Department for Education

Supported internship trial for 16 to 24 year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: An evaluation

Research Report

December 2013

CooperGibson Research

Disability Rights UK

Acknowledgements

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Supported internships were one of a number of initiatives proposed in the 2011 SEN Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*. A supported internship programme provides a structured study programme for 16 to 24 year olds with a learning difficulty assessment (LDA). The majority of the learning takes place in the workplace, and is tailored to the individual needs of the young person, equipping them with the skills they need for work so that they can achieve sustainable paid employment. The programme includes on-the-job training, backed by expert job coaches and complementary college-based learning including access to relevant qualifications, where appropriate.

In autumn 2012, the supported internship trial began at 15 Further Education (FE) colleges in England. Each college was free to design its own approach, provided the programme was consistent with four underpinning principles which required:

- a substantial proportion of learning to take place in the workplace
- additional learning to be provided outside of the workplace
- the job roles undertaken to meet learner and employer need
- appropriate support to be offered throughout to both learner and employer

The DfE commissioned CooperGibson Research, in partnership with Disability Rights UK, to undertake an evaluation of the trial to determine:

- whether the supported internship trial had been effective in enabling colleges to support young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress into sustainable employment
- how the initiative had been delivered and any lessons learned from the set-up, design and delivery
- whether the initiative provided value-for-money

1.2 Methodology

The research involved a mixed method, longitudinal approach to enable the evaluation team to gather and triangulate high quality data. The research was carried out over four periods of activity: an initial scoping phase to identify ten case studies to track during the trial and three periods of fieldwork at different stages throughout the trial. A documentary review was also undertaken at the start of the trial.

The ten case study colleges, which included colleges of different sizes, in different types of location and with different intern groups, were each visited twice - once towards the

beginning of the trial and again towards the end. During these visits, interviews were undertaken with a designated college lead for supported internships, job coaches and other staff, and with interns. Data was also collected from the colleges at a mid-point through completion of quantitative data forms, surveys and reflective logs. In addition parents were twice invited to respond to a survey and a selection of employers took part in telephone interviews. The remaining five colleges also took part in telephone interviews and returned quantitative data at regular points throughout the trial.

1.3 Key findings

1.3.1 Setting up supported internships

All the colleges developed different models for their internship programme in response to local circumstances, individual needs of the intern cohort, prior experience of offering employment-focused programmes and existing relationships with employers. Some colleges stressed the need to adopt a very different approach to other courses at the college to encourage the interns to see the programme as a route to finding work, rather than a learning programme. All emphasised the importance of being able to flex whatever model they had selected in order to meet the highly individual needs of the client group.

All the colleges followed a fairly standard set-up process including:

- building the team of staff at the college, recruiting both internally and externally to ensure a range of complementary skills
- engaging with prospective interns and, where possible, their parents and/or carers
- carrying out some form of vocational profiling with the intern to establish their abilities and ambitions
- sourcing possible employers, approaching specific employers, when a prospective 'job match' had been identified
- introducing interns to the workplace
- establishing an in-college learning element, usually including some accreditation.

Critical success factors in the set-up stage included recruiting effective job coaches, attracting interns keen to gain employment, engaging positively with employers and achieving good job matches for interns.

Key challenges encountered at the set-up phase included difficulties in engaging employers able to offer extended placements and the potential for sustainable employment and recruiting staff, particularly to the job coach role.

1.3.2 Delivering supported internships

A variety of models were delivered across the trial sites. Most colleges had stuck fairly closely to their original plans, tweaking and flexing as necessary, although nearly all had identified improvements to be implemented from September 2013. Most offered one day

a week in college, with varying amounts of time - from three to 25 hours per week - in the workplace. Whilst at work, interns fulfilled a range of different roles, carrying out largely routine tasks often under supervision, although some interns had progressed to a wider range and more challenging tasks. Generally they were working to real work conditions, but not all roles met a clear business need and some were more akin to work experience.

Learning at college generally included employability skills (accredited through a small award) and functional skills (not always accredited), with some colleges also offering individuals additional small role-specific awards, such as food hygiene certificates, sometimes at the request of employers. The college offer was not always sufficiently personalised or well-linked to the workplace learning.

A wide range of different types of personalised support was offered to interns, most often by a job coach. Support was often intense at the beginning of the internship and then gradually withdrawn over the course of the programme. Employers were also supported by job coaches but to a lesser extent. Some workplaces also had their own in-house support systems in place.

Internships were generally staffed by a small team of committed staff, including a senior member of staff as lead, supported by a day-to-day coordinator, a number of job coaches and in some cases an administrator. The most effective teams worked closely together and were flexible in their roles. While prior experience in either working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with employers was valued, a relevant skillset and a can-do attitude appear to be at least as, if not more, important. Although a number of colleges worked successfully with external agencies, their involvement with Access to Work to support transition into sustainable employment was limited.

Challenges at the delivery stage arose from a lack of awareness of supported internships amongst employers and parents/carers, interns' lack of confidence and limited knowledge of employment options, and the 'teething problems' associated with setting-up new provision including unanticipated costs for travel, competition in the local areas for work placements and working within the current economic climate where jobs are scarce.

1.3.3 Supported internship trial outcomes

Of the 190 young people who completed a supported internship:

- 36% gained paid employment, including apprenticeships (5%)
- 26% gained voluntary work
- 14% were progressing to further education or training (or in a small number of cases continuing their internship)
- 25% had no employment, paid or unpaid, or plans for further education or training

There is currently no clear pathway for young people who did not achieve paid employment at the end of the internship. This was a frustration to college staff who had

seen the interns make considerable progress towards employment. Without continuing support, college staff felt that interns would struggle to continue their journey towards, or eventually achieve, employment. Although the colleges themselves could have been better organised in planning exit strategies for interns who were not offered employment, they do not have the resources or the remit to provide the on-going support these young people need.

A sizeable number of interns achieving employment had part-time work, temporary contracts, agency or seasonal work. It is likely therefore, that they may find themselves looking for further employment in the near future. It is not clear what, if any, support will be available to help them with job search, applications and interviews or to learn a new job role if they are successful in gaining employment.

All parties who took part in the supported internship trial saw their involvement as beneficial to themselves and to the interns. Interns had gained in confidence, self-esteem and independence, learned new specific and transferable skills, developed more positive attitudes and a better understanding of the world of work and had qualifications and experiences to include on their CVs. Some parents were more optimistic about the future as a result of the internship. Some employers noted the positive impact on their own staff, the increased awareness of learning difficulties and disability, changing culture in the organisations and recognition that the interns could contribute successfully to the business. Colleges saw the internship as improving progression routes from existing courses and providing an opportunity for staff and career development.

1.3.4 Meeting the supported internship principles

The four principles, summarised above (in section 1.1), successfully guided colleges in designing innovative programmes to support young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability into employment. However, not all colleges fully met all four principles for all of their interns. Most struggled to meet the requirement for all interns to be spending a significant majority of their time in the workplace; some thought that this was not appropriate for all. Not all interns took on roles which met a real business need, with a small minority of interns in placements which did not match their own interests or ambitions. While support was provided throughout the internship, not all colleges had been able to ensure on-going support, through Access to Work or otherwise, for interns who had been offered employment or for those who had not achieved this outcome. All colleges met the requirement to provide additional learning beside that which took place in the workplace, although its relevance to the individual was variable.

1.3.5 Use of funding and value for money

The total amount of expenditure per college was influenced by the size of the grant (£190,000) available to the trial sites. However, while the average spend was close to this figure, a small number of colleges spent much less or much more. Costs per intern varied enormously, reflecting the range of support needs of the interns and the diverse

approaches taken by the colleges to provide that support. The highest areas of spend were on trial management, job coaching salaries, college-based teaching, support for interns and employer liaison. Expenditure on different elements of delivery varied considerably between colleges.

All staff involved in delivery thought that the trial offered value for money, based on the benefits to, and achievements of, the interns. However, without a longer term study to determine whether or not future savings have been made over the lives of the interns (in terms of benefit claims, day care services, health services and training provision), it is not possible to be certain at this stage if value for money has been achieved. Similarly, the sustainability of the employment interns have gained (as yet unknown) will be a key factor in determining cost effectiveness. It may be that supported internships only provide value-for-money if adequate support is subsequently provided for young people as they move jobs and develop their career.

1.3.6 Sustainability of supported internships

The supported internship model appears to be sustainable, given that all 15 colleges planned to continue to offer supported internships as a form of study programme from September 2013. In most cases, the supported internships were being 'mainstreamed' and positioned as a progression route from existing college courses. Most colleges were retaining staff from the trial, enabling them to build effectively on the experiences of the trial and further develop and strengthen the programme. Several described how they would be honing the programme further to balance cost effectiveness and quality, in order to maximise the number of internships that converted to paid employment.

Colleges had identified a number of challenges to continuing to run the programme, beyond the reduction in funding from that available during the trial, but these were not seen as insurmountable and therefore do not pose a risk to the sustainability of the supported internship. Indeed most colleges were sufficiently confident about its short-term future that they had already begun recruitment activity for September 2013 in July 2013.

1.3.7 Conclusions

The supported internship trial set out to answer three key questions relating to overall effectiveness of the programme, key success factors and lessons learned, and value for money.

Effectiveness of supported internships

The evaluation findings suggest that the supported internship programme was effective in supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into employment, with 36% of the interns achieving paid employment, including apprenticeships. Although direct comparisons in national data are not available because of the diversity of the intern cohort, this compares well with the 36% of young disabled people in employment in

2012, employment rates of under 15% for young people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions[1] and of just 7% amongst adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties, known to social services.[2] It is not possible at this stage, however, to determine the sustainability of jobs achieved.

Some colleges were much more successful than others in supporting interns into paid work. Although the models of the more successful were very varied, they did share the following features:

- recruiting only those interns with a strong desire to work
- recruitment, and development, of passionate staff with a complete belief in the programme
- personalising the programme in any way necessary in order to make it work for interns
- constant contact with employers
- close involvement with parents
- promotion of the programme as a sustainable employment opportunity rather than a college course

Key success factors and lessons learned

The experiences of the trial sites enabled a number of key success factors to be identified including:

- supported internships need to be distinctive from other forms of college provision with a clear focus on achieving sustainable employment
- job coaches, with broad skill sets, are critical to the success of supported internships
- to succeed, interns need to want to work and have families supportive of this ambition
- personalised, tapered support is necessary during the internship with further support available post-programme, as needed
- on-going partnerships between employers, interns, college staff, and where appropriate, parents and carers should underpin the programme
- achieving an appropriate realistic job match for an intern is key to their success
- college-based learning needs to be personalised, clearly linked to the workplace and to be a source of peer group support
- colleges need to plan from the outset how to secure employment for interns at the end of the internship, especially for those who are not offered paid work by their internship employer

[1] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.40-41

[2] See NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set: 2010-11 provisional release at data.gov.uk

Value for money

Without knowing how sustainable the employment gained through the supported internships will be, it is not possible to determine whether supported internships represent value for money. The value, however, can be optimised by ensuring that interns have access to on-going support to enable them to remain in employment or to continue to progress towards paid work.

In comparative terms, supported internships would appear to be better value for money than other more traditional college-based preparation for employment courses, which often have very low rates of progression into employment but still have relatively high costs.

It has not been possible to extrapolate from the data from the trial sites, given their limited number and varying circumstances, whether certain types of delivery model or approach represent better value for money than others. Further research would be needed with a wider range of colleges before such conclusions could be drawn.

1.4 Recommendations

The recommendations provided below are drawn from the findings of the evaluation. They are presented below according to programme partners and areas of work.

1.4.1 For the Department for Education (DfE) and key partners

Publicity, raising awareness and guidance

1. The DfE should publish clear guidance which distinguishes the supported internship from the Traineeship, clarifying the target clients for each programme.
2. The DfE should consider developing some publicity material or a web-page which sets out for employers, key information about the nature of a supported internship, the value of recruiting a young person with a learning difficulty and/or disability and the valuable role that employers can play.
3. In any guidance material published, the DfE should ensure that colleges are encouraged to take a flexible approach to the design of supported internships, to enable the programme to meet a wide variety of needs and take into account the different circumstances in which colleges and young people are operating.
4. The DfE should publish guidance material specifically targeted at college leads to support them in the recruitment, induction, training and review processes for all staff members on the supported internship team. The DfE might also seek to encourage relevant organisations to offer training in this area.

Eligibility criteria

5. The DfE should remind local authorities of their obligation to provide an LDA for all young people who are assessed as needing support for disability-related reasons, in line with statutory guidance.
6. The DfE should permit colleges to use their discretion in accepting onto a supported internship a disabled person who does not have an LDA but who clearly has a disability or impairment and an associated disability or impairment-related support need.
7. The DfE should consider enabling interns on a supported internship to continue to claim Job Seeker's Allowance, as is the case for those on a traineeship. This would help to prevent interns being placed on inappropriate provision for financial reasons, to establish an equitable approach for young people with and without a learning difficulty and/or disability and to remove one of the key identified barriers to participating in an internship for some young people.

Employer engagement

8. The DfE should consider developing a national directory of employers willing to be involved in supported internships, similar to that produced for apprenticeships by the National Apprenticeship Service. This could form part of a wider range of supporting materials as recommended above (see Recommendation 2 on national guidance material/webpages).

Support and sustainability

9. The DfE and DWP should work together to identify how successful interns can be supported to sustain and develop their careers, including finding and settling into subsequent jobs.
10. The DfE should continue to work closely with Access to Work and relevant Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues to ensure they fully understand the supported internship programme, so that they are prepared to offer appropriate support from September 2013. The DfE should also publicise more fully this new commitment so that colleges are aware of the support and how to help interns to access it.
11. The DfE and DWP should work together to explore the support mechanisms needed to help those young people who do not gain employment at the end of a supported internship to continue their journey towards, and eventually gain, paid employment. Colleges should then be made aware of the support available so that they can signpost young people to the appropriate agencies.

Quality enhancement

12. The DfE should continue to evaluate the supported internship programme, tracking individuals to explore the longer term impact of the supported internship and to establish costs associated with future delivery (of trial sites and new sites from academic year 2013/14) with a view to exploring value for money further.

Any future analysis might also use social return on investment methodology and include some modelling of future savings such as reduced benefits claims, less reliance on adult services and less need for mental and physical health services.

13. The DfE and college membership organisations such as the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Natspec should explore ways in which colleges can share models, plans and experiences in order to drive up the quality of supported internship provision. They should also consider working with employer-led organisations such as the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) to promote the programme to employers.
14. The DfE should consider some slight re-wording of the principles.
    - Principle 1 might be re-framed to state that interns should '*normally*' spend a significant majority of their time in the workplace to enable those for whom it is not appropriate to spend less time. It might also be re-worded to suggest that after an initial settling in period, the majority of time should be spent in the workplace. Care should be taken, however, not to dilute this requirement for most interns, as it is critical to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the supported internship programme.
    - The requirements of principle 2 might be sharpened up so that interns are required to do some additional learning which complements, and is directly linked to, that which takes place in the workplace and which is personalised and relevant to the individual.

1.4.2 For colleges and supported internship staff

Publicity, communications and guidance

15. Colleges should make explicit the primary purpose of the supported internship (to support young people to gain sustainable employment) in their publicity materials and in recruitment events and use appropriate strategies during the recruitment process to ensure that they are selecting interns who genuinely want to work.
16. Colleges should provide to employers clear information about the supported internship programme, the role of, and commitment required by, the employer; the benefits of getting involved with the internship programme, including setting out the business case and the level of support which the college will be able to offer.
17. Colleges should work to ensure that any risk of low or negative expectations from parents/carers does not become a barrier to the intern's progress. They should establish a relationship with parents early on, promoting the successes of the programme, and thereafter provide regular communications to maintain the confidence and support of parents and carers.
18. Colleges should link more closely with Access to Work representatives to strengthen their understanding of how Access to Work can support the young people during their internship and in the transition into sustainable paid employment.

Building a supported internship team

19. College leads would benefit from developing their understanding of the demands, expectations and requirements of each role within the supported internship team, particularly that of the job coach.
20. Colleges should be open-minded about the prior experience requirements they define within their job descriptions or person specifications for job coaches and focus on identifying individuals with the appropriate skills and attitudes.
21. Colleges should ensure that they have staff who are suitably trained or skilled in engaging employers or should source external agencies who can undertake some of the initial brokerage on their behalf.
22. College leads should consider the training and induction requirements of job coaches and provide access to suitable training at an appropriate point. They could refer to the National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment and might consider supporting their job coaches to gain the new qualifications for supported employment practitioners, developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in collaboration with British Association for Supported Employment (BASE).
23. Colleges should consider from the outset which partners they should be working with in order to build and strengthen their supported internship offer. They should be identifying when to involve each partner and how to optimise their involvement. They will need to work through practical issues such as data-sharing, communication strategies and the detail of roles and responsibilities to ensure no duplication of effort.

Employer engagement

24. Colleges should consider carefully what, and how much, information about an intern to share with an employer prior to the start of their placement, in order to ensure that the employer is well-placed to provide appropriate support and opportunities for the intern to develop in the workplace. The intern should be involved in the process.
25. Colleges should build on existing employer contacts to establish a database of employers who have agreed ‘in principle’ to offer a supported internship placement in the future and develop strategies to keep in touch with these employers so that they are primed and ready to accept an intern when a suitable job match is identified.
26. Where appropriate, colleges should work collaboratively locally to identify employers in order to reduce the burden on employers.

Supporting interns

27. Job coaches, and other relevant staff, should plan from the outset how they will reduce and (eventually for most) withdraw their support, keeping the level of support under continuous review.

28. Colleges should ensure that they have clear exit strategies for each intern on the programme, so that they are able to make a positive progression, wherever possible into paid work, but if that is not the case that they are moving on to something which will enable them to continue their journey to employment.
29. Colleges should ensure:
    - a clear link between the learning that takes place in the workplace and that which happens outside of it
    - college-based learning is personalised to the individual in terms of level, content and interns' interests and aspirations
30. Colleges should seek, wherever possible, to place interns with employers who are likely to be able to offer paid work at the end of the internship where the intern has met the required standards, in order to give the best chance of progressing to sustainable paid employment.

Monitoring and evaluation

31. All colleges should have in place from the outset a simple and effective tracking system that enables them to know where each intern and each job coach is at any given time.
32. Colleges should develop and apply an approach to reviewing interns' progress which allows intern, employer, job coach and other interested parties (e.g. parents) to contribute.

2. Introduction

CooperGibson Research, in partnership with Disability Rights UK, was commissioned by the Department for Education to undertake an evaluation of the supported internship (SI) trial for 16 to 24 year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Supported internships were one of a number of initiatives proposed in the SEN Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*, which was published in 2011. They are being introduced at a time of considerable change in the further education sector, alongside new 16 to 19 (25) study programmes including traineeships and a new approach to 16 to 19 funding. Changes are also being made to the way in which local authorities ensure support for education, health and social care is provided to young people with special educational needs or a disability, currently being trialled in a number of pathfinder sites. Supported internships represent just one strand amongst many in the government's proposals to improve education and training for young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability and more generally their post-learning adult life outcomes. They also build on a number of previous government-funded initiatives, such as Getting a Life, Valuing People Now and Valuing Employment Now and the findings of various research, including thematic studies by Ofsted. A fuller analysis of the context in which supported internships are being introduced can be found in Appendix 1.

Supported internship trials began at 15 colleges in England in autumn 2012. A supported internship programme provides a structured study programme, based at an employer, that is tailored to the individual needs of the young person and will equip them with the skills they need for the workplace to achieve sustainable paid employment as the outcome. This includes on-the-job training, backed by expert job coaches to support interns and employers, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate. The internships are based primarily in the workplace, and are designed to meet a minimal framework of four key principles, so as to enable innovation across local areas:

Principle 1	A significant majority of the participant's time should be spent at the employer's premises. Whilst at the employer the young person will be expected to comply with real job conditions, such as time keeping or dress code.
Principle 2	Participants should do some form of learning alongside their time at the employer. Wherever possible, colleges should help students who do not already have level 2 in English and mathematics to achieve that. The Department recognises that this will not be possible for some learners with learning difficulties, but all students, whatever their starting point, should be enabled and encouraged to progress as far as possible to whatever level is appropriate.

Principle 3 Jobs must work for both the young person and the employer. For the young person they must fit with their vocational profile, contribute to their long term career goal and be flexible enough to address barriers where necessary. For the employer they must meet a real business need. We would like, where possible, to see employers taking on internees to have a job available to offer at the end of it should the internee meet the required standard.

Principle 4 Central to the study programme is the provision of support to the young person and to the employer. Depending on the young person's needs this support could be provided either by a tutor from the college or by a formally trained job coach. The Department would like to see on-going support provided – e.g. via Access to Work - should the employer offer the young person a job at the end of the internship.[3]

The trials have been testing a study programme for supported internships that could be adopted by all further education colleges from September 2013. Running alongside the trials and in order to inform national roll-out of the supported internships programme, the evaluation was designed to gather evidence on:

- whether the supported internship trial has been effective in enabling colleges to support young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress into sustainable employment
- how the initiative has been delivered and any lessons learned from the set-up, design and delivery
- whether the initiative provides value for money

This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

Section three of the report provides an overview of the methodology utilised for the evaluation, including the number and type of interviewees and respondents to surveys. It also describes the process for selecting the ten case studies on which the evaluation focused (although all 15 trial sites were included to some extent).

Section four sets out the findings of the evaluation in terms of how the trials were set up and section five explores how the trials were delivered. They discuss the different approaches to designing and delivering supported internships, how this happened in practice and any lessons learned along the way.

As the supported internship programme aimed to support young people with learning difficulties/and or disabilities into sustainable employment, section six focuses specifically on outcomes. It explores the perceived benefits of the trials, employment, education and softer outcomes. This is followed by a discussion of how the four key principles of supported internships have been managed and met.

[3] From 16/7/2013 disabled people on supported internships will receive additional help through the Access to Work programme.

The next two sections look at the profile of spend and value for money, and sustainability of the programme. This then leads to an overarching conclusion giving key evaluation messages and a final section on recommendations for taking the supported internship programme forward. Whilst conclusions and recommendations are presented towards the end of the report, they are also provided in each section for clarity and ease of reference.

3. Methodology

This project was both a formative and summative evaluation, which started in September 2012 when the support internship trial was launched. It continued throughout the duration of the trial (to July/August 2013) to ensure evidence could first be gathered on set-up and delivery of the trial then towards completion of the trial on effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

3.1 Aims and objectives

The overall aims of the evaluation were to establish:

- whether the supported internship trial has been effective in enabling colleges to support young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress into sustainable employment
- how the initiative has been delivered and any lessons learned from the set-up, design and delivery
- whether the initiative provides value for money

To achieve these, five objectives were set:

- to assess the effectiveness of the supported internship model in enabling further education (FE) colleges/independent specialist providers (ISPs) to support young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities to move into sustainable employment
- to identify the key components of delivery of the supported internship pilot by the colleges
- to identify the key lessons learned from initial set up, design and delivery
- to conduct a cost benefit analysis to establish whether the supported internship initiative provides value for money in relation to costs and outcomes for young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- to identify how Access to Work has been used to enhance the delivery of supported internships and to encourage employers to provide more supported internships and/or full-time employment on completion of internship

3.2 Method

The research involved a mixed method longitudinal approach to enable the team to gather and triangulate high quality data to achieve the aims and objectives of the evaluation. The research was carried out over four periods of activity: an initial scoping phase to identify case studies to track during the evaluation and three periods of fieldwork at different stages throughout the evaluation.

3.2.1 Documentary review

A documentary review was conducted to provide the relevant policy and research background information to the project and to help to inform all aspects of the evaluation. Policy documents and relevant research reports were reviewed and analysed. The outcomes of this activity are presented in Appendix 1.

3.2.2 Scoping phase

The purpose of the scoping phase was to select ten case studies from the 15 colleges taking part in the supported internship trial and to use the information collected to establish baseline data for the evaluation. This was achieved using a combination of methods to gather and analyse information from all participating colleges.

Telephone interviews with supported internship leads

Each of the 15 college leads for supported internships took part in a telephone interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of the interview was to gather information on: the nature of their proposed supported internship model, rationale for being involved, number and characteristics of interns involved and characteristics of employers targeted.

Review of documentation

Each college submitted work-plans and management information (MI) data to the Department. These were reviewed by the project team and analysed to provide further information on: the interns, including type of learning difficulty and/or disability; programme of study; year of study; the type of employer and information about job roles including anticipated number of hours in workplace; role and nature of job; cost of internship per intern and intended employment status.

Selection of ten case studies

Ten case studies were selected in October 2012 and agreed by the Department for Education on the basis of:

- having a range of participating interns with different learning difficulties/disabilities, ages and studying different levels e.g. Entry level, levels 1, 2 and 3
- the range of types of colleges, regions and rural/urban locations
- areas of deprivation
- targeting different employer sectors
- different approaches and costing models

All 15 colleges were notified of the outcome of the selection process. The ten case study colleges were informed that they would be involved in three fieldwork phases for the evaluation and the non-case study colleges were informed that they would be involved in certain activities during the evaluation but not to the same extent as the case study colleges

Case studies

There were three main periods of activity for the fieldwork: phase one involving visits to the ten case study colleges in December 2012 and January 2013; phase two, the interim data collection phase in March/April 2013; and a phase three visit in June 2013. Each of the ten colleges was assigned a lead researcher from the project team who established contact and a good working relationship to ensure continuity throughout the evaluation. A range of research tools was designed to be used on the visits, such as interview schedules tailored to different participants, a reflective log for delivery staff and a cost pro-forma. The tools were piloted with one college in the first phase fieldwork visit, following which the tools were amended and finalised for the other nine colleges.

3.2.3 Initial phase of fieldwork December 2012 to January 2013

The purpose of the first fieldwork visit was to provide benchmarking information for the evaluation and to gather information on the start-up and recruitment stage; nature and sufficiency of support; nature of delivery model; proposed use of funding; costs and anticipated costs. The visits to each of the ten colleges involved:

- *face-to-face semi-structured interviews* with:
  - 10 Supported Internship college leads (in a small number of colleges the interview involved other senior staff such as principal or vice principal)
  - 17 college staff and one representative from a specialist employment agency
  - 13 job coaches. Not all colleges had job coaches in place at this stage of the evaluation
- *telephone or face-to-face semi-structured interviews with participating employers:* in total 19 employers were interviewed, nine of whom also took part in follow-up interviews in stage three of the fieldwork. Employers interviewed were based in a range of sectors: further education, retail, leisure, catering and hospitality, agriculture and charitable or voluntary organisations. They were mostly small-to-medium sized companies, with an average of over 30 employees[4].
- *focus groups with interns* from each college: in total 39 supported internship interns were involved in the focus groups. The interns were all provided with information in advance including a consent form which they could share and sign with their parents/carers to return to the research team at the time of the visit.

The college leads were also responsible for providing information for:

- *cost pro-formas* - recording total costs associated with the trial, any over and under-spend and cost per intern (in the ten case study colleges)

[4] The number of employees in these businesses ranged from 2 to 250 and so this average reflects the upper end of staff numbers. Some of these companies rely on seasonal or part-time staff at busier times of the year (particularly in the leisure and hospitality industries) but on a day-to-day basis, the size of the team interns are actually working in are much smaller, often only with one or two other people.

- *reflective logs* - recording any issues as the programme was delivered and solutions trialled, progress to date and any reflections by other staff/interns involved in the trial (in the ten case study colleges)
- *management information* (MI) data forms (in all colleges)

Management Information (MI) data

All 15 colleges were asked to update their MI data throughout the evaluation at each of the fieldwork phases (January, March/April and July/August 2013). This was to enable the project team to gather information on the numbers of interns enrolled, the type of job role and employer they were placed in, the number of hours and length of internship and outcome of internship (i.e. offer of employment or not).

Cost data

To monitor the profile of spend, the ten case study colleges completed a cost pro-forma at each of the fieldwork phases (January, March/April and July/August 2013). This provided information around the different areas of spend (such as resources, staffing and management) and included original planned budgets, actual spend and variance.

Parents'/carers' survey

A survey for parents and carers was set up and administered via online, telephone and paper-based methods to suit the needs of the parents/carers. The survey was conducted using SNAP Professional survey software and was distributed via the college staff at each of the 15 colleges. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from parents/carers about how they considered their son/daughter's internship was progressing. The survey asked for information on the start/recruitment stage of the course; types of information they received; how well the internship met their son/daughter's expectations, motivations and skills; type of support and progress/achievements to date. A high response rate was achieved with response from 60 parents overall, representing all 15 colleges.

3.2.4 Interim phase of data collection March to April 2013

To avoid over burdening the staff involved in the supported internship programme, the interim phase data collection involved a reduced number and type of data collection activities.

Data was collected to provide a range of information including progress to date and any challenges faced, which approaches were more or less successful and reasons why and use of funding and managing relationships. The data collection methods used included an online survey, update of MI data (all 15 colleges), and the completion of reflective logs and cost pro-formas (in the ten case study colleges).

Online survey for college leads and job coaches at all 15 colleges

A survey was conducted online using SNAP survey software. A a link was sent via email to all supported internship college leads who were asked to complete the survey and forward the link to relevant staff. Responses were monitored and follow-up calls and emails used to boost response rates. A small number of staff completed the survey electronically and returned it via email. The survey ran from 18th March to 16th April 2013.

In total 64 responses to the survey were achieved from the 15 colleges (on average 4.3 per college). All supported internship leads completed the survey. Due to the range of delivery staff, there were variations in the number of job coaches, co-ordinators and others who participated.

3.2.5 Final phase of fieldwork June to July 2013

The activities that were conducted in the first fieldwork visit were repeated during fieldwork visit two in the final phase of data collection. The research tools were revised to capture data at the end of the internship trial and to reflect that this phase of data collection aimed to gather information on the progress and outcomes of the trial; the impact and effectiveness of the supported internship programme; value-for-money; lessons learned and sustainability of the programme. The key data collection activities were:

- semi-structured interviews with 15 supported internship college leads (ten case study college leads were interviewed during the visit and the remaining five by telephone)
- semi-structured interviews with 21 other college staff such as co-ordinators, tutors, curriculum leads and funding managers (in the ten case study colleges)
- semi-structured interviews with 24 job coaches from the case study colleges
- semi-structured interviews (face-to-face or telephone) with 20 participating employers (in the ten case study colleges)
- semi-structured interviews with 3 external agencies (e.g. local supported employment agencies, Access to Work)
- focus groups with 52 interns across the ten case study colleges
- completion of reflective logs and cost pro-formas (in the ten case study colleges)
- completion of MI data forms (in all 15 colleges)
- parents'/carers' survey, achieving a response of 61 (in all 15 colleges)

3.2.6 Analysis and reporting

Data from all fieldwork activities were analysed following each phase of the evaluation to help to inform the next stage of the evaluation and to provide analysis for progress reports. The data were analysed against specific themes, within each college's model and aggregating the data across all colleges. The themes were those which corresponded with the overall objectives of the evaluation and included: identifying the

key components of delivery; lessons learned from initial set up, design and delivery; reviewing the costs, benefits and outcomes for young people; and the role of Access to Work in supporting the transition of the interns into employment.

At the outset of the evaluation, the evaluation team used a structured cost pro-forma to gather information from the colleges on: their use of funding in terms of their activities and associated costs; number of interns supported by the programme; range of different costs to the college; costs per intern; additional costs over and above what was funded; and sustainability of the programme. The aim here was to establish the spending profile for the trial to help to inform national roll-out over the next academic year.

3.3 Evaluation sample profile

In total, 190 interns completed the Supported Internship programme. A sample of 52 interns took part in the evaluation (many of these in focus groups at the beginning and end of the trial). The following table summarises each stage of fieldwork, the nature of activities that took place and participation rates achieved.

Table 1 Evaluation participants

Evaluation Stage	Methodology	Lead	Staff	Job Coaches	External Agencies	Interns	Employers	Parents (online survey)	Data Collection[e]		
									MI	CP	RL
Initial Stage	Visits/Telephone Interviews/ Focus groups	10	22[a]	13	1[c]	39	19	60	15	10	10
Interim Stage	Online Survey	16[d]	15	33	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	10	10
Final Stage	Visits/Telephone Interviews/ Focus groups	15	21[a]	24	3[c]	52	20	61	15	10	10
Total Number of Interviews Throughout the Evaluation[b]		37	58	70	4	91	39	121	45	30	30

[a] For example, principal, co-ordinator, tutor, curriculum lead, funding manager, support worker, learning support assistant, work placement officer, administrator

[b] The total number of interviews per participant type includes repeat interviews with some of the same participants at each fieldwork stage

[c] local supported employment agencies and/or, Access to Work representatives

[d] Two of the staff at one college considered themselves to be leads (with differing responsibilities) when completing the survey

[e] MI – management information, CP – cost-proforma, RL – reflective log

4. Setting up the Supported Internship Trial

This section draws on the fieldwork and data collection findings to examine the processes involved in the initial set-up of the supported internship trial, including:

- the recruitment and development of staff members at college
- the recruitment of job coaches (internally and externally)
- engaging interns, and communicating effectively with their parents and carers
- employer engagement strategies, and approaches made to inducting interns into the workplace

4.1 Staffing structures and recruitment

All colleges participating in the evaluation had small teams in place to deliver the supported internship programme. These teams consisted of a lead with overall managerial responsibility and in most cases, a programme coordinator with responsibility for day-to-day operational delivery. The teams also generally included two or more job coaches, although not all colleges referred to them as such. Each college also had a tutor who was responsible for delivery of the college aspect of the programme with learning support workers assisting interns in the classroom. Some colleges also drew on staff from other teams, such as a work placement officer. Some staff within the team had multiple roles, for example job coach and work placement officer or tutor and job coach. Some teams were also supported by a part-time administrator.

Good practice: recruiting staff

Several colleges had recruited staff with specific expertise in providing employment placements and with good 'selling skills' into job roles such as work placement coordinators, employment liaison officer or supported employment officers. Recruiting staff with a 'can do attitude' who could sell the concept of supported internships to employers, learners and their parents and carers was essential for colleges. Being knowledgeable and confident in liaising with employers was particularly important.

Building a team whose members had complementary skills and experiences was cited as desirable by several colleges. Teams whose members could multi-task (where the administrator, who was trained as a job coach, could step in to offer job-coaching support, for example) were also considered valuable.

Some supported internship team members were recruited from existing roles within the colleges, or their roles were tailored to meet the needs of the programme**.** In some colleges, there was a deliberate strategy to recruit externally to ensure a different approach during the supported internship trial that differentiated the programme from existing provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In this way, the

trial was regarded by some as an opportunity '*to create a new identity, something different from the [existing] college culture'*.

By the mid-way point of the trial, in most cases (75%) recruitment of staff into supported internship positions was complete. Recruitment of job coaches and co-ordinators was mainly through external means with over 70% of job coaches stating that they were previously external to the college.

Of those staff members recruited externally, their experience of working with employers was regarded as key by colleges. Some newly recruited staff did not have experience of working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (although several had personal experience of learning disability through a family member) but their lack of professional experiences was not seen as a barrier by colleges but as an area for which training could be provided.

4.1.1 Recruitment of job coaches

All colleges had recruited one or more job coaches (although not all referred to them as such) and some were seeking to recruit more. The numbers of job coaches per college varied widely across the colleges. For example, one college had a full-time job coach although it was seeking to recruit more, whilst another had five learning support workers who worked varying part-time hours as job coaches in addition to their learning support roles. Because of the highly personalised nature of the support provided by the job coaches both at college and at work, they needed to be prepared to work flexible hours (including evenings and weekends) depending on the nature of the work placement. This meant for some colleges creating new types of contract, distinct from the learning support assistant contract which was usually term-time and college hours only.

Several of the colleges reported having difficulties in finding the right candidates with the appropriate skills and experience to recruit as job coaches. Some college staff felt that the role of the job coach was not particularly well understood because it is not a 'well-established role' and that rather than looking for specific qualifications or prior experience as a job coach, colleges were having to identify those applicants with the appropriate 'attitude and a skills set'. One supported internship college lead described the whole business of identifying, recruiting and deploying job coaches effectively as a 'learning curve'. Due to the difficulties in recruitment, some of the colleges recruited internally on a temporary basis:

> *The college initially recruited a job coach* [externally] *in September but the CRB check and references were not forthcoming so the offer had to be withdrawn. The college then approached a learning support assistant internally so they could get someone in post at least temporarily as soon as possible. This job will be re-advertised on a longer term contract and other job coaches are to be recruited at the same time.* (College Lead)

However, as discussed in section 5, learning support assistants are not always best-placed to take on the job-coaching role.

Good practice: recruiting job coaches

Some college leads had themselves accessed job coach training which assisted them in:

- understanding the job coach role
- identifying the place of the job coach within the programme
- interviewing potential candidates for the job coach role
- cascading training to job coaches in the key elements of their role

Reading outputs from initiatives such as the ROSE project was thought to be helpful in understanding more about the role of a job coach. Drawing on the experience of internal staff with knowledge of managing the interface between college/learner and employer was informative for developing the job coach role.

Most job coaches participating in the evaluation interviews had some related experience in their previous roles, which tended to involve one or more of:

- working with employers
- finding employment placements
- working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Some job coaches had experience of selling in a recruitment agency context and several leads talked about the value of staff who could talk employers into seeing the benefits of interns' strengths e.g. an autistic intern who would always follow instructions and do repetitive tasks to a high standard. The belief that interns would perform well influenced employers to take on interns.

Good practice: building a supported internship team

Some colleges had deliberately set out to create mutually supportive teams of job coaches, possessing a range of complementary skills, from employer liaison to learner support.

In one college, all team members had had some training in job-coaching to ensure they felt able to cover for one another, so that an intern would never be unsupported because of staff absence.

Some job coaches had worked in previous roles at the college e.g. support workers, study skills assistant, learning adviser, and two had worked in supported living environments. Job coaches interviewed had achieved a range of qualifications, and among them were three qualified teachers, and a qualified occupational therapist with training in sensory stimulation. Other qualifications and specialist training included:

- NVQs in Health and Social Care and Childcare
- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)
- braille
- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)
- safeguarding children and young people
- counselling

Such training highlights that although experience of working with employers was deemed essential by college leads, there are many other specialist skills and areas of knowledge that have been transferable into the job coach role, despite the differences in context. Nonetheless, only one job coach admitted to feeling 'well-prepared' to carry out their new role. She spoke of having a '*thorough induction where the programme was explained'* and that she had a '*reasonable case load which makes it possible to do the job well*'. Others indicated that it was an evolving role in that they were learning a lot of it as they worked, interpreting the different elements of the job description so that they fit the day-to-day work, or '*finding my feet'* until the role felt established. Some were planning to attend training in areas such as special educational needs, mental health issues and dealing with autism, but they would have preferred such training early in the role rather than six months into the trial.

The positive experience of the job coach who went through the 'thorough induction' and the suggestion that scheduled training should come earlier in the role indicate a need for structured training and induction for new job coaches. Indeed, some job coaches said that some forms of training would be particularly useful – both **generic training** related to carrying out the role of a job coach, and also **specific training** such as supporting interns who are working towards an NVQ.

RECOMMENDATION: College leads should consider the training and induction requirements of job coaches and provide access to suitable training at an appropriate point. They could refer to the National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment and might consider supporting their job coaches to gain the new qualifications for supported employment practitioners, developed by LSIS in collaboration with BASE.

RECOMMENDATION: College leads would benefit from developing their understanding of the demands, expectations and requirements of each role within the supported internship team, particularly that of the job coach.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should publish guidance material specifically targeted at college leads to support them in the recruitment, induction, training and review processes for all staff members on the supported internship team. The DfE might also seek to encourage relevant organisations to offer training in this area.

4.2 Intern engagement strategies

The analysis below is based on the MI data provided by all 15 colleges and the responses to interview questions by different college staff.

4.2.1 Intern enrolment

Across the 15 colleges a total of **222 interns enrolled on the supported internship programme** for the 2012/13 academic year. This was an average of 15 per college, ranging from seven to 20 interns.

- six colleges had 15 intern enrolments
- five colleges had over 15 enrolments
- four colleges had fewer than 15 enrolments with one college recruiting only 7 interns

Out of 222 interns enrolled, 32 interns did not complete the supported internship programme (this equates to 2.1 drop-outs per college, averaged across the 15 colleges). Only 2 colleges reported having no drop outs whilst the majority recorded between 1 and 5; however one college recorded 12, although they appear to have included all those who were considered for the programme, including those who never formally started the internship.

Examples of reasons for drop-out were:

- intern found employment before their placement commenced
- illness and personal circumstances
- the intern changed their mind about the type of career they wanted to pursue
- issues relating to claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) benefits (for example, 8 interns were reported to have dropped out for this reason at one college)
- one finished after one week to sign with an employment agency
- lack of parental support/parental influence

190 interns completed the trial across the 15 colleges – an average of 13 per college across the 15 colleges, ranging from six to 16.

4.2.2 Range of Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Each college was asked to provide a range of information on the MI forms. This included recording the type of disability or impairment of each intern to ascertain the range of interns who were participating in the trial. According to the information provided by the colleges, the majority of the interns had support needs for some form of learning difficulty or disability. This included those on the autistic spectrum and those with general or moderate learning difficulties. A wide range of impairments were recorded on the MI forms, such as general learning difficulties, mild learning difficulties, moderate learning

difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. Around one-fifth of interns were recorded as having multiple impairments.

Other impairments recorded included Asperger syndrome, dyslexia, cerebral palsy, hearing and sight impairment, mobility issues, Down syndrome, emotional and behavioural issues and speech language and communication disorders. The MI form permitted open completion and therefore the wide range of learning disabilities were not recorded within specific categories. This reflects the individual nature of each intern's impairment and support needs, which all trials responded to in providing a tailored programme of support.

Out of the 222 enrolled interns taking part in the trial only 4, two each from two different colleges, did not have a Learning Disability Assessment (LDA). One of these colleges had tried, without success, to get the relevant local authorities to undertake an LDA, describing the two interns (one of whom had been to a special school), as 'clearly having a learning difficulty'. A number of staff interviewees did note that some interns did not previously have an LDA or needed an updated version which they successfully sourced prior to commencing the trial. Almost all interns therefore, met the key criteria for eligibility of interns.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should remind local authorities of their obligation to provide an LDA for all young people who are assessed as needing support for disability related reasons, in line with statutory guidance.

Several members of college staff suggested that the requirement to have an LDA was unnecessarily restrictive. In one case, an intern with undiagnosed Asperger's had had to undertake lengthy, and what he felt to be intrusive, assessments in order to qualify for an LDA. He resented the label that he now felt he had been given, in order to be eligible for the supported internship programme, and staff reported a drastic change in his emotional and mental health and his behaviour and work ethic, which eventually resulted in the breakdown of what had been, until that point, a very successful placement.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should permit colleges to use their discretion in accepting onto a supported internship a disabled person who does not have an LDA but who clearly has a disability or impairment and an associated disability or impairment related support need.

One member of college staff identified those with challenging behaviours but no associated learning difficulties, as suitable for an internship approach:

> *There are emerging pockets of learners with no learning difficulties but they do have behavioural issues so they don't qualify for supported internships. The internship project would be a positive way to get these people into work….[you could] broaden the supported internship model as these students are left on benefits* (College Lead).

Although traineeships might prove to be a more suitable route for some interns with challenging behaviours, some thought that without the job coach support, some of these interns would be unable to sustain a work placement.

Other barriers to recruitment included a reluctance to give up Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) and lack of parental interest or support (sometimes related to the benefits issue).

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should publish clear guidance which distinguishes the supported internship from the traineeship, clarifying the target clients for each programme.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should consider enabling interns on a supported internship to continue to claim Job Seeker's Allowance, as is the case for those on a traineeship. This would help to prevent interns being placed on inappropriate provision for financial reasons, to establish an equitable approach for young people with and without a learning difficulty and/or disability and to remove one of the key identified barriers to participating in an internship for some young people.

4.2.3 Age range

The age range of interns for the majority of colleges involved in the trial was 18 to 24 with only a small number of colleges recruiting 16 year olds. The average age of interns was 20 years.

Table 2 Age of interns participating in the trial

Age	Number of interns	Age	Number of interns
16	9	22	31
17	18	23	9
18	34	24	14
19	48	25	1
20	32	26	1
21	25		
Total number of interns - 222			

4.2.4 Prior attainment and level of study

Interns generally had a range of prior achievements, from level 2 qualifications in specific vocational areas to Entry 1 or 2 awards in more generic areas such as employability skills. The levels of qualifications offered within the supported internship therefore varied, too, but not perhaps as much as these prior levels of achievement suggest should have been the case. Although a large number of colleges offered the same qualification to all of their interns, some varied the level it was delivered at to match the skills level of the individual interns, although others offered a standard (most commonly Entry 3 or level 1) for all. Overall, the levels of qualifications offered within the supported internship trial ranged from Entry 2 to level 3.

In most of the colleges, interns were all following the same programme of study within each of the colleges e.g. at one college the interns were all studying BTEC level 1 in Work Skills and functional skills in English and mathematics.

Other programmes included Pathway to Employment (from Entry 3 to level 1), level 1 Award in Progression, Award in Skills for Employment (Entry 3 to level 1), Into Work (Entry 3 to level 1), Steps (level 1), Employability and Personal Development level 1, Work Skills (Entry 3 to level 3), Employability Skills (Entry 3), Award in Exploring Employability Skills (Entry 3), Developing Skills for Employment (level 1) and Personal and Social Development (level 1). Several interns at one college were on the Foundation Learning programme (Entry 3 to level 3).

The interns at 5 colleges were recorded as taking individual programmes of study, mainly linked to their area of intended employment e.g. hair and beauty, floristry, media, woodland and countryside.

Many interns also took short courses such as health and safety, food hygiene and first aid (refer to section 6.2.1 for further detail).

4.2.5 Recruitment of interns

Finding suitable recruits

The most common method of accessing and recruiting young people on to the programme was by colleges contacting past learners, especially those who had recently completed courses. This included some young people classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET). External agencies were also contacted by colleges in some cases, such as Connexions and youth services, JobCentre Plus and Mencap. Some interns who had just started new programmes in the college switched to the supported internship. These recruitment practices were in some cases the colleges' response to having to recruit interns to the trial quickly (and after the start of term) and do not represent the way in which they plan to recruit in the future.

Approaches to recruitment and engagement of interns

Many of the college leads spoke of a **phased approach to recruitment** which meant recruiting interns throughout the duration of the supported internship trial. For some, this was a necessary means to achieving the numbers required for the trial but for others it represented a flexible approach which they plan to develop further next year. One college would like to move towards a 'roll on/roll off' system so that as soon as one intern has secured employment they would be in a position to recruit a new intern. Other plans for improved approaches to recruitment included using case studies of successful interns from the trial to illustrate and promote the internships, recruiting interns on to the programme in good time, i.e. before they had completed their previous course(s) or left school and therefore before they had signed on for Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA). Where interns had already begun to claim JSA, for some families this was a barrier to the supported internship as they were reluctant to lose benefits which would impact on the household income. One college lead reflected,

> *Those supported by parents and didn't claim [benefits] thought the idea [of the supported internship] was attractive – but those who had voluntary work and/or were relying on JSA enjoyed contributing to the household or gained a bit of independence in being able to buy their own things – and they did not want to give up JSA without any guarantees*

As discussed in section 4.2.6 below, working with families from the outset is essential.

Potential interns were engaged by colleges in a variety of ways:

- one college ran an **'information and advice' afternoon** which introduced the employment agency, and also included a representative knowledgeable about welfare rights, a funding advisor and a transport advisor to help with queries
- another college recruited some interns from a **neighbouring institution** by holding a 'launch party' for the other college's learners. This relationship also enabled resources and staff to be shared between the two colleges involved.
- applications were invited, followed by an interview similar to a job interview. In some colleges this was made into a **competitive process** to encourage commitment from interns

Profile of suitable recruits

The consensus among college leads was that in order to be successful, any potential interns needed to have employment as their main focus, and needed to want to work. This was seen as far more likely to affect the outcome of the internship than an intern's starting point or level of support need. Staff from several colleges said that they would be much more careful in future rounds of recruitment to establish that an intern had this desire, and that this was backed up, where relevant, by the family. Although most of the interns participating in the interviews said that they had enrolled on to the supported internship because they wanted to work, for some, making new friends, meeting new

people and doing something rather than sitting around at home were just as important. Others were much more focused, including one who reflected:

> *I find it difficult to get on the first rung of the ladder. I haven't got work experience on my CV so* [doing the internship] *I can show I can do the job. The qualification is a nice addition but it's the job at the end I need.*

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should make explicit the primary purpose of the supported internship (to support young people to gain sustainable employment) in their publicity materials and in recruitment events and use appropriate strategies during the recruitment process to ensure that they are selecting interns who genuinely want to work.

Challenges to recruiting interns

The main challenges in setting up the programme were created by the timing of the start-up of the supported internship trial. These included:

- the difficulty in recruiting young people who were **already claiming JSA** since young people and their families would experience loss of income during the supported internship
- **not recruiting college staff in good time** which also had a knock-on effect on sourcing placements in a timely fashion and the amount of time interns were able to spend in the workplace
- **feeling under pressure to place interns** before they had got to know the interns sufficiently first
- interns becoming frustrated by the **length of time to locate placements** – they '*want to get out there and show what they can do'*. To try to address this, one college incorporated interns '*into the workplace-finding process as it helps them to understand how much we are trying to find them work places…sometimes this participation in the placement process helps to re-motivate the individual learners should they be feeling concerned at any time'* (College Staff)

Good practice: approaches to recruiting interns

- using prior knowledge of interns from teaching them on other courses to help with establishing their interests and aspirations, previous skills and experience and identifying their support needs (e.g. use of previous assessments that have already been carried out in-house). These pre-existing relationships also help when building relationships with their families
- drop-in workshops for potential interns to give them a taste of the programme and to demonstrate how it might differ from previous courses they had taken
- effective partnership working between the college and any external agencies, the college and other institutions in the area, and the college and interns' families are all essential during the recruitment process
- open days and evenings to enable interns and their families to understand the supported internship and to establish whether or not it would it be suitable for them
- providing clear information about the aims and purpose of the supported internship, what is expected and how it differs from other college courses so that the interns (and families) are clear about what is expected of them, and ensuring that they really want to work

4.2.6 Working with parents and carers

The involvement of parents and carers is discussed below with views of those participating. There were times however, when college staff referred to the tensions that can exist between parents' wishes and those of young people (including, for example, working towards greater independence). The views of young people, therefore, are also represented throughout the report, including for example, on their views of the outcomes of the programme in section 6.2.

Most of the colleges observed that involving parents and carers was critical to the success of the supported internship. Where interns did not have supportive families, where the family was opposed to some elements of the internship (e.g. to an intern travelling independently or not having college-timetabled holidays), or where an intern had no family (as in the case of looked-after young people), then the absence of support was cited as problematic by colleges. All the colleges were adopting parent/carer engagement strategies of one form or another.

Contact with parents and carers began at the recruitment stage. Many of the interns themselves described the active involvement of their parents, some of whom had received a telephone call, inviting them to come in to the college with the young person to learn more about the supported internship and discuss their options. Interns spoke of having an 'open day' or a 'big meeting with parents and staff'. Although some interns were not always keen for parents to be involved during these early stages (as they wished for greater independence), parents were generally encouraged to attend college

induction days, initial interviews, and meetings with college staff including job coaches (if in place) and specialist advisers such as those offering information on benefits, disability employment and transport/funding. There were various elements of this recruitment process that parents particularly appreciated. The table below summarises the types of involvement which parents identified as most beneficial in their survey responses.

Table 3 Involving parents: summary of strategies appreciated by parents

Area of good practice	Elements appreciated by parents
Communications	▪ the provision of regular and clear information: '*Continual updates are excellent'* ▪ the opportunity to ask questions about the process (e.g. programme specific presentations/meetings) ▪ friendly and supportive communications from college staff ▪ being able to have personal interaction with the college and staff directly involved in the supported internship
Tailored provision	▪ college staff knowing the young person already, and therefore being already aware of that intern's strengths and weaknesses ▪ the individual support from job coaches was specifically mentioned by two parents as a particularly positive aspect of the recruitment process: *'being able to have regular chats with her on the phone and meet her'* ▪ job matches being carefully considered so as to take into account of the complex needs and ambitions and interests of the young people involved: *'they got [my son] a job working outside as he doesn't like being inside in college all the time'*
Interview process	▪ efficiency: *'The interview explaining it all - considering I didn't know that it was available, and then finding out within two weeks of interview, no hanging around waiting to hear'*
Involving parents	▪ from providing information on the programme, through to providing regular updates and enabling parents/carers to assist with the matching process (and in at least one case attend interviews alongside the young person), parents have appreciated being involved directly with the recruitment processes

(Source: survey of parents)

Parents particularly appreciated the personalised approach, taken by the college, including one-to-one meetings and discussions of the specific needs and progress of their young person.

There were however, a small number of suggestions from parents as to how the recruitment process could be improved. The most common, with four parents suggesting each, were:

- **clearer, written information at each stage:** e.g. allowing parents to review interns' job applications before they are submitted; ensuring interns understand that the work involved is unpaid; providing leaflets that carers could give to potential employers
- **more high profile promotion:** e.g. to charities, established support groups for parents and local employers, to help with recruitment of young people
- **face-to-face meetings with parents:** for two respondents, this included with employers as well as college staff. One respondent had attended a face-to-face meeting for a group of parents, but would have preferred a one-to-one approach

Two parents thought that there needed to be more awareness and understanding of the individual needs of the interns among college teams, with one suggesting that job coaches are introduced to interns at an earlier stage so that they can get to know the interns' needs and abilities, and a trusting relationship can develop.

Parents were provided with initial information, advice and guidance in one of the following ways:

- introductory letters, followed up with telephone conversations, and/or then face-to-face meetings with college staff (including job coaches)
- presentations and information sessions held by the college
- paperwork (leaflet/letter) only

Nearly half of parents responding to the first survey said that they received 'a little' information, advice and guidance about the supported internship programme prior to their son/daughter being recruited onto the trial. One parent suggested that they would have liked more information on '*how it would go/how long it would last/outcomes at the end*' which may reflect the trial status of the programme, in which colleges were also learning how and when to disseminate information most effectively. Slightly fewer parents said that they had received 'a lot' of information. A small number had met the designated job coach at this early stage, enabling the family to build a rapport with them from the start.

> *The college rang me as [my son] had been there previously doing a course. They told me a bit about the programme and asked if we would be interested and wanted to join. We then went along to the college and they gave me all the information I needed, hand-outs, which was really useful and we met the job coaches.* (Parent)

Overall, where it was received, the information provided about the supported internship by colleges to parents was thought to be either 'very' or 'quite' useful by the vast majority of parents (94%), and almost all parents were satisfied with the way in which their son/daughter was recruited to the supported internship trial (93%).

Good practice: engaging parents

Parents welcomed a personal, face-to-face introduction to the programme, backed up with paperwork that could be retained for future reference.

> *Written information, phone calls from the tutor at the college and a meeting at the college with other professionals presenting… From our point of view there was nothing to be improved upon*

Regular updates on progress and involvement in dealing with any issues or problems were also appreciated.

Parents welcomed the opportunity to meet with the staff (especially the job coaching staff) who would be working with their son/daughter on the programme.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should work to ensure that any risk of low or negative expectations from parents/carers does not become a barrier to the intern's progress. They should establish a relationship with parents early on, promoting the successes of the programme, and thereafter provide regular communications to maintain the confidence and support of parents and carers.

4.3 Job matching

One of the core aspects of the supported internship is the process of 'job matching' interns with the employers and job roles most suited to their abilities, interests and ambitions. All of the colleges had an induction period during which they profiled the interns, undertaking an audit/assessment to learn about an intern's skills, interests, experiences and aspirations.

> *Through the Skills Audit and initial assessment for each student, I was able to identify individual learner needs, get an idea of the areas and skills set to match potential employers and to individualise the learning programme for the students. This really built the foundations of how I planned and managed the next steps in the co-ordination of the programme.* (College Lead).

This information was then used to gauge the types of work placements that may be suitable and the types of employers to approach. The colleges were careful to ensure that the interns' aspirations were **realistic** and **achievable**, which sometimes meant that valuable existing employer contacts were not suitable.

> *The job coach would talk to learners about their interests, skills and experience and try to hone that into something realistic and achievable then find employers who could help. This was why they did not use any of the employers who they already had relationships with as none of the job roles wanted by learners matched their existing employers.* (College Lead)

In addition, the location of an intern's home in relation to the place of work was taken into account when considering travel requirements. If the commute was not sustainable, for example because an intern's bus pass could not be used for peak hour travel, then there would not be a job match.

Employers who 'matched' the interns' interests/skills/experience were then approached with a view to negotiating and securing a placement in a suitable job role (for employer engagement strategies see section 4.4).

One college had developed what they described as an 'evidence-based way' to achieve a good job match:

> *For each learner a workplace suitability assessment is carried out when considering a particular match, against five criteria: match to learner's skills, suitability of location, match to learner preference, quality of employer, likelihood of leading to paid work. Each criterion is scored out of five and then a mean is calculated.* (College Lead)

The college aimed to have a mean score of three or preferably more for each match to give the intern the best chance of succeeding in their role.

Good practice: job matching

- skills assessments undertaken early in the process highlighted abilities and strengths of interns, and also ensured their personal aims were achievable and realistic
- face-to-face discussions between job coaches and employers who had registered an interest in taking on an intern, with the young person also contributing, were seen as most effective approach when job matching
- job 'carving', whereby a role is specifically shaped to match the intern's strengths, while remaining core to the employer's business, was used by some providers to ensure a tight match
- some colleges provided taster sessions where the intern would visit the employer for a morning/afternoon or a full day to trial the placement for both employer and intern

In both parent/carer surveys (in the first and second phase), the vast majority believed that the job to which their son/daughter had been recruited matched the young person's needs and future career ambitions either 'very' or 'quite' well. Most of the interns

interviewed also reflected that the job roles they had been undertaking were well matched to their interests and aspirations for the future, which they reported as a significant factor in their valuing and enjoying their internships. Several employers also specifically emphasised the importance of the **job matching** process in terms of the success of the placement overall, saying that if this was done appropriately the attributes of an intern could prove to be a real benefit to their business. For example, one intern on the autistic spectrum within a catering and hospitality business was able to use his focused attention to detail to carry out tasks with accuracy and precision, hand-finishing products to a high standard. The employer commenting on his autism reported that, *'it's not a disability in this environment'*. Two employers noted that where their interns had not made much headway, it was probably because of an inappropriate job match, confirming the importance of getting the match right. [See section 7 (principle 3), for an analysis of how well colleges managed to meet the principle that jobs should be right for both intern and employer.]

4.4 Employer engagement strategies

The analysis below draws on the quantitative data provided on the MI forms completed by all 15 colleges and qualitative data from interviews with college staff and employers from the case study colleges.

4.4.1 Employer profiles

Most colleges secured placements from a combination of local and national employers with several of the colleges relying more on local employers. These included small businesses as well as national organisations, charities/voluntary sector, social enterprises, NHS and several placements within the colleges themselves i.e. in the library, catering, administration etc. There were a very small number of placements with multi-national and/or international companies and a couple of placements in local government/public sector organisations. One college provided all placements for their interns within different parts of the college.

Table 4 Type of employer involved in the trial

Type	Number of employers
Local	139
National	47
National/Local	11
International	5

Note: Numbers reflect internship at more than one employer

The interns were employed in a wide variety of businesses, with retail and catering types of work being the most frequent. Other types of employment included sport, recreation and leisure, animal care, horticulture/agriculture, hospitality, care, childcare and motor vehicle. Farming and agriculture were popular placements in the more rural colleges.

Table 5 Employment sector

Sector	Number of employers
Wholesale and Retail	47
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	33
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	25
Health and Social Care	24
Other Service Activities	23
Administrative and support service activities	17
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	12
Education	9
Transportation and Storage	8
Manufacturing	3
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and	1

Note: Numbers reflect internship at more than one employer

4.4.2 Recruitment of employers

Engaging employers was identified as critical to the success of supported internships and one of the most significant challenges for most colleges. When identifying potential employers, many colleges used existing contacts and databases that they had built up, as well as drawing on the in-house knowledge and expertise of college placement teams. One college worked collaboratively with another local institution to target local employers. Most colleges found themselves involved in a two-tier employer engagement process: first they built up a database of employers who had expressed an interest in offering an internship, then when the interns had been recruited and their interests, strengths and ambitions identified, colleges either returned to the employers already sourced to discuss

specific interns and job roles, or where there was no suitable employer in their database, they set out to identify further employers.

Employers most commonly reported getting involved with the supported internship programme where they had previously offered student work placements (44% from interview round one). Many of those interviewed were also employers who had previously worked with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which meant that they already had specialist knowledge, had often undertaken training for making adjustments in the workplace to meet individual needs and were therefore more confident about taking on an intern. Some employers said that the intern got in touch with them directly (in two instances the intern had known the employer already). Some colleges took on interns in-house, as part of a drive on the part of the institution to support in-house programmes and initiatives. In these cases, supported internship staff were still involved in explaining and promoting the programme and persuading other departments to take on an intern, in much the same way as with external employers.

Marketing and awareness raising strategies from colleges to promote the programme to employers were varied. For example, one college gave a presentation at a local council employer group meeting, whilst others produced leaflets and fact sheets, or published accessible information on websites. In future, some plan to produce case studies/success stories from trial interns and publish these throughout local press to draw in employers.

Good practice: engaging employers

- face-to-face, one-to-one contact was found to be more productive by college leads than sending information by post or e-mail or organising meetings such as breakfast briefings
- college staff found that recruiting employers was easier once intern profiles had been created (from the initial skills audit in college) as the information gained from this could be used to give employers a tangible impression of the young people seeking placements (some colleges even took individual interns to meet employers to help with the engagement process)
- when discussing the possibility of an internship for a particular individual with a specific employer, the staff member needed to be knowledgeable about the internship programme and the individual intern
- colleges built on existing relationships where they existed, including with other local colleges and support agencies where expertise or contacts could be shared
- some colleges found that they had more success in approaching small local employers than large organisations and companies who were already advertising a vacancy or organisations that already worked with people with disabilities as clients
- a process of 'keeping warm' employers who had been recruited to the programme in principle, before an intern is matched and placed with them was considered useful

Some colleges contacted specialist employment agencies and local organisations to help them engage with employers, although it was noted by college leads that care is required to avoid a conflict of interest between the supported internships and other programmes (e.g. apprenticeships) for which the same agency may be helping to identify and secure placements. One college recruited an external organisation specialising in sourcing work placement and experience opportunities for school and college students, following an unsuccessful start to employer recruitment by their own staff. At this stage, Access to Work were approached by some colleges to discuss their potential involvement and the support they could offer. However, they were not involved in the employer engagement and brokering aspect of setting up the supported internships.

Agencies and organisations approached by colleges to help engage employers included:

- JobCentre Plus
- local careers services
- learning disability teams of local social services
- voluntary/third sector organisations (Scope, Mind, Mencap, Remploy)
- local support group and supported employment agencies

The expertise and advice offered by these agencies and organisations was helpful to colleges in putting them in touch with employers, especially where the college leads

didn't think they had the right expertise in identifying the best person to speak to within a business, and how to gain their interest.

> *You have to unravel the organisation. It is a time factor and there is a crowded market. We decided that* [the agency] *recognised the area, had contacts and that would be a better way. When we spoke to employers, they would say we already work with* [the agency]. *I may not be a good sales person, I had no experience of that.* (College Lead)

However, these organisations were only really useful in making the initial introductions, and colleges then had to work further with each employer to discuss possible job roles and working arrangements for interns.

4.4.3 Employers: challenges to recruitment

Supported internship college leads attributed difficulties with recruiting employers to:

- the economic climate - with some organisations making redundancies and not wanting to be seen to be 'replacing' staff with unpaid workers
- negative media publicity about other initiatives such as the Work programme where recruiting unpaid workers was seen as using 'free labour' - consequently some employers were reluctant to take part in any other scheme and offer placements
- the lack of any national information or a national profile about supported internships to which employers could be referred
- the need to provide 'realistic sustainable employment' not just work experience which employers felt they couldn't offer
- concerns about the intern not being able to carry out a 'full' role
- concerns about appropriate insurance and whose responsibility this was when the intern was in the workplace
- in some cases, lack of experience or appropriate skills in dealing with employers or selling the programme amongst college staff.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should consider developing some publicity material or a web-page which sets out for employers, key information about the nature of a supported internship, the value of recruiting a young person with a learning difficulty and/or disability and the valuable role that employers can play.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should provide to employers clear information about the supported internship programme, the role of and commitment required by the employer, the benefits of getting involved with the internship programme including setting out the business case and the level of support which the college will be able to offer.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should ensure that they have staff who are suitably trained or skilled in engaging employers or should source external agencies who can undertake some of the initial brokerage on their behalf.

Very few employers offering internships reported any challenges or issues with the recruitment process, but a small number noted that they would have appreciated more information than they were initially given about an intern's specific needs and requirements. Without this information, they felt ill-prepared to meet their needs in the workplace. One noted:

> *I would have appreciated some idea of any trigger points and how to deal with them and any difficult situations beforehand. (Employer in Catering and Hospitality)*

Another commented:

> *The biggest challenge was that I had no idea that [she] had learning difficulties, I found this out when she came for her interview, I just knew that she was blind. No one from the college told me and her CV was not very detailed and I had to push to get that…I didn't have the full picture beforehand, if I had known about her learning difficulties I would have taken the interview down a different path.* (Employer in the Third Sector)

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should consider carefully what and how much information about an intern to share with an employer, prior to the start of their placement, in order to ensure that the employer is well-placed to provide appropriate support and opportunities for the intern to develop in the workplace. The intern should be involved in the process.

Employers offering internships within the trial had a number of suggestions for encouraging further employers to take part in the future including:

- invite employers to meet the 'success stories' of the programme – perhaps at an event such as an open evening or via a video filmed by the college, so that they can see the benefits directly

- ask employers who have successfully worked on the supported internship trial to become ‘ambassadors’ for the scheme, talking to other employers and telling them what the process is really like including possible challenges and solutions
- create a national website like the apprenticeships website for the supported internship programme, including testimonials from employers, case studies and to help facilitate job matching

Building trusting relationships not just with interns and their families, but also with employers is essential to the success of the supported internship. This includes ensuring that information being cascaded to employers about an intern’s needs provides a clear indication as to the full extent of that intern’s circumstances, support needs, abilities and attributes so that employers can make informed decisions, minimising potential risks and optimising opportunities in the workplace. It also gives employers increased confidence during the placement that they will be able to manage any unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

4.4.4 Induction into the workplace

The induction of interns into the workplace generally included a range of steps shared between the college and employer such as:

- face-to-face meeting between employer, college and job coach to discuss the structure of the programme and the needs of the individual intern
- meeting at the workplace including the proposed intern, to show them around the work environment
- the intern attending the workplace for a trial/job shadow, generally for one or two days
- ‘interview’ or ‘informal’ discussion about the role - although interns are matched with specific employers, several employers said that they had carried out an interview anyway, to make the process ‘more realistic’ (in some cases, these were competitive interviews involving more than one intern).

4.5 The supported internship model(s)

All the colleges developed different models for their internship trial in response to their location (rural or urban, transport links and travel to college/work patterns locally); the individual needs of the intern cohort; the labour market in the area; the college’s existing programme offer and expertise; local partnerships and previous employer engagement activities. They all emphasised the need for flexibility whilst still seeking to meet the four principles set out by the Department for Education for the trial.

However, they have all followed a fairly standard process to set up the supported internship:

1. Build the team of staff at college, drawing on in-house expertise from other programmes and external recruitment, particularly focusing resources on recruiting the most appropriate candidates for the roles of job coach.
2. Engage with prospective interns either via, or alongside, their parents and/or carers.
3. Carry out some form of vocational profiling with the intern to establish their abilities and ambitions and ensure that their motivations are to secure paid employment.
4. Source possible employers, approaching specific employers, when a prospective 'job match' has been identified.
5. Allow for an induction period with the employer.
6. Establish an in-college learning element, usually including some form of accreditation.

Some colleges also spoke of purposefully adopting a different approach to previous learning courses at the college to encourage the interns 'out of the college mind-set' and to include some workplace-like conditions within the programme. Strategies included rooming in a different place, off-site; adopting a different timetable including longer days and requiring interns to come into college one day a week even during college holidays; and use of a holiday card to 'book time off'.

Within these broad activities however, a wide range of different approaches have been taken. While different approaches are to be expected during the trial of any new programme, those involved in the supported internship trial were keen to stress the importance of the programme remaining flexible, adaptable and responsive so that the highly individual needs of the client group the programme is serving can be met.

RECOMMENDATION: In any guidance material published, the DfE should ensure that colleges are encouraged to take a flexible approach to the design of supported internships, to enable the programme to meet a wide variety of needs and take into account the different circumstances in which colleges and young people are operating.

4.6 Conclusions

Building the right team to take forward the supported internship programme was critical. Colleges identified a need to identify personnel responsible for: strategic leadership of the programme; overall coordination of internships; job-coaching; college-based teaching and training and learning support in college; employer liaison and support (where this is not part of the job coach role) and administration. Many colleges have found that they have had to look outside their current staff to find individuals with the necessary skills and experience of approaching, engaging, and developing viable working relationships with employers. Some deliberately recruited staff externally to try to establish the programme as a different type of programme to other college courses.

Job coaches were frequently cited as the most important element of the supported internship. They were also considered by many as the distinctive feature of the programme, setting them apart from other college courses, training programmes, work placement or work experience initiatives. A more detailed analysis of the job coach role can be found in section 5.

The role of family members especially during the early stages of the programme is highly significant and some colleges described parents and/or carers as essential members of the supported internship 'team'. Involving parents and/or carers early in the recruitment process – and making them fully aware of the intended aims and outcomes of the programme – means that they are more likely to have a better understanding of the programme, be more able to provide interns with the necessary support, as well as better manage their own expectations and hopes of the internship.

Engaging employers was a key challenge for all colleges. The way in which colleges approached employers and presented the internship programme varied. However, key messages from colleges were that direct personal contact was most successful and the internship programme was best-presented as something from which the employer (and the intern) could gain.

As the supported internship programme develops, it will be important for colleges to keep a 'live' database of employers who are interested in principle in offering supported internships and to establish ways to maintain relationships with these employers even when they do not currently have an intern placed with them.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should build on existing employer contacts to establish a database of employers who have agreed in principle to offer a supported internship placement in the future and develop strategies to keep in touch with these employers so that they are primed and ready to accept an intern when a suitable job match is identified.

All parties - college staff, employer and intern (and parents/carers where appropriate) - should be working from the outset towards the same goal: to secure paid sustainable employment for the young person. As this evaluation has identified, **getting the right match between employer, job role and intern is crucial to the success of the programme** and this can only be achieved if communications are clear, unambiguous and open from the outset.

RECOMMENDATION: Where appropriate, colleges should work collaboratively locally to identify employers in order to reduce the burden on employers.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should consider developing a national directory of employers willing to be involved in supported internships, similar to that produced for apprenticeships by the National Apprenticeship Service. This could form part of a wider range of supporting materials as recommended above (see Recommendation on national guidance material/webpages – section 4.4.3.).

The evaluation has identified that during initial recruitment processes all parties (interns, parents/carers, and employers) appreciate:

- direct face-to-face communications from colleges, preferably with time to ask questions and discuss the programme on a one-to-one basis
- paperwork to follow up these personal communications (such as leaflets containing key information)
- clear information regarding practicalities such as benefit entitlements, funding and transport arrangements
- accurate and early profiling of interns' needs, abilities and ambitions, so that expectations are realistic and achievable

A shared understanding of the internship programme, between intern, employer, college and parents/carers is essential. All parties should be aware of what the intern is aiming to achieve at the end of the placement in terms of their employment status, what the employer can expect from the college and the intern and vice versa.

5. Delivering Supported Internships

Whilst the previous section explores the different approaches to setting up supported internships, this chapter looks at the approaches to the delivery of supported internships. An analysis of the day-to-day practices during the trial in terms of the balance between time in work and in college, support arrangements, staff roles, use of external agencies and lessons learned is provided, using data gathered at the mid-point and towards the final stages of the trial.

5.1 Time in college/workplace

5.1.1 College learning

Almost all colleges had an allotted amount of time in college to support the interns and provide learning complementary to that going on in the workplace. This was mainly in the form of one day a week where the interns studied functional skills, personal development and work-related skills, including for some, continued job searching activities such as weekly visits to the Jobcentre and support in completing job applications.

One college did not provide any discrete provision in college for the interns - instead they were 'infilling' into relevant classes. This meant that they had no set provision where the interns all met together as a group. However, from next year, they plan to change this approach as they recognised the importance of the group getting together to learn from and support each other and to provide a less isolated environment. At a number of the trial sites, both college staff and interns saw the value in the young people establishing themselves as an identifiable group, capable of providing mutual support and plan to maintain that approach next year.

Linking college and workplace learning

Although all colleges aimed to make a link between learning in and out of the workplace, some were doing this more successfully than others. Some teams worked closely to understand what was going on in the workplace, so the college sessions were picking up on issues that had occurred for individuals at work. In this sense the classroom provided the theory and the workplace provided the practice with the learning going across both settings. Some colleges had staff who were out in the workplace and then coming into the classroom to help make the links. They were able to prompt in the workplace about learning they observed in the classroom and vice versa. When asked how learning in college supported learning in the workplace, a range of responses were supplied. These related to:

- affirming and consolidating specific skills and qualities used in the workplace e.g. communication, interview techniques, telephone skills, writing skills, personal presentation, practical skills, first aid and health and safety
- the use of units that link/have synergy to the workplace/job role
- employability qualifications to support interns in their work setting

- sector specific qualifications to provide grounding for the job role and to allow interns to have the same sector specific basic qualification as their employed peers
- functional skills learning to support independence in the workplace
- travel training and getting to work

For most, the college learning was tailored at least in part to each individual's needs, for example, travel training, dealing with money, food hygiene certificate, using tills/cash register.

Good practice: college-based learning

To bring the workplace and college learning together, one college set personal targets across both contexts.

One college used a reflective diary for interns to make the links and review progress. They also used content from the diaries to explore scenarios at work in the classroom with the full group (issues that might have come up for just one individual or several).

Interns particularly valued those activities which they could see were directly related to improving their performance in their specific workplace.

Accreditation

Colleges delivered accredited qualifications from Entry to level 3 for some elements such as employability skills, work skills, pathway to employment and functional skills. There were also examples of practical work-related subjects such as first aid, health and safety, basic food hygiene and vocational subjects such as horticultural skills, motor vehicle, floristry, animal care, bricklaying, customer care and business and IT. Some colleges described choosing qualifications and units to match student needs and the placements they were going to be on. Many colleges used awards rather than certificates or diplomas which were sometimes described by supported internship leads as too large for the timescale and time commitments of interns.

In terms of functional skills, one college made a deliberate choice not to offer accredited learning since they felt the interns would be better served by embedded delivery and a more personalised focus on particular elements of the functional skills relevant to each individual and their job role.

5.1.2 The internships

Length of internship

The majority of internships were between five and seven months in length. At two colleges nine interns were on internships lasting nine and twelve months whilst one

college had much shorter internships ranging from less than a month to four and half months. The length of an internship varied according to a range of factors, including for example, employer capacity and requirements, intern ability and job coach capacity.

Time in the workplace

There was a wide variation in relation to the number of hours the interns spent at the employer site, with the variations occurring for a range of different reasons. Approximately half the interns were in placements of 16 hours per week or more with around a quarter in placements of between eight and 15 hours a week. There were a very small number of placements of less than five hours – some interns had two shorter placements e.g. four hours in a hair salon combined with two hours in a beauty salon.

Time in the workplace therefore, varied from three to 25 hours a week, in some cases starting with shorter hours and gradually increasing over time. This was tailored according to the needs of intern and the employer.

> *We found that students find it better to start working one day a week then increase their time with employers. Students we started on three days placement found it too much and had to reduce time which reflected negatively… it all depends on students' ability.* (College Lead)

A number of employers also confirmed that for some interns it was appropriate to gradually build up the amount of time in the workplace over the duration of the internship, rather than being expected to manage the full allotment of hours from the beginning. Whilst college staff were keen for interns to be placed in work, they were also concerned that:

- employers were not over-burdened from the start and had time to get to know the interns, their support needs and what they were capable of
- interns were not overwhelmed at the start when moving into a new environment
- interns had time to adapt to the working environment and gradually learn new tasks
- the time in work fitted with interns needs', particularly if there were health reasons for limiting the number of hours

Some co-ordinators and job coaches also noted that on occasion, the internships needed to fit with family and other commitments such as the time spent with a support worker, funded through a personal budget. If an intern had a specific day to spend with a support worker, they and their families were reluctant to change this pattern for an internship and job coaches noted that it was sometimes important to accommodate families' wishes in order to encourage their commitment to the programme.

Working conditions

Most employers said that their interns worked to the same policies and procedures that were in place for all members of staff. The only changes made were to provide more

flexibility on working hours – for example, one employer allowed the intern to work shorter days while another made sure that the intern took longer breaks than other members of staff. These changes are similar to the reasonable adjustments that might be offered to a person in paid employment. Interns and job coaches corroborated this finding, confirming that they are expected to wear the same uniform, conform to the same health and safety standards and observe the same time-keeping arrangements as other staff. These requirements contributed to their sense that they were part of the workforce and undertaking real work.

Interns conducted a wide range of roles and duties. The most common were assistant posts in catering, retail, hospitality, care, administrative/computing and farm work. Duties included food preparation, serving customers, inputting data, letter-writing, filing etc. More unusual posts included diving assistant in a diving school, building computers and installing software, workshop restoration (of cars), working for the Institute for the Blind, producing Braille resources and dog groomer.

Most employers said that interns carried out very specific tasks in the workplace often undertaken under close supervision, sometimes with a 'buddy', mentor or small team working around them. Around half of employers anticipated that they would need to offer the intern new and more challenging tasks over time as their skills and confidence developed. Some interns described being given additional tasks and some job coaches reported that their role included negotiating with the employer to ensure the intern was able to take on a more challenging role when they were ready. In some cases, employers did not believe that the intern was likely to progress from the most basic of tasks under close supervision. For some, this was a cause for concern as it meant they could not foresee employing the individual where this was the case.

Good practice: task allocation and explanation

> *As we go along for each task we ask questions to make sure they understand what we are asking them to do, then we get them to repeat the task so that we can see if they are able to retain the information* (Hospitality and Catering Employer)

In many workplaces, interns were initially given short, routine tasks that they would be repeating frequently, so that they could build up their skills and confidence.

> *We monitor in different ways, [the job coach] encourages her intern to have a manual of the job role (a step-by step guide) which he is now learning to not use all the time but it helped to build his confidence, allowing him to work by himself for longer and longer periods. The next thing he needs help with is answering the phone.* (College Staff)

Some job coaches were very proactive in seeking out new and more challenging tasks as the intern mastered their given duties.

5.2 Support arrangements

Job coaches were the main source of support for both employers and interns. Support was typically quite intense as the intern entered the workplace but once they were settled into the work environment, support was reduced and job coaches did not attend as frequently. In some cases, job coach support was withdrawn altogether, occasionally at the request of the employer, so that the intern could progress more independently. In some cases, employers reported that the support provided by the job coach was then replaced by more natural forms of support in the form of managers and colleagues. One commented:

> *The job coach came in every day at some point for the first few weeks as [the intern] was very shy and had very little confidence. Now she just pops in for an hour. There is plenty of support for her here and she is confident now to ask for help if she needs it. (Leisure Employer)*

Employers in particular were keen to see job coach support reduced over time in order to encourage the development of independence by the individual. However, there were occasions where employers had requested that the job coach withdraw but the job coach felt that the intern was not yet confident enough to be working totally independently.

> *Support is never withdrawn without employer consent but sometimes it's maintained where an employer doesn't think it's needed*. *Some employers don't think a job coach is needed and the job coach has had to be quite assertive about hanging on in there.* (College Lead)

Job coaches themselves cited the gradual withdrawal of support as a key aim, as the interns and employers became more confident and as interns mastered their role. This was supported by the college leads, one of whom observed:

> *Just as important as knowing when to support is knowing when not to support. You do have to let young people make mistakes and then help them learn from them. Support needs to be tapered if learners are going to increase independence.* (College Lead)

Job coaches at one college described a traffic light system which was used to monitor the level of support required:

> *We use a traffic light system that's worked really well, so we only withdraw support for a task when the intern, employer and job coach all agree it's a green. We reduce support at amber and are pretty much there one-to-one full time at red.* (Job Coach)

Most interns mentioned the role of the job coach in providing support, with many observing that they did not see their job coach as much as time went on.

> *They do let you try to do it yourself. They encourage you to work things out for yourself. Maybe they help you with one bit. Then you do the rest when you know what you're supposed to be doing.* (Intern)

Where job coach support had decreased, some interns mentioned feeling confident enough to ask colleagues questions or for help, or that other members of staff would make sure that they were happy.

In some cases, support in the workplace was provided by support workers (who liaised with job coaches) and co-ordinators. On occasions where staff capacity was an issue, the whole supported internship team helped out with for example, the programme lead or co-ordinator supporting interns (often those who had taken the job coach training). Supported internship co-ordinators also sometimes took on some of the job coach role and took responsibility for employer engagement and continued liaison with employers. Two employers mentioned that they had not seen a job coach at all since the intern started their placement although no reasons were given as to why this may be the case. However, the majority (92%) of parents (responding to the survey towards the end of the trial), thought that their young person had received suitable support. A large proportion were also happy with the support provided by the employers.

Good practice: providing workplace support

A planned reduction in support as soon as the intern had settled into the workplace was seen as crucial to long-term success of the interns. This might involve fewer visits or less interaction with the job coach as they began to play more of an observer role.

Support that was geared to increasing independence, rather than just helping the intern to be able to do the job, was particularly valued.

RECOMMENDATION: Job coaches, and other relevant staff, should plan from the outset how they will reduce and eventually for most, withdraw their support, keeping the level of support under continuous review.

Mentor or buddy systems

To help foster working relationships with other employees, six employers mentioned having a 'buddy' system in place with interns working closely with another member of staff who would generally be working the same shifts as the intern. For some, this arrangement ran in parallel to the job coach support and in others, the job coach handed over to the internal support mechanism when they thought the intern was ready. The 'buddy' – sometimes the employer/team leader – acted as mentor and sometimes also supervisor for the intern. Employers thought this was seen as successful in that it

provided some level of stability and routine for the intern, integration into the staff team and a degree of confidence for the employer since it ensured that the intern was being closely supervised. However, towards the end of the programme several employers did reflect that these support arrangements had been onerous and that they had not fully grasped the extent of the support and supervision that would be required.

5.2.1 Types of support offered

The support offered to the interns was highly personalised and the nature and level of support differed for each individual according to their needs. Some interns had full-time support in the workplace to help them in their role and ensure they were learning the skills and tasks required; for others the job coach just called in once a week or every two weeks or in some cases less frequently than that. Job coaches or support workers described how they would break down tasks for interns, provide materials (such as cue cards) and show them how to use equipment. A few made reference to using systematic instruction as one strategy amongst many that had been applied. They felt that it lent itself better to some contexts and to some interns than others.

> *Learners are offered lots of different forms of support, for example, checklists, pictorial reminders of routines. It's individualised and flexible – some have had travel training, route planning. We have focused a lot on problem-solving skills, observing a learner at work and taking them aside to ask, 'how else could you have tackled that situation?', providing advice on ways to ask for help that fit with conventions of their workplace. We have shown some how to use smartphone apps to help with time keeping.* (College Lead)

The role of job coaches is described further below. However, all staff and supported internship college leads noted that teamwork and communication were key to getting the support right – between the staff team itself, with the interns and with employers.

In addition to face-to-face support at college and in the workplace, one college lead described how they used social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to provide support to interns so that they would feel less isolated when not in college.

Good practice: tailoring support to the individual

Job coaches used a variety of different methods, depending on the needs of the individual and the tasks they were being required to complete. For example, one job coach had produced a labelled set of photos of the produce being grown on an allotment to help the intern remember the range of vegetables when talking to customers. Another had helped an intern working in a day care setting to plan a music activity for clients by talking through with her what key elements and resources might be needed.

Support for employers

All parties found it more difficult to articulate the support offer for employers as opposed to that for interns. Employers valued colleges providing them with clear expectations and candid, open and honest conversations about an intern's abilities and difficulties. The leads noted how absolute reliability and professionalism was imperative to the relationship with employers as some employers had reported having bad experiences with the Work Programme. Since being involved in the supported internship programme, several had commented how much more positive their experience on this programme had been. To ensure that employers felt supported, staff visited employer sites regularly and maintained regular dialogue, including offering mobile telephone numbers so that employers could get in touch at any time and any issues could be dealt with promptly. Staff offered support to both the supervisors and colleagues of the interns and did not just have contact with the original manager who agreed to internship. This helped enable those working closely with the interns who were aware of their progress and any issues in performing the role satisfactorily to be directly involved with the college staff. Several colleges commented that they would continue to provide follow-up support to employers, if required, after the programme had been completed.

5.3 Managing the internship

The programme co-ordinators played a vital role in the day-to-day management of what in all settings was a very complex programme, due to the highly personalised nature of the internships. Almost all the models adopted involved interns being placed with a range of employers and individual programmes for interns in terms of the days and time spent at the employer sites and in some cases, individualised timetables for their college-based learning. Job coaches and other staff were required to travel between different sites on a continuous basis and in some colleges a range of tutors were involved in delivering college-based learning. This called for careful tracking mechanisms for both interns and staff. One college lead described how their supported internship administrator held a central record showing weekly movements of all interns and staff so that anyone could be tracked and traced at any one time. This proved useful for communication between staff and for tracking interns to ensure they attended on site when required. Another college used an at-a-glance grid system for tracking their interns and staff.

Also important in management terms, was the tracking and monitoring of interns' progress, both in the workplace and at college. Colleges developed a variety of tools and approaches to review and record progress, including log books and review sheets. Many involved employers in the process either through formal statements or job coaches recording their comments on an intern. Interns were also encouraged to reflect on their own progress and in some cases to offer peer assessments too.

Inevitably, as in any trial, concerns and issues arose. When this was the case, staff were keen to manage the concerns as quickly and openly as possible, with one explaining, *'if*

issues arise, they are tackled swiftly and honestly and openly. It's important that nothing festers'.

RECOMMENDATION: All colleges have in place from the outset a simple and effective tracking system that enables them to know where each intern and each job coach is at any given time.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should develop and apply an approach to reviewing interns' progress which allows intern, employer, job coach and other interested parties (e.g. parents) to contribute.

5.4 Staffing

Recruitment of staff and the basic shape of the team required are discussed in section 4. This section focuses on the working practices of staff as they delivered the internship programme. The role of the job coach is covered in detail, as this post was seen as the most critical to the success of the supported internship programme.

All leads were keen to emphasise that a significant success factor was having the right staff involved, including coordinators, employer engagement staff, job coaches and administrators. Staff commitment, communication, flexibility and a strong team ethic were also seen as crucial to success of the internships.

One college lead described how they recruited someone to coordinate the supported internship programme in order to delegate some of the responsibility. They looked for someone with previous experience in a similar role and recruited someone with a supported employment background who '*just got it straightaway*'. They noted that:

> *The co-ordinator needs to be someone calm, patient and persistent, someone who can co-ordinate the many players involved in supported internships. In your team, you need people who can network and engage people. It's a good idea to have different skill sets so they are complementary.* (College Lead)

Having the staff with the right skills and a team with a good cross-section of skills was seen as crucial, including the ability to engage and recruit employers and specialist skills in working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teams were then able to support each other, share information on the progress of interns and work closely with each other to build up strong relationships with interns and employers. Employer engagement skills were viewed as particularly important to the success of the programme in terms of arranging internships quickly and efficiently. Employer engagement was not necessarily a skill set that was found amongst existing college staff:

> *The person who has taken on this role has been amazing. She has over 40 employers signed up with ten to 20 more leads to pursue. She has a relationship manager background with a bank and knows how to get people on side and keep them on side. Frequency of contact is also key. She has a son with Asperger's so brings personal experience and commitment and believes in what she's doing. Tactics have included muscling in on existing employer networks, being competitive in an informal and light-hearted way amongst team members – how many good employers can you get signed up? Also, following up initial contacts quickly with face-to-face meetings to sell the benefits.* (College Lead)

The role of the co-ordinators varied. In some trial sites, they were day-to-day managers of the staff and the programme overall, keeping an eye on the interns and relations with employers through liaising with job coaches and the team generally. In one site, the coordinator was the overall supported internship lead, responsible the strategic side as well as the day-to-day management ensuring that the infrastructure was all in place for the internship programme to run as smoothly as possible. In other sites, the co-ordinators took more of an employer engagement role. For some, the role was evolving to reflect the stage of progression of the trial – at the beginning they had focused on recruiting employers before moving on to more general overseeing of the programme and providing some support to interns.

In many of the trial colleges, the co-ordinator was the first post to be filled. This meant that they took on a wider range of responsibilities during the trial than they are likely to in the future. Some initially took responsibility for liaising with employers and identifying possible placements. They also competed specialist job coach training and performed the job coach role until a full complement of job coaches was appointed. This was seen as beneficial for the team. One college lead described how their coordinator was able to explain the detail of the programme to the employer including the job coach role and was able to brief the newly appointed job coaches more fully as a result.

The college leads certainly valued the work of the coordinators:

> *The co-ordinator especially is persistent, dogged, passionate, fully believing in the value of the internship programme and able to get others to buy in to that*. (College Lead)

> *Ours have done everything from engaging employers to signing them up and doing risk assessments… They have brought the young people to meet the employer, discussed the job role, supported them in training, produced evidence of whether they are able to do it, negotiated with employer for further training.* (College Lead)

Other staff included work experience co-ordinators responsible for finding employers, employer liaison and relationship management and administrators who were responsible

for tracking intern attendance at college and work through individualised timetabling systems, booking appointments with employers and all paperwork for employers.

Staff involved in the trial were very flexible within their roles with a co-ordinator doing some job-coaching (often with job coach training), and job coaches doing some employer engagement. This was seen as both a feature of the trial, as their roles were still evolving, but as beneficial to the working of the team.

5.4.1 The role of the job coach

All 15 colleges employed job coaches within their supported employment team, although not all referred to them by this job title. Some were full time, others part time. For some, it was one aspect of their role (e.g. in some colleges they were also work placement officers), while for others it was their full role. The number of job coaches per college varied from one to six with caseloads varying accordingly. Typically a job coach was responsible for between three and five interns but there was one job coach who was responsible for 15 interns (with support from other staff) and in a couple of cases, the job coach had just two interns. In a few trial sites, support workers or learning support assistants were offering support in the workplace, replacing some of the coaching/supervision work of the job coaches.

Job coaches were seen as crucial to the success of the programme by all parties: interns, parents/carers, employers and college leads. Supported internship leads described the role as developing strong relationships with parents, employers and interns, acting as the 'middle person' and for this it was important to have the right skills and experience.

> *That is the vital thing about the programme – getting an experienced job coach – we were very lucky to find [job coach] – other colleges have been using LSAs. I would say if they have not got a knowledgeable, experienced job coach they are stuffed from the beginning. The expertise of job coaches is important, [job coach] had been working for Access to Work, she ran her own company which supported learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through Access to Work, she has been doing it for many years. She had done job carving before so she understood the process.* (College Lead)

Job coaches (and other staff) emphasised the need to be flexible - to be able to work with interns, learn the jobs and break these down into tasks for interns to learn, provide alternative ways of learning tasks (such as using lists, cue cards) and monitor progress to ensure that interns are continuously learning new tasks and being stretched. Job coaches, in most sites, were responsible for ensuring the interns performed adequately in their role, that employers were happy with the interns' progress, that tasks were being completed to the required standard, and that interns were happy with their own situation and progress. Job coaches also supported development of transferable and life skills such as '*telling the time, travelling independently, using equipment etc*.' (College Lead)

However, the scope of the role was slightly different from one college to the next, with the main difference being the extent to which job coaches were involved in engaging employers and setting up the internship. In some colleges, this was done by the co-ordinator, although in most the job coaches were either taking the lead or actively involved. In all but one case study college, it was the job coaches who provided all the in-work support (one had support workers for those who needed full time assistance), although the coordinator sometimes visited interns at work. The extent to which the job coaches were involved in the college-based element also varied. In one college, the job coaches were doing some of the teaching. In some colleges they played a learning support role, while in others, they 'popped in' or came to occasional sessions to provide a specific input.

> *There's no one model for being a job coach and it's definitely not a 9 to 5 job.* (Job Coach)

Job coaches identified the following activities and responsibilities as core to their job role:

- getting to know the intern/vocational profiling: '*adjusting, refining and establishing career goals'* (Job Coach)
- finding possible internships - cold-calling, marketing benefits to employers
- preparing for and attending interviews with an intern, attending health and safety inductions and first day or first few days at work
- helping with job search, application and preparation for interviews, helping them to develop CVs
- mentoring e.g. encouraging young person to speak out or use initiative, build confidence
- target-setting and monitoring/reviewing – supporting interns to reflect
- travel training, mobility training, using Braille, help to apply for bus passes
- help to gather relevant documentation for employment
- reviewing progress on placement and finding a new one if the first is not working out (e.g. because a young person didn't know what they wanted to do)
- mediating between parents and interns
- carving out a role (an intern can't do A, but can do B,C,D) – spotting the opportunities in a workplace
- negotiating an increase in responsibilities or new activities for an intern in their job role
- learning the job role so that you can train the intern
- helping employers to understand better the abilities of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- challenging interns (e.g. about unrealistic or unambitious plans or to open their eyes to other possibilities)
- modelling task completion and workplace behaviours
- observing the intern in action to advise on ways to improve
- prompting and reminding the interns (e.g. to thank a customer)
- re-phrasing employer instructions, checking they understand what they have to do, getting interns to try it out a different way if the first way doesn't work for them – helping them to find their own solutions
- breaking down tasks into mini-steps (sometimes using systematic instruction)
- building up trust with the intern and with the employer and negotiating between them and reassuring employers, providing support to employers so that they can work successfully with the intern
- advocating for the intern, sorting things out if they've made a mistake
- *'almost working on behalf of the employer'* (College Lead) so that interns are doing the work properly and respecting the employers' expectations for attendance and so on – being the key contact for employers
- helping with very specific aspects of job they find difficult (e.g. the till/cash register when it is busy)
- negotiating with employers for sustainable employment, at the end
- providing support to find work and make the transition from the internship

As discussed above, many colleges found recruitment of job coaches difficult, in part because the role is not well established and they were therefore not able to advertise for experienced job coaches. Instead they had to look for candidates with appropriate skills and experience. One clear finding from the trial is that learning support practitioners do not easily transfer into the job coaching role; their skill set is quite distinct from that needed by a job coach. Critically, job coaches have far more responsibility for interns than learning support staff, who almost always work under the direct supervision of a tutor. Other key differences cited by college staff included the focus on employability skills, the need to understand different workplaces, the ability to learn different job roles and then pass on that learning to the intern and to be assertive with employers and with interns, particularly as they reduce or withdraw support.

At the beginning of the trial, many job coaches were not entirely clear as to the distinction between the learning support role and job coaching role because they were learning their role at the time. However, towards the end of the trial, they were much clearer and supported internship leads particularly could see the differences in the roles. They saw that job coaches had greater responsibility and whereas a support worker (e.g. study skills assistant, learning support assistant) would work with a small group, but under the direction of the teaching staff, job coaches need *'to be decisive and be able to make decisions, and need to be good communicators with students and businesses – they need to be more business-like in their approach and in their communications with businesses'*.

> *Support workers although largely autonomous tend to work under the instruction of a tutor, so goals are set by the tutor. Often though there are support goals set and we would expect the support workers to manage and monitor those goals in session. With a job coach it is very clear that they need to be able to understand the job they are going into; need to understand the employer and the nature and culture of that employer. Then they need to be able to translate that into a role that is suitable for the intern moving in there. They also need to be able to learn that role then they can spend time working with the intern, so they get absolutely what that role is. The job coach also needs to be assertive enough to be able to say 'no' to employers, because sometimes when you are approached by a disabled person and a member of staff, all the instructions go to the member of staff, all the expectations and understanding are dealt with through the member of staff rather than through that intern. They need to be able to say no I am backing off now, moving right away it is up to the intern to do their bit. I am going to be moving right away and watching what is going on, observing and allowing the intern to make mistakes if necessary because that is how they are going to learn. So it is being able to speak to employers in a way so that they understand what the job coach role is and that is only going to come through people absolutely knowing what a job coach role is and being fully conversant in it. A job coach needs to be brilliant at everything, multi-talented, multi-flexible, able to work any hours because some*

employers don't also have placements that go between 9 am and 4 pm. (College Lead)

Several supported internship college leads emphasised that unlike other college staff, job coaches had to have completely different terms and conditions relating to hours and days of work and as the managers, they expected flexibility. For example, several spoke of job coaches working on bank holidays because the interns were, and of very early starting times compared with a college day.

Colleges who had recruited staff externally reflected at the end of the trial that they were pleased they had done so because the new staff had brought with them a different mind-set which had helped establish the distinction between the supported internship and college courses which the interns might previously have taken.

Good practice: finding the right job coaches

Colleges found it useful to recruit job coaches with a different range of backgrounds and with different skill sets. Some, but by no means all, were knowledgeable about learning disabilities, others had a sales or business background and some had been responsible for client or relationship management. Several had family members with a disability which increased their understanding of the parent/carer perspective.

Colleges generally found that relevant skills and attitudes were at least as important – if not more so – than direct prior experience in a similar role.

Key skills of job coaches

When asked about the range of skills a job coach required, the following examples were cited by job coaches themselves:

- an instinctive ability to read people well, understand people
- patience, multi-talented, good communicator at all levels with clients and employers and families
- flexible, adaptable, positive, encouraging
- assertive with employers and interns but also diplomatic
- good time-keeping and time management and prioritising
- happy to be fairly autonomous and taking your own decisions
- '*prepared to muck in'*
- able to think outside of the box and be creative
- problem-solving ; being resourceful
- being tough when needed
- open-mindedness
- sales skills
- ability to anticipate need
- empathetic

- responsive
- resilience – '*you can get a lot of knock-backs'*

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should be open-minded about the prior experience requirements they define within their job descriptions or person specifications for job coaches and focus on identifying individuals with the appropriate skills and attitudes.

5.4.2 Staff training

Section 4 covered the training requirements and plans of the supported internship team, as perceived at the beginning of the trial. By the mid-way point of the trial, of all survey respondents, 21% (20) had not received any specialist training specifically for the supported internship programme. However, others had received training in a variety of areas – job coach training (29%, 27), systematic instruction (17%, 16), working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (13%, 12), employer engagement (5%, 5), and management/planning (7%, 7). Whilst job coaches were more likely to have either trained in systematic instruction or job coaching, co-ordinators were more likely to have trained in job coaching (note that the base is low for co-ordinators) and supported internship leads were more likely to have trained in job coaching. Many staff at this stage also expressed a need for development in the above specialist areas – leads were more likely to prefer training in employer engagement, job coaches were more likely to prefer employer engagement training (with systematic instruction, job coaching, working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and management/planning being close behind) and co-ordinators seemed to require training fairly evenly across all specialist areas.

Many of the job coaches reflected towards the end of the trial that they would have preferred to have had some specific job coach training much earlier (indeed some had not yet received any training by this point). Some job coaches who had received training had not found it very useful - they thought it needed to be more practical and draw on more examples (some colleges had accessed specialist training including that provided by the ROSE project and by BASE although some suggested it was too expensive). Some job coaches who had not had training stated that they would have preferred both general job coaching training and training in specific areas such as managing challenging behaviours. Some felt that training was not needed.

> *It's not a job that you can just do because you've been trained. You need to have a certain attitude.* (Job Coach)

Several referred to needing to shape the role '*to make it your own'*. (Job Coach)

Job coaches need a wide skill set and the ability to carry out a range of roles and responsibilities. Depending on the job coaches' prior experience, colleges will need to

provide different types and amounts of both initial training and continuous professional development to enable their job coaches to fulfil their roles effectively.

Support and training available to employers

Only two employers said that they have been offered training by the colleges in order to assist the delivery of the internship. However, neither had taken these offers up as they felt they had enough experience working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities already. Some had already undertaken relevant training, for example in safeguarding vulnerable adults, or in approaching diversity or disability in the workplace. These generally seemed to be in-house training courses offered by employers and there was no indication that these were undertaken in preparation for the supported internship trial. Two employers did suggest that for interns with severe or complex conditions, additional training may be required. A specific example given was for severe epilepsy and ensuring that the employer possessed the necessary competence in first aid in order to deal appropriately with a seizure should such an incident occur in the workplace.

5.5 Use of agencies

About a third of the colleges used supported employment agencies or other partners, or collaborated with another college to help with recruitment of interns and identifying and securing employers. These included local supported employment officers from agencies such as Remploy, Work Choice, and other local support organisations. Many also had close working relationships with local authority staff. These partners were also useful in sharing resources.

Forging relationships with agencies took time, particularly in terms of agreeing distinct responsibilities and contract terms. One college reported difficulties in sharing information between the college and the external agency due to college security systems, instead, the team held regular monthly meetings with the agency and communicated regularly by telephone.

Those using the agencies thought that the partnership had added value to the programme and in particular had supported the employer engagement process. In one trial site, an employment advisor for a supported employment agency was funded through the supported internship trial. The employment advisor had responsibility for engaging employers and finding internships to start with and then as the internships became more established, he/she took on some job coaching responsibility. The college lead noted that as the job coaches had specific case loads, the employment advisor would instantly know who to approach about a particular intern. There were times when work was duplicated because the roles were not as clearly defined as they might have been – for example, when the employment advisor visited interns/employers at the employer sites because they were in the area only to find that a job coach from the college had already visited.

Good practice: working with other agencies

Partnership working was most successful when external partners brought skills or knowledge to the supported internship programme, which complemented those already existing in the college, e.g. a detailed knowledge of employers in the local area which for one college meant the employment advisor would instantly know who to approach about a particular intern.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should consider from the outset which partners they should be working with in order to build and strengthen their supported internship offer. They should be identifying when to involve each partner and how to optimise their involvement. They will need to work through practical issues such as data sharing, communication strategies and the detail of roles and responsibilities to ensure no duplication of effort.

5.5.1 Involvement of Access to Work

At the beginning of the trial, some staff had contacted Access to Work to discuss the programme and how Access to Work might be involved (see section four). In most cases, they agreed to defer further contact until later on in the programme when interns were beginning to seek work or get job offers. However, throughout the programme and particularly towards the end when internships were transferring into job roles, there seemed to be a lack of communication and engagement between the colleges and Access to Work to support the transition process, in some cases despite attempts by the colleges to contact Access to Work. At this stage, many college staff still knew little or nothing about the role that Access to Work could play or the nature of support that Access to Work funding could provide. Likewise, the small number of Access to Work representatives who were interviewed noted how they had only learned about the programme through discussions with college staff in participating colleges.

Some leads had considered using Access to Work but had decided against this as they felt the support was not needed since either the interns did not need the kind of support that they thought would be available or that the support was already put in place by the supported internship team.

Of those who had been in touch with Access to Work, one did so because their job coach had previous experience of Access to Work; another said they were helping with negotiating paid outcomes; three had made contact initially and one said they had helped with support such as benefits. The misunderstanding or lack of understanding about Access to Work is clearly illustrated by the comment below from a college lead, and is typical of the responses from the colleges:

At the start of the programme we initiated links with Access to Work, regional Access to Work and the local Access to Work officer at [*]. They didn't know anything about the supported internship programme. We now need to bring them in again. Some don't need Access to Work but we are unsure what it can offer them. We are not clear about the Access to Work commitment. (College Lead)

Of those who did not have much involvement with Access to Work, this was in some cases because they had other agencies involved which would be supporting interns to find employment or because interns had not yet had a firm job offer. One college was using a local supported employment agency to support those with job offers because they felt that Access to Work were quite remote and relied too heavily on people being able to complete forms. In this case they recognised that the agency would bring in Access to Work as they gradually took a step back.

None of the employers interviewed had any involvement with Access to Work, and four said they had 'not heard of them'. This may be in part due to the fact that most of the employers were not considering offering the intern paid work and Access to Work was therefore not relevant.

Involvement of Access to Work will inevitably change following the government announcement that interns will have access to support from Access to Work during the course of their internship, rather than after its completion when a job offer is secured. This may ensure that Access to Work support is considered prior to job negotiations taking place with a view to widening the spectrum of possible employment opportunities.[5]

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should continue to work closely with Access to Work and relevant Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues to ensure they fully understand the supported internship programme, so that they are prepared to offer appropriate support from September 2013. The DfE should also publicise more fully this new commitment so that colleges are aware of the support and how to help interns to access it.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should link more closely with Access to Work representatives to strengthen their understanding of how Access to Work can support the young people during their internship and in the transition into sustainable paid employment.

[5] During the evaluation, the Department for Education has been working closely with Access to Work to agree their further involvement in supported internships. Recognising the need to raise awareness in colleges, guidance has been drafted specifically to support and encourage colleges to engage with Access to Work.

5.6 Development of the model during the trial

The nature of supported internship model(s) used during the trial is discussed in section 4. Some leads noted, however, that their delivery model had evolved over time in part because they had had to set up the trial, recruit and begin to deliver all at the same time which meant they had not been able to plan as effectively as they might otherwise have done. Two colleges said that they had not deviated at all from their original plans but several others commented that they had made changes including:

- **staffing structures** due to difficulties in recruiting job coaches – existing staff and support workers were used to deliver the programme where required
- **employer engagement approaches** – such as using a wider variety of employers, approaching smaller local employers (including in rural areas to account for the travel difficulties for interns), or approaching larger employers and securing a number of internships in one site (the Project SEARCH model)
- **partnering with a college** - to help with recruitment of interns and sharing resources
- **using alternative host employers** - where negotiations were not successful with some employers. One college planned to use one host employer but restructuring at that employer meant that the internship was no longer an option. Eventually the college acted as host employer and housed interns due to the short timescale available. Another college planned to use one host employer but changed their plan to work with both smaller employers and some larger employers in the hope of getting more interns with a single employer
- **moving from a one fixed model to a more flexible approach** - where for example, a college had moved from their original plan for each intern's programme to follow a standard pattern to an individualised approach based on the young peoples' preferences and employers' needs. At this site, all interns have some college-based learning and some work placement but the balance and amount and content of learning differs for each. '*The original model has been flexed in every way conceivable to make sure we weren't closing down options for individuals'* (College Lead)

All the colleges felt that overall, their delivery model had worked and with just a few slight adjustments, this could continue successfully. Most, however, had some plans for improving the way in which they delivered their model. These are captured in section 5.9.

5.7 Key challenges

For all trial sites, there were challenges borne out of the late starting of the programme and time taken to get contractual agreements in place (as documented in section four). This had an on-going impact. In around half of the trials, enrolment was taking place throughout the year (some on a roll-on and off basis) in order to achieve the number of enrolments required by the DfE, and therefore completion of internships was later than expected for some. Colleges learnt from this experience and all have put plans in place

to start their employer engagement and intern recruitment work prior to the start of the academic year. They also recognised that a considerable amount of the set up work has been completed already, such as getting the systems and infrastructure in place and connecting with employers, and therefore, the initial stages of the programme will be easier in the second year.

General challenges and issues during delivery were around lack of awareness, lack of confidence and the logistics and infrastructure of delivery.

Lack of awareness

- lack of awareness of the trial meant that local partner bodies were not properly engaged with the programme and were not sure how they could support it. Also employers had not heard of the supported internship programme – that made it harder to engage them. They didn't realise it was a national programme with government backing. There was a need highlighted to have national status to raise its profile
- some employers had negative perceptions of people with disabilities or simply underestimated what they were capable of. Colleges worked to develop the confidence of employers and supported them to better understand the capabilities of the young people
- interns' lack of awareness of job market meant that they had little understanding of options open to them and limited aspirations or preparedness to sample new things. Some interns had unrealistic expectations such as wanting to work in areas (e.g. hairdressing or childcare) where they would need a level 2 qualification to be employed which would not be possible for them. Colleges had addressed these issues through challenging and informing interns and supporting them to try internships in new areas
- parents were not aware of the supported internship and did not understand how the young people would be spending their time. Some also had low aspirations for their young person (or benefit concerns). Colleges worked with parents to explain the programme and how it differed from college courses. Some also tried to raise the aspirations of parents

Lack of confidence, motivation and aspiration

- many interns lacked the confidence to work. Some colleges noted that the transition from college to the workplace was enormous, describing the interns as having been in an 'SEN/LDD bubble' all their lives. One noted, '*through college they have been mothered, we have to say now it is time to be grown up* (Job Coach). Another commented, '*Many of them have done lots of courses and have become institutionalised'* (Job Coach). As a result the interns required substantial support and confidence building at the start to build their independence and encourage them into the working environment. A small number of interns lacked the motivation to work. Colleges described the difficulties in trying to motivate

these young people to think positively about work and to apply themselves to their placement

- some parents did not want their young people to work (e.g. in a family where no-one works or where benefits will be affected). Some were overprotective, including not wanting their young person to travel independently

  Overprotective parents (some with negative experience of working with learning providers/agencies in the past) – need close working, being calm, reassuring, offering realistic examples of what could be possible. Next year we will be able to use examples from this year's successes (College Lead)

Logistics/infrastructure

- the cost of travel to work for interns, particularly in rural areas, limited options for some interns, although some colleges supported interns with their travel costs
- development of overly onerous paperwork to monitor and track interns - one college mentioned reviewing this process
- colleges were in competition with supported employment agencies for placements
- some colleges realised they did not have sufficient information about the interns when recruiting/job matching which presented specific challenges in placing the intern in a suitable environment:

  One female intern had issues working with men and in college that student had never really worked with any males as we are very much female based support staff, female tutors, so it had never come up as an issue. On her first placement she was working with a female job coach, so again it never came up. Then when we changed the placement to something we thought would have been brilliant for her there were suddenly alarm bells – knowing that, we could have been forearmed for the future. So we do need to know everything to make it successful. (College Lead)

- agreeing internships with larger employers could take a long time and was made more difficult (more impersonal) by being referred to the head office
- in some localities, work is seasonal making sourcing sustainable employment difficult
- achieving sustainable employment in the current economic climate was cited as a difficulty by many colleges. Some of the supported internship delivery teams felt that more interns would have achieved jobs if economic conditions were different. Some colleges were looking at traineeships as alternative outcomes

5.8 Key success factors

Factors that enabled success, identified by those involved in the trial, include:

Communication and team work

- have a trusting rapport and building relationships between interns, staff, employers and parents - getting to know employers and interns individually really well
- working with parents so that everyone is working towards the same goal – sustainable paid work
- maintaining constant communication with employers
- consistency of approach by all staff in the team – all working together in a clear framework – a team that works well together and communicates well
- persistence and commitment of job coaches and other staff – their organisation and methodical approach
- a team with complementary skills that works together well

Planning

- good and careful job matching, based on a thorough understanding of the intern and the workplace
- brokering and shaping the placements to play to interns' strengths
- having a good plan in place with clear vision
- anticipating possible issues and dealing with them before they happen

Instilling the work ethic

- making the supported internship distinct from college courses – e.g. one college runs off-the-job learning sessions at a Connexions office, rather than at college, to reinforce the fact that it is not a college course
- instilling the work ethic in interns and ensuring they understand that they must not let employers down
- ensuring interns have good attendance and commitment to the programme which means recruiting the right young people to the programme, those with the attitude of 'I want to work'

Support

- *'being flexible about when to step in and when to step out and sometimes when to up support that had previously been reduced if something emerges or changes'* (Job Coach)
- giving honest feedback in a way that interns can take on board, learn from it and develop
- mentoring, support, encouragement and challenge on an individual basis
- one-to-one support by a job coach – someone who really knows the interns
- job coaches having a degree of autonomy to use professional judgement about what sort of support is needed for each individual

- dealing with issues as they arise and quality of support provided to employers
- focusing on what interns can do to sell the internship and engage employers

Partnerships

- effective partnerships with employers where job coaches have been able to persuade employers to give interns a chance
- working with a partner/other organisations to support delivery and bring in additional resources and skills, and additional support post-programme, particularly to support transition
- having contact with organisations which can offer referrals to the programme

5.9 Lessons learned in delivery

This section outlines those areas where colleges are likely to make improvements to the supported internship programme, based on their learning from the trial, including the feedback of employers, interns and parents/carers.

Raising employers' awareness

- some colleges plan to increase the level of awareness employers have of the needs of individuals prior to the start of the placement so that any workplace procedures and processes that may need adjusting to meet the needs of the intern have been identified and addressed in advance
- many plan to use the 'success stories' from the trial to illustrate to employers how the supported internship works and what can be achieved

Preparation and marketing

- most colleges felt that the supported internship programme now had a clear identity which would enable them to explain it better to others and to market it more fully, including through their college website
- some colleges reflected that that they now had a set of marketing materials and paperwork, developed through the trial which they would be able to present to and share with others including employers
- some colleges were planning to pull all the interns' paperwork (e.g. CRB, proof of address, eligibility to work) together much earlier so that their start in the workplace is not delayed

Recruitment

- several colleges planned to increase the target numbers for recruiting young people to take into account those that may drop out early on
- several planned to 'sharpen up' the interview process, making sure that young people and their parents and carers are aware of the content and the commitment required and that the 'right young people' are recruited i.e. those who are motivated and really want to work

- some plan to establish from the recruitment stage that parents have a positive attitude, so that they will be encouraging and supportive of what young people want to achieve, as well as realistic about their aspirations or goals

Job preparation

- some colleges plan to put more of a focus on work preparation before the interns begin their placements
- two colleges are considering finding work experience for interns where there is a delay in finding a suitable internship, rather than having them solely college based until a placement is found
- some are considering providing more guidance on becoming self-employed where interns are interested in working in a sector where a lot of the work is done by self-employed people, (e.g. contract work on farms)
- some colleges will be putting in interventions early on to address barriers to work, e.g. travel training
- because interns do not always know that they want to do or have a false sense of what a particular job might be like, some colleges plan to offer tasters in two or three different environments
- some planned to develop the vocational profiling process further, questioning interns more about interests and hobbies and asking parents about the young people's interests rather than just relying on an intern's initial request or their previous course to find suitable employment

Parental engagement

- many colleges plan to further develop their working with parents, including having them involved in regular progress reviews

Employer liaison/job brokering

- several colleges plan to better coordinate all employment engagement activity across the college (at least one college has moved departments for the next academic year, into the apprenticeship department)

  The way you broker and work with employers – it is not just negotiating about interns, it is being aware of the wider context – you have to negotiate and get internships alongside other programmes e.g. work experience. You have to coordinate this in the college so we don't overburden employers (College Lead)

- some colleges plan to explain the internship to employers more carefully, particularly so that they understand the distinction between a work placement and an internship and so that they are clear about the job coach role
- some colleges who targeted large national companies without much success plan to switch their focus to smaller employers
- almost all colleges plan to approach employers earlier than they did in the trial, building up a bank of employers ready to call on when a job match has been

identified. Several colleges plan to be more careful about identifying employers where there is likely to be a job at the end as this is the best route into employment. They will also be quicker to move an intern if it is obvious their placement is not going to convert to a job

- one college will be avoiding sole traders in the future as they felt that too much rests on one person

Staffing

- one college was introducing two team leader co-ordinators for employer engagement and job brokering and a team of specialist '*learning support in work assistants'* for day-to-day coaching as a more efficient staffing model

Partnerships

- Some colleges plan to develop better and more relationships with external agencies/partners and ensure communication is open and regular

Time in college/workplace

- some colleges are considering increasing the time interns spend in college:

  Students had one day a week in college to prepare for internship, next time we should have more time in college to do job searching and readiness – more intensive work. Time in college also stops them from being isolated and allows them to support each other. (College Lead)

- some interns would like the learning and training to lead to 'more certificates' and the coursework at college to be more challenging. They would also like more job-related college training (e.g. developing practical skills, carrying out project-based assignments to practice their skills/knowledge)
- some interns would like to spend more time in the workplace with the employer and have work placements nearer to home to avoid long or expensive travel (and more assistance with travel costs)
- one college thought they would be able to increase the hours if they just got the 'interns through the door', but it has not worked that way. Next year they will be asking employers for substantial hours for interns from the start
- some employers would welcome better structuring for the training and assessment of the intern throughout their time with the employer including a more structured induction with an assessment of an individual's 'starting point' in terms of skills, abilities – as well as their goals and expectations

Exit strategies

- not all colleges had planned exit strategies for all interns. They now realise this is vital, especially if paid work is not forthcoming from the internship role
- colleges are looking to identify how interns can be supported after the end of the programme. One college lead noted '*continued support needs to be offered at the*

end of the internship as they move on to jobs or need to find work. There's a real need to ensure they don't fall off a cliff at the end'

- some of the colleges are using agencies including transition pathways and local supported employment officers to help with supporting the interns when they have completed the programme

College strategy

- colleges are looking at ways to position the supported internship into their wider college offer, particularly at how it can provide progression from college courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

  This is a progression route for students on other programmes and we have structured the department so we have a pre-internship programme. And the introduction of study programmes means it's a model that informs the whole college. (College Lead)

5.10 Conclusions

The Supported Internship models delivered across the trial sites were broadly similar. Although colleges tweaked the model during the year and flexed it to accommodate the needs of individuals, most had stuck fairly closely to their original plans, although nearly all had identified improvements to be implemented from September 2013. Most had settled on a pattern of one day a week in college, with varying amounts of time in the workplace ranging from three hours to 25 hours per week.

Learning at college was focused primarily on generic employability skills, accredited through a small award, and functional skills, which were sometimes accredited and sometimes not, with some colleges also offering additional small role specific awards for individuals. The college offer was not always sufficiently personalised or as well linked to the workplace learning as it could have been.

Whilst at work, interns fulfilled a range of different roles, carrying out largely routine tasks often under supervision, although some interns had progressed to a wider range and more challenging tasks. Generally they were working to real work conditions but not all roles met a clear business need and some were more akin to work experience. Employers who saw themselves as only offering work experience did not enter the internship with the intention of offering paid work to the intern at the end of the programme.

A wide range of different types of support, personalised to the individual, was offered to interns, most often by a job coach. This appears to have been one of the most distinctive and successful features of the internship. Employers were also supported by job coaches but to a lesser extent. Some workplaces also had their own in-house support systems in place.

Internships were generally staffed by a small team of hard working and committed staff, with a senior member of staff providing the lead, supported by a day-to-day co-ordinator, a number of job coaches and in some cases an administrator. The most effective teams worked closely together, understood each other's job roles and were able to cover for one another when needed. While prior experience in either working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with employers was valued, it appears that a relevant skill set and a can-do attitude are at least as important, if not more important.

6. Supported Internship Trial Outcomes

The primary purpose of the supported internship programme was to achieve paid employment for as many interns as possible. Information on the progression outcomes, including employment outcomes, for the interns involved in the trial is provided below. However, there was a range of additional benefits, achievements and successes for the various parties involved in the programme. This section also records these 'softer' outcomes.

6.1 Progression outcomes

Of the 190 interns who completed a supported internship, 58 (31%) gained an employment contract of some form. Another 11 (6%) had secured an apprenticeship.[6]

- 8 have been offered **confirmed paid employment of over 16 hours a week,** some of whom have been employed by their internship employer 25-30 hours a week
- 50 have gained **paid employment of up to 16 hours a week**, mainly on a temporary basis - a small number are permanent
- 11 have secured an apprenticeship
- 49 are continuing in voluntary positions, over half of whom are staying in the organisations they were placed for their internship. Approximately one third of these will continue with some form of further education learning alongside their voluntary work
- 26 had opted to continue in further education, skills training or maintaining training through Work Choice. A small number of these interns, had been accepted onto accredited further education courses in vocational areas, which they were previously turned down for
- 46 have been recorded as unemployed although a small number of these were recorded as likely to be offered employment by their internship employer and 2 interns were unable to take up an offered position - one because of ill health and the other because of JSA restrictions. One intern was recorded as not being able to find employment that met their aspirations
- 9 were continuing on the supported internship programme. A small proportion of these interns are continuing to look for employment having been referred to Supported Employment and Inspire Communities or Job Search run by the colleges

On average therefore, across the 15 colleges, five interns gained employment of some form (including apprenticeships). These figures were provided towards the end of the trial (end of July and early August 2013). All leads noted however, that they were likely to change as some of the internships were still continuing and negotiations were still taking place to achieve transition to paid employment.

[6] A total of 36% gaining employment including Apprenticeships. Figures above are rounded.

Employers mentioned a number of reasons for not offering jobs:

- the internship taking more time in the workplace (in terms of supervision) than had been anticipated
- the job role not being flexible/progressive enough to become sustainable
- economic inability to sustain another paid member of staff

A college lead provided further detail in their reflective log:

> *There are a number of employers who have fully embraced the project but who, for various reasons, are currently saying that paid employment for the intern is unlikely. Others want to achieve this outcome but to date there hasn't been the opportunity to do this. Reasons why?*
>
> - *there are no current vacancies*
> - *perhaps we should have been even more clear in the approach we took. It was part of our remit that when we negotiated with employers we stated that there needed to be a realistic opportunity for paid employment for the young person to be placed there. This was re-enforced by the JCs* [job coaches] *(although speaking this through with them they feel that whilst they raised it frequently saying any more, or being more forceful, might have been counter-productive)*
> - *changes in managers. This seemed to happen quite a lot, especially in the retail sector*
> - *some managers aren't the decision-makers*
> - *things the employers thought would happen aren't happening*
>
> (College Lead Reflective Log Entry)

Two employers in the second round of interviews claimed that the**y did not know paid employment was intended** to be the outcome of the internship. Organisations from the voluntary and community sector participating in the trial commented that employment at the end of the internship was generally an unrealistic expectation for interns placed with them, as the sector did not employ large numbers of paid staff and relied on its voluntary workforce.

At several colleges, staff stressed that the final figures they had provided may not accurately reflect the rate of paid employment achieved by interns, as some interns who had not yet achieved paid work were likely to do so.

6.1.1 Negotiating outcomes – exit strategies

Not all colleges had particularly well-developed exit strategies for interns. This may have been because initially they had thought that most successful interns would progress into employment with their original employer, as was described in the trial documentation shared with them by the DfE. College staff were aware from the outset that even when

interns were very eager to work, it would be challenging to find work for all of them. Some were also conscious that they had recruited some interns who were unlikely to achieve full time paid employment in the long term and certainly not within the timeframe of the internship. Despite this level of awareness, not all were focused until the very end of the programme on the target outcomes for these interns.

As the programme progressed, it became increasingly apparent that many interns would not achieve paid employment with their internship employer, and even where it was a possibility, the intern was likely to need support from the college to make this transition. The need for more carefully planned exit strategies became clear. Some college staff and leads spoke of ensuring that interns were not left 'high and dry', including those who had been offered work but would need continued support. Some said that they would be continuing some form of support beyond the life of the programme:

> *It is important that the employer feels they can still ring someone if the young person has a bit of a wobble – continuation of some support is important….we wouldn't like to stop completely.* (College Lead)

The colleges were keen to identify '*somewhere to go on to*' for all interns, so that the momentum was kept up and the interns did not find themselves '*back where they started'*, despite a valuable experience through the internship. Some colleges were more proactive than others, with one stating,

> *I think we can say there is nobody walking out of the door that isn't going somewhere so we have an exit strategy for every single one* (Job Coach)

However, for 46 interns, their post-internship status was recorded as 'unemployed' on the MI forms returned by colleges and it was not clear how they would be supported towards employment. A clear exit strategy was not apparent for these interns.

Employers also expressed concerns about what would happen to those interns who did not get work at the end of their internship. Some were not convinced that the next stage had been properly thought through for these interns:

> *I am not sure….the potential outcomes for some of these interns if they don't get offered a job at the end of the programme [have been considered]. A lot of them are going to be heartbroken.* (Agriculture Employer)

Job coaches typically took the lead in supporting interns to plan their next steps after the internship, although in many cases co-ordinators were also involved. College staff were involved in a range of different activities to support the interns' progression. Some described having to be quite assertive in suggesting to the employer that they should be offering the intern paid work, rather than simply letting them fulfil a real business need for free. Where an intern was offered a job by their internship employer, the job coach sometimes helped shape that role and assessed what further training an intern might need.

[Interns' name] at [café] – signed a contract of employment for 18 hours a week. They didn't have the hours to pay for customer service/front of house but said they needed someone to make sandwiches – so we put in extra support to train him on this (using picture cards) and a contract of employment has come out of it. (College Lead)

Where paid work with the internship employer was not forthcoming, the job coaches sometimes encouraged employers to keep the interns' details on file; helped interns identify further accredited training they could undertake to become more employable or in a few cases negotiated the continuation of the internship. Some job coaches helped interns negotiate continued or new voluntary work, sometimes alongside a college course. Others had identified other local agencies who could provide on-going support either in the workplace or in order to help the interns continue their progression towards employment, including Work Choice, supported employment agencies and Connexions.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should ensure that they have clear exit strategies for each intern on the programme, so that they are able to make a positive progression, wherever possible into paid work, but if that is not the case, that they are moving on to something which will enable them to continue their journey to employment.

6.2 Benefits, successes and achievements

6.2.1 For interns

College staff reported witnessing significant positive changes in the interns during the course of the supported internship. They believed that the interns had made great achievements and had benefitted from their experience. The vast majority of the interns interviewed reported finding the supported internship a worthwhile and beneficial experience. Many said that it had allowed them to achieve what they wanted to, which was to be given the opportunity to learn about the world of work and gain some experience and skills that would help them in finding a job.

I have really enjoyed it. I liked going into the workplace, learning a job and meeting new people. It was what I expected it to be like and I got a job [an apprenticeship] at the end of it. (Intern)

The large majority (90%) of parents stated that they thought their son/daughter had enjoyed their time on the supported internship trial a lot. Three-quarters (75%) agreed that the supported internship had enabled their son/daughter to achieve what they wanted to achieve to a great extent, with a further 21% thinking that they had at least achieved this to a small extent. A similar proportion said that their son/daughter had achieved what they (the parent) wanted them to achieve. Overall, nearly all parents (90%) felt that it was worthwhile for their son/daughter to take a supported internship.

Some interns said that if they had not been on the supported internship, they would have '*still been looking for a job'*, or been '*stuck at home'*.

> *I wouldn't have been doing anything if I hadn't been doing this course.* (Intern)

Learning new skills

The interns had positive experiences and realistic work placements, learning useful transferable skills for the local labour market (e.g. timekeeping, communication, customer service as well as role-specific skills and knowledge that would be relevant in future careers).

> *The thing I found most positive about being on the supported internship is learning new skills that I never thought I'd had before.* (College Lead Reflective Log Entry representing feedback from an intern)

They had learnt skills that would better equip them for work in the future and for finding work (e.g. job application and interview skills, travelling independently, time and money management, better communication and social skills) – even where the internship did not result in sustainable employment. One college lead noted how:

> *One student said he had always worked as part of a team but through attendance on the programme he realised that he has leadership skills and qualities and he has been using these skills whilst at college. Recognition of these skills has given him the confidence to do voluntary work within the media/photography industry.* (College Lead Reflective Log Entry)

Interns reported acquiring skills in the following work-related areas:

- first aid
- food hygiene
- health and safety
- handling money/using a till
- stock taking/stock rotation
- customer service
- administration (telephone and paper-based)
- IT skills
- employability skills/preparation for the workplace (e.g. interviewing, completing application forms, appropriate dress, attitudes required in the workplace)

Indeed, the majority of parents (87%) thought that their young person had developed new skills that will help them to secure employment in the future. In addition, interns recognised that they had developed more general skills in:

- being able to deal with new and different situations
- communication skills

- team-working
- independent travel

Interns had also improved in confidence and self-belief about their abilities, developed more positive attitudes and were transferring skills from the workplace to the home environment.

> *Interns have learnt skills and qualities that otherwise they would not have had the opportunity to explore; some had not done anything since they left [college] three years ago (Job Coach)*

Employers also noticed a change:

> *Over the last few months----- has improved in all areas, especially communication with myself and members of the public. With all the work, ----- has improved and I am sure will be a good worker and in September 2013 I will be able to employ -----".* (College Lead Reflective Log Entry representing an employer's view)

Some were able to describe their skills development within the workplace:

> *At first I made tea and coffee, now I am being taught how to wash hair and a girl shows me how to use the computer and phone skills.* (Intern)

Whilst on the supported internship programme, interns were also enrolled on a variety of qualifications. A number also completed work-related qualifications such as health and safety, manual handling and hygiene certificates, further developing their knowledge and skills in relevant areas.

Learning about work

Interns have learnt what it is like to be at work, 'to do a working day' and to meet the requirements of employers, such as being on time and following a dress code.

> *The work ethic of some learners has increased massively.*

All supported internship staff were able to provide examples of interns in whom they had witnessed significant changes, including examples of interns excelling in work where they had struggled previously in training or on college courses.

> *A warehouse assistant who has a disability and behavioural issues – he had trouble on the mainstream courses but has excelled in this context. They are talking of employing him or an apprenticeship (College Lead)*

Improved confidence, independence and self-esteem

The supported internship programme had reduced social isolation for some (e.g. one intern who was agoraphobic, is now in a customer-facing role). Interns had developed the ability to integrate and to work with others and in teams - staff often described how interns had developed from barely communicating with anyone to meeting and greeting

strangers and taking the first move to say hello to staff in a morning. For some, staff saw this as a huge achievement.

> *One has gone from virtual social isolation to voluntary work in the community* (College Lead)

Many parents gave similar feedback:

> *I would say it is more the social side as his social skills were non-existent before doing the programme. He is more confident with people and has enjoyed the interaction with the other staff at work. It has really increased his confidence and he comes home with a smile on his face.* (Parent)

Several employers and interns described in positive terms the way in which they had been able to integrate socially into the workforce. One employer described how an intern had been invited to the stag party of another member of staff. One intern explained how he had been invited to a staff barbecue.

The increased confidence and 'work ethic' developed through the placement has also, according to parents improved the self-esteem and self-belief of young people, as well as behaviours in other situations such as helping at home.

> *It is the social interaction that [he] needs more than anything as he can isolate himself quite easily. The supported internship has made him realise that he can achieve what he is asked to do by the employer and see what he is capable of.* (Parent)

In all of the focus groups and interviews, interns mentioned that they had increased their confidence levels and felt much more able to '*speak to people more now than I would'*. For many interns, some of the greatest challenges were learning to work with other people, to overcome shyness or find ways of communicating not just with other members of staff, but with customers too:

> *I found working with other people a bit scary to begin with then I got used to it – making friends, talking to people who have come to visit the farm – I have got used to it now* (Intern)

Some have addressed long-standing barriers to employment:

> *All my life I have not been very good at working with a group and I have managed to get over that being here* (Intern)

This new-found confidence and ability in the workplace, said one intern, gave him '*a reason'* to try to learn to control his own challenging behaviours. In another example, an intern said that the experience had helped '*me recognise what I want to do and what I'm good at'*.

Interns' confidence and independence had grown significantly, including interns who had once been transported by parents or a taxi to college, were now travelling independently on public transport.

> *Confidence has grown beyond recognition. At home as well as at work and college. They can do things they didn't think they would ever do.* (College Lead)

> *Learners have benefited from the opportunity to behave as an adult, to take on responsibilities and be in a situation where people have had high expectations of them. Their experience of success has resulted in an increase of confidence and also pride and enthusiasm. Verbal feedback from learners and parents was all very positive.* (College Lead)

> *I went to pick up one intern and his mum was saying, have you got your bag, have you got your coat and the intern replied – mum, I am working now, I have got all my stuff, I know what I am doing* (Job Coach)

Nearly three quarters (74%) of employers interviewed towards the end of the programme said that the intern was more outgoing or had an increase in confidence, whilst 26% (5 employers) had noticed improved communication skills. The increased confidence was more significant to parents than job experience and knowledge of being in a workplace. They also thought that the increase in confidence was linked to the better ability to meet, interact and socialise with new people; improved communication skills and increased team-working skills.

Improved aspirations and motivation

Supported internship staff also noted that attendance and motivation were especially improved, including amongst those who had not been in education, employment or training (NEET). Staff had seen improved commitment from the interns and that they had learned to 'stick to something'. They felt that interns had increased in maturity.

> *There was an incident when we had really bad snow on the Monday and I [job coach] went in and [intern] was waiting outside, he had set off earlier because of the weather and he was there before the other staff that worked there. (Job Coach)*

Interns had a much clearer idea of what they wanted to do after being involved in the supported internship trial. For some it opened their eyes to new possibilities and new areas of work that they had not thought of before. For others, it confirmed a type of work that they did not want to do and allowed them to plan alternative options. For many, the experience had helped them to understand what they were good at and what they were not good at. For some, the experience had changed their perceptions about what was achievable, and had raised their aspirations.

> *It has changed their perception about what is achievable for them and has changed the language around that and with their parents. The idea of talking*

about real work becomes a presumption rather than 'it would be good if you could get it'. It has raised aspirations and potential for better outcomes (College Lead)

Interns were enjoying being able to do things, having some independence and having a job. They had more pride, self-belief and self-esteem. As a result of being involved in the programme, they now realised they have a right to be paid for their work and they do not just have to volunteer.

> *It is more about the pride it has given young people, one said that he felt that he was on the scrap heap before but now he has been given an opportunity and belief. [Intern] who is the community centre chef, couldn't have done it without the support, his attendance was hit and miss, bad behaviour, hypochondria and this has all stopped. He is in at ten to nine - not just on time, now he is early. He has changed, he has self-esteem. He has a famous family locally with intergenerational worklessness – he is absolutely bucking the trend* (College Lead)

Supported internship leads and other staff gave several examples of interns breaking the mould of intergenerational unemployment and in a small number of cases, a pattern of criminal behaviour.

The observations of college staff, employers and the young people themselves were corroborated by parents. One noted that for her son, '*his life has been transformed*'. Families had noticed the improved confidence and communication skills in particular and increased independence and maturity. Some had made a point of sharing this with the college staff and thanking them for their input. One college described how a parent had stood up at a public event '*and thanked everybody and said what a difference it had made to her son, how she felt that she had got her son back, how the future looked rosy, how proud she was of him and she was thanking the college'.*

6.2.2 For parents

Just over two-thirds (68%) of parents responding to the survey (towards the end of the trial) said that the programme had changed their views. It had changed some parents' perceptions about what their young person could achieve:

> *At one point I couldn't see how [she] could move forward or get anywhere but she has had some great support on the programme and I can see a huge difference in her* (Parent)

Where it had changed parents' views, similarly to interns, this was centred on a new belief in their son/daughter to be able to hold down employment, proving a sense of commitment and the ability to develop. For some therefore, it had raised aspirations; for others it was about having more realistic expectations. For some parents, the programme had offered hope for the future - they saw the internship as helping to break the cycle of college learning and relieving them of the worry about what would happen at the end of

the college course. One college lead believed that the impact of the programme was far reaching:

> *I think it has made a difference to people's lives, not just the students but the impact on the parents and the wider community as well* (College Lead)

6.2.3 For employers

Involvement in the supported internship trial raised employers' awareness of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and helped to break down barriers. Many were impressed with the reliability of the young people (including the low rate of sick days compared to other staff) and the way in which they took pride in the job. They realised that young people with disabilities, with the right support, can achieve what is required. Employers gained someone who could do the job that needed doing including tasks that could not be covered by the existing workforce. They had also witnessed, through job carving, how interns had been able to take on tasks that were not being completed:

> *All the stuff that has piled up e.g. at the council, there's a load of spreadsheet work that no-one could do – they carved out the job for [intern] and he has secured work, he is good value.* (Job Coach)

As a result, some employers are now looking beyond the disability and seeing the commitment of the young people.

College staff believed that employers had gained a great deal from their involvement:

> *They gained an insight to people with learning difficulties and disabilities, that they are equal and can do the same jobs as other people. They have learned to work with a different range of employees. Employers have commented on the high level of commitment of the learner, and their good time keeping* (College Lead)

> *Employers are now experienced at working with people with disabilities. This has been especially beneficial for the customer facing organisations which have a very diverse customer base. It's good for them to have a similarly diverse workforce. Also they've given their staff confidence about working with people with disabilities either as colleagues or customers. Employers are less likely to make negative assumptions about a person's capacity to work.* (College Lead)

Most of the employers involved believed they had benefited in some way from taking part, which is borne out by the fact that most are keen to continue to work with the colleges. They had entered into the programme in the belief that they would achieve mutual benefits for both businesses and interns. At an early stage of the project, half of the employers interviewed said that they were hoping to be able to help young people in the job market, while at the same time gaining 'an extra pair of hands' and for some a

possible employee who they had been able to train with additional support from the college.

> *It works both ways we get a support person and they are working; then at the end of the supported internship we will get a member of staff we know and that can do the job.* (FE College Employer)

Just under half the employers interviewed towards the end of the programme said that their involvement had been beneficial to them and/or their business as the intern had made them 'think about doing things in different ways' and had brought 'fresh ideas' to working practices. Three employers had noticed **development in other members of staff,** observing that their employees had learned '*to be more understanding'* and to '*be prepared to help each other'* more.

Overall, the experience of employers appears to be a positive one for the majority due largely to careful job matching and continuous interaction with the college and support from job coaches. One employer commented:

> *I think this is the most successful work placement scheme I have been part of. I am really proud of my interns. None of them have been off sick, they are never late, no one has dropped out and they have a great work ethic.* (Hospitality and Catering Employer)

6.2.4 For staff and colleges

College staff have been able to develop contacts and support through the networking required for the programme. They have also secured new links with employers, from which the wider college might benefit. Staff experienced significant personal and skills development, particularly in relation to working with employers. They all felt that they were learning 'on the job' but that it has been a hugely rewarding and interesting experience. Many job coaches said that they had learnt a significant amount and had gained confidence in their own abilities, such as, negotiating and liaising with employers.

> *Staff have got more confident, they now negotiate with employers. You can't come across as eternally grateful, you need to be working with them. Staff understand a lot more about how a business operates and what else they can do to make sure things are covered, they are less naïve. (College Lead)*

Staff also believe that the college as a whole will benefit from having a planned progression route from other courses. Previously learners had come to the end of useful full-time programmes; now they would be able to progress onto supported internships which can offer a bridge between education and employment. They saw this as strengthening their offer and enabling them to get more people into work. One college lead noted:

Gradually more and more tutors are coming to talk to the Supported Internship team to ask if the course might be right for a particular learner they have in mind. It's offering a new progression route internally and for the wider community. It's also helped improve the college reputation locally – especially with employers who've valued the high quality relationship management and support. (College Lead)

6.3 Conclusions

Of the 190 young people who completed a supported internship:

- 36% gained paid employment, including apprenticeships (5%)
- 26% had gained voluntary work
- 14% were progressing to further education or training (or in a small number of cases continuing their internship)
- 25% had no employment, paid or unpaid, or plans for further education or training

While just over a third had achieved paid employment - the primary goal of the internship - three quarters of them had achieved a positive progression outcome which was likely to improve their quality of life. This compares favourably with other initiatives, such as Project SEARCH which reported in 2012, a 31% success rate in achieving paid employment[7]. Although direct comparisons in national data are not available for this cohort of interns, these outcomes compare well with the 36% of young disabled people in employment in 2012; employment rates of under 15% for young people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions[8] and of 7% amongst adults known to social services with moderate to severe learning difficulties.[9]

At the same time, there was a significant number for whom transition into paid employment was not achieved. While it is possible that colleges might have been more successful had they had greater support from other agencies and themselves been more knowledgeable about the support that such organisations can offer, it is likely that some interns would have still finished their internship without paid employment. There is currently no clear pathway for young people who did not achieve paid employment at the end of the internship, either from the voluntary work they moved into, planned further education or training or from unemployment. Many of the college staff interviewed, and some employers, were concerned that without the level of support they had enjoyed during the supported internship, these young people would struggle to continue their journey towards, or eventually achieve, employment. Although the colleges themselves could have been better organised in planning exit strategies for interns who were not

[7] Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012), Project SEARCH Evaluation: Final Report (Office for Disability Issues), p.85

[8] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.40-41

[9] See NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set: 2010-11 provisional release at data.gov.uk

offered employment, they do not have the resources or the remit to provide the on-going support these young people need.

Of those interns who achieved employment, a sizeable number had part time work, temporary contracts, agency or seasonal work. It is likely therefore that they may find themselves looking for further employment in the near future. It is not clear what, if any, support will be available to help them with job searching, applications and interviews or to learn a new job role if they are successful in gaining employment - without which many will struggle.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE and DWP should work together to explore the support mechanisms needed to help those young people who do not gain employment at the end of a supported internship to continue their journey towards, and eventually gain, paid employment. Colleges should then be made aware of the support available so that they can signpost young people to the appropriate agencies.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE and DWP should work together to identify how successful interns can be supported to sustain and develop their careers, including finding and settling into subsequent jobs.

All parties who took part in the supported internship trial reported benefits to themselves and in particular to the interns. Interns were described (by themselves and others) as having gained in confidence, self-esteem and independence; learned new specific and transferable skills; developed more positive attitudes and a better understanding of the world of work and their possible place within it; and having qualifications and experiences to include on their CVs. Some parents reported feeling more optimistic about the future as a result of the internship. Many employers commented on the reliability and commitment of the young people, that they were able to take on tasks that were not previously being completed, the positive impact on their own staff and change in culture in the workplace borne out of a greater awareness of learning difficulties and disabilities and what the young people can achieve. Colleges saw the internship as improving their offer, particularly in terms of providing progression routes from existing courses, as well as having provided an opportunity for staff development and career development.

The fact that all 15 colleges plan to continue offering the supported internship from September 2013 (despite a reduction in funding and the challenges they experienced this year); that almost all staff involved in the trial wanted to keep working on the programme; and many of the employers had indicated to the colleges that they would be willing to take on interns in the future (even where an internship had broken down this year), provides clear evidence that those most closely involved have judged the trial to be a success and the approach to be worth continuing and further developing. Early indications suggest that they will have no difficulty in recruiting interns for future programmes - many of the colleges have already recruited interns for the next academic year.

7. Meeting the Four Supported Internship Principles

Rather than prescribing one 'model' of supported internships, the DfE set four key principles for colleges to follow. The intention was that the principles would guide design, set-up and delivery of the programme and would allow the necessary flexibility to enable colleges to deliver the programme and support interns into sustainable employment appropriate to their needs and contexts. This section explores the ways in which colleges have managed to work to these principles during the trial. It draws on evidence from findings from previous sections of the report to reach conclusions as to the extent to which colleges' practice was consistent with the four principles.

7.1 Amount of time spent at employer premises

Principle 1: A significant majority of the participant's time should be spent at the employer's premises.

This principle was met by some but not all colleges, and in only a few colleges did all interns spend a significant majority of their internship in the workplace. In a small number of colleges, all interns spent a minimum of three days per week at the employers' premises, with some interns in the workplace for four days a week. However, some interns in other colleges spent as little as six to ten hours per week at work. There does not appear to be any direct correlation between number of hours spent in the workplace and success in gaining paid employment, although in most cases interns who achieved paid work had spent ten or more hours in the workplace.

Whilst several colleges thought that they met this principle 'reasonably well', others noted that they had not done so for all interns. In some cases, colleges were only seeking a small number of hours for particular interns, for example, due to physical frailty and a lack of capacity to work a substantial number of hours, or were looking for reduced hours at the start of the internship with a view to increasing these as the intern gained in confidence and the employer began to recognise their abilities (it should be noted that not all employers proved willing to increase the interns' hours where this strategy was adopted). In other cases, colleges were having to accept fewer hours than either they - or sometimes the intern - would have liked. College staff cited a number of reasons why this was the case:

- fewer hours better meeting the employers' needs (e.g. where the role was part-time)
- inability to find employers willing to offer placements with a substantial number of hours
- working with an agency which determined the number of hours in placements
- interns' conflicting commitments (e.g. time spent with a support worker, funded by personal budgets, or other college courses)

- lack of college staff capacity (e.g. caused by delay in recruitment of job coaches) which resulted in later placement of interns than planned and consequently limited time in the workplace

7.2 Learning carried out alongside time with employer

Principle 2: Participants should do some form of learning alongside their time at the employer

All the colleges appear to have met this principle, with all interns doing some form of learning alongside their time with the employer. For most, this took the form of one day per week in college. Most colleges offered interns a short accredited employability skills course (e.g. an award in Work Skills), alongside some English and mathematics, although not all were accrediting this element particularly where it was embedded rather than free-standing. One college was running the supported internship alongside other accredited employability or vocational courses, for which the interns had enrolled before the supported internship began recruiting. Although they took this approach to recruitment because of the timing of the trial, they intend to continue to run the internship in this way next year. Another college began by taking an 'infill' approach, placing each intern into relevant existing classes, according to their learning needs. However, they switched to a group approach partway through because they felt the interns needed the support of a specific peer group, experiencing the internship.

The extent to which the college-based learning was personalised varied from college to college. In some cases, all interns followed the same programme, each taking the same level of award, regardless of prior achievement. In others, interns had access to different levels of the same qualification. In some colleges, interns were offered additional specific, small, work-related awards, relevant to their job role, usually at the request of the employer. These included awards in first aid, health and safety, safe lifting and manual-handling, customer care, tractor-driving, chainsaw use, bush-cutting and pesticide handling. Some staff mentioned specific tutoring for individuals:

> *For example a mathematics tutor working with a young man placed in a building suppliers who was struggling with metric measurement..[the tutor]..went into the workplace to help.* (College Lead)

Both interns and college staff valued the college-based day, although they reflected more on its role in establishing a self-supporting peer group than on the learning itself. Several staff noted that including a qualification in the internship ensured that those who did not achieve employment at the end of it, at least '*had something to take away with them*.' Some job coaches questioned the relevance of the college-based day, as did some interns. This uncertainty may be due in part to the way in which links were made between the learning in college and the workplace experience. In some colleges, the links were made much more explicitly than others, for example, through having job coaches contribute to the classroom teaching or helping interns reflect on their practical

experiences back at college. In other colleges, the staff responsible for delivering the qualification had little direct knowledge of the interns' workplace experiences. Interns found practical activities such as preparing for interviews and putting together CVs most useful.

Some colleges were planning to review the college-based learning element. Planned improvements included greater personalisation (including access to different levels of qualification), offering accredited functional skills, more practical-based learning, a wider variety of teaching and learning approaches and more out-of-college experiences, including trips to different workplaces and opportunities to develop team working skills.

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should ensure:

- a clear link between the learning that takes place in the workplace and that which happens outside of it.
- college-based learning is personalised to the individual in terms of level, content and interns' interests and aspirations.

7.3 Jobs must work for both the young person and the employer

Principle 3: Jobs must work for both the young person and the employer. For the young person they must fit with their vocational profile, contribute to their long term career goal and be flexible enough to address barriers where necessary. For the employer they must meet a real business need.

The majority of colleges thought that they had met this principle in that the jobs that the interns were matched to, met with their aspirations in most cases and that the jobs fitted with the business needs of employers. However, there were exceptions where interns had not been offered a placement that matched their interests and aspirations and it was not always clear that all of the jobs met a real business need.

Colleges put considerable effort into the job matching process, with some developing quite sophisticated approaches to achieving an appropriate match (see section 4.3 on job matching). Job coaches in particular cited effective job matching as critical to the success of an internship. In most cases, they appeared to have achieved a good job match for most of their interns.

There was a degree of compromise required initially on the part of the interns in some cases, for example where their aspirations were thought to be unrealistic or based on a very limited understanding of particular job roles or of the wide range of possibilities open to them. In some cases, interns did not know at the start of the internship what sort of job they would like and the internship programme enabled them to discover what they liked

doing and/or were good at. A few interns were interested in particularly 'niche' areas and it was not possible to find a precise match. However, several college staff noted that interns in these circumstances often ended up enjoying their internship:

> *One of the… students wanted to work in a music shop and to be honest there aren't many music shops anywhere so she is working for a company which is part of [company name] on the catering side and we asked her to give it go and see what it was like and she loved it.* (Job Coach)

For a few interns, their college was not able to find a suitable match, resulting in interns being placed in roles which did not interest them. For example, a group of young male interns who wanted to work outside found themselves working in a warehouse. This happened where a college was unable to secure the commitment of a suitable range of employers. In a very small number of cases, interns had ended up with a placement that did not match their needs because their original, more suitable placement had broken down, due to their poor attendance or behaviour in the workplace.

In some cases, the interns were clearly fulfilling a real business need. Several job coaches cited the fact that the interns had been offered paid employment to continue post-internship, as evidence of this. Some employers commented on the value that the intern was adding to their business or organisation, for example a day care centre manager noting that the intern enabled them to offer a better quality service to their service users. Where a job had been 'carved' for an intern, for example in an office where a young man was tackling a backlog of data entry, then it was clear to see that they were meeting a real business need. However, there were other cases where the intern's role was closer to work experience. One job coach cited an example of an intern working in a bar, who could only ever do the job when another bar staff member was present, even though only one person was really needed to staff the bar.

While the original intention in placing interns with an employer was that a paid job should be available at the end of the internship, provided that the intern showed themselves capable of fulfilling the job role, this did not turn out to be easy to engineer. One college pointed out that:

> *Employers cannot commit to offering employment in nine months' time, even if an intern comes up to standard. They don't know if they'll have vacancies or even still be up and running. This has meant that although jobs may meet a real need at the time, the employer might not be around or able to afford to recruit to meet that need at the end of the internship.* (College Lead)

Several colleges noted that their interns had fulfilled a real business need during the internship, that it had certainly been more than work experience and definitely not 'make-work', but that at the end of the placement, for one reason or another the employer was unable or not ready to recruit. One was re-structuring and subject to a recruitment freeze, another start-up business was at too early a stage to employ anyone, and small cafes

that had welcomed the extra pair of hands could not afford to take on additional staff. Some of these employers explicitly stated that if there was a job, they would offer it to the intern.

Some interns were placed in voluntary organisations where paid work was never a possibility at the end of their internship. In some cases, this was a deliberate strategy and seen as a stepping stone towards paid work, although it is not clear how the interns would be supported to take the next step. In other cases, interns were placed with voluntary organisations because the college was unable to find an employer who might be able to offer paid employment.

One college was frank about its inability to sign up employers who would consider offering paid work at the end of the internship. Its job coaches reflected:

> *We intended to go round together and instead of saying 'jobs' maybe get a reference at the end of it to prove to somebody else that they can do the work. None of our employers have changed their minds and decided to offer paid employment so it is ending up more like work experience really.*

Where it was unlikely that an internship would lead directly to paid work with an employer, some colleges thought that the interns' experience of the programme would still help with their CVs and gaining new skills and in preparing them for a real job in the future. However, others were less hopeful:

> *It is all very well us saying it will build up their CV, it is more experience and they will get good references from these employers but it is just a shame that we can't get them paid work. (Job Coach)*

RECOMMENDATION: Colleges should seek, wherever possible, to place interns with employers who are likely to be able to offer paid work at the end of the internship, where the intern has met the required standards, in order to give the best chance of progressing to sustainable paid employment.

7.4 Employer and young person receiving support throughout the internship

Principle 4: Both the young person and the employer should receive on-going support during the Supported Internship and afterwards for the learner via Access to Work should the employer offer a job to the learner.

All colleges believed that they had met this principle, although they cited far more examples of providing support to interns than to employers. There was also little evidence that interns were using Access to Work for support post-internship, although

this was at least in part due to the timing of the evaluation interviews which took place before many interns had secured employment.

Support for interns was judged by college staff as critical to the success of the programme, both in terms of enabling the intern to achieve within the internship and in convincing employers to become involved. Interns also clearly valued the support they were receiving. Support was generally personalised to the individual and took many and varying forms. Systematic instruction was mentioned by several job coaches, as one strategy amongst many which had proved effective. The support was often more intense at the start of the internship and gradually reduced or in some cases, withdrawn altogether as the intern gained confidence.

Colleges, and in particular job coaches, found it more difficult to describe the support they offered to employers. They saw their role as being on hand to sort out problems (with speed of resolution a critical factor), and also to anticipate and prevent problems from arising. Some job coaches had given advice to employers on communication strategies and one described how she advised an employer on how to discipline a young person with a learning difficulty. Others had shared assessments with the employer to help them understand the individual they were working with, in particular their strengths, or given information about a specific condition, such as Asperger's. Several job coaches described their role as negotiating between employer and intern, and many cited the importance of the job coach, intern and employer working in partnership. As with the support provided to interns, that offered to employers also differed from one setting to another. One job coach noted:

> *You adapt your support and your manner for different employers. You don't do it the same way with the guys in the garage as you do for the ladies in the nursery.*

Some of the employers interviewed were very complimentary about the support they had received from the college; others were not clear about the job coach role or had found it difficult to accommodate 'an extra person', in addition to the intern, on their premises.

On-going support, post-internship was an issue that was concerning many of the colleges, both for those who had secured jobs and those who had not. About a third of colleges made reference to Access to Work when prompted, but their involvement with the service was limited. This will clearly change now that Access to Work funding will be available to interns during the course of their internship rather than when a firm job offer is made at the end of the programme.

Most colleges had some sort of exit strategy for interns in place, but in some cases this was something of an afterthought and had not been planned in from the start. Where interns had not secured employment, plans were in place in most colleges to '*hand interns over'* to Connexions, local supported employment agencies and other organisations, or to find them suitable courses, to enable them to continue their journey towards work. Several colleges had also arranged briefings about basic benefits advice.

There was a concern, however, that outside of the internship, the interns would no longer benefit from the high levels of support that they needed to progress. Some colleges questioned where the funding for the necessary support would come from.

7.5 Conclusions

The four principles successfully guided colleges in designing innovative new programmes focused on supporting young people with a learning difficulty or disability into employment. However, not all colleges fully met all four principles for all of their interns. Most struggled to meet the requirement in principle one for all interns to be spending a significant majority of their time in the workplace; some thought that this was in any case not appropriate for all. Not all interns took on roles which met a real business need, as required by principle three, with a small minority of interns in placements which did not match their own interests or ambitions. While support was provided throughout the internship, not all colleges had been able to ensure on-going support, through Access to Work or otherwise, for interns who had been offered employment, as required by principle four. All colleges met the requirement of principle two to provide additional learning beside that which took place in the workplace, although the relevance of some of that learning to the individual was variable.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should consider some slight re-wording of the principles.

Principle 1 might be re-framed to state that interns should '*normally*' spend a significant majority of their time in the workplace to enable those for whom it is not appropriate to spend less time. It might also be re-worded to suggest that after an initial settling in period, the majority of time should be spent in the workplace. Care should be taken, however, not to dilute this requirement for most interns, as it is critical to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the supported internship programme.

The requirements of principle 2 might be sharpened up so that interns are required to do some additional learning which complements and is directly linked to that which takes place in the workplace and which is personalised and relevant to the individual.

8. Profile of Spend on the Supported Internship Trial

All 15 colleges were provided with approximately £190,000 by the Education Funding Agency to deliver the one year supported internship trial for the 2012 to 2013 academic year (each college prepared a bid with costs to the Department for Education). This section explores how the trial funding has been spent in the ten case study colleges - the different elements of spend, areas of over and under expenditure and costs per intern. Figures have been provided by the ten case study colleges on three occasions as the trial progressed via a structured expenditure form which required costs to be inserted against different elements of spend. Those not chosen as case studies provided overall total costs for the trial on their MI forms. Finally, we offer an assessment of value for money of the trial in terms of a subjective appraisal of costs and benefits.

8.1 Use of Supported Internship funding

The following sections provide a breakdown of various costs and expenditure which will provide colleges wishing to deliver supported internships in future years with an indication of potential delivery costs and key areas of spend. However, it should be noted that, given the trial situation, most colleges were influenced in their spending by the size of the grant available to them for the trial, rather than necessarily focusing on the most cost-effective way to design and deliver the programme (the overall spend for six of the fifteen trial sites came within the £8,000 of the grant available to them.) Indeed, all colleges have recognised the significant value of the funding that was made available during the trial and when planning future delivery were planning more efficient approaches to save on costs and to ensure viability under study programmes funding. They also recognised that this first year of delivery has helped them to set up much of the infrastructure needed (e.g. recruitment of staff, training of staff, developing tracking systems) to continue delivery in following years.

> *The DfE has enabled us to provide a legacy for future cohorts in terms of marketing, website material, employer events and a very successful celebration event involving interns, parents and employers. The benefits being that the communication between all parties has been excellent and support from employers is growing.* (College Lead Reflective Log Entry)

Some college leads advised that colleges new to supported internships may need to invest similar funding levels in the initial stages, noting that they '*couldn't have done it without the trial funding'*.

Some colleges were only able to provide estimated actual costs for some elements of expenditure where their interns were still on a supported internship – where for example, the internship had started later than anticipated or where they were running a roll-on/roll-off programme. The figures provided via MI data were confirmed by colleges to be as accurate as possible at the time of collation, as of end of July 2013.

8.1.1 Overall expenditure

There was a considerable difference between the highest (£279,415) and lowest (£142,251) amount of overall expenditure for delivering the supported internship trials. However, there was considerable clustering around the mean (just under £190,000) and the median (£187,937). This reflects the way in which colleges were influenced by the amount of funding available through the grant for the trials. The figures in the table below do not appear to show any correlation between number of interns enrolled and total costs. Given that the interns required varying degrees and types of support, a correlation between the number of enrolled interns and costs of the trial would be difficult to ascertain. The spread of overall costs from minimum to maximum points is shown in the chart below.

Table 6 Costs of delivering supported internships

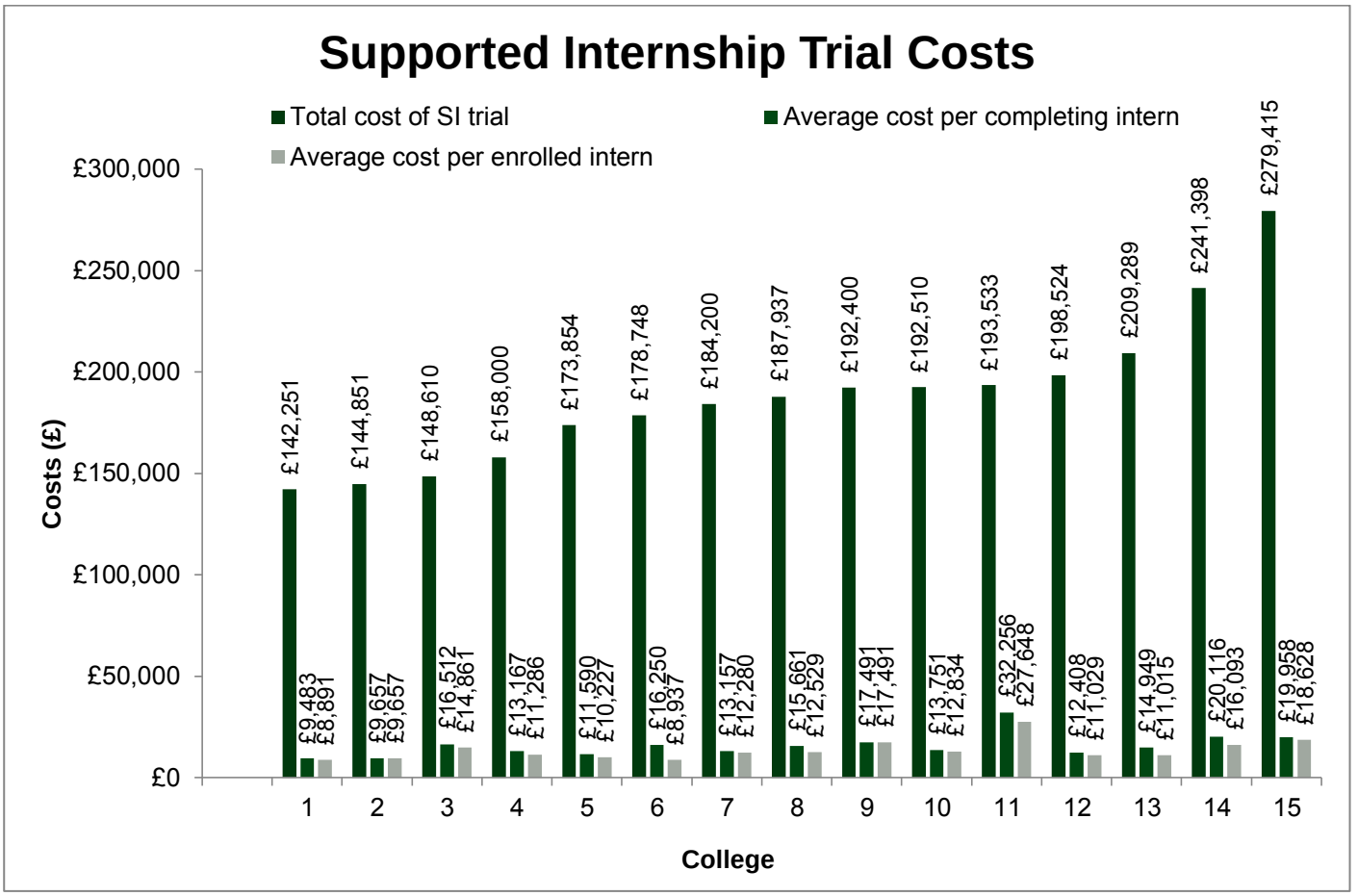
College	No. of interns enrolled	No. of drop-outs	No. of interns completed	No. of interns employed	Total cost of SI trial	Average cost per completing intern	Average cost per enrolled intern
1	16	1	15	3	£142,251	£9,483	£8,891
2	15	0	15	10	£144,851	£9,657	£9,657
3	10	1	9	6	£148,610	£16,512	£14,861
4	14	2	12	5	£158,000	£13,167	£11,286
5	17	2	15	5	£173,854	£11,590	£10,227
6	20	9	11	5	£178,748	£16,250	£8,937
7	15	1	14	5	£184,200	£13,157	£12,280
8	15	3	12	3	£187,937	£15,661	£12,529
9	11	0	11	1	£192,400	£17,491	£17,491
10	15	1	14	3	£192,510	£13,751	£12,834
11	7	1	6	0	£193,533	£32,256	£27,648
12	18	2	16	11	£198,524	£12,408	£11,029
13	19	5	14	6	£209,289	£14,949	£11,015
14	15	3	12	2	£241,398	£20,116	£16,093
15	15	1	14	4	£279,415	£19,958	£18,628
TOTAL	222	32	190	69	£2,825,520		
AVERAGE	15	2	13	4.6	£188,368		
MEDIAN	15	1	14	5	£187,937		

There is no clear correlation between overall costs and the number of interns achieving paid employment - those spending more on the supported internship trial did not achieve correspondingly more employment outcomes, while some of those achieving high numbers of paid work for their interns were among the lower spenders. This reflects the fact that costs varied according to a number of factors including level of support needed

and geographical situation of the college, while external influences, including economic stability of local employers and local skills needs, affected colleges' ability to find paid employment for their interns.

The average expenditure per intern completing the programme ranged from £9,483 (for 15 completers) to £32,256 (for six completers). This however, does not include the costs associated with initial induction/engagement work with those who did not complete the programme. Accounting for these costs, the average cost for all engaged interns (those completing and those not completing) ranged from £8,891 (16 enrolled interns) to £27,648 (seven enrolled interns).

Figure 1 Costs of delivering supported internships



The broad range of costs reflect the diversity of approaches taken and the different contexts within which the trials were delivered (e.g. rural settings where transport costs may have been higher). The actual costs per intern reflect the highly personalised approaches taken for different interns and in particular, the levels of support required and the transport costs associated with getting to the workplace. Each college was asked to provide an overall cost per intern (rather than average cost) which included all expenditure items (such as college tutoring, job coaching salaries, as well as travel costs and resources provided). Estimates were provided against each intern on the MI form. **Where these individual figures were provided and looked to reflect the overall costs of the trials, examples are provided below**. It should be noted that the average

costs per intern shown below are based on the number of *all* interns enrolled (and are associated with incurring some costs whether completing or not) and include estimated costs such as job coaching salaries, tutoring costs, equipment and travel. Estimations have been made for example, where one intern may have required more job coaching time than another. In these cases, proportions of time/salary have been estimated. These figures will therefore differ from those shown above. These are provided for comparison purposes only.

Table 7 Costs of delivery per intern

College	Number of interns enrolled	Number of drop-outs	Number of interns completed	Average cost per intern*	Range of costs per intern (completing trial)	Range of costs per intern (non-completers)
1	16	1	15	£12,096	£1,494 - £29,889	Not available
4	14	2	12	£13,167	£12,000 - £14,250	Not available
7	15	1	14	£12,280	£11,340 - £14,100	£7,560
8	15	3	12	£12,529	£7,845 - £16,787	£6,568 – £9,122
9	11	0	11	£17,455	£10,000 - £32,000	Not applicable
10	15	1	14	£12,834	£3,850 - £30,802	£3,850
12	18	2	16	£9,840	£2,950 - £17,500	£6,750 - £10,450
13	19	5	14	£11,627	£10,532 - £15,750	£2,838 - £5,975
14	15	3	12	£11,066	£8,424 - £19,017	£1,822 – £6,124

* Based on the number of all interns enrolled including those who may not have completed the trials. Figures taken from the MI form and averaged across individual intern costs. Data is only provided for nine colleges as less complete and unreliable data has been omitted.

Based on the figures provided above, there were some relatively substantial costs associated with interns who did not complete the trial. These ranged overall from £1,500 to £32,000 and again reflected the individualised nature of the programme and in some cases specialist support such as communication workers. This underlines the importance of careful recruitment and selection of interns, job matching and strategies for maintaining engagement levels during the programme.

8.2 Items of expenditure

When asked about overall expenditure towards the end of the trial, most supported internship leads commented that they were on track with planned spend. Employer engagement, staffing and in particular, job coach salaries were deemed to be the highest areas of spend, in line with predictions at the outset. Travel was also a significant cost for those colleges who were located in rural areas although one rural college said they had underspent on travel, in part due to their overestimation of travel costs at the start, as more interns than anticipated had their own transport, taxis were provided by the local authority or jobs were deliberately found on bus routes. Leads also identified some areas of underspend, including on job coaching due to recruitment issues.

A common thread in the discussions about costs was how personalised the approach had been and how the costs reflected this. Those with higher needs had required more job coaching and support. Indeed they also recognised that some of the costs would continue after completion of the trial since some were still providing support in employment and also for those not yet placed.

8.2.1 Profile of spend

According to the costs provided by the ten case study colleges, the highest areas of spend in most cases (according to the average spend) were:

- trial management
- job coaching salaries
- college-based tutoring
- support for interns
- employer liaison

Spend across different areas did vary quite significantly illustrating again the wide range of implementation approaches, delivery models and starting points. For example, some colleges diverted a considerable sum to trial management and administration, while others spent very little in this area. Where colleges had to recruit a completely new team, or carry out multiple rounds of recruitment, this represented significant expenditure, while others who were using existing staff spent nothing at all in this area.

It is worth noting that some colleges found the profiling of costs easier to undertake than others and some offered much more detailed information than others. This has made it difficult to draw conclusions about typical costs associated with supported internships.

Table 8 Profile of spend

Areas of spend	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Trial management (e.g. co-ordination, quality assurance, monitoring)	£7,000	£94,251	£43,125	£37,770
Project administration	£0	£26,872	£10,428	£12,583
Recruitment costs for new staff	£0	£54,275	£7,646	£1,738
Marketing of programme/recruitment of learners and employers, if not covered in the job coach role	£0	£16,449	£4,660	£3,479
Employer liaison and support	£0	£50,688	£14,937	£5,058
Job coaching salaries	£12,000	£107,467	£42,421	£36,010
Support for learners not covered by job coaching	£0	£67,000	£17,663	£3,889
Training	£0	£19,174	£4,096	£1,997
Transport for learners	£0	£7,500	£2,111	£1,197
Transport for staff	£0	£7,953	£2,612	£1,830
Resources (e.g. equipment/clothing for learners)	£200	£20,512	£7,027	£4,565
College based tutoring for learners	£0	£90,000	£20,284	£10,525
Work-based tutoring (outside the job coach role)	£0	£12,750	£2,216	£0

Note that where a college did not attribute any costs to a particular area of spend, it is assumed that there was zero spend for that element. This will have had an impact on the mean and median values.

8.2.2 Overspend and underspend

Colleges provided an indication of their planned costs for each area of spend and their actual expenditure towards the end of the trial. Using these figures, the variance was calculated to show where over and underspend had taken place. Due to the wide range of delivery models and approaches taken and the resulting wide range of costs attributed to different areas of spend, there does not appear to be a discernible pattern of overspend and underspend. Most colleges had anticipated expenditure fairly accurately or determinedly worked within their predicted spending model.

Several leads spoke of unexpected costs such as: purchasing work clothing, further training for interns beyond the planned element e.g. food hygiene, travel, protective clothing, administration, CRB checks and employer requested certification e.g. food hygiene, manual handling equipment. However, most had managed to keep within their planned budget, transferring spend between the different elements to balance the budget.

8.3 Other funding and its use

Given that the funding for the trial was around £190,000, it is clear that several colleges supplemented this grant with additional funds. Seven of the ten case study colleges noted that they had used additional funding to support the trial grant. For the most part, use of additional funds was planned in from the start, and related to the college-based element of the programme, rather than resulting from unanticipated costs that had to be met in the year.

Whilst some colleges used additional funding to cover a wide range of areas of spend, the common areas that were supplemented were support for learners and college-based teaching. A further significant area of spend covered by other funds seems to have been trial management which in some cases included salaries for time spent by leads on the supported internship trial.

The most common sources of additional funding were Additional Learning Support (ALS) and learner-responsive funding, both from the Education Funding Agency. Interns were eligible for this funding where they were taking an approved qualification as part of the college-based element of their course. Social care budgets were not used as an additional source of funding.

8.4 Does the Supported Internship programme offer value-for-money?

The college staff interviewed were firmly of the opinion that the supported internship programme, while expensive, offered value for money. Several reflected, however, that while it was easy to identify the costs it was much more difficult to quantify the benefits. One college lead asked:

> *Where do you put the measurement in seeing those young people flourish, grow in confidence, apply for jobs, to go out into the world on their own, get on a bus on their own and have that impact on the local area economy, because those employers have come back to us and said what a contribution the interns are making to their companies; so where do you put the value on that?*

Some spoke of the interns' increased confidence and happiness; others noted the likely longer term benefits and related savings associated with employment, including reduced reliance on adult services, mental or physical health services and a reduced likelihood of claiming benefits. Some colleges noted that the trial grant had been spent well in terms of

building a sustainable infrastructure that would benefit future interns (such as recruiting and training staff, developing tracking systems and producing marketing materials), although there were some concerns about maintaining the quality of provision, given the reduced funding going forward.

It is difficult to draw conclusions at the end of a year's trial about value for money, when the longer term outcomes are unknown. However, the overall success rate in terms of achieving paid employment (including apprenticeships); the positive impact on interns' confidence, attitudes, aspirations and skill sets; and the known benefits and savings associated with being in employment, suggest that the supported internship programme certainly has the potential to offer real value for money. Across the different trial sites, however, some colleges have clearly achieved greater value for money than others (based on spend against number of interns achieving employment – see Figure 6) and the return on investment for some individual interns varies greatly (from high spend, resulting in no positive progression to low spend resulting in paid work). Further research would be needed to identify any correlation between particular approaches, levels of expenditure, types of intern and gaining paid employment.

In addition, it is not possible at this stage to predict whether or not interns who achieved paid work at the end of their internship will be able to successfully sustain that employment, move into new jobs or develop a career. The high level of temporary, agency and seasonal work achieved suggests that many interns will find themselves looking for new jobs in the near future. If they can make this transition successfully, the supported internship programme will have offered a high level of value for money, but if the interns find themselves unemployed (and without the support they need to re-enter the workforce), then the value of the supported internship becomes more questionable.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE should continue to evaluate the supported internship programme, tracking individuals to explore the longer term impact of the supported internship and to establish costs associated with future delivery (of trial sites and new sites from academic year 2013/14) with a view to exploring value for money further. Any future analysis might also use social return on investment methodology and include some modelling of future savings such as reduced benefits claims, reliance on adult services and need for mental and physical health services.

8.5 Conclusions

The total amount of expenditure per college was influenced by the size of the grant available to the trial sites. However, while the average spend was close to £190,000, a small number of colleges spent considerably less while an equally small number spent significantly more. Costs per intern varied enormously, including the costs of provision for interns not completing the trial, reflecting the range of support needs of the interns and the diverse approaches taken by the colleges to provide that support.

The highest areas of spend in most cases were on trial management, job coaching salaries, college-based tutoring, support for interns and employer liaison. Expenditure on different elements of delivery was very varied however, again reflecting the different contexts in which delivery was taking place, the starting points of the different colleges, the range of delivery models and the personalised nature of the programme.

Whilst all staff involved in delivery thought that the trial offered value for money, based on the significant benefits and achievements of the interns, and what they perceived to be very positive employment outcomes, at this stage the evaluation we cannot be certain if value for money has been achieved. Savings to public funds over the time that the young people may be in employment have not been factored into this assessment. A longer-term study would be needed to determine whether or not savings were made in terms of benefit claims, day care services, health services and training provision. Similarly, the sustainability of the employment gained at the end of the supported internship will be a key factor in determining cost effectiveness, and these longer term outcomes are currently unknown. It may be the case that supported internships can only provide value for money if adequate support is subsequently provided for young people as they move jobs and develop their career. It will also be important to base future calculations on the expenditure on the programme outside of the trial, when colleges are more focused on achieving cost-effective approaches to delivering the internship programme.

9. Sustainability of the Programme

This section explores college plans, issues and challenges related to sustainability of the supported internship programme.

9.1 Continuation of the Supported Internship programme

All 15 colleges have plans in place to run the supported internship programme next year. It will be classified as a study programme and will be funded through the standard funding formula for 16 to19/25 study programmes, including use of the different levels of funding available for additional learning support. Almost all colleges had calculated that there would be considerably less funding available to them than in the trial.

The majority of colleges planned to position the programme as a progression route from other college courses, thus integrating it into their wider offer. Some college staff expressed concerns that the programme could lose its distinctiveness if it was 'mainstreamed' into the college; this was particularly the case where the programme was transferring from a specialist project team to a different department in the college. Colleges were generally seeking to retain the staff involved on the pilot to ensure continuity, but several were undergoing re-structuring that meant staff were at risk, particularly where they were on short-term contracts. Some more senior staff reported that they were likely to have a reduced involvement in the programme next year now that the programme had been developed and the infrastructure was in place. Very few staff were voluntarily leaving a supported internship role - most described how much they had enjoyed the new job and were eager to continue and develop further.

All the colleges were retaining the key elements of the model from this year. However there were a number of modifications or changes being proposed. Improvements planned as a result of lessons learned are covered in section 5.9. Changes that are primarily being implemented due to the reduced funding available are detailed here. It should be noted that some changes prompted by a need to increase value for money were also seen as improvements.

- a small number of colleges were considering emulating the Project SEARCH model by using an individual employer or a couple of large employers for all their interns as it would be more cost-effective to have interns based with just one or two employers, in terms of providing support. A couple of colleges were considering a mixture of using one large employer and several other employers to ensure efficiency and the personalised approach for interns
- one college was considering using a roll-on/roll-off model as it would be more efficient and would spread the workload of the job coaches
- several colleges did not believe that they would be able to retain the number of job coaches they had recruited for the trial, while others reported that the case load of the job coach was likely to increase (some of these were concerned about a possible decrease in quality of job coach support as a consequence)

- one of the colleges that had been working with supported employment agencies this year said that was unlikely to continue because it was too expensive

Other planned changes to the supported internship programme as a result of reduced funding included:

- getting interns to buy their own work clothes rather than funding this through the programme budget
- accessing more financial support from the college e.g. bursaries for travel for interns
- reducing paperwork to cut back on staff time required to complete it
- limiting the number of additional qualifications available to individual interns. One college thought they would only offer short sector-specific qualifications where the employer was prepared to pay for them
- reduced marketing activity and fewer promotional materials
- exploring alternative sources of funding including personal budgets to fund some elements of the provision

9.2 Recruitment of interns for next year

Almost all the colleges had made progress in recruiting young people for next year, with several colleges already having interns signed up. For example, one college had 19 interns signed up and interviewed and was going to bring them in early to do taster-type travel training. The colleges varied in terms of the numbers they hoped to recruit in total from ten to 35 interns.

The interns were likely to have a wide range of support needs and be working at varying levels although some colleges were aiming to recruit those with lower support needs who they assessed would have the best chance of being successful in securing employment, or would be most likely to benefit from the programme. One college lead explained:

> *The client group will be more defined. The college will be looking for a higher conversion rate to paid employment. This means we will be selecting more carefully which learners will benefit from a supported internship. This is not about whose needs will be most difficult to meet but more about who will best benefit. In particular, learners will need the right mind-set. There will be an intensive assessment period at the beginning of the course and those who are not really interested in working will be 'disinvited'.* (College Lead)

A few members of staff interviewed expressed some concerns that their college might take a 'cherry-picking' approach to recruitment, focusing on those interns who would be easiest - and cheapest - to support. One interviewee felt so strongly about his college's planned approach to recruitment (which he thought would result in those young people

most in need of help being denied access to a supported internship) that he had decided to leave the team.

For most colleges, recruitment was likely to be through the natural progression from college courses (including specifically designed pre-supported internship programmes), and through referrals from Connexions and specialist personal advisors. Other means mentioned were via friends, word of mouth and from other departments in the college. Some of the colleges were going to re-enrol some of the interns from this year who had either started later or had not been successful in terms of gaining employment but who they thought would be able to achieve work within a reasonable timeframe.

Some colleges were still negotiating with their local authority commissioners about the number of interns who they would be able to recruit. In one case there was doubt as to whether the local authority would commission the provision for learners over the age of 18 with an LDA, due to a funding allocation issue arising from the 2012-2013 reforms. This would appear to contradict the local authority duty to support disadvantaged young people to achieve their potential in education or training.

9.3 Future involvement of employers

In previous sections, it has been noted how colleges had built up a bank of supportive employers. Many employers had commented on their positive experiences and were happy to be involved in future Supported internship provision, although this varied across the size of employers. Where smaller employers were involved, these were less likely to be able to offer additional employment.

Colleges were also planning more co-ordinated approaches with other departments (such as apprenticeships) that engage employers and as in section 9.1 above, colleges are considering a range of alternative strategies to engage employers in following years - including approaching larger employers to host a number of internships. Staff, however, felt more prepared for this aspect of the programme since many noted how they had developed skills in approaching, liaising and negotiating with employers.

9.4 Challenges faced in continuing the programme

Colleges had identified a number of challenges they would need to overcome to ensure the sustainability of the programme. These included:

- employer engagement with competition for places likely to be more difficult next year with other courses competing e.g. traineeships and Work Programme. Some thought it would be difficult to find additional placements where smaller employers had already taken on an intern and would not be able to accommodate another
- accessing sufficient higher needs Additional Learning Support (ALS) funding from local authorities, who often based allocations for this funding on the number of school leavers which means they have not always factored in those who are ‘off the radar’

- JobCentre Plus lack of awareness about the programme resulting in potential interns being given inaccurate advice about benefits
- accessing the low-level ALS funding which comes into college centrally to ensure the internship programme receives its 'fair share'
- retaining job coaches - some of whom had zero hours contracts which did not give them the stability or job security they wanted

9.5 Conclusions

The supported internship model appears to be sustainable, given that all 15 colleges planned to continue to offer supported internships from September 2013 (although some will be making changes to the model as a result of the reduced funding available for study programmes in comparison with the level of trial funding). In most cases, the supported internships were being 'mainstreamed' and positioned as a progression route from existing college courses which meant a transfer to a new department for some.

In most cases there would be continuity of staffing except where colleges were undergoing re-structuring or had calculated that they would need to reduce staffing levels. This should mean that colleges can build effectively on the experiences of the trial and further develop and strengthen the programme.

Colleges had identified a number of challenges to continuing to run the programme, beyond the reduction in funding but these were not seen as insurmountable and therefore do not pose a risk to the sustainability of the supported internship. Indeed, most colleges were sufficiently confident about its short term future that they had already begun recruitment activity for September 2013 in July 2013 and one college already had interns enrolled.

Colleges were keen in further developing the programme to know how other colleges were planning to shape and run their supported internships in the future, as study programmes and under the new funding methodology. In particular, they were interested in balancing cost effectiveness and quality in order to maximise the number of internships that converted to paid employment.

RECOMMENDATION: The DfE and college membership organisations such as AoC and Natspec should explore ways in which colleges can share models, plans and experiences in order to drive up the quality of supported internship provision. They should also consider working with employer-led organisations such as AELP to promote the programme to employers.

10. Conclusions

The evaluation of the supported internship trial set out to answer three key questions:

- was the supported internship trial effective in enabling colleges to support young people with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress into sustainable employment?
- how was the initiative delivered and what lessons can be learned from the set-up, design and delivery?
- did the initiative provide value for money?

A wealth of both quantitative and qualitative data, as detailed above, have been collected in order to help the evaluation reach conclusions on each of these three questions.

10.1 Effectiveness of supported internships

The supported internship programme was effective in supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into employment. It achieved a slightly higher success rate than Project SEARCH[10], with 36% achieving paid employment, including apprenticeships. There was a very diverse group of interns involved in the supported internship trial. Interns included both those with a learning disability and those with other disabilities which caused them to need support for learning and for seeking and gaining employment. The diverse nature of the cohort makes it difficult to cite other national data on employment, against which to compare the success rate of supported internships. Much of the national data provides figures for either disabled people or those with learning difficulties and in many cases, the figures relate to ages 16 to 64 years and not directly to the age group eligible for supported internships (refer to Appendix 1 for further details). However, it is worth noting that the 2012 Labour Force Survey, found that nationally only 36% of young disabled people were in paid employment in 2012[11], while just 10% of people of working age with a learning disability were in employment[12]. Latest data from the NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators survey show that only 7% of adults known to social services with moderate to severe learning difficulties are in paid employment[13]. Further, the Labour Force Survey (2012) suggests that 'people with

[10] Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012), Project SEARCH Evaluation: Final Report (Office for Disability Issues), p.85

[11] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.40

[12] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.41

[13] See NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set: 2010-11 provisional release at data.gov.uk

learning disabilities or mental health conditions have employment rates of under 15 percent'.[14]

However, it is not yet possible to determine the extent to which employment will be sustainable for the young people involved. Given the high proportion of jobs achieved that were temporary, seasonal, agency-based or involving zero hour contracts, it is likely that many interns will not stay in these initial jobs for long. Colleges, employers and parents reported an increase in confidence, self-esteem, independence, and communication, job-seeking, job application and role-specific skills amongst a majority of interns. It is yet to be seen whether interns will be able to utilise these effectively in securing on-going employment.

The trial did not provide any evidence to suggest that supported internships were more or less effective for interns with certain types of disability. The level of support needed was not seen as a clear determinant of success, although one college lead noted, contrary to her expectations, that those with higher support needs had been more successful than those with lesser needs. Other factors, in particular, an intern's commitment to finding work and the level of parental support, were considered more significant.

It is clear that some colleges within the trial were more successful than others in achieving paid employment for their interns, with the most successful supporting 11 interns into paid work and the least successful not gaining paid work for any of their interns. Given the small number of colleges involved in the trial and the large number of variables, it is not possible to draw clear conclusions as to what made some more successful than others. The two colleges achieving the highest level of success worked with two quite different core models - one had all their interns enrolled on fairly substantial sector-specific programmes alongside non-internship learners in addition to the supported internship programme, while the other had interns on the same short employability skills course with additional small role-specific awards provided which only required them to be in college one day per week. However, they both attribute the high level of progression into employment to:

- careful recruitment of interns (selecting only those with a strong desire to work and including close partnership with referral agencies)
- careful recruitment and development of staff (selecting those who are passionate, committed and with a complete belief in the programme)
- personalising the programme in any way necessary in order to make it work for interns (rather than just tweaking a fixed model)
- constant contact with employers (to identify and address issues promptly, to keep progress under review and to provide support to employers as needed)
- close involvement with parents (to ensure they are working as partners)

[14] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.41

- positioning and promoting the programme as an employment opportunity rather than a college course

Whilst a range of approaches were taken to delivering supported internships, the colleges were guided by the four key principles underlying the programme. However, not all colleges fully met all four principles for all of their interns. Most struggled to meet the requirement in principle one for all interns to be spending a significant majority of their time in the workplace - some thought that this was in any case not appropriate for all. Not all interns took on roles which met a real business need, as required by principle three, with a small minority of interns in placements which did not match their own interests or ambitions. While support was provided throughout the internship, not all colleges had been able to ensure on-going support, through Access to Work or otherwise, for interns who had been offered employment, as required by principle four. All colleges met the requirement of principle two to provide additional learning beside that which took place in the workplace, although the relevance of some of that learning to the individual was variable.

10.2 Lessons learned

The trial provided a wealth of information on set-up, design and delivery of supported internships, as described in the main body of the report, from which it has been possible to identify a range of key lessons learned and critical success factors. The following are amongst the most significant:

- supported internships need to be designed to feel substantially different from college courses, with the primary focus throughout on the achievement of sustainable paid employment at the end (some colleges were concerned that the distinctiveness of the programme might be diminished as it became a type of study programme)
- job coaching is the key, distinctive element of supported internships, enabling the positive involvement of both young people and employers
- job coaches need a ‘can-do’ attitude and a skill set which encompasses the ability to motivate, support and mentor young people and to engage and negotiate with employers - a combination of skills which was not typically found amongst existing college staff
- the interns most likely to succeed are those who enrol because they want to work and have families who are supportive of this ambition
- differing levels of personalised support, tapered on an individual basis to encourage increased independence, contribute to the success of the intern during their programme - however some support needs to be available post-programme, whether the intern achieves employment or not, and this had not always been identified by the trial sites
- identifying and engaging suitable employers and then developing and maintaining close relationships with them is essential - employers need to be treated as a

partner alongside interns, college staff (in particular the job coach) and, where appropriate, parents and carers

- achieving an appropriate job match for an intern, using a systematic approach to determine the suitability of the job role, is key to a young person's success at the end of the programme
- college-based learning contributes most when it is personalised to the individual, is clearly linked to the workplace and provides a means of establishing and maintaining peer group support
- most employers are not able to offer placements which are guaranteed to lead to jobs for interns, even where they demonstrate an ability to work to the required standard - colleges therefore need to plan from the outset for alternative routes to securing employment at the end of the internship.

10.3 Value for money

It is too early to calculate the extent to which supported internships represent real value-for-money, given that it is not possible at this stage to determine whether the interns who have gained jobs will be able to sustain employment over the longer term. The value of a supported internship, however, can be optimised by ensuring that interns have access to on-going support to enable them to remain in employment, thereby building on the success that they achieved as a result of the internship.

In comparative terms, supported internships would appear to be better value for money than other more traditional college-based preparation for employment courses, which often have very low rates of progression into employment but still have relatively high costs because of the level of additional learning support required.

It has not been possible to extrapolate from the data from the trial sites, given their limited number and varying circumstances, whether certain types of delivery model or approach represent better value for money than others. Further research would be needed with a wider range of colleges before such conclusions could be drawn.

11. Recommendations

The recommendations provided below are drawn from the findings of the evaluation. They are presented below according programme partners and areas of work.

11.1 For Department for Education (DfE) and key partners

Publicity, raising awareness and guidance

1. The DfE should publish clear guidance which distinguishes the supported internship from the traineeship, clarifying the target clients for each programme.
2. The DfE should consider developing some publicity material or a web-page which sets out for employers, key information about the nature of a supported internship, the value of recruiting a young person with a learning difficulty and/or disability and the valuable role that employers can play.
3. In any guidance material published, the DfE should ensure that colleges are encouraged to take a flexible approach to the design of supported internships, to enable the programme to meet a wide variety of needs and take into account the different circumstances in which colleges and young people are operating.
4. The DfE should publish guidance material specifically targeted at college leads to support them in the recruitment, induction, training and review processes for all staff members on the supported internship team. The DfE might also seek to encourage relevant organisations to offer training in this area.

Eligibility criteria

5. The DfE should remind local authorities of their obligation to provide an LDA for all young people who are assessed as needing support for disability-related reasons, in line with statutory guidance.
6. The DfE should permit colleges to use their discretion in accepting onto a supported internship a disabled person who does not have an LDA but who clearly has a disability or impairment and an associated disability or impairment-related support need.
7. The DfE should consider enabling interns on a supported internship to continue to claim Job Seeker's Allowance, as is the case for those on a traineeship. This would help to prevent interns being placed on inappropriate provision for financial reasons, to establish an equitable approach for young people with and without a learning difficulty and/or disability and to remove one of the key identified barriers to participating in an internship for some young people.

Employer engagement

8. The DfE should consider developing a national directory of employers willing to be involved in supported internships, similar to that produced for apprenticeships by the National Apprenticeship Service. This could form part of a wider range of

supporting materials as recommended above (see Recommendation 2 on national guidance material/webpages).

Support and sustainability

9. The DfE and DWP should work together to identify how successful interns can be supported to sustain and develop their careers, including finding and settling into subsequent jobs.
10. The DfE should continue to work closely with Access to Work and relevant Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues to ensure they fully understand the supported internship programme, so that they are prepared to offer appropriate support from September 2013. The DfE should also publicise more fully this new commitment so that colleges are aware of the support and how to help interns to access it.
11. The DfE and DWP should work together to explore the support mechanisms needed to help those young people who do not gain employment at the end of a supported internship to continue their journey towards, and eventually gain, paid employment. Colleges should then be made aware of the support available so that they can signpost young people to the appropriate agencies.

Quality enhancement

12. The DfE should continue to evaluate the supported internship programme, tracking individuals to explore the longer term impact of the supported internship and to establish costs associated with future delivery (of trial sites and new sites from academic year 2013/14) with a view to exploring value for money further. Any future analysis might also use social return on investment methodology and include some modelling of future savings such as reduced benefits claims, reliance on adult services and need for mental and physical health services.
13. The DfE and college membership organisations such as AoC and Natspec should explore ways in which colleges can share models, plans and experiences in order to drive up the quality of supported internship provision. They should also consider working with employer-led organisations such as AELP to promote the programme to employers.
14. The DfE should consider some slight re-wording of the principles.
    - Principle 1 might be re-framed to state that interns should '*normally*' spend a significant majority of their time in the workplace to enable those for whom it is not appropriate to spend less time. It might also be re-worded to suggest that after an initial settling in period, the majority of time should be spent in the workplace. Care should be taken, however, not to dilute this requirement for most interns, as it is critical to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the supported internship programme.
    - The requirements of principle 2 might be sharpened up so that interns are required to do some additional learning which complements and is directly

linked to that which takes place in the workplace and which is personalised and relevant to the individual.

11.2 For colleges and Supported Internship staff

Publicity, communications and guidance

15. Colleges should make explicit the primary purpose of the supported internship (to support young people to gain sustainable employment) in their publicity materials and in recruitment events and use appropriate strategies during the recruitment process to ensure that they are selecting interns who genuinely want to work.
16. Colleges should provide to employers clear information about the supported internship programme; the role of and commitment required by the employer; the benefits of getting involved with the internship programme, including setting out the business case, and the level of support which the college will be able to offer.
17. Colleges should work to ensure that any risk of low or negative expectations from parents/carers does not become a barrier to the intern's progress. They should establish a relationship with parents early on, promoting the successes of the programme, and thereafter provide regular communications to maintain the confidence and support of parents and carers.
18. Colleges should link more closely with Access to Work representatives to strengthen their understanding of how Access to Work can support the young people during their internship and in the transition into sustainable paid employment.

Building a Supported Internship team

19. College leads would benefit from developing their understanding of the demands, expectations and requirements of each role within the supported internship team, particularly that of the job coach.
20. Colleges should be open-minded about the prior experience requirements they define within their job descriptions or person specifications for job coaches, and focus on identifying individuals with the appropriate skills and attitudes.
21. Colleges should ensure that they have staff who are suitably trained or skilled in engaging employers or should source external agencies who can undertake some of the initial brokerage on their behalf.
22. College leads should consider the training and induction requirements of job coaches and provide access to suitable training at an appropriate point. They could refer to the National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment and might consider supporting their job coaches to gain the new qualifications for supported employment practitioners, developed by LSIS in collaboration with BASE.

23. Colleges should consider from the outset which partners they should be working with in order to build and strengthen their supported internship offer. They should be identifying when to involve each partner and how to optimise their involvement. They will need to work through practical issues such as data sharing, communication strategies and the detail of roles and responsibilities to ensure no duplication of effort.

Employer engagement

24. Colleges should consider carefully what and how much information about an intern to share with an employer, prior to the start of their placement, in order to ensure that the employer is well-placed to provide appropriate support and opportunities for the intern to develop in the workplace. The intern should be involved in the process.
25. Colleges should build on existing employer contacts to establish a database of employers who have agreed 'in principle' to offer a supported internship placement in the future and develop strategies to keep in touch with these employers so that they are primed and ready to accept an intern when a suitable job match is identified.
26. Where appropriate, colleges should work collaboratively locally to identify employers in order to reduce the burden on employers.

Supporting interns

27. Job coaches and other relevant staff should plan from the outset how they will reduce and, eventually for most, withdraw their support, keeping the level of support under continuous review.
28. Colleges should ensure that they have clear exit strategies for each intern on the programme, so that they are able to make a positive progression, wherever possible into paid work, but if that is not the case that they are moving on to something which will enable them to continue their journey to employment.
29. Colleges should ensure:
    - a clear link between the learning that takes place in the workplace and that which happens outside of it
    - college-based learning is personalised to the individual in terms of level, content and interns' interests and aspirations
30. Colleges should seek, wherever possible, to place interns with employers who are likely to be able to offer paid work at the end of the internship where the intern has met the required standards, in order to give the best chance of progressing to sustainable paid employment.

Monitoring and evaluation

31. All colleges should have in place from the outset a simple and effective tracking system that enables them to know where each intern and each job coach is at any given time.

32. Colleges should develop and apply an approach to reviewing interns' progress which allows intern, employer, job coach and other interested parties (e.g. parents) to contribute.

Appendix: The Context for the Introduction of Supported Internships

The target audience for the supported internship trial is interns, aged 16 to 24, with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) in further education (or an Education, Health and Care Plan once these are introduced) who need additional support to move into employment. Colleges in the supported internship trial used the Department's definition[15] of a learner with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD) to establish eligibility. This is defined in statute as an individual who:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons his/her age and/or
- has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of facilities generally provided by institutions providing post-16 education or training

In the context of this evaluation, the following review adopts the term LLDD using the above definition, unless otherwise stated.

In a review of special education needs (SEN) and disability provision in 2010[16], Ofsted evaluated whether current legislative frameworks worked effectively for children and young people from age 0 to 19 in arranging appropriate educational provision. The review found that young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities are[17]:

- disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds
- more likely to display absenteeism, or be excluded from school
- likely to achieve less well than their peers (in terms of progression and attainment)
- one of the most likely cohorts of post-16 learners to find themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET)

As they get older, the challenges increase. The transition into adulthood made by these young people (i.e. LLDD at post-16) is typically characterised by a decline in access to support services, and of most concern to some government agencies is that 'young people entering adult services are at greater risk of marginalisation during the transition process'[18].

> Just over one in five pupils – 1.7 million school-age children in England – are identified as having special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs are categorised, using the 2001 Special Educational

[15] Section 15ZA (6) and (7) of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 41 of the ASCL Act).
[16] Ofsted (2010), The special educational needs and disability review: A statement is not enough
[17] Ibid., p.5
[18] DoH (2010), Prioritising need in the context of *Putting People First:* A whole system approach to eligibility for social care – Guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care (England)

> Needs Code of Practice, according to the degree of support they require. When pupils are regarded as requiring School Action, this usually means they have additional learning needs and that they should receive additional support from within the school, such as small group tuition. When pupils are defined as requiring School Action Plus, staff working with them should receive advice or support from outside specialists. Those in need of the most intensive support are given a statement of special educational needs. Since 2003, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs has slightly decreased from 3% to 2.7%, while the proportion identified as needing less intensive additional support at School Action or School Action Plus has increased from 14.0% in 2003 to 18.2% in 2010. (Ofsted review of SEN and disability (2010))

There are currently 11 million people in Great Britain with a long-term limiting illness/disability, with 20% of individuals in families where there is at least one disabled member living in 'relative income poverty'[19]. Although employment rates for those with a disability are slowly rising, disabled people still remain less likely to gain employment than their non-disabled counterparts (in 2011 in England, 46.3% of disabled people were in employment compared to 76.1% of non-disabled people)[20]. However, the Labour Force Survey (2012) identified a drop in employment rates for young disabled people from 46% in 2001 to 36% in 2012.[21] Securing employment can be an even greater challenge for those with learning difficulties. Latest data from the NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators survey show that only 6.6% of adults known to social services with moderate to severe learning difficulties are in paid employment[22]. Further, the Labour Force Survey (2012) suggests that 'people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions have employment rates of under 15 percent'.[23]

Social care packages for young people transitioning into adult services have been found to generally represent a 'significant reduction in services' – and that successful transition requires careful (and early) planning, often including continued communication with children's services during transition (possibly over a number of years) to ensure that individuals and their families are fully aware of the support and opportunities available to them[24].

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[19] Office for Disability Issues, Disability Facts and Figures: http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/disability-facts-and-figures.php#gd; Section 15ZA(6) and (7) of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 41 of the ASCL Act).

[20] Office for Disability Issues, Disability Employment Factsheet, p.3

[21] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.40

[22] See NHS Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set: 2010-11 provisional release at data.gov.uk

[23] LFS Q2 2012, cited in DWP (2013), Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today, p.41

[24] DoH (2010), Prioritising need in the context of *Putting People First:* A whole system approach to eligibility for social care – Guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care (England)

Other research (Sloper et al 2010) has highlighted that in terms of transition to post-16 education, special school sixth forms are a popular choice among young people already attending special schools. However, transition to local further education (FE) colleges appears to be more problematic, with barriers including a lack of appropriate courses or a lack of availability of specialist support staff or 'multi-sensory' curricula for those with severe or profound learning difficulties[25]. Transition into paid employment is identified as being an even greater challenge: opportunities made available for individuals with complex needs are few, with employment noted as a 'conspicuous gap' in the transition plans of young people with LDD:

> On leaving education, the principal options for these young people were to go to a social services day centre where activities may include work-type pastimes such as gardening or helping in the café, and/or to employ a personal assistant through self-directed support funds[26].

This is despite the fact that in 2005, Burchardt's study of the education and employment of disabled young people established that there is no discernible difference between the aspirations of disabled 16 year olds and their non-disabled peers, and yet by the age of 26, disabled individuals were four times more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled people[27].

Often, projects supporting LLDD into sustainable or meaningful supported employment are short-term initiatives that – due to economic constraints – cannot be funded through established budgets on a permanent basis[28]. Ofsted found links between agencies at transition stage to be 'insufficient, particularly between education provision, adult social care, health services and JobCentre Plus'[29]. However, initiatives involving job coaches and supported employment services were found to be successful in helping LLDD access work but also in making a 'considerable impact on the aspirations of young people and their carers'[30]. Despite this, opportunities to access supported employment across England have been limited and there are declining numbers of LLDD accessing work-based training. Since 2005, for example, the proportion of people on apprenticeships who are defined as having a disability has fallen from 11% to 8%[31]. In 'Fulfilling Potential – Next Steps' (2013) the DWP[32] published a study to inform public understanding of disability and the issues faced by disabled people. The headline findings in relation to finding and retaining employment for young people with LDD confirm that:

[25] Sloper et al (2010), Models of Multi-Agency Services for Transition to Adult Services for Disabled Young People and Those with Complex Health Needs: Impacts and costs

[26] Ibid., p.120

[27] Burchardt, T. (2005), The education and employment of disabled young people: Frustrated ambition

[28] Ofsted (2010), The special educational needs and disability review: A statement is not enough, p.43

[29] Ofsted (2010), The special educational needs and disability review: A statement is not enough, p.44

[30] Ibid., p.45

[31] Apprenticeship Unit (2012), Creating an Inclusive Apprenticeship Offer

[32] DWP (2013) Fulfilling Potential: building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today

- disabled people are more likely to face barriers to education and training and that moving from education into work is harder for disabled people
- disabled young people are twice as likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training)
- although disabled people's employment rates remain much lower than average, half a million more disabled over- 50s are in work now than ten years ago. This contrasts with employment rates for young disabled people which are falling, in line with their non-disabled counterparts
- once young people finish their full-time education, the employment rate gap starts to widen quickly
- young disabled people are five times as likely as older disabled workers to say they have been refused a job or an interview because of their disability
- although there are now more disabled apprentices, disabled young people are still under-represented[33]

The recent Wolf Review of vocational education[34] confirmed that more needs to be done to ensure young people are able to access high quality and a varied range of learning and employment pathways. However, as the above section has shown, transition into employment presents very specific challenges for young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability, and they are more likely to fare worse than their non-disabled counterparts (see for example, Burchardt, 2005)[35]. In response, the recent SEND Green Paper outlined Wolf's vision for:

> …incentivising young people to take the most valuable vocational qualifications pre-16; introducing principles to guide study programmes for young people on vocational routes post-16; evaluating the delivery structure and content of apprenticeships to ensure they deliver the right skills for the workplace; making sure the regulatory framework moves quickly away from accrediting individual qualifications to regulating awarding organisations; removing the requirement that all qualifications offered to 14- to 19-year-olds fit within the Qualifications and Credit Framework and enabling further education lecturers and professionals to teach in schools, ensuring young people are being taught by those best suited to teach them. **The Department for Education will build on the findings of the Wolf Review of vocational education to improve vocational and work-related learning options for young people aged 14 to 25 with SEN or who are disabled[36].**

[33] Ibid.

[34] Alison Wolf (2011), Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report

[35] Burchardt, T. (2005) *The education and employment of disabled young people; frustrated ambition* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

[36] DfE (2011), Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – a consultation, p.64

Policy reforms/government response

Children and young people who have a special educational need or disability deserve the same life chances as every other child. But, too often, the systems that should support them and their families fail them, putting bureaucratic barriers in their way and failing to address their true needs. A single system would ensure children and young people received the support they need regardless of age or where they are taught, providing for them from birth until, where appropriate, their 25th birthday, with comparable statutory rights and protections throughout. (Draft legislation on reform of provision for children and young people with SEN, September 2012).

Support and Aspiration: SEND Green Paper and the new Children and Families Bill

The SEN and Disability (SEND) Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration* (DfE 2011) and subsequent *Progress and Next Steps* (DfE 2012), set out wide-ranging proposals to improve education and life outcomes of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The reforms presented through the Green Paper are the most substantial for supporting those with SEND in thirty years, and aim to see a more streamlined system that gives confidence and independence back to young people and their families, whilst ensuring local agencies have more control over the decisions made on the ground to support each individual appropriately and effectively.

The reforms proposed are designed to 'support better life outcomes for young people; give parents confidence by giving them more control; and transfer power to professionals on the front line and to local communities'[37]. They will be ratified within the new Children and Families Bill expected to be introduced in 2013, and the draft SEN provisions were published in early September 2012[38].

In summary, to be introduced through the Bill by 2014[39]:

- a single assessment process which is more streamlined, better involves children, young people and families and is completed quickly
- an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which brings services together and is focused on improving outcomes
- an offer of a personal budget for families with an EHCP

Furthermore, local authorities will be required to provide a clear streamlined offer, showing the support and opportunities available to children and young people with LLDD from the age of 0 through to 25. To assist in this, joint commissioning of services are

[37] Ibid, p.4

[38] See: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm84/8438/8438.pdf

[39] DfE (2012), Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps, p.5

expected to be arranged between local education, health and social care provision, so that the local authority will become central to facilitating and delivering services[40]. The vision in the Green Paper also includes an embedded role for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in ensuring individual independence throughout the assessment process, 'full engagement' of children and young people (and their parents/carers) in the assessment process, and improved arrangements for transition from children into adult services.

Twenty local pathfinders involving 31 local authorities and their local health partners are testing the reforms and building the knowledge and skills needed to implement them effectively. The remit of the pathfinders covers trialling new processes required as a result of the key reforms (as listed above) plus additional areas chosen to reflect the circumstances and priorities of local authorities (e.g. focusing on specific age ranges, supporting parents, banded funding, and support requirements for particularly vulnerable groups such as children in care[41]). In addition, the pathfinders are tasked with developing viable approaches to address a series of key challenges identified through the Support and Aspiration consultation process.

[40] SecEd (2012), Are you prepared for the SEN changes?

[41] DfE (2012), Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps, p.20-21

Table 9 Key challenges for pathfinders

Need	Challenge
Working together	▪ identification of best ways for agencies to work together in order to support a single EHCP assessment ▪ trial formal collaborative working arrangements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding, shared governance, pooled budgets) ▪ improving good practice in joint working
Understanding of statutory requirements	▪ develop and improve engagement with VCS organisations ▪ develop and improve engagement with parents ▪ increase wider knowledge of how current systems work ▪ take advantage of local expertise to inform and design new single assessment processes

Improving assessment processes	▪ investigate how to improve several areas of the assessment process, including:
	  ▪ bringing health and social care, and education, assessments together
	  ▪ continuity of social care and health arrangements for advice/input
	  ▪ which assessments should be part of the scope of EHCP
	  ▪ possible roles for VCS organisations (e.g. information/guidance, advocacy)
	  ▪ how to streamline the assessment process for individuals with complex needs (some can currently require up to 32 assessments as they grow up)
	  ▪ creating a quicker, more efficient process, involving parents in key roles
	  ▪ supporting the development of a Personal Independence Payment claim using data families provide through the assessment process

(Source: DfE 2012: Support and Aspiration – next steps)

An evaluation of the process and implementation aspects of the first eighteen months of the SEND pathfinder programme has so far identified, with particular relevance for the supported internships[42]:

- increased involvement of parents in assessment and planning processes needing to be balanced with ensuring that children and young people have parity of input
- the need to build on areas of good practice in joint/integrated working and personalised approaches to creating new packages of support

[42] DfE (2013), Evaluation of the SEND pathfinder programme: process and implementation, p.11-12

- challenges for providers involved in the 'shift to focus on outcomes', learning how to develop 'outcomes based' plans and managing wider cultural change within an organisation as a result

Preparing for Adulthood

One of the strands for the pathfinder programme is *Preparing for Adulthood*, placing a greater focus on outcomes achieved by young people as they progress through education and training provision. Building on the recommendations from the Wolf Review, a core aspect of these outcomes will be employment and *Preparing for Adulthood* aims to ensure that those with SEN and disabilities have equal life chances such as paid employment, housing independent living, community inclusion, friends and relationships[43].

Supported Internships[44]

Backed by £3 million in government funding, another initiative is being trialled, that of supported internships, in 15 colleges across England from September 2012. These internships are offering young people aged 16 to 24 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities a structured employment opportunity that is tailored to suit their individual circumstances and needs, whilst designed to equip them with appropriate employability skills. Within supported internships, an expert job coach will provide personalised support for both the employer and young person, and learning will be combined with work placements with the aim of developing work skills and sustainable employment on completion of the programme. Learning will be delivered via the systematic instruction method wherever appropriate[45].

The overall aim for the programme is that it will equip young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with the skills needed for them to achieve sustainable paid employment after the supported internship. It is anticipated that it will break down barriers to employment (including negative attitudes) whilst boosting their own confidence, gaining sustainable paid employment and therefore developing their prospects for a smooth yet supported transition into a more independent adulthood.

All post-16 colleges will be able to offer supported internships from September 2013 as part of the new study programmes. The internships will be placed primarily in the workplace, and are designed to meet a minimal framework of **four key principles to**

[43] For further details, see: www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk

[44] Summary of the four key principles are taken from DfE (2012) Annex 9 Financial and Management Information Requirements: Trialling the Supported Internship model for 16-24 year olds - Agreement Details. Full details of the four principles are provided in Appendix B of this document.

[45] Systematic instruction focuses on teaching individuals how to learn, providing strategies and techniques to that they can regularly apply when learning and understanding new information (e.g. thinking aloud when problem-solving; memory devices such as mnemonics; learning a sequential approach to solving a problem that can be used each time.)

which all supported internships must adhere, so as to enable innovation across local areas.

Table 10 The 4 key principles of Supported Internships

Principle 1	A significant majority of the participant's time should be spent at the employer's premises. Whilst at the employer the young person will be expected to comply with real job conditions, such as time keeping or dress code. Where appropriate, learning at the employer should use systematic instruction, a method specifically designed to help people with complex learning difficulties learn new tasks.
Principle 2	Participants should do some form of learning alongside their time at the employer. Wherever possible, colleges should help students who do not already have level 2 in English and mathematics to achieve that. The Department recognises that this will not be possible for some learners with learning difficulties, but all students, whatever their starting point, should be enabled and encouraged to progress as far as possible to whatever level is appropriate.
Principle 3	Jobs must work for both the young person and the employer. For the young person they must fit with their vocational profile, contribute to their long term career goal and be flexible enough to address barriers where necessary. For the employer they must meet a real business need. As the goal of the programme is for the young person to end up in paid employment we would like, where possible, to see employers taking on internees to have a job available to offer at the end of it should the internee meet the required standard.
Principle 4	Central to the study programme is the provision of support to the young person and to the employer. Depending on the young person's needs this support could be provided either by a tutor from the college or by a formally trained job coach. The Department would like to see on-going support provided – e.g. via Access to Work - should the employer offer the young person a job at the end of the internship.[46]

It is intended that this framework will still allow local agencies to remain responsive both to a young person's long-term career aspirations and capabilities, and an employer's business need.

> In line with our proposed reforms to post-16 study programmes, providers will be responsible for drawing up a supported internship study programme. Close working relationships between education providers, employers and

[46] From 16/7/13 disabled people on supported internships will get additional help through the Access to Work programme.

> local authorities will help to make this successful, building on the existing good links in many local areas. However we believe that there needs to be one body clearly in the lead and that education providers will be best placed to do this[47].

Decisions about which young people are most likely to benefit from the programme would be made at local level, but it is hoped that an employer could have a vacancy available at the end of the internship for an internee, should they have met the required standard during their training.

Some of the key elements of supported internships are outlined below.

What is supported employment?

The term supported employment is used widely and it is useful to provide some clarification for the purposes of this evaluation. Drawing on recent research by SSCR[48] which suggests that there are two major approaches – the more traditional models which are often in a sheltered environment rather than part of 'mainstream' employment; these are sometimes referred to as 'train then place' models. The second approach starts with seeking out and getting a paid job role, then providing the necessary training and support in the job to 'enable the person to gain confidence and skills in the open workplace'.

However, the SSCR research also identified a third category of employment support approach 'that appears to bridge the gap between these two, whereby people are trained and supported within an open workplace environment, but on a time-limited 'placement' basis, such as an internship or apprenticeship, i.e. they are not guaranteed/necessarily going to continue with a job at that place of work at the end of this time period.'[49]

This approach most closely fits with the supported internship model designed for the trial.

The role of the job coach

The role of job coach is regarded as key to the successful delivery of supported internships. The job coach will view both the intern and the employer as customers with specific needs and requirements. Their main role will include[50]:

- getting to know the intern and the employer to ensure an effective job match
- devising a plan of support for both the internee and employer (with regular reviews and updates)
- setting stretching learning goals, and using systematic instruction where appropriate and at a pace to suit both intern and employer

[47] DfE (2012), Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps,p.62

[48] NIHR School for Social Care Research Scoping Review: Economic Evidence Around Employment Support

[49] Ibid. pp5-6

[50] Preparing for Adulthood (2012), Supported internship seminar briefing – Kathy Melling

- supporting employers to maintain productivity whilst adapting job roles
- advising on reasonable adjustments that may be required in the workplace (being mindful of health, safety and wellbeing of the intern)
- ensuring the intern is socially included in the workplace
- identifying 'natural supports'[51] and advocating on behalf of the intern
- providing better-off calculations
- ensuring support continues after the internship has finished to ensure the intern can move into paid employment and a sustainable career

The work of the job coach is underpinned by the Supported Employment National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Supported Employment National Occupational Standards

The Supported Employment National Occupational Standards (NOS) were developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and ratified by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in May 2012, following a development and consultation process, mapping of supported employment job functions, and consideration of the values of supported employment. The uses of NOS vary widely (in some places the tally is at 115 uses[52]), but fundamentally they are designed to support the development of competence-based training, qualifications, and to underpin other key processes such as workplace appraisal, quality assurance and continual personal/professional development.

Within the NOS, 'supported employment' is defined as 'the high quality personalised support for people with disabilities and/or other disadvantages which enables them to seek, access and retain employment in the open labour market'[53], which is fairly close to the working model for supported internships[54]. These can include job coaches, mentors, careers/employment advisers, but can also cover what the NOS refer to as 'natural supports' – i.e. those who work in line management roles. The Standards set out the **performance criteria** that individuals within the supported employment sector need to work towards to be able to demonstrate competence, as well as the **knowledge and understanding** required to underpin that competence. Supported employment NOS (and therefore the job roles) pose a further challenge however, since individuals in the sector are required to adhere to a set of ethical, value-based practices in their approach to work. As a result, the skills and knowledge required within the Standards also needs to be

[51] Support as unobtrusive as possible and that fades over time – drawing upon community services/social capital (see HM Government, *Supported employment and Job Coaching: best practice guidelines*)

[52] See *115 Uses of NOS*: http://clients.squareeye.net/uploads/dea/documents/uses_of_standard.pdf

[53] LSIS (2012) Supported Employment National Occupational Standards (full suite), p.3

[54] For the functional process for the Supported |Employment NOS, see: http://base-uk.org/sites/base-uk.org/files/knowledge/National%20Occupational%20Standards/full_suite_supported_employment_nos_final.pdf

applied – in the appropriate context – against the following **twelve core values** as defined within the NOS[55]:

Understand…

1. …the positive contribution that can be made in the workplace by people with disabilities and/or disadvantages
2. …the main components of a 'real job'[56]
3. …the 'zero rejection' philosophy, i.e. everyone can work given the right role and support within it
4. …supported employment does not equate to work readiness. It is a 'place then train' approach, securing employment first and training later
5. …that job searches should happen at the earliest opportunity
6. …individuals require choice and control of their career decisions based on a variety of experiences, options and support; support should be built around the individual, with options offering viable employability and promoting personal choice
7. …the need to create genuine partnership between the individual, family and support workers, and the providers of supported employment
8. …that an individual should be supported to become a fully active member of the workforce and wider community, bringing them both social and economic inclusion
9. …the importance of employers being regarded as customers of supported employment, with their own needs and requirements
10. …Social Role Valorisation (SRV) – recognising that those with disabilities and/or disadvantages are often regarded as of less value than others: employment is a valued social role, bringing wider positive consequences for individuals
11. …the social model of disability as a product of physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers that can lead to discrimination; removing barriers to employment can reduce discriminatory thinking and change social approaches/attitudes to those with disability and/or disadvantages
12. …not many stay in the same job for their entire working life, and this applies equally to those with disabilities and/or disadvantages wanting to adapt to changing labour markets and improve employment prospects; supported employment should therefore encourage career development, promoting training opportunities and options for increased responsibility through time unlimited support

[55] Ibid., p.4

[56] "wages are paid at the going rate for the job, with the same terms and conditions as all other employees; the job helps the person to meet their life goals and aspirations; the role is valued by managers and colleagues; the job has similar hours and times at work as other employees, with safe working conditions"

The role of Access to Work

Access to Work is a specialist disability scheme which provides practical advice and support to disabled people in employment and their employers to help overcome work-related obstacles resulting from disability. It is provided where an individual requires support or adaptations beyond the reasonable adjustments an employer is legally obliged to provide under the Equality Act, 2010.

Access to Work does not provide the support, but Access to Work funding can be used to cover a share of the costs towards any additional support required. Access to Work customers must[57]:

- be aged 16 or over
- have a disability/health condition that has a long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out their job
- be in, or about to start, paid employment (including self-employment)
- be on traineeships, supported internships, work trials and work academies
- live and work in Great Britain
- not be claiming Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance whilst in work (with the exception of higher permitted work[58])

The 2011 Sayce Review of disability employment support[59] identified Access to Work as the government's 'best kept secret', with positive feedback from users that Access to Work 'at its best boosts the confidence of both employees and employers'[60].

> It [Access to Work] helped 37,300 people in 2009/10[61], at an average cost per person of around £2,600. Historically, Access to Work has been rationed by lack of publicity. It is a matter of accident whether an individual or employer has heard of it – and it is under-used by people working in small businesses (who probably need it most) and by those with mental health problems and learning disabilities. This means people needlessly lose their jobs or miss out on getting them[62].

As a result the Sayce Review recommended a wide range of reforms, so as to improve and broaden the Access to Work service with an aim to double the number of people eligible for Access to Work, raise 'overall numbers securing disability employment support to 100,000 within existing resources'[63]. This, Sayce recommended, could be done for example by ensuring effective partnerships are formed between employers, employees and wider support networks; streamlining processes, improving

[57] DWP (2012), Access to Work - presentation

[58] For definitions and rules for Permitted Work Higher Limit see: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/f35.htm

[59] Liz Sayce (2011), Getting in, staying in and getting on: Disability employment support fit for the future

[60] Ibid.

[61] And over 35,000 in 2010/11 (DWP AtW presentation, 2012).

[62] Liz Sayce (2011), Getting in, staying in and getting on: Disability employment support fit for the future, p.14

[63] Ibid., p.15

communications and customer services; raising awareness and widening participation in the scheme, particularly among smaller employers; reducing waste and ultimately ensuring that those directly involved with the service have independence and control over the decisions made.

Notably, Sayce was in support of the use of supported internships as a way to ensure high quality provision and employment opportunities for those with disabilities; Access to Work support, the Review suggested, should be applicable to any workplace the individual chooses, rather than government funded 'disability-specific' work environments and provision[64]. Consequently, Access to Work should complement initiatives such as supported internships, where individuals are at the start of a potential career and require rapid 'support to realise their aspirations for sustainable work'[65] and enable them to stay in the workplace by accessing additional support that may otherwise be unavailable to them or their employer.

Government response to the Sayce Review has welcomed the recommendations and the support shown towards successful programmes and schemes, in particular Access to Work. As a result, in the Spending Review of March 2012 an additional £15million of funding was made available to Access to Work, with the budget for specialist employment support also protected. Further, resources are to be 'directed towards disabled people themselves, giving them maximum choice and control in the services they receive' [66].

In July 2013, changes to Access to Work were announced, to widen the eligibility criteria of the scheme to enable individuals in traineeships, supported internships, work trials and work academies to benefit from the support available, as well as disabled individuals setting up their own business via the New Enterprise Alliance. In addition, businesses with up to 49 employees are no longer required to pay a contribution towards 'the extra costs faced by disabled people in work'[67].

Other supported employment initiatives and best practice

Examining the outcomes from research undertaken internationally into supported employment schemes, Dr Stephen Beyer at the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities has concluded that attitudes of employers towards hiring learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not always the problem to recruitment, but that employers require additional information in terms of the support available and the benefits to them in doing so[68]. Good support systems can increase employer confidence and create further jobs for complex needs – highlighting, according to Dr Beyer's research, the intrinsic link between

[64] Ibid., p.18

[65] Ibid., p.18

[66] DWP (2012), Disability employment support: Fulfilling potential, p.6

[67] DWP (2013), ''Drive to get more disabled people into mainstream jobs', see: www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-get-more-disabled-people-into-mainstream-jobs

[68] Beyer, S. (2011), Supported Internships and the Benefits to Employers

education and employment institutions in ensuring a successful placement with sustainable outcomes both for the individual and the employer[69].

As part of the Valuing People Now strategy[70], and following Beyer's research, it was recognised by the government that supported employment was a 'well-evidenced, personalised approach' to giving people with significant disabilities access to sustainable employment[71]. This prompted the development of best practice guidelines to assist those working in the supported employment sector, many of which have underpinned the new Supported Employment NOS described earlier. However, the guidelines also describe the skills and attributes required by supported employment workers/job coaches for each step of the process, whilst ensuring that employers, job seekers/employees, family carers, and community/natural supports are all involved and kept informed as appropriate throughout the process.

Table 11 The government's supported employment model (Valuing People Now)

	Working with employer	Working with job seeker/employee
Engagement	▪ research local job market ▪ contact employers best matching skills/ interests of job seeker ▪ professional approach ▪ promote business case for diversity in the workplace ▪ secure commitment to participate fully in the process	▪ identify individuals wishing to work (preferably) at least 16 hours per week – although this might need to be built up over time ▪ gain support from family carers, community supports ▪ provide accessible information to encourage self-determination and informed decisions ▪ ensure full and active participation ▪ encourage high levels of motivation from job seeker
Understanding needs/ getting to know you	▪ enable employer to be the best possible at employing/ supporting those with disabilities ▪ identify unmet needs/ opportunities to tailor job specifications to add value to business and the role ▪ agree recruitment strategy to fit with existing policy or to	▪ carry out vocational profiling/ person-centred employment planning ▪ assess (in partnership) the job seekers aspirations, skills, needs, abilities, experience, preferences and supports ▪ gather information on benefits income ▪ better-off calculation

[69] Ibid.

[70] The government's 2009-2012 strategy for improving the lives of people with learning disabilities

[71] HM Government (2011), Supported employment and Job Coaching: best practice guidelines

	develop it into a more inclusive one to help attract a diverse workforce	▪ ensure the process is led by the job-seeker
Getting to know the job/ agreeing a plan	▪ carry out job analysis to understand all aspects of the role, workplace culture and environment ▪ identify potential 'natural supports' (and build on these)	▪ agree plan to find and sustain employment that matches information gained through 'getting to know you' process above ▪ make sure individual will be financially better off at work ▪ identify the individual's personal pathway to employment
Job match	▪ might involve developing, tailoring or designing job roles ▪ negotiate with employer: agree reasonable adjustments required ▪ carry out risk assessment to address equality, diversity, health, safety and safeguarding issues	
Arranging the right support	▪ agree person-centred plan with all involved to ensure the most 'natural' supports are appropriately used ▪ ensure individuals can develop into valued employees, maintaining their health and wellbeing, and employers develop a workplace supportive of those with disabilities ▪ systematic instruction/training for employees and employers where required ▪ address other needs where required/possible, e.g. advocacy, disability awareness, job readjustments, problem-solving, on-going natural supports	
Career development	▪ agree development, enhancement and progression opportunities to benefit employer and employee ▪ provide support to access training opportunities and if appropriate, work towards qualifications	

Getting a Life

Running for three years, 2008 to 2011, Getting a Life was a national programme aimed at identifying good practice in getting young people with learning difficulties into paid employment, and developing regionally-based resources of advice and guidance for those wishing to improve, further develop or implement supported employment routes into work. Good practice identified in the North West for example includes benchmarking local processes against any national guidelines/pathway frameworks to assess current practice and identify any initial actions that can be taken towards improving services[72].

[72] North West Joint Improvement Partnership (2011), Getting a Life in the North West: Things to think about and ideas to try; DoH (2011), Pathways to Getting a Life: transition planning for full lives

Wider feedback was gained from individuals and their families about the Getting a Life programme. Although based on the experiences of younger individuals (age 14+), the relevant outcomes from consultation on transition into employment are summarised below.

Table 12 Outcomes from Getting a Life: transition into employment

	Pathway into paid work
Overall	▪ education and transition planning needs to include/encourage employment opportunities ▪ those with learning difficulties should be able to access the same range of opportunities as their non-disabled peers ▪ young people moving through the transition process will have experiences to share that can help to inspire others in the same position
Challenges	▪ often families and support professionals can have incorrect information about employment support opportunities available to young people with learning difficulties, the impact of work on benefits claimed, or the attitudes of employers ▪ where expectations for employment are considered by individuals and their families, these do not generally include the full-range of options (e.g. full/part-time, self-employment, apprenticeships) ▪ job coaches need to connect more with schools to share experiences, help solve problems and build on good practice in the transition process ▪ creative person-centred outcomes for the individual can be lacking
Opportunities	▪ individuals need to be encouraged to have the expectation to work, with clear and correct information as to all the opportunities available, and funding eligibility ▪ work placements need to be high quality 'real work' settings; when employment agencies are involved there appear to be better outcomes for young people ▪ all examples and guidance given should reflect the wide range of options available; this includes demonstrating how the benefits system can encourage rather than hinder or stall employment ▪ planning needs to start early ensuring that other support services (e.g. health/social care, housing) are able to work around the individual's requirements so that employment is made possible ▪ employment needs to be prioritised in local strategic planning, with resources used efficiently

(Source: Department of Health 2011)

Project SEARCH

As part of Valuing Employment Now strategy for people with learning disabilities, between 2009 and 2011, a number of 'demonstration projects' took place to showcase what works in terms of supported employment initiatives. These projects have now closed, although the vision for, and commitment towards developing, supported employment has been continued through the Sayce Review, the Coalition Government's SEN Green Paper, and in particular the Preparing for Adulthood pathfinder.

One of the 2009 to 2011 ‘demonstration projects’ was Project SEARCH (licensed by Project SEARCH US), a supported internship programme hosted by employers with a view to enabling interns to become ready for work and better placed to find appropriate employment on completion. Fourteen sites participated in the ‘demonstration’ year (2010 to 2011). Existing employment and supported employment funding streams were used to identify tutors and job coaches, and any further costs or resources were met by employers. The adopted model for Project SEARCH internships, based on the vision to ‘facilitate successful transitions from education into paid work’[73] applied approaches including vocational profiling, job matching and systematic instruction. Key findings from the project are listed below:

Table 13 Key findings from Project SEARCH[74]

Outcomes	▪ at least 1 in 3 interns gained full-time or part-time employment on completion of the programme (reported to be higher than average at the time for people with moderate to severe learning difficulties) ▪ soft outcomes reported by interns, families and project partners: improvements in self-confidence, motivation, decision-making, self-esteem and health ▪ organisational benefits for employers and other project partners: improved efficiency and attitudes among the workforce
Successes	▪ an effective and organised partnership between employer, education provider and supported employment provider is essential in terms of communications and sharing responsibilities; plus ‘buy-in’ at senior level across all partners is crucial ▪ tutors trained in systematic instruction techniques (which can also be useful for employers and mentors/coaches) ▪ close engagement with families, carers and other staff within the workplace assisted the programme’s success ▪ job search should be an early focus for interns and include external employers
Challenges	▪ availability of funding: many sites had ‘absorbed’ costs or found accessed additional funding streams – but this is not sustainable in the longer term ▪ the aim to provide continuing support to those individuals who had completed the programme raised concerns, particularly from those also expecting to take on new interns the following year ▪ employers participating in the scheme will have limited opportunities in terms of the posts they could make available for more than one intern, so new employers would need to be continually engaged

(Source: CESI 2012)

[73] Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012), Project SEARCH Evaluation: Final Report (Office for Disability Issues), p.11

[74] Ibid.

It was thought by partner organisations that supported internships through Project SEARCH were particularly beneficial because of the relatively substantial length of time spent by the individual within a 'real work' environment, gaining valuable experience and skills. It was recognised however that future programmes needed to enable a pragmatic approach to delivery, remaining flexible enough to take into account and cater for local circumstances.

The evaluation report for Project SEARCH recommended that for the supported internship element of the Preparing for Adulthood pathfinder, core successes 'such as employer engagement and a partnership approach to Supported Internships' are adopted and maintained throughout the duration of the initiative[75]. Other key considerations suggested for future implementation of supported internships were[76]:

- maintaining close engagement of individuals and their families
- job matching, vocational profiling and the use of systematic instruction techniques
- encouraging an early focus on job searching, with the engagement of external employers

Other case studies

The Realistic Opportunities for Supported Employment (ROSE)[77] programme is based at Havering College since its launch in April 2006. Its aim is to secure paid work placements for clients with learning disabilities. The programme involves the support of a job coach, which is made available to provide support to clients for as long as necessary to become an independent employee. The programme aims to raise awareness and provide advice to employers as to their expectations of working with people with learning disabilities.

A supported employment initiative was trialled for people with learning disabilities in North Lanarkshire[78] and illustrated the success of supported employment (SE) in an area with relatively high unemployment. It was acknowledged that the achievements were due to 'a sustained period of development and investment, and represents the benefits of a mature SE agency, rather than a new and inexperienced one. The approach involved:

- investing significant time in being with the prospective worker
- a range of settings, some social, to get a better understanding of their capacities
- being clear with prospective workers and their families that work of 16 hours or more is the service's goal

[75] Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2012), Project SEARCH Evaluation: Final Report (Office for Disability Issues), p.14

[76] Ibid., p.13

[77] http://rose.havering-college.ac.uk/our-clients/client-case-studies.aspx

[78] Beyer, S. (2008) An evaluation of the outcomes of supported employment in North Lanarkshire (2007), Cardiff University

- providing expert welfare rights advice as an integral part of the supported employment process that provides reassurance that income will increase in employment through a blend of earned income, non-means tested benefits and Working Tax Credits
- financial investment to provide adequate job coach resources to deliver the SE process

Traineeships

The government has recently introduced an additional study programme to assist young people to enter the employment market, that of traineeships (introduced in May 2013). These differ from the supported internships programme in that they are not aimed at young people with high support needs and are more about providing work experience prior to a move into an apprenticeship. The supported internship is aimed to provide young people the opportunity for learning a specific job role in the workplace in order to move into that role as sustained employment.

Traineeships will be available initially for young people aged 16 to19 and for young people with Learning Difficulty Assessments [79] up to academic age 25 from August 2013. These are targeting young people who:

- are not currently in work, have little work experience but are focused on work or the prospect of it
- are qualified below level 3
- providers and employers consider have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or an apprenticeship within six months of engaging in a traineeship

They are not intended for young people that are:

- the most disengaged young people who require very intensive support
- those ready to start an apprenticeship
- those already in a job

The duration will be no more than six months with a work placement within the traineeship to be at least six weeks but no more than five months. The trainees will be expected to study English and mathematics unless they have achieved GCSE A*-C in those subjects. The programme has been deliberately designed to be flexible to enable providers to design traineeships to meet the requirements of young people who are claiming benefits[80].

[79] These will be replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans, subject to the passage of the Children and Families Bill.

[80] DfE (2013), Traineeships: Supporting young people to develop the skills for apprenticeships and sustainable employment: Framework for delivery

The quality and meaningfulness of delivery were foremost concerns for providers in preparation for the implementation of traineeships, with indicators of these being the ability to offer:

- safe working/learning environments
- adequate and appropriate supervision
- effective mentoring
- worthwhile, employment-related tasks to complete

The focus for colleges preparing for the delivery of new traineeships was on developing and providing an 'experience for work' rather than 'work experience', to change the emphasis to students', with a view to develop new partnerships with employers that jointly work at creating learning and training opportunities that offer a more holistic view of the sorts of job roles available to trainees[81].

[81] OCR (2013), A Special Report on Traineeships

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at: Joanne O'Shea, Level 5, 2 St Paul's Place, 125 Norfolk St, Sheffield, S1 2FJ
Email:joanne.oshea@education.gsi.gov.uk

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