

Best practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes

Final report

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Learning and Work Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This report explores best practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe. For the purposes of this project, pre-apprenticeship programmes are defined as programmes targeted at young people aged 16-24, where at least one of the stated aims is progression to an apprenticeship. Across Europe, some programmes are explicitly called 'pre-apprenticeships' whilst others have specific brand names. Programmes typically prepare young people for apprenticeships by providing a combination of vocational training and hands-on experience, however, the components vary by individual programme.

The report draws together emerging findings from:

- A **desk-based literature review** of official reports and evaluations, independent studies and peer-reviewed research focussed on pre-apprenticeships across Europe.
- An online **call for evidence**.
- **In-depth interviews** with providers of pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- **Deep dive study visits** with pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe
- A **knowledge exchange workshop** for providers and other stakeholders from across Europe.

2. Findings

Programme entry

Pre-apprenticeships are typically targeted at economically or socially disadvantaged young people who are unemployed, early school leavers and/or young people who are low skilled and facing barriers to work. Additionally, some providers directly target sub-groups with specific needs or from particular backgrounds (e.g. homeless young people, ex-offenders, young people with mental health difficulties or young people in government care/care leavers). Even where programmes are not directly targeted at young people with complex needs, young people classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET) will sometimes present with additional or complex needs.

Clear messaging that focusses on pre-apprenticeships as a route to employment has proved to be effective in making the pre-apprenticeship offer attractive. In addition to engaging young people, typically via outreach and online marketing (e.g. through social media), providers often run events to promote their programmes as well as relying on referrals from other agencies.

Assessing potential trainees is an essential part of all effective pre-apprenticeship programmes, to explore expectations, aspirations, capabilities and skills. Assessment typically involves some form of basic or functional skills assessment and a discussion with tutors or other programme staff. This allows barriers to learning to be identified from the outset and suitable workplace opportunities identified. Making a successful match between trainees and their work placement host is critical in achieving successful programme completion and progression opportunities and such matching is reliant on comprehensive assessment information.

Programme design and delivery

Pre-apprenticeships benefit from a clear framework for quality assurance and require providers to provide strong oversight to ensure participants experience high quality work placements.

Preparatory activities are an important pre-cursor to work experience placements in the most effective programmes – particularly as young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes typically need support to develop their confidence and self-esteem and their employability skills. There is an expectation that basic skills provision (e.g. literacy and numeracy) should be provided, and ideally this is woven seamlessly into programmes to give young people the basic building blocks of labour market success alongside work experience.

Work experience placements provide young people with invaluable experience of real-life employers. Tailoring placements to the individual needs of participants is likely to yield the most successful placements, but this can be limited by the availability of willing and able local employers. Placements need to be monitored and any problems acted upon to ensure the best chances for completion and positive experience.

In the most effective programmes, providers often offer holistic support to trainees which is appropriate and tailored to the diverse needs that disadvantaged young people can have. Mentoring is often a core part of any support package, and mentors can be tutors, staff with specialist backgrounds, employer representatives and/or peers (e.g. apprentices). These relationships can help to build individual's sense of self-esteem and worth through giving young people space and time to discuss their experiences and aspirations. Mentors are then able to respond appropriately, including offering more support, if and when any problems arise, or additional needs become apparent. High quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), is important in addressing the lack of opportunity awareness amongst programme participants and helps their labour market transitions.

Pre-apprenticeship provision should be designed flexibly to ensure it addresses the individual needs of participants. Varying the time frames of programmes, offering more or less intensive basic skills training, and putting in place a multi-faceted support package are all ways in programmes can flex around trainee needs.

Partnerships and employer engagement

Engaging employers in pre-apprenticeships is necessary not only to facilitate well planned and executed work placements: their involvement can also ensure that the design of programmes reflects labour market needs and enhances progression opportunities. However, most employers are likely to need the support of providers in offering high quality placements and supporting young people during their time on site. This is particularly the case when working with young people who have additional support needs.

Employer engagement can also help by bringing employee representatives together with young people - exposure which benefits both parties. Young people on pre-apprenticeships can find inspiration in the experiences of employers, particularly if they share personal characteristics or experiences (e.g. disabilities or low educational attainment) and meeting young people can overcome any negative stereotypes employers may hold.

Other partnerships, for example with schools, public authorities, public employment services, career guidance providers, youth organisations and trade unions, all help in the development and

execution of successful pre-apprenticeship programmes. Partners can offer specialist support to trainees, recruit or refer to programmes, deliver specific programme elements and/or help by providing oversight or advice. Effective partnerships add real value to the pre-apprenticeship offer in many ways.

Supporting progression

Effective pre-apprenticeship providers can achieve very high progression rates even when working with young people with multiple barriers, or from very disadvantaged backgrounds. Some providers embed a focus on progression into every element of their programme, from the assessment of young people to the selection of employers and the development of ongoing relationships with them, into exit interviews and maximising learning from placements. Linking specific programme inputs to progression outcomes, however, requires further data and analysis.

Monitoring and evaluation

There is a lack of robust evaluation data to drive forward improvements in pre-apprenticeships, and providers should be encouraged to measure a range of outcomes that go beyond monitoring how many young people they work with, or even progression rate data. Both soft and hard outcomes are also important, and impact assessment is necessary to establish how pre-apprenticeships improve on a 'do nothing' approach.

3. Lessons learnt

Best practice in **programme design** involves:

- Developing clear quality assurance frameworks and strong provider oversight.
- Working to clearly defined and realistic goals for all parties.
- Building in sufficient flexibility to meet individual needs and being holistic enough to directly tackle a range of individual barriers to labour market entry.

To facilitate successful **programme entry and recruitment**, pre-apprenticeship providers should focus on:

- Engaging young people before they drop out of learning, where this is possible.
- Clearly outlining the benefits of pre-apprenticeships in terms of how they can lead to apprenticeships and better job, career and wage outcomes for participants.
- Investing in a range of marketing approaches which combine events, online marketing and outreach to attract and inform young people and their parents, with partner engagement to secure appropriate referrals.
- Careful and sensitive assessment of young people's capabilities, skills, aspirations and needs, using IT systems to do this where appropriate, prior to their entry to a programme.
- Using the data obtained from high quality initial assessments to support successful matches between young people and employers.

Success in **programme delivery** involves:

- Providing preparatory activities and sequenced learning as preparation for workplace-based elements where necessary.
- Supporting basic skills development through workplace learning which embeds general, vocational and soft skills throughout.
- Offering a support package which combines a mix of core support - offered to all trainees as part of the programme (e.g. mentoring and high quality IAG) - with specifically tailored and/or specialist provision to address specific needs.
- Personalised work experience placements selected for young people on the basis of their skills and interests, with employers who offer high-quality placements that have clear progression routes.

Successful **partnership working, and employer engagement** requires:

- Committed partners who add value to the offer and help to create a 'pathways' approach which provides a seamless transition between school and work.
- Utilising partners in a way that reflects their specific strengths to enhance the quality, content or inclusivity of the programme.
- Providers to work with employers in the design of programmes to ensure they reflect labour market needs and lead to positive outcomes for both young people and employers alike.
- Employers to be supported so that they can develop realistic expectations, run high quality placements, deal with issues as they arise and provide suitable progression opportunities for the young people they work with.

To **support progression**, effective providers typically use:

- Careful participant assessment before a young person starts a pre-apprenticeship, and on an ongoing basis.
- A strong focus on exit interviews and learning from work placements.
- Ongoing work placement monitoring.
- A clear focus on working with employers who offer real opportunities for progression to apprenticeships.

There is little existing evidence, however, which directly links individual programme elements to work and education outcomes. There is also generally a need for better **monitoring and evaluation** of pre-apprenticeships, particularly in terms of impact and outcomes, to promote a culture of continual feedback and improvement.

1.INTRODUCTION

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. Since November 2017, L&W have been working with the support of J.P. Morgan to research and share best practice in the design and delivery of inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeship programmes that provide pathways to apprenticeships for young people, across Europe.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes are defined as programmes targeted at young people aged 16-24, where the main aim is progression to an apprenticeship. Across Europe, some programmes are explicitly called 'pre-apprenticeships' whilst others will have specific brand names. Such programmes prepare young people for apprenticeships by providing a combination of vocational training and hands-on experience, however, the components and specific aims vary by individual programme.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes vary significantly in the ways in which they are designed and delivered, and there has been a lack of documented best practice and shared knowledge. The aim of this work is to:

- Identify what constitutes **best practice**.
- **Facilitate knowledge exchange** across Europe.
- Develop and **disseminate a range of resources** that will secure positive impact in strengthening and establishing programmes that provide inclusive and effective pathways into apprenticeships.

This best practice report presents the findings of research conducted between November 2017 and November 2018. The report is accompanied by a series of practical resources and materials, which will be disseminated in early 2019. All materials and resources are available on L&W's website and include:

- Detailed case studies of 5 pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Short films showcasing effective practice across Europe.
- Practical guidance for providers of pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Top tips for designing and delivering pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Context

The recession of 2007/08 disproportionately affected young people across Europe, with rates of youth unemployment rising dramatically. Despite these rates having fallen back since 2013, a number of countries, including Italy, Spain and Greece, still had youth unemployment rates of over 35%¹ in 2017. In the first quarter of 2018, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the EU was estimated at 10.6%.

Whilst the figures are falling, data on young people who are NEET in Europe clearly highlight that significant numbers of young people are still not making an effective transition into the labour market. Evidence also shows that young people with particular characteristics, or who experience particular forms of disadvantage, such as having a disability, being in government care, a migrant and/or having low levels of educational attainment, are more likely to be NEET than other young people. Such young people often face challenges in entering employment and are therefore more likely to be excluded. For example, research shows that young people in England from less advantaged social backgrounds are more likely to plan to apply for an apprenticeship but are less likely to become apprentices when compared to other young people.² Research also shows that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are less likely to be successful in applications to apprenticeship vacancies.

Exclusion from the labour market, particularly for a sustained period of time, increases a young person's risk of social and economic exclusion. It has an impact upon their long-term life chances, often reducing their earnings potential and their access to employment and other opportunities, contributing to inter-generational cycles of disadvantage. The impact of youth unemployment upon individuals highlights the critical importance of creating inclusive systems, infrastructures and opportunities that enable all young people to make positive and sustained transitions into the labour market. All young people are different and, therefore, require a range of different options or pathways in their transition to employment.

Across Europe, apprenticeships are increasingly perceived as a pathway that supports effective school-to-work transitions and decrease youth unemployment and inactivity. The benefits of apprenticeships are especially significant for young people who are NEET, who are less likely to complete initial schooling or find good jobs. OECD countries with a high proportion of young people in apprenticeships have lower rates of young people struggling to transition to employment (Quintini and Martin, 2014)³

Apprenticeships exist across Europe, however, there is a wide variation by country, in terms of the role, profile, value, quality and rigour of apprenticeships. The systems in place for delivering apprenticeships vary immensely too. For example, the duration of an apprenticeship, the level, the balance between work and training, the role of employers and the qualifications apprentices gain is different, across European countries. In some countries apprenticeships have historically become strongly embedded within the vocational education system and are perceived as a high quality, valued pathway to professions, providing individuals with rigorous skills. Whilst in other countries

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/> (August 2017 data)

² Apprenticeships for Young People in England: Is there a Payoff? Centre for Vocational Education Research. November 2017. <http://cver.lse.ac.uk/textonly/cver/pubs/cverdp010.pdf>

³ http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/Work-based_Learning_For_Youth_At_Risk-Getting_Employers_On_Board.pdf

apprenticeships are a more recently established option and are seen as a more generic and less intensive pathway to employment.

For some young people, finding a good quality apprenticeship can be a challenge. Those living in disadvantaged areas sometimes have fewer job opportunities available to them, and family and friends may be unemployed or in low skill jobs, limiting their chances to make informal connections with employers. Even when connections can be made with employers who are taking on apprentices, other barriers often prevent young people from securing opportunities and making effective transitions.

Young people who are NEET often do not have opportunities to develop the full range of skills that employers' value in young apprentices. They often have lower levels of basic skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy skills) than young people in education, employment or training. In addition, there are sometimes barriers linked to soft skills, motivation and wider personality attributes.

Whilst there is variation in the policy frameworks and systems for delivering apprenticeships, the prevalence of apprenticeships across Europe has led to an increased focus on pre-apprenticeship programmes, as a pathway to apprenticeships.

To assist member states, the European Commission has sought to improve the rigour of pre-apprenticeships across Europe through the publication of its Recommendation for a Quality Framework for Traineeships in 2013. The Framework was issued in response to widespread concern that pre-apprenticeships were being used as cheap labour, with a Eurobarometer Survey showing that 1 in 3 pre-apprenticeships in the EU were substandard in terms of working conditions or learning content⁴. The Framework is non-legally binding but has nevertheless brought some commonalities to the delivery of pre-apprenticeships in the EU.

The key conditions for better and more accessible schemes set out in the Framework are:

- There should be a written agreement between the trainee and pre-apprenticeship provider setting out the objectives of the pre-apprenticeship, working conditions, duration and financial compensation.
- Pre-apprenticeships should be supervised, and progress monitored.
- They should be of a reasonable duration that, in principle, does not exceed six months, except where justified.
- Providers should encourage proper recognition of the skills and knowledge gained through an assessment and certification.
- It is crucial to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate in pre-apprenticeships.
- It is important to involve all relevant players (social partners, civil society organisations and, especially, youth organisations) in formulating guidelines and monitoring and evaluating implementation of the framework.

The Framework stated that, '*A smooth transition from education to employment is crucial for enhancing the chances of young people in the labour market. Improving young people's education*

⁴ House of Commons Library (2016) Traineeships, Briefing Paper, March 2016, The Stationery Office, London

and facilitating their transition to employment are necessary for achieving the Europe 2020 headline target of aiming to reach a 75% employment rate of women and men aged 20-64 by 2020.

Guideline 8 on the employment policies of the Member States calls on the Member States to enact schemes to help young people and in particular those not in employment, education or training find initial employment, job experience, or further education and training opportunities.

Half of the EU Member States have undertaken, or plan to undertake, legal changes to align their national practice with the Quality Framework. In the countries which have already adapted their legislation (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain) most of the reforms include limiting the duration of pre-apprenticeships to six months, (12 months in Bulgaria), clarifying the conditions for longer pre-apprenticeships and assigning mentors to provide guidance and monitor progress during the programme.

A number of countries, for example France and Ireland, have recently carried out, or plan to carry out, reforms to vocational training. Such reforms have meant increasing attention being paid to the role pre-apprenticeships in driving and supporting inclusive access to apprenticeships.

Given the diversity of approaches in this area, by identifying and sharing best practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe, L&W hopes that this project will provide the momentum and insight to drive further progress in securing the delivery of high quality, inclusive pre-apprenticeship programmes.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of best practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe, several stages of research have been completed including:

- A desk-based literature review
- An online call for evidence
- Interviews with providers of and stakeholders in pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Deep dive study visits with five selected programmes
- A knowledge exchange event.

Desk-based literature review

The first phase of research involved a desk-based literature review to better understand the key factors underpinning models of pre-apprenticeship programmes, and the commonalities and differences between them; as well as key success factors in the design and implementation of programmes. This review informed the development of questions used in the online call for evidence and helped to establish an evidence base for the identification and selection of best practice case studies. Sources were identified using known literature and references, and through keyword searches both online and in appropriate journals. The evidence reviewed was grouped under three headings:

- The range and types of different pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Key factors in design and delivery that contribute to effective practice.
- Key factors that contribute to success in tackling social exclusion.

Call for evidence

In order to gather insight into the design and delivery of existing pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe, an online call for evidence was conducted. The questions included in this call for evidence were designed and informed by the key messages emerging from the desk-based literature review. L&W worked to ensure that the call for evidence questions were not only accessible to a range of stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeships, but accessible to respondents whose first language may not have been English.

The call for evidence was primarily administered using online software. In addition, respondents had the option to provide evidence via a Word version of the survey. The online survey was launched on 29th January 2018 and was open for one month.

The call for evidence was targeted at organisations across Europe who are involved in the delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes. It was disseminated by L&W through a range of channels. These included a [news story](#) on the L&W website, email broadcasts, communications via learning provider and employer representative bodies, as well as social media activities. Targeted invitations to respond to the call for evidence were shared with a wide range of European networks and platforms. Specifically, we utilised our direct contact with skills training providers across the UK; [Impact Forums](#) established by L&W in each of the four UK nations as part of our EAAL⁵ role; and our extensive European networks.

⁵ European Agenda for Adult Learning

Qualitative interviews

To add depth and breadth to L&W's understanding of the different pre-apprenticeship programmes being delivered across Europe, and to contribute to our growing evidence base, qualitative interviews were conducted with representatives of pre-apprenticeship programmes. Interviews took place in February and March 2018 and involved a range of staff that contribute to the delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes and other sector stakeholders, such as local authority representatives. For practical reasons, these interviews took place by telephone or using Skype software.

Deep dive study visits

Using the data gathered from the literature review, call for evidence and qualitative interviews, L&W developed a framework of effective practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes. In selecting five best practice case studies, the following factors were taken in to consideration:

- Thorough initial assessment of young people.
- Strong partnerships in place for referrals, wider support and delivery.
- Effective employer engagement.
- Clear structure of delivery.
- Effective processes for supporting progression to apprenticeships.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes.

L&W undertook deep-dive study visits with each of the five selected case study providers between May and June 2018 to gain in depth data about their delivery models, the outcomes they achieve, challenges experienced and critical success factors. To allow for a detailed exploration of the context in which these programmes are delivered, we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with key individuals involved in the design and delivery of the pre-apprenticeship programme, including programme leads, delivery staff and employers, as well as young people who have taken part in the programme. The five case study organisations are outlined below:

Tomillo Foundation, Spain – Tomillo Foundation are an independent training provider based in Madrid, Spain. The programme, known as Basic Vocational Training, supports young people who are aged 14-18 in Madrid. This case study outlines the unique 'project-based learning' delivery methods used by Tomillo Foundation for delivering basic, vocational and social skills, which support young people who are furthest away from the labour market. It provides key learning points about the delivery methods which are most effective and secure good outcomes for young people with the greatest support needs.

Jobwise Training, England – Jobwise Training are an independent training provider who introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme in 2013. They specialise in providing pre-apprenticeship programmes in business administration, focusing on the healthcare sector. This case study highlights best practice in engaging employers in pre-apprenticeships, including effective matching of young people with employers, specific employer engagement activities as well as facilitation of work placements.

Technological University Dublin, Ireland – TU Dublin are the largest provider of apprenticeships and higher education in Ireland. In 2017, TU Dublin piloted the Access to Apprenticeship programme which aims to prepare young people from Dublin's inner-city communities to access an apprenticeship. This case study highlights key learning points from the

pilot, specifically the key role that different partnerships play in the design and delivery of good quality pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Second Chance School Savoie (E2C73), France – The Second Chance School Savoie (E2C73) which is based in the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region of France, was set up in 2011 by the local authority with support from the wider Second Chance School (E2C) Network. This case study showcases good practice in conducting the initial recruitment and assessment of young people and the importance of this in ensuring that programmes address individual needs.

JOBLINGE, Germany – JOBLINGE aims to enable disadvantaged young people aged 15-25 to find an apprenticeship or job and in so doing, lead a self-determined life. The programme targets young people who struggle to find employment on their own. This case study specifically highlights best practice in how mentoring and personalised support can contribute to inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeships.

Facilitating knowledge exchange

In October 2018, L&W hosted a knowledge exchange event. The purpose of the event was to facilitate meaningful and effective exchange of best practice between staff from different pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Exchange took place between 28 representatives of pre-apprenticeship programmes from 10 different countries across Europe, including UK, Ireland, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland, with a focus on the following questions and topics:

- What are the most effective ways of engaging employers in pre-apprenticeships?
- How can programmes effectively embed basic, vocational and social skills in pre-apprenticeships?
- Which partners should be involved in designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships?
- How can mentoring and personalised support lead to inclusive pre-apprenticeships?

During the workshop, programme providers had the opportunity to discuss these key messages in the context of their own work, exploring similarities, differences and how good practice can be replicated and built upon.

In advance of the event L&W undertook several activities to ensure event delegates were equipped with knowledge of, and insight into, best practice. Participants participated in a webinar hosted by L&W where key learning and best practice based on the range of research activities undertaken was shared. Delegates were also provided with a stimulus paper ahead of the event, which aimed to provoke thought and reflection amongst providers about their own pre-apprenticeship programmes, country contexts and barriers and enablers to delivering programmes.

Resource Development

This report is accompanied by a suite of **practical resources** for use by pre-apprenticeship providers and other employment readiness training providers. The resources were developed in consultation with providers and include:

- Detailed case studies of 5 pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Short films showcasing effective practice across Europe.
- Practical guidance for providers of pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Top tips for designing and delivering pre-apprenticeship programmes.

3. FINDINGS

This section of the report outlines best practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes, based on research activities conducted since November 2017. The findings are presented under five main headings: entry to pre-apprenticeship programmes; programme design and delivery; partnerships and employer engagement; supporting progression from pre-apprenticeships; and monitoring and evaluation.

3.1 Entry to pre-apprenticeship programmes

This section begins by detailing the way in which effective pre-apprenticeship programmes target young people and goes on to explore different approaches to recruiting young people onto programmes, including the ways in which programmes are marketed. Finally, this section concludes with an exploration of assessment and matching techniques used in pre-apprenticeship programmes.

3.1.1 Target groups for pre-apprenticeship programmes

Decisions about who programmes are aimed at is a key factor influencing the aims of a given programme, and subsequently how the programme is designed as well as the way in which it is delivered.

Pre-apprenticeships are predominantly targeted at early school leavers, young people who are unemployed, and at young people with low skills levels who face multiple barriers to work and/or who can be classed as socially or economically disadvantaged. Providers tend to belong to one of three categories:

- Those who have an **open-door policy** to young people who meet certain qualifying criteria (e.g. they are from certain geographical areas and are classified as NEET). Where qualifying individuals present with more complex needs, these young people are still included in the programme and specialist support may then be sought or drawn upon. Whilst such programmes do not specifically target disadvantaged young people, typically these will make up the majority of programme participants.
- Those who **specifically target young people with specific additional needs or from specific backgrounds** as priority groups. Examples include providers who seek to work with young people who are: homeless; ex-offenders; care leavers or in care; ex-military personnel, and; dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues.
- Those who work only with **individuals without complex needs** and/or meet a specific level of basic skills. Such providers typically refer the young people they are unable to help to other agencies. This approach was the least common amongst those consulted.

Many young people who are NEET present with multiple or additional needs, even if such individuals are not the direct target group for a programme. Establishing effective mechanisms to access specialist support, as and when necessary is therefore a key part of the most effective pre-apprenticeship programmes. Where young people with specific additional needs are targeted, a more holistic and specialist support package is typically built in.

3.1.2 Recruitment of young people

Evidence suggests that young people and their parents do not typically have a good understanding of vocational learning. Improving understanding of vocational opportunities and creating positive perceptions of vocational training is therefore an important first stage in the process of promoting pre-apprenticeships.

The marketing and messaging of a pre-apprenticeship is a crucial stage in the outreach and recruitment process and is central to recruiting the appropriate group of young people to a programme. Clear messaging that focuses on pre-apprenticeships as a direct route to apprenticeships has proved to be effective in making the pre-apprenticeship offer attractive.

Awareness-raising activities such as work 'tasters' and job shadowing can help young people to make well-founded choices in relation to their education and careers, as well as combat prevailing stereotypes and prejudices about pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships. In England, the focus of recruitment activity is typically on providing young people with a clear line of sight to employment, rather than direct marketing of a pre-apprenticeship programme; young people want a job, independence, and a good wage. An engaging and effective pre-apprenticeship can be the means to those ends.

Clear marketing and engagement: Jobwise Training, England

Jobwise Training in England have designed a range of marketing materials that explain the core elements of the programme and place a strong focus on the apprenticeship opportunities available to young people on completion of their pre-apprenticeship. The 'NHS Traineeships' leaflet names specific hospitals who are recruiting for apprenticeship vacancies and the salary that trainees will earn. Marketing also states other clear benefits of the traineeship, including: a guaranteed interview with an apprenticeship employer, paid bursary allowance for attendance, assigned mentor, a guaranteed four week work placement.

The voices of young people are a central feature of the marketing and messaging used to advertise E2C73's pre-apprenticeship programme in France. This includes promoting case studies of young people who have found an apprenticeship or employment on completion of the programme. These case studies are promoted through methods such as local radio, online and using social media. These approaches help to create positive messages and perceptions about E2C73 and the young people who attend, which in turn is key to improving perceptions of the target group amongst local employers and other partners in the local community.

Qube Learning in England sees parents and guardians as integral to the support trainees receive. They have developed an information leaflet aimed at parents to explain the traineeship programme; make clear what young people can gain by participating; clarify the differences between a traineeship and an apprenticeship, and; describe the type and level of support available for each trainee. The leaflet is also used in one to one discussions with parents/guardians to help manage expectations. This helps to keep young people focussed on employment outcomes which in turn helps motivate them to complete their traineeship.

Tailored marketing and messaging is crucial in promoting pre-apprenticeship programmes at distinct groups of young people, for example where programmes are aimed at young women or young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Tailored marketing and messaging: Access to Apprenticeship (ATA), Technological University Dublin, Ireland.

Women continue to be significantly under-represented in traditional apprenticeships in Ireland. TU Dublin aim to use their pre-apprenticeship programme to attract more women into apprenticeships. Several initiatives have taken place to attract women to the programme, such as a targeted open day with the primary focus of engaging young unemployed women in the local area. Employers have recognised the value of the programme in diversifying the recruitment pool for apprenticeships and are keen to collaborate with the ATA programme to engage and recruit more females.

'We are very interested in working with the Access programme to increase the number of female apprentices. The biggest challenge will be to get parents and career guidance professionals to recognise that it is a positive and rewarding career for females'. Employer

A recent Cedefop⁶ study in the Netherlands identified a number of factors that contribute to successful recruitment to vocational programmes, including pre-apprenticeships. These included:

- Supporting and encouraging young people to **take responsibility** for their own career/education path.
- Helping students **identify different professions** in which they want to carry out their pre-apprenticeship, and then identifying good employers and providing quality traineeships. As seen in the Jobwise Training pre-apprenticeship.
- Providers **acting as independent mediators** with key stakeholders. This is important in building trust and open communication between providers and trainees.

Providers tend to recruit young people onto their pre-apprenticeship programmes in one or more of the following ways.

- **Referrals from other agencies.** To maximise referrals, other agencies and partners need to be aware of the pre-apprenticeship programme and its target group/s, and ideally work in partnership with providers. Referrals can come from a range of sources such as education providers; local authorities, employment services; other programmes working with young people; Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs), or; specialist NEET teams. Most providers of effective pre-apprenticeship programmes work with a range of partners and agencies to recruit young people.
- **Walk-in services or self-referrals.** Online promotion is often used to engage young people directly, as a way of encouraging them to self-refer onto a programme. Some providers have their own Facebook pages, use other social media and advertise opportunities on online job

⁶ Cedefop (2014), Attractiveness of initial vocational education and training: identifying what matters

boards. Evaluation of the pre-apprenticeship programme run by the Youth Activation Agency, Spain, highlighted the importance of social media and online advertising in recruiting young people.

- **Promotional events.** Barts Health NHS Trust, England, for example, provides local people with structured pathways into its own apprenticeships and lower banded roles. It engages young people through timetabled open days. In England, Barclays proactively works to overcome young people's barriers to engagement by hosting 'insight sessions', where young people are brought into the organisation to see the kind of support they would receive and hear current apprentices' stories.
- **Referrals from other programmes.** Targeting individuals who unsuccessfully applied for an apprenticeship is an effective way of recruiting young people to pre-apprenticeships. One example of this is QA in England which often recruits young people who have unsuccessfully applied for their apprenticeship, onto their traineeship programme. In addition, young people are often referred from other training opportunities which do not meet their needs.

The most effective pre-apprenticeship providers undertake a range of different marketing activities to encourage greater awareness and take up of their programmes. Best practice in recruitment, therefore, depends on the target group for a pre-apprenticeship programme and its specific aims. However, any marketing undertaken benefits from being outcome focused - young people and their parents are typically most interested in what a pre-apprenticeship can lead to in terms of jobs, careers, and wages. Referral arrangements are the most common way of recruiting young people onto pre-apprenticeship programmes, but many providers also engage directly with young people, with online awareness raising becoming increasingly important. Open days and events continue to be important in helping potential participants fully understand what pre-apprenticeships involve.

3.1.3 Assessments and matching

If pre-apprenticeship programmes are to meet the needs of both employers and young people, there must be suitable systems in place to assess trainees' skills levels and capabilities, to ensure that appropriate support is available. Test or assessment data must be handled carefully, particularly where it relates to basic skills needs so that it is not seen as a selection instrument and/or a barrier to entry. Examples from the literature show that learners can be reluctant to share personal information. This means that barriers to learning may not be identified until part way through a programme.

Initial assessments of young people ‘admissions’: JOBLINGE, Germany.

Following an information workshop where JOBLINGE staff explain the pre-apprenticeship programme, young people are ‘tested’ through completion of voluntary work on a two-day charitable project, typically at a local kindergarten. During these activities, staff informally assess young people’s suitability for, and commitment to, joining the programme. This might be demonstrated through consistently arriving on time for work or the ability to work with others in a team, for example. In addition, the Youth Co-ordinator holds an interview with each young person to find out about them, their lives and why they want to start at JOBLINGE. At the end of the project, staff meet to decide which young people can join the programme.

The admission phase is designed to motivate participants to earn their place at JOBLINGE, by starting the programme with a positive experience, whilst also providing opportunity for JOBLINGE staff to get to know the young people and for participants to develop trust in programme staff.

This stage is also designed to initiate a change in perspective, in which participants turn from recipients of help into contributors to the community.

The use of technology has been shown to help with initial assessments. An evaluation of traineeships in England found that all providers assessed a young person’s literacy and maths skills levels at the start of their traineeship, predominantly through computer-based programmes (e.g. SkillsBuilder, BKSB, and Guroo). Programmes such as OneFile and Forskills provided additional resources, such as customised forms, portfolio journals, and quality policies and tools.

Online survey tools were also used with trainees and employers. This enables providers to collect data and undertake analysis in response to specific questions, for example about prior attainment, safeguarding, and employer support systems/knowledge.

Providers generally assess potential trainees using some form of basic skills assessment. Most combine this with a more qualitative interview or meeting which gives tutors or support staff the chance to speak in-depth to candidates. The Derby City Council Adult Learning Service (ALS), England, for example, recruits each young person to a specific traineeship vacancy, usually within the council, which corresponds to their skills and career goals. Applicants are invited to an informal 1:1 meeting, at a location convenient to them, to discuss their experience, needs and aspirations, and determine if a traineeship is right for them and if the specific vacancy matches their interests. If not, they will be referred elsewhere. New trainees receive full assessments of English, maths and IT skills and are enrolled in appropriate provision with the ALS.

Using the assessment to personalise programmes, E2C73, France.

Before joining E2C73, young people attend an interview which is used to determine whether they are appropriate for the programme. For example, during the interview staff explore whether applicants are 'work ready', their motivations for joining, as well as their personal and social circumstances. Likewise, this initial interview provides an opportunity for young people to decide whether the programme is right for them by gaining an understanding of what would be expected of them throughout the year and the benefits of joining, including the progression opportunities available.

Once young people have joined the programme, they attend an induction interview to discuss their personal, social and financial circumstances in more detail. The holistic information collected from this interview is then used to develop a learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on the programme is tailored to their individual needs. Tailoring the programme in this way ensures that each young person can address their individual barriers to gaining an apprenticeship and entering the labour market, maximising the prospect of a successful outcome. The induction interview includes an assessment which measures each young person's level of essential skills e.g. maths, as well as competencies related to personal and social development. The assessment is completed by the young person, alongside their tutor, using a paper-based assessment form and is repeated throughout a young person's time on the programme to track their progress and identify areas for further development.

The initial assessment plays a key role in ensuring a successful match between the pre-apprentice/trainee and their work placement host. This can be critical to achieving successful apprenticeship/employment outcomes and increasing the opportunities for trainees to gain an apprenticeship or employment with their placement employer.

Some providers also emphasise the importance of effectively matching students to programme tutors and/or mentors, this can sometimes be on the basis of shared experiences or characteristics. Where placements are well matched, this can enhance a young person's self-confidence and help trainees to have a positive experience of the workplace, allowing them to make a more considered decision about their future career paths. Similarly, employers can use work practice to help screen potential employees.

3.2 Programme design and delivery

This section provides an overview of the key components of effective pre-apprenticeship programmes and starts by looking at how providers can ensure clarity in their offer. Whilst every programme offers something unique, there is a range of common elements to pre-apprenticeship programmes that are most likely to secure positive outcomes for young people. These are: preparatory work to build learner confidence; basic skills provision; support such as mentoring and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG); work experience placements, and; the need for flexibility in provision.

3.2.1 Funding arrangements

Establishing an optimal and sustainable funding arrangement is a core aspect of designing, delivering and sustaining pre-apprenticeship programmes. It is important to consider the costs and benefits of pre-apprenticeships, and how to engage funders, employers and governments alike.

There are multiple ways in which pre-apprenticeship programmes can be funded, dependent on the country context, education and skills policy and priorities and establishment of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. In the UK, pre-apprenticeship programmes, or 'traineeships' are a government funded programme introduced in 2013 to enable young people to make transitions to apprenticeships and other employment.

Other programmes are co-financed through public funding as well as private donations, for example JOBLINGE in Germany is largely funded by the public sector, in addition to private donations (total budget approximately €11.4m in 2017; €3.6m donations, €7.7m public funding). Depending on the location, public funding can be drawn from job centres, employment agencies, local municipalities or federal state funding.

Linked to the matter of funding is the use of incentives for employers and young people to promote their participation in pre-apprenticeships. Depending on the context surrounding skills development and desired policy outcomes, governments may provide financial incentives to promote the engagement of both employers and young people in pre-apprenticeships. For example, the apprenticeship tax was established by the French government to support the vocational training of employees and apprentices. Employers are required to contribute a proportion based on gross salaries paid during the previous calendar year. They can then choose a training provider, or programme, to allocate the tax to. Pre-apprenticeships are included as one of such programmes which are eligible to receive funding in this way. In Wales, the Welsh Government's 'traineeships' programme includes a weekly payment for young people. Evaluation of the programmes shows that the weekly payment is an important factor in incentivising participants to initially engage and sustain their engagement.

3.2.2 Models of delivery

Pre-apprenticeship programmes can vary in the ways in which they are delivered, depending on the aims of the programme, for example if they are reintroducing young people to education and training before accessing an apprenticeship, or if they are aimed at providing young people closer to the labour market with a refresher in basic skills and facilitating contact with employers.

Phased Learning

The way in which activities are sequenced is important in preparing young people for work placements, and their progression to an apprenticeship. Learning activities should be sequenced in a way which allows young people to gradually build skills, confidence and knowledge in preparation for work placements. This is particularly important as young people on a pre-apprenticeship programme typically need support to develop their confidence and self-esteem as well their employability skills, before having exposure to the workplace.

The programme at Tomillo Foundation in Madrid, Spain, which lasts two years, is built around a three-tiered model, whereby young people progress through the programme developing their personal, professional and social skills in that order, before progressing to a work placement.

Sequenced learning that focuses on personal and social well-being, as well as employability skills, helps to prepare trainees for the workplace.

The programme is made up of three phases and is designed to help young people become more confident, skilled and clearer about their career aspirations as they progress through.

Phase one lasts for four weeks and aims to re-introduce learners to an education and training environment; to rediscover a positive view of education and work; and to prepare for positive engagement in training. This intensive period of re-introduction is considered key to engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and enabling them to sustain their engagement and progress. During this phase, young people also complete their first work placement and work with staff to develop a personal programme for the next phase.

Skills Sampling, Technological University Dublin, Ireland

The first 10 weeks are spent in the classroom, after which young people complete a two-week work placement. Young people spend five days per week in the classroom, with each week focused on different apprenticeship sectors. For example, young people spend time learning about aircraft mechanics for one week, before focusing on painting and decorating the next. Tutors who usually deliver classroom-based training on the apprenticeship at TU Dublin are involved and provide young people with a basic knowledge about the sector, alongside an opportunity to work on a practical project in this area.

This approach gives young people the chance to experience a wide range of apprenticeships on offer at TU Dublin and elsewhere, enabling them to make an informed decision about their future career choices. Young people value the opportunity to attend taster sessions in various apprenticeship sectors. They gain insight to sectors which they might not have considered before, and importantly, can explore which sectors they might want to pursue through an apprenticeship.

3.2.3 Preparatory work to build learner confidence

Preparatory activities are a key component of best practice in all effective pre-apprenticeship programmes explored through this project. Such activities are important in developing levels of confidence and self-esteem. They can take the form of role play interviews or CV preparation, with activities carefully sequenced to lead up to contact with real employers (e.g. through mock interviews initially taking place with programme staff). Such interactions help to develop communication skills and prepare trainees for a real working environment. Employability skills are often subtly embedded into team building, enrichment, and exploration activities.

'One of the things from a lot of reports that we hear from employers, it's not just the qualification really, it's the behaviour of that learner and whether or not they're employment-ready. What we've done is we really designed it, 50% on the sector, 50% on employability skills, behaviours, attitudes and work experience within that...sector that they're interested in.' (ITEC Training, Wales)

Preparatory work and weekly reflections are built into the pilot programme delivered at TU Dublin. Each Wednesday is known as 'personal development and employer engagement' day, where young people engage in activities related to improving their employability skills such as CV development,

interview preparation or employer engagement. Weekly reflections are built into the programme to give young people experience of the assessment and feedback processes in an apprenticeship.

This enables young people to review their experience of different apprenticeship sectors, look at the skills they have developed and to make plans for the subsequent week. This level of reflection also provides a way for young people to think about their preferred apprenticeship area.

JOBLINGE's pre-apprenticeship programme consists of distinct phases (admission, orientation, practical experience and probation), each one aimed at specific milestones/outcomes for learners. In the orientation stage, participants take part in a variety of practical group projects. In so doing, they discover their interests and strengths, develop their social and professional skills, and evaluate different types of jobs in a wide range of business situations.

Group projects are led by topic experts from partner organisations and Joblinge employees provide intensive one-on-one time to identify trainees' strengths, determine the most suitable job profiles, and address personal problems (e.g. homelessness, debt, lawsuits, or domestic violence). This preparatory stage takes place before a 'probation stage' where participants spend three months in training as job candidates at a company where they can secure an entry-level position.

3.2.4 Basic Skills provision

The quality and relevance of the learning that young people engage in is central to their employment chances. Young people need the basics of literacy, language and numeracy on which to build and to create the foundations for successful careers. In addition to occupation-specific skills, employers also increasingly demand transferable skills (e.g. ability to work in a team, creative thinking and problem solving). Workplace learning can play a key role by providing a meaningful learning environment for the development of soft skills and integrating key skills, such as basic numeracy and literacy, in practical contexts.

Frameworks for pre-apprenticeship programmes vary within individual countries but broadly emphasise the need to deliver learning in relation to work-related skills, which includes a combination of:

- **General skills:** Programmes typically include literacy and numeracy provision, and sometimes foreign language training.
- **Vocational skills:** In some programmes, participants develop foundation skills related to a particular industry or apprenticeship occupation. In others, the focus is on career exploration, with participants learning about various occupations.
- **Soft skills:** This includes the skills that young people need to find and obtain a work-based learning opportunity (e.g. job search, CV writing and interview skills), as well as the skills needed to succeed in the workplace (e.g. time-keeping, teamwork, resilience)

Embedding personal, professional and social skills in pre-apprenticeship programmes. Tomillo Foundation, Madrid

Tomillo Foundation adopt Project Based Learning (PBL) methods during year two of their pre-apprenticeship programme. whereby young people learn about their chosen vocational subject and develop key professional skills. This method is specifically designed to be engaging and

effective at motivating the target group of young people. Young people work as part of a group to design and develop a team project relevant to their chosen subject. In computer science for example, young people could be tasked with designing a household composter which helps to dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly manner. Such approaches are considered effective in supporting young people who are furthest away from the labour market. The excellent progression outcomes achieved by young people, with 97% of participants progressing to an intermediate apprenticeship in 2017, is indicative of how programmes can support young people furthest away from the labour market to achieve good outcomes.

The delivery of basic skills training in pre-apprenticeships requires careful handling. Trainees can be resistant to such training and may be unlikely to engage with classroom-based learning, often because of poor experiences in compulsory education. Best practice suggests that the development of young people's basic skills is most effective when embedded throughout pre-apprenticeship learning activity, ideally as a seamless part of the wider programme.

In addition to basic skills and vocational training, programmes can incorporate additional content in response to changing priorities, learners' needs and needs of the labour market. For example, at E2C73, young people are given the opportunity to suggest workshops that would interest and benefit them. This is seen as useful for keeping the programme focused and engaging. E2C73 utilise their positive working relationships with other organisations in the local area to deliver bespoke workshops, such as media and journalism, or cookery and hospitality. Partners in the area are often commissioned to deliver these activities due to their expertise in the sector.

3.2.5 Mentoring, IAG⁷ and other forms of support

In the most effective examples, support within pre-apprenticeship programmes is designed to encourage enrolment and sustaining engagement: support is easily accessible; adapted to the diverse needs of individuals, including those with low motivation and limited independent learning skills, and; marketed in a positive way to avoid it being stigmatising.

Many pre-apprenticeship providers place some form of mentoring at the heart of their provision for young people. Mentors can be tutors, specialist support staff, peers or employer representatives. They can be existing provider staff or work for partner organisations, and young people can be given access to more than one type of mentor during the programme. Mentoring can take the form of regularly scheduled one to one support meetings, a more ad hoc arrangement based on emerging needs, or a combination of both.

Formal mentoring in pre-apprenticeship programmes: JOBLINGE, Germany

In addition to the individual support provided by JOBLINGE staff, from week 2 each participant is matched with their own personal volunteer mentor. Mentors share their professional and life experience, acting as a role model and source of support to the young person for the duration of the pre-apprenticeship programme.

Mentors meet weekly with participants, providing encouragement as they progress through each stage of the programme. This helps to motivate young people, and reduce the chances of them dropping out, in the face of any challenges they encounter at home, in their wider

⁷ Information, Advice and Guidance.

lives or during an internship, for example. —The mentor acts as confidant, coach and role model guiding the participant through the programme and helping to deal with any issues that arise. Having access to someone who cares, and listens is often a new experience for the young people, and these personal relationships are crucial as the participants strive to understand and overcome their past struggles.

'I think it's a really great asset, because it's so special for the participants to have one mentor of their own. So, they meet once a week...they hardly know anybody successfully working... they just know pedagogues, teachers and Job Centre employees who are talking to them. So, if there's somebody who's just sitting there once a week for one hour, it's very special and valuable to them.' Deputy Regional Manager, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

Mentors, currently numbering 1700, are professionally trained and supervised and are mainly recruited from partner companies, helping to maintain employer buy-in to the programme. A growing number of partners have started to use JOBLINGE mentoring as part of their employee development programmes, adding to the long-term sustainability of the mentoring 'pillar' of JOBLINGE.

Offering young people this type of personalised support allows them to talk through their experiences and aspirations and highlight any difficulties they are facing. This means that providers have better intelligence about problems as and when they arise and are therefore more able to respond in an appropriate and timely manner, helping to retain young people and improve their experience of the programme. In addition, mentors may be the only available adult role model for many young people, and the mentor/mentee relationship, therefore, provides opportunities to enhance young people's feelings of confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth.

Mentoring in the workplace: Jobwise Training, England

Jobwise Training assigns each young person a mentor during their work placement with whom they complete a weekly review during which they can make suggestions about aspects of the workplace they would like to experience.

'We ask... 'Who in the workplace would you like to shadow for a few hours?' and that gets them moving around in the workplace and noticed by other people. I suppose it also gets them to think about, maybe, other jobs or work experience they would like to get before they leave.'

In addition, apprentices also work as 'buddies' with pre-apprentices for two weeks during their work placement.

'We've also just launched a buddy system where every apprentice is going to take on a trainee for two weeks and mentor them in the workplace because I think that will, (a) be good for our trainee, (b) be great for the apprentice because they get to do the mentor form with them, they get to tell them, you know, how things are done in the organisation, but I'm also hoping for an additional outcome, which is the employer notices them and offers them a job as well. So, we might be able to double up on the apprenticeships we're doing.'

Mentoring can play a particularly important role in programmes which specifically target young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, Millwall Community Trust in London, which works with young people who have had negative educational experiences, has a strong focus on addressing emotional/behavioural barriers that might hamper young people's success. Tutors are used as mentors who address any wider personal issues that may act as barriers to programme completion. Centrepoin, London, works with homeless young people and relies on staff developing strong relationships with young people to engage them in the programme, as well as acting as mentors during the programme. Barclays offer a match mentoring system which encourages disclosure of additional needs (especially health conditions or disabilities) and matches trainees to staff mentors who have similar experiences.

Mentoring is, therefore, a useful tool to enhance the experience of young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes. It also acts as a mechanism by which providers can monitor progress, identify emerging problems and expose young people to a range of positive influences. The provision of high-quality IAG also supports young people in making informed decisions about their future, and many programmes develop their own bespoke support packages based on their assessment of trainee needs. To ensure that trainees are recruited into a programme that meets their individual needs, employment support staff at CT Skills' in England undertake a Level 4 information, advice and guidance (IAG) qualification. Their placement officer is also IAG qualified. This enables him to not only offer advice and guidance to trainees, but also to employers about the support and supervision they provide to trainees, and their recruitment activities. CT Skills consider that equipping staff with strong IAG skills has been important in enabling them to develop tailored individual plans that prepare trainees to progress to an apprenticeship or employment, at the right time for them.

3.2.6 Work experience placements

Work experience placements provide invaluable experience and real-life exposure to the world of work. For this reason, work experience placements are a key component of most pre-apprenticeship programmes and are often integral to achieving programme aims. The most effective placements are personalised and tailored to the needs, interests, and ambitions of the individual young people and employers involved. This typically requires providers, employers, and learners to work together at the design stage to ensure there is a mutual understanding of which activities would be most effective. During the placement, it is important to monitor progress and ensure that both learner and employer benefit from the experience. An example of this is YMCA in England. YMCA involves employers in the training process and tutors use feedback from employers to monitor learner progress. However, this approach is time and resource intensive, and may not suit smaller employers.

'Employers have reported that issues with human resources, line management; risk assessments; safeguarding and health and safety have prevented them from taking on trainees in the past.'
(Manchester College, England)

Some providers offer sector-specific pre-apprenticeship programmes, with work placements taking place only with employers from certain sectors, whereas others try to reflect the specific interests of young people in securing diverse work placements for them. The latter approach requires providers to have a more extensive network of available employers and may, therefore, need a greater investment in employer engagement. In practice, it seems that providers often do the best they can to offer relevant placements, but many are limited by the availability of local employers.

There are a variety of ways in which work placements can be designed and delivered. E2C73 take an interesting approach. Work placements play a key role in helping young people at E2C73 to explore and realise their personal career aspirations. Young people alternate between work placements and in-house training for the full duration of the programme. This is a continuous and developmental process which is ongoing until a young person secures an apprenticeship place, or another progression outcome. Rotating work placements in this way has real benefit for young people as it provides a chance for them to explore different career paths, to build a realistic understanding of work in a given sector, and helps them to build a professional and well-rounded CV.

Work placements with employers providing apprenticeships, TU Dublin, Ireland.

The two-week work placement takes place at the end of the programme to ensure young people gain exposure to the workplace environment and experience the reality of apprentice training. TU Dublin work with a selection of employers from across apprenticeship sectors to ensure young people have access to a work placement in a sector of their choice.

Employers who were involved in the Access to Apprenticeship pilot provided positive feedback on the programme. They valued the opportunity to engage with the young people and to see their level of interest in pursuing an apprenticeship. Employers also thought it was good for young people to learn what would be expected of them as an apprentice. Young people who complete the programme especially value the work placement element, highlighting that gaining experience in the workplace with an employer helped to clarify which apprenticeship sector they are interested in pursuing.

'I'm happy with the programme and the 9-day work placement with employers give both the candidate and employer a good opportunity to assess each other to see if this will work both ways'. (Employer)

Some young people, particularly those with the most acute additional needs, may benefit from in-house work experience placements with training providers, rather than going straight into real workplaces. bbw SH in Germany provides extensive and specialist support for young people with learning disabilities, mental health difficulties and other needs. They operate a vocational rehabilitation centre and young people take part in work experience workshops for a range of professions, in the centre. This programme aims to prepare young people with extensive needs, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the skills required for integration into the labour market. Young people have access to in-house work experience coupled with specialist support.

Work experience placements, whatever their form, are an important aspect of effective pre-apprenticeship provision. Well-designed placements reflect the interests and needs of both employers and trainees and involve them in the planning process to manage expectations. In addition, placements need to be adequately monitored so that all parties benefit from the experience, and any problems can be identified and dealt with before they threaten the successful completion of the placement.

3.2.7 Flexible provision

Flexible provision is considered a crucial element of best practice in the most effective pre-apprenticeship programmes. It is seen as essential that providers do not apply a 'one size fits all' approach. Flexibility is required to ensure that programmes address the specific barriers of each individual participant. Programmes can do this by:

- varying the time frames over which they operate.
- investing more heavily in basic skills provision.
- offering tailored learning opportunities.
- adapting the types and level of personal support they offer individuals.

In England and Wales, flexibility is built into the Traineeship programme, although there can be difficulties in tailoring programmes to vocational interests. Across mainland Europe, flexibility around provision appears to be simpler outside the government-funded formal pre-apprenticeship programmes that exist, in more general employability and engagement programmes. A flexible approach is particularly important in engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who often face specific barriers to labour market entry which need to be overcome as part of the programme.

Flexible and personalised approach to pre-apprenticeships, E2C73, France

Once young people have joined the programme, they attend an induction interview to discuss their personal, social and financial circumstances in more detail. The holistic information collected from this interview is then used to develop a learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on the programme is tailored to their individual needs. Tailoring the programme in this way ensures that each young person can address their individual barriers to gaining an apprenticeship and entering the labour market, maximising the prospect of a successful outcome. The induction interview includes an assessment which measures each young person's level of essential skills e.g. maths, as well as competencies related to personal and social development.

E2C73 in France ensure their provision is tailored and personalised by encouraging young people to create their own personal programme. E2C73 staff work with each young person to develop a personalised programme according to their individual goals and aspirations. Young people choose which workshops they wish to attend, as well as make their own connections with employers they would like to complete work placements with. Developing the personalised programme is designed to be an empowering process for young people which enables them to develop a strong sense of commitment to the programme and confidence that they can succeed.

3.3 Partnerships and employer engagement

This section provides an overview of the importance of effective partnerships in pre-apprenticeship programmes. It begins by discussing employer engagement, before moving onto other forms of partnership.

3.3.1 Employer engagement

Just as they are central to the design and delivery of apprenticeships, employers have a fundamental role to play throughout the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programs. Employer involvement is essential to ensure good quality and effective programmes, with benefits for providers, young people and employers alike.

Employers have a central role to play within pre-apprenticeships, including in:

- the co-design of programmes.
- the supply of quality work experience/placements and associated training.
- support to the trainee.
- quality assurance, and.
- active promotion of the programmes to encourage take up.

Regionally or nationally, employers can be engaged via some form of committee or council which provides strategic connections to other parties, whilst providers also typically develop their own local employer networks.

Employer engagement in pre-apprenticeships allows young people to have direct and personal contact with individual managers or existing employees. This means that young people can hear the ways in which real people, some of whom may share characteristics with them (e.g. low educational attainment), have achieved success in the labour market. This, in turn, can raise individual aspirations and encourage self-belief. The process can also help employers better understand the experiences and abilities of young people, and potentially break down barriers between them.

'They [employers] are coming in our school too, to explain their own history in environment of employment. Yes, or how it was hard for them at school and how they succeed at the end in their employment too, it can be. They are coming to work with our teachers to organise some special programme, like a game of recruitment for example' (School of Second Chance, France)

For employers, effective pre-apprenticeships provide a supply of screened, trained young people who are ready to start an apprenticeship. This represents a cost saving in the time and money that would be incurred in recruitment and training, and reducing turnover rates given that better prepared young people are more likely to sustain their apprenticeship position. Pre-apprenticeships can mitigate against the considerable challenges employers often face in filling their apprenticeship positions and developing a talent pipeline to fill middle-skill jobs.

'Many organisations are very interested in working with us because they know how we work. Our organisation is very professional. We talk the same language as the companies, so sometimes what happens is that the companies go to a school. We are very used to have relations with companies and that makes all this easier.' (Álvaro Monsó, Teacher of Basic VET, Tomillo Foundation, Spain).

However, an international survey of school-to-work transitions by McKinsey⁸ has shown that most employers do not engage with education providers. The findings of the survey also recommend that employers become more involved in the design of training programmes by identifying their detailed requirements and offering structured workplace learning opportunities co-operatively with providers. Schemes which have strong links to the labour market and the direct involvement of employers have been shown to generate more positive employment outcomes.

Several providers highlighted the importance of involving employers in the process of programme development so that they can input to a programme's design or focus. A number described their programmes as being 'employer-led' as a result. Some providers work with employers to develop programmes that address local recruitment needs, or sector skills shortages. This approach offers two clear benefits: employers are more likely to participate if they see the programme as relevant to the success of their business, and; young people are better prepared with the specific skills required to enter the labour market in their local area as a result. The literature also highlights that aligning pre-apprenticeships to national, regional or local labour market needs is a key factor in them achieving successful employment outcomes.

'We develop all of our programmes with the help of the companies that help in this education level and so that makes our programmes very updated and when they access to different education or to the labour market they are actually well prepared to develop their jobs' (Julian Martin, Tomillo Foundation, Spain)

Approaches to employer engagement vary. Some providers focus on working with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or with very large employers, others simply involve as many employers as possible, whilst others work solely within local councils or their supply chains.

Having access to a large pool of employers, compared to programmes that focus on working with just one or a very small number of employers, allows providers to be selective and/or match students and employers based on their characteristics or aims. However, some programmes focus on establishing strong links with a smaller number of employers so that these organisations ring fence opportunities for vulnerable local young people. Employers can also develop expertise in working with young people through repeated involvement in pre-apprenticeship programmes, and this can be easier to achieve if a small number of employers are involved. There are advantages to both approaches and what works best will depend on local factors (e.g. the needs of participating young people, the profile of local employers, the aim of the programme).

Effective employer engagement is a key success factor in the delivery of the programme offered by The Second Chance School in Savoy, France. Their extensive network of employers provides work experience placements to learners on the programme and opportunities for other forms of engagement. Young people benefit from employer-led activities and hear inspirational stories from employers who have had similar experiences to them.

'At the end of each year, we've got around 500 firms who worked with us for those work experience placements. We welcome each year around 120 students and we have 80 firms which are

⁸ Mourshed Mona, Farrell Diana, Barton Dominic (2012) Education to Employment: Designing an education system that works, McKinsey Center for Government

considered, as our real strong partners because they are not only welcoming our students in working experiences.’ (E2C73)

Pre-apprenticeship providers need to support employers; working with young people can be challenging for employers without relevant experience. The literature identifies that some employers also have unrealistic expectations about trainees’ skill levels. Several providers acknowledge this by providing ongoing support to participating employers throughout their pre-apprenticeship programme. Given the potential challenges employers face in engaging with pre-apprenticeship programmes, providers should have systems in place which support employers, and make engagement as simple and effective as possible.

Best practice suggests that pre-apprenticeship programmes should have a single point of contact between the provider and the employer. That person is able to build a relationship with the employer, engages the young person, facilitates job placements, and handles all logistics related to the employer’s participation in the programme. Some providers have a named department or key contact in the organisation who holds responsibility for employer engagement. For example, Tomillo Foundation has developed a positive reputation amongst employers in Madrid. One of the key reasons for this is that the Foundation has a dedicated department who are responsible for developing partnerships with employers. This strong and direct link with employers ensures that the pre-apprenticeship programme is tailored to the needs of the labour market. It also means that Tomillo can be responsive to changing labour market trends, by ensuring that young people on the pre-apprenticeship have the full range of vocational and soft skills that employers expect.

Employer engagement with pre-apprenticeship programmes, therefore, benefits employers by allowing them to input into programme design so that local business needs are reflected. This is important as these young people are their future workforce; pre-apprenticeships provide an early opportunity to ensure that young people are gaining the skills employers need, from the very early stages of their employment journey. Young people gain greater exposure to the world of work and a wider range of career pathways and can be inspired by individual employees, particularly where they share similar backgrounds. Bringing employers together with young people can also help to challenge stereotypes on both sides. However, some element of support for employers is an integral part of effective programmes, particularly in setting and managing their expectations.

Designing programmes to meet employer needs, JOBLINGE, Germany

JOBLINGE STEM programme

JOBLINGE see themselves as a learning organisation, always looking to develop new initiatives and projects in response to changes in employers’ needs and the wider environment, to continually improve the programme for participants.

2017 saw the introduction of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) project, with the support of J.P. Morgan. The STEM programme is a permanent part of the overall pre-apprenticeship programme, designed to prepare and equip JOBLINGE participants for technical occupations. The programme, in which all JOBLINGE’s young people take part, aims to place 35% of participants in STEM fields across Germany.

Although the STEM sector in Germany is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers, JOBLINGE’s young people face a range of barriers to entering the sector, including lack of basic skills, especially in maths, failure in recruitment tests or in vocational school, lack of

self-confidence, insufficient knowledge of STEM professions and not least, perceptions amongst STEM employers that the JOBLINGE target group is insufficiently educated to work in the field. By developing the STEM programme JOBLINGE is providing targeted pre-apprenticeship opportunities in sectors where there are current and long-term opportunities for sustainable and high-quality employment.

To help to build bridges between potential apprentices and companies, STEMWorld Workshops, developed with STEM experts and employers, provide opportunity for the two groups to get to know each other informally. The workshops take place on-site at partner companies to give young people practical experience of STEM occupations. Observation, evaluation tools and self-assessment by participants help to identify potential candidates.

3.3.2 Developing strong partnerships

Employers are one stakeholder, amongst many, who contribute to successful pre-apprenticeship programmes. Other stakeholders include schools, young people and their parents, public authorities, public employment services, career guidance providers, education and training institutions, employers, trade unions and youth organisations. The literature highlights that weak partnerships often lead to programmes which are unattractive to both young people and employers, and which fail to achieve effective outcomes.

Some countries with highly regulated apprenticeship systems build in a strong social partnership element to their vocational and pre-apprenticeship provision (e.g. Austria and Germany). Whereas, in more market-led systems (e.g. in the UK) providers typically work harder, on an individual basis, to create successful partnerships between stakeholders, and the strength and effectiveness of partnership working depends on the stakeholders involved. Developing strong partnerships is considered crucial in leading to the efficient delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes, making use of stakeholder strengths and avoiding duplication of effort.

Using partnerships to facilitate community engagement and outreach: Technological University Dublin, Ireland

Community engagement and outreach has been an important factor contributing to the success of the Access to Apprenticeship pilot programme. The activities that have taken place to gain buy-in from the community have targeted local employers, policy makers and other learning providers. Community engagement has been especially important for effective recruitment of young people:

Effective community engagement has led to the development of an advisory board of senior representatives from colleges, employers and youth organisations. This has been identified as a fundamental outcome which will positively influence the programme as it develops.

This advisory board is helping to provide strategic direction on progress in the development of the pilot. The board also brings a national perspective to the programme, ensuring it's implemented in line with external developments in relation to apprenticeships and eventually, can be mainstreamed in to wider policy development.

The Access to Apprenticeship programme is promoted through various outreach activities in schools, youth employment schemes and local area partnerships, as well as using online and social media platforms. TU Dublin effectively use their existing partnerships with schools, community and statutory organisations to support the recruitment of disadvantaged young people within the 16-24 age group. For example, TU Dublin's Access and Civic Engagement team have good relationships with DEIS⁹ schools in Dublin, designated as disadvantaged by the Department of Education and Skills. They used this partnership as an opportunity to promote engagement onto the programme.

'We have a range of partners in the community education sector, in youth groups or in youth training centres, and we also targeted them to see if they had students who they thought the programme might be suitable for.' (TU Dublin Access Co-ordinator)

⁹ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

In Germany, JOBLINGE works in partnership with an extensive network of approximately 2,400 businesses and the level of engagement and close relationship with companies is undoubtedly a core element in the success of the programme. Employers are involved in the programme in a variety of ways – as providers of pre-apprenticeship internships and apprenticeships, as mentors, through financial support and on supervisory boards for example.

Key partners including BMW, J.P. Morgan, KPMG, Porsche and Commerzbank amongst others, provide long term sponsorship and support the programme to expand and develop, introducing new initiatives such as Kompass (JOBLINGE Kompass, is aimed at young refugees, 18-25, who have recently arrived in Germany and have insufficient German language skills to take part in the main programme).

The involvement of businesses on the local gAC¹⁰ boards, including high profile companies, helps to open the door to other employers. This was particularly important in the early days of the programme, although today the success of the initiative means that JOBLINGE itself can be the door-opener.

Many countries in Europe have unregulated pre-apprenticeships, and trade unions and employee organisations play a critical role in quality assuring placements and safeguarding the rights and conditions of the apprentice/trainee. Youth organisations and youth workers can increase programme transparency and improve the relevance of interventions through better tailoring of services to the needs of young people as well as providing a way to reach out to young people more distant from public authorities. The involvement of these stakeholders therefore helps to ensure that the needs of employers are balanced with those of the participants.

OECD research¹¹ points to the way in which effective partnerships can deliver a more holistic pathway approach from education/training to employment and progression, which is more effective than one-off interventions. In their words, *'A 'pathways' approach cannot be delivered by any single organisation, and rather requires the co-ordination of schools, training institutions, public employment services and employers to ensure that services are aligned, and that young people are guided from one stage to the next.'*

Providers can work with a range of partners who bring specialist knowledge and resources to programmes, such as:

- **Holistic support to promote successful programme completion.** Derby Adult Learning Service, England, has developed a pre-apprenticeship programme in partnership with teams in the local authority who support care leavers and other young people who are NEET. This specialist input ensures that young people on the programme receive holistic support to maximise their chances of success.
- **Specialist support and/or work placements.** Tomillo Foundation, Spain, utilise their partnerships with a range of organisations to deliver a specialist support offer for young people at risk of social exclusion. This holistic and individualised support is provided by specialist staff, including psychologists, pedagogical staff, social workers and teachers.

¹⁰ Local not-for-profit stock corporations (gACs)

¹¹ OECD, EU and LEED (2014a) The Local Implementation of Youth Guarantees: Emerging Lessons From European Experiences. OECD, France

- **Recruitment or referrals to the programme.** Surrey County Council, England, works in partnership with Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) supporting vulnerable and excluded adults and young people, and with Jobcentre Plus to secure referrals. They also work with council contractors to secure work placements and progression opportunities.
- **Delivering specific programme elements.** The pre-apprenticeship offered by Barclays, in England, is delivered with Capita Talent Partnership who are responsible for the recruitment and training of young people and providing them with information and guidance.
- **Offering oversight or advice.** The Youth Activation Agency, Gijon, Spain has an extensive steering committee including local and regional actors and representatives of government, employers and young people. Bringing these stakeholders together was a key objective of the project as it allowed each partner to contribute their knowledge and expertise at all stages of the programme.

Many providers work with individual partners in different ways. For example, Milwall Community Trust in England works in partnership with local authority services in Lewisham and Southwark, to recruit young people who are NEET. Vocational training is delivered by Apprentice England in the construction sector and Vi-Ability who offer sports coaching. Partnerships have also been formed with other organisations to meet specific support needs (e.g. Sport and Thought, which uses sport as a catalyst to help young people address challenging behaviour).

Best practice, therefore, centres on developing partnerships that add real value to the pre-apprenticeship offer in some way, and who are committed to it. In many cases, this is through working with specialists who increase the quality of provision, provide access to key target groups and/or who can help providers tailor their provision to the needs of specific groups.

3.4. Supporting progression

A key aim of all pre-apprenticeship programmes is to facilitate progression to apprenticeships or entry to the labour market. Many providers, therefore, monitor progression rates to demonstrate the success of their programme. Several providers who contributed to the online call for evidence or participated in an interview shared progression rate information and some of these reported very high rates of progression.

Effective pre-apprenticeship providers can achieve high progression rates into apprenticeships even when working with very disadvantaged young people. Some providers embed a focus on progression into every element of their programme, from the assessment of young people to the selection of employers and the development of ongoing relationships with them, through to exit interviews and maximising learning from placements. This is particularly impressive where programmes have specifically targeted disadvantaged groups, for example, Tomillo Foundation in Spain, who work with young people that have typically left school without formal qualifications and high levels of need have achieved progression rates of 97% of young people moving in to an intermediate apprenticeship.

It is difficult to directly link specific programme activities to progression rates without further data, but some of the methods used by those reporting high rates of progression to apprenticeships and/or employment include:

- Careful assessment of participants to ensure a good fit with the programme and the identification of needs early on. Cruz Roja, Spain, have a strong focus on the initial assessment of young people. Mapping out the skills, competencies and needs of young people, and developing an individualised intervention is seen as key to high progression rates.
- A strong focus on exit interviews and a realistic discussion with participants about potential progression opportunities. Jobwise Training in England believe a key factor in supporting young people before moving in to an apprenticeship is by conducting exit interviews with young people. Exit interviews allow young people to reflect on their learning throughout the pre-apprenticeship and how this can be applied in their new position.
- Strong links with employers who have appropriate and live job vacancies. Employer engagement plays a key role in ensuring young people at TU Dublin in Ireland have direct contact with employers who can offer work experience. This is an important element of this programme, helping provide meaningful opportunities for young people who might not traditionally access apprenticeships or normally have direct contact with hiring employers.
- Ring fencing opportunities in public sector employers for disadvantaged young people and using pre-apprenticeships as pathways to these vacancies. Jobwise Training in England have strong links with public sector employers, namely the NHS. Young people on the pre-apprenticeship complete work experience with an NHS employer before moving to an apprenticeship with them.
- Monitoring work experience placement progress carefully and being prepared to move trainees if no suitable progression opportunities are available. Petroc College of Further Education, England, conduct fortnightly workplace support visits to review trainee progress and set goals for next two weeks. By week 7 of a placement, the employer is required to confirm whether they intend to offer the trainee an apprenticeship or employment. If a positive outcome cannot be secured, the trainee is transferred to a work placement with another employer.

- Only working with employers whose placements are likely to secure progression opportunities.

3.4.1. Post training support and formal recognition of learning

In addition to many of the key success factors outlined in this report, pre-apprenticeship providers can put in place additional mechanisms which help to secure progression outcomes for young people. This can include post-training support. For example, post-training support is a formal part of the E2C73 programme in France, where tutors and staff keep in touch with young people for one year following completion of the programme. Young people are contacted at least 4 times at 3-month intervals during the follow up year. This is important in terms of providing support to enable them to sustain their new apprenticeship.

In most cases pre-apprenticeships are not a certified course, as young people often do not complete a qualification, however, best practice in delivering pre-apprenticeship programmes highlights that young people should receive formal recognition of their learning and achievement on a pre-apprenticeship programme. There are many ways in which learning can be recognised, which can be simple and yet effective. For example, providing young people with a certificate of participation, which recognises their learning as well as the successful completion of work placements.

On completion of the E2C73 programme, young people obtain a formally recognised Certificate of Acquired Competencies, highlighting their progress and achievements on the programme to future employers. E2C73 view this formal recognition as an essential aspect of their programme which helps to boost young people’s access to apprenticeships or vocational training.

At the end of the Access to Apprenticeship pilot at TU Dublin, young people were invited to attend an awards ceremony, attending by employers, tutors and the young people themselves. Not only does this provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on their learning and feel a sense of achievement, employers’ engagement with the programme is recognised.

Post-training support, JOBLINGE, Germany,

Although participants are no longer part of the pre-apprenticeship programme once they have taken up an apprenticeship, the follow-up phase is designed to ensure that young people successfully complete their vocational training. Each young person is allocated a dedicated Apprenticeship Supporter who remains in contact via WhatsApp, email and phone calls to check everything is going well. Alongside this, a rolling programme of workshops for apprentices on specific topics such as communication and learning to study, as well as crisis intervention measures if problems occur, help to prevent drop outs.

Apprenticeship Supporters are also a point of contact for the companies providing the placement, providing reassurance that support is there should they encounter any problems.

‘It’s a very important thing for the companies, too. Maybe it’s sometimes, that’s the reason why they say, ‘okay, I give you this apprenticeship’, because there’s a possibility of the apprenticeship and support afterwards.’ (Company Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main)

Best practice in ensuring progression is therefore likely to involve: a strong focus on progression opportunities in the selection of placements; working with partners to establish clear progression routes for trainees, and; supporting and monitoring placements so that they can be used effectively as a pathway to future opportunities.

3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

This final section discusses how evaluation evidence, or a lack of such evidence, affects our understanding of pre-apprenticeship programmes and describes essential elements of effective evaluations.

There is a lack of robust evaluation data to drive forward improvements in pre-apprenticeships, and providers should be encouraged to measure a range of outcomes that go beyond monitoring how many young people they work with, or even progression rate data. When done well, monitoring systems need to capture quantitative data and qualitative information at each stage – from initial engagement with a programme, drop outs (and reasons for doing so), follow-up work, and outcomes. Such monitoring systems can be coupled with learner surveys, which provide the learners' perspectives on the support received. This data and information is vital to identify how a programme could be improved and an essential pre-requisite for scalability. Soft and hard outcomes are both important, and impact assessment is necessary to establish how pre-apprenticeships improve on a 'do nothing' approach.

The existing literature highlights that there is a lack of robust evaluation data from pre-apprenticeship programmes. Best practice in evaluation would be to develop clear outputs, outcome and impact indicators for each programme and then to put in place monitoring systems which adequately capture these. Both soft and hard outcomes should also be monitored.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes tend to be costly, so identifying which approaches work best, under different circumstances and with different groups of young people is essential. If a pre-apprenticeship programme does not develop useful skills it risks becoming stigmatising for participants rather than a pathway to apprenticeships and good jobs. Evaluation evidence can help to identify whether a programme works so that successful initiatives can be expanded, and unsuccessful ones discontinued.

Good evaluation and monitoring can ensure a course is having its intended impact on learners, diagnose areas for improvement, and evidence the impact of the course for funders, commissioners and future learners.

To fully understand the success of a pre-apprenticeship programme, quantitative data should be available on factors such as the: routes into the programme; the number of participants; the number of completers; the number of non-completers; time spent with each participant, and; training and work outcomes of participants. Qualitative data on the experiences of participants, including those who leave the programme prematurely, should also ideally form part of the evidence base. It is only through access to such information that best practice in delivery can be identified and built on, and improvements made, both within and across programmes.

[In their learner survey] 'We have a questionnaire about social integration and health situation. This questionnaire, we ask our questions at the beginning of our path when they arrive and we ask the same when they quit.' (E2C Second Chance School, France)

Providers generally engage in some form of monitoring; however, the extent and quality of their evaluation activities vary considerably. Many providers focus on completion, progression and drop-out rates, for example. Whilst this allows some problems to be identified and assessed, it is insufficient to fully understand how well a programme is working and why, and what difference it makes.

Some programme providers do go further in collecting evaluation evidence such as qualitative data from participants. These providers believe that their evaluation activities allow them to develop a greater understanding of the full impact of their programmes (e.g. on soft outcomes such as employability and participant well-being).

Ongoing participant feedback can also be used to continually develop the content of a programme, if used in a timely and analytical way. By monitoring participant journeys and experiences, providers have found that their programme can be more effectively tailored to the needs of current participants. For example, Jobwise Training systematically assess different aspects of their programmes at regular intervals. This allows them to continuously improve their programme in line with changing priorities.

'Getting that feedback means we know which workshops this week they enjoyed and which ones they didn't, and was it the content or was it the delivery? It means we can change the environment or change the content if it's not interesting enough. Then, we also ask all the students to write if they want...an extension session. So, if they've enjoyed the workshop, would they like a more advanced version of that?' (Jobwise Training, England)

External evaluations are less common but, if conducted well, can provide compelling evidence of impact.

Evaluating pre-apprenticeship programmes: Technological University Dublin, Ireland.

TU Dublin commissioned an external evaluation of the Access to Apprenticeships pilot programme after the first phase to learn more about the strengths, challenges and key learning points to take forward. TU Dublin have been able to use this evaluation to inform the future development of the programme. For example, in the next rollout of Access to Apprenticeship, TU Dublin are considering adapting the 'taster' modules to provide young people with a deeper level of insight and understanding into key sectors.

This evaluation also gave the organisation the opportunity to gauge a wider range of stakeholder views about the programme, including those of participating employers, tutors and young people.

'The programme is a great initiative for young people to give them a potential start they otherwise would not have had, we hosted work placements for each of the phases and we have two apprentices from the programme now registered with us'. (Employer)

Pre-apprenticeship programmes with solid evaluation evidence are therefore most likely to be able to engage in an ongoing cycle of feedback and improvement to best meet the needs of learners and the labour market. They also, therefore, offer the greatest opportunities for learning about best practice and programme impact.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the evidence derived from the project, the following lessons learned have been identified in the delivery of effective pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe.

Programme entry and recruitment

- Ideally, interventions should support a young person *before* they drop out of learning. Where this is not possible (e.g. due to data sharing limitations or an absence of tracking systems) providers should work closely with education providers and public employment services and promote their services via social media and outreach.
- Outreach and engagement activities, such as marketing, benefits from being outcome focused - young people and their parents are interested in what a pre-apprenticeship can lead to in terms of apprenticeships, jobs, careers and wages.
- Providers rely heavily on referrals from other agencies and programmes but also use promotional events, direct online marketing and outreach to promote pre-apprenticeships. A combination of approaches is likely to attract a broader range of participants whilst open days or events play a specific role in helping potential participants develop a detailed understanding of what pre-apprenticeship programmes offer.
- Careful and sensitive assessment of a trainee's capabilities and skills, and their aspirations is needed and can be aided by IT. Providers who combine both qualitative (e.g. in-depth discussions or initial meetings) and quantitative (e.g. basic or functional skills assessment) assessment methods do so to develop a more detailed understanding of their trainees from the outset.
- A successful match between young people and work placement hosts, supported by high-quality initial assessments, is key to achieving high programme completion rates.

Programme design

- Pre-apprenticeships benefit from clear quality assurance frameworks at system, provider and company levels to ensure systematic feedback and auditing. Providers need to play a strong supervisory, monitoring, oversight and quality assurance role to promote high-quality placements.
- Programmes should be designed in a way that ensures both young people and employers are clear and realistic about their goals from the outset.

Programme delivery

- Preparatory activities and sequenced learning are useful pre-cursors to workplace learning where young people need to develop levels of confidence and self-esteem. Employability skills can also be successfully embedded into preparatory activities to help prepare trainees for workplace learning.
- Basic skills are a core requirement for successful labour market participation. Workplace learning offers an attractive alternative to classroom learning for basic skills development and for

general, vocational and soft skills development. Ideally, such skills should be seamlessly embedded throughout programmes.

- Pre-apprenticeship trainees, whether these are young people who are NEET or sub-groups of this cohort with specific additional needs, require easy to access and tailored support to be embedded within programmes. Mentoring, IAG and specialist inputs to address specific individual needs, are all used successfully by providers as part of their support packages for young people.
- Work experience placements are an invaluable component of most pre-apprenticeships. The most effective placements are personalised and tailored to the needs, interests and ambitions of the individual young people and employers involved, although this can require substantial investment. Monitoring of placements is vital to identify and deal with any problems early on and promote successful completion and positive experiences.
- Programmes need to be flexible enough to cater for individual needs. This is particularly true when working with the most disadvantaged young people. A holistic approach which goes beyond a simple focus on employment, and which directly tackles a range of barriers to successful labour market entry, is most likely to succeed.
- Recognition of learning and post-training support

Partnerships and employer engagement

- Effective partnerships are central to successful programmes and involve a range of committed partners who add real value to what providers could offer working alone. The most effective partnerships lead to a 'pathways' approach to youth support services in which services are aligned and the young person has a seamless transition between school and work.
- Partnerships are used successfully to: deliver specialist support; promote programmes or provide referrals; deliver specific programme elements, and; provide providers with oversight and/or strategic advice or guidance.
- Engaging employers is another key success factor for effective pre-apprenticeship programmes. Ideally, employers should be involved in the co-design of programmes to ensure pre-apprenticeships have relevance to local labour markets. This generates more positive employment outcomes for trainees and makes pre-apprenticeship programmes more attractive to employers.
- Employers should be supported throughout their involvement in pre-apprenticeship programmes. Initially, they may need support to develop realistic expectations of young people, and then to design and run successful placements. Close and ongoing monitoring of placements is good practice and promotes more positive experiences for all parties.

Supporting progression

- Many providers demonstrate impressive trainee progression rates onto apprenticeships and employment whilst working with some of the most disadvantaged young people in society.
- The experiences of these providers suggest that some combination of careful participant assessment; a strong focus on exit interviews and learning from work placements; ongoing work placement monitoring, and; a clear focus on working with employers who offer real opportunities for progression (or experiences that are likely to lead to these) may contribute to this success.

Some providers also build high progression expectations into their placements from the start (e.g. by making it explicit that employers are expected to take on trainees who successfully complete work placements).

Monitoring and evaluation

- Evaluation should be a pre-requisite of any proposals to scale up successful practice, but there is a lack of robust evaluation data about pre-apprenticeship programmes. Best practice would involve developing clear output, outcome and impact indicators for each programme and then ensuring that monitoring systems exist to adequately capture these.
- Both soft and hard outcomes should also be monitored, and qualitative data from young people is required to develop a full understanding of the impact of programmes, particularly on outcomes such as employability and well-being. It is only by developing the evidence base on pre-apprenticeships that best practice can truly be established and used to create a cycle of feedback and continuous improvement.
- Providers may need to be up-skilled in evaluation methods and data analysis and convinced of the value of improving their evaluation offer, however, before they are able to, and committed to, developing their own evaluations, particularly in terms of linking their inputs to programme impacts

5. CASE STUDIES

Tomillo Foundation – Madrid, Spain

Case study summary

Tomillo Foundation introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme as a progression route to their existing offer of intermediate apprenticeships. The programme is delivered in four sector areas which host a large proportion of employment in Madrid; hospitality, computer science, electrics and administration.

The programme, known as Basic Vocational Training, supports a target group of young people who are aged 14-18 in Madrid. Young people typically come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and have often left compulsory education without formal qualifications. The two-year programme is longer in duration than average pre-apprenticeship programmes. The two-year duration allows Tomillo Foundation to provide the intensive and personalised support that this target group of young people require to build the range of skills they need to enter the labour market, and in particular, for an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation.

This case study outlines the unique delivery methods used by Tomillo Foundation to deliver basic, vocational and social skills. Such approaches are considered effective in supporting young people who are furthest away from the labour market. The excellent progression outcomes achieved by young people, with 97% of participants progressing to an intermediate apprenticeship in 2017, is indicative of how programmes can support young people furthest away from the labour market to achieve good outcomes.

Key programme details

- Young people attend Basic VET five days per week (Monday to Friday) for a period of two years
- Project Based Learning (PBL) is used as a method for supporting young people to develop the personal, professional and social skills needed to succeed in an intermediate apprenticeship and in their wider lives
- Each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is financially supported by a key employer, who also have input to the programme content, making it relevant to the needs of the labour market
- The cost per person on the pre-apprenticeships across the full two years is €9600.

Country context

Spain has one of the highest rates of early school leavers of all EU countries. In 2017, 18.3% of young people aged 18-24 had left formal education or training without qualifications¹², compared with an average of 10.6% in the EU. The latest figures also indicate that the proportion of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) was 13.31%, slightly lower than the EU figure of 14.2%¹³.

Overall, there is a strong preference for higher academic education in Spain, even though the employment outcomes for university graduates are not significantly different to those for graduates of higher levels of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

A key issue in the Spanish education and training system is how effective different types of training are in meeting the skills needs of the economy. There is a gap between the type of education that young people receive and the skills that employers demand. In spite of the very high unemployment rates, employers in Spain continue to have difficulties in recruiting staff with appropriate professional qualifications.

In 2012, apprenticeship training became the core part of VET in Spain with the aim of improving transition to the labour market for Spanish young people. Formal apprenticeship programmes last for two years and include training in a company (minimum 20%) and at a VET school (maximum 80%). They are offered as a priority to young people aged 16-21 who have left compulsory education without qualifications.

Two levels of apprenticeship training are offered in Spain. Intermediate-level apprenticeships are for those who enter after completing compulsory secondary education, and higher-level apprenticeships are for those who have already completed their intermediate-programme or have finished upper secondary school. This enables direct access to university.

As part of the national reform to Vocational Education and Training, 'Basic' Vocational Education and Training, a pre-apprenticeship model, was introduced in 2013 and has opened progression routes for young people with little or no qualifications to access intermediate apprenticeships.

The pre-apprenticeship at Tomillo Foundation

Tomillo Foundation is a private and independent organisation which was founded in 1983 with the purpose of contributing to social improvement and development in Madrid. The work with children, young people, families as well as wider communities, to empower them with the skills to allow them to take responsibility for their lives and their environment. Through education and employment, Tomillo Foundation aims to contribute to improving people's living conditions so that they can develop their full potential and play an active and responsible part in society.

The activities delivered at Tomillo Foundation are carried out by a team of people, mostly teachers, pedagogues and psychologists, who develop a range of programmes, as well as providing training alongside personal support and work orientation.

Tomillo Foundation introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme as a progression route to their existing offer of intermediate apprenticeships. The pre-apprenticeship is delivered in four sector

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipslm90&plugin=1>

areas which host a large proportion of employment in Madrid; hospitality, computer science, electricity and administration. In 2017, approximately 280 young people were enrolled on the programme across these sectors. The cost per person on the pre-apprenticeships across the full two years is €9600.

Young people who participate in Basic VET are:

- aged 14-18
- from local areas of socio-economic disadvantage
- not in education or employment (NEET)
- commonly early school leavers

'The young people have economic, social issues, and family issues so we try to deal with that. They have not had success academically in their school before, their motivation is very low, their skills are initially very low, and we need them to reach a certain skill level' (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

Model of delivery

The pre-apprenticeship programme coincides with the typical academic calendar in Spain and lasts for two years, which allows Tomillo Foundation to effectively support this target group of young people to build the range of skills they need to enter the labour market, and in particular for an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation.

During these two years, young people are supported to develop personal skills, professional and social skills. They attend the programme five days per week (from Monday to Friday), which allows them to gain first-hand experience of the commitment and responsibility required for an apprenticeship.

The programme is built around a three-tiered model, whereby young people progress through the programme developing their personal, professional and social skills in that order, before progressing to intermediate VET.

Preparatory activities and the sequence of learning is important in effectively preparing young people for work placements, and importantly, their progression to an apprenticeship. It is particularly important as young people on the pre-apprenticeship programme typically need support to develop their confidence and self-esteem as well their employability skills, before exposure to the workplace.

1. Personal development

Substantial emphasis is placed on supporting young people with their personal and social development. This is the key focus of activities during the first year of the programme. It is mainly carried out through classroom-based activities and learning where the development of personal and social skills is embedded within wider learning, for example basic skills such as literacy, maths and digital skills.

To meet the diverse needs of young people, Tomillo Foundation employ a range of qualified staff who have a strong commitment to working with the profile of this target group. In addition to classroom responsibilities, each staff member acts as a mentor for an average of five young people and are responsible for getting to know the economic, social and home situation of each individual. In addition, Tomillo Foundation can draw on specialist support from social workers, psychologists

and pedagogical staff. This means that young people receive very holistic and tailored support to meet their individual needs.

‘Our teachers are very committed to working with this type of student profile. They could be anywhere teaching but they choose to work with these specific kinds of students. So initially, that is important.’ (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

2. Professional development

During year two of the programme, young people develop the key professional skills needed for their chosen vocational subject. This phase is delivered using Project Based Learning, a method specifically designed to be engaging and effective at motivating the target group of young people. Young people work as part of a group to design and develop a team project relevant to their chosen subject. In computer science for example, young people could be tasked with designing a prototype that meets a certain objective, e.g. designing a household composter which helps to dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly manner.

‘Students do not just sit in front of a board, they have to develop a project related to their professional field that they are interested in and all of the rest of the subjects are related with that project...so the role of the student is much more active, they have to be doing things all of the time. We give them the objective and they have to organise themselves. We try to foster their autonomy.’ (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

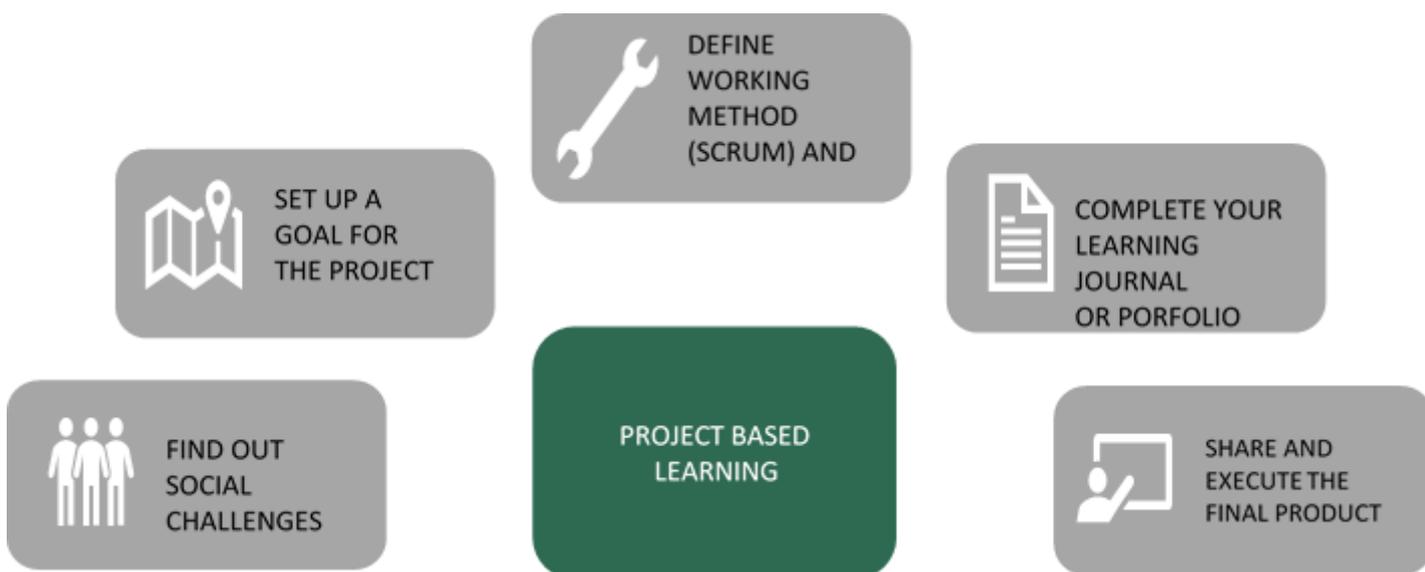


Figure 1. Project Based Learning at Tomillo Foundation

To support the project-based learning method, classrooms are set up to reflect the workplace environment to allow young people to develop meaningful professional and employability related skills for their chosen vocation. For example, the administration classroom resembles that of a real-life office, allowing young people the opportunity to gain insight to particular job roles. These methods help to promote the autonomy of young people as well as providing a way for young people to develop the range of soft skills needed for an apprenticeship, such as teamwork and decision making.

3. Social Development

Tomillo Foundation believe that a key factor in effective pre-apprenticeship training lies in providing young people with new experiences to expand their vision of the world around them and expose them to meaningful learning experiences that increase their long-term aspirations.

Young people are trained by a local company in methods to improve the energy efficiency of households in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Once they have successfully completed year one of the programme, young people visit local households and teach residents ways in which to improve their household efficiency. This has benefits for both young people and the communities involved. Through this experience, young people are positively integrated with the local community, and importantly have the chance to put into practice the soft skills they have developed over the course of the pre-apprenticeship such as communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork.

'All of those projects have to be related with the community. Our students, if you ask the rest of the neighbours, they are a problem for the neighbourhood because they are very problematic students, they maybe take their issues to the rest of the neighbours and to the rest of their communities so we need to change that vision for them so we make them do those projects to be related with the community and then we are changing the image, the initial image that the rest of the people in the community have about them.' (Julian Martin, Director of Formal Training)

Digital approaches

In recent years, Tomillo Foundation have incorporated a variety of digital approaches within their provision. With digital skills becoming increasingly important across the labour market, the inclusion of digital approaches is seen as a way of ensuring young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the same opportunities as their peers. This belief has led Tomillo Foundation to ensure digital approaches are embedded within all aspects of their delivery, and to update their programmes to include topics such as programming, robotics, 3D printing, database work and computer security. Such additions have helped to ensure young people not only have opportunities to develop essential digital skills but are given opportunities to acquire specialist IT related skills. So far, with the help of a partner organisation, students have achieved 200 certificates of MOS titles (Microsoft Office Specialist) which is a meaningful addition to their CV.

The preparation for MOS exams has been integrated into the pre-apprenticeship curriculum and has been extended to each of the sectors. In 2017, a project known as 'Garage Lab' contributed to the digital transformation of the programme, promoted by Fundación Orange. Orange Garage Lab is a basic technology project designed and targeted at students on the pre-apprenticeship and results in the construction of a scalable prototype. As part of this, young people have created impressive work, such as video surveillance drones and pollution meters, waste composters and an automatic irrigation system that optimises the use of water.

Effective partnership working

Tomillo Foundation have excellent working relationships with various partners and employers, utilising these in a way that reflects their specific strengths to enhance the quality and content of the pre-apprenticeship. Their objective is to adapt the offer to meet the current demands of the labour market, meaning they work closely with employers with the aim of reducing the gap between employer needs and vocational training. Doing so maximises progression opportunities for young people into apprenticeships and other job roles.

The recent changes to the VET system in Spain give Tomillo Foundation some flexibility to adapt the content of the curriculum to the needs of employers engaged with the programme. Although,

adaptations must be approved by the relevant Education Authority, Tomillo Foundation view this as an opportunity to tailor the content of their programme to the labour market whilst meeting the needs of their young people:

Tomillo Foundation have developed 'shared training' programmes with large organisations in Spain, meaning that each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is supported by a relevant organisation, both financially and in terms of its specific vocational content. For example, in the energy, technology and IT sectors their training programmes have been developed with Fundación Telefónica and other companies to provide training in 'Technical Assistant of Microcomputer Systems'.

Tomillo Foundation have developed a positive reputation amongst employers in Madrid. One of the key reasons for this is that the Foundation has a dedicated department who are responsible for developing partnerships with employers. This strong and direct link with employers ensures that the pre-apprenticeship programme is tailored to the needs of the labour market. It also means that Tomillo can be responsive to changing labour market trends, by ensuring that young people on the pre-apprenticeship have the full range of vocational and soft skills that employers expect.

'Many people, many organisations, are very interested in working with us, because they know how we work. Our organisation is very professionalised. We talk the same language as the companies, so sometimes what happens is that the companies go to a school, but they are talking differently. We are very used to have relations with companies and that makes all this easier.' (Álvaro Monsó, Teacher of Basic VET).

Tomillo Foundation also have good links with the Erasmus+ programme. Through this partnership, they can offer students internships abroad. For example, 14 young people have recently been able to gain work experience in the UK, in sectors such as hospitality, electricity, administration and computing.

Outcomes for young people

Tomillo Foundation have recently introduced an initial assessment of young people's soft skills and socio-emotional well-being. This assessment is informed by a European Framework and includes skills and attributes such as emotional intelligence, communication, teamwork, interpersonal skills and citizenship. Going forward, Tomillo Foundation will assess these skills before a young person begins their pre-apprenticeship and on an ongoing basis in order to progress and soft outcomes.

The most recent data illustrates that 97% of young people who completed the pre-apprenticeship at Tomillo have progressed to an intermediate apprenticeship or employment. Of these, 75% progressed to an intermediate apprenticeship with Tomillo Foundation, and 22% have gained employment elsewhere. The remaining 3% have not yet progressed from the programme but continue to receive mentoring from Tomillo Foundation.

Drop-out rates are considered an important indicator of the success of a learning or work programme in Spain, given the country's high proportion of early school leavers in comparison to other EU countries. Tomillo Foundation track their drop-out rates by drawing comparisons with similar programmes in Madrid. On a typical programme aimed at this target group, drop-out rates average at 50%. In comparison, the drop-out rate in 2017 on the Tomillo pre-apprenticeship programme was 10%.

For young people who have completed their pre-apprenticeship but are not yet ready to enter an apprenticeship or employment, they are able to stay on the pre-apprenticeship for up to two years, where they will receive further tailored support to bridge the gap to an apprenticeship.

Best practice – key success factors

- Sequenced learning that focuses on personal and social well-being, as well as employability skills, as preparatory activities to help prepare trainees for exposure to the workplace.
- Project Based Learning methods are an effective way of engaging young people to develop the range of soft skills needed for an apprenticeship, such as teamwork and decision making.
- Partnering with sector specific employers to develop pre-apprenticeship programmes helps to ensure young people are apprenticeship ready for current roles in the labour market

Jobwise Training – London, England

Case Study Summary

Drawing on government funding for traineeships, Jobwise Training introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme in 2013. The programme focusses on business administration, predominantly in the healthcare sector. Focusing on a particular sector allows them to match employers with a supply of young people who are keen to develop the specific skills and work experience that they need for apprenticeship vacancies.

Most young people on Jobwise's pre-apprenticeship are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and many are former offenders or gang affiliated. The majority are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, with learners of Bangladeshi heritage being the predominant group.

This case study highlights best practice in engaging employers in pre-apprenticeship programmes, including effective matching of young people with hiring employers, specific employer engagement activities as well as facilitating work placements. In particular, Jobwise Training deliver employer engagement activities such as 'Dragons Den' which aim to develop young people's presentation skills, to build confidence and provides an opportunity for young people to showcase their skills, abilities and talent to prospective employers. Jobwise emphasise the importance of ensuring that basic skills such as literacy and maths are embedded throughout all aspects of their programme. Dragons Den provides an engaging opportunity to contextualise literacy and maths in a way that is meaningful for them, for example by drafting accounts and creating budgets for the business concept they have designed.

Key programme details

- Jobwise utilise a variety of methods for recruiting young people on to their pre-apprenticeship, which is underpinned by clear progression focused marketing and messaging.
- Young people undergo a robust initial assessment of literacy and maths skills using the digital platform BKSB, combined with a face-to-face interview to gauge young people's readiness to take part in the programme.
- Jobwise aim to support trainees to progress to an apprenticeship within 4 months of starting the programme. The first 3 weeks of the pre-apprenticeship features a series of employability coaching through 'Work Ready' classes which includes CV preparation and mock interviews with employers.
- Sector specific topics (including business administration and healthcare specific topics) are integrated in to the timetable to ensure the programme is designed around employers' needs.
- Work placements take place in a sector of choice and begin between 6 to 9 weeks after young people start the programme depending on when they are ready and last an average of 4 weeks.
- The programme costs approximately £2,500 per person

Country Context

Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16 living in England and combine a job with training. Training takes place both in the workplace and off the job, typically in a college or training centre. Most sectors of the economy offer apprenticeship opportunities in a wide range of job roles. There are four different levels of apprenticeship; intermediate, advanced, higher and degree level. The length of an apprenticeship depends on a number of factors, such as the level of the apprenticeship and the chosen sector.

- Intermediate apprenticeships typically last between one year and 18 months.
- Advanced apprenticeships are usually over two years.
- Higher and degree apprenticeships take three-to-six years to complete.

Apprenticeships are a key government policy priority in England. Successive governments have reformed the way in which apprenticeships are funded as well as delivered and have introduced targets to increase apprenticeship numbers. Reforms are designed to drive economic growth by meeting employers' skills needs and boost social mobility by extending opportunity.

Government-funded pre-apprenticeships operate under the brand name 'traineeships'. Traineeships were introduced in 2013 and are aimed at young people aged 16-24 years old, or young people with Learning Difficulty Assessments or Education, Health and Care plans up to the age of 25.

In March 2018, there were 808,000 young people (11.5%) aged 16 to 24 years in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Of all young people in the UK who were NEET, 39.9% were looking for work and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed.¹⁴

Traineeships are designed to help young people gain the skills and experience they need to get an apprenticeship or job. The target group for traineeships are young people who:

- Are not currently in employment and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it.
- Are aged 16 to 24 and qualified below level 3; and
- Have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or an apprenticeship within six months of engaging in a traineeship.

Traineeships are made up of three core elements:

- High-quality work experience.
- A focused period of work preparation training.
- English and maths if required.

¹⁴ Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: May 2018 (ONS, accessed 25/07/18)

The pre-apprenticeship at Jobwise Training

Jobwise Training are an independent training provider that was established in 1979 with the purpose of improving the skill levels of London's workforce through training, apprenticeships and qualifications. They are a government funded organisation and are graded as being outstanding by OFSTED, the organisation that inspects education and training in England. Drawing on the available government funding for traineeships, Jobwise introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme in 2013.

Jobwise Training specialise in providing pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in business administration, predominantly in the healthcare sector. By focusing on a particular sector, jobwise is able to provide employers with a supply of young people with the particular skills and work experience that they need.

Recruitment

Most young people on the pre-apprenticeship are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and many are former offenders or gang affiliated. The majority are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds with learners of Bangladeshi heritage being the predominant group.

Jobwise utilise a variety of methods for recruiting young people on to the pre-apprenticeship. Key to the success of this is their clear progression focused marketing and messaging. They have designed a range of marketing materials that explain the core elements of the programme and place a strong focus on the apprenticeship opportunities available to young people on completion of their pre-apprenticeship. An example is a marketing leaflet that advertises Jobwise's 'NHS traineeships programme'. The leaflet names specific NHS hospitals who are recruiting for live apprenticeship vacancies and the salary that trainees who progress to these opportunities will earn. Marketing also states other clear benefits of the traineeship, including:

- Guaranteed interview with an apprenticeship employer.
- Paid bursary allowance for attendance.
- Assigned mentor.
- Guaranteed four weeks work experience.

Jobwise utilise their strong working relationships with local councils who refer potential trainees on a regular basis. Other activities include open days which are held throughout the year. Jobwise also has a dedicated Client Accounts Management (CAM) team who run various social media campaigns e.g. through twitter and Facebook. Many young people also self-refer to Jobwise having heard of the programme through word of mouth as it has developed a strong reputation in the local area.

Initial assessment

Initial assessment is an important part of the recruitment process, which includes an assessment of maths and English skills level, and a face-to-face interview. Young people complete an assessment of English and maths using a tried and tested online platform known as BKSB.

The face to face interview provides young people with a thorough introduction to the programme, so they can make an informed decision about whether it's the right path for them.

To guide this process, Jobwise use a holistic questionnaire which explores young people's motivations for joining the programme, career aspirations, personal and social circumstances, financial circumstances, prior school experiences, barriers to learning, e.g. negative school

experiences, and other information that is relevant to their long-term progression to an apprenticeship in the health sector, e.g. criminal records. Conducting such a holistic questionnaire ensures that Jobwise can put comprehensive support in place, to enable each young person to make a success of their traineeship and progress to an apprenticeship.

Model of delivery

Following induction and an initial assessment, Jobwise aim to support trainees to progress to an apprenticeship within 4 months of starting the programme. However, young people have the option to stay with Jobwise longer than this if they require a longer period of support and training to be ready for an apprenticeship.

The small classroom sizes (up to a maximum of fifteen trainees, but typically much smaller) keep young people engaged and allows tutors to build rapport with young people. A small team of staff deliver the traineeship, comprised of five tutors with a combination of specialisms in maths and English, business administration and workplace skills; four assessors, and the Client Accounts Managers who oversee the recruitment, continuous assessment and mentoring of young people.

Through the government funding they access, Jobwise pay all trainees a bursary for attending. The bursary supports travel and other costs and is a further incentive that motivates young people to engage. The bursary is particularly important given the profile of the target group, many of whom are from low income families.

In the classroom, there's a strong focus on encouraging young people to take ownership of their own learning and development. Tutors proactively encourage group discussions to facilitate critical thinking and encourage young people to form and execute their own opinions. They have several ways of doing this, including asking young people to debate a popular news-related topic they've read in the newspaper. Such activities that promote critical thinking and public speaking amongst young people enable and them to develop the interpersonal skills needed in the workplace.

Content

On day one, young people are taken to a local coffee shop with their mentor, usually a staff member working in the Customer Accounts Management (CAMs) team. The CAMs team have responsibility for managing relationships with employers as well as providing mentoring support for young people. This early engagement provides an early opportunity for mentors to build rapport with young people and is particularly helpful for those who have had negative prior schooling experiences. On the second day, tutors take young people shopping for their own professional work clothing. This helps young people to feel valued and also ensures the environment at Jobwise Training is seen a professional one. When employers visit the training environment, they're more likely to have a positive perception of young people.

'They understand it's not a college course, we're going to treat them like adults' (James Pearson, Operations Director)

The first 3 weeks of the pre-apprenticeship is very focused and features a series of employability coaching through 'Work Ready'. Work Ready includes activities such as CV and cover letter writing, interview preparation, journey (travel) planning and mock interviews with employers.

Sector specific topics are integrated in to the timetable to ensure the programme is designed around employers' needs. This typically includes business administration, and topics and skills needed within the health care sector. An example of this is the way in which Jobwise recently tailored their

pre-apprenticeship programme to meet the requirements of a local hospital, who were planning for an intake of new apprentices. The hospital identified a requirement for apprentices to have a basic understanding of infection control. Jobwise staff were able to draw on their experience of working with employers in the health sector to tailor their pre-apprenticeship programme and incorporate the required focus. This provided the hospital with a supply of potential apprentices, with the skills they require.

A unique part of the programme known as Dragons Den aims to develop young people's presentation skills, to build confidence and provides an opportunity for young people to showcase their skills, abilities and talent to prospective employers.

Working as part of a team, young people design a unique business concept. Each team member takes on a specific role, such as a marketeer, an accountant, team leader; giving them insight to different roles.

Together, young people present their business concept to a panel of local employers, who in turn ask a series of questions. Through this process, young people gain important work-related skills such as being pro-active, thinking on their feet, interpersonal skills and how to work in a team.

Young people receive tailored feedback from employers at the end of the session, focussed around their strengths and areas for improvement. The added benefit is that employers have direct access / vision of young people, and often invite young people to be interviewed for a work placement, which in turn can lead to an apprenticeship.

Jobwise have endeavoured to ensure that basic skills of maths and English are embedded throughout all aspects of the programme. Young people are also supported to improve their financial capability through personal budgeting. Dragons Den provides a further opportunity to contextualise English and maths, whereby young people draft accounts and create budgets for the business concept they have designed.

Contextualising numeracy, where concepts such as area and perimeter are taught in a way that's useful in the workplace is important in enabling young people to understand the context of their learning and its transferability to the workplace.

Work Placements

Jobwise strongly emphasise that work placements should be a meaningful experience for young people, and that the content of the placement needs to be relevant and useful in order to boost a young person's chances of progressing to an apprenticeship.

Work placements begin between 6 to 9 weeks after young people start the programme depending on when they are ready and last an average of 4 weeks.

Available work placements are advertised on a job board in a communal area that young people have access to daily. This is a helpful reminder of the progression opportunities available to young people, helping to maintain their motivation.

Young people indicate their preferred apprenticeship sector on their initial application form, or if they prefer, they can select a few sectors and then make a more informed decision further along the programme.

The process for matching young people with a suitable employer is carried out by the CAMs team. The team make decisions about which young people are work-ready, and which employers are most suited to a young person. Where young people express an interest in working in a specific sector, the team ensure they embark on a relevant work placement. Appropriately matching young people and employers helps to develop good relationships, giving young people and the employer reassurance the placement is a good fit.

Young people undergo a standard application process in which they complete an application form and attend an interview with the employer. This is an opportunity for young people to learn of their responsibilities and an employer's expectations. It also helps to ensure that trainees understand that they need to show strong commitment to the training in order to progress into an apprenticeship.

Work placements are positively viewed as a type of probationary period where young people and employers have the chance to test each other out to see if they are a good match.

'Sometimes, after maybe a week or two, the employer can say, 'Actually, I'm happy with this person. Let's offer this person an apprenticeship right now,' and we'll start from there.' (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

Prospective employers are interviewed by Jobwise before providing work placements for young people. The employer interview includes a health and safety inspection of the workplace, a discussion of the work placement job description and how confident the employer is in supporting the young person. The interview is also an opportunity for Jobwise and the employer to make decisions about what activities/duties young people should carry out on their work placement.

All young people are allocated a workplace mentor who is independent from the workplace manager. Regular workplace reviews, that include clear goal setting and opportunities for reflection, enable young people to remain focused on their goals and see the progress they are making towards an apprenticeship.

A weekly review is carried out between young people and their workplace mentor using a standardised form to guide the process. This ensures young people have the opportunity to indicate if and when they need extra support in the workplace, to reflect on their progress so far, and to create short and long term SMART¹⁵ goals. Young people can also make suggestions about aspects of the workplace they would like to experience going forward.

This review process also gives employers the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of work, achievements of young people, and to report on any changes in their employability skills since beginning the placement. This gives young people and employers the chance to sit back and reflect on progress.

Young people return their review to Jobwise on a weekly basis. This weekly contact with the tutors means that they can identify areas that could be improved or things that are going well. Continuous improvement and feedback mean young people are more likely to succeed on their work placement and maintain good relationships with the employer. Young people enjoy coming back to the learning environment to tell everyone how well they're getting on at work and how they've been able to apply their learning.

¹⁵ SMART goals are targets that are **S**pecific **M**easurable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound.

All the above review and support processes help to maintain and strengthen the employer-trainee relationship, in turn keeping the progression route to an apprenticeship open and accessible.

Workshops

Themed workshops are held throughout the week and are tailored to the interests of young people whilst providing learning in an engaging environment. At the end of each workshop, young people complete feedback forms where they grade the content and delivery of the workshop, as well as providing suggestions for the future. This feedback informs the delivery and content of workshops, creating a continuous review cycle that feeds into the ongoing improvement of the programme.

So, what we try and do with certain subjects, Facing Phobias is a perfect example, they didn't like the delivery, but they enjoyed the content, so we now deliver that in a pet shop in Brixton where they get to actually hold the tarantulas and snakes and whatnot. So, it means we can react to change the environment or change the content if it's not interesting enough. (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

Jobwise also use their existing partnerships to deliver workshops that are young people focused, e.g. sexual health workshop delivered by local sexual health clinics. Delivering workshops that are focused on young people, keeps trainees interested and potentially addresses issues they may be facing in their wider lives that can impact upon their engagement in the traineeship.

Some workshops are focused on increasing young people's contact with older adults, with the aim of improving their professional communication skills. Coffee mornings for example, provide a space where young people network with potential employers. Young people engaged in the Jobwise pre-apprenticeship often haven't had a large degree of contact with adults outside of their family circle or school teachers. Running activities such as coffee mornings, has been an effective way of introducing trainees to older adults and overcoming one of the barriers to employment that they typically face.

Mentoring and additional support

Young people engaged in the Jobwise traineeship often experience specific types of disadvantage that are a barrier to successful employment. To address this, Jobwise have put in place a range of support mechanisms for young people. Each young person is assigned a Jobwise mentor, who is a member of the CAMs team and is responsible for engaging with employers who offer work placements. Offering young people this type of personalised support allows them to talk through their experiences and aspirations and highlight any difficulties they are facing.

This level of support ensures that tutors and staff become aware of potential issues as and when they arise and are therefore more able to respond in a timely manner, helping to retain young people and improve their experience of the programme, and eventual successful progression from the programme to an apprenticeship.

Interestingly, members of the CAMs team are graduates of the pre-apprenticeship who have secured employment with Jobwise Training, creating a 'grow your own talent' environment. This provides a form of inspiration for young people on the pre-apprenticeship. It enables them to clearly see that the programme leads to positive outcomes.

Important and holistic information is kept for each young person in a file in that is known as 'considerations. Considerations contains information such as the individual learning style, personal and social circumstances, and needs of each young person. This provides a mechanism for all

tutors to get to know young people on an individual basis and how to best support them in the classroom.

Effective partnership working

Employers play a key role throughout the lifespan of the Jobwise pre-apprenticeship. Employers are involved in the design and delivery of the programme. They are also involved in the inductions that young people go through and provide crucial work placements in the healthcare sector.

Jobwise work primarily with large employers in the healthcare sector. Jobwise recently worked with a local NHS hospital who provide work placements and apprenticeships to young people on the programme. To ensure young people were sufficiently prepared to work with this employer, Jobwise designed the content of the pre-apprenticeship programme around their needs. This is an effective practice that helps to provide a pipeline of 'apprenticeship-ready' young people for employers who are actively supplying opportunities.

'The NHS Employer is a lot more defined than some of the other needs of the employers, but they specifically wanted certain things to happen at certain points. So, we designed the programme around them before we started. For example, they wanted the infection control to be in there. They wanted there to be a use of medical terminology.' (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

A key success factor in securing good progression rates for disadvantaged young people is the availability of holistic and inclusive support networks. Jobwise have developed strong partnerships with local social services teams and local housing authorities in order to ensure a continuity of support is available for those young people who would most benefit from it.

Outcomes for young people

On completion of the pre-apprenticeship, young people often progress to an apprenticeship with Jobwise Training, usually also with the employer that offered the traineeship work experience placement. Jobwise ensures that young people have a clear understanding of the job they are taking on, and for example, ensure that young people have received a formal contract from the employer:

'We ensure that they get contracts from the employer, that the salary's clear, that the holiday allowance is clear with them, what training plan are we going to put in place...' (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

Should a young person wish to progress to an apprenticeship in a sector not offered by Jobwise, they work with other training providers in London to find a suitable place for them. Jobwise continue to support these young people during the process of moving to an apprenticeship with a different provider, ensuring it is streamlined and that the young people feel supported throughout.

Young people are offered an exit interview if they have not secured an expected outcome. Through this process, Jobwise have the opportunity to learn from young people and to review and improve the programme.

Recent provider figures (2017) revealed that of 171 young people, 49% have progressed to an apprenticeship, 13% progressed to full time employment, 12% to further education, and the proportion of those young people who have not yet progressed (26%) continue to be supported by the team at Jobwise in applying for different roles, or to further uncover their career interests.

Best practice – key success factors

- Tailoring programmes to meet the skills needs of employers enables young people to develop specific skills that local employers are looking for when they recruit apprentices.
- A clear and sequenced structure of delivery is important for developing levels of confidence and self-esteem of young people, leading up to contact with real employers.
- Robust feedback and review processes contributes to a continual cycle of improvement of the pre-apprenticeship, taking into consideration the views of tutors, employers and young people.

Technological University Dublin - Access to Apprenticeship, Ireland

Programme Summary

Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) is the largest provider of apprenticeships and higher education in Ireland, currently providing 30% of apprenticeship education alongside wider vocational provision. In 2017, TU Dublin piloted the Access to Apprenticeship programme which aims to prepare young people from Dublin's inner-city communities to access apprenticeship positions.

The Access to Apprenticeship programme is 12-week programme which includes 10 weeks in the classroom followed by a 2-week work placement with a relevant employer. TU Dublin delivered three phases of the Access to Apprenticeship programme in 2017/18, with sixteen young people (total 48) on each phase in September 2017, January 2018 and April 2018.

This case study highlights key learning points arising from the unique opportunity to study this pilot programme in detail. It specifically highlights the key role that different partnerships play in the design and delivery of good quality pre-apprenticeship programmes. The case study provides examples of the role of partners at different stages, for example in setting up programmes, recruiting suitable young people, delivering programme, content and in providing work placements.

Key programme details

- Young people spend a total of 12 weeks on the programme, with 30 contact hours per week. The first 10 weeks are spent in the classroom, after which young people complete a two-week work placement.
- Young people engage in skills sampling, whereby they spend five days per week in the classroom, with each week focused on different apprenticeship sectors. This is a useful way of providing career orientation for young people who can then make informed decisions about the sector they are interested in.
- Employer engagement is an important element of this programme, helping provide meaningful opportunities for young people who might not traditionally access apprenticeships or normally have direct contact with hiring employers.
- Young people receive a certificate of participation at the end of their programme, recognising the skills developed during the programme and the completion of their work placement.
- The programme cost 3,700 per person in 2017/18

Country context

In Ireland, apprenticeships are an employer-led scheme, managed by the 'Further Education and Skills Service known as SOLAS. There are currently 29 disciplines offered on the apprenticeship scheme focusing on craft-based areas such as construction, manufacturing and transport with new additions in insurance, accountancy and financial services. The traditional apprenticeship scheme generally involves seven phases over four years with phases four and six taking place in an Institute of Technology.¹⁶ Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 involve on-the-job training and phases 2, 4 and 6 involve off-the-job training.

Given that traditional apprenticeships in Ireland are strongly focused on areas such as construction, levels of apprenticeship recruitment in these sectors are strongly linked with labour market and economic cycles. Apprenticeship starts in Ireland fell rapidly from 8,239 registrations in 2007 to just 1,500 in 2013. Levels of apprenticeship starts are now beginning to grow again, and there is significant scope to increase the numbers of young people choosing an apprenticeship as a route to employment and training.

With the aim of meeting skills shortages in key areas of the economy and improve youth unemployment rates, there has been recent investment in expanding the apprenticeship scheme, including promoting apprenticeships as a feasible alternative to higher education. It is the ambition of the Irish government to have 100 different apprenticeship frameworks in place by 2020 providing a total of 50,000 apprenticeship places. Along with several recommendations set out by a review of the apprenticeship system in 2013¹⁷, the government identified the introduction of a national pre-apprenticeship course as being key to meeting these targets by increasing the number of opportunities for young people to gain access to the apprenticeship scheme.

The current provision of pre-apprenticeship programmes in Ireland is delivered outside of the main apprenticeship education providers. There are a small number of pre-apprenticeship programmes offered in colleges of further education around Ireland but there is no official, national pre-apprenticeship programme.

Some programmes help people who have already met the entry requirements for an apprenticeship to gain work experience in a particular sector to provide them with a foundation of knowledge and experience to pursue an apprenticeship in that trade. Other programmes are offered by Community Training Centres and are aimed at early school leavers, or young people who wish to complete an apprenticeship but for whom the minimum entry requirement has not been achieved. Such programmes offer young people the opportunity to gain the qualification needed to begin an apprenticeship.

¹⁶ An Institute of Technology is a type of higher education in Ireland, which usually specialises in engineering, technology, applied science, and sometimes natural sciences. There is a total of 14 colleges that use the title in Ireland. (Source: <http://www.dit.ie/about/>)

¹⁷ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Review-of-Apprenticeship-Training-in-Ireland.pdf>

Access to Apprenticeship

Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) is the largest provider of apprenticeships and higher education in Ireland, currently providing 30% of apprenticeship education alongside wider vocational provision. TU Dublin trains apprentices across 13 job roles including Aircraft Mechanics; Brick and Stone Laying; Construction Plant Fitting; Electrical; Heavy Vehicle Mechanics; Industrial Insulation; Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting; Metal Fabrication; Painting & Decorating; Plumbing; Print Media; Refrigeration & Air Conditioning; Sheet Metal working; Vehicle Body Repairs; Wood Manufacturing and Finishing.

TU Dublin provide 10% of all higher education in Ireland through its four colleges; arts and tourism, business, engineering and the built environment, sciences and health. Due to this range of provision, TU Dublin have a diverse student population, with students undertaking apprenticeships, undergraduate degrees, master's and doctoral programmes. Supporting their commitment to widening participation in higher education, TU Dublin offer a successful one-year access course which aims to support mature students and/or young adults who have experienced educational disadvantage. This strong and well-established access programme supports around 950 access students who are currently completing undergraduate courses. The access programme is targeted at students who come from backgrounds typically under-represented in higher education, and combines academic, financial, personal and social support and activity.

In Ireland, the proportion of young people who were not in education, training or employment in 2017 was 10.9%, which is lower than the EU average of 14.2%¹⁸. In 2017, TU Dublin was successful in securing a grant from J.P Morgan Chase Foundation and ESB to develop an innovative project to support the transition of young people from areas of socio-economic disadvantage on to an apprenticeship programme. The Access to Apprenticeship programme particularly aims to address the challenges faced by young people in Dublin aged 16-24 from areas of social disadvantage in accessing an apprenticeship.

The development of the Access to Apprenticeship programme was underpinned by TU Dublin's combined expertise in apprenticeships and access. The project was delivered on a pilot basis by TU Dublin's College of Engineering and Built Environment. The pilot project is working with key stakeholders in inner-city Dublin to address the challenges facing young people (16-24) from disadvantaged communities in accessing apprentice positions. The project was delivered from January 2017 to September 2018 with the development and design stage commencing in January 2017. The project mirrored the existing traditional apprentice intake recruiting 16 students for a 12-week block in 3 stages (Sept 17, Jan 18, April 18).

In designing their programme, TU Dublin set up an advisory board of key stakeholders in the apprenticeship sector including policy makers, employers, educators and youth workers. This advisory board is helping to provide strategic direction on progress in the development of the pilot implementation. The board also brings a national perspective to the programme, ensuring it's implemented in line with wider developments around apprenticeships and eventually, can be mainstreamed in to broader policy development. In the future, TU Dublin would like Access to

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipslm90&plugin=1>

Apprenticeship to develop into a programme that can be mainstreamed into wider apprenticeship provision in Ireland.

Recruitment of young people

To support the transition of young people from areas of socio-economic disadvantage in Dublin on to an apprenticeship scheme, staff identified geographic areas in Dublin with some of the highest level of socio-economic disadvantage in the city. To meet the criteria of targeting young people who are socially and economically disadvantaged, the following indicators were used.

- Parent(s) or Guardian(s) Have Not Gone to College (Higher Education)
- Applicant has Attended a DEIS¹⁹ School for At Least 2 years
- Applicant Lives in an Area of Urban Disadvantage

The Access to Apprenticeship programme was promoted through various outreach activities in schools, youth employment schemes and local area partnerships, as well as using online and social media platforms. TU Dublin effectively use their existing partnerships with schools, community and statutory organisations to support the recruitment of young people who are within the 16-24 age group from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, TU Dublin's Access and Civic Engagement team have good relationships with DEIS schools in Dublin, designated as disadvantaged by the Department of Education and Skills. They used this partnership as an opportunity to promote engagement onto the programme.

'We have a range of partners in the community education sector, in youth groups or in youth training centres, and we also targeted them to see if they had students who they thought the programme might be suitable for.' (TU Dublin Access Co-ordinator)

Women continue to be significantly under-represented in traditional apprenticeships in Ireland, and TU Dublin aim to use this programme as an opportunity to attract more women into apprenticeships. TU Dublin have run several initiatives to attract women to the programme, such as a targeted open day with the primary focus of engaging young unemployed women in the local area. Two young women joined Access to Apprenticeship having attended the targeted open day. Employers have recognised the value of the programme as diversifying the recruitment pool for apprenticeships and are keen to collaborate with the ATA programme to engage and recruit more females.

'We are very interested in working with the Access programme to increase the number of female apprentices. The biggest challenge will be to get parents and career guidance professionals to recognise that it is a positive and rewarding career for females.' (Employer)

Interview and initial assessment

Using their effective working relationships with the Access team, staff involved in the pilot have been able to share learning about targeting, recruiting and assessing young people on to the Access to Higher Education programme. The access team worked with the access to apprenticeship team to develop assessments as well as the benchmarks used to determine if someone is classed as disadvantaged.

¹⁹ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

Young people who apply for a place on the Access to Apprenticeship programme attend an interview with TU Dublin staff. To determine young people's levels of work readiness, the interview explores young people's motivations for applying, their personal and social circumstances and educational background. It also set out the practicalities of the programme and what would be expected of them. Importantly, young people are made fully aware of the progression outcomes available to them upon completion, key success factor in recruiting young people onto the programme.

To ensure that all places on phase one of the programme were taken up, recruitment involved targeting schools, community and statutory organisations that work directly with the target group. Staff and tutors highlighted how it was much easier to recruit and engage young people in September, as this is when the academic year begins in Ireland. In addition, more young people were referred to the programme by schools for phase one starting in September, compared with later in the academic year.

The pilot phase of Access to Apprenticeship led to several key learning points relating to the recruitment of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given that this was the first time TU Dublin had worked with this type of student in an apprenticeship setting, there were important lessons about the appropriate level of resource or experience to meet the needs of young people.

Going forward, the initial assessment will be an important part of the recruitment process for Access to Apprenticeships. Staff and tutors plan to reflect on the application process used during the pilot phase to introduce a careful assessment of young people's motivations, capabilities and skills before they are accepted on to the programme. This will help to ensure the right profile of young people enter the programme, and that they are likely to fully engage with it and progress onto an apprenticeship.

Staff will also work with partners to signpost young people where more intensive intervention and support is required for this type of student. The ATA Programme was not designed to provide intensive supports, rather support with access to apprenticeship and employers.

Model of delivery

The Access to Apprenticeship programme seeks to deliver the essential skills required for entry to apprenticeships including maths, science and digital skills, as well as career support, personal development and confidence building. Young people spend a total of 12 weeks on the programme, with 30 contact hours per week. This model was designed to reflect the amount of contact time individuals spend during one term as an apprentice. Personal and professional development focuses on skills such as self- assessment, self- evaluation, goal setting and resilience.

The first 10 weeks are spent in the classroom, after which young people complete a two-week work placement. Young people spend five days per week in the classroom, with each week focused on different apprenticeship sectors. For example, young people spend time learning about aircraft mechanics for one week, before focusing on painting and decorating the next. Tutors who usually deliver classroom-based training on the apprenticeship at TU Dublin are involved and provide young people with a basic knowledge about the sector, alongside an opportunity to work on a practical project in this area.

This gives young people the chance to experience a wide range of apprenticeships on offer at TU Dublin, enabling them to make an informed decision about their future career choice. Young people value the opportunity to attend taster sessions in various apprenticeship sectors. They gain insight to sectors which they might not have considered before and importantly, can explore which sectors they might want to pursue through an apprenticeship.

Each Wednesday is known as ‘personal development and employer engagement’ day, where young people engage in activities related to improving their employability skills such as CV development, interview preparation or employer engagement. Each Friday is dedicated to reflecting upon what went well the week before and creating new goals for the week ahead.

Weekly reflections are an important part of the programme in enabling young people to review their experience of different apprenticeship sectors, look at the skills they have developed and to make plans for the subsequent week. This level of reflection also provides one way for young people to think about their preferred apprenticeship area. Each participant records their reflections in a portfolio which is assessed again at the end of the programme.

Weekly reflections are built in to the programme to give young people a sense of the assessment and feedback processes in an apprenticeship. In Ireland, apprentices are continuously assessed using online portfolios throughout the course of the apprenticeship, rather than through formal testing.

Table 1. Access to Apprenticeship programme

Week	Access to Apprenticeship – 12-week programme
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Induction and Health and Safety Training ▪ Health and Safety Training, Manual Handling & Emergency Response ▪ Safe Pass Training Course and Certification Provided
2-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monday (9am – 5pm) ▪ Mornings - Personal Development & Employer Engagement ▪ Afternoons - Employers and Current Apprentice Presentations ▪ Tuesday through Thursday (9am – 5pm) ▪ Skills Sampling - Workshops and Lectures ▪ Friday (9am-1pm) ▪ E-Portfolio Development with Apprenticeship Lecturers from that Week
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal Development & Employer Engagement ▪ Aircraft Mechanics - Two Visits for Group of 8 Students ▪ E-Portfolio Development with Apprenticeship Lecturers from that Week
11 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work Experience with SOLAS Registered Employers ▪ Last Friday - Awards Day – Certificate of Completion (CPD)

Employer engagement

Employer engagement plays a key role in ensuring young people have direct contact with employers who can offer work experience. This is an important element of this programme, helping provide meaningful opportunities for young people who might not traditionally access apprenticeships or normally have direct contact with hiring employers.

'The programme is a great initiative for young people to give them a potential start they otherwise would not have had, we hosted work placements for each of the phases and we have two apprentices from the programme now registered with us'. (Employer)

Employer engagement activities take place every Wednesday whereby employers give presentations about their organisation, apprenticeships and potential opportunities. TU Dublin also hold regular networking events where young people have the opportunity to meet a range of employers at one time. This provides young people with the chance to meet potential employers to host their work placement and potential apprenticeship, and in turn provides employers with the opportunity to meet potential apprentices.

The two-week work placement takes place at the end of the programme to ensure young people gain exposure to the workplace environment and experience the reality of apprentice training. TU Dublin work with a selection of employers from across apprenticeship sectors to ensure young people have access to a work placement in a sector of their choice.

Employers who were involved in the Access to Apprenticeship pilot provided positive feedback on the programme. They valued the opportunity to engage with the young people and to see their level of interest in pursuing an apprenticeship. Employers also thought it was good for young people to learn what would be expected of them as an apprentice. Young people who complete the programme especially value the work placement element, highlighting that gaining experience in the workplace with an employer helped to clarify which apprenticeship sector they are interested in pursuing.

'I'm happy with the programme and the 9-day work placement with employers give both the candidate and employer a good opportunity to assess each other to see if this will work both ways'. (Employer)

TU Dublin commissioned an external evaluation of the Access to Apprenticeships pilot programme after the first phase to learn more about the strengths, challenges and key learning points to take forward. TU Dublin have been able to use this evaluation to inform the future development of the programme. For example, in the next rollout of Access to Apprenticeship, TU Dublin are considering adapting the 'taster' modules to provide young people with a deeper level of insight and understanding into key sectors.

Outcomes for young people

The programme resulted in an overall completion rate of 75%, a pass rate of 62.5% with 50% of participants taking up an apprenticeship. Young people receive a certificate of participation at the end of their programme, recognising the skills developed during the programme and the completion of their work placement. This is an important component in the design of TU Dublin's pre-apprenticeship programme, providing a sense of achievement for young people and supporting their progression to an apprenticeship.

'I didn't know what I wanted to do with my future but since I started this course, I know that I want to do an apprenticeship in Plumbing. Everything is explained on the course about what you need to do to get the apprenticeship. After I left school, there was no guidance about next steps and getting a career, this course came at the right time for me as I was completely lost and getting into bad habits and falling out with everyone at home' (Young person on ATA).

Additionally, as part of the independent evaluation, a questionnaire was administered with 33 participants to measure changes as a result of participation in the programme. Students were asked to score themselves on a range of soft indicators before beginning the programme and then at ten weeks.

The external evaluation demonstrated positive changes in outcomes for young people who completed Access to Apprenticeship. These changes ranged from a 25% improvement in independence to a 33% improvement in ambition and included other outcomes such as improvements in health and well-being (30%), community participation (33%), and personal development (30%).

'Meeting new people has been great, I am now much more confident and comfortable talking and working with others. I am getting more out of myself and I have more skills than I thought I had. (Young person on ATA).

Best practice – key success factors

- Using existing partnerships such as with schools and youth organisations provides a useful way to generate targeted and appropriate referrals to pre-apprenticeship programme.
- Giving young people the chance to experience a range of apprenticeship sectors allows them to find out what interests them and to make informed career decisions.
- Employer engagement activities that introduce young people to employers demonstrates that there is a commitment to them to find work placements, and that there is a real opportunity to progress to an apprenticeship.

Second Chance School (E2C73) – Savoie, France

Case study summary

The Second Chance School Savoie (E2C73) which is based in the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region of France, was set up in 2011 by the local authority with support from the wider Second Chance School (E2C) Network. The E2C73 programme seeks to boost progression opportunities for young people aged 16-25 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) by supporting them to gain the essential skills needed to enter an apprenticeship or the wider labour market.

This case study showcases good practice in conducting the initial recruitment and assessment of young people. Young people who attend E2C73 take part in a thorough assessment process which is used to determine whether the programme is suitable for them. The assessment is comprised of an initial interview before young people join the programme, followed by another induction interview upon joining. The holistic information collected from these interviews is then used to develop a unique learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on their pre-apprenticeship is tailored to their individual needs.

Key programme details

- E2C73 use diverse methods to drive the recruitment of young people through external and self-referrals, including through partnering with a range of local and national organisations.
- The programme is completed over a period of 8 months and consists of a series of workshops around topics such as essential skills, citizenship, sports, social projects, and a series of work placements.
- The programme is made up of three phases - this phased learning helps young people to gradually develop the range of skills required to progress to an apprenticeship.
- Work placements lasts two weeks, followed by two weeks in the training centre. Work placements are delivered in rotation; whereby young people alternate between work placements and in-house training for the full duration of the programme.
- Post-training support is a formal part of the E2C73 programme, where tutors and staff keep in touch with young people for one year following completion of the programme.
- The cost per person on the programme is €6200 per year.

Country context

A French apprenticeship (*apprentissage*) aims to give young people who have completed compulsory schooling, theoretical and practical training, leading to a certificate of vocational or technological education at secondary or higher level. Apprenticeships are delivered across most employment sectors in France, however they are most common in the customer service sector, including hospitality and business services. Other sectors where apprenticeships are common include retail, construction and hairdressing and beauty.²⁰ An apprenticeship lasts from one to three years, depending on the sector and the level of qualification sought.

The French government recently announced plans to transform the apprenticeship system with the aim of making it more attractive for young people, with a clearer focus on progression to the labour market. Young people aged 16-26 are currently eligible for an apprenticeship, this will soon change to include those up to age 30 following recent reforms. Apprenticeships usually take place in training centres for apprentices (*centres de formation d'apprentis*, CFAs). In the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region of France, where the E2C73 Second Chance School is based, there were 33,032 apprenticeship starts between June 1st, 2016 and May 31st 2017.

The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in France is lower than in other EU countries, with 11.5% recorded as not in education, employment or training (NEET) in 2017 compared with an average of 14.2% across the EU²¹. Second Chance Schools (*Écoles de la deuxième chance*; E2Cs) were set up in France to tackle the social exclusion that many young people experience. Second Chance Schools aim to reintegrate young people who have left school early, or had negative experiences of compulsory schooling with education and the labour market. There are now more than 52 second chance schools, with more than 124 sites across France.

A core feature of the E2C model is its focus on targeting young people who have left compulsory education without qualifications. In 2017, approximately 90,000 young people entered an E2C programme.

The pre-apprenticeship at E2C73 in Savoie

E2C73 in Savoie, which is in the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region of France, was set up in 2011 by the local authority with support from the E2C Network. The programme welcomes young people aged between 16-26 who are NEET and regarded as socially excluded. In 2011, there were approximately 3000 local young people eligible for the programme. The number remains similar today highlighting the continued need for programmes that support young people to enter the labour market. The cost per person on the programme is €620 per year.

The E2C73 programme seeks to boost progression opportunities for young people by supporting them to gain the essential skills needed for an apprenticeship including maths, literacy and digital skills, employability, rediscovering their self-confidence; and a series of work placements to explore their personal career aspirations.

²⁰https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2015/ReferNet_FR_2014_WBL.pdf

²¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipslm90&plugin=1>

Recruitment of young people

E2C73 use a range of methods to drive the recruitment of young people through external and self-referrals. One way they do this is through developing partnerships with organisations who then refer young people to the programme. Referrals most commonly come from the Local Missions²², centres where young people between the ages of 16 to 25 can seek support and advice about work, training, accommodation and other important areas of their lives. Other referral pathways include local job centres, youth justice centres as well as social work or educational professionals. Having a variety of referral pathways ensures that the young people who are least likely to access education and training have multiple opportunities to do so.

The voices of young people are a central feature of the marketing and messaging used to advertise E2C73. This includes case studies of young people who have found an apprenticeship or employment through local radio, online and using social media. These approaches help to create positive messages and perceptions about E2C73 and the young people who attend, which in turn is key to improving perceptions of the target group amongst local employers and other partners in the local community.

Interview and initial assessment

Before joining E2C73, young people attend an interview which is used to determine whether they are appropriate for the programme. For example, during the interview staff explore whether applicants are 'work ready', their motivations for joining, as well as their personal and social circumstances. Likewise, this initial interview provides an opportunity for young people to decide whether the programme is right for them by gaining an understanding of what would be expected of them throughout the year and the benefits of joining, including the progression opportunities available.

Once young people have joined the programme, they attend an induction interview to discuss their personal, social and financial circumstances in more detail. The holistic information collected from this interview is then used to develop a learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on the programme is tailored to their individual needs. Tailoring the programme in this way ensures that each young person can address their individual barriers to gaining an apprenticeship and entering the labour market, maximising the prospect of a successful outcome. The induction interview includes an assessment which measures each young person's level of essential skills e.g. maths, as well as competencies related to personal and social development. The assessment is completed by the young person, alongside their tutor, using a paper-based assessment form and is repeated throughout a young person's time on the programme to track their progress and identify areas for further development.

Young people then discuss this personal and social competency assessment in small groups during the first week of the programme. These group discussions are important in helping young people to learn why such skills and competencies are important for an apprenticeship, and ways they can be developed through the programme.

²² Local missions were set up with the objective to reduce youth unemployment and to help integrate young people into French society.

Model of delivery

E2C73 staff work with each young person to develop a personalised programme according to their goals and aspirations. This is designed to be an empowering process for young people, enabling them to develop a strong sense of commitment to the programme and the confidence to succeed. The programme is completed over a period of 8 months and consists of a series of workshops around topics such as essential skills, citizenship, sports, social projects, and a series of work placements. At E2C73, work placements take place across the whole eight-month duration of the programme, with each young person spending around 40% of their time in work placements with different employers.

Phased Learning

The programme is made up of three phases and is designed to help young people become more confident, skilled and clearer about their career aspirations as they progress through the programme. This phased learning helps young people to gradually develop the range of skills required to progress fully into the labour market.

Phase one lasts for four weeks and aims to re-introduce learners to an education and training environment; to rediscover a positive view of education and work; and to prepare for positive engagement in training. This intensive period of re-introduction is considered key to engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and enabling them to sustain their engagement and progress. During this phase young people also complete their first work placement and work with staff to develop a personal programme for the next phase

During phase one, young people engage in a range of activities, focused around:

- Employability, such as CV writing and effective job searching
- Essential digital skills, such as using email and Google Drive
- Essential soft skills, such as team work and communication skills
- Hygiene and safety at work

Phase two lasts just over three months and aims to enable young people to consolidate their learning from phase one, to acquire essential skills needed for the labour market, and to explore their career aspirations. Phase three lasts for four months and is the last stage in a young person's time at E2C73 before they move on an apprenticeship. This is described as the phase when young people become fully independent and are ready for progression to the labour market.

Workshops

Classroom based learning takes place in the form of workshops which young people select when developing their personal programme. Each workshop is limited to just a small number of young people, helping them to build rapport with each other as well as with tutors. In each workshop, there is a strong focus on encouraging young people to take ownership of their own learning and development. Tutors encourage group discussion on a daily basis to help develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Young people are given the opportunity to suggest workshops that would interest and benefit them. This is seen as useful for keeping the programme focused and engaging. E2C73 utilise their positive working relationships with other organisations in the local area to deliver bespoke workshops, such as media and journalism, or cookery and hospitality. Partners in the area are often commissioned to deliver these activities due to their expertise in the sector.

Sporting activities are considered an important part of the programme and are seen as a way of improving or maintaining young people's holistic health and well-being. Good health and wellbeing is an important foundation for positive engagement with the programme and progression to the labour market. Tutors emphasise that getting involved in sporting activities helps young people to build rapport with their peers; a key precursor to positive workplace relationships.

Essential skills such as French language and maths are embedded throughout the main workshops, providing a useful way for young people to engage with essential skills training and to realise the value of these skills in the workplace and in everyday life.

Employer Engagement and Work Placements

Throughout all phases of the programme, young people undergo simulation interviews with real employers and complete visits to companies in the local area. These activities help young people to get a flavour of different sectors and places of employment, an important addition to the programme given that many young people have limited labour market experience.

E2C73 have developed strong links with a wide range of local employers to ensure learners have opportunities to find placements that meet their needs and interests. The added value of the E2C concept has been recognised by the French government, which helps E2C73 to develop and maintain strong links with employers.

Employer engagement activities include inviting local employers to visit E2C73 to present their organisation and sector, mock interviews for apprenticeship roles, and visits to local companies. E2C73 view employer engagement activities as a core element of the programme, benefiting both employers and young people. Young people benefit from meeting a range of employers, whilst employers have the chance to overcome negative stereotypes, they may have of young people at a second chance school. Feedback from employers suggests they value having one clear contact at E2C73 as this enables them to co-ordinate activities efficiently.

Work placements play a key role in helping young people at E2C73 to explore and realise their personal career aspirations. During phase one, young people are asked about the type of jobs and sector they would be interested in and are encouraged to try this out during an initial 'broad' placement.

Young people alternate between work placements and in-house training for the full duration of the programme. This is a continuous and developmental process which is ongoing until a young person secures an apprenticeship place, or another progression outcome. Rotating work placements in this way has real benefit for young people as it provides a chance for them to explore different career paths, to build a realistic understanding of work in a given sector, and helps them to build a professional and well-rounded CV. The delivery of in-house training in between work placements provides a focussed period of support to address any skills gaps, or to explore new areas of interest, that may have been identified during a placement.

Young people are empowered to make their own connections with employers and to seek out their own work placement opportunities. Each young person is encouraged to demonstrate greater independence to prospective employers as they progress through the programme, with support from tutors where required.

Through rotational work placements, interspersed with a personalised programme of in-house training, E2C73 take a thorough approach to continuous feedback and assessment. Training plans,

career guidance and goals are constantly evaluated and adjusted along the way to meet the specific and evolving needs and progress of each young person. To support this, E2C73 consistently re-visit the soft skills assessment completed by young people at the beginning of the programme to track their progress, identify distance travelled and determine key areas for further improvement as they progress through the programme.

E2C73 have involved a range of local and regional stakeholders in the delivery of the programme to ensure it meets the needs of the local labour market. Each of these partners have an important role which plays on their strengths and areas of expertise. For example, by keeping good working relationships with social workers who refer young people to the programme, E2C73 can effectively quickly secure extra support for young people if they need it whilst they are on the programme. Many of the young people engaged in the E2C73 programme are disadvantaged and experience financial and social barriers to employment. To enable these young people to overcome the barriers they face, E2C73 staff emphasise the importance of accessible and inclusive support. For example, at a practical level, public transport is not well established in the area. Without adequate travel allowances from local authorities, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who live far away from the area would not be able to attend.

E2C73 follow a clear quality framework as part of the E2C branding process. Each E2C takes part in an independent audit every four years. The audit explores a range of criteria including the partnerships established on the programme, the aim of the programme, teaching practices and if the E2C has evidenced an ongoing commitment to improving practices and procedures. The E2C label was officially recognised by the National Council of Employment, Training and Vocational Guidance in 2015, a body that regularly carries out a review of French certifications and labels relating to the quality of vocational training.

Outcomes for young people

The most recent outcomes and progressions data showed that in 2017, 51 young people graduated from E2C73. Of these, nearly half (49%) moved on to a full-time outcome. Eight young people moved on to further study or education, 9 found full time employment and 7 young people found an apprenticeship place with one of the employers who provided work experience during the E2C programme. These outcomes reflect the local labour market, including the availability of apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

A further 24% of young people progressed from E2C73 to a short-term outcome, including 4 who found a short-term job, 5 went on to join a youth guarantee programme²³ and 3 found supported work placements for young people with learning disabilities. The remaining 27% of young people are currently looking for an apprenticeship place or job.

E2C73 measured these outcomes again 12 months after young people left the programme and found that all 51 young people had sustained their apprenticeship place or employment position.

Post-training support is a formal part of the E2C73 programme, where tutors and staff keep in touch with young people for one year following completion of the programme. Young people are contacted at least 4 times at 3-month intervals during the follow up year. This is important in terms of providing support to enable them to sustain their new apprenticeship.

²³ Young people on a youth guarantee course follow a one-year intensive support programme, combined with training and professional experience; they receive monthly financial support. The programme is run by the local youth employment agencies (*mission locales*).

On completion of the programme, young people obtain a formally recognised Certificate of Acquired Competencies, highlighting their progress and achievements on the programme to future employers. E2C73 view this formal recognition as an essential aspect of their programme which helps to boost young people's access to apprenticeships or vocational training.

Best practice – key success factors

- Phased learning provides a way for young people to gradually develop the range of skills required to progress fully into the labour market.
- Involving a wide range of economic and social stakeholders in the design and delivery of programmes ensures it continually meets the needs of the local labour market and is inclusive for young people
- Keeping in touch with young people after they have completed the programme helps to ensure appropriate support is in place to sustain their apprenticeship or job where necessary

JOBLINGE, Germany

Case Study Summary

JOBLINGE aims to enable disadvantaged young people aged 15-25 to find an apprenticeship or job and in so doing, lead a self-determined life. The programme targets young people who are unlikely to find employment on their own. The programme has worked with more than 7,000 participants to date and currently has over 1,800 places each year. Almost all participants are referred to the programme by job centres and local employment agencies.

This case study specifically highlights best practice in how mentoring and personalised support can contribute to inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeships. JOBLINGE apply different approaches to personalised and one-to-one support for young people whilst they are on a pre-apprenticeship programme

The design of this programme, particularly its approach to mentoring provides useful learning about ensuring young people are ready to engage in pre-apprenticeships, leading to good outcomes and successful apprenticeship matches.

Key programme details

- JOBLINGE is a six-month, full-time programme which participants attend all day Monday to Friday.
- Referrals from job centres are compulsory (with sanctions for non-attendance). Nonetheless, many participants report that the professional nature of the programme and high ambitions for each young person is motivational and helps them to engage
- The programme follows a clear, defined structure which encompasses five stages including 1. Admission, 2. Orientation, 3. Practical experience 4. Trial, and 5. Vocational training – follow up. Each phase is underpinned by a clear set of aims and objectives and has unique benefits for young people.
- Mentors meet weekly with participants, providing encouragement as they progress through each stage of the programme. This helps to motivate young people, and reduce the chances of them dropping out, in the face of any challenges they encounter at home
- JOBLINGE works in partnership with an extensive network of approximately 2,400 businesses and the level of engagement and close relationship with companies is undoubtedly a core element in the success of the programme.
- The cost per participant of each pre-apprenticeship, on the traditional programme, is €5,900

Country context

Despite relatively low rates of young people not in education, training or employment compared to other European countries (2017: Germany 6.3%, EU average 14.3%)²⁴, Germany has more than half a million young people who are unemployed, or in measures delivered through the 'school-to-work' transition system, and a record level of unfilled apprenticeships; 43,000 of the 547,000 apprenticeships in 2015/16 remaining unfilled (an increase of 4.5% on the year before).²⁵ Less qualified young people, particularly those without a vocational degree, have much higher unemployment rates than those more highly qualified. Access to vocational training is therefore key to future employment prospects.

Due to demographic changes, a range of industries and sectors are facing a skills shortage; a shortfall of 5m skilled workers is forecast by 2025²⁶. At the same time, Germany has encountered new challenges in integrating large numbers of refugees into the labour market. Around 32% of 300,000 new entrants in the school-to-work system in 2016 did not have German citizenship and currently around 120,000 refugees under 25 are seeking jobs²⁷.

Dual vocational education and training is viewed by many as central to the strength of the German economy and the quality of German vocational training is internationally recognised.

In the dual system, students acquire the practical experience and skills needed for their chosen occupation in the workplace, for part of the week, and attend vocational school for the remaining days. Apprenticeships are part of the formal education system, helping to integrate young people into the labour market; apprentices successfully completing their final exams leave with a nationally recognised certificate for their profession and many go on to be offered employment by the company that provided the apprenticeship. The curriculum is overseen by federal government, trade unions and industry organisations.

Young people leaving school at 16 with a lower secondary school qualification or less are likely to enter the VET system in 'transition system' programmes and schemes, which do not provide full vocational training. Although this system receives substantial public funding, in the main through job centres, there is concern that it is too often fragmented and insufficiently focused on outcomes and value for money (funding is allocated on a per participant basis). As a result, young people can be sent from one programme to another with little realistic prospect of making the transition to the regular VET system.

²⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipslm90&plugin=1>

²⁵ 2017, Report on Vocational Education and Training, Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

²⁶ Boston Consulting Group

²⁷ May 2017, Job market migration monitor: People in the context of flight migration

The pre-apprenticeship at JOBLINGE

JOBLINGE was created in 2007 when Boston Consulting Group (BCG), a worldwide management consultancy, and BMW's Eberhard von Kuenheim Foundation came together to develop a project to better prepare low qualified and disadvantaged young people for the job market. Following the pilot phase, both organisations continue to support JOBLINGE in a number of ways including with financial support, as supervisory board members, as mentors or trainers for young people and through enabling access to their networks and contacts.

The programme is co-financed through public funding and private donations (total budget approximately €11.4m in 2017; €3.6m donations, €7.7m public funding²⁸). Ongoing costs are largely funded by the public sector. Depending on the location, this can include funding from the job centre, employment agencies, local municipalities or federal state funding.

JOBLINGE has 30 locations nationwide, with plans to expand, and employs approximately 180 staff (FTE). To extend the reach of the programme as widely as possible, JOBLINGE is organised as a social franchise system in which the different locations work as franchisees with a national umbrella organisation as the 'franchisor.' Local not-for-profit stock corporations (gACs) allow shareholding and ensure professional implementation of the programme, for example measurable targets, quality standards, defined responsibilities and consistent processes. Each gAC consists of a pro bono supervisory board (decision makers from business, local government and the community), a pro bono director and a salaried staff team - a leader and assistant, youth and mentor co-ordinators, a company co-ordinator and apprenticeship supporters.

The gACs are supported by the umbrella organisation (JOBLINGE e.V.) which handles for example, organisational development, finance, marketing and communication and programme development. The umbrella organisation is financed exclusively through private fundraising.

JOBLINGE aims to enable disadvantaged young people to find an apprenticeship or job and in so doing, lead a self-determined life. The programme is targeted at young people aged 15-25 who are unlikely to find employment on their own. Young people participating in the programme;

- face multiple barriers to accessing an apprenticeship
- have experienced an average of three years in the school-to-work system
- are, on average, over 20 years old (mainly 19 – 22)
- around 50% have a lower secondary school degree or less
- 56% are from a migrant background or are recently arrived young refugees
- over 70% are from families in receipt of social welfare
- 66% are male

The programme has worked with more than 7,000 participants to date and currently has over 1,800 places each year. Almost all participants are referred to the programme by job centres and local employment agencies.

A second programme, JOBLINGE Kompass, is aimed at young refugees, 18-25, who have recently arrived in Germany and have insufficient German language skills to take part in the main programme. The goal is early and sustained entry to the primary labour market with work as the key

²⁸ 2016, JOBLINGE Annual Report and Impact Report

to a successful integration and a way to acquire the language and educational requirements needed to progress to vocational training.

Kompass incorporates the same elements as the main JOBLINGE programme, with the addition of basic and industry related language courses and on the job language training. Unlike the main JOBLINGE programme, Kompass participants also complete work placements before undertaking vocational training. Currently, the programme has around 800 participants (85% male) and 30 staff.

JOBLINGE describes its success as building on 'four pillars'; practical experience from the start of the programme, personal support through one-on-one mentoring, joint local commitment from the public and private sectors and volunteers and the entrepreneurial approach demonstrated through its stock company/social franchise structure.

The cost per participant of each pre-apprenticeship, on the traditional programme, is €5,900²⁹

Model of delivery

JOBLINGE is a six-month, full-time pre-apprenticeship programme which participants attend all day Monday to Friday. In each location, there are four group starts per year, each with around twenty participants.

The programme has an educational approach that promotes independence, by encouraging participants to take responsibility for themselves - young people 'earn' their apprenticeship through their own efforts. Whilst they are closely supervised and supported throughout the programme, by JOBLINGE staff and volunteers, the initiative is also designed to challenge young people and has high expectations of them, both in what they can achieve and in preparing them for the actuality of work being a full-time job in a professional environment.

'Our participants should never become consumers of a programme – we have to challenge, motivate and activate them so that they also contribute something themselves, trust in themselves and have to apply themselves, but also know they are not alone.' Chief Operating Officer, JOBLINGE (2016 Annual Report and Impact Report)

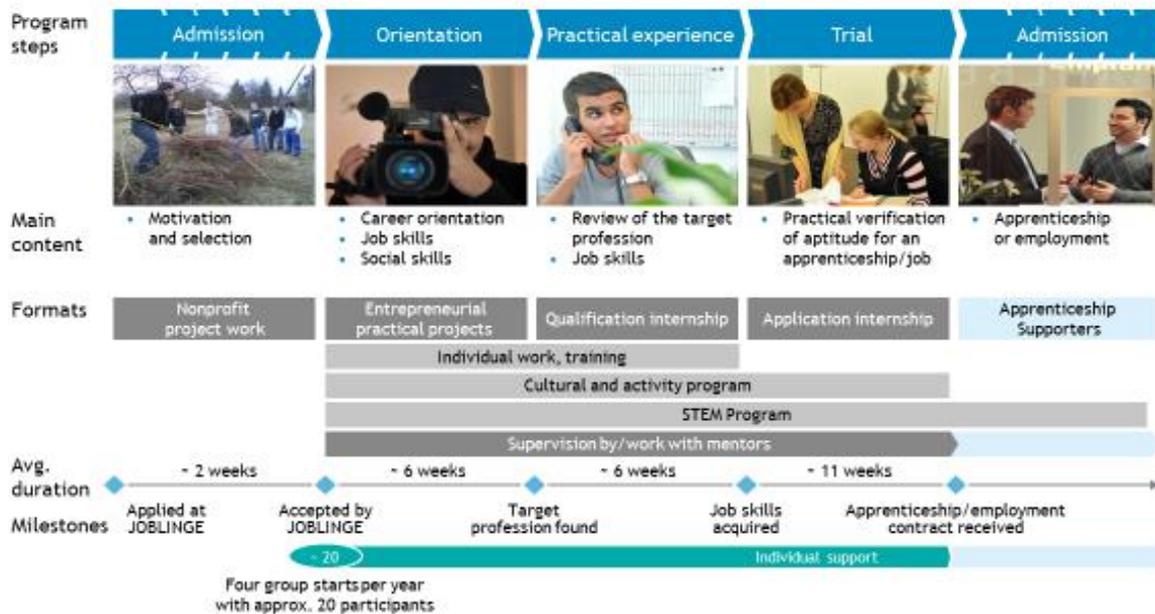
Referrals from job centres are compulsory (with sanctions for non-attendance). Nonetheless, many participants report that the professional nature of the programme and high ambitions for each young person make it stand out from other programmes they have been referred to. Participants describe feeling motivated and valued at Joblinge *'pushed to come, in a good way!'* and report that they are taken seriously compared to other schemes where they had felt they were *'just there to listen.'*

One young person, when comparing JOBLINGE to previous learning experiences commented that at school *'the pressure is to get good grades, here the pressure is to learn.'* Young people also value the contributions of JOBLINGE staff and volunteers, suggesting they could *'teach us a lot'* compared to staff on other programmes.

²⁹ Joblinge, 2017

Programme stages

The diagram below shows how participants progress, step-by-step through the programme to ‘earn’ their apprenticeship.



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1. Admission

Following an information workshop where JOBLINGE staff explain the pre-apprenticeship programme, young people are ‘tested’ through completion of voluntary work on a two-day charitable project, typically at a local kindergarten. During these activities, staff informally assess young people’s suitability for, and commitment to, joining the programme. This might be demonstrated through consistently arriving on time for work or the ability to work with others in a team, for example. In addition, the Youth Co-ordinator holds an interview with each young person to find out about them, their lives and why they want to start at JOBLINGE. At the end of the project, staff meet to decide which young people can join the programme.

The admission phase is designed both to motivate participants to earn their place at JOBLINGE, by starting the programme with a positive, successful experience and at the same time, to provide opportunity for JOBLINGE staff to get to know the young people and for participants to develop trust in programme staff.

This stage is also designed to initiate a change in perspective, in which participants turn from recipients of help into contributors to the community.

‘...if you want to really have a change, then you have to reach them emotionally, and then you have to do something they do not expect ... So, they are not the victim, so to speak, anymore, who gets help, but they first need to do something and work... they become active and they feel what it feels like when they have done something meaningful.’ Deputy Regional Manager, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

JOBLINGE find that because young people decide to actively participate in the programme, it has a very different value in the eyes of participants compared to other schemes they have been directed

to attend. Because young people positively value the programme, they are more likely to remain engaged and achieve good outcomes.

'I think a very important part of this initial phase is that it's not granted for them that they are with us...It's much more worthwhile for them to be in Joblinge, because they worked for it, and it was not automatic...They could have failed, yes? So, they have to decide, 'Do I want to be a part of it for half a year, full-time job, every day, or would I like to stay at home...' Company Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

2. Orientation

The goal of the orientation phase is to prepare young people for the start of their working life and enable them to acquire the necessary professional and social skills (and in Kompass, basic language skills) needed for successful progression to an apprenticeship.

The focus is on vocational orientation, including deciding on preferred professions. Participants attend numerous company presentations and workshops, including on-site visits to companies and have repeated one-to-one discussions with JOBLINGE staff to allow them to get to know as much as possible about each young person and address any underlying issues that may affect their ability to find work.

'I tell them...that they have to trust us somehow... Whatever happened in their past, it is important that they tell me about it, because those are the [reasons] why they don't have an apprenticeship yet. That works well because they are very open.' Youth Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

At the same time, a cultural and activity programme provides a variety of practical projects, for example joining a creative writing or theatre workshop for a week, and then working in a small group to create a stage play and perform it to an audience. These activities are designed to allow young people to discover their interests and recognise their own strengths and talents, but also to push them out of their comfort zone;

'to broaden their horizons, and to strengthen their self-confidence, and to also put an emphasis on communication, and how to deal with difficult situations, and to be able to succeed in an environment that is not very common to them. Also, to present themselves in a good way, and in a way, they didn't think of themselves...' Deputy Regional Manager, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

Essential employability skills, such as preparing CVs, writing applications, and job interviews are also an important part of the orientation phase.

Young people receiving an apprenticeship or offer of employment at this stage may leave the programme early. These places remain vacant in order to maintain the existing dynamic of the group and ensure that they continue to work together effectively.

3. Practical experience

In the practical phase, participants gain work experience in one of JOBLINGE's partner companies. Young people are encouraged to try things out, to find out about day to day work in their identified professions and industries and revisit their preferred options if needed.

'if we have some ideas about what a [young person] would like to do, and what he can do, then we will look together, or sometimes only me, sometimes [him]. Everyone has to look which companies offer these jobs...then we phone them up and ask, 'are you still looking...and is there a possibility to give him an internship?' Company Co-ordinator, Frankfurt Rhine-Main

These closely supervised 'qualification internships' allow participants to try out their new skills in the workplace and to prove themselves to potential future employers; in the absence of school qualifications, obtaining a good internship certificate can help to convince employers to give a young person a chance. Some participants might go into their first qualification internship with clear ideas about their chosen career and quickly receive an apprenticeship offer. Others use this phase to try out multiple internships in different industries.

During this stage the participants still come to the JOBLINGE location at least once a week to reflect on how their internships are going, in one-to-one talks with staff and as a group. Participants are helped with any challenges they encounter during the internship, and discuss together, ways to solve problems, enabling them to learn from and have a positive experience of their work placement.

'It's very important for the group that they will see each other again, not that everybody's on his own, so they stay in contact... we need the feedback from them, and we give them the feedback that we get [from companies] ...If there's some things they could do better, we will teach them, we will talk to them.' Company Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

4. Trial

Following the practical phase, young people progress to the trial phase. During this phase, participants continue to be closely supported whilst completing a three-month 'application internship' with a partner company. If this probationary period goes well and the participant and company are a good match, they will generally be offered an apprenticeship.

In the Kompass programme, language training, designed together with the companies, is continued during the practical phase and language skills are reinforced in practical work experience.

5. Vocational training – Follow-up

Although participants are no longer part of the pre-apprenticeship programme once they have taken up an apprenticeship, the follow-up phase is designed to ensure that young people successfully complete their vocational training. Each young person is allocated a dedicated Apprenticeship Supporter who remains in contact via WhatsApp, email and phone calls to check everything is going well. Alongside this, a rolling programme of workshops for apprentices on specific topics such as communication and learning to study, as well as crisis intervention measures if problems occur, help to prevent drop outs.

Apprenticeship supporters are also a point of contact for the companies providing the placement, providing reassurance that support is there should they encounter any problems.

'It's a very important thing for the companies, too. Maybe it's sometimes, that's the reason why they say, 'okay, I give you this apprenticeship', because there's a possibility of the apprenticeship and support afterwards.' Company Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

JOBLINGE has recently started to offer training for employers, for example on issues that might arise when working with their target group, especially for those working with refugees. Further training is being developed for other stakeholders, for example tutors and job centre staff.

One to one mentoring

In addition to the individual support provided by JOBLINGE staff, from week 2 each participant is matched with their own personal volunteer mentor. Mentors share their professional and life experience, acting as a role model and source of support to the young person for the duration of the pre-apprenticeship programme.

Mentors meet weekly with participants, providing encouragement as they progress through each stage of the programme. This helps to motivate young people, and reduce the chances of them dropping out, in the face of any challenges they encounter at home, in their wider lives or during an internship, for example. The mentor acts as confidant, coach and role model guiding the participant through the program and helping to deal with any issues that arise. Having access to someone who cares and listens is often a new experience for the youths, and these personal relationships are crucial as the participants strive to understand and overcome their past struggles.

'I think it's a really great asset, because it's so special for the participants to have one mentor of their own. The mentors never have two mentees, they just have one. So, they meet once a week...they hardly know anybody successfully working... they just know pedagogues, teachers and Jobcentre employees who are talking to them. So, if there's somebody who's just sitting there once a week for one hour, it's very special and valuable to them.' Deputy Regional Manager, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

Mentors, currently numbering 1700, are professionally trained and supervised and are mainly recruited from partner companies, helping to maintain employer buy-in to the programme. A growing number of partners have started to use JOBLINGE mentoring as part of their employee development programmes, adding to the long-term sustainability of the mentoring 'pillar' of JOBLINGE.

JOBLINGE STEM programme

JOBLINGE see themselves as a learning organisation, always looking to develop new initiatives and projects in response to changes in employers' needs and the wider environment, to continually improve the programme for participants.

2017 saw the introduction of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) project, with the support of J.P. Morgan. The STEM programme is a permanent part of the overall pre-apprenticeship programme, designed to prepare and equip JOBLINGE participants for technical occupations. The programme, in which all JOBLINGE's young people take part, aims to place 35% of participants in STEM fields across Germany.

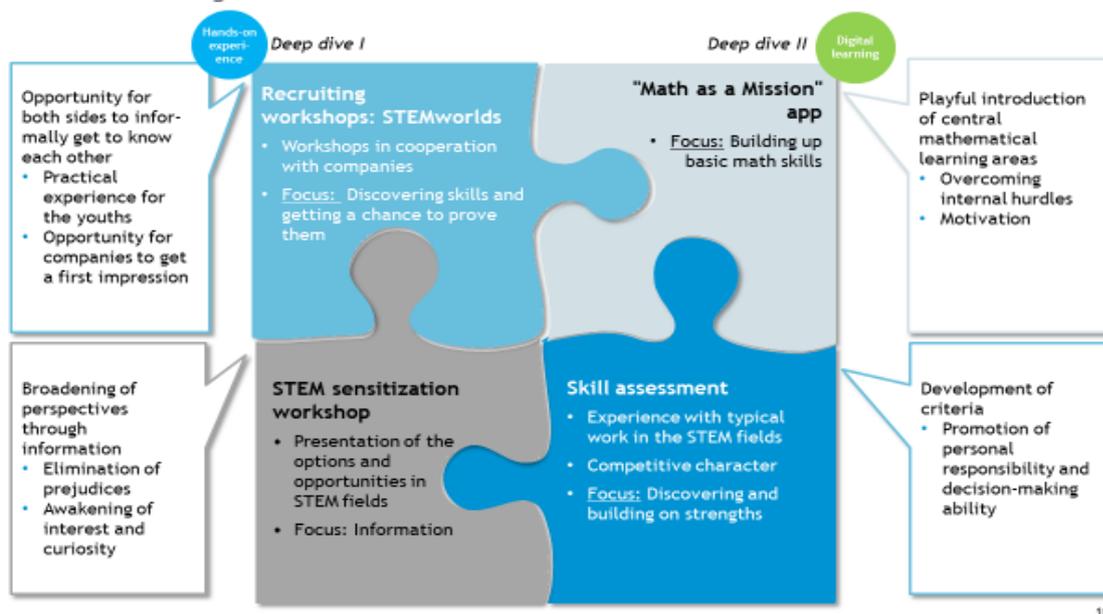
Although the STEM sector in Germany is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers, JOBLINGE's young people face a range of barriers to entering the sector, including lack of basic skills, especially in maths, failure of recruitment tests or in vocational school, lack of self-confidence, insufficient knowledge of STEM professions and not least, perceptions amongst STEM employers that the

JOBLINGE target group is insufficiently educated to work in the field. By developing the STEM programme JOBLINGE is providing targeted pre-apprenticeship opportunities in sectors where there are current and long-term opportunities for sustainable and high-quality employment.

To help to build bridges between potential apprentices and companies, STEMWorld Workshops, developed with STEM experts and employers, provide opportunity for the two groups to get to know each other informally. The workshops take place on-site at partner companies to give young people practical experience of STEM occupations. Observation evaluation tools and self-assessment by participants help to identify potential candidates.

Comprehensive professional orientation in the STEM fields

Four interlocking factors



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Maths embedded in STEM curriculum

Recognising that numeracy is essential for almost all vocational training, but in particular for STEM occupations, the programme places a particular emphasis on improving maths skills. Results for the first group of participants are not yet available but the programme target is for 75% of participants to improve their maths scores by 25% over the course of the programme. This approach has been tested successfully in JOBLINGE's Frankfurt pre-apprenticeship programme and will be rolled out nationwide later in the year.

Digital learning

In partnership with BMW, JOBLINGE have developed a mobile phone app, 'Maths as a Mission', to support participants to improve their maths skills 'in a playful manner'. The app is comprised of a comic story and a game, with difficulty levels linked to playable characters. The app is introduced during the orientation phase and effectiveness is measured with pre and follow-up tests. Alongside this, the Mathe4Joblinge project, supported by J.P. Morgan, aims to improve digital and maths skills

of participants on the pre-apprenticeship programme through the use of e-learning modules ([bettermarks](#)) and is again tested at the start, middle and end of the JOBLINGE programme.

Partnerships

JOBLINGE works in partnership with an extensive network of approximately 2,400 businesses and the level of engagement and close relationship with companies is undoubtedly a core element in the success of the programme. Employers are involved in the programme in a variety of ways, as providers of pre-apprenticeship internships and apprenticeships, as mentors, through financial support and on supervisory boards for example.

Premium partners including BMW, J.P. Morgan, KPMG, Porsche and Commerzbank amongst others, provide long term sponsorship and support the programme to expand and develop, introducing new initiatives such as Kompass.

The involvement of businesses on the local gAC boards, including high profile companies, helps to open the door to other employers. This was particularly important in the early days of the programme, although today the success of the initiative means that JOBLINGE itself can be the door-opener. Nonetheless, recruitment of new employers is an ongoing process.

Although contracts exist between JOBLINGE and partner companies, the key to working together successfully is developing a relationship with the employer. The Company Co-ordinator takes time to explain the aims of the pre-apprenticeship programme to potential new employers and maintains close contact throughout the course of an internship, so companies are confident that support is there should any problems arise.

'I think it's a win-win situation for everyone...The company has the possibility to see them working for two, three or four weeks. Everything is safe.' Company Co-ordinator, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

JOBLINGE find that once an employer has taken on a young person who is a good match for the company, they are usually keen to recruit more young people from the programme.

'Generally, so having had a good experience with an apprentice from JOBLINGE, when those kind of applications now come, and they know where they are coming from, they are much more open-minded about it. I'm not sure it would work otherwise.' Employer Mentor, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

In return, employers benefit from access to new target groups and well prepared, skilled and committed workers.

'I think that often, those guys are especially loyal because they know they have been given a shot, a chance, so they really want to hang in there...' Apprenticeship Supporter, JOBLINGE Frankfurt Rhine-Main

Most employers offer young people employment in the company once they have completed their apprenticeship.

Outside of the Federal Employment Agency and Job Centres who refer young people to their pre-apprenticeship programme, JOBLINGE is also supported by more than 50 public sponsors at a European, national, state and municipal level.

Outcomes for young people

JOBLINGE aims to ensure the long-term placement of as many young people as possible in the primary labour market. Success is measured through two main outcome indicators, the placement rate and the sustainability rate (the number of former participants who are still in their apprenticeship or job six months after starting).

In 2016, 75% of participants across all JOBLINGE locations, were placed in the primary vocational training or job market (average 72% since 2008, Kompass 61%) with a sustainability rate of 86% (average 84% since 2009).

In total 3747 participants³⁰, on the traditional programme, have been placed since 2008. Of these, 81% have gone on to an apprenticeship, 11% have gone into employment in the primary job market and 8% went on to attend vocational school.

The proportion of programme places filled, participation in the training modules and the internship rate are also tracked.

Online satisfaction surveys provide opportunity for participants, partner companies and volunteers to feedback on the programme and are used to inform changes in design or delivery as appropriate.

Although not formally measured, JOBLINGE emphasises that success is also demonstrated through the personal development of individuals during the relatively short duration of the programme, enabling young people to lead an independent, self-determined life and become active members of society. Mentors also report significant personal enrichment and development through their involvement in the programme

Best practice – key success factors

- Individualised support in the form of mentoring helps to motivate young people, identify challenges early and reduce the chances of them dropping out.
- Having an initial preparation phase is important in motivating participants. It enables them to start with a positive, successful experience and at the same time, allows staff to get to know young people on an individual basis
- Providing an ‘Apprenticeship Supporter’ who remains in contact with young people when they complete the programme ensures young people are supported to complete their vocational training. This also provides reassurance to employers that support is available if they have any problems.
- Strong employer engagement and support helps to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme and facilitates a wide range of quality pre-apprenticeship internships and apprenticeship opportunities.

³⁰ Joblinge, April 2018