

# **BELS STUDENT APPRENTICESHIPS PROJECT**

## **End of Year 1 Evaluation Report**

**August 2003**

This report follows the interim evaluation report of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 and incorporates the findings from our monthly return summaries showing the extent of student progress.

### **PROJECT AIMS**

- To develop greater links between education and training in the post-16 phase;
- To reduce the skills shortages in the region;
- To develop an effective scheme for wider dissemination.

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

- to recruit 25 full-time post-16 students to undertake one day per week work placements in job areas linked to subjects and career choices, working at level 2 or 3;
- to recruit training providers to establish suitable outlets for the student placements and to support and assess the students' vocational learning in the placements;
- to work in skills sectors that reflect local needs, e.g. Business/IT, Construction and Health and Social Care;
- to note successful practice and build up, in collaboration with partners, a toolkit of recommended methodology for the future.

### **OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS**

In the first year of the pilot project we used 4 training providers across the region to place 24 students (from 8 schools and one college) in work placements after initial interviews. There was a reasonable gender balance with a few more girls than boys. The majority of the students were working at Level 2 but a few were aiming for Level 3. About half of them made good progress through the weeks at work. This was from an original 34 applicants.

In the initial stages, 10 students changed their minds about wanting to be involved. Of these, 6 withdrew before attending their initial interview:- one of these had decided to leave school and the other 5 had simply decided it was not for them. 3 of these 6 had been subjected to a delay in setting up their interview and placement, because one of our original training providers did not manage to place any of them.

4 students did attend an initial interview with the training provider but then withdrew, mainly because they had very specific requirements that their training provider was unable to meet. For example one student wanted a nursing placement but this was unavailable in the region. (We hope to remedy that in time, by widening the range of job area vacancies.)

By the summer, 11 placed students had dropped out but 13 students were still on course. 11 of these had spent at least 10 days at their placements, with a few managing 15 days. One student was still awaiting her start date with the employer.

Three students went further and achieved one NVQ unit. For those students the project was particularly successful in equipping them with the beginnings of a vocational qualification alongside their academic qualifications. For other students the onset of the summer term, with its exams and coursework deadlines, caused a reduction in attendance and productivity at the workplace and we hope to bring the whole process forward next year to reduce this problem.

(Appendix 1 shows a summary of the progress made by students whose placements lasted well into the summer. It does not include the details of one student whose placement hasn't yet started because of delays at the employer's end.)

It has become clear that the application, interview and placement process would have been more effective if the project had started in September, rather than November. Students would then fit their work day around the weekly school or college routine early in the autumn and would also have covered their 6 months' work soon after Easter. This would avoid the pressure of summer exams from preventing completion of the vocational units. In Year 2 we intend moving all processes forward by at least two months for this purpose.

We have noted all the above issues and effects and are working towards improvements in our planning for Year 2 of the project. For instance, the student apprenticeship process needs to be explained more fully to students, through fuller induction and clearer paperwork. We have built up a picture of what seems to make a successful student apprentice and will be using that to aid the selection process.

We also intend to expand the base of available work placements and job sector areas by interviewing and recruiting more training providers in readiness for year 2 of the project.

## **MONITORING**

The partnership agreement included obligations in respect of monitoring for the school/college, the training provider and our own BELS office.

The agreement said that the School or College should

- 'work with the training provider to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the student's progress.'

Similarly, the agreement said that the training provider should

- 'work with the school or college to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the student's progress and provide regular feedback to BELS' and to
- 'report back to BELS any issues of concern including any student's poor attendance or lack of progress.'

We have visited almost half the active placements during the year and we have also collected responses from students through the use of questionnaires and interviews at the end of March and in the late summer. A summary of the students' feedback is shown in Appendix 2.

We also organised an evaluation conference in July for the main stakeholders: schools, colleges, trainers, employers and EBPs. This served as our main evaluation of the project as seen by those parties and reinforces the collaborative nature of the project. (See the July conference report in Appendix 3).

However, we haven't had enough ongoing monitoring information about student attendance and progress this year and we need to introduce a more rigorous and regular check on this in Year 2. Part of the reason has been indistinct lines of communication and another part has been the irregular assessor visits to some of the students. With this in mind, a Student Apprenticeship "contact grid" form has been drafted, which includes all parties' telephone and email contacts, to enhance lines of communication. This was approved by the July conference delegates and is shown as Appendix 4.

We also intend to standardize several of the forms in current use by the various trainers, adapting them from their Modern Apprenticeship equivalents. A new BELS Student Apprentice Initial Interview Report form will be developed, incorporating the most relevant ideas from the current training provider forms.

Likewise a customized BELS Student Apprenticeship Individual Learning Plan is being prepared, with LSC approval.

Thirdly, a new Student Apprentice Assessment Review form will be trialled in Year 2 of the project. It will include data on attendance and on progress towards the target units. Payment to the training providers will be dependent on receipt of a copy of each student's latest monthly Assessment Review form.

A draft Year 2 timeline of project activities (shown at the July conference) is aimed at keeping the flow of evidence from the training providers and other parties. (Appendix 5).

Our overall verdict is that, although a proportion of our first cohort of students did not complete their placements to the extent that we had hoped, other students showed that the scheme has real potential for the blending of academic and work-based learning and we look forward to an improved set of outcomes in Year 2 of the pilot project (see "Recommendations" below). We also hope to be able to make significant contributions to any national evaluation that occurs in the coming year.

The five appendices that follow show summary student outcomes, feedback from students and all other parties, plus two key new features of our planning for next year.

We then conclude on the last page of the report with our recommendations for Year 2 of the project.

**Appendix 1**  
**Student Apprentice Outcomes**

**Summary matrix,**

**August 03**

School	Student	Trainer	Employer	NVQ Units attempted	Estimated days worked	Units gained	Likely destination
Bullers Wood	Alexander Zanzico	Springboard	Forest Hill Leisure Centre Dartmouth Road Forest Hill London <b>SE23 3HZ</b>	<b>Customer Service, Level 2</b> Unit 1 – Give customers a positive impression of yourself and your organisation Unit 2 – Deliver reliable customer service <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 3</b>	14	(Lifesaving) but didn't complete Customer Service portfolio	Paid work
The Priory	Natalie Meader	Springboard	Springboard Beacon House Old Homesdale Road Bromley <b>BR2 9LJ</b>	<b>Administration, Level 2</b> Unit 201 – Support the work of your team Unit 202 – Plan, organise & improve your work Unit 204 – Prepare and print documents using a computer <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 2</b>	15		AMA in work
	Samantha Smith	Springboard	Threshers Day Nursery Threshers Hut High Street St Mary Cray <b>BR5 4AX</b>	<b>Early Years Care and Education, Level 2</b> Unit 205 – Maintain an attractive, stimulating & reassuring environment for the children Unit 206 – Maintain safety & security of children <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 1</b>	10	Withdrawn, exam pressure	AVCE at school
Ravensbourne	Lucy Higgins	Springboard	Elizabeth Terrace Day Nursery 18-22 Elizabeth Terrace London, <b>SE9 5DR</b>	<b>Early Years Care and Education, Level 2</b> Unit 205 – Maintain an attractive, stimulating & reassuring environment for the children <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 1</b>	14	Hoping to carry on	AVCE at school
	Samantha -Toni Mahon	Springboard	Les Enfants 8 Blyth Road Bromley <b>BR1 3RX</b>	<b>Early Years Care and Education, Level 2</b> Unit 205 – Maintain an attractive, stimulating & reassuring environment for the children Unit 206 – Maintain safety & security of children <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 1</b>	10	Withdrawn, exam pressure	AVCE at school
	Stephanie Williams	Springboard	St Mary Cray Primary School High Street St Mary Cray Orpington, <b>BR5 4AR</b>	<b>Early Years Care and Education, Level 2</b> Unit 205 – Maintain an attractive, stimulating & reassuring environment for the children <b>Key Skills, Working with Others, Level 1</b>	12	Hoping to carry on	AVCE at school

Carshalton HS	Michael Parrott	NTS	BELS Church House Business Centre 1 Church Road, Croydon, <b>CR0 1SG</b>	<b>Administration, Level 3</b> Started late - units to be decided shortly	3	Hopes to return	A levels or paid work
Cheam HS	Victoria Church	Carshalton WBL	Les Enfants Nursery 128 Grove Road Sutton Surrey <b>SM1 2DD</b>	<b>Early Years Care and Education, Level 2</b> Unit 201 – Support children’s physical development needs Unit 206 – Maintain the safety and security of the children <b>Key Skills, Working With Others, Level 2</b>	16	<b>EYCE 201 L2 C1</b>	Cache Course, L3 at FE
Chessington Community College	Amie Alexander-Tolman	NTS	Quest Travel 4-10 Richmond Road Kingston Upon Thames <b>KT2 5HL</b>	<b>Administration, Level 2</b> Unit 102 – Ensure your own actions contribute to health and safety Unit 201 – Contribute to effective team work Unit 204 – Prepare and print documents using a computer	14	Found paid work elsewhere before finishing portfolio	FE college
	Ayan Dahir	NTS	Kingston Library Fairfield Road Kingston Upon Thames <b>KT1 2PS</b>	<b>Administration, Level 2</b> Unit 102 – Ensure your own actions contribute to health and safety Unit 201 – Contribute to effective team work Unit 204 – Prepare & print documents using a computer	10	Withdrawn in mid-summer	FE college
	Landa Wanliss	NTS	Chessington World of Adventures Leatherhead Road Chessington <b>KT9 2NE</b>	<b>Administration, Level 2</b> Unit 102 – Ensure your own actions contribute to health and safety Unit 201 – Contribute to effective team work Unit 204 – Prepare & print documents using a computer	12	Didn't complete portfolio	FE college
Richmond College	Aloka Maskeri	NTS	NTS Vocational Training Pool Road East Molesey <b>KT8 2HU</b>	<b>Administration, Level 2</b> Unit 102 – Ensure your own actions contribute to health and safety Unit 201 – Contribute to effective team work Unit 204 – Prepare and print documents using a computer	13	<b>Bus Admin 204, L2 ?</b>	AVCE at same FE college

## Appendix 2

### Student evaluation responses (from questionnaires and interviews)

**Early responses, by Easter 2003**, showed that in general students were happy with their placements and thought that the work would help them with their school/college courses. A few quotes:-

- ‘Things are going well; I’m getting a general insight into working in a leisure facility. I’m also taking part in staff training and learning how to become a lifeguard’.
- ‘Everything is going brilliantly. I’m getting a picture of the big, wide world’
- ‘I think I am doing computer tasks well. When I print or copy letters, it gives me more practice with the computer – this helps me achieve better IT skills.’
- ‘The apprenticeships are a great way of helping younger people get an idea of their ideal job’
- ‘Things are going really well. I am really enjoying working there.’
- ‘It’s helping me because I’m realising what work is like.’
- I want to work in a travel agent and this is making me realise what needs to be done in this line of work.’
- ‘I’m really enjoying myself and I am looking forward to undertaking Level 3.’

### STUDENT RESPONSES from SUMMER 2003 QUESTIONNAIRE & INTERVIEWS

12 students responded:

*Alex Zanzico, (Natalie Meader, Samantha Smith, Samantha-Toni Mahon), Lucy Higgins, Stephanie Williams, Michael Parrott, Vicky Church, Amie-Alexander-Tolman, Ayan Dahir, Landa Wanliss, Aloka Maskeri*

*They came from 6 schools and 1 FE College*

*Their placements were 7 in Business/Admin and 5 in Child Care  
10 were placed with local employers and  
2 worked at the trainer provider premises*

*Which day of the week? 8 went on Wednesday, 1 on Thursday, 3 on Friday*

*Which units were attempted?*

*Mainly level 2, in Bus Admin (e.g. units 102, 201, 202, 204),  
Early Years Care & Education (e.g. units 201, 205, 206) and*

*the key skill Working with Others.*

How many of these have been achieved?

*Vicky gained her EYCE unit 201*

*Natalie*

*Aloka*

The most popular aspects of the apprenticeship work have been

- *Computer work, e.g. word-processing, using databases*
- *Working with people and as part of a team*
- *Meeting new people*
- *Getting to know about the business*
- *Working in a relevant work environment*
- *Working with individual children*

and students felt they were best at

- *Computer work, e.g. word-processing*
- *Dealing with people, working with a group*
- *Filing duties*
- *Practical aspects of working in a leisure centre*

The least popular aspects were

- *Some tasks are very repetitive*
- *Lack of human contact made it boring*
- *Insufficient variety of tasks*
- *Long working hours*
- *Insufficient visits from the assessor or the assessor turning up very late*
- *Working with difficult children*

and students found most difficulty with

- *Some tasks were too hard*
- *Sometimes the language was hard to work with*
- *Understanding the centre booking system*

Several of the placements helped students with the courses they were taking at School or College, e.g.

- *good links between working in a travel agent and also in an Adventure Theme Park with Level 2 GNVQ Leisure & Tourism*
- *potentially good links between IT work tasks and aspects of GNVQ IT and other subjects*
- *some good links between nursery work and GNVQ Health & Social Care*

*In a few cases the placement, although relevant to the student's future career, did not have any clear links with the current course at school and college.*

The placements also helped with progression, e.g.

- *the taste of work has encouraged 2 to go on to AMAs and 4 others to continue with the same work theme on a college course*
- *the experience of work has helped 2 others to settle into other paid work during the summer*
- *2 students changed their minds about the nature of their next courses as a result of experiences gained at the workplace*

### **A summary of other students' Reasons for Withdrawing**

- The student changed his/her mind after sending in the application form (in some cases because of a delay in arranging the placement)
- The placement did not offer the specific job tasks that the student wanted
- The student was daunted by the travel arrangements
- The student was not really motivated from the start
- The student's attendance at the placement was poor
- The student gradually found the duties too repetitive or "too hard"
- The student had personal problems that prevented him/her from continuing
- Anxiety about forthcoming summer exams

These responses from students who did not last the programme indicate to us that we need to pay greater attention next year to:-

- starting earlier
- giving more details of the procedures and the nature of the work to students before they start
- putting students through a more rigorous application procedure, to ensure their commitment
- keeping student travel distances short
- maintaining regular communication between the student and other parties
- recognising links between work tasks and current courses at school and college
- building towards the units' portfolio development with monthly assessor visits

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## Appendix 3

### Report on the Conference on Student Apprenticeships on Wednesday, 2 July 2003 at The Fairfield Hotel, Croydon

#### 1. Those present

Dominic Boyse	Head of Sixth Form	Wimbledon College
Alison Brown	Head of Sixth Form	Kelsey Park School
Marjorie Butcher	Sales & Recruitment Manager	Carshalton Work Based Learning
Janet Byrne	Recruitment Adviser	ReMIT
Maggie Flook	Director	Circa
Jim Forrest	Project Officer	BELS
Glyn Jones	Recruitment Adviser	ReMIT
Andree Jordan	GNVQ H&SC Tutor	Ravensbourne School
Sara Kearns	Recruitment Co-ordinator	Headmasters Hairdressing Group
Victoria McIlroy	Deputy Manager	Les Enfants Nursery
Mike McMorran	Recruitment Adviser	ReMIT
Sally Morse	Project Manager	BELS
Sharon Newman	Director of Sixth Form	Bullers Wood School
Jean Norton	WRL and EBP Manager	Bromley LEA
Ben O'Connor	Manager	NTS Vocational Training
Jane Phelps	Programme Manager (Young People)	London South LSC
Irene Roberts	Administration Manager	Kingston Library
Sarah Sutherland	Project Officer	BELS
Karen Taylor	Recruitment Co-ordinator	Headmasters Hairdressing Group
Brian Whittington	General Manager	BELS

#### 2. Welcome

Brian Whittington welcomed delegates to the Conference and looked forward to hearing their views on the progress of BELS pilot project on student apprenticeships so far. We had a very good "mix" of all the parties involved in this year's project.

#### 3. Review of the project so far

Jim Forrest's review included a summary of the interim outcomes and tabulated information about the students still participating in the project. This included their school, training provider, employer and the NVQ units they were working towards.

#### **4. Workshop 1: What makes a good student apprenticeship?**

*Consensus views of the delegates:-*

##### **The ideal student apprentice should be**

- able to communicate both orally and in writing
- able to meet targets; determined to succeed
- able to work with others
- reliable, punctual
- have a good attendance record
- prepared to travel to a placement
- independent and self motivated
- willing to learn
- flexible
- interested in the programme, understand its aims and objectives and have an awareness of what its outcomes and benefits are likely to be.
- well informed about NVQs

##### **To be successful, a placement should be**

- one the student is interested in
- related to the student's future career area
- linked to a part of the student's current course in school / college
- matched to a student's abilities and aptitudes
- easy to travel to
- on the right day to fit in with the student's timetable
- visited regularly by an assessor or mentor

##### **The employer/training provider should provide**

- a job description
- an induction process
- a variety of work tasks which become more challenging as the student progresses

##### **What else could BELS do to improve student apprenticeships?**

- provide, or ask training providers to provide, an induction session for students
- provide even more information for school/college tutors about the project
- take even more care to ensure that everybody participating in the project understands their own obligations and those of the other parties
- consider reimbursing students' travel expenses where appropriate
- raise training providers' and employers' awareness of individual student's needs
- ensure that student apprenticeships are more closely linked to students' school or college work

#### **5. Workshop 2: How can BELS make lines of communication more effective?**

### **BELS should**

- provide students with an induction pack, to include a "contact grid" for the names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all their student apprenticeship contacts (see Appendix 4)
- provide students with a diary or simple logbook
- ensure that training providers and employers are informed about important dates in students' school calendars, e.g. dates for submission of course work, exams, school/college holidays etc.
- consider setting up and maintaining a central database which could allow for the on-line completion of application forms, individual learning plans and assessment reports

## **6. Workshop 3: Preparing for the second year**

A draft timeline was suggested for the second year of the project and met with general agreement. (See Appendix 5).

### **Schools/Colleges should**

- promote the project to students likely to return to the Sixth Form / College as early as possible
- identify students likely to be interested in the project and the types of placements they would be looking for as early as possible.
- use the 'person specification' to be provided by BELS to assist with the selection procedure for suitable student apprentices, whilst allowing any student to consider applying.
- work with training providers to link student's individual learning plans to elements of their school course work

### **BELS should**

- consider extending the job areas included in the project  
*(Leisure & Tourism and Engineering were two suggested new areas).*
- review the number of units students should undertake *(concensus was for 2 units, although there might be exceptional circumstances to change this .)*

## **7. Conference Evaluation**

90% of those attending said the conference timing, balance between information and discussion, and the topics for discussion were either excellent or good. 80% said the outcomes and impact of the conference were either excellent or good. 70% said the venue and facilities were either excellent or good.

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**Appendix 4**  
**Contact Grid for Student Apprenticeship for ..... (student)**

	Student	School/college	Training provider	Employer	Assessor	BELS
Contact name						Jim Forrest & Sarah Sutherland
Phone no(s), incl mobile						020.8296.1030
Fax no						020.8401.0808
Email address						studentapps@bels.org.uk

The student should make sure that everybody on this list has a copy of this completed sheet. This will make it easier to keep in contact.

**Appendix 5  
BELS Student Apprenticeships Year 2 Timelines (draft)**

August/ September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BELS invite selected training providers to look for potential vacancies</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training providers locate and alert potential vacancies and send lists to BELS</li> <li>• Schools and colleges across the BELS area receive details of the scheme, followed by details of vacancies</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students return application forms for vacancies (with school/college endorsement) to BELS, who forward them to appropriate training provider</li> <li>• Trainer interviews students, carries out initial assessment and makes selections.</li> <li>• Trainer organises initial meeting between student and employer. Placement details given to student and copies sent to school/college and to BELS.</li> <li>• ESF short return forms completed by student and original returned to BELS by trainer.</li> <li>• Partnership agreements signed by relevant parties.</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students undergo induction through trainer and start one day per week placements</li> <li>• Trainer/assessor's first support visit, within the first month, to reassure student and clarify understanding of all parties.</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student's Individual Learning Plan is established and a copy sent to school/college and to BELS (by Xmas)</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First assessment review report, copied to schools/college and to BELS.</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second assessment review report</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third assessment review report</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fourth assessment review report</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fifth assessment review and portfolios ready</li> </ul>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Units claimed / Certificates arrive</li> </ul>

**Recommendations for Year 2 of the project:**

- Start earlier, preparing all parties from September onwards;
- Recruit more training providers, widening the range of available placements;

- Encourage training providers to advertise specific vacancies for students to apply for, as well as placing other students after a general interview;
- Widen the range of job sector areas to suit demand;
- Offer some opportunities to colleges to use their own work-based learning departments to place some of their own academic students;
- Clarify the scheme more fully to students before application and also through induction after selection;
- Design a person specification to help the student self-selection process;
- Standardise the main paperwork for training providers;
- Use a timeline to ensure regular production of paperwork and outcomes;
- Improve the lines of communication between all parties;
- Contribute to national evaluation and dissemination.

*Jim Forrest*

*Sarah Sutherland*

*(Project Officers)*