

## End of Summer 2004 Final Report on

# The BELS Student Apprenticeships project - Year 2

### Executive Summary

Despite a late start to this year's activities we had a much more successful year, with many students successfully placed for one day per week for up to 6 months and a huge increase in the number of units achieved by our student apprentices by the end of the summer. On that basis this may well have been the most **successful** Student Apprenticeship project in the country. Hence it is very disappointing that further funding has not been available for a third year.

Alongside our Year 1 modus operandi (6<sup>th</sup> formers put in touch with training providers who found the placements and monitored progress) we introduced a second way with FE colleges, in which their students were placed and monitored by their own work-based learning departments. Thus two slightly different systems operated, using the same paperwork. The paperwork was more rigorously adhered to and the systems were far more effective in year 2. The Toolkit was revised again in summer 2004. The shortage of available employers remains an issue in some job sectors, however. Business Admin and Child Care remain the two areas in which it was easiest to place students.

When funding becomes available in the future to continue this post-16 project our scheme will be well equipped to do so. Some of our practices would be able to transfer easily to a pre-16 project.

### Student statistics

56 students undertook an initial interview with an appointed training provider and 55 completed ESF forms. 29 of those came from the two colleges who came on board (Bromley and Orpington) and a nearly equal number from school 6<sup>th</sup> formers and 6<sup>th</sup> form college students. Nine LSC-verified Training Providers were involved.

Some early drop-outs meant that we managed only 45 ILPs but after that the majority of students stayed on course and they achieved **68 units** between them, 53 were vocational NVQ units and 15 were wider key skills (mainly Working with Others). 46 of these came from students (mainly girls) in the 2 colleges using their own college work-based learning team for placements and 22 came from schools and 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges linking with training providers (11 units each by males and females). This is a very pleasing total and shows how well the process can work if the right students, tutors, placements and training providers can be found in time. There were some excellent students this year, as the monitoring visit accounts testify.

Most units gained were in Business Admin, with a minority gaining Hair & Beauty units or Working with Others or Improving own Learning and performance.

Besides an overall colour-coded individual **student matrix**, which we updated at least once a month (Appendix 1) we also developed working computer files for all those students still on track after Easter, sorted both by LEA and by Training Provider (Appendix 2). In this way we kept close contact with every outcome as it happened. Because of this rigour, we were able to link payments to training providers to specific pieces of work for each student, e.g. for initial interviews, for bringing the employer on board, for the ILP and the subsequent Assessment Reviews and unit certifications. We are grateful in particular to Bromley College (enabling students to gain 28 units), Orpington College (18 units) and to Archbishop Tenison School, Croydon (8 units)

### **Monitoring and evaluation - Visits**

Besides the 12 preparative visits we carried out before hand we then made 36 monitoring and evaluation visits during the second three months of the placements, the aim being to visit all the training providers, most of the schools and colleges and a cross-section of the students. (See Appendix 3 for the list of visits) We devised and used standard interview forms for these visits. (See Appendix 4 for examples. Copies of each visit report are available if needed.)

The student evaluations recorded during these visits and from an earlier student questionnaire highlighted the

- Motivational force of the scheme for the student
- Relevance to the student's current course of study and career aspirations
- Support given by the employer and by the visiting assessor
- The satisfaction of doing a grown up job and learning about yourself
- The extra self-confidence and maturity that this has given the student

The most taxing part for many students was the actual compilation of the portfolio of written evidence needed to gain the unit accreditation. Time will tell how useful these extra qualifications will prove to be to the students. In this sense the scheme would have benefited from more national publicity about the value of Student Apprenticeships, which would have raised its profile.

The training providers, schools and colleges reported an improvement in communication systems compared with Year 1, mainly because of this year's more rigorous paperwork. The only substantial rewrite needed (if the project is taken up again one day) is of the ILP, which is too repetitive, including sections which were dealt with earlier in our initial interview form. We have written our amendments to this and one or two other forms and included the new versions in our revised Year 2 BELS Toolkit for student Apprenticeships, submitted to the LSC in July.

### **Celebrations**

BELS officers presented students who had gained at least one unit with a personalised BELS Student Apprenticeship Certificate of Completion. Between us, we did most of the presentations in person in formal events (at the college or the

school of the Training Provider HQ). We also wrote letters of thanks to all the training providers and to a few key employers.

## **Conclusions**

- The internal college route, linking full time students to the college work-based learning route, has proved to be effective, although their work-based learning sections still had to search far and wide for placements. However, they managed 29 placements between them. Communication is clearly easier across the parties in this system than the school - BELS - trainer system that we also operate, but we feel that it is important to try to offer the same opportunities to 6<sup>th</sup> formers as to college students.
- Placements in ICT, Construction, Engineering proved very difficult to find, partly due to health and safety constraints and the heavy time commitment needed to find each new placement when starting from cold calling. A number of trainers reported that placements in business/admin, hairdressing and leisure and tourism areas were difficult to find, for the numbers that we wanted. The most plentiful job sector for placements amongst the South London training providers is child care, for which ironically there were virtually no student applicants this year.
- The funding provided by us this year to training providers was lower than originally planned and did not provide the incentive for them to spend the necessary extra time in persuading employers to take on the students for a one day per week placement. Additionally, the lack of incentive offered to employers for any education/business partnership activity is an inhibiting factor in the project. This is a country-wide concern of which the Treasury need to be made aware.
- Any future local student apprenticeship scheme may need to rethink the process of expecting training providers to find the placements for 6<sup>th</sup> formers. An alternative route would be to ask the local EBPs and work experience teams to find the placements, directly from the students' requests, and then hand the rest of the process (monitoring and assessment) to the appropriate training provider. The project would need more funding per student than was available this year and also an earlier "go-ahead" start time from the LSC (e.g. July rather than October).

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