

The Student Journey Select Committee Report

*Helping young people in their journeys through
education to employment*

May 2012



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Foreword



The proposal to set up The Student Journey Select Committee stemmed from the findings of visits to all the twelve Kent districts in 2011. It became very evident that an urgent and fresh approach to education, learning and skills from Key Stage 2 right through meaningful employment was needed. That “journey” for students appeared to lie at the heart of any new regeneration strategy.

The Wolf Report indicates that student’s education, training and skills should have a sharper focus on the economy and on employment, and less dependency on bureaucracy and exam results. We have sought to understand that journey and have endorsed it.

A different methodology and style have been required from those of many other select committees. Throughout our information gathering we have produced draft recommendations that were tested for practicality and credibility with those who might implement them. The response has been excellent, so that on completion of the report several recommendations were already being put into practice.

Students, employers and institutions have been wonderfully open, frank and honest, and have warmed to our independence. We feel that this is one of the great strengths of select committees. When collecting information we have always sought to verify theory and anecdotal evidence. Refreshingly, we have received a great deal of free and blue sky thinking from all sorts of people, some of which is included in this report. At every turn we have tried to keep true to our claim of involving students and employers by asking “How is it for you? How can we help you on your journey?”.

We thank all of the many people and organisations that have been part of our journey, and that have shared their journey with us. There has been superb feedback and involvement. We especially thank the many students, employers and providers who have continually amazed, inspired and encouraged us, and we hope that you can catch some of that flavour in this report and in any future work on the employability of young people.

A successful journey for students is so absolutely fundamental to the economic, social and environmental future of Kent.

Kit Smith, Chairman of The Student Journey Select Committee

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Committee Membership

1.1.1. The Committee consists of nine Members of Kent County Council (KCC): seven Members of the Conservative Party, one Member of the Liberal Democrat Party, and one Member of the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents' Association.



Mr Alan Chell
Conservative Member
for Maidstone South



Mr Ian Chittenden
Liberal Democrat
Member for Maidstone
North East



Mr Mark Dance
Conservative Member
for Whitstable



Mr Peter Homewood
Conservative Member
for Malling Rural
North East



Mr Richard Lees
Member for the
Swanscombe and
Greenhithe
Residents' Association



Mr Steve Manion
Conservative Member
for Dover North



Mr Michael Northey
Conservative Member
for Canterbury
South East



Mr Kit Smith
Conservative Member
for Deal
(Chairman)



Mrs Carole Waters
Conservative Member
for Romney Marsh

1.2. Scene Setting

- 1.2.1. Young people are the future for England and its economy. Raising their aspirations, and creating the right opportunities to improve their skills and attitudes so that they can enter sustainable employment, are crucial for their independence and the quality of their lives, as well as for the country's economic recovery and growth.
- 1.2.2. Global economic recession has resulted in falling youth employment. The proportion of unemployed young people aged 18 to 24 in Kent has risen dramatically, accounting today for more than a quarter of the youth labour population. But youth unemployment is not a single issue requiring one solution. Young people embark on different "student journeys", and the issues for those who lack qualifications or work experience are different from those who hold vocational or academic qualifications.
- 1.2.3. For many years the English education system has given rather greater emphasis to academic achievements than to practical, vocational training, leaving a shortage of appropriately trained and educated young people to fulfil the different needs of the economy. Formal qualifications are often a necessary but not sufficient condition for obtaining the types of jobs which young people aspire to.
- 1.2.4. Improving the employability of young people is a crucial task if we want to contribute to the country's economic recovery as well as to give the best possible prospects to future generations of workers in Kent.

1.3. Terms of Reference

- To investigate the extent to which learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work, and enable them to apply their learning in the workplace.
- To explore the relevance of training and skills provision for young people against local labour market needs and growth industries in Kent.
- To seek out and listen to students' views about, and experiences with, their preparedness for work and their employability.
- To examine the efficacy of partnerships between local businesses and local educators, and the opportunities in Kent for young people hoping to enter the labour market at key transition points of their educational journey.
- To look into the extent to which careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) enables young people to make informed choices about their future education and employment at key transition points.
- To consider the potential impact of changes in national policy on the educational and employment opportunities, and choices, of young people in Kent.
- To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

1.4. Scope

1.4.1. The breadth and complexity of this topic requires a clear and focused approach. Possible key themes and issues to be covered by the review are detailed below:

- To investigate the extent to which learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work, and enable them to apply their learning in the work-place.
 - a. To consider the extent to which the content of courses in secondary schools, colleges and universities in Kent prepare young people for the world of work.
 - b. To investigate the extent to which secondary schools, colleges and universities in Kent adapt the structure of their courses to enable students to develop workplace skills and experience.
 - c. To investigate the reasons for student dropouts.
- To explore the relevance of vocational training and skills provision for young people against local labour market needs and growth industries in Kent.
 - a. To explore the extent to which current vocational training, apprenticeship and work experience schemes meet local labour market needs and the expectations of growth industries in Kent.
 - b. To consider whether additional training schemes, courses and qualifications are necessary in order to meet local labour market needs.
- To seek out and listen to students' views about, and experiences with, their preparedness for work and their employability.
 - a. To record the diversity of educational journeys that students take from dependent childhood into employment.
 - b. To explore students' views about, and experiences with, their employability and preparedness for work. The Committee should be innovative in gathering information and evidence from students.
 - c. To explore the social, economic, access and community dimensions affecting the journeys that students embark on.

- To examine the efficacy of partnerships between local businesses and local educators, and the opportunities in Kent for young people hoping to enter the labour market at key transition points of their educational journeys.
 - a. To investigate the effectiveness of current partnerships between employers and educators in Kent in helping young people to enter the labour market.
 - b. To consider the job opportunities for young people in Kent, at the key transition points in their educational journeys (around 14, 16, 17/18 and 21 years).

- To look into the extent to which careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) enables young people to make informed choices about their future education and employment at key transition points.
 - a. To explore current policy and practices concerning careers IAG provision for young people in schools, colleges and universities in Kent at key transition points (around 14, 16, 17/18 and 21 years).
 - b. To consider whether the quality and reach of this provision could be enhanced.

- To consider the potential impact of changes in national policy on the educational and employment opportunities, and choices, of young people in Kent.
 - a. To consider whether there may be national policy changes affecting the educational and employment opportunities, and choices, of young people in Kent.
 - b. To examine the implications of the Wolf Report and the implementation of its recommendations by the Government.
 - c. To consider the potential impact of these changes – if any - on the educational and employment opportunities, and choices, of young people in Kent.

- To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.
 - a. To report progress and developments to the Scrutiny Board and the Policy Overview Scrutiny Committees throughout the review.
 - b. To make recommendations based on the evidence and information gathered during the review.

1.5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Student Journey Select Committee recommends the strengthening of the 14-19 Strategic Forum, which should include representatives and leaders of learning and skills providers and of businesses in the County. The Committee proposes that the name of the Forum should be changed to the “14-24 Strategic Training and Employment Forum”. (Please refer to Chapter 3, Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3)

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that KCC’s Skills and Employment Team facilitates the use of existing Local Planning Forums to promote dialogue between local learning and skills providers and local employers. Although strategic leadership is necessary to secure commitment at county-wide level, local issues and solutions are best discussed at local level, with local accountability residing within Locality Boards. (Please refer to Chapter 3, Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4)

Recommendation 3

The Select Committee endorses Recommendations 4 and 11 of the Wolf Report and recommends that:

- KCC’s Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to urge that performance management indicators and systems do not give schools incentives to divert low-attaining pupils on to courses and qualifications that are not recognised by employers or accepted by colleges for progression purposes.**
- Funding for full-time students aged 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student. The funding should follow the student. (Chapter 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2)**

Recommendation 4

KCC’s Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to press for the teaching of employability and “soft skills” in the curriculum from Key Stage 1, and for the improvement of young people’s literacy and numeracy standards, especially those of the lowest attaining learners. (Chapter 4, Section 4.3)

Recommendation 5

The Skills and Employability Team should develop a personal, electronic version of a portfolio containing a list of activities that young people in Kent should undertake in order to improve their employability. This e-portfolio, which the Committee wishes to name “Footprints”, should be available to all students in Kent, from those in Years 5 and 6 in primary school to those in university; it should record the activities that will help students enhance their employment prospects during their different “student journeys”. (Chapter 4, Section 4.4)

Recommendation 6

KCC’s Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to recommend the setting up of the proposed national kitemark scheme that validates the different CEIAG quality awards for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. (Chapter 4, Section 4.5)

Recommendation 7

The Skills and Employability Team should set up a pilot scheme, in at least two secondary schools/colleges per District, where suitably trained mentors are regularly available to give students careers information, advice and guidance.

The Skills and Employability Team should also pilot an online careers education mentoring website for Kent which is based on the national model of www.horsemouth.co.uk. The website should provide a safe social network for informal mentoring and should enable users to search for a mentor. In addition, it should give information on how to become a mentor, and should be a source of inspirational mentoring stories. The scheme should encourage the recruitment of mentors from the business community. (Chapter 4, Section 4.5)

Recommendation 8

KCC should channel part of the Early Intervention Grant to the Skills and Employability Team in order to enhance the employability of Kent young people aged 14-24. (Chapter 4, Section 4.6)

Recommendation 9

KCC should support the Young Chamber project by meeting the Chamber’s annual licence fee of £500. (Chapter 4, Section 4.7)

Recommendation 10

KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education asking him to consider the allocation of more appropriate and proportional funding per student for International Baccalaureate courses. (Chapter 4, Section 4.8)

Recommendation 11

KCC should not integrate the kentchoices4u website into the corporate KCC website. The Skills and Employability Team should instead promote the use of the kentchoices4u website by introducing, if possible, hyperlinks and QR codes in other KCC websites that are popular with young people.

The apprenticeships section in kentchoices4u should be expanded in order to offer more information to young people about the choices that are available to them.

Finally, access to this website should be extended to Kent children in the last two years of primary school. This is necessary for the effective delivery of Footprints and to support the consolidation of the employability skills of young people in Kent. (Chapter 5, Sections 5.1 and 5.2)

Recommendation 12

KCC should allow all its Divisions to use social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to enhance their communication and engagement with young people, and to support them into employment. Social media access and usage should be moderated as appropriate. (Chapter 5, Section 5.3)

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that KCC's Regeneration Board continues to support the GradsKent project by providing funding for a further 2 years. Any income generated by GradsKent should be re-invested into the project with the aim of making it self-sustaining.

The Committee recommends that GradsKent continues to work on the following objectives:

- Increasing the number and visibility of student and graduate employment opportunities, including internships and graduate careers.
- Working with businesses to identify skills shortages, and encouraging graduates with in-demand skills to work in Kent.
- Working with local universities to increase their students' employability.
- Engaging with students, graduates and employers through appropriate channels, including social networking sites, where return on investment can be demonstrated.
- Keeping pace with changing technology in order to remain accessible to users, particularly through developing GradsKent into a web app which offers increased functionality when visited on a smart phone. (Chapter 5, Section 5.4)

Recommendation 14

The Skills and Employability Team, in partnership with employers, learning and skills providers and other local organisations, should:

- Set a target whereby 10% of 16-18 year old young people in each cohort in Kent are undertaking an apprenticeship within an agreed timeframe.
- Ensure that the take-up of work experience placements increases, by promoting and encouraging the organisation of more placements throughout the year and not exclusively in the summer months. (Chapter 6, Sections 6.1 and 6.2)

Recommendation 15

The Skills and Employability Team should increase its support, advice and guidance to young people and to local employers who offer, or intend to offer, apprenticeships, internships and work experience programmes in Kent. In particular, the Team should:

- Establish a dedicated unit which is charged with the development and delivery of the apprenticeships strategy in Kent.
- Ensure that the unit also acts as a single point of contact, providing support, advice and guidance to young people and to businesses that offer, or intend to offer, apprenticeships and work experience schemes. The unit should ensure that the staff who operate the main KCC switchboard are trained to put employers and young people seeking apprenticeship-related information through to the unit/contact point.
- Encourage the setting up of a database which maintains shared information and contacts on apprenticeships, internships, work experience, health and safety, and other related matters.
- Help to cut bureaucratic processes in order to ease the setting up of apprenticeships by employers and their take-up by young people. (Chapter 6, Section 6.3)

Recommendation 16

- KCC endorses Recommendation 14 of the Wolf Report, and urges the Government to adopt and implement it. In view of Kent's special reliance on SMEs, particular incentives to help them should be considered. (Chapter 6, Section 6.3)

Wolf Report – Recommendation 14

Employers who take on 16-18 year old apprentices should be eligible for payments (direct or indirect), because and when they bear some of the cost of education for an age-group with a right to free full-time participation. Such payments should be made only where 16-18 year old apprentices receive clearly identified off-the-job training and education, with broad transferable elements.

Recommendation 17

In order to fulfil its Corporate Parent responsibility, KCC should actively promote and increase the apprenticeship take-up of looked-after children, care leavers and other vulnerable young people, both within KCC and across Kent.

In addition, the Skills and Employability Team should ensure that apprenticeships are offered by a greater variety of teams within the Authority, and that the placements are not all office-based. (Chapter 6, Section 6.4)

Recommendation 18

The Skills and Employability Team should encourage learning and skills providers to agree voluntary targets to reduce the number of young people who could potentially become NEETs when they leave school or college. (Chapter 7, Sections 7.1 and 7.2)

Recommendation 19

KCC should consider proposals, such as that of the Kent-based construction company Denne, to develop and support the delivery of work-focused programmes to be taught in secondary schools in Kent. (Chapter 7, Sections 7.1 and 7.2)

Recommendation 20

The Committee commends the valuable work that IMPACT Ashford does to help local young people who are not in education, employment or training to develop their social and academic skills and to enhance their employability.

The Committee recommends that the Skills and Employability Team promotes across Kent the work of organisations such as IMPACT Ashford as examples of good practice. (Chapter 7, Sections 7.1 and 7.2)

Recommendation 21

KCC should put in place measures to enable Kent employers to buy the Kent 16+ Travel Pass for their apprentices at KCC's purchase rates. (Chapter 8, Section 8.1)

Recommendation 22

The Skills and Employability Team, the Kent Foundation and other proven agencies should further encourage schools to raise awareness amongst their students about the option of becoming self-employed, and to provide information about the support and guidance that are available.

The Kent Foundation should be supported in promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, and in increasing the number of Kent young people starting up a business. The organisation should also be encouraged to deliver enterprise education to young people in Kent. (Chapter 8, Section 8.2)

2. Background

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Today's labour market conditions bear very hard on young people, and economic recession has worsened underlying structural trends. Almost one in ten young people in the UK is not employed or in full-time study or training. Unemployment is an immediate problem that is particularly severe for young people, as it deprives them of the opportunity to learn valuable skills and can damage their self-esteem. But joblessness can also have severe long-term consequences, in terms of lowering social cohesion, economic performance and wellbeing. If youth employment is not promoted, by giving to today's young people the support, skills and experience they need to access the world of work, the country in the next decades will be faced with a "lost generation".

2.1.2. The Student Journey Select Committee's review has focused on vocational education, although employability issues which affect young people in Higher Education, as well as general issues which affect all students from primary school until they leave education, have also been explored. Good vocational education courses, such as apprenticeships, can offer different content and skills that are as valuable as those offered by conventional academic courses and can lead to successful careers.

2.1.3. Although vocational education provides a valuable route to successful careers for many young people, structural barriers at both national and local level can be removed in order to open up career paths for many others. It is encouraging that several of the shortcomings that the Committee identified at national level have also been recognised by the Wolf Report, a recent and influential work commissioned by the Government.

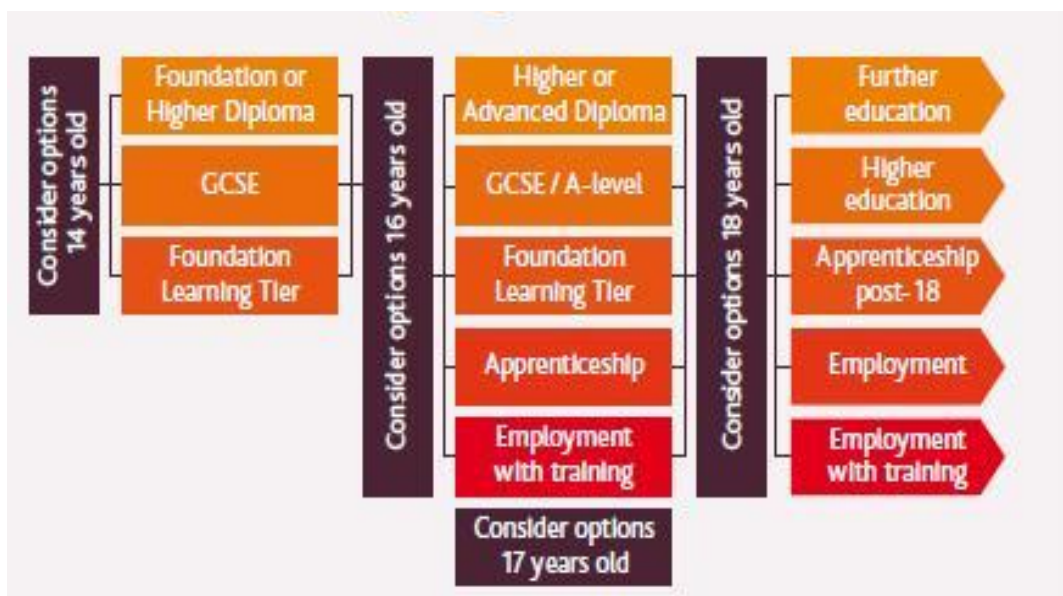
2.1.4. But, as Professor Maguire points out, it is revealing and highly pertinent to also adopt a local perspective, as there are important local variations that are best dealt with through local policy making and service delivery.¹ By addressing local issues without losing sight of the national perspective, The Student Journey Select Committee hopes to have made a rounded contribution to enhancing the employability and the lives of young people in Kent.

¹ Maguire, S. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

2.2. Terminology

2.2.1. As it is argued in “Avoiding a Lost Generation” (2010), there is not a single youth unemployment issue; there are several. The challenges facing graduates may be different from those entering the job market after compulsory schooling or with no qualifications.² There are diverse “journeys” that students take from education to employment, each offering different skills, prospects and challenges. A “one-size-fits-all” approach is therefore inadequate, and segmented approaches are needed to address the needs of young people (see also Appendix 3).³

Figure 1: Choices in education and training from age 14 to 19.



Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

² Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) *Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future*, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

³ Newton, B. (2011) *The Student Journey Select Committee*, written evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

- 2.2.2. There are several definitions of “unemployed” and of “youth unemployment”. For the purpose of this review, the “**unemployed**” comprise all persons above a specified age who, during a particular period, were not in paid work. The rate of “**youth unemployment**” is the proportion of the youth labour force that is unemployed. “Young people” are defined as persons aged between 16 and 24, unless stated otherwise. The “**labour force**” is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.⁴
- 2.2.3. Universities and employers, after extensive collaboration, have attempted to define “**employability skills**” and to identify the set of skills and the specialist knowledge that the term should include. Their definition of the term is: “*a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy*”.⁵
- 2.2.4. Employability skills include: self-management, team-working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy and application of information technology. Underpinning these skills must be a positive attitude and a readiness to contribute.⁶
- 2.2.5. There is no formal definition of “**vocational education**” in England. The term is used to refer to both the most demanding and highly selective apprenticeships and to study programmes of dubious value which often recruit disaffected young people with poor academic records. Nonetheless, as Professor Wolf points out, no government report can change the way people use language, and giving something a new, official name simply means that that name acquires the overtones of the old one.⁷

⁴ UNstats (2011) adapted definition from Millennium Development Goals Indicators, United Nations, Geneva.

⁵ CBI (2009) Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work, London.

⁶ Ibid.

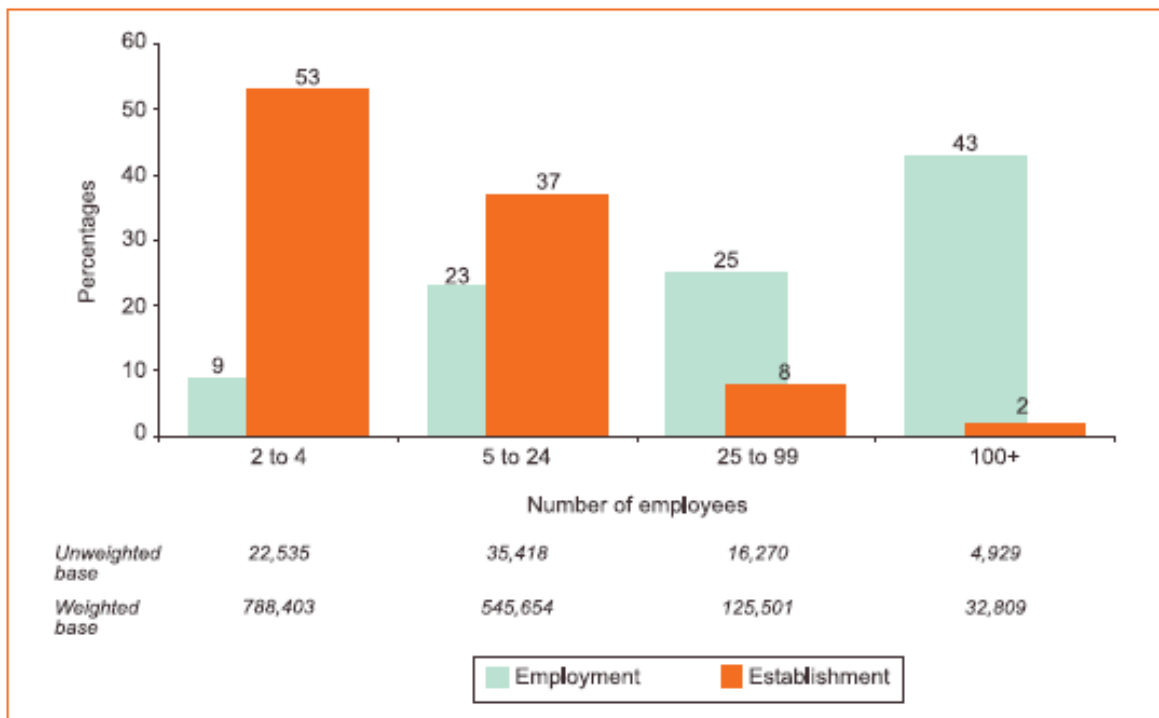
⁷ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

2.3. The Social and Labour Market Context

2.3.1. The employer landscape in England is dominated by small and medium-size firms. Over half (53%) of businesses are very small, with 2 to 4 workers including the employer, while 37% employ between 5 and 24 people. This means that about 9 in 10 firms (89%) employ fewer than 25 people. In Kent, 98% of businesses are SMEs.^{8 9}

2.3.2. In terms of workforce distribution, although 9 in 10 firms are small, only about a third (32%) of employees work for them, while two-fifths of the workforce is employed by large companies with 100 or more staff.¹⁰

Figure 2: Distribution of establishment size and employment in England (2009).



Source: Inter Departmental Business Register (2009)

⁸ UKCES (2010) National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Main Report, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

⁹ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁰ Ibid.

2.3.3. In terms of sector distribution, according to the Standard Industrial Classification, sector groups in England are very uneven. There are large numbers of establishments in the Business Services and in the Retail and Wholesale industries (24% and 22% respectively), although these sectors account for a smaller proportion of employment (19% and 17% respectively).¹¹

2.3.4. Hotels and Catering, Manufacturing, Health and Social Work and Other Services each account for between 7% and 9% of the total number of firms, and are all medium-sized in terms of their workforce. Other sectors, such as Mining and Quarrying are very small in terms of establishment numbers, although the Education sector includes several large organisations and accounts for 9% of total employment.¹²

Figure 3: Employers and employment by sector, England (2009).

	Share of establishments %	Share of employment %
Overall	100	100
Agriculture	5	1
Mining & Quarrying	*	*
Manufacturing	7	10
Electricity, Gas & Water	*	*
Construction	9	5
Retail & Wholesale	22	17
Hotels & Catering	9	6
Transport, Storage & Communications	4	6
Financial Intermediation	2	4
Business Services	24	19
Public Administration & Defence	1	5
Education	3	9
Health & Social Work	7	12
Other Services	8	5

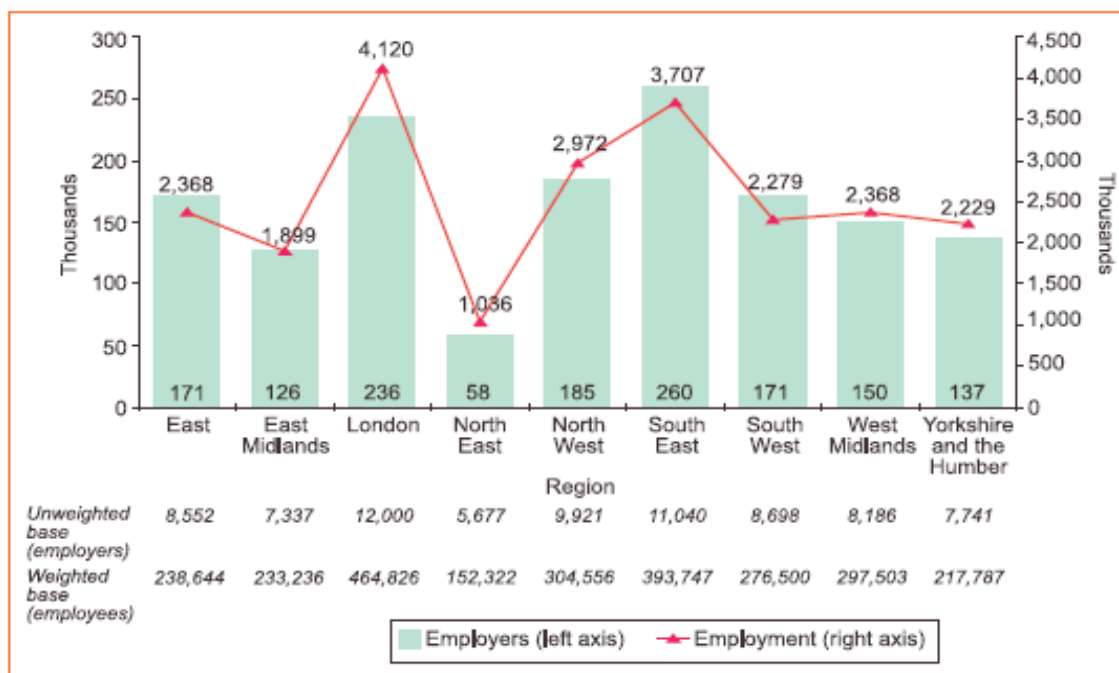
Source: Inter Departmental Business Register (2009)

¹¹ UKCES (2010) National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Main Report, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

¹² Ibid.

2.3.5. The number of firms in each region of the country also varies considerably. The South East has the highest number of establishments, followed by London (260,000 and 236,000 respectively), although London accounts for more employees. The North East has the lowest level of employment in the commercial sector (69%), while almost a quarter of the workforce (24%) works in central or local government. The North West and West Midlands share a similar scenario to the North East.¹³

Figure 4: Employers and employment across regions, England (2009).



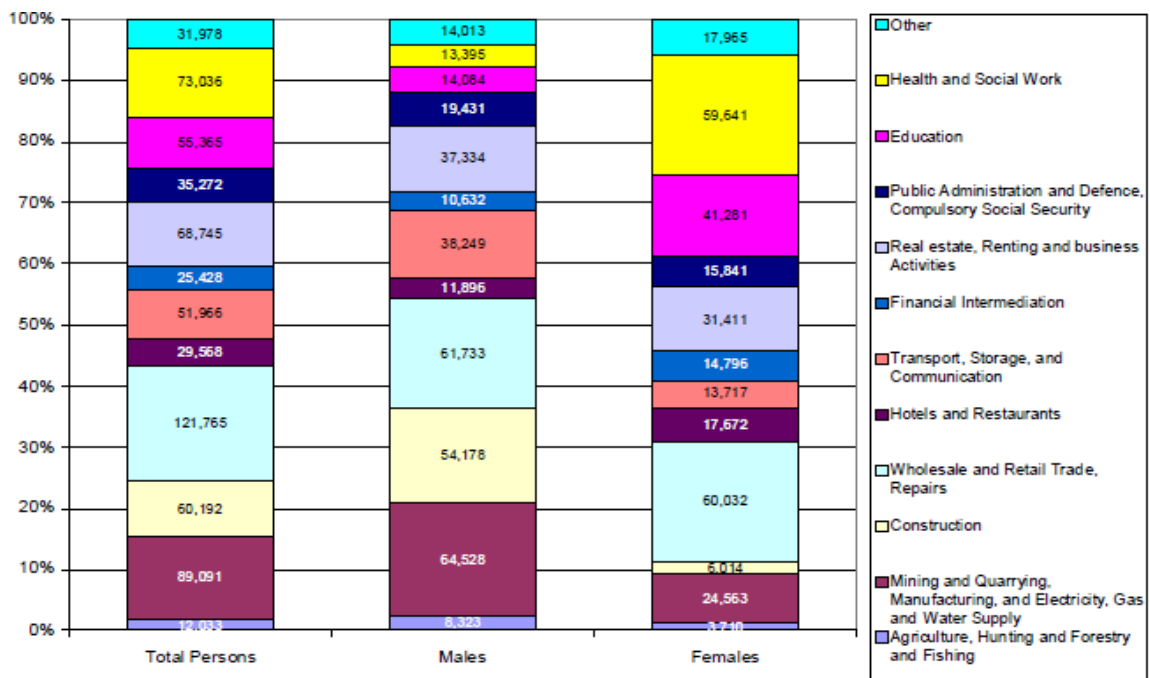
Source: Inter Departmental Business Register (2009)

¹³ Ibid.

2.3.6. Other variations include a higher proportion of retail and personal services businesses in the North East, and the highest number of IT firms in the South East.¹⁴

2.3.7. Data taken from the 2001 Census shows that the great majority of Kent's workforce is employed in Wholesale and Retail businesses. About 120,000 people work in this sector, accounting for 18.6% of the total number of employees. The number of women employed in the sector is higher than that of men (19.6% and 17.7% respectively). There are also more women in Health and Social Work, which employs about 60,000 female workers (19.4% of all female workers in Kent). By contrast, the majority of male employees are concentrated in Mining, Quarrying, Manufacturing, and Electricity, Gas and Water Supply (see also Appendix 3).¹⁵

Figure 5: Employees in Kent, by sector (2007).



Source: 2001 Census, Special Workplace Statistics Table, Office for National Statistics.

2.3.8. According to the NESS Survey (2010), as a result of the economic recession, about a quarter of employers (24%) said they had to reduce their workforce. Large employers were more likely to have reduced their staffing than smaller firms; 39% of those with 200 to 449 employees had to reduce their staffing, compared to 35% of those with 100 to 199 staff, and 34% of those with more than 500 workers. Businesses with fewer than 5 staff claimed to be relatively unaffected.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kent County Council (2007) Travel to Work Patterns in Kent County, Maidstone.

¹⁶ Ibid.

2.4. The Education System within the Social and Labour Market Context

- 2.4.1. Within this wider, national social and labour market context the education system has changed dramatically in recent years, as it has in all other OECD countries.¹⁷
- 2.4.2. The Wolf Report argues that the whole of the developed world is now characterised by a vanishing youth labour market and very high youth unemployment. Only a few decades ago the large majority of young people were in full-time employment by their mid teens; nowadays the norm in developed countries is that young people remain in full-time education until they are 18. The main exception to this trend is young people with apprenticeship contracts, as they are classified as “employed”.¹⁸
- 2.4.3. The number of young people available for employment has been decreasing for many years. In 2009 40% of all 18 year olds were in the labour market, while in 1970 the proportion was 68% and in 1958 was 74%.¹⁹ Although there are no definitive answers, it appears that a key cause for these changes is the attractiveness of higher-level qualifications and the fact that the lack of jobs persuades many young people to remain in education.²⁰
- 2.4.4. The English labour market offers particularly high returns to those with degrees, in both absolute and relative terms, when compared to other European countries. However, it also offers very low returns to those holding only low-level qualifications. As Professor Wolf points out, many low-level qualifications have little value in the labour market.²¹
- 2.4.5. The aspiration to higher education is almost universal in this country. For example, 98% of British mothers who had children in 2000 wanted them to go to university.²² However, apprenticeships and employment can also lead to high returns. While some businesses may be unable to offer full-time employment to young people, there is strong evidence that most value work experience, and that the best way of securing a job is to have one.²³

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

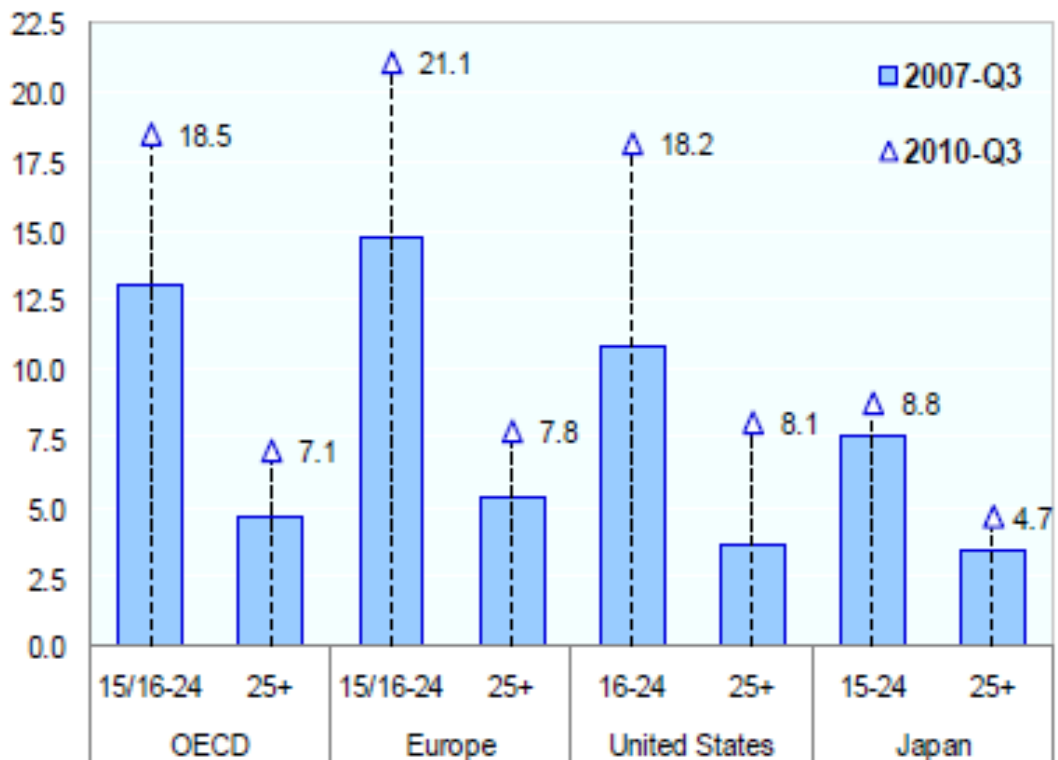
²³ Ibid.

2.5. Youth Unemployment

2.5.1. Since 2008 the British economy has contracted by 6% and unemployment has increased to about 2.5 million.²⁴ Although unemployment has not reached the levels that some originally feared, the current state of the economy, and the lack of growth in particular, is not encouraging for job creation, especially for young people. Many companies have been able to minimise redundancies by reducing salary costs and promoting short-time working; when demand grows, they may well first increase the working hours of existing staff. In addition, during recessions many businesses prefer to employ staff with experience rather than young people needing training.²⁵

2.5.2. As previously discussed, as a result of the global economic crisis young people have suffered a disproportionate share of job losses not just in Britain, but in the entire developed world. In both 2007 and 2010, young people were about three times more vulnerable to unemployment than older workers in OECD and EU countries.²⁶

Figure 6: International youth and adult unemployment rates in 2007 and 2010, as a percentage of the labour force in each group.



Source: OECD (2010)

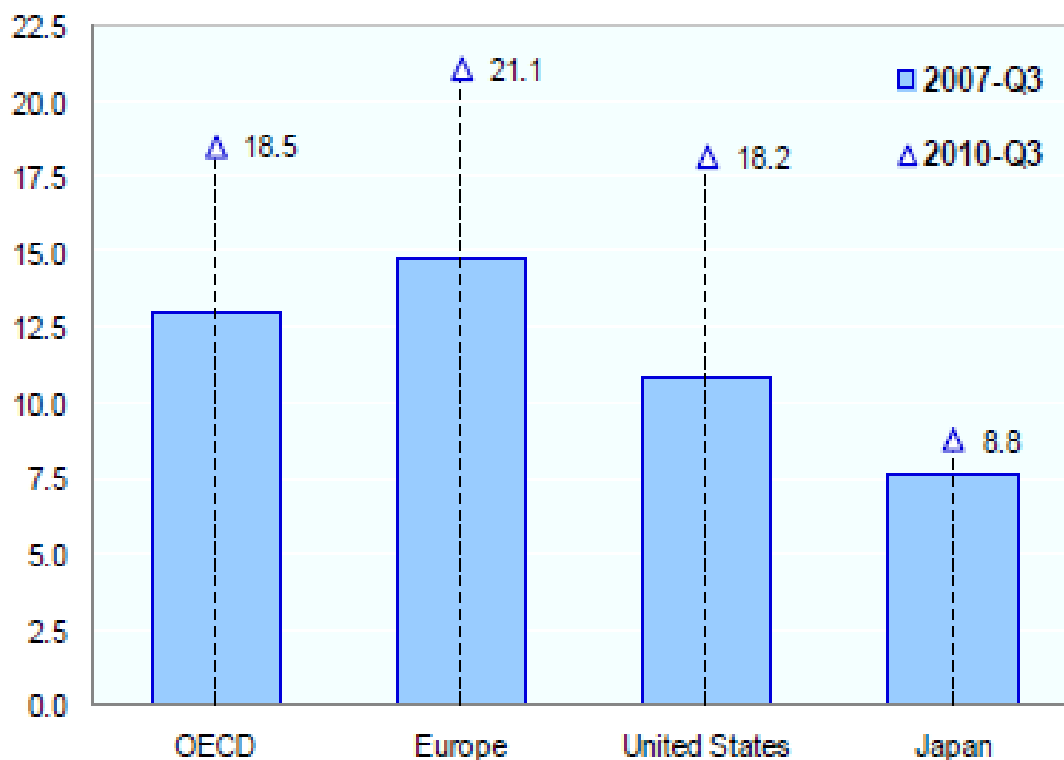
²⁴ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) *Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future*, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

2.5.3. In the third quarter of 2010, the OECD average youth unemployment rate was 18.5% of the labour force aged 15/16-24 - an increase of 5.5 percentage points and 3.5 million more youth unemployed than in 2007.

Figure 7: International youth unemployment rates, as a percentage of the youth labour force 15/16-24.

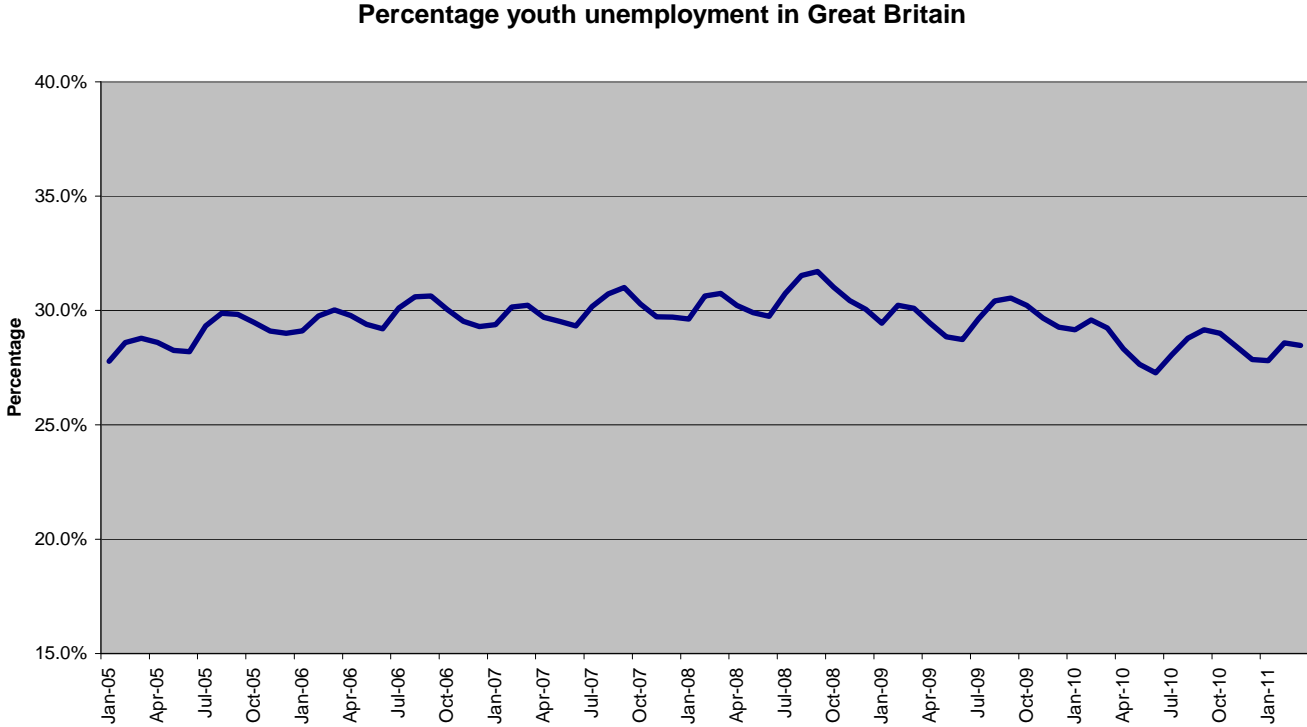


Source: OECD (2010)

2.5.4. The proportion of unemployed youth in Britain and Kent is similar and has remained stable in the last few years. As of January 2011, in Britain about 400,000 young people aged between 18 and 24 were officially unemployed, accounting for more than a quarter (28.5%) of those available for employment. In Kent, at that time, about 7,500 young people were unemployed, or 28.6% (see also Appendix 3).²⁷

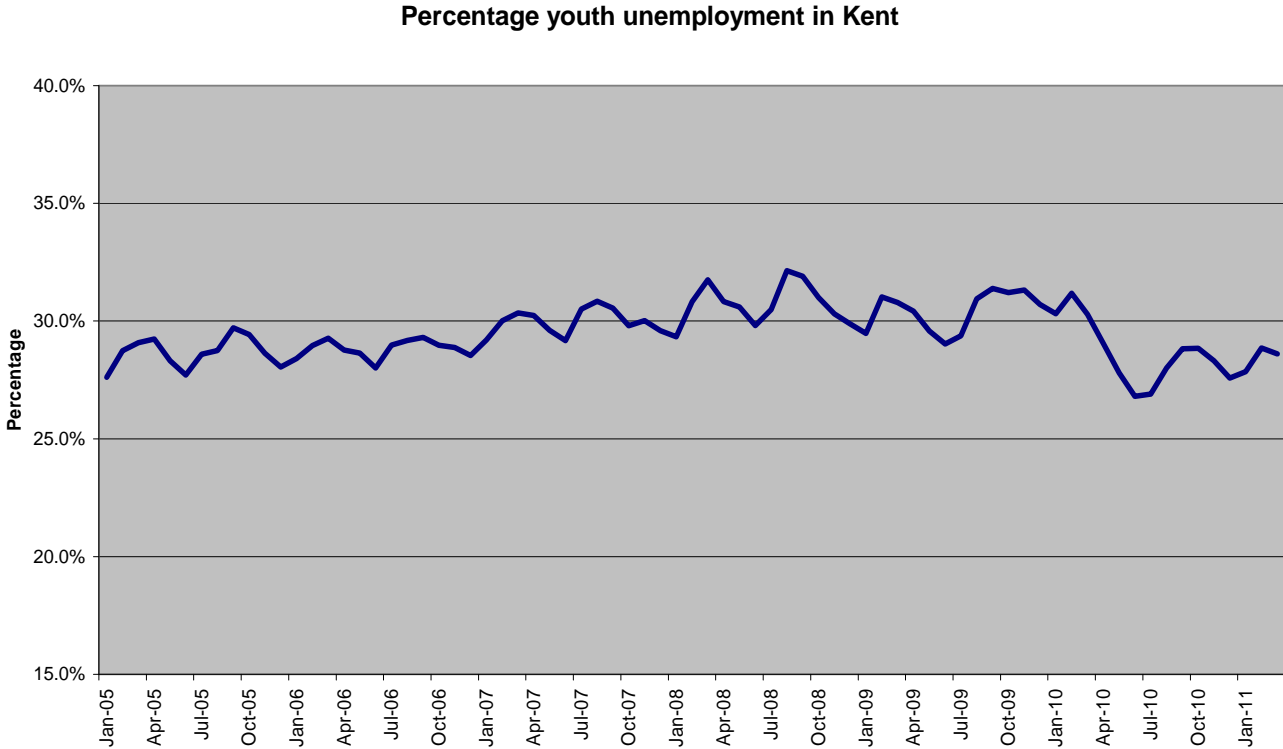
²⁷ Office for National Statistics (2011) Youth Unemployment Data, NOMIS, London.

Figure 8: Percentage of youth unemployment in Great Britain (18-24 years), 2011.



Source: NOMIS, prepared by Research and Evaluation, Kent County Council, 2011.

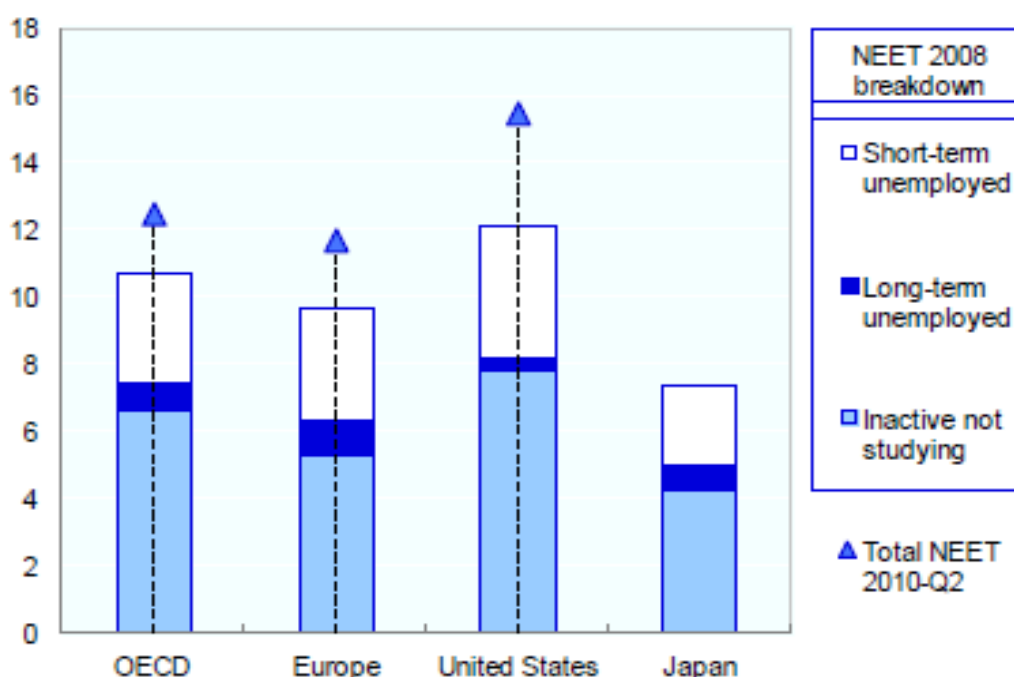
Figure 9: Percentage of youth unemployment in Kent (18-24 years), 2011.



Source: NOMIS, prepared by Research and Evaluation, Kent County Council, 2011.

2.5.5. Perhaps more concerning is the number of young people who are neither in education nor in employment or training (NEET). On average, in the OECD area in 2008, almost 11% of all young people were NEET. Of these, 33% had been unemployed for less than a year, 7% had been unemployed for more than one year, and 60% were inactive and not in education. The NEET rate of European countries was similar; in Japan it was much lower (7.4%), while in the USA it was higher (12.1%). Data from 2010 suggests that in the previous two years the proportion of young people who were NEETs increased by almost 2% both in OECD countries and in Europe, and by much more in the United States (3.4%).²⁸

Figure 10: International youth NEET in 2008 and 2010, as a percentage of youth aged 15-24.



Source: OECD (2010)

2.5.6. In England, in the last decade the proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET has remained stable at around 10%. More specifically, the proportion of 16-17 year olds NEET has fallen from 7% in 1999 to 5.1% in 2009, while the proportion of NEETs aged 18 has risen from 10.4% to 16.9% over the same period.²⁹

2.5.7. In Kent, the proportion of NEETs is lower than the national average, although NEETs levels remain a matter of concern. As of September 2011, the proportion of 16-18 year old NEETs was 6.5%.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Department for Education (2011) "What Works Re-engaging Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training? Summary of Evidence from the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots", London.

³⁰ Connexions Kent MI Team (2011) NEETs Data, Connexions Kent, Maidstone.

2.6. The Cost of Youth Unemployment

2.6.1. Significant periods of unemployment can not only have serious consequences for the confidence and self-esteem of young people, but can also result in severe consequences for the economy. Taking into account productivity loss and the cost of benefits, the Prince's Trust has estimated that the annual cost of youth unemployment is approximately £4.7 billion.

2.6.2. A fiscal study of the UK benefit system conducted by Shaw and Sibieta in 2005 showed that the Exchequer costs of youth unemployment amounted to £20 million per week. In calculating productivity loss, it was estimated that the loss to the UK in terms of foregone income was -£70 million per week.³¹

Figure 11: Exchequer costs of youth unemployment per week, 2005

	% unemployed*	population of 18-24 year olds**	Estimated number of unemployed	Total cost (£ per week) based on JSA rate of £45.50
London	10.8	722,878	78,133	3,555,051
North East	11.5	242,939	27,830	1,266,265
North West	7.7	625,099	48,167	2,191,598
Yorkshire	8.6	482,251	41,244	1,876,602
East Midlands	7.3	384,974	28,223	1,284,146
West Midlands	8.2	478,789	39,223	1,784,646
East of England	7.5	439,746	33,165	1,509,007
South East	7.0	681,477	47,442	2,158,611
South West	6.2	413,670	25,487	1,159,658
England	8.2	4,471,823	368,698	16,775,759
Wales	8.1	265,645	21,517	979,023
Scotland	9.1	458,631	41,815	1,902,582
Northern Ireland	7.1	169,050	11,952	543,816
UK			443,982	20,201,181

Source: Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010)

³¹Shaw, J., and L. Sibieta, (2005), "A Survey of the UK Benefit System," The Institute for Fiscal Studies, Briefing Note No. 13.

- 2.6.3. The cost of being NEET is considerable. To the individual, the personal cost is not only in the immediate loss of earnings, but also in the future benefits that come with education, training or work experience. Gregg and Tominey (2004) argue that there is a 'wage penalty' from youth unemployment even if individuals avoid being unemployed again. Using the National Child Development Study, they estimated that youth unemployment reduces individuals' wages by 12-15 per cent by the age of 42.³²
- 2.6.4. In terms of costs to society, according to a recent study by the University of York (2010), the average individual life-time "public finance cost" of 16-18 year olds NEET is estimated at £56,300, while the average life-time "resource cost" is £104,300.³³ In Kent, as of September 2011, the number of NEETs aged 16-18 was 2,318, or 6.5% of the total 16-18 cohort.³⁴
- 2.6.5. The study by the University of York also gave a range of estimates of the current, medium and long-term resource costs (between £22 billion and £77 billion) and public finance costs (between £12 billion and £32 billion).³⁵

³²Gregg, P. and Tominey, E. (2004) The Wage Scar from Youth Unemployment, CMPO Working Paper Series No. 04/097, University of Bristol.

³³Cole, B et al (2010) Estimating the Life-Time Cost of NEET: 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training, University of York, York.

³⁴Connexions Kent MI Team (2011) Kent NEET data, Maidstone.

³⁵Ibid.

2.7. National Policies and Strategies

2.7.1. Tackling youth unemployment is a key priority for the Government. One crucial objective is to ensure that the cyclical impact of economic recession does not result in long-term unemployment and in a “lost generation” of today’s young people. Another central aim is to tackle those structural barriers that can prolong and perpetuate the unemployment period of the most vulnerable youth.³⁶

2.7.2. The current Government has established **five core areas** for action for supporting youth employment, working with businesses, local government, voluntary groups and local communities. These five areas are:

- promoting skills
- encouraging more work experience, apprenticeships and internship opportunities
- supporting the most vulnerable
- providing financial and non-financial incentives, and
- restoring economic growth.³⁷

2.7.3. At the time of writing, the Government is developing a **Participation Strategy** which will specify how young people’s participation in education, employment and training will be maximised.³⁸

2.7.4. Together with these national policies and strategies that are aimed at boosting youth employment, other national policies aimed at dealing with youth unemployment from a vocational education perspective have emerged and are being developed.

2.7.5. The Department for Education's Schools White Paper “**The Importance of Teaching**” (2010) set out, for example:

- Powers for teachers to improve discipline, and the trialling of a new approach to pupils’ exclusions.
- A vision for a transformed school curriculum supported by rigorous assessment and qualifications.
- More academies and free schools and a strong strategic role for local authorities.
- Changes to school performance tables, Ofsted inspections and governance.
- A funding system to channel more money to the most deprived children.³⁹

³⁶ Prime Minister’s Office (2011) Supporting Youth Unemployment, London.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

2.7.6. Proposals from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, found in “**Skills for Sustainable Growth and Further Education – New Horizon**” (2010), covered vocational learning and the management of further education and sixth form colleges.⁴⁰

2.7.7. The recent **Education Act (2011)**, many of whose provisions were announced in “The Importance of Teaching”, covers changes to teaching, schools and the school system. In particular, the Act will:

- Introduce new measures to increase teachers' authority to discipline pupils and ensure good behaviour.
- Extend the Academies programme.
- Confirm the raising of the participation age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015, although enforcement measures will be removed.
- Give colleges increased freedoms.
- In accordance with the Browne Review recommendations, introduce a real rate of interest charge on HE student loans, and cap fees for part-time undergraduate courses.⁴¹

2.7.8. Finally, a key document which is currently driving changes in vocational education is the “Review of Vocational Education – The **Wolf Report (2011)**”. This is an independent review of vocational education which was commissioned by Education Secretary Michael Gove and was carried out by Professor Alison Wolf.

2.7.9. Professor Wolf was asked to consider how vocational education for 14 to 19 year-olds could be improved in order to promote young people’s successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training. She was also asked to provide practical recommendations to help inform future policy direction in vocational education, taking into account current financial constraints.⁴²

³⁹ Department for Education (2010) The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010, London.

⁴⁰ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010) Skills for Sustainable Growth and Further Education – New Horizon, London.

⁴¹ Department for Education (2011) The Education Act 2011, London.

⁴² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

2.7.10. The Report's recommendations stemmed from clear organising principles for reform:

- The system has no business steering young people into educational programmes with little employability value.
- Provide young people with useful and accurate information and guidance that enables them to make informed decisions about their careers.
- A simplification of the English vocational system.⁴³

2.7.11. Professor Wolf's key recommendations included that:

- Funding should be on a per-student basis.
- Post-16 English and mathematics should be required components of study programmes for those without good GCSEs in those subjects.
- Schools should be free to offer any qualifications they wish, as long as they meet stringent quality criteria.
- "Perverse" incentives that encourage schools to run educational programmes with little value for "accountability" reasons should be removed.⁴⁴

2.7.12. The Government has promised to take action on each of the Wolf Report's recommendations.⁴⁵ It is currently consulting various bodies on its proposals, set out in the paper "**Study Programmes for 16-19 Year Olds**" (2011).⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Department for Education (2011) Wolf Report of Vocational Education: Government Response, London.

⁴⁶ Department for Education (2011) Study Programmes for 16-19 Year Olds, London.

2.8. Local Policies and Strategies

2.8.1. At local level Kent has also developed, and is developing, policies and strategies which are aimed – amongst other things - at tackling youth unemployment. The Kent Partnership identified three overarching ambitions, which are the key objectives of the medium-term strategic document “**Bold Steps for Kent**” (2010). These are:

- to grow the economy
- to tackle disadvantage, and
- to put the citizen in control.⁴⁷

2.8.2. The Kent Children’s Trust is also working on a new “**Children and Young People’s Plan**” for the period between 2011 and 2014. Areas of particular need which are relevant to this review include:

- enhancing the learning outcomes of primary school children
- engaging with adolescents, and
- tackling family poverty.⁴⁸

2.8.3. “**Unlocking Kent’s Potential**” (2009) is a long-term strategic document that identifies the essential infrastructure needs for public capital investment over the next 20-25 years. The document looks to future challenges and opportunities facing Kent in global and local contexts. Two specific and relevant key targets which the strategy mentions are:

- “increasing the number of graduates in Kent and retaining them”, and
- “developing a new partnership with the Higher Education sector”.⁴⁹

2.8.4. As part of this long-term strategy, KCC commissioned Sir Terry Farrell to produce “**21st Century Kent: A Blueprint for the County’s Future**” (2010). This is a wide-ranging spatial vision for Kent, aimed at helping to unlock the potential of Kent’s economy, environment and people.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Kent County Council (2010) Bold Steps for Kent: The Medium Term Plan to 2014/2015, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁴⁸ Kent Children’s Trust (2011) Strategic Planning Framework to Support Positive Outcomes for Children and Young People, Maidstone.

⁴⁹ Kent County Council (2009) Unlocking Kent’s Potential: Kent County Council’s Framework for Regeneration, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁵⁰ Farrells (2010) 21st Century Kent: A Blueprint for the County’s Future, London.

2.8.5. The “**Kent Apprenticeship Strategy**” (2010) has the primary objective of increasing the number of apprenticeships in Kent. The Strategy has a wide and ambitious action plan to promote the growth of apprenticeships between 2011 and 2014. Priorities include:

- Providing young people and employers with full information about apprenticeships and their benefits.
- Developing a support service for employers to provide guidance on the apprentices’ employment process.
- Ensuring that the Kent Success programme meets its delivery targets.
- Ensuring that the wider public sector employs a greater number of apprentices.
- Developing specialist programmes to support vulnerable learners into apprenticeships.⁵¹

⁵¹ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

2.9. Methodology

- 2.9.1. The Student Journey Select Committee held ten hearings, from which it gathered a wealth of information and evidence from a variety of sources, including young people, business representatives and academics, as well as KCC officers and representatives of organisations providing training and employability skills to young people.
- 2.9.2. This oral evidence was complemented by written evidence which was submitted to the Committee by a variety of sources. Ad hoc questionnaires, aimed at seeking the views of both young people and employers on the issue of youth employability, were also prepared. The Committee received about 170 completed questionnaires. Literature stemming from desktop research was also used to inform the review.
- 2.9.3. Nine official visits, as well as several informal visits, also took place during the review. The visits mainly involved seeking views from young people of primary and secondary school age, as well as those studying in colleges and academies. Other visits involved meetings with employers and gathering their views about issues related to youth employability and unemployment. More details about the information gathering process can be found in Appendix 1.

3. Collaboration

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Today's students could spend as much as 50 years of their lives in some form of employment, but it appears that they could be better supported and prepared for both their first job and for all their subsequent ones.⁵² The Committee found that one of the most effective ways of helping young people achieve this aim is by promoting genuine dialogue and collaboration between all those who have a key role to play in improving their employability, especially between employers and learning and skills providers. The Committee reached the conclusion that the ideal structure underpinning an "institutional culture that promotes employability" is one that operates at a strategic, county-wide level, as well as at a more local level.⁵³

3.2. Collaboration Issues

3.2.1. Evidence suggests that, at both national and local level, there is a strong interest – and indeed there are good practice examples – in enhancing the employability of young people. At national level, for example, the CBI in the recent "Building for Growth" (2011) maintains that business recognises that it has a central role to play in supporting schools to raise the achievement of students, and that there is an appetite for greater engagement.⁵⁴

3.2.2. The CBI publication explains that business links with schools in England are widespread. The key findings of the survey suggest that::

- Engagement with secondary schools is a clear priority for employers, with 67% of companies surveyed claiming that they have built such links.
- Over a third of employers (36%) have increased their initial engagement with schools.
- Several businesses provide more than work experience; nearly half (48%) support careers advice and more than one in four (28%) provide school governors.
- More than half (54%) are willing to play a greater role in delivering careers advice.⁵⁵

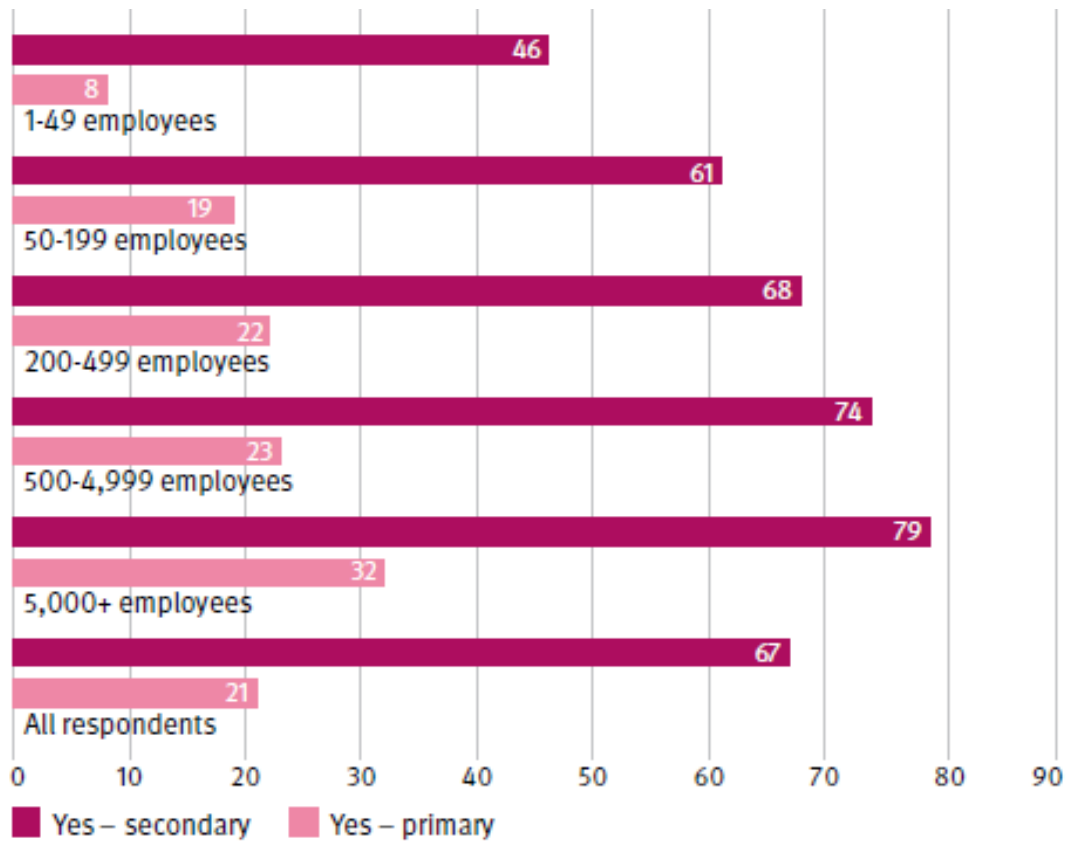
⁵² Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) *Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future*, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

⁵³ UKCES (2009) *The Employability Challenge*, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

⁵⁴ CBI (2011) *Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills*, London.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Figure 12: Percentage of employers claiming to have developed links with schools.



Source: CBI, "Building for Growth" (2011)

3.2.3. Locally, evidence from the business community and from education suggests that many collaborative efforts are taking place. The Young Chamber from the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, for example, organised initiatives with local schools which enabled students to learn how to set up and run shops with the support of local retail managers.⁵⁶

3.2.4. The Federation of Small Businesses also promotes schemes and programmes to local small and micro businesses. “Working with Schools and Colleges” (2008) is a detailed guide explaining to small businesses how to get involved in, for instance, offering work experience, acting as mentors, visiting schools and volunteering as advisors.⁵⁷

3.2.5. From the education community, teachers from local secondary schools which the Committee visited suggested that engagement could be improved by creating employers’ forums and by encouraging them to come to schools to talk to pupils about job opportunities.⁵⁸

3.2.6. Finally, as well as local businesses and learning and skills providers, there are several private, voluntary and charitable organisations, such as the Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO) and EBP Kent, which excel in facilitating the links between employers and training providers, and which promote employment opportunities to young people.^{59 60}

Good Practice

The Young Chamber from the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce organised initiatives with local schools which enabled students to learn how to set up and run shops with the support of local retail managers.

⁵⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 June 2011, Maidstone.

⁵⁷ Federation of Small Businesses (2008) Working with Schools and Colleges: A Members’ Guide.

⁵⁸ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, visit, 5 October 2011.

⁵⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Maidstone.

⁶⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 22 July 2011, Maidstone.

3.2.7. However, a substantial body of national and local evidence suggests that current arrangements are not adequate and that more needs to be done to promote dialogue and partnership work between the key organisations.^{61 62} Indeed, with regard to vocational education, Professor Wolf maintains that “there were far more direct links between employers and local colleges in the past”.⁶³

“There were far more direct links
between employers and local colleges in
the past”

Professor A. Wolf, Wolf Report (2011)

3.2.8. One of the reasons for enhancing dialogue between educators and employers is that it seems that educational courses and qualifications are not always relevant or appropriate to the needs of the local labour market. The issue of perverse incentives, which can lead learning and skills providers to offer students qualifications with little employment value is a central one, and will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

3.2.9. This issue is reflected in the responses to the National Employer Skills Survey for England (2010). While the reasons for employers not engaging with Further Education organisations vary significantly according to the size of the employers, the reason that 46% of small employers gave was that FE provision was not relevant to their business.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 June 2011, Maidstone.

⁶³ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

⁶⁴ UKCES (2010) National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Main Report, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

- 3.2.10. Although it has been pointed out to the Committee that there are many challenges in setting up, ratifying and accrediting new educational courses, local evidence shows that there is a mismatch between the demand for labour and the local skills and qualifications that young people can acquire.⁶⁵ For example, KCC's "Land Based Sector Skills Strategy" (2010) reports that 16% of businesses in the South East have a "skills gap" which accounts for 7% of unfulfilled vacancies in agriculture and horticulture.⁶⁶
- 3.2.11. Poor communication and lack of support can lead to unfulfilled local vacancies because of irrelevant qualifications. It can also result in problems with retaining the Kent young residents who *are* qualified. "The Origins and Destinations of Graduates in Kent" (2010) reports that Kent's graduate retention rates are low in absolute terms; only 37% of students who were resident in Kent prior to studying return to Kent for work.⁶⁷
- 3.2.12. Another concerning issue which can be tackled by improved dialogue is the low take-up of work experience and apprenticeships. For example, the Wolf Report reveals that in England, despite the "political noise" about apprenticeships, there is still a clear under-supply of places; the number of applicants exceeds the supply of all apprenticeship places by more than 15:1.⁶⁸
- 3.2.13. With regard to work experience, the Department for Education recently reported that the most concerning and consistently identified gap in local provision for NEETs was a lack of experience of the workplace and basic skills placements.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

⁶⁶ Kent County Council (2010) Land Based Sector Skills Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁶⁷ Kent County Council (2010) The Origins and Destination of Graduates in Kent, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁶⁸ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

⁶⁹ Department for Education (2011) "What Works Re-engaging Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training? Summary of Evidence from the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots", London.

3.3. Strategic Level Collaboration

3.3.1. In order to deal with issues such as adapting the content of courses and qualifications, addressing the “skills gap”, strengthening relationships between business and educators, and increasing young people’s employability, the Select Committee concluded that the development of an overarching, strategic body was necessary. Key aims of this body should include:

- To secure the commitment of diverse key organisations in Kent, including local learning and skills providers and employers, to cooperate in order to deal with the problem of youth unemployment.
- To ensure that these organisations work together to deal with any barriers to enhancing the employability of young people in Kent.
- To set out clear and measurable targets for improving the employability of young people in the county.

3.3.2. A strategic body whose key aims - amongst other things – are to enhance the employability of young people in Kent, already exists. The structure and remit of the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum have developed in the last 7 years, in part to reflect the changing statutory role of KCC with regard to post-16 learning. Its strategic priorities are closely aligned to the strategic vision of the Committee. These include ensuring that every 14-19 year old learner, as well as every 14-24 year old with a learning difficulties assessment, in Kent can:

- Access high quality education provision which equips them with the skills, knowledge and high aspirations for progression into meaningful employment.
- Choose an appropriate programme of study from an offer that is coherent and accessible across the geographical area, and which is planned, where appropriate, with education and training providers.
- Access up-to-date careers advice and guidance.
- Receive support, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Progress seamlessly through all levels of educational provision in order to gain skills and experience, including the learning of enterprise skills.
- Participate in learning and activities which prepare them for the world of work.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Froude, L. and Grix, S. (2011) Report to Kent Children’s Trust on the Development of the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum to Ensure Young People Reach their Full Potential to Progress into Employment and Higher Levels of Learning, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

3.3.3. The Forum is well placed to deliver these objectives. Its successful record of project delivery demonstrates its effectiveness and potential. Nevertheless, evidence offered to the Committee suggested that the power of the Forum to “move things forward” could be enhanced.⁷¹ Successful and ground-breaking projects and initiatives include:

- The development of vocational centres across Kent, which were awarded “Green Flag” status by the Audit Commission for their innovative approach to supporting young people’s learning.
- Collaborative “Diploma Gateways”.
- The setting up of the “Kent Young Apprenticeships Programme”, which is one of the largest in the country.
- The “Skills Force Programme”, which enables 14-16 year olds to learn employability skills.
- The reduction of the number of NEETs in the county in 2008-9.⁷²

3.3.4. The strong strategic partnership between the members of the Forum is one of the key reasons for its success. At the time of writing members include:

- A representative of the Kent Association of FE Colleges (KAFEC), which includes schools, colleges and training providers. The representative is also the Co-Chair of the Forum.
- A representative of the Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO). The representative is the other Co-Chair of the Forum.
- A representative of the Connexions service.
- Representatives of secondary schools, Academies and Higher Education.
- Local Planning Forum Representatives.
- KCC officers.⁷³

⁷¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

⁷² Froude, L and Grix, S (2011) Report to Kent Children’s Trust on the Development of the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum to Ensure Young People Reach their Full Potential to Progress into Employment and Higher Levels of Learning, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁷³ Ibid.

3.3.5. The membership of the Forum is diverse and influential. Nonetheless, the Committee believes that, in order to enhance genuine dialogue and collaboration at local level, representatives from the business community should also be included in the Forum's membership.

3.3.6. The Committee believes that the leadership role of the Forum is crucial to enhancing the employability of young people in Kent, and hence it also recommends that the profile and role of the Forum should be further strengthened. Finally, the Committee believes that, in order to reflect the key objective of tackling youth unemployment by enabling young people to progress seamlessly through their "student journeys", the name of the Forum should be changed to the "14-24 Strategic Training and Employment Forum".

3.3.7. The Student Journey Select Committee therefore recommends the following.

Recommendation 1

The Student Journey Select Committee recommends the strengthening of the 14-19 Strategic Forum, which should include representatives and leaders of learning and skills providers and of businesses in the County. The Committee proposes that the name of the Forum should be changed to the "14-24 Strategic Training and Employment Forum".

3.4. Local Level Collaboration

- 3.4.1. Together with this top-tier body, whose objective is to provide leadership and drive at a strategic, county-wide level, the Committee is convinced that a more local structure is also needed to facilitate dialogue and promote local youth employment. The Committee, like the Wolf Report, believes that in order to enhance the employability of young people in Kent, the identification of local labour demand and the quality assurance of vocational educational programmes must involve employers. As Professor Wolf put it, “if they are not involved, then standards suffer”.⁷⁴
- 3.4.2. National bodies often report that it is challenging to secure the involvement of employers because meetings keep them away from their businesses, and attendance offers them no direct benefit. However, it is also argued that involvement at *local* level is far less problematic, because local venues are more accessible, and local institutions are often the places from which firms hire staff.⁷⁵
- 3.4.3. As with the strategic level structure, a local level structure which offers a cost-effective way of deploying existing resources and expertise already exists, and has strong links with the Forum. Like the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum, “Local Planning Forums” have evolved in the last 7 years in an effort to facilitate collaborative working and offer learners a broader curriculum.^{76 77}
- 3.4.4. While the task of the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum is to ensure the development of strong partnerships across six local planning areas in the county, 9 Local Planning Forums are structured to support these planning areas, either individually or in groups of two or three (Ashford and Shepway, Canterbury and Swale, and Dover, Deal and Sandwich).⁷⁸
- 3.4.5. The objectives of the Local Planning Forums tend to develop to reflect the requirements of post-16 educational providers, but their core aims include: to enhance the delivery of learning outcomes for 14-24 year olds; to ensure access to a broad and inclusive curriculum which leads to effective progression to employment; to encourage lifelong learning and economic well-being; and, importantly, to prevent young people from becoming NEETs and to reduce the number who are.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kent County Council (2009) Developing the Functions and Structures of the 14-19 Partnership, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁷⁷ Kent County Council (2008) Local Children’s Service Partnership and 14-19 Planning Forums: A Briefing to Support the Development of Partnership Working, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁷⁸ Froude, L and Grix, S (2011) Report to Kent Children’s Trust on the Development of the Kent 14-19 Strategic Forum to Ensure Young People Reach their Full Potential to Progress into Employment and Higher Levels of Learning, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁷⁹ Kent County Council (2008) Local Children’s Service Partnership and 14-19 Planning Forums: A Briefing to Support the Development of Partnership Working, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

3.4.6. The membership of Local Planning Forums includes: secondary headteachers, FE college principals, work-based learning providers, HE representatives, Adult Education representatives, District Council officers, Connexions representatives, employers and representatives of economic regeneration agencies.⁸⁰

3.4.7. The development stages of the Planning Forums vary, but there are good practice examples, such as the Shepway Planning Forum, in which members agreed that the reduction of NEETs in the area required urgent attention, and adopted a joined-up approach to deal with the issue through a NEETs Reduction and Prevention Action Plan.⁸¹

3.4.8. The Committee would like all the Local Planning Forums to reach the level of development of the Shepway Forum. The Committee would also like to see the involvement of the business community promoted and enhanced, given the centrality of employers in identifying the skills required to meet local labour market needs. The new Skills and Employability Team, given its remit to coordinate the strategic planning and commissioning of provision for learners aged 14-19, seems well placed to drive forward this vision.⁸²

3.4.9. In addition, the Committee believes that, in order to encourage local solutions to local issues, Local Planning Forums should be accountable to Locality Boards. Locality Boards, which are supported by the Kent Forum to shape local delivery, are responsible for advising both county and district councils on public service priorities and for delivering local and county-wide ambitions.⁸³ The key aims of Locality Boards - although the Boards are being developed at the time of writing - include:

- To advise on, and deliver, county-wide and more local service priorities.
- To oversee the local performance of local government services, with appropriate links to local partnerships such as Local Children's Trusts.
- To exercise community leadership.
- Crucially, to exercise and improve local accountability to residents for public services in their totality.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Kent County Council (2008) Local Children's Service Partnership and 14-19 Planning Forums: A Briefing to Support the Development of Partnership Working, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Kent County Council (2011) Update on the Establishment of the Skills and Employability Team, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁸³ Kent Forum (2011) website, www.kentforum.org.uk/localities/locality-boards.

⁸⁴ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Strategic Forum Work Plan 2011-2013, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

3.4.10. The core membership of each Locality Board is planned to comprise the County Councillors who represent the electoral division within the Locality and an equal number of District Council Cabinet members. Additional members will be appointed by each Board depending on the specific needs of the Locality.⁸⁵

3.4.11. Having considered all the above issues, the Select Committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that KCC's Skills and Employment Team facilitates the use of existing Local Planning Forums to promote dialogue between local learning and skills providers and local employers. Although strategic leadership is necessary to secure commitment at county-wide level, local issues and solutions are best discussed at local level, with local accountability residing within Locality Boards.

⁸⁵ Kent Forum (2011) website, www.kentforum.org.uk/localities/locality-boards.

4. Careers Education and Information, Advice and Guidance, and Funding

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. As well as promoting collaboration at national and local level in an effort to enhance youth employability and employment, other aspects of the education system need to be modified if young people are to become more “job-ready”. Tackling the perverse incentives that result in “easy” qualifications of limited value, and promoting the teaching of “soft skills” and work ethics from an early age, seem necessary measures. Again, the national changes should be accompanied by the implementation of more local initiatives, such as “Footprints” (an electronic portfolio which records a range of activities aimed at enhancing the employability of young people in Kent), if young people are to be supported in an effective way through their “journeys” through education to employment.

4.2. “Easy” Qualifications and Funding

4.2.1. Professor Wolf argues that the structure and content of the qualifications that are offered to a country’s young people reflect its views about the aims of education, and are a crucial vehicle for social mobility and opportunity.⁸⁶ Formal qualifications are important in the English labour market; it is therefore crucial that they evidence skills and abilities in order to be valuable to employers.

4.2.2. However, while the English labour market offers high returns to graduates when compared to other European countries, it offers very low returns to those with low-level qualifications. In England, many low-level vocational qualifications, such as Level 1 and Level 2 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), have little labour market value. Indeed, research shows that occupationally specific Level 2 NVQs may even offer negative returns, with young people who obtain them earning on average up to 23% less than those who have remained in employment and are less qualified.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Figure 13: Wage Returns to NVQ Level 2 qualifications (proportional increase/decrease in wages for those with an NVQ Level 2, compared to individuals with either no qualifications, or Level 1 qualifications only.)

	Males	Females
All (average)	-0.054	-0.008
Qualifications obtained at college	-0.116	-0.009
Qualifications obtained in employment	0.018	0.017
Qualifications obtained in government training schemes	-0.225	-0.166

Source: The Wolf Report (2011).

4.2.3. The problem of the low labour market value that is attached to low-level NVQs is an acute one, because these qualifications form a large part of the vocational education that is offered to young people aged 16-18.⁸⁸

4.2.4. Perhaps more concerning are those educational programmes, such as “Foundation Learning”, which are designed to help low-attaining students who are not able to undertake a Level 2 course. There are currently about 1,300 Foundation Learning qualifications, 400 of which can be completed in less than 50 hours. Policy research estimates that Foundation Learning can involve up to 20% of 16-18 year olds. These qualifications are unfamiliar to employers and do not command particular value in the labour market. As the CEO of a voluntary organisation working with young people at risk of exclusion put it, “these are qualifications that qualify you to do nothing but take another qualification”.⁸⁹

“These are qualifications that qualify you to do nothing but take another qualification”

The CEO of Rathbone on Foundation Learning, Wolf Report (2011)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

- 4.2.5. Part of the problem appears to result from lack of clarity over the accreditation of qualifications. In England, the qualification system evolved independently of the state; academic and vocational qualifications are not awarded by the state but by numerous awarding bodies. Despite attempts by the Government in the past to reduce the number of awarding bodies, their number has increased from 98 in 2002 to 144 in 2009. The creation of numerous vocational awards, and the reforms that generate them, not only result in an unrealistic task for the independent regulatory body (Ofqual) to scrutinise their credibility, but are also perceived by employers with confusion and suspicion.⁹⁰
- 4.2.6. A second, and linked, part of the problem is the current funding system for post-16 education and training. In England, while funding for young people aged 4-16 is mainly on a per-student basis, that for students aged 16-19 is on a per-qualification basis. This approach is atypical for most European countries, where vocational and academic education funding is allocated to the student, with the amount varying depending on the course.⁹¹
- 4.2.7. Educational organisations, then, are paid by qualification, not by the number of their students. In addition, payments are “by results”; the institution receives less money if the student does not gain the qualification from the awarding body. Although performance management indicators and league tables have been shown to be very effective in raising the educational performance of schools and their students, they can also create perverse incentives where the amount of money that establishments receive is directly linked to their students’ success rates. Indeed, it seems that one of the anomalies resulting from these perverse incentives is that schools spend valuable time and resources researching the “latest wrinkles” to best exploit the funding formula.⁹²
- 4.2.8. The lack of clarity over the accreditation of qualifications, and the unusual funding approach linked to qualifications, result in a series of negative consequences.
- They encourage institutions to steer large numbers of students into courses offering “easy” qualifications that they are likely to pass but that have little labour market value.
 - They give establishments incentives to choose qualifications that are well funded but require a smaller proportion of teaching time.
 - They give institutions no incentives to offer programmes of study which are coherent and which are aimed at preparing young people for employment.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

- 4.2.9. Another consequence is that the little value attached to “easy” qualifications can perpetuate perceived inequalities in the “parity of esteem” between academic and vocational awards that vocational education does not deserve. Not all academic qualifications have the same prestige, and there are apprenticeships, such as those with BT or Rolls Royce, which are more over-subscribed than courses at Oxbridge or at universities of the Russell Group.⁹⁴
- 4.2.10. The collapse of youth employment opportunities for young people with low-level qualifications is a “double problem”; their qualifications are not valued and, unlike in the past, it is now difficult for them to offset their lack of valuable qualifications by labour market experience.⁹⁵
- 4.2.11. Many young people “churn”, moving between qualifications of little value that do not lead to genuine progression, that often do not offer prospects of long-term employment, and that can lead to long periods of unemployment. Research shows that 20% of 16 to 18 year olds at any given time have identifiable periods of “churn”.⁹⁶ Evidence given to the Committee concurs with this research; indeed the Committee has been informed of cases in which young people who studied Level 2 vocational courses were subsequently steered back to Level 1 programmes.⁹⁷
- 4.2.12. As the Wolf Report points out, these poor returns to qualifications should lead us to ask whether the state is providing young people “with an education which justifies the time and money that they and we spend on it”.⁹⁸
- 4.2.13. The Wolf Report recommends that performance management indicators and systems should not give schools incentives to divert vulnerable, low-attaining students into courses and qualifications which are not recognised by employers. The Report also calls for a reform of the current funding system, suggesting that the funding for full-time students aged 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 22 July 2011, Maidstone.

⁹⁸ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

4.2.14. The Government's consultation on its response to the Wolf Report ended in January 2012. The Select Committee is persuaded by the arguments set out in the Wolf Report, and wishes to contribute to informing the Government's policy decisions by fully endorsing recommendations 4 and 11 of this Report.

Recommendation 3

The Select Committee endorses Recommendations 4 and 11 of the Wolf Report and recommends that:

- **KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to urge that performance management indicators and systems do not give schools incentives to divert low-attaining pupils on to courses and qualifications that are not recognised by employers or accepted by colleges for progression purposes.**
- **Funding for full-time students aged 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student. The funding should follow the student.**

4.3. “Soft Skills” and Literacy and Numeracy Standards

4.3.1. Alongside the need to tackle funding issues and the perverse incentives that result in inadequate “easy” qualifications, the teaching of “soft skills” and good work ethics from an early age, and the improvement of literacy and numeracy standards, are also necessary to enhance the employability of young people.

Soft skills

4.3.2. Young people should be enabled to enter the labour market with a set of skills which allow them to operate effectively. However, it appears that there are too many young people who leave education lacking the skills – including “soft skills”- which are deemed essential by employers. This is a matter of concern for employers, but it is also a key issue for wider society if youth unemployment is to be tackled.

4.3.3. As mentioned earlier in the report, universities and employers, after extensive collaboration, have attempted to define “**employability skills**”, as well as the set of skills and the specialist knowledge that the term should include. The definition of the term is: “*a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy*”.⁹⁹

4.3.4. Within this wider definition, there seems to be general agreement that soft skills include: self-management, team-working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, effective communication, reliability and commitment. Underpinning all these attributes must be a positive attitude and a readiness to contribute.^{100 101} In other words, the soft skills that young people should display in the workplace include: being on time, being well dressed, being willing to learn, being polite, and being ready to help colleagues and to work as a team.

4.3.5. Evidence suggests that employers tend to rely on qualifications they are familiar with and which they can interpret. It also suggests that they often use qualifications as *signals* of general skills, rather than indicators of highly specific skills.¹⁰² Labour market research, such as the seminal works of Becker and Goldthorpe, has consistently shown that, despite the growing importance of formal qualifications, employment history and the skills gained with experience are central to explaining career progression and higher earnings.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ CBI (2009) Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work, London.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Written Evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

¹⁰² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

- 4.3.6. This research concurs with evidence given to the Committee, which suggests that, as young people face increasing competition in the labour market, they need to demonstrate skills and qualities that set them apart from others.^{104 105} Indeed, with regard to lower-skilled young people in particular, there is evidence that employers are willing to downplay or even disregard qualifications if applicants show other positive attributes.¹⁰⁶
- 4.3.7. Some evidence gathered by the Committee shows that students - in a number of local schools that value employability attributes - are taught a range of soft skills. Yet, a substantial body of evidence indicates that locally there is a real mismatch between what young people think employers want – and what they can offer to employers – and what employers look for.^{107 108 109 110 111}

“Currently young people who are entering the workplace are poorly equipped to understand what is expected of them. They may have the academic ability but it is essential when they are introduced to employment that they have some experience and training to deal with what to expect, ie turning up on time, properly presented, engaged, motivated and interested...”

A local employer, Questionnaire for Businesses
The Student Journey Select Committee

¹⁰⁴ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Written Evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

¹⁰⁵ Bransby, R. and Prior, M. (2011) Learner Voice in Kent; Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, Kent County Council and Connexions, Maidstone.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Saunders, P. (2011) Student Journey: Learner Voice, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁰⁸ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

¹⁰⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹¹⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹¹¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 June 2011, Maidstone.

- 4.3.8. Although in September 2010 the Government introduced the teaching of “functional skills”, a recent survey by the CBI, “Building for Growth” (2011), showed that much still needs to be done to improve young people’s employability skills more broadly, and also showed continuing widespread dissatisfaction amongst employers. Employers argue that while they do not expect young people to be job-ready, and while they recognise their responsibility to train them, they do expect them to display a set of employability skills which should enable them to be effective in the workplace as soon as they are employed.¹¹²
- 4.3.9. According to the survey, over half of employers (55%) are not satisfied with young people’s self-management skills, and expect them to be more willing to accept responsibility and to manage their time more effectively. Two thirds of employers (69%) are not satisfied with young people’s levels of customer awareness, feeling that young people need a better understanding of the importance of customer satisfaction.¹¹³
- 4.3.10. Other evidence seems to confirm the importance of customer satisfaction. For instance, “Avoiding a Lost Generation” (2010) argues that products and services are becoming increasingly customer orientated and that effective customer communication, as well as commercial awareness, are needed.¹¹⁴ Oral evidence to the Committee indicated that 80% of sales came from regular customers and repeat business, and stressed that good relationships and customer skills were vital for business.¹¹⁵
- 4.3.11. “Building for Growth” (2011) also highlights the importance that an increasing global economy is placing on language skills and cultural awareness. 76% of employers are not satisfied with young people’s language skills and with their perceived lack of international cultural awareness (61%).¹¹⁶
- 4.3.12. Significantly the survey shows that, while a positive attitude to work is vital for young people’s professional development, it is concerning that a third of employers (35%) are dissatisfied with young people’s enthusiasm to learn.¹¹⁷

¹¹² CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

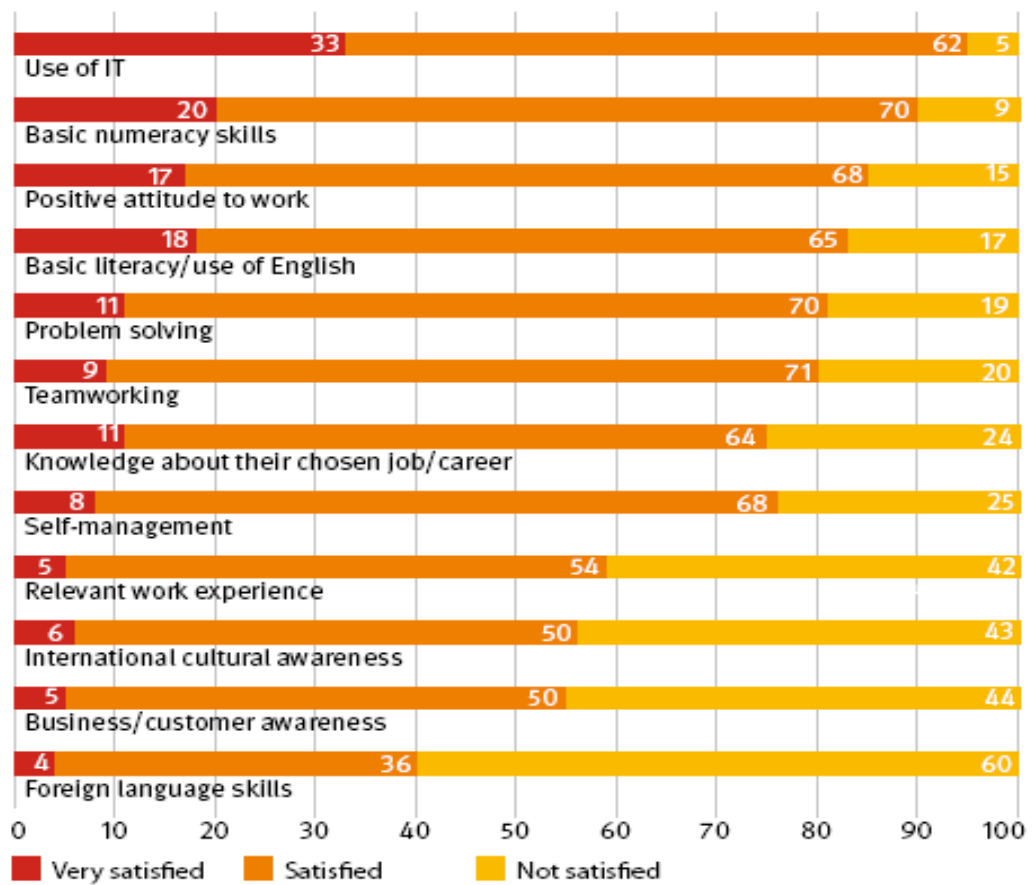
¹¹⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹¹⁶ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

4.3.13. The shortage of soft skills is not just a problem affecting young people who undertake vocational courses; it is also widespread amongst graduates. Although employers are generally more satisfied with the skills displayed by graduates, many report troubling shortfalls. For instance, 19% of employers are dissatisfied with graduates' level of creative thinking and problem solving, while a similar percentage complains about their teamworking qualities. But perhaps more concerning is the fact that 44% of businesses believe that graduates display inadequate business and customer awareness.¹¹⁸

Figure 14: Employer satisfaction with graduates' employability skills (%), England.



Source: Building for Growth, CBI (2011)

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

- 4.3.14. “The Employability Challenge” (2009) points out that the vast majority of students in tertiary education pursue primarily vocational training, with two thirds of UK undergraduates studying directly vocational programmes such as law, accountancy, medicine and engineering. The publication argues that far too many of these courses teach the essential knowledge required for employment, but neglect employability skills; this results in a great disadvantage for their students when competing with those who are taught these crucial skills.¹¹⁹
- 4.3.15. Schools and colleges have generally tried to embed employability skills in their teaching, and at present “personal learning and thinking skills” modules are used. However, many employers feel that these are not sufficient to teach the employability skills that business needs. For a large majority of employers (70%) employability skills are crucial. They believe that what is needed is not a new qualification, but rather an overarching embedding of employability skills in the curriculum, as the best schools and colleges already do.¹²⁰
- 4.3.16. Moreover, the Committee received substantial evidence that soft skills and work ethics should be taught as part of the curriculum from Key Stage 1. This can give the best chance to ingrain crucial soft skills in young people’s attitudes and behaviour from an early age, and improve their later employability.^{121 122 123}

¹¹⁹ UKCES (2009) The Employability Challenge, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

¹²⁰ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

¹²¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Maidstone.

¹²² Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹²³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 14 September 2011, Maidstone.

Numeracy and literacy standards

- 4.3.17. English and mathematics skills are considered extremely important for labour market entry and career progression. However, it appears that structural developments are perversely preventing young people from improving their literacy and numeracy standards.
- 4.3.18. In England the importance of literacy and numeracy has been recognised for decades. Maths and English GCSEs (A*-C) have become central indicators of pupils' attainment, and are used by gatekeepers as tools to select and determine access. However, there is evidence that funding incentives and government targets in fact prevent many students from enhancing their literacy and numeracy skills, even though the levels of these skills are considered inadequate by employers.¹²⁴
- 4.3.19. As explained earlier, systemic funding incentives encourage educational institutions to divert their students away from valuable qualifications, and instead steer them towards programmes that can be passed easily but that have little labour market value. In particular, national funding formulae give establishments strong incentives to register pupils to qualifications – such as key skills certificates in “application of number” or “communication” - which are supposedly equivalent to English and maths GCSEs, but which can be more easily completed successfully, and which attract generous levels of funding.
- 4.3.20. While the few schools and colleges that enter students for more valuable but also more demanding maths and English awards effectively take financial risks, those offering equivalent key skills qualifications can deliver these through on-line, multiple-choice tests that can be repeated until pupils pass. As Professor Wolf puts it “no other developed country allows, let alone effectively encourages, its young people to neglect maths and their own language in this way”.¹²⁵

“No other developed country allows, let alone effectively encourages, its young people to neglect maths and their own language in this way”

Professor A. Wolf, Wolf Report (2011)

¹²⁴ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

4.3.21. While young people who take full A-level courses almost always achieve at least a Grade C in both English and maths, the majority of students taking vocational courses do not. Research conducted by the Department for Education in 2011, looked at a cohort of young people who were 15 in 2005/6, and found that:

- 37% achieved neither English nor maths GCSEs A*-C.
- 12% achieved English GCSE A*-C but not maths.
- 7% achieved maths GCSE A*-C but not English.
- In absolute terms, for this cohort, 329,000 young people aged 15 did not have both English and maths GCSEs A*-C; by the age of 18 approximately 304,000 still did not.¹²⁶

4.3.22. The improvement of literacy and numeracy core skills, which can help young people to make an effective transition into the world of work, has been a matter of concern for employers for a long time. Employers argue that only if these core skills are sufficiently developed can young people make use of their other skills and abilities in the workplace. The issue has become particularly urgent since the growth of youth unemployment.¹²⁷

4.3.23. Although employers' concerns over literacy and numeracy standards vary depending on the nature of their businesses, there is wide agreement about the way that weak English and maths skills affect the ability to perform tasks. Everyday activities that can be hindered include the ability to draw out information from basic texts, the production of coherent written communication, and the processing of basic arithmetical problems such as working out discounted prices.¹²⁸

4.3.24. "Building for Growth" (2011) reports that 42% of businesses surveyed expressed concerns over the basic literacy standards of school leavers, and 35% over their numeracy standards. Some evidence of local trends supports these findings, suggesting that in Kent the quality of some young people's spelling and basic grammar is poor.¹²⁹ But basic skills appear to be a general concern across the whole workforce, suggesting that their inadequacy has been a problem for a long time. About half of respondents reported their concern about both the levels of literacy (48%) and numeracy (48%) amongst all their staff. In fact, since 2008 employers' concerns about inadequate literacy and numeracy standards, as well as IT proficiency, have deepened.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

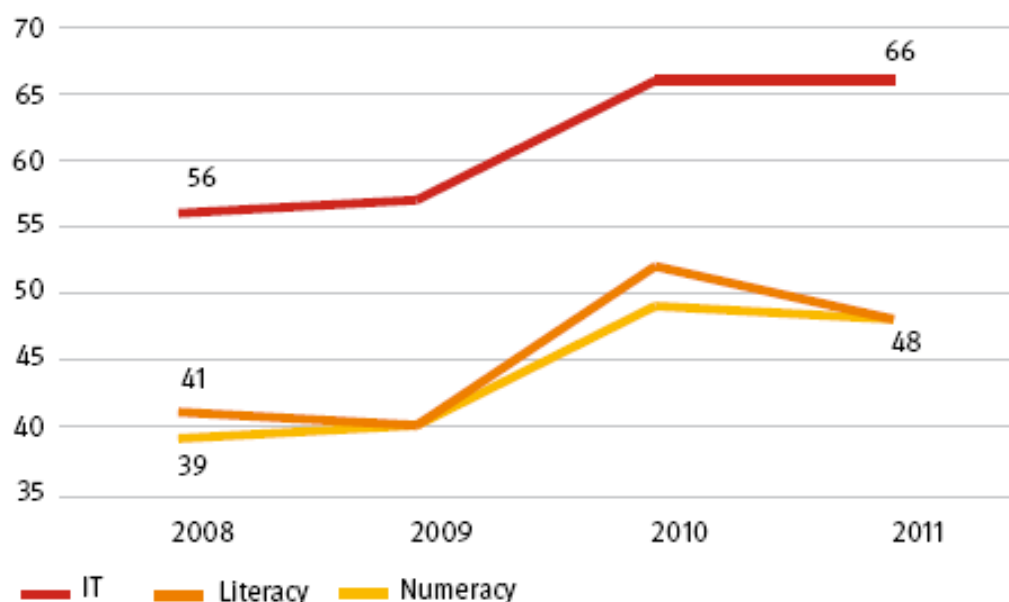
¹²⁷ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 22 July 2011, Maidstone.

¹³⁰ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

Figure 15: Employers reporting problems with core skills of current workforce over time (%), England.



Source: Building for Growth, CBI (2011)

4.3.25. In order to address literacy and numeracy shortcomings some employers are providing remedial training. They report that in 2010 44% of businesses had to arrange remedial training for at least some young people who had recently joined them. More specifically, 22% had to organise workforce training in literacy, 21% in numeracy and 20% in IT. Some firms had to provide remedial training in two or in all three.¹³¹

Figure 16: Employers providing remedial training in 2010 (%), England

	School/college leavers	Graduates	Adult employees
Literacy	22	12	18
Numeracy	21	7	13
IT skills	20	17	51

Source: Building for Growth, CBI (2011)

¹³¹ Ibid.

4.3.26. A large number of the employers (65%) surveyed by the CBI believe that shortcomings in young people's literacy and numeracy standards need to be addressed.¹³² This need seems to be even more pressing for the lowest-attaining pupils since, as argued earlier, instead of encouraging them to focus on their English and maths, many are diverted into programmes that can be passed easily but have little labour market value.

4.3.27. The Government is aware of the shortcomings in soft skills and in literacy and numeracy standards amongst young people, and is introducing a series of reforms to support students in their transition from education into employment. Reforms include:

- Raising the age of compulsory participation in education or training to 17 in 2013 and to 18 in 2015 to enable young people to gain the skills and qualifications they need for employment.
- Promoting the English Baccalaureate to help more young people to study subjects that employers most value.
- Expanding Apprenticeships.¹³³

4.3.28. Despite these reforms, evidence shows that there is still an urgent need – especially during an economic recession – to support young people in improving their soft skills and literacy and numeracy standards in a competitive and increasingly globalised economy. Having examined these issues, and having established their importance in promoting the competitiveness and employability of young people both in Kent and in England, the Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 4

KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to press for the teaching of employability and "soft skills" in the curriculum from Key Stage 1, and for the improvement of young people's literacy and numeracy standards, especially those of the lowest attaining learners.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Prime Minister's Office (2011) Supporting Youth Unemployment, London.

4.4. The E-Portfolio – “Footprints”

- 4.4.1. A key local initiative that the Committee believes can help young people to build up their employability skills is the development of an electronic portfolio. The objective is to encourage young people in Kent to undertake and record a range of activities aimed at enhancing their employability during their “journeys” through education to employment. The Committee suggests that the e-portfolio should be called “Footprints”, as it records qualifications, soft skills and other achievements of students during their “journeys”, and because it relates to Bold Steps for Kent.
- 4.4.2. The Committee is convinced that it is vital to promote the development of Footprints. It believes that the teaching of soft skills is so important that it should be encouraged through both national reform and more focused and local initiatives.
- 4.4.3. Another key reason for the development of Footprints concerns the provision of careers education and guidance. From April 2012 a new “National Careers Service” will be established to provide young people with a single point of access through a helpline and online services offering careers information, advice and guidance (IAG).¹³⁴
- 4.4.4. Responsibility for additional provision of independent and impartial provision of IAG to young people will be transferred from local authorities to schools. Schools will be expected to deliver a range of activities supporting career management skills for every student in the academic Years 9 to 11, and this duty may be extended to Years 8, 12 and 13.¹³⁵ However, under the new arrangements, such provision will no longer be statutory but at schools’ discretion.^{136 137}
- 4.4.5. While the Committee welcomes the intentions behind these changes, it feels that the new arrangement could create variation and inconsistency in the provision and quality of IAG.¹³⁸
- 4.4.6. “Kentchoices4u” is a KCC website – run by KCC’s Skills and Employability Team - that offers a wealth of information on careers information, advice and guidance for young people; the Committee believes that Footprints should be integrated into this website.
- 4.4.7. The e-portfolio should include a wide range of activities and tasks that are known to promote employability, such as: attitudinal/psychometric tests; learning how to produce a curriculum vitae and a personal statement to a high standard; mock interviews; personal careers guidance, and work experience.

¹³⁴ Kent County Council (2011) Briefing Paper: National Careers Service/Schools’ Responsibilities for Impartial Guidance, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Maidstone.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

- 4.4.8. Importantly, the assessment of many of these activities, especially for younger pupils, should be organised in a way that promotes parents' involvement. While parents are generally recognised as a key source of careers information and guidance, and although nearly all are keen to support their children, many feel insufficiently informed.^{139 140}
- 4.4.9. The Committee believes that Footprints should be made available to all Kent students from their last two years of primary school to university. By exposing young people from an early age to the importance of employability skills, these skills and a positive work ethic are more likely to remain ingrained in their attitudes and behaviour. The teaching of employability skills from primary school would also support a seamless careers education during pupils' transition to secondary school.
- 4.4.10. The portfolio should be also available to students in higher education. The inadequacy of soft skills also applies to many graduates; while lower-skilled and higher-skilled labour markets operate in different ways, and the challenges facing young people vary according to their educational routes, all of them need to demonstrate common employability attributes when seeking employment.¹⁴¹ Indeed, according to a survey conducted by the CBI, for the last three consecutive years employability skills were the most important factor for graduate recruiters.¹⁴²
- 4.4.11. The design of Footprints should involve Kent employers. The Committee believes that only with the input of local businesses will it be possible to organise activities that genuinely develop effective employability skills and that employers recognise. As the Wolf Report points out, employers tend to value schemes and awards they are familiar with.¹⁴³
- 4.4.12. The assessment of activities should not be a "tick-the-box" exercise; robust evaluation methods are necessary to give credibility to the portfolio. While it may be difficult to evaluate some activities in an objective way, there are methods used successfully in business and education that can be applied in this context. These include standardised recruitment approaches, and assessment methods, used in some vocational courses, that capture qualitative and personal aspects of employability skills.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁴⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 14 September 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁴¹ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Written Evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

¹⁴² CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

¹⁴³ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

¹⁴⁴ UKCES (2009) The Employability Challenge, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

- 4.4.13. A recognised, county-wide electronic portfolio may help schools to meet the new “destination measures” requirements by Ofsted. By 2013 the Department for Education will publish, as part of schools’ performance tables, learner destination data that will make learning providers accountable for ensuring that all their students take qualifications that offer them progression, and that will serve as indicators of these providers’ level of career guidance.¹⁴⁵
- 4.4.14. Key Stage 4 and 5 destination measures will provide information to parents and young people about the post-16 routes taken by the students of every institution. Although the take-up of Footprints is at schools’ discretion, it is hoped that the portfolio will be useful to them when evidencing their levels of careers guidance and employability skills provision during inspections.¹⁴⁶
- 4.4.15. When the Committee sought views about the feasibility and attractiveness of an electronic portfolio, it found widespread agreement. During their visits to secondary schools, members of the Committee ascertained that the idea of an employment portfolio was appealing to both young people and their teachers. Teachers emphasised its usefulness in encouraging students to increase their skills set. Students felt that Footprints could help them to identify the employability skills they needed to impress employers.¹⁴⁷
- 4.4.16. Oral evidence showed also agreement from graduates, children in care and employers’ representatives.^{148 149 150}
- 4.4.17. The feasibility of an e-portfolio in Kent has been explored. The Skills and Employability Team (then called “Kent 14-24 Innovation Unit”), was closely involved in a pilot scheme to assess the viability of a Kent Learning Framework for students from the age of 14. The key strategic drivers behind this project were:
- To support young people’s educational achievement and progression.
 - To promote social justice by supporting the success of all students regardless of their background.
 - To promote economic growth through the enhancement of wider skills which are conducive to productivity.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Londoncouncils website (2011) Comments and Issues for Development of Destination Measures, londoncouncils.gov.uk.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Saunders, P. (2011) Student Journey: Learner Voice, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁴⁸ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 14 September 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁴⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁵⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 19 September 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁵¹ Foster, N. et al (2010) Kent Learning Framework for Progression and Achievement at 14+, University of London, London.

- 4.4.18. The pilot phase for the “Kent Learning Framework for Progression and Achievement at 14+” was organised for the academic year 2009-10, and involved 8 Kent secondary schools and 2 training providers. Feedback was sought from school managers, students and employers.¹⁵²
- 4.4.19. The main purpose of the Framework was both to broaden the availability of areas of study - especially in schools - and to support a mechanism for recording learning and activities that are important for students’ development but that are not currently recorded and accredited.¹⁵³
- 4.4.20. Central to the pilot was the notion of an online electronic diary. Its purpose was to enable all students to record achievements, up-load files, pictures and videos, and to share information. It was felt that many students undertook a variety of activities, both within and outside schools, that enriched their learning and employability skills but were not recognised or recorded. For many students these activities were the most important factor shaping their progression choices and career aspirations.¹⁵⁴
- 4.4.21. Another important aim was to use the diary to improve institutions’ understanding of the factors behind the progression choices of young people through electronic tracking. It was also felt that the use of a “kite mark” to ensure high standards and to confirm the credibility of the diary would be appropriate and useful.¹⁵⁵
- 4.4.22. There was support for the project from strategic managers, school managers, employers and students involved in the pilot scheme. School managers saw the value of the diary for young people to record and demonstrate acquired employability skills and qualities, such as teamwork, independent learning and self-confidence. They also saw the potential of the diary for improving careers information, guidance and planning and for the wider recording of achievement.¹⁵⁶

“Increased awareness of activities subsumed in school life that go unrecorded at this stage”

“Ownership of own learning, self-esteem and self-confidence”

School managers’ views on the portfolio’s benefits for students, Kent learning Framework for Progression and Achievement (2010)

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

4.4.23. Young people generally agreed or strongly agreed on the usefulness of the diary. They understood the importance of recording and evidencing the gaining of employability skills and progression, both for themselves and for employers. They also appreciated the potential and convenience of an online diary to store (even from home) evidence in different formats, such as videos, photos and electronic stickers.¹⁵⁷

"It's helped me think about what to do next and how to improve..."

"I think the diary is a good way of recording extra curricula stuff which hasn't been recorded before"

Students' views on the portfolios' benefits for them,
Kent learning Framework for Progression and Achievement (2010)

4.4.24. Employers also welcomed the initiative, particularly its emphasis on employability skills. They felt strongly that records of academic attainment were not as helpful in showing candidates' potential for employment as their extra-curricular activities and their soft skills.¹⁵⁸

4.4.25. Some challenges were also identified during the pilot project. For example, some managers and tutors expressed concern over the lack of time and support to develop the diary to its full potential. Other comments referred to confidentiality and a perceived excess of bureaucracy in the administration of the diary and inflexibility in its management. Finally, some respondents pointed to the need to support the least engaged students to log their learning and experiences in the diary.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

4.4.26. Following the wide success of the pilot scheme, the organisers concluded that it should be extended to the whole county. The Select Committee commends the involvement of young people and employers in the project, and fully endorses the vision of a county-wide electronic diary. Indeed, it believes that a county-wide e-portfolio should be developed without delay, and should be extended to include students from as early as the last two years of primary school.

Recommendation 5

The Skills and Employability Team should develop a personal, electronic version of a portfolio containing a list of activities that young people in Kent should undertake in order to improve their employability. This e-portfolio, which the Committee wishes to name “Footprints”, should be available to all students in Kent, from those in Years 5 and 6 in primary school to those in university; it should record the activities that will help students enhance their employment prospects during their different “student journeys”.

4.5. A National Kitemark and Mentoring Schemes

4.5.1. It was indicated earlier that the wealth of qualifications across the country has raised serious concerns over the consistency of such awards. The proposal to introduce a national kitemark to validate the different careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) awards that are currently available to schools and colleges, is aimed at addressing this issue. It was also mentioned that the provision of CEIAG will be reformed, and that a new National Careers Service will be operational from April 2012. To complement the national provision of online IAG services, the Committee believes that additional local mentoring schemes should be trialled to evaluate the effectiveness of personal advice and guidance for young people in Kent.

A National Kitemark

4.5.2. The Careers Profession Task Force (2010) maintains that it is important that young people are given choices in their education, so they can pursue subjects and interests that best suit their talents and aspirations. It is argued that it is therefore critical that young people and their parents are given good careers education and guidance, so they can make well informed decisions. Providing good IAG is not only a moral responsibility; there are also social and economic imperatives that justify helping young people to access employment opportunities.¹⁶⁰

4.5.3. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service reports that, in 2010, there were as many as 18 IAG quality awards on offer to learning providers throughout England. These awards were then available to 127 (84%) local authorities. Four of these awards had arrangements in place to quality assure learning providers in local authorities outside the geographical remit of the awards. These were: "Career Mark" (East Midlands), "Investors in Careers" (South West), "Gold Standards" (Humber) and "Inspiring IAG" (Manchester).¹⁶¹

4.5.4. The main purposes of these awards include:

- Recognising and sharing good practice.
- Raising the profile of careers education and information, advice and guidance at a strategic and operational level both locally and nationally.
- Enabling learning providers to audit their provision.
- Contributing towards meeting national IAG standards.^{162 163}

¹⁶⁰ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

4.5.5. All the quality awards map their elements against national frameworks and standards, although the comprehensiveness of their mapping varies. The majority of the awards have been mapped against national requirements and standards, including:

- The principles of impartial careers education.
- The national quality standards for IAG.
- The Ofsted Common Inspection Framework.
- The Matrix Standard.
- “Every Child Matters” outcomes.¹⁶⁴

4.5.6. All the quality awards are available to schools, colleges and special schools. Most authorities also make the awards available to work-based learning providers, pupil referral units, hospital schools and youth centres.¹⁶⁵

4.5.7. Although most of the awards are reputable and promote the provision of CEIAG to a high standard, some shortcomings have nonetheless been identified. One is the variation of provision across the country. According to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, while some areas have very robust and rigorous provision, others have either a weak provision or none at all.¹⁶⁶ Research conducted by the organisation also found substantial variation between different awards in terms of their content and method of assessment.¹⁶⁷

4.5.8. There also seems to be a marked variation in the level and type of qualifications held by careers advisors. A survey of all 150 local education authorities in England concluded that there were “significant variations in the definitions and descriptions of roles, plus considerable uncertainty about the appropriateness and currency of qualifications in the fields of career guidance and youth support”.¹⁶⁸

4.5.9. Ofsted found that, in the schools it inspected, careers education was sometimes taught by those with insufficient and outdated knowledge. The education foundation Edge found that 51% of young people felt that CEIAG was inadequate.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Learning and Skills Improvement Service (2010) Career Learning for the 21st Century, Learning and Skills Improvement Service, Coventry.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ McHowan, A. et al (2009) Local Variations: A Follow-up Study of new Arrangements for Connexions/Careers/IAG Services for Young People in England, website, www.iccdpp.org.

¹⁶⁹ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

- 4.5.10. A final concern is the fact that, as a result of the recent reforms, careers information and guidance services will be purchased directly by schools. This could raise questions about the impartiality of such provision; the fact that perverse incentives can encourage schools to divert their students to courses of little labour market value is an illustration of the importance of genuine, impartial guidance.
- 4.5.11. In an extensive survey by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service most local authorities supported the introduction of a national kitemark for CEIAG quality awards. This would address the inconsistency and variation in provision, while allowing different users to retain bespoke quality awards. It would also reassure schools, colleges, young people and their parents that awards meet a nationally recognised standard of excellence.¹⁷⁰
- 4.5.12. The Committee believes that, for moral, social and economic reasons, it is critical to secure the consistency, credibility and impartiality of careers education and information, advice and guidance provision for young people, and recommends the following.

Recommendation 6

KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education to recommend the setting up of the proposed national kitemark scheme that validates the different CEIAG quality awards for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers.

¹⁷⁰ Learning and Skills Improvement Service (2010) Career Learning for the 21st Century, Learning and Skills Improvement Service, Coventry.

Mentoring Schemes

- 4.5.13. The announcement of a new National Careers Service has been accompanied by new legislation in the recent Education Act (2011), which allows schools to refuse the face-to-face IAG guidance offered by the Connexions service – the key service for the supply of personal advisers. Instead, schools will become directly responsible for impartial careers guidance to their pupils.¹⁷¹
- 4.5.14. Funding for the supply of personal advisers to students will be drawn from the Dedicated Schools Grant; since it is not ring-fenced, schools can decide how much to spend on IAG.¹⁷² Schools will be able to decide whether to provide their pupils with personal careers guidance, and the extent and quality of such guidance.
- 4.5.15. Although some educational institutions may decide to continue to fund personal guidance, it is worth noting that the funding allocated to the local Kent and Medway Connexions service is being cut by 20%, which will limit the number and availability of local advisors.¹⁷³
- 4.5.16. A substantial body of evidence points out that personal careers information, advice and guidance is crucial in helping young people to make informed choices about their education and about their careers. Evidence gathered in visits to schools showed the Committee that students consider careers educators as the most important resource for helping them make plans for the future.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, oral evidence from different groups of young people of different ages suggested that interviews with personal careers advisors should be compulsory in schools.^{175 176}

¹⁷¹ Department for Education (2011) The Education Act 2011, London.

¹⁷² Kent County Council (2011) Briefing Paper: National Careers Service/Schools' Responsibilities for Impartial Guidance, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁷³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁷⁴ Saunders, P. (2011) Student Journey: Learner Voice, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁷⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 July 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁷⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 14 September 2011, Maidstone.

"It is important to be able to speak to someone face-to-face, as everyone's individual circumstances are different"

"In secondary school pupils need to have compulsory careers advice"

Comments from local students on personal careers guidance,
The Student Journey Select Committee

4.5.17. Careers educators and mentors can be drawn from a variety of sources. Ideally, employers should be involved in the provision of careers information in schools; a view that is also shared by the Government. A recent publication from the Prime Minister's Office, "Supporting Youth Employment" (2011) commends the employer-led programme "Inspiring the Future", which aims to find 100,000 professionals from different sectors to talk in schools and colleges about their jobs and career routes.¹⁷⁷

4.5.18. The quality of mentors and advisers needs to be high. The Careers Profession Task Force found that the lack of professionalism in the delivery of IAG was a key reason why careers services were not always as good as they should be.¹⁷⁸ The task group made a distinction between "professionally trained careers advisers" and "careers educators". It said that while careers educators, such as teachers and other people who are responsible for providing IAG in schools, play an important role, their skills and competencies can vary significantly. Oral evidence from different sources concurs with this view and argues that careers mentoring should be formalised.^{179 180}

¹⁷⁷ Prime Minister's Office (2011) Supporting Youth Unemployment, London.

¹⁷⁸ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

¹⁷⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 7 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁸⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Maidstone.

- 4.5.19. Having carefully explored the issue of personal careers guidance, the Committee firmly believes that the online and hotline-based provision of careers guidance offered by the National Careers Service should be complemented by a more local initiative that offers young people a face-to-face careers mentoring service. The Committee proposes the trialling of this initiative through a pilot scheme, in at least two secondary schools or colleges in each Kent District, where suitably trained mentors provide students with personal careers information, advice and guidance.
- 4.5.20. In order to offer greater service flexibility and provision, the Committee also proposes the setting-up of a local pilot scheme that promotes and offers *online* mentoring. The Committee recommends that mentors should also be drawn from the business community, given the invaluable expertise at their disposal. The scheme could be modelled on the “horsesmouth” social network for informal mentoring. Features of this website include the facility to search for a mentor, information on how to become a mentor, and inspirational success stories.¹⁸¹

Recommendation 7

The Skills and Employability Team should set up a pilot scheme, in at least two secondary schools/colleges per District, where suitably trained mentors are regularly available to give students careers information, advice and guidance.

The Skills and Employability Team should also pilot an online careers education mentoring website for Kent which is based on the national model of www.horsesmouth.co.uk. The website should provide a safe social network for informal mentoring and should enable users to search for a mentor. In addition, it should give information on how to become a mentor, and should be a source of inspirational mentoring stories. The scheme should encourage the recruitment of mentors from the business community.

¹⁸¹ Horsesmouth Online Coaching and Mentoring Network (2011) website, www.horsesmouth.co.uk.

4.6. Grants

- 4.6.1. In September 2011 the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to learners from low-income families was removed. While a “16-19 Bursary Fund” - which will be allocated directly to schools, colleges and work-based learning providers – is being introduced to replace the EMA, concerns remain about the impact this will have on youth employment.¹⁸²
¹⁸³
- 4.6.2. Professor Maguire from Warwick University argues that, although the effects of the removal of EMA payments on post-16 participation, retention and attainment are still unknown, a number of factors may reduce staying-on rates in full-time post-16 education. The fact that post-16 financial support will be allocated to learning providers, that they will be able to offer it on a discretionary basis, and that it will not be determined until after young people have made their post-16 decisions, may discourage some from staying on in education.¹⁸⁴
- 4.6.3. Professor Maguire points out that the Longitudinal Young People’s Survey in England and the Youth Cohort Study have already shown that vocational routes are generally undertaken by young people from lower socio-economic groups. Poor employability skills and an incomplete vocational education can result in real barriers for these young people when looking for a job or retaining one. The removal of the EMA may lead to more young people seeking employment at the end of compulsory education, or even to a greater number of NEETs.¹⁸⁵
- 4.6.4. Further evidence shares this concern. It suggests that the removal of the EMA may disincentivise young people from continuing their education and lead to an increase in drop-out rates.^{186 187}
- 4.6.5. The “Skills and Employability Team” has recently been established by KCC to meet the new 14+ skills and employment agenda and to improve service delivery across the county, in line with the strategic document “Bold Steps for Kent” (2010).

¹⁸² Kent County Council (2011) Post-16 Transport Policy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁸³ Maguire, S. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

¹⁸⁷ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

- 4.6.6. The main priorities and responsibilities of the Team include:
- To coordinate the strategic planning and commissioning of provision for students aged 14 to 19 and for community and adult learning.
 - To coordinate a number of specialist services for the support of the most vulnerable young people.
 - To ensure a smooth and high quality transition for young people from education to employment.
 - To provide an information service for all young people aged over 14, and for their parents and guardians.¹⁸⁸
- 4.6.7. Although the Team is subject to continuing budgetary pressures, it will have a key role in dealing with the potential consequences for young people of the removal of the EMA.¹⁸⁹
- 4.6.8. Some initiatives are already being developed by KCC to address some of the consequences of the removal of the EMA. For example, the “Post-16 Transport Policy” involves the provision of a subsidised travel pass for young people in Years 12 and 13 (aged around 17 and 18 years), since the Authority will need to ensure the compulsory, “full participation” in learning by young people until the age of 18 by 2015.¹⁹⁰
- 4.6.9. Nonetheless, if it is to fully support a potentially greater number of young people seeking information and guidance on their educational choices and their employability, the Committee feels that the Skills and Employability Team needs additional financial support.
- 4.6.10. Financial support could be drawn from the “Early Intervention Grant”. This Grant is not ring-fenced, so there is flexibility in allocating it according to local needs. It has been introduced to replace the removal of other sources of funding for children and young people’s services, and its focus is on early intervention and preventative services.¹⁹¹
- 4.6.11. The allocation of this funding to Kent for 2011-2012 is £50.3 million. An indicative allocation for 2012-13 is £53.4 million.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Kent County Council (2011) Update on the Establishment of the Skills and Employability Team, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Kent County Council (2011) Post-16 Transport Policy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

¹⁹¹ Department for Education (2011) Early Intervention Grant: Frequently Asked Questions, website, www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople.

¹⁹² Ibid.

4.6.12. The Committee believes that the flexibility of this Grant, and its focus on supporting children and young people, make it an ideal source of funding to support the Skills and Employability Team in their efforts to improve the educational and employment prospects of young people in Kent.

Recommendation 8

KCC should channel part of the Early Intervention Grant to the Skills and Employability Team in order to enhance the employability of Kent young people aged 14-24.

4.7. The Young Chamber Project

4.7.1. Amongst the variety of local initiatives that are aimed at enhancing the employability of young people in Kent, the Committee was informed about the “Young Chamber” project. This was established as part of the national “Enterprise Education Strategy”, which encourages greater enterprise capability amongst young people. It was developed by the Chambers of Commerce Network, following concerns by business over young people’s lack of employment skills.¹⁹³

4.7.2. The Young Chamber project provides a link between local employers and schools; it supports the organisation of initiatives aimed at giving young people a “voice” and greater understanding of the workplace, of enterprise and of future employment opportunities. An annual fee of £500 is charged by Young Chamber UK Ltd to those individual chambers of commerce that intend to operate a local Young Chamber project; the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce is licensed to operate such a programme in Kent.¹⁹⁴

4.7.3. The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, and its members, have fully supported the Young Chamber project because of the significant benefits it offers to businesses, to the Chamber of Commerce, and to schools and their students.

4.7.4. There are several benefits to business, including:

- The opportunity to raise the profile and branding of the business through its interactions with schools and students.
- The opportunity to explain the value and role of business in the community to both teachers and students.
- The prospects of shaping the quality of future employees by explaining to young people the qualities and attributes that employers require.
- A way of helping businesses to fulfil elements of their corporate responsibility agenda.
- Personal development opportunities for staff through their interaction with students.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Lavender, R. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Ashford.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (2011) Young Chamber, website, www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk.

4.7.5. Benefits for the Kent Invicta Chamber include:

- Greater mutual understanding between the business community and prospective employees.
- The opportunity to raise awareness among young people about issues affecting the local business community.
- The opportunity to seek young people's views on issues affecting both themselves and local employers.¹⁹⁶

4.7.6. Advantages for schools include:

- A contribution to the achievement of work-related learning frameworks and inspection criteria.
- The opportunity to become active partners in the wider community.
- The opportunity to provide their pupils with recognised employability skills.
- Enhanced opportunities for sponsorship from business partners.¹⁹⁷

4.7.7. Finally, advantages for students include:

- The opportunity to find out, in person, the attributes and skills that employers require from potential employees.
- The opportunity to have a voice and to interact with the business community.
- The prospect of enhancing their employability skills and to evidence them.
- The opportunity to see their learning experiences at school in the context of the world of work.¹⁹⁸

4.7.8. An example of the “real life” interactive activities that the Kent Invicta Young Chamber has organised is a project involving the setting-up of a shop by the students of a local secondary school. The manager of a local outlet centre was invited to support the students throughout the process, which also involved students seeking financial advice from a local bank.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 28 June 2011, Maidstone.

4.7.9. Another example involved helping students from a local grammar school to set up a wrapping paper business. This ambitious project included preparing a professional business case, developing methods of auditing compliance, designing a company logo and supplying Harrods with the final product. As in real life situations, the students faced many challenges - such as branding issues and financial difficulties - that they had to resolve by organising fund raising events.^{200 201}

4.7.10. Despite the significant benefits to local young people, schools and business, and the opportunity for students to experience real life situations associated with the world of work, the Committee learned that the funding for the local Young Chamber's annual licence had been withdrawn. The Committee believes that this project should be supported so that it can continue to provide opportunities for developing young people's employability skills as well as socio-economic benefits for the wider local community.

Recommendation 9

KCC should support the Young Chamber project by meeting the Chamber's annual licence fee of £500.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (2011) Business Project for Invicta Grammar School for Girls 2011, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Ashford.

4.8. The International Baccalaureate

- 4.8.1. During its review the Committee gathered evidence about the International Baccalaureate programme (IB). The IB was founded in 1968 in Geneva. It is a non-profit educational organisation which seeks to develop inquiring and knowledgeable young people through inter-cultural understanding.²⁰²
- 4.8.2. The organisation works with schools, governments and international bodies to develop challenging courses of international education, and rigorous assessment.²⁰³
- 4.8.3. It works with over 3,000 schools in 141 countries, and offers three programmes of study to nearly 1 million students aged between 3 and 19. In the UK 214 schools offer IB programmes.²⁰⁴
- 4.8.4. The three IB programmes of study can be offered by schools individually or as part of an academic plan. They consist of:
- A “Primary Years Programme” (PYP) for students aged 3 to 12.
 - A “Middle Years Programme” (MYP) for students aged 11 to 16.
 - The Diploma programme for students aged 16 to 19.²⁰⁵
- 4.8.5. The PYP is organised around six inter-disciplinary themes of global significance – such as “sharing the planet” and “how the world works” - that are aimed at helping children to engage with the world around them. Pupils explore each theme through a “unit of inquiry” which is developed around a central idea, and which requires in-depth study.²⁰⁶
- 4.8.6. The MYP is a flexible framework which accommodates national curriculum requirements and all major disciplines, as well as promoting inter-disciplinary work. Key features include a broad and balanced curriculum, rounded education and holistic learning, inter-cultural awareness, communication and academic rigour. The programme has five “areas of interaction” – such as “approaches to learning” and “human ingenuity” - which help students make connections between subjects such as humanities, mathematics, sciences, technology, arts and languages.²⁰⁷

²⁰² International Baccalaureate (2011) About the International Baccalaureate, website, www.ibo.org.

²⁰³ International Baccalaureate (2010) The IB: What You Should Know, International Baccalaureate Organisation, Geneva.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ International Baccalaureate (2011) About the International Baccalaureate, website, www.ibo.org.

²⁰⁶ International Baccalaureate (2010) The IB: What You Should Know, International Baccalaureate Organisation, Geneva.

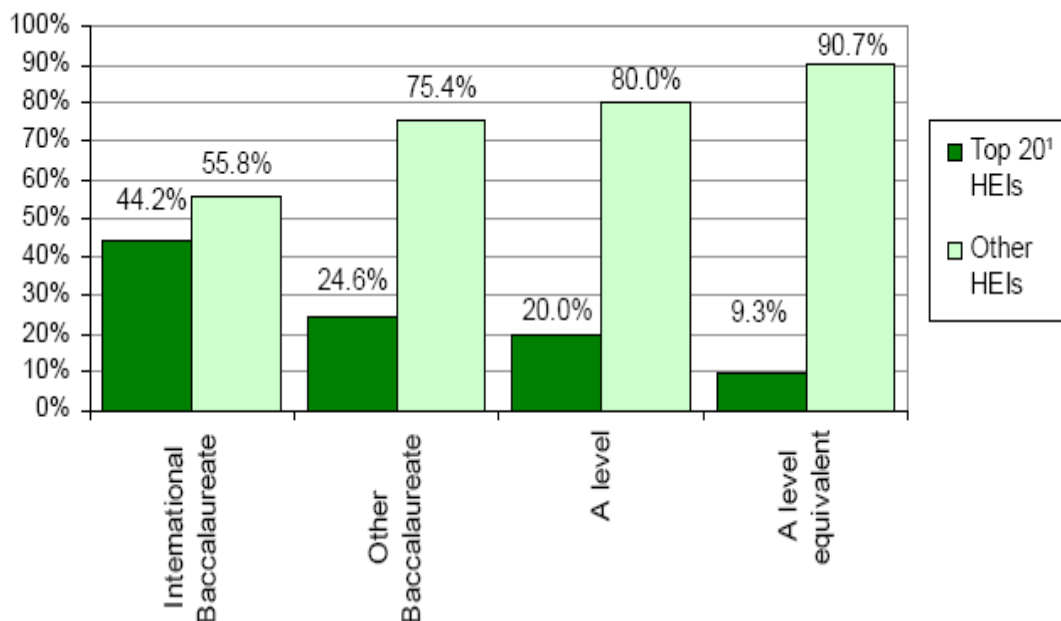
²⁰⁷ Ibid.

4.8.7. The Diploma is a rigorous two-year programme aimed at students in the final two years of secondary school who intend to progress to Higher Education. They are required to study 6 subjects, write a 4,000 word essay, complete a course in the theory of knowledge and work on a number of “creativity, action and service” projects. The Diploma is taught in English, Spanish and French, and is well-respected by the world’s leading universities.²⁰⁸

4.8.8. A visit to an academically outstanding and over-subscribed school which offers IB courses convinced the Committee of the effectiveness of IB programmes in giving students a strong academic education and a broad and balanced curriculum. This perception is supported by an independent report from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, which shows that the level of academic preparation and employability of young people completing the IB Diploma is exceptional.²⁰⁹

4.8.9. The report looks at outcomes for both IB Diploma and A-level students, and shows that the Diploma compares favourably. According to the report, IB students are more than twice as likely to enrol at the top 20 UK universities as A-level students (44% and 20% respectively).²¹⁰

Figure 17: Full-time first degree entrants by type of institution and type of qualification held, 2008-9



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

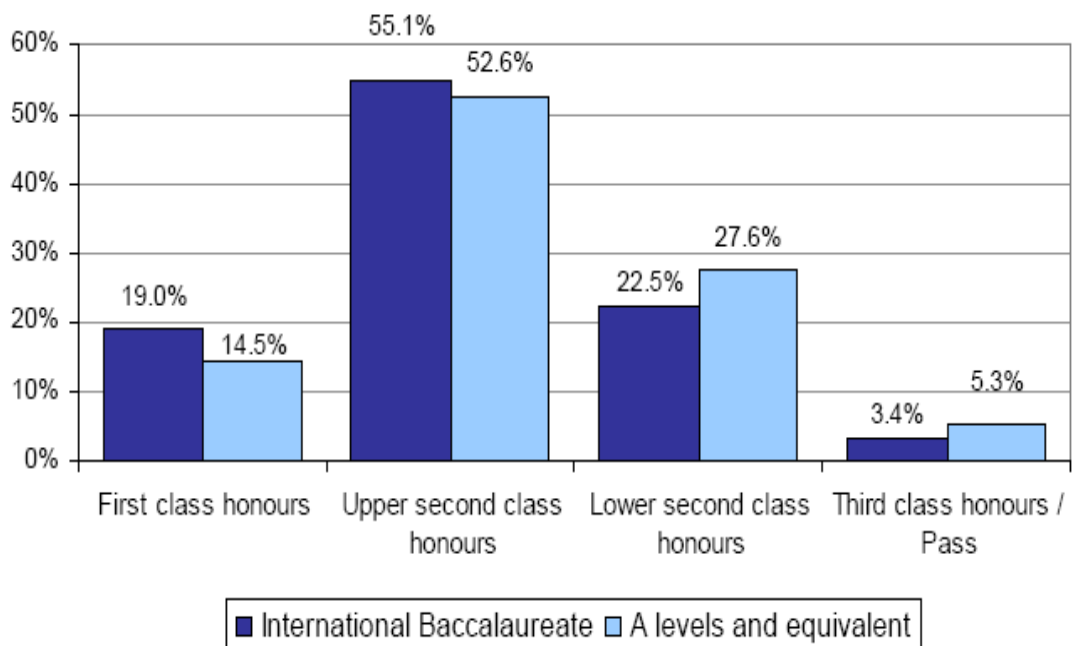
²⁰⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, visit, 1 November 2011.

²¹⁰ Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011) International Baccalaureate Students Studying in the UK: How Do They Fare? HESA, Cheltenham.

4.8.10. The Diploma appears to give its students an advantage when they apply for some specific courses. For example, 5.1% of IB students who applied for medicine and dentistry courses were successful compared to 2.9% of A-level students.²¹¹

4.8.11. IB students seem also to perform better when studying at university. The report indicates that fewer IB students drop out of courses and that they have higher attainment rates. The percentage of IB students achieving a first class honours degree was 19%, compared to 14.5% of A-level students. IB students out-performed their counterparts in all subjects apart from “mass communication” (see also Appendix 3).²¹²

Figure 18: Full-time first degree percentages by class of degree, 2008-9



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011)

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

4.8.12. Significantly, the level of employability of IB students is also higher, as are their starting salaries. In 2008-9, 9.1% of A-level students and equivalent leavers were assumed to be unemployed compared to 8.3% of IB leavers. 17.2% of IB leavers were employed in professional, scientific and technical activities, compared to 10.1% of their counterparts. They also attracted higher average starting salaries (£20,500 against £19,000).²¹³

Figure 19: Median annual salary of full-time first degree leavers in full-time paid employment in the UK by type of qualification held and subject area, 2008-9.

SET Marker / Subject Area	Type of qualification held	
	International Baccalaureate	A level & equivalent
All subjects	£20,500	£19,000
SET	£21,000	£20,000
Medicine & dentistry	£30,000	£30,000
Subjects allied to medicine	£21,000	£21,000
Biological sciences	£18,000	£16,000
Physical sciences	£20,000	£18,000
Engineering & technology	£25,000	£23,000
Non-SET	£20,000	£18,000
Social studies	£23,000	£18,000
Law	£18,000	£16,000
Business & administrative studies	£21,000	£18,000
Languages	£18,000	£16,000
Historical & philosophical studies	£24,000	£16,000
Creative arts & design	£15,000	£15,000

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011)

²¹³ Ibid.

4.8.13. Despite the apparent effectiveness of IB programmes in preparing young people both academically and in terms of employability, the Committee found that the success of these programmes, and especially of the IB Diploma, is at risk. National funding cuts have reduced teaching time. This reduction is particularly challenging to manage in IB programmes, because the curriculum for a Diploma qualification requires the compulsory teaching to a high standard of each of its parts. A more appropriate and proportional funding allocation would resolve this problem.²¹⁴

Recommendation 10

KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills should write to the Secretary of State for Education asking him to consider the allocation of more appropriate and proportional funding per student for International Baccalaureate courses.

²¹⁴ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, visit, 1 November 2011.

5. Young People’s Engagement and Internal Communication

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. The Local Government Information Unit and the Children’s Services Network point out that there is a disconnection between formal political structures and the informal engagement young people are more likely to be involved in. Much of this engagement now takes place online and through social networking sites, where young people can spend over two hours a day. Information technology and social media offer an exciting opportunity for local authorities to have a genuine dialogue with young people from different backgrounds, and can provide one of the most effective ways of reaching a wider audience and supporting them into employment.²¹⁵

5.2. Kentchoices4u

5.2.1. The recent Education Act (2011) brings major changes, including the transfer of responsibility for the provision of IAG from local authorities to schools. Nonetheless, KCC remains a key player in the strategic planning and commissioning of educational provision for young people and in supporting them in their journeys through education to employment. For example, the remit of the new Skills and Employability Team includes facilitating the development of the vocational curriculum, delivering the county apprenticeships strategy, and supporting the provision of careers advice and guidance across the county.²¹⁶

5.2.2. A central part of the Team’s strategy in supporting the provision of IAG is the development of the “kentchoices4u” service. This service includes:

- A county-wide network of support to schools and to the Connexions service for the delivery of effective IAG.
- A range of events, projects and publications.
- A website (www.kentchoices4u.com).^{217 218}

²¹⁵ Local Government Information Unit and Children’s Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

²¹⁶ Kent County Council (2011) Update on the Establishment of the Skills and Employability Team, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²¹⁷ Bransby, R. and Prior, M. (2011) Learner Voice in Kent; Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, Kent County Council and Connexions, Maidstone.

²¹⁸ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 7 December 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 5.2.3. The website is a comprehensive source of information on careers education and guidance for young people aged 14 to 19. It contains functions such as links and tools to access careers information, and an online prospectus and application process for education courses.²¹⁹
- 5.2.4. Kentchoices4u is a well established service amongst Kent students; in 2010 it was visited 160,817 times. Its online “prospectus search and application” facility is well-used; in 2010 14,292 students created an application account in the site, and 11,939 made an online application.²²⁰
- 5.2.5. According to an independent, local survey in 2011 on behalf of Connexions and KCC, websites and personal interviews are amongst local students’ favourite means for accessing careers advice and guidance. The survey’s findings show that kentchoices4u is very successful with the students who use it, and with parents and carers. Other evidence confirms this and shows that the website is used by 91% of Year 11 students.^{221 222}

“Gave me an idea of what jobs were available for what GCSEs I can get”

“I can apply online to sixth form via the website”

Comments from local students on the kentchoices4u website, Learner Voice in Kent survey (2011)

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Bransby, R. and Prior, M. (2011) Learner Voice in Kent; Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, Kent County Council and Connexions, Maidstone.

²²² Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Maidstone.

- 5.2.6. Despite the clear benefits and support that kentchoices4u offers to young people in Kent, as well as to local establishments that are responsible for offering IAG, the Committee has identified issues which could seriously impinge on its effectiveness.
- 5.2.7. As part of KCC's "one council" ethos and the strategic drive to provide more efficient service delivery, the integration of the kentchoices4u website into the wider, corporate "kent.gov" website is being considered.^{223 224 225} While the Committee appreciates and agrees with the rationale behind the "one council" vision, it believes that the integration of the kentchoices4u website would be highly counter-productive.
- 5.2.8. The "search and application facility" of the website is a complex programme which KCC licences from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The system also has features that allow the tracking of young people in order to deliver the September Guarantee. This is a process that helps local education authorities to meet their statutory duty to make an "offer", by the end of September, of a suitable place in education or training for all 16 to 18 year olds in their area. The development of such a complex function within the corporate website would not be cost-effective, especially in view of the fact that UCAS intends to reduce its licensing charges to local authorities.^{226 227}
- 5.2.9. As pointed out earlier, the kentchoices4u brand is already well-established; in the "Learner Voice" (2011) local survey, it was familiar to about a third of the young people surveyed.²²⁸ It has been operational for more than five years, and it is a nationally recognised example of good practice. The link with UCAS encourages the collaboration and commitment of learning providers, as they value the admissions service in supporting their students' educational progression. In addition, kentchoices4u has earned a reputation amongst its users and learning providers for delivering impartial careers education; its perceived impartiality is essential for the successful engagement of young people and their parents.²²⁹

²²³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 9 December 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²²⁴ Kent County Council (2010) Bold Steps for Kent: The Medium Term Plan to 2014/2015, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²²⁵ Kent County Council (2011) Customer Service Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²²⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 7 December 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²²⁷ Department for Education (2011) September Guarantee, website, www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies.

²²⁸ Bransby, R. and Prior, M. (2011) Learner Voice in Kent; Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, Kent County Council and Connexions, Maidstone.

²²⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 7 December 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 5.2.10. Research has shown that, in order to attract young people, the design of websites needs to be both engaging in style and simple to use. The practicality of navigation is particularly important to encourage usage by vulnerable learners. There is evidence that the corporate website has a fairly complex navigation system, and that its appearance is not as appealing to young people; this could potentially alienate them and seriously affect KCC's ability to meet the statutory requirements of the September Guarantee.²³⁰
- 5.2.11. The kentchoices4u service has also been identified as a central part of the "Pathways to Employment" Interreg bid, which focuses on supporting young people in finding their first two jobs. As part of this collaborative initiative, the kentchoices4u website is undergoing further development in order to secure a successful submission.²³¹
- 5.2.12. Finally, and importantly, the kentchoices4u website has been identified by the Committee as being well suited for the effective delivery of the e-portfolio; the website's focus on the provision of IAG to young people, and a structure based on supporting educational progression, make it an ideal place for the county-wide provision of Footprints to young people in Kent.²³²
- 5.2.13. As well as highlighting the need to leave kentchoices4u as a stand-alone website, the Committee has identified a series of improvements that need to be carried out to enhance its effectiveness.
- 5.2.14. Although knowledge of the website is generally widespread amongst young people in the county, awareness of it should be raised amongst particular age groups. While 34% of young people surveyed are aware of the website, it appears that the majority of visits are from those in Years 10 and 11, who use it to search for post-16 courses and for online applications. Fewer students in Years 12 and 13 had used the website, and only 2% of respondents in Years 8 and 9 had done so. The survey concluded that the website needs to be given a much higher profile through marketing and promotion strategies.²³³
- 5.2.15. Students taking an academic route in the sixth form tend to be better informed about qualifications and pathways than those taking a more vocational route. For example, while 73% of students are reported to have sufficient knowledge of the sixth form at their school and 88% have sufficient knowledge of universities, only 25% feel adequately informed about vocational qualifications such as BTECs, and only 29% are sufficiently informed about apprenticeships.²³⁴

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Bransby, R. and Prior, M. (2011) Learner Voice in Kent; Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, Kent County Council and Connexions, Maidstone.

²³⁴ Ibid.

5.2.16. Inadequate knowledge of vocational qualifications, and of apprenticeships in particular, appears to be an important concern of young people. When asked for suggestions to improve the website, they commented that it was difficult to access advice on apprenticeships.²³⁵ Other evidence supports this view and suggests that the apprenticeships section could be complemented by local employers' profiles and the signposting of local training and apprenticeship opportunities.²³⁶

"Getting apprenticeships advice was difficult"

Comments from local students on the kentchoices4u website,
Learner Voice in Kent survey (2011)

5.2.17. The need to expand and improve apprenticeships, and to provide young people with the skills and knowledge that will help them to progress into employment, is widely recognised; the Government, for example, intends to introduce a new national programme – "Access to Apprenticeships" – that aims to benefit up to 10,000 vulnerable young people.²³⁷

5.2.18. As well as raising awareness of the website and improving the information it offers on vocational qualifications and apprenticeships in particular, the Committee suggests that the Skills and Employability Team explores the feasibility of introducing hyperlinks and "QR codes" into other KCC websites that are popular with young people. It is hoped that this would publicise the kentchoices4u website in an efficient way and would offer young people rapid and modern access to it.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 7 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²³⁷ Prime Minister's Office (2011) Supporting Youth Unemployment, London.

- 5.2.19. Finally, the Committee proposes that access to the website should be extended to Kent children in the last two years of primary school. This is necessary for the effective delivery of Footprints and to support the consolidation of the employability skills of young people in Kent.

Recommendation 11

KCC should not integrate the kentchoices4u website into the corporate KCC website. The Skills and Employability Team should instead promote the use of the kentchoices4u website by introducing, if possible, hyperlinks and QR codes in other KCC websites that are popular with young people.

The apprenticeships section in kentchoices4u should be expanded in order to offer more information to young people about the choices that are available to them.

Finally, access to this website should be extended to Kent children in the last two years of primary school. This is necessary for the effective delivery of Footprints and to support the consolidation of the employability skills of young people in Kent.

5.3. Social Media

- 5.3.1. Nowadays many people use the Internet to find everything from information and entertainment to shopping, and expect to be able to comment (online) on the quality of the products and services they buy. They will increasingly demand that local government offers online services that match the level of interactivity that is provided by others. If it fails to do so, local government may become less relevant to citizens, and may not be able to fulfil its local leadership role effectively.²³⁸
- 5.3.2. The urgency of “keeping up with the pace” is perhaps most important when engaging with young people, as they are amongst the biggest users of social media and because they represent the future. However, the opportunity to involve and interact with them through social media appears not to have been fully exploited by KCC. If young people are to be supported effectively in their “journeys” from education to employment, it is crucial that the Authority makes full use of the communication tools that young people are most comfortable with.
- 5.3.3. The term “social media” refers to a wide range of online platforms that allow people to publish, share and interact by using media content.²³⁹ The term is generally used to describe how individuals and organisations share content, such as text, video and pictures, and create conversations on the web. As the publication “Connected Councillors” (2010) puts it, “the important thing to remember about social media is that it’s social. It’s about communication”.²⁴⁰
- 5.3.4. Social media are usually open and allow people to see, comment, interact and collaborate. They are designed to be easily shared amongst users, and normally there are low barriers to accessing the information and communication tools they offer.²⁴¹

²³⁸ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²³⁹ Local Government Information Unit and Children’s Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

²⁴⁰ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

5.3.5. There are several social media tools, although often their features and functions overlap. Popular social media tools include the following.

- **Blogs.** These are web journals which are usually published by individuals or small groups of people. They are easily updated and viewers can normally add comments.
- **Twitter** was the social media phenomenon in 2009, and it is still expanding. It is mainly a conversational tool which enables people to tell others what they are doing or to ask for help. It also allows the sharing of small bits of information and of links to resources.
- **Facebook, Bebo and MySpace.** These are social networking tools that are used to build communities of individuals who normally know one another and are interested in sharing information and support. They can also be used by organisations and businesses to exchange information about the services, events and products they offer.
- **LinkedIn** is a social networking tool which focuses on people's career and professional identities.
- **YouTube and Vimeo** allow users to upload and share videos with all their viewers.²⁴²

5.3.6. Both the reach and importance of social media are rapidly expanding. Only a few years ago emails were an innovative way for residents to contact their councillors.²⁴³ More recently, in 2009, 70% of British households had access to the Internet, and the vast majority use broadband connections.²⁴⁴ In 2010, Facebook had about 24 million user accounts in the UK. There is some evidence that more people use online networks than read local newspapers.²⁴⁵ Participation in "social computing" in the UK is nearly two thirds, and rises to 87% amongst users aged between 18 and 24.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Office for National Statistics (2009) Statistics, website, www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.

²⁴⁵ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²⁴⁶ Forrester's Groundswell Research (2009) Figures, website, www.forrester.com.

5.3.7. Young people in the UK are growing up in an increasingly connected world which offers a wide range of multi-platform and interactive online social media such as YouTube and Facebook. Evidence suggests that the time young people spend online is rapidly overtaking the time they spend watching television or other more conventional forms of communication.²⁴⁷ Social media offer local authorities an opportunity to use free or inexpensive tools, such as SMS texts and bespoke social networking programmes, to target services that support young people, and local residents in general, and to build local communities and a shared sense of belonging.²⁴⁸

“In such a fast moving world, councils need to keep up or get left behind. Smart councils and councillors are now taking advantage of technology and social media to drive communications, innovation and improvement”

Councillor Michael Chater, Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils, Connected Councillors (2010)

5.3.8. Other cost and efficiency savings that local authorities can make by using social media include:

- Cutting the cost of travel to attend meetings.
- Networking more effectively with other organisations to increase collective impact and avoid duplication.
- Using existing free media resources that are available online and that can be adapted for particular purposes.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Local Government Information Unit and Children’s Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

²⁴⁸ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²⁴⁹ Local Government Information Unit and Children’s Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

- 5.3.9. Many councils, partner organisations and councillors use social media for a variety of purposes. In 2010 the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) carried out a review of councils' social media usage; it found that 154 councils were using Twitter and that 73 were using Facebook.²⁵⁰
- 5.3.10. There are examples of local authorities using social media for wider purposes. Redbridge Council supports local democracy through "Big Conversation", which is a platform to invite local residents to set priorities for spending in the area and to engage in policy debates. Medway Council promotes local cultural events and festivals through Facebook. Barnet Council uses social media to examine conversations that take place between citizens about the quality of the Council's services and to plan solutions. KCC is making progress in opening its data sets to the public; as part of its "Pic and Mix" project, it made over 500 data sets available online, enabling users to combine and personalise different statistics to suit their needs.²⁵¹
- 5.3.11. Some councils exploit the benefits of social media for more specific purposes. For example, Staffordshire created "RateMyPlace.org.uk" to provide food safety information and to enable residents to rate eateries. The Facebook group in Islington promotes information and good practice about recycling in the borough, while "ManchesterLitList" is a blog that offers information about books and literary events.²⁵²
- 5.3.12. In order to engage young people in local democracy, local authorities can add social network sites to almost every youth participation opportunity. They can be used to seek feedback and comments, for surveys and consultations, to advertise particular events and projects, to support peer-led activities and youth forums, and to interact with young people involved in governance.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Local Government Information Unit and Children's Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

5.3.13. In Newcastle, for instance, the interaction with a Facebook group that was critical of the council's perceived role in closing down a popular nightclub helped explain the reasons behind the enforcement.²⁵⁴ In Hackney, the use of a blog was instrumental in involving young people in shaping, and participating in, the popular "Discover Young Hackney" arts and culture festival. The blog was viewed over 3,000 times, especially by young people who were unaware of the event, and succeeded in attracting local youth to the cultural activities offered in the festival.²⁵⁵

5.3.14. Despite the clear benefits and efficiencies that the innovative use of social media can bring, there is evidence that there are barriers that prevent full and genuine engagement with young people and wider local communities through these means, and that most UK councils have not yet fully exploited the opportunities and potential that this technology offers. For example:

- Access to social media such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter and YouTube is routinely blocked from council computers.
- Clear policies are sometimes not available to councillors and officers on using social media in a personal or official capacity and on responding to comments from citizens.
- Communications strategies often do not include social approaches.
- Computers may be too old for the effective use of social media features.²⁵⁶

Good Practice

In Hackney, the use of a blog was instrumental in involving young people in shaping, and participating in, the popular "Discover Young Hackney" arts and culture festival. The blog was viewed over 3,000 times, especially by young people who were unaware of the event, and succeeded in attracting local youth to the cultural activities offered in the festival.

²⁵⁴ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

²⁵⁵ Local Government Information Unit and Children's Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

²⁵⁶ IDeA (2010) Connected Councillors: A Guide to Using Social Media to Support Local Leadership, IDeA, London.

- 5.3.15. A particular barrier that may prevent full engagement with young people is that of safety and specific protection against risks such as violent web content, bullying and harassment, problematic sexual content, racism and exploitation of personal information for commercial purposes. The wellbeing of children and young people should always be a central concern. The Local Government Information Unit advises that local authorities should consider strategies to manage risks such as: creating a safe cyber environment, promoting safe online sites, equipping young people with skills to respond to risks, and introducing terms and conditions and moderation mechanisms.²⁵⁷
- 5.3.16. Evidence indicates that, as in many other authorities, the usage and benefits of social media are not yet fully exploited by KCC. There are examples of good practice which show the opportunities that social media can bring to the Authority and to young people's employability. For instance, GradsKent – which is a KCC-operated service that promotes and publicises employment opportunities for students and graduates – uses social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to interact with students and Kent-based employers.²⁵⁸
- 5.3.17. Although a significant part of GradsKent activities involve sales calls, the team has found that customers are often more likely to be approached through social media. When the evidence was submitted, GradsKent's Twitter had 814 followers; a number of them first learned about the service through the social medium. The use of Twitter enabled the placement of a former Pfizer employee with specialist skills into new employment. Facebook had 171 fans who received job alerts and links. In May 2011 GradsKent used Facebook to target 111,560 users in an advertising campaign; the site was viewed 808,678 times in only 4 days.²⁵⁹
- 5.3.18. However, other KCC teams and initiatives do not appear to have been able to use social media to engage with young people or with Kent residents in general. For example, the Committee learned that corporate directives prevent the inclusion of social media such as Facebook and Twitter within the kentchoices4u website. KCC's Kent Apprenticeships Team, whose aim was to promote apprenticeships and to support young people in accessing them, also appears to have been prevented from adding social media functions to its website.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Local Government Information Unit and Children's Services Network (2009) Social Media: Youth Participation in Local Democracy, London.

²⁵⁸ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 15 August 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 18 January 2012, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

5.3.19. Although there may be sound reasons - such as those relating to safety – for limiting the use of social media within the organisation, the Committee firmly believes that solutions to many of these issues can be found. The significant benefits that social media can bring in terms of helping young people into employment and supporting Kent residents in general, justify a greater resolve from a modern and innovative organisation.

Recommendation 12

KCC should allow all its Divisions to use social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to enhance their communication and engagement with young people, and to support them into employment. Social media access and usage should be moderated as appropriate.

5.4. GradsKent

5.4.1. As pointed out earlier, there are diverse “journeys” that students can take from education to employment. Different approaches may be needed to help into employment young people who follow vocational or more academic routes. While there is a need to improve the employability of young people in vocational education, there is also a recognised urgency to retain graduates’ skills in the local economy. KCC’s GradsKent project was created to address this issue.

5.4.2. “The Origins and Destinations of Graduates in Kent” (2010) reports that Kent’s graduate retention rates are low in absolute terms; only 37% of students who lived in Kent prior to studying returned to Kent for work.²⁶¹ The need to retain in Kent graduates’ skills and economic competitiveness was acknowledged in KCC’s long-term strategic document “Unlocking Kent’s Potential” (2009), which identified the increase and retention of graduates in Kent as a key challenge.²⁶²

5.4.3. GradsKent was launched in October 2010 with the main aim of addressing the relatively low graduate retention rates in the county. The project is funded by Kent’s Regeneration Board and operates mainly through a website, www.GradsKent.com. The cost of the project is £9,500 per month, part of which is met by income generated through service charges. The aim is that the project should grow and attract enough revenue to become self-sustaining.²⁶³

5.4.4. As outlined in the previous section, GradsKent makes extensive use of social media and endeavours to remain innovative. For instance, the project’s team is exploring the possibility of carrying out cost-effective improvements to its website which will make it accessible to smart phones.²⁶⁴

5.4.5. The project promotes local employment opportunities for students and graduates with both KCC and other Kent employers. Within KCC, GradsKent has contributed to the recruitment of younger staff. This is important, as recent evidence indicates that the number of KCC staff aged under 25 is falling. In its first year GradsKent helped KCC recruit 32 students and graduates, sometimes for positions which required specialised knowledge and qualifications.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Kent County Council (2010) The Origins and Destination of Graduates in Kent, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁶² Kent County Council (2009) Unlocking Kent’s Potential: Kent County Council’s Framework for Regeneration, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁶³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 17 October 2012, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁶⁴ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 18 October 2012, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁶⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 17 October 2012, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

5.4.6. The majority of the 156 jobs that GradsKent had advertised by October 2011 were with external businesses. Recruitment monitoring has shown that 85% of the applicants who used the service were appointed. Two such applicants were previous Pfizer employees with highly specialist skills.²⁶⁶

5.4.7. The project has also proved very successful in engaging with traditionally “hard to reach” groups of young people. While 6.5% of Kent’s population is from black minority ethnic groups, the proportion of those who are registered with GradsKent is 24%.²⁶⁷

5.4.8. As well as helping young graduates to find permanent employment, GradsKent also promotes internships and work placements, both within KCC and externally. Within KCC, GradsKent is the only channel for identifying internships. The project also has a key role in supporting the setting up of internships and sandwich years through collaborative networks with employers and with all the local universities.²⁶⁸

5.4.9. GradsKent’s role in retaining young graduates in Kent, and in enhancing their employability, contributes to the achievement of strategic corporate goals. In particular, the project supports the following ambitions, which are set out in Bold Steps for Kent:

- *Through our economic development role, KCC will work with the business community to ensure the skills needed in the local Kent economy; make sure that school leavers and graduates have the skills that local businesses are seeking.*
- *We will work with the Higher Education sector to improve graduate retention in Kent through supporting greater use of sandwich year placements and other mechanisms that provide graduates with the real world skills and experience needed by Kent employers as part of their course.*
- *We will help young people develop career management skills, so that they can plan and manage their careers throughout life, and are better able to respond to new opportunities as the economy changes.*^{269 270}

5.4.10. The innovative approach and effectiveness of GradsKent have been recognised nationally as good practice. The project was a finalist in the category “Best example of commercial innovation” in the 2012 UK Public Sector Digital Awards.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Kent County Council (2010) Bold Steps for Kent: The Medium Term Plan to 2014/2015, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁷⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 17 October 2012, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁷¹ GradsKent (2011) website, www.gradskent.com.

5.4.11. Despite the success and national recognition of GradsKent, the Committee learned that the future of the project is uncertain. GradsKent has sufficient funding to continue to operate until June 2012. The project's team has recently submitted a bid to the Regeneration Board for additional funding for 2 years, arguing that this would enable it to become self-sustaining. However, there is evidence that the Board may be reluctant to provide further funding.

5.4.12. The Select Committee is convinced that GradsKent plays an important role in supporting local graduates and in retaining their valuable skills within the county. The Committee believes that the project deserves the additional funding that will enable it to become sustainable, and recommends that it continues to work to support young graduates and students, local employers and the Kent economy.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that KCC's Regeneration Board continues to support the GradsKent project by providing funding for a further 2 years. Any income generated by GradsKent should be re-invested into the project with the aim of making it self-sustaining.

The Committee recommends that GradsKent continues to work on the following objectives:

- **Increasing the number and visibility of student and graduate employment opportunities, including internships and graduate careers.**
- **Working with businesses to identify skills shortages, and encouraging graduates with in-demand skills to work in Kent.**
- **Working with local universities to increase their students' employability.**
- **Engaging with students, graduates and employers through appropriate channels, including social networking sites, where return on investment can be demonstrated.**
- **Keeping pace with changing technology in order to remain accessible to users, particularly through developing GradsKent into a web app which offers increased functionality when visited on a smart phone.**

6. Apprenticeships

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. By helping young people acquire the right skills their chances of finding employment will be increased. But many of them will not be able to move directly into a permanent job; they may first have to gain some experience of the workplace through schemes such as work experience, internships and apprenticeships. Despite the recognised value of apprenticeships in opening pathways into employment, and despite major efforts at national level to promote them and increase participation, excess demand remains very high; the number of all applicants exceeds the number of apprenticeship places by more than 15:1, and that of students exceeds the supply of places by 10:1.^{272 273} It has proved particularly challenging to increase the number of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds.²⁷⁴ Improvements and reforms are needed without delay, both at national and local level, to promote the growth of apprenticeships and to give young people the opportunities they deserve.

6.2. The Shortage of Apprenticeships

6.2.1. In England apprenticeships are open to anyone who is aged over 16 and is not in full-time education. Their completion normally takes between one and four years. They are designed in collaboration with employers, and offer a structured programme that helps individuals gain job-specific skills. As employees, apprentices receive wages and undertake most of their training in the workplace, complementing it with off-the-job education at a local college or specialist training organisation.²⁷⁵

6.2.2. Apprenticeships are increasingly recognised as the “gold standard” for work-based training. In England there are more than 200 types of apprenticeships, leading to over 1,200 professions. They are offered by more than 100,000 employers in 160,000 locations.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

²⁷³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ National Apprenticeship Service (2011) Apprenticeships: The Basics, website, www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

6.2.3. There are three levels of apprenticeships:

- **Intermediate Level Apprenticeships**, for apprentices who work towards work-based qualifications such as Level 2 Competence Qualifications, Functional Skills and often a relevant knowledge-based qualification.
- **Advanced Level Apprenticeships**, for apprentices who work towards work-based qualifications such as Level 3 Competence Qualifications, Functional Skills and often a relevant knowledge-based qualification.
- **Higher Apprenticeships**, for apprentices who work towards work-based qualifications such as Level 4 Competence Qualifications, Functional Skills and often a relevant knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation Degree.²⁷⁷

6.2.4. All apprenticeships must include the following elements:

- A competencies qualification which demonstrates proficiency in performing a particular skill, trade or occupation, and which must be achieved by the apprentice to qualify for an apprenticeship certificate.
- A technical knowledge qualification, which demonstrates achievement of technical skills and an understanding of theoretical concepts of a particular industry and its market. Sometimes an apprenticeship framework may have an integrated qualification, combining competence and technical knowledge, which are assessed separately.
- Either key skills (for example working in teams, problem-solving, communication and using new technology), or functional skills qualifications (for example maths and English), or a GCSE with enhanced content (such as maths and English).^{278 279}

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2011) Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England, London.

²⁷⁹ National Apprenticeship Service (2011) Apprenticeships: The Basics, website, www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

6.2.5. The benefits of apprenticeships are many, and are widely recognised in several European countries, such as Germany, Denmark and France.²⁸⁰ In England, apprentices receive a salary of at least £95 per week, although their average weekly wage is currently around £170 and in some cases can reach £210 per week.²⁸¹ ²⁸² The practical, business-focused training that apprenticeships provide improves business productivity and equips apprentices with the skills they need to achieve fulfilling careers. The CBI reports that over 80% of employers surveyed believe that apprenticeships have helped to raise the overall productivity of their business, and that 90% of the apprentices find a job immediately after their training ends.²⁸³

6.2.6. Unlike some low-level vocational qualifications, company-based apprenticeships are highly valued and often lead to very high returns; some apprenticeships, such as those with BT and Rolls Royce, are more oversubscribed than courses at Oxbridge.²⁸⁴ Network Rail reported receiving about 4,000 applications for their 200 apprenticeships.²⁸⁵ As Professor Wolf puts it, “low-level qualifications, notably NVQs, have, on average, absolutely no significant economic value to their holders unless they are gained as part of a completed apprenticeship”.²⁸⁶

“Low-level qualifications, notably NVQs, have, on average, absolutely no significant economic value to their holders unless they are gained as part of a completed apprenticeship”

Professor A. Wolf, Wolf Report (2011)

²⁸⁰ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

²⁸¹ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

²⁸² National Apprenticeship Service (2011) Apprenticeships: The Basics, website, www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

²⁸³ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

²⁸⁴ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

²⁸⁵ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

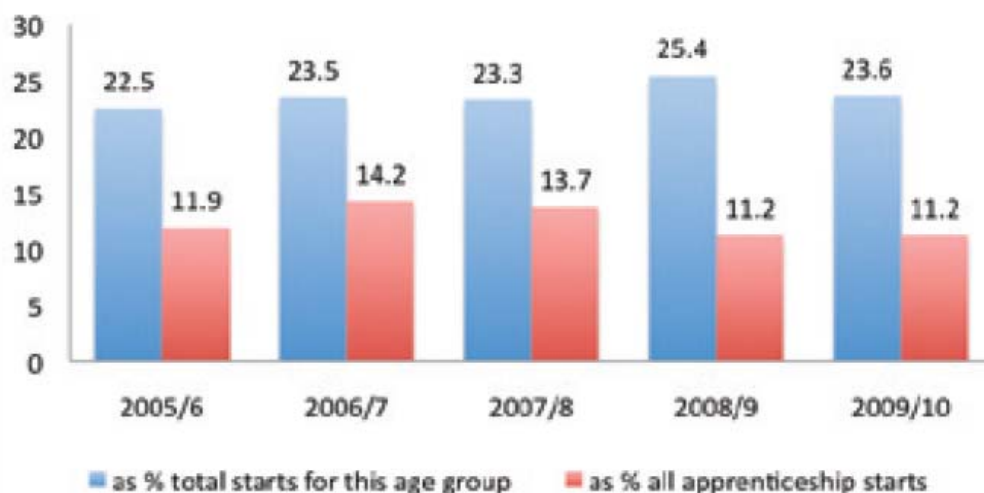
²⁸⁶ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

6.2.7. At national level, despite the benefits of apprenticeships and vocational skills, and their support from both employers and the Government, excess demand for apprenticeships remains very high. Employers recognise the value of skills and invest £39 billion a year in staff training. According to Eurostat the UK has the highest proportion in the EU of employers offering training - 90% compared to the EU average of 60%. The Government intends to increase its support for apprenticeships by investing £1.4 billion in 2012 and by collaborating with employers in an effort to deliver 100,000 more apprenticeships by 2014.²⁸⁷

6.2.8. The current system appears ineffective in securing apprenticeships, particularly for young people. In 2009 only 6% of employers recruited young people aged 16, and only 11% recruited any 17 or 18 year olds. The proportion of young people doing an apprenticeship in 1958, typically at age 15, was about a quarter.²⁸⁸ Although it is true that then very few students went to university, international evidence suggests that today in England it should be possible to enrol a far greater number of apprentices.²⁸⁹

6.2.9. Young people aged between 16 and 18 are substantially under-represented in Level 3 apprenticeships, which are particularly valuable in terms of progression and income, and are widely accepted for entry to degree courses. Government-driven growth of these apprenticeships is mainly benefiting young people aged over 18 or even over 24, because of employers' concerns over employing younger people – such as those over health and safety - and because it is easier for them to convert existing employees into apprentices (see also Appendix 3).²⁹⁰

Figure 20: Level 3 starts for 16-18 year olds, 2005-2010



Source: Wolf Report (2011)

²⁸⁷ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

²⁸⁸ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

6.2.10. Several issues seem to exacerbate the problem of the shortage of apprenticeships for young people. Youth unemployment is rising, and young people have been hit particularly heavily; more than a quarter (28.5%) are unemployed.²⁹¹ The raising of the compulsory participation age in education, and university fee increases, may lead to a further growth in the demand for apprenticeships.^{292 293}

6.2.11. In Kent, the importance of promoting vocational education and of increasing the number of apprenticeships is recognised. For instance, KCC was central to a ground-breaking initiative involving the delivery of 25 vocational centres across the county for young people aged 14 to 16; evidence from 2010 shows that these centres have already enabled 8,500 students to take a vocational course.²⁹⁴

6.2.12. KCC's Kent Apprenticeships programme, in collaboration with local training providers and businesses, has delivered a substantial and generally increasing number of apprenticeships since 2005.²⁹⁵

Figure 21: Apprenticeship starts in Kent, 2005-2010

	March 2008	March 2009	March 2010	March 2011
No. 18-24 year old claimants	4,300	8,485	8,905	7,780

Source: Kent Apprenticeship Strategy 2011-2014

6.2.13. Nonetheless, data suggests that there is potential to increase the number of apprenticeships in the county further. In 2009-10, out of a total cohort of 57,471 young people aged 16-18, only 2,070 (6.5%) started an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships were offered by only about 3,500 of the 50,000 or so businesses in Kent.²⁹⁶

6.2.14. One reason for the shortage of apprenticeships in Kent, which will be considered further in the next section, seems to be associated with the size of businesses. Many small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which represent the overwhelming majority of firms in the county, point out that their relatively limited resources and inadequate support prevent them from offering apprenticeships.^{297 298}

²⁹¹ Office for National Statistics (2011) Youth Unemployment Data, NOMIS, London.

²⁹² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

²⁹³ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

²⁹⁴ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

²⁹⁸ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 6.2.15. Nevertheless, there are ways of encouraging the growth of apprenticeships. The National Apprenticeship Service runs a scheme, based on an Australian model, where an apprentice is employed by a group of SMEs and has to work for each of them in turn for the duration of the apprenticeship.²⁹⁹
- 6.2.16. Also, the growth of particular sectors of the county's economy offers prospects for employment and for the development of relevant skills. In the public health sector, which is one of the largest in Kent, skills shortages have been identified in health visiting.³⁰⁰ The expansion of the wind farming industry in the county will create jobs which require specialist knowledge and skills for the operation and maintenance of wind farm developments.³⁰¹
- 6.2.17. Apprenticeships, in short, can offer young people a genuine opportunity to enhance their employability and to find permanent employment. Indeed, evidence submitted to the Committee indicates that the target of providing apprenticeships for 10% of local 16-18 year olds, although ambitious, is necessary if the number of young people not in employment, education or training is to be reduced.³⁰²
- 6.2.18. Work experience can also offer young people job-related skills and knowledge that can enhance their employability. Normally work experience placements are arranged through collaboration between local schools and colleges, and employers. Schools are expected to offer work-related learning to their students, and arrange placements either directly with local businesses or through organisations which manage the process on their behalf.^{303 304}
- 6.2.19. Work experience offers several benefits, both to young people and employers. The shorter duration and depth of work experience placements makes them perhaps less effective than apprenticeships in providing young people with work-related skills, but it can also encourage greater participation by employers; placements for 16 and 17 year old students involve fewer expenses and health and safety requirements.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁰⁰ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁰¹ Kent County Council (2011) Skills Strategy for the Wind Farm Manufacturing, Construction and Maintenance Sector, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁰² Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁰³ Kent County Council (2011) Briefing Paper: National Careers Service/Schools' Responsibilities for Impartial Guidance, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁰⁴ Careers Profession Task Force (2010) Towards a Strong Careers Profession, Department for Education, London.

³⁰⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

6.2.20. More generally, by demonstrating that they have experience of the workplace, young people are more likely to secure employment. According to the National Employer Skills Survey for England (2009), employers who believe that their young recruits are poorly prepared for work often put this down to a lack of experience of the working world or to immaturity. It is perhaps of interest to a county which is overwhelmingly represented by SMEs that the survey shows that the smaller the size of the business, the more likely employers are to believe that the young people they had recruited were poorly prepared for work.³⁰⁶

6.2.21. Work placements can also help to challenge young people's negative perceptions about particular careers, which may in fact offer good employment prospects. The CBI's "Education and Skills Survey" (2010) notes that "work placements give students an insight into STEM (that is, science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers and often raise awareness of how these subjects are used in the workplace, combating negative perceptions".³⁰⁷

6.2.22. The benefits of work experience placements are significant, and as with apprenticeships, their provision needs to be increased. As Professor Wolf explains "it is becoming even harder for young people to obtain ordinary employment and too little is being done to assist them in obtaining genuine workplace experience and employment-based skills".³⁰⁸

6.2.23. The evidence given by several employers shows that one key barrier is the concentration of work experience placements at the end of the academic year. More flexible approaches, which promote availability throughout the year, can increase the opportunities that employers are able to offer.³⁰⁹

"I would much prefer to have a trainee student working alongside me now or in the new year/early Spring than at the start of the busy peak period when we don't have time to spare"

A local employer, The Student Journey Select Committee

³⁰⁶ UKCES (2010) National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Main Report, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

³⁰⁷ CBI (2010) Ready to Grow: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, website, www.cbi.org.uk/content.nsf.

³⁰⁸ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

³⁰⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Questionnaire for Businesses, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

6.2.24. Most students undertake work experience during Key Stage 4. Although their placements tend to be concentrated at the end of the academic year, the law allows them to do work experience during term time and school holidays. It was suggested to the Committee that it may even be possible to timetable work experience placements as “block releases” from school, or to organise them for one day a week for a number of weeks as part of extended studies; this would involve a longer-term skills development plan which would make it easier for SMEs to prepare for.^{310 311}

Recommendation 14

The Skills and Employability Team, in partnership with employers, learning and skills providers and other local organisations, should:

- **Set a target whereby 10% of 16-18 year old young people in each cohort in Kent are undertaking an apprenticeship within an agreed timeframe.**
- **Ensure that the take-up of work experience placements increases, by promoting and encouraging the organisation of more placements throughout the year and not exclusively in the summer months.**

³¹⁰ Department for Education (2010) Which Way Now? How to Choose Your Key Stage 4 Options, London.

³¹¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

6.3. Apprenticeships' Support, Information and Guidance

6.3.1. There is strong evidence that more support, information and guidance are needed to encourage more businesses and young people to take up apprenticeships. Students report that, at school, they are given extensive information about progression to university but little advice about apprenticeships.³¹² This can have the detrimental effect of perpetuating their perception that apprenticeships are limited to “plumbing and hairdressing”, and of discouraging take-up.³¹³ While most employers have a general awareness of apprenticeships, their knowledge of specific categories and of the support available for offering an apprenticeship is more limited. Insufficient guidance, and apprehension about bureaucracy and costs, seem to be major factors that dissuade many employers from participating.^{314 315}

6.3.2. The National Apprenticeship Service is the main organisation responsible for the provision, nationally, of advice and guidance on apprenticeships. However, limited resources have led the organisation to focus its support on large businesses with more than 250 employees. The consequences for Kent employers, and for the provision of local apprenticeships, are serious; 98% of businesses in the county are SMEs, and evidence indicates that the smaller the firm, the harder it is to offer apprenticeships.^{316 317} A service that provides local information and support to small and medium-sized businesses, as well as to young people, is needed.

6.3.3. According to a national survey by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2010), employers' awareness of Government-funded apprenticeships is high, with 91% confirming that they had heard of them. However, the survey found that awareness of specific categories was much lower; only about one third (31%) had heard of adult apprenticeships. Only 28% had heard of advanced apprenticeships, and only 16% were aware of higher apprenticeships.³¹⁸

³¹² Saunders, P. (2011) Student Journey: Learner Voice, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³¹³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 14 September 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³¹⁴ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

³¹⁵ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

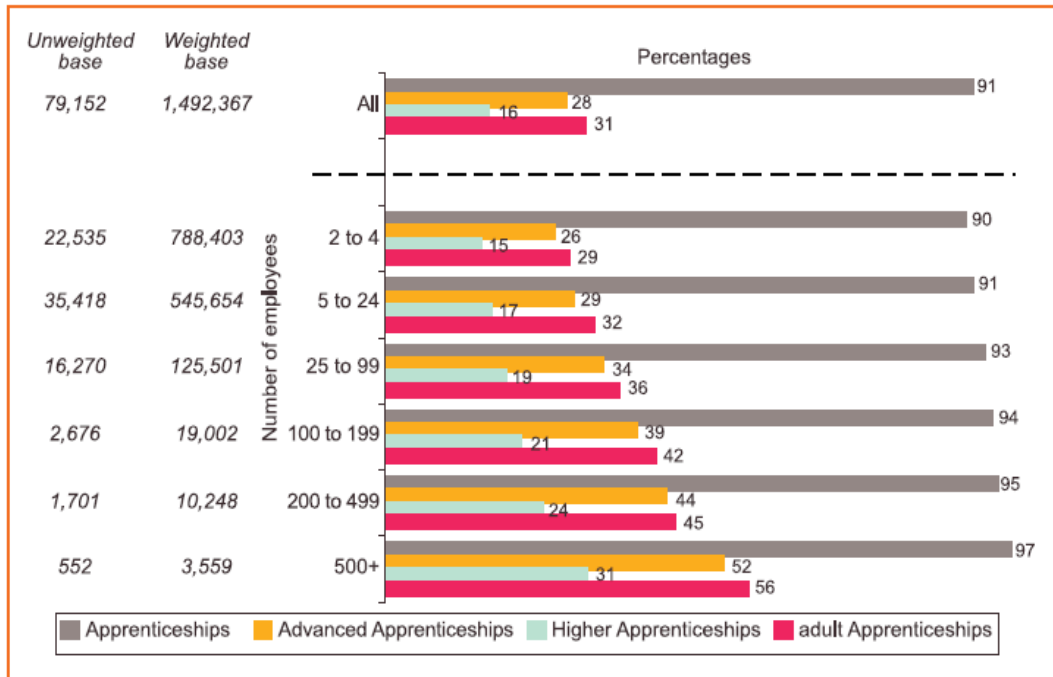
³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

³¹⁸ UKCES (2010) National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Main Report, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearn.

6.3.4. The survey also found that awareness of apprenticeships increases with the size of employer; those with over 500 staff are about twice as likely to be aware of the three apprenticeship categories as those with 2 to 4 staff (see also Appendix 3).³¹⁹

Figure 22: Awareness of different types of Government-funded apprenticeships by establishment size, 2009



Source: National Employer Skills Survey for England (2010)

6.3.5. In Kent, there is substantial evidence of a general lack of awareness by employers. Continuing policy developments nationally appear to have worsened their understanding of apprenticeships.³²⁰ In a recent survey by the Kent Economic Board, only half of respondents said they understood what was involved in employing an apprentice.³²¹

6.3.6. Many employers say that their knowledge of apprenticeships and of current qualification systems is outdated.³²² Limited awareness and outdated information can create apprehension. For example, some employers in the transport and logistics sector, as well as those in the construction and care industries, feel inadequately informed about health and safety regulations. This can deter them from employing young people.^{323 324}

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Questionnaire for Businesses, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³²¹ Kent Economic Board (2010) A Survey of Kent Employers' Views of Apprentices/Apprenticeships for the Kent and Medway Employment and Skills Board, SEA, Canterbury.

³²² Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³²³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 6.3.7. KCC and partner organisations are trying to raise awareness of apprenticeships and to support young people and businesses. The Authority runs an internal apprenticeships programme, Kent Success, for young people aged between 16 and 19 who intend to have a career in local government. Since its inception, in 2006, the programme has grown, and it now employs approximately 80 apprentices at any one time.³²⁵
- 6.3.8. In addition to offering internal opportunities, KCC collaborates with organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, such as the National Apprenticeships Service and the Kent Association of Training Organisations, in an effort to provide young people and employers with information and guidance. This Kent Partnership has been involved in several initiatives, such as a pilot scheme in Thanet to support young people and SMEs' engagement with apprenticeships.³²⁶
- 6.3.9. Marketing campaigns have also been devised, such as the "Kent Apprenticeships Bus", which promotes apprenticeships and their benefits throughout the county.³²⁷
- 6.3.10. Crucially, KCC's Supporting Independence Team was involved in preparing a Kent Apprenticeship Strategy in 2010 whose primary objective was to increase the number of apprenticeships in Kent. The Strategy has a wide and ambitious action plan to promote the growth of apprenticeships between 2011 and 2014. Priorities include:
- Providing young people and employers with full information about apprenticeships and their benefits.
 - Developing a support service for employers to provide guidance on the apprentices' employment process.
 - Ensuring that the Kent Success programme meets its delivery targets.
 - Ensuring that the wider public sector employs a greater number of apprentices.
 - Developing specialist programmes to support vulnerable learners into apprenticeships.³²⁸

³²⁴ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³²⁵ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³²⁶ Kent County Council (2010) Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Kent Apprenticeships, 16 September 2010, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 6.3.11. Towards the end of its evidence gathering the Committee was informed about the transfer of the apprenticeships services remit from the Supporting Independence Team to the new Skills and Employability Team. Services that the Skills and Employability Team offered before its proposed transformation already included support in the provision of employability-related services. In addition, the Team operated a helpline support service for careers information, advice and guidance for young people and their parents and carers.³²⁹
- 6.3.12. The Committee was informed of the proposal to establish a dedicated unit within the new team which will focus on the delivery of apprenticeships, and on engaging and supporting local employers and young people. The Committee fully endorses this proposal and recommends that the unit is charged with the development and the delivery of the Kent Apprenticeship Strategy.
- 6.3.13. Evidence from employers suggested a need for a single point of contact for the provision of information, support and guidance on apprenticeships to both businesses and young people.³³⁰ The Committee recommends that the Skills and Employability Team should develop its existing helpline service to enable the unit to provide this single point of contact.
- 6.3.14. Since Kent already has strong partnership working and networks for work-related training and apprenticeships, the Committee believes that the new Skills and Employability Team should encourage partner organisations to set up a shared database containing county-wide information and guidance about apprenticeships. The sharing of information should lead to a more efficient and effective organisation and delivery of local apprenticeships and work-related learning. The database could include clarification of the latest legislative requirements, for example those concerning health and safety in apprenticeships, as well as work experience contacts and guidance.
- 6.3.15. Another issue that requires attention is the burden of bureaucracy in the delivery of apprenticeships. The CBI reports that, nationally, a third of employers want a reduction of unnecessary red tape, not just in terms of paperwork, but also in terms of the complexity of the requirements of different organisations (such as the Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted) that firms have to satisfy.³³¹ The Wolf Report points to international evidence that the paperwork associated with apprenticeship contracts can be simple and concise.³³²

³²⁹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 1 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³³⁰ Kent Economic Board (2010) A Survey of Kent Employers' Views of Apprentices/Apprenticeships for the Kent and Medway Employment and Skills Board, SEA, Canterbury.

³³¹ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

³³² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

- 6.3.16. 57% of large firms, which meet all the costs and responsibilities of delivering accredited apprenticeship schemes, are concerned about bureaucracy. But this is also one of the main reasons for the relatively low involvement of SMEs in the provision of apprenticeships; smaller businesses lack the human resources needed to work in partnership with training providers – which shield them from some of the bureaucratic processes.³³³
- 6.3.17. In order to support SME involvement, 44% of businesses call for measures to support larger firms that are willing to train more apprentices than they need. This would allow smaller firms, without the capacity, to employ skilled workers who do not require significant, additional training. Firms such as Carillion already operate “over-training” programmes in the construction sector, so that smaller firms can benefit from this training.³³⁴
- 6.3.18. The need to help local employers to deal with the bureaucracy is also apparent in Kent, and is highlighted in the Kent Apprenticeship Strategy 2011-2014, which argues that “it is vital to support SMEs, as many are reluctant to take on an apprentice because of the perceived and real bureaucracy involved”.³³⁵
- 6.3.19. But the most important factor that employers identified as hindering their involvement in apprenticeships is cost. Extensive evidence from local businesses indicated that the single most important barrier to the provision of apprenticeships was their cost, and that financial incentives would increase the number of local apprenticeships.³³⁶

“The costs are very high - supervision, training, checking documents etc. A higher payment from the government would help to offset some of these costs”

A local employer, Questionnaire for Businesses
The Student Journey Select Committee

³³³ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³³⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Questionnaire for Businesses, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 6.3.20. Cost also seems to be a crucial barrier at national level. The CBI indicates that, while apprenticeships bring clear benefits for employers, more than half of the businesses surveyed (56%) call for more financial incentives for recruiting and training apprentices.³³⁷
- 6.3.21. The Recruitment and Employment Confederation points out that some sectors have actually seen a reduction in funding. For example, in 2010 there was a reduction in CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) funding of 30%. The Confederation concludes that many employers are facing increasing costs rather than increased incentives to provide apprenticeships opportunities.³³⁸
- 6.3.22. The Wolf Report argues that, without drastic reform of the funding mechanisms for apprenticeships, large scale growth of apprenticeships for 16 and 17 year olds will not happen. Under current arrangements, the Government pays for apprentices' formal training and accreditation, and unit costs have been rising in recent years. Employers are expected to pay an hourly wage whether the apprentice is at work or in off-the job training.³³⁹
- 6.3.23. The Report argues that, when employers bear some of the cost of educating an age-group with a right to free full-time education, they should be compensated, with direct or indirect payments by the state. Given that apprentices contribute to business output, such payments should only be made when young people receive clearly identified off-the-job training and education. In short, as Professor Wolf aptly puts it "if we want to increase apprenticeship openings for young people, we will have to pay for them".³⁴⁰
- 6.3.24. Increasing young people's access to apprenticeships is both a national and a local priority. Having carefully considered a range of issues concerning apprenticeships, the Select Committee recommends the following.

³³⁷ CBI (2011) Building for Growth: Business Priorities for Education and Skills, London.

³³⁸ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

³³⁹ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

Recommendation 15

The Skills and Employability Team should increase its support, advice and guidance to young people and to local employers who offer, or intend to offer, apprenticeships, internships and work experience programmes in Kent. In particular, the Team should:

- Establish a dedicated unit which is charged with the development and delivery of the apprenticeships strategy in Kent.
- Ensure that the unit also acts as a single point of contact, providing support, advice and guidance to young people and to businesses that offer, or intend to offer, apprenticeships and work experience schemes. The unit should ensure that the staff who operate the main KCC switchboard are trained to put employers and young people seeking apprenticeship-related information through to the unit/contact point.
- Encourage the setting up of a database which maintains shared information and contacts on apprenticeships, internships, work experience, health and safety, and other related matters.
- Help to cut bureaucratic processes in order to ease the setting up of apprenticeships by employers and their take-up by young people.

Recommendation 16

KCC endorses Recommendation 14 of the Wolf Report, and urges the Government to adopt and implement it. In view of Kent's special reliance on SMEs, particular incentives to help them should be considered.

Wolf Report – Recommendation 14

Employers who take on 16-18 year old apprentices should be eligible for payments (direct or indirect), because and when they bear some of the cost of education for an age-group with a right to free full-time participation. Such payments should be made only where 16-18 year old apprentices receive clearly identified off-the-job training and education, with broad transferable elements.

6.4. Apprenticeships and Vulnerable Children

- 6.4.1. It is crucial to identify and tackle the different challenges that different young people experience. This includes focusing on the barriers facing vulnerable young people, such as looked-after children (LACs) and those with disabilities.³⁴¹
- 6.4.2. The support of young people with disabilities, looked-after children, young offenders and young parents has been a key priority for KCC. With regard to apprenticeships, Kent's Vulnerable Learner project was set up in 2009 to identify the particular issues and barriers that these young people can encounter when preparing for and seeking employment.³⁴²
- 6.4.3. Unemployment rates among these groups far exceed the national average for youth unemployment. For example, the national unemployment rate of young offenders (60%) is more than twice the average youth unemployment rate.^{343 344}
- 6.4.4. A study by the London School of Economics in 2005 found that, at age 16/17, disabled young people were about twice as likely as non-disabled ones to be out of work or 'doing something else'. By age 18/19 they were nearly three times as likely to be unemployed or 'doing something else'.³⁴⁵
- 6.4.5. The unemployment rate for care leavers aged 16-19 is about twice the national average. LACs consistently have lower levels of academic achievement than their peers. In 2004 only 6% of LACs left care with 5 GCSEs (A-C), compared to the national average of 53%.
- 6.4.6. This is a concerning figure, given that research suggests that educational qualifications gained by the age of 16 are the best single predictor of the direction that a person's future career will take.³⁴⁶ LACs who gave oral evidence pointed out that one key benefit of apprenticeships is that they can allow young people who have not been successful in GCSEs "to have another go at training" and to discover new opportunities.³⁴⁷

³⁴¹ Recruitment and Employment Confederation (2010) *Avoiding a Lost Generation: Preparing Young People for Work Now and in the Future*, Recruitment and Employment Confederation, London.

³⁴² Kent County Council (2010) *Kent Apprenticeship Strategy*, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁴³ Kent County Council (2010) *Kent Apprenticeship Strategy*, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁴⁴ Office for National Statistics (2011) *Youth Unemployment Data*, NOMIS, London.

³⁴⁵ Burchardt, T. (2005) *The Education and Employment of Disabled Young People*, London School of Economics, for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Bristol.

³⁴⁶ Kent County Council (2011) *The Student Journey Select Committee*, written evidence, 21 November 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁴⁷ Kent County Council (2011) *The Student Journey Select Committee*, 19 September 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 6.4.7. By supporting these young people into apprenticeships, not only will more opportunities be available to them, but substantial savings can also be made. The Kent Apprenticeships Strategy shows that, by supporting vulnerable young people into apprenticeships, the Authority can potentially save the average individual life-time public finance cost of a 16-18 year old NEET, which is estimated to be £56,300.³⁴⁸
- 6.4.8. The Vulnerable Learner project has highlighted the fact that vulnerable young people require specific support to access apprenticeships. The Apprenticeships Strategy proposes that, within KCC, apprenticeship opportunities could be expanded by reviewing the Kent Success programme, and by developing – with the relevant KCC business units - career pathways in areas where skills shortages are identified.³⁴⁹ Written evidence suggests that this would be welcomed by vulnerable young people, many of whom would prefer to undertake apprenticeships that are not office-based.³⁵⁰
- 6.4.9. The importance of helping vulnerable young people to access apprenticeships across the county has been widely acknowledged. For instance, Kent’s Looked-after Children Strategy 2011-14 states that, in order to fulfil its Corporate Parenting role, KCC and partner organisations should provide “more apprenticeship opportunities for older looked-after children and care leavers to help them develop the skills they need to be successful in work”.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Cole, B et al (2010) Estimating the Life-Time Cost of NEET: 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training, University of York, York.

³⁴⁹ Kent County Council (2010) Kent Apprenticeship Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁵⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 9 November 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁵¹ Kent County Council et al.(2010) Kent’s Looked-after Children Strategy 2011-2014, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

6.4.10. The Committee believes that KCC has a moral responsibility to support vulnerable young people to access apprenticeships, because they are particularly exposed to the danger of unemployment and deserve the same opportunities in life as their peers. It recognises that each of these young people needs particular support in accordance to their specific needs. The Committee recommends that the Authority takes special measures, and arranges preferential terms, in order to actively promote and increase the take-up of vulnerable young people into apprenticeships both within KCC and across Kent.

Recommendation 17

In order to fulfil its Corporate Parent responsibility, KCC should actively promote and increase the apprenticeship take-up of looked-after children, care leavers and other vulnerable young people, both within KCC and across Kent.

In addition, the Skills and Employability Team should ensure that apprenticeships are offered by a greater variety of teams within the Authority, and that the placements are not all office-based.

7. Alternative Education and NEETs

7.1. Introduction

- 7.1.1. If youth unemployment is a serious problem, it is particularly concerning when young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET), because this is likely to prolong their inactivity, with serious consequences for their self-esteem and for the economy. The Government is seeking to address this by raising the compulsory participation age in full-time education to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015.³⁵²
- 7.1.2. While national policies are crucial in tackling the problem of NEETs, local measures are also necessary. The duty of local authorities to secure suitable education and training for young people, local variations in employment profiles and opportunities, and the influence of local social networks, all point to the need for local policy-making and delivery.³⁵³
- 7.1.3. Many NEETs fall into recognisable groups, such as young parents, those with learning difficulties, or young offenders. These more vulnerable young people need particular support to help them return to education, training or employment. But NEETs are a highly heterogeneous group, which also includes those with low aspirations and those who are unable to travel independently.³⁵⁴
- 7.1.4. In England, the proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET has remained stable at around 10% over the last decade. The latest statistics from the Department for Education show that, at the end of 2009, the number of 16-18 year olds who were NEETs in England was 183,000 (9.2%). More specifically, between 1999 and 2009, the proportion of 16-17 year old NEETs fell from 7% to 5.1%, while the proportion of NEETs aged 18 rose from 10.4% to 16.9%. This suggests that, in order to achieve full participation in education by 2015, much more needs to be done.³⁵⁵
- 7.1.5. Although the proportion of NEETs in Kent is lower than the national average, the figures are still concerning. In September 2011 the number of 16-18 year old known to be NEETs was 2,318 (6.5%).³⁵⁶

³⁵² Maguire, S. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Department for Education (2011) "What Works Re-engaging Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training? Summary of Evidence from the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots", London.

³⁵⁵ Department for Education (2011) "What Works Re-engaging Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training? Summary of Evidence from the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots", London.

³⁵⁶ Connexions Kent MI Team (2011) NEETs Data, Connexions Kent, Maidstone.

7.1.6. As explained earlier, the cost of each NEET is considerable. The personal cost is not only in the immediate loss of earnings but also in the future benefits that come with education, training or work experience. Gregg and Tominey (2004) argue that, even if individuals avoid being unemployed again, there is a 'wage penalty' from youth unemployment. They estimated the impact on individuals' wages to be 12-15 per cent by the age of 42.³⁵⁷

7.1.7. The cost of NEETs to society is substantial. A recent study by the University of York (2010) estimated that the average life-time public finance cost of a 16-18 year old NEET is £56,300, while the average life-time resource cost is £104,300. The study also estimated the total current, medium and long-term resource costs to be between £22 billion and £77 billion, and the public finance costs between £12 billion and £32 billion.^{358 359}

Figure 23: The economic costs attributable to the NEETs Population, Britain, 2010.

CURRENT COSTS	Resource cost	Public finance
Educational Underachievement		
Unemployed	£79,366,751	£1,199,238,148
Underemployed	£32,016,602	
Unemployment	£429,680,191	
Inactivity	£766,541,549	
Teenage mothers	£432,843,048	£453,866,079
Crime	£61,382,528	£7,819,683
Poor health	£413,022	£413,022
Substance misuse	£1,335,458	£1,335,458
Sub-total	£1,803,579,148	£1,662,672,388
MEDIUM TERM COSTS		
Educational Underachievement (low estimate)	£2,221,895,298	£7,216,038,780
Unemployment (low estimate)	£16,928,726,082	£27,950,397,552
Educational Underachievement (high est)	£8,606,225,493	
Unemployment (high estimate)	£65,571,241,853	
Early Motherhood	£282,863,048	£2,185,747,288
Crime	£461,052,180	£67,309,377
Poor Health	£7,759,321	£7,759,321
Substance abuse	£11,495,200	£11,495,200
Sub-totals (low estimate)	£19,913,791,129	£9,488,349,966
Sub-totals (high estimate)	£74,940,637,095	£30,222,708,738
LONG TERM COSTS		
Tax loss		£383,339,717
Additional benefits		£187,225,963
Sub-total		£570,565,680
FINAL TOTAL (low estimate)	£21,717,370,278	£11,721,588,036
(high estimate)	£76,744,216,244	£32,455,946,808

Source: University of York, 2010

³⁵⁷ Gregg, P. and Tominey, E. (2004) The Wage Scar from Youth Unemployment, CMPO Working Paper Series No. 04/097, University of Bristol.

³⁵⁸ Cole, B et al (2010) Estimating the Life-Time Cost of NEET: 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training, University of York, York.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

7.2. Local Initiatives

- 7.2.1. In Kent, a range of local initiatives and strategies have been developed to address the issue of NEETs. For instance, in 2008 the county was involved in a large project to profile and map the cohort of NEETs in the South East. Data from this project on where NEETs are concentrated was aimed at informing more focused local solutions.³⁶⁰
- 7.2.2. One of the tasks of the Skills and Employability Team is to coordinate the strategic planning and commissioning of provision for 14-19 year olds in the county and to create a single strategic approach to respond to NEETs increases. This approach involves working with the Government, and with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, to support those claiming Jobseekers Allowance and promote the take-up of apprenticeships.³⁶¹
- 7.2.3. The Committee believes that initiatives such as this could be complemented by other preventative and innovative measures in schools, as well as by promoting good practice schemes that improve the employability of NEETs across the county.
- 7.2.4. Learning and skills providers are in a good position to help to prevent young people from becoming NEETs. Evidence indicates that schools and colleges are generally fairly creative in dealing with students who are disaffected from education or who have behavioural problems. Indeed, it is suggested that, with regard to young offenders, problems arise when young people miss or leave school, because the loss of support that schools provide can lead them into a “downward spiral”.³⁶²
- 7.2.5. There are strong collaborative links between KCC and local learning and skills providers when dealing with young people who are at risk of becoming NEETs. For example, the Committee was told that the primary role of several officers in KCC’s Youth Offending Service was to liaise with local schools in an effort to keep challenging youth in school, or to liaise with alternative education providers.³⁶³
- 7.2.6. The management of the September Guarantee, which involves close collaboration between the Skills and Employability Team and local education and skills providers, enables the identification of students who have not been allocated a school place after compulsory education and who are also at risk of not being in training or employment.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Experian Business Strategies (2008) Targeting Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): Kent, LSC South East, Brighton.

³⁶¹ Kent County Council (2011) Update on the Establishment of the Skills and Employability Team, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁶² Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 16 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 7 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

- 7.2.7. It was suggested to the Committee that the close partnership working between KCC and local learning and skills providers could provide the basis for agreeing common objectives and voluntary targets to reduce the number of young people who could become NEETs when leaving compulsory education.³⁶⁵ The Committee welcomes this suggestion and recommends that the Skills and Employability Team should pursue it.
- 7.2.8. Other innovative proposals for early intervention include that of the Denne Construction firm, for the development of work-focused educational programmes to be taught in secondary schools in Kent (see Appendix 1).
- 7.2.9. Denne is the largest construction company in Kent. It also operates in London and across the South East. It was the first company in the UK to be accredited a National Skills Academy for Construction. In 2010 it was awarded South East Employer of the Year and the Youth Employment Award by Jobcentre Plus. It has also received the Platinum Employer Award for two consecutive years from the Kent Education Business Partnership. Since 2007 the firm has been operating skills centres which offer workshops, work experience and apprenticeships. In the last 4 years Denne has organised over 60 apprenticeships and an equal number of work experience placements for local young people.³⁶⁶
- 7.2.10. The objective of the programme is to equip students –through early intervention in schools – with the skills that help them to succeed in the workplace. The programme will be piloted in at least four schools to test its feasibility. It is aimed at secondary school students – and those who are about to start secondary school - who have an interest in vocational and technical skills, and will focus on mathematics and English. The teaching of these subjects will be set within the context of the workplace, particularly the construction sector.³⁶⁷
- 7.2.11. A key feature of this programme is the imposition of a work-based ethos and a strict code of conduct in terms of behaviour. Disciplinary procedures used in the workplace will be adopted, and students will be held accountable for their performance.³⁶⁸
- 7.2.12. Participating schools will be mainly responsible for the curriculum, while Denne will be responsible for the project's coordination and for ensuring that work-based discipline and behaviour are enforced.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 6 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁶⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, 13 September 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

- 7.2.13. It is also proposed that the teaching materials are made available to any school wishing to use them, and that Denne supports 3 or 4 other major employers to develop similar programmes, with the vision that all Kent secondary schools with a focus on vocational training could offer a similar programme.³⁷⁰
- 7.2.14. There are several reasons to support proposals such as Denne's. Developing young people's soft skills, work-readiness and employability is a key aim of the proposal. As already discussed, too many young people leave education with shortfalls in soft skills - such as self-management, team-working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, effective communication, reliability and commitment - which are deemed essential by employers. This is a matter of concern not just for employers, but also for wider society, if youth unemployment is to be tackled.^{371 372}
- 7.2.15. Also, employers often use qualifications as *signals* of general skills, rather than indicators of highly specific skills.³⁷³ Labour market research has consistently shown that, despite the growing importance of formal qualifications, employment history and the skills gained with experience are more significant in explaining higher earnings and career progression.³⁷⁴
- 7.2.16. By adopting different models of pedagogy, teaching can be more effective. Research on the re-engagement of disaffected students, for example, indicates that it is vital that they are offered opportunities, activities and services that interest them. Professionals with charisma, and the ability to relate to young people, can also be successful "magnets".³⁷⁵ Evidence given to the Committee clearly suggests that when these professionals combine a teaching methodology which captures students' imagination with an environment defined by discipline and boundaries, learning outcomes can be improved significantly.^{376 377}
- 7.2.17. Finally, the vision that this project, if it proves feasible and effective, could be cascaded to other sectors of Kent's economy, is highly attractive. There are significant skills gaps in key sectors, such as the land-based sector, that need to be addressed. There are also opportunities for rapid career progression.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ CBI (2009) Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work, London.

³⁷² Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Written Evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

³⁷³ Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Newton, B. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, Written Evidence, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton.

³⁷⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 19 September 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁷⁷ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 7 October 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁷⁸ Kent County Council (2010) Land Based Sector Skills Strategy, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

7.2.18. As well as preventative initiatives in schools aimed at promoting the employability of young people and at preventing them from becoming NEETs, there are others outside formal education settings, such as IMPACT Ashford, that seek to enhance the employability of those who are NEETs.

7.2.19. During its information gathering process the Committee visited IMPACT in Ashford. This project is supported by a partnership of agencies including the Young People's Learning Agency and Connexions Kent and Medway, as well as by charitable donations. It is designed for those aged 16-18 who are not in employment, education or training and who are interested in a career in uniformed public services or the sports and leisure industry.³⁷⁹

7.2.20. Each course is non-residential, consists of 13 weeks of intensive training, and is divided into three parts: Academics, Physical Training, and Adventure Training/Outdoor activities. Participants can gain 3 recognised qualifications, and have an opportunity to develop functional skills.³⁸⁰

7.2.21. The environment is characterised by military-style discipline and regimental activities which are delivered by tutors, some of whom are from armed forces backgrounds. The Committee found that the charisma of the tutors, and the disciplinary environment, provided a successful recipe for engaging with young people who were often disillusioned with, and alienated from, formal education.³⁸¹

7.2.22. The outcomes of this project are extremely positive. By the end of the course, the improvement of participants' confidence and motivation, as well as their self-discipline, is highly impressive. Their employability is significantly enhanced, and many find employment in uniformed services or in the sports and leisure sector. Renewed motivation and engagement lead some to continue their studies in further education.^{382 383}

Good Practice

IMPACT in Ashford is designed for those aged 16-18 who are not in employment, education or training. The outcomes of this project are extremely positive. By the end of the course, the improvement of participants' confidence and motivation, as well as their self-discipline, is highly impressive. Their employability is significantly enhanced, and many find employment in uniformed services or in the sports and leisure sector. Renewed motivation and engagement lead some to continue their studies in further education.

³⁷⁹ IMPACT Ashford (2011) IMPACT, website, www.impactashford.org.uk.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 7 October 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁸² Ibid

³⁸³ IMPACT Ashford (2011) IMPACT, website, www.impactashford.org.uk.

“Impact has totally changed my life, when I started Impact I didn’t have a clue about future plans and where I was going in life, Impact gave me the skills and confidence to improve my qualifications and be job ready”

Chloe from Tonbridge

- 7.2.23. The work carried out by IMPACT Ashford clearly demonstrated to the Committee that appropriate teaching methods can successfully engage even the most disaffected young people, and can improve and even transform their lives. Initiatives such as IMPACT’s deserve to be commended and supported, and to be promoted as good practice examples to be learnt from throughout Kent.

Recommendation 18

The Skills and Employability Team should encourage learning and skills providers to agree voluntary targets to reduce the number of young people who could potentially become NEETs when they leave school or college.

Recommendation 19

KCC should consider proposals, such as that of the Kent-based construction company Denne, to develop and support the delivery of work-focused programmes to be taught in secondary schools in Kent.

Recommendation 20

The Committee commends the valuable work that IMPACT Ashford does to help local young people who are not in education, employment or training to develop their social and academic skills and to enhance their employability.

The Committee recommends that the Skills and Employability Team promotes across Kent the work of organisations such as IMPACT Ashford as examples of good practice.

8. Post-16 Transport Policy and Self-Employment

8.1. Post-16 Transport Policy

8.1.1. The raising of the participation age (RPA) offers an opportunity to meet the needs of young workers and their employers because, from 2013 all 17-year olds, and from 2015 all 18-year olds, will be required to participate in an extended period of education or training.³⁸⁴

8.1.2. In order to fulfil the requirements of the RPA, and to address the replacement of the Education Maintenance Allowance with a 16-19 Bursary Fund which is allocated directly to schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, KCC has developed a new Post-16 Transport Policy.³⁸⁵

8.1.3. The main objectives of the policy are to provide support for learners to:

- Meet their travel costs to schools, colleges and work-based learning providers.
- Make sure that learning and skills providers in Kent meet the requirements of the RPA.
- Ensure that Kent students are given fair access and choice to post-16 educational provision.³⁸⁶

8.1.4. The Policy mainly involves the launch of a “Kent 16+ Travel Pass” for bus travel, which will be available to Kent students in Years 12 and 13, as well students in Year 14 who are completing their 14-19 studies. It will also be available to young people aged 16-24 who have a statement of special educational need or a learning difficulty assessment.³⁸⁷

8.1.5. While local authorities only have a statutory duty to meet the transport needs of students aged 16-19 with statements of special educational needs, KCC currently offers discretionary transport support to about 2,000 mainstream students from low-income families.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Maguire, S. (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, written evidence, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

³⁸⁵ Kent County Council (2011) Post-16 Transport Policy, County Council meeting, 21 July 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁸⁶ Kent County Council (2011) Post-16 Transport Policy Update, Education, Learning and Skills Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 September 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

8.1.6. When the Committee gathered evidence and considered possible recommendations on the post-16 Transport policy, the County Council was in the process of carrying out pilot schemes to assess the feasibility of different delivery options. Three options are currently being analysed:

- **Maintain the status quo.** KCC spent £3.84 million in 2010/11 to subsidise, either wholly or in part, travel expenses for 16-24 SEN pupils. Approximately 2,800 young people were supported through this policy. Under this option KCC would continue to subsidise travel for students from low-income families.
- **Full subsidy model.** KCC could buy the passes from bus companies and sell them to schools, colleges and work-based learning providers for a subsidised cost. The education providers would sell the passes to students for a cost ranging from £0 to £520, depending on their assessment against financial criteria. KCC estimates that between 3,000 and 4,000 students would take up the pass.
- **Capped subsidy model.** This pass would also be sold to students for a cost ranging from £0 to £520. However, in this option KCC's subsidy would be directly allocated to education providers, who would then have to purchase the passes from KCC at the full cost (£750). KCC would continue to provide subsidised and discretionary travel support for 16-24 SEN learners.³⁸⁹

8.1.7. In terms of eligibility criteria, KCC proposes that schools, colleges and work-based learning providers should use the Bursary Funding, Learner Support Funding and any other KCC subsidy to ensure that the lower the family income, the less students should pay for the pass.³⁹⁰

8.1.8. The Committee fully endorses the proposal to introduce a Post-16 Transport Policy which subsidises travel costs for Kent learners. Nonetheless, the provision of passes is expected to support no more than 4,000 young people.³⁹¹

8.1.9. While the category "work-based learning providers" may include some employers, the Committee proposes that all Kent employers should be able to purchase Kent 16+ Travel Passes, at KCC's purchase rates, so they can contribute to the travel expenses of their young employees in work-based learning.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

- 8.1.10. The urgency of helping young people gain the right skills and enhance their employability through the growth of schemes, such as work experience and apprenticeships, has already been discussed at length. Although local initiatives and strategies are being developed and implemented to encourage greater take-up of these schemes - and to fulfil the RPA requirements - the Committee is concerned that travel costs may pose a serious barrier for many young people.
- 8.1.11. This issue was also highlighted by Professor Wolf, who recommended that employers who take on 16-18 year old apprentices should be eligible for payments (Wolf Report, Recommendation 14).³⁹² If this recommendation - which is supported by the Committee – is implemented by the Government, it is hoped that more local employers will be able to offer apprenticeships and to subsidise travel costs for their young employees in work-based learning.

Recommendation 21

KCC should put in place measures to enable Kent employers to buy the Kent 16+ Travel Pass for their apprentices at KCC's purchase rates.

³⁹² Wolf, A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report, London.

8.2. Self-Employment

8.2.1. Although the report has concentrated on continuing education, employment or unemployment as the three main routes after compulsory education, there is a fourth option: self-employment. This is not a route that appeals to all young people; the transition from being taught in full-time education to the self-management involved in starting up and running a business successfully can be challenging. But, for some young people, self-employment can either be the only option or the fulfilment of an ambition.³⁹³

8.2.2. Every day about 1,500 businesses are launched in the UK; about 7.5% of them by young people under the age of 25. In Kent there are 25,000 young people aged between 18 and 30 who are likely to think about starting a business in the next three years. The annual number of recorded business start-ups in Kent is approximately 11,000, of which 2,500 are estimated to be by young people under the age of 25.³⁹⁴

8.2.3. A number of organisations help young people to create and develop their businesses, including Young Enterprise, Young Chambers, The Prince's Trust, UnLtd and the Kent Foundation. The Kent Foundation is the only local charity that targets Kent young people exclusively. It also has a unique relationship with KCC, which established it in 1985.³⁹⁵

8.2.4. The organisation offers a wide range of services to support young people in starting up a business, including:

- **Engaging with Enterprise**, which consists of a number of inspirational workshops about entrepreneurship.
- **Enterprise Experience**, a week-long residential course for young people to learn about business skills and management styles.
- **Test Trading**, which assists young people during the first few months of trading.
- **Foundation Shop Window**, which provides young entrepreneurs with marketing and promotional activities.^{396 397}

³⁹³ EMPOWER (2009) Empower Report for The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

³⁹⁴ The Kent Foundation (2010) Helping Young People Start Up in Business, The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

³⁹⁵ The Kent Foundation (2010) The Fourth Option: Business Plan 2011-2014 Summary, The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

³⁹⁶ The Kent Foundation (2010) Helping Young People Start Up in Business, The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

³⁹⁷ The Kent Foundation (2010) The Fourth Option: Business Plan 2011-2014 Summary, The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

8.2.5. One of the main medium-term objectives of the Kent Foundation is to become the “go to” organisation for young, aspiring entrepreneurs in Kent. Research shows that, despite an increased focus on business studies in secondary schools, students consistently say that those studies tend to be more academic and to be geared to exams, rather than portraying the realities of running a business. As the EMPOWER Report (2009) points out, business can be an enjoyable experience but young people need to understand the risks involved, including the financial risks, more fully.^{398 399}

8.2.6. In 2010 the Kent Foundation assisted about 2,000 Kent students. When evidence was submitted in June 2011, it was directly supporting about 60 self-employed young people. Towards the end of 2012 it should be possible to assess the success rate of the start-ups, although the literature indicates that it is notoriously difficult to quantify an overall success rate, because much of the data tends to be anecdotal.⁴⁰⁰

“Kent Foundation promotes self-employment as an option and it is important that this is not overlooked and needs to be adopted especially in the present climate and with changes to working patterns/contracts”

A local employer, Questionnaire for Businesses
The Student Journey Select Committee

8.2.7. An analysis of all the organisations that support youth self-employment in Kent shows that the levels of young business start-ups and survival do not currently make a significant impact on the economy. The research concludes that, in order to secure a higher level of success and greater impact on the local economy, more funding is required.^{401 402}

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ EMPOWER (2009) Empower Report for The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁴⁰² EMPOWER (2009) Empower Report for The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

- 8.2.8. The Kent Foundation is sustained by admirable trustees and enjoys the support of volunteers. It also produced an “Income Generation and Fundraising Strategy”, as well as a “Marketing Strategy”, to attract funding and generate income. However, evidence indicates that funding remains the most significant challenge to expanding support and increasing the number of business start-ups in the county.^{403 404}
- 8.2.9. Research suggests that financing is a greater barrier for young entrepreneurs than it is for their older counterparts. While organisations such as the Kent Foundation can offer practical help to create business plans and proposals that can instil confidence in lenders, this needs to be complemented by funding to support new businesses through varying cash flow stresses. One proposal involves the development of new banking sources, such as a “Youth Bank”, rather than relying exclusively on local authorities.⁴⁰⁵
- 8.2.10. Nevertheless, there are relatively inexpensive schemes that the Authority could support in order to increase the number of new businesses created by Kent youth. One such initiative involves the replication of the “business incubation unit” in Gravesend. This is located in the old Town Hall, and is shaped around a model designed by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts agency (NESTA).⁴⁰⁶
- 8.2.11. The unit features 8 desk spaces with computers and broadband access. Young people are not required to pay a rent but have to make contributions towards bills, such as broadband expenses. Many young entrepreneurs use their homes as the base of their businesses in order to reduce their expenses, and “go to work” at the Gravesend centre. The initiative has had an enthusiastic response from young people. The annual cost of running the project is between £7,000 and £8,000, and involves the employment of one person for 10 hours per week.⁴⁰⁷
- 8.2.12. Youth self-employment in Kent could also be encouraged by the promotion and expansion of enterprise education in Kent schools. While work-related learning, such as work experience, is important in providing young people with an understanding of enterprise, a number of educationalists and sources from the business community argue that there is a need for a more sustained teaching process. By experiencing a variety of real life work situations for a prolonged time, the value for both students and businesses would be maximised.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁴⁰⁴ The Kent Foundation (2010) The Fourth Option: Business Plan 2011-2014 Summary, The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

⁴⁰⁵ EMPOWER (2009) Empower Report for The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

⁴⁰⁶ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ EMPOWER (2009) Empower Report for The Kent Foundation, Maidstone.

8.2.13. Enterprise education is an effective way of delivering, in schools, prolonged business-like situations. However, while many Kent schools contribute to enterprise education by inviting business representatives to deliver it and by organising enterprise days, it appears that many others do not.⁴⁰⁹

8.2.14. It was reported to the Committee that the Kent Foundation has the ambition of adding the delivery of enterprise education to the services it offers. It is hoped that this will increase young people's enterprise awareness and business start-ups in the county. The Committee endorses this ambition and recommends more support for entrepreneurship and self-employment in Kent.⁴¹⁰

Recommendation 22

The Skills and Employability Team, the Kent Foundation and other proven agencies should further encourage schools to raise awareness amongst their students about the option of becoming self-employed, and to provide information about the support and guidance that are available.

The Kent Foundation should be supported in promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, and in increasing the number of Kent young people starting up a business. The organisation should also be encouraged to deliver enterprise education to young people in Kent.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Kent County Council (2011) The Student Journey Select Committee, 23 June 2011, Kent County Council, Maidstone.

Appendix 1

Evidence

Oral Evidence

Wednesday, 1 June 2011

- **Roger Gabriel**, Kent Economic Board Skills Manager, Kent County Council
- **Sue Dunn**, Head of the 14-19 Entitlement Team (now called Skills and Employability Team), Kent County Council
- **Lucy Ann Bett**, Social Inclusion Officer, and **Wayne Gough**, Interim County Manager, Supporting Independence Programme, Kent County Council

Tuesday, 7 June 2011

- **Martin Blincow**, Learner Support Manager, 14-19 Entitlement Team (now called Skills and Employability Team), Kent County Council
- **Els Howard**, Lecturer and Educational Consultant, K College, Ashford

Thursday 16 June 2011

- **Louise Simpson**, Acting Manager, Minority Communities Achievement Service, Kent County Council
- **Andy Birkin**, Interim Head of Youth Offending Service, Kent County Council

Thursday, 23 June 2011

- **Anne McNulty**, Executive Director, Education Business Partnership Kent
- **Paul Barron**, Director, Kent Foundation

Tuesday 28 June 2011

- **Richard Lavender**, Young Chamber Coordinator, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- **Peter Hobbs**, Chief Executive, Channel Chamber of Commerce

Wednesday 6 July 2011

- **David Wales**, Director, National Apprenticeships Service
- **Sean Kearns**, Chief Executive, Connexions Kent and Medway

Friday, 22 July 2011

- **Andy Brading**, AB Consulting
- **Becci Newton**, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Employment Studies
- **Lindsay Jardine**, Network Manager, Kent Association of Training Organisations

Thursday 28 July 2011

- **Dara Farrell, Paul Ayers and Tamanna Miah**, Kent Youth County Council, and **John Simmons**, Youth Participation Worker, Kent County Council

Wednesday 14 September 2011

- **Nadia Lawes, Louise Wessen and Natasha Gibbs**, GradsKent

Monday 19 September 2011

- **Ali Danish and Anthony Duncan**, Children in Care Council, and **Adrian Speller**, Chief Executive Officer, Young Lives Foundation

Written Evidence

Andy Birkin, Interim Head of Youth Offending Service, Kent County Council

Martin Blincow, Learner Support Manager, 14-19 Entitlement Team (now called "Skills and Employability Team"), Kent County Council

Andy Brading, AB Consulting

Paul Brightwell, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager (LAC), Families & Social Care, Kent County Council

Connexions Kent and Medway service

Dartford Grammar School for Boys

Richard Lavender, Young Chamber Coordinator, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Nadia Lawes, GradsKent, Kent County Council

Prof Sue Maguire, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick

Becci Newton, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Employment Studies, Brighton

Visits

Tuesday 13 September 2011

- Denne Construction Ltd, Borden

Tuesday 20 September 2011

- St Edmund's Catholic School, Dover
- Aylesham Youth Club, Aylesham

Tuesday 27 September 2011

- Teentech launch, Tonbridge

Wednesday 5 October 2011

- Simon Langton School for Girls, Canterbury
- Castle Academy, Deal

Friday 7 October 2011

- IMPACT Ashford, Ashford

Tuesday 11 October 2011

- Folkestone Academy, Folkestone
- Brabner Close Park street-based project, Folkestone

Thursday 13 October 2011

- MidKent College, Maidstone
- University Of Kent, Canterbury

Tuesday 1 November 2011

- Dartford Grammar School for Boys, Dartford

Denne Engineering & Design Programme for School

Background

Following a meeting between Sue Dunn, Head of KCC's Skills and Employability Team, and Nicholas Fowler, Denne's Business Improvement Manager, the Denne proposal has been modified to take on board issues relating to the Full Participation agenda and funding. The Full Participation agenda has been driven by the requirements in the Wolf review on Vocation Education to support students Post 16 with English and maths GCSEs and the raising of the school leaving age.

A key consideration for the Student Journey Select Committee, which is shared by Denne, is the importance of early intervention with student's learning, to help shape skills and to develop a positive attitude to work. This means that the focus of a strategy to address this issue entails engagement with students in Year 9 of their education. However, it is felt that the material and methods of teaching which this proposal aims to deliver could be equally applied to supporting students Post 16, and that this material and support could be extended to this age group.

The existing tight financial constraints also mean that the proposal has been modified to reduce the direct resource cost of implementing such a programme. It is proposed that Denne coordinates and oversees the development of the programme, but that the company will not be responsible for developing curriculum material. Under this proposal the schools will be responsible for curriculum development and implementation, with Denne coordinating the programme and providing strategic level input into the curriculum material. The Skills and Employability Team is working with Denne in order to develop this initiative, and identified one officer to liaise with the construction firm.

Curriculum material

In terms of the curriculum, it is proposed that material is developed to cover the GCSE syllabus in both English and maths. Design Technology would no longer be covered within the programme due to resource constraints. The English and maths material would be used as either a "primer" for Year 9 students before they start their GCSEs in Year 10, or alternatively as part of a GCSE course of study where the school feels that it is appropriate to start students a year early. The same material could also be available for use with Post 16 students, as they are likely to be covering the same GCSE syllabus.

Resources and Funding

It is proposed that Denne provides a coordination role equating to 2½ days per week plus strategic management input. This would reduce the funding requirement from £65k per annum to £35k per annum. Participating schools would be expected to undertake the majority of the work in developing appropriate curriculum material under a brief set by Denne. Denne would also work with the schools to establish a common methodology for delivery which would emphasise work-based discipline and positive behaviour.

Feasibility study

Prior to KCC committing funding to the Denne programme, it would be proposed that a feasibility study would be undertaken with selected schools. This would involve Denne and KCC meeting up with the heads of these schools to test the interest and operational issues in delivering such a programme. An outline programme would then be developed covering the delivery of English and maths in Year 9. This would be endorsed by 3 schools, in terms of committing resources to develop appropriate curriculum material, and delivering it to at least one cohort of students per school to start in the academic year 2012/13. It is proposed that a fourth school may join the pilot scheme at a later stage.

Proposed pilot schools

It is proposed that the following schools are invited to participate in the feasibility study and subsequent pilot:

- Hartsdown Technology College – Margate
- Walmer Science College – Deal
- Canterbury Academy - Canterbury

Denne programme and intellectual property

The Denne Engineering & Design Programme would be focused on Year 9 students. It would be expected that Denne's involvement and programme would be fully acknowledged through the way that the programme would be promoted within and outside of the schools.

Schools participating within the pilot and in the subsequent roll-out would be free to use the curriculum material. The intellectual property would be shared between KCC and Denne. Denne would not seek to hold any intellectual property rights over material developed through this programme. It is proposed that this material is made available to any school wishing to use it. Denne would be free to promote this curriculum material to other parties as it sees fit.

Roll-out and Supporting Kent wide engagement

On completion of the pilot programme, it would be expected that the Denne programme would be rolled-out to a total of 20 schools in Kent, to include 16 + delivery. Where possible, Denne would also be involved with the 16+ programme, but this may be limited due to resource constraints.

It is proposed that Denne would support 3-4 other major employers with developing a similar programme for English and maths, with the objective that all secondary schools with a focus on vocational training in Kent could be supported by an employer engagement programme.

Proposed Timetable

- November / December 2011 – Meeting with heads of pilot schools and heads of departments (English & Maths); to be arranged by KCC
- January 2012 – agree approach with schools for feasibility trial programme
- January / February 2012 – trial approach in respective schools
- March 2012 – seek school endorsement
- April 2012 – KCC agreement to proceed in principle for 3 years programme with funding agreed for one year
- April 2012 – advertise position for Denne Programme Coordinator on one-year contract
- July 2012 – Denne appoint Programme Coordinator
- September 2012 – implement pilot with 4-5 schools for one academic year
- February 2013 – Commence identification of 3 to 4 other companies to run similar programmes with similar funding being made available
- April 2013 – KCC to agree continuation of funding for programme with roll-out to up to 20 schools for two year period commencing in September 2013.

Questionnaire for employers - Closed questions responses

How many people are employed in your business?	Number	Percentage
0-5	47	32.6
6-10	14	9.7
11-20	16	11.1
21-50	21	14.5
51-250	24	16.6
more than 250	22	15.2
Totals	144	100

Where in Kent is your business situated?	Number	Percentage
Ashford	32	22.2
Canterbury	23	15.9
Dartford	5	3.4
Dover	3	2.0
Gravesham	2	1.3
Maidstone	43	29.8
Medway	8	5.5
Shepway	3	2.0
Swale	8	5.5
Thanet	4	2.7
Tonbridge and Malling	9	6.2
Tunbridge Wells	4	2.7
Totals	144	100

Has your business offered work experience to a young person in the last two years?	Number	Percentage
Yes	102	70.8
No	42	29.2
Totals	144	100

How easy or difficult would your business find it to offer work experience to a single young person for up to one month?	Number	Percentage
Very easy	19	13.3
Easy	33	23.2
Neutral	38	26.7
Difficult	34	23.9
Very difficult	18	12.6
Totals	142	100

How important do you think work experience is to helping young people develop the skills they need for employment?

	Number	Percentage
Very Important	98	69.0
Important	39	27.4
Indifferent	3	2.1
Not important	1	0.7
I don't Know	1	0.7
Totals	142	100

Has your business offered an apprenticeship to a young person in the last two years?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	55	38.1
No	89	61.8
Totals	144	100

How hard was it to offer an apprenticeship to a young person?

	Number	Percentage
Very easy	22	15.7
Easy	16	11.4
Neutral	29	20.7
Difficult	29	20.7
Very difficult	44	31.4
Totals	140	100

Based on the last young person you have recruited in the last 2 years, how do you rate their readiness to work straight from school or college?

	Number	Percentage
Very good	27	19.9
Good	24	17.6
Average	35	25.7
Poor	18	13.2
Very poor	8	5.9
Not applicable	24	17.6
Totals	136	100

Schools and colleges in Kent adequately prepare young people for the world of work

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	4	2.9
Agree	27	19.5
Neither agree nor disagree	50	36.2
Disagree	48	34.8
Strongly disagree	9	6.5
Totals	138	100

Vocational training meets local labour market needs	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	6.5
Agree	36	26.1
Neither agree nor disagree	59	42.7
Disagree	29	21.0
Strongly disagree	5	3.6
Totals	138	100

Apprenticeships meet local labour market needs	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	11.9
Agree	37	27.6
Neither agree nor disagree	52	38.8
Disagree	25	18.6
Strongly disagree	4	3.0
Totals	134	100

Work experience meets local labour market needs	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	11.8
Agree	28	27.4
Neither agree nor disagree	60	38.5
Disagree	37	18.5
Strongly disagree	3	3.0
Totals	135	100

Young people's qualifications alone do not guarantee that they are ready for work	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	91	66.4
Agree	40	29.1
Neither agree nor disagree	5	3.6
Disagree	1	0.7
Strongly disagree	0	
Totals	137	100

Do you think additional or alternative training schemes, courses and qualifications are needed in Kent to prepare young people for work and to meet employers' labour needs?	Number	Percentage
Yes	89	61.8
No	55	38.2
Totals	144	100

Has anyone in your business acted as a mentor or business buddy to a young person in the last 2 years?	Number	Percentage
Yes	52	36.1
No	92	63.9
Totals	144	100

Would you consider going to a local Kent school to talk to pupils about your business specialism and the skills you require from young people?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	95	66.0
No	49	34.0
Totals	144	100

Have any students visited your business premises in the last 2 years to learn about your profession?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	63	43.7
No	81	56.3
Totals	144	100

Questionnaire for Young People - Closed Questions responses

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	7	25.9
Female	20	74.1
Totals	27	100
Missing/non-response	7	

What school year are you currently in?	Number	Percentage
Year 11	23	96
year 12	1	4
Totals	24	100
Missing/non response/spoiled	5	

By the time I leave school I will be ready for employment	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	2	7.3
Agree	11	40.8
Neither agree nor disagree	4	14.9
Disagree	2	7.4
Strongly disagree	2	7.4
Don't know	6	22.2
Totals	27	100
Missing/non-response	2	

My school has prepared me with the literacy skills I will need in the workplace	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	42.3
Agree	12	46.1
Neither agree nor disagree	1	3.9
Disagree	0	
Strongly disagree	2	7.7
Don't know	0	
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

My school has prepared me with the numeracy skills I will need in the workplace

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	30.8
Agree	15	57.7
Neither agree nor disagree	2	7.7
Disagree	0	
Strongly disagree	1	3.8
Don't know	0	
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

School preparation - Punctuality

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	34.6
Agree	12	46.2
Neither agree nor disagree	3	11.6
Disagree	0	
Strongly disagree	1	3.8
Don't know	1	3.8
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

School preparation - Teamwork

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	30.8
Agree	8	30.8
Neither agree nor disagree	6	23
Disagree	2	7.7
Strongly disagree	2	7.7
Don't know	0	
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

School preparation - Confidence

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	4	15.4
Agree	11	42.4
Neither agree nor disagree	6	23
Disagree	1	3.8
Strongly disagree	4	15.4
Don't know	0	
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

School preparation - Commitment	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	3	11.5
Agree	14	53.8
Neither agree nor disagree	3	11.5
Disagree	4	15.4
Strongly disagree	1	3.9
Don't know	1	3.9
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

School preparation - Appearance	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	23
Agree	14	53.8
Neither agree nor disagree	2	7.7
Disagree	2	7.7
Strongly disagree	1	3.9
Don't know	1	3.9
Totals	26	100
Missing/non-response	3	

Have you considered doing some vocational training?	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	41.4
No	17	58.6
Totals	29	100
Missing/non-response	0	

Have you considered doing an apprenticeship?	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	48.3
No	15	51.7
Totals	29	100
Missing/non-response	0	

What has been the most useful resource you have used to help you make plans for future employment?	Number	Percentage
Careers Advisor	7	25.9
Books	1	3.7
Friends/Family	2	7.4
Internet	14	51.9
Open day	1	3.7
Teachers	1	3.7
None	1	3.7
Total	27	100
Missing	2	

How often has your school/college provided you with careers guidance that is personal to you?

	Number	Percentage
Four times or more	4	14.8
Three times a year	4	14.8
Twice a year	3	11.1
Once a year	9	33.3
Never	7	26
Total	27	100
Missing	2	

Have you made plans for your future employment?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	44.8
No	16	55.2
Totals	29	100
Missing/non-response	0	

Glossary of Abbreviations

CBI: Confederation of British Industry

CEIAG: careers education, information, advice and guidance

EMA: Education Maintenance Allowance

EU: European Union

IAG: information, advice and guidance

IB: International Baccalaureate

KCC: Kent County Council

KYCC: Kent Youth County Council

LA: local authority

LAC: looked-after children

NEET: not in education, employment or training

NVQ: National Vocational Qualification

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education

ONS: Office of National Statistics

RPA: raising the participation age

SME: small and medium-sized enterprise

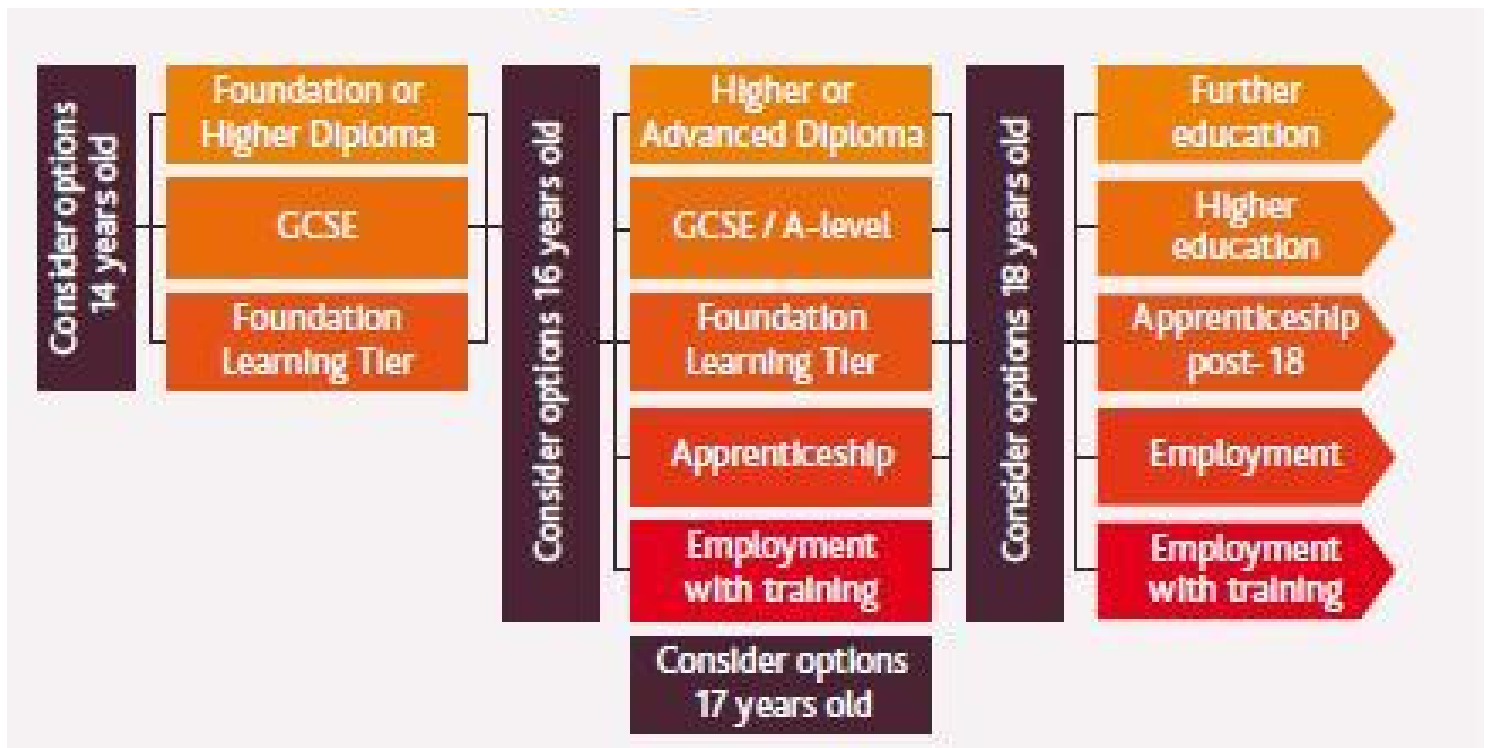
STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Appendix 3

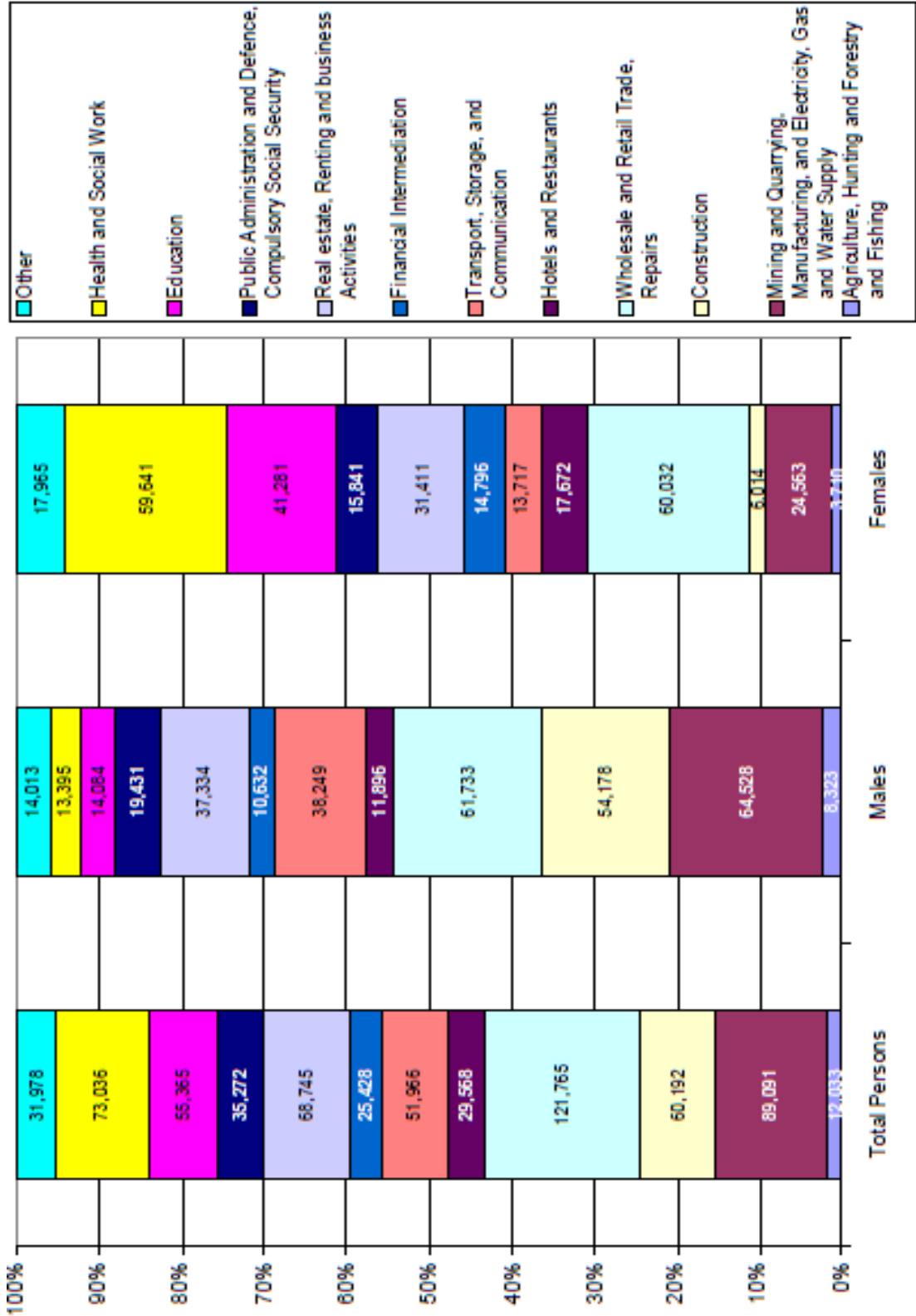
Pictures, Tables and Charts

Figure I: Choices in education and training from age 14 to 19.



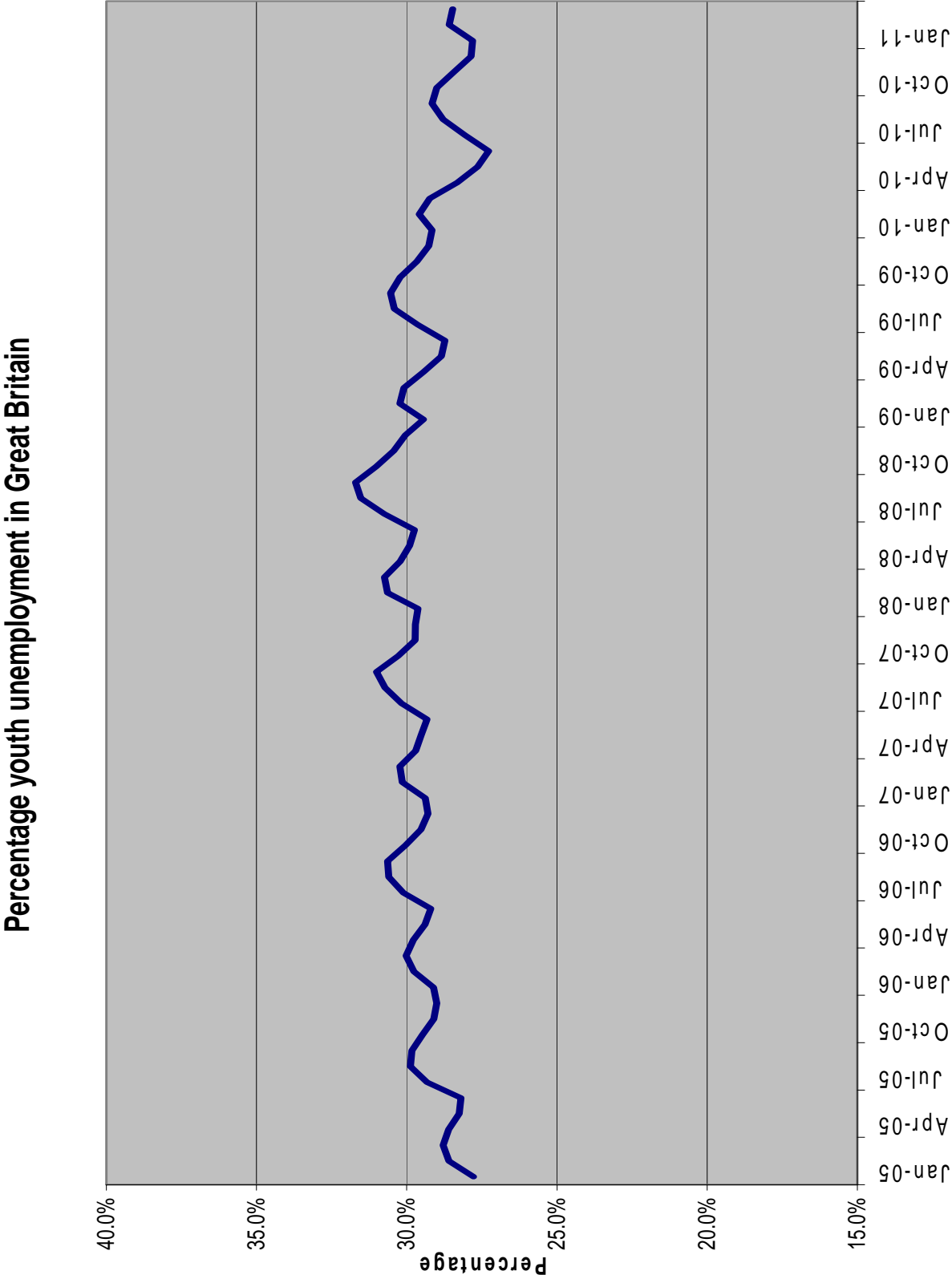
Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Figure II: Employees in Kent, by sector (2007).



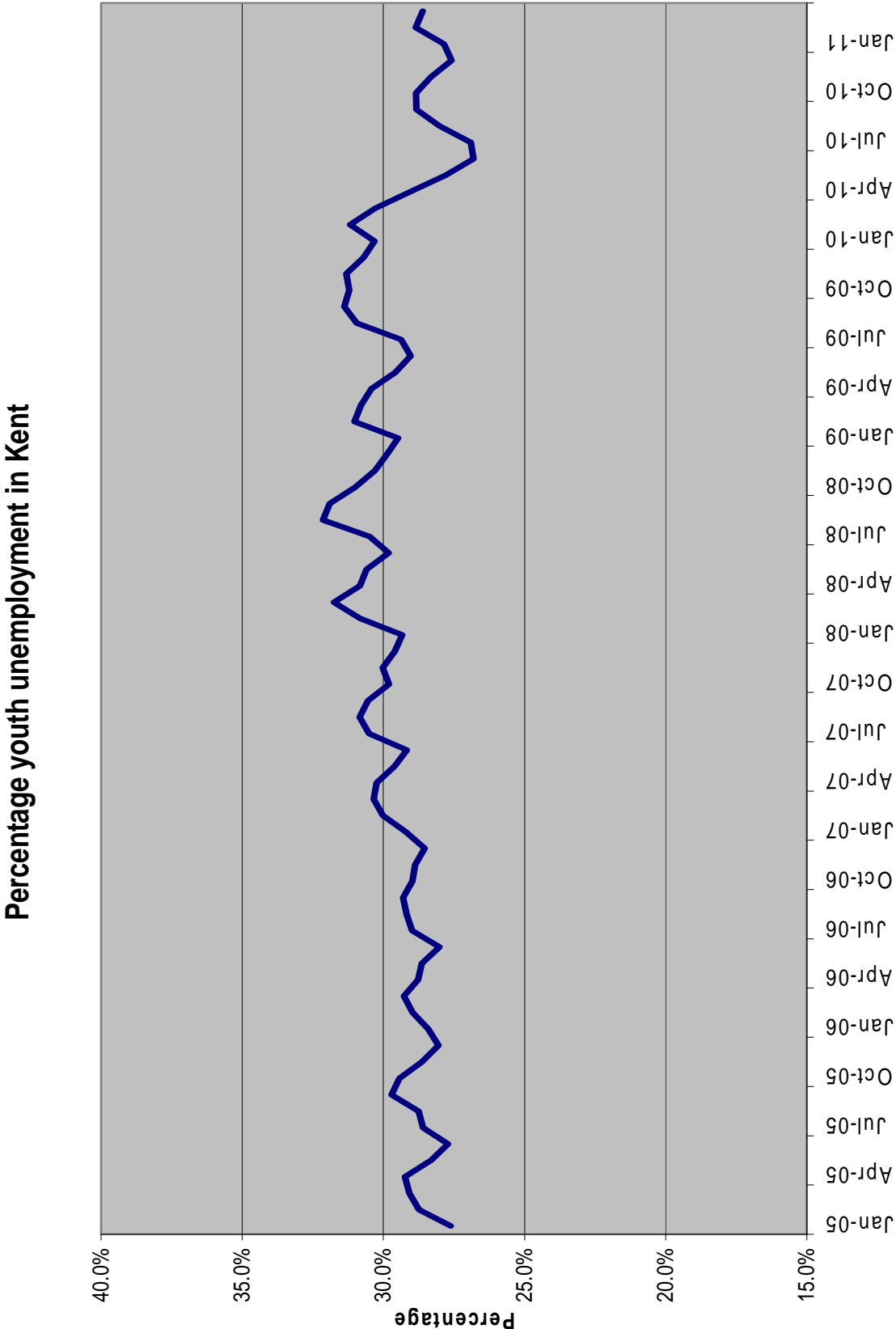
Source: 2001 Census, Special Workplace Statistics Table, Office for National Statistics.

Figure III: Percentage of youth unemployment in Great Britain, 2011.



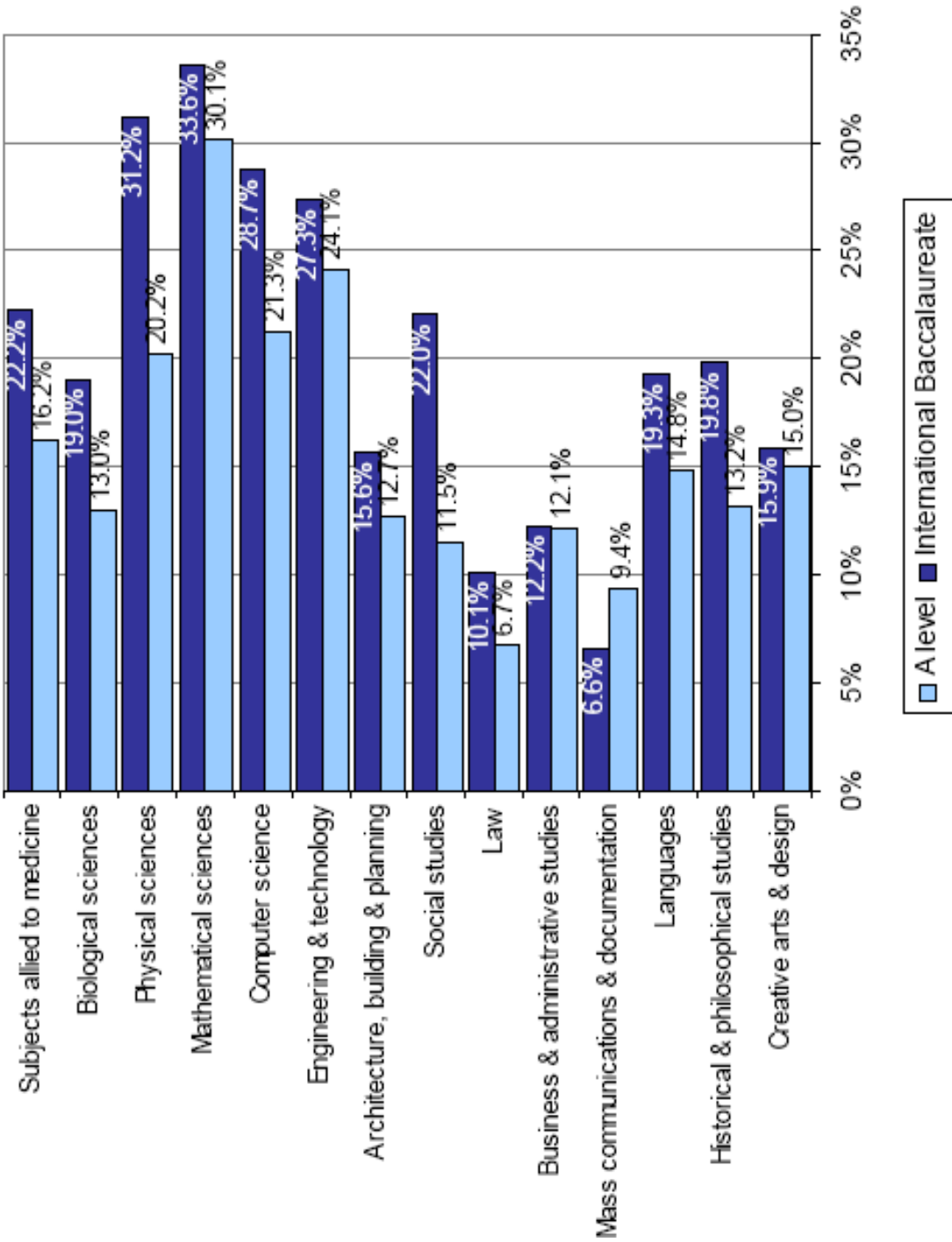
Source: NOMIS, prepared by Research and Evaluation, Kent County Council, 2011.

Figure IV: Percentage of youth unemployment in Kent, 2011.



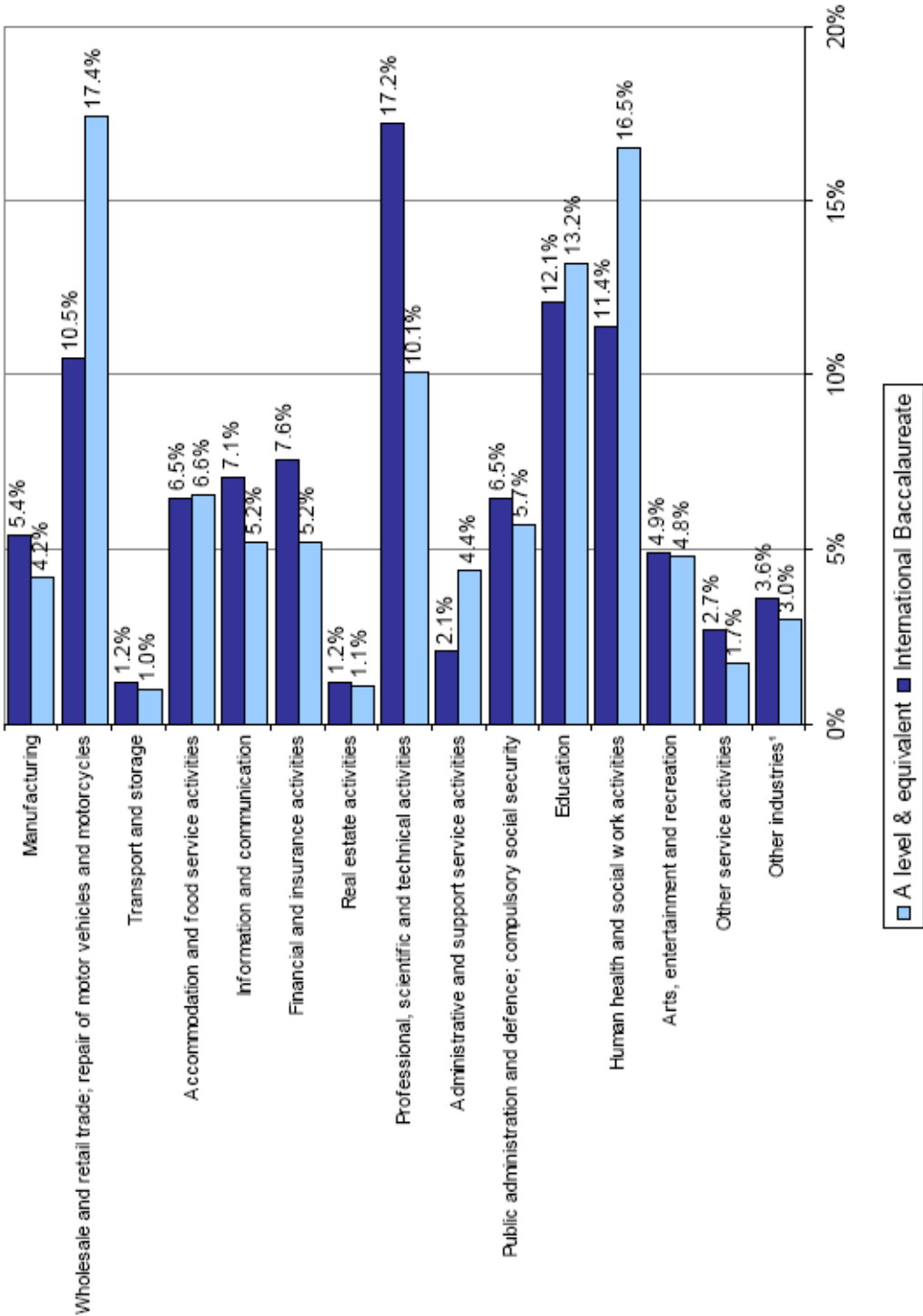
Source: NOMIS, prepared by Research and Evaluation, Kent County Council, 2011.

Figure V: Percentage of full-time students obtaining first class honours by subject, 2008-9



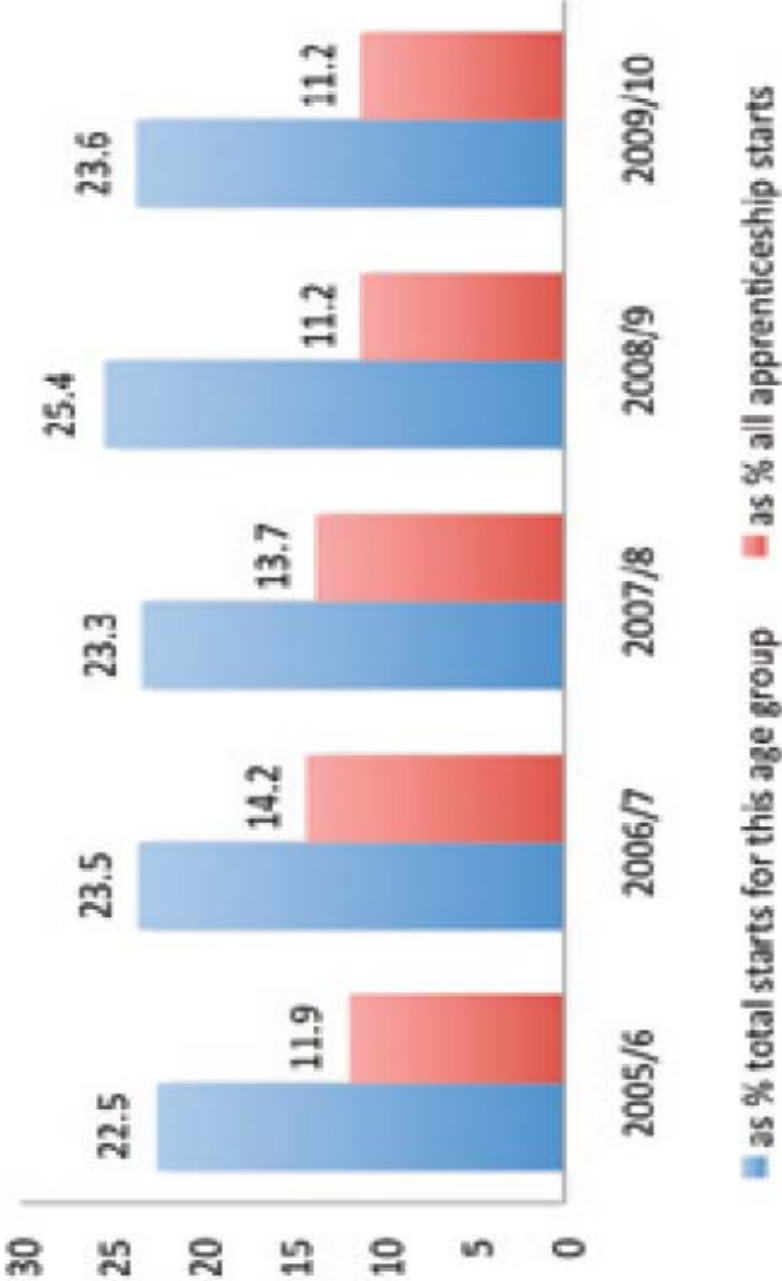
Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011)

Figure VI: Full-time first degree leavers entering employment by industry and type of qualification held, 2008-9



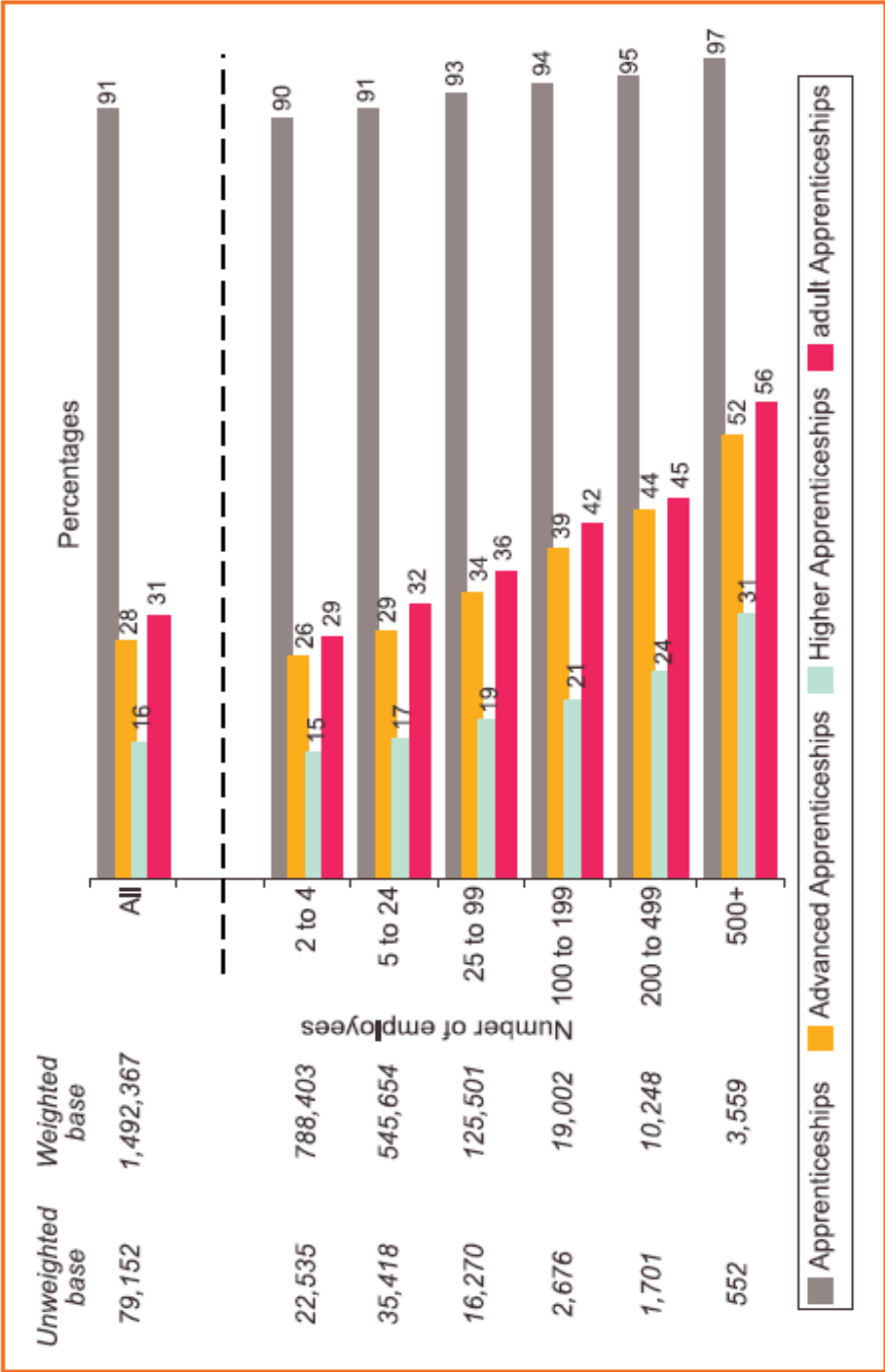
Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (2011)

Figure VII: Level 3 starts for 16-18 year olds, 2005-2010



Source: Wolf Report (2011)

Figure VIII: Awareness of different types of Government-funded apprenticeships by establishment size, 2009



Source: National Employer Skills Survey for England (2010)

Appendix 4

Further Information

www.education.gov.uk/publications

Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report (2011).

www.kentchoices4u.com

The website is a comprehensive source of information on careers education and guidance for Kent young people aged 14 to 19. It contains and online prospectus and a function to apply online for education courses.

www.connexionskentandmedway.co.uk

Connexions Kent & Medway is a service providing free, impartial and confidential advice, guidance, support and personal development services to all 13-19 year olds.

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) supports, funds and co-ordinates the delivery of Apprenticeships throughout England.

www.kentfoundation.org/

The Kent Foundation supports Kent young people who are interested in starting a business, or who have started a business and need business advice and support.

www.employment-studies.co.uk

The Institute of Employment Studies is the UK's leading independent, non-profit centre for research and evidence-based consultancy in employment, labour market and human resource policy and practice.

www.impactashford.org.uk

IMPACT Ashford offers a course for young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training and who are interested in a career in the uniformed public services or in the sports and leisure industry.

www.ons.gov.uk

Office for National Statistics (ONS).

www.cbi.org.uk

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is the UK's premier business lobbying organisation, providing a voice for employers at a national and international level.

www.ebpkent.co.uk

The Kent Education Business Partnership (EBP Kent) provides individually designed services for schools, colleges and employers. The aims are to enrich the curriculum, actively engage employers in the development of their future workforce, and equip young people with a better understanding of personal skills and their future choices.

www.kato-training.com

The Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO) represents the major training providers in Kent and Medway. It supports the interests of over 60 member organisations that deliver a variety of training programmes, including apprenticeships, bespoke training and business training.

<http://www.rec.uk.com>

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) is the professional body dedicated to representing the interests of the UK's recruitment industry in Parliament, Whitehall, the European Commission, and to press and opinion formers.

www.lsis.org.uk

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service is the body that aims to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change.

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk

The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce is a business network – which covers an area of Kent including Ashford, Canterbury, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells - that promotes enterprise in Kent.

www.fsb.org.uk

The Federation of Small Businesses is the voice of small business, promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and people who own or run a small business, and lobbying government and key decision makers on their behalf.

www.shepwaybc.co.uk/

The Kent Channel Chamber is an independent and non political organisation whose core business is to support the East Kent business community.

<http://www.ibo.org>

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation which offers three study programmes for students aged 3 to 19 to develop their educational, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in an increasingly globalised world.

“Kent Children's Future at Key Stage 2” Select Committee Report

While The Student Journey review took place, another education-related select committee review was carried out in the local authority. KCC's Select Committee report "Kent Children's Future at Key Stage 2" examines levels of attainment at Key Stage 2, and looks at factors that impact on attainment. It also asks how some schools have seemingly broken the link between deprivation and attainment, considering factors about schools, parents, pupils and localities.

The findings and challenge set by the report are key to developing the learning continuum, and to value and build on previous learning. It clearly identifies that there is a need to think about the 'destination continuum' - that there is a need to lift attainment at Key Stage 2, making sure it is part of a continuous improvement for young people.

References

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