Employer Involvement and Engagement

November 2015

Employer Involvement and Engagement

Talent Match Case Study Theme Report

Author(s):

Anne Green

Gaby Atfield

Sally-Anne Barnes

November 2015

Acknowledgements

Contents

Executive Summary

- **Employer involvement** entails the strategic involvement of employers, employers' organisations, business-led organisations and recruitment agencies in guiding the activities of Talent Match (TM) partnerships. In contrast, **employer engagement** focuses on the practical issues of making contact with employers to raise awareness of TM and to encourage them to offer jobs, work placements and other employment-related opportunities to TM beneficiaries.

- While employer involvement and engagement can take place on a relatively informal basis, without putting any 'good practice' requirements on employers (beyond meeting legal obligations), some partnerships have sought to institute charters and other good practice principles that are in-line with the TM ethos. This represents a potential legacy from the TM programme, enshrining principles relating to the recruitment, employment and development of young people in the workforce.

Employer involvement

- There are four main ways employers may be involved in strategic activities of TM: direct involvement on the core partnership; through membership of a TM employer forum or sub-group; through providing strategic or operational advice to a delivery organisation; and finally through more arms-length involvement in guiding specific TM activities, for example, how to engage with employers. A single employer may be involved in more than one way and at different times.

- Employer involvement in the TM partnerships has been more or less important at different stages of TM's development. In the planning stage, employer involvement was very important in determining the overall direction of the programme. There then appears to have been a period where putting the delivery partner structure in place was a key focus and there was less need for strategic direction from employers. Now that this infrastructure is in place in most partnerships (although it will inevitably evolve) and the number of TM beneficiaries ready to seek employment has grown, partnerships are becoming more focused on both employer involvement and, in particular, employer engagement, resulting in a greater need for input from employers.

- Employer involvement in the strategic direction of TM can be time-consuming, which is a particular issue for small employers, and means that large employers are more likely to be involved. Recognising the benefits of involving employers of different sizes and from different sectors, other methods of involvement have been tested in TM partnerships, including the development of sub-groups working on specific employer-related issues that meet less frequently and using more electronic communication.

- A key driver of employer involvement, particularly, is corporate social responsibility (CSR). The ways in which the ethos of TM can link more closely with the CSR agenda of businesses is a key facilitator of employer involvement, with TM's emphasis on widening participation, local employment for local people, and activity being driven by 'finding the right job for the right person' rather than using a payment-by-results driven model being particularly well-regarded by employers.

- There are benefits of employer involvement for both TM partnerships and employers. Learning from employer perspectives brings a kind of 'business realism' to the partnerships

and beneficiaries. It gives them an insight into what employers want and reminds them that while TM is focused on the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries, these needs and aspirations do not exist in a vacuum, and employers play a key role in fulfilling these aspirations. For employers, involvement can give them a new perspective on the lived-experiences of often marginalised young people, who, with some support, can become part of their workforce of the future.

Employer engagement

- Employer engagement can be pro-active and demand-side led, comprising identification of vacancies and awareness-raising in sectors or occupations where there is likely to be future demand for workers and 'directing' beneficiaries to such opportunities. It can also be reactive and supply-side led, focusing on the identification of the employment preferences of beneficiaries and then finding an employer match that fits those preferences. The case study partnerships used a mix of these two approaches, with a shift to more emphasis than formerly on demand-side led approaches as partnerships grew and developed their profile in their local areas.

- Responsibility for employer engagement has also evolved as this aspect of the partnerships' activities became more central. Some partnerships concentrate employer engagement activities in the lead partner organisation, others devolve responsibility to delivery partners and others employ a mix of the two. The exact operational set-up depends very much on the prior experiences of the lead and delivery partners in relation to employer engagement and there are success stories from different approaches.

- Methods used to engage employers vary, although most employers and TM partnerships emphasised the importance of the individuals involved and the relationships that were developed between a TM staff member and an employee of the employer organisation. Having a dedicated point-of-contact for the TM partnership, often an employer engagement officer, helped to build these relationships, which, in turn, saw TM becoming a respected, and sometimes preferred, source of recruits, including for so-called 'hidden vacancies' (i.e. those that exist currently or are likely to come up in the future and which may not be advertised through, for example, the Jobcentre).

- Building the reputation of TM was seen as of key importance. This took time, but this reputation could be destroyed quickly, particularly through the placement of beneficiaries who were unsuitable or not work-ready. Working with a young person to identify the point at which they were ready to be employed, and waiting until this point was reached regardless of how long it took - perhaps taking a number of steps, including easing a beneficiary into the work environment with a work placement or part-time job - were seen as key benefits of the TM approach and helped to strengthen its reputation amongst employers.

- As in the case of employer involvement, employers spoke highly of the ethos of employer engagement expounded by TM. While it was recognised that it was important to increase awareness amongst beneficiaries of the opportunities available to them and the extent to which a seemingly less-promising opportunity may lead to something more desirable in the future, employers particularly praised TM's 'pre-screening' approach of taking time to match a suitable young person to a suitable job, which reduced the burden on employers (in contrast to a more 'numbers-driven' approach which resulted in them seeing large numbers of unsuitable candidates for jobs that they were not particularly interested in or qualified for).

- As well as the individual connection with employers, the ethos of TM, the in-work support that could be provided and, as in the case of employer involvement, the synergies that existed between TM's focus on local communities and employers' CSR agendas were all important in promoting employer engagement. Both employers and TM partnerships were also keen to stress, however, that their ultimate goal in relation to employer engagement was to have 'work-ready' recruits – people who could, perhaps with some support, do a job; in some cases, an employer's engagement with TM was primarily motivated simply by their need to recruit staff. While CSR and a general sense of altruism could open certain doors, it was not seen to

be of benefit to either employer or potential employee that TM beneficiaries were treated very differently to other potential recruits either in the recruitment process or once they are in employment; there was a need to avoid them being 'stigmatised' by their involvement in TM.

- There were mixed views on wage subsidies. Pragmatically, wage subsidies were thought to promote employment, at least in the short term, but whether this was something TM ought to do was a different issue. Particular concerns were raised by TM partnerships that did not offer wage subsidies but bordered another TM partnership that did, as there was some feeling that employers recruiting across TM partnership areas would expect a uniform TM approach.

- Similarly mixed views were presented on the issue of TM as a national brand with a joint TM approach to employers (particularly large, national employers), and whether this would be helpful. The general consensus was that this would be difficult to negotiate and implement at this stage of the programme, particularly given the strong local identity of TM in some areas.

Introduction

Talent Match is a Big Lottery Fund strategic programme investing £108 million in 21 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas which have experienced particularly high levels of youth unemployment. The focus of the programme is on developing holistic approaches to combating worklessness amongst long-term NEETs. A key aspect of the programme is to bring young people closer to, and into employment.

The rationale for looking at the role of employers in TM is three-fold. First, employers are key stakeholders in the labour market, representing the so-called 'demand-side' of the labour market. Secondly, at the outset of the TM programme the Big Lottery identified an important strategic role for employers in TM partnerships. Thirdly, each TM partnership has employment targets and employers are gatekeepers to employment (for employees [as opposed to the self-employed]).

In this report a distinction is made between:

- **Employer involvement** – defined here as the strategic involvement of employers, employers' organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Business [FSB]), business-led organisations (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships [LEPs]) and recruitment agencies in TM on an ongoing basis; and

- **Employer engagement** - defined here as the practical issues of making contact with employers to raise awareness of TM, to raise the possibility of offering training, mentoring, work placements, and/or making jobs available to TM young people.

This report summarises the findings from case study research on the theme of employer involvement and engagement within TM partnerships. This research involved a short desk-based evidence review and then the major element of the research used qualitative methods and drew on the experiences and perspectives of interviewees from across four TM partnerships. The report focuses on the key issues to emerge from this discrete research and particular aspects of learning of relevance to the wider TM Programme.

The remainder of the report is divided in five sections. Section Two provides an account of the research methods used for the primary research. Section Three sets out key findings from the desk-based evidence review. It provides the context for the qualitative research. Section Four provides an overview of models of TM approaches to employer involvement and engagement and provides an overview of how the four case study TM partnerships align with these models. Section Five represents the main body of the report and presents the qualitative findings under specific themes to emerge from the discussions and analysis. Where relevant, key learning points are also highlighted and reflected upon, as well as ongoing issues related to the involvement and engagement of employers as the TM programme progresses. Section Six summarises some key themes and emerging issues.

Methods

To set the context for the qualitative research a short and selective evidence review was undertaken. This involved a review of the academic and policy literature of four main themes:

- Key features of young people's access to, and position in the labour market, in a medium-term perspective;

- Trends in job search methods used by job seekers;

- Trends in recruitment and selection methods used by employers; and

- Evidence on employer engagement – with a particular focus on disadvantaged young people and good practice in linking young people to jobs.

The qualitative research reported in Section Five draws on the findings from across four TM partnerships conducted between June and August 2014:

- The Black Country TM

- Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (D2N2) TM

- Staffordshire TM

- Worcestershire TM

While it is not possible to provide insights into all possible approaches from across the 21 TM partnerships from the experiences of these four case study areas or every possible aspect of 'good practice' pertaining to employer involvement and engagement, in-depth insight into the rationales for, and changing strategies of TM partnerships in relation to employer involvement and engagement offers potential learning and insights for other TM partnerships, and more broadly for other programmes in which voluntary (and other) organisations are seeking to make links with employers both in programme design and in helping beneficiaries into employment. In this instance the four case study areas were selected to offer a range of:

- TM Partnerships of different sizes;

- Lead organisations' previous experience in involving and engaging employers; and

- Approaches to employer involvement and engagement.

Pragmatic considerations were also taken into account in case study selection, including that the TM partnerships selected had not been involved previously in National Evaluation thematic case study work.

Further details about the four case study partnerships selected are set out in Section 4, following the discussion setting out models of TM partnership approaches to employer involvement and engagement.

A total of thirty-two interviewees took part in the research. Most interviews were one-to-one and face-to-face, although several interviews were conducted with more than one respondent present. A minority of interviews were conducted via telephone as the respondent was unavailable at the time the researchers visited. In two instances, respondents emailed comments to the researchers. All the interviews were recorded and around half were fully transcribed. Information from the remainder was captured through notes and re-visiting interview recordings where necessary.

Interviewees typically involved a mix of:

- The TM Partnership Lead

- TM Partnership staff with specific responsibility for employer engagement

- At least two employers involved / engaged in Talent Match

- Core and delivery partners with experience of Talent Match employer engagement; and

- One (or more) young people (who had gained employment / work experience via TM).

The topic guide used in interviews covered the following themes:

- Experience of employer engagement and involvement prior to Talent Match

- Rationale for employer involvement in Talent Match

- Rationale for, and use of, different employer engagement approaches in Talent Match

- Experience of employer involvement in Talent Match

- Experience of employer engagement in Talent Match

- Emerging issues and looking ahead.

Literature Review

3

This section sets out key findings from a focused review of the academic and grey literature on issues pertinent to employer involvement and engagement. To set the context, some key features of young people's access to the labour market are outlined first. Attention then shifts to key trends in in employers' recruitment and selection practices and job seekers' job search methods. Finally, evidence on employer engagement and involvement is reviewed, with a particular focus on linking disadvantaged young people to jobs.

3.1. Key features of young people's access to and position in the labour market

The position of young people in the labour market has altered radically since the end of the 1970s, with the demise of an identifiable 'youth labour market' and a shift away from the majority of young people entering employment at the end of compulsory schooling. In recent years **delayed labour market entry** has been driven by education policy which has encouraged increasing proportions of young people to engage in post-16 education, and legislation in England raising the participation age in learning and training to 18 years (Maguire et al., 2012).

The 2008-9 recession was particularly difficult for young people. Levels of youth unemployment peaked in 2011 (ONS, 2015). Despite a subsequent reduction in levels and rates, youth unemployment remains a key issue for policy. Prolonged periods of unemployment have a negative impact on individuals' well-being, socio-economic circumstances, work trajectories, lifetime earnings and job quality (Brand, 2015), and so can have a 'scarring effect' on young people (Bivand, 2012; Cocks and Picchio, 2012). Hence entering and sustaining employment is important.

Young people with little experience of work find it particularly difficult to make successful transitions into employment (Sissons and Jones, 2012) since **employers tend to favour young people with work experience** and those who have undertaken work alongside study (Conlan et al., 2015).

THE DECLINE IN SATURDAY JOBS AND IMPLICATIONS

Recent research suggests that Saturday jobs have been on the decline since the 1990s coinciding with the increasing number of students in full-time education and a lack of part-time jobs that are more likely to be undertaken by young people (Conlan et al., 2015). The declines are most significant for 16-17 year olds, but are also evident for the 18-24 age group. Through Saturday jobs young people gained experience of the labour market and transferable skills, such as communication and customer services skills in retail jobs, which can be transferred to other types of work (Vokes and Limmer, 2015). Many Saturday jobs were in the retail sector, and analysis of Labour Force Survey data shows that young people are predominantly employed in sales and customer service occupations in the distribution, hotels and restaurants and other services sectors which account for the highest levels of youth employment (Sissons and Jones, 2012).

Evidence suggests that young people combining part-time work and full-time education were less likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) subsequently (Conlan et al., 2015).

Employer demands that young people have work experience can lead to a 'catch 22' situation in which young people do not have the experience required to access employment, but cannot access employment to gain that experience. Indeed, in a review of the business case for employing young people, Cominetti et al. (2013) identify lack of experience as the key negative factor which militates against employing young people.[1]

By contrast the ability to 'mould' a young person to fit into the organisational culture and ways of working is a key positive reason for employing young people. Other positive reasons include the impact on the company profile / brand of employing young people, benefits for the local area, young people's enthusiasm and digital literacy, and cost considerations (given lower minimum wage levels for those young people under 21 years of age). **Although qualifications are important**, amongst young people and the unemployed **employers look particularly for 'attitude'** and other so-called 'soft skills' such as motivation, punctuality, awareness of what the job entails and individual 'fit' with the organisation (Sissons and Jones, 2012; Newton et al., 2005).

3.2. Trends in employers' recruitment and selection practices and in job search methods

Employers' behaviour in recruitment and selection matters as it impacts on the hiring of people currently out of work and those in employment who want to change jobs (Green et al., 2015). There is an expectation in the 'textbook model' of recruitment and selection that the methods and criteria used are driven by objectivity, meritocracy and rigour. In reality, however, informality tends to pervade recruitment and selection decisions.

A key feature of change since the late 1990s is the **rise of internet-based recruitment and aspects of automated selection**. Likewise over the same period

---

[1] More generally, evidence from the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey indicates that two-thirds of employers say work experience is a significant or crucial factor in their recruitment, compared to around half saying that academic or vocational qualifications are critical or significant factors (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2015a).

increasing numbers of **job seekers** and labour market intermediaries have **used the internet for job search**. However, use of the internet has not usurped other recruitment and job search methods; rather they have tended to add to the methods used. Hence employers use a range of recruitment channels, encompassing both formal (e.g. the Jobcentre, their own and other websites, etc.) and informal (including word-of-mouth and employee recommendations). **The channel(s) that employers use determine the route by which recruitment takes place** (Hasluck, 2011).

The use of informal recruitment methods can involve networks which young people do not have access to. Young people tend to be disadvantaged relative to older people in terms of access to such networks (Cominetti et al., 2013).

Evidence from the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey [2] (Shury et al., 2014) suggests that around **three-quarters of employers used free to use private recruitment channels**, such as word of mouth, their own website, internal notices (i.e. within the workplace) or other free websites. Word of mouth is the most commonly used private recruitment channel, used by 30 per cent of employers.

Since 2012 there has been an increase in use of **social media** as a recruitment channel (used by 7 per cent of employers in 2014), but this remains substantially less used than other more established 'private free' channels.

38 per cent of employers who had recruited in the last 12 months had used free to use public channels such as Jobcentre Plus and government schemes and programmes. The evidence suggests that unemployed people are disproportionately dependent on formal channels (such as Jobcentre Plus) for job search (Hasluck, 2011; Green et al., 2012), although the proportion of job offers through formal channels is smaller than the proportion of unemployed people using such methods.

According to the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey, smaller employers are particularly likely to rely solely on private free channels; almost half of small recruiting employers only use private free channels. By contrast, large employers tend to use a greater range of recruitment channels.

Evidence from the same survey indicates that of employers who had recruited a young person in the last 12 months, the most commonly used channel to fill that vacancy was word-of-mouth / personal recommendation (used in 23 per cent of most recent hires [down from 26 per cent in 2012]). Only 17 per cent of employers had used free public recruitment channels (such as Jobcentre Plus and Universal Jobmatch) in recruitment of their most recent young recruit.

The evidence points to **untapped employer interest in apprenticeships**. In 2014 15 per cent of employers had or offered formal apprenticeships, but of these 88 per cent indicated that they would continue to do so, and 24 per cent of employers not currently offering apprenticeships reported they planned to offer apprenticeships in future.

---

[2] A large-scale telephone-based survey of over 18 thousand establishments across all sectors of the economy in the UK.

3.3. Evidence on employer engagement and involvement and 'good practice' in linking young people to jobs

3.3.1. Employer engagement with education

In terms of employer engagement and involvement with schools and other educational establishments, there is strong evidence to suggest that creating a link between employers and education establishments is important in helping young people's transitions to the labour market. Employers can be help in a number of ways, such as supporting the development of employability skills, creating work experience opportunities, providing taster sessions, offering apprenticeships and so on (Bimrose et al., 2015; CBI, 2012; Cominetti et al., 2013; Huddleston et al., 2012; Mann and Percy, 2013). Young people can gain from better understanding of the labour market and how it operates, and more realistic career expectations and aspirations (Burge et al., 2012; Howieson et al., 2010).

3.3.2. Employer engagement with young people outside education

Conventionally employers are seen as 'gatekeepers' to employment. However, they can also be conceptualised as opening up access routes to employment, and so can play a key role, both outside and within the workplace, in providing support and opportunities for young people to develop (CIPD, 2014). An example of recognition by employers of the role that they can play in helping address youth unemployment is provided by *Movement to Work*: a voluntary collaboration of UK employers committed to tackling youth unemployment through provision of high quality vocational training and work experience opportunities for young people.[3] Similarly, the CIPD's *Learning to Work* programme[4] is concerned with helping employers to increase and improve their engagement with young people by helping prepare young people for work (e.g. through participation in mentoring initiatives [such as the *Steps Ahead Mentoring*[5] to provide support to young job seekers) and making organisations more youth friendly.

Bivand (2012) suggests that ensuring young people are prepared for the labour market through provision of (quality) **work experience**, **apprenticeships** and **wage subsidies** is key to addressing the rising level of youth unemployment.

There is evidence from the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey that most commonly employers tend to offer work placements for altruistic reasons (such as wanting to give young people experience / a chance, or as part of corporate social responsibility policies). However, a sizeable proportion also cited reasons that were more focused on the **benefits that work placements bring to the organisation**, with the evidence indicating that work placements are used as a recruitment tool by employers (Shury et al., 2014).

However, LEP area level data suggests that local areas which score higher than average on economic indicators such as Gross Value Added per head (GVA), with high levels of knowledge-intensive businesses and with lower than average levels of youth unemployment, tend to have a higher proportion of employers offering work experience and/or 'work inspiration' opportunities.[6] While there are local areas which

---

[3] See http://www.movementtowork.com/just-interested/
[4] See http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/learning-to-work/default.aspx?utm_medium=vanity&utm_source=various&utm_campaign=pp_learning2work&utm_content=learningtowork
[5] See http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/steps-ahead-mentoring/
[6] A bundle of activities where employers are involved in preparing students for work, from carrying out mock interviews to helping design coursework.

buck the trend – such as Liverpool City Region (with a higher than average share of employers offering work experience placements despite higher than average unemployment and lower than average GVA) – in general the data suggests that the geography of access to opportunities is uneven, such that people in local areas with higher than average unemployment tend to be disadvantaged in terms of access to such opportunities (UK Commission for Employment and Skills. 2015b).

3.3.3. *Employer engagement in active labour market programmes and employability initiatives*

Employers are critical to the success of active labour market programmes and other employability-focused initiatives aiming to place unemployed / disadvantaged people in employment. However, there is a risk that a sole emphasis on employers' existing hiring standards and work readiness requirements can legitimise any existing discriminatory behaviour and reinforce labour market inequalities (Fletcher, 2004).

In recent years there has been a shift towards getting employers 'on board' in the design and delivery of active labour market programmes (Gore, 2005; McCollum, 2012). In part this move may be seen as an example of new governance models characterised by a decreasing role of the state in favour of a greater role and responsibility for private actors, including employers, self-regulation and local networks of non-public actors. Employer-oriented activation policies aim to influence employers' willingness to support and hire unemployed / disadvantaged people, and may also seek to influence recruitment processes to bring them further forward in the so-called 'hiring queue' and reduce chances of discrimination against them (see McQuaid et al., 2005; Salognon, 2007).

It is clear that **employers differ in their disposition to recruit unemployed people**. Snape (1998) proposed a four-fold typology of employers ranked in order of such disposition. The first group which was most disposed to recruit the unemployed was 'socially motivated organisations' – including 'not for profit' organisations driven as much by social as commercial considerations. A second group comprised 'commercially motivated but socially responsible organisations' which believed that hiring the right person for the job is not incompatible with recruiting unemployed people. Employers in this group include many large public sectors and private sectors organisations, which also feel the need to demonstrate social responsibility. The third group is 'purely commercially motivated organisations' which tend to view unemployed people as a risk and so hesitate to recruit them. Employers in this category are found across the private sector, with small and medium-sized enterprises over-represented. The fourth category included employers where context and resources precluded recruitment of unemployed people.

The introduction of the **Work Programme** (WP) and the use of a **'payment by results' (PbR) funding model** has served to intensify competition for engagement with employers. The PbR funding model tends to drive WP providers towards large employers who may be able to provide large numbers of repeat vacancies, rather than more resource-intensive engagement of small and medium-sized employers. Indeed, evidence from a study of employer engagement in the WP in Yorkshire and the Humber suggests that small employers had limited awareness of the WP and had recruited few staff through it (Ingold and Stuart, 2015).

In **engaging employers** to help disadvantaged groups into employment appeals are made variously to **business interests**, **social legitimacy** and **corporate social responsibility** concerns. Empirical evidence from a study of two Dutch cities suggests that employers have diverse motives to engage with such programmes to help unemployed / disadvantaged groups, including lowering costs, enacting social responsibility, and finding new sources of labour (van der Aa and van Berkel, 2014).

But whatever their motivation to engage, all employers wanted motivated, work-ready candidates.

Evidence from the UK suggests that, in keeping with human resource management theory, employers that rely heavily on a large supply of low-wage, low-skill labour (e.g. the retail and hospitality sectors[7]) are most likely to engage in active labour market programmes – including to resource new facilities (e.g. to staff new retail stores) and, more importantly in volume terms, to staff activities of business units within larger companies (e.g. local branches of retail chains) (McGurk, 2014). The fact that **recruitment decisions** for these types of roles generally are **made locally** underscores the fact that employer engagement locally is crucial. This means that good local labour market knowledge is an asset in building strong and ongoing relationships with employers, in enhancing mutual understanding, and in facilitating the 'fit' of recruits and of pre-employment training to employers' requirements (Green et al., 2015). Likewise, where employers have an ongoing strategic interest in relatively basic, but locally-based sector-specific skills, to meet corporate 'community resourcing' preferences, employer engagement at local level is important.

McGurk (2014) also highlights the **significance of recruitment agencies** in the labour supply chain. For an employer, the risk of taking on a relatively inexperienced recruit through a second intermediary (i.e. a recruitment agency), rather than as a direct employee, is reduced. This suggests that recruitment agencies are crucial actors, alongside employers, in accessing vacancies for some low-skilled jobs.

3.3.4. *Encouraging employer involvement and engagement*

Labour market intermediaries may **encourage employers to become involved and/or engaged** involved in programmes in several ways. Examples include offering help in provision of services, such as:

- pre-employment training;
- support with recruitment;
- in-work support - which may help address line managers' concerns about the investment that is required in the first few weeks and months as a young person adjusts to working life (CIPD, 2014); and
- wage subsidies [8] - which may be seen as reducing the risk of hiring unemployed/disadvantaged people.

---

[7] Young people aged 16-18 years are predominantly recruited to these two main sectors (Hasluck and Armitage, 2011).
[8] As reported in by Hasluck (2011), in the Great Britain context previous initiatives such as Workstart and New Deal for Young People have offered financial incentives to employers to take on unemployed young people, and in both instances the majority of employers in receipt of incentives indicated that they planned to continue to employ the recruit once the subsidy expired.

EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT IN PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Evidence suggests that pre-employment training (especially when employers are involved in design of such training) is valuable in ensuring that people develop the skills employers want. Active involvement in the design of such training as co-producers tends to increase employers' willingness to be more flexible concerning their recruitment demands and leads to greater satisfaction with outcomes (van der Aa and van Berkel, 2014). By prioritising the practical and soft skills employers are looking for, through exercises simulating working conditions, focused short programmes can help reduce prejudices towards unemployed people and help them access low-skilled jobs (Rieucau, 2014), and so facilitate work entry.

4

Models of TM partnership approaches to employer involvement and engagement

This section sets out models of employer involvement and employer engagement, and outlines how the four case study partnerships align with these models. To recap, employer involvement is defined as the strategic involvement of employers and employers' organisations in TM on an ongoing basis, while employer engagement is concerned with the practical issues of making contact with employers to raise awareness of TM, to raise the possibility of offering work placements and other activities, and/or making jobs available to TM young people.

4.1. Models of employer involvement

There are at least four ways in which case study partnerships could be involved in TM:

- **Direct involvement in core partnerships** – and so in strategic decision making affecting the direction and planning of TM partnership activities;

- Through **membership of an employer forum / sub-group** – providing strategic advice;

- **Direct involvement in delivery 'Hub' activity** – providing strategic and operational advice, and

- Through more **arms-length involvement in TM partnership activities** – e.g. providing advice on specific issues, including those of concern to employers, and on how best to engage employers, etc.

A specific employer may be involved in one or more ways with a TM partnership, and a specific TM partnership may be characterised by one or more types of involvement.

4.2. Models of employer engagement

There are three main models of **responsibility for employer engagement** amongst TM partnerships, including:

- **Lead partner** responsibility – sometimes through a direct employer/ business engagement officer or team;

- **Delivery partner** responsibility – with delivery partners, often with different prior experiences of employer engagement, having prime responsibility; and

- A **mix of core and delivery partner** responsibility for employer engagement – sometimes with the core partner taking responsibility for raising employer awareness of TM and delivery partners engaging employers to match the preferences of TM beneficiaries for particular types of jobs.

The latter distinction between 'awareness raising' and 'matching preferences' highlights an important difference in **approach to employer engagement**. These contrasting yet complementary approaches may be termed:

- **Proactive** – involving raising the profile of TM employers in a 'general' way, so as to promote awareness and interest amongst employers to (potentially) taking on TM beneficiaries for work experience and/or employment

- **Reactive** – seeking out employers to provide specific work experience / employment opportunities to fulfil the needs and preferences of specific TM beneficiaries (i.e. to find an employer 'match' that best 'fits' an individual TM beneficiary).

There is some overlap here between what might be termed demand-side and supply-side approaches to employer engagement:

- **Demand-side** – an approach involving identification of occupations and sectors where jobs are likely to occur (e.g. in local 'growth sectors' identified in LEP policy), then seeking to acquire a 'pool' of vacancies therein for TM, and 'directing' TM young people towards such job opportunities; and

- **Supply-side** – an approach which involves identifying the characteristics and employment preferences of TM young people and seeking out specific opportunities for them; (this is akin to the 'reactive' approach outlined above.

4.3. Formalisation of key principles / standards of employer involvement and engagement

Employer involvement and/or engagement can take place on a relatively **informal** basis, without making any 'good practice' exhortations or requirements on employers (other than meeting specific legal obligations), while meeting the needs of the TM partnership and the employer. Where TM partnership and employer needs do not match, employer involvement / engagement is unlikely to take place or be sustained.

Formalisation of key principles and standards desired (or even required) of employers for involvement or engagement in TM can be set out in an '**Employer Charter**' (or similar). Such an Employer Charter can set out 'good practice' principles regarding young people's recruitment, training and development, pay and conditions, and opportunities, which TM employers are asked to consider. The idea here is to set out and promote good practice in recruitment, employment and development of young people through promotion of local TM-specific **quality standards** amongst employers involved or engaged with TM. Alongside such a 'local' approach, TM partnerships can also promote national policy standards (such as the 'UK Youth Friendly Badge' and the 'Fair Train Work Experience Quality Standard').

4.4. Overview of key features of case study TM partnership employer involvement and engagement

The case study TM partnerships vary in size and approach to employer involvement and engagement. Their key features with regard to issues of relevance to this thematic study are set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: TM Case Study Partnerships: key features of employer involvement and engagement

TM Partnership	Key features
Black Country	A large partnership, with strong employer involvement on the Core Group and increasingly on local delivery hubs. The TM partnership is large and well-known across the Black Country sub-region by the LEP and business organisations. A dedicated business engagement adviser attends TM Steering Group and supporting activities of Hubs. There is a mix of demand-side and supply-side / proactive and reactive approaches to employer engagement
D2N2	A medium-sized TM partnership using the 'Young and Successful' brand. Employer engagement activity was devolved initially to four delivery partners at four main employer hubs (where delivery partners had varying previous experience in employer involvement/engagement and some different approaches to engagement). The approach to employer engagement was consolidated in early Summer 2015 (with more resource) into a centralised team – albeit with some activity remaining at hub level. The approach to employer engagement was predominantly reactive initially, but latterly is including a more proactive element alongside a reactive approach.
Staffordshire	A small TM partnership with some employer involvement on the core partnership, which it hopes to expand. Employer engagement has been undertaken by the lead partner, which did not have previous experience of employer engagement. The approach to employer engagement was more reactive in the early stages of TM but has since evolved to combine proactive and reactive elements, particularly following the recruitment of a dedicated employer engagement officer in 2015.
Worcestershire	A small TM partnership led by the Shaw Trust. Employers are involved in delivering employability training. The TM partnership is able to draw on the resources of the Shaw Trust Worcestershire Employer Engagement Consultant to source vacancies for Talent Match (alongside other Shaw Trust programmes). This approach is predominantly proactive. Some employer engagement work is undertaken via delivery partners.

Learning from case study TM partnerships

5

This section sets out issues pertaining to employer involvement and employer engagement from the four case study partnerships, before identifying key themes and emerging lessons looking ahead.

5.1. Employer involvement

The interviews yielded less information on employer involvement in TM than on employer engagement. In part this is likely to reflect the profile of the interviewees and their immediate concerns – including the fact that only a minority of interviewees were able to report on plans for involvement of employers in TM from the business plan stage (so reflecting their more recent involvement with TM).

5.1.1. Time available for employer involvement

There was general recognition that **account needs to be taken of the time it takes for employers to be centrally involved in TM**. It was felt that only a few (mainly large) employers have time to be involved in a core partnership, or to have strategic involvement in TM in some other way (as outlined in sub-section 5.1.4). As one interviewee explained:

> *"Large PLCs can afford to lose people for two or three days and they won't even notice it whereas a small SME will go 'you can go and do that hour's interview but you'll have to work over because we need to get X done'. But a lot of people are keen to help where they can, even small businesses." (Business organisation)*

The potential time commitment of intensive employer involvement was noted as a barrier by a small employer which, in principle, would have liked greater involvement with TM:

> *"With us being a relatively small business and growing rapidly, it's that dilemma of* [we] *really like to help out but at the same time if it adds a huge work burden it becomes problematic." (Small employer)*

But there are advantages of having a mix of employers by sector and size (if possible), so that the TM partnership can learn from a range of experiences and business needs. It was reported that fewer meetings and more electronic communication would help facilitate employer involvement in TM, given competing demands on employers' time. This is an important learning point for TM partnerships going forward.

5.1.2. Organisational and individual commitment

The case study evidence suggests that **a committed individual (with support from their employing organisation) lies at the heart of more time-intensive employer involvement with TM**. There are links here with the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in employer involvement (see sub-section 5.1.3).

In general, interviewees considered that there were plenty of people who might like to get involved from an employer perspective – albeit not all would be able to overcome the constraints of their existing role to do so:

> *"There's a lot of good people out there; people have got personal lives behind them and they may well identify and think I'd like to help somebody there."* (Business organisation)

5.1.3. The role of CSR

The case study evidence indicates that **local CSR is a key driver for employer involvement**. Employer involvement does not have to be motivated solely by altruism, but it may be. The fact that both the employer and TM can benefit represent a 'win-win' situation and this is a selling point for TM. As one employer involved in a case study TM partnership explained, the **commitment from the top of a business can be crucial** in encouraging staff to have involvement with TM partnerships:

> *"We do have a corporate social responsibility but the managing director here is very passionate about the community and about supporting local businesses, local charity, etc. … So is having the links to the community so he's filtered that down."* (Employer)

Another employer emphasised the importance of the **widening participation** agenda, focused upon getting more people (including young people) from the local population into employment, was one factor stimulating involvement in TM. For this large employer the **ethos of TM** was also crucial, and the fact that the onus was on finding **local opportunities for local young people** was appealing. The fact that contrary to the Work Programme approach, 'payment by results' was not a primary driver of TM activity was also a pull factor in this instance for involvement in TM.

5.1.4. Types of employer involvement and their benefits

The most obvious way for employers to have strategic involvement in TM partnerships is to have a place on the **core partnership**. A key advantage of involving employers in this way is that they **bring business realism to TM partnerships** through **injection of a private sector perspective** (in the case of private sector employers). This input tended to be seen as being particularly valuable given the composition of partnerships which voluntary sector organisations had more experience of being involved in. As one interviewee explained:

> *"I think it brings an edge of realism … quite often we have a lot of people from county councils, district councils and the voluntary sector and in some respects they're quite far removed from whatever business who have to make money and turn out as many whatever it is or sell as many whatever it is to make a profit and their focus is the profit, the bottom line."* (Partnership Lead Organisation)

Having private sector employers on the core partnership was also seen as advantageous in enabling other TM partners to better **understand employers' perspectives**, rather than focusing solely on the needs of young people in a vacuum, as indicated in the following quote, which highlights the need to understand the

workplace and the broader environment in which employers are operating for TM to be successful in helping young people into employment:

> *"I think why it's important to have businesses on the core partnership is we can't just look at it from the perspective of getting the young person into work, you've got to understand the workplace. … For example, … a lot of SMEs can't match the nationals so it's really important to be as realistic with businesses as we're trying to be with young people; the big point of Talent Match is to understand the young people, what their needs are, but if we don't do the same for businesses we're just making the same mistake, just the wrong way round."* (Partnership Lead Organisation)

Likewise, as an Employer Engagement Officer from another of the case study partnerships noted:

> *"It's only from those businesses [centrally involved] that we can really direct the project in the right way, they have a lot of useful information to give to us as to how we can steer the project and they know what they're looking for in young people so they can give us good tips on how we should be training our young people, what areas we should be focusing on more and also they know their particular sectors [and what is important for them]."* (Employer Engagement Officer)

In the Black Country interviewees emphasised the **value of having young people and employers sitting together on the TM Steering Group**. This helped enhance young people's understanding of business perspectives through direct experience of listening to employers' views. As one employer explained, employer involvement could help provide 'grounding' (i.e. a **reality check**) for young people about their desire for a job and a need for money when young people are *"going on about 'I want this, it's our human rights"*:

> *"I said to X [young person on the Steering Group], it doesn't matter what you want, I don't want you but you need me, because I'm an employer and I will provide you with the money to allow you to satisfy your wants. So if you turn up to an interview scruffily dressed, tattoos all over your hands and face, piercings all over, or whatever choice you make in your life, you can make those choices but I can make the choice as an employer of whether I want you or not. So that's what you have to understand, you want a job and all these things in life; in order to get that you need employment because that's where you get your money, we can provide you with that so you've got to satisfy our needs as an employer."* (Employer)

However, employer involvement alongside young people in the TM strategic decision-making also **provided employers with immediate insights into the lives/experience of disadvantaged young people**, so highlighting issues of which they were previously unaware. So, for example, the employers present at a TM partnership meeting had heard from young people about how difficult it was to live on an Apprenticeship Wage. One TM beneficiary noted that *"employers are obsessed with* [work] *experience"*, but he hoped that through recounting his experience of how he felt *"used"* after being on six two-week work trials when there was no prospect of being kept on, it might provide an alternative perspective to employers, just as he had benefited from first hand insights into *"how* [employers] *psycho-analyse you"* at the employment selection stage.

Involving employers in TM partnerships was also considered to be an important for **raising the profile of TM amongst employers locally**:

"We talk in our advisory board about employers having links to other employers so their local knowledge is key to us being able to look at how we can expand our project to help the clients." (Partnership Lead Organisation)

In the Black Country (the largest of the four case study TM Partnerships) TM had developed a considerable local profile and interviewees considered that a good relationship had been developed with the LEP. This had been helpful to TM in enabling access, through marketing activities, to companies that work with the LEP. It was considered important to work in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce (and with other partners) that had existing relationships with employers, so as to 'tie everything together'.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO PULL IN EMPLOYERS: THE CASE OF BLACK COUNTRY TM

Black Country TM is the largest TM partnership (in terms of Big Lottery funding). As a result it has a considerable profile amongst key players in the employment and skills system in the Black Country. From the outset considerable emphasis was placed on involving and engaging employers and working in partnership with other organisations. The fact that Black Country TM is a (relatively) big and important local player has facilitated partnership working with local stakeholders.

In terms of employer involvement and engagement, several interviewees spoke about complementarity and the 'natural link' between the work of TM and that of their own organisation. One example of programmes working together is provided by a local NHS Trust programme (Live and Work) to provide apprenticeship opportunities in the NHS and accommodation to homeless young people. Black Country TM can refer beneficiaries to the Live and Work programme – which provides a route way to independent living and employment, while TM can provide mentoring support which is not available via the NHS. A further example of support from an organisation with complementary objectives is provided by Wolverhampton Homes, which seeks to provide training and employment opportunities for its tenants. Wolverhampton Homes is co-located with Gazebo – the organisation housing the Black Country Central Hub, and provides support to TM support with, talks, training, job opportunities, etc. These partners / supporters are in turn ambassadors for Black Country TM, helping to raise the profile across the local area.

There is a dedicated Business Engagement Advisor at Black Country TM working in partnership with other organisations – including the local authorities, the Chamber of Commerce, the Black Country LEP and DWP - to source vacancies and other opportunities (e.g. sector based work academies) for TM. Interviewees from these other organisations were positive about TM and about sharing vacancies. A co-ordinated approach is favoured for new employers moving into the local area (rather than every individual organisation trying to approach them) and the relevant local authority takes the lead here. Through building strong relationships with the local authorities Black Country TM can gain access to some of these and other vacancies notified to local authorities. Additionally the TM Business Engagement Advisor builds up some direct relationships with employers, including through attendance at networking events.

More practically, this might involve facilitating TM representation at recruitment fairs, providing links to other employers, and advising on how TM might approach employers for their involvement/engagement. So crucially, **employers can be involved in TM in other ways than strategic direction from formal involvement**

on the core partnership. They can provide advice on particular activities (e.g. what needs to be covered in a workshop on interview training). The case studies yielded examples of involvement of employers whose employee profiles (in one particular case geared towards post-doctoral qualifications) meant that direct provision of long-term employment to TM beneficiaries (many of whom have limited formal qualifications) would likely be limited. One employer in this position explained how a desire to *"add something and still help"* in such circumstances had involved developing workshops on CV and interview preparation and giving insights into what employers are looking for. The partnership lead organisation highlighted the value of this particular employer's involvement in providing such advice.

An interviewee from an employer representative organisation highlighted how these other types of employer involvement in TM might appeal to some local employers from both local CSR and **staff development** perspectives:

> " … *developing their staff and broadening their experience, especially the younger ones coming through, young managers who have something to bring, maybe interview skills or finance or whatever it is and that's good for them because that helps them with their management skills as they go forward, interacting with people."* (Business organisation)

This underscores the point that there are ways other than involvement in the core partnership to draw in employers to become involved in TM and provide important resource for TM partnerships and support for TM beneficiaries.

5.1.5. *When to involve employers*

In the Black Country TM Partnership employer involvement was prioritised at the outset and the Steering Group involved six employers. Part of the rationale for involving employers at this stage was so that they could be involved in planning and shaping the direction of TM, rather than 'being done to' at a later date. TM activity in the Black Country is organised around local hubs, and more recently the Steering Group employers have been allocated to the hubs, to provide support around employer activity – so **employer involvement is evolving over time**.

In the other case study TM partnerships formalised involvement of employers in TM strategic decision-making was quite strong in the early stages of planning for TM, but then in the early delivery period there was a drop off in employer involvement in high-level strategic decision-making. In general, it was felt in these instances that there was greater scope for employers to be involved in other ways (e.g. provision of (advice on) interview practice, and on the content of training programmes, etc.) when the caseload of work-ready TM beneficiaries increased.

Some interviewees saw advantages in developing their partnership structures going forward to facilitate greater employer involvement. In Staffordshire, for instance, the aspiration was to develop a wider partnership group in addition to the core partnership and to have more employers sitting on that. In this way, employers could be involved – without having to put in the same time commitment as involvement in the core partnership would entail.

It was clear that the long gestation period for TM was a factor in employer interest lapsing in some cases. This was attributed by several interviewees to the private sector being used to a faster turnaround time than the voluntary and public sectors. This is an important learning point for those involved in the planning and implementation of future programmes.

5.2. Employer engagement

5.2.1. Approaches to employer engagement

Section 4.2 set out key models of employer engagement. There is suggestive evidence on the basis of the four case studies that a supply-side approach has been more prevalent than a demand-side approach. Such a supply-side or reactive approach, in which specific work experience / apprenticeship / employment opportunities are sought to fit a particular TM beneficiary chimes with the 'individualised' philosophy of TM.

With regard to the supply-side or reactive approach, one issue raised in the case study interviews in relation of extent to which young people's aspirations are realistic and whether and how they should be curtailed for feasibility. There is a tension between enabling young people to do what they wish to do and being unrealistic (for a specific individual, given particular structural barriers).

A number of interviewees also pointed to the need to sell the idea that a specific job might be a 'stepping stone' to a more desirable job, rather than necessarily being able to access a preferred job in a single step.

One interviewee felt that there was a tension between focusing on what a young person wants and ensuring that young people are aware of labour market opportunities more broadly and what the labour market might look like in the future. This illustrates a possible tension between supply-side and demand-side approaches and also raises a broader issue about the role (and capability) of TM partnerships, staff and partner organisations in offering careers information, advice and guidance:

> *"Talent Match is very much coming from the angle that it should be the young person and the job that they really want. I think we should be working with growth industries to broaden young people's aspirations because whilst it should be the job they want, do they really understand the range of jobs and the jobs that are likely to give them a career path, if that's what they want, for the future?" (TM delivery organisation)*

Another interviewee from a TM partnership lead organisation, while emphasising the need to enhance young people's awareness of opportunities and what vacancies might be suitable was adamant that TM was not about a *"numbers approach"* and *"shoe-horning young people into vacancies"* – on the grounds that *"if you do what you have always done, you get what you have always got".* This highlights that part of the perceived value of the TM approach is that it can be different from the Jobcentre or Work Programme approach.

The case studies revealed a general recognition of **the case for a balance between supply-side / reactive and more proactive and demand-side approaches**. As two interviewees with responsibility for employer engagement for two different partnerships explained:

> *"We're aware of the growing economies in our local area and the opportunities that are available, so we have a database of all those opportunities and we advertise those to the mentors and young people so they're getting those through regularly so they know what's about. But if there's nothing that's suitable for the young person we do the supply side, so I can help find something specific for the young person and their individual needs so it's a bit of both [demand-side and supply-side] which works quite well." (Employer engagement officer)*

"I think we need to have a proactive and reactive strategy. [The proactive] is going out there, talking to employers, making employers more aware about what it is we do. Then the reactive one is where we have got some young people who really do want to take that next step forward, they've got an interest, that might be where we find a specific employer that's got something to do with the interest of that young person but saying to that employer this is what we're going to do with this young person, we're going to go through with them about time keeping, this, that and the other to do with work, if you can give that young person some work experience and we're still there giving that support." (Employer engagement officer)

The general direction of travel in the case of the D2N2 and Staffordshire TM partnerships had been from a predominantly reactive supply-side approach to one in which there was increased proactivity in tandem with such an approach. This had been facilitated during 2015 by reorienting and / or expanding budgets for employer engagement through the establishment of an Employment and Enterprise Team in D2N2 and the appointment of a dedicated Employer Engagement officer in Staffordshire, as well as the growing profile of TM in both areas.

Such developments are illustrative of a need to revisit existing arrangements and develop new approaches (as appropriate) when TM moves further into the delivery phase, and also show the learning ethos of TM in action. Arguably a demand-side approach can be more easily implemented by large TM partnerships, or those able to 'borrow scale' from an employer engagement team with a broader focus (as in the case of Worcestershire TM which was able to draw on the broader Shaw Trust infrastructure for employer engagement).

AN EXAMPLE OF TEST AND LEARN - 'DEVELOPING AND CHANGING APPROACH': THE CASE OF TM D2N2

In D2N2 TM employer engagement was initially the responsibility of the four hubs (one in each of Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire), where delivery was subcontracted from Groundwork (the TM lead organisation) to a delivery partner; (a different delivery organisation is sub-contracted to deliver TM in each Hub area). Precisely what was done in each hub area depended on the individual knowledge and experience of the Hub organisation. Such experience of employer engagement, and opportunities for drawing on the broader infrastructure of the hub organisation varied. For example, a staff member at one hub had been an employer and had business links, another hub organisation could draw on the broader infrastructure of a FE college (which was the delivery partner in this instance) and had considerable experience of engaging employers through being responsible for European Social Fund contracts for the unemployed; while in hubs where there was less experience it was considered that the task of employer engagement would be harder.

Based on experience and feedback from the hubs regarding this arrangement, it was decided that it would be better that rather than each hub recruit a separate Employer Engagement officer (as was initially envisaged), a centralised resource - employed by Groundwork – would be a more appropriate to supplement the work of the hubs. In early summer 2015 a centralised Employment Team with 2.5 posts was established to respond to the needs from delivery partners and to work proactively and reactively to generate opportunities for TM beneficiaries. This centralised approach is likely to result in greater standardisation across hubs (in a context where D2N2 is moving to the development of additional micro hubs) and easier management, drawing on the additional staff with specialist expertise in employer engagement.

Formerly, the balance of employer engagement activity had been mainly reactive. Some interviewees felt that more emphasis on a proactive approach of engaging employers was needed. The Employment Team is adopting proactive and reactive approaches to employer engagement, with the proactive involving going out and engaging with employers and saying: 'This is Talent Match', while the reactive one is more about going to the hubs and trying to broker jobs for work ready TM beneficiaries.

A standardised approach to employer engagement also facilitates data integration. D2N2 TM uses a bespoke Hanlon monitoring system, and the Employment Team is working towards setting up databases and management systems to enable job opportunities to be logged in such a way that they can be matched to young people in a particular geographical area looking for jobs in a particular sector.

Looking ahead at the time of the interviews, the Employment Team was looking at creating a newsletter to send to the hubs, providing information on volunteering opportunities and potential jobs, etc. Going further forward the aspiration is to set up a website. One possible model identified for website development was the Opportunities Hub at TM Greater Manchester (see https://gmtalentmatch.org.uk/opportunities) bringing together information for employers, young people, TM partners and other organisations with a potential interest in engagement / involvement in TM.

5.2.2. Responsibility for and methods of employer engagement

There is no single 'right way' to engage employers: a range of methods were mentioned by interviewees as being either in use or under consideration.

In the Black Country TM partnership primary responsibility for employer engagement is vested in a **TM-specific dedicated employer engagement role** (involving direct meetings with employers, attending business engagement events, etc.) – the type of approach that D2N2 TM was moving towards by establishing a centralised team. It was noted by one interviewee that Birmingham TM had set up a **recruitment agency** as a social enterprise and this approach was considered of interest by that particular interviewee.

Worcestershire TM partnership made use of **non TM specific employer engagement staff** serving the Shaw Trust i.e. the Talent Match lead organisation more broadly. In this way, as a small TM partnership Worcestershire could 'borrow scale' (as noted in sub-section 5.2.1) by making use of specialists, who also engaged employers for Shaw Trust clients on the Work Programme and Work Choice (i.e. programmes that clients are mandated to attend).[9] This enabled a wider variety of employment opportunities to be brought in front of TM participants than would otherwise be the case, but 'dilutes' any specific TM brand because employers were being contacted at the same time with regard to possible opportunities / vacancies for clients of different programmes. Hence it was considered in this instance that it did not make sense to talk to employers (at least in the first instance) about specific contracts / programmes, but rather to say that a pool of candidates was available, who could be prepared for specific vacancies – possibly through pre-employment programmes co-designed with an employer (if appropriate).

---

[9] These are programmes that clients are mandated to attend, and so contrast with TM which is voluntary and offers one-to-one support for the beneficiary.

Benefits of having the services of **a dedicated employer engagement officer** (whether TM-specific or otherwise) were considered by interviewees to be access to staff dedicated to this specific function **who could build up specialist knowledge about the needs of employer in particular sectors and the requirements of specific job roles**. One interviewee in an employer engagement role described how going to work for local employers for a day or so doing a particular job could be advantageous in gaining the confidence of employers and strengthening relationships with them:

> *"I think definitely the interaction with employers and going to work at their premises because that gets the buy in from the employer that if you're going to spend the time to do the job it will give the employer more confidence that you can then go away and take the actual real time knowledge with you, that's definitely something I've found has been successful, especially with strengthening a relationship with an employer." (Employer engagement officer)*

Where **delivery partners have responsibility for employer engagement** a variety of approaches may be used – depending on the experience and the infrastructure of the organisation concerned (as indicated in the case of D2N2 outlined above).. Moreover, where TM delivery partners engage with employers directly they may or may not use the TM brand; rather they may use their own organisational brand alongside, or instead of, the TM brand. For employers what matters is that they have a worker who fits their requirements; it does not matter for them if that individual has been engaged through, and is supported by a TM delivery partner via TM or some other programme that the delivery partner is contracted to provide. But this does

matter for TM, and for the longer-term sustainability of activity that Big Lottery funding has enabled. This is an issue that Big Lottery may wish to consider in future programmes.

Accessing 'hidden vacancies' (i.e. those not currently advertised on the open labour market) was a goal mentioned by several interviewees:

"More jobs are advertised online because that's the world we live in, but there are still hidden vacancies that you get from building relationships with employers that don't get advertised online and they're the ones we really try to tap into." *(Employer engagement officer)*

One interviewee described how current and future hidden vacancies could be accessed by 'door knocking' (i.e. approaching and talking to employers 'on spec'):

"One of the things is pounding the streets and finding those small employers, because when they've got a vacancy it is by word of mouth. If we're going out and meeting these people the more you're talking to them the more they'll be telling you about: 'I do need someone but at the moment I haven't got the money', or 'I'm looking at it maybe six months down the line'. That gives you that avenue then to be able to start building up that relationship so it will start to flag up to you that they've got this job coming up." *(Interviewee with some responsibility for employer engagement as part of role)*

Looking ahead, ideas mentioned by case study interviewees for expanding employer engagement work included greater use of ***social media*** and ***use of Linkedin***.

5.2.3. 'Selling' TM to employers

The case studies revealed that there are numerous non-TM stakeholders active in engaging employers for jobs, work placements, traineeships and apprenticeships, and employers feeling, in the words of one employer: *"inundated with requests from everywhere"* leading to *"sheer frustration of numbers"*. This raises the issue of **what key aspects of TM to 'sell' to employers and how to do so**.

The unique ethos of TM

One interviewee highlighted the importance of making a distinction between what TM offered and what other labour market intermediaries provided:

"What Talent Match has got to do is enthuse those employers and offer them something different to Jobcentre Plus and those doing the Work Programme offer. From what I can see so far … it's geared to help people, not [in a reference to private sector Work Programme providers] to line the pockets of corporate organisations." *(Employer involved in TM)*

Some other interviewees emphasised that TM was different from Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme in that targets were not of such central importance, and thus, in the words of an interviewee from a TM lead organisation, did not need to be so "*pushy*" or *"send people who aren't really suitable for the role"*. Staffordshire TM, in particular, appeared to have reaped benefits from having a 'different' approach to employer engagement compared with providers of mandatory programmes.

In-work support

There was a general view across interviewees that **in-work mentoring support is the key selling point for TM to employers**. Several interviewees reported that for businesses they talked to it was *"a positive"* that they welcomed. As interviewees responsible for employer engagement noted, the availability of in-work this was something that was stressed to employers:

> "We make sure employers are aware that we offer in work support, it's not just we place people into work and goodbye, there's always ongoing contact to make sure if there's any issues that we can find a solution before anything escalates." (Interviewee with responsibility for employer engagement)

"One of our selling points is that we have the mentor support, so when I go to businesses that's one of our strong points, businesses do like that because if anything should go wrong while they have a young person with them they've got that point of contact to talk to us if there are any issues, so they're not just left to their own devices" (Interviewee with responsibility for employer engagement)

A Talent Match beneficiary endorsed this view:

"If Talent Match can get in … and say to the employer they're on benefits but they're with Talent Match, they're being supported daily, any problems that you're finding with the employee or prospective employees, get in touch with Talent Match and they'll support you as well as the person getting the job, whereas the job centre say you've got a job interview on such a day, off you pop and that's that." (Talent Match beneficiary)

But it was reported by some interviewees (from various roles) that not all young people want in-work support, or if in receipt of in-work support, would want their employer to know about this - feeling that it could be a stigma that would place them at a disadvantage because the employer would 'look down' on them. However, from one mentor's perspective, *"being a listening ear"* to TM beneficiaries' concerns in employment can help to *"nip problems in the bud"* and so avoid small settling in difficulties turning into major issues that lead to a young person leaving a job. However, it was emphasised that the onus needed to be on the young person, rather than the mentor, discussing issues with the employer; after all this was in the TM spirit of developing and empowering young people to be independent. Interviewees raised some concerns about employers 'not listening' when young people had genuine issues. But young people in receipt of in-work support were appreciative of it – and it helped fuel their desire to sustain employment. As one TM beneficiary explained:

"I think as well they're there for you afterwards, even though I'm with [employer name] now, they're [TM] still here for me; me and [person from TM] went out for ice cream last week just for a catch up, and you don't really get that with the job centre, it's once you've got a job you're gone." (TM young person in employment)

It is not just in-work support for the young person that is a useful selling point to employers for TM. One delivery partner with some responsibility for employer engagement emphasised the importance of **other support that TM could provide to the employer – for example, with setting up apprenticeships**. The interviewee explained how support in guiding a small employer through what was involved in setting up an apprenticeship, providing a suitable college provider, and sorting out the paperwork, was important in providing an opening for a TM young person:

Corporate Social Responsibility and local communities

Interviews with stakeholders and employers suggest that **CSR (for large employers) and 'local community spirit' (for small employers) is a key 'hook' for employer engagement**, albeit some felt it was less important than in-work support. One employer from a large company explained the importance of CSR as a factor in engagement in TM, given the onus placed by the company on CSR:

"It's massive on [employer's name] agenda and definitely part of my performance in that I'm not just measured on what I do in my [workplace], I'm measured on what I do outside of my [workplace] as well." (Retail employer)

In this particular instance engagement in TM proved relatively easy because TM was 'sold' on the basis that:

" … they're [TM] an organisation that does good, while they've got statistics and things to run for, it's a social responsibility" (Retail employer)

Likewise, a small new start employer emphasised the importance of business having a 'social conscience' and 'giving a TM beneficiary a chance':

"If you've got a position to fill and you're not looking for a high end, highly experienced, qualified person but you have a position that is fairly tightly scoped and allows somebody to develop and train into the position then I think it's a good thing to do. It's got to be 'win win' because you've got to get something out of it, at the end of the day you're getting a pair of hands, labour, enthusiasm, that's the goal, but then you're trying to put something back into somebody and grow them as a person - business should have a conscience of some form." (New start employer)

Other interviewees also highlighted that small local employers often were more receptive than larger ones to providing opportunities for TM beneficiaries, and could be more 'empathetic' in understanding the needs of some TM beneficiaries entering employment. A young person in employment with a small employer endorsed the benefits of small businesses that are *"personally-driven"* in providing practical work experience opportunities, in contrast with his previous experience of big business which could be *"a bit cold and policy-driven"*. One interviewee from a partnership lead organisation described this more 'personalised' and 'local community spirit' aspect in the following terms:

"We should be doing something for these young people and I do have a job, I do need it filled, I'd rather a young person from [local neighbourhood] than someone coming from [outside the local area]" (TM Partnership Lead organisation)

Likewise one employer interviewed suggested that a useful approach for TM to adopt in engaging employers was along the lines:

"'Have you thought about what you can put back into the community?' - and do it from that approach. Also it's work experience so you can trial them, see how it goes, we're [TM] here to add extra support, we can provide further education so the onus isn't all on you as the employer." (Medium-sized employer)

Work readiness

There appeared to be reluctance in some quarters to use local CSR as a key TM selling point, instead preferring to place onus on TM reputation for the 'quality' of preparation of TM candidates (i.e. TM candidates being chosen on their own merit). It is clear that **work readiness of TM beneficiaries** is very important for employers. As an interviewee from a business representative organisation noted, it is often the case that young people in general presenting to them were not job ready:

"I get the feedback from a lot of businesses out there that a lot of youngsters are really not cutting the mustard, turning up on time, being smartly dressed, being respectful, not sitting there on their phone every time they've got five minutes rather than saying 'what do you want me to do next?', those sort of thing." (Business representative organisation)

This meant that the onus was on TM to prepare young people for employment and ensure that when presented to employers they are work ready. Then, at least in the case of some employers and some TM young people in employment, the employer benefits from knowing more about the background of the young person from TM than

they would get from the Jobcentre. Moreover, in cases where a reactive approach to employer engagement had been taken, the employer would know care has been taken to prepare and 'fit' the young person with the opportunity the employer is offering. Generally, interviewees from TM partnerships felt very confident about the work readiness of TM young people vis-à-vis their peers *"sent from the Jobcentre"* (Employer Engagement officer). They also emphasised work readiness when presenting young people to employers:

> *"I hammer home, the phrase I use is we [TM] get them work-ready, and when [employers] hear that they might think they're taken from high school and they've improved them a bit, or they might think they've taken someone with special needs and made them ready; … what they've heard is me say we've got them work-ready and if they're work-ready, okay, I'm ready to see them." (TM Partnership Lead organisation)*

In D2N2 the new Employment and Enterprise Team were working to formalise measurement of TMyoung people's work readiness. They had developed a 'client ready form'[10] which could be used, along with notes on the young person from TM client management system and the young person's CV, to deem whether a young person was 'job ready' (see also section 5.2.4). The young person's CV would be attached to the form,

Employers' recruitment difficulties and variable needs for staff

Some employers face difficulties in recruiting and/or have variable need for staff, so the fact that TM supplies potential recruits to **meet a labour shortage** is attractive. Examples of such employers include those recruiting for stewarding roles (on zero hours contracts), those seeking to fill jobs in fast food restaurants and agency work generally.

There were varying views amongst interviewees about whether TM should encourage young people to take such roles. One interviewee was adamant that TM young people should not be encouraged to take up such jobs:

> *"I directly steer [young people] clients away from agency work as they notoriously 'forget to pay' poach on clients with empty promises of work. Through most accounts of clients picking agency work, it has turned out to have a negative impact on a young person's life." (TM mentor)*

Conversely another interviewee with experience of managing other employability programmes with JSA claimants, as well as with involvement in TM, was adamant that agency work and zero hours contracts had a role to play in helping young people with limited work experience take first steps into employment as 'stepping stones' into the jobs they desired:

The fact that going to **TM is free to the employer** is also attractive to some employers who might otherwise have to pay for recruitment services:

> *"It's a cost effective way for them to recruit, they don't have to pay fees to recruitment agencies so it should be a win win all round." (Employer engagement officer)*

---

[10] It was noted that the Leeds TM Partnership had developed something similar.

5.2.4. When to engage employers

There was a general view from interviewees that **employer engagement can happen 'too early'** (i.e. **before TM beneficiaries are 'job ready'**), so raising employers' expectations before TM is in a position to satisfy them. This suggests that there is a balance to be struck between engaging (as opposed to involving) employers at the outset of the TM programme when only a few TM beneficiaries were job ready, yet ensuring that sufficient employers are engaged to be able to provide opportunities when TM beneficiaries were ready for them. This is an important learning point from TM for other programmes aiming to place vulnerable groups into employmentAs one interviewee with responsibility for employer engagement explained:

> *"Until we actually had young people it wasn't very real for them [employers]. I think it is difficult because if you wait too long then there isn't enough opportunities for the young people but also if the business has got an opportunity and nobody's filling it that's not great for them either." (Employer engagement officer)*

This suggests that **employer engagement becomes more important as more TM beneficiaries become work ready**.

It was considered damaging for TM beneficiaries and for TM for young people to go before employers if they are not job ready (so emphasising the importance of work readiness, as discussed above). From a TM partnership perspective, as emphasised by an interviewee from a partnership lead organisation, *"reputation is everything"*, and so it is necessary to ensure that the TM reputation remains positive by not disappointing employers: "*the nightmare scenario would be any employer saying if you are from TM we are not going to give you a chance*".

As noted above, the D2N2 TM partnership had developed a 'red, amber, green' traffic light system to categorise TM beneficiaries according to their job readiness. Those beneficiaries categorised as 'red' were deemed to be too far from work ready to be put in front of employers; rather it was those beneficiaries categorised as 'amber' or 'green' who were ready to engage with the work environment – perhaps at first through a work placement or a traineeship, as opposed to a full-time job.

5.2.5. A role for wage subsidies?

There was a range of views (some positive, some negative) about whether wage subsidies ought to play a role in TM. There was an awareness that some TM partnerships offered wage subsidies, but the four case study partnerships did not have wage subsidies as part of the TM 'offer' to employers. The majority pragmatic view amongst case study interviewees was that wage subsidies can help – including as a "*hook*" for employers to support people they might not otherwise have taken on. Two interviewees cited the value of the former Future Jobs Fund which provided a subsidy to employers to take on unemployed people. One interviewee from a Partnership Lead Organisation described it as providing a *"six-month job interview"*. However, a minority of interviews felt that offering wage subsidies was *"not the right way to go"* (Partnership Lead Organisation). Questions were raised about the sustainability of jobs once the subsidy ended:

> *"If we're thinking about changing what the job market looks like, isn't that like a temporary fix until the money runs out? And they'll be disappointed then. […] I'm not sure it's going to be a long term game changer; I think it's more of a plaster job, useful for quick wins. I'm not distraught we haven't got it [i.e. wage subsidies]." (TM Partnership lead)*

There was a feeling that a wage subsidy might prove particularly beneficial for a small employer needing to know that they can cover the wage bill when they take on a new recruit, and, in the cases of a TM young person, also provide the supervision and support necessary for that individual. However, a wage subsidy need not necessarily be the main motivator in recruitment, as an example of a new start employer engaging with TM illustrates:

> *"As an employer we try and seize the opportunity where we can to help us, cash is short, we're a start-up so we're feeling our feet, so I can understand how that would work, [but] for us it wouldn't have been the major motivator for taking someone on." (New start employer)*

However, an interviewee with employer engagement responsibility reported being asked by small businesses about whether incentives were available – and although this had not stopped them engaging with TM – and it did mean that the focus was on the individual rather than financial incentives:

> *"A lot of businesses I go out to see do mention whether there is any incentive for them, any support for them but obviously we don't do that. It's hard because the smaller businesses do perhaps need that incentive, they can't always afford to take someone on as they are but unfortunately we don't offer that, but I don't think that's a hindrance really, we haven't had businesses saying they won't get involved because of that. … we put young people at the heart of everything so they're looking at the young person rather than the money they could be getting, we encourage them to think about the skills the young person has and what they can offer rather than the money." (Employer Engagement Officer)*

As noted above, there was awareness of a range of practice across TM partnerships; one interviewee noted that the issue of wage subsidies had been discussed at an early steering group meeting, but reported that guidance from the Big Lottery was that wage subsidies could not be offered. However, it had transpired subsequently that some TM partnerships were using wage subsidies and some concern was expressed that if a neighbouring TM partnership offered wage subsidies this might lead to an expectation amongst employers that all TM partnerships would offer subsidies. This was noted by Staffordshire TM (adjacent to Birmingham TM which offered wage subsidies) although at this stage concerns were hypothetical (in that a specific instance of such an expectation being expressed by an employer had not arisen to date):

> *"Birmingham do wage incentives which has an issue for us. If we had a young person who lived Lichfield side of Birmingham who wanted to go into [a Birmingham based employer] we couldn't offer them the same as Birmingham currently offer them so as far as [the Birmingham based employer] are concerned they probably wouldn't engage with us." (Staffordshire Partnership Lead Orgnisation).*

A similar potential situation was noted by an interviewee from the D2N2 TM partnership about wage subsidies being available from, and promoted by, Sheffield TM (which borders the northern part of the D2N2 area).

In at least some parts of the D2N2 area it was possible to link into non-TM subsidies available locally, such as the Nottingham Jobs Fund, and in such a way direct employers to a non-TM wage subsidy available for some employers (meeting Fund specific requirements) in Nottingham. Likewise, in the case of D2N2 it was noted that in Leicester (part of the neighbouring Leicester and Leicestershire TM area) a subsidy from the City Council was being utilised by TM to provide financial assistance for some employers taking on TM young people.

So the picture on wage subsidies is quite complex, with a diversity of views expressed. It is clear, however, that interviewees considered that TM engagement needed to be about much more than wage subsidies, especially of employment of TM beneficiaries was to be sustainable.

5.3. A role for a joint national TM approach to engaging large employers?

There were a **range of views on whether there was a role of a joint national TM approach to engaging large employers**, but the general consensus was that **such an approach would have had to be implemented from the outset**, and it was **now too late to do so**. Many organisations with a national footprint – such as the Shaw Trust (the lead partner for Worcestershire TM) – have national account managers to work with large employers, so a joint national TM approach to engaging large employers would replicate such an arrangement. One of the small employers interviewed felt that such an approach might be appealing to large employers, while for a small employer it was the fact that TM was happening locally that mattered.

What was clear from interviewees was that a joint national approach to engaging large employers **would need common branding across TM partnerships**. This issue of common national branding is an important learning point for future programmes. One interviewee was very positive about a joint national approach, but felt that the time for this had passed:

> *"It would be good to have some big organisations perhaps being a champion of the programme. But then you have to think in terms of the identity and branding of the programme, it's not uniform across the country." (TM partnership lead organisation)*

Similarly an interviewee from an employer representative organisation was clear that a national approach would be helpful in engaging large national employers with a footprint across several local areas and raising the visibility of promoting TM, but again emphasised the need for clear national branding:

> *"I've got an awareness now of what Talent Match is and what it does … but if you change it to ABC Matching in 12 months' time you go 'what's that?' so I think that's really important. So stick with 'Talent Match' whether you like it or not, it does what it says on the tin, matching talent." (Employer representative organisation)*

However, **negotiating and implementing a joint national TM approach to large employer might not be that simple**. While some interviewees involved in liaising with employers reported that a company's centralised recruitment procedures (sometimes subcontracted to an agency on a fixed-term contract basis) may mean it was impossible for TM to engage, some (but not all) interviewees from large employers emphasised that they had considerable discretion in local recruitment. One interviewee from a TM partnership hub organisation with considerable experience in the employability policy field questioned how easy it would be for TM to generate a national approach, especially given competition from other organisations:

> *"You've got so many people knocking on people's doors and other organisations, without being derogatory at all, that are far bigger than Talent Match that are knocking on people's doors, you've got all the Work Programme providers, it's very difficult. Some companies will have a relationship with one particular provider but it's not as common as it used to be. … I think there's a place for that and if they [TM] can negotiate that that's fantastic, but I'm not sure how successful they'll be in doing that." (TM Partnership Hub organisation)*

5.2.6. A role for relaxing / adapting recruitment and selection practices for TM beneficiaries?

There was **consensus** from interviewees that **standard recruitment and selection practices should not be relaxed for TM beneficiaries**; rather the approach for TM partnerships should be one of assisting TM beneficiaries through existing recruitment processes while challenging businesses (as appropriate) to (re)consider their recruitment and selection procedures to make them accessible (where possible) to a wider range of recruits. After all, it was noted that employers have standards and (in the private sector) obligations to their shareholders. An example was given of one employer having adapted their standard recruitment processes to consider TM young people but this appeared to be the exception rather than the norm. Rather what appeared to be the norm was summed up by one employer as:

> *"What [you] can't do is lower the bar, so if the entry criteria is five GCSEs A-C that's what's needed. … You can't compromise the quality." (Employer)*

A different employer with strategic involvement in TM considered that TM beneficiaries would be unlikely to be successful with the company's normal recruitment processes which would "*pick the cream*" in a "*highly tuned recruitment process*". This employer noted that currently much of the recruitment at the organisation was done through an agency (and agency workers accounted for around one in four workers). When a vacancy came up a manager would "*take the pick*" from the agency pool. In this particular instance the interview considered that for TM beneficiaries to be taken on it would be necessary to **challenge businesses about their recruitment policies** and / or circumnavigate the current recruitment process.

The majority of interviewees were clear that while there was a case for recruitment and selection processes to be demystified where appropriate, recruitment norms and standards should be maintained. As one interviewee from a Partnership Lead organisation emphasised, it is not a case of *"going cap in hand to employers saying please, please give this young person a chance."* Rather the role of TM in preparing young people for employment was to get to a position where *"young people are eminently employable on their own merits".* Hence, there was considered to be a role for TM staff and employers to **support young people through the recruitment process**, whether through pre-employment workshops designed for (and sometimes with inputs from) specific employers or on an individual basis. Likewise an employer could help by ensuring buddying arrangements were set up for TM beneficiaries on work experience or taking up a job:

> *"What you can do is add a bit more understanding about the person taking up that role, you're mindful that they might have other issues that you wouldn't normally expect." (Employer)*

But the bottom line is that recruitment and selection standards cannot be compromised.

Key learning points

<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 4em;">6</div>

This section sets out some of the key learning points for partnerships from the case studies.

6.1. Employer size

- Large employers with someone whose role includes CSR activities may be more able to be involved in the kind of TM strategic activities that involve meetings and workshops. If smaller employers are to be involved in these activities, thought should be given to the timing and location of such meetings, since smaller employers tend to be less able to absorb the time-cost of a missing employee during the working day.

- Smaller employers may offer greater flexibility in offering individualised support for a trainee, apprentice or employee, but they may need more administrative / HR support from TM to do so.

6.2. Employment sectors

- The voluntary and retail sectors (including restaurants and other catering outlets) appear to be of particular importance in offering employment opportunities to TM beneficiaries. Employers from all sectors can promote TM through employer networks, even if they can currently offer no suitable employment opportunities. This suggests that while some sectors might offer more direct opportunities than others, TM partnerships can benefit from engaging with employers in a variety of sectors.

6.3. Types of jobs

- Low hours, zero hours and fixed-term contracts can play a role in building young people's CVs – as a stepping-stone towards a more 'ideal' position. It is unrealistic to expect that all TM beneficiaries who want a permanent full-time role can be placed in such a role in the first instance, given the labour market history and challenges faced by some young people.

- There are real benefits to working with beneficiaries to produce an individualised plan that leads them to the job that they want, but there has to be an understanding on the part of the beneficiary and the advisor that this is a journey that hopefully will eventually lead to the job they want, not a one-step process.

6.4. Reputation and trust

- Reputation and trust are very important in relationships with employers and can take time to build. They can be destroyed easily. It is important that TM partnerships are open and honest in their dealings with employers.

- Care should be taken as far as possible to ensure that TM beneficiaries are 'work ready' and matched to particular opportunities which represent a 'good fit'. This is seen by employers as a key benefit of TM and one that differentiates it from other programmes, so making these features important selling points of TM.

6.5. CSR, local community spirit, support and stigma

- The CSR agenda and local community spirit can be important hooks for employers (of all sizes) to engage in TM. As such it makes sense for TM partnerships to utilise them.

- The support provided by TM partnerships (particularly for beneficiaries when in-work) is a key selling point for TM. Care must be taken in presenting this to employers, as such support could be viewed as stigmatising for the young person concerned. Work-ready TM beneficiaries should be seen as capable, valuable employees who are employed on their own merits, not "*charity cases*".

- It is important that there is discussion between the young person concerned and his/her mentor, as well as with the employer, about the support they want once they are in work, and, indeed if they want any support at all.

6.6. Local and central/national

- A local approach to employer engagement fits with the ethos of TM, but in engaging with national employers there may be benefits to presenting TM as a national programme. This means that thought needs to be given, going forward, of the extent to which delivery partners, in particular, foreground their own name, rather than the TM brand, when engaging with employers.

6.7. Resourcing

- Approaches to employer involvement and engagement are to some extent shaped by resources available and they are evolving as TM develops and meets new opportunities and challenges. Partnerships can learn from their own experience and from each other.

- As TM moves forward into the next phase there needs to be recognition that additional resources are likely to be needed for employer engagement within the partnerships – perhaps via bidding for additional resources, moving resources from other activities or reconfiguring the organisational set-up in relation to management and responsibility for employer engagement.

- From these case studies it appears that TM partnerships are moving towards having a more centralised and formalised approach to management of employer engagement. This promotes certain economies of activity. Similarly, the recruitment of dedicated employer engagement officers in partnerships which did not previously have them is seen as being very useful in building relationships with employers who value the one-to-one contact and tailored approaches. But this does not mean that delivery partners and more localised approaches have no role in engaging employers.

6.8. Celebrating success

It is important that TM celebrates and demonstrates its success to the wider community, and when doing this employers should be included. This builds the reputation of TM with employers who can then be encouraged not just to recruit TM beneficiaries themselves, but to disseminate successes via their own networks.

References

Bimrose, J., Brown, A., Behle, H., Barnes, S-A., Hughes, D., Andrews, D., Davies, E. and Wiseman, J. (2014) Understanding the link between employers and schools and the role of the National Careers Service. *BIS Research Paper* 206.

Bivand, P. (2012). *Generation lost: Youth unemployment and the youth labour market (Touch Stone Extras)*. London: Trades Union Congress. Available from: https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tucfiles/generation_lost_touchstone_extras_2012.pdf

Brand, J.E. (2015) The far-reaching impact of job loss and unemployment. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 41, pp. 359-375.

Burge, B., Wilson, R. and Smith-Crallan, K. (2012) *Employer Involvement in Schools: a Rapid Review of UK and International Evidence* (NFER Research Programme: From Education to Employment). Slough: NFER. Available from: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/REIS01/REIS01.pdf

CBI (2012) *Learning to Grow: What Employers Need from Education and Skills. Education and skills survey 2012*. London: CBI/Pearson. Available from: http://creative-blueprint.co.uk/policy/item/cbi-pearson-education-and-skills-survey-2012

CIPD (2014) *Employers: Learning to Work With Young People.* London: CIPD.

Cocks, B. and Picchio, M. (2012) Scarring effects of remaining unemployed for long-term unemployed school-leavers. *Journal of Royal Statistical Society: Series A,* 17694, pp. 951-980.

Cominetti, N., Sissons, P. and Jones, K. (2013) *Beyond the business case: The employer's role in tackling youth unemployment*. Lancaster: Lancaster University: The Work Foundation. Available from: http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/336_Employer's%20Role%20FINAL%202%20July%202013.pdf

Conlan, G., Patrignani, P. and Mantovani, I. (2015) *The death of the Saturday job: The decline in earning and learning amongst young people in the UK.* Wath-upon-Dearne: UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-death-of-the-saturday-job-the-decline-in-earning-and-learning-amongst-young-people-in-the-uk

Fletcher, D.R. (2004) Demand-led programmes: challenging labour-market inequalities or reinforcing them? *Environment and Planning C,* 22, pp. 115-128.

Gore, T. (2005) Extending employability or solving employers' recruitment problems>? Demand-led approaches as an instrument of labour market policy. *Urban Studies,* 42, pp. 341-353.

Green, A.E., Li Y., Owen, D. and de Hoyos, M. (2012) Inequalities in use of the Internet for job search: similarities and contrasts by economic status in Great Britain. *Environment and Planning A* 44, pp. 2344–2358.

Green, A., Sissons, P., Broughton, K., de Hoyos, M., Warhurst, C. and Barnes, S-A. (2015) *How Cities Can Connect People in Poverty with Jobs.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Hasluck, C. (2011) *Employers and the recruitment of unemployed people: An evidence review.* Wath-upon-Dearne: UKCES. Available from: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13251/1/evidence-review-employers-recruitment-unemployed.pdf

Hasluck, C. and Armitage, J. (2011) *Employers and the recruitment of young people (16-18 year olds): An evidence review.* Wath-upon-Dearne: UKCES. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306619/employers-recruitment-of-young-people.pdf

Howeison, C., McKechnie, J. and Semple, S. (2010) 'They're already IN the labour market!': working pupils: challenges and potential for schools and employers. London: Education and Employers Taskforce Available from: http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/7737/theyre%20already%20in%20the%20labour%20market_howiesion.pdf

Huddleston, P., Mann, A. and Dawkins, J. (2012) *Employer Engagement in English Independent Schools.* London: Education and Employers Taskforce. Available from: http://www.educationandemployers.org/research/taskforce-publications/employer-engagement-in-english-independent-schools/

Ingold, J. and Stuart, M. (2015) The demand-side of active labour market policies: a regional study of employer engagement in the Work Programme. *Journal of Social Policy,* 44, pp. 443-462.

Maguire, S., Spielhofer, T. and Golden, S. (2012) Earning not learning? An assessment of young people in the jobs without training group. *Sociological Research Online,* 17 (3).

Mann, A. and Percy, C. (2013). Employer engagement in British secondary education: wage earning outcomes experienced by young adults. *Journal of Education and Work,* 27 (5), pp. 496-523.

McCollum, D. (2012) The sustainable employment policy agenda: What role for employers? *Local Economy,* 27 (5-6), pp. 39-69.

McGurk, P. (2014) Employer engagement: a human resource management perspective, *Working Paper* WERU7. Work and Employment Research Unit (WERU), University of Greenwich Business School.

McQuaid, R.W., Lindsay, C. and Greig, M. (2005) Job guarantees, employability training and partnerships in the retail sector. *Local Economy,* 20, pp. 67-78.

Newton, B., Hurstfield, J., Miller, L., Page, R. and Akroyd, K. (2005) What employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive: skills, characteristics and qualifications. *DWP Research Report* 295.

ONS (2015). UK Labour Market, April 2015 (Statistical Bulletin). London: Office for National Statistics. Available from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/april-2015/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-12--Young-People-in-the-Labour-Market

Rieucau, G. (2014) Employing the long-term unemployed: A demand-side oriented policy in retail in Greater Paris. *Local Economy,* 29, pp. 841-853.

Salognon, M. (2007) Reorienting companies' hiring behaviour: an innovative 'back-to-work' method in France. *Work Employment and Society,* 21, pp. 713-730.

Shury, J., Vivian, D., Spreadbury, K., Skone James, A. and Tweddle, M. (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK Results*, *Evidence Report* 88. Wath-upon-Dearne: UKCES.

Sissons, P. and Jones, K. (2012) Lost in transition? The changing labour market and young people not in employment, education or training. Lancaster, Lancaster University: The Work Foundation.   Available   from: http://www.theworkfoundation.com/downloadpublication/report/310_lost_in_transition%20(2). pdf

UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2015a) *Catch 16-24: Youth Employment Challenge.*   Wath-upon-Dearne,   UKCES.   Available   from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/404997/15.02. 18._Youth_report_V17.pdf

UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2015b) *Geographical variation in access to work placements and work inspiration: data from the Employer Perspectives Survey 2014*. Available   from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/404998/15.02. 18._Commentary_V10.pdf

Van der Aa, P. and van Berkel, R. (2014) Innovating job activation by involving employers. *International Social Security Review,* 67 (2), pp. 11-27.

Vokes, C. and Limmer, H. (2015) *Sector Insights: Skills and performance challenges in the retail sector, Evidence Report* 95. Wath-upon-Dearne: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.