Ensuring a Sustainable Future

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## Terms and Acronyms used in the Report

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHGM</td>
<td>Aimhigher Greater Manchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHL</td>
<td>Aimhigher Lancashire</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIPFA</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELQ</td>
<td>Equivalent or Lower Qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>Foundation Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEC</td>
<td>Further Education College</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEC (HE Provider)</td>
<td>A Further Education College delivering Higher Education programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMWL LLN</td>
<td>Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network</td>
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<td>GMSA</td>
<td>Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance</td>
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<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>HNC</td>
<td>Higher National Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>HND</td>
<td>Higher National Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILM</td>
<td>Institute of Leadership and Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lancashire LLN</td>
<td>Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLN</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>LWBLEF</td>
<td>Lancashire Work-Based Learning Executive Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<td>PTP</td>
<td>Private Training Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>QAA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Agency</td>
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<td>QCF</td>
<td>Qualifications and Credit Framework</td>
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<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
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<td>WBL</td>
<td>Work-Based Learning</td>
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<td>WP</td>
<td>Widening Participation</td>
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<td>YHELLN</td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber East Lifelong Learning Network</td>
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Training Provider

Partner organisations of AHL and/or Lancashire LLN who deliver programmes of training to Advanced Apprentices

Advanced Apprentice

An apprentice on a programme of training leading towards work-based learning qualifications at NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based certificate such as a BTEC (NAS 2011)

Higher Level Learning

Learning and qualifications at Level 4 and above of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework as defined by QAA, or Level 4 on the QCF. Higher Level Learning may be delivered by a variety of recognised learning providers including universities, colleges, professional bodies, employers and private training providers (Carter, 2009)

Progression

The term Progression is used to denote advancement to any programme of accredited higher learning that meets the needs of individuals and/or their employers – to small programmes and short award as well as ‘full’ HE qualifications or to ‘non-prescribed’ higher learning achievements such as professional qualifications (Carter, 2009)
1. Executive Summary

Background

This report was commissioned in July 2010 by Aimhigher Lancashire (AHL). Its findings are based on the results of an evaluation carried out between August 2010 and March 2011 by CGS Education Services Ltd looking at key areas of the jointly funded Apprentices Project, which had developed from the AHL Partner Provider Project and a series of project activities developed by the Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network (Lancashire LLN).

The aim of the evaluation has been two fold. Firstly it has considered the effectiveness and impact of the series of interventions and activities put in place over the course of the Apprentices Project with the aim of improving the opportunities for Advanced Apprentices to progress to Higher Education (HE) or other higher level of learning in the Lancashire area. It was to identify areas of success, good practice and lessons learned and suggest recommendations for improvement as necessary. Secondly, as both AHL and the Lancashire LLN will complete their tenure of work by the end of 2011, there has been the requirement to develop a Sustainability Strategy that will allow for Advanced Apprentices to continue to progress on to HE or higher level learning in the future without their support.

The evaluation took the form of a period of desk research followed by a series of interviews with staff and students at a variety of organisations which work in partnership with AHL and Lancashire LLN (‘the partnership’) including Private Training Providers (PTPs), Further Education Colleges (FECs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Lancashire between October 2010 and February 2011. The interviews were mainly conducted face-to-face with some being conducted by telephone. All interviews where permission was granted were digitally recorded and used to generate a framework of emerging themes relevant to the issues under consideration.

Key themes and key areas for evaluation

A series of key themes and key areas for evaluation were identified and the report discusses the main features of activity, findings and recommendations for each of these. The major key themes and key findings are listed below:

The Partner Provider Toolkit

The use, value and effectiveness of the Partner Provider Toolkit and associated materials were considered. The materials were distributed to those organisations across the partnership that expressed interest in the Project, all of whom used the materials in the Toolkit to a greater or lesser extent. Some training providers had not used the materials at the time of interview but expressed the intention to do so in the near future.

Key finding

Those training providers that have used the Partner Provider Toolkit confirm both the quality of the materials included and its fitness for purpose. Although used in different ways, it has clearly filled a need on the part of many organisations who want to enhance their Advanced Apprentices’ awareness and knowledge of the opportunities afforded by HE.
**Enrichment activities**

Funding for enrichment activities was provided by AHL to those training providers who had successfully used the Partner Provider Toolkit. A wide range of activities has been proposed to date providing for enhancement of the curriculum to support and encourage Advanced Apprentices to consider progression on to an HE qualification. The enrichment activities have included professional master-classes, development of learning and study skills, visits to HEIs and FEC (HE Providers) to view and understand the HE offer available and experience the HE environment, visits to subject specific exhibitions and industrial venues and the provision of Level 4 learning materials and equipment for training providers.

**Key finding**

To date those enrichment activities that have taken place have been highly motivating and successful for the Advanced Apprentices and others concerned in improving their awareness and understanding of opportunities for studying at HE level.

**Perspectives of progression to HE**

Views were sought from a wide range of groups in relation to their level of knowledge and understanding of the opportunities to progress to HE that were available to Advanced Apprentices. Sources included cohorts of Advanced Apprentices themselves, employers of apprentices, delivery and managerial staff in both public and private training providers and staff from HEIs and other associated training and education organisations.

A variety of views were expressed relating to a lack of awareness and knowledge of HE, including myths that persisted in some quarters about who and who could not partake of HE and the expectations of various groups in relation to apprentices and their potential progression in this area. The role of the training provider trainer/assessor was considered to be particularly important in the progression to HE journey for the apprentice, as was the need for clear and impartial sources of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). Implied criticism of the role played by careers advisors in schools in relation to the aspirations of apprentices to progress to HE at some time in the future was also highlighted. As a counterpoint the enthusiasm and drive of trainers/assessors in both private and public training providers has been remarked upon by Advanced Apprentices as one of the key factors in encouraging them to think about progression to HE.

The Advanced Apprentices themselves expressed enthusiasm for the opportunities afforded by HE. They valued particularly the activities provided for them by the Apprentices Project and many of those interviewed expressed a desire to progress to HE as they realised that the opportunity was a way of improving their career and life prospects.

Discussion has also revolved around the nature of an Apprenticeship ‘not being a true qualification’, (Carter, 2009) and the problems that could be encountered by an apprentice when applying for a place at an HEI or FEC (HE Provider); there are clearly at times misunderstandings on both sides during the application to HE admissions process. Issues relating to internal progression to HE in FECs and external progression to HEIs including perceived barriers on the part of both staff and apprentices have also been highlighted.
Key finding

A variety of myths and barriers still exist surrounding opportunities for Advanced Apprentices to progress to HE. Many of these barriers and myths are starting to be exposed and broken down as a result of the activities of the Apprentices Project.

Staff CPD activities

A series of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for staff from training providers funded as part of the Project has clearly been effective in improving awareness across the partnership in relation to opportunities and progression routes available for Advanced Apprentices wishing to progress to HE. A Coaching and Mentoring programme organised by the Lancashire Work-Based Learning Executive Forum (LWBLEF) and the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE programme developed by Lancashire LLN have both proved extremely successful in not only generating interest generally, but providing staff with greater knowledge, skill and confidence to enable them to advise and guide apprentices about HE progression opportunities. These programmes are ongoing and will run again in the future with further cohorts.

Key finding

The CPD initiatives developed through the Apprentices Project are having a very positive effect on the staff concerned who are becoming much more aware and knowledgeable about HE progression issues and are now more confident to advise their apprentices.

Employer perspectives

The support given by employers to their Advanced Apprentices to progress beyond Level 3 studies is an issue that is highly pertinent to the economic strategy of the present government. Employers, though generally supportive of their apprentices progressing to HE or other forms of higher level learning and aware of the benefits both to the employee and their company, often appear concerned about loss of employee working time and the cost of fees associated with funding an apprentice through an HE programme.

Key finding

Employers continue to have concerns about the costs associated with HE. There is opportunity for further engagement with employers to provide them with a clear picture as to the advantages of a more highly skilled and educated workforce at Level 4 and above within their company.

Progression opportunities for Advanced Apprentices

Progression rates to HE for apprentices remain resoundingly low at around 4%, when compared with other students of similar ages taking GCE ‘A’ levels or vocational qualifications such as BTEC Nationals (Carter, 2009). The Apprentices Project has endeavoured to devise appropriate strategies aimed at improving the rate of take up in the Lancashire area. Knowledge and awareness of HE progression issues on the part of training provider staff is rapidly improving as a result of the range of initiatives supported by the Project. At the same time these staff are realising the importance of progression as part of the wider needs of the UK economy and for the development and sustainability of their own organisations. The Visaroute web-based facility developed by Lancashire LLN, is a particularly valuable tool for use by staff and their students who wish to progress to HE.
**Key finding**

All parties concerned; employers, training providers and apprentices are now much more aware than previously about the need for, the benefits derived from and the opportunities available to, Advanced Apprentices progressing to HE level study.

**Value added and future sustainability**

The Apprentices Project has had a relatively short life span to date but has achieved a wide range of positive outcomes. In terms of increased knowledge, awareness and confidence on the part of training provider staff to promote HE progression opportunities to their Advanced Apprentices, the project through use of its CPD programmes has clearly achieved success. Through the use of the Partner Provider Toolkit and the funded enrichment activities, significant progress has clearly been made in engaging with Advanced Apprentices in encouraging them to consider in a focused way, the life style and career opportunities that are available to them through taking a programme of study at HE level. The Project has clearly added value through the use of activities and interventions that in normal circumstances would not have taken place at all, nor in the manner or time in which they have occurred.

The Project will cease during the course of 2011 and a series of recommendations have been made regarding sustainability of its key themes and associated ideas. Some of the recommendations relate to the continuation of use of materials and activities that have taken place already, others relate to the development of new activities and materials during the continued life of the Project, whilst others concern developments on the part of individual training providers and other organisations which will need to be continued once the Project has ended.

The evaluation has captured evidence of a large amount of good practice which has been generated during the course of the Apprentices Project and this is now in the process of being embedded within the curriculum of many of the PTPs.

**Key findings**

The Apprentices Project has generated its own momentum in the Lancashire area and added value to the HE progression process through the activities and interventions it has developed and implemented.

A sustainable future for the positive outcomes achieved to date in the form of activities and interventions that have been implemented and proposed is assured if, there is continued commitment on the part of the PTPs, FECs, HEIs and other organisations involved to ensure that the good practices and processes identified to date are continued beyond the life span of the Apprentices Project. This sustainable future can only be of benefit to Advanced Apprentices and the training organisations involved.
Key recommendations for a sustainable future

Significant progress and outcomes have been achieved to date. To ensure that the value added benefits generated continue to provide positive impacts for Advanced Apprentices in improving their progression opportunities to HE and higher level learning, the following recommendations warrant consideration and action prior to the closure of the Apprentices Project:

- **Development of a short Good Practice Guide in respect of Advanced Apprentices Progression to HE.** This should outline case studies and good practice developed to date.

- **Organisation of an End of Apprentices Project Dissemination event.** This event will showcase the good practices and activities that have been developed in the Lancashire area as a result of the Project.

- **Continuation and enhancement of the current CPD Programme.** The highly successful CPD activity to date such as the Coaching and Mentoring programme and the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module should be rolled out until the end of the Project to allow as many staff as possible across the partnership to benefit from it.

- **Make provision for the Partner Provider Toolkit to be available and accessible after the end of the Project.** The quality and value of the Toolkit materials and activities have been widely acknowledged and their continued availability can only be beneficial for future Advanced Apprentices.

- **Ensure wider distribution of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials.** The Toolkit has only been used by those training providers who have elected to take part in the Apprentices Project. Now that its value and effectiveness has been established, the Toolkit should be made available for use by all training providers in the Lancashire area.

- **Re-launch the Visaroute web-based progression tool.** Visaroute is a powerful and sophisticated tool for helping students learn more about progression to HE opportunities in the Lancashire area. It would be more widely and effectively used if more staff in partnership organisations were aware of its availability and potential.

- **Organisation of a Management of Change/Changing HE Environment event for all partners.** This event will outline the recent political and economic developments at governmental level that have resulted in a series of funding measures which will start to affect the whole HE landscape from September 2011. This is particularly pertinent at the present time given the government’s intention to dramatically increase the number of apprentices by 2020 with a high proportion of them intended to progress to HE.

- **Continued development of new HE programmes across the partnership.** This should concentrate particularly on Foundation Degree development in order to fill curriculum gaps for progressing apprentices.

- **Pursue local validation and ownership of the Train the Trainers – Preparation for HE Module.** This module is at present validated by an HEI external to Lancashire; local ownership would make its delivery more responsive to local need and development.
• **Development of Communities of Practice.** These would comprise staff who have benefited from the various CPD programmes that have taken place to date. Such communities allow for the discussion of ideas and experiences, dissemination of good practice and potential development of further CPD in the future.

• **Organisation of a CPD event for Careers Advisors who work in schools.** A specific CPD event would highlight the opportunities available at HE level for apprentices in the Lancashire Region and the requirements for improved IAG to ensure progression.

• **Development of a series of Good Practice Seminars.** A series of seminars providing public and private training providers who have benefited from the Apprentices Project with the opportunity to cascade this good practice to others.
2. Introduction

This evaluation considers the quality, effectiveness and impact of a series of interventions and activities that have taken place since the inception of the Apprentices Project with the intention of improving the opportunities for Level 3 Advanced Apprentices to progress to HE or a higher level of learning in the wider Lancashire area.

The interventions and activities involved cover a variety of areas including development of learning and IAG materials, provision of funding for enrichment activities to partner organisations, provision of a range of CPD activities and the development of the web-based Visaroute progression tool. The partner organisations involved, include both public and private training organisations which provide training for Advanced Apprentices across Lancashire.

This report provides an independent and objective appraisal of progress made to date through the Apprentices Project and provides a series of recommendations in terms of a Sustainability Strategy for the future.

It should be noted that this report comprises the final evaluation of Phase 1 of the Apprentices Project only. A further evaluation report will be produced towards the end of 2011 to coincide with the closure of the Apprentices Project.

Key themes for evaluation

Through discussion with the Apprentices Project management team the following key themes were identified for evaluation and key areas for evaluation specified. These are outlined in Table 1.
Table 1 – Key themes for evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key theme</th>
<th>Key areas for evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Partner Provider Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>▪ Use of the Partner Provider Toolkit&lt;br&gt;▪ Quality of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials&lt;br&gt;▪ Effectiveness of the Partner Provider Toolkit - perceptions of staff&lt;br&gt;▪ Staff perceptions of students using the Partner Provider Toolkit&lt;br&gt;▪ Effectiveness of the Partner Provider Toolkit - perceptions of students&lt;br&gt;▪ The enthusiasm of staff delivering the Partner Provider Toolkit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrichment Activities</strong></td>
<td>▪ Types of enrichment activity taking place or proposed&lt;br&gt;▪ Problems of arranging enrichment activities&lt;br&gt;▪ Other enhancement activities already taking place&lt;br&gt;▪ The problem of time&lt;br&gt;▪ Effective progress in enrichment activities&lt;br&gt;▪ Concerns about raising apprentices’ aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Learner Perspective</strong></td>
<td>▪ Myths and misunderstandings&lt;br&gt;▪ Awareness, expectations and aspirations of apprentices&lt;br&gt;▪ The role of the trainer/tutor in raising awareness of and aspirations about HE</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Training Provider Perspective</strong></td>
<td>▪ The response of training providers to the Apprentices Project&lt;br&gt;▪ The timing of the Apprentices Project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The HE Provider Perspective</strong></td>
<td>▪ An apprenticeship as a qualification?&lt;br&gt;▪ The FEC (HE Providers) perspective - Internal progression&lt;br&gt;▪ Concurrent FE and HE qualifications&lt;br&gt;▪ The HEI perspective - External Progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Role of Staff CPD Activities</strong></td>
<td>▪ CPD opportunities&lt;br&gt;▪ The Apprentices Project launch event&lt;br&gt;▪ Coaching and Mentoring training&lt;br&gt;▪ Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module&lt;br&gt;▪ CPD feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes of Employers</strong></td>
<td>▪ Support given by employers</td>
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<td><strong>Progression of Apprentices</strong></td>
<td>▪ Staff attitudes towards progression&lt;br&gt;▪ Progression to date&lt;br&gt;▪ The Visaroute facility&lt;br&gt;▪ Use of the Visaroute facility to date</td>
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3. Background and Context

The organisations and their aims

AHL (2004 - 2011) and the Lancashire LLN (2008 - 2011) are government funded organisations, both charged with raising awareness and aspirations of learners at a variety of stages of their education or training to pursue qualifications at HE level. The remits of the two organisations are outlined below:

Aimhigher Lancashire

AHL is part of the national Aimhigher programme, which encourages young people with potential who would not normally consider HE to ‘aim higher’. It aims to raise aspirations, widen horizons and create a greater skills base in the workplace (AHL, 2011). AHL operates in partnership with a wide variety of organisations in the Lancashire area in order to achieve these aims.

The defined role of AHL is to:

- Raise aspirations and motivation to enter HE among young people in schools, further education and workplace learning, who are from under-represented groups
- Raise the attainment of potential HE students, who are from under-represented groups, so that they gain the academic or vocational qualifications and learning skills that will enable them to enter HE
- Strengthen progression routes into HE via vocational courses, including Apprenticeships, whether they are delivered in schools, colleges or the workplace
- Offer IAG to potential HE students, their teachers and families
- Work with employers and training providers to progress students onto vocational HE routes
- Encourage those already in the workplace to become full-time, part-time or distance learning students

The Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network

In June 2004, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) set out its intention to ‘make a step change in vocational progression’ through the development of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs). The Lancashire LLN is one of 31 such networks covering England. HEFCE defined their overall objective for LLNs as follows:

‘To improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through HE’

In order to achieve this overall objective HEFCE also identified specific areas for the focus of LLN activity, namely curriculum development to facilitate progression, IAG and learner support systems and network wide progression agreements (Lancashire LLN, 2011).

The Lancashire LLN is a partnership of 5 HEIs, 12 FECs, the LWBLEF and AHL.
Specifically, the Lancashire LLN aims to:

- Remove barriers to progression for vocational learners, helping them to progress into and through HE
- Further develop existing IAG and provide information on progression routes for vocational learners
- Engage employers and facilitate relationships between employers and LLN partners
- Ensure that the needs of employers for training and staff development underpins all of the LLN partner developments in creating or adapting curriculum

Background to apprenticeships and progression

The development of modern apprenticeships in the 1990s led to a surge of young people taking up training places and embarking on a career via the learning through work route. Recent policy changes proposed by the coalition government will only increase this number (BIS, 2010). Based primarily around Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications, particularly National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and technical competence qualifications, the apprenticeship has not been seen as part of a traditional route through which to enter into HE (UVAC, 2010). There has been a historical continuation in some sectors, particularly Business and Administration, where apprentices who have completed their training to Level 3 will progress to continue their training, thereby taking professional qualifications at Level 4 through accrediting bodies such as the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Likewise in Engineering, some companies encourage apprentices to continue their studies by taking a Higher National Certificate (HNC) qualification (SEMTA, 2010). Overall however, the progression of apprentices into HE remains at a very low level (Skills Commission, 2009). Various reports over the past 10 years have listed progression rates from Level 3 (Advanced) Apprenticeships to full-time HE at around 4% nationally and to part-time HE as 6% (HEFCE, 2009). Compared to similar aged student cohorts taking GCE ‘A’ Level (progression rate to HE of > 90%) and those taking full-time vocational courses such as BTEC Nationals (progression rate to HE > 40%) the progression rate to HE for Level 3 apprentices of 6% (Carter, 2009), remains consistently and disappointingly low.

This historic lack of progression to HE learning by apprentices has been due to a variety of factors which essentially can be seen as ‘barriers’ to progression (WYLLN, 2010). Apprenticeships have traditionally been viewed as a ‘non-academic’ route into work with many students who ‘did not do well at school’ taking up apprenticeships at age 16. Further, the apprenticeship scheme is ‘not in itself a true qualification’ (Skills Commission, 2009); rather it is a generic descriptor of a package of training and qualification which is accrued, often on an individual basis, by an individual student. Students in a specified cohort may follow in general, a prescribed training package including NVQ portfolio building in a particular vocational area but, the addition of enrichment activities and achievement of additional technical competence qualifications means that the term ‘apprenticeship’ requires a far more detailed specification of what an individual has actually achieved than for example, the attainment of 3 GCE ‘A’ Levels at Grade C, or a National Diploma at Merit Grade. This has proved to be problematic for some students when applying for places at university or FEC (HE Providers) in that, admissions officers and/or admissions tutors may sometimes be unclear about where ‘apprentice qualifications’ sit within their listed entry requirements (UVAC, 2010).

Other problems have arisen in terms of the amount and quality of IAG that students have received in the past when initially deciding to embark on an apprenticeship rather than another qualification route. Evidence relating to this issue (CBI, 2010) and confirmed by students during interviews increasingly points to the fact that during the decision-making process at 16+ when students are
deciding to take the apprentice route, they are not being made aware that opportunity may arise at a later date to progress on to a university or FEC (HE provider) programme of study.

Further problems relate to the opportunities available at HE level for Advanced Apprentices following programmes with both public and private training providers. Apprentices are used to ‘learning by doing’ and ‘learning whilst in work’, (National Apprenticeship Service, 2011) and assessment is normally achieved through the use of practical tasks and portfolio building. HE programmes of study require the development of new study skills on the part of apprentices; the type of study in universities and in FEC (HE providers) is more academic and requires the learner to think and learn in essentially different ways. In addition, the suitability of delivery modes of HE programmes available for Advanced Apprentices wishing to progress, (usually individuals working full-time who cannot attend at college/university except on a part-time or work-based learning basis) is limited. In many cases, programmes of this nature simply do not exist in the local learning landscape and hence there is little scope for progression to HE.

‘Progression for apprentices and adult learners on professional programmes is particularly problematic, with many learners facing an array of options more aptly described as “crazy-paving” rather than a coherent pathway.’

(Shaw, 2009)

The AHL/Lancashire LLN Apprentices Project

The nature of the project

In February 2010 AHL and the Lancashire LLN identified common interests in respect of apprentices. Both organisations had as a priority, to increase the number of apprentices in their area progressing to develop their skills at Level 4 and above. Each was planning, or already had underway, interventions to develop this agenda. It was agreed that it would be more effective to work collaboratively than in isolation: to coordinate important work already under development (such as AHL’s Partner Provider Project) with new activity, to commission new interventions to complement and add value to work already taking place and to ensure that apprentices would benefit from other innovative work relevant to them, such as the Lancashire LLN’s Visaroute web-based progression tool.

The Aimhigher Lancashire/Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network Apprentices Project (usually known as the Apprentices Project) was approved in March 2010 with a combined initial budget of £165,000 to deliver these joint objectives and planned to run until December 2011.

The Project Plan maps a framework covering four areas of activity:

1. **Establishing market size and demand for higher skills, both among employers and the apprentices themselves.** This includes identifying progression gaps and taking steps to fill them.

2. **Targeting Advanced Apprentices.** This involves stimulating demand by improving awareness of progression opportunities among apprentices, through an innovative programme of impartial IAG. It includes developing bridging provision to stimulate demand and assist effective study.
3. **Targeting staff.** Improving progression through staff development activity among training provider, FEC and HEI staff including admissions services, to raise awareness of Advanced Apprentices and their needs. This also involves facilitating progression by developing bridging provision for apprentices accepted onto HE programmes to enable them to study effectively at higher skills levels.

4. **Targeting the curriculum.** This includes stimulating curriculum developments aimed at facilitating progression of apprentices

The Apprentices Project has two phases, made necessary by the proposed end of AHL funding in July 2011. Phase One, running from March 2010 to July 2011, is the subject of this evaluation. A second, continuation phase will see the project carried on until the closure of the Lancashire LLN in December 2011 and will be the subject of a separate evaluation.

The Project has never sought to ‘reinvent wheels’, but to use and adapt materials already in existence where possible. Work to stimulate progression among apprentices is not new either nationally or in the North West and the Project has been able to develop its work in Lancashire more quickly and effectively because of this legacy and because of the willingness of colleagues elsewhere to share their expertise. The AHL Partner Provider Project, for example, has drawn extensively on the work of Aimhigher Greater Manchester (AHGM) and the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) while the Apprentice’s Passport to HE is developed from the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network’s (GMWL LLN) original version. The Train the Trainer - Preparation for HE Module has been adapted from an original model developed by the Yorkshire and Humber East Lifelong Learning Network (YHELLN) and Aimhigher Humber, in partnership with the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Hull.

**Strand 1 (Ideas developed by AHL)**

The **Partner Provider Project** forms an element of the AHL Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and was developed following a series of transition projects relating to apprentices’ progression and subsequent evaluation undertaken for AHL by Wendy Holden of the LWBLEF in 2009.

The overall aim of the Partner Provider Project is to provide strategies which will ultimately enable more Level 3, Advanced Apprentices to progress to higher level learning, particularly into HE at Level 4 and above.

This project has involved:

- A staff CPD training event aimed at raising awareness about apprentices progression opportunities at HE and introduction to learning, marketing and other materials
- The development and utilisation of the Partner Provider Toolkit comprising learning, marketing and IAG materials in both paper and digital form aimed specifically at apprentices
- The delivery of these materials to identified cohorts of Level 3 apprentices
- Development and delivery of subsequent enrichment activities for apprentices specified by each of the training provider organisations involved
- Coaching and mentoring activities developed for trainers and assessors by the LWBLEF
- Feedback data from apprentices undertaking these activities
- Opportunity enrichment activities
**Strand 2 (Ideas developed by Lancashire LLN)**

In conjunction with the AHL activity, the Lancashire LLN in line with the requirements of its Business Plan of 2008 has developed a series of further activities aimed at improving HE progression opportunities for Advanced Apprentices.

These activities include:

- A series of CPD opportunities for training provider employees
- Development of a Train the Trainer - Preparation for HE Module with delivery to training provider trainers, assessors and managers
- Rollout of an adapted version of the Train the Trainer - Preparation for HE Module to apprentices
- Development and Implementation of a Mathematics for Engineers Module to be used by apprentices progressing onto HE programmes
- Development and distribution of the Apprentices Progression Passport
- ‘Visaroute’, an online progression tool developed by the LLN to aid IAG for progression of vocational learners in Lancashire. The tool includes progression from apprenticeship frameworks and the tool data is being mined to identify gaps in progression (including from apprenticeships) that partners are encouraged to close.
- Other CPD developed for delivery to HEI and FEC (HE provider) staff in relation to apprentices progression onto HE

The 4 priority sectors which the Apprentices Project has concentrated on are specified as:

- Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure and Tourism
- Environment and Sustainability

It was not intended to look outside of these 4 sectors unless specifically requested to do so, or unless particular lessons relevant to this study could be learned from other specified sector areas.

**The need for an evaluation**

As part of the Apprentices Project and in order to measure achievement of outcomes, AHL and Lancashire LLN required an evaluation for the Project to be undertaken. The aim of this evaluation is to assess the impact and level of success of all activities and delivery interventions undertaken to date and to develop a Sustainability Strategy that can be implemented by the partner organisations once AHL and Lancashire LLN have ceased their work in July 2011 and December 2011 respectively. The nature of this evaluation has been to consider all of the interventions and activities undertaken in a holistic manner, providing for one set of outcomes and recommendations which are relevant and applicable to both organisations.

The evaluation looked at the nature of all delivery interventions, enrichment activities, CPD and other interventions undertaken during the lifetime of the Apprentices Project in terms of:

- Type and style of delivery e.g., face to face, on-line delivery, blended learning
- Location of delivery
- Quality of materials developed and their delivery
- Usefulness of delivery to learners, trainers, and assessors
- Effectiveness of any specified delivery to date to learners, trainers and assessors
- Response of training provider organisations to activities and interventions
- Response of HE provider and other higher level learning provider organisations to the activities and interventions
- Response of employers to the activities and interventions

Consequently the evaluation provides a formative assessment of the effectiveness and impact of, AHL and Lancashire LLN activities in the two strands of work relating to improving apprentices opportunities to progress onto HE.

The aim of the evaluation has been to collect and present information that will:

- Provide evidence of outcomes to support reporting and claims
- Demonstrate the impacts that the funding and activities have made on individuals and organisations
- Support the future development of the business plan and the overall sustainability of the Project

Methodology of evaluation

A mixed-method approach was adopted that combined:

- Desk research and review of existing literature to set the work in context
- Review of the Partner Provider Toolkit learning, IAG and other materials, developed by AHL and the Lancashire LLN
- Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews with staff in partner organisations
- Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with learners in partner organisations
- Feedback review data collated by the LWBLEF from learners using the learning, IAG and other materials of the Partner Provider Toolkit
- Feedback questionnaire data collated from staff following CPD initiatives developed by both AHL and the Lancashire LLN
- Overview meetings with various other groups
- Feedback information from staff CPD programmes
- Feedback information and data from meetings with employers
Desk research of organisational and other documentation

The following documents have been taken into consideration as part of this evaluation:

- Lancashire LLN Business Plan, 2008
- Update on Key Project Developments, December 2009
- Update on Key Project Developments, June 2010
- Report to Lancashire LLN Strategic Board, December 2010
- AHL Area Strategic Plan, 2008-2011
- AHL Learner Progression Framework
- AHL Evaluation Plan, 2008-2011
- Apprentices Project Report to Lancashire LLN Executive Group, May 2010
- Lancashire LLN Baseline Data Collection Update, 2010
- Report on the Transition of Work-Based Learners (Particularly Apprentices) to HE, LWBLEF, 2009

The strategic overview and vision of both AHL and Lancashire LLN provided the initial focus for the development of the evaluation. The formative evaluation was undertaken in the period September 2010 to February 2011 with the summative report being submitted in March 2011.

Meetings as part of the evaluation process

Three initial fact-finding meetings were held with the Apprentices Project management team at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in the summer of 2010. Two further initial fact-finding meetings were held with members of the LWBLEF during the same period.

This was followed by semi-structured interviews and meetings with people in a variety of education, training and other organisations across Lancashire to include:

- a) Staff
- b) Students
- c) Employers

The meetings and interviews mainly took place on an individual or small group basis and were mostly held face-to-face (occasionally by telephone) between 14th October 2010 and 3rd March 2011.

The partner organisations involved

The evaluation focused on those Work-Based Learning (WBL) training providers in the AHL and Lancashire LLN partnerships who had expressed an interest in being involved in the Apprentices Project. In addition, it was necessary to evaluate the role of various other AHL and Lancashire LLN partners involved in the project including the LWBLEF and HEI and FEC (HE Providers) such as the University of Cumbria, Edge Hill University, UCLAN and the University Centre, Blackburn.
The evaluation process included the following 17 organisations:

**Four Private Training Providers**

- Beneast Training, Blackpool
- Lancaster Training Service, Heysham
- North Lancs Training Group, Accrington
- Training 2000, Blackburn

**Seven FE Colleges**

- Accrington and Rossendale College
- Blackburn College
- Blackpool and The Fylde College
- Burnley College
- Myerscough College
- Runshaw College
- Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College

**Three HEIs:**

- The University of Cumbria
- UCLAN
- Edge Hill University

**Three other organisations**

- AHL
- Lancashire LLN
- LWBLEF

**Meetings with staff**

A total of 46 staff were interviewed across the partnership from the 17 organisations. Written submissions were received from 2 staff in partner organisations where interviews were not possible. In addition, further written and oral feedback was received from a combined cohort of 12 staff from Beneast Training Ltd and Blackpool and The Fylde College, undertaking a programme of CPD as part of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module.

**Meetings with students**

Student meetings involved a total of 31 students comprising:

3 focus-groups with cohorts of Advanced Apprentices:

- Accrington and Rossendale College (12 learners - Automotive Engineering)
- Lancaster Training Services (10 learners - Automotive Engineering)
- Training 2000 (8 learners - Automotive Engineering)
One semi-structured face-to-face interview with a Foundation Degree (FD) student:

- Myerscough College (1 learner - Floristry)

Opportunities to interview further students were not available. In some cases students are taught and assessed almost entirely ‘on the job’ and hence cohort groups meet exceedingly rarely, or cohorts come in only occasionally for block weeks, with none due in during the next few months. In other cases, the staff themselves were only available to meet with the evaluator on days when students were at work and hence not available for interview.

Meetings with employers

Interviews with groups of employers proved particularly difficult to arrange. This was a common problem across the partnership for both private and public training providers. Consequently, the feedback received from employers centred on a major dissemination event about progression to HE opportunities for apprentices organised by Blackpool and The Fylde College in March 2011.

Feedback sessions and submission

A feedback workshop and interim presentation to AHL and Lancashire LLN was arranged for mid-February in order to test interim findings and receive initial feedback. The final document was submitted to the Apprentices Project Management team on Tuesday 15th March, 2011.

Documentation and materials

The evaluator worked closely with the Apprentices Project management team to identify and assimilate documents pertinent to the evaluation of a range of progression activities and interventions.

Document analysis was used to gain general background information about the approach to apprentices’ progression taken by AHL and Lancashire LLN, to understand the context and ways in which their partners were working, and to gauge likely understanding and adoption of apprentices’ progression strategies across the partnership. This analysis was also used to inform the development of questionnaires, interview styles and interview schedules.

Interviews were all recorded in note form by the evaluator, usually digitally recorded and later transcribed, although some interviews were recorded in note form only, due to the wishes of the interviewees. These transcriptions and notes were used to generate a framework of emerging themes, with various new themes emerging over the lifetime of the evaluation. The resulting themes were cross-checked against the original document analysis. Where quotations are used in this report to illustrate or justify key findings, they have been carefully selected to reflect a dominant or clearly emerging view. This may either be about perceptions or a clearly defined understanding of specific facts or issues. Individual respondents have not been identified in this report; instead only respondent types are noted in order to protect individual or cohort identities. All interview and other material submitted has also undergone analysis in line with the process outlined below and the results of this have fed into the broader analysis of staff/student interviews and into the report’s recommendations.
A series of questionnaires was developed in order to gain further insights into particular progression activities for staff or students that have occurred. In addition, the LWBLEF has collated questionnaire responses in relation to the delivery of Partner Provider Toolkit materials from groups of Advanced Apprentices.

Other questionnaire data has been captured from:

- The Partner Provider Project launch at the Marriott Hotel, Preston, on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 2010
- The Launch of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module at the Westleigh Conference Centre, Preston, on 8\textsuperscript{th} October 2010
- Pre and post-evaluation of the pilot delivery of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module held between December 2010 and February 2011
- Feedback from questionnaires developed by LWBLEF for use with apprentices following use of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials

This interview and questionnaire evidence was analysed with respect to each of the emerging themes, within a framework of the wider contextual knowledge of the evaluator of AHL and the Lancashire LLN, the national Aimhigher and LLN programmes and the English HE sector in general. This analysis was linked back to the key questions posed in the initial Project Proposal of Work for Evaluation, in order to provide appropriate answers and solutions.

Finally, a set of recommendations has been proposed as a result of the analysis in order to support AHL and the Lancashire LLN in developing strategies that will allow for the sustainable continuation of a range of supportive activities that will benefit and encourage Advanced Apprentices who wish to follow a progression route to professional higher level learning or HE, at Level 4 and above.

**Choice of interviewees/meeting cohorts**

The choice of individuals and cohorts to be interviewed was dependent on a variety of factors but was primarily determined in conjunction with the Apprentices Project management team and advice from the LWBLEF. Individuals and groups chosen were those that had been involved in some way with progression CPD or other activities relating to Advanced Apprentices progression to HE. These criteria were also used when considering written responses and data collated from feedback sessions.

Interviews took a variety of forms including group meetings in formal settings, focus groups, individual interviews and group interviews. All meetings were carried out by the evaluator to promote consistency, conducted face-to-face and based on a semi-structured interview schedule informed by the evaluation project’s requirements and the consultant’s previous experience. Use of face-to-face interviews was the preferred method of eliciting information as these allow for the development of a positive relationship between the parties and the use of visual and non-verbal cues as an important part of the interview process.
5. The Partner Provider Toolkit

Introduction

The Partner Provider Toolkit was first developed by Aimhigher Greater Manchester and with their permission, AHL were able to adapt and develop a set of learning and IAG materials that would be made available to training providers for use with their Advanced Apprentices. These materials were introduced at a launch event held at the Marriot Hotel, Preston on 2nd July 2010. The event, hosted jointly by AHL, Lancashire LLN and the LWBLEF was attended by representatives from training providers across the partnership from both the public and private sectors and representatives of the participating HEIs.

During the event, participants were introduced to the Partner Provider Toolkit. This comprises a range of materials including ‘Information for delivering AHL Apprenticeship Progression Training’ plus the Apprentices Passport developed by the Lancashire LLN. The Toolkit comprises a comprehensive guide that allows providers the opportunity to deliver information and guidance about progression to HE to their Advanced Apprentices through use of a range of materials and activities. Included in the Toolkit are overall and specific criteria in relation to AHL/Lancashire LLN targets for improving Advanced Apprentices’ progression to HE.

Copies of the Partner Provider Toolkit, including all Learning and IAG materials, were made available to participants through the use of memory stick pen drives and hardcopy materials distributed at the event. The materials within the Partner Provider Toolkit comprise:

- A PowerPoint Presentation – Increasing Opportunities for Apprentices
  Outlining routes available in order to achieve a degree and the benefits of progression to higher level qualifications

  Providing information for both students and practitioners in relation to the financial costs associated with progressing onto HE programmes and where to find financial support, advice and guidance. This also includes specific information in relation to part-time study.

- Booklet - A Guide to Higher Education for Employers of Apprentices
  Outlining the benefits of HE, the progression opportunities available locally plus appropriate case studies

- DVD – Don’t stop me now
  Providing students with reasons as to why it is important to progress to higher level learning

- DVD – Don’t Hold Back
  Providing information about the range of HE qualifications and opportunities that are available once an Advanced Apprenticeship has been achieved

- Flyer – HE costs less than you think
  Providing information for learners and parents in relation to costs associated with part-time HE programmes.

- Flyer - Apprentices and HE – A lifetime of opportunities
  Outlining costs and benefits of apprentices progressing to take HE programmes. Information is provided about costs, part-time routes, types of HE qualification and websites where further information is available.

- Flyer – Apprentices - Where do you want to be in 10 years time?
  Allowing apprentices the opportunity to consider where they would like to be in the future, what they would like to achieve and how they might get there.
• Apprentice Evaluation Sheets
  Providing opportunity for apprentices to comment on the value of the process and what they had gained from using the learning and IAG materials.

Further material made available by Lancashire LLN:

• Booklet - Passport to Degree Level Studies for Apprentices
  Distributed to all Advanced Apprentices in the Lancashire area providing information in relation to reasons for progression to HE, opportunities available locally, types of qualifications that are appropriate and career development opportunities. The information provided is specific to the core sectors targeted by the Lancashire LLN.

Quality and use of the Partner Provider Toolkit

Following the distribution of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials by LWBLEF, part of the evaluation process was to discern how useful these materials were considered to be by the partners. This included feedback as to what extent they had been used and how effective they had been in enhancing the understanding, knowledge and awareness of opportunity in relation to progression to HE on the part of Advanced Apprentices.

Use of the Partner Provider Toolkit

8 partner training providers of the 10 questioned indicated that they had used the learning and IAG materials in the Partner Provider Toolkit in some way after having attended the initial Apprentices Project launch event. The other two partners had not yet used the materials but commented that they intended to do so.

In each case the use of and value gained from the materials was different. Some partners had used all of the materials extensively with one or more cohorts of apprentices, whilst some partners had not used the materials at all at the time of interview. The materials were referred to variously by the partners; sometimes as ‘IAG materials’, sometimes as ‘progression information’, sometimes as ‘the Partner Provider Toolkit’, or simply the ‘AHL Toolkit’, which perhaps indicates a slight difference in perception of intent and therefore reception of the materials in individual institutions. All partners did however, realise the value of these materials in helping to make their apprentices more aware of the opportunities afforded them by progression to HE.

Only one training provider when questioned specifically mentioned an individual learning material; mainly the providers referred to the materials as a collective resource.

‘The Apprentices Passport has been used for dissemination at a careers event and proved very popular with potential learners.’

  Sector Manager - (PTP)

The way in which the materials have been used by partners to date also shows tremendous variation between institutions and sometimes even within a single institution. Some partners have made extensive use of the materials with one or more cohorts of apprentices by integrating them into their apprentices’ programme of learning and embedding new learning outcomes, whilst other partners have used them on an ad-hoc basis with some of their groups.
‘The materials are being used with some cohorts. One tutor has used them extensively and has in turn inspired her students, and they are being delivered systematically. There are plans to include the materials within an integrated package of delivery as part of a specific scheme of work which could be delivered to all apprentices in the future. As such, the materials will be embedded into the apprenticeship curriculum.’

‘Other tutors are using some of the materials on an ad-hoc basis, but do consider them useful.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

‘We used some of the toolkit materials for Marketing and Open Day events for potential apprentices.’

Apprentices Manager - FEC

Other partners had distributed the materials to various parts of the organisation without any monitoring in place to see how they would be used.

‘We did receive the AHL/Lancashire LLN booklets and literature which were passed on to relevant divisions and student services.’

Apprentices Manager - FEC

In some cases partners indicated that they ‘already had’ a large array of materials available for use with apprentices in relation to progression issues and that in this case, the Partner Provider Toolkit materials would be added to these to increase their resource bank.

‘The college already has a wide range of materials available for progression information and activities. However the AHL and Lancashire LLN materials will enhance these and provide an added perspective.’

Apprentices Manager - FEC

‘The Toolkit is supplementary to IAG that is already done, however it does provide a good structure for delivering information about progression to HE for the Level 3 apprentices.’

Career Development Manager - PTP

Quality of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials

The overall view from partners was that the materials were of good quality and that they could be usefully used with their Advanced Apprentices. They appreciated that the materials had been professionally produced, looked professional and that they were fit for purpose.

‘We viewed the materials as very good.’

Sector Manager - PTP

‘The quality of the [Toolkit] materials has already been assessed by staff and found to be excellent and fit for purpose. It is likely that these materials will be used as a basis for delivery next year with additional materials developed and others of those provided here further developed and extended.’

Training Manager - PTP
‘The training managers at the college have discussed the use of the materials and consider them to be valuable and worthwhile resources.’

Training Manager - FEC

‘The quality of the materials is very good and helps in terms of presentation to the students. A high quality of learning materials is now demanded across the college and these materials fulfil that criterion.’

Apprenticeships Manager - FEC

Effectiveness of the Partner Provider Toolkit

Perceptions of staff

A majority of the partners questioned responded very positively to the effectiveness of the materials. All of the partners stated clearly that progression IAG is now regarded as a very important part of an Advanced Apprentice’s programme of learning and that good quality and up-to-date information in this area is paramount. All partners (with one exception) were keen to promote progression to HE for their Apprentices and viewed the Toolkit materials as good pointers towards that goal. In some cases the issue of progression from Level 3 qualification was being driven by the Sector Skills Council for that industry:

‘In the Health and Social Care sector, it is now more important than ever that learners progress to Level 4 and Level 5 in line with the expectations of the Sector Skills Council and the industry in general. In this respect, we offer some Level 4 technical qualifications already but we do need to add to this.’

Sector Manager - PTP

Some of the providers expressed the view that they already had ‘some of their own progression materials’ and that they always delivered some sessions in relation to progression to HE and/or higher level learning to their apprentice cohorts, on occasions with some success:

‘We have always done some progression IAG anyway as we see it as a fundamental part of our work. Some apprentices do progress onto local colleges to do FDs.’

Career Development Manager - PTP

From the management and delivery staff perspective many of those interviewed were positive about the effects that the Toolkit materials had imbued on themselves and their delivery colleagues. There were many comments expressing the view that the materials had proved ‘particularly useful for education managers, trainers and assessors’, as they had afforded them the opportunity to become much more aware about the progression to HE opportunities available for their students. In this respect the materials had clearly changed the perspective and attitudes of trainers, assessors and managers themselves about the progression opportunities to HE available for Advanced Apprentices and the issues surrounding the progression process generally.

‘The staff really feel that they can help their apprentices much more positively as they now know so much more about HE progression as a result of the Partner Provider Toolkit activities and materials. So in all, the effect of the materials and activities has been very positive.’

Head of Studies for HE (FEC)
'The staff think that progression is very important and should be encouraged for apprentices; the staff are keen on progression both for students and for themselves and hence feel that they should positively promote it. One member of staff delivering to the apprentices originally completed a Level 3 Apprenticeship himself and is now undertaking a Degree after having taken PTLLS and CTLLS qualifications. Unsurprisingly he is keen to promote HE progression opportunities to all of his apprentices.'

Training Manager - PTP

In some partner organisations it was the case that staff had not really talked about the issue of progression to HE with their apprentices previously and that the advent of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials had spurred them on to do so:

‘The materials have raised students’ awareness in that they have now become aware of and considered HE opportunities outside of the immediate locale. The information about part-time progression to HE has been particularly useful. Staff are now much more pro-active in relation to progression for their students as a result of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials provided and consider the effect of the IAG learning materials and activities to have been a very positive one.’

WBL Manager - FEC

‘The materials are considered useful by staff as a good starting point for the discussion of progression opportunities. The materials will be used in future as an integral part of the progression IAG for apprentices. This development is viewed as particularly important by the WBL Corporate Group at the college and by the College Senior Management Team.’

Commercial Manager - FEC

There was a consensus between several of the partners that to date, their Advanced Apprentices had not been offered enough progression IAG between Levels 3 and 4 and that this was disadvantageous towards them. They considered that the use of the Toolkit materials would appropriately raise awareness of HE progression opportunities for the learners and also raise their aspirations. The constraint of time in some cases meant that the Toolkit materials had not been used to their full extent to date; however in all cases where this was so, the delivery staff intended to use the Toolkit when the next available opportunity arose.

‘The materials provided are fairly comprehensive and are considered very useful. The materials have been used only with the specified group (Auto Engineering) so far, however it is considered that the materials are appropriate for purpose and will be used with other groups next year.’

Training Manager - PTP

In the case of two FEC partners, the use of the Toolkit materials had proved so positive and successful that the partners were intending to spread their use across all apprentice cohorts in the college and in addition, intended to cascade them in modified form for use with other FE Level 3 vocational learners in the college.

‘The Partner Provider Toolkit is seen here as really useful by staff and students and it is likely to become embedded within the curriculum for apprentices and for other vocational learners too.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC
There was concern expressed in one or two cases however, that apprentices who were completely work-based and were not readily able to attend sessions at a training provider centre, would have problems in signing up to sessions where the Partner Provider Toolkit materials were to be delivered.

'We had a problem of recruiting a cohort of students in 2010 because all of our Health and Social Care apprentices are work-based but we will be endeavouring to recruit a cohort for 2011 soon. Hopefully we will see the Toolkit materials being used in January or February 2011 with students’.

Sector Manager - PTP

**Staff perceptions of students using the Partner Provider Toolkit materials**

As previously noted, the use of the Toolkit materials has varied across the partnership. Where they have been used however, the overwhelming view of delivery staff is that they have been positive and valuable for the learning and awareness-raising of the apprentices concerned.

‘Yes, the materials have been used and delivered to apprentices. The materials did raise awareness for some of the apprentices to think about progression’

Training Support Officer - PTP

‘It [the Partner Provider Toolkit] pulls all information together into a structured approach. It will be used again in 2011. Yes, students’ awareness was raised, plus it is very useful as a general information and literature source for students who want to know about progression. Overall the apprentices found the materials and suggested activities in the Toolkit really useful for raising their awareness and aspirations about HE.’

Career Development Manager - PTP

‘The materials have proved useful in that they are very relevant, pre-prepared and can easily be integrated into apprentices schemes of work. This was simply not happening before, but it is now.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

‘There is a positive response from apprentices to these IAG opportunities and materials as they help with progression and signposting. IAG progression is seen as important by our organisation for both staff and students and through use of these materials the apprentices clearly see how they can help them progress on to Level 4 and above. Only in a very few cases were apprentices not interested.’

Training Manager - PTP

**Effectiveness of the Partner Provider Toolkit - perception of students**

The students that had used the Toolkit for progression work were positive about the use of the learning materials. They considered that the materials fitted in well into their learning schedule, and were of interest to them. All of the students said that having used the Toolkit materials they now knew more about progression routes into HE that were suitable for them. In terms of delivery, the students did not state a preference for one method of delivery above the other e.g. DVDs as opposed to group activity or PowerPoint etc.
The cohorts of students that were interviewed overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with both the content of the Toolkit materials and the delivery. All of the groups interviewed appeared highly motivated and confirmed that they had found the materials both interesting and very useful. The majority of the apprentices stated that prior to the delivery of the Toolkit materials they had not known that Level 4 study was available to them and that they now had a much greater awareness, knowledge and aspiration about the opportunities that might be available for them at HE Level. The delivery staff involved also confirmed that the activities and materials are clearly changing apprentices’ minds and attitudes in relation to HE aspirations.

‘We found the Toolkit materials really useful and the PowerPoint was particularly useful.’

Apprentices - FEC

‘Initially we had no thoughts about HE at all but the use of the Toolkit materials has really made us think about what we can do in the future and not just have to stay in a dead-end job.’

Apprentices - PTP

The enthusiasm of staff delivering the Partner Provider Toolkit materials

One area for comment that was emphasised by the apprentices interviewed revolved around the enthusiastic approach of their tutors/trainers when delivering the Partner Provider Toolkit materials and activities.

Apprentices were consistent and forthright in their praise of the positive approach and style in which they had been informed about the opportunities that were available to them and the active and interesting modes of delivery that had been used in delivery of the Toolkit materials and associated activities.

Many of the apprentices commented on the enthusiasm of their trainers and managers in making them aware of the opportunities in HE available to them and in encouraging them to consider that this might be a career development route for them now or in the future. They commented that not only had the trainers and assessors raised their awareness of HE opportunities but had inspired them to really think about moving on to HE. Some apprentices commented that they had never before considered progression of this nature as it had been outside of their framework of thinking and knowledge, but that the enthusiastic way in which the Toolkit had been delivered by their tutors and trainers had really inspired them to think about a possible future in HE in a very different and positive light.

‘The enthusiasm of delivery by tutors has been particularly valuable in inspiring us students.’

Apprentices - FEC

‘The materials have really been delivered with enthusiasm by our trainer and she really motivated me.’

Ex-apprentice - FEC

‘The excellent quality of delivery [of the Toolkit] will depend more on the delivery qualities and enthusiasm of the staff rather than the quality of the materials -which we consider very good anyway. This is what will motivate our students.’

Training Manager - PTP
Summary

- The Partner Provider Toolkit has proved itself fit for purpose with the designated user groups in partner training providers. It has been used for its designed purposes with groups of Advanced Apprentices and has in some cases been adopted for use with other groups of students within these partner organisations.

- The Toolkit has been used successfully in many of the partner training providers and has achieved its aims of informing, raising awareness and increasing the aspirations of apprentices with regard to the opportunities afforded by progression onto HE.

- Staff in the training provider organisations have found the Toolkit particularly valuable too, as they themselves have learned more about the opportunities available for their students to progress to HE. It has allowed them to be more effective advisors in respect of progression.

- Most of the partners involved consider the Partner Provider Toolkit as a highly useful and effective learning resource for improving the quality and type of IAG provided to their apprentices about HE progression and indicate that they will continue to use it in the future.
6. Partner Provider Enrichment Activities

Types of enrichment activity (activities taking place or proposed)

As an integral part of the Apprentices Project and as a follow-up to the use of the Partner Provider Toolkit, partners were encouraged to develop a series of enrichment activity programmes. These enrichment activities were not prescribed, but could take the form of particular activities in relation to HE progression that were considered appropriate for their apprentices by the individual training providers. Suggestions for the type of activities included, but were not restricted to:

- Master-class visits by well known people/experts from the industry
- Visits to College HE or University specialist centres
- Visits to major employers’ establishments
- Visits to Exhibition and Technology centres relevant to particular learning areas
- Training in a specific area of new technology at a higher level

Funding was made available for the enrichment activities from AHL through the LWBLEF. Two tranches of £1,500 (to a total of £3,000) have been made available to each training provider on submission of ‘appropriate proposals’. It clearly took time for the training provider organisations to develop their requirements for enhancement activities as these could not be determined until the Partner Provider Toolkit materials had been delivered. In some cases activities have taken place already; in other cases providers have submitted a range of proposed activities and are awaiting approval and funding. In the case of some training providers, the process has got little further than an acknowledgement of initial interest with some general discussions about activities having taken place. However, the process is now gathering pace and many more proposals are being received by LWBLEF for consideration and approval.

The reasons for the variation of progress in relation to enrichment activities are various although many good suggestions for interesting and innovative activities are being discussed across the partnership. Having undertaken the Partner Provider Toolkit activities many of the students are now enthused:

‘They [our training provider] have not organised any enrichment activities as yet, but have said they will soon be doing so. We very much want these enrichment activities to take place as we consider them a very valuable addition to our training programme and we are really keen to know more about HE and opportunities for progression.’

Apprentices - PTP

Problems of arranging enrichment activities

In some cases there is a problem of timetabling. With training providers where many of the apprentices are completely work-based and assessors visit the apprentices in the work place, making arrangements for extra enrichment activities of this nature can be problematic.

‘We have not undertaken any enrichment activities as yet, but opportunities for these are being considered at present. We are considering things such as visits to specialist exhibitions with the industry and utilisation of specialist external speakers for Master-classes etc.’

WBL Manager - FEC
‘All of our apprentices within the sectors specified by AHL and Lancashire LLN are almost totally work-based, hence the logistics of getting all our students together for a Master-class or a visit to an employer’s operation, an exhibition or a university/FEC HE department is very difficult..........however, we do like the concept of the opportunities that are provided by these enrichment activities very much.’

Training Manager - PTP

One PTP indicated that they had plans and ideas for a range of enrichment activities that they would like to take place but that they had not applied for any funding at present. The Advanced Apprentices engaged here are all totally work-based and in some cases their employers are not supportive in allowing them ‘extra time for other activities’. The provider is however determined that the activities will take place once they have sorted out the logistics of bringing their apprentices together as suitable groups and considered it likely that they will be in a position to take advantage of the funding sometime in the early part of 2011.

‘We have not yet applied for enrichment activity funding because our apprentices have difficulty to attend such activities i.e., all are work-based and so rarely come together as a group and sometimes employers are not supportive.’

Sector Manager PTP

Other enhancement activities already taking place within partner organisations

In the case of some training providers it is clear that much enhancement activity for apprentices is already taking place outside of the framework of the Apprentices Project. As part of their mainstream work some providers are already building such activities into delivery programmes for apprentices and these ‘extra activities’ are considered a very important aspect of their overall training package.

In the case of one FEC, visits by university lecturers and guest speakers from industry to talk with apprentices are taking place already. Master-classes on aspects of HE activity such as essay writing, learning skills and academic referencing are being provided by members of the college’s own HE staff allowing the apprentices to get a flavour of what study at a higher level is like. In addition IAG advice from Lancaster University and UCLAN careers advisors is provided on a ‘no fee’ basis and is integrated into the mainstream delivery programme. As a consequence the college considers that much ‘enhancement activity’ is already taking place within the framework of their Advanced Apprentices programme of delivery and at present no costs are attributed for much of this enhancement work.

‘At present, no AHL enrichment activities funding has been applied for through LWBLEF as in a sense it is not really needed. All our enrichment activity is college-funded already and there is almost no incentive to sit down and fill in the forms for just £3,000 as this would take one of our staff some considerable time. However, all of these “enhancement activities” mentioned are considered to be really important for apprentices in terms of their progression awareness and will certainly continue after any AHL/Lancashire LLN funding has ceased.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC
The problem of time

In some cases, the training provider has carried out the learning activities using the Partner Provider Toolkit, but has not as yet had time to organise any enrichment activities although they clearly wish to do so in the future.

‘We have not applied for any funding and have not undertaken any enrichment activities as yet, but we will be applying for funding soon when appropriate activities have been decided upon. Whatever, we want our apprentices to gain knowledge and inspiration from these enrichment activities’.

Tutor/Assessor - PTP

Effective progress in enrichment activities

To date 12 proposals for enrichment activity funding have been submitted involving 8 partner training providers with 11 of these proposals having been approved for funding. Some of these activities have already taken place and others are scheduled to start in the near future. It is possible that other proposals for funding will be received before the end of the Partner Provider Project. A detailed listing of enrichment activities which have been approved for funding is provided in Appendix A. The large number of activities listed in Appendix A either proposed or taking place, indicates that partner organisations realise the benefits that can accrue from such enrichment activities. The type and style of activities are very varied and indicate the value of allowing individual organisations to determine their own agenda in response to the specific needs and requirements of their apprentices.

Concerns about raising apprentices aspirations

In general, those people interviewed in partner organisations about opportunities for enrichment activities and their funding expressed a positive view, even if such activities were only in the formative stage of development. There was however one dissenting view, where concern about the enrichment activities was expressed. In this case, the training provider indicated that nothing was planned as yet, and that they were unsure as to whether they would develop any enrichment activities at all. They would only do so if they believed the outcomes of the enrichment activities were to be beneficial to their apprentices and to date no funding had been applied for. The main concern of this training provider centred around the raising of aspiration of their apprentices to progress to HE when in reality no suitable FDs or other HE programmes were available locally.

‘We are concerned here about providing greater awareness and aspiration about HE to our Level 3 apprentices when in reality there are no Level 4 courses available in the local area/region for these students. We are putting out about 35-40 Advanced Automotive Engineering apprentices per year, but we see no real HE progression available for them locally.’

Career Development Manager - PTP

Interestingly, other partner providers had also alluded to this point on occasions, but had nevertheless gone ahead and started to organise enrichment activity schedules and apply for funding. In these cases, they felt that it was better to raise the aspirations of apprentices initially in respect of progression opportunities in HE and then address any issues of non-provision locally at a later date.
Feedback on enrichment activities

To date, two enrichment activities have taken place and in both cases the outcomes have been positive.

Blackpool and The Fylde College

Awareness-raising event for employers and Advanced Apprentices (Enrichment Activity 1)

This enrichment activity was held on 2nd March 2011 and took the form of a major awareness-raising event about HE opportunities to which both employers and their Advanced Apprentices were invited from a range of subject areas including Engineering, Health Care, Early Years, Computing and IT, Business and Construction. 21 Advanced Apprentices and 13 employers attended. The event comprised an evening seminar including presentations and discussion opportunities focusing on appropriate progression routes, funding issues and HE programmes available locally for apprentices.

Outcomes

The outcomes of the evening were positive. Employers were engaged by the potential HE progression process and many expressed the view that they would like their apprentices to progress on to HE as they saw the benefits of it for their company. The event dispelled many of the myths about HE for apprentices and the employers left with a much clearer view of the HE opportunities available for their workforce. Many were clearly surprised about the relatively short attendance time required of the student for study on an HE programme e.g., only one or two days per week, and saw how such study could be integrated into the work of their company.

There was caution expressed by some of the employers about the costs of supporting their apprentices through an HE programme of study. Nevertheless they did accept that the evening had provided them with a much greater awareness of HE in general and confirmed that they would certainly give consideration to funding their apprentices through their next level of study.

The Advanced Apprentices who attended also had the opportunity to benefit from the wide range of information and advice provided and were enthused by the HE opportunities that were clearly available to them. Various myths were dispelled in areas such as HE funding arrangements, with the message clearly being stated that the apprentice route to HE was one that was now increasingly being encouraged. All of the apprentices attending expressed their desire to move on and progress to taking an HE qualification with several remaining behind after the event to discuss specific funding and application issues with college staff.

The organisers in their review of the event have also learned lessons for the future. As a result the following are proposed:

- The event to be run again at an appropriate point in the future as the outcomes are considered successful
- More trainer/assessors who have regular contact with apprentices will be up-skilled so as to be able to provide better advice on HE funding and progression opportunities
- Ensure a team of staff to provide presentations to every cohort of Advanced Apprentices about HE opportunities during their final year of training
- Start to provide more information about HE opportunities to Level 2 apprentices
- Engage in the progression process earlier by discussing HE opportunities with potential Level 2 apprentices during the recruitment stage
It is worthy of note that the college had been considering enhancement activities of this nature for its apprentices for some time prior to the Apprentices Project being launched, however:

‘The enrichment activities funding provided by AHL has really provided a catalyst for all these activities to take place. Without the funding promised from AHL these things would ultimately have gone ahead as this is part of the college’s philosophy on progression, but things would necessarily have happened much more slowly.’

*Commercial Income Manager*

**Accrington and Rossendale College**

**Visit of Automotive Engineering Advanced Apprentices to Lancaster University**

The visit took place on 10th February 2011 with the purpose of enhancing the apprentices’ knowledge and awareness of progression routes beyond their NVQ Level 3 qualification. The apprentices experienced a campus tour, a look at student life and facilities and a chance to sample the HE environment in general. The group also met their counterparts from the University who are working towards an FD in Mechanical Engineering and got the opportunity to engage in their current project – the design and building a racing buggy.

**Outcomes**

The day was considered highly beneficial for the apprentices concerned and provided plenty of food for thought for the next step of their careers. A similar visit is currently being planned to Blackpool and The Fylde College sometime in May 2011.

Most of the apprentices had never in the past considered that their future career path might include study at HE level; however many now think that this could be a serious option for them.

**Summary**

- The opportunity to develop enrichment activities has been welcomed by the majority of training providers who see it as enhancing the opportunities available for their Advanced Apprentices.

- Some providers have already undertaken activities and other are developing enrichment schemes. The uses of the enrichment funding varies, dependent upon the nature of the subject area of training and a wide range of activities have been planned or have already taken place. In most cases the enrichment activities have been determined by consensual discussion between staff and apprentices within the organisation.

- The number and variety of enrichment activities taking place and proposed is increasing quickly as partner organisations realise the value and benefit that can be derived from such activities by their Advanced Apprentices.

- There have been some problems associated with organising enrichment activities where apprentices are entirely work-based and very rarely leave the work-place, although training providers have endeavoured to overcome this.
• Concern has been expressed by one provider about raising aspirations through the use of such activities if there were actually no HE programmes available locally for apprentices to progress onto. Other organisations in a similar situation considered the awareness raising and opportunities provided by the enrichment funding were suitable outcomes in themselves and developed a programme of activities for their students.

• Some enhancement activities were taking place already in some organisations; however the enrichment funding available meant that their programmes could be improved or brought forward. In one case there was uncertainty about applying for enrichment funding as the amount of money available was relatively small and it was considered that the application process might be time consuming.

• Given the number of proposals for enrichment activities now being received it is likely that all available funding will be used by the end of the Partner Provider Project.

• Those enrichment activities that have taken place to date have proved very successful in their outcomes in raising awareness and value of HE opportunities that are available to both Advanced Apprentices and their employers.
7. The Learner Perspective

Four student cohorts were interviewed during the course of the evaluation. In all cases the students were keen to share their views and contribute towards the evaluation process. The meetings with students mainly took the form of focus groups with a series of pre-prepared questions asked of them, followed up with supplementary questions as they arose from the answers given. The students were essentially very positive about the Apprentices Project and the associated activities and were keen to find out more about the opportunities available to them at HE level. On occasions however, they expressed misgivings about the type and quality of IAG that they had received prior to starting their apprenticeships.

Myths and misunderstandings

A major concern voiced by the apprentices was that the IAG they had received at school had been lacking as to the potential opportunities that could be available to them, once they had completed their Level 3 apprenticeship. Most of the students stated clearly that prior to and for the majority of their apprenticeship, they had never understood or been made aware that achievement of an Advanced Apprenticeship could lead on to an HE qualification. As a consequence, most of the apprentices had initially harboured no thoughts or aspirations as far as HE was concerned:

‘We didn’t realise that an apprenticeship could lead to an HE qualification. We only thought it would lead to a dead-end job.’

Apprentices - FEC

Equally it has sometimes been the case that apprentices had initially chosen to do a vocational course of this nature because they did not want to do further academic (school type) study and instead wished to ‘get doing a job’. At some point later however, their aspirations had changed and they began to realise that other opportunities may be available to them:

‘In many instances these apprentices have chosen to go down this [apprenticeship] route because they did not want to go down the traditional academic route but equally what we are conscious of is that as time progresses, people do change their minds.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

The clear message coming from apprentices is that once they realise that they might be able to take advantage of progressing to HE, many actually started to consider the option.

Awareness, expectations and aspirations of apprentices

The figure of a 4-6% progression rate for Apprentices progressing to HE is one that has remained static for several years. Initiatives such as the Apprentices Project were set up to challenge this situation and the perceived view that apprentices were not actually interested in moving on to take HE Level qualifications. Evidence collated as part of this evaluation from apprentices themselves and the staff who teach them, certainly indicates that many apprentices actually have aspirations much greater than is generally understood, and that the initiatives undertaken here by AHL and Lancashire LLN have in fact changed the way that many apprentices locally now think about HE.
Students interviewed continually stated that they were interested in ‘getting on’ more than just working for ever in the same job and considered that now they had learned more about the opportunities offered by HE, it might be useful to them personally. It was clear that students had been highly inspired and motivated as a result of the Partner Provider Toolkit activities and after using the materials there was an increase in aspiration and desire for greater opportunity in their career development, particularly through progression to HE.

‘We want to know more in terms of IAG for HE – we’ve even been onto the UCAS website now.’

Apprentices - PTP

‘We’d never thought about HE as a route to take, and been given little information about it. The [Partner Provider Toolkit] activities and materials have changed our awareness, aspirations and attitudes in relation to taking an HE course.’

Apprentices - FEC

The apprentices at one PTP* concurred that, following the use of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials they strongly agreed that:

- They understood more about how an HE qualification could help them get an interesting and well-paid job
- They were more interested in progressing to a higher level of learning
- They were confident that ‘I will be able to take the next steps towards a higher level of learning’

Apprentices - PTP

* Taken from the LWBLEF feedback survey of the Partner Provider Toolkit.

One training manager expressed the concern that their students generally, not just apprentices, did not get enough IAG between Levels 3 and 4 and that this did not help with aspiration-raising. However, the comment was also made by his colleague that:

‘These [Partner Provider Toolkit] materials and activities go a long way towards helping our apprentices become more aware and help them make the correct choice in respect of moving on and progression.’

Training Co-ordinator - FEC

Another training manager expressed the view that the Partner Provider Toolkit activities may not have necessarily changed completely the attitudes and inspirations of apprentices in relation to HE, but that:

‘They have certainly raised awareness of the possibilities that are still there for them and this came through very much in the work that the apprentices did using the Partner Provider Toolkit materials, (and the work with the Aim Higher Associates, in setting down with the apprentices and discussing what opportunities might be there for them to progress to HE and raising their awareness of progression generally)..........
.........as a result, many apprentices are now aware that they have not necessarily burnt their bridges with HE in taking the apprenticeship route and that various HE options are still open to them.”

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

Some apprentices had indicated initially that they did not know that they could continue further with their education and training through progression to HE:

‘It [the Partner Provider Toolkit] has raised their awareness and aspirations even though not all of them will necessarily want to change from their present route. The key thing is that it has made them realise that options for HE are there for them. They may not take advantage of those opportunities just at the moment, but they are now aware of the fact that they are there.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

Other apprentices expressed the view that they were now very much more aware about the opportunities that HE offers but equally also aware of the costs involved (apprentices noted that fees of up to up to £9,000 per year were being discussed in the press). However many apprentices understood that part-time fees would be less than this, that they would not have to pay them back until after an HE course had been completed and confirmed that:

‘....they would be prepared to progress onto an HE course if their employer would support them on a part-time basis whilst they were still employed.’

Apprenticeship Manager - FEC

There were equally some students who even after having experienced the Toolkit materials and completed the activities were still not convinced about progressing to HE, and wished to remain in their present training and work circumstances:

‘Some apprentices still say “well, I did this because I didn’t want to go down the academic route and that’s fine for me.” That’s what choice is all about. Apprentices have to make the correct choice on as much information as they can get and these [Partner Provider Toolkit] activities have helped them do that.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

The role of the trainer/tutor in raising awareness of and aspirations about HE

One important feature of the Apprentices Project evaluation that continually arose during interviews with apprentices was the role that their tutors, assessors and trainers had played in raising their knowledge, understanding and aspirations about HE.

The apprentices voiced the opinion that as a result of completing the Partner Provider Toolkit activities and using the associated materials, they now understood clearly that more opportunities may well become available to them in their working environment if they achieved HE qualifications. As a consequence, many apprentices now wanted to know more specifically about what qualifications are available after they have completed their Level 3 programme so that they can progress. In this, they had only praise for their tutors/trainers in the way that they had delivered ideas about HE to them.
‘Our tutors have been instrumental in changing our perceptions about HE. They are inspiring tutors, so much so, that many of us are now thinking about going on to HE. The PowerPoint about HE opportunities was really useful and informative and our tutor explained it really well.’

‘We are really looking forward to the enrichment activity trips. We will certainly gain by going on the visit to the Engineering Department at Lancaster University that they [the tutors] have organised for us.’

Apprentices - FEC

‘We just want him [the training manager] to tell us more about opportunities for HE now.’

Apprentices - PTP

In one FEC, students (ex-apprentices) had been pointed the way of an appropriate FD by staff within the department who had taught them as apprentices and encouraged them to progress to this HE programme on a part-time basis. The students noted that their inspiration had been motivated by these ‘excellent staff’ who had influenced them and helped raise their aspirations very positively. They could not praise highly enough the quality of input from the staff in terms of advice and guidance that had contributed to them progressing onto the HE programme.

Summary

- The apprentices interviewed welcomed the opportunities and activities available through the Apprentices Project. They were clearly appreciative of the activities undertaken and the learning that they had gained.

- It was apparent that the majority of apprentices considered that they had not been adequately informed about the opportunities to progress to HE when they had originally decided to take the apprenticeship route to qualification and training.

- The apprentices appreciated greatly the way that the learning materials and activities had been delivered and felt that they had gained from it. In all cases, the apprentices commented on the enthusiasm of their tutors and trainers/assessors in delivering the information and activities which had made their learning a very positive experience.

- The apprentices confirmed that they now felt very much more knowledgeable and aware about the opportunities that HE could provide for them. Some indicated that they would now seriously consider progressing onto an HE programme at some point in the future. They now also understood much more clearly the meaning and value of their Level 3 qualification.

- There were concerns expressed by some apprentices as to the cost of taking an HE programme of study and whether or not their employer would support them.
8. The Training Provider Perspective

The launch event of the Partner Provider Project in July 2010 at the Marriott Hotel, Preston, has proven to have been a milestone in the whole HE awareness and aspiration raising process for apprentices in the greater Lancashire area. Of those partner organisations contacted who sent representatives to the event, all confirmed this and returned to their organisations with the Partner Provider Toolkit and other materials that were made available to partners during the day.

In the case of the majority of training providers who attended, the event proved particularly positive and they considered the potential outcomes discussed and materials provided by the Project useful and appropriate in relation to raising awareness and aspiration about progression to HE locally for their Advanced Apprentices. There were some dissenting voices who felt initially that the event had not particularly addressed certain of the issues relevant to their individual organisations, although they did indicate that latterly they had found the ideas and materials demonstrated at the event to be useful. In a generic sense however, the launch event of the Partner Provider Project can be viewed as a positive step forward for AHL and the Lancashire LLN in their desire to work with training providers in the region, with the aim of improving awareness and opportunities for apprentices to progress to HE.

The response of training providers

In many cases the training providers have reacted quickly and responsively to the requirements of the Apprentices Project.

In one large FEC it was stated clearly that apprentices are very important to the College in terms of its business plan and as a result there is now a culture of progression embedded in the apprentices section of the college. The training manager concerned considered that the Partner Provider Toolkit materials and activities were of excellent quality and highly relevant to their apprentices. The Toolkit had proved particularly useful in respect of aspiration-raising and improving awareness about HE progression opportunities for Advanced Apprentices and fitted very comfortably with its business plan. The opportunities provided for apprentices through enrichment activity funding were also seen as extremely valuable.

The college took the long term view that, driven partly by the present economic situation and a government policy which aims to substantially increase the number of apprenticeship places available over the next few years (BIS, 2010), there will be a greater number of apprentices available who may ultimately aspire to progress to HE in the future. Clearly then, the lessons learned from the Apprentices Project would come to the fore as time progressed and could only be beneficial to the college.

Another FEC confirmed that its Work-Force Director had attended the Apprentices Project launch event and brought back all of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials. These materials had been cascaded to staff delivering to apprentices and more widely to other staff who train/assess employees taking NVQs in the work-place. The introduction to and use of the materials had clearly made an impact on the training managers, trainers and assessors and all had now re-assessed their attitudes in respect of progression to HE for apprentices and other WBL students. Clearly here, the Partner Provider Toolkit materials and ideas introduced at the Marriott Hotel launch event are having a positive effect.
This FEC has now decided to develop things further and has realised the need to ‘plant the progression to HE seed’ not just at Level 3 but further down the curriculum at Level 1 and Level 2. In addition, many of the Toolkit materials have been cascaded to other parts of the college, not just those in the AHL/Lancashire LLN targeted core areas and it is the intention of the college that these generic ideas about progression to HE will be adopted in all of its FE Directorates in the near future, not just those dealing with apprentices and WBL students. Staff at the college are clear that the effects of the Apprentices Project activity on the Advanced Apprentice target groups have been particularly positive. They confirm that developments in relation to progression would not have happened (or certainly not as quickly), without the information, materials and activity input from the Project launch event. Staff understanding of progression awareness and opportunities for apprentices has dramatically improved and delivery staff are now very enthused about the process, although some admit to the fact that:

‘We ourselves are still learning about progression IAG as we go along, but it is an excellent learning opportunity for us too.’

WBL Manager - FEC

Staff at the college also comment that the effects on some of the apprentices have been quite dramatic:

‘The apprentices really see the value of their Level 3 qualification now e.g., for entry to the RAF, business, emigration or progression to HE and so these materials and activities are really raising their aspirations. Many of the apprentices are now talking openly about progression to HE, potential Level 4 courses, visits to HEIs etc., and asking what is available HE-wise at other places like Blackpool and The Fylde College.’

Training Support Officer - FEC

‘Our apprentices now realise that what they are taking is a proper Level 3 qualification and that it can open doors. It is the tutors that are showing them the way in this.......if it were not for the enthusiasm of our trainers and assessors in this process, the apprentices would not have had the increase in their aspirations and knowledge.’

WBL Manager - FEC

One senior training manager at another FEC commented that the Marriott Hotel, Partner Provider Project launch event had been “a good event and inspirational for those attending”. It was the case that one trainer/assessor who attended had been highly inspired by the event and had since developed a learning scheme from the Partner Provider Toolkit materials provided and was using this with her cohort of students. The scheme has been totally integrated into the apprentices’ programmes of study and is operating very effectively. Other staff have been using the Toolkit materials on a more ad-hoc basis, but do find the materials equally useful and inspiring for their students.

It is particularly noticeable here that the Toolkit materials have been enlightening and inspirational for some of the assessors/trainers themselves and appear to have acted as a catalyst in their use with apprentices.
‘The [Partner Provider Toolkit] materials are appropriate, very useful and fit for purpose, and have clearly had a role in boosting the knowledge and confidence of some of the delivery staff who are now much more at ease when discussing progression issues with their students.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

This point was noted by the students themselves who commented that they had been inspired in their use and understanding of the materials and activities by the obvious interest and enthusiasm of the staff delivering to them.

Staff at this college were unsure at the time of interview as to whether they would be utilising the enrichment activity funding. Although they really saw the value of such activities they were already undertaking a wide range of progression enhancement activities for their Advanced Apprentices and hence were not clear about the value of applying for funding of some £3,000 through LWBLEF.

In other FECs, staff expressed some concerns about the progression process and hence the use of the materials and enrichment activities. In one case it was considered that the Partner Provider Toolkit helped very much with ideas about progression; however they indicated that the college already had a very strong profile in supporting apprentice progression to HE and had itself developed a large number of high quality learning materials for this purpose and that further development was already being undertaken by staff in this area of work. They considered the Toolkit to be a high quality product, but that it would be used as an adjunct to their own materials and activities already in place.

The view expressed in another FEC was a concern about the image of apprentices harboured by full-time mainstream FE and HE students within the college. Staff indicated that there had been problems of the full-time students taking a snobbish stance towards apprentices and particularly their aspiration to progress to HE. They did concede however, that more apprentices were now considering looking at progression, particularly on to FDs, because of the inspired and encouraging attitudes professed by their trainers/assessors and tutors. It was apparent that this positive attitude and approach by delivery staff was having a particularly fruitful effect on the progression aspirations of their apprentices.

Staff at several of the PTPs were also positive about the launch of the Apprentices Project and having attended the launch event were very supportive about how it could be of benefit to both their apprentices and staff. They confirmed that the project encouraged the delivery staff to think much more about mentoring and guidance in respect of progression. Several staff had been inspired by the event with the result that now much more emphasis was being placed on IAG opportunities for progression with apprentices during training sessions and the Toolkit materials were being incorporated into these.

Staff at several of the PTPs were also positive about the launch of the Apprentices Project and having attended the launch event were very supportive about how it could be of benefit to both their apprentices and staff. They confirmed that the project encouraged the delivery staff to think much more about mentoring and guidance in respect of progression. Several staff had been inspired by the event with the result that now much more emphasis was being placed on IAG opportunities for progression with apprentices during training sessions and the Toolkit materials were being incorporated into these.

In the case of most PTP partners, it is the case that staff development for their own employees to become qualified at Levels 4, 5 and 6 is particularly high on their list of priorities. Most indicated that staff CPD was a fundamental part of their philosophy and formed an important part of their business plan. This approach by the providers of encouraging progression for their own staff was clearly apparent to the apprentices themselves and consequently inspired those apprentices to consider more the opportunities and benefits of progression to HE and higher level learning.
‘There is a very positive attitude from staff in the company about being involved with the Partner Provider Project. We have also been encouraged by our good relationship with and the support we have received from the LWBLEF.’

Sector Manager - PTP

‘We view progression as very important for our apprentices. It is an aspirational issue for both staff and learners alike and there is a very good staff development policy. Several of our staff started out in their careers via the apprenticeship route and are now taking HE courses locally as part of their personal CPD development.’

Training Manager - PTP

Several of the private training providers stressed the importance now being placed on progression through all of their training programmes; this was a responsibility being placed on them by both funding agencies and their own internal quality requirements. As such, the advent of the Apprentices Project and the Partner Provider Toolkit materials and activities provided were very timely and apposite.

‘There is much more concentration now placed on the Learner Journey; this is insisted on by our own internal Quality Assurance team. The materials will make our apprentices much more aware about HE opportunities and we foresee many more of them moving into the realm of HE as time progresses. All of the Toolkit materials will be used but not until later this year as this fits better with our timetable.’

Training Manager - PTP

The timing of the Apprentices Project

In the case of two PTPs the timing of the Project was raised as being problematical. They were very clear in their support for the Apprentices Project and viewed its aims very positively, but both felt that the time constraints imposed in relation to when the Toolkit materials should be used and when enrichment activities could take place provided logistical problems for them. They both noted that their training time-scales worked on an annual cycle and that these activities would be difficult to fit in; however they would both try to ensure that some of the activities did take place, as they were organisations that fully supported the philosophy of progression and realised that the process would be beneficial to their apprentices.

Summary

- The Apprentices Project has proved a positive initiative with the majority of training providers. They view it as a coherent package of learning materials, activities and CPD which ultimately can only be of benefit to their apprentices.

- Some staff have found the Project inspiring and have now embedded all of the learning materials and activities into their training programmes.

- Many see the Apprentices Project as providing a focus and coherence for their work on progression to HE, as this is now an important part of their work with apprentices and a requirement of their own organisation.
• In some cases, organisations have found difficulty with the timing of the Apprentices Project and delivery of the IAG materials and associated activities has not yet taken place. However, the staff concerned do see the value of the Project and intend to embed these materials and activities into their programmes at a later date.

• Many staff have found the activities and experiences afforded by the Project as a useful learning and developmental process for themselves.
9. The HE Provider Perspective

HE in the Lancashire area is provided in a variety of HEIs and FEC (HE Providers). In order to ascertain the HE perspective in relation to the Apprentices Project, interviews were conducted with staff in 3 HEIs and 7 FECs. All of the FECs involved offer some of their provision at HE level; only one of the HEIs offers FE programmes as part of its overall curriculum offer.

An apprenticeship as a qualification?

Part of the survey work in HEIs and FEC (HE Providers) undertaken, was to ascertain whether or not an individual having completed an Advanced Apprenticeship would be considered for a place on an HE programme at that institution and whether or not ‘an apprenticeship’ would be considered as an appropriate entry qualification. The situation is complicated by the issue referred to previously in that, ‘an Apprenticeship is not in itself a qualification’ (Carter, 2009), rather it is at various times, a descriptor of an approach to training, a label for a package of learning or training, and more formally a Framework of Training, Learning and Work (NAS 2011).

In the formal sense, an Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3) always contains within it the following:

- A Competence-based element – NVQ Level 3
- A Knowledge-based element – Technical Certificate Level 3
- A Key Skills/Functional Skills element – Level 2
- Employment Responsibilities and Rights (for those aged 16-25)
- Additional Employer Requirements specific to that industry  
  e.g., Basic Engineering training (Performing Engineering Operation NVQ Level 2)
  
  (NAS, 2011)

In academic terms, particularly in respect of entry requirement for HE, the position lacks clarity and consistency. Since an apprenticeship is a ‘framework’ rather than a qualification and since apprenticeship frameworks even within a particular sector can contain a plethora of different competency-based and knowledge-based qualifications, HE providers often find it very difficult to provide consistency in terms of admissions practice. Often the only part of the framework which is considered relevant is the competency-based element (NVQ Level 3) but in some frameworks, the accompanying knowledge-based element is considered equally as valuable or even more so (e.g., some engineering frameworks have an HNC - a Level 4 HE qualification - as the knowledge-based element) and in still others the NVQ Level 3 is not considered relevant by some HE providers.

As a consequence, the term ‘apprenticeship’ does not normally feature within the admissions criteria of many institutions that run HE programmes, although NVQ 3 as a stand-alone qualification does. In many cases however, this NVQ 3 qualification is considered as a ‘non-standard’ entry qualification (i.e., not GCE ‘A’-level or BTEC National), with a slightly different entry process required within some admissions departments.

It is worthy of note that all of the HEIs or FEC (HE Providers) surveyed as AHL/Lancashire LLN partners stated when asked, that ‘Yes they would’ consider applications from Advanced Apprentices for a place on an HE programme, in light of the fact that within their framework of training an apprentice will have successfully completed an NVQ Level 3 qualification.
The FEC (HE Providers) perspective - Internal progression

All of the FEC (HE Providers) surveyed indicated their willingness to take apprentices onto HE programmes; however in some cases problems occur within their own institutions where students are progressing internally. In some cases there are communication difficulties within the different parts of the FECs and there appears no ‘joined up approach’ to Advanced Apprentices progression:

‘We have problems of communication between the WBL, FE and HE sections of the College. Sometimes there is no real linkage and progression for our students is simply not as good as it should be. Some Advanced Apprentices simply don’t know that HE is available to them and the HE staff don’t really understand what apprenticeships are all about.’

WBL Manager - FEC

Other FECs (HE Provider) appear to have overcome these internal communication and/or procedural problems and are able to ensure that apprentices can progress fairly easily onto an HE programme. This progression process often forms part of the college’s strategic plan and is important for maintaining student numbers:

‘We have good links in the college with all of our HE departments in relation to Level 3 apprentices progressing. We have developed a structural approach across the college in relation to progression so that all students can move easily from FE to HE as a natural course. Also, if progression from Level 3 for apprentices was not encouraged there would be a drop off in numbers going in to HE. In some cases HE programmes would not run due to low numbers, so progression is seen as critical to our survival.’

Development Manager - FEC

Concurrent FE and HE qualifications

In one FEC (HE Provider) Advanced Apprentices can follow a part-time HNC programme in e.g., Business Administration whilst completing their apprenticeship at the same time.

‘This has proved to be a very popular route with the HNC compacted into 2 days of the required 2.5 days of college study. This allows for half a day of technical NVQ study, then the apprentices can continue at work for the rest of the week. This is very demanding on the apprentices but is a good model as it allows them to work and progress at the same time.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

Further, the same college is very keen to develop a Bridging Module using the ideas and materials from the Train the Trainer - Preparation for HE Module as a basis, so that their apprentices can ‘test the water’ before embarking on a full-time or major part-time vocational/academic HE programme. The college believes that it has a potential cohort of Advanced Apprentices keen to take this module.

The HEI perspective - External progression

Three local HEIs were visited during the evaluation with various admissions staff/admissions tutors being interviewed about their policies and practices in relation to admitting Advanced Apprentices onto their programmes. In some areas of discussion there was a marked similarity of response which is some cases was very positive, although there were individual differences in approach between the three institutions.
The staff interviewed confirmed that all of the HEIs considered themselves to be Widening Participation (WP) institutions with a commitment within their strategic plans to provide inclusive opportunities in HE for their local and regional communities; they all acknowledged however that their Senior Management Teams (SMTs) were considering revisions to their strategic plans in view of the various funding changes following recent developments in government policy. Equally, all admitted to wanting to work more closely with local businesses in order to help up-skill their workforce.

Recruitment of Advanced Apprentices onto HE programmes was something that took place within each institution although all admitted that numbers in recent years had been ‘particularly low’ and were unable to precisely quantify these. Admission had been based in each case on the NVQ 3 qualification that had been achieved by the individual concerned and in each case the qualification had been viewed as ‘non-standard’. This had (usually) required the applicant to attend for an interview and complete a piece or pieces of work to test their academic competence prior to being offered a place. These non-standard practices were not applied for applicants applying with GCE ‘A’ levels or BTEC Diplomas. However, each of the HEIs indicated close links with local FECs through partnership and/or validation arrangements and understood that more apprentices did progress to HE programmes in these institutions, mainly onto FDs and the HEIs were very happy to engage with apprentices in an HE environment through this mechanism. It was also commonly stated that partner FECs were considered very flexible in their approach, much more part-time oriented than HEIs and hence able to offer a more responsive delivery to e.g., FD students.

In diverging in their views, one HEI indicated that NVQ applicants and apprentices were seen as very important for them in respect of future developments. The Apprentices Project tied in well with other AHL and Lancashire LLN funded projects that they were linked to, which involve campus visits for apprentices. Following the launch of the Project the HEI had developed links with one of the PTPs which had attended and arrangements were now underway with tutors from the HEI visiting the training provider premises to undertake workshops about HE with groups of Advanced Apprentices. This was followed by a visit to the HEI campus by the apprentices to find out more about progression opportunities that were available there. In this way, the HEI felt that it could gain a lot through being involved in the Apprentices Project and is very keen to be engaged with and offer enrichment activities to other appropriate training provider partners in the region. It outlined that its WP strategy is a very important part of the its business plan i.e., widening and deepening of local participation and that it sees great value in utilising admissions qualifications support mechanisms such as *Preparation for HE bridging modules* as a way of supporting apprentices (and other Level 3 vocational students) in their progression onto HE programmes. The HEI definitely wished to engage more with apprentices in Lancashire to enable them to progress.

In terms of its WP philosophy many of the Business, Health and Social Care, Nursing and Teaching and Learning Support programmes provided at this HEI are FDs and are flexible and work-based so that those in employment (including ex-apprentices) can be accommodated. There is a flexible shell framework of qualification to provide for this. All of these FD programmes lead to top-up qualifications at Honours degree level e.g., Qualified Registered Nurse and Qualified Primary School Teacher. The HEI is now looking at delivering a whole range of its FD provision (some 30 programmes) in areas such as Arts, Science, Forestry and Sport in a much more flexible structure and mode, so that they can be completed on a part-time basis and/or by people in work. In this respect, the HEI may well find its programmes more attractive to Advanced Apprentices and their employers in the future.
‘Ultimately, this University sees itself as a connections facilitator across the partnership for FECs and PTPs alike. Pump-primed by AHL and Lancashire LLN through projects like the Apprentices Project and the Aimhigher Associates scheme, our work in this area will continue post-AHL and Lancashire LLN.’

Recruitment Manager - HEI

One of the other HEIs visited is reaching capacity of its students’ places and so more alternative offers are being passed out to FEC Partner Colleges. In the recent past students with NVQs, apprenticeships and other professional qualifications had the opportunity to partake on a 6-8 week access course which then allowed them access onto a Combined Honours Degree. However the Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ) situation has proved problematic here and this course is now no longer available.

There are various issues related to Advanced Apprentices which may occur should they apply for a place on an HE programme, although the number of applicants was stated as being ‘very low’. Applications from apprentices are always viewed as non-standard although they do get a fair consideration from Admissions Officers and Admissions tutors within the various schools of the University. There is in some cases a problem of convincing academics that an NVQ qualification is suitable and appropriate for entry to an HE programme, and admissions tutors are encouraged to consider Advanced Apprentices on their merits, provided that they will succeed. In some cases School Admissions Officers might suggest an apprentice going initially onto a course at a partner college, i.e., to do an FD, with the possibility of transferring in later at the Honours (Level 6) stage.

Certain of the academic schools are more attuned to admitting students with NVQs on a regular basis than others, in areas such as Health and Social Care where NVQ 3 is a standard qualification in the industry and students progress directly onto a part-time FD. The same situation occurs in the Business, Accountancy and Finance fields. In these cases, the programme of delivery is flexible allowing for students to continue with their employment and utilise work-based assignments within their programmes of study.

The other HEI visited has a large number of FD programmes available in the area of Health and Social Care with most of these having a top-up programme to Honours level. Other cohorts of students attend at partner FECs under validation arrangements. For all of the FD programmes, NVQ 3 and BTEC National qualifications are normally accepted as entry qualifications and are not considered as non-standard. Many of the students enrolled on these FDs are in work; the programmes run on a part-time basis, utilise blended-delivery methods and are flexibly delivered with students spending 1 day per week at the HEI and a minimum of 1 day per week in professional work-practice. Assessment takes place both at the HEI and in the work-place through use of a mentor, with many of the programmes being linked to the NHS or Local Authority Health and Social Service work-places.

At present there are few applications from Advanced Apprentices for places on these programmes; however the HEI is happy to consider any apprentice who wishes to apply in that they will have achieved an NVQ Level 3 qualification as part of their training framework. It was clearly stated that any apprentice applying would be considered in the same way as any other student and that the admissions tutor would be expected to match the student’s expectations with the academic requirements of the programme.

At present no type of Preparation for HE bridging module is available pre-entry for any students; however students on all FD and Honours Degree programmes are required to take a Study Skills module at Level 4 which feeds into their Personal Development Plan.
Summary

- The HEI partners all see the value of encouraging more vocational learners including Advanced Apprentices to progress to HE. Mainly, they see this as an important role within their WP Strategy commitments.

- All the HEIs indicated that they would accept applications from Advanced Apprentices and would consider each student on their merits. Advanced Apprentices would be considered in view of the achievement of their NVQ Level 3 qualification, which was acceptable for entry to certain programmes but which was normally considered as a non-standard entry qualification.

- It was considered likely that Advanced Apprentices would be offered a place on an FD rather than directly onto an Honours programme. However, they would ultimately have the opportunity to progress to a Level 6 top-up programme upon successful completion of the FD.

- It was recognised that students entering HE programmes with qualifications such as NVQ Level 3 often involved people who worked in a particular profession. As such the delivery of the HE programme needed to be on a part-time, flexible or blended-delivery basis.

- There was recognition that some admissions tutors did not really understand what an apprenticeship actually involved in terms of achievement and hence where it lay, either in terms of qualification comparability or the institutions own admissions procedures and practices. This was compounded by the fact that an apprenticeship is not in itself a qualification.

- One HEI found the Apprentices Project provided the opportunity for them to make contacts with PTPs in the region which allowed for the development of mutually beneficial visits and information dissemination/sharing sessions.
10 The Role of Staff CPD Activities

Part of the Apprentices Project strategy has been the provision of a range of CPD activities for staff in FECs and PTPs who are involved with the management of, or delivery to apprentices. Some of the CPD has been provided through AHL and some through Lancashire LLN; however all has been focused particularly on the area of apprentices’ progression. The main CPD activities to date have been:

- Launch of the Partner Provider Project
- Launch of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module
- Delivery of the Coaching and Mentoring training
- Pilot delivery of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module

General comments in respect of CPD opportunities

The overwhelming response from the training providers in terms of CPD opportunities has been very positive. All of those partners interviewed have expressed the view that CPD is highly valued by their organisation and the staff who undertake it. The general view expressed was that staff CPD would ultimately derive benefit to the apprentices themselves and hence the opportunity for progression CPD was accepted with enthusiasm.

The response from training providers and HEIs was the same. All providers welcomed the CPD opportunities and expressed the view that the ideas learned could be embedded into programmes of learning, meaning that the processes would continue after AHL and Lancashire LLN had ceased. Another view strongly expressed was that lessons learned through the CPD provide a very valuable contribution to the development of the overall progression for apprentices within their own organisations. The view was also expressed, particularly by training providers, that in some cases their own delivery staff had never experienced HE and that these CPD opportunities would raise their own awareness of opportunities for ‘personal career development’ available though HE. It was also noted that it was valuable for private and public learning providers to undertake CPD activities jointly as there were many useful and complementary experiences that could be shared:

‘This CPD is excellent in respect of the Institute for Learning (IFL) 30 hours per year requirement and it will be excellent to cooperate with a PTP. Some staff do not have HE experience themselves, so these CPD events will raise staff awareness of progression. This will then be cascaded to the apprentices and we will be able to use these ideas and materials even after AHL has finished.’

Apprenticeship Manager - FEC

‘We see all of this CPD activity and associated materials only as a benefit to the College and the apprentices. These things will help broaden the outlook of facilitators and trainers about progression. This CPD is seen as a very valuable part of our overall progression strategy for our apprentices. Previously some students would think about progression but not in a systematic way; this will enable us to help them in a much more structured way.’

WBL Manager - FEC

‘Our apprentices want to emulate the staff in “getting on” and going in to HE. This CPD will help them in doing that.’

Training Manager - PTP
Launch of the Partner Provider Project

The Partner Provider Project was launched on 2nd July 2010 at the Marriott Hotel Preston.

A range of apprentice partner providers from across Lancashire were invited, with ten of the eleven partner providers invited attending. There were 39 attendees at the event in total.

The launch was held jointly by AHL, the Lancashire LLN and the LWBLEF. The purpose of the event was to outline the aims and objectives of the Project, raise awareness and to advise staff attending of the materials available that could be used with Advanced Apprentices including learning materials, financial support information, routes into HE and marketing literature, etc. Information was also provided about forthcoming CPD opportunities which would be available to them.

The day included various presentations, discussions and opportunities for questions, and prior to leaving all attendees were issued with a USB pen-drive containing all relevant marketing, and IAG materials and presentations discussed during the event.

Initial feedback

An initial evaluation taken at the event indicated that the event had been successful in advising staff about the project including all documentation to be used. Valuable feedback was also received as to how useful the event had been.

Unfortunately representatives from only one HEI from the region were able to attend and it was considered that the event would have been more valuable had other HEIs been able to send representatives to express their views and outline their involvement.

Later feedback

Feedback obtained from the partner providers visited during the evaluation process pointed consistently to the success of the Partner Provider Project launch event. Many attendees commented that it had been highly successful in raising their awareness and understanding about apprentices’ progression opportunities to HE and that the IAG and marketing materials provided at the event had been of a high quality and fit for purpose. Some spoke of the event as being ‘inspirational’ resulting in them using the ideas promoted there extensively with their apprentices and embedding them into their schemes of work and training programmes.

Others indicated that the materials and ideas taken from the event were now being cascaded within their organisation and in the case of one FEC, that the ideas and materials would be used in future with students across all FE Directorates, not just with apprentices.

The Coaching and Mentoring Programme

A series of Coaching and Mentoring CPD workshops were made available across the partnership through the LWBLEF during the course of January 2011. The one-day course was provided on 4 different days and in different locations across Lancashire to enable as many partner provider staff, particularly trainers and assessors to attend as possible.
Delivery dates and venue for the programme were:

- 10th January 2011  Accrington & Rossendale College
- 19th January 2011  Training 2000 - Nelson
- 20th January 2011  Beneast Training - Preston
- 27th January 2011  Blackpool and The Fylde College

Each one day event was well-attended with 54 people attending in total.

The main focus of the Coaching and Mentoring CPD has been to provide trainers/tutors and assessors with a greater knowledge and awareness of issues surrounding progression to HE for apprentices. The overall aim of this process has been to ensure that each of the partner providers would be able to continue with progression coaching and mentoring for their students once AHL and the Lancashire LLN have completed their work.

The aims of the Coaching and Mentoring workshops were:

- To ensure assessors have full information about the Aimhigher programme to support them in their work with apprentices
- To support assessors to achieve a higher rate of entry into HE for the apprentices they work with
- To support assessors to enhance their interpersonal skills with regard to mentoring and/or coaching

Those attending the workshops came from a variety of training providers and from a variety of training backgrounds. Reasons for attending also varied; some on the workshops intended to act as trainer to other staff on their return to work, some staff had volunteered for the training whilst others had been ‘sent’ by their employer, in some cases at short notice.

The workshops involved a variety of learning approaches and associated activities including presentations, role-play and other exercises.

**Feedback and outcomes**

The delegates were asked for feedback at the end of their workshop session. Most commented that they had found the sessions useful and they now understood the difference between Coaching and Mentoring and realised how each could be used to good effect. Each person attending indicated that they would be ‘doing something differently’ on their return to work as a result of attending in the workshop. Equally they would use what they had learned from the day in terms of e.g. listening, reflecting and questioning in their work supporting their apprentices.

The majority of delegates indicated that they had ‘enjoyed the training, had found it useful and had gained from it’. Several indicated that they would like more, in-depth training in this area with the result that LWBLEF have agreed to provide further training sessions on Stages 2 and 3 of the Coaching and Mentoring process. Other delegates said the course ‘was very useful and very interesting’ and that ‘they were now hungry for more.’ One FEC sent an initial group of delegates on one of the earlier workshops, and following positive feedback from those staff attending, sent a further cohort of staff on a later workshop session.

The delivery of the workshops was refined over the course of the 4 weeks of the project, with the delivery staff using feedback from one session to inform the next.
The general consensus perceived by the delivery team and corroborated by formal feedback indicates that the majority of those attending the workshops felt that they received a great deal of useful information and that they were well-executed and extremely informative. 48 out of the 54 people attending overall rated the workshops between ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ on their feedback form.

As a result of the training feedback and evaluation, the LWBLEF has agreed to provide an additional course on Stages 2 & 3 of Coaching and Mentoring which will take place on 7th April 2011.

The Coaching and Mentoring programme provided through LWBLEF can therefore be described as having been very successful and fulfilled those objectives achievable at present.

It was also noted that:

‘The events contributed to meeting several external quality standards that providers have to meet, such as the Common Inspection Framework and Matrix accreditation. Progression for Advanced Apprentices is high on the government’s ‘Skills for Growth’ agenda and these [Coaching and Mentoring] events have prepared training provider staff to consider how to deliver activity that would underpin a strategy for progression in their organisations.’

(du Thoit, 2011)

The Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module

The Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module is a short programme of study aimed at training managers, assessors, trainers and others who work with and advise Advanced Apprentices about opportunities for progression. Progression in this context is specifically focused on moving into a programme of study at HE level.

The module is based around one that was developed by a consortium of educational agencies and training provider organisations in the Humber region during the period 2007-2009, and has been utilised there with success since then. It was validated by the University of Hull as a 10 Credit University Foundation Award module. The original intention of the module was to provide both apprentices and their trainers/assessors the opportunity to find out more about the opportunities that lay with progressing to HE and to learn some of the study skills that would be required to undertake an HE programme of study. Funding for the development and running of the module was provided jointly by Aimhigher Humber and YHELLN.

The main point of trainers and assessors taking the module was to enable them to continue to provide the module within their own training establishments once funding for the project had ceased with the closure of Aimhigher Humber and YHELLN; in this way, the delivery of the module and its learning outcomes would become sustainable.

The module was launched in Lancashire at the Westleigh Centre, Preston, on 11th October 2010. There was much interest from a range of PTPs who indicated that they would like to take part in this initiative. The main thrust of the project in the Lancashire area focused initially only on the staff of the partner providers; Advanced Apprentices to this point have not been involved although they may be in the future. The decision to work initially only with staff, is based around the premise of ensuring sustainability of delivery of the programme after the cessation of the Lancashire LLN in December 2011.
Ensuring that the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module is embedded into the partner organisations should ensure that many other cohorts of Advanced Apprentices and the staff who train them will be able to take advantage of the module in the future.

The first cohort of students was a mixed group of staff from 2 training providers, one an FEC (Blackpool and The Fylde College) the other a PTP, (Beneast Training Ltd., of Blackpool). The cohort consisted of 6 staff from each organisation making 12 in total. The initial module consisting of 4 separate days was delivered over the period 10th January 2010 to 18th February 2011 at Blackpool and The Fylde College.

The aims of the module are:

- To prepare participants for further study at HE Level 4 and above
- To develop a range of study skills appropriate for further study at HE Level 4 and above
- To provide an initial HE programme for Advanced Apprentices in our region
- To provide an opportunity for participants to critically reflect upon their own learning and development, their educational aspirations and plan for their future study
- To develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of Lancashire-based trainers to deliver the course

Support for the module

Support for the module has been extensive across the partnership. Most partner providers have indicated their intention to send members of staff on the programme when it becomes available.

‘One member attended the launch and several staff will be involved. This training module will allow our assessors/trainers to work much more professionally with apprentices in respect of progression issues. The programme is likely to be adopted for use by apprentices either accredited or non-accredited as the final summation of the whole progression activities and process of the Apprentices Project. That is, we would like to follow this up and develop it into a Bridging Module which would then allow apprentices to take up a place on a full-time or (probably) part-time HE programme locally.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

‘We expect 6 colleagues on this programme from December 10th 2010 in association with Beneast Training. The staff will be trainers, assessors and managers of Advanced Apprentices. Hopefully we can deliver the module at some point to the students themselves after the Lancashire LLN has finished.’

Commercial Manager - FEC

‘6 people went to the launch of the Train the Trainers – Preparation for HE initiative in October and we want all of them to go on this programme. Our aim is to embed the process of Preparation for HE into our apprentices’ programme of learning.’

WBL Manager - FEC

‘We have not heard about the Preparation for HE - Train the Trainers Module; however we would like to find out more about it as it sounds very relevant to our work.’

WBL Manager - FEC
‘We will be taking part in the first cohort of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module to be held at Blackpool and The Fylde College. We are looking forward to a good interaction with college staff on the module.’

Sector Manager - PTP

‘Yes we would be interested in this module and we would like possibly 6 candidates on this programme. There is the important issue of progression involved here and this will provide good staff development.’

Training Manager - PTP

‘No one went to the launch of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module – but yes, we would be very interested in this for the development of our staff.’

Training Officer - PTP

Outcomes of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module

Start of course feedback

The initial feedback centred on why the staff attending were taking the course and what they hoped to gain from it.

The main themes centred around:

- Gaining a better knowledge and understanding of the process and opportunities of HE for apprentices
- Improving the quality of advice apprentices, parents and employers receive about HE pathways and opportunities
- Developing a more structured approach to guiding final-year apprentices with respect to progression routes
- Demonstrating to employers the benefits accrued from apprentices gaining HE qualifications and experience
- Being able to help apprentices bridge the learning skills gap between FE and HE
- Ensuring that IAG support given is adequate and appropriate
- The changing landscape in education means more of our future students will be in employment
- Finding new ways to encourage learners to progress from an Advanced Apprenticeship
- Sharing good practice with colleagues and learning from them
- Learning how to embed (progression) materials into sessions and helping learners make the right choices
- Learning how to build better relationships with those (who work) in HE
- Getting a better understanding of barriers for apprentices wanting to progress from FE to HE
- Dispelling the myths that people have about progression, work and income for apprentices

This is a fairly comprehensive coverage of issues and is relevant in respect of the learning objectives of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module
End of course feedback

The pilot programme of the module finished on Friday 18th February 2011. Feedback was collated in various ways through use of:

- Evaluation forms provided by the tutor
- Production of Flip charts by members of the group during the last session
- A discussion and feedback session held after the last learning session
- A short feedback questionnaire developed by the Project evaluator

As a consequence the feedback was wide-ranging and comprehensive. Comments were made in relation to aspects such as quality of teaching, resources and facilities, usefulness of assessment methodology, the value of visits undertaken and overall satisfaction with the module. Furthermore the organisations concerned whose members had attended the course were asked how they would take things forward from now on.

Various generic comments related to the actual structure of the programme itself, e.g. timing of sessions, structure of major assignment, length of the course, number and length of trips out and the day-to-day structure of the programme. Clearly the organisers of the programme of study have learned from this and will be making adjustments as necessary when the module is rolled out in other areas of Lancashire.

In terms of success of the programme of learning, overall satisfaction with the module was high with feedback ranging from ‘good’ to ‘excellent’. In terms of the learning outcomes achieved, students expressed the view that the module had been extremely valuable, very worthwhile in its style of delivery and content and had improved their knowledge of what HE could offer their apprentices. An emerging theme was that participants now felt much more confident to advise their students about opportunities for HE progression.

The following comments were collated from those attending the course in response to the questions:

*How will taking the course influence your work with apprentices?*

*What do you intend to do differently as a result of taking the course?*

Attendees commented:

‘I have enjoyed the course and we look forward to moving forward as a college to deliver advice and guidance to encourage apprentices to progress to HE. We have planned an evening event to promote this.’

‘We will start to deliver to apprentices as soon as possible and start to promote progression [to HE].’

‘[We will be] using this course to facilitate mentoring and courses for assessors moving HE progression forward within the college.’

[I will] be developing sessions to give apprentices better guidance - many go on - or at least want to go on - to do an FD in my subject area. I now have the knowledge to promote HE learning.’
'The course certainly made me wish I had gone to university, so hopefully this will have the same effect on our learners. I always hated the classroom environment so I found the prospect of HE scary. However having visited various HE providers and seen exactly what life is like as a student, it has changed my views completely........I believe I can now confidently give appropriate IAG to learners looking at HE and confidently support them. I also feel competent enough to deliver this module to our students.’

Other comments indicated that it had been particularly useful to take the module alongside colleagues from another type of training provider in that this has led to cross-fertilisation of experiences and ideas which was highly beneficial.

Next steps for the future

In terms of next steps i.e., moving forward for the future, the two training provider organisations taking part clearly stated that they saw the learning outcomes of the programme as highly valuable and wanted to embed the module within their CPD programmes for their staff and also deliver it to their learners. Activities and actions that would take place as a result of the module delivery would include:

**Beneast Training**

- Embedding of the higher level study skills learned here into every learning area of the organisation, to include essay writing, report writing, presentations, bibliography (linking to Personal Learning Plans and Functional Skills)
- Development of progression reviewing with students on a more formal basis including the introduction of the programme as a bridging module (e.g., a 7 week course)
- An update of the organisation’s website and publications to more actively promote HE and provide useful links for their students
- The organisation looking to make closer links with HE providers in the region who could provide progression routes for their Advanced Apprentices

**Blackpool and The Fylde College**

- Training more members of staff to deliver the course to Apprentices
- Delivering the modules to all Advanced Apprentices in all training sectors
- Developing a programme of coaching skills for all assessors
- Embedding of self-study into the culture of the training programmes for Advanced Apprentices
- Raising awareness of the opportunities for HE for apprentices with employers during learner reviews and providing them with suitable information
- Developing the college website to include more information about HE opportunities for its apprentices

The proposal to develop a Community of Practice was broached by the group and was considered a good idea that would be of benefit to the members concerned. It was also noted that the delivery of the module within any training provider organisation would be seen as a positive development by OFSTED.
A note of caution

Various issues were brought to the fore during the evaluation process that did offer some concerns for those involved. Particularly, there were concerns expressed about how the delivery of the module would be funded in the future, how candidates would be selected and who would be accrediting the programme in the long-term. The need for a continued commitment to this programme on the part of the two organisations was also realised, with the understanding that there would need to be a structural embedding of the programmes into the organisations and that there would be resource, staffing and other cost implications attached to this.

A positive outcome

The Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module has clearly made a positive impact both on those staff taking the course and their employing training provider organisations. The feedback that has been provided clearly shows that the module is fit for purpose and is seen as a credible tool for the future that will be used with further staff and apprentice cohorts alike.

Summary

- The CPD programme that has been delivered by the Apprentices Project has been well received by staff in the training provider organisations. They see the CPD as particularly valuable and consider that it will be beneficial to their Advanced Apprentices.

- Training provider staff see the CPD as beneficial to themselves as well as their students in that some feel that their knowledge and understanding of progression to HE and associated issues and processes has been lacking. As a result of this updating and professional development they now consider that they are in a much stronger position to advise their Advanced Apprentices about HE progression.

- The launch of the Partner Provider Project at the Marriott Hotel in June 2010 has been recognised as an excellent CPD event in itself and many of those who had attended came away feeling well-informed and inspired about the progression opportunities to HE for their Advanced Apprentices.

- The Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module has highly been effective in raising awareness about a wide range of issues relating to Advanced Apprentices’ progression to HE and has made staff much more confident to advise their students in this area.

- The Coaching and Mentoring programme has allowed partner provider staff to understand better how to listen to, question, guide and advise their apprentices. This applies not only to issues related to HE progression but to other aspects of their pastoral and guidance role as well. Many of those who attended the programme would now like more in-depth training in this subject.
11 Attitudes of Employers

Support given by employers

The support given by employers to apprentices wishing to progress onto HE programmes varies greatly within individual training providers and across the region as a whole.

Providers report differences in attitudes from employers covering the full spectrum of opinion. Some employers are very positive towards apprentices and their aspirations to progress, whilst others are not so. In general the view expressed was that bigger employers are much more interested and supportive of apprentices’ progression opportunities, probably because larger companies tend to have a staff development policy and process and apprentices would become involved in this. Smaller-scale employers tended not to be so supportive at times, sometimes viewing better qualified people within their organisation as a threat to themselves, as they personally have never had the opportunity to partake of HE opportunities.

‘Some employers can be negative about students, particularly in respect of progression from Level 3. Employers can be concerned about apprentices’ getting above their station if they get too well-qualified.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

Further comment related to the time and financial implications for the employer of further training at HE level, although it was noted that they were more likely to support a student on a part-time programme rather than on a full-time basis:

‘Some employers are interested in HE and progression but always have to consider additional workload, time commitment, funding etc., in any decision; however if students are employed on a more part-time basis there is more chance that the employer will support their progression needs. Employers always look at progression training e.g., to HE in terms of problems such as time lost, cost, attitude of student etc.’

Training Co-ordinator - FEC

‘Some employees are positive and some are not, in supporting apprentices’ progression funding requests’

FD student - (Ex-apprentice) - FEC

One PTP noted that in the past some employers have been the stumbling block to progression, although more are starting to embrace the idea of progression for their apprentices as they see the benefit of employing people with higher level skills. As a consequence there was an increasingly positive relationship between the training provider and many of the employers.

‘We have a good relationship with employers some of whom are increasingly interested in progression to a higher level for their apprentices.’

Sector Manager - PTP

Other training providers also commented favourably on their relationship with employers and used this as a tool for trying to encourage them to support progression for their apprentices.
‘Generally, there is a very good relationship between the college and apprentices’ employers which can only be of benefit all-round. As such, the college continually endeavours to encourage employers to provide and support progression for their employees.’

Commercial Manager - FEC

‘Employers have supported progression in many cases in the past and some are still interested.’

Tutor/Assessor - PTP

Where relationships were positive it was considered beneficial to celebrate this and to continually engage with employers to reinforce the value of their apprentices to them and benefits of progression:

‘We are holding an AHL-funded employers and apprentices evening event to talk about and celebrate career development for apprentices and discuss with employers the benefits of progression to HE.’

Commercial Manager FEC

Feedback from employers

To date employers have only engaged in the evaluation process through one event, the presentation and seminar held at Blackpool and The Fylde College on 3rd March 2011.

Those employers that have provided feedback have generally been positive about the opportunities that HE can provide for their apprentices and understand the value that can be gained both by the apprentice and the company involved. Several expressed the intention to provide funding for their apprentices to progress to an HE programme of study as they saw this process as beneficial to all. However, there often appeared a note of caution on the part of the employers who expressed the point that there might be significant costs involved in funding apprentices through an HE programme. They were concerned that depending on circumstances, they might either not get their investment back, or that they would lose a well-trained apprentice from the shop floor, who would want to progress upwards in this or another company. These issues are clearly of real concern for employers who do understand the need to maintain a highly skilled and up-to-date workforce trained to the highest level possible in order to remain competitive, but do need some assurances about their financial investment in supporting apprentices through HE programmes.

Summary

- It has been difficult to gain the opinions of employers of Advanced Apprentices. Lack of regular meetings of groups of employers appears to be a common problem for all training providers.

- Employers do understand the need and value of HE qualification and appear generally supportive of their Advanced Apprentices progressing to HE as part of their requirement for a highly skilled workforce.

- Employers are concerned about certain financial aspects of supporting Advanced Apprentices through HE programmes.
12. Progression of Apprentices

Baseline data provided by the Lancashire LLN compiled from its partner institutions shows that for the 2008/9 cohort of students on programme in Lancashire, the total number of apprentices was 2,839. Of this number a total of 40 progressed to HE programmes; this is equivalent to 1.4%. This is some way below the national average of 4-6% of apprentices progressing annually to HE and should also be seen in the context of some 90% of ‘A’ level students and 40% of students with vocational qualifications such as BTEC National progressing to HE nationally over the same period. Partners in the LLN however noted that the data on progression particularly for apprentices is very shaky. Some of the public providers and all of the private providers do not routinely keep data on progression and hence are reliant on largely anecdotal information from learners. Even those who do routinely keep progression data note that the data is difficult to obtain and thus incomplete as it usually relies on learners contacting the institution after they have left. The figure of 1.4% is thus the LLN’s best available data and is certainly not lower than this; the figure may however be higher, particularly if the fact that apprentices will sometimes progress to HE several years after completing the apprenticeship is taken into account.

Staff attitudes towards progression

Feedback from interviews held with staff across the partnership indicated that training provider management and delivery staff are very passionate and enthusiastic about progression, and know that there is a ready-made market of apprentices for whom HE may be appropriate and encourage such students to take advantage of it. It is the case that that all of the training providers contacted view progression as an important and integral part of their work for both staff and apprentices. The wish to improve the aspirations and attitudes of apprentices towards learning and progression is ongoing throughout the apprentices training programme and has been clearly stated by training providers throughout this evaluation process. Terms such as ‘inspirational learning’, ‘increasing aspiration’, ‘increasing awareness’, ‘promoting opportunity’, ‘enthusiastic and supportive tutors/trainers’ in relation to progression opportunities for Advanced Apprentices appear to be common parlance among the training providers and the concept of progression appears firmly embedded in the philosophy and procedures of these organisations.

‘The philosophy of the staff in this organisation is that progression should be very much encouraged in our learners. We wish to improve the aspiration and attitude of our apprentices to one of learning and progression on-going throughout the training programme. The concept of progression for staff and students is now firmly embedded within this organisation and will continue as an important aspect of our programmes for all apprentices.’

Training Manager - PTP

The use of AHL/Lancashire LLN developed materials and activities provided and funded through the Apprentices Project has obviously enhanced this process and in some cases been a major driver:

‘Before the Marriott Event and Partner Provider Toolkit materials, our staff had not really talked to apprentices about progression. The students have now started talking about Level 4 programmes and are looking forward to visiting the Engineering Department at Lancaster University using AHL enrichment funding.’

Training Support Officer - FEC
One FEC was particularly supportive of the way that the Apprentices Project had influenced its entire outlook in relation to apprentices’ progression and felt that it was providing a much more systematic approach to the whole process. It now viewed the whole process of progression as a continuum which was integrated into the long-term delivery plan for all apprentices.

‘Things are much more positive now with respect to apprentices’ progression. The AHL and Lancashire LLN materials and activities have been used in various apprenticeship areas and education managers, trainers and assessors are now encouraging apprentices to think about and consider progression much more than they did previously.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC

In addition the college sees the continuum as ultimately including a Preparation for HE Module for apprentices, preparing them for the different style of learning required in HE.

In another FEC the WBL department is developing a tracking and monitoring system for apprentices who will ultimately take the Preparation for HE programme as a bridging module. Likewise the use of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials and involvement in the Apprentices Project has encouraged some of the training providers to develop a more structured approach to progression with several developing progression policies as part of the final evaluation of their apprenticeship programmes.

‘We are developing a progression policy which will apply to all of our apprentices. Some apprentices do progress on to university to date or some go on to NVQ Level 4 qualifications and we now want to embed progression throughout their apprenticeships.’

Sector Manager - PTP

One of the HEIs in the region commented specifically on problems of progressing apprentices into HE, although the staff themselves were very supportive of individuals making this move.

‘Convincing some academics of the value of NVQ 3 qualifications can be difficult on occasions. Admissions tutors wish to be convinced that the learner will succeed.’

Applicant Guidance Officer - HEI

The HEI however, was positive in specifying certain areas where NVQ 3 qualifications would be acceptable as entry qualifications for HE programmes. These included FDs in Health and Social Care, Business, Finance and Accountancy; in these cases NVQs are considered as non-standard entry qualifications, but students would be considered on an individual basis.

**Progression to date**

Progression data concerning Advanced Apprentices across the Lancashire area (other than generic data) is particularly difficult to obtain and quantify. Shown overleaf are examples of known progression routes from a range of partner training providers which have been used by Advanced Apprentices either in the year 2010-11 or in the recent past.
HE programmes

- Advanced Apprenticeship in Floristry onto FD in Floristry
- Advanced Apprenticeship in Automotive Engineering onto HNC Engineering
- Advanced Apprenticeship in Construction onto FD in Construction
- Advanced Apprentices Automotive Engineering onto a part-time FD in Motor Racing Engineering
- Concurrent HNC in Engineering alongside Advanced Apprenticeship
- Concurrent HNC in Business alongside Advanced Apprenticeship

NVQ Level 4 Technical Certificates

- Advanced Automotive Engineering Apprentices onto a NVQ Level 4 Technical Certificate that could lead onto a part-time FD
- Advanced Apprentices (any subject) NVQ 4 plus ILM Level 3 qualifications - available online at present
- Advanced Automotive Engineering Apprentices to Master Technician (Level 4 Technical Certificate)

Comments from training providers

'We had an increase of 2% this year (2009-2010) in the number of Advanced Apprentices progressing internally from Level 3 to take an HE programme - up from 4% - 6%. Some are full-time and some are part-time.'

'12 students from an Advanced Apprenticeship and 1 student from an NVQ progressed from last year’s cohort (2009-2010) and are on a course in HE this year (2010-2011). These could be full-time or part-time students.'

'At present one in the cohort of 16 Advanced Apprentices in Automotive Engineering is keen to go on to HE. Others are considering a Level 4 Technical Certificate.'

'In reality not many students to date have progressed onto university courses.'

'Construction Advanced Apprentices progress to FD Level 4, so this is possible, but the delivery of the FD needs to be flexible to fit in with their employers’ needs.'

'The Advanced Apprentices in Engineering are taking an HNC alongside their apprenticeships (paid for by employers). They have to attend for 2 evenings a week plus their day-release in college.'

It appears the case that data on Advanced Apprentices’ progression is difficult to obtain and that it is often not specific enough to use in a meaningful way. It is clear also that the number of Advanced Apprentices progressing to HE in the Lancashire region at present and in the recent past is very small, in line with or below national trends. This illustrates clearly the need for the types of interventions and activities that are being delivered through the Apprentices Project.
Summary

- The best available data regarding the number of Advanced Apprentices progressing to HE in the Lancashire area suggests that it is lower than the national average, though due to the difficulties in collecting progression data this cannot be stated with certainty. Some Advanced Apprentices do progress to part-time HE, sometimes concurrently with their Level 3 apprenticeship programme. Few Advanced Apprentices progress to full-time HE. Others progress to Level 4 by taking Technical or Professional Certificates.

- Until the advent of the Apprentices Project, many Advanced Apprentices did not realise that they could, or would be able, to progress to HE. Staff in training providers are now much more aware about the need for and opportunities available for their apprentices to progress on to HE than previously as a result of the interventions and activities of the Apprentices Project.

- Staff are increasingly being required to inform their Advanced Apprentices and other students about the opportunities to progress to HE by their own organisations and in some cases by the requirements of their Sector Skills Council. Most of the training providers now have a progression policy, or are developing them in relation to progression for Advanced Apprentices.

- In some cases, particularly in FECs, progression to HE of Advanced Apprentices is seen as beneficial for both the apprentices and the College itself in ensuring that certain HE programmes will run, hence providing a positive effect on overall student numbers. In this respect Advanced Apprentices’ progression is built into the FEC’s Business Plan.

- In the case of some FECs, the process of progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices is well organised and developed. Other FECs admit to there being a problem of communication between the FE, WBL and HE parts of the college.
13. The Visaroute Facility

As part of its strategy to create progression routes and progression agreements into and through HE for learners in identified vocational sectors in the Lancashire region, the Visaroute web-based facility has been developed. The website endeavours to contain all of the programmes offered by PTPs, FECs and HEIs in the partnership and for any given programme specified, shows any progression routes that the partners consider relevant. The programme has been professionally developed at Blackburn College University Centre on behalf of the Lancashire LLN.

The aim of the facility is to allow any student (including apprentices) to find out what routes are available for progression from their present course in any partner institution across the Lancashire region.

The Visaroute programme is linked directly to the Lancashire LLN website and is available for both staff and students as well as members of the public. It is clearly signposted, contains clear instructions and is easy to use. It was introduced to partner members at a launch on 30th June 2010 shortly after it had been constructed.

Use of the Visaroute facility to date

Evidence collated suggests that the Visaroute facility has not been widely used to date. The partners interviewed had heard of the facility and its availability and several had attended the launch of the programme. Those attending the launch had understood the potential of Visaroute, but none had systematically promoted its use to their staff or apprentices. The reasons given for this are varied:

- Initially, following the launch, several training providers demonstrated the programme to colleagues and students, but found teething problems with its use.

- To date there appears to be a lack of completeness on the system particularly in relation to opportunities for apprentices. Problems include non-appearance of apprenticeship programmes and in some cases no progression routes listed for their particular courses. Several FECs listed on Visaroute appear to run few or no apprenticeships; in one case Visaroute shows an FEC as running only one apprenticeship course, whilst the College website and on-line prospectus lists a wide number of apprenticeship opportunities available in 12 vocational sector areas. In addition, some apprenticeship programmes where listed, appear to show no progression routes available in any partner institution in the Lancashire region. There are also some minor technical problems relating to the visual display of courses in some listings which may be causing problems of use.

- The information provided by Visaroute appears therefore, to be incomplete and following initial disillusion with the web-based facility it appears that it is little used amongst training providers, even though they are aware of its existence. It does remain however, a powerful tool for providing information about opportunities for progression to HE for all students across the Lancashire area.
Summary

- The Visaroute facility can be seen as highly effective tool in enabling Advanced Apprentices to access information about progression opportunities to HE in the Lancashire area.

- The Visaroute facility is not used extensively, if at all, by the partner training providers.

- There are minor technical issues with the Visaroute system that require rectification to make it more effectively accessible to the user.

- The system contains some serious gaps in its provision of information regarding progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices.

Value Added

Several distinct outcomes emerge from the initiatives that have been developed through the joint AHL/Lancashire LLN Apprentices Project which has involved the development of a wide range of materials and activities on the part of both organisations and the effective implementation of these across the partner institutions. In the sections above, we have indicated the outcome and effectiveness of these interventions and activities that have taken place in relation to Advanced Apprentices’ progression to HE. It is the case that in some circumstances it can be difficult to measure Value Added and problematic to distinguish between those outcomes that have been achieved by the specified interventions and activities and those that might simply have come about because partners had ‘been going to do them anyway’.

It is clear however, that in the case of the Apprentices Project, Value Added has been demonstrated and positively recorded. The Project has gone a long way in funding activities that either would not have taken place when they did and in the manner in which they did, or would not have taken place at all due to lack of funding. This evaluation clearly shows that new deliveries, new activities and new policies and procedures have been put into place in many organisations across the partnership. What is also evident is that over the course of the Project to date, there has been an accelerating increase in the number and range of interventions and activities that have taken place across the partnership of PTPs, FECs and HEIs. There is clearly evidence of a much greater awareness and understanding on the part of the staff in delivery organisations concerning the opportunity for apprentices to progress to HE and the value of this progression for both apprentices and their employers. Indirectly, this improved awareness and understanding has usually been of benefit to the staff of the partner organisations as well. The results of these changes are important in that they are likely to be embedded into the organisations involved.

We have seen that the Apprentices Project has:

- Motivated Advanced Apprentices to consider a future in HE
- Motivated training provider delivery staff to become much more knowledgeable and aware of their apprentices’ requirements in respect of progression to HE
- Successfully developed and delivered a range of effective CPD across the partnership
- Ensured successful delivery of targeted and relevant learning and IAG materials across the partnership through use of the Partner Provider Toolkit
- Funded successful enrichment activities across the partnership
- Embedded the idea of progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices into the culture of training providers, both private and public
- Encouraged the development of policies and procedures in relation to HE progression in training provider organisations
- Put in motion practices that will ensure a sustainable future for the outcomes of the Apprentices Project initiative
- Prompted local HEIs to consider how Advanced Apprentices can more appropriately be accommodated into their admissions practices and procedures
Sustainability - the situation at present

The partner training providers, both private and public and HEIs have responded positively to the need to sustain the policies, activities, and practices across the partnership once AHL and Lancashire LLN funding and activity have ceased. One particularly positive outcome is the way that the concept of apprentices progressing to HE is now considered to be an integral part of their training programme. Progression of this nature is seen as beneficial to all concerned; students, training providers, and employers and is seen as something to be encouraged.

All of the training providers interviewed indicated that the materials used and activities undertaken will be embedded into their training programmes for use in future years.

The Apprentices Project through its CPD programme has significantly improved the understanding and awareness of staff in the partner training providers in respect of progression value and opportunities for their apprentices. The following comments from across the partnership are representative and very clear in this view of the future:

‘All progression ideas taken from Partner Provider Project enrichment activities will be embedded within the apprentices’ programmes as they are considered to be in the interest of the college and vital to its business plan. Progression is seen as beneficial both to the apprentices and the College.’

“Progression is critical to the survival of HE at the college, and apprentices’ progression is a large part of that.”

Commercial Manager - FEC

‘Training Support Officers will be embedding many of the AHL/Lancashire LLN activities and materials into all apprentice programmes across the college. This will become a formative part of what apprentices do in college.’

“It is intended to embed the materials and activities on all FE programmes across the college. Staff are very enthusiastic about progression and the AHL/LLN activities from the Marriott event onwards have enhanced this.”

‘8 of our Training Support Officers will take the NVQ Level 3 qualification in IAG as part of our continuing progression strategy.’

WBL Manager - FEC

‘Progression activities will continue using the learning and IAG materials and activities after AHL and Lancashire LLN cease. All activities will be embedded into Advanced Apprentices’ programmes, as in some cases they are being already. Also, it is important to realise that a lot of the AHL/Lancashire LLN CPD has provided many of the staff involved with lots of ideas and information about progression. In this way, the progression ideas and activities will continue to live on after AHL and the LLN have ceased.’

‘There is no formal progression strategy across the college at present but the AHL activity has spurred us on to get one developed.’

Head of Studies for HE - FEC
‘It is incumbent within the business plan for the college to provide progression information and activities for all its students. The activities and materials from AHL and Lancashire LLN will be embedded into the apprentices’ curriculum and used in the future.’

WBL Manager- FEC

‘As a training organisation we consider we have a duty of care to all our apprentices and will enable progression to HE for any individual who wishes to take advantage of it. Progression is now part of our philosophy and culture; these ideas are embedded in our training and the materials and activities from Apprentices Project have reinforced this. Hence progression will continue after AHL and the Lancashire LLN have closed.’

Sector Manager - PTP

‘The concept of progression IAG is embedded within the fabric of the company, and this will continue after AHL and the LLN have ceased. The awareness-raising, materials and activities provided by AHL/Lancashire LLN will be embedded into all of the apprentices’ programmes.’

Tutor/Assessor - PTP

‘Our Quality Team are taking these [progression] materials and ideas and are embedding them into all of our apprenticeship programmes. This is seen as a fundamental part of our work and from now on there will be a greater emphasis on progression; many more of our employees will follow progression CPD as a result of the AHL and the Lancashire LLN awareness-raising and CPD provision. This is part of the culture of the company and will continue after AHL and the LLN cease.’

‘Coaching and Mentoring for progression training and the Train the Trainer - Preparation for HE Module are seen as excellent examples of CPD that staff will take in the future.’

Training Officer - PTP

‘All materials will be embedded into the apprentices’ programmes of learning and will enhance those materials and activities that are already there.’

Career Development Manager - PTP

‘It is the aim of the University to carry out all of the work that it has done to date with AHL/Lancashire LLN as part of its widening participation strategy, even after AHL and the LLN have closed. We will continue in this endeavour. The AHL/Lancashire LLN network of PTPs, FECs and HEIs has provided many useful new links for us, particularly with FECs. Some want now to develop new HE programmes themselves to provide progression for their own students.’

‘We will continue to develop our flexible shell framework so that new HE programmes can be developed that will cater for the aspirations of students with NVQs and other non-traditional qualifications.’

Recruitment Manager - HEI
Ensuring future sustainability

In order to build on the success already achieved and to maintain momentum in a sustainable way after the cessation of activity and funding by AHL and the Lancashire LLN, it is vital that both organisations continue to engage positively with all training providers and other relevant partners for as long as possible to ensure that the ideas and philosophy of progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices are embedded into the culture of their provision.

Consequently, the following actions are strongly recommended:

a) Development of a short Good Practice Guide in respect of Advanced Apprentices progression to HE

The production of a short Good Practice Guide that will be available to all members of the partnership outlining the opportunities available for apprentices to progress to HE in the region and the benefits that accrue from it. The case studies should be drawn from good practice and embedded philosophy found across the partnership and involve ideas and activities specifically funded by the Apprentices Project initiative. This Good Practice Guide should be professionally produced and could be made available as a hard-copy guide, an e-guide, or both depending on the time and funding available.

b) Organisation of an End of Apprentices Project Dissemination event

An opportunity for partner training providers to showcase good practice in progression. This would include the benefits derived from encouraging apprentices to progress for employers, trainers and apprentices themselves.

This will entail a one-day or half-day dissemination event as a way of exhibiting examples of good practice from across the partnership. Hosted by AHL and Lancashire LLN, partner training providers would present their activities and initiatives, indicating positive practice and outcomes and achievements to date. They would also be required to outline how and why they will be ensuring sustainability of progression activities and ideas in their organisations in the future. (The event could include the launch of the Good Practice Guide as outlined in part a) above if required).

c) Continuation/enhancement of the CPD programme

The effectiveness of the CPD that has taken place to date under the aegis of AHL and Lancashire LLN should not be under-estimated in relation to the effect on the sustainable continuation of ideas and practices that have been developed through the Apprentices Project. It is recommended that the programme of CPD be continued for as long as possible (probably by Lancashire LLN up until it ceases in December 2011). It is recommended that:

i) The Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module continues to run with another cohort of assessors, trainers and managers from partner training providers. At the same time a further cohort comprising Advanced Apprentices interested in progressing to HE should be enrolled from both public and private training providers.

ii) The Coaching and Mentoring training materials be made available through the LWBLEF website for future use and reference by partner organisations.
iii) CPD be developed to enable admissions and other relevant staff at HEIs and FEC (HE Providers) to become more aware of Advanced Apprenticeship issues in relation to progression to HE. This could take the form of an adapted version of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module.

d) Continue to make the Partner Provider Toolkit learning and IAG materials available

Continue to make the high quality IAG and learning materials (Partner Provider Toolkit, Progression Passport etc.) produced as part of the Apprentices Project, available through the LWBLEF and their website for future use by partner providers and other organisations who may wish to take advantage of them.

e) Re-launch of the Visaroute facility

Visaroute is clearly a highly useful tool in relation to progression to HE for all students including apprentices. The following is recommended:

i. Ensure that all minor technical problems with the system are rectified to ensure the website works properly and efficiently.
ii. Ensure that all gaps in curriculum provision are filled, so that the website truly reflects the real curriculum offer across the region in the PTPs, FECs and HEIs.
iii. Hold a further promotional event for partners about Visaroute once all minor errors and omissions have been rectified (or promote it within another CPD event e.g., the End of Apprentices Project Dissemination event).
iv. Negotiate with one of the partner organisations to take on responsibility for Visaroute to ensure appropriate management and updating for a further year after Lancashire LLN has finished. Provide funding for this if necessary.

f) Organisation and holding of a Management of Change/Changing HE Environment event.

Hold a ‘Management of Change/Changing HE Environment’ event outlining the recent political and economic developments at governmental level that have resulted in a series of measures in relation to HE funding and which will start to affect the whole HE landscape from September 2011. Included in this would be the opportunities that the changes might bring: e.g., the increase in the number of apprentices that the coalition government now proposes, the opportunity for developing more distance and blended-learning programmes (e.g., for apprentices and those in work), the potential opportunities of more work-based learning at HE Level, opportunities to develop closer links with industry and to provide for up-skilling the workforce to Level 4 and beyond.

The event would require a knowledgeable and well-respected keynote speaker with the gravitas and reputation to draw in attendance from all of the partners including HEIs. This event could be stand-alone or part of another larger event e.g., the End of Apprentices Project Dissemination event.

g) Holding of Good Practice seminars

Fund good practice seminars to involve public and private training providers who have benefited from the Apprentices Project to date and who will disseminate this good practice to others at an event at their premises or other convenient venue.
**h) Continued development of new HE programmes**

Look at areas where there may be need for new HE programmes e.g., FD in Automotive Engineering and Business Management. Ensure discussion with HEIs and FEC (HE providers) as to how these gaps are to be filled. This may mean focusing into specific areas of discussion with identified training providers in conjunction with HE providers prior to the end of the Lancashire LLN.

**i) Ensure local validation and ownership of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module**

Validation of the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module by a local HEI would mean local ownership of the programme. The HEI concerned would derive a (financial) benefit from delivering the programme at the same time as being responsive to local demand.

**j) Development of Communities of Practice**

The development of Communities of Practice across various areas of work can prove particularly valuable. Examples could involve ‘graduates’ who have completed CPD programmes such as Coaching and Mentoring or the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module. Such Communities allow for the discussion of ideas and experiences, dissemination of good practice and possible development of further CPD in the future.

Communities of Practice do require *ownership and leadership* on the part of organisations or individuals, and effort should be made to determine who might continue responsibility in the future. The Community will function most easily through Facebook, a Wiki, or some other similar electronic media.

**k) Wider distribution of the Partner Provider Toolkit materials**

AHL should aim to distribute Partner Provider Toolkit materials to all other members of the partnership who were not involved in the Apprentices Project. The materials have been well received by those partners involved in the Project to date, so would probably be welcomed for use by any other partners too.

This process might require a short CPD activity and dissemination event for those partners who have not been involved previously.

**I) CPD event for Careers Advisors who work in schools**

School careers advisors have received implied criticism within this evaluation report. A specific CPD event (possibly run in conjunction with the National Apprenticeship Service) could highlight the opportunities available at HE level for apprentices in the Lancashire Region, particularly in the light of the increase in numbers of Advanced Apprentices over the next few years proposed by the coalition government.
Summary

- The Value Added capacity attributable to the Apprentices Project is clearly demonstrated by the wide range of learning, enrichment, CPD and curriculum development activities that are taking place across the Lancashire region. Evidence collated clearly shows that the Project has changed perceptions of those training providers and other partners at whom it has been targeted.

- A series of interventions and activities have taken place across the partnership which have effected changes within the practice and policies of training providers and other partners. Many of the ideas that have resulted from the Apprentices Project are now being embedded within these organisations.

- There is opportunity and need, prior to the cessation of tenure of both AHL and the Lancashire LLN to ensure that further activity is undertaken and practices put in place in order to ensure that the achievements already attained continue in the future, in line with the series of recommendations given above.

- There is a clear framework of understanding and awareness in relation to progression to HE for Advanced Apprentices that has developed during the past year across the partnership, as a result of the interventions and activities of the Apprentices Project that have taken place. This provides a sound basis for sustainably embedding the practices and processes that have been developed within the training providers and other partner organisations that have benefited from the Project.
15. Conclusions

This evaluation has looked at a wide range of activities and interventions taking place across Lancashire involving a number of private and public training providers as well as HEIs, which have taken place as a result of the Apprentices Project. The report has demonstrated the high quality impacts and positive effects of the Project and makes a series of recommendations as to how such activities and interventions can be sustained in the future beyond the life of both AHL and the Lancashire LLN.

Some areas of activity and intervention have already been completed whilst in other areas they are still taking place and although it is too early to assess their full impact, the evaluation clearly highlights many areas where success and value added are being achieved. Equally there remain areas for improvement which, if carried through would add to the overall success of the Project. The main key findings are outlined below:

Areas of success

- **The Partner Provider Toolkit and other materials**

  The Partner Provider Toolkit and Apprentices Passport have been received very positively by partner providers, several of whom have used these learning and IAG materials to good effect with their apprentices as a tool for encouraging greater awareness and opportunity about progression to HE and higher level learning. In addition these materials have achieved a profound effect on the delivery staff using them who, in many cases have themselves become much more aware about and now understand more clearly, the whole process and value of progression for their apprentices. As a result several of the providers have signalled the intention to use the Toolkit and Passport in other areas of their curriculum and at other levels, in addition to their use with Advanced Apprentices.

- **Enrichment activities**

  Various enrichment activities have now taken place or are proposed over the coming months in most of the partner provider organisations. A wide range of such activities has been planned aimed at providing enhanced experiences for Advanced Apprentices to learn about the opportunities that HE provides. The students involved are clearly enthused about such activities and have been actively involved in the choice and organisation of them. The enrichment activities are clearly seen as a valuable and formative part of the whole progression to HE process by the training organisations concerned.

- **CPD activities**

  The Apprentices Project has allowed for a range of CPD activities to take place which has proved very positive and in some cases inspirational for those staff attending training events and programmes. Launch events have appeared crucial here in initially arousing interest, resulting in positive outcomes from the CPD programmes. To date the Coaching and Mentoring programme and the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module have both been particularly successful in increasing the knowledge, awareness and understanding for delivery staff of the issues and opportunities relating to progression for Advanced Apprentices.
• **Greater awareness and opportunities across the partnership**

The Apprentices Project has brought together at various times, representatives from FECs, PTPs and HEIs from across Lancashire. This opportunity to meet people from other sectors has allowed for the discussion of common areas of interest and for the development of links that help to break down barriers to progression for Advanced Apprentices. This has clearly been beneficial in promoting greater understanding about the provision of opportunities for Advanced Apprentices at HE level in the region.

**Areas for development**

• **Visaroute**

The Visaroute web-based progression tool has had some minor technical problems to date and contains some omissions in relation to certain HE progression routes. However, with minor modifications and a suitable re-launch it could prove to be a highly effective and important tool in the field of student progression.

• **Links with employers**

It has proved difficult throughout the course of the evaluation to engage with apprentices’ employers. Those employers that were interviewed proved generally supportive of their apprentices progressing to HE. Employers did however express some concerns about the costs and ‘time lost’ implications of allowing apprentices the opportunity to engage with HE. There is need for increased engagement with employers to ensure that they continue to be aware of and understand, the benefits that can be gained for their company by supporting their Advanced Apprentices to progress to HE Level.

**Value Added**

The evaluation process has highlighted many areas across the partnership where, without the advent of the Apprentices Project, activities simply would not have taken place at all, or within the foreseeable future, or may have taken a different and less well-resourced form at some time in the future. The provision of Learning and IAG materials, a range of ongoing CPD programmes, funded enrichment activities and opportunities for staff from different sectors to meet and converse has clearly had an effect on the understanding and awareness of opportunities available for Advanced Apprentices, both on the students themselves and the staff who deliver to them. It is too early to assess the full impact of such activities and interventions; however the increased awareness, understanding of opportunities available at HE level and enthusiasm of apprentices, delivery staff and employers, as a result of the implementation of the Apprentices Project has highly been evident throughout the course of this evaluation. Many of the partner organisations involved have indicated that they will maintain these activities in the future as they can only be beneficial to their apprentices and the organisation itself.

**Future sustainability**

In line with the original requirements of the evaluation, a range of recommendations have been made in relation to future sustainability of the Apprentices Project. Clearly the Project will not continue in its present form beyond 2011, however it is likely that many of the activities and the ideas associated with them will do so in one form or another.
Recent government policy statements indicate a substantial increase in the number of apprenticeships to be created by 2020 with the expectation that an increasing number of the apprentices concerned will progress to HE. In respect of these developments it is clearly the case that the positive outcomes achieved by the Apprentices Project will need to be carried forward and developed further. The recommendations made in Section 14 of this report relating to Ensuring Future Sustainability if adopted, will go a long way towards providing mechanisms for these developments in the future.
References


Appendix A

Enrichment activities taking place or proposed
Accrington and Rossendale College

Two sets of enrichment activities started with a press launch on 1st December 2010 and these activities are now ongoing. The enrichment activity funding is being used here for a variety of purposes which will directly benefit the apprentices concerned. Importantly, the activities have been decided upon after discussions between staff and apprentices themselves, following on from the Partner Provider Toolkit activities and taking into consideration what the students believed would be most useful in providing them with background information and awareness about HE opportunities in their field of study/work.

The main enrichment activities planned include:

**Enrichment Activity 1**

- Awareness-raising visits for 15 apprentices and 4 staff to the Engineering and Business departments at:
  
  a) Lancaster University  
  b) The HE Centre at Blackpool and The Fylde College 

  The visits will also include tours of the campus and student facilities.

**Enrichment Activity 2**

- The purchase of a range of hi-tech, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and related training that will be used on Automotive Engineering Apprentice Level 3 and FD Level 4/5 programmes. The following will be included:
  
  - Master-class on Hybrid and Modern Technology where apprentices will have the opportunity to follow this technical course at NVQ Level 4  
  - Enrolment on a Refrigerant Handling Course (IMI AWARDS)  
  - Purchase of Hydrogen Fuel Cell generator  
  - Purchase of Pico Scope Diagnostic Tool  
  - Purchase of First Look Engine Diagnostic Sensor  
  - Purchase of Mega-squirt Programmable Diagnostics resource  
  - Purchase of Advanced Diagnostics literature specifically to promote and develop the apprentices’ appreciation of study and knowledge required at Level 4 and to support the use and understanding of the diagnostic equipment purchased

- Purchase of work-wear specifically to promote and develop the Aimhigher supported students and enhance the image they portray to other learners in the College.

Both staff and students at the college agreed on the benefits of the enrichment activities in raising the awareness and aspirations of the apprentices in relation to HE. The staff noted that many apprentices now aspire ‘to do an HE course’ and are thinking about how to ensure progression. This has developed from the enthusiasm of tutors who are encouraging them in this respect and has been confirmed by the apprentices.
‘The apprentices all wore their AHL workshop T-shirts or smocks at the press launch and displayed them to the cameraman with pride.’

‘These enrichment activities do make the causal difference in helping apprentices to consider progressing to HE. The apprentices themselves indicated a keen desire to participate in these activities and confirmed that they are key in raising aspiration and awareness about progression opportunities to HE.’

Training Support Officer - FEC

‘We think that we will learn a lot from the visit to the University of Lancaster and we all want to go on it.’

Apprentices - FEC

Blackpool and The Fylde College

This college will provide a series of different enrichment activities for its Advanced Apprentices including:

Enrichment Activity 1

This enrichment activity takes the form of a major HE awareness-raising event to which both employers and their Advanced Apprentices will be invited from the areas of Advanced Engineering and Health Care and Early Years.

The event will take the form of an evening seminar and dinner for up to 30 employers and 30 apprentices. There will be presentations and discussion opportunities focusing on appropriate progression routes and programmes available locally for apprentices at HE level.

These will include:

- A presentation by the college to highlight the benefits of progressing to HE aimed at both the apprentice and the employer, including an introduction to AHL and its activities
- A presentation by apprentices who have already progressed to HE programmes outlining the benefits that have accrued to themselves and the benefits to employers of having a more highly skilled work force within their company
- A quiz based information session for apprentices’ and employers about the benefits of HE
- A presentation about the funding available for Advanced Apprentices wishing to progress to HE and the cost implications for their employers
- A presentation by an employer on how successful apprentices have already completed progression to HE and how this has benefited their business
- Provision of information and case studies as to what can happen to a company’s competitiveness if staff are not offered appropriate higher level CPD within the organisation
- The opportunity to discuss what full-time and part-time programmes are available to people completing their Advance Apprenticeship
The formal part of the evening will end with a presentation about the Train the Trainers - Preparation for HE Module, and how this will ultimately be of benefit to their apprentices. An information pack about HE progression opportunities will be provided for all attendees.

**Enrichment Activity 2**

10 Engineering Advanced Apprentices and 2 staff will undertake a visit to Bridgewater College Energy Skills Centre for a “Nuclear Experience”, with information provided about the HE opportunities that are available for those making a career in the nuclear engineering industry. The centre, the first of its kind in the UK has been designed to meet the growing demand for training in science and engineering from employers in the nuclear industry and boasts two realistic work environments for specialist training and simulated experiences. The visit will be a two day residential experience in Somerset.

A series of taster sessions providing information on opportunities on HNC/HND and FD programmes including Eco-technology, Technical Illustration and Nuclear Engineering will be provided by HE Engineering staff from the HE Centre at Blackpool and The Fylde College.

**Burnley College**

Burnley College in association with UCLAN has developed a progression route onto the FD in Building Services for Advanced Apprentices in Electro-technical Services and Advanced Apprentices in Plumbing Studies.

The enrichment activities proposed here involve increasing the apprentices’ awareness and knowledge of what is available for them at HE level and to then demonstrate through a series of related activities, the opportunities that are available to them beyond their current level of study. Activities will be provided for 20 apprentices and will comprise:

- A Master-class presentation to apprentices by a representative from the environmental sustainability industry outlining the importance of higher level study
- A presentation to apprentices by a member of the HE staff about higher level courses and HE facilities available at the college
- A Visit to Worcester-Bosch Energy showrooms to look at the latest renewable and sustainability technology available including solar water heating, ground source heat pumps and air source heat pumps
- A presentation by Worcester-Bosch technicians about opportunities with the company
- A Visit to the Archimedes Screw facility at Howsham Mill, Malton near York, where the latest hydro-electric technology has been installed to power 25 houses with electricity

**Myerscough College**

The college is targeting a group of 10 Advanced Apprentices in various sectors. Activities will comprise of:

- Floristry Master-class - delivered by Fiona McDowell, Work-based Floristry lecturer which will promote skills that will give Floristry candidates an insight into HE course requirements
- HE Applicants Day - which will allow prospective HE applicants to listen to a series of generic lectures about HE, meet subject area tutors and have a tour of college HE facilities
- Monthly Open Morning - where Advanced Apprentices and other vocational Level 3 learners can meet and talk with HE tutors
• Agricultural Progression Event ‘Preston or Prague’ - A guest speaker will run a master-class on opportunities provided by HE across Europe
• Animal Care Progression/Careers Event including Technical Advisory Board
• Creative Floral Workshop with Marie Francoise Deprez - there will be a series of workshops, master-classes, demonstrations and business seminars as well as a full exhibition of student work from the Floristry department
• A BA Degree research findings presentations and a preview evening launching the event

North Lancs Training Group

This training provider is arranging a visit to the HE Centre at Burnley College. This will provide opportunities for 39 Advanced Apprentices from the Furniture Construction sector. Accompanied by two staff the visit will include:

• A presentation given by HE staff at the College covering progression opportunities specific to the apprentices, information about appropriate HE programmes available and types of academic learning and vocational work that will be involved.
• A tour of the facilities within the Division of Construction
• A tour of the facilities including lecture rooms and the Library/Learning Resource area within the UCLAN Centre
• A tour of recreational facilities
• The opportunity to speak to HE students currently taking Level 4 and higher qualifications and learn from them about the benefits of higher level learning

Runshaw Training

Runshaw Training has developed two sets of enrichment activities for its Advanced Apprentices as follows:

Enrichment Activity 1

A series of activities involving 15 Early Years Advanced Apprentices to include:

• Guest speakers from UCLAN and Edge Hill University to visit Runshaw Training to explain about HE opportunities for Early Years students
• Visits to UCLAN and Edge Hill University campuses – to include meeting HE students, seeing facilities and finding out more about HE courses
• Seminars on:
  o Completing application forms
  o Funding opportunities for HE
  o Academic research and writing skills
• Team building/motivation weekend (Smelt Mill or similar)
• Attendance at the OMEP (Early Years) conference at Manchester University
• Attend at the Early Years/Primary Teaching/Special Needs Conference, Manchester
Enrichment Activity 2

A visit to the Ewood Park Stadium, Blackburn by 10 Hospitality Apprentices to inform them about HE opportunities relating to Events Management in Hospitality.

The apprentices have already received a number of short briefing sessions to introduce them to the concept of continuing their education to HE level. A number of the apprentices had not previously considered progression of this nature, however following the briefing sessions interest levels have been raised.

The visit will include:

- A tour of the stadium’s grounds and hospitality facilities
- A presentation by the Marketing and Business Manager to encompass the commercial activities needed to support the stadium in order to make the organisation profitable i.e., through different events such as weddings, conferences, exhibitions, etc.
- A discussion about the impact of the 2012 Olympics Games will highlight the value and future of leisure and tourism to the hospitality industry and how the two are closely linked
- Discussion about the opportunities afforded by taking an HE programme of study in Hospitality Management

Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College

Enrichment activities here involve 54 Level 3 Learners from the college currently undertaking Leisure and Tourism and Sports qualifications. These students will be fully funded to complete their ‘Welcome Host Gold’ (WHG) qualification. The WHG programme develops a deep understanding of customer care principles for the hospitality, leisure and tourism industry.

Welcome Host Gold participants will:

- Develop proactive communications skills
- Recognise different customer expectations and learn how to meet them
- Better understand their frontline sales and service role
- Be confident in effectively tackling difficult situations
- Learn why teamwork is vital in a customer-facing environment

Students who complete the WHG one day programme are given the opportunity to gain accredited qualification through a City & Guilds examination that is mapped against the syllabus of the WHG course. This gives individuals the opportunity to gain dual accreditation from both the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and a nationally recognised awarding body.

Training 2000 Ltd

Training 2000 Ltd has targeted a group of 31 Automotive Engineering Advanced Apprentices to follow a programme of study developed at Level 4 by the Institute of the Motor Industry, the relevant Sector Skills Council.
The enrichment activity will involve the purchase of specialist high technology diagnostic equipment and an associated package of training that are widely used and recognised in the automotive industry. Training 2000 will use this equipment and training with its Advanced Apprentices on an on-going basis and intends ultimately to incorporate these into a module on any FD in this area of study that is developed locally in the future.

This provider is also intending to develop enrichment activities for groups of its Dental Health Advanced Apprentices although details have not yet been finalised.