



## **Research into the Young Apprenticeship Scheme**

### **Phase one findings – perceptions and involvement of employers in the Retail Motor Industry**

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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Background and methodology

- Following the launch of the Young Apprenticeship Scheme, Automotive Skills commissioned ORC International to investigate employer perceptions and involvement in the scheme.
- Phase one of the research required approximately twenty telephone depth interviews to be conducted with automotive businesses in the regions of Bournemouth, East Sussex, Leeds and Nottingham.
- A topic guide was developed around areas of interest identified by National Office LSC.
- Twenty-four scheduled appointments were made with employers, using samples obtained from lead training providers such as BHTA Training (East Sussex), ITE training (Bournemouth), Hargreaves Ltd (Leeds) and also yellow pages / [www.YELL.com](http://www.YELL.com) (Nottingham),. From these appointments, twenty-one interviews were achieved.
- Eligibility for interview was on the basis that employers had heard about the Young Apprenticeship Scheme.
- Interviews were transcribed / noted and then analysed to identify themes and patterns in content.

## 1.2 Research findings

- Though findings are only indicative, they are very encouraging. Seventeen of the twenty-one employers interviewed responded positively to the Young Apprentice Scheme.
- Seven employers interviewed had already signed up to the scheme.
- A further 10 employers were interested in participating in the scheme. These details were passed back to the Automotive Skills and learning providers to progress<sup>1</sup>.
- At the outset of the interviewing process, many employers had only a basic, conceptual awareness of the scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> This included the provision of a named contact for Nottingham and Leeds.

- Sources of information about the scheme ranged from word-of-mouth to face-to-face meetings with training providers. Employers who had met with relevant persons about the scheme demonstrated a greater understanding of the scheme than those who had come across the information in an indirect fashion.
- Considerable employer engagement was detected in Bournemouth. This appeared to be associated with a proactive approach amongst the Sales personnel at ITE training of directly contacting employers to explain the scheme to them. Four employers from this region had already signed up to the scheme.
- Many Nottingham employers were aware of the scheme in spite of the fact that those interviewed had been sourced through a random sample of SMEs and not provided by the lead provider for the area (i.e. EMTEC)<sup>2</sup>. Four out of the ten ‘interested’ employers were based in Nottingham.
- Of the seven employers already signed up to the scheme:
  - One employer in East Sussex had actually taken on a Young Person and had done so in September of last year.
  - Three more employers were due to take on someone in the next few months.
  - One Leeds employer had signed up to the scheme, but their Young Apprentice (YA) never turned up and there had been little follow-up since then.
- Employers identified the following benefits to the scheme: effective recruitment / gaining a potential employee; grooming a young person to the employers’ particular way of working; and avoiding the peer pressure issue associated with apprentices starting after the age of 16.
- Four employers were not interested in the scheme and barriers to employer engagement included: fear of litigation; insufficient resources to supervise a Young Apprentice full-time; and previous bad experiences of apprenticeship schemes.
- Three out of the four disinterested employers were based in Leeds. The lowest response was also recorded for this region.

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<sup>2</sup>Sample from the lead providers were said to consist of employers already approached about the scheme.

### **1.3 Conclusions**

The following are only indicative conclusions given the small number of interviews completed:

- A low awareness of the scheme was evident overall;
- Amongst those interviewed, it was evident that face-to-face marketing led to better understanding and a more positive response to the scheme;
- The interview provided an opportunity to explain the scheme. Once explained, employers that were previously unaware of the scheme were generally positive about it and the benefits it could bring;
- At the same time, employers expressed concerns about taking apprentices into their workplace;
- The scheme competes with a variety of other Apprenticeship schemes and needs to be differentiated to succeed.

### **1.4 Recommendations**

- Progress partnerships with employers interested in the scheme to get them signed up to the scheme. Make use of face-to-face contact to enhance understanding and involvement.
- Approach employers already signed up to the scheme to become champions for the region and hold forums where they advocate the scheme and share their experience with other employers.
  - Assess the opportunity to use the early experience of East Sussex to demonstrate the value of the scheme.
- Disseminate research findings amongst learning providers to inform and encourage their efforts to engage employers in the scheme.
  - Encourage providers to align their marketing and communications strategies with the research findings.
  - Encourage provider follow-up of the Leeds-based employer expressing an unsatisfactory experience of the scheme.

- Evaluate the success of the scheme to provide evidence to promote further employer engagement.
  - Establish experience of employers involved in the scheme
- Work in close partnership with the lead providers in the pilot regions to facilitate interview recruitment in phase two of the research into 'Young Apprentice Employer Research'.

## 2 Introduction

In May 2004, the Young Apprenticeship Scheme was launched by Chancellor Gordon Brown and the Education Secretary (then Charles Clarke). The scheme offers 14-16 year olds the chance to take up industry-specific programmes on top of the core national curriculum and is part of a larger reform being made to apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships will be available from September 2004 when 14 – 16 year olds will have to meet certain standards to win a place and spend up to two days a week learning skills in the workplace. The Government expects that around half of the trainees will want to continue after the age of 16 and move on to the next level, Advanced Apprenticeships when they leave school.

The scheme is being piloted across a number of sectors to encompass the retail motor industry. Within each sector, partnerships are being developed between employers and training providers in four regions of the country (East Sussex, Bournemouth, Leeds and Nottingham).

Following the onset of the scheme, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) who are responsible for administering the programme wishes to review progress made with implementing the scheme within the pilot areas and sectors as part of a National Evaluation Programme.

Automotive Skills, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the retail motor industry, commissioned ORC International to speak to employers in East Sussex, Bournemouth, Leeds and Nottingham about their views of the Young Apprenticeship Scheme.

What follows is an account of ORC International's experience of conducting a number of depth telephone interviews with employers and of investigating employer interest and involvement in the scheme during February and March 2005. The report consolidates phase one of the research.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Design Stage

To enable commonalities across the partnerships in terms of reviewing the scheme, LSC National Office has identified issues that it wishes SSCs to cover when evaluating employer/placement activity.

Based on these evaluation guidelines, a semi-structured question guide was developed to gain specific information from employers and to enable probing and prompting, where necessary, of employers’ perspectives of the scheme.

However, given that young people had not yet been placed with employers at the design stage, all questions about the operations of the scheme were asked in a hypothetical sense. The full topic guide used in interviews is included in Appendix A of this report.

#### 3.2 Sampling

The samples used for the purpose of the research came from different sources and varied in size and quality.

Except in the case of Nottingham, samples were obtained from the lead provider in the region and were said to consist of employers already approached about the scheme. These included BHTA Training (East Sussex), ITE Training (Bournemouth) and Hargreaves Ltd (Leeds).

Details of automotive employers in Nottingham were obtained from yellow pages ([www.YELL.com](http://www.YELL.com)). Employers registered under the following categories were targeted:

**Table 1: Categories of Nottingham businesses**

Brake & Clutch Services	Garage Services
Car Body Repairs	Panel Beaters
Car Dealers – New	Commercial Vehicle Dealers
Car Dealers – Used	Commercial Vehicle Repairs
Car Electrics	Motorcycle & Scooter Dealers
Car Painters & Sprayers	Motorcycle Repairs & Service

Bournemouth and East Sussex samples included named contacts (i.e. personnel) within the businesses whereas Leeds and Nottingham did not. In this respect, part of the



research exercise involved trying to identify relevant persons to speak to within businesses located in Leeds and Nottingham.

Samples received were analysed to remove duplication. Sample sizes were as reflected in the table below.

**Table 2: Final Sample Size**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Size of Sample</b>
Bournemouth	12
East Sussex	10
Leeds	286
Nottingham	490

### **3.3 Recruitment**

Recruitment was undertaken on the basis that employers needed to have heard about the Young Apprenticeship Scheme to be eligible for interview.

The recruitment for East Sussex and Bournemouth interviews was undertaken by a Research Assistant whilst recruitment for Leeds and Nottingham interviews was undertaken using experienced business-to-business interviewers within ORC’s call centre. In both instances a recruitment script was used which outlined the objectives of the research to the employer.

Overall, accessing eligible employers took a lot longer than expected. This low response rate was due to a variety of reasons, including:

- Many employers reported not to know anything about the scheme. This was particularly prevalent in the Leeds area.
- Many employers were dealerships under the same umbrella company rather than separate businesses. This was particularly evident of the Bournemouth sample.
- Lack of named sample for the Leeds and Nottingham areas meant that the appropriate person first had to be identified and then approached. This could take a number of phone calls.
- Small sample sizes for Bournemouth and East Sussex meant that the sample was quickly exhausted, with repeat calls amongst more hard to reach clients time consuming.
- A handful of employers declined to sign up to the research. This was highest in the East Sussex and Leeds areas.

Twenty-four scheduled appointments were made with employers of which twenty-one interviews were actually realised. In cases where the employer missed their appointment, a further five attempts were made to get hold of the employer and interview them before deciding to abandon the interview.

### **3.4 Analysing interviews**

Written notes were made during each interview. Where permission was obtained from the employer, interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. These notes and transcriptions were then analysed to identify themes and patterns in content, and any interrelationships. Views were evaluated in terms of their:

- Weight: e.g. number of respondents sharing a particular viewpoint.
- Power: e.g. depth / intensity of feeling, illustrated through quotations.
- Direction: e.g. consistency of the views expressed.

## 4 Key findings

The following section provides a detailed account of our findings from the 21 interviews undertaken amongst employers of the Retail Motor Industry. This includes: employer awareness and understanding of the scheme; employer involvement in the scheme; perceived benefits and barriers and our insight into the retail motor industry employer. The research undertaken was of a qualitative, in-depth nature providing insight into employers perceptions of the scheme and, thus, how best to promote the success of the scheme moving forward. The overall number of interviews is small and cannot be said to represent the retail motor industry, particularly within the regions surveyed. Where numbers are listed, these are for illustrative purposes only.

### 4.1 Employer awareness and understanding of the scheme

Employer awareness of the scheme varied across businesses.

- Where the sample of employers was supplied by the lead providers' database, contact names were deemed to have had some contact with providers affiliated with the scheme. However, when employers were approached, some maintained that they had not heard about the scheme.
- Many Nottingham employers were aware of the scheme despite the fact that the sample had not come from the lead provider for the area (i.e. EMTEC).

Employer awareness arose through a variety of information sources, ranging from word-of-mouth to direct contact with sales personnel of the lead provider.

- Employers who had had a meeting with relevant persons about the scheme expressed a greater understanding of the scheme than those who had come across information in an indirect fashion.
- Some employers had received correspondence from their local LSC. However, their understanding tended to be limited to a grasp of the basic concepts (i.e. that it involved younger children and that there were health and safety requirements).

Employer understanding and interest in the scheme tended to vary according to the means through which they had been contacted.

- Employers who had been proactively contacted, and subsequently enjoyed a face-to-face meeting with a personnel of the providers tended to display the most favourable perception and comprehensive understanding of the scheme:

*“He came over and outlined the change, really, in terms of the age range, and how the schools were getting involved with it. And he basically asked the question, did I see any benefit in having children on board from the age of 14 on day release for 2 years, so that when they*

*were at the normal age we would receive them, 16 years old, they would already have the equivalent of half their apprenticeship under their belts. And we basically had a discussion about it before he outlined that that was actually happening” (Bournemouth employer)*

This marketing method was particular to the Bournemouth area, where the sales personnel of the lead provider (ITE Training) had taken arranged face-to-face meetings with employers in the area to explain the new initiative to them.

- On the other hand, employers appeared to respond less favourably to remote contact, for example where rung up by a school:

*“It was basically, “Are you interested in taking on an apprentice?” -- -- -- , that was either a yes or a no. -- -- -- “Oh, yes”, they’d say it would be only a couple of days a week. And then obviously they’d have to come out and do the health and safety. That was about it” (Leeds employer)*

*“To be quite honest, it’s a case of, somebody phones me up and says, “Can you take them on?” That is as much information as we get. We don’t get people coming in, sitting down and talking to us, saying, “This is what we want to do, and can we do it like this?” We just get, “We’re from such-and such. We’ve got this lad who is interested in the motor trade. Can you take him on for a year?” We don’t get any more feedback than that.” (East Sussex employer)*

The types of marketing techniques employed in each region are depicted in the table below. Bearing in mind the small number of interviews at a regional level, a greater awareness and understanding of the scheme was evident in the Bournemouth region. This region appeared to have focused on recruiting through face-to-face contact with employers.

**Table 3: Marketing Techniques across the regions<sup>3</sup>**

Region	Face-to-Face <sup>4</sup>	Phone call <sup>5</sup>	Written correspondence <sup>6</sup>	Publications <sup>7</sup>	Word of mouth	Media (local radio)	Total interviewed
Bournemouth	5	2	-	-	-	-	5
East Sussex	3	2	3	-	-	-	4
Leeds	1	3	2	-	1	-	5
Nottingham	2	-	1	2	2	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>

Employers tended to lack an understanding of the distinction between the Young Apprenticeship Scheme and ad hoc work experience placements for school children or the Modern Apprenticeship schemes:

*East Sussex Employer:* “Well we’ve had probably half a dozen and we’ve got two more to start, so - and we’ve taken on, we’ve actually employed two people from it”

*Interviewer:* “Right, okay and when did that commence?”

*East Sussex employer:* “We’ve been doing it now for about three years”

*Interviewer:* “Involving people below the age of sixteen as part of the Young Apprentice Scheme?”

*East Sussex employer:* “Yes. Oh, no, hang on. Perhaps that’s the wrong...”

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<sup>3</sup> Some employers had heard about through scheme though several mediums of communication.

<sup>4</sup> All but one face-to-face meeting in Bournemouth was with the training provider whilst in East Sussex and Nottingham only one face-to-face meeting took place with the training provider. Other face-to-face contact involved franchised dealers, colleges or schools. There was no face-to-face communication with a training provider in Nottingham.

<sup>5</sup> In many cases, meetings with training providers were preceded by a telephone call. One Leeds employer was telephoned by a school.

<sup>6</sup> Mainly e-mails from LSC. However, one East Sussex employer was written to by a local college.

<sup>7</sup> To include the free-of-charge ‘Motor Trader’ magazine.

- This was evident amongst employers that already had young people below the age of 16 coming to them as well as employers that had merely been approached by local schools to take on school pupils.
- One respondent spoke of their difficulty with deciphering the many Apprenticeship initiatives despite sitting on the local Education Business Partnership (EBP).

*“I do have concerns that there’s not enough information going out to other employers to tell them about it, how it works, and how easy it is...there’s so much information out there about apprenticeships, young apprentices, the fourteen to sixteen bracket and all those sorts of things... there’s not enough clarity out there for employers. Unless you’re actually in the know...I’m on the Education Committee and even I get confused, you can imagine how other employers can feel. And I think they get worried that it’s going to cost them a lot of money and they’ve got to do this, that and the other, and they don’t want to commit” (East Sussex employer)*

The same employer felt that front line employees should be informed about the scheme since they would be the ones directly involved in the scheme at the end of the day rather than the “employer” as an entity:

*“You need to tell the people who are going to train them. It’s all very well saying “the -employer says yes, I’m going to take somebody on”. But the guy who’s actually going to train him needs to get a little bit of information and education as to how he’s going to do it, and to help him when he’s got him with him”*

Employers did not appear to be informed of any support available regarding Health and Safety issues.

Those already involved in apprenticeship schemes did not feel they needed any questions answering when contacted about the scheme as they were of the opinion that it would run much like the other apprenticeship schemes.

## **4.2 Employer involvement in the scheme**

Seventeen out of the 21 employers interviewed responded positively to the Young Apprentice scheme.

Seven of those interviewed reported they were already signed up to the scheme. Employer engagement was evident across all regions except Nottingham as illustrated in table 4.

- Four out of the seven employers in Bournemouth interviewed were signed up to the scheme which may be evidence that this region is making better progress than others in terms of getting employers on board the scheme.

- An East Sussex employer had taken on a Young Apprentice last year and so far the business was very satisfied with the experience so far.
- Some respondents even remarked that they were the successful product of an apprenticeship scheme:

*“I started as an apprentice technician, and now I run the after sales. I’m the after sales manager. So it does work” (East Sussex employer)*

- A young person was scheduled to start with a Leeds employer at the beginning of the year. However, they were reported to have never turned up. Moreover, there had been little follow-up from the LSC since the incident.
- In all other cases, employers had not yet started on the scheme despite being signed up.
- Three employers confirmed that they were taking on young people in the next couple of months. These were reasonably large employers that were already heavily involved in the Modern Apprenticeship Schemes. They reported to have good relationships with their local college or training provider as a result.

Ten of the 21 employers interviewed were interested in the scheme and indicated that they were likely to get involved.

- As outlined earlier, not all employers seemed to have been approached directly about the scheme.
- In the case of those that had, some had not received any further information despite having expressed an interest in the scheme when contacted.
- The decision making authority of whether to get involved tended to be held by the person interviewed. Where previously unidentified, this list was provided to Automotive Skills for progression with the providers.

Four employers were not interested in signing up to the scheme. These were in Nottingham and East Sussex. This is illustrated in the table below.

**Table 4: Breakdown of employer involvement across the regions**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Signed up to YA scheme</b>	<b>Interested in YA scheme, but not signed up</b>	<b>Not Interested in YA scheme</b>	<b>Total interviewed</b>
Bournemouth	4	1	0	<b>5</b>
Leeds	2	3	0	<b>5</b>
East Sussex	1	2	1	<b>4</b>
Nottingham	0	4	3	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>

### **4.3 Perceived benefits to employer engagement**

There was much support amongst employers for the principle of the Young Apprenticeship Scheme. Perceived benefits included:

- Overcoming the difficulty of recruiting the requisite skill for the job and gaining a future employee in an industry where skilled persons are in short supply:

*“The main reason we need apprentices is really that skilled technicians are very difficult to find” (Bournemouth employer)*

*“It’s the only way we can see actually recruiting and keeping recruitment the way we want it. I can’t remember the last time we advertised in the paper for a technician, for a salesman, for anybody. We don’t advertise for jobs. People seem to stay. We train them up; they stay. It’s fantastic. It works really well for us. Really, really well” (East Sussex employer)*

- “Growing your own staff” or “grooming” the Young Apprentice as opposed to retraining a skilled person to the businesses’ particular way of working or products.

*“If they’re working on our product, they’re knowing a lot more about the particular product we work with, so it’s better for us, obviously, when they become skilled” (Bournemouth employer)*

- Evaluating, first hand, how the apprentice performs on the job before actually employing them



*“You can interview them as much as you like. The best way is actually seeing someone who’s actually doing the job and working with somebody. You get to see their attitude. You get to see their work ethic” (East Sussex employer)*

- Getting young people trained up quicker.

*“They’ll be skilled virtually within one or two years of leaving school, where normally it could take up to 4 years to get an apprentice through a scheme. If they’re ¾ of the way there when they leave school, it’s better for us, isn’t it?” (Bournemouth employer)*

*“It’s a benefit to us if they’re up that ladder of the skills at an earlier age” (Bournemouth employer)*

- Removing the peer pressure problem experienced with Modern Apprenticeship Schemes where young people start training from 16 years of age onwards).

*“I think because they’re being talked to at school about the industry in a different way, at an earlier age, they are choosing to do this, instead of coming into it having failed to do other things. That’s the key thing. So at 14 they are making the choice that they want to join the automotive retail industry, instead of, at 16, being in front of the tutor who’s in charge of education and jobs and all the rest of it, and saying, “Why don’t you do that? Because you can’t do anything else” (Bournemouth employer)*

#### **4.4 Barriers to employer engagement**

A handful of employers could not see any barriers to getting involved in the scheme

*“Well, I only see positives in it, really” (Bournemouth employer).*

Other employers identified a number of barriers, which included:

- Insufficient resources to supervise a Young Apprentice full-time due to size of workforce (small to medium size businesses) or existing commitments with other Apprenticeship schemes (larger businesses).

*“At the end of the day I’ve got to see what resources I’ve got left in my workshop. And I wouldn’t do it if I couldn’t fully commit to it” (East Sussex employer)*

- This was particularly the case where the scheme extended over a long period of time, as illustrated in the following comment:

*“The problem is, some of our colleges have wanted us to take them on for a year or two years at a time...it’s quite a big commitment for a company to actually take someone on for that long” (East Sussex employer)*

- Fear of litigation  
*“It puts potential employers at a liability.”(East Sussex employer)*  
*“We’re frightened to death”(Nottingham employer)*
- Previous bad experiences with apprentices. One East Sussex employer has decided not to sign up to the scheme on this basis.
- Willingness of trained technician / employee to take the young person under their wing:  
*“There has to be a willingness of a trained guy we currently employ to take them under their wing. So we could get some opposition there” (Bournemouth employer)*
- Risk of lower productivity amongst existing staff:  
*“One guy’s going to lose his bonus, or not get as much bonus before, so you can compensate him for training them.” (East Sussex employer)*  
*“We’re not an educator, but a cash-producing business” (Bournemouth employer)*
- Concerns that the Young Apprentice might be ill-equipped to adjust to the “intense” working environment of the retail motor industry due to their young age and lack of maturity.  
*“It is the age that is my main concern.”(Leeds employer)*  
*“You’re in a very dangerous environment with a lot of hazards (East Sussex employer)*
- Risk of the Young Apprentice leaving after the employer has invested in them.  
*“The only thing that does worry me is how do we hang on to them at the end of the time? If we train them all up and then the people that don’t bother to do the training just offer them extra money and take them away. So all the money you’ve spent on training them, if you’re not careful you’ve lost it on” (East Sussex employer)*
- Getting the “wrong” kind of young person.  
*“You don’t want someone here just to get out of school” (Nottingham employer)*

For the majority of employers, getting the right sort of young person (i.e. someone who is willing to learn and interested in the job), and dedicating the time to train them up, were greater concerns than ensuring the health and

safety of the young person since they felt they had sufficient mechanisms in place. As one Leeds employer put it:

*“At the end of the day, you have responsibility for all of your employees, whether they’re 15 or 50”.*

#### **4.5 The automotive employer as respondent**

Based on our experience of conducting interviews, we found that it was difficult to access employers in the retail motor industry for the following reasons:

- It was difficult to identify appropriate members of staff where a named sample was not supplied.
- In smaller organisations, respondents were proprietors of the company which meant they were very busy people.
- Where respondents were managers of several dealerships, they were often off-site.
- In larger companies, gatekeepers such as secretaries or company receptionists controlled calls to managers.

The difficulty experienced with getting hold of employers can also be explained to some extent by the fact that employers receive numerous calls on a weekly basis about taking on Apprentices.

*“We get a lot of people asking us to take people on. You know, you get schools on work experience, you get the colleges, and now you’ve got the 14 – too, actually I probably get 10 phone calls a week, “Can I take somebody on?” (East Sussex employer)*

Without knowing anything about the research or the benefits to getting involved, employers were understandably reluctant to give up their precious time. For example, some employers from the samples supplied by the lead providers would not agree to be interviewed without receiving written notification of the research.

On the basis of interviews scheduled and undertaken, it appears that managers responsible for running the shop floor / workshop are key personnel to target concerning the scheme. In smaller businesses, it is the owner since they will tend to reside over operational matters within this role

This suggests that providers will need to adopt aggressive marketing tactics to reach employers and engage them in the scheme.

## 5 Conclusions

The following are only indicative conclusions given the small number of interviews completed:

- A low awareness of the scheme was evident overall;
- Amongst those interviewed, it was evident that face-to-face marketing led to better understanding and a more positive response to the scheme;
- The interview provided an opportunity to explain the scheme. Less informed employers were generally positive about the scheme when supplied with further information in interviews.
- At the same time, employers expressed concerns about taking Young Apprentices into their workplace;
- The scheme competes with a variety of other Apprenticeship schemes and needs to be differentiated to succeed.

## 6 Recommendations

Initial research shows that employer engagement is patchy in spite of strong support for the Young Apprenticeship Scheme.

We propose a number of recommendations with regards to taking the scheme forward in cohort two and carrying out further research:

### Recommendation # 1

- We recommend targeting employers who expressed an interest in the scheme to take on a Young Apprentice via the second cohort and to increase employer engagement in the pilot regions in general (database supplied as part of this research).

### Recommendation # 2

- We recommend targeting employers currently signed up to the scheme (database supplied as part of this research) in order to:
  - Make them champions for their respective area.
  - Arrange forums across the regions with engaged employers for them to share their experience with other employers and generally advocate the scheme.
  - In general, obtain information about their experience for the purpose of marketing the scheme (e.g. producing case studies) and evaluating the scheme.

### Recommendation # 3

- We recommend disseminating the findings of this research to parties concerned with the delivery of the scheme (e.g. LSC), in particular:
  - The barriers to employer engagement.
  - The need to send a clear message about the various apprenticeship schemes to employers to avoid any confusion.
  - The lack of follow-up being made in some instances with employers who have said they will sign up to the scheme.

### Recommendation # 4

- We recommend encouraging providers to review existing marketing and communication strategies to include activities such as:
  - Making initial visits to employers to outline the benefits and practicalities of the scheme in plain English (Building on the success story of the Sales Manager at ITE training)
  - Devising a FAQ sheet and distributing it to all employers.

- Focusing on overcoming employers' perceived barriers to scheme, in particular through addressing the lack of awareness of help with Health and Safety issues
- Selling the benefits of the scheme, in particular to differentiate it from other apprentice schemes and work placement schemes

**Recommendation # 5**

- An evaluation of the success of the scheme should focus on:
  - The experience of having a post-16 year old site and how this differed from expectations.
  - The Young Apprentice experience in relation to modern apprenticeship schemes, where relevant.
  - How the Young Apprentice adjusted to the working environment and any lessons learnt about how to get them smoothly on board
  - Any Health and Safety challenges experienced and how these were overcome
  - The impact of mentoring / supervising a young Apprentice on employer resources and overall work efficiency
  - What support employers actually needed
  - Whether employers were pleased with the Young Apprentice (YA)
  - Whether they understood the next steps for themselves and the YA
  - Whether they would take on another YA

**Recommendation # 6**

- For the next phase of research, we recommend undertaking depth face-to-face interviews with employers about their experience of taking part in the scheme.

**Recommendation # 7**

- We recommend close partnership working with lead training providers in the next phase of the research so as to:
  - Facilitate employer recruitment to interviews – e.g. by agreeing to send out endorsed letters to employers participating in the scheme informing them of the research and encouraging their participation.
  - Facilitate further evaluation of the scheme by obtaining employers feedback about the scheme and their involvement in it.

## Appendix A – Topic Guide

### Depth interviews with employers interested in Young Apprentice scheme<sup>8</sup>

Automotive Skills Limited is the Sector Skills Council for the retail motor industry, charged by government and employers with leading the drive to boost competitiveness through skills development. They have commissioned ORC International to speak to employers who have expressed an interest in the Young Apprentice Scheme in order to investigate motivations for participation, any perceived barriers and support needed. To our knowledge your business fits into this category and your name was given to us by Automotive Skills as the best person to speak to regarding the research. Is this correct?

#### ***INTRO FOR NOTTINGHAM EMPLOYERS***

Automotive Skills Limited is the Sector Skills Council for the retail motor industry, charged by government and employers with leading the drive to boost competitiveness through skills development. They have commissioned ORC International to speak to employers who know about the Scheme to find out their views about it. Can I confirm that you are familiar with the scheme?

If it is still convenient, I'd like ask you a few questions about your business's views of the Young Apprentice scheme. The interview should take about 15 – 20 minutes.

At ORC International, we adhere to all quality and data protection requirements when conducting research. All responses given in this interview will remain confidential and the information will only be used for research purposes.

May I record the conversation to help with the analysis? The tapes will not be sent to Automotive Skills, but kept internally for six months, after which they will be destroyed.

#### **Employer interest in the scheme**

- 1) How did your business hear about the Young Apprentice scheme?  
(*prompt: source and nature of information*)
  - 1a) What information was supplied?
  - 1b) How was this information communicated?

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<sup>8</sup> This is the original topic guide agreed with Automotive Skills. However, the introductory text was revised following recruitment to reflect the fact that not many employers had actually been approached about getting involved in the scheme. Eligibility for interview came to include employers who were aware of the scheme.

2) As an employer, were you happy with the level of information supplied?  
Why / why not? (*prompt: content, format, presentation, relevance to audience*)

2b) Did it answer your questions? Why / why not?

3) What information, if any, was lacking?

4) What else would you have liked to know?

5) How could the information have been better communicated to employers such as yourself?

### **Employer views of the scheme**

6) What is your business's understanding of the scheme?

7) What made your business interested in the scheme?

8) How does your business view the scheme?

9) How do you see the scheme being delivered?

10) As an employer, do you see any practical issues with the scheme?

11) What are the benefits to the scheme? (*prompt: to employers but also their business in particular*)

12) What are the pitfalls to the scheme?

### **Getting involved**

13) Will your business be signing up to the scheme?

14) Why? / Why not? / Why has a decision not yet been taken?

15) At what level within the business is the decision taken?



16) What would make the scheme worthwhile for your business?

17) Has your business ever taken on any sort of Apprenticeship before?

*If yes*

What was this experience like?

*(positive and negative aspects, what was learnt, what needs to be improved, mutual benefit felt?)*

*If no*

What has prevented you from doing so in the past?

**Practicalities behind employer engagement**

18) What challenges or barriers **would / will** your business face in taking on a Young Apprenticeship – i.e. someone under 16 years of age? (*prompt: how feel about H & S issues and Legislation checks?*)

19) What kind of supervision / mentoring **would / will** your business provide a Young Apprenticeship?

20) What **would / will** your business expect from a Young Apprenticeship?

21) What mechanisms does your business have in place regarding health and safety issues of employees?

22) What mechanisms **would / will** your business need to have in place in order to get a young apprenticeship smoothly on board?

23) What support would / will your business need from other parties in order to get involved in the scheme? (prompt: partners and level/nature of support)

23a) Ideally, whom **would / will** the business want this support from?

**ASK ONLY EMPLOYERS WHO DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN YA SCHEME**

24) Is there anything that could have incentivised you to sign up to the scheme?

## Appendix B – Bournemouth Key Findings

Five interviews were undertaken in the Bournemouth area. Through findings are only indicative, they yielded the following insights:

- Employers interviewed in the Bournemouth area demonstrated a relatively high level of awareness and understanding of the scheme overall.
- Face-to-face marketing was the predominant marketing method being used.
- This method appeared to be working well for a number of reasons:
  - Employers were more informed about the scheme compared with other regions.
  - Employers were particularly positive about the scheme.
  - All but one of the employers in this region had already signed up to the scheme.
- Bournemouth should continue with this proactive and evidently successful strategy.
- Close partnership working with the lead training provider (ITE Training) will secure the success of cohort two.

## Appendix C – East Sussex Key Findings

Four interviews were undertaken in the East Sussex area. Though findings are only indicative, they yielded the following insights:

- Many employers are hearing about the scheme via written correspondence from the LSC or other parties. This unfocused, indirect contact might explain why there were few employers signed up to the scheme.
- Where face-to-face communication is taking place, it is more often with a franchised dealer, school or college rather than the lead provider.
- There was some disinterest in the scheme because of a fear of litigation and a concern for the health and safety requirement.
- More face-to-face communication with the lead provider (BHTA Training) is advised for greater employer engagement in cohort two. Question - Answer sessions should be used to combat employer fears.
- The early positive experience of one employer involved in the scheme should be used to market the scheme to others and to understand good practice in terms of rolling out the scheme.

## Appendix D - Leeds Key Findings

Five interviews were undertaken in the Leeds area. Though findings are only indicative, they yielded the following insights:

- Leeds employers were poorly informed and disengaged despite attempts to market the scheme via telephone and written correspondence.
- Phone calls were not followed up with face-to-face meetings or visits which may explain why employers were less engaged than in Bournemouth.
- Communication was often via the school or college rather than the provider, who may not understand or highlight the benefits of the scheme from an employer's perspective.
- For cohort two, more face-to-face communication should be undertaken via the lead provider (Hargreaves Training) or other parties able to highlight the benefits of the scheme from an employer's perspective.
- Close monitoring of employers involved in the scheme is also advised for cohort two in order to deal with issues such as Young Apprentices not turning up and to prevent employer disengagement.

## Appendix E - Nottingham Key Findings

Seven interviews were undertaken in the Nottingham area. Through findings are only indicative, they yielded the following insights:

- The fact that none of the Nottingham employers interviewed had signed up to the scheme is evidence that the marketing method being used (i.e. published articles in magazines, features in the local media, written correspondence and some face-to-face interviews) is not proving successful.
- However, when contacted as part of the research exercise, employers responded positively.
- Disproportionately high disinterest amongst Nottingham may be the result of employers being poorly informed of the benefits or unaware of the support they can receive in terms of targeting the right kind of young people and dealing with the health and safety responsibility.
- For cohort two, Nottingham employers should be targeted more directly and fears and misconceptions should be addressed.