

# Rural Opportunities

A study of work-related learning opportunities in the rural economy for young people aged 14-19

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# Introduction

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## The rural economy, enterprise and education

The rural economy exemplifies a number of key features of the future world of work. These include the growth of micro-businesses and self-employment, IT-based products and services, and diversification of traditional industries. Young people have much to gain from learning about these changes, and the skills and knowledge which fuel them. Just as young people can benefit from learning more about, and taking up opportunities in, the rural economy, rural economies need young people. Work-related learning (WRL) can influence the quality of skills supply and affect young people's choices – it is not unusual for young people to seek employment in sectors where they have undertaken work experience placements.<sup>1</sup> Other forms of WRL, such as mentoring and competitions, may also influence choices. Despite the clear benefits of WRL, features of the rural economy, including isolation and business capacity, create barriers to WRL and to employer engagement.

The study was aimed at assessing current provision of WRL to young people in rural economies, identifying benefits of and challenges to the engagement of employers. It aimed to identify ways in which barriers to engagement might be overcome, leading to increased activity involving employers and young people. The focus of the research is on opportunities for young people aged 14-19 in all types of programme, including work experience, wider WRL, vocational GCSEs and A-levels and the emerging Diplomas.

The research focused on the development of enterprise skills and on new and emerging rural industries. These include a wide range of activity aimed at enhancing understanding of what is required to succeed in the future world of work. The research did not include initiatives concerned with traditional rural skills where these did not include an enterprise element or programmes without employer involvement. It was a qualitative study aimed at identifying examples of interesting practice across the UK rather than a complete survey of all WRL in the rural economy.

The study was intended to establish current issues affecting WRL in the rural economy and particularly the engagement of employers. As a qualitative piece of research, it was not intended to establish the extent of current opportunities or to quantify employer engagement. It was aimed at identifying examples of WRL that might be more widely replicated in rural areas. A further theme informing the research was the importance of quality in WRL. Poor quality experience can discourage rather than open up opportunities in rural areas and the research aimed to identify what makes for a quality experience for young people, employers and other stakeholders.

The research worked with the broad definition of WRL used by the Education Act 2002. This defines WRL as:

*“...planned activity designed to use the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices and learning the skills for work.”*

Examples of WRL activities include mock interviews, work simulations, role plays, careers information, curriculum-linked visits, workshops, work experience, tasters, enterprise education, industry days, mentoring, coaching, part-time work, apprenticeships and voluntary work.

We found evidence of a wide range of such activity, including work experience in innovative small, medium and micro-businesses (small and medium enterprises – SMEs), enterprise fairs, conventions and competitions, mock interviews, mentoring programmes, employer visits and workplace tours. In some cases these were linked to areas of the curriculum, in others to options and career choices or to other agendas such as healthy schools or improving engagement. While WRL is widespread, it does not always involve employers or have a focus on enterprise. It is likely that significant gaps exist in young people's contact with these two aspects of WRL.

1. Miller, L. (2007) 'How can we encourage employers to become involved in education?' Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies.

## Research methods

The research included discussions with rural businesses involved with WRL and with around 50 stakeholders in schools, Connexions partnerships, Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), local authorities, enterprise bodies and representatives of projects and initiatives delivering WRL. Nine employers were interviewed about their experiences of engagement in WRL. These employers were selected because they exhibit, in some way, the future world of work in the rural economy. They include self-employed entrepreneurs, small business owners, managers of medium-sized businesses and a social enterprise (see Figure 1, page 14). Case studies of good practice, presented in Section 2, were selected to include a range of established projects illustrating types of WRL across the UK. The projects vary in purpose and design but all have a rural dimension either in location or outlook and are aimed at cultivating enterprise knowledge and skills among young people aged 14-19.

The research also included a review of research and policy-based literature on WRL and issues for young people in the rural economy. The research took place during March and April 2008.

## Report structure

The report is divided into four sections:

**Section 1:** Opportunities for and barriers to employment in the rural economy, requirements on schools to deliver WRL and factors affecting employer engagement in such programmes.

**Section 2:** Case studies illustrating different models, types and approaches to WRL.

**Section 3:** Benefits of and challenges to engagement in WRL from the different perspectives of employers, young people and schools.

**Section 4:** Discussion of the main messages from the research and key questions concerning the future of WRL and engagement of employers in rural areas.

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## Executive summary

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Work-related learning (WRL) is defined as planned activity that uses work as a context for learning. It involves young people learning about themselves and the world of work, and develops their skills and attributes to succeed in the future working environment.

Commissioned by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), this is one of three reports looking at how organisations and businesses in different sectors can engage more effectively with education. The other reports focus on the third sector and the creative industries.

The study challenges traditional approaches to WRL and examines models of engagement between innovative rural employers and 14–19 year olds, which provide the opportunity for young people to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the future. Case studies are used to highlight some of the key benefits for those participating: young people, schools and colleges, and rural economy employers.

## The rural economy and the future world of work

The rural economy exemplifies a number of key features of the future world of work. These include the growth of micro-businesses and self-employment, IT-based products and services, and diversification of traditional industries. Young people have much to benefit from learning about these changes, and the skills and knowledge which fuel them. Just as young people can benefit from learning more about, and taking up opportunities in, the rural economy, rural economies need young people.

## Summary of findings and recommendations

### WRL benefits young people and rural economies

Rural economies represent many features of the future world of work. They are home to a growing number of micro-businesses, IT-based products and services. They are seeing the diversification of their traditional industries. These opportunities are open to young people but they need the right knowledge and skills to be able to access all the options. This is why WRL is so important in rural areas: it can improve skills, revitalise communities and help stem migration to towns and cities.

### Where are the gaps?

WRL comes in many forms. Young people can benefit from work experience, enterprise competitions, employer visits or mock interviews. Such opportunities, while typically linked to careers and enterprise education, occur across the curriculum or as part of programmes such as Healthy Schools.

But employer engagement is sporadic in rural schools. Much WRL lacks the authentic voice of employers or a focus on enterprise. This results in significant gaps in young people's contact with some of the essential ingredients of effective WRL. Consequently, young people in rural communities may not have a complete picture of opportunities available locally and assume that their future is in employment in distant towns and cities.

### Opportunities to deliver WRL in rural contexts are often missed

There is renewed interest in traditional crafts and skills for contemporary application. Although these are a feature of many rural education projects, they rarely involve employers or teach entrepreneurial skills which means that they provide hobbies rather than work. These projects should be linked more directly with enterprise education. This does not mean projects need to make WRL their main purpose. But it does mean taking appropriate opportunities to inform young people about local career options. Rural regeneration projects which bring young people into contact with designers and architects could open their eyes to new career paths, including urban opportunities.

### **Why do rural employers engage and how do they benefit?**

There are many reasons why rural employers get involved with schools. They want to support their local community, inspire young talent and 'give something back'. They also want to explain their skill requirements and highlight job opportunities. Although they enjoy the satisfaction of assisting schools and young people, they also benefit their business by raising their profile, networking with other employers and learning young people's perspectives on their business projects and problems. While some occasionally use such engagement to recruit staff, it is not a strong motivator. These opportunities may be particularly valuable for rural employers who have fewer networking opportunities and fewer chances to link up with young people than their urban counterparts.

### **What are the barriers to engagement?**

Rural employers can find engagement harder because of their size. Small firms can ill-afford a lot of non-productive activity. Getting to events can involve more time and cost than in cities. There may also be a lack of knowledge about how to become involved and confusion resulting from the sheer number of such programmes.

### **Promoting employer engagement: what works?**

Non-participating rural businesses should be encouraged by the benefits that participating employers gain. Although few small firms will have corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, they can still see the value of assisting their local community and inspiring local young people.

- Highlight the benefits: After all, rural employers have an interest in the health of their local economy. So they should see the benefits of reducing youth unemployment, maximising local talent and revitalising their community. Approaches to rural employers that incorporate such messages and make clear the benefits of involvement in WRL could help bring them on board. However, employers may need advice on the distinctive contribution they could make to raise awareness of local skill needs and business opportunities.
- Employer champions: The business benefits of such engagement should be widely publicised to foster business-education links in rural areas. Messages may be delivered most effectively by champions working with local employer networks.
- Simple options: Small rural firms may have little time to discuss complicated programmes of events. They may not even be able to host work placements. But they may be enticed by simple options with specified time commitments. Brokers and networks could act as efficient go-betweens for schools and employers, particularly in rural areas where businesses are dispersed and isolated. However, schools may find it easier to approach directly employers who are parents of pupils.

### **Benefits and challenges for rural schools**

All schools benefit from employer engagement because it gives a real-life context to WRL and provides young people with business role models. Such contact is especially important in rural areas dominated by farming, food production and tourism. But broadening horizons can present particular difficulties. Young people and teachers may need transport to work experience and external events. The range of local employers may be too narrow. Schools may also need to overcome local expectations that young people will work in particular industries or gender stereotyping, which can be more entrenched in rural areas.

## **Recommendations for improved engagement**

### **Start earlier and build on outcomes**

WRL should start as early as possible. This research highlighted a number of rural primary schools engaged in a wealth of interesting initiatives in such areas as farming and woodlands, and in projects that build key skills of communication and teamwork.

Young people in rural areas should also be supported and funded to develop their own business ideas. This can help ensure that young people and rural communities really benefit from the input of employers and other local stakeholders into WRL.

### **Use IT**

Information and communications technologies can greatly enhance WRL, not least through virtual work placements and e-mentoring. Their potential is greatest in isolated rural communities where travel between schools and workplaces is time-consuming and costly. Such methods should complement face-to-face contact and should incorporate full support for young people, teachers, employers and other participants.

# 1. How do rural employers engage with education?

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In this section we look at the context of work-related learning (WRL) in the rural economy. This includes exploration of the following:

- factors that open up opportunities for young people and those that can restrict opportunities and narrow horizons;
- types of WRL in rural areas; and
- involvement of employers and factors motivating their engagement, conveyed by employers who participated in the research.

## Key messages

- Employment opportunities for young people are limited in many rural areas by the predominance of SMEs, poor local transport and lack of social networks. Many young people, particularly higher achievers, associate career opportunities with towns and cities, resulting in a rural-to-urban brain-drain and an ageing rural population.
- Rural areas are experiencing the growth of new industries, fuelled in part by innovations in IT. Many businesses now need no visible presence to attract and maintain business. This development is opening up opportunities for young people in rural areas on their own doorsteps.
- The growth of rural leisure activities and revival of traditional rural skills offer employment and enterprise opportunities to young people. Projects that engage young people with land-based skills and rural crafts could be linked more directly to enterprise education to enable young people to develop business ideas.
- The range of WRL in schools is wide, but the involvement of employers in activities is patchy. Employers in rural areas are engaged with education to support their local community, to 'give back' help they have received and to support young talent. They also wish to raise awareness of enterprise as an option for young people locally. These motivations could be used to engage non-participating employers.

## Opportunities in the rural economy

Around 19 per cent of the population of the UK live in rural areas. Although traditionally industries such as farming, forestry and mining dominated rural economies, this is no longer the case – in recent years, employment in agriculture and primary industries has declined, alongside an increase in opportunities in service industries, most notably leisure and tourism.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in England at least, the structure of employment in rural localities is becoming more similar to that of urban areas: in remote rural areas as a whole 25 per cent of employment (including self-employment) is in public administration, education and health; 23 per cent is in hotels and catering and 15 per cent in manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> Agriculture and fishing account for only 5 per cent of jobs. Employment in rural Wales follows a similar pattern to that of rural England.<sup>4</sup> Rural Scotland, however, has a very different pattern of employment; in more remote rural areas primary industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing and energy) account for 21 per cent of employment.<sup>5</sup> Rural Northern Ireland shares similar features.<sup>6</sup>

Unemployment is generally lower in rural areas than in towns and cities. However, employment opportunities are limited in many localities, with the highest demand for low-skilled labour. Reflecting this, pay levels have been low and opportunities for progression have been limited. Many young people in rural areas have therefore relocated to towns and cities in order to pursue their career goals. At the same time, in many areas of the UK, the rural economy is far from in decline. Self-employment is relatively high at 11.7 per cent of the population of working

age, compared to 8.3 per cent elsewhere. Rural areas also accommodate a higher proportion of micro-businesses, with over 90 per cent of all rural firms employing fewer than ten people. This is likely to reflect a combination of lifestyle choice and limited opportunities for permanent employment.

### The needs of young people in rural areas

Research on young people in rural areas has found that they experience a number of problems in relation to employment, but the emphasis on urban unemployment and social problems means that these are often overlooked.<sup>7</sup> For young people in rural communities, the concentration of employment in small firms results in few opportunities for young people to undertake training. Research for the Connexions service in rural areas also identifies transport as a major factor affecting take-up of education, training and employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup> Other features of the rural economy that are likely to affect young people are lack of social networks and shortage of affordable housing. These problems contribute to unemployment and flight from rural communities. One consequence of this flight is an ageing rural population with fewer residents of working age and increased pressure on public services.<sup>9</sup>

Young people's choices may be further limited by attitudes and beliefs: research has noted more traditional attitudes among young people in some rural areas, including in relation to 'male' and 'female' jobs.<sup>10</sup> Such attitudes have also been found among teachers.<sup>11</sup> Gender stereotyping in career choice is particularly problematic in rural areas because it places restrictions on options that may already be limited by a shortage of jobs.

2. Mahroum, S., Atterton, J., Ward, N., Williams, A., Naylor, R., Hindle, R. and Rowe, F. (2007) 'Rural innovation.' London: NESTA.

3. Rural Evidence Research Centre, Birkbeck College (2004) 'Social and economic change and diversity in rural England.' London: Defra.

4. Wales Rural Observatory (2004) 'An overview of life in rural Wales. Key Findings - Paper 2.' Cardiff: Wales Rural Observatory.

5. The Scottish Government (2005) 'Rural Scotland, Key Facts 2005: People and communities, services and lifestyle, economy and enterprise.' Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

6. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (2007) 'Northern Ireland Strategy Plan for implementation of the EU Rural Development Regulation in 2007–2013.' Belfast: DARD.

7. Cartmel, F. and Furlong, A. (2000) 'Youth unemployment in rural areas.' York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

8. Connexions and the Countryside Agency (2006) 'The implementation of Connexions in rural areas: a good practice guide.' Wetherby: Countryside Agency Publications.

9. Mahroum *et al.* (2007) *op. cit.*

10. Miller, L., Pollard, E., Neathley, F., Hill, D. and Ritchie, H. (2005) 'Gender segregation in Apprenticeships.' Working Paper No. 25. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

11. Francis, B., Osgood, J., Dalgety, J. and Archer, L. (2005) 'Gender equality in work experience placements for young people.' Working Paper No. 27. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Despite the problems highlighted by research on young people in rural areas, the rural economy does offer employment opportunities. In recent years, such economies have seen the growth of new businesses in such areas as web design, electronic publishing, design and marketing. This development has been stimulated by improved information and communications technology (ICT), which allows industries with dispersed or distant markets to conduct their businesses from their preferred location. Some businesses that can now conduct much of their work over the internet have relocated to rural locations, taking advantage of lower rents, larger space, lower congestion and a pleasant working environment. The growth of such enterprises offers young people new opportunities to develop their careers within their rural locality. Such development also has the potential to attract young people from urban areas and to revitalise rural areas. The availability of such opportunities and of young people to take them up is not, however, a simple question of matching the two: there is evidence that young people in rural areas do not necessarily regard self-employment as an attractive option, associating it with low incomes, long hours and uncertainty.<sup>12</sup>

There may also be work to be done in convincing young people that rural communities offer opportunities for progression. Research has identified an attitude among young people that they have to 'get out' to 'get on'.<sup>13</sup> Such beliefs may lead to a type of rural-to-urban brain-drain where those with ambition leave and young people without resources such as personal networks or qualifications remain. It is argued that, in the light of the emergence of new rural industries:

*"Rural policy should pay specific attention to the needs of young people who want to develop careers in areas that have the potential for growth in rural communities."*<sup>14</sup>

Limited access to opportunities, and knowledge about what is available, results in unemployment. In some rural areas the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is increasing.<sup>15</sup> Non-engagement also fuels activity in the informal economy, which flourishes in some rural areas. Research has also identified a culture of isolation in some rural areas where young people eke out a living through cash-in-hand work on farms, in tourism and other seasonal or temporary work. This problem is more commonly found in areas with employment opportunities, than those with few jobs, but the end result is that young people reduce their availability for permanent work and for training.<sup>16</sup>

All of the problems raised here, in relation to employment in the rural economy, might be assisted to some degree through improved knowledge of opportunities through WRL.

12. Countryside Agency (2003) 'Rural economies: stepping stones to a healthier future.' Wetherby: Countryside Agency Publications.

13. Midgley, J. and Bradshaw, R. (2006) 'Should I stay or should I go? Rural youth transitions.' Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Commission for Rural Communities and IPPR North.

14. Ibid.

15. Mahroum *et al.* (2007) *op. cit.*

16. Connexions and the Countryside Agency (2006) *op. cit.*

## Types of work-related learning in rural areas

There is a range of ways in which employers can engage with learning and contribute to the work-related curriculum. The research found evidence of the following activities:

- Work placements within work experience programmes or within vocational education and training.
- Hosting visits by pupils and conducting workplace tours.
- Visits to schools to talk to pupils, teachers and sometimes parents, about employment in their organisation or sector.
- Use of role models.
- Involvement in careers, industry or enterprise days through activities such as hosting stalls, taking part in question-and-answer sessions, judging competitions.
- Involvement in the delivery of curriculum subjects, such as science and technology.
- Delivering workshops to develop job search and application skills, including mock interviews.
- Mentoring or coaching.
- Teacher visits or placements.

Many of these activities are arranged or brokered by Education Business Partnerships, careers companies and local authorities. A number of national organisations run initiatives aimed at involving schools in WRL and enterprise activities, for example Young Enterprise, Young Chamber, the Prince's Trust, the Edge Foundation and, indeed, NESTA. Such initiatives vary in the extent of their employer involvement. Some of these

which include employer engagement with young people in rural areas are presented in Section 2.

Schools vary in the extent of WRL provided and in the extent of employer engagement in such activity. Many WRL programmes are focused on delivering the skills required to prepare young people for work. For example, the 'Work Ready' programme developed by Cumbria Business Education Consortium illustrates the range of activity that can be delivered to young people to prepare them for the world of work. The programme consists of a 'carousel' of five different workshops in the areas of job applications, the business view, team-building, career progression and motivation. This is then followed by mock interviews. All sessions are supported by around 40 local employers.

There are reports of an increase in WRL activity in the last few years, driven most recently by the development of 14-19 Diplomas. The first five of these are to begin in September 2008 in the subject areas of engineering, society, health and development, ICT, creative and media and construction and the built environment. Twelve other diplomas are to be rolled out from 2009 to 2011. Those of particular relevance to the rural economy are land-based and environment, and travel and tourism. Employers are reported to be having some input into the new Diplomas at local level, by attending meetings and events and contributing to teacher training. They are seen to be keen to be involved because of perceived benefits to supply of skills.

It is too early to assess the impact of the new Diplomas on employer engagement. However, one example of employer involvement in delivery of the 14-19 Diplomas is provided by the West Wiltshire Federation in rural Wiltshire. This is a consortium of eight schools and Wiltshire College delivering the 14-19 Creative and Media Diploma. With the assistance of the education-to-employment organisation Trident, the consortium has recruited 14 employers from the sector and hosted a series of breakfast meetings. The majority of these employers were becoming engaged with education for the first time. A representative of the consortium reported:

*“They are chuffed to pieces about the qualification because it meets their needs. There are long-term recruitment benefits for them but mainly it’s because the qualification matches what is needed by the sector.”*

This suggests strong potential for employers to be engaged in the WRL component of the Diplomas. Another example of employer engagement in the curriculum, predating the 14-19 Diplomas, is provided by Cumbria Business Education Consortium. The partnership has invited individuals working in a range of occupations, including a musician and a chef, to talk to students about how maths impacts on their own job. The project has involved pupils in Year 10 low-ability maths sets and has been found to have had a positive impact on the appreciation of maths as a subject and its importance as a key skill for work.

We referred earlier to changes in the rural economy, including the growth of tourism and leisure. The popularity of countryside activities, including outward bound and survival courses, quad biking and high-wire adventure courses has increased in recent years. Another noteworthy development is the revival of rural crafts and regeneration of woodland for ecological benefit. A growing number of projects, organisations and individuals are engaging in such activity. There are also a number of projects aimed at increasing awareness among young people of farming, food and the countryside. National projects with a strong educational component include the Woodland Trust,<sup>17</sup> Working Woods Trust,<sup>18</sup> the 47 local Wildlife Trusts,<sup>19</sup> and Farming and Countryside Education.<sup>20</sup> An example of a local project is the ‘Fuelling a Revolution’ programme in South Yorkshire.<sup>21</sup> In addition, a wide range of businesses and individuals are engaged in educational activities. They include, for example, the Woodland Enterprise Centre in Kent,<sup>22</sup> Rawnsley Woodland Products<sup>23</sup> in Cornwall, and Ben Law’s Prickly Nut Wood project.<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis of many of these projects and programmes is on reviving and developing traditional rural crafts for contemporary application. Although they do not include an enterprise element, they show, by example, that there is a living to be made from traditional rural crafts. There is scope for such projects to include an explicit enterprise element, to enable young people to develop their own business ideas, rather than see rural skills solely as a leisure interest.

17. See [www.woodland-trust.org.uk](http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk)

18. See [www.workingwoodlands.info/the\\_trust.php](http://www.workingwoodlands.info/the_trust.php)

19. See [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

20. See [www.face-online.org.uk](http://www.face-online.org.uk)

21. See [www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk](http://www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk)

22. See [www.woodnet.org.uk](http://www.woodnet.org.uk)

23. See [www.cornishwoodland.co.uk](http://www.cornishwoodland.co.uk)

24. See [www.ben-law.co.uk/education.html](http://www.ben-law.co.uk/education.html)

## Employer engagement in work-related learning

There is no available data on the extent of engagement of employers in rural areas with education. The research did not aim to plug this gap, but to find out about some of the ways in which employers are involved in such activity and the issues affecting their engagement with education. To obtain employers' perspectives, interviews were carried out with nine employers, listed in Figure 1.

Participating employers were engaged in a range of WRL activities. While the most common form of engagement was providing work experience placements, other activities included visits to schools within areas of the curriculum, for example business studies or design and technology, giving mock interviews, hosting school visits, and taking part in teacher training sessions. Two of the

employers, Stubbins and Film4U, were not currently engaged in WRL, providing insight into some of the barriers to participation (see Section 3).

A number of the employers interviewed had become involved in WRL in fairly informal ways, typically through an initial enquiry from a pupil or through assisting at schools attended by their own children. This may reflect a lack of formal structures for WRL, for example through brokers, in some rural areas. In some cases, relationships had become formalised, for example an employer might be included on the work experience database of the local Education Business Partnership. Links were generally strongest with local schools, reflecting the rural nature of employers' location.

**Figure 1.**  
**Employers who participated in the research**

The JJ Group, a marketing agency based in Oxfordshire employing 70 people.

Twoey Toys, a Cumbria-based toy design and manufacturing company employing 33 people.

Woodborough Nursery and Garden Centre in Wiltshire employing 25 people with diverse business activities, including plant nursery, farm shop selling own-produced organic produce and a café.

Arlosh Graphics, a graphic design company in Cumbria producing operational diagrams for the water industry, employing 12 people.

Reboot, a social enterprise located in Forres, Moray in the North of Scotland re-conditioning computers for re-sale employing two people and staffed predominantly by volunteers and New Deal trainees.

Stubbins, a specialist tomato grower in South Wales employing 37 staff and up to 40 seasonal workers.

A graphic design company based in Cumbria employing eight people.

Film4U Ltd, a community web-based television company based in Wiltshire employing four people.

Cumbrian Carvings, a chainsaw sculpture business run by two people in Cumbria.

### Why become involved in work-related learning?

It is widely acknowledged that employers become engaged with education for a variety of reasons, from meeting recruitment needs to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Employers' motivations for involvement with education have been classified into three broad groupings: narrow self-interest, including pursuit of recruitment or marketing aims; general or enlightened self-interest, to influence and inform young people; and benevolent interest, to give something to the community, benefit education and young people.<sup>25</sup> Participating employers did not fit easily into these categories: a number voiced an interest in recruitment, but narrow self-interest was not at all apparent. The interview findings in part reflect those of research by John Ahier and colleagues who report that: "providers of placements had a localised, pragmatic approach that was predominantly 'charitable' in character".<sup>26</sup> Therefore, participating employers said the principal motivation for involvement in WRL activities was community giving. They saw their involvement as a service to schools and a way of helping young people to choose their future paths. For example, one employer explained that he had received funding for his own business in the past and saw his involvement in a mock-interview programme as 'giving back'.

Some employers expressed personal reasons for involvement with education. Some with their own children had become aware of the importance of WRL and the value that employer involvement adds. They felt that their own goodwill in helping other young people might somehow be repaid to their own family's benefit. Two employers, engaged in work experience and mock interviewing respectively, looked to their own negative experiences of school and felt that contact with employers might have given more meaning to their studies.

A number of employers said they liked the idea of encouraging young people to think of their future or, as one employer put it, they would like to 'mould young talent'. One employer was considering setting up a training scheme and thought that work experience might help to identify recruits. This benefit of engagement in education is identified in earlier research, which has found that many young people who are offered work placements go on to look for employment within the same sector, often with the employer who provided the placement.<sup>27</sup> However, ideas of recruitment were only a subsidiary motive for involvement with education.

Other than these motivations, a number of employers simply enjoyed contact with schools and young people, particularly their interest and enthusiasm. In some cases, as we explain later, they benefited from their enterprising ideas. It was also apparent that some employers, who had set up their own successful business, were proud of their achievements and of the workplaces they had created. They welcomed the opportunity to share this with others, and particularly to encourage young people to pursue their own ambitions. A number referred to limited employment opportunities in the area and of outward migration of young people to towns and cities. Enterprise was seen as a way of keeping young people in the area and keeping rural localities alive. Employers felt this could not be achieved without greater awareness of the opportunities for enterprise and self-employment than is currently offered to young people.

25. Hillage, J., Barry, J. and Pike, G. (2002) 'Education Business Link clusters evaluation.' DfES Research Report 379. London: DfES.

26. Ahier, J, Chaplain, R., Linfield, R., Moore, R. and Williams, J. (2000) School work experience: young people and the labour market. *Journal of Education and Work*. Vol. 13, No. 3, pp.273-88.

27. Miller, L. (2007) op. cit.

## 2. Case studies of work-related learning in the rural economy

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In this section we present some examples of WRL. These illustrate different approaches to WRL in rural areas and include a range of partners and delivery models. The examples have been selected for reasons including their innovative nature and the potential for wider application. Examples of good practice in work experience placements are provided in Section 4.

Some of the projects included in this section are highlighted in boxes, providing more detail on their design and outputs. The projects featured in this section cover a range of activity, including the following:

- Business enterprise challenges.
- Use of role models.
- Business start-ups on school sites.
- Enterprise fairs.
- Rural regeneration.
- Virtual work experience and e-mentoring.

### Key messages

- The featured projects illustrate the range of work-related activities in rural areas and the forms of employer engagement. Many of the initiatives involve young people in practical learning activities and have a strong element of fun.
- Some of the featured projects are aimed at raising awareness among young people of opportunities that might keep them in the locality or tempt them to return after university. An understanding of local skill needs and the option of enterprise can help young people to revitalise rural communities and prevent a rural to urban brain-drain of talent.
- The projects show how the perennial problems of engagement of rural businesses can be overcome if WRL offers benefits to employers, as well as to young people. For rural enterprises, these benefits include:
  - *greater awareness of the skills and talent available locally among young people to meet future recruitment needs; and*
  - *opportunities to network with other businesses, which may be more limited for small rural businesses.*
- Schools, even in rural areas, are reported to have stronger links with large, urban businesses and often have very weak links to rural businesses. The featured projects show some of the benefits of these links in raising teachers' awareness of the opportunities available to young people locally. One project recruited employers who were parents of pupils at local schools.
- The innovative idea of offering business space on school sites benefits schools, pupils and rural businesses. This type of relationship offers the potential for employer engagement in a wide range of activity. It also makes use of one asset of many rural schools – space.
- Regeneration and enterprise have been combined in imaginative ways to deliver messages about the curriculum and career options to young people. Contact with experts, such as designers and architects, shows young people that there are opportunities for professional practice locally.
- In rural areas virtual work experience and e-mentoring can increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the world of work while avoiding the costs of travel, which can be considerable in rural areas. Use of IT-based methods may be most effective when combined with direct experiences, and when full support is given to pupils and teachers.

## Business enterprise challenges

Business enterprise challenges involve young people and employers in short-term projects with a competitive element. They involve some commitment of employer time which can present a difficulty to organisers, particularly in rural areas with a narrow employer base. However, as the examples of the projects featured here show, they can deliver key messages about enterprise through active engagement which are likely to remain with participants long after the end of the challenge. The initiatives featured here are Go Forest! in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, and ICT Youth Challenge, originally in Scotland and now in the north-east of England.

## Case study: Go Forest!

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Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

### What's on offer?

Go Forest! enterprise challenge is organised by the Forest Education Business Partnership (EBP). The event is held during the time of Enterprise Week, an annual UK-wide week of activities inspiring young people to pursue ideas for enterprise. Go Forest! involves over 30 local businesses and around 500 pupils from six local secondary schools. The focal age group is Years 9 and 10.

Young people are given a choice of four challenges to work on over a period of two weeks, including Enterprise Week. Challenges have included designing and building the most efficient wind turbine and producing a promotion leaflet for the Forest of Dean aimed at teenagers. Students carry out these challenges in school, with employer input, and hold their own events to present their findings.

Following school-based events, the Go Forest! day is held in the Miners Welfare Hall in Cinderford where pupils are involved in additional problem-solving activities through a series of workshops. Around 30 local businesses are involved in the workshops which include challenges on such issues as town planning, business enterprise and creativity. For example, a design company set a 'sheepscape' challenge, in which students decorated three dimensional sheep in innovative ways, resulting in sheep by the names of 'Gordon Ramsay' and 'Supermarket Sheep'. In the evening, parents and teachers attend to view students' work, and local businesses, colleges, Connexions and other partners host interactive stalls. This is an opportunity for young people to explore various career options.

### Who makes it happen?

Go Forest! was initiated by the Forest EBP following a demand identified through the local skills network and was enabled by funding from the county's Rural Renaissance Scheme, managed by a partnership of economic development organisations.

### What are the benefits?

The aims of the project are to raise awareness among young people of the skills required by local industry and to develop a range of business-focus skills.

The project is also aimed at increasing communication between enterprise and schools, to raise the profile of the Forest of Dean as a centre for employment and to showcase the emerging talents of young people. This was seen as important given concerns about the area's ageing workforce and interest expressed by local businesses in interacting more effectively with young people in the locality.



**What's the unique selling point (USP)?**

The programme brings pupils and businesses together in stimulating activities with a strong enterprise element. It has enabled students and teachers from different schools to interact. The fact that teams of students from different schools face the same challenge has allowed observing teachers to compare and contrast students' enterprise skills. A full range of stakeholders are involved in the Go Forest! evening event, including parents, a key influence on young people's decision-making.

**A model for future development**

Go Forest! has the commitment of local business and schools. It is self-funded by the EBP, schools and businesses. It is relatively easily replicated, requiring recruitment of schools and businesses and availability of local community space for the enterprise day.



## Case study: ICT Youth Challenge

[www.youth-challenge.co.uk](http://www.youth-challenge.co.uk)

Highlands and Islands of Scotland and north-east England

### What's on offer?

Youth Challenge is a long-term intervention, being a competitive process involving young people aged 20 years or under in developing new ICT applications. The Challenge is explicitly aimed at giving young people skills and insight into opportunities they might pursue in the region, rather than head off to the cities.

The remit of participants is to come up with an idea for a product or service that uses ICT in a way it has not been used before. More generally, the project aims to develop skills in areas such as understanding technology, understanding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) options, design and marketing, team work and communication. It involves young people hooking up to networks of businesses, funders and other contacts that might be useful to them in future. In this way, the project aims to improve skill sets in rural areas of the Highlands and Islands. Around half of all schools in the Highlands and Islands are involved in ICT Youth Challenge and roughly 500 young people each year. Interest is increasing with recognition of its success.

Youth Challenge is delivered in a number of stages over most of a school year. Teams are formed of three to five people who can be friends, family or anyone else aged 20 or under. Most teams are formed in schools, but have also included other youth groups. Each team must have an adult mentor, to accompany them to events, including the final residential stage.

The first stage, The Seed Idea, is carried out on participants' home space and entries are submitted online. Teams selected from this stage go forward to The First Pitch stage, in which they are given three minutes to 'sell' their idea to judges. This stage is sponsored and hosted by a network of colleges which form the new University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute. Fifteen teams are then selected to attend a full-day event, The Forum, to develop their business ideas with the input of industry experts. The robustness of teams' ideas is then tested by a 20-minute interview with competition judges. At the final event of the challenge, The Hot House, six teams from the Forum stage attend a week-long residential course. During the week, teams work with experts in business development with a view to moving their idea towards implementation. The week also includes team-building and outdoor activities to broaden the experience and develop key skills of communication and team-work.

### Who makes it happen?

Highlands and Islands Enterprise and ITP Solutions Consortium (ITP Solutions, Rural Insights, Atlantic Marketing).

ICT Youth Challenge was inspired by a visit from Nicolas Negroponte, founder of MIT Media Lab and One Laptop per Child who, on a visit to the Highlands and Islands, advocated greater involvement of young people with business. Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the region's economic development agency, had the idea of an ICT-based competition involving young people in networks of businesses, funders and other contacts that might be of future benefit to them and develop the rural economy of the Highlands and Islands. They then developed this idea with the support of a private sector consortium.



### What are the benefits?

Young people and schools are the principal beneficiaries of the programme. Successful entrants are awarded prizes donated by sponsoring businesses. For example, one prize is sponsored by BT and involves a trip to the BT futurist development labs in Ipswich. Microsoft sponsors a prize for the best use/application of technology, the winners securing a trip to the Microsoft campus in Seattle. The team with the most innovative idea wins a trip to the MIT Media Lab in Boston, sponsored by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The project has enjoyed positive feedback from teachers and parents who have remarked on the maturing effect on young participants. Now in its sixth year, the project is beginning to see the long-term benefits of its work, with a number of new businesses set up by young people.

### What's the USP?

The focus on ideas generation, ICT innovation and entrepreneurial thinking are distinctive features of the programme. The programme enables young people to develop real enterprise ideas. Young people have the opportunity to develop these ideas with business experts.

### A model for future development

The project is continually developing, with most recent plans for a social networking site to keep young participants in touch. Following its success in the Highlands and Islands, ICT Youth Challenge has been launched in north-east England. Although originally intended to address the need to increase opportunities in isolated rural areas, the project is equally applicable to other areas where enterprise can significantly enhance young people's options. What has contributed to its success is the merging of public sector catalytic policies with private sector energy and networks.



## Case study: The Work-Related Learning Village Project

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Gloucestershire

### What's on offer?

The idea of the Work-Related Learning Village was to develop awareness among young people of the extent and range of local and national employment opportunities. The initiative uses a local business park as a venue in which young people can make contact with a range of businesses by size and sector. The focal age group is 14-16 of whom around 1,300 visit the project each year.

A visit programme is developed to fit the needs of each school and is focused on a local business park. Pupils from local schools attend in groups of 60-80. They are guided around the site in small groups with a facilitator. Each group visits three or four employers; interviews them and collects information about the business. Students are issued with questionnaires as an aid to exploring features of the businesses including type of production, sourcing, customers, employment and skills. Employers are offered a range of options for involvement in the project. These include providing business information, hosting visits and being interviewed. After their visits, pupils prepare a presentation of their findings and host a session at their school to which businesses, teachers and other students are invited.

### Who makes it happen?

Forest of Dean Education Business Partnership.

### What are the benefits?

Young people are the principal beneficiaries. The initiative is targeted at 14-16 year olds because of a perceived need to inform young people about opportunities available locally at a relatively early stage of their career decision-making. For pupils in years 9 and 10, it is seen as helping to inform choices about work experience.

### What's the USP?

The project allows young people in a rural location to interact with employers and enterprises in a range of sectors. Interaction with employers is a central feature of the project. The requirement to deliver a presentation on findings from the visit and interviews enhances young people's research and communications skills. This element of the project also enables other pupils and teachers to learn from their experiences.

### A model for future development

Factors seen as contributing to the project's success include full preparation of all participants involving businesses in celebrating outcomes with students, teachers and other businesses.

Originally involving the six Forest of Dean schools, the initiative is now being rolled out to other schools in the county of Gloucestershire.



## Case study: The Northumberland Enterprise Learning Network

[www.reaction-online.org/young-people.php](http://www.reaction-online.org/young-people.php)  
Northumberland

### What's on offer?

In 2006 a number of projects were set up under the umbrella of an Enterprising Northumberland strategy by the Learning and Skills Council in conjunction with Northumberland Strategic Partnership, representing organisations with an interest in the regeneration of the region. The Northumberland Enterprise Learning Network (NELN) project aims to help build an enterprise culture in Tynedale, including embedding enterprise learning across the Key Stage 4 curriculum. It has involved 3,000 young people aged 14-19 between October 2006 and March 2008.

NELN activities have included enterprise fairs involving pupils, teachers, entrepreneurs, employees and the general public in events, workshops and exhibitions. These events have included an interactive forum where young people have met and informally interviewed local entrepreneurs. The aim of these interviews is for students to gain an insight into the skills required for successful entrepreneurship, and more generally to understand how ideas can be put into action. The fairs have involved a wide range of businesses, including a sole trader Frisbee maker, a fruit liqueur producer and an African drummer. The target group for these fairs is pupils aged 14-15. The fairs have been found to increase pupils' understanding of enterprise, and also that of teachers involved in events. They have also provided opportunities for businesses to network. In recent years fairs have been adapted to embrace Key Stage 3 and sixth form students, as well as special schools.

The network has also included a range of other activity, including professional development for lead enterprise staff in schools and an online shared learning and activity resource. The project has been run in 14 high schools and a special school. Each school has a number of 'enterprise coordinators' responsible for organising activities and liaising with their equivalents in other participating schools. This feature of the project has been found to work well, with coordinators valuing the contact with members of the network in other schools. The network has actively collaborated with 'hub' and 'spoke' schools within the Schools' Enterprise Education Network run by Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

### Who makes it happen?

Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Tynedale high schools and Reaction, a community interest company owned by local authorities in the county of Northumberland.



**What are the benefits?**

The external evaluation of the project has identified benefits to young people, concluding that the project has improved the quality of enterprise education in schools across the region.

Fairs have provided opportunities for local businesses to network.

**What's the USP?**

Through interaction with employers in the setting of an enterprise fair, young people are able to gain an insight into the qualities, skills and action required for successful entrepreneurship. These illustrate a wide range of different ways of earning a living. The environment of the fair is specifically geared to ensuring that students and entrepreneurs have conversations – rather than lectures – through practical exercises that are drawn directly from each business' everyday life. Students have the opportunity to explore the pros and cons of self-employment. Staff are encouraged and supported by Reaction to ensure that students get the most out of the activity and to analyse what they have learned through evaluation.

**A model for future development**

Reaction has increased the scale of both the network and enterprise fairs by extending the district-level pilot to sub-regional level (up to 100 miles distance) since 2006. LEA high school heads have endorsed continued support for the network beyond the initial funding in Northumberland. Reaction is currently developing a training and development package to enable others to apply the experience of the network and enterprise fairs.

## ID8: a youth panel

[www.ideate.org.uk](http://www.ideate.org.uk)  
Northumberland

Reaction also delivers 'ID8', a youth-led enterprise project that provides grants to young people to take forward enterprise projects in Tynedale, England's largest and most sparsely populated district. ID8 panel members, who are all young local entrepreneurs, give presentations to pupils in schools, have attended enterprise fairs and take part in workshops to help enterprising young people grow their ideas as part of the Key Stage 5 curriculum. The panel is the only one of its kind in Britain and represents a range of businesses including childcare, website-design service, life coaching and waste recycling. Key factors in the effectiveness of the panel are panellist recruitment and development, fund marketing, and support for applicants. Successful applicants have included 'Batt and Ball Animations', a claymation business which uses stop-motion animation similar to Aardman Studios' Wallace and Gromit characters. Set up by two teenagers, the business has won prizes in two categories at the MTV Boom Academy Awards and the Royal Television Society.

The panel has made 27 awards to a variety of individuals and groups worth over £50,000 in the 18 months since its launch in Enterprise Week 2006. Applicants apply by text or email and are given appropriate support to help develop their ideas. There are no application forms to complete but all applicants are expected to discuss their ideas and plans with the panel. While in some respects like

the television programme Dragons' Den, a key difference is that the panel is determined to encourage young people to develop their ideas and put them into practice, which will bring knock-on benefits to the local area.

Further awards have been made, including to Key Stage 3 students to develop a market garden to raise funds for the school; to a Key Stage 4 student to develop an egg production and retail service in a remote Pennine village, and for the production of a revision guide for AS Physics. Sports and drama awards have also been made. There are also awards to develop the business ideas of a number of young people in their twenties. The success of the scheme in the rural north-east has been recognised and the investment funds have been increased by more than £90,000.

## Role models

Careers education programmes have frequently used role models as a way of encouraging young people to widen their horizons and consider options that they may have discounted. Sometimes this is because of gender stereotyping and traditional notions of men's jobs and women's jobs. Opportunities for enterprise may equally be overlooked, and young people in rural areas may be conditioned to see opportunities in towns and cities, rather than on their own doorstep. The use of role models who have made different choices can be invaluable in challenging young people's assumptions. The featured case study is in Wales and has been successful throughout the country, including in rural areas in north, west and mid Wales.

## Case study: Project Dynamo

[www.projectdynamo.com](http://www.projectdynamo.com)

Wales

### What's on offer?

The aim of the project is to develop entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in young people across Wales, so that they can contribute to economic prosperity. The use of role models for educational visits is a central feature of the programme and is intended to convey the personal motivation and excitement experienced in setting up a business. Over 500 role models have been recruited and trained by the Welsh Assembly Government since 2002 and there are 300 active at the present time. The role models deliver presentations in schools and further and higher education institutions. These presentations are facilitated by Careers Wales to ensure coverage throughout Wales. Through such exposure, it is envisaged that young people will consider enterprise as an option for the future.

Role models visit schools and colleges to talk to students about their business, how they came up with the idea, how they got started and their experiences as an entrepreneur. Sessions are designed to be interactive, giving pupils the opportunity to ask their own questions of entrepreneurs. Visits by role models can be supported by a range of curriculum resources, including video interviews, role-play games and interactive business simulations. The Dynamo materials include a virtual business simulation in which pupils can interact with role models, explore the skills required for business set-up and test their own knowledge.

Approximately 2,900 presentations are made every academic year to over 60,000 students.

Originally designed for Years 9 and 10, Project Dynamo has extended into post-16 within schools and FE/HE.

### Who makes it happen?

Dynamo is managed by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for the Economy and Transport. It is delivered by Careers Wales throughout Wales. Schools do not pay for participation in the project or for use of resources.

The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for recruiting and training role models. Careers Wales facilitates the project within education establishments. The programme has a high coverage rate, so that few schools are not involved.

Recruiting role models can sometimes be difficult, particularly finding Welsh speakers, ethnic minorities and young people. Role models are reimbursed for their time.



### **What are the benefits?**

Young people benefit from contact with entrepreneurs operating in their locality. The programme can be delivered within the personal and social education (PSE), work-related education (WRL) or careers education and guidance (CEG) framework, to coincide with other enterprise activities and workshops and/or within a specific curriculum subject area. Its flexibility in this respect has been key to its success: educational establishments can decide themselves where it fits best.

Role models' presentations can also impact on teachers as well as pupils, providing an opportunity to influence their view of enterprise and entrepreneurship and how related skills and knowledge can be integrated into the curriculum.

The enterprises of the role models benefit from networking with other entrepreneurs and sometimes through ideas and feedback from young people. For example, a music trader was given ideas about products that would sell to young people. Access to other role models has led to new business opportunities and informal mentoring. Role models also benefit from opportunities to practise communications skills.

### **What's the USP?**

Young people have direct contact with entrepreneurs in their locality and the opportunity to ask their own questions. The interactive and participative approaches used by role models have been found to work particularly well with pupils in Years 9 and 10. Visits by role models are supported by a range of additional resources, workshops and projects enabling young people to explore issues of enterprise and innovation.

### **A model for future development**

The project is large-scale and well established, delivered through the six Careers Wales companies across schools in their areas. The project relies on the continuing involvement of role model entrepreneurs, who often have limited free time. Projects need to have a large number of role models signed up, but need to avoid over-burdening them with excessive requests for visits. At the same time, benefits to role models may ensure continuing commitment and recruitment of other entrepreneurs.

## Building on Project Dynamo: Llwyddo'n Lleol

[www.llwyddonlleol.com](http://www.llwyddonlleol.com)

Wales

The Llwyddo'n Lleol project (translated as Succeeding Locally) has been developed by Gwynedd Council in North Wales as a way of building on the work of Project Dynamo and regenerating the rural economy. It provides support for groups of young people aged 13-30 to develop business ideas. The package includes creative sessions to explore enterprise ideas, plan trials and arrange further support. The Llwyddo'n Lleol bursary of up to £1,000 is offered to support venture trials, for example in buying equipment and funding the costs of training and study visits.

Over 100 bursaries have been awarded to date and have supported new rural enterprises in a range of industries. They have included a card-making business and scriptwriting in rural Snowdonia, music workshops on the Llyn peninsula and T-shirt design in Penygroes, near Caernarfon. The bursary is supported by the Welsh Government's Rural Community Action Fund, Gwynedd Council, the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency and the Gwynedd 14-19 Network.

As well as providing support to budding entrepreneurs, Llwyddo'n Lleol works to develop enterprise skills in youth groups and some secondary schools. Through a series of five modules delivered over Years 9, 10 and 11, activities are aimed at developing skills in team-work, problem-solving and communication. The scheme also includes opportunities to work with local entrepreneurs on real-life business tasks.

## Blackdown Hills Business Association enterprise talks

[www.bhba.org.uk](http://www.bhba.org.uk)

Devon and Somerset

Another example of the coordination of local entrepreneurs for school events is provided by the work of the Blackdown Hills Business Association (BHBA) in the Devon and Somerset border. The BHBA is a membership organisation acting as a hub for information, support and resources for 250 largely small and micro businesses. Members of the association identified that young people need to be better informed about enterprise opportunities and developed links with local schools to run evening sessions for pupils and parents. Finance for the project has been awarded by the Devon Community Foundation, a local business network fund in 2007 to carry out work with local schools, and by the Local Network Fund.

Employment opportunities in the area are limited and there is a predominance of SMEs, self-employment and micro-businesses. Young people seeking employment typically leave the area, overlooking opportunities for self-employment. The BHBA believes this is due in part to limited understanding of self-employment among young people. In response, it identified a need to give them a flavour of what it is like to be employed through real examples of local entrepreneurs.

This has been provided through a series of evening sessions on self-employment in local schools. Events have featured local entrepreneurs in such areas as web design, food and drink, and a travelling barbecue. Events showcased these businesses, with entrepreneurs describing their passage into business and their personal experiences of self-employment to offer inspiration. In one school, the event was attended by as many parents as pupils, reflecting strong local interest in rural enterprise opportunities.

Some of the participating businesses involved parents of pupils at the school hosting the event, while others were part of the BHBA network. The network has experienced little difficulty in signing up employers to school events, finding that businesses enjoy speaking to others about their experiences. They are also motivated by commitment to the community and assisting young people. Participating schools were found to appreciate messages emphasising the value of hard work and achieving goals. It was felt that these are most effectively delivered by successful individuals.

### **Business start-ups on schools sites**

Many schools in urban areas have employers on their doorsteps. This is unusual for those in rural locations. This may lead young people to see their options as being in towns and cities rather than locally. Kent County Council came up with the idea of setting up business start-up units on school sites with the idea of improving young people's knowledge and understanding about business and, in turn, benefiting local enterprise.

## Case study: Business start-ups on school sites

[www.kent.gov.uk/news/your-story/business-incubator-units.htm](http://www.kent.gov.uk/news/your-story/business-incubator-units.htm)  
Kent

### What's on offer?

Kent County Council has established two business incubator units and one innovation centre on three school sites with the intention of allowing host schools to benefit from links with new businesses. In return for high-quality, low-cost accommodation (charged at local market rates), host businesses contribute to WRL programmes, including giving talks and providing work placements. It is also intended that school pupils might support business through activities such as market research and website design. As well as the support to community regeneration, the centres will give students an opportunity to gain real-world business experience.

Business incubator units are currently established in two schools. Contact is made between businesses on school sites with pupils in Years 10–13 and those in Years 7–9 will also benefit as the relationship between schools and businesses matures. One of the participating schools, the Abbey School, a business and enterprise college, is situated in a semi-rural location on the outskirts of the small dormitory town of Faversham with pupils also drawn from local villages. The school welcomed the approach by Kent County Council because of the potential benefits to its WRL programme and because it will extend pupils' horizons. The business manager for the school explained:

*"When you visit the area, it's lovely and quaint, but there are few jobs around and young people sometimes go into HE simply because of limited options."*

Resident businesses are asked to commit a minimum of one hour a month to school activities. To date, businesses have given guest talks within careers education, and it is expected that they will be used as living case studies for students taking business studies courses. Because of its location, the school had ample land on which the units could be built. Of the three resident businesses, one is developing a product range of healthy snacks, providing a good match for the current healthy eating agenda in schools. The company has links with larger food companies who have been approached for WRL activities. Also resident on the site is a business-to-business marketing company offering sustainable approaches, which links well to the school's environmental practices as well as enterprise objectives.

The Marlowe Innovation Centre (MIC) will open for business in June 2008. Based on the site of the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate, MIC will offer 18 office units of various sizes, six light industrial workshops and virtual office and hatchery space. MIC is focused on innovative business and will provide a range of support services to companies.



**Who makes it happen?**

The business incubation units at Astor and Abbey are a partnership between Kent County Council and the schools. MIC is a partnership between Kent County Council, the De Haan charitable trust, the Government Office of the South East (GOSE), Thanet District Council and East Kent Partnership.

**What are the benefits?**

A representative of the project described the relationship as symbiotic, with equal benefits to both sides.

Young people benefit from enhancement of careers education and role models of business enterprise.

Businesses benefit from high-quality, low-cost accommodation.

Schools benefit from enhancement to the curriculum and rental income.

**What's the USP?**

The use of school space to accommodate enterprise, in exchange for input into careers programmes and other areas of the curriculum, makes this a unique project. Pupils also benefit from access to role models and exposure to non-traditional career options. Because businesses are permanently located on site, the relationship developed with the school is likely to be stronger and lead to more opportunities for curriculum enrichment than could be provided by occasional guest employers.

**A model for future development**

The project is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Businesses pay an all-in rate of £18,000 per annum, equivalent to half the cost of employing a teacher.

Opportunities to develop more units at Abbey School are being explored because of clear benefits to the school, pupils and local businesses. The project has attracted considerable interest from new businesses, many of which are web-based and in industries such as travel, the media and whole foods.

Development costs are likely to be minimal because the land is already owned by the school/ Kent County Council.

## Case study: The Lade Project

[www.ltscotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation/sharingpractice/secondary/index.asp](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation/sharingpractice/secondary/index.asp)  
Isle of Bute

### What's on offer?

Completed in 2006, the project involved redevelopment on the site of a former cotton mill. Young people were involved in a range of activities concerned with redevelopment. Activity was focused on the design and production of a public artwork for a location on the redeveloped site. The project involved roughly 30 pupils aged 13 to 15 in S2-4.

The involvement of young people included site visits, surveys and conducting historical research. It was intended that such involvement should give young people a greater understanding of their role in the community and contribute to its future well-being and prosperity. Other aims of the project were to forge stronger links between the school and local business and to provide opportunities for young people to develop entrepreneurial skills.

Young people readily engaged with the project, contributing their own ideas and drawings for aspects of the design. The project was linked with the school curriculum in the areas of art and design, social science and media studies. They were also involved in the Architects in Residence Scheme where they sampled activities related to a range of occupations connected with architecture and design.

### Who made it happen?

The project involved collaboration between pupils at Rothesay Academy on the Isle of Bute and the Education Department of Argyll and Bute Council with business partners. These were property developer Fyne Homes, a landscape architect, a sculptor and The Lighthouse National Residency Scheme. The project was funded jointly by Communities Scotland and Fyne Homes.

### What are the benefits?

Young people were found to benefit from greater awareness of their community and local environment and knowledge of the range of occupational choices available locally. Young people benefited from particularly close involvement with architects, artists and designers. Such knowledge is especially important in areas such as the Highlands and Islands, which suffer high levels of outward migration of young people.

**What's the USP?**

The project involved a range of partners from the public and private sector. Young people worked closely with experts in architecture, art and design. Their own ideas formed part of the project, with the results visible to the community. The project developed young people's skills in a number of curriculum subjects and provided a real experience of regeneration through active engagement.

**A model for future development**

The project was time-limited, but Rothesay Academy continues to engage pupils in local regeneration projects.

## Rural schools and regeneration

Regeneration projects are by nature temporary, involving development of disused or decaying sites. Involvement in a real-life project can provide young people with valuable knowledge and skills about redevelopment and enterprise. Projects also benefit by having community input and commitment to their success. The project featured here is the Lade Project, which took place from 2002 to 2006 on the Isle of Bute.

## Technological delivery mechanisms for work-related learning

The potential for internet-based delivery of WRL has been explored and developed in recent years. In particular, systems have been developed for e-mentoring and for virtual work experience. Both of these have particular potential for application in rural areas because of difficulties of transport for both young people and employers, discussed in Section 2.

The potential value of virtual work experience has led to the development of a number of such packages, some of them led by Education Business Partnerships. They include 'virtual visits' websites developed by Shropshire EBP from an initial Marriott Hotel website developed by Wiltshire LEA. The site includes a virtual visit to Birmingham International Airport ([www.sebpvirtuallearning.org.uk](http://www.sebpvirtuallearning.org.uk)). The VIEW project ([www.futurevu.com](http://www.futurevu.com)) is a virtual access to work package featuring a number of employers, developed by Chris Monk, a former development manager for an Education Business Partnership. A virtual work placement was seen as having the potential to help meet the growing demand for work placements and overcome difficulties arising from health and safety, confidentiality and location.

The VIEW system is designed to allow users to explore a work environment using an approach styled on an adventure game, where work-based evidence is collected, following, for example, a sequence of images, a document in a drawer, poster on a wall or interview with a member of staff. VIEW features 360° panoramic images that allow users to navigate their way around workplaces, opening doors to different areas such as laboratories and workshops. The system is designed to develop young people's enquiry skills, to prepare them better for work experience visits and placements, and to build on these activities. To stimulate interaction, each virtual workplace includes interviews with a range of employees which allow users to choose questions to ask and obtain answers. Questions are designed to bring out general features of the work, such as human contact, whether active or sedentary, and what employees like and don't like about their jobs.

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has provided financial support for VIEW and employers including Ford, Eli Lilly, Genzyme, Gatwick Airport Authority and Addenbrooke's Hospital have taken part as virtual workplaces. Employers have been willing to give their time to the project, seeing benefits for their profile and future skill needs. Some have also used the materials developed for induction training of new staff. The potential for including small employers has also been explored, particularly in relation to developing enterprise skills. VIEW has been released on CD-ROM and used by schools in the south-east of England. These trials indicate that, to be used effectively, young people need support in using access to work packages, but teachers are not always able to provide this. A need has therefore been identified to support teachers by showing how work-based evidence can be handled and used to assist learning.

The potential for transfer to a web-based system is being developed. This would allow for online support to be linked into virtual work placements, helping to address the problem of inconsistent classroom support. Particular benefits have been identified in building a library of virtual workplaces for young people to explore, across the UK, accessible through a browser. This facility would allow young people to compare the opportunities offered in different industries and occupations and to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for career choice. Currently, the development of disparate virtual work experience systems does not allow for such links, and each package allows access to a relatively small number of workplaces.

The system featured in the next case study uses similar technology to VIEW. It has been developed in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, with the specific purpose of catering for the needs of young people who experience difficulties in accessing workplaces because of rural isolation.

## Case study: Virtual work experience

[www.virtualworkexperience.com](http://www.virtualworkexperience.com)  
Highlands and Islands of Scotland

### What's on offer?

The idea of virtual work experience is to enable young people to explore workplaces, jobs and work tasks using simulated workplaces. The project was informed by the barriers faced by young people in accessing work experience because of their location in isolated rural areas, including island communities, or because of issues of health and safety, confidentiality or protection. The system has been on trial in 20 schools across Scotland for two years and a final version has now been developed. It is aimed at young people aged 15-18.

The project is aimed at broadening current levels of access to knowledge of the world of work. It is not intended to provide a substitute for real work experience placements, but as a supplement when opportunities are limited. It consists of six 'worlds' representing different industry sectors, including healthcare and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Using games technology, users can move around each virtual world to access information about jobs and video clips of real workplaces. These clips are created through visits to participating employers, where filming takes place in the course of one day.

### Who makes it happen?

The scheme was initiated by Careers Scotland, the careers service for Scotland, which developed the system in collaboration with the Scottish Government's Determined to Succeed Programme. The project involves a number of partners, including BT Scotland, Learning Teaching Scotland and Skills for Business. The Scottish Government has copyright of the system.

### What are the benefits?

Young people benefit from having access to information about occupations they may not have considered, and from the facility to explore these interactively. Young people in isolated rural areas gain particular benefit because of the limited opportunities for work experience in their locality. Participating businesses have access to future consumers or service users and may also benefit from future recruitment.

### What's the USP?

The programme provides opportunities for young people to sample a wider range of work experiences than would be possible through actual visits. The package uses game technology which allows young people to explore occupations in an interactive and entertaining way.

The system allows small enterprises to contribute to enterprise education without the resource implications of work experience placements. The project has therefore attracted interest from employers who feel they cannot accommodate a young person on placement, yet would like to inform students and teachers about the career opportunities they offer.



### A model for future development

Virtual work experience is particularly applicable in rural areas because of difficulties accessing employers, either at all or in sectors of interest to the young person. A representative for Careers Scotland explained that workplace visits frequently involve young people from rural schools in round trips of more than 100 miles. For island dwellers, work experience can involve the additional cost and aggravation of flights and accommodation, including for teachers who are required to accompany pupils making such trips. Although developed initially to meet the needs of young people in more isolated rural areas in the Highlands and Islands, a representative of Careers Scotland explained:

*“...it is every bit as applicable to urban as rural schools because young people are not being offered the range of work experience due to a number of restrictions and limiting factors.”*

These restrictions include health and safety, and child protection where young people cannot be adequately supervised. Examples of workplaces which could be accessed only through virtual work experience include hospital operating theatres and nuclear power stations. Its wider applicability has resulted in plans to extend its use to other locations in Scotland.



### E-mentoring

In the context of WRL, a mentor is a positive and impartial role model who inspires and encourages young people to achieve their goals. Mentoring of young people by employees in local or more distant workplaces has been found a useful and effective form of WRL. The scope for e-mentoring is being explored, with a view to either enhancing face-to-face mentoring or as the sole method of communication.

The Edge Foundation think-tank has developed Horsemouth, a social networking site designed for online mentoring on topics including education and training ([www.horsemouth.co.uk](http://www.horsemouth.co.uk)). Individuals seeking information or advice on jobs and careers can contact other registered users who are willing to help. The site is described as “a

dynamic life-experience exchange where young people share first-hand experience of education, work choices and challenges”. The site has proved highly successful with thousands of volunteer mentors registering. User profiles are moderated before being posted on the site and real names and email addresses are not used. Funding for the site, which is run as a social enterprise, was provided by Edge and ‘v’, the youth volunteering charity.

The example featured here is of a pilot project run by Suffolk EBP. The partnership developed the e-mentoring system in the county to build on its face-to-face, accredited mentoring scheme ‘Passport 2 Success’. The example highlights the benefits and some of the limitations of e-mentoring as a form of WRL.

## Case study: E-mentoring

[www.suffolk-mentoring.org](http://www.suffolk-mentoring.org)  
Suffolk

### What's on offer?

E-mentoring has been trialled as a form of WRL for young people in Suffolk, by the county's Education Business Partnership.

The rural nature of the county and the limited opportunities available to young people locally have been important factors in the development of mentoring as a form of WRL. The EBP and partner organisations in Suffolk and Essex have successfully delivered a face-to-face mentoring scheme Passport 2 Success, linking pupils with employees in specific sectors experiencing skills shortages. This scheme involves face-to-face mentoring, supported by e-mentoring, combined with a site visit at the end of the mentoring where appropriate. One of the participating employers is British Energy at the Sizewell Nuclear plant. The power station is close to the small town of Leiston and rural communities extending inland from its coastal site. Work experience opportunities are limited by health and safety considerations, but the company is keen to be involved in WRL locally.

In the light of the achievements of Passport 2 Success, the EBP explored the potential for e-mentoring as a sole form of communication, without face-to-face contact or site visits. E-mentoring was seen to have particular potential for use in more rural areas of the county where it has been difficult to recruit mentors either locally, or to travel distances to rural schools. The scheme is also aimed at encouraging enterprise among young people in rural areas who have fewer opportunities for employment than their urban counterparts.

To trial e-mentoring, the EBP has used e-Mentor Pro software developed by IBM. The EBP has provided training to coordinators in schools, community organisations and employers to enable them to set up and use the mentoring software. Having completed the pilot, the EBP plans to fully launch the scheme and to develop accreditation.

Modelled on the face-to-face Passport 2 Success scheme, mentoring takes place for up to 12 weeks and includes guidance in such areas as job applications and interview skills, involving raising aspirations and setting goals. The e-mentoring scheme currently involves 94 mentors and 121 mentees aged 14–16. Commitment to Passport 2 Success is made at company level and mentors are allocated time away from work duties. They are also given full training, a mentoring handbook and ongoing support for their role.



**Who makes it happen?**

Suffolk Education Business Partnership, local employers and schools.

**What are the benefits?**

Young people benefit from the support and guidance of adults, assisting them in setting goals and in making their own career decisions. Mentors benefit from development of communication and support skills. Passport 2 Success accredits these skills and participating companies are reported to be using the scheme as a tool for professional development. It is intended that e-mentoring will develop a similar system awarding certificates to both mentors and mentees, and the school coordinators. In this way, mentoring can benefit employee development. Accreditation acts as an incentive for businesses which can benefit from the application of skills developed by mentors back in the workplace. Schools are reported to welcome the idea of e-mentoring which is seen to overcome difficulties in arranging face-to-face meetings with mentors.

**What's the USP?**

The scheme enables young people to benefit from the experience of adults and to receive support and guidance in decisions about their studies and careers. The system is relatively undemanding of the mentor's time and, because communication is by email, can be at a time most convenient to them. The delivery mode is one with which young people are familiar and comfortable and the system is regulated through encryption and randomised monitoring.

**A model for future development**

e-Mentor Pro can work with 10,000 mentee/mentor relationships and the system therefore has scope for expansion. The limitation on its use is in the cost of administration: although software can monitor messages to a certain extent, it is still necessary to monitor a proportion of emails. Trial of the software highlighted the need for additional resource to fully explore the potential of e-mentoring and sufficient time for administration. Evaluation of the trial has also concluded that there are some limitations to the use of e-mentoring as a single tool; e-mentors were found to still need face-to-face support with scheme coordinators. The pilot also concluded that e-mentors found it easier to interact with their mentee and to develop a rapport if they had met them, rather than communicated solely by email. Therefore, where e-mentoring is used, it may be necessary to build in some face-to-face meetings and support to ensure that the needs of mentors are met, as well as those of mentees.

### 3. Assessing the impact of work-related learning on rural enterprise: benefits and challenges

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This section looks at the benefits of WRL for the key participants: young people, employers and schools. It explores the following areas:

- Challenges to employer engagement in rural areas, including capacity of SMEs and transport issues.
- Benefits to young people and how quality in WRL can be ensured.
- Benefits to schools and colleges and barriers to engagement with employers.

Because of the emphasis of the research on finding good practice in engagement, the research is able to report some of these benefits first-hand from employers interviewed. Information on benefits to schools and young people is gathered largely from interviews with stakeholders and from existing research.

#### Key messages

- Rural businesses engaged with education largely for broadly altruistic reasons but some are encouraged to continue their initial involvement by the benefits they experience. They did not generally see their involvement as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Greater recognition of the potential business benefits of CSR activity might encourage more rural SMEs to engage with education.
- In rural areas, the need to prevent mass youth migration, to keep rural communities alive and to promote healthy local economies could be used to encourage greater employer engagement with education.
- Although the main benefit was often the satisfaction of assisting local schools and young people, businesses found they also benefited from young people's ideas and perspectives. Rural enterprises could be encouraged to consider how the knowledge and skills of young people might benefit their business.
- Other benefits from engagement with education included raising the organisational profile in localities where it is hard to recruit and opportunities to network with other employers at events such as enterprise fairs. Such opportunities may be infrequent in rural areas.
- Challenges to employer engagement in rural areas largely stemmed from their status as SMEs which left them little time for anything beyond core business activity. Travelling to schools can add to the time and cost of engagement.

- To encourage employer involvement and prevent drop-out, employers in rural areas could be given a choice of work-related activities with a clear indication of time commitment required.
- The limited employment opportunities in some rural areas may lead young people to have a narrow perspective on their future. This may be reinforced by expectations of schools and parents. Contact with employers from growth sectors, such as creative and media, and with self-employed entrepreneurs, can raise awareness of wider choices and skill needs in the locality. Such contact can also help to challenge gender stereotyping which is still prevalent among young people and possibly stronger in rural areas.
- Transport in rural areas can also affect young people's choice of work-experience placements and restrict schools' engagement in external events. There were reports of young people staying with relatives to take up opportunities in towns and cities. Choices may also be limited by parents' willingness to provide lifts.
- Variations in the quality of work placements may be greater in rural areas because of the predominance of SMEs and the challenges they face in providing a structured programme of varied activities. Guidance should be given to all employers in how to organise quality work experience.

## How do employers in rural areas benefit from engagement in education?

Engagement with education can have a number of potential benefits for employers. Benefits that feature most commonly in literature about WRL are:

- Preparing young people for the world of work.
- Corporate social responsibility.
- Updating employers' knowledge of qualifications and the education system.
- Business benefits, including image of the business or sector.

Our research explored the benefits for rural employers that are likely to be different in some respects from other employers: the businesses were predominantly small and micro-businesses with limited recruitment requirements. In most cases, their main involvement with education was through provision of work experience, although they were also involved in activities such as mock interviews and hosting visits. Although some had recruited former work-experience students, rural employers were not motivated by the possibility of recruiting young people. Most work experience students were around 15 years old and, because employers generally required higher-level academic or vocational skills, would not be ready for employment for some years. In general, future recruitment was seen as a possibility but regarded in the words of one employer as 'icing on the cake' rather than a motivation for involvement or a benefit.

Instead, the main benefits reported by rural employers could be described as community giving, reflecting the findings of existing research. The chief benefit expressed was the satisfaction of assisting young people and schools with their WRL programmes. Employers felt they were doing something worthwhile for local young people and the community more generally. The small size of participating businesses meant that they did not see this as corporate social responsibility, nor recognise the benefits that could come from it.<sup>28</sup> Greater recognition of the potential business benefits of CSR activity might encourage more rural SMEs to engage with education.

Employers were nonetheless aware that there were benefits to be gained from involvement in WRL. Those experienced by participating employers included:

- An owner/manager of a graphic design company offered employment to a student as a result of work experience.
- A company designing and manufacturing toys had offered a series of placements to a student who had visited on a GCSE design and technology trip. Now employed by the company during her gap year, she is described as bringing 'a fresh pair of eyes and new ideas', and has taken on a number of projects developing new product lines.

Other employers had also found young people to be a source of new ideas. This was sometimes facilitated where employers had used the work experience placement to the benefit of their business, while providing the young person with a 'real' experience. For

28. Miller, A. (2007a) 'What future for employer engagement?' Edge Essay 1. London: Edge Foundation.

example, a design company gave two work experience students the task of researching football clubs for a new project. On another occasion, students had researched and designed a Christmas card and calendar which were used by their school. A similar example was provided by a marketing company which had given work experience students the task of designing a poster for an internal project. The end product was displayed throughout the building to the immense satisfaction of the young designers. Such examples demonstrate the potential gains of bringing fresh talent into the workplace.

A range of other benefits to involvement in WRL were reported by other stakeholders, including enterprise agencies. These benefits include:

- Staff development through teaching, coaching or supervising young people.
- Company profile in localities where it is hard to recruit, for reasons including geographical isolation.
- Product awareness.
- Networking with other employers, involved in such events as enterprise fairs, careers talks and mock interviewing.

Opportunities to network with other local employers may have particular potential to engage employers in rural areas, because they are likely to have fewer opportunities for such contact than employers in towns and cities.

## Challenges to employer engagement in rural areas

Previous research has highlighted the problems experienced in seeking work experience placements within rural areas.<sup>29</sup>

There are a number of barriers to the provision of work-related opportunities in the rural economy. Some of these stem from the nature of rural businesses and the predominance of SMEs and some, for example transport, arise from their relative isolation. Other barriers include insurance premiums, paperwork, child protection, health and safety, and lack of support and guidance to employers about what is expected of their participation.<sup>30</sup> These were experienced by participating rural employers. However, it is unlikely that they were affected differently from other employers in these respects. Therefore this section focuses on issues relating to their status as SMEs and their rural location.

The general view of stakeholders was that it is more difficult to engage rural employers than larger organisations in urban settings which are often motivated by recruitment and marketing considerations. However, some different experiences were reported: some brokers, including in the Scottish Highlands, said it is actually easier to engage rural businesses because they can see the need for WRL to enable young people to fully understand their range of options which do not require them to leave the area. A further factor encouraging participation was perceived skills shortages and recruitment difficulties among employers in some rural areas.

29. Hillage, J. and Kodz, J. (2001) 'Pre-16 work experience practice in England: an evaluation.' DfES Research Report 263. London: DfES.

30. See, for example, Ahier *et al.* (2000) *op. cit.*

Difficulties experienced in organising work experience and in engaging employers in other forms of WRL had led to particular strategies by schools and other stakeholders. These included:

- Schools making arrangements with a small number of large employers who were then engaged in a range of work-related activities.
- Replacing work experience with other activities.

An example of the second strategy was provided by a school in Wales, which replaced work experience with master classes because local opportunities were largely in the hospitality sector, where students had part-time jobs. A representative of the careers service explained:

*“Unpaid work experience in these situations was, unsurprisingly, not attractive to students, so attendance at placements became a cause for concern.”*

Unpaid work experience in these situations was, unsurprisingly, not attractive to students, so attendance at placements became a cause for concern.

It is regrettable if difficulties in engaging local employers in sectors of interest to young people lead schools to take such measures. Interviews with schools, stakeholders and employers themselves do suggest, however, an interest in engagement with education among rural employers, and with schools in working with them, although achieving this was not always easy.

### Challenges to engaging SMEs

A lot of the challenges to the engagement of rural employers were a function of their status as SMEs. Stakeholders in WRL reported that relationships with rural employers are more problematic than relationships with larger, urban employers for the following reasons:

- They are less likely to be part of networks, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and therefore have to be approached directly.
- The limited capacity of SMEs results in uncertainty over participation in WRL.

The issue of capacity was raised by employers, schools and other stakeholders: willingness to assist with WRL at any given time might depend on factors including the order book, availability of staff and seasonal factors. These pressures were understood by stakeholders. At the same time, schools require commitment and the danger of last-minute drop-out introduces some difficulty when planning events involving small rural employers. One solution was found in overbooking employers for events such as workshops, on the grounds that some would drop out.

Many of the rural SMEs confirmed that commitment of time was a problem for them. A number had experienced some difficulty in allowing staff time for WRL, or indeed any activity not directly related to the business. This applied particularly to work experience placements where students needed supervision. Some employers may not be aware of other ways in which they can engage with schools which are less time-consuming.

The need to factor in travel time in rural areas was a further factor affecting employer participation: some activities, such as mock interviewing, involved half a day at a school and additional travel time. Clearly, participating employers had overcome these challenges, but were still concerned about the costs of downtime and had this under continual review. Such considerations brought some uncertainty to their involvement.

Education Business Partnerships reported that, although willing to be involved in WRL activity, employers sometimes became overwhelmed with the work involved and therefore discontinued their involvement. The representative of an employer organisation explained that:

*“To get SMEs involved, you have to make sure they understand what is being asked of them and are comfortable with it without feeling over-burdened. For SMEs, it can be a massive commitment.”*

One national scheme involving employers was reported to have a reputation for demanding too much, so that ‘once you’re involved, they don’t want to let you go’. To avoid over-burdening and drop-out, it was seen as important that the extent of involvement and commitment of time was agreed at the start. A menu of activities, with clear indication of time involved, was seen as helpful in this process. Because of the seasonal nature of business for some rural enterprises, it might also be helpful to provide rural businesses with a clear indication of the date of any proposed activities.

The fragility of links between employers and education was an issue for some stakeholders who remarked that participation often resulted from the interest and willingness of one individual. Where this individual leaves or loses interest in WRL, involvement can fizzle out.

## How do young people benefit from engagement with rural enterprise?

According to the DCSF Building on the Best report, WRL:

*“...enriches the curriculum and learners’ experience by providing a broad range of learning activities that have been shown to help to raise standards, improve participation, increase attainment and support the delivery of improved outcomes for young people.”<sup>31</sup>*

Existing literature on WRL has little to say about benefits for young people in rural areas, yet it is arguable that WRL has even greater benefits for young people in such locations: some respondents in schools and careers services observed that many young people have a quite narrow perspective on their future, sometimes assuming they will work for major local employers in sectors such as retail and tourism. Contact with employers from other sectors, such as creative and media, and in self-employment or freelancing rather than on standard employment contracts, was seen as widening young people’s horizons. Some projects presented in Section 3, for example the ICT Youth Challenge, involved young people travelling to events outside their home locality, which can be a learning experience in itself. Many events involved connecting young people in different schools, calling for use of social and communications skills.

The projects featured in Section 3 show a range of benefits gained by young people from WRL. Some of the featured projects aimed to raise awareness among young people of opportunities that might keep them in the locality, or encourage them to return after university. Face-to-face contact with entrepreneurs was reported to bring to life opportunities available in the local area and local skill needs. Projects involving role models serve a similar purpose as well as helping young people to widen their mental list of options. Role models can also help to

31. DCSF (2007) ‘Building on the best: final report and implementation plan of the review of 14–19 work-related learning.’ London: DCSF.

challenge stereotyped notions of ‘men’s jobs’ and ‘women’s jobs’ which are still prevalent among young people and possibly more strongly held in rural areas.<sup>32</sup>

### Challenges to achieving quality in work-related learning

There has been a long-standing concern with the quality of WRL, especially within work experience programmes. In rural areas, experience of poor quality opportunities can lead young people to the view that opportunities in rural enterprise are inferior to other choices. Yet there may be particular challenges for rural employers in providing quality work experience because of their size. Stakeholders remarked on the variation in quality that can result in small enterprises where much can depend on the availability of staff and business fluctuations: a student arriving during a particularly hectic period could have a very different experience from one arriving during a lull in activity. Poor experiences of WRL can encourage the flight of young people to urban areas.

Interviews with employers, schools and other stakeholders suggest the importance of the following in achieving quality in WRL in rural areas:

- Good matching and preparation of young people to placements.
- A structured programme.
- Involvement in real work activities.
- Detailed feedback to inform future provision.

Participating employers saw good matching of young people to placements as key in determining the quality of work experience for both pupils and the employer. This reflects the findings of existing research with employers and is unlikely to be specific to rural employers.<sup>33</sup> One barrier to achieving a good match in rural areas is transport difficulties, which may restrict young people’s options. One rural school explained that its pupils arrange their own placements because of the need to consider transport. This is likely to restrict young people’s choices to workplaces on transport routes or where they can be taken by parents. Some stakeholders reported that young people stay with relatives in towns and cities rather than look for work experience in their rural locality. This may lead to local opportunities being overlooked and contribute to rural ‘flight’.

Rural employers generally felt that it is the schools’ responsibility to ensure a good match between the student and the placement. This was seen to require knowledge and understanding of the nature of the business on the part of the school or intermediary. This was not always achieved: for example, a belief that graphic design is ‘all about drawing’ had resulted in one school sending pupils with a passion for art, when the main activity of the business was really on building databases. Some employers and stakeholders also identified a need to address unrealistic expectations fuelled by the glamorous image of some industries, for example design and media.

32. Miller *et al.* (2005) *op. cit.*

33. CBI (2007) *op. cit.*; FreshMinds (2007a) ‘Improving engagement between schools and employers, Wave 1 Focus Group Findings.’ Prepared for Edge, BITC, NEBP Network. p.3.

Rural employers emphasised the need for preparation. There were reports of some placement students finding the working environment intimidating and being unable to carry out activities organised for them. This problem may be more prevalent in the smaller workplaces that predominate in rural areas. A further factor is the physical isolation of some rural businesses which may add to feelings of insecurity and exposure among placement students. Some employers said they found that taking on two students at a time helped prevent problems of adjustment to the work environment. The findings highlight the general importance of good communication between schools and employers, referred to in previous research.<sup>34</sup>

A structured programme was seen as essential to ensuring quality by some employers and by stakeholders. Some put together a bespoke programme for work experience students, involving rotation around departments in larger workplaces, or observing and sampling types of work. This was sometimes problematic in rural SMEs, but two companies, an IT enterprise and a graphics company, provided such an overview by putting placement students through their introductory training programme.

Employers strongly believed that work placements should provide a 'real experience' to assist young people in future decisions about education and training pathways. Where possible, students were engaged in real activities rather than observing others, and some employers had devised projects that would benefit both placement students and the business. As described earlier, these included real research and design projects.

The real test of the quality of WRL is in outcomes for young people, in what they learn and in the development of their skills, understanding and the capacity to make career decisions. Employers were keen to help in this way. Indeed, it was the main motivation for their involvement. However, they had little idea of whether the experience they provided had been of positive benefit to young people. They received only superficial feedback from young people and schools, when more detail would help them to ensure the quality and value of future placements. Given the barriers experienced by some SMEs in engaging in WRL, it is important that they are convinced that their involvement benefits young people.

34. Ibid.

## How do schools and colleges benefit from employer engagement?

The benefits of employer engagement are likely to be similar in many respects for rural and urban schools, although the barriers may differ. Aside from helping to ensure they meet the requirement to deliver WRL, schools benefit from employer engagement in a number of ways, including the following:

- Finding pupils work experience in Key Stage 4 and for vocational courses including the new 14-19 Diploma.
- Bringing to life events such as careers fairs, talks and other WRL.
- Providing additional support to young people through mentoring and coaching.
- Access to employers' resources, such as equipment they might otherwise never see, aiding understanding and achievement in areas such as science and IT.
- Greater knowledge of the labour market and employment opportunities among teachers, through participation in pupil activities and teacher placements.
- Keeping curriculum subjects up to date and relevant to pupils' future needs.

An example of curriculum enrichment through employer engagement is provided by a school in a rural area of Northern Ireland with few opportunities outside the retail sector. The school has involved a local pharmaceutical employer in the delivery of science subjects, hosted laboratory visits and offered work experience. The benefits to the company are in recruitment of local people.

Many benefits of employer engagement can usually only be experienced by taking pupils off-site, which can be difficult in rural areas. A project in Kent is developing closer links with enterprises through making space available on school sites. Enterprises in these business incubator units bring rental income to participating schools as well as contributing to WRL across the curriculum (see Section 3). One of the best assets of rural schools is space, and the example of this project suggests how this might be used to their advantage.

### Barriers to the engagement of schools with enterprise

There are a number of barriers in the way of forming closer links with employers. Many of these are not specific to rural areas and include the constraints of the curriculum and timetabling. Schools may also regard WRL as relevant only to a segment of pupils, often lower achievers, expected to make an early entry to the job market.

Other barriers include:

- Complexities of timetabling which make it difficult to deliver activities that cross year groups.
- A focus on achieving good grades<sup>35</sup> rather than developing broader skills.
- Freeing up teacher time, including cover, to take part in placements or enterprise projects.<sup>36</sup>

To overcome these barriers requires considerable effort and commitment to WRL on the part of schools. This is most likely to be effective when driven by the head teacher and the senior management team.

Participating employers reported a number of problems in working with schools, providing insight into some of the barriers to engagement with employers. Schools were thought to be reluctant for pupils to engage in activities in particular sectors. For example, a school in a rural Scottish community was reported to be uninterested in engaging in a programme involving a transport company on the grounds that their pupils were destined for the tourist industry. A specialist tomato grower found local schools uninterested in his offers of guided workplace tours and hands-on activities. Employers visiting schools were also reported to sometimes receive an un-businesslike welcome lacking the customary offers of parking spaces and coffee.

35. Francis *et al.* (2005) *op. cit.*

36. Herrmann, K. and Richardson, P. (2006) 'Evaluation of rural enterprise Tynedale.' Durham: Durham Business School, Durham University.

## 4. What next for work-related learning in the rural economy? Conclusions and recommendations

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### How can young people in rural areas benefit from employer engagement?

The rural economy offers opportunities for employment and enterprise, which have been stimulated by improved ICT and lifestyle choice. Rural economies are seeing the growth of new businesses in such areas as web design, electronic publishing, design and marketing. The growth of such enterprises and opportunities offers young people new possibilities to develop their careers within their rural locality. However, young people may continue to see few opportunities on their doorsteps and believe that they have to 'get out' to 'get on'. They may not see self-employment as an attractive option, associating it with low incomes, long hours and uncertainty. If widespread, such beliefs may lead to a type of rural-to-urban brain-drain where those with ambition leave. WRL can help to challenge the association between the rural economy and dead-end jobs and insecurity. It can help to raise awareness of opportunities for enterprise which young people may pursue on leaving school, on leaving HE or at a future point in their careers.

The limited employment opportunities in some rural areas may lead young people without an escape route to HE to have a narrow perspective on their future. They may simply expect to work for the largest local employer or in sectors such as retail or tourism. Contact with employers from other sectors, such as creative and media, and with self-employed entrepreneurs, can raise awareness of other options and the wider range of skill needs in the locality.

WRL is widespread and includes an eclectic range of activities. However, it does not always involve employers or have a focus on enterprise. It is likely that significant gaps exist in young people's contact with these two aspects of WRL.

The growth of rural leisure activities and revival of traditional rural skills offer employment and enterprise opportunities to young people. Numerous projects encourage greater awareness of the rural environment and provide training in traditional crafts for contemporary application. Projects involving traditional rural skills and crafts could be linked more directly to enterprise education to enable young people to develop business ideas.

Projects need not be directly employment-related to deliver messages about enterprise and opportunities. Regeneration and enterprise have been combined in imaginative ways to deliver messages about the curriculum and career options to young people. Contact with experts, such

as designers and architects, shows young people that there are opportunities for professional practice locally, rather than in distant towns and cities. To maximise the benefits of such contact, young people should be informed about pathways to the professions whose practice they observe.

Engaging with business and enterprise can add to young people's experiences in innumerable ways. A number of projects included in the report present employers and entrepreneurs as 'role models' who talk about their own experiences of setting up and running a business. Role models from the local area can encourage young people to think outside the box and consider options they may have ruled out or simply not known about. They have been widely used by schools, Connexions and Education Business Partnerships to challenge gender stereotyping. If, as evidence suggests, traditional attitudes towards gender roles are more prevalent in rural areas, this approach should be more widely used.

Quality of WRL, and work experience in particular, is known to be variable. These variations may be greater in rural areas because of the predominance of SMEs and the challenges they face in providing a structured programme of varied activities. Clear guidance should be given to all employers in how to organise quality work experience.

It is important that WRL is followed through by providing support to young people wishing to pursue their business ideas. The report features two schemes that support young enterprise through start-up funding: Llwyddo'n Lleol in Wales and ID8 in Northumberland. These are both aimed at building on schools-based enterprise programmes. Such provision can help to revitalise local economies through making the most of young talent.

### **Engaging employers with education: what works?**

Employers in rural areas are motivated to be involved with schools for a range of reasons, including supporting their local community, 'giving back' help they had themselves received and supporting young talent. Employers also wished to raise awareness of local enterprise as an option for young people. These motivations could be used to increase current levels of employer engagement.

Although employers said the main benefit to engagement with education was the satisfaction of assisting local schools and young people, they also benefited from young people's ideas and perspectives. Rural enterprises should be encouraged to consider how the knowledge and skills of young people might benefit their business.

Other benefits to engagement with education included raising organisational profile in localities where it is hard to recruit, and opportunities to network with other employers at events such as enterprise fairs. Such opportunities may be infrequent in rural areas. The business benefits of involvement with education should be widely publicised and used to engage employers in rural areas.

A number of projects featured in the report were set up with the aims of encouraging young people to stay in the local areas and to raise awareness of the opportunities available to them, including in enterprise. Other projects had a strong regeneration theme, involving young people in redevelopment within their locality. While this is not a direct benefit of WRL to employers, many enterprises in rural areas are likely to be in tune with these aims. Employers may be encouraged to engage with schools on the grounds that they might benefit in the future, from revitalised rural communities.

Participating rural employers did not generally see their involvement as corporate social responsibility. CSR has a number of well-recognised benefits to an organisation, in enhancing its image and profile and resulting in business benefits. Greater recognition of the potential business benefits of CSR activity might encourage more rural SMEs to engage with education. These benefits may be less applicable to some small rural enterprises, but other attractions such as networking opportunities may be more effective.

### **Overcoming barriers to employer engagement in rural areas**

The barriers to employer participation in WRL are well recognised as a result of previous research on the issue. However, those affecting rural employers are less well known. Many of the issues affecting participation of employers in rural areas may arise from their small size. SMEs may feel they cannot offer an all-round work experience and may be reluctant to over-burden their small teams with additional responsibilities. Their location is a further factor, adding to the cost and inconvenience of visiting schools and other locations to engage with young people. Participating employers were aware of the cost of participation to their business, particularly in terms of downtime, and continued because they believed it was worthwhile.

There is evidence that employers are often not engaged with schools because they don't know how. Schools wishing to involve employers may therefore need to be more proactive or work with brokers such as Education Business Partnerships. Where schools need employers in particular sectors, they should work with sector-based organisations such as Sector Skills Councils. Organisations should compile lists of employers who are willing to be involved with schools, and what kinds of activity they will consider.

Employers were reported to be discouraged from involvement in WRL because of confusion about the various programmes and types of engagement. There is evidence that SMEs prefer one contact to deal with any activities they might be involved in, rather than a different contact for each programme or activity. As the DCSF report

Building on the Best notes: “Employers can be confused and irritated by the number of separate contacts”.<sup>37</sup> It adds to the time needed to manage and coordinate their engagement and is likely to lead to frustration and drop-out.

Employers may be willing to engage with education but deterred by the fear of excessive demands. This issue is likely to apply particularly to rural SMEs, who often have to factor in travel time for external WRL. To avoid over-burdening and drop-out, it is important that time involved in WRL activities is made clear to employers from the start and that they are given a choice of activities, for example in the form of a ‘menu’.

One of the biggest assets of any WRL programme is a committed employer who will talk to others about how their business has benefited from working with schools and young people. These can be used as ‘champions’ who can use local and sector-based networks to lobby others to get involved. It should not be difficult to find such employers. Of the participating employers, a number spoke of real benefits to the business from engagement with young people. These included input to current projects and meeting recruitment needs.

For rural employers, travelling to distant schools and other venues can be more time-consuming than the activity itself. Because the costs of transport can discourage rural employers from engagement with education, where possible activities should minimise travel time, or be arranged to fit around employers’ work schedules. Reimbursement of travel costs and time might also encourage employers in rural areas to participate in school-based programmes. A case has been made to offer cash or tax incentives for

employers providing placements but the effectiveness of such measures in promoting employer engagement has not been tested.

### **Maintaining employer engagement**

Employers in rural areas, usually because of their status as SMEs, were not always seen as dependable when it came to involvement in WRL activities. Schools and other stakeholders saw these employers’ involvement as fragile, continually threatened by the day-to-day demands of running a small business. It may not always be possible to keep small rural enterprises involved in WRL activities, but there are ways in which their commitment can be strengthened. These include:

- Having feedback from young people participating in work experience and other activities.
- Recognition of their involvement, for example through certification.
- Publicity about WRL projects, featuring employers and other participants.

Feedback on the benefits gained by participants in WRL is essential to retaining employers’ commitment. Some employers providing work experience placements had little idea of whether the experience they provided had been of positive benefit to young people. Given that many employers are motivated by the potential benefits to young people, it is understandable that they should wish to know what these are. Employers may be encouraged to continue their involvement in WRL if they are convinced it benefits young people. They may also tell other employers about these benefits and encourage greater participation.

37. DCSF (2007) op. cit. p.23.

## Engaging schools with employers

Schools are involved in enterprise activity, but do not necessarily engage the skills and knowledge of employers. Yet WRL is most likely to be most effective when it involves young people in active engagement and includes contact with real examples of work and enterprise. Such involvement places WRL fully in context.

The benefits of employer engagement are likely to be similar for rural and urban schools but there are different challenges and opportunities. These include a shortage of local employers and transport of young people to external events. There may also be attitudinal barriers to be overcome, where schools expect pupils to seek work in particular sectors or do not welcome employer contact.

Some schools may also need to improve their approach to 'customer care'. Employers were reported to be sometimes disconcerted by the less-than-warm welcome they received. Employers are likely to be encouraged by a clear commitment to employer engagement from senior management and by basic facilities such as parking spaces and refreshments.

The focus of the research was on 14-19, but WRL needs to begin much earlier.

The need for early intervention in careers education and guidance to prevent young people from narrowing their choices is widely acknowledged in policy circles. However, provision of WRL is likely to be limited, because it is not a statutory requirement and because of the demands of the core curriculum. At the same time, primary schools do provide a foundation for WRL, by engaging children in project work and team-work activities. These often involve real projects and in rural areas have included woodland and farm-based activities. These key skills should be built on in the early years of secondary school, but there is evidence that they are not. As a consequence, young people may lose important work-related skills, such as team-work and communication during Key Stage 3. At this age young people are beginning to form real ideas about their future lives and are often open to new ideas and possibilities. The dearth of WRL before Key Stage 4 represents a wasted opportunity and should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## Which models work best to deliver work-related learning?

The research found a range of types of WRL and a number of delivery models. These include delivery through Education Business Partnerships, through local enterprise agencies, and consortia of agencies and other organisations. Consortia developed to deliver WRL projects include Sector Skills Councils, local authorities and private sector organisations among other partners. The projects presented in the report show the range of delivery models for WRL projects.

What works best is likely to depend on the aims of the project, and whether it has a focus on a particular sector or skill set. Whichever delivery model is used, the most important factor is that the lead organisation and partners are able to secure the commitment and involvement of employers.

### Brokers

The broker model for delivery of WRL has long been in place for work experience. Since the 1970s, well over 100 Education Business Partnerships and national link agencies have been established to support WRL, including work experience and a range of other activity.

The role of brokers in linking schools and rural employers is crucial, particularly in getting new companies involved with WRL programmes and maintaining the quality of provision. Brokers are often able to carry out some form of monitoring and evaluation which helps employers to see the benefit of their involvement. They can also share other practice from schools and employers.<sup>38</sup> Education Business Partnerships were responsible for the development and successful implementation of a number of the projects presented in the report. EBPs are able to bring their knowledge of employers' requirements to events such as enterprise fairs. These might include, for example, concerns about future skill needs.

Connexions and the careers service may also act as a broker for WRL, as in the example of Project Dynamo in Wales. This project is managed by the Welsh Assembly Government

and delivered by Careers Wales. In Scotland, the careers service has worked with the Scottish Government, skills councils and employers, including BT Scotland, to develop a facility for virtual work experience.

Local authorities can play a key role in developing and supporting links between schools and businesses. The initiative developed by Kent County Council to offer space to businesses on school sites in exchange for contribution to WRL is an example of successful brokerage. Local authorities are also involved in projects with a regeneration aspect and can act as a broker between schools, planners and professionals.

Another approach, adopted in Northumberland, has been to set up a community interest company under the ownership of the local authorities in the region. 'Reaction' has delivered a number of projects involving local employers. Projects were developed under the umbrella of an Enterprising Northumberland strategy planned by the Learning and Skills Council.

38. Miller, A. (2007b) 'Brokers and barriers: what infrastructure do we want to engage employers in education?' Edge Essay 3. London: Edge Foundation.

### **Use of networks to encourage employer engagement**

Contact between schools and employers can prove difficult even in towns and cities where they are in close proximity and are visible to each other. In rural areas it can be difficult for schools even to know where employers are and what they do. In addition, it is often difficult for either schools or employers to organise activity alone. Local networks involving employers and education providers are crucial in establishing sustainable WRL programmes. In rural areas networks of employers can help spread the load and engage employers from the widest field. The research found a number of examples of successful networking, including close involvement of employers with Education Business Partnerships, as a means for increasing their involvement in education activities. The example of the work of the Blackdown Hills Business Association shows how brokers working at local level can help to involve SMEs who have an interest in education but do not know how to get involved. The project also shows the potential to recruit employers who are parents of pupils at local schools.

### **Branded approaches**

It is important that the WRL projects are attractive to all participants: young people, schools, businesses, local partnerships and other stakeholders. Organisations developing WRL projects often put considerable effort into presentational aspects, including name, project narrative and the design of materials, including those for use in the classroom to support WRL. Presentation, including branding, is important because, to be successful, projects need to appeal to participating organisations and to young people.

Schools and employers in rural areas may be attracted to initiatives with a local flavour and identity. They may also be encouraged to join schemes established under a familiar brand. Therefore, schemes such as those developed by 'Young Chamber', the junior branch of the Chamber of Commerce, may have an appeal to employers and schools. Young Chamber is part of the Enterprise Strategy of the DCSF. It is currently being piloted in 51 schools with specialist business and enterprise status.<sup>39</sup>

### **Technology as a delivery mechanism: is it the answer for rural communities?**

There is much interest in technological means of delivering WRL. A number of systems offering virtual work experience have been developed and e-mentoring has been used as a supplementary or main form of communication in mentoring schemes involving young people and employers. Virtual work experience allows young people to explore real workplaces, occupations and work roles without having to leave their school. There may be few workplaces within easy reach in isolated rural areas or clusters

39. See [www.youngchamber.com](http://www.youngchamber.com)

of employers in the same industry rather than a range of enterprise. Therefore, virtual work placements may have particular benefits in rural areas. Young people are already familiar with the technology used in virtual work placements through interactive websites and social networking, and may therefore take easily to virtual work experience.

The report has highlighted the value of role models to young people, including in encouraging young people to consider career options they had not known about or rejected as not for them. A mentor is a type of role model who plays an active role in inspiring and encouraging a young person to achieve their goals. Mentoring of young people by employees in local or more distant workplaces has been found a useful and effective form of WRL. Mentoring may be particularly beneficial for young people in rural areas who may have less direct knowledge of a range of industries and occupations through family and local networks. It therefore has considerable potential for wider use in the rural economy.

The scope to provide mentoring through email is being explored and would appear to have particular benefits in rural areas: stakeholders involved in mentoring projects reported problems of travel time for mentors to visit young people in schools and of space for meetings to take place. Trials of e-mentoring suggest, however, that it may work best in combination with face-to-face meetings: communication is better where participants have already met and have developed some degree of familiarity.

The experience of application of e-mentoring and virtual work placements suggests that support is needed for individuals delivering and using them: mentors need training and support and virtual work placements need to be supported by guidance from teaching staff, who need to be familiar with the packages used by students and with how work-based evidence can be used to support learning.

There is a need to evaluate the impact of virtual work experience on young people to see how they benefit, and how it compares with outcomes of real-life experiences, such as visits, fairs and traditional placements. The extent to which virtual workplace visits can build on these real experiences should also be explored. A number of internet-based virtual work experience packages are being developed, using different approaches. Benefits to young people and schools could be maximised through the development of a common approach, or linking of web-based packages through a browser.

The answer to whether technology can overcome barriers to WRL in rural areas is that it can help where real experiences are difficult to organise or are limited in scope. It may also be effective when combined with other, more active engagement with employers and with teacher guidance and support. Young people in rural communities may benefit most through participation in a variety of experiences, which develop a range of skills and knowledge to assist decision-making and which include contact with employers and enterprises. The report has highlighted some of these activities which develop enterprise skills and knowledge. However, there are indications that provision of active WRL is patchy, and employers are often absent from school-based initiatives. There is scope for much wider implementation of the best approaches in rural areas, and for much fuller participation of employers, to the mutual advantage of young people and rural economies.

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## Appendix 1: List of research participants

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### Stakeholders

CCEA Northern Ireland – Vivienne Bannon

Careers Scotland – Ian Carse

Careers Wales Gwent – Mark Hoban

Centre for Rural Economy – Neil Ward

Connexions Cornwall and Devon – Geoff Hallett

Connexions Cumbria – Daniel Carter

Connexions Derbyshire – Geoff Bright

Connexions Somerset – Peter Renshaw

Connexions Staffordshire – Lesley Baird, Carol Jones

Connexions West Wales – Philip Drakeford

Countryside and Community Research Institute – Nigel Curry

Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership – Michelle Meacham

Cumbria Education Business Partnership – Carol Reynolds

DCSF – John Edmunds, Jayne Turner

Delni, Northern Ireland – Michael Gould

Durham Education Business Partnership – Sue White

Herefordshire Education Business Partnership – Polly Garnett

Highland Council – Moira Forsyth

Lincolnshire Education Business Partnership – Elaine Lilley

Moray Council – George MacKenzie

North Yorkshire Education Business Partnership – Sue Gradwell, Rosalyn Sands

NESTA – Theresa Crowley, Gerard Darby, Helen Gleaves, Katherine Mathieson

Oxfordshire Education Business Partnership – Vikki Gledhill

Perth and Kinross Council – Fran Revell

QCA – Gary Forrest

Scottish Enterprise – Neil Ferguson

Shetland Islands Council – Beryl Smith

Somerset Education Business Partnership – John Crew

Staffordshire Education Business Partnership – Shan Jones

Wiltshire and Swindon Education Business Partnership – Neil Reaich, Jane Taylor

Wiltshire County Council – Paul Quantick

Worcestershire Education Business Partnership – Terry Owens

## Work-related learning projects and initiatives

Blackdown Hills Business Association – Val Baker

Business Incubators in Kent – Noel Hatch, Kevin Kelly, John Taylor

Determined to Succeed, Scottish Government – Rosemary Whelan

Food and Drink Challenge – Kelvin Thomson

Futurevu – Chris Monk

Go Forest and the WRL village, Forest of Dean – Andy Robertson

ICT Youth Challenge – Alistair Murray

Llwyddo'n Lleol – Nia Swann

Make Your Mark – Peter Grigg

Passport 2 Success and E-mentoring – Helen Scott Davies

Project Dynamo Wales – Val Ashall, Lowri Edwards, Sebastian Huckman, Mark Kendrick

Reaction, Northumberland – Andy Hugman

Space Unlimited – Heather Sim

Young Chamber – Kevin Smith

## Businesses

Arlosh Graphics – Julie Dabinett

Bluepole – Linzi Rowe

Cumbria Carvings – Simon Willan

Film4U – Justin Potter

Reboot – Lee McGrath

Stubbins – Richard Lewis

The JJ Group – Erin Green

Twoey Toys – Joanne Miller

Woodborough Garden Centre – Alison Parker

## Schools and colleges

Abbey School, Faversham Kent – Kevin Kelly

Avon Valley College, nr Amesbury Wiltshire – David Edwards

Dowdales School, Northumberland – Mike Ridyard

Rothsay Academy, Isle of Bute – Jane Catlin

Royal Agricultural College – Emma Thomas

Springfields School, Wiltshire – Amanda Taylor

St Paul's High School, Bessbrook, Northern Ireland – Una McNulty



# About NESTA and NIESR

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## NESTA

NESTA is the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. Our mission is to transform the UK's capacity for innovation. We invest in early-stage companies, inform innovation policy and encourage a culture that helps innovation to flourish.

NESTA's goals are to:

- Build well-evidenced models of how innovation can work.
- Establish NESTA as a renowned centre of expertise in innovation.
- Have NESTA's models adopted by others.
- Make NESTA a highly effective organisation.

NESTA's Innovation Programmes are practical, experimental projects that aim to build a body of evidence about how best to stimulate and support innovation.

More information about NESTA is at [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk).

## NESTA's Future Innovators programme

NESTA's Future Innovators programme aims to embed effective approaches to delivering the skills and attitudes necessary for innovation within mainstream education and informal learning. We do this by supporting the professionals and institutions that work with young people, testing new approaches and disseminating ideas and resources about education for innovation.

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Demonstrate ways of stimulating and supporting the development of the skills and attitudes needed by young people in their role as innovators of the future.
- Build the capacity of schools/colleges and the informal learning sector to nurture the innovators of the future.

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