



House of Commons
Education Committee

Participation by 16–19 year olds in education and training

Fourth Report of Session 2010–12

Volume I

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Volume II: Oral and written evidence

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The Education Committee

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Summary

More and more 16 and 17 year olds are taking part in some form of education or training beyond compulsory school age. That upward trend is welcome; but it will need to continue if we are to have a thriving, competitive economy founded on a highly skilled workforce. We still have large numbers of young people left behind, disengaged from learning and with poor prospects for employment. The Government's response is to proceed with raising the age of compulsory participation, and this Report looks at what that means for young people, schools, colleges and employers.

A readiness to take part in education or training post-16 is rooted in a positive experience before and during school. In most schools there are children aged 12 or 13, or sometimes even younger, who show little enthusiasm for “academic” learning and who see school as an irrelevance. An outward-facing approach, clearly related to work and financial independence, is needed for these children. While we would not want to encourage over-specialisation at Key Stage 4, the Department should consider whether a 40%/60% split between time spent on specifically vocational or technical study and on a core academic curriculum would best suit 14 year olds who take up vocational options while at school.

The Government is planning to review the funding formula for institutions offering courses for 16 to 18 year olds. That review should recognise the higher cost of supporting learning by young people lacking confidence and should enable all providers, including voluntary sector bodies, to offer the learning opportunities which are required. It should also, while assessing the value of every aspect of provision (including qualifications), consider the case for restoring a higher level of entitlement funding: this plays an important part in motivating and engaging all learners and in providing them with a rounded education rather than just instruction.

The Government's sudden decision to bring an end to the Education Maintenance Allowance was controversial, and views on its abolition formed a large part of our evidence. We welcome the Government's decision to provide transitional funding for some learners who had begun courses in the expectation that they would continue to receive Education Maintenance Allowance. However, allocations of funding for student support through the bursary scheme which is replacing the EMA have been made far too late to allow Year 11 students to make fully informed decisions on what they will do the following year. That delay was regrettable and should not have been allowed to happen.

The Government, in defending its decision to abolish the EMA, relied heavily on an argument that 90% of recipients would have chosen to study with or without the benefit of the Allowance. It should have done more to acknowledge the combined impact on students' participation, attainment and retention, particularly amongst disadvantaged sub-groups, before determining how to restructure financial support, and we would have welcomed a more measured and public analysis by the Government before it took the decision to abolish the EMA.

We accept that a change to financial support for 16–19 year olds was inevitable. However, it will be difficult to ensure that bursary funds are matched efficiently to need and that

inconsistencies which will inevitably arise do not erode confidence in the scheme or distort learners' choices of where to study. We are not persuaded, therefore, that a strong enough case has been made for distributing £180 million in student support as discretionary bursaries rather than as a slimmed-down, more targeted entitlement.

Some 16 to 18 year olds struggle with the cost of travel to and from study. There is a strong argument for saying that 16 and 17 year olds subject to compulsory study or training should be eligible for free (or perhaps subsidised) travel in the same way as children of compulsory school age. We recommend that the Government should, as part of its review of school transport, assess the cost of offering free or subsidised travel to all 16 to 18 year olds travelling to and from learning.

It seems wholly unfair that young people from equally deprived backgrounds should have unequal access to financial support or to support in kind, purely because of where they have chosen to study. There is no logic in making free school meals available to 16-18 year olds in schools but not in colleges, and, while we recognise that the financial implications would make an early change of policy difficult, we recommend that parity of eligibility should be the medium to long-term aim.

The Government is considering a recommendation by Professor Alison Wolf that employers of Apprentices, because they are operating at least in part as educators, should be recompensed for that role. We believe that the main motive for an employer to take on Apprentices should be to make a long-term investment in their workforce for the benefit of their staff and for good business reasons. We recommend that the Government should publish its assessment of the costs and benefits of paying employers to take on Apprentices, before it decides whether or not to go ahead. On the existing knowledge base, however, the Committee does not support the principle of payments to employers taking on Apprentices.

The Government should not lose sight of the need to retain quality in Apprenticeships, particularly if numbers of Apprentices increase substantially. We question whether Apprenticeships offered through Apprenticeship Training Agencies, where there is no long-term commitment or investment on the part of the employer offering the work placement, are of the same quality as work-based Apprenticeships with a regular employer. We recommend that such opportunities should be regarded primarily as a form of training and should be treated separately for statistical purposes.

Cost-cutting by local authorities in response to falls in grant funding has led to a sharp reduction in some areas in the availability of career guidance services for young people. This is damaging and should not be allowed to continue. Any reductions in Connexions services should be proportionate, and local authorities should respect duties imposed by Parliament to encourage, enable or assist effective participation by young people in education or training.

The Government intends that career guidance services for young people should in future be provided through schools, who would have a duty to secure independent and impartial provision. It appears that there would be no face-to-face guidance services for young people through the future National Careers Service. Schools, however, have a history of seeking to promote their own interests; and there will be some young people who are not

in school or who do not have confidence in services provided in a school setting, but who nonetheless need or seek professional advice. We therefore recommend that the National Careers Service should be funded by the Department for Education to provide face to face careers guidance for young people.

1 Introduction

1. The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, when delivering his Budget Statement in March 2006, told the House that “today, the British economy has just 9 million highly skilled jobs. By 2020, it will need 14 million highly skilled workers. And of 3.4 million unskilled jobs today, we will need only 600,000 by 2020”.¹ These predictions, based upon work conducted for Lord Leitch’s Review of Skills, published in December 2006, have been much debated and challenged since they were made. However, the need for a more highly skilled workforce is not in doubt. As Lord Leitch himself said, “unless the UK can build on reforms to schools, colleges and universities and make its skills base one of its strengths, UK businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete”.²

2. The Government’s plan for implementing the proposals made by Lord Leitch in his Final Report recognised that there were ramifications for adult learning, careers advice, higher education, employers, school education, and participation in education and training beyond school age.³ This Report looks at the last of these fields. Two Government policy decisions underlay our inquiry: the first, dating back to 2007, was to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training. We do not examine the merits of raising the participation age in our Report: those debates have been held, and the legislation is in place. Instead, our inquiry has concentrated upon the consequences of raising the participation age, how different groups will be affected, and what the options will be for young people subject to the legislation. The second decision dates back only to October 2010, when the Government announced that it would make a significant change to financial support for 16 to 18 year olds in post-compulsory learning, by withdrawing the Education Maintenance Allowance.

3. We announced terms of reference for our inquiry in January 2011. These were:

- What impact the Education Maintenance Allowance has had on the participation, attendance, achievement and welfare of young people and how effective will be the Discretionary Learner Support Fund in replacing it;
- What preparations are necessary, for providers and local authorities, for the gradual raising of the participation age to 18 years and what is their current state of readiness; and
- What impact raising the participation age will have on areas such as academic achievement, access to vocational education and training, student attendance and behaviour, and alternative provision.

4. We received over 70 memoranda, mostly from local authorities, colleges, professional representative bodies, young people in learning, and voluntary sector organisations. We also received over 700 short e-mail submissions from young people, their parents, college

1 HC Deb 22 March 2006 col 292

2 *Prosperity for all in the global economy—world class skills*, Final report by Lord Leitch, HM Treasury, December 2006, Executive Summary

3 *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*, DIUS, Cm 7181, July 2007

staff and Connexions services staff, describing the use made of the Education Maintenance Allowance and the implications of its abolition. The main themes from these submissions are summarised in Annex 2 to this Report. We also held an informal meeting with students from Brooke House Sixth Form College in Hackney, London: our discussion is summarised in a further Annex, also published with this Report. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the inquiry: the contribution made by young learners themselves was striking.

5. We have, as always, been greatly assisted in our work by our two Specialist Advisers, Professor Alan Smithers and Professor Geoff Whitty.⁴

⁴ Professor Geoff Whitty has declared an interest as a Trustee of the IFS School of Finance.

2 Raising the age of participation

The policy aim

6. Participation in education is presently compulsory up until the last Friday in June of the school year in which a pupil reaches the age of 16.⁵ The ambition to treat the age of 16 as the school leaving age dates back to the Education Act 1944, although that ambition was only realised in September 1972.

7. The Department does not publish statistics for the percentage of children of compulsory school age who are in education, whether in school or out of school. However, it does collect data for absenteeism: 1.4% of pupils at state-funded primary schools, 4.4% of pupils at state-funded secondary schools and 10.5% of pupils at special schools were persistent absentees (defined as pupils who have missed 64 or more sessions⁶ during the year) in 2009/10: on average this works out as 2.9% of pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools (including Academies) and non-maintained special schools.⁷

The Education and Skills Act 2008

8. The Labour Government in the last Parliament brought forward legislation to increase the age of compulsory participation in education or training. In popular parlance, the Education and Skills Act 2008 is said to raise the age of compulsory participation to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. More precisely, sections 1 and 2 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 specify that the requirement to be in “appropriate full-time education or training” shall apply to anyone who has ceased to be of compulsory school age but who has not yet reached the age of 18, and who has not attained a Level 3 qualification. The Act also specifies that the Secretary of State should stagger the raising of the age of compulsory participation, by requiring him or her to apply the participation requirement from 2013 to young people who have not reached the first anniversary of the date on which they ceased to be of compulsory school age, before the full provisions come into force in 2015.⁸

9. In practice, the effect of the 2008 Act is that all 16 year olds will have to participate from 2013 onwards, as well as those who start the school year aged 16 but turn 17 during the course of the year. The effect of further raising the compulsory participation age in 2015 will be merely to extend the requirement to all 17 year olds, and it is therefore somewhat misleading to talk about raising the participation age to 18.

10. The hours of training or education required to satisfy the duty under the 2008 Act must amount to at least 280 hours of “guided learning”: direct instruction, immediate guidance or supervision, and excluding unsupervised preparation or study. Each local authority is required to “ensure that its functions are ... exercised so as to promote the effective

5 See section 8 of the Education Act 1996. A child who attains the age of 16 after the last Friday in June also ceases to be of compulsory school age if their 16th birthday occurs before the start of the next school year.

6 Half-days

7 *Pupil absence in schools in England, including pupil characteristics: 2009/10*, DfE Statistical First Release 03/2011

8 See Section 173 (10)(b) of the Act

participation” of the young people in its area. Governing bodies of institutions are similarly required to promote participation through regular attendance of relevant learners.⁹

11. The rationale for raising the age of participation was set out by the previous Government in a Green Paper in 2007: *Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16*.¹⁰ The gist is in paragraph 2 of the Executive Summary:

It is no longer a sensible option for a young person to leave education for good at 16 in order to seek work. The great majority of young people already do stay on beyond 16 and there is a risk that it will only be the more vulnerable and lower-achieving who drop out at 16. Yet they are precisely the group who have the greatest need to stay on—so that they can achieve useful skills which will prepare them for life. The time has come to consider whether society is letting these young people down by allowing them to leave education and training for good at 16, knowing that they are not adequately prepared for life.

12. Although not mentioned in the Coalition Agreement published in May 2010,¹¹ the Coalition Government has confirmed that it will proceed with the policy of raising the age of compulsory participation. The Spending Review 2010 remarked that

For 16 to 19 learning, the Spending Review will support further increases in participation, while moving towards raising the participation age to 18 by 2015. This will reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training and ensure more young people from all backgrounds have the support they need to fulfil their potential in the labour market and improve social mobility.¹²

Existing levels of participation

13. There has been a steady increase in participation in education and training by 16 year olds in England in recent years, and most are now already participating. The proportion of 17 year olds in education or training, which hovered around 80% for many years, has risen steeply since 2006, when it stood at 80.9%. Latest figures are set out below:

9 Sections 8,10 and 11 of the Education and Skills Act 2008

10 Cm 7065

11 *The Coalition: our programme for government*, May 2010

12 *Spending Review 2010*, Cm 7942, paragraph 2.4

Table 1: Participation by 16–18 year olds in education, training and employment

	% of 16 year olds			% of 17 year olds			% of 18 year olds		
	1999	2009	2010	1999	2009	2010	1999	2009	2010
In education or training	87.1	95.2	97.1	81.1	88.1	89.9	62.1	65.3	67.5
In employment without training	6.2	1.0	0.7	11.7	4.7	3.4	27.4	18.0	20.0
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	6.8	3.8	2.3	7.2	7.2	6.8	10.4	16.7	12.4

Source: DfE Statistical First Release SFR 15/2011: Participation in education, training and employment by 16-18 year olds in England. Figures for 2010 are provisional.

The following figures illustrate where 16–18 year olds in full-time education are learning:

Table 2: 16–18 year olds in full-time education in 2010, by place of learning

	% of all 16 year olds	% of all 17 year olds	% of all 18 year olds
Maintained schools	31.6	24.8	3.4
Academies/CTCs	4.5	3.4	0.4
Independent schools	6.5	5.9	1.0
Sixth form colleges	11.9	9.7	1.6
FE colleges	33.7	31.5	18.1
HE institutions	0.2	0.8	24.3

Source: DfE Statistical First Release SFR 15/2011: Participation in education, training and employment by 16-18 year olds in England. Figures are provisional.

14. Internationally, the United Kingdom as a whole appears to perform poorly in rates of participation in education and training beyond the age of 15. The OECD measures participation rates in member and partner countries and produces comparative tables. Although any such data are dogged by differences in terminology and classification, the percentage of the population aged 15 to 19 in the UK studying at institutions in 2008 was calculated by the OECD to be 73%, compared to an average among OECD member countries of 82%. Among OECD member and partner countries, only Turkey, Israel and Mexico had lower percentages; and major European economic competitors such as France and Germany scored 86% and 89% respectively.¹³ It should be noted, however, that in most OECD countries, formal schooling begins later than in the UK.

15. Given the increasing value of skills in the labour market, it might be assumed that the UK's poor relative performance in participation at 15–19 under OECD measures would be

reflected in a comparatively high rate of youth unemployment. In fact, the OECD’s figure for youth unemployment in the UK is just *below* the OECD average, alongside the United States, and is higher than Germany, Japan, Australia and the Netherlands (lowest of all, at around 7%), but lower than France, Finland, Italy and Sweden.¹⁴

Impact on young people

16. The young people principally affected by the new provisions on compulsory participation in England will be those shown in Table 1 as being in employment without training¹⁵ and those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The latter group is considerably larger and more problematic. We look at the characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training in some detail below, and we take this sketch as a general indication of the circumstances and characteristics of perhaps the majority of those 16 and 17 year olds who, in a few years’ time, will be in education and training not because that is what they would have chosen but because it has become compulsory.

Characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training

17. At the end of 2009, there were 25,200 16 year olds and 49,100 17 year olds who were not in education, employment or training: 74,300 in total, which was 5.7% of the 16–17 age group. If 18 year olds are included (as is the more common practice), the total increases by 116,300 to 190,600, which is 9.6% of the 16–18 age group. However, as explained above, 18 year olds will not be subject to compulsory participation under the provisions of the 2008 Act.¹⁶

18. Young people who are not in education, employment or training may be so for a huge variety of reasons. Some will have no history of work; some will have moved in and out of short-term employment; some will have opted out of study because of an unhappy school history; some will be in custody; some will be refugees or asylum seekers not yet granted citizenship; and some will have left study because of difficult domestic circumstances. Some will be “NEET” for more positive reasons: for instance, full-time volunteers and young people on gap years fall within the definition used for statistical purposes.¹⁷

19. The National Audit Office provided our predecessors on the Children, Schools and Families Committee with an analysis of some of the characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training. It found that:

14 *Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*, OECD, 2010, page 28. Figures based upon individual countries’ labour force surveys, which may not be compatible with each other. Youth was defined as 15–24 except in five countries (including the US and UK) where it was defined as 16–24.

15 People in this group received no training while in employment in the four weeks before the survey

16 Equivalent figures for 1999 were 40,600 (16 year olds), 42,500 (17 year olds) and 62,400 (18 year olds), totalling 145,500: 7.0% of the 16-17 age cohort and 8.1% of the 16-18 cohort. All figures taken from annual Statistical First Release series, which is regarded as “the primary source of national data on 16-18 year olds NEET”: see DfE Statistical Release OSR 10/11, NEET Statistics—Quarterly Brief, May 2011

17 See *Young people not in education, employment or training*, Eighth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10, HC 316-1, paragraph 5

- A higher proportion of white young people are NEET than is seen among most ethnic minority groups;
- Young people who are NEET are more likely than their peers to have a disability or longer term health problem;¹⁸
- Children in local authority care are much more likely than their peers to be NEET;
- 16/17 year olds who are NEET are more likely to have engaged in risky behaviours (smoking or vandalism, for example) by age of 13/14; and
- Disadvantage in its many forms is a more common feature of early life for 16/17 year olds who are NEET.¹⁹

Haroon Chowdry, a senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, told us that academic performance within school was a major predictor of NEET status post-16.²⁰

20. As the Children, Schools and Families Committee noted, the question of how to reduce the size of this group has attracted attention from policymakers, thinktanks, the third sector and many others.²¹ It is not difficult to see why so much energy has gone into trying to address this issue. The Government noted in its child poverty strategy, published in April 2011, that

Being NEET between the ages of 16 and 18 years is associated with later negative outcomes, such as unemployment, lower pay, having a criminal record, poor health, teenage parenthood and negative psychological outcomes.²²

The problems which individuals face cannot be addressed by learning alone; nor can they necessarily re-enter and remain in education or training without some of those problems (such as health and housing) being tackled.²³ However, these are issues which lie outside the scope of this Report.

21. Given their typically fractured school history, many in this group will have comparatively low levels of attainment, skills and aspiration. Some will have an antipathy to any formal learning setting. Dr Thomas Spielhofer, who led a research study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on barriers to education and training, told us that 6% of young people surveyed by the study were not interested in participation, and that often this was because they had been put off by their experience of

18 The Transition Information Network reported Connexions Services data indicating that 12% of 16-18 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were not in education or employment, compared to 6% of those without learning difficulties and/or disabilities: Ev w72.

19 Memorandum from the National Audit Office to the Children, Schools and Families Committee, available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmchilsch/memo/young%20people/m0101.pdf>

20 Q 2. See also Q 21

21 *Young people not in education, employment or training*, Eighth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10, HC 316-1, paragraph 1

22 *A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives*, HM Government, Cm 8061, April 2011, paragraph 3.45

23 See memorandum from Barnardo's, Ev 112, paragraph 3.5

education and training: “they just do not want anything to do with anything that they associate with their previous experience of it”.²⁴

22. Witnesses held a range of views on whether motivation was an issue for this group. Seyi Obakin, Chief Executive of Centrepoint, told us that he did not think that motivation was a real problem: “When you scratch beneath the surface, all the young people we work with want to do well. They want to attend; they know that if they have qualifications they will do better in life”.²⁵ However, Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive of the Children’s Society, thought that self-motivation was lacking in many who were NEET or not engaged; and he believed that this could be a reaction to other people’s perception that they had no potential.²⁶ A further angle was put to us by Dr Thomas Spielhofer, who told us that

With some of the young people who don’t participate, it is not necessarily an issue about motivation or self-motivation; in many cases, the issue is about resilience ... Often the issue with young people who do not participate is that they have very low resilience, so if anything is a small barrier or if anything goes wrong they drop out or do not even start to participate.²⁷

23. We recognise that the seeds of increased participation at the age of 16 and 17 lie much earlier in a child’s life and will be rooted in a positive experience at and before school and in their aspirations.²⁸ Deborah Roseveare, Director of Education and Training at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), told us that “the strongest predictor that can be identified of whether someone will drop out of school is the grades achieved at the end of primary school”.²⁹ The Government’s memorandum to our inquiry dwelt at some length on the steps being taken to improve opportunities for all children to learn from the outset, whether through investment in early years education for the most disadvantaged 2 year olds, curriculum reform, a closer link between disadvantage and pupil funding (through the pupil premium) or greater recognition of the value of early intervention.³⁰ Whether or not these policies prove to be successful in increasing subsequent levels of engagement by children in and beyond school, we acknowledge their relevance; but we do not assess their impact in this Report.

Engagement during school years

24. In most schools there are children aged 12 or 13, or sometimes even younger,³¹ who show little enthusiasm for “academic” learning and who see school as an irrelevance. Some of these will become persistent absentees and will drop out altogether, showing up in due course as a statistic in figures for young people not in education, employment or training.

24 Q 238

25 Q 238

26 Q 239

27 Q 240

28 See for example memorandum from Peterborough City Council 8-19 Service, Ev w92, paragraph 33; also memorandum from Barnardo’s, Ev 112, paragraph 3.4

29 Q 111

30 Ev 84–5

31 See Mr Collis, Q 139 and Jane Connor, Q 159

Improving engagement in learning for these children, while a desirable aim in itself, could also lighten the task (and reduce the cost) of drawing disengaged young people back into education or training once the age of participation is increased.

25. At issue is the way in which children spend their time in learning. The Government has announced a major review of the National Curriculum, which is to be slimmed down “so that it properly reflects the body of essential knowledge which children should learn”. The aim is to allow schools the freedom to “develop approaches to learning and study which help us to catch up with high-performing education nations”.³² While the purpose behind the review is clear, and we shall watch with interest the progress of the review, a different approach, more outward-facing and more clearly related to work and financial independence, is needed for children disenchanted with academic learning in a school setting.³³

Vocational learning at age 14–16

26. Vocational GCSE courses have been taught in schools for some years; but, as Professor Wolf observed in her recent report on vocational education,³⁴ there has been a rapid expansion in the number of pupils aged 14 and 15 following more vocational, non-GCSE courses. While Professor Wolf had major reservations about the worth of many of these qualifications, the principle of introducing greater variety of opportunities for vocational study during years of compulsory schooling, often through joint working between schools and colleges, has been established. Peter Lauener, Chief Executive of the Young People’s Learning Agency, told us that he believed that there was a lot more collaboration between schools and colleges than a few years ago, as well as signs of funding mechanisms being put in place by schools and colleges to pay for “the one or two days per week that young people might be spending out of a school environment in a college environment”.³⁵ We note also the Department’s statement in its response to Professor Wolf’s review that it wished to see more young people being offered the opportunity to enrol in colleges before they reached the age of 16, and that it would communicate this view to all schools and colleges.³⁶

27. However, we received evidence that “reductions in school funding” and changes to performance measurement were leading to a fall in vocational learning in colleges by 14 to 16 year olds, with some colleges reporting a reduction of about 80% from its peak.³⁷ Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, confirmed that numbers of 14 to 16 year olds attending college were in decline.³⁸

28. The range of options for more vocationally-weighted learning for 14–16 year olds is expanding, with the introduction of studio schools and University Technical Colleges:

32 HC Deb 20 January 2011 col 47WS

33 See Martin Ward Q 185

34 *Review of Vocational Education*, Professor Alison Wolf, March 2011, page 47

35 Q 284

36 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education—Government Response* p 11

37 157 Group of Colleges, Ev w25, paragraph 12

38 Q 186

- In **Studio Schools**, pupils aged 14 to 19 study the national curriculum through mainstream qualifications (including GCSEs). Part of each week is spent in work placements (paid for 16–19 year olds). The first studio schools opened in September 2010.
- In **University Technical Colleges**, formed through partnerships between universities, colleges and businesses, study also begins at 14, recognising that “students who know what they want to do can often become bored at school and so underachieve by the time they are sixteen”.³⁹ Between the ages of 14 and 16, the split of time between general education/bridging core studies and technical studies is 60:40. One University Technical College has opened: at least ten more are being developed, and the 2011 Budget set out a commitment to expand the programme and establish at least 24 new colleges by 2014.⁴⁰

We acknowledge the Government’s support for the expansion of University Technical Colleges, which we see as a bold experiment in providing learning opportunities for young people motivated by a more practical curriculum.

Specialisation

29. Professor Wolf was opposed to any significant specialisation before the age of 16, arguing in favour of a common core of study at Key Stage 4, with vocational specialisation normally confined to 20% of a pupil’s timetable. As an example of supporting evidence, she cited a submission to her review from the TUC, which believed that the aim should be to ensure that all young people have both a broad general education and a practical education up to the age of 16, and that “the key point is to avoid making irrevocable decisions too early”.⁴¹ It could be argued, however, that the English system in fact delays specialisation by comparison with some other developed countries: educational paths in the Netherlands, for instance, diverge at the age of 12, with a core curriculum supplemented by a large element of school-based vocational education in certain types of school.⁴² In evidence to our inquiry, Professor Unwin also questioned whether some of the vocational courses followed in England at Key Stage 4 would be recognised elsewhere as being truly vocational.⁴³

30. Professor Wolf developed her argument by noting that:

Claims are often made that vocational options motivate young people more and therefore lead to them achieving higher grades in their other subjects; and that such options also stop them from dropping out and becoming ‘NEET’ ... this might suggest that a larger share of time should routinely be allocated to vocational options for some students.

39 See <http://www.utcolleges.org/faqs>

40 *Budget 2011*, HC 836 (Session 2010–12), paragraph 1.118.

41 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, pages 111 and 107–8

42 See Professor Unwin Q 119. See also *The Education System in the Netherlands 2007*, Dutch Eurydice Unit, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, http://english.minocw.nl/documenten/en_2006_2007.pdf

43 Q 131

However, she found no indication either in existing research literature or in analyses carried out for her Review that Key Stage 4 students (whether generally or specifically “at risk of disengagement”) made substantial improvements in their general attainment as a result of taking more vocational courses. As she herself noted, these findings are “profoundly counter-intuitive for many people involved in high quality vocational provision”.⁴⁴

31. Martin Ward, representing the Association of School and College Leaders, agreed that over-specialisation at 14 was “not a good thing”; but he warned that moving away from more vocational courses in the 14-to-16 phase of education “may make it more difficult to motivate and keep engaged some of the young people in that age band”. He added that “If they are obliged to do a narrowly defined academic course and nothing else, we may find they reach 16 all the more likely to want to leave”.⁴⁵ Joanne McAllister, a 16-19 Commissioning Adviser working for Cumbria County Council, agreed that vocational education for 14 to 16 year olds had been “a very useful tool” and that there had been “significant” progression to post-16 courses.⁴⁶ The Hull College Group noted that secondary schools “consistently report that attendance and behaviour improves for those pupils who attend off-site education and training that they are fully engaged in”.⁴⁷

32. We have not considered in detail the research evidence summarised by Professor Wolf on page 110 of her Report, which underlies her conclusion that vocational study at the age of 14 to 16 has no discernible effect on attainment at the age of 16 or later. However, we make three observations:

- The location of study during Key Stage 4 may make a difference to subsequent retention and attainment, given some children’s antipathy to a school setting, and it is not clear whether the existing research base takes this into account;
- The quality of teaching (and of the course followed) can be expected to have a bearing on retention and attainment, and Professor Wolf herself was critical of the value of some vocational courses;
- An absence of any indication that vocational study at the age of 14 to 16 makes an appreciable difference to students’ staying-on rates at the age of 16 does not necessarily show a neutral effect: it may represent an improved rate of participation post-16 for those who would have been at risk of “disengagement” had they not followed a more vocationally-weighted curriculum at the age of 14.

33. This is an issue so central to the improvement of participation at and beyond the age of 16 that a comprehensive, solid and up-to-date research base should be established. **We recommend that the Government should commission further research to assess the effect of applied learning and vocational study at age 14 to 16 upon participation in education and training at age 16 to 18. That research should take into account the location of study, and experience from a range of vocational courses.**

44 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, pages 108–9

45 Q 184

46 Q 186

47 Paragraph 3.2, Ev 89. See also memorandum by the NUT, Ev w14

34. While we would not want to encourage over-specialisation at Key Stage 4, we recommend that the Department should consider whether a 40%/60% split between time spent on specifically vocational or technical study and on core academic curriculum would best suit 14 year olds who take up vocational options while at school.

Young Apprenticeships

35. Young Apprenticeships, which have run since 2004 as a pilot scheme, offer motivated and able 14–16 year old pupils the opportunity to take industry-specific vocational or vocationally-related qualifications alongside GCSEs. Pupils study the core curriculum; but two days per week are spent on studying for vocational qualifications, and 50 days over the two years are spent in the workplace. The Department confirmed in March that the pilot would end “due to the high delivery costs which are not justified in the current economic climate”.⁴⁸ Funding for new starts on Young Apprenticeships ceased in January 2011, although funding for existing Young Apprentices will be available in 2011–12 and 2012–13 (£15.3 million and £4 million respectively).⁴⁹

36. The National Foundation for Educational Research undertook an evaluation of outcomes for students who began the Young Apprenticeship programme in 2006. The Foundation found that:

- 78 % of all Young Apprenticeship participants had achieved five or more A*–C GCSE grades or equivalent, compared to 64% of all learners nationally
- Learners who completed Cohort 3 of the programme gained significantly more points in total (94 points more) at the end of Key Stage 4 compared with similar learners in the same schools who had not participated in the programme
- Of those who had completed the programme and for whom the destination was known, the majority (95%) progressed into further education or training, and 19% had progressed into an Apprenticeship.⁵⁰

37. The programme was praised in evidence to our inquiry. The Merseyside Colleges Association said that it “provides a well-developed, successful model ... as part of promoting vocational education, training and as a feeder route to full apprenticeships with exposure to employers and the workplace”.⁵¹ The Hertfordshire 14–19 Partnership⁵² also supported the pilot, saying that the programme “needs to be fully recognised as a valued and extensive experience of a vocational sector” and that programmes “have provided young people with the opportunity to experience practical learning as a pathway and enable them to have a wide choice of post-16 options”.⁵³ Peter Lauener, Chief Executive of the Young People’s Learning Agency, said that the results of the pilot had been “terrific”,

48 <http://www.education.gov.uk/16to19/qualificationsandlearning/workexperience/a0013457/young-apprenticeships>

49 HC Deb 21 March 2011 col. 846W

50 *Evaluation of the Young Apprenticeships Programme: Outcomes for Cohort 3*, NFER, November 2010

51 Ev w51, paragraph 8. See also Bill Sutton Q 173

52 Comprised of representatives from schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, Connexions, the University of Hertfordshire and the local authority

53 Ev w55, paragraph 25

that it had been popular with young people and that achievement rates were good. He confirmed, however, that it was an expensive programme, as participants were funded on top of their per pupil allocation to schools.⁵⁴

38. We accept that the cost of the Young Apprenticeship programme is currently difficult to fund, despite its impressive results. We acknowledge that there is some evidence of effective joint working between schools and colleges to provide vocational study opportunities for 14 to 16 year olds; but this appears to be in decline, for financial reasons. The success of Young Apprenticeships suggests that high quality vocational training for 14 to 16 year olds can raise engagement and academic achievement, and we urge the Government to consider how best to build on this model.

What sort of provision will young people need?

Alternative forms of support

39. It is clear to us that many of those who will be brought into education or training by the 2008 Act will need flexible learning provision, quite possibly in an informal setting.⁵⁵ A formal study setting such as a school—or even a college—will have negative connotations for those who did not prosper at school and who may have dropped out. For such people, online or ‘distance’ learning is likely to have greater appeal. Centrepoint, a national charity working with young homeless people, described for us a proposal for a ‘college without walls’: this would combine in-college and online learning so that young people would have the flexibility of online modules together with the more intensive support of face-to-face teaching. The ‘college without walls’ would hold the budget, allowing young people to complete modules at different institutions and at different times.⁵⁶

40. Voluntary sector bodies have proven expertise in offering the sort of intensive—even one-to-one—support which some young people will need in order to regain confidence, develop aspiration and re-enter some form of learning.⁵⁷ Joanne McAllister⁵⁸ saw a role for the voluntary and community sector in preparing young people for the college environment, supporting them in the first few weeks on a course.⁵⁹ Anne-Marie Carrie, Chief Executive of Barnardo’s, gave us examples of programmes run by Barnardo’s which were designed to address low motivation, for instance by providing travel to and from college.⁶⁰ However, this type of support can be expensive,⁶¹ and we were told that although there was potential for the voluntary sector to play a much greater role in this respect, the funding system made it very difficult for voluntary sector providers to do so.⁶²

54 Q 282

55 See memorandum from Helen Roper, secondary curriculum adviser, Ev w83

56 Further information supplied by Centrepoint [not printed]

57 See for example memorandum from Fairbridge/Prince’s Trust, Ev w96, section 2

58 A 16–19 Commissioning Adviser working for Cumbria County Council

59 Q 192

60 Q 238

61 Devon County Council 14+ Learning and Skills Strategic Team, Ev w37 paragraph 3.1 and 3.2. See also submission from City of York Council 16–19 team, Ev w46, paragraph 13; also London Councils, Ev w40, paragraph 20

62 Leeds 11–19 Learning and Support Partnership, Ev w49 paragraph 33.

41. The Government intends to review the funding formula for institutions offering courses for 16 to 18 year olds “to see how it can better support the Coalition Government’s aims of transparency and fairness” and, in particular, “how targeted support for 16 to 18 year old learners can be aligned with the pupil premium for pre-16s”.⁶³ **The forthcoming review of funding for post-16 learning should recognise the higher cost of supporting learning by young people lacking motivation or confidence; and the future funding mechanism should enable all providers, including voluntary sector bodies, to offer the learning opportunities which are required.**

Flexible course start dates

42. Flexibility of start dates was clearly an issue for many who were leading disrupted or unsettled lives. Ms Carrie gave as an example a young person released from a young offenders institution being given only 24 hours’ notice of the accommodation which they would occupy when released. She added that such people would have to wait until the start of the next term before they could start a college course and said that “there is no flexibility in start and end dates, in terms of when young people can enter individualised programmes”.⁶⁴

43. We were told that the “lagged learner funding” model used by the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) to fund college provision could deter colleges from offering mid-year starts on courses. The decision to introduce “lagged funding” as a means of calculating allocations to colleges—essentially taking the previous year’s learner numbers as a basis—was taken in June 2010, and details were set out in the YPLA’s Funding Statement for 2011–12, published in December 2010. Jane Machell, the Principal of Alton College, said that using “lagged learner numbers” allowed “no flexibility to do any January or mid-year starts” and “no flexibility for any additional specific things that you might want to put on for youngsters in the following year”.⁶⁵

44. Local authorities also commented on the effects of lagged funding models: the City of York 14–19 team said that raising the participation age required “new strands of provision” but added that “we have no real ability to facilitate immediate changes in the pattern of provision because of the total reliance on lagged numbers as a basis for allocating funded places to providers”. It implied that schools and colleges were in a position to be more accommodating:

“A school or college can “smooth out” the budgetary implications of offering new provision which attracts new learners (it will receive the funding the following year) when funding rates at per learner level are consistent. However, a small voluntary organisation or new training provider able to offer small scale but valuable provision in an RPA context cannot.”⁶⁶

63 HL Deb 10 January 2011 col WA 413

64 Q 237

65 Q 36

66 Ev w47, paragraph 19

LEACAN⁶⁷ similarly spoke of “the lack of willingness of providers to expand or amend provision to meet demand when constrained by funding based on historic numbers and historic Standard Learner Number ratios”.⁶⁸

45. The Association of Colleges took a more nuanced view. Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association, told us that ‘lagged funding’ was “the least worst system you can come up with”: it allowed stability and mitigated peaks and troughs, but it did mean that, for mid-year starts, “you could be waiting for the money for the student you have taken on in January for a full 18 months”. He believed that it was a model which was “fundamentally right” but that it needed “some sensible refinements”.⁶⁹

46. We note that the Statutory Guidance on Funding Arrangements issued by the Young People’s Learning Agency in December 2010 said that recruitment through the 2010–11 academic year and flexible start dates would be taken into account in calculating allocations to colleges for the 2011–12 academic year.⁷⁰ The Association of Colleges told us that YPLA officers had in some cases made adjustments to college funding where colleges could show that they had significantly increased the number of in-year enrolments.⁷¹

47. We are not convinced that the “lagged learner funding” mechanism currently used by the Young People’s Learning Agency as a basis for funding learning providers necessarily prevents flexibility in course starts. We welcome the Agency’s willingness to adjust funding for colleges in 2011 to reflect significant increases in in-year enrolments. We recommend that the Agency should indicate as soon as possible whether it intends to use lagged student numbers as a basis for calculating allocations to colleges for study in 2012; and we encourage it to confirm at the same time that it will continue to recognise in its funding allocations significant rates of in-year enrolment in individual colleges.

Entitlement funding and its effect on learning provision

48. The complex funding formula for 16–18 year olds has various elements. Besides funding per learner, colleges, schools and training providers receive “entitlement funding” for activities or practices which enhance learning. Entitlement funding may be used to provide tutorials, additional courses, careers support, pastoral support, health advice, and “enrichment” activities such as sport and arts activities.⁷² The Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA), in its Funding Statement for 2011/12, announced a reduction in entitlement funding from 114 to 30 guided learning hours per learner. In a question and answer paper accompanying the Funding Statement, the YPLA recognised that “for those with lower prior attainment, the entitlement funding provides valuable tutorial and learning support that persuades them to engage and remain in learning and enables them

67 LEACAN describes itself as a national network of inspectors, advisers, officers and consultants employed by local authorities in roles with a specific remit for strategic 14–19 planning and development

68 Ev w30, paragraph 24

69 Q 196

70 *Statutory Guidance: Funding Arrangements for 16–19 Education and Training*, Young People’s Learning Agency, December 2010, paragraph 27

71 Further information received from the Association of Colleges [not printed]

72 See memorandum from the Catholic Education Service for further examples, Ev w9

to progress”. However, it then added simply that “30 hours per learner is retained so that this can continue”.⁷³

49. College principals have registered dismay at the reduction in entitlement funding. Dr Elaine McMahon, Chief Executive and Principal of Hull College Group, told us that “some students have a need for more support. If the entitlement money goes from support areas, we struggle to make those students able to be motivated sufficiently and to meet their needs”.⁷⁴ In a letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* in January this year, Asha Khemka, the Principal and Chief Executive of West Nottinghamshire College wrote:

Tutorials are a fundamental part of colleges’ learning programmes and are often the ‘glue’ that holds the various aspects together. They are integral to teaching and learning, contributing to learner retention, achievement, success and progression. Similarly, enrichment activities such as vocational trips act as incentives for learners, keeping students motivated and interested and preparing them for the world of work and higher education. Reducing these life-enhancing experiences will demotivate students and, at worst, harm their employment chances.⁷⁵

In discussions during oral evidence on engagement and raising the participation age, Martin Ward (Deputy General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders) said that

the last few are much more difficult to engage and retain than the first few, and are much more expensive. The issue becomes one of support, monitoring and mentoring at a much greater and more intense level than may be necessary for some of the other students. That is expensive ... The loss of that enrichment funding will clearly make it that much more difficult for schools and colleges—it may well be colleges in particular—to engage with this group of students.⁷⁶

This statement was echoed by Mr Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges.⁷⁷

50. The YPLA points out in the Funding Statement that £150 million of the savings from reducing entitlement funding will be redirected through the “disadvantage uplift” element of the funding mechanism, paid in 2011/12 for young people “that live in the most disadvantaged areas of England⁷⁸ and those who are disadvantaged by other circumstances”.⁷⁹ Ministers have justified the reduction in entitlement funding by saying that the Government’s first priority was to protect the core education programmes which are offered by schools and colleges and which deliver “the real benefits to all young people” and which enable them to progress into higher education or employment.⁸⁰ We note that

73 16–19 Funding Statement Q&A, YPLA, paragraph 19

74 Q 45

75 *Times Educational Supplement*, 14 January 2011

76 Q 192

77 Q 192. See also memorandum from South Thames College, Ev w121, paragraph 2.2

78 In the 27% most deprived super-output areas of the country, based upon the Index of Multiple Deprivation

79 16–19 Funding Statement, Young People’s Learning Agency, December 2010, paragraph 11

80 HC Deb, 1 February 2011, col 835

no formal assessment was made by the Department of the effects of reductions in funding for student support services in colleges and schools.⁸¹

51. The severe reduction in entitlement funding for colleges will limit provision of tutorials and access to enrichment activities. We acknowledge Ministers' desire to target funding on the most needy and we note that £150 million of the savings will be redistributed through 'disadvantage uplift'; but **we do not accept that the activities and services supported by entitlement funding are necessarily needed more by those who benefit from 'disadvantage uplift'; and we are not convinced that they should be targeted to the extent proposed by the Young People's Learning Agency. The quality of the universal offer is likely to decline once entitlement funding is reduced, and student motivation, retention and achievement may suffer.**

52. The Government has said in its response to Professor Wolf's report that there is a need for radical change in funding for 16–19 education "to remove perverse incentives for colleges to accumulate qualifications rather than provide sensible, balanced and broad programmes of study".⁸² This is a highly complex area and, as the Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges told us, "when you start moving bits around in this formula, the law of unintended consequences applies very quickly".⁸³ **The Department's forthcoming review of the funding formula for 16–19 learning should, in assessing the value of every aspect of provision (including qualifications), consider the case for restoring a higher level of entitlement funding.**

Impact on schools and colleges

53. The widely-held expectation among those who submitted evidence to our inquiry was that young people brought into education and training by the introduction of compulsory participation would favour vocational courses or employment-based training above study at school.⁸⁴ As Mick Fletcher, an independent consultant and author of a policy paper on the EMA⁸⁵ told us, "a selective sixth form or sixth-form college is not going to notice it happening. The issue is concentrated in general further education colleges and among those specialist, independent and voluntary sector providers which work with young people who are not engaged in education".⁸⁶ The Training and Development Agency took a different view and suggested that because of "the current recession", young people would be less likely to move into employment or Apprenticeships and would choose instead to remain in education.⁸⁷

54. The Funding Statement for 2011/12 published by the Young People's Learning Agency in December 2010 forecast that there would be 62,000 additional places in learning by 2014/15, compared to the number funded in 2010/11. Given that the YPLA estimates that

81 HC Deb 23 May 2011 col 458W

82 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education—Government Response* page 8

83 Q 191

84 See for instance Dr Spielhofer Q 238; A4e Ltd, Ev w22, paragraph 4.3

85 *Should we end the Education Maintenance Allowance?*, CfBT Education Trust, 2009

86 Q 3. See also memorandum from Hertfordshire 14-19 Partnership, Ev w57, paragraph 38

87 Ev w118, paragraph 3.3

just under 1.6 million young people were in learning in England in 2010/11, the 62,000 additional places would represent a percentage increase of about 3.9% in learner numbers by 2014/15.

55. Where there is more demand for courses in schools and colleges once the age of compulsory participation is raised, it may be that extra provision will need to be mainly at Level 2 or below. It was suggested to us that in rural areas, where post-16 learning provision is chiefly in school sixth forms, typically studying A levels, schools would need to broaden their offer so as to provide for 16 and 17 year olds of relatively low attainment who were not attracted to study at college because of the long journey time (and possibly expense) involved.⁸⁸ Joanne McAllister also indicated that there was a lot of work still to be done in schools to prepare for 16 year olds who were not ready to study courses typically followed in sixth forms.⁸⁹

56. Schools and colleges will also need to be sensitive to the needs of children who have not necessarily followed a mainstream curriculum up to the age of 16, such as children who have been home-educated, or those who have attended alternative provision or are from abroad. Any such children who study at school or college post-16 might not have the qualifications to satisfy the formal entrance requirements, for instance because of difficulties faced in taking exams as private candidates.⁹⁰

57. There is likely to be an impact on staffing requirements and other resources; but we were told that schools showed “very different levels of preparedness”.⁹¹ The Training and Development Agency (TDA) also noted “variable” states of readiness, with “little evidence of preparation” in some areas, including a lack of information or understanding of curriculum changes flowing from the English Baccalaureate and the Wolf Review of Vocational Education, changes to school infrastructure, post-16 funding methodology, or teacher supply and demand.⁹² The TDA predicts that raising the participation age is likely to increase the demand for qualified teachers both in schools and in the further education sector, but it says that it is currently not possible to comment on the scale of that increase. It nonetheless expects that there will be greater demand for subject specialists, to meet the needs of expanded sixth form provision, and for teachers with vocational knowledge and competence.

Data transfer

58. Some 16 and 17 year olds who will be newly drawn into education or training from 2013 onwards will have particular educational or behavioural needs; yet we heard that, in the past, colleges had not always received from schools the sort of advance information about individual pupils which would enable them to put in place suitable provision and support. David Wood, Principal and Chief Executive of Lancaster and Morecambe College, said that:

88 Memorandum from Helen Roper, secondary curriculum adviser, Ev w82, paragraph 2.3

89 Q 193

90 See memorandum from Fiona Nicholson, Ev w35, paragraphs 43-45

91 Memorandum from Helen Roper, secondary curriculum adviser, Ev w83 paragraph 2.3

92 Ev w116

The second thing for me is understanding the previous education of the young person. When they come to us, I need to know what their needs are based on their performance, what their issues are and whether they have any specific needs which I need to cater for in my own institution. Very little of that information follows the learner currently. I would want to see far better information passed from schools to FE, so that I can make better representation for my young people ... There is no doubt that if we got earlier information we would be able to put the support in earlier to make sure those vulnerable people were picked up much earlier, before we come to September, and guide them into our system.⁹³

Jane Machell, Principal of Alton College, made the same point, although she stressed that there *was* a flow of information from some schools: it depended upon the school's leadership.⁹⁴

59. We raised this issue with Ministers, who agreed to consider it. Lord Hill subsequently told us that there is a statutory requirement for a maintained school or non-maintained special school to transfer a pupil's curricular record to another school or to a further education institution or higher education institution, upon receipt of a written request. However, a parallel statutory requirement to transfer a pupil's Common Transfer File and educational record⁹⁵ applies only when a pupil moves from one school to another, not when he or she moves from a school to a further education or higher education institution. Even where schools want to transfer the data and have the consent of the young person to do so, the transfer is complicated by FE and HE institutions' lack of access to the Department's secure school-to-school data transfer system.⁹⁶

60. In our view, there are unjustified inconsistencies in the requirements upon schools to transfer a pupil's Common Transfer File and educational record. **We recommend that the regulations on transfer of pupil information be amended, so that further education and higher education institutions are entitled to receive the Common Transfer File and educational record relating to any pupil being admitted. We recognise that colleges do not currently have access to the secure system used for the transfer of such data and that work would need to be done to allow this. In principle, however, security of data transfer considerations should not be allowed to impede the free flow of information on individual pupils' needs from schools to colleges and higher education institutions, where this is to the benefit of the pupil.**

Impact on employers and training providers

61. The Green Paper published by the previous Government in 2007, setting out the rationale for raising the age of compulsory participation, included projections for numbers of young people in different forms of learning, running from 2005/06 to 2016/17. In absolute terms, the largest projected increase was in the combined further education and

93 Q 77–8

94 Q 80 and Q 83

95 These record data about pupil achievement, attendance and needs: see Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1437).

96 Ev 103

higher education sectors: 48,000 16 and 17 year olds (an increase from 37% to 46% of the total 16–17 population); but in terms of percentage increase from base, the greatest projected rise was in work-based learning: 45,000 16 and 17 year olds (an increase from 7% to 12% of the total 16–17 population).⁹⁷ Several of those who gave evidence believed that there would indeed be a preference for work-based learning among 16 and 17 year olds required to participate in education or training.⁹⁸ The attraction of this option could stem from an aversion to formal study settings or from an over-riding concern for financial independence, best achieved through employment as an Apprentice or through training clearly related to job opportunities.

62. SEMTA (the sector skills council for the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies) described the Green Paper’s projections as “alarming”, largely because of the pressure such an increase would place on employers and on the Apprenticeships programme. SEMTA told us that there was a danger that work-based learning was “viewed as a ‘dumping ground’ for those incapable of appropriate level learning, or unwilling to learn at all”. It also reported employers’ concerns that programmes which they used and trusted (such as Apprenticeships) “might be compromised if they were changed to accommodate low achievers and the disaffected”.⁹⁹ We look at Apprenticeships in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

Impact on local authorities

The local authority role

63. Local authorities have a duty under section 41 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to “secure that enough suitable education and training is provided” to meet the needs of people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19. This is complemented by a requirement under section 85 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to promote co-operation between the authority, its partners and others regarding provision of education and training for 14–19 year olds. A further duty on local education authorities exists under section 10 of the same Act, to ensure that their functions “are exercised so as to promote the effective participation in education or training” of those subject to compulsory education or training. This section has yet to be brought into force.

64. Local authorities have begun to plan how to discharge their responsibilities in preparation for the raising of the participation age. The 14+ Learning and Skills Strategic Team from Devon County Council, for instance, described to us its preparatory work: convening meetings attended by Connexions, representatives of further education institutions and other providers colleagues; sharing NEET figures; exploring “broad engagement issues”; and disseminating best practice.¹⁰⁰ Sixteen local authorities took place in a first phase of trials to develop knowledge and good practice in advance of the raising the participation age, each focusing on one of three specific areas: securing a full offer of

97 *Raising Expectations: staying on in education and training post-16*, Department for Education and Skills, 2007, Cm 7065, Figures 4.2 and 4.3

98 See for instance Mr Collis Q 151; also memorandum from A4e Ltd, Ev w22, paragraph 4.3

99 Ev 96, paragraphs 5,6 and 12

100 Ev w37, paragraph 2.2

information, advice and guidance; identifying and re-engaging 16 and 17 year olds who disengage from learning during the year; and developing area-wide strategies to enable full participation. An evaluation of Phase 1 of the trials has been published;¹⁰¹ and an evaluation of a second phase is expected shortly.¹⁰²

65. Joanne McAllister, speaking on behalf of Cumbria County Council, thought that the Council's role, for the moment, could only be one of facilitation, influence and persuasion, particularly as it did not control funding;¹⁰³ and this view was echoed by others. LEACAN¹⁰⁴ saw their role in co-ordination role as "vital" and listed functions: bringing partners together, co-ordinating data and audits of provision, working with national agencies such as the National Apprenticeship Service, the YPLA and the Skills Funding Agency, developing the market, and providing a leadership role.¹⁰⁵

66. Peterborough City Council's 8–19 Service described difficulties which it faced in co-ordinating provision. One area of particular frustration flowed from schools' conversion to Academy status: four out of eleven secondary schools in the local authority area are already Academies, with two more potential conversions in the offing. The Council said "it was difficult to maintain a city-wide strategic view if we only have access to data on the local authority-maintained sector". It added that the Academies in the city "almost without exception" provided only Level 3 courses, whereas the city's needs for learners aged 16 or above were predominantly for Level 1, Level 2, and FE provision.¹⁰⁶

67. Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, told us that although the legislation was in place, local authorities "do not have the wherewithal or the mechanisms to do much about it, particularly since more Academies have formed". He saw the local authority role as moving towards one of championing on behalf of local people and their needs, in order to ensure that there is a breadth of provision.¹⁰⁷ Martin Ward, speaking on behalf of the Association of School and College Leaders, told us that schools and colleges felt that they were in the strongest position to make sensible decisions about what learning provision there should be for this group of young people, and they were therefore "very reluctant to see the local authority directing them to do certain types of work". He suggested that local authorities could have a moral leadership in saying "Come on, folk, we have this group of young people who are not being served and somebody has got to do something about that"; but he suspected that institutions' decisions on whether or not to come forward to do something about that would "depend much more on the funding mechanism than upon the moral pressure".¹⁰⁸

101 <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/rpa%20phase%201%20evaluation%20report.pdf>

102 Ev 87. See also HC Deb 10 June 2011 col 505W

103 Q 200

104 LEACAN: a national network of inspectors, advisers, officers and consultants employed by local authorities in roles with a specific remit for strategic 14-19 planning and development

105 Ev w28

106 Ev w91–2, paragraphs 20–24

107 Q 198–9

108 Q 200

68. Local authorities will continue to be frustrated in the exercise of their role in promoting co-operation in provision of education and training for 14 to 19 year olds if they have no levers to exercise control. The Department’s policy, as articulated in *The Importance of Teaching*, recognises that local authorities “have an indispensable role to play as champions of children and parents, ensuring that the school system works for every family and using their democratic mandate to challenge every school to do the best for their population”. In time, the Government expects that local authorities will take on more of a strategic commissioning and oversight role.¹⁰⁹ Further work needs to be done to clarify how this more strategic role would be exercised and when it would start, and what the implications would be for local authorities’ activities in support of the increase in the compulsory age of participation. In July 2010, the Secretary of State established a Ministerial advisory group on the role of the local authority in improving the lives of children, young people and families, and how that role might need to change over the next few years.¹¹⁰ **We recommend that the Secretary of State’s Ministerial Advisory Group should consider, as a distinct work strand, local authorities’ roles in supporting the raising of the participation age, and whether statutory powers are required to enable them to make a meaningful contribution.**

Enforcement of the raised participation age

69. The Education and Skills Act 2008 provides a mechanism to enforce the raising of the participation age and, if necessary, punish those who defy the statutory duty. If a local authority concludes that a person subject to the participation requirement and belonging to the local authority area is failing to participate, it can issue an attendance notice naming a course or other placement which that person must attend. The young person can appeal: that appeal is heard and determined by an attendance panel established by the local authority. Failure to comply with an attendance notice not rescinded on appeal is punishable by a fine.

70. The Department for Education has included in the Education Bill now before Parliament a clause which would make it possible for Ministers to delay the commencement of the enforcement mechanism, without disturbing the duty to participate. The Impact Assessment prepared by the Department set out the rationale, saying that “there are concerns that powers given to local authorities ... may be used inappropriately, at least initially ... a vulnerable young person could enter the enforcement system when, in fact, they have a barrier to learning”. Any delay would be “until we are sure that the system has the capacity to use the powers appropriately and minimise the costs they will entail”.¹¹¹

71. Some local authorities which have responded to the Committee’s call for evidence noted the intention to delay the introduction of an enforcement mechanism but questioned what levers there would be, in that case, to ensure participation by those who choose not to engage.¹¹² The NASUWT feared that unscrupulous employers would take

109 *The Importance of Teaching*, DfE White Paper, November 2010, Cm 7980, paragraphs 5.28 and 5.42

110 <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/ff/future%20work%20programme.pdf>

111 *Overarching Impact Assessment for the Education Bill 2011*, page 37

112 For example Devon County Council, Ev w38, paragraph 3.4; Lincolnshire14-19 Strategic Partnership, Ev w33, paragraph 14; Association of Colleges, Ev 75, paragraph 32. See also Mark Corney, Q 4

advantage of the lack of an enforcement mechanism to deny 16 and 17 year olds time away from work to attend education or training;¹¹³ and the Association of School and College Leaders, while supporting the removal of penalties, reported that its members believed that the voluntary nature of the new provisions could increase the number of young people not in education, employment or training.¹¹⁴

72. Evidence from other developed countries suggests that compulsion is not an essential element of participation.¹¹⁵ Many, such as Australia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Japan and Korea achieve rates of more than 90% participation beyond the age of compulsory participation.¹¹⁶ However, the OECD Jobs for Youth (UK) study in 2008 cited “international evidence ... that if there are no mechanisms in place to enforce the participation requirement, as has been the case in some US states and in New Brunswick in Canada, the policy only has a small effect”.¹¹⁷

73. We asked Ministers what plans the Government had for those young people who refused to participate in education and training. Lord Hill told us that the Department was working together with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions on a participation strategy which would address “the specific NEETs issue”. He added that local authorities had duties to “identify, report, target and work with the voluntary sector” in this field, and he was satisfied that local authorities used their powers to do so.¹¹⁸ The implication, therefore, is that the Government is content to go gently in coaxing young people into education and training.

74. Despite some local authorities’ questions about how to achieve compulsory participation in the absence of an enforcement mechanism, the current Government’s policy does relieve local authorities, even if only temporarily, of a burden. The Leeds 11–19 Learning and Support Partnership, for instance, said that the local authority (which is represented on the Partnership) was “particularly concerned by the potentially enormous cost of implementing the enforcement duties” as set out under the 2008 Act.¹¹⁹ The National Association of Head Teachers pointed out that local authority attendance officers would be likely to be involved in any statutory enforcement process, yet there were signs of a “diminution of attendance officer support as budgets come under pressure”.¹²⁰

75. We accept that the cost of using powers under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to enforce the increase in the age of participation could turn out to be disproportionate to their effectiveness. We therefore agree with the decision to delay introduction of those powers, but we believe that a formal review should take place as soon as the level of compliance with the duty to participate becomes clear.

113 Ev w79, paragraph 26. See also memorandum from Saint John Fisher Catholic College, Ev w4, paragraph 3(a)

114 Ev w19, paragraph 25

115 Deborah Roseveare Q 117

116 *Education at a Glance 2010*, OECD, Table C1.1

117 *Jobs for Youth—United Kingdom*, OECD, 2008, page 104

118 Q 314 and 315

119 Ev w49, paragraph 2.6

120 Ev w68, paragraph 18

3 Financial support for 16–18 year olds

The need for financial support

76. While the cost of course provision for young people in maintained schools and in colleges is covered centrally, the costs of travel to and from the place of learning, of overnight residential accommodation and of food, essential clothing and equipment, are not. It has been recognised by this Government and its predecessors that some 16 to 18 year olds will either be unable to afford to study or will suffer significant hardship unless financial support is provided to cover these expenses.

77. Whereas financial concerns are known to be a constraint on learning for 16 to 18 year olds, some evidence suggests that they only form an absolute barrier for a relatively small group. Recent work by the National Foundation for Educational Research into barriers to participation in education and training found that, whereas around a quarter of those sampled¹²¹ viewed finance as a constraint when deciding what to do after Year 11, only four per cent said that it had actually stopped them from doing what they wanted. However, that low overall figure masked more substantial disincentives for certain subsets, for instance:

- 29% of young people not in education, employment or training said that they would have engaged in education after Year 11 if they had received more money to cover the cost of transport;
- 27% of young people not in education, employment or training said that they would have engaged in education after Year 11 if they had received more money to cover the cost of books and equipment; and
- 39% of young people in jobs without training said that they would have engaged in education or training after Year 11 if they had received more money to cover the cost of transport (33% of this group said the same in relation to the cost of books and equipment).

18% of young people overall reported that they would have done a different course or training if they had received more money to cover the cost of transport, books, equipment or food.¹²²

78. Various forms of financial support are available to 16 to 18 year olds in education or training:

121 Main sample from a survey of 2,029 young people who had completed Year 11 in either 2008 or 2009; booster samples from particular subgroups, including young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their parents, teenage parents, and young people not in education, employment or training. See *Barriers to participation in education and training*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2010, paragraph 1.3

122 *Barriers to participation in education and training*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2010, paragraphs 5.3, 5.7 and 5.8. See also Dr Spielhofer, Q 257

Income Support

In general, a young person may qualify for Income Support if they have a low income and savings below £16,000 and are not working for more than 16 hours per week. Young people in full-time study will not normally qualify, although there are exceptions for lone parents, people who do not live with a parent or someone acting as a parent, or who are at serious risk of abuse or violence, and refugees learning English. The weekly rate for 16 and 17 year olds is currently £53.45.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Introduced initially as a pilot, in 1999, before being offered nationally from the start of the 2004–05 academic year. EMA was payable to 16, 17 or 18 year olds who had left compulsory education and were in full-time education: from April 2006, payments were extended to cover participants in Entry to Employment programmes and Programme Led Apprenticeships. Bonuses were payable for full attendance and successful completion of the planned programme.

EMA was paid at three rates for different levels of household income:

- Less than £20,817: £30 per week
- £20,818 to £25,521: £20 per week
- £25,522 to £30,810: £10 per week
- Above £30,810: no payment

Part-time job earnings were not included in calculation of household income.

32% of all 16–18 year olds in England, and 47% of those in full-time education, received the EMA in 2009–10.¹²³ EMA is now not available to new applicants.

Discretionary Learner Support

Funded by the Department for Education but administered by schools, colleges and providers: £26.8 million was available to alleviate individual cases of hardship among 16–18 year olds in the 2009/10 academic year.¹²⁴ The current discretionary scheme supports approximately 200,000 young people each year.¹²⁵

Care to Learn

Care to Learn helps young parents continue in, or return to, education or training, by providing financial help with childcare costs and travel. A maximum of £160 per child per week is payable (£175 in London).

Free school meals

Available to pupils in a school sixth form but not to pupils studying in further education or sixth form colleges.

This Report concentrates upon financial support provided through the Education Maintenance Allowance, and its intended replacement, and through free school meals.

123 See House of Commons Library Standard Note SN05778: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05778>

124 HC Deb 19 January 2011 col 858W

125 HC Deb 7 December 2010 col 254W

The decision to end the Education Maintenance Allowance

79. The Spending Review in October 2010 announced that support provided by the Education Maintenance Allowance would in future be focused on the most disadvantaged children, thereby saving £0.5 billion. The Government indicated that discretionary learner support funding would be the channel through which student support would be paid in future. In December, Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State at the Department for Education, said in reply to an adjournment debate:

Final decisions about the quantum of that extra funding still have to be taken, but we have already spoken of increasing the value of that fund by up to three times its current value, which stands at £25.4 million.¹²⁶

80. The sudden decision to bring an end to the Education Maintenance Allowance was controversial, and a vigorous campaign for retention of the Allowance followed. The vast majority of submissions to our inquiry commented on the Government’s decision, and almost all were opposed. Large numbers of young people and their parents contacted the Committee directly, giving reasons why they believed that it was essential to retain the EMA. We were told that the Allowance was used by students to meet the cost of travel, computers and internet access, food, and necessary equipment and protective clothing (in some cases several hundreds of pounds).¹²⁷

81. We were also told that:

- The EMA was a necessity for some, not a luxury.¹²⁸ For example, one student “was constantly on the edge; if her EMA was late she couldn’t afford her fare”;¹²⁹
- The EMA provided an incentive to attend college on time and to focus on studying. The loss of EMA could result in behavioural issues for those who lose that focus;
- The EMA had enabled students to attend their first choice of provision, rather than the closest;¹³⁰
- The EMA was part of the household income, used to help with the cost of household bills;
- The EMA had improved students’ retention and attendance (this is covered in more detail below, in paragraphs 94 to 99);

126 HC Deb 15 December 2010, col. 322WH

127 Necessary equipment and clothing might include knives for catering courses, or footwear for students on dance or construction courses: see memorandum from Campaign to save the EMA, Ev w88. At Easton College in Norfolk, which specialises in agricultural and land-based courses, safety equipment cost £300 on average per learner; for those studying arboriculture, the figure was £800 to £1,000 per learner: see Q 51.

128 Submission from Mrs Cleave, Ev w1

129 Submission from Jo Sugrue [Not printed]

130 Mrs Newman-McKie Ev w1, Catholic Education Service Ev w8, paragraph 3(iv)

- The EMA enabled low income families to see further education as an option for them, and the lack of guaranteed funding as a ‘safety net’ would deter some young people from applying for courses;
- The EMA released young people from dependence on their parents, who might not otherwise have provided the financial support necessary (particularly where more than one child was in post-compulsory study);¹³¹
- A large proportion of students with learning difficulties came from low income households and would be disproportionately affected by withdrawal of the EMA;
- Young carers, who are less likely to enter further education because of their caring responsibilities, would be adversely affected;¹³²
- Young refugees and migrants, who experienced high levels of poverty and need, faced particular barriers to education: EMA had been “a vital resource” to young Roma;¹³³
- The loss of the EMA would mean that less well off students might need to take part time jobs, which would reduce their study time and put them at a disadvantage to better off students. Students from Brooke House Sixth Form College in Hackney reported difficulties in finding part-time employment;¹³⁴
- The EMA allowed young people to set and manage their own budget, developing their financial skills;¹³⁵ and
- The EMA provided a means for some young people to participate in extracurricular activities that would enhance their university application.

A summary of points made directly to the Committee by young people and parents in favour of retaining the EMA is printed with this report, as Annex 2.

82. Peterborough City Council’s 8–19 Service listed many negative impacts of the loss of the EMA. However, it said that “one positive aspect of the removal of EMA” was that “we are no longer artificially trying to construct provision that meets EMA criteria. Our most vulnerable learners often require flexible, short or small programmes to entice them in to learning. Only after their confidence grows will they commit to 12 hours a week or a programme spread over a number of weeks. EMA was often a barrier to being truly flexible to meet learner needs, as we had to try to get young people to attend larger programmes that did not meet their needs”.¹³⁶

131 See memorandum from Campaign to save the EMA, Ev w88

132 Memorandum from Action for Children, Ev w58, paragraph 1.2

133 Further memorandum from the Children’s Society, Ev 109

134 See Annex 1. The difficulty of finding part-time work was raised by the National Association of Student Money Advisers, Ev w65, and by Central London Connexions, Ev w93, paragraph 1.4.

135 Memorandum from Centrepoint, Ev 81, paragraph 11

136 Ev w90

83. Some colleges have opted to provide their students with an entitlement in place of the EMA. Middlesbrough College has set aside to help students pay for free bus travel, subsidised rail transport, cash rewards for good attendance, subsidised or free meals, and subsidised stationery. Redbridge College, in London, has allocated £265,000 of its funds to provide support to those who would have received the EMA.¹³⁷

The bursary scheme

84. In response to representations and to public pressure, the Government came forward with a revised proposal in March this year, for a bursary scheme. The main features are that:

- £180 million would be available for bursaries allocated by schools, colleges and providers of work-based training;¹³⁸
- The Department would expect students in care, care leavers, and those on Income Support to receive an annual bursary of at least £1,200 if they stayed on in education. The Secretary of State indicated that about 12,000 young people would fall into these categories;¹³⁹
- Receipt of a bursary should be conditional on the recipient meeting standards of behaviour and attendance set by their school/college/training provider;
- There would be local discretion on eligibility, the method of payment (such as instalments or lump sum), and policy on payment in cash or in kind; and
- Allocation of the fund to schools, colleges and training providers would be based initially upon the proportion of young people presently receiving the maximum (£30) weekly rate of EMA, rather than according to eligibility for free school meals or deprivation measures. The distribution methodology would be reviewed in future.

85. A separate pot of £194 million in 2011–12 has been set aside to cover what the Government describes as transitional funding, in the form of weekly payments for students part way through courses and currently receiving the EMA. Students who began courses in 2009–10 would have their EMA payments protected until the end of the 2011–12 academic year. Those who started courses in 2010–11 and received the maximum weekly payment of £30 would receive weekly payments of £20 until the end of the 2011–12 academic year; this was expected to cost £113 million. Those who started in 2010–11 and who received lower weekly EMA payments would no longer receive anything weekly. However, all young people continuing to receive weekly payments would also be eligible for bursaries.¹⁴⁰

137 Redbridge College: see *Times Educational Supplement*, 3 June 2011. Middlesbrough College: see *Times Educational Supplement*, 20 May 2011

138 Only £115.5 million will be allocated in the 2011–12 academic year, as a number of students who might be expected to qualify for a bursary will be supported by transitional protection as described in paragraph 85. See HC Deb 4 July 2011 col 980W

139 HC Deb 28 March 2011 col 53

140 *Financial Support for 16 to 19 year olds in Education or Training*, DfE consultation paper, March 2011; see also HC Deb 26 April 2011 col 280W

86. A consultation on both the bursary scheme and the transitional arrangements for existing claimants started immediately; the closing date was 20 May. The Government has chosen to adopt the basic principles of the bursary scheme and transitional support in the form outlined in the consultation paper, and allocations to individual schools, colleges and other providers were made on 17 June.

87. The Government was right to recognise, even if belatedly, that the initial proposals for replacing the Education Maintenance Allowance fell short of what was required. We welcome the Government's decision to provide transitional funding for some learners who had begun courses in the expectation that they would continue to receive Education Maintenance Allowance.

88. We also welcome the Government's decision to consult on its proposals for a bursary scheme. However, the consequence of holding an eight-week consultation at this stage, starting at the very end of March, was that allocations to providers were made only in June this year, less than three months before courses were due to start. Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, told us that

The last safe moment to have introduced these changes was about November last year, when students were coming to college to think about what their future might be and what they might do at 16—when they were approaching that point of decision. We had no information to give them. I made that point very clearly to the Secretary of State at the time.¹⁴¹

When we put this to Lord Hill, the DfE Minister responsible for school funding, he agreed that it would have been good to have put forward the replacement bursary scheme more quickly, and he accepted criticism of the delay.¹⁴²

89. Allocations of funding for student support through the bursary scheme for 2011–12 have been made far too late to allow Year 11 students to make fully informed decisions on what they will do the following year. The Government misjudged the scale of support necessary when announcing the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, and precious months were lost while it revised its plans and consulted on the bursary proposals. The delay in deciding on allocations and guiding principles for distribution was regrettable and should not have been allowed to happen.

Should the EMA have been abolished?

90. The original rationale of the EMA was set out by the Rt Hon. Baroness Blackstone in January 1999. The press notice accompanying her announcement reported her as saying that:

Many young people who leave education at 16 are not only the least qualified, and the least likely to return to education later in life; they deny themselves the opportunities open to their better-educated peers, and deny society the benefit of their skills and participation in community life. Currently, the number of 16–18 year

141 Q 220

142 Q 292

olds in education or training from lower-income families is 20% lower than for young people from better-off households. The [EMA] pilots will test how an allowance encourages these young people to stay on and achieve in education. If the pilots are a success, as we think they will be, then we will consider the introduction of EMAs nationally.¹⁴³

91. The previous Government's Green Paper on raising the participation age, published in March 2007, addressed financial support for learners. It made the following statement:

We think that EMA should continue until compulsory participation is introduced in 2013. After that, we propose that financial support will need to be restructured. In doing so, we would build on the reforms from the Government's review of financial support for young people, and the views we gathered in the public consultation on supporting young people to achieve. EMA is designed to be an incentive to encourage young people from less well off households to participate in education or training; this support also helps young people to meet some of the costs of post 16 learning, such as transport, books and specialist equipment. There would no longer be the same role for an incentive payment if participation was made compulsory. But it would still be vital, of course, to make sure that financial circumstances are not a barrier to participation, so we would still expect to provide financial support to the most disadvantaged young people.¹⁴⁴

92. When the current Government announced its intention to abolish the Education Maintenance Allowance, it gave reasons:

- The scheme was becoming financially unaffordable, given the economic circumstances;
- Research had shown that a large proportion of recipients would have participated in education or training even without the EMA; and
- The EMA had been designed as an incentive at a time when participation post-16 was optional: that logic would no longer apply once participation became compulsory.

93. In 2010–11, budgeted expenditure on the Education Maintenance Allowance was £564 million, approximately 1% of the Departmental Expenditure Limit.¹⁴⁵ Outturn expenditure on the Allowance between 2006–07 and 2009–10 ranged from £503 million in 2006–07 to £580 million in 2009–10.¹⁴⁶ The numbers receiving EMA have continued to climb since the scheme was extended nationally: 527,000 recipients in 2006–07, 546,000 in 2007–08, 576,000 in 2008–09 and 643,000 in 2009–10 (equating to 32% of all 16–18 year olds in England, or 47% of 16–18 year olds in full-time education).¹⁴⁷

143 DfEE Press Release 45/99, issued on 28 January 1999

144 *Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16*, DfES Green Paper, March 2007, Cm 7065, paragraph 5.23

145 HC Deb 15 November 2010 c593W

146 Department for Children, Schools and Families Resource Accounts 2009-10, HC 256, Session 2010–12

147 See House of Commons Library Briefing Paper SNSG 5778, at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05778>

The impact of the EMA on participation, retention and attainment

94. The Government, in defending its decision to abolish the Allowance, relied heavily on the argument that “90%” of recipients would have chosen to study with or without the benefit of the Allowance, and that the expenditure was therefore largely an economic “deadweight” cost.¹⁴⁸ In doing so, the Government was following a line of argument set out by Sam Freedman and Simon Horner in a paper for Policy Exchange in 2008. Their argument ran:

The EMA is, in effect, a massive deadweight cost—providing payment to 46% of learners, the vast majority of whom would have been in post-16 education in any case. Once new government legislation to make 16–18 education or training compulsory comes into force in 2013 the entire cost of the EMA will effectively become deadweight. As young people will have to participate anyway, it can have no positive incentive effect.¹⁴⁹

95. The 90% figure often quoted by the Government may be a ‘rounding-up’ of the 88% figure derived from the NFER’s study of barriers to participation in education and training. The study noted that “only 12% of young people overall receiving an EMA believe that they would not have participated in the courses they are doing if they had not received an EMA”.¹⁵⁰ The study went on to note that much higher proportions of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities said that they would not have participated in learning without this support, and it drew the conclusion that there was a case for financial support to be increasingly targeted at those most in need.¹⁵¹

96. We asked the lead author of the NFER research study, Dr Thomas Spielhofer, whether the Government had been justified in basing its policy on the 12% figure. He replied that he thought that it had been misinterpreted, in that the 88% would have included some for whom finance would have been at least a constraint if not an absolute barrier, as well as some who were receiving EMA at the £10 per week rate, for whom removal of the EMA would be unlikely to be a “deal-breaker”.¹⁵² He also indicated that 12% was, in itself, a significant figure, and he described it as “a worrying statistic”.¹⁵³ Indeed, it is likely that the 12% includes people who are less motivated (and who may continue to be less motivated once participation is compulsory) and who may need dedicated and expensive support to enter and remain in education and training.

97. Some previous studies of the impact of the EMA on participation have identified rather smaller percentages as saying that they would not have participated without the EMA. An evaluation of the first two pilot years of the EMA by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRiSP), in 2002, found a positive effect on participation rates of 5.9% among those

148 We were told that young people objected to the use of the term “deadweight” to describe people trying to stay on in education despite hardship: memorandum from Save EMA Campaign Ev w107

149 *School Funding and Social Justice: A Guide to the Pupil Premium*, Policy Exchange, 2008

150 838 of the 2,029 young people who took part in the study said that they were receiving the EMA: see Q 252

151 *Barriers to participation in education and training*, DfE Research Report RR009, page 7

152 Q 252–4

153 Q 252

eligible for EMA.¹⁵⁴ An evaluation of the national roll-out of the EMA by RCU Research and Consultancy elicited a similar figure—6%—who said that they would not have continued in learning without the EMA.¹⁵⁵ Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies in 2007 found that the EMA increased the proportion of eligible 16-year-olds staying in education from 65% to 69% and the proportion of eligible 17-year-olds from 54% to 61%. Based on these impacts, and on estimates of the financial benefits of additional education taken from elsewhere in the economics literature, the IFS study concluded that the costs of providing EMA were likely to be exceeded in the long run by the higher wages that its recipients would go on to enjoy in future.¹⁵⁶

98. Less prominence has been given to the effects of EMA on attainment and retention. The CRiSP study of the first two years of EMA, noted above, found evidence that young people eligible for the EMA, despite having achieved lower attainment levels in Year 11 qualifications and showing higher levels of socio-economic deprivation than comparable young people in the control areas, nonetheless attained similar results to the control group in one-year GCSE/GNVQ qualifications, both in terms of numbers of A*–C passes and in their grade-point scores.¹⁵⁷ Regarding impact on retention rates, the RCU Research and Consultancy study of the national roll-out, also described above, found that in-year retention was 2.3 percentage points higher on the learning aims of those receiving EMA.¹⁵⁸ We received other submissions providing evidence of beneficial impacts, not necessarily proving conclusively a causal effect: these cited retention rates which were anything from 5 to 17 percentage points higher for students receiving EMA¹⁵⁹ or even up to 30%,¹⁶⁰ and higher “success” rates (as a recognised measure of college performance, comprising attainment and retention) of up to 11 percentage points.¹⁶¹

99. It is difficult to assess the significance of improvements in participation, retention and attainment identified by analyses of the impact of the EMA and to form a view on the cost benefit. Nonetheless, **we would have welcomed a more measured and public analysis by the Government before it reached its decision to abolish the EMA. The Government’s assertion is that there was a substantial economic “deadweight” cost element to the EMA, meaning that a significant proportion of young people would have taken courses whether or not they received the EMA. However, economic “deadweight” costs are a feature of many interventions and do not necessarily mean that the policy is invalidated. The Government should have done more to acknowledge the combined**

154 *Education Maintenance Allowance: The First Two Years: A Quantitative Evaluation*, Centre for Research in Social Policy/Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2002, Chapter 2

155 *Evaluation of the EMA National Roll-out*, Aitken et al, RCU, 2007

156 *Conditional Cash Transfers and School Dropout Rates*, Dearden et al, IFS, 2007

157 *Education Maintenance Allowance: The First Two Years: A Quantitative Evaluation*, Centre for Research in Social Policy/Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2002, page 131

158 *Evaluation of the EMA National Roll-out*, Aitken et al, RCU, 2007, page 71

159 5 to 7 percentage points: Liverpool Community College, cited by the Merseyside Colleges’ Association, Ev w50. 17 percentage points cited by Mick Fletcher, Q 10, in relation to Lambeth College (figure for 2008-09); a figure of 15 percentage points was cited by the UCU for Lambeth College (figure for 2009–10), Ev w42

160 Saint John Fisher Catholic College Ev w3

161 City College Plymouth, cited by the Association of Colleges, Ev 73 paragraph 11. See also LEACAN Ev w27; Hull College Group, Ev 88

impact on students' participation, attainment and retention, particularly amongst disadvantaged sub-groups, before determining how to restructure financial support.

Entitlement v discretionary payment

100. Written evidence to our inquiry was submitted at a time when it was expected that the total available for distribution as student support was considerably lower than that which is now on offer; but the principle of the move to discretionary payments remains, and the criticisms continue to be relevant. The move to a bursary scheme involves a shift from an entitlement paid regularly in small amounts, about which there is relative certainty in the longer term, to a discretionary payment in the form of a lump cash sum (or possibly in kind), which is intended to provide support over a shorter period, typically a term.¹⁶² It was put to us that this introduced instability and confusion for young people who were in a precarious financial position.¹⁶³ We were also told that by requiring students to apply to the place of learning for a bursary, it forced them to declare their poverty in a way which some would find shaming or stigmatising;¹⁶⁴ and some would prefer not to divulge their circumstances.¹⁶⁵ As an illustration of students' attitudes to different types of support, Lincolnshire 14–19 Strategic Partnership told us of an institution where take-up of free school meals (for which an application had to be made via the local authority) was approximately 2% but take-up of EMA (administered centrally) was 34%.¹⁶⁶

101. A number of witnesses made it plain that they had reservations about the bursary system. Martin Ward, Deputy General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that “I think we would all prefer an entitlement scheme such as EMA, so that people know in advance what their entitlement is, and they know it will be the same whatever institution they choose to go to. In fact, we would prefer to keep the EMA”.¹⁶⁷ Anne-Marie Carrie, the Chief Executive of Barnardo's, stressed that Barnardo's was “utterly in opposition to the discretionary support fund, and to moving that fund to providers ... I consider that unfair. It is inefficient, and it will stigmatise some young people who don't want to say, ‘Well, actually, I was in a young offenders institution and I need a bit of extra support because of x, y and z’”.¹⁶⁸

102. There is also the possibility that neighbouring institutions will adopt differing criteria for distribution of discretionary bursaries. Mr Doel said that there are times “when that would be justified, particularly if you are in a rural area and the needs are different”, but that at other times, differing practice in bursary payment by institutions within the same travel-to-learn area would be “unhelpful”.¹⁶⁹ LEACAN warned that the existence of

162 Payments are expected to be made in three blocks during the course of the academic year: Mr Lauener Q 279

163 See for instance Careers South West, Ev w2, Leacan, Ev w28, UCU, Ev w43 and NUS, Ev w114

164 Memorandum from Cumbria County Council, Ev 92, paragraph 1.5

165 Peterborough City Council, Ev w91, paragraph 14

166 Lincolnshire 14–19 Strategic Partnership, Ev w31, section 2

167 Q 220

168 Q 255

169 Q 225

differing levels of support could lead learners to make decisions “based on financial benefits rather than educational choice”.¹⁷⁰ Similar points were made by others.¹⁷¹

Administering the bursary fund

103. The bursary fund will not be administered centrally, as the EMA has been: it will be administered by individual schools, colleges and training providers. The Government argues that this is a strength, in that it will enable institutions to respond in ways which best fit the needs of their learners.¹⁷² The Government maintains that the bursary scheme should be proportionately no more difficult or expensive to administer than discretionary learner support payments currently made on a smaller scale by schools and colleges. Schools, colleges and training providers will be able to use up to 5% of their allocation for discretionary student support on administration costs: by comparison, approximately 5% of total expenditure on the EMA is absorbed by administrative costs.¹⁷³ In effect, the Government has transferred an administrative burden from the Young People’s Learning Agency to schools, colleges and other providers, who may have to meet some of the administration costs from their own core budgets.

104. There could be a considerable impact on administrative staff accustomed to distributing much smaller sums through the existing discretionary learner support funding stream. The likelihood is that there will be more payments by each institution, and that more staff effort will be required. David Wood, Principal and Chief Executive of Lancaster and Morecambe College, said that the 5% permitted for spending on administration costs was a “nominal” amount and that “you can quadruple that”,¹⁷⁴ and Martin Ward, representing the Association of School and College Leaders, said that “clearly it will ultimately be more expensive to administer in total”.¹⁷⁵ LEACAN questioned the ability of providers to manage the distribution of discretionary funds effectively or equably with limited administrative resources.¹⁷⁶ Martin Doel, the Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, was confident that a college would “have significant managerial capacity to actually take on this scale of change and to apply the scheme”, but he was less certain about the capacity of some schools to take on this responsibility, particularly in the first year.¹⁷⁷

105. There is also a question about whether institutions will be equipped to assess the relative hardship of applicants. The Merseyside Colleges’ Association suggested to us that colleges would be unlikely to conduct means testing to inform distribution of funds, because of “resource requirements”.¹⁷⁸ However, the Department has said that it “will not

170 Ev w28 paragraph 7

171 Memorandum from UCU (University and College Union), Ev w42, paragraph 20, and Leeds 11-19 Learning and Support Partnership, Ev w48 paragraph 1.6; also memo from Association of Teachers and Lecturers, Ev w104 paragraph 4.6

172 *Financial Support for 16 to 19 year olds in Education or Training*, DfE consultation paper, March 2011, paragraph 3.4

173 HC Deb 10 May 2011 col 1140W

174 Q 74

175 Q 227

176 Ev w28 paragraph 8

177 Q 224

178 Ev w50 paragraph 3

set any expectation that awards under the new scheme should formally be means tested” and that it is working with the Association of Colleges and the Sixth Form Colleges Forum to consider how they can identify students who would benefit from support.¹⁷⁹ One nationally consistent source of relevant information would be data on eligibility for free school meals in Year 11; yet the Government has said that it will not require local authorities to provide this information to further education and sixth form colleges.¹⁸⁰ We understand that the Government has indicated to the Association of Colleges that there is no legal impediment to the transfer of information on eligibility for free school meals.¹⁸¹ This should be more widely known, and **we recommend that the Government should issue guidance to schools and local authorities that there is no legal impediment to the transfer of information on Year 11 children’s eligibility for free school meals to post-16 providers. We further recommend that the Government consider whether a child’s eligibility for free school meals should be recorded on their Common Transfer File.**

Conclusion

106. The need to examine every area of public spending is not in dispute, nor is the need to make difficult decisions. We note that the previous Government indicated, even before the recent financial crisis, that financial support for 16-19 year olds would need to be restructured to take account of the raising of the age of compulsory participation, when the Allowance would cease to have the same role as an incentive. **We accept that a change to financial support for 16-19 year olds was inevitable.**

107. The question is whether the shift from an entitlement to a discretionary system is justified by the savings to be made. This is an issue which is very finely balanced, given that more money is to be spent on student support than had been envisaged in the Spending Review, and the benefits of financial savings therefore now weigh less heavily against the uncertainty and stigma for students which would flow from the discretionary system. We note the view of the Association of Colleges that the cost of administering centrally the £76 million scheme initially proposed would have been uneconomic, and that the decision to raise the value of the sum to be distributed to £180 million still does not bring it to the tipping point at which the cost of central administration of an entitlement becomes justified.¹⁸² It may be that by reducing the eligibility net for an entitlement, for instance by restricting availability to 17 year olds (for whom there is further to go in order to reach full participation), or by simplifying eligibility criteria—for instance by replacing the three graded levels of weekly payment with a single, reduced level—the cost of central administration could be brought down. Such an approach would avoid the imposition on schools and colleges of an administrative burden whose impact and cost is unknown. We have received no evidence, however, to suggest that the Department gave any serious consideration to modifying the EMA. The Association of Colleges told us that the decision

179 HC Deb 9 May 2011 col 964W

180 HC Deb 12 May 2011 col 1311W

181 Information supplied by the Association of Colleges [not printed]; see also further memorandum from the Association of Colleges, Ev 104

182 Q 218

to end the EMA “was made without any prior consultation and without looking at alternative ways to improve the scheme”.¹⁸³

108. The EMA was imperfectly targeted in that it failed to differentiate between students who benefited from free or subsidised travel and those who did not, or those who had to pay for equipment and clothing and those who did not.¹⁸⁴ More careful targeting is a good idea in principle, but it can have unforeseen consequences for those most in need, and there is no certainty that schools and colleges will be equipped to be more discriminating, or indeed any fairer, than the income measure which has been used until now to calculate EMA. **It will be difficult to ensure that bursary funds are matched efficiently to need and that inconsistencies which will inevitably arise do not erode confidence in the scheme or distort learners’ choices of where to study. The Committee is not persuaded that a strong enough case has been made for distributing £180 million in student support as discretionary bursaries rather than as a slimmed-down, more targeted entitlement. We believe that the Department should have conducted an earlier, more public assessment of the options for better targeting of student support.**

Travel costs

109. The cost of travel for young people in post-compulsory study was cited repeatedly as one which young people struggled to meet and on which Education Maintenance Allowance was spent. There is no requirement on local authorities to assist with the costs necessarily incurred by 16–18 year olds travelling to and from places of learning. Local authorities have instead a duty under section 509AA of the Education Act 1996 to publish a transport policy statement each year, setting out how they will support 16- to 18-year-olds, either through transport arrangements or financial assistance with transport, to access education and training.¹⁸⁵

110. The NFER’s study of barriers to participation in education and training identified the cost of travel as a constraint. Cost rather than availability was the issue, although only 2% of those sampled reported that the cost of travel had stopped them from doing what they wanted to do, whereas 16% said that cost had been a problem but that they had coped with it. The study found that young people in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to identify cost as a barrier or constraint.¹⁸⁶ Availability of transport was also an issue. However, we were told by students from Brooke House Sixth Form College in Hackney, London, that the cost of daily travel for those who lived in parts of London which were far from the college were substantial and that the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance would deter them from studying at Brooke House.¹⁸⁷ We also note that 34% of the 144 young people in the NFER survey who did not go into education or training after

183 Ev 72, paragraph 6

184 See Mick Fletcher Q 24

185 See <http://www.education.gov.uk/16to19/studentsupport/p16transportcosts/a0064794/post-16-transport>

186 *Barriers to participation in education and training*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2010, paragraph 4.2

187 See Annex 1

Year 11 said that they would have done so had they received more money to cover the cost of transport.¹⁸⁸

111. In February this year, the Association of Colleges provided the Transport Committee with a memorandum on the impact of the 2010 Spending Review on bus services. In December 2010, the Association commissioned a survey of its members requesting information and views on the accessibility of transport for people aged 16–19 attending colleges. The survey suggested that:

- 72% of students travel to college by bus
- Local authority support for 16–19 transport is extremely varied: 29% provide transport, 20% provide financial support, 18% provide both and 27% provide neither;
- The majority of colleges (78%) provide some form of financial assistance for transport, either through financial support or provision of services

The Association noted a view from one college that local authority subsidised schemes could be out of reach for some of the poorest students,¹⁸⁹ and it pointed out that the level of subsidy varied across local authorities, with some charging over £500 per annum for a student travel pass.

112. Evidence to our inquiry drew attention to several local authorities which, because of tighter budgets, were planning to cut back the support offered to 16–18 year olds travelling to and from learning. For instance, Norfolk County Council, although it will continue to provide support for travel by 16–18 year olds, will need to make a saving of £1 million in the scheme's budget from 2012–13.¹⁹⁰ We were told that proposals being considered by Lincolnshire County Council would result in an increase of 100% in learners' travel costs.¹⁹¹ The Principal of Alton College told us that her local authority (Hampshire County Council) was consulting on removing or reducing assistance with transport costs for students from low-income families, and on introducing a charge for travel costs for post-16 students with learning difficulties and disabilities.¹⁹² Cumbria County Council Cabinet agreed on 28 April to bring an end to its free travel scheme for 16–19 year olds attending college and to require a contribution of £350 from each learner from September 2011 (although a hardship fund of £130,000 will be created).¹⁹³

113. Many examples were provided to the Committee of students who used the EMA to cover the costs incurred in travelling to institutions offering courses which they believed best matched their needs, rather than those which were closest.¹⁹⁴ We note the decision of

188 *Barriers to participation in education and training*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2010, paragraph 4.2

189 The particular view related to Nottinghamshire County Council, which offers a half-fare pass at an up-front cost of £99

190 Memorandum by Easton College, Ev 78 paragraph 6

191 Ev w32, section 8

192 Jane Machell Q 33

193 Minutes of Cumbria County Council Cabinet, on Council website

194 For example Catholic Education Service, Ev w8; memorandum from Mrs Newman-McKie, Ev w1; Mr Wood Q 52; also Annex 2

at least one local authority to subsidise transport only to the nearest college, irrespective of whether that college offers the course which the student wishes to follow.¹⁹⁵

Transport for 16-18 year olds in learning: a long-term answer

114. The Government has recognised that, in the absence of the Education Maintenance Allowance, 16 to 18 year old learners facing hardship would need financial assistance to cover the cost of travel. Whereas the existing scheme for discretionary learner support cannot be used to cover travel costs, claims for assistance with travel would be eligible under the bursary scheme now brought forward by the Government. We have considered, however, whether there is a good reason why a requirement on local authorities to provide free travel to and from school for children of compulsory school age, in certain circumstances,¹⁹⁶ should not be extended, on principle, to provide for those who will be of compulsory participation age from 2013 and beyond.

115. The Department said in April this year that it has “no current plans to extend the pre-16 transport duty to cover young people of sixth form age in further education or training when the participation age is raised”.¹⁹⁷ It is, however, planning a review of school transport, which will include an examination of “what practice exists for post-16 provision”.¹⁹⁸

116. It is wrong that travel costs should exert undue influence on students’ decisions on whether to study and where: the suitability and quality of courses should be the main determinant. Although there is as yet no evidence of a trend among young people to decide against studying their first choice course at a distant college because of higher travel costs, Mr Ward (Deputy General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders) said that it was “hard to see that there won’t be such changes in behaviour”.¹⁹⁹ There is a strong argument for saying that 16 and 17 year olds subject to compulsory study or training should be eligible for free (or perhaps subsidised) travel in the same way as children of compulsory school age.²⁰⁰ **We recommend that the Government should, as part of its review of school transport, assess the cost of offering free or subsidised travel to all 16 to 18 year olds travelling to and from learning. The aim should be to achieve, through co-operation between schools, colleges, local authorities and transport companies, free or subsidised travel to and from learning for all 16 to 18 year olds.**

195 See further memorandum from the Association of Colleges, Ev 104. The local authority concerned is Lincolnshire County Council.

196 Local authorities must provide free home to school transport for pupils of compulsory school age who are attending their nearest suitable school, provided that the school is beyond the statutory walking distances (2 miles for pupils below the age of eight and 3 miles for those aged eight and over). Free travel must also be provided for children who are unable to walk because they have special educational needs, a disability, mobility problems, or because their walking route is unsafe. Pupils entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit will also be eligible for free travel. See Department for Education website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/travelandtransport/a0077797/efficiency-and-practice-review-home-to-school-transport>

197 HL Deb 26 April 2011, col WA 98

198 HC Deb 26 April 2011 col 297W

199 Q 229

200 See Jane Machell Q 55

Free school meals

117. Free school meals are available to pupils in a school sixth form but not to pupils studying in further education or sixth form colleges. The Department “has registered concern” over this “but currently has no plans to extend free school meal eligibility”.²⁰¹

118. We asked witnesses whether they could discern any logic behind this distinction. Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges said “None whatever”, and Martin Ward, Deputy General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders replied “No. It makes no sense at all” and suggested that it was an unintended consequence of the profusion of different types of school and college. Mark Corney, a consultant and author,²⁰² said simply that it was “a scandal. Either you level down or you level up”.²⁰³ Mr Doel, referring to a suggestion by the Secretary of State that not all colleges had canteens where they could offer free school meals,²⁰⁴ said:

Our sense ... is that all colleges would make provision for those students to make use of free school meals within their estate. Some of them will not currently have a dining room as you would have in an 11 to 16 school or a sixth-form college, but every college we have asked says that if that provision was made they would make it available.²⁰⁵

We note that only “a majority” of the free schools intending to open in September 2011 will have catering facilities.²⁰⁶

119. We asked Lord Hill, the Minister with responsibility for school funding, whether the Department planned to extend eligibility for free school meals to 16 to 18 year olds studying at colleges. He replied:

It will be the same principle for the new fund. Whether it is transport or helping with food, that would be at the discretion of the school or college. That reflects in part the fact that the landscape and what young people are doing post-16 is quite different from what they are doing pre-16. They are working in different places; they travel; they arrive; they might be doing an apprenticeship; they might be at work. The universal approach to all in the cohort saying, “This is the entitlement you get” does not fit as comfortably with one model post-16 as it does pre-16.²⁰⁷

We do not find this argument convincing. Eligibility for free school meals reflects household income, and it seems wholly unfair that young people from equally deprived backgrounds should have unequal access to financial support or to support in kind, purely because of where they have chosen to study. **There is no logic in making free school meals available to 16–18 year olds in schools but not in colleges, and, while we recognise that**

201 HC Deb 4 April 2011 col 706W

202 For instance *Raising the participation age—keeping it on track*, published by CfBT Education Trust, 2009

203 Q 14

204 HC Deb 28 March 2011 col 59

205 Q 222

206 HC Deb 29 June 2011 col 888W

207 Q 303

the financial implications would make an early change of policy difficult, we recommend that parity of eligibility should be the medium to long-term aim.

4 Apprenticeships for young people

120. Employment with training will be one of the ways in which young people can meet their obligation, under the Education and Skills Act 2008, to take part in education or training up until the age of 18. A standard model for such provision is an Apprenticeship. For some, as we noted in paragraph 61, this will be the preferred option, as it will provide a salary as well as a way of improving skills.

The characteristics of Apprenticeships

121. Whereas businesses can and do offer their own, self-funded apprenticeship schemes, there has been a resurgence of publicly-funded Apprenticeships in recent years, and both this Government and its predecessors have put considerable effort into promoting the brand and stimulating the supply of Apprenticeship places. This Government describes Apprenticeships as its “flagship skills programme and a key route for raising the participation age in learning”.²⁰⁸ The essentials of publicly-funded Apprenticeships are:

- A blend of work-based and theoretical learning for an employee (either a new recruit or an existing employee), with no upper age limit
- Normally 30 hours or more paid employment per week, but with a minimum of 16 hours
- A training element amounting to at least 280 guided learning hours per year, of which at least 100 hours or 30% (whichever is the greater) must be delivered off the job and must be “clearly evidenced”²⁰⁹
- Training can be provided by a college, a training provider or by the employer itself
- Public funding is provided, via the National Apprenticeship Service, for the training element (100% of costs for Apprentices aged 16–18; up to 50% for older apprentices)

The costs to the employer include salary (the National Apprenticeship Service cites research from 2008 indicating an average salary for Apprentices of £170 per week)²¹⁰ and the costs of supervision, support and mentoring.

122. Apprenticeships are available at three levels:

- Intermediate Apprenticeships (leading to a qualification equivalent to five good GCSE passes)
- Advanced Apprenticeships (equivalent to two A Level passes)

208 Written memorandum (E 101) to the Public Bill Committee considering the Education Bill: see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/education/memo/educwritev.pdf>

209 *Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England*, BIS, January 2011

210 *Apprenticeship Pay: 2007 Survey of Earnings by Sector*, DIUS Research Report 08/05. The minimum wage for Apprentices is £2.50 per hour for people under 19, or for people 19 or above in their first year as Apprentice.

- Higher Apprenticeships, which work towards (for instance) NVQ Level 4 qualifications.²¹¹

123. Apprenticeship frameworks (setting out high-level curricula) and apprenticeship standards (setting out the standards to which frameworks must conform) were established on a statutory basis by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The Act also put in place a duty on the Chief Executive of Skills Funding to secure the availability of apprenticeship places “in sufficient number and variety” for there to be suitable places for every suitably qualified young person who wants one. However, provisions within the Education Bill now before Parliament would replace that duty with a requirement to prioritise funding for young people who have secured an apprenticeship place. The Government argues that the power to offer Apprenticeships lies with employers rather than with the Chief Executive of Skills Funding, and that therefore the revised duty would be more realistic.²¹²

124. Both this Government and its predecessor have sought to increase the number of Apprenticeships offered by employers. Statistics published shortly before we agreed this Report showed a substantial growth in Apprenticeship starts in 2009/10 when compared with 2008/09: 279,700, as opposed to 239,900, representing an increase of 16.6%. The increase was higher than average for learners under 19, who registered 116,800 “starts”, 17.5% more than in 2008/09. Rates of completion (or “Apprenticeship framework achievements”) also rose from 2008/09 to 2009/10: there were 171,500 completions in 2009/10, an increase of 19.6% upon 2008/09. However, the rate of increase in completions by learners under 19 was rather lower, at 7.9%.²¹³ **We welcome the latest statistics on Apprenticeships, showing a major increase in Apprenticeship starts, with growth at all levels and for both under-19 year olds and 19–24 year olds.**

Access to Apprenticeships for under 19 year olds

125. One of the most striking features of these statistics is the rise in the number of Apprenticeship starts by learners under 19, despite a trend, identified by Professor Wolf in her Review of Vocational Education, for government policy on Apprenticeships to be targeted increasingly on 18–24 year olds and—more recently—on people aged 25 or above. Professor Wolf described this trend as “very problematic at a time of high youth unemployment and when the statutory participation age is about to rise”. She noted that “major recruitment efforts” since 2008/09, when the figures for 16–18 year old Apprentices were especially low, had reversed the fall overall; but numbers were still in decline in certain sectors, such as construction.²¹⁴

126. Professor Wolf referred in her report to the “vanishing youth labour market”, not just in England but across the developed world.²¹⁵ The Minister observed in evidence to us that

211 See www.apprenticeships.org.uk

212 Written memorandum (E 101) to the Public Bill Committee considering the Education Bill: see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/education/memo/educwritv.pdf>

213 All figures from *Post-16 Education and Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held*, Quarterly Statistical First Release, BIS, published 23 June 2011. Figures relate to academic years.

214 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, pages 164–5

215 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, page 24

the number of jobs you “can get and keep that do not require core skills” has fallen;²¹⁶ and Professor Unwin took a similar view.²¹⁷ As the Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges said, the point of entry to the job market “is now presumed to be 19 rather than 16”.²¹⁸

127. Mirroring this decline in job opportunities for 16 to 18 year olds is the steady increase in levels of participation in education and training post-16, creating a more highly qualified workforce at 18 (and indeed 21). As a result, employers can raise the entry standard and still fill vacancies, taking many Apprenticeships out of reach for 16 and 17 year olds, particularly for those with low attainment levels.²¹⁹ Professor Wolf noted that Advanced Apprentices at Airbus will now typically have A levels, and that the average age at which Apprentices at Network Rail start is now “well over 19”.²²⁰ SEMTA²²¹ provided evidence that other employers might be thinking along these lines, citing the aerospace and nuclear industries.²²²

128. Some employers are not confident in some younger people’s readiness for work, whether because they lack basic language, communication and arithmetical skills or softer skills such as teamworking, presentation, customer service, problem solving and a professional approach. For example, Caroline Blackman, Head of Organisational Effectiveness at Laing O’Rourke, told us that some 50% of applicants failed to get through standard aptitude testing, most failing on numeracy and literacy.²²³

129. Professor Wolf concluded that 16 to 18 year olds are “extremely ill-served” by the vocational education system’s neglect of mathematics and English, despite these subjects’ “crucial role” in both the labour market and progression to higher education. She therefore recommended that students who were under 19 and who had not achieved a GCSE in English and/or mathematics at A*–C should be required, as part of their learning programme, “to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications or which provides significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success”.²²⁴ The Government, in its response to Professor Wolf’s report, agreed with the essence of her argument and undertook to examine evidence of good practice among schools, colleges and other providers in enabling young people to progress to GCSE level qualifications at 16 or soon after, before publishing its findings and recommendations by December 2011.²²⁵

130. Witnesses who gave evidence to our inquiry after publication of the Government’s response to the Wolf Report, on 12 May 2011, and who expressed opinions on the Report,

216 Q 286

217 Q 105

218 Mr Doel Q 190

219 Mr Collis Q 154; also Dr Spielhofer Q 238. See also memorandum from Central London Connexions, Ev w94, paragraph 24

220 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, page 168

221 The sector skills council for the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies

222 Ev 97 paragraph 14

223 Q 151 and Q 162

224 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, pages 118-9

225 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education – Government Response*, published on 12 May 2011, page 7

generally supported it and the Government’s response. Martin Doel, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said that he was particularly pleased that the recommendation on English and mathematics GCSE “had been softened somewhat, to attend to the fact that some young people at 16 won’t find English and maths GCSE the right way forward to engage them”.²²⁶ Martin Ward, Deputy General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, agreed, saying that over-emphasis on English and mathematics GCSE, as distinct from numeracy and literacy, “would not necessarily be helpful”.²²⁷ **We welcome the Government’s measured response to the recommendation by Professor Wolf in her review of vocational education that students under 19 who had not achieved GCSE mathematics and/or English at grade A*–C should continue to study towards it beyond the age of 16. We agree that existing good and innovative practice in provision of English and mathematics courses for these young people should be assessed before further policy decisions are taken.**

131. SEMTA told us that some employers feared that the Apprenticeship programme, which they used and trusted, might be changed by the Government to accommodate “low achievers and the disaffected”.²²⁸ We did not hear or receive evidence to suggest that the Government was planning to impose upon employers a lower threshold for entry to Apprenticeships. What the Government has announced is a new Access to Apprenticeships ‘pathway’, to enable up to 10,000 vulnerable young people to benefit from an Apprenticeship.²²⁹ Mr Hayes told us that

What I want to create is a pathway that is progressive, rigorous and just as seductive as the academic route that many of us took. That means moving people from disengagement to engagement through bite-sized chunks of learning. It means providing access to apprenticeship courses that then lead to levels 2 and 3 and beyond.²³⁰

Fuller details of the Access to Apprenticeship pathway are to be announced in the autumn.

132. Employers should not be expected to lower their requirements for entry to Apprenticeships in order to help meet a Government policy aim. Apprenticeships, if they are to retain the confidence of employers, should be for those who are prepared to show commitment, so they should be extended rather than brief (normally two years minimum); and it is acceptable for Apprentices to have relatively low rates of pay up until the completion of their Apprenticeship framework.

Maintaining quality while stimulating supply

Payments to employers

133. The formal training and accreditation of Apprentices aged 16 to 18 is publicly funded, and employers pay an hourly wage whether the Apprentice is at work or training offsite.

226 Q 183

227 Q 184

228 SEMTA, the sector skills council for the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies, Ev 96, paragraph 6

229 *Supporting youth employment*, published on 12 May 2011, HM Government

230 Q 325

Professor Wolf put forward an argument in her report that Apprentices should be “primarily engaged in learning” and that, as a corollary, employers should be operating in part as educators and should therefore be recompensed for this part of their role, directly or indirectly. She described this as “standard practice in other countries with large apprenticeship programmes”.²³¹ Professor Unwin noted that practice in this respect differed across Europe: in Germany, only a few employers are given extra funds, and the bulk of them receive no support for training costs.²³²

134. The Government, in its response to Professor Wolf’s report, said that “payments to employers can be an effective way to encourage them to take on Apprentices” and that it would assess the costs and benefits involved.²³³ We are doubtful about the merits of such payments, which would obscure an important principle. We believe that the main motive for an employer to take on Apprentices should be to make a long-term investment in their workforce for the benefit of their staff and for good business reasons. **We recommend that the Government should publish its assessment of the costs and benefits of paying employers to take on Apprentices, before it decides whether or not to go ahead. On the existing knowledge base, however, the Committee does not support the principle of payments to employers taking on Apprentices.**

Programme-led Apprentices and Apprentice Training Agencies

135. There is very great demand for respected Apprenticeship programmes. Laing O’Rourke told us that it had received 1,200 applications for its four-year Apprenticeship Plus programme, and that 31 of these had been taken on.²³⁴ Network Rail received nearly 8,000 applications in 2010 for 200 Apprenticeships;²³⁵ and Kwik-Fit told us that its Apprenticeships were oversubscribed “to the tune of some 4,000 for every 120 places”.²³⁶ The excess of demand over supply led to the development of Programme-led Apprenticeships: these were classroom-based courses (normally based in colleges and offered as full-time vocational courses) conforming to a named Apprenticeship framework. The previous Government described Programme-led Apprenticeships as “a helpful way of catering to the demands of prospective Apprentices where there is not the immediate offer of a job available”, and it noted that this type of provision appealed to some employers “as it front-loads the sometimes technical preparation for a job”.²³⁷

136. Witnesses to our inquiry expressed support for Programme-Led Apprenticeships: SEMTA (the sector skills council for the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies) told us that Programme Led Apprenticeships enabled employers

to recruit young people who had completed ... initial training, thus reducing their costs and also the risk which comes from recruiting an individual directly into an

231 *Review of Vocational Education* by Professor Wolf, March 2011, page 122

232 Q 136

233 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education—Government Response*, Department for Education, 12 May 2011, page 10

234 Q 151

235 *Daily Mirror* 18 January 2011

236 Q 142

237 *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All*, DIUS/DCSF, 2008

area where they have no prior experience ... Through PLA, employers were able to reduce their salary costs and recruit only those young people who had demonstrated their ability and commitment to an engineering career by completing the initial training while receiving the EMA.²³⁸

Eric Collis, General Manager of the Humberside Engineering Training Association, told us that the Programme-led Apprenticeship format allowed his Association to offer “a ready-made, quality-assured apprentice who we could place with [employers] and we could deal with all the bureaucracy and all the support systems that need to be taken care of”. He added that the model “was extremely useful” and said that any decision to stop offering Programme-led Apprenticeships would, in his area, “reduce the number of apprentice vacancies overall” and “reduce our penetration of SMEs”.²³⁹

137. Funding for new Programme Led Apprenticeships (PLAs) ceased on 6 April 2011. Keith Smith, representing the National Apprenticeship Service, explained that PLAs did not give the learner employed status and therefore could not be Apprenticeships under the terms of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.²⁴⁰ The Minister, when giving oral evidence, accepted that PLAs “may have served a purpose in some cases” but said that they “were not enough like a real job”.²⁴¹ Given their nature, it was probably a mistake ever to describe Programme-led Apprenticeships as a form of apprenticeship: the title set up an expectation which could not be met.²⁴²

138. A more recent innovation aimed at soaking up some of the demand for Apprenticeships is the concept of an apprentice training agency (ATA). The agency employs the Apprentice, co-ordinates training and hires them out to employers in order to enable them to complete the work-based components of their Apprenticeship framework. These count as Apprenticeships, as the learner has employed status; but it was suggested to us that they were less than ideal in that:

There is less commitment to the longer term development and integration of apprentices from the employers providing work experience places, which will potentially give rise to the ATA model being seen as the sort of ‘warehousing’ approach associated with youth training schemes during the 1980s ... Rather than working on behalf of employers, ATAs work on behalf of the Government’s desire to maximise apprenticeship places.²⁴³

Conclusion

139. The Apprenticeship brand is highly respected and is seen by young people as offering security, employer commitment and investment, and a clear pathway to career

²³⁸ Ev 96 paragraph 10

²³⁹ Q 173

²⁴⁰ Q 175-6

²⁴¹ Q 325

²⁴² See oral evidence given by Rt Hon Jim Knight MP and Lord Young of Norwood Green to the former Children, Schools and Families Committee on 22 October 2008, published with the Fourth Report of the Children Schools and Families Committee, *The Draft Apprenticeships Bill*, HC 1082 of Session 2007–08.

²⁴³ Memorandum from Professor Alison Fuller and Professor Lorna Unwin, Ev 98

progression. The Government should not lose sight of the need to retain quality, particularly if numbers of Apprentices increase substantially. We are comforted by the statement made in oral evidence by Mr Hayes, the Minister with responsibility for further education and skills, that he recognised the danger of allowing a rapid growth in the number of Apprenticeships to dilute their quality and damage the brand, and that he had “absolutely no intention that that will happen”.²⁴⁴

140. We welcome the Government’s acknowledgement that driving up numbers of Apprenticeships carries a risk of diluting their quality. We question whether Apprenticeships offered through Apprenticeship Training Agencies, where there is no long-term commitment or investment on the part of the employer offering the work placement, are of the same quality as work-based Apprenticeships with a regular employer. We recommend that such opportunities should be regarded primarily as a form of training and should be treated separately for statistical purposes.

5 Careers services

141. A great deal of the written evidence submitted to our inquiry stressed the importance of good careers guidance for young people if they were to be able to make suitable choices for learning while in compulsory education or training.

142. At present, schools have a duty to provide pupils with “a programme of careers education ... during the relevant phase of their education”: that phase lasts from the start of Year 7 and lasts until the end of Year 11.²⁴⁵ Careers *guidance* services, as opposed to careers education, are provided for young people by Connexions services: these have been funded, since April 2008, by local authorities. Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 safeguarded this provision by placing a duty on each local authority to make available to young people “such services as it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist the effective participation of those persons in education or training”.

143. Connexions services have provided careers guidance to individuals alongside wider support services targeted, in general, at more disadvantaged groups; and some Connexions services have been more successful than others in discharging these two duties equally successfully. The final report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, chaired by the Rt Hon. Alan Milburn, stated that “throughout our work, we have barely heard a good word about the careers work of the current Connexions service”, and it concluded that the focus on the minority of vulnerable young people was distracting Connexions advisers from offering “proper” careers guidance to the majority.²⁴⁶

144. In the light of these criticisms, the Coalition Government has decided to transfer responsibility for career guidance for young people to schools. The Education Bill contains a duty on schools to provide pupils in Years 9 to 11 with “independent careers guidance”, to be presented in an impartial manner, and including information on options for education or training at the ages of 16 to 18. Schools are otherwise free to determine how to fulfil the duty, and the Department says that “this approach recognises that education professionals are best placed to make arrangements for careers guidance that fit the needs and circumstances of their students”.²⁴⁷ Ministers intend that the duty should come into force from September 2012. At the same, time, schools would be relieved of the duty to offer a programme of careers *education*.

145. In parallel, the Government is developing proposals for an all-age careers service, to be known as the National Careers Service, funded jointly by the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. John Hayes MP, the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, explained his intentions for the all-age careers service at a speech at the Institute of Careers Guidance’s annual conference in November 2010:

A single, unified careers service would provide major benefits in terms of transparency and accessibility. And a single service with its own unique identity

²⁴⁵ Education Act 1997, section 43

²⁴⁶ *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*, July 2009, page 75

²⁴⁷ HC Deb 28 June 2011 col 765W

would have more credibility for people within it as well as users than the more fragmented arrangements that are currently in place.²⁴⁸

Professor Tony Watts, Life President of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, told us that the all-age service was “one of the things which this Government has got right”, in that it would professionalise and strengthen services.²⁴⁹ The Government’s intention is that “as much as possible” of the all-age service should be in place by September 2011, although it will be April 2012 before the service is fully established.

Services during the transitional period

146. Neither the duty on schools to secure career guidance nor the all-age careers service is therefore in place; yet the Connexions career guidance services which they would replace are already being cut back by local authorities seeking savings as a result of tighter budgets. The £311 million total in-year reduction in 2010–11 in Area-Based Grant, from which Connexions services are funded, led to service reductions from September 2010 in some areas and further closures or reductions from April 2011.

147. This dramatic shrinkage of careers advice services is taking place even though local authorities’ statutory duties, described in paragraph 142, remain in place until the new services are established. Indeed, the Department for Education reminded local authorities in April 2011 that they continued “to play a crucial role in the provision of support to young people up to age 19”, as set out in section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and that the Early Intervention Grant would support their transitional responsibilities.²⁵⁰ The Department also made clear that there was no expectation that local authorities should provide universal careers services once the all-age service had been established and the duty on schools had commenced.

148. It is arguable that the reductions in Connexions services in some areas are of such a scale that local authorities could be deemed to be failing to meet their statutory duties. Unison has claimed that only a quarter of local authorities in the south-east, for instance, were meeting their obligations, and it has hinted that it might take legal action against some of them.²⁵¹ **We recognise the difficult financial circumstances in which local authorities find themselves. However, the sharp reduction in the availability of career guidance services for young people outside schools is damaging and should not be allowed to continue. Any reductions in Connexions services should be proportionate, and local authorities should respect the duty imposed by Parliament. The Government should assess local authorities’ compliance with their statutory duties and should not hold back from taking legal action, if necessary, to ensure compliance.**

248 See <http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/john-hayes-icg-conference>

249 Q 210

250 <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/1/a%20communication%20april%202011.pdf>

251 *Children and Young People Now*, 19 April 2011

Long-term provision of face-to-face careers advice for young people

149. There is unease about the quality of career guidance services available to young people even once the all-age service and the duty on schools to secure independent advice are in place. It appears that the Department for Education’s funding contribution to the all-age service is designed to cover only the provision of online and phone services for young people transferred from Connexions Direct, and that face-to-face services will be offered by the all-age service only to people aged over 18.²⁵² Funding for Connexions Direct in 2010/11 amounted to about £7 million,²⁵³ whereas funding for the career guidance services provided through Connexions is estimated to have been nearer £200 million.²⁵⁴ Professor Watts concluded that the estimated £200 million allocated by the DfE or its predecessors for face-to-face career guidance services in previous years was simply “being allowed to vanish”.²⁵⁵

150. The duty on schools, meanwhile, does not amount to a duty to provide face-to-face services; nor is there any identifiable enhancement to school funding specifically to recognise the cost of career guidance services.²⁵⁶ Professor Watts told us that in the two countries which had so far enabled commissioning of careers advice services by schools (New Zealand and the Netherlands), there had been “a significant erosion in the quality of the help that was available and its extent”; but in both cases, funding had at least been transferred to schools, which is not to be the case in England.²⁵⁷

151. Some written submissions were apprehensive about schools’ abilities to ensure that guidance was impartial. The fear is that schools, however legislation is worded, will provide it in such a way that pupils are encouraged to stay at school post-16, even though it might not be in the child’s best interests. The Association of Colleges noted “powerful financial incentives for schools to retain their pupils”,²⁵⁸ while LEACAN was more critical and described the Government’s proposal as “a high-risk strategy, when perverse incentives such as league tables, school autonomy and funding methodology will cause some schools to prioritise the needs of the school above those of the learner”.²⁵⁹ There is evidence that young people themselves do not believe that the careers guidance which they received in school was impartial.²⁶⁰ Witnesses had experience or knowledge of schools resisting approaches by employers to give career guidance. Bill Sutton, Operations and Development Manager at SEMTA, spoke of employers who had “been rebuffed” and who

252 See HC Deb 22 June 2011 col 93WH

253 Information supplied by Professor Watts

254 Based on information supplied by Professor Watts. The total allocation for Connexions services in 2010/11 was £467 million. A study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2006 indicated that around 42% of allocations for Connexions was spent on career guidance services, as opposed to the more holistic advice service provided for young people in need.

255 Q 205

256 HC Deb 29 June 2011 col 889W

257 Q 205

258 Ev 74 paragraph 21

259 Ev w29, paragraph 21. See also memorandum from London Councils, Ev w40, paragraph 17

260 *Raising the Participation Age: Developing an Engaging Offer to Young People*: summary of research by the National Youth Agency in partnership with the Local Government Association, April 2011. See http://nYA.org.uk/dynamic_files/research/RPAoverview.pdf

had not been given access to schools; and Jane Connor, representing Kwik-Fit Ltd, also reported that the firm had been turned away from schools.²⁶¹

152. Professor Watts pointed out that other stepping stones between school and work were being removed. The Government has decided to end the statutory duty on schools to provide all young people in Key Stage 4 with work-related learning,²⁶² funding for Aimhigher²⁶³ is being withdrawn; and the duty on schools to provide a programme of careers education (as opposed to career guidance) for pupils in Years 7 to 11 would be removed by the Education Bill now before Parliament.²⁶⁴

153. The new requirement for schools to secure impartial careers guidance is well-intentioned, but schools have a history of seeking to promote their own interests.²⁶⁵ Mr Doel suggested that Ministers were planning to trust schools to carry out a duty without taking steps to verify what was happening, and he was concerned that changes were being made without any way of establishing whether they were succeeding in their aims. He envisaged a role for Ofsted in evaluating schools' compliance with the proposed statutory duty, although he recognised that this would be resisted by the Government.²⁶⁶

154. We note with interest the Department's response to a recent Parliamentary Question asking what plans it had for inspecting the quality of schools' career guidance services. The Department replied:

The revised school inspection framework will have a sharp focus on the quality of teaching, backed by excellent leadership and management, and good discipline and behaviour. Ofsted will consider outcomes such as pupils' achievement and progression rather than inputs such as the type or amount of careers guidance. The introduction of new destination measures will ensure that schools are held to account for the way in which they support their pupils to progress to higher levels of education and training, or into employment. The Government have also accepted the recommendation of the Careers Profession Task Force to ask Ofsted to carry out a thematic review of careers guidance as a means of identifying excellent provision and establishing a baseline for future policy development.²⁶⁷

155. The Department seems content to rely upon destination measures and thematic reviews by Ofsted to ensure the quality and impartiality of career guidance services in schools. However, years will elapse before age 19 destination measures are available for children receiving career guidance in schools from September 2012; and we do not see how those measures will identify or isolate poor careers guidance as a factor in low achievement at 19.²⁶⁸ **We believe that there should be some form of clear accountability measure for**

261 Q 142

262 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education – Government Response*, page 12

263 A programme to widen participation in higher education

264 Q 205

265 See for instance memorandum from Hull College Group, Ev 89, paragraph 3.3

266 Q 207

267 HC Deb 28 June 2011 col 762W

268 See Professor Watts Q 208

the quality, impartiality and extent of career guidance services in schools. We recommend that Ofsted school inspections should, as part of the pupil achievement strand within the framework for inspection of schools, assess specifically whether schools are meeting their statutory duty to secure the provision of independent and impartial career guidance.

156. Professor Watts told us that “we used to have a careers service for young people, and all we had for adults was a strategy—an IAG framework. What we now have ... is a careers service for adults, and a very loose IAG framework for young people”.²⁶⁹ Online career guidance, which allows young people to explore at their own pace and according to their own interests, is valuable; and we heard praise for the online careers services offered by DirectGov.²⁷⁰ However, this is no substitute for personal advice, given on the basis of an understanding of a young person’s circumstances and ambitions. **We recommend that the all age careers service should be funded by the Department for Education for face to face career guidance for young people.** Even if this is not essential for most, there will be some who are not in school or who do not have confidence in services provided in a school setting, but who nonetheless need or seek professional advice. Indeed, these may be people who are in greatest need of what the all age careers service can offer.

Age from which career guidance services must be provided

157. The effect of the Education Bill as it stands is to specify that schools should provide careers guidance to pupils from the start of Year 9 through to the end of Year 11. However, the Government indicated in a memorandum to the Education Bill Committee that the Secretary of State would extend the duty to cover people over the age of 16 and up to the age of 18 attending schools²⁷¹ and further education institutions.²⁷² The Government intends to consult on the proposal, and that consultation will begin in the summer.²⁷³

158. The Education Bill Committee considered an amendment which would in effect have extended the duty to children in Years 7 and 8. The Minister argued that personalised guidance was “unlikely to be of huge benefit before the age of 13, because the first major decision point relates to post-16 options”, although he noted that schools would have the freedom to make their own decisions about “how to introduce their pupils to the world of work”. On that basis, he agreed to extend the remit of the Department’s forthcoming consultation to include a proposal for the duty to apply additionally to children in Year 8.²⁷⁴

159. There was some support in evidence to our inquiry for careers guidance to be offered at an earlier stage of a child’s schooling. Caroline Blackman, Head of Organisational Effectiveness at Laing O’Rourke, recommended that children should receive careers advice

269 Q 211

270 Annex 1: note of a meeting with students from Brooke House Sixth Form College

271 Only those types of school listed in the proposed section 42A of the Education Act 1997, to be inserted by the Education Bill

272 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/education/memo/educwrittev.pdf>, E86

273 HC Deb, Education Bill Committee proceedings, 29 March 2011, col 715

274 HC Deb, Education Bill Committee proceedings, 29 March 2011, col 715

from the start of secondary school, at which point relevant aptitude and “hands-on” skills were beginning to become apparent. She argued that “if you don’t open their minds at an early age, what success looks like is purely academic for them”.²⁷⁵ Professor Watts thought that career guidance should be available from the age of 13 “at the latest”.²⁷⁶

160. As we noted much earlier in this Report, loss of interest in an academic curriculum and lowering of aspiration often occurs earlier than Year 9. For these children, good career guidance could help to retain their focus on learning by linking study to destinations which have more immediate appeal. We note that the Minister appears to accept that there is a case for extending schools’ duty to secure career guidance so that it applies to pupils from Year 8 onwards, and that he will include the proposal in a wider consultation this summer. We have taken limited evidence on this issue and have not been able to test the case thoroughly; but we see value in the provision of career guidance to school pupils from the start of Year 7. **We recommend that the Department’s consultation on the age of pupils for whom schools should provide career guidance should be extended to examine the case for the statutory duty to apply to pupils in Year 7.**

275 Q 140–1

276 Q 211

Annex 1: Note of an informal meeting with students at BSix Brooke House Sixth Form College

The Committee held a meeting on 18 May 2011 with four students from BSix (Brooke House Sixth Form College) in Hackney. Two were in the first year of study; two were in their second year. All were receiving EMA.

The following points were made:

- Even under the special transitional arrangements for existing EMA claimants, students who would in future receive £20 per week rather than £30 were still worse off
- There would be a stigma in having to declare poverty to the college
- EMA might not necessarily lead to A* grades, but it helped to keep young people in education and constructive activity
- Some people studied at college because it was a stepping-stone to university; others studied in order to make more informed career moves
- Students had had difficulty in finding jobs, for instance in local shops
- EMA imposed discipline on students and was a motive to attend college; it also actively attracted students to college
- EMA allowed students from families which were not well-off to feel parity with those who were better-off financially
- The replacement bursary fund had indeed been raised to £180 million, but only because of public pressure
- Travel difficulties for students in rural areas were acknowledged. Although students had the benefit of free bus travel in London, there were students from other more distant parts of London for whom it was more practical to use trains to get to and from the college. These students had to cover the cost of tickets themselves; so removal of EMA would be a deterrent in their case
- Most of the group believed that education should be compulsory only to 16, although one suggested that it was best to continue to 18 if the right provision was available. It was also said that there should be more Apprenticeships, which offered a way into the workforce
- For one of the group, careers guidance at school had been “laughable”; another had used the local Connexions office and had tried a number of different courses before knowing “where they were going”. Another mentioned that the careers advice on DirectGov was “quite good”.

Annex 2: Summary of submissions received via www.emacampaign.org.uk

How EMA is used

- EMA is used to help cover the cost of rent, books, utilities, food, clothes (e.g. school uniform for sixth form) and equipment by those pupils whose families are otherwise unable to afford such items. Some students are concerned that they will not be able to learn if they cannot afford a meal at lunchtime
- EMA helps towards the costs of computers and internet access

How EMA is used: transport

- EMA covers transport costs that would otherwise be unmanageable for families – travel often cost £25 or more weekly
- Not having EMA would restrict severely the choices of courses and colleges available to prospective students. If EMA is stopped, free travel or a travel grant should be put in place
- Pupils unable to pay travel costs are likely to have poor attendance as they face long walks to and from college
- The cost of transport to school is much higher in rural areas where the journeys are longer. The EMA has been used in effect to subsidise that higher cost.

Disadvantaged groups

- A large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties come from low income households and so would be disproportionately affected.
- Young carers will be adversely affected by the loss of the EMA
- The loss of EMA would affect single parents on low incomes and young people living independently.
- The loss of EMA will mean that less well off students may have to take part time jobs, which would reduce their study time and put them at a disadvantage to better off students

Non-financial benefits of EMA

- The EMA allows young people to set and manage their own budget; those financial management skills will be crucial to them as they reach adulthood
- EMA provides an incentive to attend college on time and to focus on studying. The loss of EMA could result in behavioural issues for those who lose that focus; the principle of payment only if you attend prepares students for how employers see things

- EMA has improved retention rates and colleges’ “success” rates
- EMA enables low income families to see further education as an option for them. If replaced with a welfare grant distributed by FE institutions, the lack of guaranteed funding as a ‘safety net’ would deter some families from applying for courses, leading to low aspirations
- The provision of EMA shows less advantaged students that wider society does care about them and that they do have a stake in our society
- EMA has provided a means for some young people to participate in extracurricular activities that will enhance their university application. Without EMA, such opportunities would be lost to them
- EMA is an incentive for families to encourage children to study rather than to think of children as free childcare for younger siblings
- Removal of EMA was having a “massive” impact on motivation

Loss of EMA: impact on FE and HE institutions

- The loss of EMA will put pressure on FE institutions to support students financially by cutting back in other areas. This will put pressure on the pay and conditions of FE staff
- The loss of EMA will have an impact on the less well subscribed courses that currently attract students from a wide catchment. If those students are unable to pay for transport, such courses will be unviable, leading in turn to redundancies for staff
- The proposed enhanced learner support fund would place a greater administration burden on colleges
- Loss of EMA would make it harder for HE institutions trying to expand their participation base

Other predicted outcomes of the loss of EMA

- If poorer students are not supported financially, the cost to society will be greater in the long term through payment of benefits, demands on health services and the impact on the criminal justice system
- If EMA is stopped halfway through a course, some students might have to drop out of FE and abandon aspirations to go on to higher education. Some have already made the decision to drop out when EMA stops
- Removal of EMA was deterring people from FE and was encouraging them to apply for Apprenticeships purely for financial reasons

Other issues raised

- Lowering the income level needed to claim EMA would be preferable to scrapping it altogether. In addition, stopping the bonus EMA payments would reduce costs

- There is a need to ensure that funds are directed to those who need it, and to ensure that it is not seen as a bonus for those pupils who can manage financially
- Withdrawal of EMA coincides with the removal of Aimhigher
- Has any equality impact assessment that has been carried out on this issue?

Conclusions and recommendations

Raising the age of participation

1. We acknowledge the Government's support for the expansion of University Technical Colleges, which we see as a bold experiment in providing learning opportunities for young people motivated by a more practical curriculum. (Paragraph 28)
2. We recommend that the Government should commission further research to assess the effect of applied learning and vocational study at age 14 to 16 upon participation in education and training at age 16 to 18. That research should take into account the location of study, and experience from a range of vocational courses. (Paragraph 33)
3. While we would not want to encourage over-specialisation at Key Stage 4, we recommend that the Department should consider whether a 40%/60% split between time spent on specifically vocational or technical study and on core academic curriculum would best suit 14 year olds who take up vocational options while at school. (Paragraph 34)
4. We accept that the cost of the Young Apprenticeship programme is currently difficult to fund, despite its impressive results. We acknowledge that there is some evidence of effective joint working between schools and colleges to provide vocational study opportunities for 14 to 16 year olds; but this appears to be in decline, for financial reasons. The success of Young Apprenticeships suggests that high quality vocational training for 14 to 16 year olds can raise engagement and academic achievement, and we urge the Government to consider how best to build on this model. (Paragraph 38)
5. The forthcoming review of funding for post-16 learning should recognise the higher cost of supporting learning by young people lacking motivation or confidence; and the future funding mechanism should enable all providers, including voluntary sector bodies, to offer the learning opportunities which are required. (Paragraph 41)
6. We are not convinced that the "lagged learner funding" mechanism currently used by the Young People's Learning Agency as a basis for funding learning providers necessarily prevents flexibility in course starts. We welcome the Agency's willingness to adjust funding for colleges in 2011 to reflect significant increases in in-year enrolments. We recommend that the Agency should indicate as soon as possible whether it intends to use lagged student numbers as a basis for calculating allocations to colleges for study in 2012; and we encourage it to confirm at the same time that it will continue to recognise in its funding allocations significant rates of in-year enrolment in individual colleges. (Paragraph 47)
7. We do not accept that the activities and services supported by entitlement funding are necessarily needed more by those who benefit from 'disadvantage uplift'; and we are not convinced that they should be targeted to the extent proposed by the Young People's Learning Agency. The quality of the universal offer is likely to decline once

entitlement funding is reduced, and student motivation, retention and achievement may suffer. (Paragraph 51)

8. The Department's forthcoming review of the funding formula for 16–19 learning should, in assessing the value of every aspect of provision (including qualifications), consider the case for restoring a higher level of entitlement funding. (Paragraph 52)
9. We recommend that the regulations on transfer of pupil information be amended, so that further education and higher education institutions are entitled to receive the Common Transfer File and educational record relating to any pupil being admitted. We recognise that colleges do not currently have access to the secure system used for the transfer of such data and that work would need to be done to allow this. In principle, however, security of data transfer considerations should not be allowed to impede the free flow of information on individual pupils' needs from schools to colleges and higher education institutions, where this is to the benefit of the pupil. (Paragraph 60)
10. We recommend that the Secretary of State's Ministerial Advisory Group should consider, as a distinct work strand, local authorities' roles in supporting the raising of the participation age, and whether statutory powers are required to enable them to make a meaningful contribution. (Paragraph 68)
11. We accept that the cost of using powers under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to enforce the increase in the age of participation could turn out to be disproportionate to their effectiveness. We therefore agree with the decision to delay introduction of those powers, but we believe that a formal review should take place as soon as the level of compliance with the duty to participate becomes clear. (Paragraph 75)

Financial support for 16–18 year olds

12. The Government was right to recognise, even if belatedly, that the initial proposals for replacing the Education Maintenance Allowance fell short of what was required. We welcome the Government's decision to provide transitional funding for some learners who had begun courses in the expectation that they would continue to receive Education Maintenance Allowance. (Paragraph 87)
13. Allocations of funding for student support through the bursary scheme for 2011–12 have been made far too late to allow Year 11 students to make fully informed decisions on what they will do the following year. The Government misjudged the scale of support necessary when announcing the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, and precious months were lost while it revised its plans and consulted on the bursary proposals. The delay in deciding on allocations and guiding principles for distribution was regrettable and should not have been allowed to happen. (Paragraph 89)
14. We would have welcomed a more measured and public analysis by the Government before it reached its decision to abolish the EMA. The Government's assertion is that there was a substantial economic "deadweight" cost element to the EMA, meaning that a significant proportion of young people would have taken courses whether or not they received the EMA. However, economic "deadweight" costs are a feature of

many interventions and do not necessarily mean that the policy is invalidated. The Government should have done more to acknowledge the combined impact on students' participation, attainment and retention, particularly amongst disadvantaged sub-groups, before determining how to restructure financial support. (Paragraph 99)

15. We recommend that the Government should issue guidance to schools and local authorities that there is no legal impediment to the transfer of information on Year 11 children's eligibility for free school meals to post-16 providers. We further recommend that the Government consider whether a child's eligibility for free school meals should be recorded on their Common Transfer File. (Paragraph 105)
16. We accept that a change to financial support for 16-19 year olds was inevitable. (Paragraph 106)
17. It will be difficult to ensure that bursary funds are matched efficiently to need and that inconsistencies which will inevitably arise do not erode confidence in the scheme or distort learners' choices of where to study. The Committee is not persuaded that a strong enough case has been made for distributing £180 million in student support as discretionary bursaries rather than as a slimmed-down, more targeted entitlement. We believe that the Department should have conducted an earlier, more public assessment of the options for better targeting of student support. (Paragraph 108)
18. We recommend that the Government should, as part of its review of school transport, assess the cost of offering free or subsidised travel to all 16 to 18 year olds travelling to and from learning. The aim should be to achieve, through co-operation between schools, colleges, local authorities and transport companies, free or subsidised travel to and from learning for all 16 to 18 year olds. (Paragraph 116)
19. There is no logic in making free school meals available to 16–18 year olds in schools but not in colleges, and, while we recognise that the financial implications would make an early change of policy difficult, we recommend that parity of eligibility should be the medium to long-term aim. (Paragraph 119)

Apprenticeships for young people

20. We welcome the latest statistics on Apprenticeships, showing a major increase in Apprenticeship starts, with growth at all levels and for both under-19 year olds and 19–24 year olds. (Paragraph 124)
21. We welcome the Government's measured response to the recommendation by Professor Wolf in her review of vocational education that students under 19 who had not achieved GCSE mathematics and/or English at grade A*–C should continue to study towards it beyond the age of 16. We agree that existing good and innovative practice in provision of English and mathematics courses for these young people should be assessed before further policy decisions are taken. (Paragraph 130)
22. Employers should not be expected to lower their requirements for entry to Apprenticeships in order to help meet a Government policy aim. Apprenticeships, if

they are to retain the confidence of employers, should be for those who are prepared to show commitment, so they should be extended rather than brief (normally two years minimum); and it is acceptable for Apprentices to have relatively low rates of pay up until the completion of their Apprenticeship framework. (Paragraph 132)

23. We recommend that the Government should publish its assessment of the costs and benefits of paying employers to take on Apprentices, before it decides whether or not to go ahead. On the existing knowledge base, however, the Committee does not support the principle of payments to employers taking on Apprentices. (Paragraph 134)
24. We welcome the Government's acknowledgement that driving up numbers of Apprenticeships carries a risk of diluting their quality. We question whether Apprenticeships offered through Apprenticeship Training Agencies, where there is no long-term commitment or investment on the part of the employer offering the work placement, are of the same quality as work-based Apprenticeships with a regular employer. We recommend that such opportunities should be regarded primarily as a form of training and should be treated separately for statistical purposes. (Paragraph 140)

Careers services

25. We recognise the difficult financial circumstances in which local authorities find themselves. However, the sharp reduction in the availability of career guidance services for young people outside schools is damaging and should not be allowed to continue. Any reductions in Connexions services should be proportionate, and local authorities should respect the duty imposed by Parliament. The Government should assess local authorities' compliance with their statutory duties and should not hold back from taking legal action, if necessary, to ensure compliance. (Paragraph 148)
26. We believe that there should be some form of clear accountability measure for the quality, impartiality and extent of career guidance services in schools. We recommend that Ofsted school inspections should, as part of the pupil achievement strand within the framework for inspection of schools, assess specifically whether schools are meeting their statutory duty to secure the provision of independent and impartial career guidance. (Paragraph 155)
27. We recommend that the all age careers service should be funded by the Department for Education for face to face career guidance for young people. (Paragraph 156)
28. We recommend that the Department's consultation on the age of pupils for whom schools should provide career guidance should be extended to examine the case for the statutory duty to apply to pupils in Year 7. (Paragraph 160)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 12 July 2011

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart, in the Chair

Neil Carmichael
Nic Dakin
Pat Glass
Charlotte Leslie

Ian Mearns
Tessa Munt
Lisa Nandy

Draft Report (*Participation by 16–19 year olds in education and training*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 160 read and agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 13 July 2011 at 9.15 am

Witnesses

Wednesday 16 March 2011

Page

Haroon Chowdry, Institute for Fiscal Studies; **Mark Corney**, Independent research consultant; and **Mick Fletcher**, Independent research consultant Ev 1

David Lawrence, Principal, Easton College; **Jane Machell**, Principal, Alton College; **Ian MacNaughton**, Principal, The Sixth Form College, Colchester; **Dr Elaine McMahon CBE**, Chief Executive and Principal, Hull College Group; and **David Wood**, Principal and Chief Executive, Lancaster and Morecambe College Ev 8

Wednesday 11 May 2011

Deborah Roseveare, Director of Education and Training, OECD; and **Professor Lorna Unwin**, Professor of Vocational Education, Institute of Education, University of London Ev 21

Caroline Blackman, Head of Organisational Effectiveness, Laing O'Rourke; **Eric Collis**, General Manager, HETA (Humberside Engineering Training Association); **Jane Connor**, HR Director, Kwik-Fit GB Ltd; **Keith Smith**, Director of Operations, National Apprenticeship Service; and **Bill Sutton**, Operations and Development Manager, SEMTA (Sector Skills Council for the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies) Ev 28

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Martin Doel OBE, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges; **Joanne McAllister**, Cumbria County Council; **Martin Ward**, Deputy General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders; and **Professor Tony Watts OBE**, Life President, National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling Ev 39

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Anne-Marie Carrie, Chief Executive, Barnardo's; **Seyi Obakin**, Chief Executive, Centrepont; **Bob Reitemeier**, Chief Executive, The Children's Society; and **Dr Thomas Spielhofer**, Senior Researcher and Consultant, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations Ev 51

Peter Lauener, Chief Executive, Young People's Learning Agency Ev 58

John Hayes MP, Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Department for Education / Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; and **Lord Hill of Oareford CBE**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Department for Education Ev 62

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3	Centrepoint	Ev 79
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6	Cumbria County Council	Ev 91
7	Semta	Ev 95; 97
8	Professor Alison Fuller and Professor Lorna Unwin	Ev 97
9	Letter from Lord Hill of Oareford, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools	Ev 102
10	Letter from Martin Doel, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges	Ev 103
11	Kwik Fit Ltd	Ev 104
12	The Children's Society	Ev 105; 108
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1	Mrs K Cleave	Ev w1
2	Sue Ballard	Ev w1
3	Mrs Sam Newman-Mckie	Ev w1
4	Careers South West Limited	Ev w2
5	Saint John Fisher Catholic College	Ev w2
6	Audit Commission	Ev w5
7	Young Nottingham Select Committee, Nottingham City Council	Ev w7
8	Catholic Education Service for England and Wales	Ev w8
9	National Foundation for Educational Research	Ev w10
10	NUT	Ev w13
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12	Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)	Ev w18
13	A4e Ltd	Ev w20
14	157 Group	Ev w23
15	Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education	Ev w25
16	Leacan	Ev w27
17	Lincolnshire 14–19 Strategic Partnership	Ev w30
18	Fiona Nicholson, Home Education Consultant	Ev w33
19	Devon County Council 14+ Learning and Skills Strategic Team	Ev w37
20	London Councils	Ev w38
21	University and College Union (UCU)	Ev w41

22	City of York Council	Ev w45
23	Leeds 11–19 Learning and Support Partnership	Ev w48
24	Merseyside Colleges Association of Principals	Ev w49
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26	Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership	Ev w52
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28	Action for Children	Ev w58
29	BSix, Brooke House Sixth Form College	Ev w60
30	National Association of Student Money Advisers	Ev w64
31	Stoke-on-Trent Children and Young People's Services	Ev w66
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37	Helen Roper	Ev w82
38	Platform 51	Ev w83
39	Private Equity Foundation	Ev w85
40	Campaign to Save the EMA	Ev w87
41	Fern-Chantele Carter	Ev w88
42	Peterborough City Council Local Authority 8–19 Service	Ev w90
43	Central London Connexions	Ev w93
44	Fairbridge and The Prince's Trust	Ev w95
45	London Borough of Newham, Newvic (Newham Sixth Form College) and Newham College of Further Education	Ev w99
46	Association of Teachers and Lecturers	Ev w102
47	Save EMA Campaign	Ev w106
48	Alliance for Inclusive Education	Ev w107
49	Abdulhaq Bismillah, parent and parent governor, BSix, Sixth Form College, Hackney	Ev w111
50	National Union of Students	Ev w113
51	Training and Development Agency for Schools	Ev w116
52	Jules Pipe, Mayor of Hackney, on behalf of the London Borough of Hackney	Ev w119
53	South Thames College	Ev w119

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives (www.parliament.uk/archives), and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074; email archives@parliament.uk). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Mr David Wickwar

Jo Sugrue

Letters from Swallow Hill Community College, Leeds

Cath Hepburn, Lecturer, and two students from City of Sunderland College

Jules Pipe, Mayor of Hackney, on behalf of the London Borough of Hackney (Annex A)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2010–12

First Special Report	Young people not in education, employment or training: Government Response to the Children, Schools and Families Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2009–10	HC 416
Second Special Report	The Early Years Single Funding Formula: Government Response to the Seventh Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 524
Third Special Report	Transforming Education Outside the Classroom: Responses from the Government and Ofsted to the Sixth Report of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 525
Fourth Special Report	Sure Start Children's Centres: Government Response to the Fifth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 768
First Report	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	HC 516-I and -II (HC 1316)
Second Report	The role and performance of Ofsted	HC 570-I and -II (HC 1317)
Fifth Special Report	Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008–19	HC 924
Third Report	Services for young people	HC 744-I and -II
Fourth Report	Participation by 16–19 year olds in education and training	HC 850-I and -II