

# Evaluation of the Young Apprenticeships Programme: Outcomes for cohort 3

## Executive Summary

For information

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The data collection for the report was undertaken in 2009, and the report analysis reflects that period. More recently, the government invited Professor Alison Wolf to review vocational education provision for 14 to 19 year olds. The review is available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>

# Executive Summary

## Evaluation of the Young Apprenticeship Programme: Outcomes for Cohort 3 Sarah Golden, Tom Benton, Lisa O'Donnell, NFER.

### Background

The Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme was established in 2004 to provide 14 to 16 year olds with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in a specific vocational area and achieve a relevant qualification. Cohort 3 Year 10 learners embarked on the YA programme in 2006 and were involved in a range of 13 occupational areas.

The outcomes for the third cohort of participants, in terms of their attainment and destinations, are presented in this brief.

The YA programme is delivered through partnerships between schools and Further Education colleges and work-based training providers. Each partnership has a Lead Partner. The YA programme has the following objectives for all young people to:

- pursue approved vocationally-related qualifications at Level 2 with the opportunity to achieve level 1 during the programme;
- have appropriate and extended experience of work with a suitable employer;
- have extended experience of work which contributed directly to the coursework of the chosen qualification; and
- prepare for and be offered clear possible progression routes to an Apprenticeship after 16.

### Key findings

- In terms of the overall achievement<sup>1</sup>, 78 per cent of all YA participants<sup>2</sup> had achieved five or more A\* to C GCSE grades or equivalent, while 22 per cent had not achieved this Level 2 threshold. This was higher than among all learners nationally (64 %);
- The majority (85 %) of YA programme qualifications at Level 2<sup>3</sup> that young people who completed<sup>4</sup> the YA programme took, were achieved;

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<sup>1</sup> Achievement in the qualifications taken through the YA programme and other qualifications

<sup>2</sup> 'Participants' includes all young people who embarked on the YA programme, including those who subsequently discontinued

<sup>3</sup> (qualifications identified by the sector as being required for the YA programme)

<sup>4</sup> 'Completed' includes all those young people who completed the YA programme and excludes those who discontinued before the end of Year 11

- In their achievement of five A\* to C GCSE grades or equivalent including mathematics and English, 43 per cent of all YA participants achieved this compared with 48 per cent nationally;
- For learners who *completed* the YA programme, 87 per cent achieved five or more A\* to C GCSE grades or equivalent; and 48 per cent achieved five or more A\* to C GCSE grades or equivalent including English and mathematics;
- Learners who completed Cohort 3 of the YA 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<sup>5</sup>; and
- Of those completing the YA programme and for whom destination is known, the majority (95 per cent) progressed into further education or training and 19 per cent had progressed into an Apprenticeship.

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<sup>5</sup> when the effect of prior attainment and other background factors are taken into account

## **Aims of the research**

The evaluation aims to assess the extent to which the YA Programme has fulfilled its national aims and objectives and to inform future policy. Key objectives are to identify the outcomes of the programme for individual learners in terms of attainment and destinations and assess as far as possible how these have been achieved.

## **Research methods**

Details of the young people who participated in Cohort 3 of the YA programme (2006 to 2008) were provided voluntarily by partnerships. This included details of the qualification taken and location of study, the extent of their work experience, whether they discontinued before the end of Year 11 and their achievements and destinations after completing the programme.

This information was then matched to the National Pupil Database (NPD), which provided details of learners' achievement on the YA programme, and their overall achievement and background characteristics of participants. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multi-level modelling.

The analysis of outcomes is based on details of around 2000 learners, which represents around 68 per cent of the 2,922 learners who were identified by 116 Lead Partners in the baseline as participating in the YA programme.

## **Attainment outcomes for Cohort 3 of YA participants**

### **Achievement of qualifications taken as part of the YA programme**

The majority (85 %) of YA programme qualifications at Level 2 (qualifications identified by the sector as being required for the YA programme), taken by young people who completed the programme, were achieved and nearly three quarters (73 %) of Level 1 qualifications were achieved. The proportion of qualifications achieved at entry level, or where the level was unknown, was lower (59 %). However, such qualifications are often offered as optional supplementary qualifications for young people participating in the programme and are not necessarily a core element of the programme.

Analysis of whether young people achieved the qualification that they took through the YA programme showed there were no statistically significant differences between those who achieved or did not achieve the qualification in terms of gender, recognition for action on the register of Special Educational Needs, or ethnicity. Young people who were eligible for free school meals were

significantly less likely to have achieved a qualification (76 % compared with 85% of all participants).

Further analysis which takes into account the effect of qualification types, pupil background and school-level characteristics was undertaken. This showed that female learners, those taking a BTEC First certificate or an Applied GCSE were significantly more likely to achieve the qualification that they took through the YA programme. In addition, those who pursued administration-related and engineering-related qualifications (two of the YA programme sectors) had a greater probability of achieving the qualifications that they took through the YA programme, than similar learners taking subjects in other sectors.

YA pupils studied in the following sectors: motor industry, business administration, art and design, performing arts, engineering, science, health and social care, hospitality, sports management, leadership and coaching, textiles, construction, hairdressing, and retail.

### **Overall achievement**

YA participants take non-GCSE qualifications as part of the YA programme. In order to make a comparison between the achievement of YA participants and other learners it is necessary to include these equivalent qualifications which are assigned a point score by QCDA. When the qualifications that learners achieved through the YA programme were combined with their other achievements at key stage 4, it emerged that 78 per cent of all YA participants<sup>6</sup> had achieved five or more A\* to C GCSE grades or equivalent, while 22 per cent had not achieved this Level 2 threshold. This compares favourably to 63 per cent in YA schools and 64 per cent nationally.

When learners' achievement of English and mathematics GCSEs is included, 43 per cent of YA participants achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C. This compares slightly unfavourably to 45 per cent of their peers in YA schools and 48 per cent nationally.

Analysis which takes into account the effect of prior attainment and other individual and school-level characteristics was undertaken to explore the achievement of young people who participated in the YA programme, compared to similar learners in the same schools. It is worth noting that there are a variety of other influences and factors that might affect young people's achievement which are not accounted for in the analysis. Examples include their attitudes or experiences, for example motivation or parental support.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Participants' includes all young people who embarked on the YA programme, including those who subsequently discontinued

The analysis revealed that learners who completed<sup>7</sup> the third cohort of the YA 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<sup>8</sup>.

The difference between YA programme participants and non-participants in the total points achieved at key stage 4 is smaller when the analysis includes the effect of those who embark on the YA programme and discontinue before the end of Year 11. Such young people achieved significantly less well than they would have if they had not embarked on the YA programme and this affects the attainment of the cohort as a whole. Young people who embark on the YA programme, and may or may not have completed it, attained 66 points more on average compared to similar learners who did not embark on the programme

Those with lower levels of prior attainment among YA programme participants appeared to gain even more at key stage 4, relative to those with similar levels of attainment who did not participate in the YA programme.

Young people who participated in the YA programme also achieved more points in their eight highest grades achieved (15 points) than might have been predicted given their prior attainment and other background characteristics. This figure is greater (26 points) when restricted to pupils embarking on and completing the programme.

To illustrate the achievement of those who took part in the YA programme compared to those who did not, a 'typical' learner was defined. This 'typical' student has the characteristics of the majority of YA learners nationally. This analysis takes into account the effect of various influences such as prior attainment, gender and the school attended so, in contrast to the figure of 43 per cent achieving five A\* to C grades including mathematics and English, reported earlier, it compares 'like with like'. This shows that a 'typical' learner at a school that was not involved in the YA programme had a 32 per cent probability of achieving five A\* to C GCSEs or equivalent including mathematics and English whereas a typical YA learner had a 28 per cent probability. However, the

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<sup>7</sup> 'Completed' includes all those young people who completed the YA programme and excludes those who discontinued before the end of Year 11

<sup>8</sup> A typical YA learner is defined to illustrate the analysis by providing an example of what the outcomes are for a YA participant who has the characteristics of the majority of pupils nationally. In this analysis a typical young person is white, male, not recognised for action on the register of SEN and attends a mixed school that is comprehensive to 18 and not a specialist school. The analysis compares the outcomes for the 'typical' YA learner with a 'typical' non-YA learner who is defined as similar in these respects but did not participate in the YA programme.

difference in this probability is smaller than was the case in Cohort 2 where there was a ten percentage point difference compared to a four percentage point difference in Cohort 3.

So while all young people who participated in the YA programme achieved more points overall at the end of Year 11 than might be predicted, they were less likely to achieve five A\* to C GCSEs or equivalent grades including mathematics and English than similar learners.

### **Destinations after Year 11 for Cohort 3 of YA participants**

Lead partners provided details of the post-16 destinations of participants in Cohort 3 of the YA programme. Findings reflect those for whom a destination was known.

Of those whose destination is known, the majority (95 %) of young people who completed the YA programme progressed into further education or training and a fifth (19 %) had progressed into an Apprenticeship. This level of Apprenticeship progression is comparable to the previous two cohorts (21 % in Cohort 1 and 22 % in Cohort 2).

Young people who had discontinued their involvement in the YA programme before the end of Year 11 had a significantly lower probability of progressing into further education and training than similar learners who had not discontinued.

Young people who had completed the YA programme in the hairdressing, construction, motor industry and engineering sectors were more likely to have chosen an Apprenticeship post-16 than those in other sectors. Of those young people who progressed into further education and training 67 per cent of young people in hairdressing, 47 per cent of those in the motor industry, 37 per cent of those in construction and 32 per cent of those in engineering had embarked on an Apprenticeship post-16.

If you would like to read the full research findings you can download the report at the following link –

<http://www.ypla.gov.uk/aboutus/ourwork/funding/curriculumqualifications/young-apprenticeships/>

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