

EVALUATING WORK READINESS PROGRAMS IN MERTON

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Abstract

This project, completed in conjunction with Commonsense Community Development Trust, studied the current work readiness programs available to residents of the London borough of Merton who are 16 to 24 years old. These programs are intended to transition young people into employment after secondary school. After analyzing the responses compiled from local program directors, employers, and participants, we made recommendations to the Economic Wellbeing Group on ways to improve participation in and practices of Merton's work readiness programs.

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Authorship Page

Our project team wrote this report utilizing a group approach. Each member individually wrote multiple components of each section. We then revised all writing as a group to reach a satisfactory level. Because we followed these methods, there is no single author or editor for each section. As a result, each group member made equal contributions to the writing of this report.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Authorship Page	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Executive Summary	ix
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review	3
<i>General History of Youth Employment in England</i>	<i>3</i>
Post World War II Policies.....	4
Transition from Education to the Work Force	5
The Evolution of ‘Skill’	6
<i>Education</i>	<i>7</i>
Post-secondary Education Opportunities	8
Promoting Further Education and Training.....	9
<i>Work Readiness Programs</i>	<i>13</i>
Training Programs.....	13
Apprenticeships.....	13
Work Volunteering.....	18
Work Experience.....	19
Traineeships	20
Qualification Providers	21
<i>Employer Engagement with Young People</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Successful Work Readiness Programs</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Merton: Background, Economy and Work Readiness Initiatives</i>	<i>24</i>
Youth Unemployment.....	27
Work Readiness Programs and Policies.....	30
<i>Perceptions Surrounding Work Readiness Programs</i>	<i>32</i>
Chapter Three: Methodology	34
<i>Objective One: Understand the history, development, and support of the work readiness programs in London and Merton.</i>	<i>34</i>
Identified and contacted participants.....	34
Developed Interview Questions and Script.....	35
Conducted Interviews.....	35
Analyzed Data.....	36
<i>Objective Two: Assess the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing Merton’s work readiness programs.</i>	<i>36</i>
Identified and Contacted Participants.....	36
Developed the Interview Questions and Script	37
Conducted the Interview	37
Analyzed the Data	37

<i>Objective Three: Identify the perspectives of program participants.</i>	37
Identified and Contacted Participants for Interviews and Focus Groups	38
Developed the Focus Group and Interview	38
Conducted the Focus Group and Interview	39
Analyzed the Data from Focus Groups	39
<i>Objective Four: Recommend program improvements that will better prepare Merton’s young people for the work force.</i>	39
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis	41
<i>Education</i>	41
<i>Economic Status and Its Implications</i>	42
<i>Young People</i>	43
Prior Preparation	43
Motivation	44
<i>Work Readiness Programs</i>	46
Opportunities Available	46
Training Providers	46
Apprenticeships	48
Work Experience	49
Work Volunteering	50
<i>Employers</i>	51
Chapter Five: Conclusions	56
Chapter Six: Recommendations	57
<i>Awareness of Work Readiness Programs</i>	57
Step-by-step Procedure to Enter Work Readiness Program	57
Implement a Work Readiness Program Database	57
Implement a Community Website	57
Bringing Retired Workers and Young People Together	58
<i>Education</i>	58
Outreach Program in Secondary Schools	58
Educate Parents about Work Readiness	58
Required Guidance Sessions in Secondary Education	59
Guidance Department Should Promote Work Readiness Programs	59
<i>Training Providers and Programs</i>	59
One to One Support during Training Programs	59
Goal-Based Programs	59
Asset-Focused Approach	60
Incentive Programs for Young People	60
Collaboration between Training Providers	60
Incentivize Collaboration with Employers	60
<i>Apprenticeships</i>	60
Educate and Engage Secondary School Students through Assemblies	60
Implement Reduced-hour Apprenticeships	61
<i>Work Experience</i>	61
Require Short Term Work Experience Prior to an Apprenticeship	61
Continue Student Choice in Work Experience Field	61
<i>Work Volunteering</i>	62
Campaign for Work Volunteering Opportunities	62

<i>Employers</i>	62
Educate and Support Employers	62
Utilize Employer to Employer Relationships.....	62
Provide Information during Business Registration	62
<i>National Policy</i>	63
JSA benefit change for those training or volunteering	63
Pay-by-results upon placement in employment	63
Third-party recruitment agency	63
Employer council	64
Parents responsible for 16-18 year olds in training	64
Incentivize Hiring Young People without a University Degree.....	64
References	65
Interview Subjects	70
Focus Groups Subjects	70
Appendix I	71
Appendix II	76
Appendix III	78
Appendix IV	80
Appendix V	85
Appendix VI	86
Appendix VII	88
Appendix VIII	89
Appendix IX	92
Appendix X	93

List of Tables

Table 1: Colleges in England.....	9
Table 2: Participation in Work-based Learning	10
Table 3: Educational Structure.....	76

List of Figures

Figure 1: Employment rate of young people not in education or training.....	11
Figure 2: Apprenticeships as a Proportion of Employees in Engineering	14
Figure 3: Proposed Traineeship	21
Figure 4: Merton's Location in Greater London	24
Figure 5: Merton's Main City Centers	25
Figure 6: Merton's Job Distribution	26
Figure 7: Hourly Pay by Industry in the U.K.....	27
Figure 8: Unemployment in Merton	27
Figure 9: Proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET.....	28
Figure 10: JSA Claimants for 16-24 year olds.....	28
Figure 11: JSA Claimant Rates in Merton.....	71
Figure 12: Political Map of Merton	72
Figure 13: Unemployment Rates 16+ year olds	72
Figure 14: Available Jobs in Merton by Ward.....	73

Executive Summary

Young people's role in the work force began to change in England during the 19th century. These youth initially acted as a source of income for their families, but no longer were able to in the late 1800s with the introduction of child labor and education regulation. Secondary education began to play a significant role in developing the students' skills, and England continues to offer different pathways for its youth to further their education and training post-secondary school. Despite the available opportunities, the current education system fails to provide young people with the skills they need to enter into the job market; thus, many youth are unskilled post-graduation and become unemployed.

Recent governments have focused on policy reforms, which encourage young people to utilize work readiness programs as a viable pathway to employment. Participation in these programs allows young people to build upon their skills and experiences to prepare themselves properly for employment in the future. Currently, society encourages the academic route of college and university while viewing these work readiness programs as an inferior alternative. As a result, many young people are uneducated and thus unaware of these opportunities. Each program offers its own form of training, but they all focus on the employability of the young person to ensure they are fit for the workplace.

Merton, a borough in Greater London, has a progressive approach in guiding their local youth into the workforce. Merton has a number of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) and require an extensive amount of skills training before they can enter into work-based programs such as apprenticeships, work experience, and work volunteering. One can attribute this lack of skill to several factors, including issues with education and the young person's home environment. Recent economic trends in London also limit a young person's ability to find employment or participate in skill-training programs. Other young people who do have the skills required to enter into the workforce are incapable of finding a job because they lack work experience. As these individuals remain unemployed, they experience a deteriorating self-worth and self-confidence.

Merton has identified these areas of concern and has implemented a number of initiatives to address them, many of which focus on providing and promoting local work readiness programs as a viable pathway to employment. These programs include training programs, apprenticeships, work experience, or work volunteering. Although Merton has taken many

initiatives to train its youth, they have yet to assess the effectiveness of its programs based on the perspectives of the programs' stakeholders.

The goal of this project was to evaluate work readiness programs in the borough of Merton in order to provide recommendations for future program improvements following four objectives: (1) understand the development and support of the work readiness programs in London and Merton, (2) assess the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing Merton's work readiness programs, (3) identify the perspectives of program participants, and (4) provide recommendations for program improvements that will better prepare Merton's young people to enter the workforce. We fulfilled these objectives by conducting in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders, including members of the Greater London Authority, local authorities, organizations for implementing and delivering readiness programs, and past and present program participants.

After synthesizing all the information gathered, the team compared the various stakeholders' opinions and expectations. We identified the major factors that affect and influence the performance of local programs, which include the following six key areas: education, economic status and its implications, experience and motivations of young people, youth's exposure to opportunities, work readiness programs, and employers' concerns.

Merton's school curriculum provides the minimum amount of work experience exposure and does not educate its students in all opportunities available for post-secondary school. A few local employers visit students at school to discuss about their company and possible positions available to young people; however, only a few employers reach out to schools, providing only a portion of Merton's youth with this useful information. In addition, secondary school staff pushes students towards university and do not inform young people of other pathways to employment, such as the variety of work readiness programs. Not all young people benefit from attending university; therefore, it is extremely important that schools emphasize work readiness programs as a viable alternative.

A second key area was the national economy's effect on Merton's job market, which hinders young people from gaining employment. There are considerably fewer jobs in general compared to past years, further displacing young people out of the work force as higher skilled people are occupying lower skilled jobs. The 2008 recession caused a decrease in overall spending, impeding employers from hiring the unqualified or under qualified youth.

Another identified finding is the trend of Merton's young people lacking work experience. Gaining a part time job while in education is increasingly difficult as employers expect applicants to have past work experience. These young people, however, cannot gain work experience because employers are not willing to hire them. Long-term unemployment can lead to a decrease in self-confidence and motivation. Some youth have multiple generations of family members who are unemployed, which decreases their motivation to enter into the workforce. Students who are aspiring to move into a stable career do understand the need for work experience and are taking a practical approach to locate work readiness opportunities.

The fourth category of findings focuses on young people's limited exposure to work readiness programs. As stated previously, secondary education tends to promote university over other options available upon graduation. The first introduction young people have to a work readiness program is if, and when, they sign on for unemployment benefits at a job center. Those who are not claiming benefits and are self-motivated often use the Internet to locate training and work experience opportunities.

The project team also found many deficiencies with local training programs and providers, apprenticeships, work experience, and work volunteering. Some training providers focus mainly on receiving payment for taking on learners. Completion rates motivate these training providers rather than ensuring the lessons provided are effectively training the participants. In addition, there is a significant difference between recruitment strategies used by public and private training programs. Private programs receive funding from the government solely based on their ability to get young people into an apprenticeship or employment; and as a result, they tend to take on young people who are closest to possessing the skills required to enter into the workforce.

We found that even though apprenticeships are the most advertised and encouraged work readiness programs within Merton, residents are unclear of the differences between the traditional and modern apprenticeship schemes. Additionally, the wages offered by apprenticeships are significantly lower than the national minimum wage, deterring young people's participation.

The last group of our findings relates to employers. Employers either have too little or too much information regarding the structure and benefits of work readiness programs, which muddles the entire process. Additionally, some employers have negative perceptions of hiring

young people because some youth may not exhibit the best attitude in regards to work. As the current workforce ages, however, employers are becoming more interested in hiring young people. Work readiness programs allow employers to train young people to fit the needs of their respective companies as well as pass down knowledge from one generation of workers to the next.

Based on our findings, combined with an understanding of the current situation in Merton, the project team made recommendations in several key areas, including awareness of work readiness programs, education, work readiness programs, and employers.

Our team suggests that Merton implements and advertises a community website. We suggest developing a step-by-step procedure that explains how to enter into each work readiness program and post each procedure on the website. The young person using the website can then understand how to get involved and what to expect from the programs. Merton should then create a database that includes providers and the types of skills training offered locally, exposing young people and employers to available opportunities.

Additionally, we suggest developing a program to bring retired workers and young people together, with the intention of instilling young people with the values possessed by older generations. Many retired workers understand the value of work and can translate work's associated sense of self-pride and identity to younger generations. Young people who have generations of unemployed family members at home may especially benefit from this pairing.

Educating both parents and young people is extremely important to the success of work readiness programs. The team suggests developing an outreach program where past participants can share their experiences, both in the programs and current work force, with secondary school students. Additionally, schools should begin to educate parents about work readiness opportunities rather than just university.

The project team also focused on improving the effectiveness of training programs. The combination of realistic goals and an individualized, asset-focused approach are key to allowing participants to more easily understand the material while building their self-esteem. We suggest training providers utilize these methods to enable participants to build confidence through small, frequent accomplishments while simultaneously adding to their current knowledge. We also found collaboration amongst training program providers beneficial because it allows programs to

have more resources, a greater number of potential participants, and a larger collection of knowledge.

Each work readiness program requires specific areas of improvement. Merton should educate secondary school students about apprenticeships through assemblies. Current assemblies regarding information about college and university should begin to incorporate work readiness programs as a parallel pathway to employment. Additionally, the team suggests Merton offers reduced hour apprenticeships to enable carers, young mothers, and other time-constrained young people to participate.

Our team also recommends a required work experience placement prior to participating in an apprenticeship, allowing the young person to confirm that the industry is their desired career path before investing a significant amount of time into an apprenticeship.

To increase work volunteering participation from young people within Merton, we suggest the Economic Wellbeing Group campaigns the benefits of volunteering and its ability to help local young people become work ready. Merton residents still view these programs as free labor, so marketing the benefits may help change the perceptions within the community.

The last area of recommendations focuses on employers. Employers with successful work readiness programs should reach out to employers not utilizing these programs and share the benefits of training young people. In order to distribute information more effectively, the Chamber of Commerce should provide businesses with information on how to get involved with the work readiness programs available in Merton during registration.

The project team feels confident that these recommendations can aid Merton's current approach in improving local work readiness programs to meet the needs of its young people.

Chapter One: Introduction

Youth unemployment has been a social issue in England beginning in the 19th century. As education advanced and the work force began to change with industrialization, communication and employability skills became more important. Upon mastering these skills, young people could move smoothly into the workforce. Over the past few decades, however, education as well as social and economic factors have not properly guided young people into jobs.

Recent economic conditions have exacerbated unemployment in London, resulting in a rise in the number of young people on unemployment benefits. A number of factors attribute to this increase, including deficiencies in the education system, volatile job market conditions, and changing nature around the meaning of work. The education system provides basic knowledge to students but fails to provide soft skills, such as communication and hands-on work training that employers deem necessary for hiring. Socioeconomic factors also contribute to young people not prepared for the work force. In many places in London, there is a generational unemployment problem. Without proper guidance and support, many young people have no archetype of a working class citizen and thus follow a similar pattern.

To address the disconnect between education and the work force, both national and local work readiness programs supply young people with an opportunity to gain the required skills to successfully enter into the workforce. The programs also provide guidance to motivate and support the young person throughout the program. Nationally, the most highly publicized work readiness program is the Modern Apprenticeship. While apprenticeships have historic origins, recent national governments have rebranded them to fit the needs of the modern job market. Other work readiness programs, such as work volunteering, work experience, and training programs, have developed to accompany apprenticeships to better prepare young people for employment.

Merton, a borough in London, mirrors the high youth unemployment conditions of Greater London along with the trends that affect the unemployment rates. To better address high youth unemployment, Merton is working to enhance local work readiness programs, which requires an evaluation of the existing programs to understand their successes and failures. Naomi Martin, the director of Merton's Commonsense Community Development Trust, sponsored the project team to assess local programs using the opinions of key stakeholders including

participants, program providers, and employers. To collect the stakeholders' opinions, our team conducted research following four distinct objectives. First, we developed an understanding of the history, development, and support of work readiness programs in London and Merton through interviews with members of the Greater London Authority, Merton Council, and Merton Chamber of Commerce. These interviews provided context for local programs' objectives and motivations. We then assessed the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing local work readiness initiatives. Interviews with local employers and local training providers presented information that developed the project team's understanding of Merton's current programs as well as perspectives about their effectiveness. Next, we conducted interviews and focus groups with past and present program participants aged 16 to 24 in order to provide context on the programs' ability to meet the needs and expectations of young people. We collected all of the stakeholders' opinions, synthesized and analyzed the information, and recommended potential ways to improve the work readiness training provided in Merton. We made recommendations to improve Merton's participation in and delivery of current programs targeting the 16-24 year old age group, focusing on apprenticeships, work volunteering, work experience and training programs.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following section examines the educational, social, and economic issues contributing to youth unemployment. It also addresses the evolving ideas of work and skill as well as the need for today's training, in any form, to address these changes to properly equip young people for the workforce. The section overviews many types of work readiness programs and current initiatives, concluding with a profile of Merton and its approach towards readying its 16-24 year old residents for work.

General History of Youth Employment in England

In the early 19th Century, roughly 31 percent of people living in London were unemployed. Children in working class families, regardless of their parents' employment status, entered the workforce at an appropriate age. With children working at an early age, the family had an additional source of income and experienced a brief period of economic stability (Childs, 1991, p. 4). According to Hopkins (1994), children found themselves employed in "two major forms of employment in the national economy, agricultural work and workshop industry" (p. 11). Depending on the industry, children began work when they were physically capable of completing the job's tasks. Young people entered into the agriculture industry at ages seven or eight. In the workshop industry, children began working much earlier, between the ages of three and four, since this work did not require a high level of physical capabilities (p. 23).

During the late 1800s, the English government began creating policies regulating education and child labor. According to Childs (1991), "the late Victorian and Edwardian period saw great changes in the nature of the juvenile labour force, primarily due to developments in education and changes in the industrial structure of the country" (p. 52). The working class population experienced a period of enormous growth during the 19th century, instigating higher rates of social discontent. Hopkins (1994) explains that "education was thus to be applied as a social emollient, not so much perhaps as the result of cold-blooded calculations, but rather as a common-sense and practical way of dealing with new social problems, and with the minimum of government intervention and expenditure" (p. 130). Hopkins (1994) asserts that England used education not as a means of creating a more skilled work force but instead as a convenient method of the government for 'controlling the masses'.

In 1860, the government required children to receive an elementary education up through the age of eight. The Agricultural Children Act of 1873 followed, prohibiting children under the age of eight from working in agriculture (p. 145). Secondary education became mandatory towards the late 19th century, and the rapid development of educational policies continued through the early 20th century.

By the beginning of the 20th century, England no longer used education as a way to control the masses. The English Parliament passed the 1902 Education Act, also known as the Balfour Act, to maintain England's standing in world trade. Other European schools "were giving priority to engineering and science" due to the rise of industrialization in the 19th century, ultimately making Britain's traditional 'gentlemen' model of education less significant (Gillard, 2011). England, in an attempt to overcome the economic competition, altered its curriculum to incorporate the less traditional areas of study through the Balfour Act. The act gave borough councils control over their schools through local education authorities (LEAs). It also encouraged LEAs to subsidize the funding for existing secondary schools and to develop new secondary 'grammar' schools, which the LEAs maintained.

While young people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were becoming better educated, Brockmann, Clark, and Winch (2010) state that "the practical, work-based element and the educational elements were never adequately integrated, making for a division between knowledge acquired inside and outside the workplace, one which even sharpened as technical instruction rapidly expanded" (p. 115). The youth did not gain the necessary skills to enter directly into the workforce post-secondary school and thus became unemployed.

Post World War II Policies

World War II brought a period of low unemployment, but the post-war period threatened major socio-economic dislocation. *The British White Paper on Employment Policy* of 1944 was "concerned primarily with the prevention of mass unemployment in the post-reconversion period. It [analyzed] the general conditions required to maintain a high and stable level of employment and [proposed] specific measures to prevent a fall in total expenditure and hence in employment" ("The British White Paper", 1944). Fortunately, unemployment rates stabilized at three percent post World War II (Bogdanor, 2011).

Clement Attlee became the Prime Minister of England in 1945 and created socialist policies to promote nationalization, “which he called . . . the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange” (Bogdanor, 2011). Attlee focused on providing full employment, universal health care, and a welfare program for the unemployed. He defined full employment as an unemployment rate lower than three percent, and this economic benchmark lasted until the 1970s (“Why did Britain have full employment between 1945 and say 1975 but not thereafter?”, n.d.).

In 1975, power shifted from the Labour to Conservative party when Margaret Thatcher took office. Because of the rising rates in inflation and unemployment, Prime Minister Thatcher declared government had no role in managing the rate of unemployment. Instead, employers and unions should determine the subsequent unemployment rates (Bogdanor, 2012).

When Prime Minister Tony Blair took office in 1997, he immediately took action to address unemployment rates. Although approximately five percent when he took office, one of his main projects was to lower unemployment levels. Reitan (2003) discusses Blair’s “New Deal,” which “required young people aged eighteen to twenty-four who were receiving unemployment benefits to enter into jobs, full-time education or training, or public service activities. If they refused to participate, they would lose their benefits. The pay would exceed the benefits received on the dole, and employers would be subsidized to provide jobs” (p. 188).

With unemployment consistently arising as a political policy concern, youth unemployment is often a topic of political debate. Recently, both parties have recognized that employing young people is a significant concern. While the parties disagree on possible courses of action, they all recognize that it is a problem, allowing the trial of potential solutions.

Current policies surrounding youth unemployment are similar to Tony Blair’s “New Deal” in that they actively try to provide skills and future employment to those who are currently out of work. Despite these policies, many young people still lack necessary employability skills upon leaving education. Social and economic factors also contribute to this deficiency, thus defining the struggle in transition from education into the workforce.

Transition from Education to the Work Force

According to Vickerstaff (2003), the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s were a “‘golden age’ of unproblematic transitions . . . when, by implication, young people easily made the related

transitions from school to work” (p. 270). This transition was easier than today because England’s mid-20th century economy was relatively stable (Pollock, 1997). The number of jobs and training opportunities was relatively high, and young people most commonly moved directly from education into a full time job. Although education may not have provided sufficient skills for entering the workforce, young people were able to acquire jobs due to the large number of opportunities available.

This ‘golden age’ of youth transition between education and the workforce ended in 1970, and the new era created a stigma in which it was unacceptable for young people to be economically inactive (Bynner & Parsons, 2002, p. 292). Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 experienced more pressure to stay economically active through further education or training programs. This pressure arose primarily because the government stopped providing the unemployed youth with any benefits due to their recognition that “failure to gain the critical work experience and job training after leaving school is permanently damaging not only with respect to employment, but also in making a satisfactory adjustment to adult life” (Bynner & Parsons, 2002, p. 291).

The lack of training for the youth post-1970s marked a period of “uncertainties, fluctuations, discontinuities, reversals and seesaws”, contrasting with the “one-step transition to work” that working age individuals experienced from the 1940s to 1970s (p. 275). While present-day young people receive a more comprehensive education compared to those who attended school in the early 1900s, they no longer receive hands-on training or soft skills coaching in communication and presentation. As a result, society considers many of today’s young people as unskilled; therefore, they cannot attain a job directly out of school.

National and local governments are adjusting and designing work readiness programs, such as apprenticeships, work volunteering, training programs, and work experience, to train the unskilled youth and to aid in their transition from education into the workforce.

The Evolution of ‘Skill’

The previously identified mismatch between skills attained through education and those required for the workforce assumes that young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are ‘unskilled’; however, the definition of skill has changed with the evolving job market in England. One must understand the altered definition in order to assess the degree of skill that

these young people possess. Policy makers who focus on youth unemployment and education reform should also understand this evolving definition, so they can ensure policies addressing work readiness programs are most effective.

According to Payne (2000), “the relevant policy documents reveal that what policy makers actually have in mind when they talk about ‘skill’ is considerably broader now than in the past, when it tended to be equated with the manual craft worker and technologist” (p. 333). As industry developed, the ability to communicate with clients and coworkers began to determine one's ability to obtain a job.

The current definition of skill includes “a veritable galaxy of ‘soft’, ‘generic’, ‘transferable’, ‘social’, and ‘interactional’ skills, frequently indistinguishable from personal characteristics, behaviours and attitudes, which in the past would rarely have been conceived of as skills” (p.354). Payne also discusses the need for education and training reform to develop “a well educated, highly skilled, and flexible worker-citizen, by offering all students an entitlement to a mandatory core of general education within a unified post-14 qualifications framework” (p. 367). Educational policies currently being implemented aim to achieve this goal.

The modern structure of work readiness programs adjusts for the changes to the current skills required for work. Programs developed in the past, including apprenticeships and work volunteering programs, have fulfilled different roles because the job market required a different set of skills than it does at present. The current work readiness programs should provide training that sufficiently covers all aspects of today’s job market, including soft skills such as communication, as well as hands on training.

Education

This section provides background information regarding the training provided to the 16-24 year old age group by England’s current education system. As education dictates the skills taught to the average young person, an analysis of its content and structure provides insight into the scope of work readiness programs. Appendix II provides a detailed description of the English educational structure and types of opportunities available post-secondary education.

Post-secondary Education Opportunities

The quality of school is variable across England based upon system structure and socio-economic demographics. After students take their GCSEs¹ in secondary school at the age of 16, education is no longer compulsory, and students either continue their education or enter the workforce; failure in doing so results in unemployment.

To minimize truancy rates in secondary school, government utilizes monetary fines for the parents of those students who miss school regularly. These fines start at £100 and increase upon subsequent offences. The parents of delinquent students can face punishments as severe as imprisonment if their children under 16 continue to miss school purposefully for an extended period (N. Martin, personal communication, March 26, 2013; M. Cuomo, personal communication, April 4, 2013). With parents held responsible, children feel compelled to go to school to keep their parents out of trouble. On the other hand, students may continue to skip school out of spite if they have a bad relationship with their parents (Sophie, personal communication, April 11, 2013).

At the age of 14, students can choose to leave secondary school to attend vocational colleges. The most common type are university technical colleges (UTCs), which are institutions that specialize in engineering, construction, and business to combine academic and vocational trades by integrating academic study and practical learning. At UTCs, students prepare for general GCSEs along with technical qualifications. Universities sponsor these colleges in cooperation with local employers who offer work experience to students (“University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools”, 2013). Students have the option to attend these vocational schools up to the age of 19.

In addition to vocational colleges, there are a variety of opportunities for young people to continue their education or training post-secondary school. Colleges, for example, provide training for those who either want to move onto university or simply wish to further their education. Typically, college students pursue A-level qualifications, which focus on academic learning, or similar BTEC qualifications centered on vocational learning. In order for students to

¹ In key stage four, tutors prepare students for the national qualifications known as the General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE). The GCSEs have different subject areas, and students must select five of the subject areas on which to focus their Year 11 studies. Students take their selected GCSE subject exams at the end of Year 11 and must achieve a score of A*-C to be awarded their certificate for that particular subject.

attend university, they need to have completed some A-levels accordingly. Colleges also offer help with curriculum vitae (CV) writing and employability training since college students have a stronger understanding of why they should possess these skills.

Colleges are free to organize their structure according to the needs of individuals, businesses and local communities (Association of Colleges, 2013). As shown in Table 1, England has 341 colleges where students can continue in further education with different areas of specialty.

Table 1: Colleges in England (College key facts, 2012)

 Colleges in England	341
General Further Education Colleges	219
Sixth Form Colleges	94
Land-based Colleges	15
Art, Design and Performing Arts Colleges	3
Specialist Designated Colleges	10

Colleges constitute essential means of further education as well as training and are relatively accessible to young people. Encouraging statistics show that “every year colleges educate and train over 3 million people... [and] 45,000 16 to 18-year-olds started an apprenticeship through their local College” (“College key facts”, 2012, p. 2).

There are different forms of college across London, with the two main types being sixth form and further education. The difference between these institutions is the variety of topics offered. Sixth forms tend to focus on A-levels while further education colleges allow opportunities for young people to achieve NVQs, BTECs, and A-levels. Colleges, unlike secondary school, are not required for the youth to attend; and as a result, they have a different learning environment quite similar to the university level (“Sixth-form Colleges”, 2013).

Promoting Further Education and Training

Despite the post-secondary education and training opportunities, youth unemployment rates continue to rise and participation in further education and training courses continues to decline.

Launched in 2000, a government agency, known as Connexions, targeted young people aged 13 to 19 and provided guidance on several topics, including career advice and further

education. Each borough had several ‘Connexions Centres’ that provided information and support to the area’s youth as well as directly to local schools. The government ultimately eliminated the program in 2011 after studies showed that young people were unclear of Connexions’ role. It also received mixed reviews from some students who were surveyed (Hibbert, 2010, p. 13). The elimination of Connexions has left no state-funded careers advice and guidance service in England’s schools.

Following the program’s elimination, the Mayor of London launched an educational inquiry in November 2011 that assessed London’s education system for areas requiring improvement. The report focused on areas that have “the greatest effect on young people’s lives” such as competing in the global marketplace and improving learning through better teaching methods (Greater London Authority, 2012, p. 5). Some recommendations include connecting schools with local businesses, improving the delivery of information to students, and ensuring the training provided through education is meeting the needs of businesses (p. 8). The Education Inquiry encourages the Mayor of London to start taking action to ensure that London’s youth can find employment when leaving education.

Table 2 illustrates that the 16-18 year old age group has become more involved in work-based learning and part-time education over the past two years. While these participation levels have increased, the table also illustrates that young people aged 16-18 that are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) has also increased.

Table 2: Participation in Work-based Learning ("Participation in education, training, and employment by 16 to 18 year olds in England", 2011)

	16		17		18		16-18	
	end 2010	end 2011 (prov)	end 2010	end 2011 (prov)	end 2010	end 2011 (prov)	end 2010	end 2011 (prov)
Full-time education	88.0%	86.2%	75.9%	75.6%	49.4%	50.4%	70.6%	70.5%
Part-time education	4.2%	5.9%	5.1%	6.6%	5.1%	6.2%	4.8%	6.2%
Work-based learning	3.7%	3.8%	6.2%	6.3%	7.1%	7.3%	5.7%	5.8%
Education and WBL	95.5%	95.5%	86.8%	88.3%	61.3%	63.5%	80.8%	82.2%
Education and training	96.5%	96.7%	89.4%	90.7%	67.5%	69.6%	84.1%	85.4%
NEET	2.7%	2.8%	7.2%	6.7%	12.5%	14.5%	7.5%	8.1%

Alison Wolf (2011) argues that young people do not have the required skills for today’s work force (p.28). Vickerstaff (2003) echoes this concern in that educational systems no longer incorporate hands-on training (p.270). As a result, the youth now have fewer skills compared to their mid-20th century peers; thus, they are unable to attain a job directly out of secondary school,

contributing to higher rates of youth unemployment. With the young people's unemployment rates increasing, Figure 1 suggests that it is much harder today to gain employment without work-based learning.

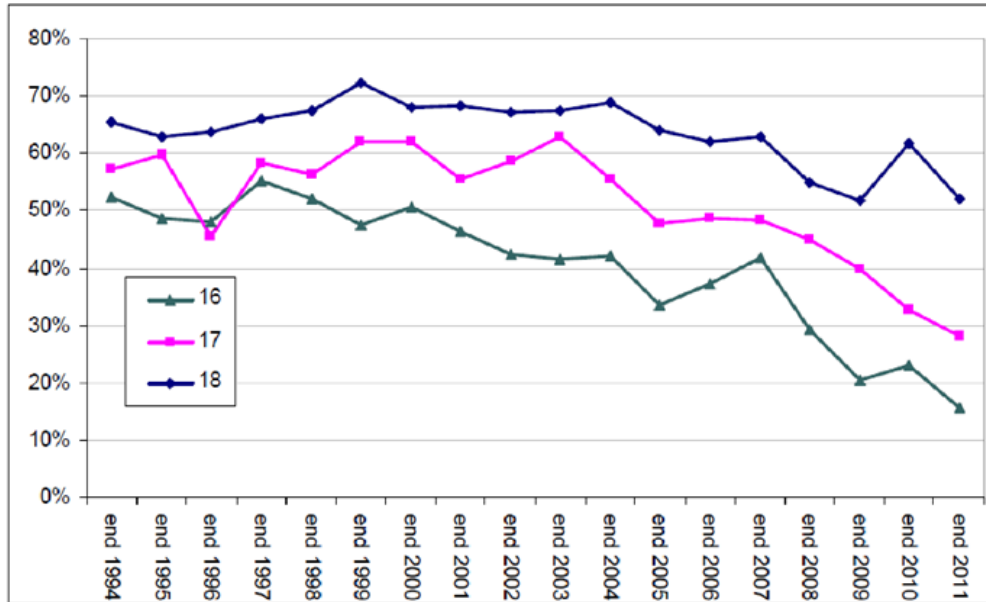


Figure 1: Employment rate of young people not in education or training ("Participation...England", 2011)

Many analysts have suggested that the high rates of unemployment among the youth result from their failure to acquire appropriate skills and qualifications. Because of these discouraging statistics, the government focuses on increasing participation rates of young people in post-secondary education and training. The programs are a resource to prevent and reduce the percentage of students who are NEET, working to improve their skills to increase their earning power in the future.

Nevertheless, since education or training is not mandatory after secondary school, a percentage of young people still do not pursue further education or training either because they are unable to participate in or unaware of the available opportunities. To address the needs of all young people, England's current government is working to create policies that integrate education and work readiness, so students, upon graduation from secondary school, are more prepared to enter the workforce.

In order to advertise work readiness programs effectively to all of London's youth, the 14-19 Reform Programme (2009) targets those who do not have the means to obtain information

easily on these programs, emphasizing England's goal of providing equal opportunities to those of different economic backgrounds and hoping to make the transition from school to the workforce much smoother. It is a "10-year program [that] aims to transform the services and opportunities available to young people by reforming qualifications, broadening the curriculum offered and ensuring the right support is in place so that every young person can learn in a way that engages and motivates them and puts them on the path to success" (p. 5).

Another educational reform is the Education and Skills Act of 2008, which increases the age that students must stay in school or educational training from 16 to 18 by 2015. By increasing the mandatory age of participation, the act provides students with more opportunities to learn the skills necessary to enter the workforce. Attendance notices will enforce the act, leading to penalties for those under the age of 18 that fail to participate (Department for Children, School, and Families, 2008, p. 2). All of England's local authorities must ensure that their young people participate in either educational training programs or school (London Borough of Merton 14-19 Partnership, n.d.).

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, implemented the Time for Action Plan in 2008. While it does focus on lowering rates of youth violence, it also focuses on education reforms such as the Mayor's Academy Programme, the Mayor's Scholars, and the creation of apprenticeships. The Mayor's Academy Programme aims to "raise skills and knowledge, support progression, and promote community learning hubs" by opening academies in the Greater London area. Through these academies, the Mayor seeks to "create beacons of academic excellence and to provide support so that students progress on to positive outcomes such as further or higher education and apprenticeships" ("Raising skills and knowledge through education in London", n.d.). The Mayor's Scholars Programme focuses on students that are currently in school and guides them through their education, either by maintaining their attendance or achieving employment upon graduation. Finally, the Mayor is working to create more apprenticeships within London. While London does house 14 percent of England's population, it only provides 7.5 percent of its apprenticeships ("Apprenticeships are great", n.d.). The Mayor hopes to create 3,000 apprenticeships appealing to young people in the upcoming years (Greater London Authority, 2009, p. 19).

Work Readiness Programs

Work readiness programs serve a vital role in providing training and experience to young people. Each type of work readiness program accommodates different individual needs. Currently, the English government is pushing apprenticeship participation through employer incentives as well as through subsidies for training providers and young people. Other opportunities, such as training programs, work volunteering, and work experience, also serve vital roles in preparing the youth for work but are not as emphasized through government policy. Work readiness program stakeholders should recognize the functionality and purpose of all programs in order to fit the needs of young people who require training.

Training Programs

Prior to the beginning of any work-related activity, a young person should possess certain skills. Training programs developed to qualify those not previously prepared to enter into a work-based program or employment. The programs are designed to teach basic knowledge and employability skills to individuals who have graduated from secondary education and are available to all individuals but specifically target England's 16-24 year old population. Some programs also target specific fields of work while others offer work placements to program participants as a means to apply the skills learned. Training programs offer written qualification exams, such as Functional Skills and NVQs that test the skills learned during the course.

Apprenticeships

History

In the 19th century, apprenticeships focused on a particular trade. Benavot (1983) describes the 19th century apprenticeship as “both distinct and informal: few were differentiated by age or ability level and there was little emphasis on formal certification and credential conferral” (p. 64). A young person could take part in an apprenticeship in two ways. One was more traditional, in that the apprentice lived with his master while being paid with the expectation of fulfilling his master’s role. The other method treated the apprentice as an employee rather than as a successor to his master (Hopkins, 1994, p. 28).

The apprenticeship system soon experienced a period of decline as industry advanced. Companies would “organize and finance ‘schools’ offering technical-vocational courses designed to train young workers in new skills” (Benavot, 1983, p. 64). This training included hands on experience, which essentially provided all the experiences that an apprenticeship would provide. When public schools began to provide a partial vocational education, apprenticeships became superfluous.

According to Fuller and Unwin (1998), “in the late 1940s and 1950s, apprenticeship numbers increased in line with the boom in manufacturing industry and its resultant impact on the service sector” (p. 156). This trend continued into the 1960s with a quarter of a million apprenticeships available in the manufacturing and construction industries (Campbell, Thomson, & Pautz, 2011, p. 367). As mass-production technology became more common, apprenticeships once again steadily declined in the 1970s (Broadberry & Crafts, 1996). Figure 2 displays just how dramatic the decline in engineering apprenticeships was during the 20th century.

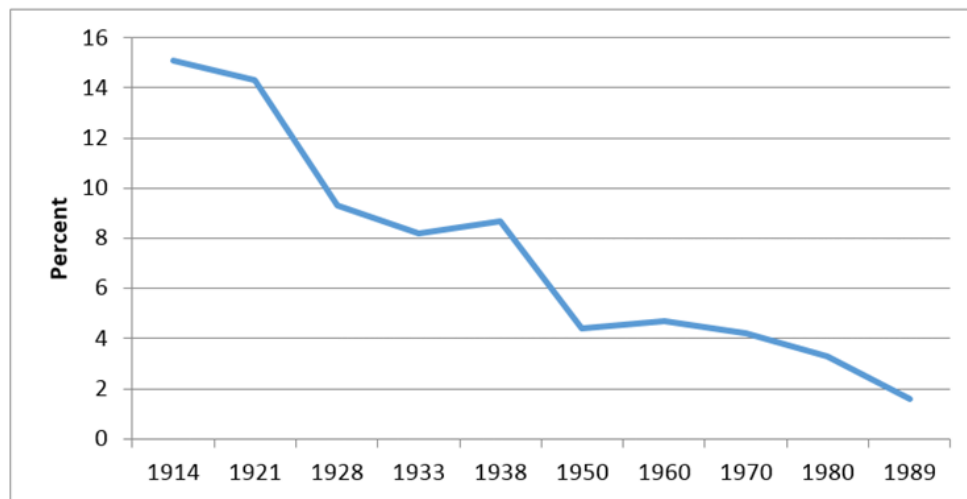


Figure 2: Apprenticeships as a Proportion of Employees in Engineering (Broadberry & Wagner, 1994)

Towards the late 20th century, more children attended post-secondary education and upon graduation, they had more opportunities available to them (p. 367). In 1983, the English government created the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which “provided work experience and training for 16- and 17-year olds, which was heavily subsidized” (p. 367). This initiative was much more attractive to employers than apprenticeships as the government funded employers to utilize the YTS (p. 367).

According to Hogarth, Gambin, and Hasluck (2012), “government-funded programmes such as YTS were poorly regarded by young people and their parents, who often perceived such schemes as supplying subsidized labour to employers that offered no guarantee of training, no guarantee of a qualification, and no guarantee of employment once the placement had come to an end” (p. 43). The government designed the Modern Apprenticeship to overcome these perceptions and create a more efficient apprenticeship program.

Modern Apprenticeship

The creation of the Modern Apprenticeship system in 1993 allowed the English government to rebrand apprenticeships to expand their training into all economic sectors and to “revitalize apprenticeship training in the traditional sectors” (Campbell, Thomson, & Pautz, 2011, p. 368). The system was a publicly funded program intended to deliver on-the-job training. The government made many changes since the modern apprenticeships’ inception, now targeting the 16-24 year old demographic although there are no age restrictions to becoming an apprentice after 16. The new program exhibits less racial and ethnic exclusivity, which accomplishes an original goal of the publicly funded system (Brockmann, Clarke, & Winch, 2010, p. 116).

Modern day apprenticeships include on-the-job training as well as classroom learning programs. Apprenticeships are also a form of employment since the apprentices are paid a per hour salary; however, the apprentice, also referred to as the learner, is the main beneficiary of the program (Richard, 2012, p. 24). The apprentice does gain essential training for a specific profession; however, what differentiates employment and an apprenticeship is the learning program. These programs consist of classes focusing on apprenticeship-specific knowledge designed to deepen the apprentice’s understanding of the work environment, thus defining apprenticeships as a form of education (p. 25).

In order to be an apprentice, the learner must be at least 16 years of age, be eligible to work in England, and not be enrolled in full-time education (“Apprenticeships”, 2013). Apprenticeships typically last twelve to eighteen months, but some can last up to four years depending upon their difficulty (S.Boucher, personal communication, March 14, 2013; “Apprenticeships”, n.d.). Every apprenticeship requires collaboration between an employer and a training provider (S.Boucher). The employer provides the apprentice with on-the-job training, and the training provider educates the apprentice with the classroom learning. The type of

apprenticeship program defines the delivery method of the learning. Some apprentices work for four days a week and attend classes at a college on the fifth day; other apprentices simultaneously work and complete the learning. Either way, the apprentice works to complete multiple units of material required of the program throughout the duration of the apprenticeship. The training provider ensures that the apprentice has completed the unit prior to continuing on to the next (E. Thistleton, personal communication, April 5, 2013).

There are three levels of apprenticeships in England: Intermediate, Advanced, and Higher. Intermediate apprenticeships are equivalent to five GCSE passes, advanced apprenticeships are equivalent to two A-level passes, and higher apprenticeships can lead to NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) Level 4 and above or a Foundation Degree. Modern apprenticeships range from traditional vocational trades to the business and service industry. Specified qualifications now divide the traditional trades, such as carpentry, into specific areas like furnishing and interiors, construction, etc.

Upon completion of the apprenticeship program, apprentices attain at least one of the following: NVQ at Level 2-5, Functional Skills qualifications, a technical certificate, and/or knowledge based qualifications such as a Higher National Certificate, a Higher National Diploma, or a Foundation Degree (“Apprenticeships”, n.d.). An individual can attain a NVQ, Functional Skills qualification, and knowledge-based qualification without participation in the apprenticeship since an individual takes a written exam to achieve them; however, a technical certificate is specific to the workplace. In order to receive the technical certificate upon completion of the apprenticeship, the training provider and employer assess the apprentice in the workplace (S.Boucher). For example, the training provider may observe a customer service apprentice making a phone call or interacting with a customer. The provider then assesses if the apprentice practiced the defining skills of the apprenticeship and awards the apprentice with the technical certification if the apprentice was successful.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services, and Skills (Ofsted) regulates any form of education or child services, including apprenticeships and the qualifications achieved at their completion. Ofsted works directly with the government to ensure the best practices are taking place within the apprenticeship programs. Ofsted inspects each program to determine its quality by using an inspection report; they publish all inspection reports on their website for public access (“Ofsted: Raising standards improving lives”, 2013).

The recruitment and creation of apprenticeships can occur in many different ways. One is through provider initiative in which the provider seeks employers who wish to ‘up skill’ their current employees. The employee’s participation allows him to receive additional training and possible qualifications (p. 24). Employers also may take the initiative to develop apprenticeships. The employer can approach a training provider with interest in taking on an apprentice (R. McCann, personal communication, March 15, 2013). The employer asks the provider to offer the learning aspect of the apprenticeship to the apprentice upon hiring. The employer then advertises the apprenticeship in hopes of filling the vacancy, while also asking the provider if they have any learners interested in participating in the apprenticeship. The provider then screens its learners to see who is most suited for the apprenticeship, referring its top learners to the employer (R. McCann). When there are apprenticeship vacancies, the employer typically advertises through local job centers or the National Apprenticeship Service².

Apprenticeships are especially attractive to employers because they can pay their apprentices £2.65 per hour, which is well below the minimum wage of £3.68. These rates are subject to change depending on the apprentice’s age, where the apprentice receives higher wages if he is over 19 or has been an apprentice for more than one year (“National Minimum Wage Rates”, n.d.). Minimum wage also increases with age.

England’s national government has implemented numerous policies to promote the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. These policies promote employer engagement with apprenticeships as well as providing more opportunities for involvement to 16-24 year olds. Appendix III details some of the more recent government policies that shape and influence the scheme. The Modern Apprenticeship system, however, still faces some major concerns. Brockmann, Clarke, and Winch (2010) argue that despite increased enrollment, the new programs do not produce high quality results. They further state that “the Apprenticeship Programme has in general failed to produce the high-quality intermediate skills base originally sought with the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship” (Fuller & Unwin, 2003).

²In 2009, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) launched to help young people become apprentices. NAS aims to “increas[e] the number of Apprenticeship opportunities and provid[e] a dedicated, responsive service for both employers and learners” (About Us, 2012a). Their website facilitates communication between employers and prospective apprentices. The NAS website also has a database of vacancies, which serves as a popular source to advertise apprenticeship vacancies across England.

Work Volunteering

History

In the 19th century, religious groups used volunteering to promote social well being rather than as a source of work readiness. University students felt obliged to donate their time to social service as well. Becoming more popular during the World Wars, this trend continued through the mid-20th century. According to Brewis (2010), the 1960s experienced a “youth ‘volunteer boom’... a period marked by debate about the role of volunteers in state-run welfare services as well as how to engage more young people in constructive leisure time activities” (p. 441). Volunteering programs developed as “an extracurricular activity that was largely student-led.” Utilizing volunteering programs as a means of gaining work experience is a very new concept (p. 447).

Modern Volunteering Programs

Current volunteer programs are unpaid, flexible positions that offer the opportunity to gain valuable work experience (E.Germaine, personal communication, April 9, 2013). Volunteering differs from other programs in that a volunteer can also complete his studies, work full-time, or receive benefits. Volunteering opportunities are primarily in public and voluntary organizations, and the volunteer can choose a field that would help his career or in which he simply enjoys to work. Volunteers can also easily change from one position to another since there is no time commitment with this type of program.

Volunteer programs also are an opportunity for unemployed individuals to stay economically active. One such opportunity is Work Together, which is a national program coordinated through local job centers that helps unemployed individuals stay in economically active while they are looking for permanent employment. At a national level, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Office for Civil Society, and the Devolved Administrations are working to make volunteering more appealing so that people searching for work choose to take part in Work Together (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013).

The government also provides Work Trials through local job centers. The program is a valuable opportunity for unemployed individuals to gain work experience without requiring an extended commitment from employers. Program participants volunteer in a professional position

for 30 days with the possibility of a full time offer upon completion. If the individual finishes the work trial early or turns down an offered full time position, their benefits will not be affected (“Help with moving from benefits to work”, 2013).

In 2006, a study focused on the development of volunteer work in regards to work readiness in London. In this study, the National Youth Agency (NYA) explored the “the skills, knowledge and attitudinal development that young people derive from volunteering” (National Youth Agency, 2007, p. 9). The NYA’s research found that the participants in the volunteer programs improved their self-confidence, communication skills, and planning abilities, among other things.

The NYA also developed recommendations for volunteering projects as well as improvements to the current volunteering system. These recommendations included the development of more flexible programs to account for a wider variety of participants and an accreditation or other form of recognition to establish a benchmark for the skills developed through volunteering. The NYA also suggested that there needs to be a definition of volunteer work to distinguish what does and does not qualify under these distinctions.

Work Experience

A work experience program is full-time work that intends to provide the participant with an understanding of a professional working environment. Schools typically incorporate these programs into the curriculum, either in secondary or in sixth form, with the goal of providing a means for young people to gain on-the-job experience.

Work experience teaches participants essential workplace skills like punctuality, a simple but necessary skill to possess in the working world. Alison Wolf (2011) refers to these types of skills as “employability skills” and stresses that they receive greater emphasis within the 16 to 18 age group (p. 53). Work experience also provides this usually disconnected age group with the opportunity to gather contacts and network.

JobCentre Plus offers an opportunity for work experience to 16-24 year old Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants. The work experience placement lasts between two and eight weeks, where the claimant works 25 to 30 hours per week. JobCentre Plus may also subsidize travel and childcare for the participating claimants (“Help with moving from benefits to work”, 2013).

At a city level, the Greater London Authority created the Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer. This program provides work experience to young people who have completed full time education but never gained experience in the workforce. It makes receiving benefits for first time 16-24-year-old Jobseekers' Allowance claimants conditional on participation in the program. These targeted young people claim JSA and continue to receive these benefits throughout the duration of the program. The program lasts for 13-weeks, beginning with employability training and ending with a work placement. The company providing the work experience must help the young person search for future job opportunities. As a pilot program, some boroughs in North and South London currently offer the Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer. If successful, the program will launch across Greater London ("Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer", 2013).

Despite the government's repeated promotion of work experience, Wolf's report highlights some deficiencies with the current programs. Those surveyed disliked their lack of control over their own programs, as their programs were often at the employer's discretion. Respondents also indicated that they did not see value in their work. Both of these flaws in the work experience programs contribute to their issues in providing desirable work to help young people gain employment.

Traineeships

In order to facilitate young people joining training programs that are already available, the Department for Education (DfE) released a discussion paper stating the need for the development of a new traineeship program in England. Starting in September 2013, the program will provide useful skills such as CV writing, interview practice, and self-discipline. After the participants learn these skills, the program will place the learner into some type of job in order to provide work experience, enabling more young people to better matriculate into apprenticeships and other work opportunities. Traineeships continue the recent efforts to reduce the amount of NEET young people by helping them move towards sustainable employment.

Figure 3 illustrates the program's proposed structure. The DfE has yet to establish a standard duration for the traineeships, but they have made clear their desire to keep these programs flexible in duration as well as content. The flexibility is essential to the program since

young people will require differing amounts of training (Department for Education & Department for Business and Innovation Skills, 2013).

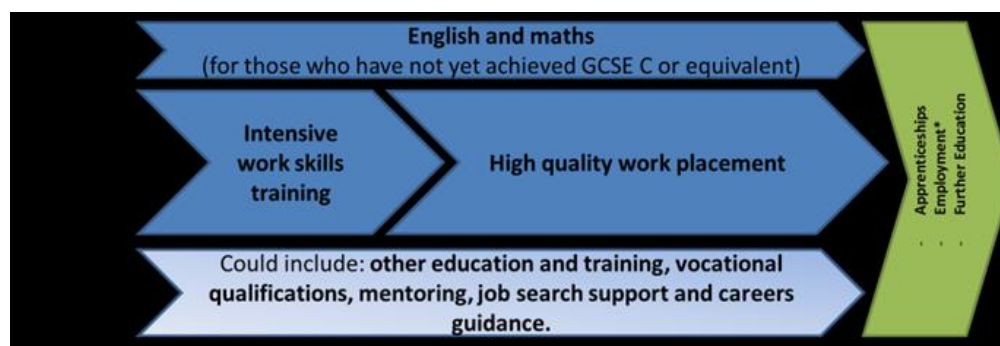


Figure 3: Proposed Traineeship (Department for Education et al, 2013)

Qualification Providers

Private companies can provide qualifications achieved through work readiness programs. They create the qualification program but then outsource the training portion of the program to a training provider. Companies like CIPD and City & Guild provide these qualification programs.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) works with human resource (HR) departments within companies to further ‘up-skill’ their current staff. CIPD provides qualifications focused in HR through universities, colleges, and training providers within the UK (“Qualifications”, n.d.). Along with providing these qualifications, they conduct research focusing on human resource issues and other work based themes. Recently, CIPD has launched Learning to Work, which focuses on the issues surrounding youth unemployment, specifically employer engagement with young people. *The Employee Outlook: Focus on apprenticeships* report, published by CIPD, provides a statistical analysis of the current economic situation from the perspectives of employees within the UK (CIPD, 2013). CIPD also created *The Business Case for Employer Investment in Young People*, which details what deters employers from hiring young people as well as misconceptions and realistic benefits of hiring the youth (CIPD, 2012).

City and Guild is an international company that provides qualifications for vocational education. In the UK alone, City and Guild provides up to 29 qualifications in many different vocational tracks, ranging from beauty and complementary therapies to information technology (IT). Training providers or further education institutions contract with City and Guild to utilize

their qualifications or apprenticeship programs. City and Guild also creates flexible programs for individuals who require more skills in order to become work ready. One such program is the Work Ready program, which offers four qualifications including employability and personal development; unit warehouse, which is a free-range qualification program; basic skills; and short courses and vocational skills (“Believe You Can”, 2013).

Employer Engagement with Young People

In order for young people to assimilate successfully into the workforce, employers should recognize their need for young people and thus see value in helping train and prepare the youth for the work force. The following section discusses employers’ initiatives to engage with young people in preparing them for work.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), led by Commissioners from all types of businesses, provides “strategic leadership on skills and employment issues” to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (“About Us”, n.d.b). UKCES works with business leaders in different sectors to “raise skill levels to help drive enterprise, create more jobs, and [promote] economic growth” (“About Us”, n.d.b). One of its main priorities is to “create more career opportunities for young people” (“About Us”, n.d.b). UKCES also works to have employers invest more into the training and development of their employees, specifically in terms of skill. UKCES has recently commissioned The Youth Employment Challenge, which suggests a ‘youth policy’ that will encourage employers to take on young people to embed them in today’s business where they can begin to foster their career (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2012).

Among other initiatives to prevent unemployment and move people from welfare to sustainable employment, the government recently developed The Work Programme. This program provides personalized support for claimants that need more assistance to obtain a job. Special service providers deliver the program on behalf of the Department of Work and Pension and support people that face tough barriers to find and stay in work. Even though the service providers are free to adjust their services to best support participants, they have to meet specific service standards. The European Social Fund partially funds the program in an attempt to help the most vulnerable sectors of society and break their dependency on benefits (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). The government requires JSA recipients between 14 and 16 year olds

as well as Employment and Support Allowance recipients to participate in this program; for other benefit recipients, participation is voluntary (Department of Work and Pensions, n.d., p. 7).

Since the Work Programme requires the collaboration of the public, private, and voluntary sectors, the government is using incentives, such as wage incentives, to engage more employers and pay them to help the unemployed get into work. The government's Youth Contract encourages employers to recruit 18-24 year olds through their local JobCentre Plus or their local Work Programme provider and claim wage incentives up until April 2015 ("Youth Contract", 2013). In order to be eligible to claim, the employer must recruit participants between 18 and 24 years old who have been out of work and claiming benefits for a period of at least six months. In addition, the job offer must last more than 26 weeks with 16 hours of work or more per week ("Other employment schemes", 2013).

Successful Work Readiness Programs

Critics qualify successful work readiness programs by many different definitions; however, general outcomes exist that they associate with successful programs. Ofsted has recently examined some of England's programs and generalized what factors contribute to success.

In a study known as "Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning" (2010), Ofsted found several commonalities in providing an outstanding work readiness program. These included the importance of communicating the purpose and goals to participants, catering the skills of the participants to the needs of the market, and matching participants to programs in which they will thrive and enjoy (p. 10). Another important characteristic was the establishment of high goals and the monitoring of participant progress through frequent reviews and the use of smart assessment tools (p. 11).

Ofsted's second study proved to have similar findings on the qualities of a successful work readiness program. Their study, "Apprenticeships for young people" (2012), compared the effectiveness of structured apprenticeship programs with unguided, less structured programs. Students with expectations of program accomplishments were more motivated and had a better understanding of their progress (p. 24). The successful programs usually had target goals that were attainable, motivating students to keep progressing (p. 26). These high quality programs also supplemented their on-site training with other additional training modules, including

training in first aid and conflict resolution, group and individual competition, and ambassador roles that intend to develop apprentices' leadership skills (p. 30). The structure of these well-regarded programs elevated the quality and effectiveness of the program's results.

Ofsted also highlighted the importance of clear communication as a significant attribute to a successful apprenticeship program. In order to offer a successful program, the provider must effectively communicate the expectations they hold for their apprentices. Additionally, the successful programs provided participants with resources via an online database or other remote system as well as relevant feedback on their progress in the program (p. 25). Apprentices also had access to tutors for additional help.

While there has been a significant amount of research regarding effective apprenticeships, there has not been comparable research conducted into the lesser known programs like training programs, work volunteering, or work experience.

Merton: Background, Economy and Work Readiness Initiatives

In response to England's recent initiatives to address the transition from education into the workforce, London's outer borough of Merton (Figure 4) has implemented its own policies and programs to improve work readiness of young people.



Figure 4: Merton's Location in Greater London ("Adopt London", n.d.)

Located in Southwest London, "Merton is a relatively prosperous borough ... with good transport connections to Central and South London, low levels of unemployment, and high average wage levels" (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p.2). The majority of residents work in managerial or professional occupations, with an average employed salary of £33,200, which is slightly above the London average of £31,900. There is, however, a notable difference

in the socioeconomic profiles of the eastern and the western halves of the borough. West Merton, which includes the neighborhoods of Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, and Raynes Park, attracts many skilled workers because of its accessibility to Central London. These skilled workers include primarily “higher level managerial and professional occupations” (p.6). Additionally, West Merton houses the majority of Merton’s employment opportunities, specifically found in South Wimbledon where the most “commercial, work and recreational opportunities for Merton’s residents” are located (Merton Partnership, 2005, p.2).

The districts of Mitcham and Morden comprise East Merton (Figure 5). Transportation within this part of the borough is very limited and requires multiple transfers to reach Central London. As a result, this part of the borough is less attractive to Central London workers, and most of its own residents work locally, finding employment in agriculture and other industries developed along the River Wandle. The Wandle has historically served as the main attraction to East Merton, specifically during industrialization, since it provided water for a number of industries (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 5). For more socio-economic demographics of Merton, see Appendix I.



Figure 5: Merton's Main City Centers ("About us", n.d.a.)

William Morris, an artisan and industrialist from the 19th century, restructured the Wandle’s Merton Abbey Mills, previously a silk-weaving factory, to be the new home of his Morris & Co.’s workshops (Parry, 1989). With his new acquisition and artisan background, Morris established craft-like work within the industrialization process. He created opportunities to weave fabric, tapestry, and carpet as well as a site for dyeing the textiles using dye grown in the site’s gardens. Morris’s ‘Arts and Craft Movement’ fought against the traditional industrial methods of forcing employees to alter their skills to what the job required. Instead, Morris

allowed employees to shape their work around the skills that they could already provide. Morris's efforts highlight the evolution of the idea of work in that craft was no longer a desired skill and that an individual must adapt his abilities to acquire work.

This evolving idea of a required skill adjustment to meet employer demand creates significant concern that present day workers will not be able to make these changes to achieve a sustainable career. Available opportunities for industrial work in Merton have shrunk significantly since England's manufacturing employment and productivity decreased over the past quarter century. The recent recession caused Merton residents to become more dependent on "employment in central London and the City" (Merton Council, n.d., p.38). This dependence is especially concerning for East Merton since many of its residents do not have easy access to Central London and thus rely on employment from Merton's local businesses. Work and the sustainability of jobs in East Merton are continually at risk, evidenced by the loss of 5,000 jobs from September 2004 to September 2007 (Merton Council, n.d., p.38).

With poor connections to Central London, East Merton created its own job opportunities in "construction, real estate and renting, education, health, and social services" between 1998 and 2002 (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p.8). Figure 6 illustrates all job opportunities available by sector.

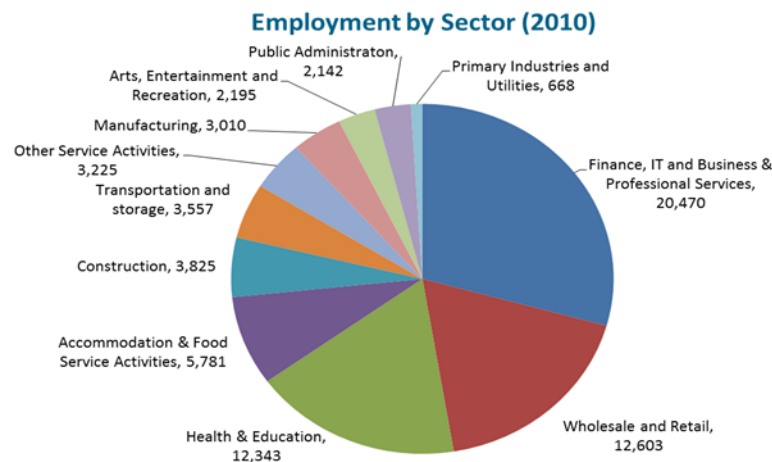


Figure 6: Merton's Job Distribution (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p.4)

Although these opportunities offer employment to some East Merton residents, the industries offer the lower end of the average gross hourly pay (Figure 7) and do not provide long-term employment; therefore, they are not sustainable by nature.

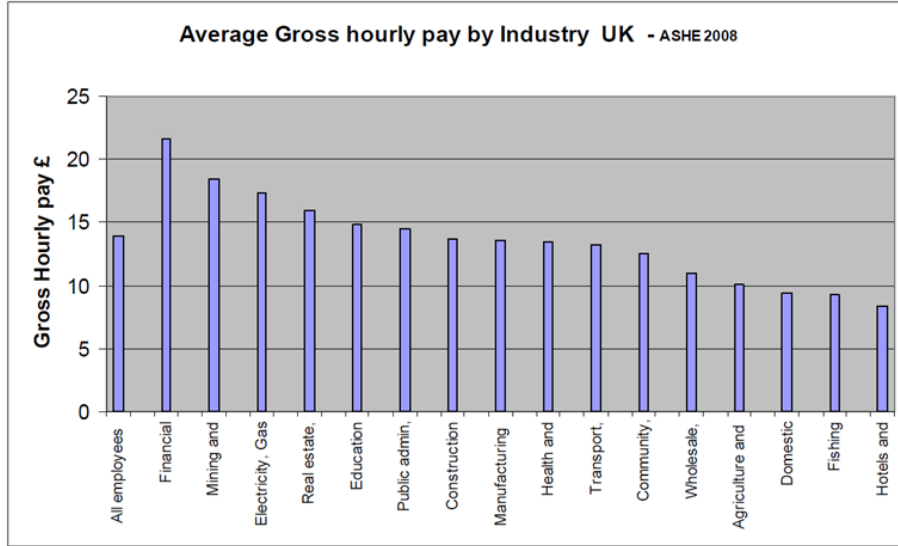


Figure 7: Hourly Pay by Industry in the U.K. (Merton Council, 2010, p.12)

Youth Unemployment

Unemployment in East Merton remains a significant concern (Merton Council, n.d., p.12). With Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimant rates consistently rising since the beginning of the recession in 2008 (Figure 8), youth unemployment is a major concern, especially within East Merton. Alison Wolf reports, “young people have always suffered first and most in recessions but England now also ... [has] very high structural youth unemployment rates, up to and including 25 year olds” (Wolf, 2011, p. 25).

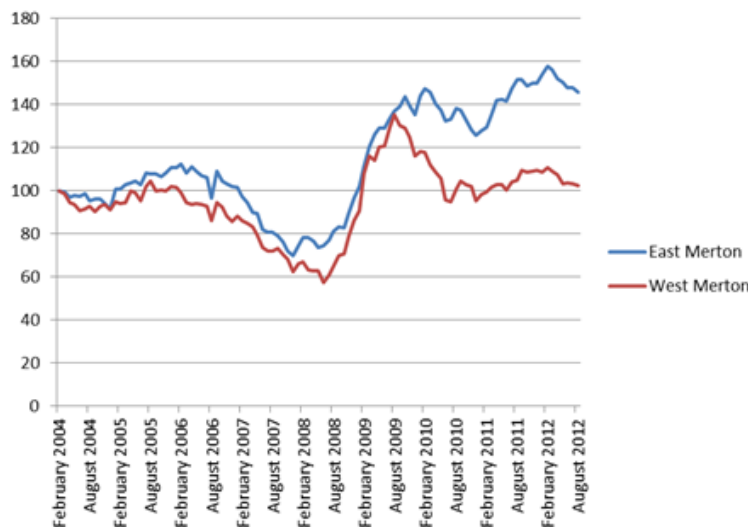


Figure 8: Unemployment in Merton (Merton Economic Wellbeing, 2012, p. 13)

Within the last year in Merton, the number of young people classified as NEET has increased (Figure 9).

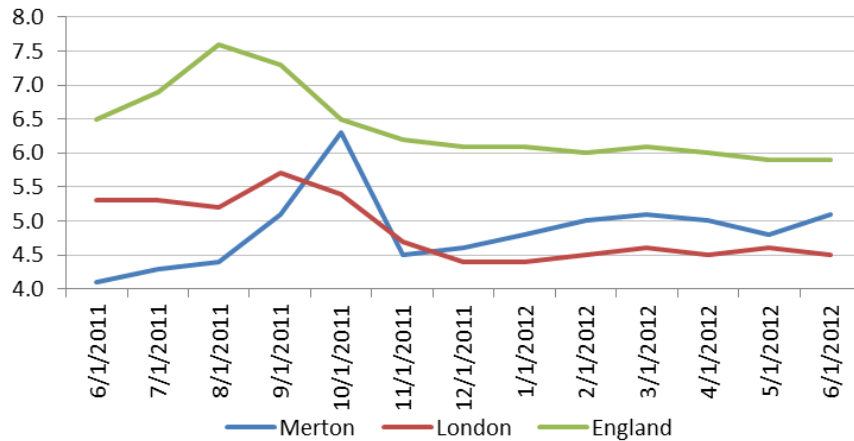


Figure 9: Proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 16)

NEET individuals, as well as other unemployed residents in Merton, utilize JobCentre Plus to connect with job vacancies throughout the borough as well as training opportunities to gain necessary skills to enter into work. As part of the Department for Work and Pensions, JobCentre Plus is a division that provides services to support people who are looking to move from welfare into the workforce. Similarly, it acts as a recruitment agency that helps employers to find prospective employees to fill openings (“Jobcentre Plus”, n.d.). JobCentre Plus is in charge of benefit claims such as JSA. Figure 10 shows the JSA claimants between 16 and 24 years old in Merton.

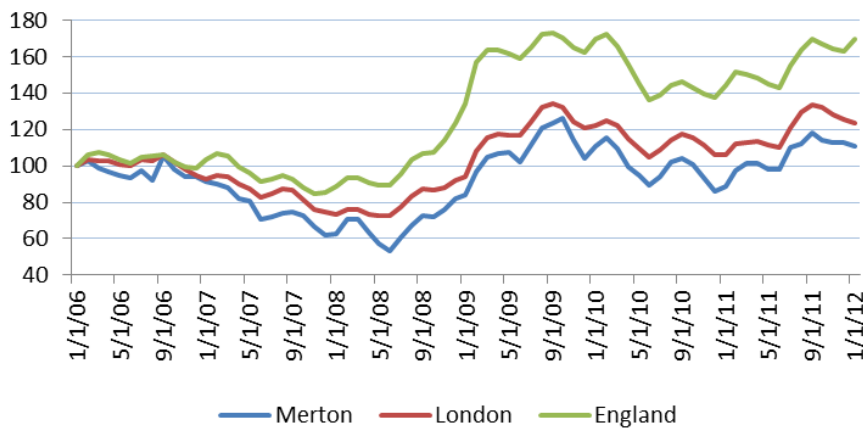


Figure 10: JSA Claimants for 16-24 year olds (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 15)

In order to be eligible to apply for this benefit, claimants must prove that they are actively seeking a job by completing an application and attending an interview to provide enough evidence on their current economic situation. If government deems them in need of receiving the benefit, JobCentre Plus and the claimant must agree on the next steps that the claimant will follow to obtain employment. They must show up at the local JobCentre Plus every two weeks to check-in and report their recent progress (“Jobseeker’s Allowance Overview”, 2013).

Payments can range from £56.25 to £71 or even as much as £111.45 a week depending on the claimant’s age, status and circumstances (“Jobseeker’s Allowance: What you’ll get”, 2013). The job center matches claimants aged 16 to 24 with an advisor, who creates a personalized profile to keep track of the claimant’s job-seeking process as well as participation in a work readiness program (“Benefits Advisor”, 2013). If any issues arise between the claimant and the employer, the claimant’s adviser mitigates to avoid further problems (A. Hoblyn, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

Although the JobCentre provides a means for Merton residents to seek employment, many residents still face adversity when it comes to the job market. Vickerstaff (2003) argues that “class background and type of school attended” constrain the job opportunities available upon graduation from secondary school (p. 271). Kerckhoff (1996) furthers this argument and states that job markets and national policies also influence the ability for the youth to obtain employment (p. 37). This restriction, more succinctly based on “class, gender, and ethnicity,” continues to occur from “one generation to the next” (Bynner & Parsons, 2002, p. 290). East Merton’s demographics of lower class families, lower wage jobs, and higher percentages of minorities creates disadvantage for its youth residents, facing “difficulties not only in entering employment but in sustaining any kind of fulfilling career” (p. 290). With the job market dominated by unsustainable jobs and without the proper training programs, Merton’s youth will find themselves in a cycle of short-term unskilled jobs and unemployment. Not only is this cycle of concern from an employment standpoint, but also failure to gain the proper work experience and training is damaging “in making a satisfactory adjustment to adult life” (p. 291).

Work Readiness Programs and Policies

In response to the gap between East Merton and West Merton as well as the issues of youth unemployment that are especially prevalent in East Merton, many local policies and programs were created and implemented to improve Merton's overall environment.

Merton created its Community Plan, also referred to as the Sustainable Community Strategy, in response to the Local Government Act in 2000 that suggested that all local authorities "prepare a strategy... for promoting or improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of its area" (Merton Council, 2010, p. 3). The Community Plan launched in 2006 with five central themes that work to bridge the gap between East and West Merton in order to "improve the opportunities available to those living in the east so that they are comparable with those in the west" (Merton Council, 2009, p.6). To address the skill differences, Merton should improve its work readiness programs to educate all of its residents to have the required skills for sustainable employment. One theme, known as Sustainable Communities and Transport, looks to improve the programs in Merton in understanding that "work and learning opportunities ... contribute to the quality of life for Merton citizens" (p. 9). To address this point, the theme implemented an Employment and Skills Development Strategy to "improve the skills of residents and workers" (p. 12).

In addition to the plans in place to improve the skills of its residents, similar plans aim to improve Merton's employment and job opportunities, specifically for East Merton. Developed in 2010, Merton's Economic Development Strategy is a counterpart to Merton's Community Plan to address the lack of employment opportunities. The plan's objective is to improve employability and economic activity of East Merton's residents so that they are able to benefit from the newly created job opportunities in the other areas of Merton. Merton expects this plan to roll out over a 20-year period, with Merton becoming a self-sufficient and sustainable community as the end goal. The most recent revision in 2012 establishes numerous action times for Merton Council to undertake, including "coordinating activity to support unemployed residents into work" (Merton Economic Wellbeing, 2012, p. 2).

Initiated by the most recent revision of the Economic Development Strategy, the Economic Wellbeing Group directs the Economic Development Strategy. It works to "address the worklessness and skills challenges in the borough" (p. 2). This group reviewed local policy

and developed an action plan, known as the Employment and Training Action Plan, that proposes an increase to “employer demand, and take-up of apprenticeships by young people in Merton” (p. 31). Other initiatives include increasing work experience opportunities, recruiting in cooperation with local employers, and developing more readily accessible and understandable employment and skills programs for employers. The plan builds upon the existing work readiness programs in Merton and looks to make improvements to decrease youth unemployment and reduce the number of young people who are NEET.

These local initiatives drive the creation of many programs in Merton, including apprenticeships, training programs, work volunteering, and work experience. These programs cooperate with local training providers, employers, colleges, and schools to provide opportunities for Merton residents to receive work readiness training. Appendix IV contains examples of these existing programs and their connection to the community.

Merton’s Economic Wellbeing group recently placed a bid, known as the Demand-led Pilot, to the government through Grenfell Housing and Training, a local training provider. This bid brings up to £800,000 to Merton to provide local skills improvement training, including vocational qualifications, to up to 400 residents. Local training providers will deliver these qualification courses alongside core skill workshops in Literacy, Numeracy, Information, and Communications Technology (ICT). The local providers will also offer courses in First Aid, music, and DIY to “engage learners, enhance skills and build confidence” (“Demand Led Pilot”, n.d.). The local providers will also create work placement opportunities with local businesses for the program participants in order for them to gain the important work experience to match their qualifications. Each program participant will have a support mentor to offer counseling to personal concerns and ultimately help the participant find employment. This grant enables Grenfell and other programs in Merton to continue to offer more opportunities for its residents to gain skills to become more work ready.

Program Sustainability and Improvements

The Children’s Trust board and its Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) promote continuous improvement to these work readiness programs by improving Merton’s education system. The CYPP has five priorities for the future of children and young people: “improving health outcomes, maintaining robust safeguarding, improving educational outcomes, promoting

the positive contribution, and promoting the economic wellbeing of children and young people” (Merton Partnership, n.d., p.11). The “improving educational outcomes” priority targets the educational systems within Merton to become “self-sustaining and self-improving” while meeting the needs of its students. It also strives to reduce achievement gaps for all peer and ethnic groups within the educational system. The initiative targeted at “promoting the economic wellbeing of children and young people” addresses education, employment, training and volunteering participation of individuals 16 years of age and older. The emphasis will provide “vocational pathways for young people,” with intent to expand apprenticeships’ role in defining the skills expected of young people within the local job market as well as to strengthen relationships with local employers (Merton Partnership, n.d., p.11). This plan continues to build upon the skills of Merton’s young people to better prepare them for future employment.

Created in response to the Education and Skills Act of 2000, the Raising of the Participation Action (RPA) Plan puts strategies in place for Merton to be prepared by 2015 for the Act’s implementation (2012). Monitored by the 14-19 Partnership, the RPA Plan developed strategies for the education system to adjust to the increased participation age including a tracking system for students, forecasting destinations for certain peer groups, and enrollment guidelines. The plan implemented local Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy programs (CEIAG) to aid in transitions from one form of education to another as well as quality assurance systems to assess the quality of the curriculum being taught to Merton’s students. In addition, the RPA Plan will create support options for struggling groups of young people that are NEET or in jobs without training.

Perceptions Surrounding Work Readiness Programs

As mentioned previously, CIPD conducted a survey to understand the perceptions employers and parents have surrounding apprenticeships. *The Employee Outlook: Focus on Apprenticeships* collected data from 285,000 participants, including employers from the private and public sector as well as parents with children 18 or under (CIPD, 2012).

Parents who prefer their children achieve an apprenticeship qualification to all other qualifications comprised 22 percent of the total sample. Working parents who agree or strongly agree that they would recommend apprenticeships to their children comprised 47 percent of the survey population. Two-thirds of parents with children under 18 think that becoming an

apprentice would be a good career option (p. 3). Their views of apprenticeships are swayed, however, because 45 percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that apprenticeships are appropriate for blue-collar jobs. Even with this misunderstanding of the apprenticeship program, 61 percent of parents think apprenticeships will further their children's career in the future (p. 4).

43 percent of survey participants disagreed that teachers provide equal amounts of information regarding university and apprenticeship programs, while 15 percent agreed (p. 11). Approximately 50 percent of the survey sample, who did not think that an apprenticeship qualification is equal to a university degree, believed that if more local employers offered the apprenticeship scheme, they would consider becoming an apprentice as a good career choice (p. 4).

Although the collected information reflects the opinions surrounding the apprenticeship scheme, it demonstrates that the public views work readiness programs as a lesser counterpart to a university degree. There is still value in the work readiness programs themselves, but public opinion hinders participation unless it is the young person's last resort to gain employment.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The project team evaluated existing work readiness programs in the borough of Merton and concluded with suggestions for future improvements. The project followed four main objectives:

1. Understand the history, development, and support of the work readiness programs in London and Merton.
2. Assess the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing Merton's work readiness programs.
3. Identify the perspectives of program participants.
4. Recommend program improvements that will better prepare Merton's young people for the work force.

Objective One: Understand the history, development, and support of the work readiness programs in London and Merton.

Prior research gave us a preliminary understanding of the history, development, and support for work readiness programs. To gain additional information, we interviewed representatives from the Greater London Authority (GLA) who have been involved with work readiness programs in London. The project team also interviewed selected borough council members who have implemented or contributed to work readiness programs in Merton. Both subject groups informed the project team about the support system that has shaped the current work readiness programs.

Identified and contacted participants

The project team worked with Naomi Martin, the director of Commonsense and co-chair of the Economic Wellbeing Group (EWG), to identify other individuals on the EWG who also serve on Merton Council or Merton Chamber of Commerce. The identified stakeholders promote work readiness directly within Merton and conversations with these individuals depicted the history, development, and current structure of the local work readiness programs. One member of the Chamber of Commerce, Ray Kinsella, provided the team with several contacts, including

members of the Greater London Authority who spoke to London's initiatives and opinions of the current work readiness programs.

Appendix X contains the list of individuals with whom the team spoke. At the end of each interview, the group asked each interviewee to identify other potential contacts to develop a snowball sample of key informants. From these contacts, the team selected individuals who provided pertinent information about the development of work readiness programs based on recent reviews of additional information, policies, and programs found in London. The team initially contacted these individuals using phone calls and e-mail, where we described the nature and purpose of the project and asked if they were willing to be interviewed. Upon their agreement, we then established a time and place for the interview (Appendix V).

Developed Interview Questions and Script

As stated in the objective, the interview questions focused on the history, development and support of current work readiness programs. In this way, we explored why the programs were developed and how they were implemented. We also discussed the influence of government policy in regards to the support and promotion of work readiness initiatives. Appendix VI contains a list of interview questions for these stakeholders. The team adjusted these questions to meet each interviewee's profile and background. Many questions focused on the stakeholder's involvement with local programs and perceptions about their successes. The team also asked questions related to government funding that contributes to these programs, eliciting responses of differing opinions on the effectiveness of the distribution of funding.

Conducted Interviews

The project team conducted face-to-face, semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews, allowing the team to guide discussions while simultaneously allowing the subject to elaborate fully on any topics they deemed worthy. The team began each interview with a preamble describing the nature and purpose of the project (Appendix VII) and requested verbal consent to record the conversation and quote responses. Questions relating to the subject's involvement with work readiness programs followed the introductory prompt. The interview then covered detailed questions about the history, development, and support of work readiness programs in London and Merton. We arranged the interview questions in this way to allow the subject to

become comfortable with the conversation and trust the project team as interviewers (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 118). The detailed questions also included validating questions to clarify the subject's responses. The interviewed subjects provided us with unique perspectives and were willing to inform the team of their participation and opinions with ease due to our explicit intentions and open rapport.

Upon agreement with the subject, the team recorded the conversation; otherwise, we used written notes. One member of the group facilitated the discussion while the other group members took notes using a notebook or a computer. The group members who were not conducting the interview still asked questions when they felt the need for further elaboration.

Analyzed Data

After each interview, the group transcribed the recording and notes into Word documents. These documents enabled the group to analyze all the information gathered from each interview. The group then compared the opinions of each subject and compiled multiple sub-documents to organize any patterns found. Identifying patterns required the use of all main documents as well as the information found in background research.

Objective Two: Assess the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing Merton's work readiness programs.

The project team assessed the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing Merton's work readiness programs. The primary contacts used were members of the Economic Wellbeing Group, who provided information about the different programs' structure and definition as well as motivations and goals surrounding their implementation. We interviewed individuals who have been involved in the planning, directing, implementation, or promotion of local initiatives.

Identified and Contacted Participants

The project team interviewed stakeholders such as training, apprenticeship, and volunteer program providers; local employers; and the local job center. A list of specific individuals interviewed can be seen in Appendix X. We contacted these identified individuals using snowball sampling, which began with recommendations from our sponsor liaison, Naomi Martin,

enabling the identification of key stakeholders who are involved with work readiness programs. Following the procedure outlined in Objective One, we contacted these individuals via email and asked for their participation in our research. The team followed the script, found in Appendix VII, and adapted it for the purpose of each particular interview.

Developed the Interview Questions and Script

The project team developed questions, as seen in Appendix VIII, prior to each interview to address individual history and perceptions (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 117). Specific questions explored the subject's educational and professional history, motives for involvement in the programs, actual involvement level with the programs, and opinions on the programs' expected outcomes. We also asked the program providers and employers to define work readiness based on their personal experiences with young people and the work force; these definitions provided the project team with concrete examples of the skills required to enter into employment. The team adapted the interview questions for each interview to meet the background and profiles of the targeted stakeholder and his organization.

Conducted the Interview

Similar to Objective One, we conducted face-to-face, semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews to allow for a guided conversation with employers and providers. We conducted some of these interviews over the phone, as some targeted individuals were unable to conduct face-to-face interviews due to scheduling conflicts. The team began each interview with an adapted version of the preamble in Appendix VII. The interview then continued, following the procedures outlined in Objective One.

Analyzed the Data

The method used in this objective followed the same procedures as Objective One.

Objective Three: Identify the perspectives of program participants.

In order to address the perspectives of Merton's 16-24 year old population exposed to work readiness programs, we conducted interviews and focus groups with past and present

program participants. The collected data informed the group of program performance from the point of view of young people.

Identified and Contacted Participants for Interviews and Focus Groups

The project team targeted young people aged 16-24 who are currently involved in or have graduated from a work readiness program. We contacted these subjects with guidance from Steve Boucher from Grenfell Housing, David Dodd from TRP, Chris Nicholls from White Light, Ming Carpenter from JobCentre Plus, Delrose Earle from Delrose Earle Training, and Naomi Martin from Commonsense. These individuals work directly with work readiness programs and aided in our efforts to meet with involved young people. Before contacting the participants from each target population, the individuals who have worked with the young people made initial contact to gain the appropriate permissions. Once they received this permission, we contacted the participants, following the preamble in the previous two sections, to coordinate a meeting time for either a phone or face-to-face interview.

Developed the Focus Group and Interview

Focus groups are unique in that they allow a group to brainstorm ideas together to deepen the conversation. They also allow observation of group reaction to a particular idea. Because of these powerful benefits, the project team conducted focus groups with the program participants in Merton. We coordinated three focus groups, each consisting of three young people, in order to obtain the desired data. The focus group was similar to the in-depth qualitative interview process, which we described in the first two objectives.

In-depth qualitative interviews provide detailed information as well, and the team additionally utilized these to speak with young people involved, previously or currently, with a work readiness program. The team used these interviews, following the protocols detailed in the previous two objectives, when the team was unable to coordinate a focus group. By taking advantage of speaking with young people either individually or in a group, the project team spoke with as many program participants as our sampling methods and time restraints allowed.

Both research methods focused on the expectations, goals, accomplishments, and opinions associated with work and work readiness programs. Our group was interested in identifying the expectations for both the program and future employment, including long-term

goals and short-term plans for skill training. We were also interested in identifying motivations for involvement in the program and their opinions surrounding the program's ability to meet the individual's expectations. Appendix IX includes the questions asked by our group to identify these areas of concern.

Conducted the Focus Group and Interview

All four team members were present in each interview and focus group. One member served as the moderator while the other three team members took notes and facilitated the discussion when necessary. We adapted the preamble in Appendix VII to apply to the focus group and interviews to inform the participating subjects about the process. The discussion topics began with general questions about the participants' definition of work readiness as well as their general program experience. The discussion transitioned into their opinions of the programs in which they participated as well as related topics that the participants chose to highlight (Vernon-Gerstenfeld, n.d., p.2). The moderator then discussed the individual experiences with the other participants to collect information.

The data was collected in the same way as Objective One, utilizing both tape recording and note taking. Reference Objective One for more details.

Analyzed the Data from Focus Groups

We analyzed the collected data following the same analysis method used in Objective One. The effectiveness of a program is directly related to the ability of the participants to learn the intended skills and the outcomes they receive upon graduation from these programs. These interviews with young people provided the project team with this key information.

Objective Four: Recommend program improvements that will better prepare Merton's young people for the work force.

The project team spoke with 36 individuals, including 15 young people, two employers, and two members from the Greater London Authority. Appendix X organizes each objective by individuals interviewed. Objective Four combined information collected from all previous objectives and recommended areas for improvement within Merton's work readiness programs.

Each prior objective provided a unique set of data from different stakeholders who are involved with work readiness programs. By combining all the collected information, the team compared opinions, expectations, and needs of all the stakeholders in order to have a full conception of the structure and nature of the programs in Merton. In order to compare the data, the team made a compilation of all documents and subdocuments recorded previously. We used a document that outlined the thoughts expressed by each stakeholder and organized these opinions by theme. Each document facilitated the comparison and evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing programs. Based on our evaluations, we reported findings and possible recommendations to the Economic Wellbeing Group to modify the structure and delivery of the work readiness programs in Merton.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The project team evaluated local training, apprenticeship, work volunteering, and work experience programs using the perspectives and opinions of key stakeholders. There is an overwhelming amount of support to utilize these programs to train young people to enter more easily into employment. The following section describes our findings from fundamental focus areas that aid this project team in the evaluation of local training initiatives.

Education

The role of education in preparing students to enter the workforce was a recurring topic when interviewing stakeholders. Many of the results focused on similar topics or measures.

Prior to 2011, the education system provided many students access to information regarding opportunities available after secondary school through a government-funded program called Connexions. Connexions provided information and guidance to young people aged 13 to 19 until the current government eliminated its funding in 2011 (S. Williams, personal communication, March 21, 2013; M. Cuomo, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

In lieu of a state-funded guidance program, many schools utilize local employers to present opinions on necessary employability skills. These sessions are particularly useful because they provide insight into what employers specifically target during the hiring and recruitment processes; however, many local employers cannot afford to take time away from their regular duties and are unable to extensively provide these sessions throughout the borough.

Furthermore, the current guidance and advising programs in many schools do not present the full scope of post-secondary opportunities to their students. It is clear that there is an overwhelming emphasis placed on students attending university. The importance of university is stressed in such a way that apprenticeships and other work readiness programs are either not presented at all or as a second choice. Even in programs that discuss apprenticeships, the presentation of these programs is very inconsistent. These inconsistencies create a lot of confusion about work readiness schemes, which can further deter young people from enrolling in them (Jessica, personal communication, March 20, 2013).

Many secondary schools are foregoing work placement programs because the placement methods, which match students with an employer, are not effective. The employer was either

unhappy with the performance of the student, or the student had no interest in the job in which they were placed. Some of Merton's sixth form colleges are beginning to incorporate work placements because their students tend to have a better understanding of the field in which they hope to work (N. Martin).

After analyzing the opinions of different programs provided to students in secondary school, we found that while some secondary schools teach CV writing and interview techniques, these skills are taught inconsistently and often without any regard to their practicality. In some instances, these schools do not teach these skills at all. As a result, many young people are still unable to produce a quality CV and fail to demonstrate their communication skills in job interviews (Jessica; Mat, personal communication, April 5, 2013; Chynaii, personal communication, April 2, 2013).

The job application process has changed with the development in technology. Due to the emergence of online job applications, instructors should tailor CV writing lessons to online applications by placing higher emphasis on the content of the CV rather than the presentation (D. Dodd, personal communication, March 26, 2013). Colleges and schools need to recognize this change to encourage students to get involved in work readiness programs to fill their CVs with relevant experience.

Some students may not have a home life with figures who are strong communicators due to a lack of work experience; as a result, secondary schools should emphasize communication skills in their curriculum. Furthermore, with strong communication skills, a young person develops more self-confidence and self-worth, which will allow him to perform with poise during job interviews. Soft skills, including timeliness and understanding social cues, are also important employability characteristics.

Economic Status and Its Implications

As the goal of all work readiness programs is to get its participants into work, the status of the job market and economy has a significant bearing on the effectiveness of the programs. The 2008 economic recession has significantly limited the number of opportunities available to young people. As a result, the youth who are under qualified experience the most backlash. Even young individuals who have any type of qualifications, be it an NVQ or a university degree, still have difficulties finding a job. The reduction of opportunities places significantly higher

emphasis on employability skills, as employers are increasingly reluctant to hire people without proper skill development.

The reduction of opportunities, coupled with the types of jobs readily available in London, has increased the difficulty of finding work for young people. The elimination of many industrial and manufacturing positions has directly affected the shape of London's job market. The top-tier jobs, which require highly skilled individuals, are plentiful in London. These jobs typically require a university degree. Because there are currently few opportunities at the industrial level, those highly skilled individuals who do not find employment in one of the top-tier jobs generally fall into lower skilled work. As a result, the higher skilled individuals dilute the applicant pool for the lower-tier jobs, pushing the less skilled workers out and making it increasingly difficult for the less skilled to achieve a stable career (M. Cuomo).

While the job market has become increasingly volatile, there has been a rise in the number of people entering into government-sponsored benefits programs. The government is slowly reducing the extent of the benefits by capping the amount received in many instances. These changes aim to reduce reliance on benefits; however, they will affect many people across England, especially young people who are just entering the job market (S. Boucher; N. Draper, personal communication, March 12, 2013). With the reduction in benefits, people are becoming more interested in taking part in work readiness programs to stay economically active.

Young People

The project team found several distinctive factors that characterize young people's exposure to and perceptions of work readiness programs. These areas include skills learned through education, familiarity with the function and purpose of work readiness programs, and personal motivations to gain employment.

Prior Preparation

There is considerable concern over the lack of soft skills young people exhibit. As mentioned previously, lack of training in education may contribute to underdeveloped soft skills, which are usually a result of the lack of work experience opportunities available to students. Some of these young people have never developed basic employability skills, including

interview skills, CV writing skills, or the ability to show up on time. S. Boucher, the operations director of Grenfell Housing, stated that

The fundamentals, the basics, are the ability to serve yourself because I've met some extremely capable and degree educated people who, because they have not worked before and because they haven't got the experience with interviews and CVs, actually aren't particularly good at articulating what their strengths are and what they can offer someone.

R. Kinsella (personal communication, March 21, 2013), a staff member of the Merton Chamber of Commerce, further explains that a lack of work experience can affect all aspects of attaining a job including basic tasks, such as dressing for the job and simple conversational techniques.

Young people may not understand the necessity of these skills due to their underexposure to the work force because of generational unemployment or a number of other socioeconomic factors. An individual may learn these skills in a classroom, but he develops and masters these skills through work experience (N. Martin). Practice and demonstration may allow the individual to confidently interview for an apprenticeship or full-time employment position with a high chance of achieving employment.

Motivation

Motivations for young people vary significantly when it comes to work readiness programs. Some young people may not have the adequate motivation and support at home; for others, education or their future careers may simply not interest them. On the other hand, some students recognize the need to gain work experience and seek the means to gain this experience to enter into employment. The following section illuminates the motivations of 16-24 year old individuals towards work readiness and their effects.

Merton, similar to some other boroughs, has an unfortunate trend where generations of people within a family are unemployed. These unemployed individuals either have no work history or simply collect benefits as their source of income (S. Williams). S. Boucher explains

I think you've also got problems with families with this generation of unemployment, They have never seen their mother work or never seen their father work so they have no notion of what it's like to work. There is a culture of moving

on to benefits and that's what will support me; that can be an issue for some people.

Because of their home environment, many young people do not recognize the need for work and view benefits as a viable source of financial support.

Long-term unemployment leads to a plethora of issues including mental health problems. Unemployment is of special concern for young people since they are just starting their working life. Depression and lack of confidence can develop as young people continue to stay unemployed. They tend to sit at home, while progressively losing their self-esteem and motivation. Getting these individuals into work is not only about improving their economic status but also improving their mental health (S. Williams).

After speaking with current learners from Grenfell Housing (personal communication, April 11, 2013), our team identified the lack of motivation that some young people have to gain work experience. Some of these individuals were uninterested in education during secondary school and anxious to graduate. Secondary school did not discuss work readiness programs as a viable way into employment. Without prior exposure and after claiming benefits for a few years, these individuals are struggling to find employment without additional training in basic skills and trades. They are frustrated that they have to take these courses because the training programs are time consuming and provide no monetary compensation. Their negative attitudes deter them from taking the program seriously, and they become less motivated to apply themselves. As a result, these individuals need to complete additional work readiness programs to enhance their skills and attitudes in order for them to be employable (S. Boucher). Without the cooperation from the young person, training programs will continue to be unsuccessful regardless of the efforts of the training provider.

On the other hand, many young people recognize the need for work experience since they have not been able to gain entry into the workforce. While further education did provide some work experience, employers did not hold this experience to high standards (Sophie, Anna, & Matt, personal communication, April 11, 2013). University graduates were especially motivated to obtain work experience through local job centers or apprenticeship vacancies that could provide enough experience to fulfill the expectations of employers. Though these individuals may have lacked self-confidence before enrollment, they understood that work is a necessity, and they needed to become self-sustainable through training and employment. After participating in

the program, the participants had a greater sense of self-worth and are, now, in full-time employment or are continuing in another training program to obtain additional qualifications.

Work Readiness Programs

The following sections provide the team's findings on the different work readiness opportunities in Merton, including each program's perceived benefits and implications, gains from participation, and functionality.

Opportunities Available

Young people tend to find work readiness program opportunities using two main methods. First when signing on to receive benefits, JobCentre Plus presents them with work readiness opportunities. The job center assigns each 16-24 year old an advisor who guides them through the process of applying to these programs. Only people who sign on to benefits at the job center can utilize these resources, meaning that young individuals who are not claimants do not have exposure to these programs. This lack of exposure leads to the second method of locating work readiness opportunities, which includes using search engines to locate programs in a desired area. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has a website that provides a large amount of information regarding the structure of an apprenticeship and opportunities available in greater London. Of the seven apprentices interviewed, three said that they utilized the NAS website but did not find an apprenticeship that fit their interests and career aspirations. The other four individuals found their apprenticeship using the NAS website; however, only half of the young people questioned found this resource useful.

Training Providers

Training providers face issues when offering lessons and work placement opportunities to young people. Once they recruit participants, some training providers do not provide extra support to individual participants and are more concerned with getting them through the program rather than ensuring that they possess the skills learned. The monetary payments from government incentives usually motivate this hurried approach.

Private providers are affected greatly by government funding, as it is their only source of income and, in this way, are more susceptible to monetary predispositions than their public counterparts are. The government funds these programs based on the success rates of their participants completing a work readiness program through a pay-by-results model; therefore, private training providers are more likely to recruit individuals into their programs who are somewhat work-ready in order to increase the likelihood that they receive their funding. This strategy neglects young people who require extensive training. Despite the predisposed bias, a benefit of using a private training provider is that many require their employers to sign a contract that guarantees full employment to the young person once the work readiness program is completed (D. Dodd).

Of the non-profit providers with which we have spoken, they are less concerned with screening youth applicants and more interested in helping them to gain important life and career skills. Some young people entering these public providers' programs have no experience with work and lack basic skills. Trainers meet with new participants to develop a plan for their employability training, which may include training programs to strengthen their soft skills or suggest immediate entry into an apprenticeship or employment. Some providers use continual check-ins with the learners to understand their skill development and the necessary next steps to enter into full employment. Since non-profit providers receive funding through other means, they are not completely reliant on the success rates of their participants.

Many training providers are not always able to guarantee employment but continue to recruit participants. As a result, young people may maintain their unemployed status even after graduating from the learning programs (S. Boucher).

Some training programs engage young people through incentive programs. Many programs provide a wide variety of educational courses including basic math and literacy skills, employability skills, and vocational qualifications; however, these programs are not very appealing to young people. As a result, trainers offer programs in art, music, and drama to engage young people but require participation in a more beneficial course as a prerequisite. For example, Grenfell Housing uses a production project for learners where they can develop and present a theater, musical, or similar type of production contingent upon participation in an employability skills course (S. Boucher).

Some training programs also target college and university graduates to provide work experience with a training structure quite similar to apprenticeships. The team interviewed three participants that were university graduates, all of who said that because they had received a degree, it was unnecessary to take part in another time-consuming qualification program. All the participants were most interested in gaining work experience because they did not have the chance to do so in university (Mat).

Mat, one of these program participants, graduated from university; however, he was unable to find a job because he lacked work experience. After Mat signed on to benefits, JobCentre Plus referred him to a program advertised by Merton Chamber of Commerce. Mat seized the opportunity to participate, where he was able to receive valuable training in “presentation skills, working in teams, PR, [and] marketing” (Mat). The training provider also helped him find employment upon the program’s completion. Mat, who is now employed at Merton Chamber of Commerce, explained that he gained work experience but, more importantly, gained his self-confidence back after being unemployed for a year (Mat).

Communication between the training providers and employers has become increasingly inefficient. Employers are not always capable of expressing their needs for the vacancies they are looking to fill. Training providers will then send candidates they think will fit the job when in actuality the employer was expecting a different group of young people. When Aztec, a local employer in Merton, began offering apprenticeship programs, the training providers referred candidates who were unaware of the company’s purpose or the requirements of the apprenticeship. J. Robson, Aztec’s managing director, attributes this failure to the provider’s inability to understand the function of the company and the types of candidates it requires.

Apprenticeships

Our team observed that the government focuses on apprenticeship participation more so than any other work readiness opportunity; however, apprenticeships have some key issues, including perceptions of what the program entails and the responses of employers and young people to these positions.

The Modern Apprenticeship redefined the traditional program, and consequently created confusion around its new structure. Many people, including the youth and employers, assume that modern apprenticeships only offer qualifications in traditional blue-collar jobs. It is

common, however, for people to be an apprentice in a variety of white-collar positions including customer service, ICT, and other similar careers (D. Dodd). One's confusion is likely due to the lack of concisely stated information and advertising about the modern scheme. Advertisements do not explicitly state the difference between the traditional and modern apprenticeship.

Both national and local governments have made ample efforts to promote apprenticeships as a work readiness opportunity. A major deterrent for young people, however, is the apprenticeship wage, which is much lower than the national minimum wage. Upon graduating secondary school, many young people wish to be able to support themselves financially. If they choose to participate in an apprenticeship, they are unable to do so. As a result, young people find it more beneficial to stay on benefits or take a minimum wage job; however, claiming benefits or working in a minimum wage job does not provide training (S. Boucher; S. Williams).

Another deterrent of these programs is the common perception that vocational training is an inferior alternative to university education. R. Kinsella explains that, "In this country ... the academic route is favored; it's a currency they recognize." C. Nicholls (personal communication, March 28, 2013) further states, "it's still hard to get some people, and this includes parents of apprentices, to understand that an apprenticeship is a viable alternative to university." Many other stakeholders have echoed these opinions displaying the traditional view that apprenticeship programs are inferior to university degrees. As a result, society deters many young people away from these programs.

Work Experience

Similar to apprenticeships, work experience programs are a full-time work placement with no compensation. There is much criticism directed at work experience as many consider it a form of free labor. Although work experience does provide the employer with an extra employee at no cost, the participant gains valuable exposure to the work environment through participation. S. Hannigan (personal communication, April 9, 2013) explains work experience as a one-way path where the participant is gaining experience in being an employee but is not providing much back to the employer or community.

These positions tend to be for a specified period with a local employer. Secondary schools have previously required their students to go on work experience for two weeks, which they obtained either through the school or through the students' parental contacts (Gaby,

personal communication, March 28, 2013). Previous students have discussed their secondary school work experience and deemed it unhelpful since it was usually not in an area of interest, they were too young, and it was just another requirement (Gaby). These placements in the past have targeted students in Year 10 of secondary school; however, due to their ineffectiveness, Merton is shifting the program into a separate requirement for those in sixth-form colleges (E. Germaine).

While work experience is not the most prevalent work readiness program within Merton, it continues to provide 16-24 year olds with necessary exposure to the working environment.

Work Volunteering

Merton currently encourages its young people to participate in work volunteering as a source of work readiness. These programs, offered through VolunteerCentre Merton and local libraries, provide flexible opportunities to 16-24 year olds to gain work experience. Individuals often criticize work volunteering positions as a source of free labor since businesses do not have to monetarily compensate their volunteers for their time (A. Gates, personal communication, April 4, 2013); however, there are many benefits that these programs provide to Merton's young people. Those who work closely with such programs view them as a good opportunity for young people to gain experience in multiple areas of work prior to choosing a career path for future employment (E. Germaine). They prepare volunteers for "life after whatever stage they are at, at the moment" (E. Germaine), while offering benefits to both parties involved. The young person participating in the program gains practical experience in developing their skills from working with others in an area of interest, all while giving back to the organization for which they are volunteering (S. Hannigan).

Volunteering programs are very useful for young people who may be unsure about their career plans. The flexibility of the program allows the young person to change easily from one volunteering opportunity to another with no implications. Flexibility also allows young people to volunteer alongside their studies or employment and enables them freedom to start and end programs at their discretion. This characteristic is quite different from an apprenticeship or work experience program, which both have defined completion lengths (S. Hannigan).

Volunteering is not only a very flexible option, but employers also view volunteering as a confirmation of commitment. Volunteer programs typically last longer than work experience

opportunities and are not compulsory. As a result, employers are keener to see a young person volunteering for a span of three months rather than participating in a three-week work experience program (S. Hannigan). There are also opportunities to obtain qualifications, for example as a sports team coach, through these programs by local training providers. These qualifications are not yet nationally registered; however, they provide a baseline for expected skills volunteers should acquire from their program participation.

Merton views volunteering opportunities as a way of getting young people trained for the work force (E. Germaine). Local libraries heavily use volunteers, among other public and voluntary organizations throughout the borough (N. Draper). A recent initiative, by VolunteerCentre Merton, has established a connection with four Merton sixth-form colleges to provide young people with information on volunteering as well as opportunities to get involved during their studies (E. Germaine). The Education and Skills Bill 2008 allows students to utilize volunteering positions to fulfill the further education or training requirement as long as the volunteer commits to a minimum of 20 hours a week, placing a higher value on volunteering programs within Merton (Department for Children, School, and Families, 2008).

Merton's young people can gain much from these programs, including work experience, exposure to different areas of work, communication skills, and employability training, alongside work or completing their studies (E. Germaine). VolunteerCentre Merton measures the effectiveness of their programs based on the administration of the same survey to their volunteers prior to participating and then during to understand the impact of the volunteering roles. These measures have demonstrated that program participation has increased the confidence and esteem of their volunteers and changed their individual expectations of future goals and work opportunities.

Employers

One of the key pieces in getting young people involved in the work force is the people who are employing them. These individuals are often the most difficult group to reach, as their priorities do not lie with helping to train the youth but instead focus on their business and its performance. Work readiness cannot be successful without the cooperation of employers who are willing to provide opportunities to young people within their companies.

Once employers are involved in these work readiness programs, the placing of young people into a position is a delicate process; the role of the employer is instrumental in making and maintaining a successful placement. One of the most common deterrents for employers in offering placements to 18 to 24 year olds is their misconception and general confusion of what an apprenticeship entails. As M. Cuomo from the Greater London Authority and A. Peate (personal communication, April 2, 2013) from CIPD suggest, most employers do not know what is available to them in terms of work readiness programs. If they have a general idea about them, the lack of clear information makes it difficult for businesses to identify the benefits of these programs. As A. Peate explains, "there are a lot of things available at the moment and [employers] either don't have enough information or [have] so much information that it can be confusing." The employers' lack of awareness or confusion in regards to the existing programs significantly limits their ability to participate in them, and the lack of advertisement to employers may contribute to this barrier. The little advertisement that exists does not effectively address the confusion surrounding these programs. S. Boucher from Grenfell Housing explains

Employers don't understand [apprenticeships] in a sense. I understand them because I work in the industry but you talk to most employers. If you talk to a big retailer, they will understand. You talk to a small retailer about employing an apprentice and they'll say 'Apprenticeship in retail? What do you mean? They are for carpenters' and most of them won't understand it.

Similarly, another factor that prevents employers from getting involved with work readiness programs is their negative perceptions about young people's attitudes. Some young people may not exhibit the best attitude in regards to work. These young people do not understand that they are no longer students but have become employees. If they make a mistake, like any other employee, they may lose their job. As C. Nicholls from White Light says, "they actually don't know how to be an employee yet...they have to realize I am not the headmaster, I don't give detention, I fire them ultimately." This concern emphasizes the need for learners to understand their responsibilities to enter the workforce effectively. For most young people, their first and only interaction with adults other than their parents is at school, where the environment is completely different from that of the workforce due to the shift in the attitudes expected from the young people.

The youth need to be more aware of employer's expectations to better transition from education into work, focusing on their qualifications and skills. Depending on the type of industry, employers look for a balance between soft skills and qualifications. R. Kinsella states

You can say that I'm very good at relationships and stuff like that, but if you've got qualifications that say you are, if you've got work experience that says you are, if your school says so, if you're using someone as a reference, or if you are doing a part time job. So there is a balance.

Employers view qualifications as important but are not wholly determinant for the final hiring decision. C. Nicholls from White Light explains, "I see a qualifications in terms of a degree, it just tells me that they are able to learn at a baccalaureate level. That's it." Although degrees are important to some employers, the majority are more concerned with the young person's ability to communicate and adapt to the working environment. They also wish to see that the young person has a willingness to learn in a new environment.

In addition to employers' perceptions, funding and investment are major issues in offering placement to young people since the vast majority of employers in Merton are small and medium sized companies. Small companies are those who employ fewer than 50 people while medium companies employ between 50 and 250 people. Having young employees that need training represents a cost for the company; many companies are not able to afford these costs especially after the last recession, which severely limited the amount of money available for recruitment and training. As R. Kinsella suggests, "money is tight and where people are recruiting, ideally they would like to recruit people with the right skills, so money is an issue." Small companies do not usually have the means to afford the absence of one employee for one day per week; therefore, their recruitment of young people and participation in work placement or apprenticeship programs is more difficult than it is for larger firms. For large companies that usually employ more than 250 people, their amount of resources makes their integration into the apprenticeship scheme very important. Large companies have the capability of taking on and training several apprentices at once; therefore, using them as a resource towards reducing youth unemployment is essential. Unfortunately, approximately 20 large companies reside within Merton. The lack of large organizations places a much higher importance on the role of small to medium sized employers in Merton to get involved with training programs for the youth (R. Kinsella).

In order to promote small business involvement in these programs, the Employer Incentive, as explained by R. Kinsella, encourages employers to take on apprentices. Since funding is a big factor in a company's decision of hiring apprentices, monetary incentives and subsidies are attractive to all businesses. For small companies in particular, grants provide resources to run work readiness programs for young people while still investing in their current staff. These incentives have proven successful with employers such as Aztec. J. Robson explains that his company, which usually only takes on highly qualified applicants as full time employees, decided to take on two apprentices in 2012 due to this monetary incentive.

In addition, employers identified that apart from being a less expensive source of labor, apprenticeships allow employers to personalize their training schemes to best suit their company. Young employees are malleable, and employers can take advantage of this situation to provide them with the skills that best suit their type of business. The benefits employers gain from training employees constitute a long-term investment that not all companies are willing or able to accept. J. Robson from Aztec "saw the opportunity to take youngsters and train them up in the way we like to work instead of how other people like to work." Similarly, hiring young people now is a way to transfer those skills to new generations before their highly qualified staff retires. A. Peate states that employers are starting to realize that their aging staff will retire soon and that hiring young people is necessary to translate their expert staff's skills to future generations. The young people in whom employers invest are typically much more loyal than average employees, allowing the company to grow with motivated and faithful employees.

S. Boucher from Grenfell suggests that a local provider who approaches an employer creates a relationship with that employer to build confidence and assurance of a potentially successful work readiness program. Local employers are more willing to work and collaborate with training providers that they trust. Local partnerships, such as Merton Partnership, are also looking for employers' participation as an active sub-group. S. Williams and N. Martin suggest that this sub-group will encourage more work readiness programs, such as apprenticeships and work placements, to occur in Merton. These initiatives follow R. Kinsella's suggestion of the importance of making connections and relationships with employers. Good relations make it easier to share information and solve potential misunderstandings.

Participating in work readiness programs is a way to give back to society and perhaps, as R. Kinsella explains that if companies once gave current employers the opportunity to enter

through a work readiness program previously, these employers may want to give that same opportunity to someone else. Some advocates for work readiness programs were previously work volunteers or apprentices and are now in favor of providing similar opportunities to today's young people. By helping young people to develop professionally, companies create a connection with the community and engage with local young people.

In an apprenticeship program, the relationship between employers and training providers is sometimes an issue that may deter an employer from offering a work readiness program. Training providers sometimes place young people with an employer without recognizing employer's needs (J. Robson). Employers suggest changes in the recruitment process to mitigate misunderstandings between training providers and employers. J. Robson hesitates in having providers do both the training and recruitment for his company after his initial negative experience. He explained his idea of the best methods for recruiting and training an apprentice as follows

The actual recruitment side is very lengthy and difficult. Everyone knows that recruitment is lengthy and difficult. There's not much incentive, although the incentive is at the end of it that you'll get a couple of people you're going to train up and actually they do turn, as we've discovered, into great people. But if you don't know that, you don't feel much incentive to actually get involved and do it yourself. You have other people saying, 'We will help you with that recruitment side of things.' Then you've got someone else saying, 'Right, well we can provide the training.' That's where it can start to work in my opinion.

Some employers would like to have on-site training to have better control over the apprentices' progress. As White Light's C. Nicholls explains, "we are hoping to actually take the whole thing including the training and the examination in house, because we feel that we have full control over it." This control may be useful for White Light since their industry is very specific, and it has many organizations that are working together to provide apprenticeships. Even though some employers would like to have more control over what is going on during the training of their apprentice, the feasibility of this control depends on the type of apprenticeship and the qualifications.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

The project team completed this research in order to understand the role of work readiness programs within Merton. These programs aid in the transition of young people from education into the workforce, which is essential, as Merton's youth unemployment rate is high. The current economic state has a direct influence on the youth unemployment levels in Merton. The lack of available positions limits the youth's opportunity to find employment thereby influencing the effectiveness of work readiness initiatives. While Merton is interested in improving these programs, they have not evaluated local programs on behalf of their stakeholders.

We utilized focus groups and interviews with local program providers, young people, employers, and members of local authorities to gain insight into the current opportunities within Merton. Through compiling and analyzing our research, the team was able to draw four main conclusions. First, Merton should focus on awareness surrounding work readiness programs as many residents, young and old, are either completely unaware of these opportunities or are unclear of what these programs provide. Next, we suggest that education provides extensive guidance services to its students to educate them in all pathways available to reach employment. Proper guidance programs are essential in presenting the student with all opportunities in hopes of them choosing the best-suited pathway upon graduation. Third, apprenticeships, training programs, work experience, and work volunteering programs provide different types of training but should all focus on catering to the needs of and providing the proper support to their participants. Finally, Merton should better educate and support its employers in providing work readiness programs. While there are some great examples of successful initiatives by local companies, Merton should make improvements in the structure and presentation of the programs.

As the economy and workforce change, work readiness programs will continue to adjust to meet the demands for employment. These conclusions apply to present day Merton; however, we understand that they are likely to change as the definitions of skill and work continue to evolve.

Chapter Six: Recommendations

This team created a set of recommendations based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions described above. These recommendations suggest improvements to the work readiness initiatives within Merton.

Awareness of Work Readiness Programs

Step-by-step Procedure to Enter Work Readiness Program

The Economic Wellbeing Group should develop a step-by-step procedure to describe how to participate in each work readiness program, including apprenticeships, training programs, work experience, and work volunteering. This procedure will inform young people on to get involved with a program and what they should expect once participating. A training program in London's borough of Richard-upon-Thames has developed a useful procedure for apprenticeships that Merton could mirror during development ("Young People", 2008).

Implement a Work Readiness Program Database

The Economic Wellbeing group should identify the programs offered by individual training providers within Merton and surrounding communities. They should organize the programs by skills taught and compile the information in a centralized database. The database will serve as a resource for young people and employers to identify the local programs that best suit their needs. Merton's Economic Wellbeing Group should initialize this effort and see its follow through and implementation.

Implement a Community Website

The Economic Wellbeing Group should develop a website for work readiness opportunities within the community. On this website, the EWG should include the step-by-step procedures and the program database. They should distribute this web address via advertisements to secondary schools, sixth form colleges, further education colleges, youth centers, community centers, and local libraries. The EWG should also encourage schools to distribute flyers to students.

Bringing Retired Workers and Young People Together

Community centers should run a program that brings retired people, who have experience holding a stable career for long periods of time, together with young people who are interested in that field. Since older generations view work with a sense of pride and identity, the program will expose young people to these values and guide them to seeing work's benefits. These programs will be particularly helpful for young people who do not have previous exposure to the working environment.

Education

Outreach Program in Secondary Schools

The creation of a school outreach program focused on exposing young people to the working life and the experiences gained in a work readiness program would fill a void that currently exists in many secondary schools. The program should include an employer presentation about the work force and their view of young people as an asset as well as first-hand experiences from past participants. Allowing employers to present to students exposes the students to the work force and the soft skills necessary to be successful in a particular field. Understanding why the employers are interested in utilizing work readiness program participants may also further educate students and encourage their involvement. Utilizing young people who have successfully completed a work readiness program presents students with a firsthand report of why these programs are useful. Young people have also shown to relate more easily to other young people.

Educate Parents about Work Readiness

Educating parents and guardians about work readiness opportunities before their child graduating from secondary school is crucial. An informed parent or guardian can provide a well-rounded explanation of all the opportunities available to their child upon graduation from secondary school. Merton can provide informative flyers that schools can distribute to students at least two years prior to graduation. To ensure the student provides the flyer to their guardian or parent, the school should require that the student get a form signed. Additionally, parent information sessions on college and university should also include apprenticeships and work

volunteering opportunities to inform parents. The sessions should also discuss training programs when appropriate. The team also suggests publishing informative sections on work readiness programs and their benefits in annual school newsletters to continue to remind parents that these programs are a viable pathway to employment.

Required Guidance Sessions in Secondary Education

Secondary schools should require their students to have a one-on-one session with a guidance staff member during Year 10. This guidance member should appeal to the current skills and hopes of the student when providing advice for further education and training.

Guidance Department Should Promote Work Readiness Programs

Secondary schools should have guidance programs with staff that promote all options for post-secondary education, including university and work readiness programs.

Training Providers and Programs

One to One Support during Training Programs

Training providers should offer one-to-one support during its programs by interviewing participants to identify their needs and interests prior to placing them in a program. We also encourage a tracking system that will follow the participant throughout the duration of the program, including follow-up meetings that would allow the participant's experience to be personalized and efficient.

Goal-Based Programs

Training programs should have realistic goals in order to build up the participant's self-confidence. Programs that are short in length are also effective for individuals who have been long-term unemployed and need to build up their self-esteem and sharpen their employability skills.

Asset-Focused Approach

Existing programs need not focus initially on what the trainees are lacking, but instead on how to expand the skills they already possess in an attempt to counteract many unemployed people's self-esteem issues. The team believes this approach is effective at both expanding skills and regenerating participant's self-worth by realizing their potential to achieve.

Incentive Programs for Young People

Training providers should introduce programs that engage students' interests. The training providers should make participation in a skills training course, such as employability or basic lessons, conditional upon participating in the more desirable courses.

Collaboration between Training Providers

Due to the saturation of the market of training providers, all training programs could benefit from an increase in collaboration. By combining resources, collaborative efforts allow a larger target population pool, an increase in support, and a larger bank of knowledge to access; all of these efforts will contribute to programs that are more effective. Working in partnership is in fact a great way to share information and resources to offer the community more work readiness program opportunities.

Incentivize Collaboration with Employers

The team suggests the use of incentives to attract employers into working with training providers to better connect the programs offered to the expectations of the job. Possible incentives could include further support from the Merton Chamber of Commerce, a monetary bonus for participating in this effort, and possible advertising advantages for company image.

Apprenticeships

Educate and Engage Secondary School Students through Assemblies

Economic Wellbeing Group members should host assemblies for local secondary and sixth form schools to explain the modern apprenticeship, its advantages, and the opportunities available within the community. The members should direct these assemblies towards students to

influence their understanding that successfully gaining an apprenticeship qualification is parallel to accomplishing a university degree. The members should also discuss training programs and work volunteering. They should advertise work volunteering as a way to introduce individuals to a particular area of work while completing their education, working, or receiving benefits. Presenters should introduce training programs as a pre-apprenticeship program for students to gain the necessary skills to complete an apprenticeship successfully.

Implement Reduced-hour Apprenticeships

Based upon our finding that time commitments were limiting some young people's ability to participate, we suggest the introduction of a reduced-hour apprenticeship. This type of program would last longer than its full-time counterpart does but would have reduced hours per day. Less time commitment per day would allow for larger numbers of young people to participate and would make the programs more accessible to many individuals that cannot manage a full-time apprenticeship, such as young mothers or carers. Further research into employers' opinions of this part-time option would be required prior to its implementation.

Work Experience

Require Short Term Work Experience Prior to an Apprenticeship

The training provider should require a short-term work experience before signing on as an apprentice. Taking part in this placement, the young person can experience the working life in the company and decide if it is an opportunity they wish to continue to pursue. This prerequisite would likely reduce apprenticeship dropout rates.

Continue Student Choice in Work Experience Field

If work experience remains compulsory in secondary school, students should continue to choose the field in which they complete their work experience; however, we suggest that schools more heavily weight the student's choice in the placement process. Placing the student in a field of interest allows the program to be much more worthwhile and beneficial for the student.

Work Volunteering

Campaign for Work Volunteering Opportunities

The Economic Wellbeing Group should initiate a campaign that emphasizes the expansion of work volunteer programs. This campaign should promote the program's flexibility and positive employer perceptions as well as its ability to provide soft skills and employability to participants. The campaign should also address the misperception of "free labor" in that it is a mutual gain for the volunteer and organizations.

Employers

Educate and Support Employers

Training providers, Merton Council, and the Chamber of Commerce should educate employers on the modern apprenticeship scheme as well as other work readiness programs that could benefit their business. These organizations should continue efforts, similar to the Take One campaign, to connect with employers and educate them about the possibilities and benefits of getting involved with young people. Supporting employers through this process is key in making work readiness programs successful.

Utilize Employer to Employer Relationships

An employer with successful work readiness programs may influence a company who has not yet utilized these programs. The company with experience with work readiness programs could explain the direct benefits, especially in the long term, of using these programs. The Chamber of Commerce could run a convention to explain the modern apprenticeship and have employers speak about their experiences with it. This convention would attract employers, as an altruistic effort, with successful stories.

Provide Information during Business Registration

During company registration process, Merton Chamber of Commerce should provide new companies with information about employing young people and how the company can get involved with work readiness programs. This introduction will foster a youth-friendly workplace

for new companies in Merton. In this way, companies can establish good relations with the local community from the very first time they start operating in Merton.

National Policy

Merton should consider the previous recommendations to improve work readiness programs locally. Since they are a current national issue and government continues to look at their effectiveness, our group has identified areas where improvements can be made that are outside the scope of this project. Although Merton may not be able to implement directly the following recommendations, we do think it is important to highlight these areas since our research has shown them to have considerable bearing on Merton's work readiness programs.

JSA benefit change for those training or volunteering

Due to the role that benefits plays in motivating young people to stay NEET, we recommend a reduction or revision to the funds available on Job Seeker's Allowance. In order to accomplish the goal of getting young people off benefits while simultaneously training them, we suggest a revision to JSA to provide a higher allowance to those participating in work training or work volunteering programs.

Pay-by-results upon placement in employment

In order to ensure the quality of training programs, we suggest a reevaluation of the pay-by-results system. A more effective system may have smaller payouts awarded for a student's completion of training but a larger payout awarded when program graduates enter into sustainable employment. In this way, the system would prioritize practical results over simply qualifying students.

Third-party recruitment agency

The placement process for work readiness programs needs improvement. Creating a third party recruitment agency that specifically focuses on placing young people in work readiness positions, without funding based on success, may be a solution. The employer could set realistic expectations, and each case would have an assigned recruiter to focus only on finding suitable

candidates. This recruiter would still use candidates provided by the training program but would act as another filter scheme to take the pressure off the employer. This new party would help to mitigate misunderstandings between employers and training providers.

Employer council

Our team suggests Merton creates a council, association or some sort of organization comprised of employers who take part in these work readiness programs. Collaboratively, they could work towards further improving work readiness programs and exposing companies who are not using these programs to their potential. Similarly, the integration of employers into existing panels would greatly benefit potentially obtained results.

Parents responsible for 16-18 year olds in training

Parents are responsible for their child's truancy up to the age of 16. In response to the raised participation age, we suggest continuing the parent's responsibility for students who choose to participate in an education or training program. Although it is a requirement to participate, some young people may rebel against the new policy; and authorities should not hold parents accountable for this choice. On the other hand, the local authorities should hold parents responsible while their child is in education or training, which may motivate the youth to complete their program. Family environment greatly affects the perception of the child so increasing the participation of the parent could increase the motivation of the young person to attend work or training on a daily basis.

Incentivize Hiring Young People without a University Degree

Recently, lower skilled work opportunities have attracted university graduates; thus, those who do not have a degree have fewer opportunities to fill these vacancies. In order to help less qualified young people enter into lower skill level work, government should introduce incentives to persuade employers to hire young people without a university degree for entry-level positions.

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Interview Subjects

Cheryl Arnold, Former program participant, April 8, 2013
Steve Boucher, Director of Operations, Grenfell Housing, March 14, 2013
Ming Carpenter, JobCentre Plus, March 27, 2013
Jacqui Cayenne, Neighbourhood Regeneration Manager, Merton Priory Homes, April 4, 2013
Chynaii, Former program participant and apprentice, April 2, 2013
Michelle Cuomo, Senior Manager, Economic & Business Policy, Greater London Authority, April 4, 2013
David Dodd, TRP Ltd., March 26, 2013
Nick Draper, Labour councilor for Colliers Wood, Merton Council, March 12, 2013
Theresa Durney, Pollards Hill Library, March 28, 2013
Andrew Gates, Policy Implementation Manager, Greater London Authority, April 4, 2013
Ellie Germaine, Youth Action Coordinator, VolunteerCentre Merton, April 9, 2013
Sarah Hannigan, Recruitment and Placement Manager, VolunteerCentre Merton, April 9, 2013
Carol Hemans, Youth Manager, Pollards Hill Youth Centre, April 15, 2013
Anne Hoblyn, Partnership Manager, JobCentre Plus, March 27, 2013
Jessica, Work experience participant, March 20, 2013
Ray Kinsella, Business Engagement Manager, Merton Chamber of Commerce, March 21, 2013
Mat, Former program participant, April 5, 2013
Naomi Martin, Director, Commonsides Community Development Trust, March 21, 2013
Ryan McCann, Accounts Manager, South Thames College, March 15, 2013
Chris Nicholls, Operations Director, White Light, March 28, 2013
Annie Peate, Programme and Policy Officer, CIPD, April 2, 2013
Jacqueline Purcell, Communication consultant and trainer, March 28, 2013
Caroline Quinn, Community Development Officer, MOAT, March 20, 2013
John Robson, Managing Director, Aztec, April 8, 2013
Emily Thistleton, Current apprentice, April 5, 2013
Yvonne Tomlin, Head of Community Education, Merton Adult Education, March 28, 2013
Sara Williams, FutureMerton, Merton Council, March 21, 2013

Focus Groups Subjects

Anna, Former program participant, April 11, 2013
Chris, Current program participant, April 11, 2013
Daniel, Current program participant, April 11, 2013
Dean, Current apprentice, March 28, 2013
Gaby, Former apprentice, March 28, 2013
Jayden, Current program participant, April 11, 2013
Matt, Current apprentice, April 11, 2013
Ollie, Current apprentice, March 28, 2013
Sophie, Former program participant, April 11, 2013

Appendix I

Merton Description:

The London Borough of Merton, established in 1965, combined the smaller municipal boroughs of Mitcham and Wimbledon with the Urban Districts of Merton and Morden. Merton, which covers 37.6 km², is one of the 19 outer boroughs of London and is located to the southwest of the city. The majority (65.5%) of the current population of 211,000 is between the ages of 20 and 64, while 23.4% are between 0 and 19 years old (“Economic Wellbeing”, n.d.). Young adults currently attending school comprise 5.8% of the population (“Wards”, n.d.).

The western part of the borough is typically more prosperous, with housing that is more expensive, better transport connections, and a higher percentage of workers in professional employment. The eastern half of the borough is less affluent and has higher rates of unemployment (Figure 11).

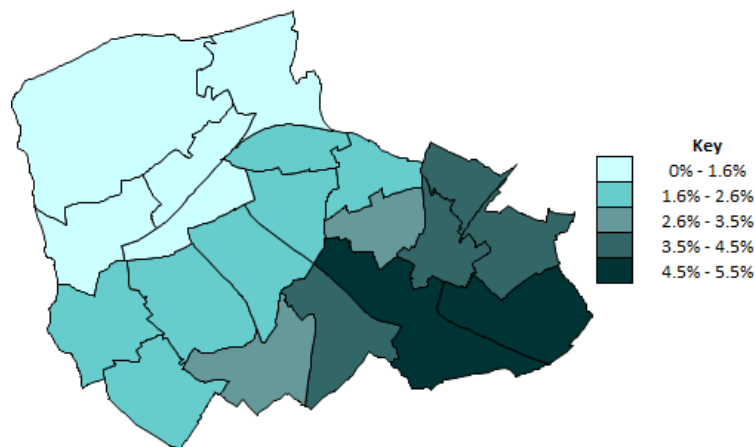


Figure 11: JSA Claimant Rates in Merton (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 13)

Jobs in this area are in lower paying sectors such as wholesale and retail businesses (Figure 6). The voting patterns as reported by Piggott (2010) in the 2010 Council elections illustrate these differences as the majority of voters in the west is Conservative while the majority in the east is Labour (Figure 12).

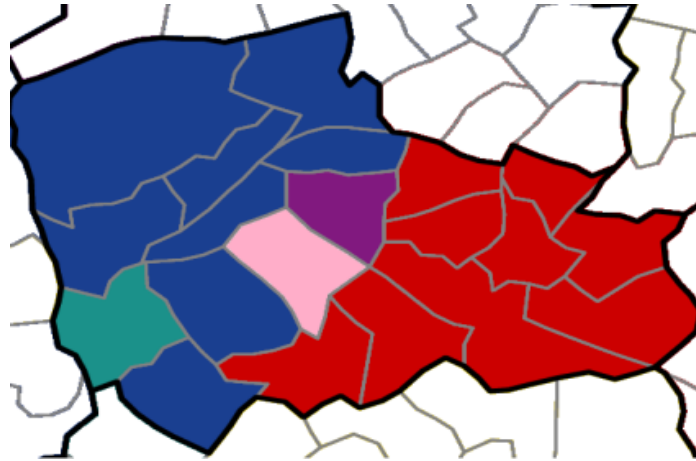


Figure 12: Political Map of Merton

Only 27 percent of people living in Merton work in the borough, which can be attributed to the availability of transportation (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 7). As mentioned above, transport connections to Central London are located in West Merton, influencing job selection of residents as those living in West Merton have easier access to these transport sites and can obtain higher paying jobs in London. The overall unemployment rate in Merton is currently 6.6 percent (Figure 13); however, this rate varies between the different sides of Merton.

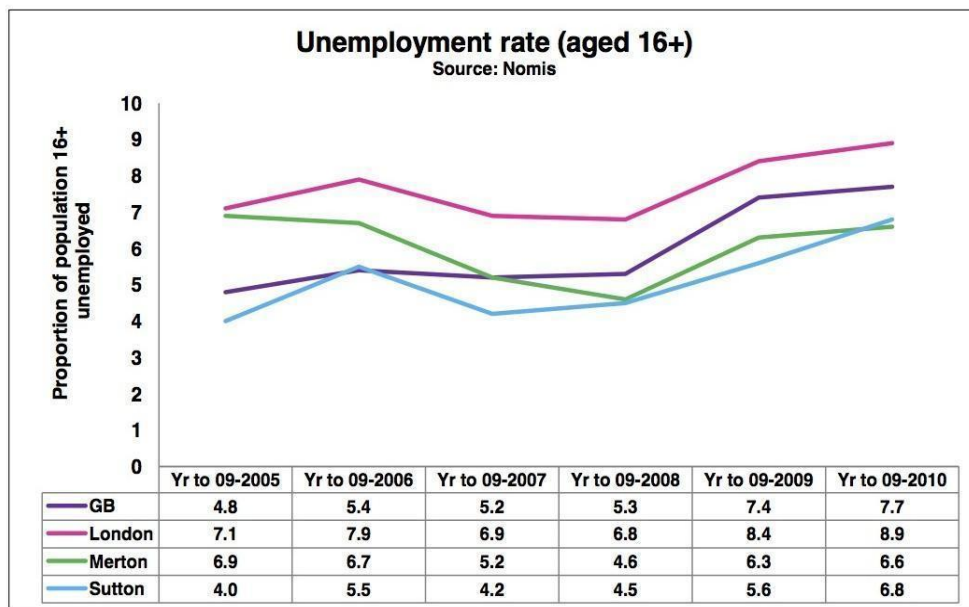


Figure 13: Unemployment Rates 16+ year olds (“Economic Wellbeing”, n.d.)

Merton has a low number of available job opportunities, with an uneven distribution across the borough. As Figure 14 suggests, East Merton has limited job opportunities, in contrast with South Wimbledon where job opportunities are highly concentrated

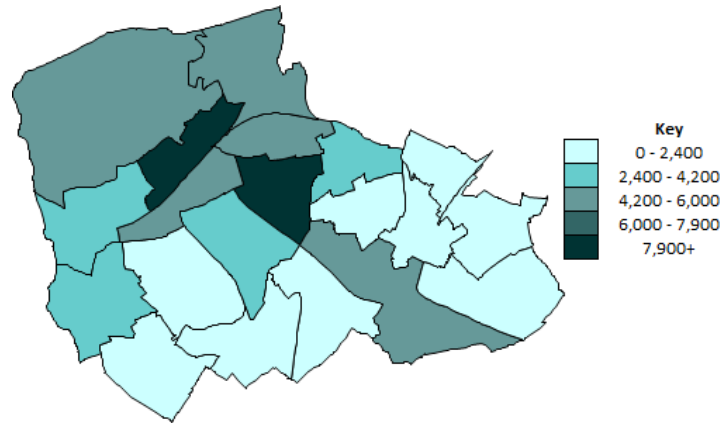


Figure 14: Available Jobs in Merton by Ward (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 13)

Those in East Merton unable to find sustainable employment have become economically inactive. Approximately 3900 people are JSA claimants (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 9). Differences in levels of JSA claimants are evident throughout the borough, illustrated in Figure 11.

Youth unemployment is of particular concern in the borough, especially in the east; and its levels have risen in recent years. Recent data indicate that approximately 294 young people in 2012 between the ages of 16 and 18 are currently NEET (p. 14). It is the goal of the Merton community, specifically a committee known as the Economic Wellbeing Group, to ensure that the youth is not affected by the recent unemployment trends; thus, they are working to “ensure that [the youth] are able to achieve suitable employment” (p. 5).

Sponsor description:

Commonside Community Development Trust is a voluntary organization located in East Merton and established in March 29, 2001 (“About Commonside”, n.d.). As a charitable non-profit organization, Commonside is in financial good standing and is overseen by a Board of 17 community members (“Governance”, n.d.). The Trust contributes to the economic, environmental, and social regeneration of Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh, all of which are wards located within East Merton (“History of Merton”, n.d.). Its mission is “to create a better future for ourselves, our families and our communities” (Commonside Community

Development Trust, 2012) through “developing the capacity and skills” of the local disadvantaged communities to enable the communities’ members to “participate more fully in society” (“1089578-COMMONSIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST,” n.d.).

Additionally, Commonsides provides training to advance an individual’s education. Commonsides targets these opportunities towards the unemployed to provide them with relevant skills and work experience. Commonsides also provides financial, technical, and business advice to aid in the transition from unemployment into the workforce (Commonside Community Development Trust, 2012). In order to reach these goals, Commonsides continues to seek partnerships with other voluntary, private, and public sector organizations interested in improving the lives and environment of Merton’s population. The director of Commonsides, Naomi Martin, has taken the initiative to get involved in other Merton organizations to further these efforts. Some of Commonsides’s partners include Merton Voluntary Services Council, Merton Adult Education, Merton Council, and the Merton Chamber of Commerce (“Partners”, n.d.).

By managing a community center, arranging community events, and organizing community development programs, Commonsides strives to ensure the wellbeing of Merton’s population. Currently, the organization manages three main projects: Healthy Community, Lunch Club for Over 55s, and Step Forward Program. Each of these programs provides a way to support residents in many aspects of life including physical and mental health, nutrition, recreation, self-confidence, social inclusion, education, training, work, parenting, housing, family programs, and many other activities that enrich citizens’ lives and allow them to develop skills to successfully manage everyday living (Commonside Community Development Trust, 2012).

Merton Council, a contributor to Commonsides, released a Sustainability Community Strategy in 2009 to establish a new plan for Merton (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 2). This Plan, also known as the Merton Community Plan, strives to make Merton “a great place to live and call home, where citizens are also neighbours and take responsibility for improving their own lives and neighbourhoods” (“Merton Partnership: Working with Merton's Communities”, n.d.). One important aspect of this plan is to make all communities within the 20 wards of Merton sustainable. The plan defined a sustainable community as a “place with high quality of life, work and learning opportunities, housing services, local environment protection,

and an improved ability to move about in and around borough” (Merton Economic Wellbeing Group, 2012, p. 2).

Merton revised their Economic Development Strategy in early 2012 to support the Community Plan’s initiatives. Among the six newly identified areas required for growth within the Merton Community was “co-ordinating activity to support unemployed residents into work” (p. 2). In response to this initiative, Merton’s Economic Wellbeing Group (EWG) wrote their Employment and Training Action Plan. This group consists of different organizations of Merton that have a common goal to “reduce unemployment and increase economic wellbeing” (p. 2). Some of the agencies involved in this initiative are Merton Priory Homes, Grenfell Housing and Training, VolunteerCentre Merton, as well as many other administrations that work together to combine resources and forces to achieve their common goal. Naomi Martin is a member of this group and served as the main collaborator for our project.

Appendix II

Current Educational Structure:

The current, full-time education program in England requires school attendance from five to 16 years old. England divides its structure into four key stages (KS) as demonstrated in Table 2. Primary school consists of key stage one and key stage two with a national curriculum that covers the following 11 subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education, information and communication technology and religious education. Key stages three and four form secondary school; the national curriculum covers the same subjects as in primary school but with advanced material (“National Curriculum”, 2013). In key stage four, tutors prepare students for the national qualifications known as the General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE). The GCSEs have different subject areas, and students must select five of the subject areas on which to focus their Year 11 studies. Students take their selected GCSE subject exams at the end of Year 11 and must achieve a score of A*-C to be awarded their certificate for that particular subject. Each key stage in the education system has corresponding tests, which give a general perspective of the quality level in education.

Table 3: Educational Structure ("United Kingdom: Overview," n.d.)

		Years	Ages	ISCED
Early years	Foundation stage	-	3–5	0
Primary	Key stage 1	1–2	5–7	1
Primary	Key stage 2	3–6	7–11	1
Secondary	Key stage 3	7–9	11–14	2
Secondary	Key stage 4	10–11	14–16	3
Post-compulsory secondary	-	12–13	16–18/19	3

Types of schools:

England has a variety of school options that provide academic education. Most of them are state-funded schools that students can attend at no cost. There are four types of state schools available to students aged 5 to 16: community schools, foundation schools, academies, and grammar schools. Community schools are institutions unrelated to any business or religious group and are overseen by local authorities. Foundation schools are similar to community institutions, but they can establish their own rules regarding the structure of their systems. Organizations such as local councils, community trusts, or foundation bodies run grammar schools; in order to attend, prospective students must pass an entry exam (“Types of schools”, 2013). Academies are schools that “get funding from sponsors from business, faith, or voluntary groups. They also get money direct from the government, not the local council” (“Types of Schools”, 2013). Some of the structural differences of academies rely on their freedom from local authority and their ability to set their own pay for staff. Also academies have the autonomy to decide what they want to include in the curriculum (“What is an academy?”, 2013).

In addition, numerous independent and private schools offer different curriculums. These types of schools are not funded by any party and, therefore, charge fees for attendance. Although they are not required to follow the national curriculum, the private institutions must still register with the government. Among these institutions are city technology colleges, which are independent secondary schools funded by companies or local councils that promote technical and practical programs. Unlike private schools, these schools are free to attend. Depending on the private or independent institution, they may offer the national curriculum as well as many other qualifications such as the business and technology education council (BTEC) qualifications, the Cambridge pre-university program, and the international baccalaureate (IB).

Appendix III

Apprenticeships Policies and Initiatives

Government implemented the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children, and Learning Act in 2009. The act instills local authorities with the responsibility of providing education and training for 16-18 year olds as well as 19-25 year olds “subject to a learning deficiency assessment” (Department for Education, 2009). The Young People’s Learning Agency provides support for the local authorities. The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for all other learners over 19 and also for providing apprenticeships that target 16 to 18 year olds. This act provides a framework for apprenticeships and develops the right to an apprenticeship for 16 to 18 year olds. The Act also allows employees to take time off from their current job to enter into apprenticeships to receive appropriate training (“Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009”, n.d.). Should an employee choose to do this, he will not receive any employment penalties up to a certain period of time.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA), as created by the latter act, is the successor of the Youth Training Scheme and also maintains the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The SFA provides support to employers, providers, and young people through a “demand-led system that responds to their needs” (Department for Education, 2009). It funds and promotes national further education and skills training, which approximately 3600 training programs provide, including colleges, independent trainers and training organizations. The SFA provides the funding directly to the training programs in order to subsidize the cost of each learner’s course work (“About Us,” 2012b). The SFA’s website also acts as a database for training programs, including the National Careers Service and Lifelong Learning Account.

The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16 to 24 year olds (AGE 16 to 24) incentivizes employers to take on an apprentice until December 2013. The National Apprenticeship Service provides a £1500 grant to businesses of less than 1000 employees who hire 16 to 24 year old apprentices. This grant is to “encourage employers to develop their business and take on new apprentices” (“Employer Incentive (AGE 16 to 24)”, 2013). The £1500 grant is in addition to the subsidy for the apprentices’ training received by the training provider from the Skills Funding Agency. The employers eligible for this grant are those who have either never employed an apprentice or have not employed one in the past 12 months. An employer can receive funding from NAS for up to ten 16-24 year old apprentices; but the employer must agree

to employ its apprentices for at least one year or until the completion of their apprenticeship program, whichever is longer in duration (“Employer Incentive (AGE 16 to 24)”, 2013).

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, developed many supporting policies relating to apprenticeships in the past year. The Mayor implemented a policy that will lower the prices of public transportation for apprentices traveling within London. This policy grants a 30 percent discount on public transit, including bus, tube, and tram, for first-year apprentices aged 18 and above starting May 2013 (Mayor of London Press Office, 2013). This travel incentive encourages young people, who previously could not afford London’s high transportation fees, to take advantage of the available apprenticeships. Additionally, since apprentices’ wages are significantly lower than the national minimum wage, subsidizing travel incentives may encourage young people to take part in this lower-waged opportunity.

Appendix IV

Training providers organize most of the apprenticeships and training programs in Merton in cooperation with local schools or employers. This section profiles many of the local training programs.

Merton Priory Homes

Merton Priory Homes is a housing association that owns and manages more than 9000 homes in Mitcham, Morden, and Wimbledon. Working in collaboration with 12 partners, Merton Priory Homes forms part of a larger company, Circle Anglia Limited. Their mission is to achieve sustainable communities by improving local opportunities and quality services (“About us”, 2013). They also provide work readiness programs to the local community.

Merton Priory Homes recently launched the Merton Training and Employment Centre (MTEC), which provides free training and job placement services in the construction field. Merton Priory Homes created the program as part of the 2013 National Apprenticeship Week and has already enrolled about 50 trainees. In addition, MTEC provides a database of apprentices where local employers market their vacancies to recruit trainees. There are many areas for training such as painting, carpentry, dry lining, and decoration. At the end of the program, participants gain a Construction Skills Certification (CSC) and a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification. The program gives support to residents interested in the construction industry by providing them with the skills and qualifications needed to apply for a job. The program is also a great resource for local businesses to recruit construction apprentices (“News and Publications”, 2013).

Grenfell Housing and Training

Grenfell Housing and Training provides temporary housing to people facing periods of crisis. In general, services provided by this association target vulnerable families and young people who have major difficulties or are moving towards independence. Grenfell also provides training courses and apprenticeship opportunities to tenants and local community members in order to get them into work. The participants develop their individual abilities through participation in the programs. Grenfell places its participants in based on the participants’ personal background when possible to help each participant fulfill their potential. Some of the courses offered cover Literacy, Numeracy, Business Administration, ICT, and Customer Service.

In addition to accredited qualifications, there are other courses and workshops to help people with other living skills such as health subjects and money management. Depending on the type of course, programs run with 60 to 100 learners (“Training”, n.d.).

Grenfell offers two main programs: apprenticeships and Together You Can. Grenfell offers apprenticeships in collaboration with local employers to provide work experience opportunities to Grenfell’s learners. Grenfell Housing covers costs such as materials, training courses, and accreditation. The Skills Funding Agency will provide Grenfell with either full or partial funding depending upon the age of the participant.

Similarly, Grenfell delivers Together You Can to young people between 18 to 25 years old. Local employers, such as Merton Chamber of Commerce or the Citizens Trust Borough, that work in partnership to provide opportunities to young people, support the program. Participants work with one employer for four days and spend one day developing a project called Your Career, Your Choice at Grenfell’s facilities. This project had Together You Can participants recruit other Merton young people into employment. The Together You Can program embraces basic skills such as CV writing, interview skills, and self-confidence development (“Together You Can”, n.d.).

Take One Campaign

Take One Campaign is a project recently developed by the Merton Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Economic Wellbeing Group. More than just an engagement campaign to attract employers, Take One is about providing employers support and guidance throughout their participation in local work readiness programs. Merton’s Chamber of Commerce believes that companies should engage with young people in a variety of ways, either by inviting them for a short period of time and introducing young people to their businesses or by offering them placement for an extended period of time (R. Kinsella).

The main idea behind the campaign is to provide employers and young people the opportunity to communicate more effectively. Employers usually have a generalized negative perception of young people’s attitude towards work; but by engaging with young people in some way without commitments, employers can experience working with young people. If employers have a good first experience, they may continue to provide work experience opportunities to Merton’s youth (R. Kinsella).

In this way, the Take One Campaign is a long-term campaign that introduces local businesses with young people but also provides support to both parties throughout their experience of working together. The Chamber of Commerce understands that many youth come from diverse backgrounds where most of them need some kind of special support to finish a program successfully; therefore, support for young people in the workplace is extremely important to avoid any sort of troubles. R. Kinsella states that “Take One, for this particular people, ... would have someone that is not necessarily involved with giving the training in the workplace, but is on hand to guide and listen” (R. Kinsella).

Merton Adult Education

Merton Adult Education program offers individuals the opportunity to take courses to earn a qualification or to simply become more educated. Specifically for 19 to 24 year olds, Merton Adult Education provides pre-apprenticeship programs that offer young people guidance on work and training opportunities. The program runs twice a week for six weeks and is a full day program. Participants can receive qualifications upon completion, including Workskills, Employment Rights and ICT qualifications (“19-24 Courses”, n.d.). Merton Adult Education also reaches out to local companies to provide courses in house so that employees may gain more skills during work hours.

Training and Recruitment Partnership, Ltd.

The Training and Recruitment Partnership (TRP) Ltd. is a training program that provides young people with the opportunity to enter into an apprenticeship. TRP took over the Merton Training consortium in 1998 and now provides apprenticeship opportunities all over the South of England. TRP uses training advisors to properly place the youth in apprenticeships that will be most beneficial for them. Once placed, the apprentice will enter into full time employment. TRP sends certified trainers to teach the trade’s theory into the apprentice’s workplace for most career paths; however, some apprentices may have to attend one day of college to learn all aspects of the trade they are practicing. In successful completion of an apprenticeship program with TRP, the apprentice receives an appropriate qualification. The apprentice then has the choice to enter into full-time employment with the company for which they apprenticed or continue onto another apprenticeship (“About us at TRP”, n.d.).

Make It Happen

The Make It Happen initiative is a national program provided by Delrose Earle Training, who provides their services on a local level (“Welcome to Delrose Earle Training Provider”, 2013). Merton is using the Make It Happen scheme to support and provide opportunities to local 16 through 24 year olds who are NEET. This course runs for five weeks, during which young people have a two-week work placement in a preferred industry. This placement helps the young people to develop their basic skills as well as confidence and communication skills (“MiH Development Program”, n.d.). They also learn basic life skills including health awareness and financial management.

South Thames College

A local college, South Thames College (STC), offers the Prince’s Trust Team Programme to 16 to 25 years olds. These young people can attend this free 12-week course to learn basic life skills including confidence, motivation and communication through presentations, group work, and projects (“The Prince’s Trust Team Programme”, 2013). STC also provides an apprenticeship program that works like the previous programs mentioned, where the apprentice attends a college course once a week while working the remaining four days. These apprentices receive qualifications at the end of the apprenticeship as long as they successfully fulfill the program’s requirements (R. McCann).

Work Clubs

In a continuing attempt to train the underskilled, Work Clubs have begun to arise across England. The government created these Work Clubs to break a cycle of “benefits dependency” (“Work Clubs”, 2012). England will implement these programs across the nation, and they expect the programs to grow over time. The goal of the programs is to create a local community organization where a lot of knowledge and resources are available to those in need. The programs ultimately are trying to get the unemployed into work, and believe a local knowledge bank will facilitate that process.

VolunteerCentre Merton

VolunteerCentre Merton is the main outlet for volunteering work opportunities within Merton. They promote volunteering and guide their participants throughout the course of their experience. VolunteerCentre Merton provides services to employers, such as information on how

businesses can incorporate work-volunteering opportunities into their workplace. This information includes recruitment methods for gaining volunteers and choosing the right volunteer as well as how best to support each volunteer (“Welcome to Volunteer Centre Merton”, 2012).

If an individual is between the ages of 16 and 25, they can utilize the Youth Action Team which discusses the benefits of becoming a work volunteer, including developing new skills, building up confidence, and access to qualifications (“Why Volunteer and the Benefits”, 2012). VolunteerCentre Merton actively recruits young people through sixth form colleges and presenting to secondary schools through relatable discussions on the benefits of work volunteering in terms of work experience (E.Germaine).

Library Volunteers

In Merton, another source of volunteering opportunities is through the local libraries, such as the Pollards Hill Library. The library utilizes volunteers for a variety of purposes, including shelving books, contributing to informative sessions for library patrons, coordinating reading groups and organizing health or fitness activities (“Volunteer roles at Pollards Hill Library”, n.d.). Merton’s utilization of volunteers as a task force for their libraries is an unconventional model, according to borough councilor N. Draper, but is one that allows the borough’s libraries to function at low cost while providing skill development opportunities for those in the community.

Merton considers its library volunteer scheme very effective thus far. It has over 350 volunteers in its system, and they have proven to fill a variety of needs. Mayor of London Boris Johnson invested £100,000 in expanding the program further across London’s library system (“Merton to lead way for London’s library volunteers”, 2011).

Appendix V

The group used the following script to introduce ourselves via phone or email when contacting subjects for an interview:

Hello. We are a group of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts working with Naomi Martin from Commonsense and serving Merton's Economic Wellbeing Group. We are conducting research to understand the structure, development, and implementation of the work readiness programs in Merton. We have been referred to you by _____ who thought your expertise in _____ and opinions of the programs' past and present successes will of great significance to our research and will aide in our contribution to the evaluation of the current work readiness programs. We would like to schedule an interview with you at your earliest convenience. The interview will only take about an hour. We would like to conduct the interview in person if possible, but we could do it by phone if you prefer. What would be a good time and day for us to speak?

If the individual agrees to meet to be interviewed, a date, time, and location will be established to conduct the interview.

Appendix VI

Interview Questions for Merton Council

1. Where do you currently work and what is your position in this organization?
2. Can you detail the purpose of the Economic Wellbeing Group?
3. What motivated you to work with the Economic Wellbeing Group?
4. Have you personally been an apprentice or a work volunteer? If yes, which one?
5. Out of the three programs, which work readiness experience do you find most beneficial? Why?
6. How long have you worked with work readiness programs?
7. What role have you had/do you have with the development of work readiness programs in Merton?
8. Which policies have you helped to implement in Merton to improve youth's work readiness? If no participation, what policies currently exist in Merton to aid work readiness?
9. Why were these particular policies created?
10. What is your opinion of the purpose of work readiness programs?
11. How will the newly raised participation age in education affect the work readiness programs?
12. In your opinion, where are the most successful programs located: Locally, Nationally, or Internationally?
13. What makes this particular program successful?
14. Do you believe the work readiness programs in London/Merton adequately prepare the youth for the work force?
15. What flaws do you find with the current programs?
16. Do you believe that the youth are adequately prepared for the work force upon graduation from secondary school?
17. What do you believe the youth are lacking in preparation for the work force?
18. Is the situation in Merton different from other places in London? If yes, why do you think this is true?
19. What is the best method of engaging young people to participate in the work readiness programs?
20. Do you know of anyone else that can be useful contacts to aid in our research?

Interview Questions for Merton Chamber of Commerce

1. What is the role of the Chamber within Merton?
2. What is your current position with the Merton Chamber of Commerce?
3. How does the chamber work with local businesses?
4. Does the chamber have direct involvement with the work readiness programs?
5. Have you personally been an apprentice or work volunteer?
6. What role have you had/do you have with the development of work readiness programs in Merton?
7. How long have you worked with work readiness programs?
8. What is your opinion of the purpose of work readiness programs?
9. Do you think that work readiness programs are effective in making the youth work ready?

10. In your opinion, where are the most successful programs located? Locally, Nationally, or Internationally
11. What makes this particular program successful?
12. What are the employers' opinions in regards to work readiness programs?
13. Do they offer work readiness programs?
14. What general skills are expected for any of these work readiness programs?
15. Are there different required skills for each work readiness program?
16. Is there a specific field in which employers are more likely to host these work readiness programs? Whether it is carpenters, accountants, etc.
17. Do the employers value previous work experience when hiring young people.
18. Are employers willing to participate with learning providers to provide apprenticeships of young people aged 16-24? Does funding play a role?
19. Do you believe the work readiness programs in Merton adequately prepare the youth for the work force?
20. What flaws do you find with the current programs?
21. How will the newly raised participation age in education affect the work readiness programs?
22. Which policies have you helped to implement in Merton to improve youth's work readiness? If no participation, what policies currently exist in Merton to aid work readiness?
23. Why were these particular policies created?
24. Do employers believe that the youth are adequately prepared for the work force upon graduation from secondary school?
25. What do you believe the youth are lacking in preparation for the work force?
26. Is the situation in Merton different from other places in London? If yes, why do you think this is true?
27. Do you know of any employers that can be useful contacts to aid in our research?

Appendix VII

Interview Pre-amble:

We are a group of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. We are conducting a series of interviews with various stakeholders to understand the history, development, and structure of the current work readiness programs in Merton. This is a collaborative project with Commonside Trust, Merton's Economic Wellbeing Group and WPI.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. During this interview, we would like to record our conversation for later analysis. We will also be taking notes during the interview on key points. Is this okay with you?

Can we also have your permission to quote any comments or perspectives expressed during the interview? This information will be used for research purposes only and we will give you an opportunity to review any materials we use prior to the completion of our final report.

Your participation is greatly appreciated, and we thank you for taking the time to meet with us. If you are interested, we would be happy to provide you with a copy of our results at the conclusion of our study.

Appendix VIII

Interview Questions for Program Providers

1. Have you personally been an apprentice or work volunteer?
2. What is your current position with your company?
3. What role does your company play in preparing youth for work?
4. How do you create apprenticeship opportunities for work people?
5. What role have you had/do you have with the development of work readiness programs in Merton?
6. How long have you worked with work readiness programs?
7. What do you define as a work readiness program?
8. Which programs do you have experience developing?
9. What purpose do you believe the work readiness programs serve?
10. What characteristics of a work readiness program makes them most effective?
11. Specifically which work readiness program do you find is most effective in preparing the youth for the work force?
12. Are there any major flaws within these programs?
13. What policies govern the work readiness programs and are they beneficial? For example, do they provide funding, support, etc.
14. What opinions do you have surrounding these policies?
15. Do you think the work readiness programs currently used in Merton are adequately preparing the youth for the work force? Why?
16. Do you believe the youth are adequately prepared for the workforce upon graduation from secondary school? Are they lacking skills? If so, which skills?
17. Do you think these work readiness programs are essential in preparing the youth for entering the workforce?
18. How do you measure the effectiveness of a work readiness program?
19. Specifically pertaining to the programs that you work with, do you find them effective? Are there any flaws with these programs? If so, what flaws?
20. How do you engage the youth to participate in work readiness programs?
21. Do you advertise your programs? If so, how?
22. Are there any other people you can suggest we speak to who can help us better understand the effectiveness of current work readiness programs?
23. Can we speak with your learners?

Interview Questions for Employers

1. What is *insert company name here*?
2. What is your current position at this company?
3. Does this company have direct involvement with the work readiness programs?
4. Have you personally been an apprentice or work volunteer?
5. What is your opinion of the purpose of work readiness programs?
6. Do you think that the current work readiness programs are effective in making the youth work ready?
7. What makes this particular program successful?

8. What are your opinions in regards to work readiness programs?
9. What general skills are expected for the young people entering your program?
10. Can you speak to the perspective of what young people think about these work readiness programs? Do you find they are interested in participating in these programs?
11. Do you look for candidates who have previous qualifications, say prior NVQs, or are you open to hiring young people with little to no work experience?
12. Are you willing to participate with training providers to provide apprenticeships to young people aged 16-24? Does funding play a role?
13. Do you believe the other work readiness programs in Merton adequately prepare the youth for the work force?
14. Do you find any flaws within your programs, whether it be issues with funding from the government or issues with motivating young people?
15. How will the newly raised participation age in education affect the work readiness programs?
16. Are there any other policies that you find either enhance or hinder the work readiness programs?
17. What skills do you value most in hiring a new employee?
18. Would you hire work readiness program participants full time upon completion of these programs based on the results you have seen? Why or why not? If yes, what percentage of apprentices do you hire as full time employees upon graduation from the program?
19. Can we speak with your apprentices, past or present?

Interview Questions for JobCentre Plus

1. What role does the Job Centre play in preparing and providing youth employment or training?
2. With what types of employers does JobCentre Plus collaborate? What types of jobs make up the job market in Merton?
3. Does the Job Centre collaborate with training providers? Which ones?
4. How do you decide to place young people into training programs, apprenticeships, or employment?
5. What do you define as a work readiness program?
6. What purpose do you believe the work readiness programs serve?
7. What characteristics of a work readiness program makes them most effective?
8. Specifically pertaining to the providers that you work with, do you find them effective in preparing the youth for the work force?
9. Are there any flaws with these programs? If so, what flaws?
10. What policies govern the work readiness programs and getting the youth into employment?
11. What effect does receiving benefits play in participating in a training program?
12. What opinions do you have surrounding these policies?
13. Do you believe that young people are adequately prepared for the work force when they enter the job center seeking employment?
14. Do you think the work readiness programs are able to prepare the youth for entering the workforce?
15. How do you engage the youth to participate in work readiness programs?

16. Do you advertise your services? If so, how?
17. Are there any other people you can suggest we speak to who can help us better understand the effectiveness of current work readiness programs?
18. Are there any employers that you can refer us to who hire apprentices or those who have participating in a training program?

Appendix IX

Focus Group and Interview Questions for Young People

1. With what type of program are you involved?
2. How did you find out about the program?
3. How did you get involved with the program?
4. Why did you enter into the program?
5. What education did you have prior to joining the program?
6. What skills do you hope to gain from the program?
7. Are you participating in this program as a way of becoming 'work ready'?
8. Do you think that you will be ready for the workforce after completing this program?
9. Do you believe the program had excessive entrance qualifications?
10. What was the application process?
11. Do you feel the program is teaching you effectively?
12. What do you consider is the main gain of participating in this program?
13. Are you satisfied with the program's conditions?
14. Did you apply to any other program other than the one in which you are currently?
15. Why did you choose the program in which you are currently involved?
16. What types of processes did you have to go through?
17. Was this a secondary school sponsored program?
18. What kind of job would you like to have upon entering the workforce?
19. What skills do you think are expected of you for this job?
20. Do you think that the work readiness program can properly equip you with these skills?
21. What is the most concerning thing to you about entering the workforce?
22. What do you expect from having a position in the workforce?
23. What are your expectations for the work force?
24. What are your opinions around entering work force?
25. What learned skills in the work readiness programs do you think are most important to equip young people to enter into the workforce?

Appendix X

Objectives	Goals	Contacts
<p>1) Understand the history, development and implementation of work readiness programs in London and Merton.</p>	<p>Assess essential characteristics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program development ● Implementation process ● Government funding ● Program opinions 	<p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Michelle Cuomo (Greater London Authority) ● Nick Draper (Merton Council) ● Andrew Gates (Greater London Authority) ● Ray Kinsella (Chamber of Commerce) ● Naomi Martin (Commonside Community Development Trust) ● Sara Williams (Merton Council)
<p>2) Assess the perspectives of stakeholders responsible for developing and implementing the Merton's work readiness programs.</p>	<p>Gather information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educational history ● Professional history ● Conceptions of Apprenticeships ● Involvement level ● Motive for involvement ● Program opinions 	<p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Steve Boucher (Grenfell Training) ● Ming Carpenter (JobCentre Plus) ● Jacqui Cayenne (Merton Priory Homes) ● David Dodd (The Training and Recruitment Partnership Ltd) ● Theresa Durney (Pollards Hill Library) ● Sarah Hannigan (Volunteer Centre Merton) ● Carol Hemons (Youth Centre) ● Anne Hoblyn (JobCentre Plus) ● Ellie Germaine (Volunteer Centre Merton) ● Ryan McCann (South Thames College) ● Chris Nicholls (White Light, ltd.) ● Annie Peate (CIPD) ● Jacqueline Purcell

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Caroline Quinn (MOAT) ● John Robson (Aztec Event Services Limited) ● Yvonne Tomlin (Merton Adult Education)
3) Identify the perspectives of the program participants.	Evaluate participant's expectations, participation rates, experiences and satisfaction rates.	<p>Interviews and focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anna (Grenfell) ● Cheryl (Delrose Earle) ● Chris (Grenfell) ● Chynai (Delrose Earle) ● Daniel (Grenfell) ● Dean (White Light) ● Emily (TRP) ● Gaby (White Light) ● Jayden (Grenfell) ● Jessica (Commonside) ● Mat (Merton Chamber of Commerce) ● Matt (Grenfell) ● Ollie (White Light) ● Sophie (Grenfell)
4) Recommend program improvements that will better prepare Merton's young people for the work force.	Synthesize analyzed data from Objective 1, 2, and 3 to generalize the opinions, perspectives and expectations of stakeholders involved in work readiness programs. Compare opinions from each stakeholder group to suggest program effectiveness.	