

Evaluation of the Government Skills Apprenticeships Pathfinder

Government Skills
Spring 2009



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Appendix A: About us

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Date: 20th March 2009

Executive summary

Project context

Experian was commissioned by Government Skills in January 2009 to evaluate the Apprenticeship Pathfinder within the Civil Service, to help Government Skills identify the benefits of apprenticeships to individuals and their departments, and evaluate the lessons learnt for a subsequent roll-out.

Apprenticeships are a form of work based learning qualification at Level 2 (Apprenticeship) or Level 3 (Advanced Apprenticeship). They are open to any employed staff, and a small proportion of learners taken on in the pathfinder are long term unemployed and on a fixed-term contract for 18 months. The target for enrolments by September 2008 was 500 starts, and by end of March 2009 a total of 1395 had begun their course. This is the first of two stages of the evaluation, and the objectives are to:

- Explore the perceptions and expectations of apprenticeship training;
- Understand the experiences of apprenticeship training in practice; and
- Examine the outcomes and impact of apprenticeship training.

The findings in this report are based on a survey of apprentices, consultations with line managers and HR managers responsible for learning and development, alongside secondary data analysis of learner records.

Key findings

- When compared with other apprentices on these courses, civil servants are notably older, and more ethnically diverse than their peers. In total 71 per cent of civil servant apprentices are over 25 compared to 30 per cent of other apprentices, and 74 per cent are white, compared to 90 per cent apprentices in all sectors. This reflects the make up of the Civil Service workforce. As one consultee strongly stated, the Apprenticeship Pathfinder has allowed them to:

“hit a group of staff who aren’t normally captured by training”.

- They are also more likely than apprentices in all sectors to be taking Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3), reflecting the older age profile and more advanced careers of the civil servants taking part.
- Uptake is being driven by the apprentices themselves, with line managers generally saying that they were approached by their staff. Apprentices cite a wide variety of benefits they expect to get, but the most highly rated benefits are a qualification, skills to do their current job better and improved self-confidence.
- Line managers also say that the main benefits are developing apprentices’ confidence and technical knowledge, whilst gaining a nationally accredited qualification is also important. Nearly half say that they need new skills to adapt to changing job roles, with the government efficiency drive and increased use of IT forcing roles to change. Apprenticeships allow this to be addressed in a structured way, unblocking key skills barriers to development in conjunction with the learning necessary to develop.
- For the department, the anticipated benefits are primarily retention of staff, generating internal drive amongst lower grade staff to advance in their career and marking out pro-active staff for development. In the long term these should translate into productivity gains, but in the short

term the primary strategic benefit is enabling staff to keep pace with front line structural changes in areas like customer service.

- Overall, attitudes towards learning are highly favourable amongst apprentices, particularly in relation to developing new skills for their changing job and the opportunity to be able to learn in different ways. Line managers are beginning to see improved confidence already.
- The course structure is broadly suitable, and line managers believe the more developmental nature and flexible structure of the courses make the apprenticeship far superior to previous training options. However, they believe it should be just one amongst many training options and has a particular place.
- From a learning and development perspective, there had usually been a departmental desire to engage with apprenticeships in the past, but this had not been possible. They now have clear senior management commitment as a result of the skills pledge and centralised procurement has allowed departments to proceed with the courses where previously the internal resources weren't available to begin the process.

Issues and recommendations

- Apprentices consider the line manager as the most important source of information and advice about apprenticeships, but the responses from line managers in the depth interviews is that they do not fully understand the details of apprenticeships, and actually rely on the apprentices for further information. In addition, once their employees have been enrolled there is little reported contact between the line managers and providers, which limits the ability of the line manager to support their employee through the course.
- Line managers do state that the flow of information about apprenticeships could be improved. A review of some of the guidance that departments have drafted independently might help them to better understand what the information gaps are and to develop literature to address these gaps. This is particularly pertinent for line managers who inherit their staff when they have already signed up to the apprenticeship, e.g. through a new management role. Greater line manager engagement will ensure the qualification is utilised better, particularly in the long term.
- Although the arrangements for tutoring do reflect the nature of apprenticeship training, as one third of apprentices are requesting more time being taught by a teacher or tutor, Government Skills should explore with both providers and apprentices the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the time spent in guided learning in order to inform the roll-out.

Introduction

Project overview

Experian was commissioned by Government Skills in January 2009 to evaluate the Apprenticeship Pathfinder within the Civil Service, to help Government Skills better understand what they need to offer employers in the sector. The main objective of the two phases of the research is to identify the benefits of apprenticeships to individuals and their departments, and evaluate the lessons learnt for a subsequent roll-out of more apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships provide work-based training to young people and adults who want to learn new skills and gain qualifications while working. An Apprenticeship (Level 2) and Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3) framework consists of a National Vocational Qualification, Key Skills qualifications, a Technical Certificate and Employment Rights and Responsibilities.

The Apprenticeship Pathfinder within the Civil Service, which commenced in England in April 2008, is designed to promote the uptake of apprenticeships, but also to evaluate the benefits and any issues with using apprenticeships for developing staff within the Civil Service. The original target was for 500 apprentices to have begun their course in September 2008, and a total of 1,395 apprentices were anticipated to have started by the end of March 2009 (source: Government Skills).

The pathfinder is open to staff of any age who are already employed, to equip these staff with skills within their current roles or to aid redeployment.¹ Some departments also employ a small number of apprentices externally, on the condition that they are long-term unemployed. They have found these staff using Local Employment Partnerships, and all are employed on fixed-term contracts of 18 months.

Methodology

From the project brief and through subsequent discussions with the Government Skills Apprenticeship team, three key objectives were identified for the evaluation of the Apprenticeship Pathfinder:

- To explore the perceptions and expectations of apprenticeship training;
- To understand the experiences of apprenticeship training in practice; and,
- To examine the outcomes and impact of apprenticeship training.

The approach taken to achieve these objectives is a combination of desk based analysis and primary interviews with apprentices, their line managers and HR departments.

In terms of data sources, current apprenticeships are funded through the LSC and records are kept via the Individual Learner Record (ILR). The ILR is a collection of data about learners and their learning that is currently requested from learning providers in the FE system by the Information Authority (and previously by the LSC). The use of the ILR over the course of the evaluation is as follows:

- Interim evaluation (Spring 2009)
 - To determine who is engaged with the Apprenticeship Pathfinder and what they are doing.
 - To compare the profile of civil service apprentices with other apprentices.
 - To access the contact details of employees for primary interviews.

¹ In the past, Apprenticeships have been geared towards young people between the ages of 16 and 24. More recently, they have become available to 14 to 16 year olds and to adults aged 25 and above.

- Final evaluation (to be confirmed)
 - To review retention and achievement rates.

The primary research for the interim evaluation consists of a quantitative survey with 100 employees enrolled on apprenticeships within the civil service, conducted by telephone and qualitative face to face consultations with three HR learning and development heads and seven apprentice line managers in Spring 2009.

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1 Profile of apprentices

1.1 Overview

In terms of the diversity of recruitment, the profile of Civil Service apprentices is more diverse than all apprentices, and one consultee strongly stated that the Apprenticeship Pathfinder has allowed them to “*hit a group of staff who aren’t normally captured by training*”. The offer was also focused on individuals who had lower level qualifications currently, and who had limited training opportunities in the past.

This section of the report describes the profile of apprentices in the Civil Service, and compares this to the profile of learners taking apprenticeships across all sectors. The data is drawn from the ILR employer response return for January 2009 (ER 04 2008/09).

In total, 428 Civil Service apprentices were identified through the ILR, selected based on the providers that are contracted to deliver apprenticeships through the Pathfinder, and employer names associated with each apprenticeship.

In the following analysis it is also important to note that the data for all apprenticeships only includes those taking five specific frameworks - Business Administration; Management; Customer Service; Learning and Development (Direct Training & Support); and IT User. [Accountancy, Team Leadership and Catering frameworks are also available through the Apprenticeship Pathfinder, but these have not yet been captured in the ILR]. We restrict the comparison group of all apprentices to these five frameworks because factors such as age and gender vary by framework. This allows a more accurate comparison with apprentices in the Civil Service, as only these five frameworks are taken by Civil Service apprentices currently recorded in the ILR.

1.2 Age

The most noticeable difference between the profile of Civil Service apprentices and those in all sectors is by age. As table 1.1 shows, the age profile for learners on the Apprenticeship Pathfinder is considerably older – just 1 per cent of Civil Service apprentices are younger than 18, compared to nearly 30 per cent of those in all sectors, while 70 per cent of apprentices on the Apprenticeship Pathfinder are over 25, compared to just over 30 per cent of those in all sectors.

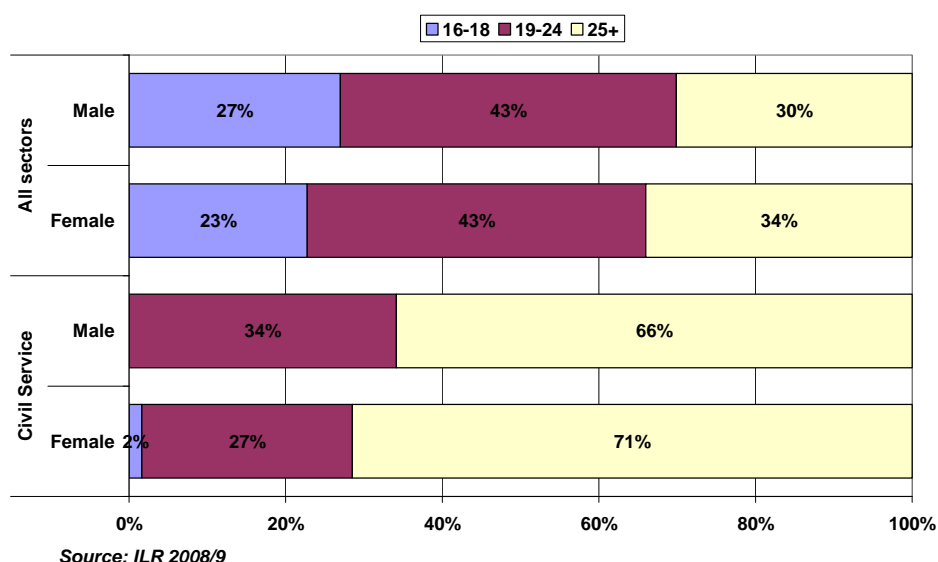
These results are consistent with the evidence from the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews analysed in chapter 2. Particularly important to explaining these figures is the tendency for the Civil Service to offer the pathfinder apprenticeships to existing members of staff, and restrictions in place in the Civil Service on employing new staff for apprenticeships. One line manager also commented that in their department they generally found it difficult to find training for their older staff. The department was heavily staffed with fast streamers, and the advantage of the apprenticeship was that it had allowed them to engage their older staff in a structured development programme.

Table 1.1: Age profile of apprentices (% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
Under 16	-	<0.5%
16-18	1%	29%
19-24	29%	40%
25 and over	70%	31%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

As can be seen in figure 1.1, the age split is different by gender in the Civil Service, something that is not noticeably the case for apprenticeships across all sectors. In total the number of 25 plus year olds is significantly higher in the Civil Service, but females are also more likely to be over 25 than males (71 per cent compared to 66 per cent) while males are more likely to be aged between 19 and 24 (34 per cent compared to 27 per cent).

Figure 1.1: Breakdown of age by gender



1.3 Gender

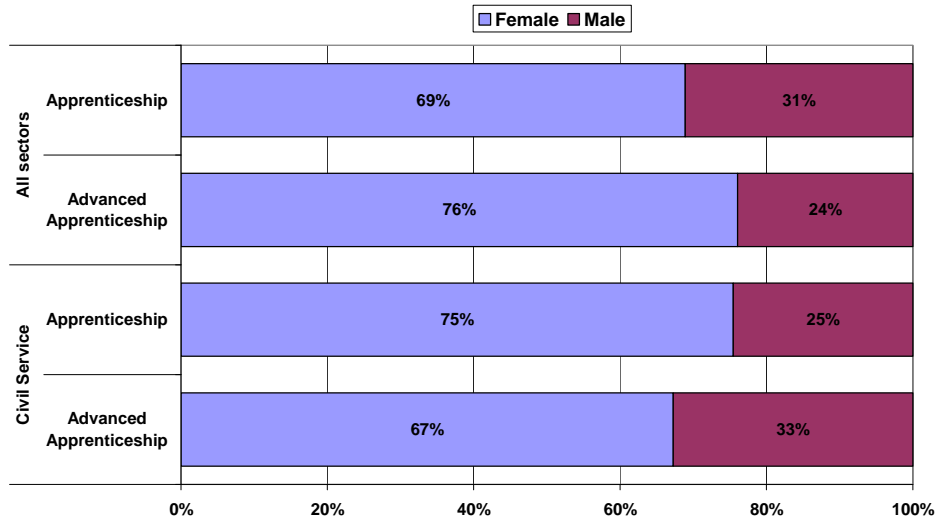
In contrast to the noticeable differences in age, the division of apprentices by gender are similar for the Civil Service and the all sector average. In both cases females make up the majority of the learners, at just under three-quarters of the total.

Table 1.2: Gender profile of apprentices (% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
Female	73%	71%
Male	27%	29%
Total	463*	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9 * (including 35 non ILR records of Apprentices in the RAF)

There are, however, differences between males and females in the level at which they do their apprenticeships (figure 1.2). Across all sectors a higher proportion of Apprenticeships are males than Advanced Apprenticeships (31 per cent compared to 24 per cent). In contrast, in the Civil Service learning at apprenticeship level is comprised of a lower proportion of males (25 per cent) than Advanced Apprenticeships (33 per cent).

Figure 1.2: Breakdown of level by gender



Source: ILR 2008/9

1.4 Disability and learning difficulty

As table 1.3 shows, just over 90 per cent of apprentices in both the Apprenticeship Pathfinder and across all sectors have no disability. Similarly there are few differences between the pathfinder learners and apprentices in terms of the proportion with learning difficulties.

Table 1.3: Learning difficulties and disabilities of Apprentices (% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
No learning difficulty	96%	95%
No disability	90%	90%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

1.5 Ethnicity

The profile of learners taking apprenticeships in the Civil Service is more ethnically diverse than those taking Apprenticeships across all sectors. As shown in table 1.6, there are a noticeably higher proportion of learners of Asian and Black ethnicity in the Civil Service compared to the average. In

contrast, a smaller proportion of apprentices in the Civil Service compared to all sectors are of White ethnicity (74 per cent and 90 per cent respectively).

Table 1.4: Ethnic profile of apprentices (% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
White	74%	90%
Asian	11%	4%
Black	10%	2%
Mixed / Other	4%	3%
Not Known/Not Provided	-	1%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

1.6 Region

Given the concentration of central government departments in London, the proportion of apprentices in the region is much higher in the Civil Service pathfinder than amongst apprentices as a whole (32 per cent compared to 8 per cent). This is an encouraging sign given Greater London's generally lower-than-expected apprenticeship provision.

Elsewhere, the proportion of apprentices in the Civil Service is also higher than all sectors in Yorkshire and Humber (21 per cent compared to 13 per cent), which is the predominant location for apprentices in the Home Office UK Border Agency.

Table 1.5: Regional location of apprenticeships (% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
East of England	2%	8%
East Midlands	5%	8%
Greater London	32%	8%
North East	3%	8%
North West	12%	16%
South East	9%	10%
South West	2%	9%
West Midlands	10%	16%
Yorkshire and the Humber	21%	13%
Missing (Not Applicable/ Not Known)	4%	5%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

1.7 Prior attainment

The apprentices in the Civil Service have similar prior attainment levels to apprentices across all sectors, although there is a slight tendency for those in the Civil Service to have a qualification at Full Level 2 rather than Level 1 or No Qualifications. There are also a slightly higher proportion of learners with Entry Level qualifications in the Civil Service than in all sectors (5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively).

Table 1.6: Prior Attainment of apprentices		
(% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
Level 1	30%	32%
Full Level 2	47%	45%
Full Level 3	8%	9%
Level 4	1%	<0.5%
Other Qualifications below Level 1	1%	<0.5%
Entry Level	5%	3%
Other Qualification, Level Not Known	<0.5%	1%
Not known	3%	2%
No qualifications	5%	8%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

1.8 Level

Although the prior qualification of Civil Services apprentices is similar to all apprentices, there are a higher proportion of learners from the Apprenticeship Pathfinder who are taking Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) compared to all sectors. While there is a near even split of learners between Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships in the Civil Service (49 per cent and 51 per cent respectively), for all sectors the split is closer to two-to-one between Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships (70 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

This may reflect the older age profile and structure of Civil Service roles, with learners having worked their way to a position that is already at the equivalent of Level 3. In contrast general learners are younger and more likely to have recently left school with less experience.

Table 1.7: Level of apprenticeship		
(% of total)		
	Civil Service	All sectors
Advanced Apprenticeship	51%	30%
Apprenticeship	49%	70%
Total	428	55,757

Source: ILR 2008/9

2 The views of apprentices, line managers and HR

2.1 Overview

This section of the report analyses results from a telephone survey of Civil Service apprentices regarding their learning, specifically their perceptions and expectations of the course, their experiences, and the outcomes and impact of their learning. The survey took place in Spring 2009 and, in total, 105 of the 428 apprentices in the ILR were interviewed. Contact details for the learners were obtained from the ILR for the purposes of this project.

The responses from line managers and HR are also given, where appropriate, to provide a fuller picture of the Apprenticeship Pathfinder for the individuals and teams involved.

2.2 Profile of respondents

The profile of respondents to the survey was broadly in line with the general profile of those taking apprenticeships in the Civil Service (table 2.1), although there was a slightly lower proportion of 19 to 24 year olds interviewed compared to all Civil Service apprentices and a slightly lower proportion of those with no learning difficulty or disability.

**Table 2.1: Profile of survey respondents, by status
(number and % of total, 105 respondents)**

	Total survey	Survey respondents	All Civil Service apprentices
Age			
16-18	-	-	1%
19-24	21	20%	29%
25+	84	80%	70%
Gender			
Male	25	24%	27%
Female	80	76%	73%
Ethnicity			
White	74	70%	74%
Non-white	25	24%	25%
Not known	6	6%	-
Learning Difficulty			
No	94	90%	96%
Disability			
No	91	87%	90%
Civil Service grade			
EO (Executive Officer)	42	40%	-
AO / AA (Administrative Officer / Assistant)	55	52%	-
Other (Grades 6/7; SEO / HEO; B and E; E Grade; and PS)	7	7%	-
Don't know	1	1%	-

Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service Apprentices; ILR 2008/09

In the analysis that follows only questions responded to by more than 50 learners are considered statistically reliable for analysis.

2.3 Perceptions of, and reasons for, apprenticeship learning

2.3.1 General attitudes to learning

Overall, attitudes towards learning are highly favourable amongst apprentices. Almost all agree that they need new skills throughout their working lives and that they enjoy learning in different ways (96 per cent and 94 per cent respectively). Four fifths (81 per cent) also disagree that learning is only valuable if it leads to a qualification.

Nine tenths of apprentices (89 per cent) feel that they are more likely to get a better job after learning, suggesting that there is strong recognition of the link between skills improvement and training, and career progression.

One half of learners (48 per cent) say that they find it hard to find time for learning, supporting the advantages of apprenticeships in the ability to combine work and learning. However, it is worth noting that the GfK NOP study in 2007 found that lower grade staff are the least likely to cite time as the main barrier to training.²

Table 2.2: General attitudes to learning			
(% of total, single coded)			
	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Need new skills throughout working life	96%	1%	3%
Learning only valuable if leads to a qualification	11%	81%	8%
More likely to get a better job	89%	5%	7%
Enjoy learning in different ways	94%	2%	4%
Difficult to find time for learning	48%	36%	16%
Base : all			
A.1a I am going to read out some statements about learning. For each, please tell me whether you agree or disagree, or have no view.			
'Learning new skills is something I will need to do throughout my working life.'			
'Learning is only valuable if it leads to a qualification.'			
'You are more likely to get a better job if you do some learning, training or education.'			
'I enjoy learning in different ways.'			
'I find it difficult to find the time for learning.'			
Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service Apprentices			

Nearly half of the apprentices note that their job is, or has been, changing and that they need to develop new skills as a result (table 2.3). This figure is relatively high,³ but encouragingly suggests that apprenticeships are seen as a way for workers in the Civil Service to gain new skills in order to adapt to changing work circumstances.

² Employee Survey, 2007, GfK/NOP on behalf of Government Skills

³ A similar question was asked of all Level 3 NVQ and Apprentices learners in England, and just 25 per cent responded that their job was changing and they needed to develop new skills. Source: Interim Evaluation of Level 3 – Wave 1 report, Experian and Ipsos MORI on behalf of the LSC, April 2008.

A fifth of apprentices believe that their skills are a little higher than needed for their job or that their skills roughly match the needs of their job, while a tenth of learners believe their skills greatly exceed the needs of their job.

Table 2.3: Current fit between skills and job needs

(% of total, single coded)

My skills greatly exceed the needs of my job	11%
My skills are a little higher than needed for my job	20%
My skills roughly match the needs of my job	20%
My job is changing/has changed so I need/have needed to develop new skills	48%
Don't know	1%
Base: all	
A.12 Which of the following statements best describes how well the skills you have now fit your job needs?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

Just 13 per cent of apprentices had ever considered doing an apprenticeship in the Civil Service before their course, which demonstrates the extent to which this form of learning is not embedded within the Civil Service.

Table 2.4: Prior consideration of apprenticeship

(% of total, single coded)

Yes	13%
No	86%
A.2. Have you ever considered doing an apprenticeship in the Civil Service before now?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

Prior to the Apprenticeship Pathfinder, each of the line managers and HR consultees also stated that their departments had very limited exposure to apprenticeships as a form of training and had few employees that had previously undertaken apprenticeships. On an individual basis there was also only a vague awareness of apprenticeships from the line managers, although a more detailed knowledge of apprenticeships was held by the consultees in HR, training and development roles.

2.3.2 Source of apprenticeship information

Apprentices in the Civil Service first heard about the pathfinder scheme from a variety of different sources listed in table 2.5 overleaf, including the internet (29 per cent); human resources/training department (20 per cent); their line manager (19 per cent); and the intranet (19 per cent). In contrast, friends, family and colleagues are only mentioned by a small proportion of apprentices (4 per cent), while the Apprenticeship DVD and poster, and Civil Service Live are also mentioned only rarely.

Other responses given included the Home Office global information email (6 per cent); internal global information bulletin (3 per cent); global communication (1 per cent); and work training unit (1 per cent).

Table 2.5: How employees first heard about the Civil Service Apprenticeship Pathfinder

(% of total, multi coded)

Internet (including Government Skills website)	29%
Human Resources/Training & Development Department	20%
Line Manager	19%
Intranet	19%
Friends, family, work colleagues	4%
Apprenticeship DVD and posters	1%
CS live	1%
Other	19%
Base: all	
A.1a. How did you first hear about the offer of apprenticeships in the Civil Service?	

Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

Apprentices also looked to a variety of sources for information and advice about whether to do the course, although the most common are line managers and HR/Training and development departments (55 per cent and 43 per cent respectively). Around a quarter of learners are also helped by the intranet, the internet or the launch event or summit, (28 per cent, 27 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).

Table 2.6: Source of information, advice and guidance

(% of total, multi coded)

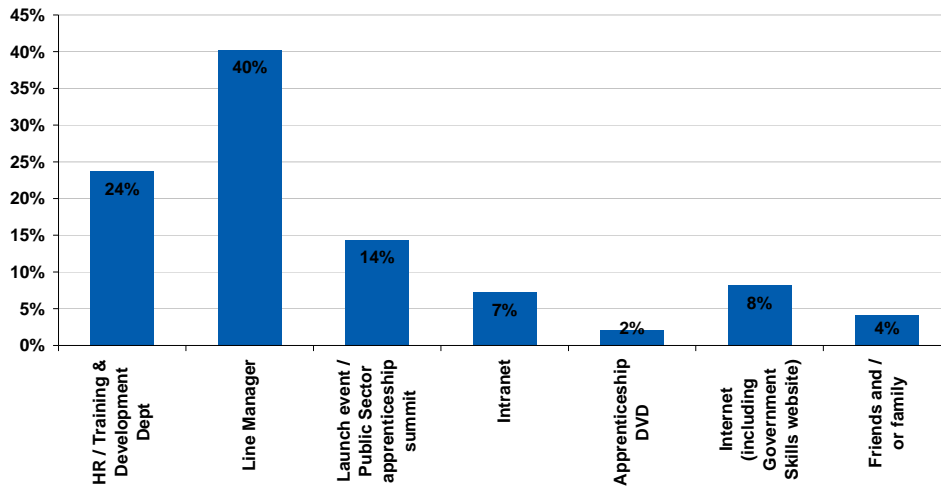
Line Manager	55%
Human Resources/Training & Development Department	43%
Intranet	28%
Internet (including Government Skills website)	27%
Launch event/ Public Sector Apprenticeship summit	20%
Apprenticeship DVD	11%
Friends and/or family	9%
CS live	3%
Union	2%
None	8%
Base: all	
A.5 Which sources of information or advice helped you to decide whether to do this apprenticeship?	

Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

Overall the line manager is also considered the most important source of information, advice and guidance for the greatest proportion of apprentices (figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Most important source of information, advice and guidance

Base: all except for those apprentices who had no sources of information, advice and guidance A.6. And which was the most important?



Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

For the HR consultees, the process of gathering information stemmed from first contact with Government Skills, through a series of conversations and documented information. However, it was cited by one consultee that a better developed portfolio of information would have been more useful, and therefore some departments have drafted their own guidance for employees and line managers interested in apprenticeship training.

“When the pathfinder was first rolled out, I think there was an assumption that we already knew how they work. The literature available from the LSC [Learning and Skills Council]...did help initially, but there isn’t really a one-stop shop.”

(HR)

The flow of information from HR and training departments to line managers then takes the form of emails, leaflets, meetings and workshops, and additional information available on respective department intranets. Many of the line managers also state that much of their understanding of the pathfinder has come from the apprentices themselves, and the quote below illustrates where any ongoing communication activity should focus.

“The benefits of apprenticeships have not really been explained. I do not feel I am being communicated with.”

(Line Manager)

Two line managers had also taken responsibility for apprentices after they had already started the course, but they felt there was limited information on what was involved in the course. If there are no other apprentices in the immediate department, and/or there is little provider contact, the line manager could become divorced from the process.

2.3.3 Reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship

Of those who had not considered an apprenticeship before now, over three-quarters explain their decision to take an apprenticeship as due to thinking it is valuable training for them to undertake, and because they want to take advantage of free training (82 per cent and 76 per cent respectively, table 2.7). Just under three fifths (58 per cent) of learners also cite that their employers had encouraged them to do the course. Other responses given by apprentices are that they wanted to better their skills base; further their career; gain experience to get a better job; and for personal knowledge and gain.

Together, these results suggest that while employers may encourage learners to undertake the learning, it is the benefits to the individual that has led to the decision to take an apprenticeship in central government.

Table 2.7: Reasons for doing apprenticeship	
(% of total, multi coded)	
I think it is valuable training for me to undertake	82%
My employer has encouraged me to do it	58%
I would like to take advantage of the offer of free training	76%
Base: all who did not consider doing an Apprenticeship before now	
A.3b What is the reason for doing an Apprenticeship now?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service Apprentices</i>	

2.3.4 Choosing the course

The overall view of HR and line managers is that the generic apprenticeships made available through the pathfinder are appropriate for the job roles of the individuals put forward, and that the focus on generic subjects helps to make the training easier to run as more apprentices are doing the same course. There is also flexibility in terms of the modules that can be undertaken within one framework.

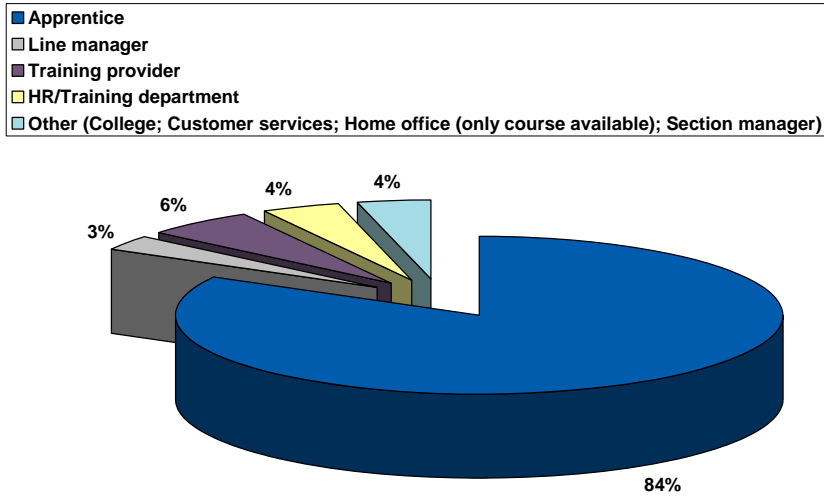
In the one instance where a line manager does not appreciate how the generic apprenticeship applies to their employee's job (because the work is very specific and process orientated) the hope is that the apprenticeship will instead develop confidence and wider personal skills.

For the majority (84 per cent) of apprenticeships the apprentice was the primary decision-maker over which type to take. However training providers, line managers, and HR also made decisions about the type of course in a minority of cases. This is confirmed by HR and line managers, who in consultation state that for most apprentices the choice of framework was made by the individual, in consultation with providers and line managers, although other apprentices were offered apprenticeships in pre-determined frameworks.

Figure 2.2: Decision-maker for the type of apprenticeship taken

Base: all

A.7. Who chose the type of apprenticeship that you are taking?



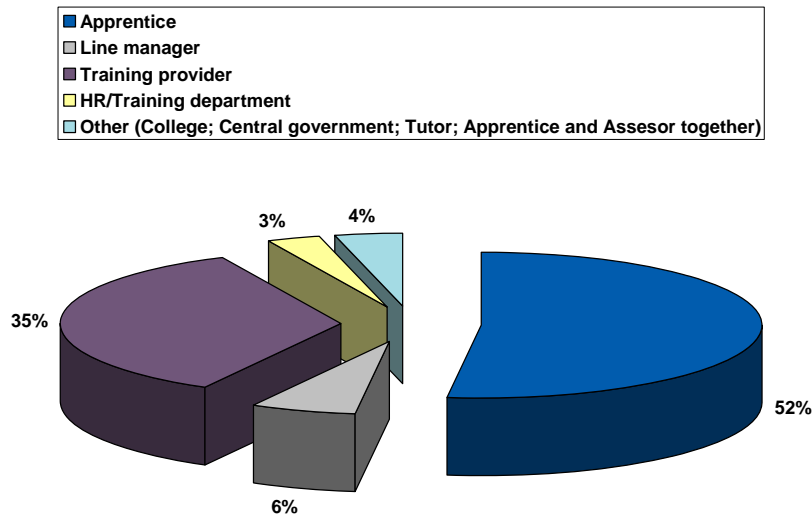
Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

The story is slightly different when it comes to choosing the level of the apprenticeship. Over half (52 per cent) of courses are still chosen by apprentices themselves, but training providers also choose a significant proportion (35 per cent) of the apprenticeships by level of course.

Figure 2.3: Decision-maker for the level of apprenticeship taken

Base: all

A.8. Who chose the level of apprenticeship that you are taking?



Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

The process described by line managers is that before enrolling as an apprentice, interested employees and external candidates attended general and detailed workshops within the department. The provider then becomes involved, holding sessions with individuals to discuss further details and confirm the apprenticeship framework and level.

2.3.5 Monetary considerations

The survey evidence does suggest that monetary considerations have an important effect on the decision-making of apprentices. In total, seven tenths of Civil Service apprentices note that having to pay for training would have influenced their decision to take the course, and half reporting that it would have affected the timings of the course. However, only three tenths of learners say that if they had to pay for the training it would have influenced the amount of effort given to their study.

Table 2.8: Impact of not having to pay for training	
(% of total, single coded)	
Choice to do an apprenticeship	
Yes	70%
No	28%
Don't know	3%
Amount of effort you put into training	
Yes	29%
No	70%
Don't know	2%
The timing of your course	
Yes	49%
No	49%
Don't know	3%
Base: all	
A.4 If you had to pay for this training, would this influence:	
'Your choice to do an Apprenticeship?'	
'The amount of effort you put into the training?'	
'The timing of your course?'	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

These findings are supported by their line managers, although the line managers report that an individual's decision to enrol on an apprenticeship is not influenced just by whether they must pay for the training, but also how much this contribution would be. A potential difficulty is that while many apprentices are very positive about their course, and their line managers believe that they would pay, this is retrospective and based on what they know now. Some line managers do not believe their apprentices would have taken part if they had to pay, because they were in debt or had young families. One line manager also pointed out that the local college ran the course but staff had not considered doing it previously.

HR staff also said that they would on principle not ask staff to pay, as isn't the ethos with which they approach learning and development.

2.4 Expectations and experiences

2.4.1 Enrolment

According to HR and line managers there are a number of drivers of the uptake of apprenticeships in the pathfinder, although the main driver is described as the commitment at the highest level within the departments rather than the learners themselves who have needed more encouragement.

“There is a strong ministerial push and political interest in its success”
(HR)

The contribution to meeting Skills Pledge commitments is also cited as a driver of the uptake of apprenticeships, and the strong interest and enthusiasm from the apprentices themselves has been spread to other employees. For some consultees the interest in apprenticeships has come as something of a surprise.

The centralisation of apprenticeship procurement through Government Skills has also supported the uptake of apprenticeships through the Pathfinder. Learning and development staff had looked at the courses before, and intended to get involved, with some under pressure from Trade Unions to take up the course. However, previously there had always been barriers as the resources necessary to procure providers and roll out the course were always used up by higher priorities. Central procurement has allowed them to piggy back while the policy commitment was there at the highest level.

One other motivation that emerged from our discussion with line managers is that the unit based nature of the apprenticeship is very popular.

“The four elements are very useful, they cover everything that needs to be done. (and) it works well in the sense that as a manager you can help them pick their modules, get a much clearer oversight of their objectives and make it much more business specific.”
(Line manager)

This confirms the recommendations in the Government Skills Demand for Qualifications Study (2008) that a building block approach helps generate interest in qualifications.⁴

2.4.2 Course content

Overall, apprentices feel reasonably knowledgeable at the start of their course about the content and structure, as over four-fifths cite feeling very well informed or suitably informed about all the criteria (figure 2.4). The slight exception to this pertains to assessments, where a significant minority of apprentices (17 per cent) feel not very well informed about both the frequency of assessments and the type of assessments.

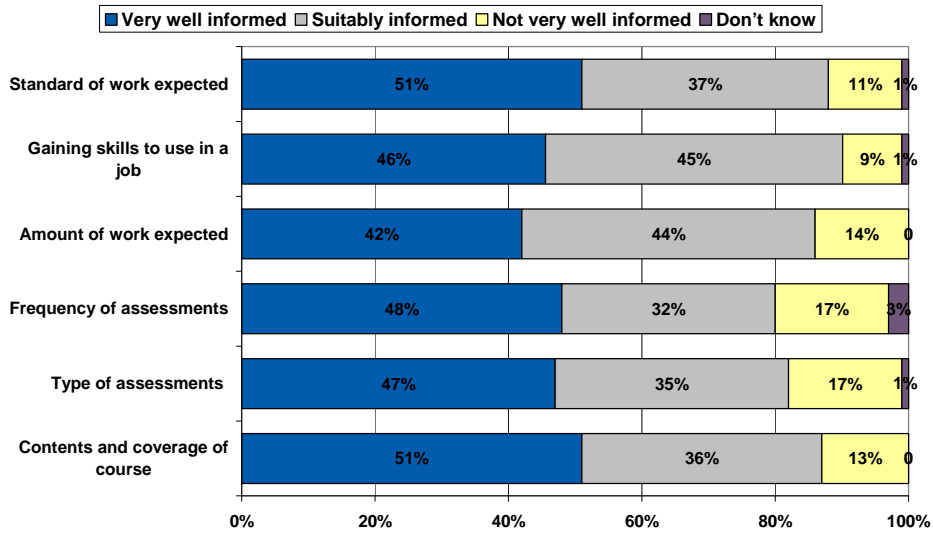
⁴ Demand for Qualifications, Government Skills, February 2008

Figure 2.4: Expectations of course content and structure (% of total, single coded)

Base: all

B.1 How well informed did you feel at the time of enrolment about the following aspects of the course?

- 'The content of the course and what subjects you would cover.'
- 'The type of assessments that you would be given.'
- 'The frequency of assessments.'
- 'The amount of work expected of you in your own time.'
- 'How the training would help you gain skills to use in a job.'
- 'The standard of work expected of you.'



Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

2.4.3 Time spent

In terms of timings, apprentices feel least well informed about the reality of training with regards to the amount of time spent studying in their own time. Just 43 per cent of apprentices cite it as being about expected, and the remainder are evenly split between those for whom the amount of training was more than expected, and those for whom it was less than expected (25 per cent and 21 per cent respectively). One fifth of apprentices also feel that the time taught by a teacher or tutor was more than expected.

Just 7 per cent of apprentices feel that the amount of time being assessed or completing tests was less than what they expected.

Figure 2.5: Expectations of course timings (% of total, single coded)

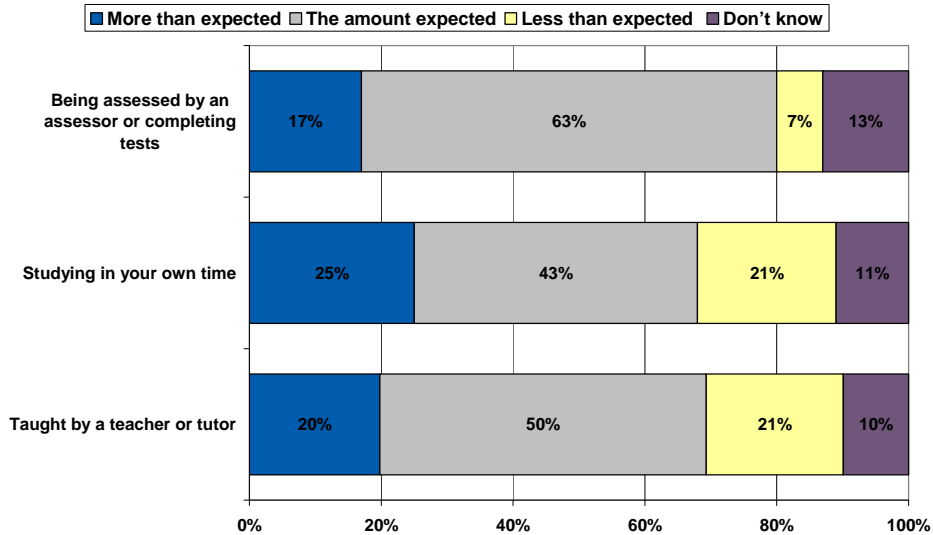
Base: all

B.2 For each for the following aspects of apprenticeships, how does the actual time you commit compare with your expectations, based on typical hours per week?

‘Taught by a teacher or tutor.’

‘Studying in your own time.’

‘Being assessed by an assessor or completing tests.’



Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

None of the consulted line managers felt that the time out staff needed for the course was creating major work load problems, and the majority felt there weren't any issues at all. Courses were generally scheduled for typically slower periods, or done at the workstation, and managers who had to organise rotas could overcome any issues.

One manager with a large number of staff said that block release for the Key Skills element means that only a certain volume of staff can undertake the apprenticeship at any one time. Also, where one staff member was very active in sub-groups, a more senior staff manager had questioned whether the apprentice had time to take part, but his concerns had been overcome so far.

2.4.4 Course balance

When assessing the balance of the course, over half of learners feel that the amount of time spent on being taught, studying in their own time and being assessed was about right. However, over a third of apprentices feel that more time should be spent being taught by a tutor – making it the aspect of learning that most apprentices feel there should be more of – and a fifth of students feel that there should be more time spent both studying on their own and being assessed by an assessor.

Table 2.9: Balance of the course				
<i>(% of total, single coded)</i>				
	More time	The same amount of time	Less time	Don't know
Taught by a teacher or tutor	34%	57%	1%	8%
Studying in your own time	20%	62%	9%	10%
Being assessed by an assessor or completing tests	19%	65%	4%	12%
Base: all				
B.3 When thinking about the balance of the different aspects of your apprenticeship programme, would you like more, the same or less on each of the following?				
'Taught by a teacher or tutor.'				
'Studying in your own time.'				
'Being assessed by an assessor or completing tests.'				
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>				

2.4.5 Support

Over half of learners feel that there is no extra support which will help them with their training, and where support is suggested no-one form dominates – support from an assessor/tutor (13 per cent); more time to do the course (9 per cent); and time with/access to tutor (7 per cent).

In addition to the options presented in table 2.10, apprentices also mentioned more online support; more support with maths and English skills; and more information on how to use Excel and PowerPoint.

Table 2.10: Desired forms of extra support	
<i>(% of total, multi coded)</i>	
None	53%
Support from assessor/tutor	13%
More time to do the course	9%
Time with/access to tutor	7%
Time in work/time off work to do training	5%
Support from line manager/supervisor	5%
Information in advance about the amount/type of work involved	5%
Allocated time during working day to study	3%
Tutor being there/available as scheduled	3%
Support from colleagues	2%
Support from the college/training provider	1%
Having a tutor that is professional, I find they do not know what they are doing; it would help if they could spell	1%
Other	7%
Base: all	
B.4. What extra support would help you with your training?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

No line managers felt that their staff needed some form of support that wasn't available. In addition, a number of line managers describe the level of support for apprentices compared to NVQ learners as positive.

2.5 Outcomes and impact

In comparison to other qualifications, apprenticeships offer a number of advantages, including flexibility in the duration of training and inclusion of Key Skills (in comparison to NVQs). In particular, NVQs are also described as relying more heavily on input from the line manager, whereas the responsibility on providers for apprenticeship training is a positive element. For one line manager the advantage of delivery of classroom based training at the provider's premises is that it allows apprentices on similar courses to meet each other, discuss their course and share their experiences.

“Some of the people on the course, they work in different areas, she (the apprentice) likes that.”

(Line Manager)

Specific comparisons between apprenticeships and graduate fast streams are also encouraging, as one consultee suggests that the Apprenticeship Pathfinder has already begun to change perceptions of non-graduate routes for recruitment.

Apprenticeships have value in that they provide a broad understanding of the subject areas, whereas other qualifications may be more appropriate if a specific and discrete understanding of a subject is required. HR consultees state that it is also important to offer apprenticeships alongside other types of training and to keep a balance of the types of training and qualifications that departments offer. They also said that it allowed them to address specific areas for improvement, for example their management training or customer service functions. These could complement other offerings, rather than being a block replacement for their own provision. In some cases they were developing their own NVQs for specific occupational areas, and one day they might be able to become an apprenticeship.

2.5.1 Anticipated gains from course

The Apprenticeship Pathfinder is quoted by one consultee as being a “driver for change” in both management and customer service skills, plus delivering to the associated skills needs from internal restructuring. Apprenticeships are also referred to as a “benchmark standard for staff” by one consultee, and offer benefits such as increased confidence, motivation and independence.

As table 2.11 shows, apprentices have a wide range of hopes for their apprenticeship training. Most commonly cited are *a qualification*; *skills to help me to do my current job better* and *improved self-confidence*, all of which are cited by over four fifths of learners. Less commonly cited are better pay and a promotion, though over half of learners still refer to these.

Table 2.11: Anticipated gains for learner from apprenticeship

(% of total, multi coded)

A qualification	88%
Skills to help me to do my current job better	83%
Improved self-confidence	80%
The chance to learn something new	78%
Skills that will look good to future employers	78%
Skills to help me do a different job in the future	77%
Better job	76%
A promotion	64%
Better pay	51%
Base: all	
A.9 What do you personally hope to gain from this apprenticeship?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

Further confirming the Demand for Qualifications findings, several line managers agree that getting a nationally recognised qualification is important for staff. Although permanent, it was recognised that some staff would go on to work outside the Civil Service and they need to have 'currency'. Line managers also say they can see how positive their staff are about the course, with many already seeing benefits in terms of improved confidence.

According to line managers and HR the gains do vary somewhat depending on the particular staff members' situation. For some, it is a chance to pick up technical knowledge and abilities directly relevant to their role. The motivation is to do their current job better, for example where they lack the technical IT or mathematics skills to develop their role. In one case the course also provided a structured means of learning from internal experts by asking relevant questions through informal sessions.

This drive for new knowledge is often in response to changing job roles (see table 2.3). The driver in this process is the drive for efficiency in the Civil Service, meaning that more and more staff need to be able to operate independently, to have a greater depth of knowledge to do tasks without simply passing on questions. Many roles are also becoming more reliant on IT, partially as a result of the efficiency drive and the need for staff to be able to access more information, quickly. This also confirms the results of the GfK NOP study in 2007, which found that 43 per cent of Administrative Officers and 42 per cent of Executive Officers lower grade staff have ICT/computer related skills gaps.⁵ This was the highest of any grades.

For other staff, line managers saw the course as a stepping stone for their apprentices into higher positions, with management and team leadership courses the most obvious example of this. An important part of this process is building up confidence in their staff to make them believe that they can move on or up. The course structure allows them to simultaneously shore up some of their weaker key skills, and improve their overview and technical knowledge of their job. Several of the apprentices were specifically building their confidence for their next round of job applications.

Apprentices are less clear about the gains that employers are likely to receive from their apprenticeships, indicated by the lower proportion responding to this question generally. Just under half believe they will *develop skills to help me to do my current job better* and to *be more productive*. 'Other'

⁵ Employee Survey, 2007, GfK/NOP on behalf of Government Skills

responses also mentioned include *better management skills*; *less complaints*; and *recognising and utilising my capabilities* as alternative benefits to the employer.

Table 2.12: Anticipated gains for employer from apprenticeship	
(% of total, multi coded)	
Develop skills to help me to do my current job better	49%
Be more productive	43%
Develop skills to help me do a different job in the future	13%
Learn more about my job role	12%
Be more motivated	11%
Be more committed to my job	6%
New ideas for the business	5%
Improve the training provision overall	1%
Other	14%
Don't know	11%
Base: all	
A.11 And what do you think your employer will gain from you doing this apprenticeship?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

Line managers vary in their views of the benefits to the department, and their views appear to stem from the benefits the apprentices are getting. Where this is a focus on management, it is about motivation and drive for change in the department. Many feel this is part of a commitment of an employer to a staff member, and that by now delivering on this promise their staff will work harder, and be more likely to stay, as noted in the Demand for Qualifications study.⁶ Long term these should turn into productivity gains, but none of the managers feel that this was the immediate priority for participation.

Interestingly, two different departments said that the positive attitudes and pro-active nature of many apprentices is opening the eyes of senior managers to the potential amongst lower grade staff, where previously the focus might always be on fast streamers. It marked out the pro-active staff at lower grades.

2.5.2 Course satisfaction

A few concerns have been raised by both the line manager (representing apprentices) and HR consultees around initial working arrangements with providers, including dissatisfaction with course administrators and the speed of response to queries. However, as the relationships have evolved and concerns have been discussed and resolved, there is now a generally high level of satisfaction with providers.

That said, while the department apprenticeship leads have met with the training provider on regular occasions, line managers report having had little direct contact with the training providers, which is an area of potential improvement for the pathfinder. Several managers had met the assessor only once, even though their staff were several months into the course, although opinions were mixed as to whether this was a major concern. A suggestion was also put forward by a line manager that provider training in the workplace “*helps to link the learning back into his [the apprentice] work*” but this approach is not adopted by all providers. This is of some concern because, as discussed in the Demand for Qualifications Study, it determines how many will free up staff, identifying what

⁶ Demand For Qualifications, Government Skills, February 2008

qualifications are needed and how the skills gained are eventually utilised.⁷ In terms of those already signed up, the first two factors are not necessarily important, but if the skills gained are to be utilised effectively, the line managers need to be more involved.

Learners' ratings of their course overall are generally high, as four tenths (40 per cent) say that their course is good overall and three tenths (28 per cent) say that it is very good (figure 2.6). Just 3 per cent of learners believe that their course is poor or very poor overall.

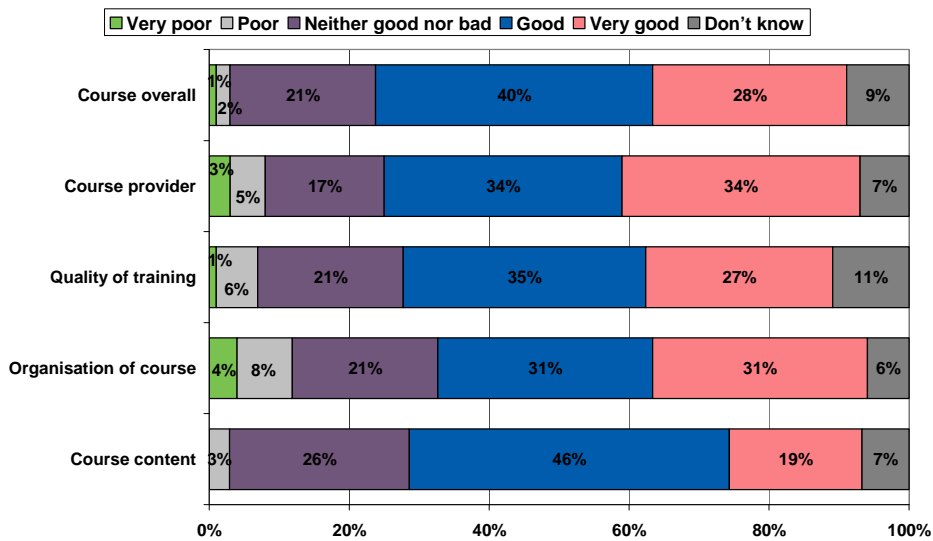
The ratings of the course overall were broadly reflective of learner satisfaction with the specific areas of their course (figure 2.7). Apprentices are most satisfied with the course provider and course content, followed by the organisation of the course and quality of training.

Figure 2.6: Course ratings for different aspects of training

Base: all

How would you rate your course generally in comparison to other study you have undertaken, if 1 is very poor and 5 is very good, on the following aspects?

- 'Course content'
- 'Organisation of course'
- 'Quality of training'
- 'Course provider'
- 'Course overall'



Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices

⁷ Demand For Qualifications, Government Skills, February 2008

Overall satisfaction with the course is generally high amongst apprentices, as a quarter (25 per cent) are extremely satisfied and over a half (53 per cent) are fairly satisfied. Just 4 per cent of learners were fairly dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the apprenticeship training.

Table 2.13: Overall course satisfaction	
(% of total, single coded)	
Extremely satisfied	25%
Fairly satisfied	53%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15%
Fairly dissatisfied	3%
Extremely dissatisfied	1%
Don't know	3%
Base: all	
Over, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the apprenticeship training?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

Also, and encouraging for the prospects of future expansion of apprenticeship provision in the public sector, the vast majority (93 per cent) of those taking apprenticeships in the Civil Service feel that their course is suitable for their job role (table 2.14).

Table 2.14: Suitability of apprenticeship for occupation / job role	
(% of total, single coded)	
Yes	93%
No	6%
Don't know	1%
Base: all	
B.5. Do you feel the Apprenticeship framework you are on is suitable for you occupation / job role in the Civil Service?	
<i>Source: 2009 survey of Civil Service apprentices</i>	

However, the views of line managers highlight the importance of sustained support, UK-wide, for apprenticeships within the Civil Service if enthusiasm amongst employees is to continue.

"I don't want it to gain momentum, we build intensity and then there's no more money anymore, and we disappoint people. If that was going to happen then we would want a long notice."

(HR)

This was echoed by several line managers who said that they were keen the course didn't become simply a fad. They felt it was better than previous initiatives, and wanted it to continue long term.

The economic downturn is highlighted by a number of the consultees as a future consideration for Civil Service Apprenticeships, in terms of tighter funding availability for recruiting new staff, and greater competition for apprenticeship places from graduates.

The restructuring and staff cuts may also create greater workload pressure, and have an associated impact on time available for staff to attend off-site training sessions.

3 Findings and implications

3.1 Summary findings from the interim evaluation

3.1.1 Profile of apprentices

- The age and ethnic profile for learners on the Apprenticeship Pathfinder is considerably different to all apprentices, with a significantly higher proportion of learners aged 25 and over and non-White. The age profile is reflective of the offer of apprenticeships to existing members of staff, which is particularly useful for departments with a high proportion of their workforce who are fast streamers, as it develops a structured programme for older, less qualified workers. However, this may create progression issues in future.
- The concentration of central government departments in London explains the relatively high proportion of Civil Service Apprenticeships in the region. However, this profile should be viewed positively as London is generally under-represented in apprenticeship delivery compared to its share of the England population.
- Although the prior qualifications of Civil Service apprentices are equivalent to all apprentices, there is a higher proportion of learners from the pathfinder who are taking Level 3 apprenticeships compared to all sectors. This reflects the use of apprentices for existing staff, many already working at a grade equivalent to their course level. This should also be seen as a positive development as it is providing a structured development programme enabling staff to push for management roles and to adapt to other changes in job roles created by increasing use of IT and the efficiency drive in the Civil Service.

3.1.2 Perceptions of, and reasons for, apprenticeship learning

- Overall, attitudes towards learning are highly favourable amongst apprentices, particularly in relation to developing new skills for their changing job, and to be able to learn in different ways.
- There is little evidence of apprenticeships being embedded yet in central government, for employees or their line managers. HR/training and development teams do hold a more detailed knowledge of apprenticeships, although their experience of provision previous to the pathfinder is very limited. There were some comments that many staff talked about the course and that it was generating interest.
- L&D staff said that there had usually been a departmental desire to engage, but this had not been possible until senior management commitment was raised by the skills pledge and central procurement removed resource barriers.
- The mediums through which the apprentices first heard about the offer of apprenticeships are the internet (emails), HR/training and development teams, line manager and intranet. These sources are also most important for the information and advice that apprentices seek when deciding whether to do an apprenticeship.
- The flow of information to HR departments is mainly from Government Skills, and this is well received by the consultees. However, there are examples where additional guidance has been drafted by the departments, and that some line managers do not feel fully communicated with. At the moment many line managers rely on informal sources of information from other staff and L&D departments when they have questions about the course, and generally would not be able to communicate points of detail.

- Over three-quarters of apprentices have made the decision to undertake an apprenticeship because it is valuable training and to take advantage of free training. Reflecting the latter response, if the apprenticeship had to be paid for by the employee, apprentices and line managers both report that it is likely to effect their decision to do an apprenticeship.
- The generic apprenticeship frameworks available through the pathfinder are considered appropriate by almost all consultees, and where specific knowledge is required there is flexibility in terms of the modules that can be chosen. In the majority of cases the employees choose the framework themselves, in consultation with line managers and providers. However, training providers are more involved with the decision about the level of apprenticeship that is undertaken. The unit based structures are particularly important because it allows courses to be specific.

3.1.3 Expectations and experiences

- The Apprenticeship Pathfinder has been promoted and driven by commitment at the most senior levels within each department, and there is also a clear link for HR departments to meeting the Skills Pledge through apprenticeships. The enthusiasm of employees towards this qualification has also been important in driving uptake, and the level of interest has come as something of a surprise to some of the HR and line manager consultees.
- Overall, apprentices feel reasonably knowledgeable at the start of their course about the content, assessment, amount and standard of work required, and the links to skills development. However, there is a lower consensus about the reality of training with regards to the amount of time to be spent studying independently and being taught by a teacher or tutor, and in particular a relatively high proportion of apprentices would like more time being taught.

3.1.4 Outcomes and impact

- Positive comparisons are made by line managers and HR between apprenticeship and NVQ training, particularly the inclusion of Key Skills in apprenticeships and the greater flexibility in the duration of training. However, consultees state that it remains important to offer a diverse range of training within the Civil Service.
- A wide range of benefits are expected by apprentices from their course, although the most highly rated gains are a qualification, skills to do their current job better and improved self-confidence.
- The consultations showed that a lot of this is connected to re-structuring of front line job roles. As staffing numbers decrease, and IT usage increases, many staff have to be more independent and technologically savvy, and the course allows them to respond to these challenges in a structured way. The multi part structure is particularly important for this, allowing basic blockages such as maths or communication to be addressed and allow wider learning. Others are using the course to build their confidence, either because they are looking for promotion or because they wish to return to learning and development routes for their future career. Getting a nationally recognised qualification is also important to learners, for both their future careers and their confidence.
- Line managers cited the potential benefits to their departments as developing drive within the department and marking out pro-active staff for development. Retention may be another benefit, and line managers also say that they feel like they are now offering their staff the development opportunities they have been promised. Few mentioned productivity gains, but they do believe these would become more prominent in the future as a result of the above benefits. HR staff also noted that it allowed them to address specific areas where they wanted

to improve, for example their management training or their customer service functions. While policy orientated departments take on smaller volumes of apprenticeships, they value the pathfinder because it enables them to deliver structured development training for older, less qualified staff. Generally these departments devote more attention to fast-streamers, who make up a high proportion of employees.

- In general, line manager and HR ratings of apprenticeships is high and initial line manager and HR concerns about providers seem to have been resolved. That said, providers could engage more with line managers to ensure apprentices gain the most from their apprenticeship day-to-day.
- Satisfaction of learners is also relatively high – two-thirds of learners rate their course as good or very good and almost four-fifths are fairly or extremely satisfied.
- Time barriers are not a major issue, but may limit numbers where a large number of staff do the same job and where rotas cannot be adjusted to cope for block release, e.g. on technical certificate or key skills courses.

3.2 Issues and considerations

- The ILR return from which the profile of Civil Service apprentices in this interim evaluation has been identified does not contain the full number of apprentices that will be enrolled through the pathfinder. The most comprehensive information for 2008/09 provision will be available in January 2010, and as this is a final return for the year it will also be possible to calculate retention and achievement rates.
- Apprentices consider the line manager as the most important source of information and advice about apprenticeships but there does not seem to be a flow of information to line managers. The responses from line managers in the depth interviews is that they do not fully understand the details of apprenticeships, and actually rely on the apprentices for further information rather than their departmental communications and HR teams. In addition, once their employees have been enrolled there is little reported contact between the line managers and providers, which limits the ability of the line manager to support their employee through the course.
- Consultees do state that the flow of information about apprenticeships could be improved, and Government Skills could usefully review some of the guidance that departments have drafted independently to better understand what the information gaps are and to help departments develop literature to address these gaps. This is particularly pertinent for line managers who inherit their staff when they have already signed up to the apprenticeship, e.g. through a new management role. Many may lack engagement with the programme, but it is not clear who has responsibility for bringing them up to speed, the provider, staff or manager themselves. Greater line manager engagement will ensure the qualification is utilised better, particularly in the long term.
- As the programme matures, it could become increasingly common that line managers ‘inherit’ their apprentice. This may be more of a departmental issue, but consideration might be given by departmental HR teams to how new managers get this information and don’t become detached from the learning process. For example, there might be a bundle of information that new managers receive, or an agreed process for providers to follow.
- Although the arrangements for tutoring do reflect the nature of apprenticeship training, as one third of apprentices are requesting more time being taught by a teacher or tutor, to inform the roll-out Government Skills could explore with both the providers and apprentices the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the time spent being taught.

Appendix A

About us



Who we are

Experian

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Combining its unique information tools and deep understanding of individuals, markets and economies, Experian partners with organisations around the world to establish and strengthen customer relationships and provide their businesses with competitive advantage.

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