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Pocket Watch – Latest guidance on Traineeships

Introduction

The transition between school/college to work remains one of the weakest links in the English education system and has remained in many ways the bane of education policy planners stretching back as far as the early 1980s. The Government's current approach has been to develop a system of traineeships, typically aimed at young people who need tailored help with developing the skills and qualities needed to get into work. The model was put out for consultation earlier this year built around a framework of six core principles, many of which find their way into this latest guidance [document](#) issued this week. It comes of course as concerns about youth unemployment remain high not just domestically but internationally and with its emphasis on employer ownership and employability skills, attempts equally to learn some of the lessons from abroad

Three big challenges

Programmes such as these have tended to suffer from three 'failures' in the past: a failure to match the particular needs of the client group; a failure to prevent such programmes from being seen as lesser alternatives; and a failure to secure market and in particular employer buy-in. On the first of these, this latest approach decides that the best way to tackle the needs of such a diverse group is to identify precisely who the programmes are for and then to phase in the implementation accordingly. It therefore lists the core target group as young people, below Level 3, not in work but with a reasonable chance of securing it within six months. And rather than go for the entire 16-24 age group in one go, it, rather contentiously, proposes starting with 16-19 year olds and extending to 19-24 year olds "*in due course*." Contentious because it therefore starts by already excluding some of the target group for whom alternative provision remains scant. On the second, such programmes being seen as lesser alternatives, the Government is hoping to overcome this by restricting them to providers who have achieved Ofsted grades of Outstanding or Good and already hold funding agency contracts as well as by developing future success and destination measures. On the third issue, that of labour market buy-in, this is always a difficult area but the Government is hoping that with the range of skills being developed and the active engagement of employers, let alone the promise of a final end of placement interview with an employer, employers may be more involved and young people better positioned to enter the labour market than previously

A few other obvious questions

An obvious question for many is what about the funding? By restricting them at least initially to 16-19 year olds, the Government is able to position such programmes within the current 16-19 funding methodology as for part-time students, further guidance from both funding agencies will reflect this. Employers by the way wouldn't be expected to pay trainees during their work placement. Second, how long will the programmes last and what will they include? In response, these are generally six month programmes and in this post-Wolf development world, allow for some local flexibility but focus on English and maths albeit initially via functional skills, work preparation training and a minimum 6 week work placement. Third what happens at the end? No specified certificate but a placement reference and an intended formal interview and, hopefully, a young person in a better position to seek work or an apprenticeship



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Traineeship Framework. May 2013