

The Evaluation of Business Class FINAL REPORT



Final report to: Business in the Community

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Executive Summary	v
1. The Evaluation of Business Class.....	1
1.1 The value of Business Class to pupils, schools and employers.....	1
1.2 What is Business Class and how might it affect the prospects of young people?	1
1.3 The youth labour market	3
1.4 The Youth Labour Market and Business Class	7
2. The Evaluation: Methods and Measures	8
2.1 Aims and objectives	8
2.2 Conceptual framework and measures.....	8
2.3 Method.....	10
2.4 Data Collection	12
2.5 Conclusion	13
3. The Pupil Experience.....	14
3.1 Understanding how Business Class affects pupil engagement with employers ..	15
3.2 An initial assessment of alignment	16
3.3 The impact of intensive activities.....	18
3.4 Non-intensive activities	23
3.6 The impact of work experience	27
3.7 The pupil voice.....	34
3.8 Conclusion	35
4. The Employer and School Perspectives	37
4.1 Introduction	37
4.2 The school experience.....	38
4.3 The employer rationale for participating in Business Class	43
4.4 The views of employee volunteers	44
4.5 Conclusion	50
5. Conclusion and Recommendations	52
5.1 Key findings	52
5.2 The Impact of BC	54
5.3 Lessons learnt and recommendations.....	55

TABLES

Table 2.1: Survey data collection used in the evaluation of Business Class	12
Table 3.1: Percentage of students taking part in particular activities with employers and average number of activities	16
Table 3.2a: Estimated coefficients for model of volume of activities undertaken by students	16
Table 3.2b: Estimated coefficients for activities undertaken by students when control variables included	18
Table 3.3: Characteristics of survey sample, wave 1 and wave 2	19
Table 3.4: Students' attitudes towards school and achievements, waves 1 and 2	20
Table 3.5: Participation in activities and their reported usefulness.....	21
Table 3.6: Characteristics of pupils participating in non-intensive activities (% of pupils) ...	24
Table 3.7: Number of employers that pupils engaged with on the day of their non-intensive activities (% of pupils)	24
Table 3.8: Type of contact pupils had with employers and what was obtained from that contact (% of pupils)	25
Table 3.9: Extent to which pupils agree or agree strongly about the extent to which they learnt something from their engagement with employers (% of pupils).....	26
Table 3.10: Extent to which pupils agree or agree strongly that they had learnt something that might help them in the future (% of pupils)	27
Table 3.11: Students' views about careers prior to going on work experience placement....	28
Table 3.12: Students' levels of enjoyment and satisfaction with their work experience placement	28
Table 3.13: Comparison of work experience under Business Class (2014) compared with DCFS survey of work experience (2008).....	33
Table 4.1: Focus of most recent Business Class activity in which employees volunteered	45
Table 4.2: Type of interaction between employer volunteer and pupils in Business Class activities	46

FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Highest level of educational attainment held by those in employment.....	4
Figure 1.2: Youth unemployment, 1992-2015	4
Figure 3.1: Percentage of all students reporting that a Business Class intensive activity was useful in particular ways	21
Figure 3.2: Percentage of all students reporting that another activity was useful in particular ways	22
Figure 3.3: Most useful activity undertaken.....	23
Figure 3.4: Students' level of agreement with what they experienced and developed whilst on work experience placements with employers	30
Figure 3.5: Students' views on how work experience affected their thoughts about future careers and school.....	31
Figure 4.1: Percentage of employee volunteers who felt that pupils 'probably' or 'definitely' gained benefits through the enterprise education or business skills activity	47
Figure 4.2: Percentage of employee volunteers who felt that pupils 'probably' or 'definitely' gained benefits through the activity focused on employability skills development.....	48
Figure 4.3: Percentage of employee volunteers who agree or strongly agree with statement about their own benefits from volunteering with Business Class	49
Figure 4.4 Effective patterns of partnership working within schools and clusters	51

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Executive Summary

Business Class

Business in the Community's (BITC) Education campaign focusses on preventing social background predicting a young person's success at school and beyond. Business Class is an education programme run by BITC that offers a framework for schools and businesses to work together to address this goal.

Business Class (BC) creates school-business partnerships that are designed to be long-term and driven by the needs of the school and the priorities, resources and capacity of the business. The programme focuses on schools that have above average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, are located in the most deprived areas of the country according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and/or are not achieving national average GCSE results.

Partnerships undertake activities in four areas: leadership and governance, curriculum, enterprise and employability and wider issues. Within geographic areas, BC partnerships are grouped into clusters which are designed to encourage collaboration between different schools and businesses, locally and across the country.

In the BC evaluation, schools have been classified according to whether they are in enhancement or expansion clusters. Enhancement partnerships were brokered by BITC prior to the existence of BC. They had been established for at least two years and had been brought into the BC programme for further development. The expansion partnerships came into being after 2013 as a result of investment by UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). Between January 2013 and July 2015 there were 27 expansion clusters, 20 Enhancement Clusters; with 40,094 pupils in scope in the enhancement clusters and 80,049 pupils in the expansion ones.

The Aims of the evaluation

The main aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of various employer-engagement activities upon the young people that participated in Business Class (BC) from 2013 to 2015. The intended impact of Business Class is to facilitate a smooth transition into employment and thus to reduce the numbers of young people who are, or are at risk, of becoming, NEET.

At the design stage, it was agreed that it would not be possible to directly measure impact upon employment for these cohorts within the timeframe of this evaluation. The evaluation therefore measures outcomes from the activities which are known to impact upon employment: employability skills, career planning and career decision making skills and knowledge. The evaluation was also concerned to determine whether young people in participating schools were more likely to have access to employer-supported activities than those in other schools, and whether pupils who participated in BC were more likely than other students to benefit from the intended outcomes. Additionally, the evaluation was intended to explore the differential impact of different kinds of activities which may be enjoyed with greater or lesser intensity.

Summarily, the aims of the evaluation are to:

1. assess the impact of employer-engagement activities upon the young people that participated in BC between 2013 and 2015;
2. identify the added-value that BC imparts on pupils, schools, and the employers involved;
3. evaluate the uplift of employability skills and impact on the likelihood to become NEET; and
4. capture the formative lessons that will improve both the effectiveness and efficiency with which BC is delivered.

Method

There are a number of parties involved in the delivery of BC: schools, employers and their employee volunteers, BITC co-ordinators, and pupils. In order to undertake the evaluation data needed to be collected from all participants. This was undertaken within a framework that sought to understand:

1. the context in which BC was delivered (i.e. pupils not necessarily having a good comprehension of the skills and qualities that employers look for in their young recruits);
2. the particular activities in which pupils engaged and how these related to their perceptions of the jobs market; and
3. the outcomes of participating in BC insofar as pupils' understanding of the jobs market was improved.

A number of surveys were undertaken of pupils in enhancement and expansion clusters - alongside semi-structured interviews with employer volunteers, school champions and pupils – that sought to record the types of activity in which pupils had participated and how this had affected their perceptions of the jobs market. Encompassed within this approach were treatment (pupils participating in BC) and comparator (pupils not participating in BC or who were yet to participate in BC) groups. As well as looking at impacts, the study also sought to identify the processes associated with relatively positive or negative outcomes.

The evaluation covers the period over which UK Commission funding was provided.

Overall findings

- BC increased pupils' access to information about employability. The fact that the information was delivered by employers, rather than teachers, reinforced the credibility of the information provided to pupils.
- Pupils were likely to experience two additional employability and enterprise activities as a result of BC compared with pupils not participating in BC. Hence BC was seen to be instrumental in connecting pupils with employers and with activities designed to improve their employability.
- There was indicative evidence that where pupils participated in BC their educational expectations were likely to be better aligned with their career aspirations – an indicator of increased likelihood of lower NEET incidence. Although the evidence shows that participation in BC resulted in pupils being 13 per cent more likely to be aligned, this was not statistically significant.
- The above finding does not suggest that BC is unrelated to improved alignment. In fact, other evidence collected during the evaluation suggests that as a consequence of BC pupils were more likely to have a more informed understanding of what would

be required of them to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. BC would appear to have a substantial impact upon shaping pupils' views about the skills and qualities that employers value when recruiting young people. Overall, around 70 per cent of participating pupils felt that BC had helped them to develop skills (such as writing a CV or how to present oneself at interview) that would assist them find a job the future.

- The cluster approach used within BC provides added benefits which other types of engagement between schools and employers might not bring about, such as the opportunity for schools and employers to share their experiences and learning from their involvement, and ensuring a shared commitment and a common agenda aiming to improve outcomes for pupils.
- As well as the impact of clusters, other factors such as working with a single employer and the flexibility in BC were important, allowing the programme to be tailored to local labour market conditions and the specific needs of pupils.

Impact on pupils

- As noted above, BC provided pupils with access to a greater number of employability and enterprise activities with employers which benefited pupils. Most pupils felt that the activities they engaged in were worthwhile and that they had, as a consequence of BC, developed skills or acquired information that would be beneficial to them in making the transition from school to work.
- There is indicative evidence that pupils particularly valued the more intensive activities with employers that involved a degree of one-to-one engagement. Through more intensive activities, pupils obtained the specific feedback that would assist them to obtain the job they wanted.
- Across all types of activity, pupils appeared to welcome hearing from employee volunteers about their jobs and how they arrived at their current positions.
- BC would appear to have a substantial impact upon shaping pupil's views about the skills and qualities that employers value when recruiting young people. Overall, 72 per cent of participant pupils felt that BC had helped them to develop skills (such as writing a CV or how to present oneself at interview) that would assist them find a job the future.
- Work experience was particularly valued by pupils. As a result of work experience, 90 per cent of pupils agreed they would work hard in their lessons and coursework at school, and 73 per cent were clearer what they wanted to do in their career. A comparison of BC pupils' views of work experience from that of a larger survey of pupils undertaking work experience in 2008 suggests little difference between the two surveys.
- Recent academic research has indicated that if the educational expectations of young people and their post-school career aspirations are aligned there is less chance of those young people becoming NEET. The research evidence presented in this report replicates approaches from longitudinal studies and demonstrates that by engaging with employers and finding out about the jobs they have on offer and the skills and attributes of successful applicants for those jobs, pupils were much better informed about the demands of the labour market. Overall, the evidence suggests that if a more nuanced understanding of alignment is adopted, that defines it as broadening pupils'

career horizons and better preparing them to acquire the skills, qualifications and attributes that employers are looking for, then the evidence points to BC achieving this aim. One would, other things being equal, logically expect this positive outcome to improve the chances of young people making a successful transition into the labour market and this is in keeping with a growing body of research literature evidencing the relationship between school-age employer engagement and employment outcomes.

Impact on schools

- The primary purpose of this research was not to investigate the wider impact on schools, which is being evaluated in additional research commissioned by BITC. This shows schools able to report an impact on leadership and governance, management skills and wider knowledge among teaching staff of the opportunities for pupils in the future. This research also highlights that links with employers are beneficial.
- Indicative evidence captured from interviews with senior school members at the start of the evaluation and then again 18 months later, confirms that schools became more involved in work related activities over the period of their involvement in BC. On balance, senior school members said that BC had achieved the ambitions they had at the outset regarding work related learning and establishing career goals. The schools also reported that the number of employers they worked with had fallen over the period they were involved in BC.

The employer's role

- Employers reported that they had engaged in BC because it affords them the opportunity to demonstrate their responsibility, develop the skills of employee volunteers, communicate the future job opportunities and develop employability and core skills in their future workforce.
- BC is dependent upon the volunteers from employers (employee volunteers) being willing to engage with schools and young people, and the evidence suggests that employee volunteers participated because they found it beneficial to do so, particularly for developing communication and negotiation skills.
- Some employers commented that the schools they were working with were potentially ones that they would recruit from in the future. It was therefore beneficial to liaise with these schools and their pupils so that they could demonstrate the career opportunities they provided.
- Some companies also mentioned that they wanted to be able to measure the benefits obtained from their engagement in a programme such as BC, and that one of the attractions of participating in the programme was that it was run by a national organisation that could provide evidence that what was being delivered was effective.

Recommendations

- Programmes such as BC are important in providing information to young people about the skills they will need to acquire if they are to obtain the type of job to which they aspire. Labour market information (LMI) has a vitally important role to play in equipping young people with effective decision making powers. Programmes such as BC are an important part of that process because they are a conduit through which employers can communicate to young people the skills and qualities they are looking for in their

recruits. Employers can be especially effective messengers of labour market information. The recommendation is therefore that BC – and comparable programmes – need to be seen as part and parcel of the effective delivery of LMI to young people.

- It is important to continue to ensure the clustering aspect remains prominent. Clusters can take time to develop and need a strong steer over the early stages of their development. The benefits of the clustering approach is that it allows practical issues to be discussed and experiences and solutions to be shared amongst members. The evidence demonstrates that employers and schools valued the cluster based approach. It is therefore recommended that in developing BC that sufficient resource is in place to develop and sustain the cluster.
- Intensive activities are shown, through this report, to be the ones pupils preferred. It is recommended, therefore, that BC encourages employers to become involved in activities where pupils have an increased involvement. It is not clear how this can be rolled out on wider scale than at present – given that it is resource intensive – but there may be scope to make some less intensive activities slightly more intensive.
- BC is a relationship between pupils, school and employer (and their volunteers). Relationships need time to develop. Some employers and schools will be poorly matched. This does not reflect failure, so long as processes are in place to anticipate a failing relationship and begin the process of finding a better match. As programmes such as BC develop and mature, it is likely that schools and employers that are more likely to be well matched can be better anticipated by BC managers. The recommendation is that if BC were to be rolled out further that sufficient time be built into that roll-out so that effective school-employer relationships can be developed.

1. The Evaluation of Business Class

1.1 The value of Business Class to pupils, schools and employers

Business Class (BC) is a programme run by Business in the Community (BITC) that creates partnerships between schools and businesses to jointly address the school's needs in relation to; leadership and governance, curriculum, enterprise and employability, and wider issues identified by schools. Business Class differs from other school-business partnerships in that it brings together schools and employers in a local area into clusters. These can then share their experiences of what works best and also collaborate to meet local needs. These clusters are part of a national network so this sharing can also happen on a much larger scale.

The evidence in this report will show that BC was a win-win-win for pupils, schools and employers. It assisted pupils to understand the skills and attributes employers were looking for from recruits, it helped schools prepare their pupils for the world of work, and it provided a means for employers to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility to the communities in which they were located. Employee volunteers also benefited in that BC honed their communication and leadership skills.

The evaluation is concerned with the activities that pupils engage in whilst at school and does not follow them into the labour market. The evaluation, therefore, does not observe how the information provided to pupils affected their eventual entry into the labour market. That said, there is other evidence - not drawn from this evaluation - that suggests where the career aspirations of pupils are aligned with their educational expectations and wider activities within school (such as choice of subjects to study), there is less chance of them ending up not being in employment, education or training (NEET) when they leave school.¹ So by being able to provide pupils with information about the skills – often generic ones - they will need to make a successful transition into the labour market, they are much better placed to make a relatively successful transition into the world of work.

1.2 What is Business Class and how might it affect the prospects of young people?

As will be outlined below in more detail, the transition from school to work for young people over recent years has become more protracted and, following the financial crisis in 2008, young people have experienced relatively more difficulty than hitherto in breaking into the labour market at their desired level. How young people can be better prepared to withstand the vagaries of the labour market is an important policy priority. Employers have a critical part to play here, especially so in signalling the qualities and skills young people will need to acquire if they are to demonstrate their potential economic value to an employer. Employers have a role too in equipping young people with the attributes and skills that they value so highly. Research demonstrates that teenagers who undertake two or more school-mediated employer

¹ Yates, S., Harris, A., Sabates, R., and Staff, J. (2011) 'Early occupational aspirations and fractured transitions: a study of entry into 'NEET' status in the UK', *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3), pp 513-534; Sabates, R., Harris, A.L., and Staff, J. (2011) 'Ambition gone awry: the long-term socioeconomic consequences of misaligned and uncertain ambitions in adolescence' *Social Science Quarterly*, 92 (4), 1-19; Gutman, L.S. and Schoon, I. (2012) 'Correlates and consequences of uncertainty in career aspirations: gender differences among adolescents in England' *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 80, pp 608-618

engagement activities are significantly less likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) than comparable peers as young adults.²

BC, therefore, has the potential to positively affect pupils' transitions from school to work if, as a consequence of schools and employers working together – under the auspices of BITC – young people are better equipped to face the demands of the labour market. Under BC, a school will work in partnership with a single employer but it will be the school that determines the support that it requires from its business partner. BC is different to other school/business partnerships in that it brings employers and schools, in a given local area, together to discuss their experiences. By bringing employers and schools together in clusters, it enables them to meet on a regular basis to share best practice, identify common challenges, and accelerate improvement.

At the heart of BC is the construction of a minimum three year partnership between a school and a business. Partnerships begin with a detailed assessment process which evaluates the needs of the school in relation to four key areas; leadership and governance, enterprise and employability, curriculum and wider issues. There is also a process with the business to identify their key objectives for engagement. Once this has been done BITC supports partnerships to develop a long term action plan of activities that will deliver mutual benefit.

Each partnership is supported by an Education Manager (EM). These support partnerships by providing advice and supporting the delivery of activities. The EM also facilitates communication and cooperation across clusters of partnerships. The network of EMs across the country means that ideas, resources and best practice can be shared on a national level. It also means that national standards for quality assurance and management can be achieved helping ensure consistency.

In the BC evaluation, schools have been classified according to whether they are in enhancement and expansion clusters.

Expansion clusters are a group of partnerships being developed in new locations as result of the UKCES investment. Expansion cluster are groups of more mature partnerships who have been in the programme for a minimum of two years and the focus of the investment was to facilitate those partnerships working in a more collaborative way to deliver activity with young people across multiple schools and business volunteers from across the BC partner businesses and beyond through their supply chains and wider business networks.

Enhancement partnerships were brokered by BITC prior to the existence of BC. They had been established for at least two years and had been brought into the BC programme for further development.

Between January 2013 and July 2015 there were there were 27 expansion clusters, 20 Enhancement Clusters; with 40,094 pupils in scope in the enhancement clusters and 80,049 pupils in the expansion ones.³

² Percy, C & Mann, A. 2014. "School-mediated employer engagement and labour market outcomes for young adults Wage premia, NEET outcomes and career confidence" in Mann et al, eds. *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education*. London & New York: Routledge.

³ Data supplied by BITC

1.3 The youth labour market

Mention has already been made of the relatively difficult conditions experienced in the youth labour market since the financial crisis of 2008. In order to understand the contribution BC might make in assisting young people to successfully enter the labour market some appreciation of the challenges young people face in making that transition is required. The youth labour market has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. In particular, the shift away from the majority of school leavers entering employment at the end of compulsory education has been extensively documented.⁴ Mass participation in post-16 education and training with increasing proportions of young people entering higher education have fed into debates about the extent to which young people have increasingly protracted transitions into adulthood,⁵ as well the position of young people in the labour market. There are several important considerations to bear in mind in the discussion about youth employment and unemployment:

1. there is a long-run trend that has seen levels of educational attainment of people in the labour market increase and this is set continue in to the future.⁶ This has largely arisen as a consequence of new entrants to the labour market being more highly educated than their predecessors;
2. unemployment is strongly correlated with educational attainment. Evidence for the UK and from across Europe demonstrates that those who are less well educated are more likely to be out of work;⁷
3. young people in particular are sensitive to changes in the aggregate demand for labour. This has been amply demonstrated in the period since the 2008 financial crisis during which time youth unemployment has been at relatively high levels though this has eased of late;
4. where young people struggle to make a successful transition from school and into the labour market, this can result in scarring which subsequently affects their future employment and wage prospects.

Figure 1.1 shows the changing qualification structure of the labour market. It reveals the way in which over a relatively short period of time, there has been a substantial increase in the number of people who are relatively highly qualified. In particular, there has been strong growth in the percentage of people in employment who are qualified to a high level (i.e. who have higher education qualifications). In general, employers are now able to select recruits from a more highly educated labour force than hitherto. This also highlights the fact that those with lower levels of attainment may be increasingly disadvantaged in the labour market.

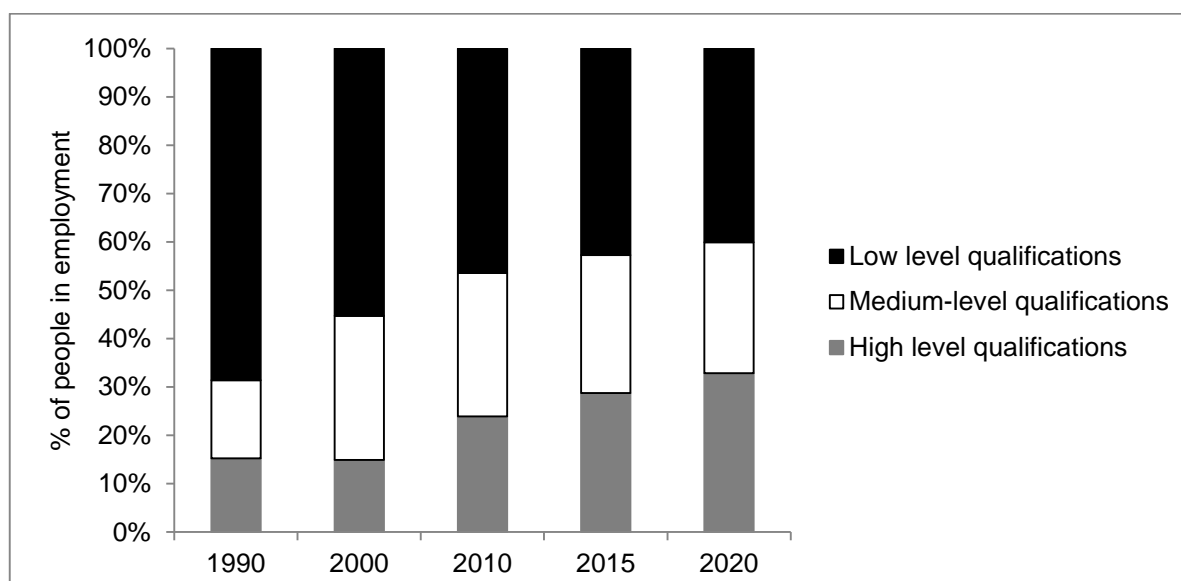
⁴ Ashton, D. et al. (1990). *Restructuring the Labour Market: The Implications for Youth*, Cambridge Studies in Sociology, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd. Mizen, P. (2004). *The Changing State of Youth*, Basingstoke: Palgrave

⁵ Bradley, H. (2005). "Winners and losers: young people in the 'new economy'", in H. Bradley and J. van Hoof (eds) *Young People in Europe*. Bristol: The Policy Press. Brooks, 2009 *Transition from Education to Work: New Perspectives from Europe and Beyond*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Wilson, R.A. et al. (2014). *The Demand for, and Supply of Skills, in the EU: Latest forecasts*. Luxembourg: Commission of the European Communities

⁷ Cedefop (2014) *On the Way to 2020: Indicator Report*. Luxembourg: Commission of the European Communities

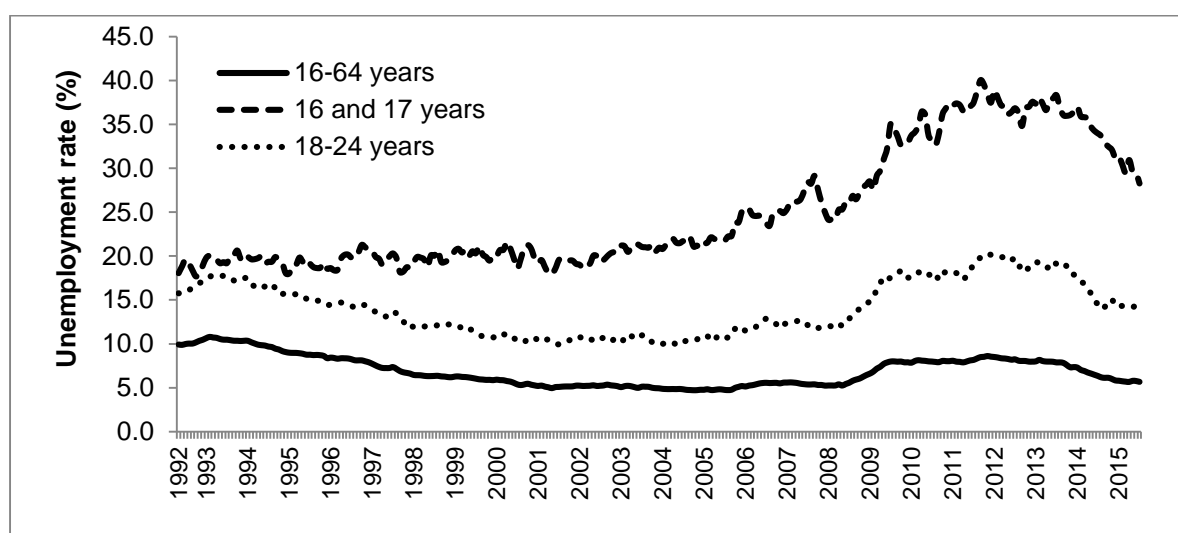
Figure 1.1 Highest level of educational attainment held by those in employment



Source: Working Futures

The evidence points to educational attainment being a predictor of employment status and earnings potential. This is especially the case with respect to young people. The unemployment rates for young people following the 2008 financial crisis reveal the extent to which young people are particularly vulnerable to shifts in the demand for labour (see Figure 1.2).⁸

Figure 1.2: Youth unemployment, 1992-2015



Source: ONS Unemployment by age and duration (seasonally adjusted)

To some extent high unemployment rates amongst young people may be expected because the youth labour market is characterised by 'churn', that is, by frequent job changes and periodic short spells of unemployment. The explanation for this is that young people lack

⁸ Hogarth, T., et al. (2009) *The Equality Impacts of the Current Recession*, Equality and Human Rights Commission Report no 47, 1 – 217.

sufficient information to make informed career choices and engage in a period of testing the job market in order to find jobs and employers that they like.⁹ But it is not just churn that results in the observed trends in youth unemployment. There are longer-term, underlying structural changes in the youth labour market and associated changes in the patterns of employer recruitment behaviour that potentially disadvantage young people. On the demand side, there are changes in the occupational structure of employment, such as the increasingly high share of jobs where entry requires some form of tertiary education. And, on the supply-side, the increasing number of young people continuing in education beyond compulsory school age may result in some employers' having concerns regarding the quality of 15/16-18 year old school leavers.¹⁰

Another factor affecting young people's employment prospects is that in the post-2008 period young people have had to compete with an increasing number of older, more experienced job seekers.¹¹ Employers in some sectors have not been recruiting – or at least not to the same extent - making it difficult for young people to gain entry to employment. And even where employers are recruiting, young people face increased competition for jobs from more experienced, more skilled job seekers. That employers raise their hiring standards in slack labour markets was recognised a long time ago.¹² Employers are able to select recruits with levels of qualifications and experience that they would not have previously have sought. This may be a cyclical effect, but it may also have a structural component too where more skilled and experienced recruits change the content of the jobs to which they have been recruited resulting in a more permanent ratcheting upwards of the skills and experience required to fill what were once relatively less skilled jobs. It has been suggested that many young people find themselves caught in 'an experience trap' in which employers select recruits on the basis of previous work experience and, as a result, young entrants to the job market who lack that experience cannot obtain the job that would allow them to gain that experience.¹³

Rising levels of educational attainment in the labour force, other things being equal, suggests that those with low levels of attainment will face a relative disadvantage finding work. It is, however, worth bearing in mind two considerations:

1. many jobs do not require specific qualifications for entry. Often employers are content that people have achieved a certain level of education rather than being qualified in a specific subject;¹⁴ and

⁹ Johnson S. and Burden T (2003) *Young People, Employability and the Induction Process*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

¹⁰ Blanchflower, D.G. and Freeman R. (2000) *Youth Employment and Joblessness in Advanced Countries*, University of Chicago Press and NBER, Chicago, Illinois; Bell, D. and Blanchflower, D. (2010) *Young people and Recession: A Lost Generation?* Centre for Economic Policy Research, London; European Commission (2011) *Employment in Europe 2010*, European Commission, Brussels

¹¹ OECD (2010), 'Off to a good start? Youth labour market transitions in OECD countries', OECD, Paris.

¹² Reder, M. (1955) 'The Theory of Occupational Wage Differences', *American Economic Review*, December 1955. Thurow, L. (1975). *Generating Inequality*, New York, Basic Books

¹³ Bell, D. and Blanchflower, D. (2010). *Young people and Recession: A Lost Generation?* Centre for Economic Policy Research, London

¹⁴ Gambin, L., Hogarth, T., Murphy, L., Spreadbury, K., Warhurst, C., and Winterbotham, M. (2015) *Research to understand the extent, nature and impact of skills mismatches in the economy*, BIS Research Paper, forthcoming

2. there will remain many jobs in the labour market that do not require high levels of skill from their incumbent.¹⁵

The implication of the above is that competition for jobs will not be solely based on educational attainment and, except in a few specific occupational areas, will not be based on possessing specific qualifications by subject other than, possibly, those which demonstrate literacy and numeracy. It is likely that competition for jobs will be based on a range of other factors that demonstrate to the employer the applicant's degree of fit with the job on offer and the overall organisation.¹⁶ So what skills and attributes are employers looking for from young people? Evidence from the Net Costs of Training to Employers series of studies provides an insight.¹⁷ These studies demonstrate the qualities that employers look for when they are recruiting a young person to an Apprenticeship. Employers, in general, were not looking for specific qualifications from applicants except in the case of STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) related ones where there was a requirement to have GCSEs in English, mathematics, and physics. Typically, employers were looking for certain attributes that indicated to them that the person would be a good fit with the organisation, such as being able to demonstrate that they had an interest in the type of work which the Apprenticeship was attached to, were knowledgeable about the organisation to which they applying, and an overall positive attitude.

Even in relation to those Apprenticeships that required specific qualifications to gain entry, employers were looking for specific attributes that would indicate that the young person was suited to both the Apprenticeship and the type of work to which it would grant them entry. Accordingly, the employer was looking for evidence of the extent to which they had pursued their interest in, say, engineering, and also evidence that they had, or had the potential to acquire, the types of generic skill that would ensure that they were a good fit with the organisation. The above is borne out by evidence in relation to the jobs market generally, where the evidence suggests that where technical skills are required, the employer wants these to be complemented by a wide range of generic ones.¹⁸ One without the other was not sufficient.

The above stresses the importance of being able to acquire those generic skills that employers rate so highly. By the time young people have selected their subject options in year eight or nine, the scope to change the subjects they are studying may be limited, but there is still plenty of scope to acquire the more generic skills that employers are looking for. In some respects, these may be the most important ones given that many employers feel that they can train young people in the technical skills required in the job. Hence the potential for programmes such as BC to help equip young people with the employability skills that will allow them to demonstrate their potential value to an employer.

¹⁵ McIntosh, S. (2013) *Hollowing-out and Entry Level Jobs*, BIS Research Report No.134

¹⁶ Gambin, L. et al (2015) *Op cit*

¹⁷ Hogarth, T., Gambin, L., Winterbotham, M., Baldauf, B., Briscoe, G., Gunstone, B., Hasluck, C., Koerbitz, C. and Taylor, C.(2012). *Employer Investment in Apprenticeships and Workplace Learning: The Fifth Net Benefits of Training to Employers Study*, BIS Research Paper Number 67

¹⁸ Hendry, C. et al. (2000) *Employers Skills Survey: Telecommunications Sector*. Department for Education and Skills / National Skills Task Force Research Report SKT38.

1.4 The Youth Labour Market and Business Class

Whilst the foregoing has highlighted how the youth labour market has become increasingly competitive, it is questionable whether young people are fully aware of the skills and attributes that employers are looking for. Most of the evidence demonstrates that young people's understanding of the labour market is weak.¹⁹ Moreover, where young people are unrealistic, indecisive, or confused about their future careers, they can encounter considerable labour market penalties later on.²⁰ The work of Yates and his colleagues is instructive in this regard in that shows where young people's career choices are poorly matched to their educational plans it can result in an increased risk of becoming NEET.²¹ Reviewing much of the literature in this area, Mann and Dawkins identify the importance of activities that address the confusion, indecisiveness, and misalignment that some young people on the cusp of entering the labour market experience. They comment:

“Studies using British longitudinal datasets which have explored the long-term implications of uncertain or ‘misaligned’ teenage career aspirations – where young people at age 16 misestimate the educational requirements needed for specific occupations – have found that there are significant consequences linked to underestimates of qualifications required for preferred career ambitions. Young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are systematically more likely to fall into this category and consequently are more likely to be able to benefit from reliable interventions.”²² (p.16)

The research literature is clear that a reliable intervention requires employer engagement. A recent review of what constitutes good career guidance in schools sets as one of its eight benchmarks: encounters with employers and employees; and experience of workplaces.²³ In relation to the former it states:

“Every pupil should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring, and enterprise schemes.” (p.7)

This draws attention to the type of employer-school engagement that might effectively provide young people with the encounters with employers and employees. Whilst the evidence shows that much employer-school engagement is one-dimensional where a single method links school and employer, where engagement has more breadth and depth, it will have a greater impact on both the school and its pupils.²⁴ This is where BC potentially has an important role to play, because it aims to afford both breadth and depth to the employer–school relationships that it brokers. The extent to which it does so is explored in the following chapters.

¹⁹ Mann, A., Massey, D., Glover, P., Kashefpadkel, E.T., and Dawkins, J. (2013) *Nothing in Common: the career ambitions of young people mapped against projected labour market demand (2010-2020)*. London: Education and Employers Task Force

²⁰ Mann, A. and J. Dawkins (2014) *Employer Engagement in Education: Literature Review*. London: Education and Employers Task Force / CfBT Trust

²¹ Yates et al. (2010) *op cit*

²² Mann and Dawkins (2014) *op cit*

²³ Holman, J. (2014) *Good Careers Guidance*. London: Gatsby Trust

²⁴ Grant, P. (2010) *Business Class: An Evaluation*. London: Cass Business School / BITC; Mann, A. (2012) *It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce

2. The Evaluation: Methods and Measures

2.1 Aims and objectives

The main aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of various employer-engagement activities upon the thousands of young people who participated in Business Class between 2013 and 2015. The intended impact of BC is to facilitate a smooth transition into employment and thereby to reduce the numbers of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET.

The evaluation measures outcomes from the activities which are known to impact upon employment: employability skills, career planning and career decision making skills and knowledge.²⁵ The evaluation was also concerned to determine whether young people in participating schools were more likely to have access to employer-supported activities than those in other schools, and whether pupils that participated in BC were more likely than other students to benefit from the intended outcomes. Additionally, the evaluation was intended to explore the differential impact of different kinds of activities which may be enjoyed with greater or less intensity.

Summarily, the aims of the evaluation are to:

1. assess the impact of employer-engagement activities upon the young people that participated in BC between 2013 to 2015 (for example, what type of activities did young people participate in and what did they get out of it);
2. identify the added-value that BC imparts on pupils, and schools, as well as employers involved (that is, what did BC offer that would not otherwise have been available);
3. evaluate the uplift of employability skills and impact on likelihood to become NEET (for example, did it help young people to better understand the skills employers are looking for from recruits to entry level jobs and thereby shape their views about what they needed to do to obtain their preferred type of job); and
4. capture the formative lessons that will improve both the effectiveness and efficiency with which BC is delivered (in other words, identifying what works well and what needs to be improved).

2.2 Conceptual framework and measures

In order to evaluate BC, a conceptual framework is required that provides a basis for exploring and analysing the data captured in the study. Implicit in the study from the start has been a context-mechanism-output (CMO) type approach.²⁶ The CMO approach assumes that any intervention can be understood only with reference to the **context** in which the intervention has been made (i.e. what is the nature of the problem and who is affected). As noted in the previous chapter, BC is designed so that schools can tailor any intervention to meet their specific needs (i.e. the school-specific context). The **mechanism** refers to the intervention, in this case the various activities that take place under BC. The **outcomes** are then the product of the context and mechanism (i.e. the extent to which pupils' orientations towards the labour market become more attuned to what is known about the attributes and skills employers most value when recruiting young people). If the mechanisms are not sufficiently attuned to the

²⁵ At the design stage it was agreed with it would not be possible to directly measure impact upon employment for these cohorts within the timeframe of this evaluation.

²⁶ Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage

context in which they are being introduced then the effectiveness, and efficiency, of the intervention is likely to be compromised.

There are linked questions that need to be asked about every intervention so that it can be understood in realist terms. These questions relate to:

- **Context:** what conditions are needed for a measure/intervention to trigger mechanisms to produce particular outcome patterns in the partnerships?
- **Mechanism:** what is it about a measure/intervention which may lead it to have a particular outcome pattern in a given context?
- **Outcome:** what are the practical effects and impacts produced by causal mechanisms being triggered in a given context?

In relation to evaluating BC, the CMO approach starts with understanding the nature of the problem that the intervention is looking to affect. It is important to consider both supply-side issues (what are the characteristics of young people who need assistance), and the demand-side (what are the factors that make employers recruit young people and provide them with good quality employment and training opportunities). The mechanism element concerns the type of intervention that BC has funded and the line of reasoning behind the choice of the type of intervention (e.g. mock interviews, business visits, etc.). There are also inter-related elements to consider in relation to the mechanics:

- the mechanics of establishing an intervention; that is, having the resources in place to assist pupils;
- the consistency between the activities funded via BC and the problems that young people face in making a successful transition into the labour market; and
- effective delivery by schools, employers, and BITC.

The importance of employability has been underscored by the UK Commission²⁷ as well as by the Confederation of British Industry.²⁸ In *The Journey to Employment* a framework is provided that identifies six key factors that influence young people's journey to employment:²⁹

- Emotional capabilities
 - An individual's ability to manage their emotions and persevere when setbacks occur. This includes personal assets such as self-esteem, and having grit and determination to succeed.
- Attitudes
 - An individual's outlook and approach to learning and work. This includes their general feelings about participating in work and their aspirations.

²⁷ UKCES (2009) *The Employability Challenge*. Wath-upon-Deane: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

²⁸ CBI (2012) *Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills*. London: Confederation of British Industry.

²⁹ Copps, J. and Plimmer, D. (2013) *Inspiring Impact: The journey to employment*. London: NPC / Deutsche Bank, p 8.

- Employability skills
 - The attributes required to succeed in the workplace, and work with others. These include communication, teamwork and leadership skills.
- Qualifications, education and training
 - The acquisition of knowledge and experience through school, college or training. This includes qualifications and attainment, as well as conduct and behaviour.
- Experience and involvement
 - The activities young people participate in, and experiences they gain, outside school or college. These include work experience, involvement in the community, and networks developed as a result.
- Career management skills
 - The knowledge and skills required to find a job. This includes having career direction, understanding how to search for jobs, and presentation to employers.

In designing the various questionnaires, used to elicit information from pupils, questions were included about the way in which BC had affected the types of factors outlined above. In summary, if BC can positively affect the above then it may be going some way towards affecting the overall employability of young people and their eventual experiences in the labour market.

2.3 Method

There is a need in the first instance, to identify the types of activities that people have participated in, by enhancement and expansion clusters, and distinguishing between intensive (engaged in three or more activities) and non-intensive activities. A series of surveys were conducted (see Table 2.1 below) that captured data on the types of activity that pupils in different types of cluster, and in intensive / non-intensive activities, undertook, their rating of those activities, and how it had shaped their thinking.

The surveys were constructed in such a way that it was possible to compare the views and perceptions of pupils who had participated in BC and those who had not done so at the time of the study. In this way, there is a treatment group and comparator group that provide an indication of the additionality that BC confers upon pupils.

In addition to the online surveying, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with pupils, schools, and employers in order to more fully understand the impact of BC. The impacts might relate to pupils' employability or to the benefits which employers and their employee volunteers obtained from participating in BC.

The method outlined above gives an indication of the impact of BC on pupils from the perspective of the pupils themselves, their teachers, and employers / employee volunteers.

In order to test for alignment – with a view to more fully understanding how participation in BC might have some future impact on becoming NEET an additional piece of analysis was conducted. The Careers/Aspirations survey measured whether the beneficiaries of Business Class have career aspirations that are realistic in relation to their stated educational expectations and to compare this alignment with a comparison group, thus providing an indicator linked to risk of becoming NEET. The methodology draws on the working of Yates et al. who measured the alignment of careers aspirations with anticipated attainment and

showed that misaligned young people were more likely to become NEET.³⁰ The questionnaire required students to select occupational preferences and also to predict their own level of attainment. The job names used in the questionnaire were taken from the Standard Occupational Classification codes. Since some popular job types were not mentioned in the list, additional occupations were added. For the purposes of analysis, each job was assigned an entry level qualification. These qualifications were sourced from the National Career Services and Totaljobs and, for a few very specific jobs, from particular companies, such as British Airways (for pilots) and Halifax Bank (for banking). An additional option was given to respondents to choose if they have not found their desired job in the list given in order to reduce the risk of non-response.

The Careers/Aspirations Survey was conducted from May to June 2014 with two groups of Year 11 students: an intervention group and a comparison group. The intervention group consisted of Year 11 students in enhancement clusters who attend schools where employer engagement activities have been available over the last two years or more. Eight enhancement schools and five expansion schools were randomly selected to participate in this survey with a view to generating a sample of 600 in the intervention population and 400 in the comparison population. 613 paper based questionnaires were submitted by students from seven enhancement schools in seven different clusters. The comparison group consisted of Year 11 students in schools that had recently joined BC therefore had not had the opportunity to benefit from BC events. 354 paper based questionnaires were submitted by Year 11 students from four schools in four different clusters.

A logistic regression was undertaken to explore the effects of the intervention upon the relationship (alignment) between two outcomes: career intention and qualification expectation. Logistic regression was applied with and without control variables in place to examine the correlation between the explanatory variables and the outcomes. The approach was to build a model that included all of the potentially important explanatory variables including control variables, such as ethnicity, gender etc. The analysis reveals the effect of each factor and, in succession those control variables that are not significant are removed from the analysis to clarify what is going on and focus on the effects of interest. The final model shows the relationship between activities and those effects and also the background variables which proved to be significantly correlated with the outcomes. Significance and the size of the effect were calculated. Additional analysis was carried out to explore the impact of the total volume of activities that students participated in on their alignment, which made it possible to explore effects across the intervention group and the control group (where some students had participated in some activities with employers). In addition, analysis was conducted to explore the effects of particular activities, such as work experience and work visits.

Not everything rests on the logistic regression. A large amount of data was collected from various surveys and semi-structured interviews that has been brought together to provide a cohesive analysis of the impact of BC. By comparing the responses of different groups of pupils, participating in differing types of BC activity, and incorporating data collected from employers and schools, it is possible to provide a more nuanced, albeit more qualitative, evaluation of BC.

³⁰ Yates, S. et al. (2010) *op cit*

2.4 Data Collection

Evaluation data were collected from pupils and employers through a series of surveys (see Table 2.1). Further data were collected through semi-structured interviews with pupils, schools and employers.

Table 2.1: Survey data collection used in the evaluation of Business Class

Survey	Purpose
Surveys of pupils	
Intensive activities survey	This survey measures the impact of intensive activities (those activities that involve at least three separate contacts with employers for pupils) - in expansion clusters - on pupils' employability skills, attitudes, experiences and careers development.
Mid-tier mass-engagement survey	This survey addresses the impact of non-intensive activities. As with the Collaborative Survey described below it aims to measure the impact of the activities upon attitudes, emotions, employability skills, careers development and intentions.
Collaborative survey	This survey audits the impact of the events experienced by young people in enhancement clusters. These activities typically involve several employers and address career development, personal development, and employability skills.
Work experience survey	This survey measures the impact of work experience by capturing the perceptions of young people.
Careers/Aspirations survey	The purpose of this survey is to measure whether the beneficiaries of BC had career aspirations that are realistic in relation to their stated educational expectations and to compare this alignment with a comparison group, thus providing an indicator linked to their risk of becoming NEET. The questionnaire required students to select occupational preferences and also to predict their own level of attainment. The survey was conducted from May to June 2014 with two groups of Year 11 students: an intervention group and a comparison group.
Survey of employers	
Employee Volunteer survey	The purpose of this survey is to confirm the character of employer engagement in Business Class activities, and explore perceptions of ease and value of participation for employers (in comparison to comparable engagement mechanisms), and their perceptions of value to young people. The respondent to the survey was the employee volunteer.
Work Experience survey (employers)	This survey aims to obtain the employer's views on the work placements they provided to pupils through Business Class. It asks employer about their previous experience of providing placements as well as about the structure and management of their latest BC placement. Employers were also asked about the benefits providing placements brought to the business / workers and also the likely benefits for students.

The response rates to the surveys were disappointing. This related in part to the use of online surveying facilities, but also due to difficulties encountered in persuading schools to request their students to complete the questionnaires. This has had a substantial impact on the evaluation and has all but negated the opportunity to conduct longitudinal analysis. That said,

by combining the data collected from the various surveys with data from the semi-structured interviews with pupils, schools, and employers, it is possible to piece together a picture of the impact BC had on pupils. The initial semi-structured interviews with pupils were undertaken during 2014. In May and June 2015, in five clusters, interviews were conducted with the school champions of BC, their employer partners, and a selection of students – around 75 in total - who had participated in various BC activities.

2.5 Conclusion

Evaluating a programme such as BC poses the evaluator with a number of interesting challenges. As the activities encompassed in the programme vary in a number of ways across clusters, schools and employers, defining and capturing control and treatment groups has proved difficult and thus has not allowed for a fully quantitative assessment of impact and additionality. Further to this, as the evaluation has not been over a time scale to allow for following students through the BC programme and into the labour market, assessing fully the impact of activities on students' employability and understanding and experiences of the labour market is not possible. Despite these limitations on the quantitative assessment, it is possible to identify a number of impacts of the initiative and also to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of the processes involved in BC.

As set out above, the approach adopted in this study has been the CMO type. This approach emphasises that understanding any intervention, here the BC programme, requires an understanding of the context in which it has been introduced. BC was introduced in to schools that were located in areas where there was a relatively high level of disadvantage with, consequently, relatively low levels of employment demand.

The mechanism considered in this evaluation, BC, provides a way for schools to engage with employers, allowing schools to tailor interventions to their own specific needs. The programme serves mainly as a facilitator for school-led engagement with employers; BC provides a link between school and employer, and a structure in which this partnership can operate. The specific interventions or activities delivered through BC are varied. They range from general activities such as careers fairs and employer talks to large groups of students, to intensive activities where employers engage with students on a more individual level, one-to-one or in small groups, and provide students with various forms of information, support and skill development.

The goal for the evaluation is to understand how the various mechanisms bring about positive outcomes for pupils. The findings in this regard are turned to in the next chapter.

3. The Pupil Experience

This chapter explores the way in which BC helped shape pupils' views of what is required to make a successful transition into the labour market, and what worked best for them. Wherever possible, comparisons are provided between: (i) enhancement and expansion clusters; and, to a lesser degree, between (ii) treatment and comparator groups (though the extent to which (ii) can be achieved is limited in practice). The chapter thereby provides an overview of the relative value pupils attributed to BC.

Overall, the results indicate that:

- BC increased pupils' access to information about employability. The fact that the information was delivered by employers, rather than teachers, reinforced the credibility of the information provided to pupils.
- Pupils were likely to experience two additional employability and enterprise activities as a result of BC compared with pupils not participating in BC. Hence BC was seen to be instrumental in connecting pupils with employers and with activities designed to improve their employability.
- There was indicative evidence that where pupils participated in BC their educational expectations were likely to be better aligned with their career aspirations. Although the evidence shows that participation in BC resulted in pupils being 13 per cent more likely to be aligned, this was not statistically significant even at the 10 per cent level. In other words, there was a more than a 1 in 10 chance that this finding was a result of chance.
- The above finding does not suggest that BC is unrelated to improved alignment. In fact, other evidence collected during the evaluation suggests that as a consequence of BC pupils were more likely to have a more informed understanding of what would be required of them to make a successful transition from school to the world of work.
- Most pupils felt that the activities they engaged in were worthwhile and that they had, as a consequence of BC, developed skills or acquired information that would be beneficial to them in making the transition from school to work.
- There is indicative evidence that pupils particularly valued the more intensive activities with employers that involved a degree of one-to-one engagement because in this way they obtained specific feedback that would assist them to obtain the job they wanted.
- Across all types of activity, pupils appeared to welcome hearing from employee volunteers about their jobs and how they arrived at their current positions.
- BC would appear to have a substantial impact upon shaping pupils' views about the skills and qualities that employers value when recruiting young people. Overall, around 70 per cent of participant pupils felt that BC had helped them to develop skills (such as writing a CV or how to present oneself at interview) that would assist them find a job the future.
- Work experience was particularly valued by pupils. As a result of work experience, 90 per cent of pupils agreed that they were going to work hard in their lessons and coursework at school, and 73 per cent were clearer what they wanted to do in their career.

- Academic research has indicated that if the educational expectations of young people and their post-school career aspirations are aligned there is less chance of those young people becoming NEET.³¹ The research evidence presented in this report demonstrates that by engaging with employers and finding out about the jobs they have on offer and the skills and attributes of successful applicants for those jobs, pupils were much better informed about the demands of the labour market. Overall, the evidence suggests that if a more nuanced understanding of alignment is adopted, that sees it as being able to broaden pupils' career horizons and better prepare them to acquire the skills, qualifications and attributes that employers are looking for, then the evidence points to BC achieving this aim. One would, other things being equal, logically expect this positive outcome to improve the chances of young people making a successful transition into the labour market.

These findings are explored in more detail below.

3.1 Understanding how Business Class affects pupil engagement with employers

Learners in the comparator group – i.e. not (yet) involved in BC - were more likely to report that they had never participated in any of the activities BC promotes: work experience, enterprise activity, employer talks, mock interviews, workplace visits and projects with employers. This suggests that BC is a major factor in engaging pupils with these types of activity. The remainder of this chapter explores how useful pupils in the enhancement and expansion clusters found their participation in BC.

Table 3.1 summarises the participation of students in activities involving employers. Overall, the main activities that pupils participated in were work experience (72 per cent of pupils participating in BC) and employer talks (70 per cent). If a comparison is made between those pupils participating in BC and those not doing so, those in BC were more likely to engage with employers. The only exception is for work experience where 74 per cent of students not in BC had experienced this compared with 70 per cent in BC. Pupils in BC were likely to have participated in more intensive activities, including mock interviews (68 per cent of BC pupils compared with 45 per cent of non-BC), enterprise activities such as Dragon's Den (40 per cent in BC versus 20 per cent not in BC), and business projects (46 per cent compared to 30 per cent). Hence the conclusion that BC is a major factor in engaging pupils in employability and enterprise activities.

³¹ Yates, S. et al. (2010) *op cit*

Table 3.1: Percentage of students taking part in particular activities with employers and average number of activities

	Non-Business Class	Business Class	All
Work Experience	74%	70%	72%
Enterprise	20%	40%	33%
Employer Talk	64%	74%	70%
Mock Interview	45%	68%	59%
Visit to Employer	44%	54%	50%
Business Project	30%	46%	40%
Mentoring	23%	29%	27%
Average number of activities	8.4	10.5	9.8
<i>Base</i>	<i>349</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>950</i>

Source: Aspirations/Careers Survey

Results of regression analysis, where the number of activities students took part in is the dependent variable and the explanatory variables included a number of control variables as well as an indicator of whether or not a student was in BC, suggest that BC pupils were statistically more likely to take part in more activities involving employers. Other things being equal, a pupil who was in BC would be expected, on average, to have taken part in two more activities than their non-BC counterpart. The results of this regression are shown in Table 3.2a and demonstrate the statistically significant impact BC has upon pupil engagement in employability and enterprise activities.

Table 3.2a: Estimated coefficients for model of volume of activities undertaken by students

Dependent variable: Volume of employer activities in which pupils participated	Coefficient
Business Class	2.18***
Free School Meals	-0.70
Female	-1.57***
Ethnic Minority	0.84
Parent attended University	0.75
Constant	9.16***

Source: Aspirations/Careers Survey

Note: * indicates statistical significance at 10% level; ** at 5%; *** at 1%.

3.2 An initial assessment of alignment

The above demonstrates that BC increases pupil-employer engagement. This is an important finding in that it demonstrates that without BC, or something comparable, students would be much less likely to be exposed to various employability and enterprise activities. But does this matter? One way of testing this, though not the only one, is by estimating the impact of pupils' participation in BC on their alignment. In other words, are pupils in BC more likely to be

engaged in activities in school – such as studying the appropriate broad range of qualifications – that are consistent with their career aspirations post-school?

The finding relating to alignment and participation in BC persists after controlling for a variety of pupils' individual characteristics, including gender and ethnicity. As a starting point, it is useful to compare the degree of alignment across pupils in BC and not in BC. Overall, just under 40 per cent of pupils were classified as being 'aligned', but where pupils were in BC, 41 per cent were aligned compared with 38 per cent not in BC. Using logistic regression techniques, the analysis revealed that participants in BC were 13 per cent more likely, other things being equal, to be aligned than non-participants. This relationship, however, was not statistically significant even at the 10 per cent level; in other words, the result could be simply due to chance in more than 1 in 10 instances.³² The analysis also showed that the greater the number of activities that each individual participated in, the greater their likelihood of being aligned (the likelihood increases by 1 per cent for each activity), but again the relationship was not statistically significant at the 10 per cent level.

To further consider the effect of various activities on the probability of pupils being aligned or misaligned, each activity was entered as an explanatory variable in a logistic regression where whether or not the pupil was aligned (0 if misaligned, 1 if aligned) was the dependent variable. Each of the activities shown in Table 3.2b was entered into a separate logistic regression. First, no control variables were included in the specification and then control variables for gender, free school meals, parental education, and ethnicity were included in. These models were estimated for all pupils as well as for the sample of pupils in BC only.

The estimated coefficients for each of the employer-engagement activities are shown in Table 3.2b. Only the employer visit activity was found to be statistically significant in all cases. Without controlling for background characteristics, the probability of being aligned was around 9.7 percentage points higher for those who had gone on a visit to an employer compared with those pupils who had not done so. After controlling for characteristics of pupils, this marginal effect increases to 11.7 percentage points. When considering only those students in BC, the effect of visits to employers is higher (all other things being equal): the probability of alignment is 14.4 (without controlling for student characteristics) and 15.4 (after controlling for characteristics) percentage points higher for those who went on visits compared with those who did not. Mentoring was statistically significant for the BC group after controlling for pupils' background characteristics, though the sign on the coefficient was not as expected (i.e. mentoring reduces the chances of being aligned).³³ The probability of being aligned was lower for those who took part in mentoring compared with those who did not do so (with a difference of 14.5 percentage points in the probability of alignment). Accounting for other factors diminishes the effects of the treatment in the majority of instances. But the results, for the most part, are not statistically significant as Table 3.2b reveals.

³² It is usual to set significance at the 10 per cent or lower.

³³ This may be because mentoring and participation in BC is provided to students who are more in need of assistance and may account for the sign on the coefficient.

Table 3.2b: Estimated coefficients for activities undertaken by students when control variables included

	No control variables		Controlling for gender, free school meals, parent education, ethnicity	
	All	Business Class only	All	Business Class only
Work Experience	0.2716	0.4856	-0.0050	0.0488
Enterprise	0.0984	-0.1059	0.0350	-0.2528
Employer Talk	0.0936	-0.0419	0.0756	-0.0845
Mock Interview	0.3416	0.4841	0.0454	0.1946
Visit to Employer	0.4098*	0.6042**	0.4923*	0.6527*
Business Project	0.1001	0.0908	-0.1613	-0.1923
Mentoring	-0.1276	-0.1978	-0.4338	-0.6221*

Source: Aspirations/Careers Survey / Note: * indicates statistical significance at 10% level; ** at 5%; *** at 1%.

There is always the danger in such analyses that like is not being compared with like in the treatment and comparator groups. In other words, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the two groups are in some way different. It was not possible to use matching techniques due to insufficient observations in the non-BC group. Even using a 'poor match' (based on propensity score matching), there was still no statistically significant effect of being in BC on alignment.

The findings from the logistic regression presented above, it should be stressed, do not show that BC and alignment are unrelated. In many respects, the somewhat inconclusive results of the logistic regression stem from the complexity of the phenomenon being analysed with the data available. With relatively small sample sizes there is the danger that the comparator and treatment groups comprise groups that are different in some way. And the nature of the alignment concept is one which does not readily lend itself to quantification or being reduced to a single indicator. If a more nuanced understanding of alignment is adopted, that sees the success of BC as being able to broaden pupils' career horizons and better prepare them to acquire the skills, qualifications and attributes that employers are looking for, then it is possible to more clearly gauge how BC affects pupils' understanding of the labour market. In this way, they are better prepared to make a successful transition into the labour market. The evidence presented below examines this in greater detail.

3.3 The impact of intensive activities

The Intensive Activities Survey captures the views of pupils who had three or more types of engagement with employers. The results derive from the expansion clusters and captures the views of pupils who took part in BC during 2014 (in Wave 1) and those who took part in 2015 (Wave 2). The longitudinal element is small (18 respondents) so it is apposite to treat the survey as two cross-sectional surveys.³⁴ The Wave 2 survey contains more data on the impact of various BC activities on pupil's orientations towards employment.

³⁴ This is a result of the low response rates to the surveys of pupils.

The characteristics of participants in intensive activities are outlined below in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of survey sample, wave 1 and wave 2

	Wave 1	Wave 2
<i>Base</i>	340	133
Gender		
Male	59%	46%
Female	41%	54%
Ethnic group		
White (British, Irish, other White background)	81%	64%
Mixed		
Asian		
Black or Black British		
Year Group		
Year 7	7%	2%
Year 8	2%	0%
Year 9	13%	13%
Year 10	64%	38%
Year 11	14%	38%
Year 12	0%	8%

Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Waves 1 and 2

Attitudes, confidence, and skills

As noted in Chapter 2, the journey into employment is shaped by various factors related to emotional capabilities, attitudes, employability skills, etc. The evidence demonstrates that participants in intensive activities were confident about their abilities, had positive attitudes towards learning, etc. Table 3.4, for instance, summarises pupils' responses to questions about their attitudes towards school. In both waves, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed with all items.

Table 3.4: Students' attitudes towards school and achievements, waves 1 and 2

	Wave 1 (all) (base = 340)		Wave 2 (all) (base = 133)	
	Strongly disagree / Disagree	Agree / Strongly agree	Strongly disagree / Disagree	Agree / Strongly agree
I always try my hardest at everything that I do at school	14%	85%	11%	89%
I think that I am going to achieve a C grade or above in my Maths GCSE	12%	83%	8%	88%
I think that I am going to achieve a C grade or above in English GCSE	10%	87%	8%	86%
When I start a new piece of work I usually feel confident that I will be able to complete it successfully	20%	78%	12%	86%
I don't give up easily - even when I find a task difficult	22%	66%	14%	83%

Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Wave 1 (question 10), Wave 2 (question 10)

These types of response are replicated when looking at pupils' confidence about their capabilities to take on a variety of tasks, how confident they felt about their skills, and whether they had a good idea of the skills and qualities employers want; the kinds of jobs they can get in future; and, where they can get careers advice and guidance. Whether BC was able to bolster confidence is a moot point, but what is evident from information provided below is that BC was able to affect pupils' attitudes and perceptions that might make them more confident about their transition into employment.

The types of activity engaged in by pupils

On average, pupils engaging in intensive activities had experience of three types of activity.

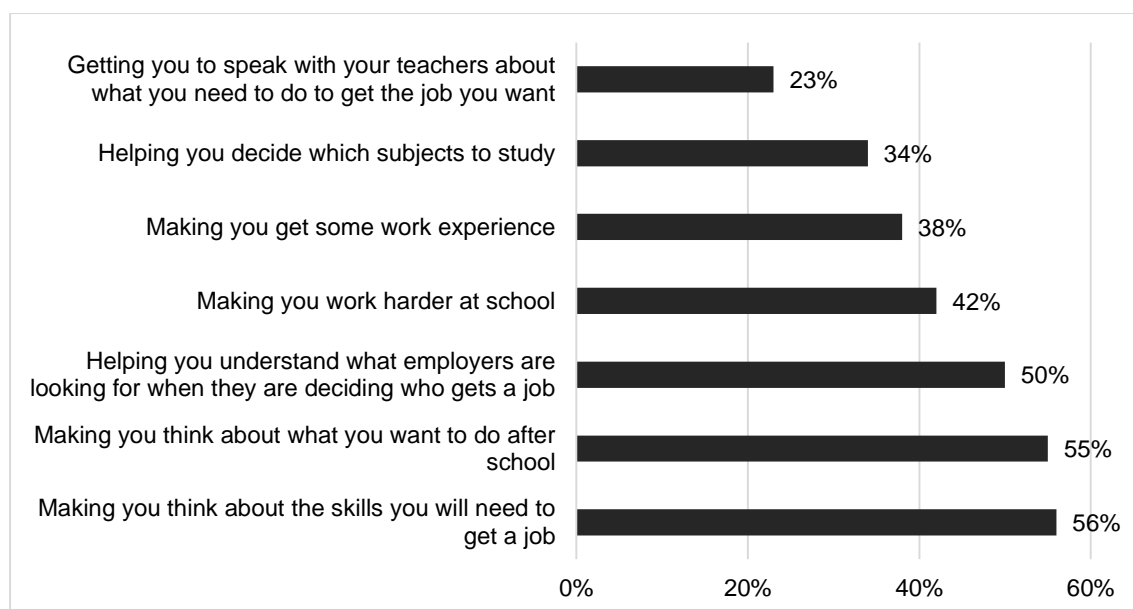
In the second wave of the intensive activities survey, pupils were asked about intensive activities they had engaged in with employers. The most common form of intensive activity reported by students was getting one-to-one advice from a business mentor (45 per cent of all in wave 2), followed by having a work experience placement with a local employer (40 per cent) and undertaking special projects with an employer (28 per cent). Those students who participated in these activities were also asked about how useful the activity had been (in general terms). Nearly 80 per cent of pupils who undertook work experience considered it to be very useful or quite useful and more than 80 per cent of those who did special projects with employers or who received one-to-one advice from a business mentor considered the activity to be useful or very useful.

Table 3.5: Participation in activities and their reported usefulness

	Work Experience	Special Projects	One-to-one Business Mentor
Total number students involved in activity	53	37	60
% of all respondents	40%	28%	45%
Usefulness (as % of all who undertook activity)			
Yes, very useful	45%	38%	43%
Yes, quite useful	34%	46%	38%
No, not very useful	13%	8%	8%
No, not at all useful	2%	3%	0%

Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Wave 2, questions 12 and 13 (Base: all students = 133; students doing activity, as shown)

When asked whether any of these activities were useful in particular ways, students identified a number of useful aspects. Their responses are summarised in Figure 3.1. Students could select multiple useful aspects of the activities. The most commonly chosen answer was that the activity with employers had made students think about the skills needed to get a job (56 per cent) followed by that it had made them think about what they wanted to do after school (55 per cent). Less than 25 per cent of students indicated that the activity with employers was useful because it had prompted them to speak with their teachers about what they need to do to get their desired job (23 per cent).

Figure 3.1: Percentage of all students reporting that a Business Class intensive activity was useful in particular ways

Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Wave 2 (n=133)

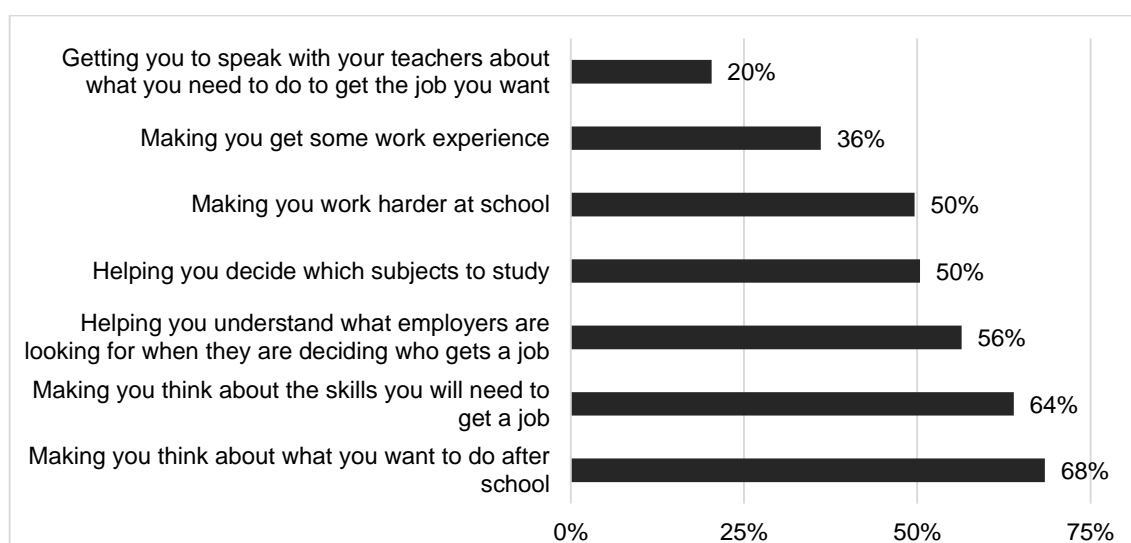
Note: Multiple responses permitted.

As part of being in BC, pupils were also involved in a range of other activities, including:

- going to careers fairs (56 per cent of pupils);
- having careers interviews (44 per cent);
- going to presentations from employers (41 per cent);
- going on visits to local business (39 per cent).

When asked about the usefulness of these other activities, the responses from pupils were similar to the responses relating to the core activities undertaken in BC, with pupils reporting a number of positive impacts (see Figure 3.2). More than half of students felt that the activities had been useful in: making them think about what they wanted to do after school (68 per cent); making them think about the skills they need to get a job (64 per cent); and helping them understand what employers are looking for when they are hiring (56 per cent). This is a particularly important finding given the commentary in Chapter 1 on conditions in the youth labour market. If employers are looking for a good fit between a person and a job when they are recruiting – in what remains a relatively tough youth labour market – then the more pupils are attuned to the qualities that employers are looking for, the better able they will be to not only get any job, but a job that goes some way towards meeting their career aspirations.

Figure 3.2: Percentage of all students reporting that another activity was useful in particular ways

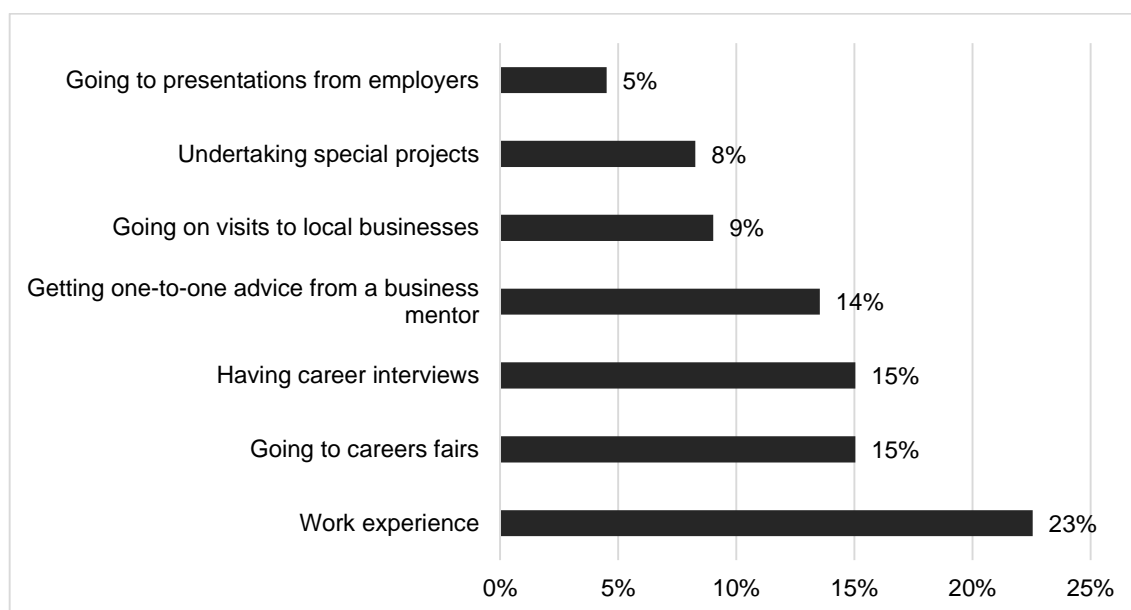


Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Wave 2 (n=133)

Note: Multiple responses permitted.

Pupils were also asked to select only one of the activities they had taken part in as being part of BC as the most useful (see Figure 3.3). Work experience was considered to be the most useful activity by nearly a quarter of students (23 per cent) while going to presentations from employers was considered to be most useful by only five per cent of students. Around 45 per cent of students reported one of the most intensive activities (work experience, special projects or one-to-one advice from a business mentor) to be the most useful activity.

Figure 3.3: Most useful activity undertaken



Source: Intensive Activities Survey, Wave 2 (n=133)

3.4 Non-intensive activities

Non-intensive activities refer to those activities where the degree of engagement is less than in the intensive activities with respect to either the number of engagements pupils had with employers or the actual amount of time spent with the employer. Non-intensive activities tend to be of shorter duration and involved less one-to-one engagement between employer and pupil.

The characteristics of the pupils participating in non-intensive activities are presented below in Table 3.6. The sample is divided between those who were in schools that formed expansion clusters (i.e. those that participated in BC as a consequence of UK Commission funding), and those in enhancement clusters (enhancement partnerships were brokered by BITC prior to the existence of BC. They had been established for at least two years and had been brought into the BC programme for further development). In this analysis, the expansion sample serves as a comparator to the enhancement group. The table shows that there are differences between the two groups. In the enhancement cluster, participants were less likely to be female pupils (39 per cent in enhancement clusters compared with 47 per cent in expansion clusters). It is also apparent that students were more likely to be from the white ethnic group in the expansion clusters and more likely to be older (i.e. more students in years 10 and above compared with the enhancement clusters). So the evidence points to expansion clusters serving a slightly different group from that in the enhancement ones.

Table 3.6: Characteristics of pupils participating in non-intensive activities (% of pupils)

	Enhancement Clusters	Expansion Clusters
Gender		
Male	39%	47%
Female	60%	52%
Ethnic group		
White	49%	69%
Mixed	9%	7%
Asian or Asian British	25%	8%
Black or Black British	7%	9%
Year Group		
Year 7	6%	9%
Year 8	44%	12%
Year 9	23%	24%
Year 10	21%	49%
Year 11	2%	12%
Year 12/13	2%	2%
<i>Base</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>1657</i>

Source: Collaborative (enhancement clusters) and Mid-Tier Mass-engagement (expansion clusters) Surveys

Table 3.7 shows the level of engagement that pupils had with employers on the day when their non-intensive activities took place. It shows a commonality of experience between the two clusters, with just 2 per cent of pupils in each cluster saying that they had had no contact with an employer. It is the case that in the enhancement clusters, pupils were more likely to have contact with more employers (37 per cent of students in enhancement clusters had contact with six or more employers compared to 16 per cent of students in expansion clusters).

Table 3.7: Number of employers that pupils engaged with on the day of their non-intensive activities (% of pupils)

Number of contacts with business people or employers	Enhancement Clusters	Expansion Clusters
None at all	2%	2%
One or two	17%	24%
Three or four	20%	38%
Five or six	21%	18%
More than six	37%	16%
Total	100%	100%
<i>Base</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>1657</i>

Source: Collaborative and Mid-Tier Mass-engagement Survey

The type of contact pupils had with employers was more or less the same between the two types of cluster (see Table 3.8), but there were differences between what activities comprised. In the enhancement clusters, pupils were more likely to have learnt about different job and career opportunities (65 per cent in the enhancement clusters versus 48 per cent in the expansion clusters) and more likely to have practised or learnt about enterprise skills (21 per cent compared with 15 per cent of pupils in expansion clusters). Pupils in enhancement clusters were less likely to have learnt about the skills needed to get a job (21 per cent in the enhancement clusters versus 27 per cent in the expansion clusters) or for any job (e.g. team work, problem solving) (reported by 47 per cent of pupils in enhancement clusters but 53 per cent in expansion clusters).

Table 3.8: Type of contact pupils had with employers and what was obtained from that contact (% of pupils)

	Enhancement Clusters	Expansion Clusters
Which option best describes the contact you had with business people or employers?		
I heard a talk from one or more business people or employers	44%	48%
I had a one-to-one short discussion with one or more business people or employers	37%	27%
I joined in a group discussion with other students and one or more business people or employers	59%	61%
I did not talk to or hear from any business people or employers	4%	3%
Which option best describes what you did today?		
We learnt about different job and career opportunities	65%	48%
We practised or learnt about skills that you need for any job, for example, team work, problem solving, communication skills	47%	53%
We practised or learnt about skills for getting a job, for example, interview skills or C.V. writing	21%	27%
We practised or learnt about enterprise skills (skills for setting up or running a business)	21%	15%
<i>Base</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>1657</i>

Source: Collaborative and Mid-Tier Mass-engagement Survey

Despite some differences between the characteristics of pupils in each type of cluster, and differences in the nature of engagement with employers, the evidence shows that pupils in both were satisfied with the activities in which they engaged. They were able to practise problem solving, develop their communication skills, and use their number skills, etc (see Table 3.9). There are relatively few differences in the experience between pupils in the two types of cluster, except that in the expansion clusters, pupils were less likely to report that they had had an opportunity to practice problem-solving (56 per cent in the expansion clusters saying that they agreed that they practised problem-solving versus 63 per cent in the enhancement clusters) and that they had learnt about something they may want to do in the future (59 per cent in the expansion clusters versus 72 per cent in the enhancement clusters). A higher proportion of pupils in the expansion cluster agreed that they had been able to practise their communication skills (72 per cent compared to 60 per cent in the enhancement clusters).

Table 3.9: Extent to which pupils agree or agree strongly about the extent to which they learnt something from their engagement with employers (% of pupils)

Reports of what was gained from activities by pupils	Enhancement Clusters	Expansion Clusters
I enjoyed the activities today	92%	88%
I learnt something new today	88%	89%
I got to practise working in a team today	74%	73%
I got to practise problem-solving today	63%	56%
I got to practise my communication skills today	60%	72%
I got to practise my number skills today	45%	41%
I had some difficulties during the activity but I was able to overcome them and go on to make a success of what I was doing	60%	60%
By the end of the activity I felt that I understood better what it might be like to work in a particular job or industry	82%	79%
During the day I learnt something about a job from somebody that does that job	84%	82%
I was able to make a good impression upon some of the business people or employers that I talked with	84%	81%
During the day I learnt something about a job that I might consider doing in the future	72%	59%
I did not get as much from the activity as I hoped I would	38%	39%
<i>Base</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>1657</i>

Source: Collaborative and Mid-Tier Mass-engagement Survey

The clusters were also largely similar with respect to the extent that pupils reported that they had learnt something that might help them in the future (see Table 3.10). The most noticeable difference between the two types of cluster here is that a lower share of pupils in the expansion clusters agreed that they had been able to get useful information, such as contact details or specific name of a college programme (60 per cent of pupils agreed) compared to the enhancement clusters (70 per cent).

Table 3.10: Extent to which pupils agree or agree strongly that they had learnt something that might help them in the future (% of pupils)

Pupils views of what activities will help them in future	Enhancement Clusters	Expansion Clusters
The activity has helped me to understand what information, experiences or help I need to advance my thinking about my career	85%	80%
The activity was a positive experience that has encouraged me to think that I can fulfil my career aspirations (do what I want in my career)	82%	78%
The day has made me realise that I need to get some additional skills or experiences to help me to get the career I want	80%	77%
Taking part in the activity today has made me think that I should work harder at school in order to get good grades	79%	75%
During the day I learnt some skills that will help me to get a job in the future, for example, how to write a C.V. or how to present myself at an interview	67%	68%
I was able to get some useful information, for example, some contact details to apply for a job, or the name of a college programme I can research	70%	60%
I would like more opportunities to talk to employers in order to learn more about work and to help me to think more about my future	84%	79%
<i>Base</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>1657</i>

Source: Collaborative and Mid-Tier Mass-engagement Survey

Overall, there is strong evidence from both the expansion and enhancement clusters, that pupils were able to practise and develop the type of skills that are likely to assist young people finding employment and, additionally, that pupils recognised that their engagement with employers would be helpful to them in the future.

3.6 The impact of work experience

The work experience survey provides further views on students' experiences of having placements with employers. Prior to going on the work experience placement, more than half (55 per cent) of students had at least some definite ideas about their future career (some had discussed these with others whilst most did not know much about the job they were considering) (see Table 3.11).

Table 3.11: Students' views about careers prior to going on work experience placement

How far had you got in terms of thinking about your future career <i>before</i> you went on your placement?	n	%
I had not thought much about my career	1	1%
I had some possible ideas but was still very unsure	40	43%
I had some definite ideas but still did not know much about these jobs	27	29%
I had definite ideas and I had discussed them with others or looked into them	24	26%
Missing / invalid	1	1%
Total	93	100%

Source: Work Experience Student Survey, n=93, question Q8a

Most work experience placements (82 per cent) had involved the student being in the workplace for five consecutive days whilst others had spent more than five days in the workplace - for some these were consecutive days (12 per cent) whilst for others they had been spread out over a number of weeks (5 per cent).

Table 3.12 summarises students' responses about their enjoyment of and satisfaction with their work experience placement. Of the 93 respondents who went on work experience placements, more than half (52 per cent) found the placement 'very enjoyable' and 89 per cent found it at least 'mostly enjoyable'. Similarly, when asked about their satisfaction with their placement, 91 per cent of students had been 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

Table 3.12: Students' levels of enjoyment and satisfaction with their work experience placement

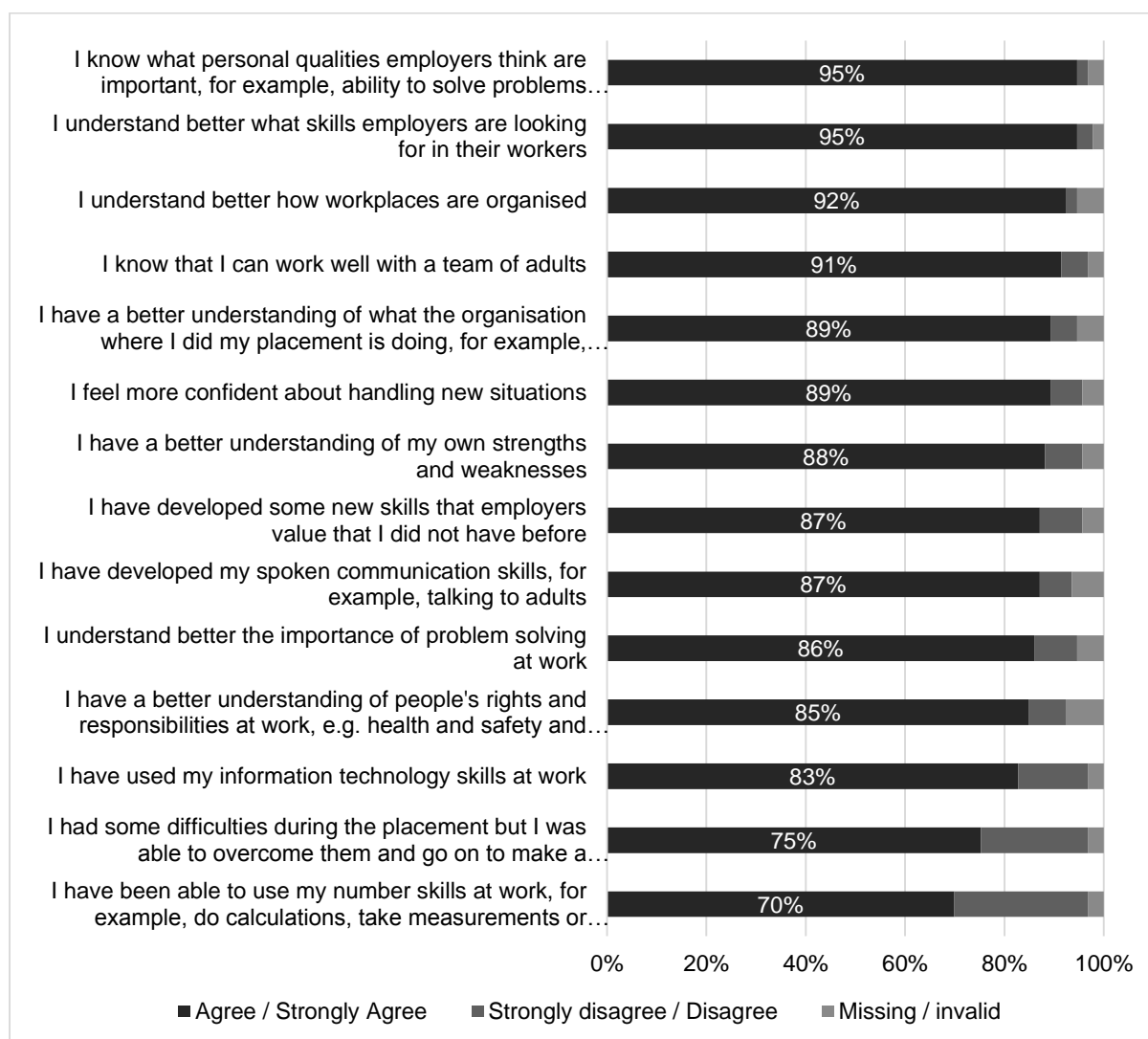
	n	%
Enjoyment of work experience placement		
Not enjoyable	1	1%
Some enjoyment	10	11%
Mostly enjoyable	34	37%
Very enjoyable	48	52%
Total	93	100%
Satisfaction with work experience placement		
Dissatisfied	1	1%
Partly satisfied	7	8%
Satisfied	31	33%
Very satisfied	54	58%
Total	93	100%

Source: Work Experience Student Survey, n=93, question questions 11 and 12.

Overall, more than three-quarters (76 per cent) of students agreed or strongly agreed that the placement they were offered matched their career interests however, more than a third (34 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed that they would not have chosen their placement but it was the best one available for them. More than 60 per cent of students had an interview with someone at their placement prior to starting their placement. In the majority of cases, students agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of what their placement would entail prior to beginning (74 per cent) and that the school had provided information in advance about how to behave whilst on placement (68 per cent). The majority of students reported that other workers at their placement had found time to explain things to them (91 per cent agreed or strongly agreed) and that other workers were supportive and encouraging (91 per cent). More than 80 per cent of students had a meeting with their employer at the end of the placement in which they were provided with feedback on their performance during the placement. When reflecting on their own performance and the activities they undertook whilst on placement, the majority of students agreed that they had: made a good impression in the workplace, showed a positive attitude to work, took on new tasks, showed initiative, and carried out a variety of jobs. They had also talked to other workers about the job and 87 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that during their placement they had found out about what they need to do to get a job with their work experience employer.

Figure 3.4 shows the level of agreement amongst students about various experiences and benefits they had whilst on work placements. As a result of going on the placement, many students felt that they had gained or been able to practice various skills and had gained better understanding of work-related issues. Amongst the most common answers here were that after the placement, students knew what personal qualities employers think are important and they understood better the skills employers look for in their workers. The highest level of disagreement related to the use of number skills at work (27 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had been able to use these skills on their placement).

Figure 3.4: Students' level of agreement with what they experienced and developed whilst on work experience placements with employers

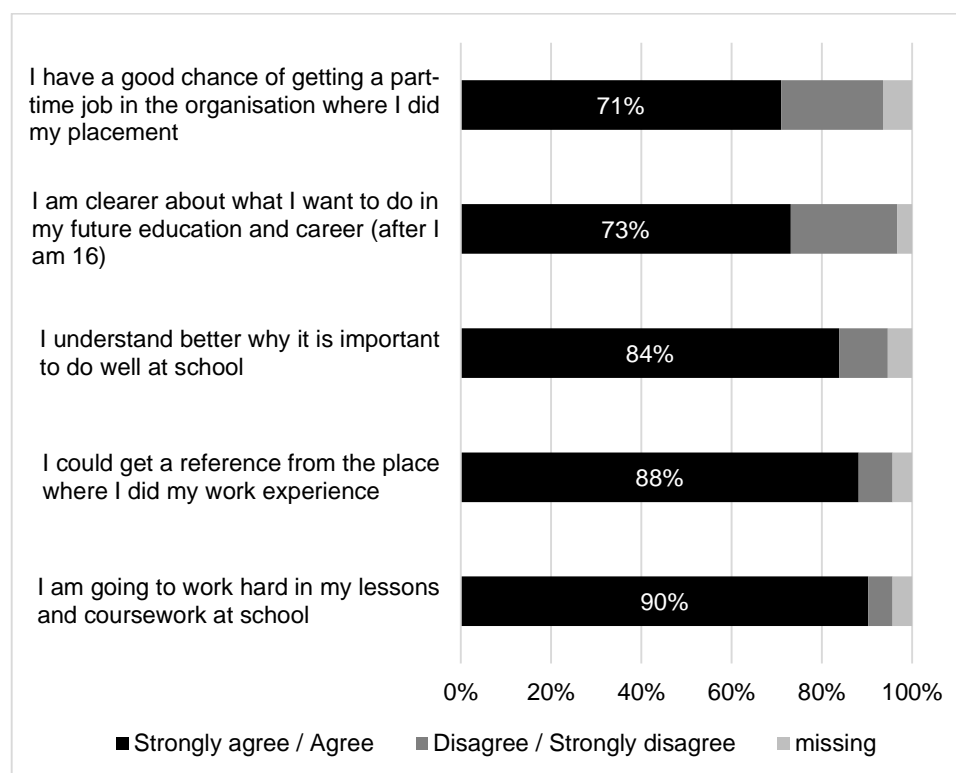


Source: Work Experience Student Survey, n=93

Figure 3.5 summarises how students felt their work experience placement had affected their thinking about their futures in terms of careers and school. The most commonly agreed upon effect was that students intended to work hard in their lessons and coursework at school (90 per cent of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement). Just under three-quarters of students agreed or strongly agreed that after their placement they were clearer about what they wanted to do in their future education and career (73 per cent) and that they had a good chance of getting a part-time job with their placement employer (71 per cent).³⁵

³⁵ For a comparison with other work experience programmes see: Mann, A. and J. Dawkins (2014) *Employer Engagement in Education: Literature Review*. London: Education and Employers Task Force / CfBT Trust

Figure 3.5: Students' views on how work experience affected their thoughts about future careers and school



Source: Work Experience Student Survey, n=93

Overall, as some of the verbatim comments illustrate below, pupils very much valued work experience with few negative comments recorded.

'Great work experience, would love to return some day in the future.'

'I enjoyed parts of my work experience because I was learning new skills.'

'I found that work experience can teach you the qualities to become more independent and co-operate clearly with other employees, it also helps you feel what a working atmosphere is like, which would make me feel more confident in future placements.'

'I have thoroughly enjoyed work experience and feel it is a valuable experience in order to understand the 'world of work'. I now have a better understanding of many different aspects of a business which I was not aware of before.'

'I like the work experience it was a fun experience and the manager said that I did very well and that if I needed it she would give me a good review for a job application. If I needed it, she told me that I could have a great future in working or owning a café. She also said I am a hard worker and she was going to speak to her boss to see if I could get a part time job there after school.'

'I thoroughly enjoyed my work experience and I would strongly recommend it to anyone who wants to know what it is like to be in the world of work and develop new skills. It was amazing and I hope to come back.'

'I very much enjoyed working in the customer service department alongside the other employees. All of them were very friendly and were all happy to answer any questions I had.'

‘My work experience really helped me to make a definite decision on what I want to do in the future; I already knew I wanted to work with medicine but after doing my work experience in the Royal Infirmary it has made that decision even clearer in my head.’

The findings can be compared to the largest existing UK survey of teenage views of work experience conducted in 2008 that asked the set of questions (see Table 3.12). The 2008 survey was a sample of 15,000 pupils who completed an online questionnaire. Whilst it is difficult to be sure that the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the two surveys are broadly the same, it provides the opportunity to see how work experience under BC compares with that provided under other programmes.

In general, if one looks at the percentage of pupils saying that they ‘strongly agree’ plus ‘agree’ there is little difference between the two surveys. Because of small sizes in the BC survey of work experience caution is required in looking at the differences between those who ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’. With that caution in mind, the results indicate that:

- Slightly more pupils in BC found work experience ‘very enjoyable’ compared with the DCSF survey;³⁶
- BC pupils were also slightly more likely to say that they were ‘very satisfied’ with their work experience.
- On all the other indicators, pupils in the DCSF survey were slightly more likely to give a higher rating than the BC ones to statements about what work experience had delivered to them. The exceptions to this were: ‘showing a positive attitude at work’, ‘understanding problem solving at work’, ‘working hard in my lessons and coursework at school’ where BC pupils gave a higher rating.
- In most instances, differences between the two surveys are small. Where there were bigger differences with relatively more positive responses given by pupils in the DCSF survey, were those relating to: ‘developing my spoken communication skills’, ‘I know that I can work well with a team of adults’, and ‘being clearer about what I want to do in my future education and career (after I am 16)’.
- Similarly, there was a relatively large difference between the percentage of BC pupils strongly agreeing that as a consequence of work experience ‘I am going to work hard in my lessons and coursework at school’ (60 per cent) compared with the DCSF survey (42 per cent).

Perhaps the principal finding from Table 3.13 is that there is not much difference between the results reported by the two surveys.

³⁶ <http://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/student-perceptions-of-work-experience-iebedcsf.pdf>

Table 3.13: Comparison of work experience under Business Class (2014) compared with DCFS survey of work experience (2008)

%	Business Class Work Experience Survey (n=93)			Impact Survey Student Responses (DCSF, 2007/08) (n=15,025)		
	Very enjoyable	Mostly enjoyable	Very / mostly enjoyable	Very enjoyable	Mostly enjoyable	Very / mostly enjoyable
Enjoyment of work experience placement	52	37	88	49	31	80
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied / Satisfied	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Very satisfied / Quite satisfied
Satisfaction with work experience placement	58	33	91	50	30	80
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree / Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree / Agree
I understand better what skills employers are looking for in their workers	32	62	95	34	60	94
I know what personal qualities employers think are important, for example, ability to solve problems and to manage one's own time	29	66	95	37	57	94
Carry out tasks or offer to do things without being asked to (show my initiative)	34	57	91	45	48	93
I have developed some new skills that employers value that I did not have before	24	63	87	42	45	87
I have developed my spoken communication skills, for example, talking to adults	38	49	87	51	42	93
I know that I can work well with a team of adults	39	53	91	54	41	95
Show a positive attitude at work	67	31	98	60	37	97
I feel more confident about handling new situations	43	46	89	45	48	93
I have a better understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses	27	61	88	35	53	88
I understand better the importance of problem solving at work	31	55	86	29	53	82
I understand better why it is important to do well at school	47	37	84	50	40	90
I am going to work hard in my lessons and coursework at school	60	30	90	42	47	89
I understand better how workplaces are organised	38	55	92	41	51	92
I have a better understanding of people's rights and responsibilities at work, e.g. health and safety and equal opportunities	33	52	85	40	50	90
I am clearer about what I want to do in my future education and career (after I am 16)	25	48	73	37	38	75

Source: Work Experience Student Survey, n=93 (Business Class);
<http://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/student-perceptions-of-work-experience-iebedcsf.pdf> (DCSF)

3.7 The pupil voice

A number of semi-structured interviews were carried out with pupils that had participated in both intensive and non-intensive activities. A number of features emerged from the group discussions with pupils (mainly from Years 8 and 9):

- enterprise days were much enjoyed by pupils, especially those activities where there was role playing with respect to running a business, or engaging in Dragon's Den type activities where the pupils need to persuade people to invest in their ideas;
- careers fairs were thought useful, but several pupils said they were pitched at too general a level such that it was difficult to get much from them that might be of use;
- pupils very much welcomed hearing the views of employers. In particular, they valued hearing about how employees themselves had developed their careers and how it might be possible for the pupils to get into that line of work. It was important to hear this from the employee volunteers.

To some extent, the types of activity mentioned above involve light touch involvement by the volunteers from the schools' partner employers. Where the students were particularly enthusiastic was with reference to more intensive employer engagement. In particular, the following were considered important:

- visits to employers were very much welcomed. For some pupils this was a real eye-opener in that it demonstrated the range of jobs that might be available. For example, a large employer near one school invited pupils to visit its headquarters and the pupils were struck by two things:
 - i. the attractiveness of working in a modern corporate workplace, that was on their doorstep, immediately struck home. They previously had little knowledge that the office complex was near their homes or if they did that it might be a possible job destination for them. As the next point demonstrates it immediately became apparent that there might well be a place for them;
 - ii. the range of jobs available in that workplace was also much wider than pupils had initially expected such that they could see that there might be a place for them in such a workplace despite the fact that they wanted to work in engineering or hospitality rather than administration and finance, because jobs in the former were available in the corporate HQ. This latter point was also in evidence where one group of pupils had visited a large hospital. Whereas previously they thought most NHS jobs were clinical ones (doctors and nurses) they were made aware of the wide variety of jobs available in the NHS many of which were of interest to those who had little interest in clinical roles;
- as a consequence of the above, some pupils said that they had reconsidered what they might want to do after finishing education such that it had contributed to broadening their career horizons;
- pupils also valued highly their one-to-one engagement with employer's volunteers. Mock interviews were particularly valued because of the feedback that the pupil received afterwards from the employer's volunteer. This was the type of information pupils valued because it told them exactly what they needed to know if they were to successfully negotiate the interview stage when applying for a job;

- pupils also were able to see how employers dealt with issues such as lateness and use of bad language, such that they could see that such behaviour might not be as acceptable as they previously thought.

Overall, pupils seemed to derive much from their involvement in BC, but the closer the contact and the more intensive the contact with the employer and their volunteers, the more they obtained from BC.

3.8 Conclusion

Given research literature, it is reasonable to expect BC to have had a variety of effects and impacts on pupils (and also on schools and employers), even if directly measuring and quantifying these outcomes has proven difficult in the present study. The evidence provided above indicates that pupils experienced a variety of effects from taking part in BC. The experiences of pupils reveal that the activities provided to them through BC affected various factors that will, in all likelihood, affect their later experiences in the labour market. Through BC, pupils were provided with access to opportunities to engage with employers and to engage in employability-related activities that they would likely not have encountered outside of the programme.

Across the more intensive types of activities in which students participated, there was a high degree of agreement that participation had made students think more about the skills they will need to get a job, what they would like to do once they completed school, and develop a better understanding of what employers are looking for when recruiting. These results suggest that the BC intensive activities (and others) had had an impact on pupils' thinking about their future careers and also about how they could get to their desired position. Pupils found participation in work experience placements to be the most useful activity. In the focus group discussions, a number of students reiterated this, saying that the placements had provided them with practical experience of what a particular job or industry entailed, a better understanding of the opportunities for work which may be available with a particular employer, and understanding of the expectations that employers have of their employees. Activities where students were less directly engaged with employers, such as careers fairs and employer talks, were also enjoyed and found useful by pupils but it was less obvious the impacts that these non-intensive activities had on pupils' attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Intensive activities were also seen (from both pupils' and teachers' perspectives) to be more suitable when trying to engage less enthusiastic students about employment and careers. Such pupils - who sometimes had more difficulty with behaviour and performance in school - were thought to gain from being able to engage with employers on an individual basis. Learning about employer volunteers' own education and careers paths, which were not always straight routes through education and into the labour market and into their current career, was also valued by many pupils (including many harder to engage pupils). Combining this type of information delivered by employee volunteers with visits to workplaces helped pupils to think more about the types of jobs they would like to have (including jobs they had not before heard of) and how they could get there. There was a sense of horizon-broadening for a number of pupils.

The importance of engagement between pupils and employers being intensive and individualised is evident in all of the various data (quantitative and qualitative) collected in this study. Mock interviews were considered helpful because they allowed pupils to practice and acquire communication skills and to understand the expectations of employers in the

recruitment process. The feedback from these mock interviews also highlighted the additional skills they may need in future. Similarly, through work experience, students received useful feedback from employers and colleagues about the job itself and about the employers' expectations and the appropriate behaviour in the workplace. Involvement in such activities then can be seen to have gone at least some way in helping to prepare pupils for future employment and ensuring they are work-ready.

At the beginning of the research, alignment was defined narrowly with respect to pursuing education appropriate to the broad entry qualifications required to gain access to certain occupations in order to allow for a quantified assessment to be made of impact. In practice, the labour market tends of course to be more flexible than such a model permits. In many respects, the concept of alignment needs to be broadened so that more importance is placed on considering how pupils can be better informed about the types of skills that employers value and it is a challenge to researchers to improve understanding of a wider range of quantified teenage indicators of likely adult employment success. For certain occupations, this will mean acquiring qualifications at a certain level in specific subjects, but for many jobs, this will not be so and even if necessary, there may be plenty of opportunity to acquire those qualifications later on. Arguably, much more important is opening pupils' eyes to the opportunities that exist in their local labour markets and how they might acquire those jobs. As outlined above in some detail, pupils recognised that BC, through both intensive and non-intensive activities, developed their skills and made them aware of what employers were looking for when they were recruiting. It was very much apparent in the semi-structured interviews with pupils that they valued hearing messages about how to get into a certain line of work, and what to expect from it, from people either doing those jobs or who worked for organisations where those jobs were to be found. This is where BC added value. It allowed pupils to hear about different types of jobs, in many instances from the horse's mouth – in other words, from people doing those jobs. So if one places the alignment issue to one side and focuses more on attuning pupils to the opportunities available in the local jobs market and what is required to get those jobs, then BC is seen to be effective.

4. The Employer and School Perspectives

4.1 Introduction

In order for BC to be successful, it requires a partnership to be developed between schools, employers, the volunteers from the employers that partner with schools, and pupils. All are important elements of the partnership. The previous chapter considered the benefits the pupils derived from BC, this chapter considers the rationale for employers, volunteers from those employers, and schools to engage in BC. It should be noted that the primary purpose of this evaluation was the impact on pupils. The main findings relating to employers (and their employee volunteers) and schools are listed below.

Overall findings

- The cluster approach used within BC provides added benefits which other types of engagement between schools and employers might not bring about, such as the opportunity for schools and employers to share their experiences and learning from their involvement, and ensuring a shared commitment and a common agenda aiming to improve outcomes for their pupils.
- As well as the impact of clusters, other factors such as working with a single employer and the flexibility in the programme were important, allowing the programme to be tailored to local labour market conditions and the specific needs of pupils.

Impact on schools

- The primary purpose of this research was not to investigate the wider impact on schools, which is being evaluated in additional research commissioned by BITC. This shows schools able to report an impact on leadership and governance, management skills and wider knowledge among teaching staff of the opportunities for pupils in the future. This research also highlights that links with employers are beneficial.

The employer's role

- Employers engage in Business Class because it affords them the opportunity to demonstrate their responsibility, develop the skills of employee volunteers, communicate future job opportunities and develop employability and core skills in their future workforce.
- BC is dependent upon the volunteers from employers (employee volunteers) being willing to engage with schools and young people, and the evidence suggests that employee volunteers participated because they found it beneficial to do so, particularly for developing communication and negotiation skills.
- Some employers commented that the schools they were working with were potentially ones that they would recruit from in the future. So it was beneficial to liaise with the schools and their pupils so that they could demonstrate the career opportunities employers provided.
- Some companies also mentioned that they wanted to be able to measure the benefits obtained from their engagement in a programme such as BC, and that one of the attractions of participating in the programme was that it was run by a national organisation that could provide evidence that what was being delivered was effective.

The evidence suggests that all parties were able to derive benefits from being involved in BC. Of course, those interviewed were those who continued to be involved in BC; evidence was not available from those who no longer participated in BC. It was mentioned by schools that some employers had dropped out due to their not being sufficient alignment between employer and school, and some employers had dropped out because business conditions were such that they could no longer afford the resource necessary to participate in BC. But these were said to be exceptions and, for the most part, strong relationships had been developed between employer, employee volunteers and schools.

4.2 The school experience

It is important to consider what the school obtains from its involvement in BC over and above any impact on the work readiness of its pupils. By looking at the initial expectations of schools – as explained by their head teachers / school champions of BC – and comparing this with their views subsequent to participating in BC, some key insights are provided.

As part of the assessment, telephone interviews were conducted - in December 2013 and January 2014 - with senior members of 10 schools that joined BC in the 2013/14 academic year. These interviews aimed to establish the baseline level of employer engagement activities at each of the participating schools in the academic year preceding their involvement in BC. To evaluate the additionality that BC may provide for the schools involved, follow up interviews were conducted some 18 months later with seven of the original ten baseline schools.³⁷ In both rounds of interviews, schools were asked to field a member of staff well placed to comment on institutional engagement with BC and wider employer engagement activities undertaken by their school. In many, but not all cases, the same person, typically a head of careers or a member of the senior management team, was interviewed. The interviews that took place in 2015 followed much of the same structure as the first interviews in order to allow direct comparisons to be made. Each school gave information relating to the different types of work-related activities they engaged with, the proportion of pupils who were involved and the perceived value of these activities. Some respondents did not feel able to answer every question asked. The remainder of this section presents the results of this study by comparing data from both sets of interviews at each of the seven schools to establish what, if any, changes have occurred relating to employer engagement in education. This second round of interviews concluded with a series of questions concerning perceived value of school engagement with BC.

The data are drawn from a small sample of schools and the findings should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive. But they do provide interesting insights into change over the duration of the BC intervention. The results and analysis are organised according to each section of the interview questionnaire. Where possible, comparisons between the baseline interview data and concluding interview data are made. Consequently, baseline averages have been calculated using only the schools that participated in both baseline and concluding interviews for each section of the questionnaire.

³⁷ One of the ten original schools had closed by time of second interviews and two, in spite of repeated approaches, refused to engage with researchers.

Work-related activities

This section was designed to discover the extent and range of the different employer engagement activities at each institution. Participants were asked to indicate which activities listed were used to engage pupils in their school.

- Careers fairs / talks / events
- Long enterprise competitions (weeks or months)
- Short enterprise competitions (weeks or months)
- Work experience or job shadowing (at least three days)
- Mentoring
- Mock interviews
- CV workshops
- Workplace visits
- Job shadowing (two days or less)
- Classroom or school talks from employers

The average number of activities reported by the schools in the second round of interviews was around eight (with numbers ranging from six to 10), compared with a baseline figure of around six and a half, indicating that schools became more involved in work-related activities after their involvement with BC. Five of the schools reported increases in their activities, one reported a slight decrease, and one no change in the number of activities since the start of BC.

Census

The data in this section which records interviewees' assessments of pupil participation across a range of seven typical employer engagement activities by year group. These activities were:

1. Careers fairs / talks / events
2. Long enterprise competitions (weeks or months)
3. Short enterprise competitions (weeks or months)
4. Work experience or job shadowing (at least three days)
5. Mentoring
6. Mock interviews
7. Workplace visits

The information presented are the estimations provided by interviewees. Furthermore, the data are somewhat incomplete as one school does not have Years 7 and 8, three schools do not have a sixth form and one participant felt unable to complete the section at all. Concurrent with the baseline findings, the majority of the activities listed were not introduced to pupils until Year 10. For Years 7 and 8 schools tended to focus their activities around careers events in which a high proportion of the year group were involved.

The frequency of activities in Year 9 also increased from Years 7 and 8 and all but one of the schools that answered said they provided careers events for a high proportion of Year 9 pupils. Workplace visits and enterprise competitions were also more widespread from Year 9. All schools provided careers events for Year 10 students with high levels of involvement across the sample. Considering all the schools that answered this section, Year 10 was the year group that took part in the most activities, a finding which is also consistent with the baseline data. For Year 11, four out of five of the responding participants said their school provided careers events and mock interviews/ CV workshops, generally reaching a large part of the year group. Out of the four schools with a sixth form the average number of activities exhibited no change between baseline and conclusion.

Working with employers

This question aimed to establish whether the schools felt they were able to find employers which could offer support which suited the needs of their pupils. The interviewees were required to indicate their answer on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The mean answer given in the concluding interviews was seven which demonstrated an increase from the mean of five in the baseline interviews prior to BC. Four out of the six schools that provided answers at both baseline and concluding stages indicated an increase in their ability to find appropriate employer relationships. The remaining two schools reported slight decreases in their ability to find well matched employers.

Financial investment

Four out of the six interviewees who completed this section at project conclusion specified that they did not pay another organisation to facilitate access to employer resources. With regard to BC, three of five schools that answered stated that they had started to pay £2,000 for the next year of the programme which they all believed to be a reasonable price. The remaining two schools specified that they would not pay anything for BC, one because they could not afford it and the other because they did not believe it was worth paying for.

Staff-time commitment

Participants were asked to estimate how demanding in terms of time it was for staff members to engage with employers through Business Class on a scale of 1 (not demanding at all) to 10 (very demanding). The analysis of the interview data reveals that there is an overall decrease in the estimated time commitment required by each of the schools since their involvement with Business Class. Average scores relating to the *senior leadership team* decreased from five in the baseline study to four in the concluding interviews. When concerned with *staff with specific careers related responsibilities* the average reduced from six (baseline) to five (conclusion) and the scores relating to *teachers in general* again showed a decrease from four (baseline) to three (conclusion).

Did Business Class help achieve ambitions?

Interviews explored whether respondents believed that BC had helped them to achieve the work related learning and careers goals they outlined in the baseline interviews. Participants were reminded of the ambitions which they had in mind themselves at the beginning of the programme. Six of the seven schools stated that they either agreed (2) or strongly agreed (4) that BC had helped achieve their ambitions, whilst one school strongly disagreed. Qualitative data was also collected in this section to provide further insight into the answers given. The majority of schools gave answers that suggested BC has helped them to achieve their ambitions. Those schools that answered positively mentioned the 'massive benefit (of Business Class) to our pupils' and how the programme provided a useful framework that "made employer engagement more prominent on the agenda". The school that strongly disagree in its response spoke of an "unwillingness on the part of businesses to work with schools" which saw the support fade out after the first year.

Number of different employers worked with

In terms of the total number of employers each school engaged with, four out of six schools described a decrease since joining BC. Of the remaining two schools, one experienced an increase and the other had no change. Five of six schools reported some new employer relationships which emerged since their involvement in Business Class. Overall the evidence indicates that the average number of employers engaged with BC decreased by around a half (from around 60 to around 30). All of the schools involved reported a decrease in the number of SMEs they worked with when compared to the baseline results. As with the baseline study, in the concluding interviews schools were found to be more likely to work with SMEs than with large businesses. Five of the six participants noted an increase in the number of large employers they worked with when compared with the baseline results.

Experience of other organisations

Three of seven schools reported an increase in the number of additional organisations engaged with since their involvement with Business Class. The evidence indicates that they thought some of these other organisations better met the needs of pupils than BC; but this is based on a very small number of observations.

Concluding thoughts

The final section sought to uncover the participants' general attitudes towards BC by asking them to indicate, on a scale of 1 (disagree strongly) to 10 (agree strongly), the extent to which they agree with four statements:

1. Because of our relationship with BC our pupils engaged more extensively with employers
2. Because of our relationship with BC the needs of our pupils have been better met in their engagements with employers
3. I would recommend other schools get involved in BC;
4. I believe that involvement in BC will help my pupils do better in the job market

The results all point to, on average, to respondents agreeing with these statements.

One school, at the point it initially engaged in BC, said that it wanted to achieve a number of goals from its participation, including:

- being able to manage work experience more effectively. In the past, it had spent substantial resources cold calling employers to see if they would offer pupils a placement;
- developing links with employers so that some of the school's pupils would go on to obtain Apprenticeships and jobs and, more generally, develop the employability skills of pupils so that they could get jobs anywhere;
- persuading pupils that the school was trying to make them more employable (given its emphasis on punctuality, putting one's self across positively, etc.) and, in doing so, make school a lot more relevant to pupils.

When asked subsequently whether the school agreed that participation in BC had helped it achieve these ambitions, the school responded that it strongly agreed that it had done so. As the headteacher noted:

“Business Class has helped make employer engagement more prominent on the agenda of both students and staff”

“It has brought about positive changes which we will continue with and do more of in the future”

Another school representative simply commented: “The impact of Business Class has been of massive benefit to our pupils” and that it had “... made us look at the importance of engaging with industries and employers in a new light”. Another school commented that: “Without Business Class we would not cease any of our current activities around employer engagement in education. However, Business Class does provide a useful framework and focus through which our school can engage with employers and in that sense it does provide additional value”.

Another school said its ambitions at the start of its involvement in BC were to:

- bring about greater community involvement so that the school was more embedded in the community and had a better external image;
- have a more realistic and valid curriculum for pupils;
- improve knowledge amongst pupils about what it is like to do a job, including the norms and expectations of behaviour in the workplace and why bad habits, such as being late, are unacceptable; and
- develop a more well-established relationship with business that touches on other areas of the school curriculum.

Again the programme was able to assist with all of these. As the head teacher commented:

“Business class has been great. It has really sparked off interesting discussions and changes with regard to employer engagement which are beneficial for our students”

“It has given us a complete shift in emphasis in what we think is important. We think more deeply about how to embed employer engagement into the curriculum and build relationships with employers”

As well as helping schools achieve their more strategic ambitions, BC could also assist in more practical ways, such as providing an additional resource to assist with, for example, helping children to read. The employee volunteer could sometimes provide the one-to-one assistance, or via small groups, that the school may struggle to resource.

Schools pointed out that for programmes such as BC to work, time is required for the relationship to develop between employer and school. Effective working arrangements take time to develop. This is where support from a national organisation, alongside the cluster meetings, can be instrumental in ensuring that relationships develop and do not fall at the first hurdle.

4.3 The employer rationale for participating in Business Class

As noted above, employers became involved in BC because it afforded them an opportunity to:

1. demonstrate their corporate social responsibility;
2. develop the skills of their employees who became BC employee volunteers; and
3. communicate to pupils the job opportunities that were likely to arise in the future in their organisation, or ones like them in the same sector.

Interviews which took place with employers in five cluster meetings provide information about the employers' rationales for engagement. Corporate social responsibility was an important goal many larger organisations said they needed to fulfil. They were conscious that they had a responsibility to their local communities, but they also mentioned that being able to demonstrate one's corporate social responsibility could be important when tendering for public sector contracts. But it would be cynical indeed to see this as the only motivation for participating in BC. Employers could point to several benefits which their employee volunteers gained, including:

- developing the skills of young employees. Younger employees, for example, may have to wait several years before they reach a position where they are managing significant numbers of other employees. BC gives them an opportunity to manage young people on, for example, company visits, or in making presentations to them. In this way, BC was able to develop their presentation skills;
- it was mentioned by several employers that when dealing with young people on, for example, visits to the company, it was important to plan these in detail to stop the pupils becoming bored and potentially unruly. Hence, it helped to develop younger employees' planning skills;
- it was also noted that employees who had participated in BC returned to work more motivated. Participating in BC in some way enthuses employees which has a positive pay-off on their overall performance.

Employers also saw schools as containing their future workforces. Accordingly, there was a need to:

- make pupils aware that their organisation existed and there were likely to be a range of jobs there in the future; and
- communicate to pupils what they expected of future employees. One employer said that "Kids need to be exposed to local employers and employers need to see potential

employees". In this way pupils can see what employers want, but employers need to be able to understand the motivations of young people too if they are to communicate effectively with them.

One employer had arranged mock interviews for pupils. This was time consuming but the employer recognised that in the near future, because of the age structure of its workforce, it would need to start recruiting young people in earnest. By hosting the mock interviews, its own employees were able to obtain practice in interviewing young people.

Several employers reported that it required a substantial time commitment to fully engage with BC. For those that continued to do so, they could point to a range of business benefits alongside fulfilling their commitment to offer something of social value to the communities in which they operated. Some companies also mentioned that they wanted to be able to measure the benefits obtained from their engagement in a programme such as BC, and that one of the attractions of participating in the programme was that it was run by a national organisation that could provide evidence that what was being delivered was effective.

4.4 The views of employee volunteers

The survey of employee volunteers provides a detailed picture of the experiences of this group. The majority of respondents to the survey (84 per cent) were from large employers with more than 250 employees. A further 10 per cent were from companies with 50 to 250 employees. Only 6 per cent had less than 50 employees.

When asked on how many separate occasions they had volunteered through BC in the past year, more than two-thirds (76 per cent) indicated that they had done so on one or two occasions (see Table 4.1). Only 14 per cent had volunteered three or more times in the past 12 months. A number of employee volunteers had volunteered with schools outside of their involvement in BC. Some had done so through other programmes with BITC (14 per cent), other broker organisations (21 per cent), or through direct contact with schools (26 per cent); 44 per cent indicated that they had not volunteered with schools before Business Class.

Most of the BC activities described by employee volunteers had taken place on either school premises (61 per cent) or employer premises (33 per cent). The majority of volunteering activities had lasted a half day or less (70 per cent). Only five per cent of employers reported that their most recent volunteering activity had been for more than one day, for example, mentoring student(s) over a term. The most common type of activities in which volunteers participated were focused on:

- careers education or advice (30 per cent);
- skills development related to gaining employment (30 per cent); and
- developing employability skills (20 per cent).

Least common was mentoring or supporting one student or group of students over a number of sessions with focus on numeracy, literacy, etc. (4 per cent).

Table 4.1: Focus of most recent Business Class activity in which employees volunteered

Focus of most recent Business Class activity	Count	%
Careers education or advice, e.g. a careers talk or careers fair	96	30%
Enterprise education or business skills: e.g. a Dragons' Den event or enterprise competition	31	10%
Skills development related to gaining employment, for example, practice interviews, support for writing C.V.	96	30%
Developing employability skills, for example, problem solving, team work, communication	64	20%
Mentoring or supporting one student or a group of students over a number of sessions with a focus on numeracy, literacy,	12	4%
Other	7	2%
Missing / invalid	9	3%
Total	315	100%

Source: Employee Volunteer Survey, n=315

The format of activities involved different types of interaction between the volunteer and pupils. Table 4.2 shows the percentage of employee volunteers who took part in activities with different formats (note that respondents could select more than one format of activity) depending on the focus of the activity (e.g. careers advice, skills development, etc.). Most employer volunteers had taken part in an interactive discussion with an individual or small group of pupils that lasted between five and 20 minutes (47 per cent of employers). This format was most common for activities that focused on enterprise education or business skills (58 per cent of employers), and developing employability skills (55 per cent). Least common were activities where the employer volunteer gave a talk to a large group of pupils (i.e. more than 20 pupils).

Table 4.2: Type of interaction between employer volunteer and pupils in Business Class activities

Format of activity	Focus of activity				
	Careers education or advice	Enterprise education or business skills	Skills development related to gaining employment	Developing employability skills	Any (excluding Mentoring or Other)
Talk to a small group of students (less than 20)	49%	48%	31%	42%	41%
Talk to a large group of students (more than 20)	16%	13%	9%	9%	12%
One or more one-to-one conversations with individual students that lasted for a few minutes (up to five minutes)	34%	35%	34%	28%	33%
Interactive discussion with a small group of students that lasted for a few minutes (up to 5 minutes)	42%	48%	22%	42%	36%
Interactive discussion with an individual or a small group of students (less than 20) that lasted for longer than 5 minutes	40%	58%	46%	55%	47%
Other	2%	3%	5%	11%	5%
<i>Base</i>	96	31	96	64	287

Source: Employee Volunteer Survey, n=315

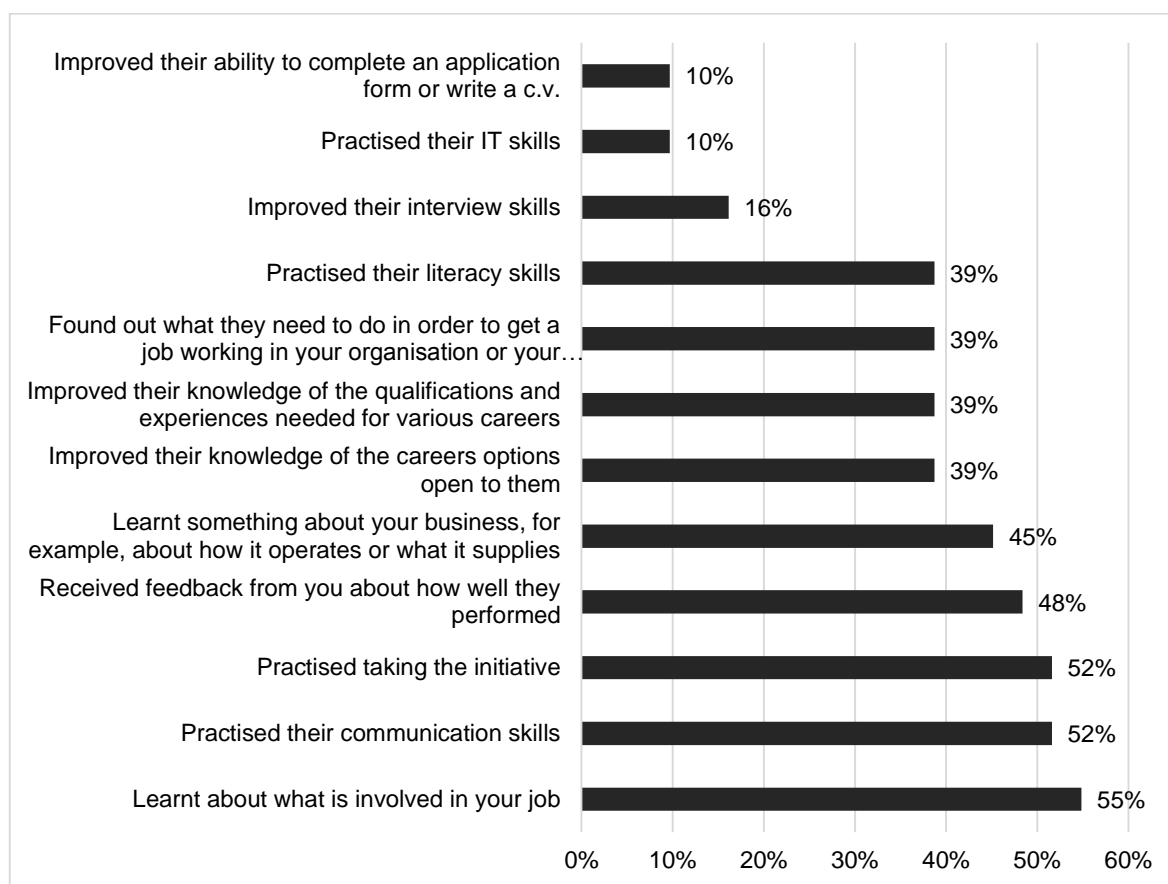
Note: Base includes all employee volunteers who reported taking part in the particular activity; multiple responses were permitted so columns do not total to 100%.

Of those employees that had volunteered in activities focused on enterprise education or business skills, more than half thought that pupils had probably or definitely benefitted from the activity in the following ways:

- they had learnt about what was involved in the employer's job (55 per cent);
- they had practised their communication skills (52 per cent); and
- they had practised taking initiative (52 per cent).

A variety of other benefits were also considered to have been obtained by the students, as shown in Figure 4.1.

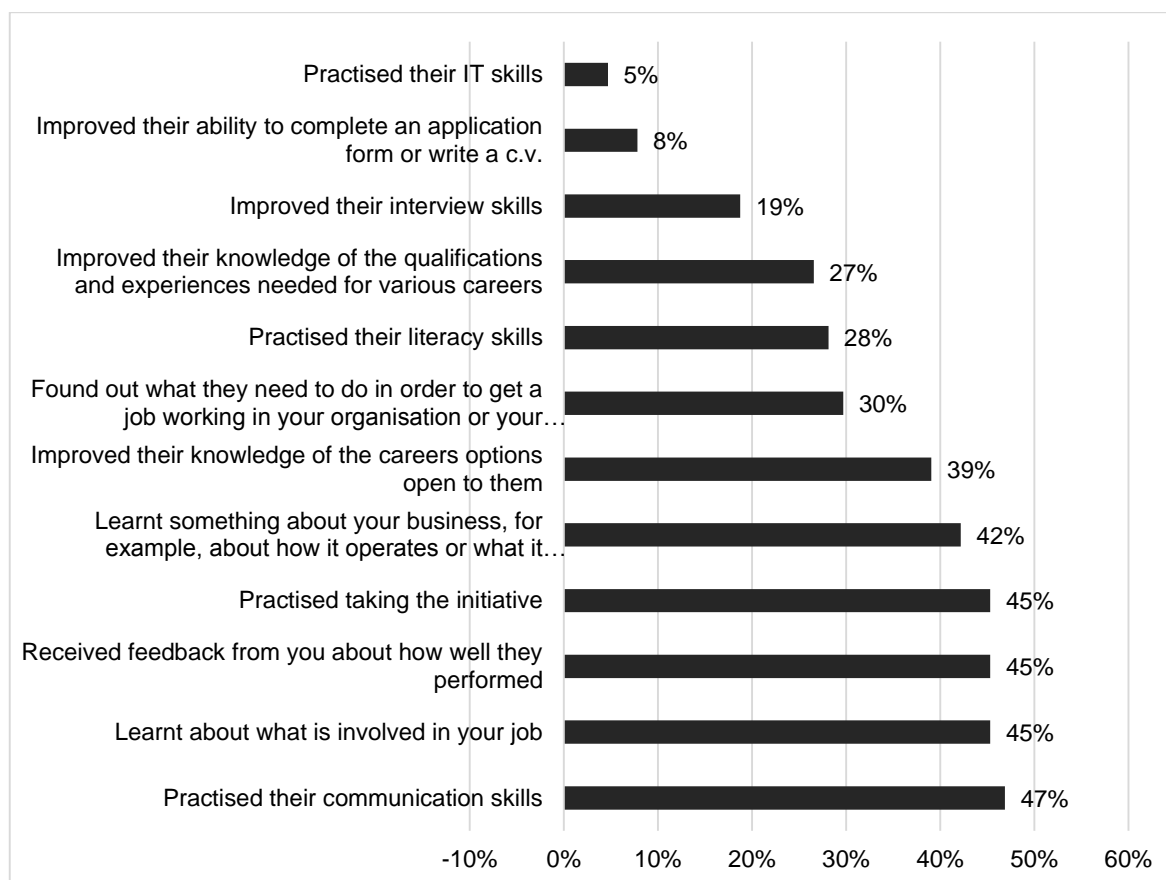
Figure 4.1: Percentage of employee volunteers who felt that pupils ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ gained benefits through the enterprise education or business skills activity



Source: Employee Volunteer Survey (n=31)

When considering those employee volunteers who had volunteered in an activity focused on the development of employability skills, the largest percentage felt that students had ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ practised their communication skills (47 per cent); learnt about what was involved in the employer’s job (45 per cent); received feedback on their performance from the employer (45 per cent); and practised taking initiative (45 per cent). Other benefits which the employer thought students would have gained from the activity are shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of employee volunteers who felt that pupils ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ gained benefits through the activity focused on employability skills development

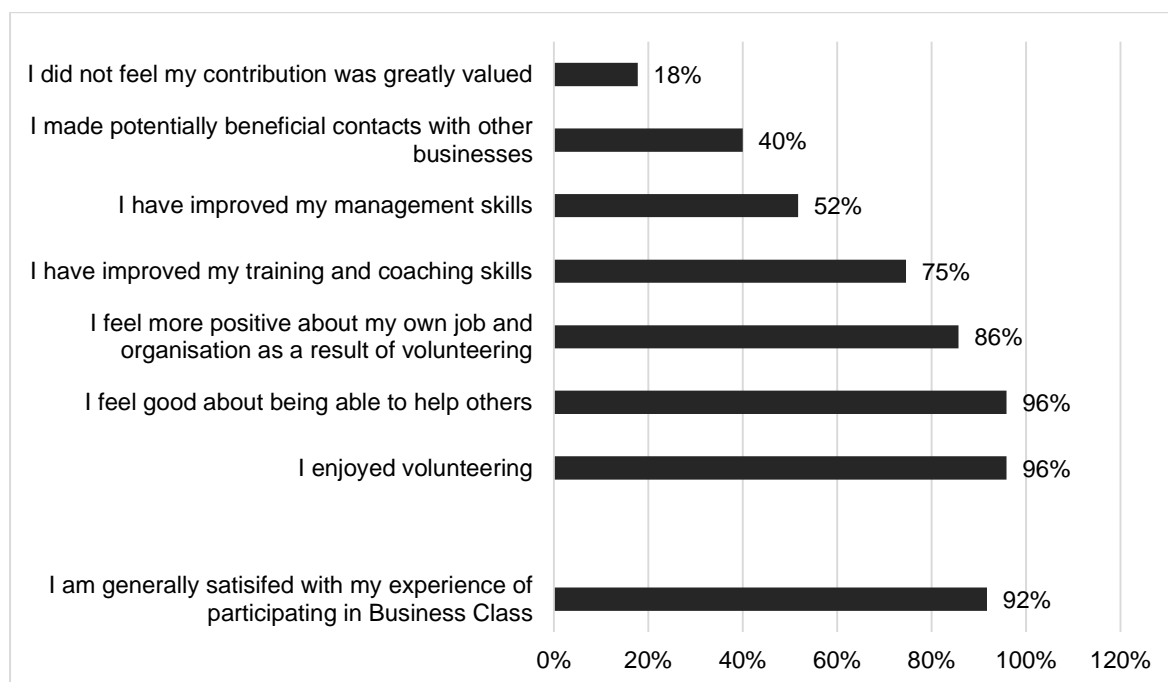


Source: Employee Volunteer Survey (n=64)

Around a third of employee volunteers reported that their most recent activity with BC involved careers education or advice (such as careers talks/fairs). The next most common type of activity concerned skills development related to gaining employment (27 per cent of volunteers reported this focus of activity) followed by activities involving the development of employability skills (22 per cent). Least common was mentoring or supporting individuals or groups over a number of sessions with focus on numeracy and/or literacy (4 per cent).

Employee volunteers were asked about potential improvements in their own skills and other benefits which they may have accrued as a result of volunteering with BC. As shown in Figure 4.3, nearly all of respondents reported that they enjoyed volunteering (96 per cent agreed or strongly agreed) and that they felt good about being able to help others (96 per cent). Only 18 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they did not feel their contribution was greatly valued. More than half of respondents felt that they had improved their management skills (52 per cent), or training and coaching skills (75 per cent). A high level of satisfaction with their experience of BC was also reported by employee volunteers.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of employee volunteers who agree or strongly agree with statement about their own benefits from volunteering with Business Class



Source: Employee Volunteer Survey (n= 315)

There were only 24 employee volunteer responses about work experience placements. All of these respondents worked for employers with more than 50 employees. Around half of these employees indicated that their employer had offered work placements before where they had been directly contacted by schools or where they had been directly contacted by young people or their parents or existing employees. Only five of the 24 employers had not offered work placements before. Nine employers had offered placements previously through BITC.

Currently, the placements offered tended to comprise five consecutive days of the student being in the workplace and in some instances the placement was for more than five consecutive days. Most of the employee volunteers rated the quality of communication and support provided by BITC as good or very good. Slightly more rated the communication and support from schools to be good or very good. The majority of employee volunteers reported that:

- employees enjoyed helping young people learn about work whilst on placement;
- the young person expressed appreciation to the organisation;
- the young person made a useful contribution to tasks;
- the reputation of their organisation in the community was enhanced after having taken on work placement students; and
- the training and coaching skills of employees were improved through having pupils on placement.

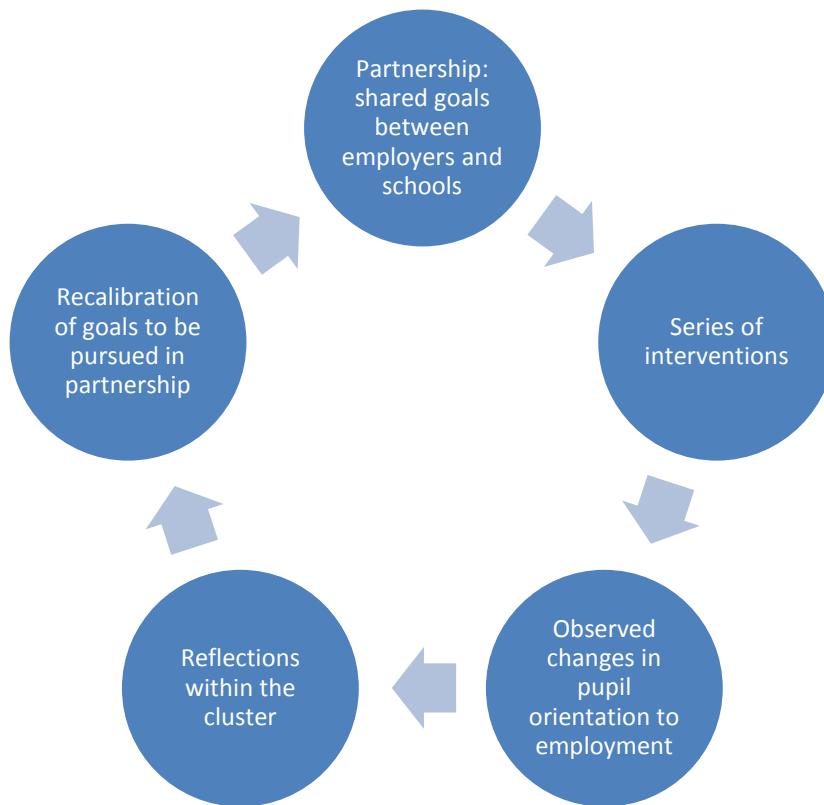
4.5 Conclusion

For schools and employers, the cluster approach used within BC, appears to provide added benefits which other types of engagement between schools and employers might not bring about. The clusters were seen to provide an opportunity for schools and employers to share their experiences and learning from their involvement in BC. The cluster members tended to have a shared commitment and a common agenda aiming to improve outcomes for their pupils. Through the cluster meetings, individual schools and employers could hear about others' experience and share and discuss practical problems (and importantly, possible solutions). By bringing together groups of employers and schools, it was also possible to identify gaps in provision of employer-engagement activities and to possibly draw on other cluster members to help fill these. It was acknowledged by all schools and employers that clusters worked best where there were shared goals and a shared commitment by both partners.

Employer involvement in BC partnerships with schools represents a real investment on the business' part. Intensive activities are particularly time-consuming which presents a real cost to employers of having their employees volunteer in schools. Their involvement suggests that they gain from this engagement with pupils. For many employers, being involved in BC (or in similar programmes) helped them to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities to the local area but there were other benefits for employers beyond this overarching one. A number of employers highlighted that it was important for their staff (particularly managers) to be able to communicate effectively with younger people, especially with the aging of their own workforces and the implications for succession planning. Taking pupils on for work placements, having one-to-one discussions with students (or small groups) and even presenting to large groups of students was considered as a useful way of helping employees to develop their skills for working with younger people. Employers also felt that by helping pupils to gain a better understanding of the realities of the world of work and the responsibilities of employees, they were enhancing the employability of the future labour force from which the employer would be looking to recruit. Improving the employability of pupils early on then should be a benefit employers will be able to obtain in future. Engaging with pupils was also thought to help the employer to attract future recruits to their business.

In summary, effective implementation runs along the lines outlined in Figure 4.4. This sees interventions being designed by schools, with the participation of their partner employer, to meet the school-specific need of pupils. The implementation of the interventions gives rise to a series of outcomes that can be observed in, for example, in the way pupils' orientation towards employment and the labour markets are altered. The evaluation evidence suggests that the outcomes of the interventions, as outlined in the main body of this report, are positive. But this does not preclude the possibility for improvement. This is where the cluster is important in sharing experiences of what works well, and how to fix problems when they arise. This then gives scope to recalibrate the nature of any interventions –because there has been shared learning in the cluster – leading to the design of new interventions or the amendment of existing ones. In this way there is an improvement process built within the system. This is all carried out under the framework provided by BITC as the guardian of BC. The evidence suggests that where the process works along the lines suggested in Figure 4.4, positive outcomes can be achieved for pupils. But this is very much dependent upon being able to bring about effective partnership working at school and cluster levels.

Figure 4.4 **Effective patterns of partnership working within schools and clusters**



As noted in the introduction, for a programme such as BC to realise its ambitions it needs to be able to satisfy the requirements of participating schools, employers, and employee volunteers. The evidence suggests that each group has different though by no means inconsistent expectations from participating in BC. The evidence suggests that the various goals of the various parties can be met. From those employers, volunteers and schools that stay with BC they can point to a number of benefits from having done so.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Key findings

The results overall reveal that BC had a positive impact on students, schools, employee volunteers, and employers. The key findings are listed below.

Overall findings

- BC increased pupils' access to information about employability. The fact that the information was delivered by employers, rather than teachers, reinforced the credibility of the information provided to pupils.
- Pupils were likely to experience two additional employability and enterprise activities as a result of BC compared with pupils not participating in BC. Hence BC was seen to be instrumental in connecting pupils with employers and with activities designed to improve their employability.
- There was indicative evidence that where pupils participated in BC their academic activities within school were likely to be better aligned with their career aspirations. Although the evidence shows that participation in BC resulted in pupils being 13 per cent more likely to be aligned, this was not statistically significant at the 10 per cent level. In other words, there was a more than a 1 in 10 chance that this finding was a result of chance.
- The finding above about alignment is consistent with other evidence collected during the evaluation which suggests that as a consequence of BC pupils were more likely to have a more informed understanding of what would be required of them to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. BC would appear to have a substantial impact upon shaping pupil's views about the skills and qualities that employers value when recruiting young people. Overall, around 70 per cent of participant pupils felt that BC had helped them to develop skills that would assist them find a job the future.
- The cluster approach used within BC provides added benefits which other types of engagement between schools and employers might not bring about, such as the opportunity for schools and employers to share their experiences and learning from their involvement, and ensuring a shared commitment and a common agenda aiming to improve outcomes for their pupils.
- As well as the impact of clusters, other factors such as working with a single employer and the flexibility in the programme were important, allowing the programme to be tailored to local labour market conditions and the specific needs of pupils.

Impact on pupils

- As noted above, BC provided pupils with access to a greater number of employability and enterprise activities with employers which benefited pupils. Most pupils felt that the activities they engaged in were worthwhile and that they had, as a consequence of BC, developed skills or acquired information that would be beneficial to them in making the transition from school to work.
- There is indicative evidence that pupils particularly valued the more intensive activities with employers that involved a degree of one-to-one engagement because in this way

they obtained the specific feedback that would assist them to obtain the job they wanted.

- Across all types of activity, pupils appeared to welcome hearing from employee volunteers about their jobs and how they arrived at their current positions.
- BC would appear to have a substantial impact upon shaping pupil's views about the skills and qualities that employers value when recruiting young people. Overall, around 70 per cent of participating pupils felt that BC had helped them to develop skills (such as CV-writing and interview skills) that would assist them find a job the future.
- Work experience was particularly valued by pupils. As a result of work experience, 90 per cent of pupils agreed they would work hard at school, and 73 per cent were clearer what they wanted to do in their career.
- Academic research has indicated that the academic activities of young people and their post-school aspirations are aligned there is less chance of those young people becoming NEET. The research evidence presented in this report demonstrates that by engaging with employers and finding out about the jobs they have on offer and the skills and attributes of successful applicants for those jobs, pupils were much better informed about the demands of the labour market. Overall, the evidence suggest that if a more nuanced understanding of alignment is adopted, that defines it as broadening pupils' career horizons and better prepare them to acquire the skills, qualifications and attributes that employers are looking for, then the evidence points to BC achieving this aim. One would, other things being equal, logically expect this positive outcome to improve the chances of young people making a successful transition into the labour market.

Impact on schools

- The primary purpose of this research was not to investigate the wider impact on schools, which is being evaluated in additional research commissioned by BITC. This shows schools able to report an impact on leadership and governance, management skills and wider knowledge among teaching staff of the opportunities for pupils in the future. This research also highlights that links with employers are beneficial.

The employer's role

- Employers engage in Business Class because it affords them the opportunity to demonstrate their responsibility, develop the skills of employee volunteers, communicate the future job opportunities and develop employability and core skills in their future workforce.
- BC is dependent upon the volunteers from employers (employee volunteers) being willing to engage with schools and young people, and the evidence suggests that employee volunteers participated because they found it beneficial to do so, particularly for developing communication and negotiation skills.
- Some employers commented that the schools they were working with were potentially ones that they would recruit from in the future. So it was beneficial to liaise with the schools and their pupils so that they could demonstrate the career opportunities they provided.
- Some companies also mentioned that they wanted to be able to measure the benefits

obtained from their engagement in a programme such as BC, and that one of the attractions of participating in the programme was that it was run by a national organisation that could provide evidence that what was being delivered was effective.

5.2 The Impact of BC

BC is a relationship between pupil, school, and employers (and their volunteers). Relationships need time to develop. Some employers and schools will be poorly matched. This does not reflect failure, so long as processes are in place to anticipate a failing relationship and begin the process of finding a better match. As programmes such as BC develop and mature, it is likely that schools and employers that are likely to be well matched can be better anticipated by BC managers. The recommendation is that if BC were to be rolled out further that sufficient time be built into that roll-out so that effective school-employer can relationships can be developed

Schools, in the first instance, sought engagement with employers because they saw this as an important means of making their students aware of the demands that would be made of them in making the transition from school to work. BC offered schools a ready-made means of engaging employers with schools on terms sought by the school. The evidence obtained from semi-structured interviews with head teachers and the champions of BC within schools indicate that BC had been able to assist schools in developing a relationship with employers to develop the employability skills of pupils. Schools point out that persuading employers to engage with schools is time consuming. BC provided an off-the-shelf means of achieving this goal.

Schools could also point to BC:

- providing an additional resource – an extra pair of hands, for example, to develop children's reading skills;
- as a source of business advice to the schools;
- allowing them to effectively deal with students who may have been struggling to see what they needed to do to get the type of job they wanted.
- Providing the flexibility which was welcomed by schools as this means it can be tailored to meet (a) local labour market conditions; and (b) the specific needs of pupils.

Schools also mentioned that working with a single employer, and allowing that relationship to develop so that the schools needs were more effectively met was an important element of BC. As was the opportunity to work within a cluster framework so that where lessons had been learnt by other schools and their employers, this could be shared across the cluster.

The evidence suggests pupils were likely to experience two more employability and enterprise activities where they participate in BC compared with pupils not participating in BC. Hence programmes such as BC are instrumental in connecting pupils with employers and with activities designed to improve their employability.

Whilst BC is instrumental in engaging pupils in employability and enterprise measures, does this matter? In other words, are pupils more employable as a consequence of their participation in BC? The analysis of alignment – which looked at the extent to which pupils' educational expectations were consistent with their career aspirations – revealed no statistically significant relationship between participation in BC and alignment. On the other

hand, pupils could point to a number of positives from participating in BC. Key points here include:

- the survey evidence that consistently demonstrates that the BC activities in which pupils participated were enjoyable and informative;
- pupils being exposed to a wider range of career options than they might have been willing to consider;
- the role of BC in opening the eyes of pupils to what would be required from them in a work setting. In this way they were much more aware of what employers were looking for when they sought to recruit someone.

There is also indicative evidence that pupils had a preference for: (a) activities where they were 'doing things' (i.e. as completing tasks and activities); and (b) more intensive activities such as mock-interviews where they received detailed feedback from employers.

Based on the above evidence there is prima facie evidence that pupils were, as a consequence of BC, better prepared to enter the world of work. But in order for BC to work well it requires employers to play their role too. From the employer side, the following views about BC were elicited:

- it allowed employers to establish links with schools. Some large employers, for example, were likely to have a lot of job openings in the future and it was beneficial for the employer to communicate this message to the pupils;
- it prepared managers to deal with young people where there was an expectation that they would be recruiting substantial numbers of young people in the future;
- it also helped managers, especially those in the early stage of their careers, to hone their communication, presentation, and leadership skills.
- it fulfilled the employers' corporate social responsibility mandate; and
- it allowed employers to learn more about the tastes of young people, which could be useful in designing products and services aimed at this market.

The employee volunteers were seen to benefit too from their engagement with BC. BC assisted with their skills development. There also an element of job satisfaction to be obtained too - by engaging in a programme such as BC there was a feeling of doing something worthwhile.

5.3 Lessons learnt and recommendations

The evidence collected throughout the study suggests that BC has a number of impacts on pupils, schools and employers. The evidence also suggests that whilst there is much to gain from BC, there are instances when things do not run smoothly. There were instances where employers have had to drop out of their partnership with a school as, due to more urgent business concerns, they could not fulfil their commitments to the school (e.g. could not attend events or provide sufficient time to engage in intensive activities). This is a particular concern where economic conditions are unfavourable for particular employers. In other cases, the partnership between employer and school had broken down due to the employer not really engaging with the programme and therefore not being a committed partner. Whilst such a breakdown had negative effects on the school, the benefit of the cluster structure of BC had

helped in finding a more suitable employer to be partnered with the school.

Within the various clusters, there was agreement that commitment between all cluster members was necessary for the process of BC to be effective and for the programme to have any of the desired effects on pupils. A crucial element of BC above other types of standalone activities involving employers and schools was the cluster structure (as noted above). It was important that this worked well and that shared aims and responsibilities amongst all partners were agreed. This can take time to develop and requires a strong co-ordinating hand to make it work.

With respect to recommendations, the following are suggested.

- Programmes such as BC are important in providing information to young people about the skills they will need to acquire if they are to obtain the type of job to which they aspire. Labour market information (LMI) has a vitally important role to play in equipping young people with effective decision making powers. Programmes such as BC are an important part of that process because they are a conduit through which employers can communicate to young people the skills and qualities they are looking for in their recruits. Employers can be an especially effective messenger of labour market information. The recommendation is therefore that BC – and comparable programmes – need to be seen as part and parcel of the effective delivery of LMI.
- It is important that the clustering aspect remains prominent. Clusters can take time to develop and needs a strong steer over the early stages. The benefits of the clustering approach is that it allows practical issues to be discussed and experiences and solutions to be shared amongst members. The evidence demonstrates that employers and schools valued the cluster based approach. It is therefore recommended that in developing BC, or comparable programmes, that sufficient resource is in place to develop and sustain the cluster.
- Intensive activities are shown, through this report, to be the ones pupils preferred. It is recommended, therefore, that BC encourages employers to become involved in activities where pupils have an increased involvement. It is not clear how this can be rolled out on wider scale than at present – given that it is resource intensive – but there may be scope to make some less intensive activities slightly more intensive. A recommendation therefore is to look at how the intensity of activities may be optimised. There is a need to find a balance: engaging in more activities provides more access to employers and thereby information about the jobs market, but there needs to be an intensive element to ensure that that information is effectively transmitted.
- BC is a relationship between pupil, school, and employers (and their volunteers). Relationships need time to develop. Some employers and schools will be poorly matched. This does not reflect failure, so long as processes are in place to anticipate a failing relationship and begin the process of finding a better match. As programmes such as BC develop and mature, it is likely that schools and employers that are likely to be well matched can be better anticipated by BC managers. The recommendation is that if BC were to be rolled out further that sufficient time be built into that roll-out so that effective school-employer can relationships can be developed.