

Developing the continuum in Oxfordshire:
Improving employability skills through Education Business links

An independent research project

October 2014

Commissioned by:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Report prepared by: Grant Hayward and Louise Wheeler of Collaborative Insights Ltd

Commissioned by: Helen Haines, Work Experience and Business Services Manager, Oxfordshire County Council, Economy and Skills

With thanks to: All those from the education, business and public sector who took time to share their thoughts and experiences by participating in interviews and completing surveys. Additionally those who helped us access participants via various professional networks.

Thanks also to the following for their hard work and valuable input: Carole Arvanitis , Abigail Beale, Jane Malcolm-Davies

About Collaborative Insights Ltd

Collaborative Insights combines specialist consultancy and research services to help organisations, from the same and different sectors, develop effective collaborations and partnerships

About Oxfordshire County Council Economy & Skills

The remit of the Economy & Skills Team at Oxfordshire County Council is to contribute to economic growth and prosperity. It manages Oxfordshire Work Experience, Oxfordshire Apprenticeships and Invest In Oxfordshire

Contact Details:

Collaborative Insights:

Louise Wheeler, Director of Research
t: 01865 596771
e: louise.wheeler@insightoxford.co.uk

Oxfordshire County Council:

Helen Haines
t: 01865 323483
e: Helen.Haines@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2014

© Copyright Collaborative Insights Ltd 2014

Content may not be copied, distributed, or dealt with in whole or in part without prior consent

Abbreviations and definitions

For the purposes of this report the following abbreviations and definitions have been used:

Term	Abbreviation	Definition
Education Business Link(s)	EBL	Any activity or programme that involves businesses (or other employers) engaging with educational establishments to support the development of students
Careers education, information, advice and guidance	CEIAG	Services provided by schools and FE colleges to help students to make informed career choices
Education business link organisation	EBLO	An organisation or group of people who enable links and facilitate supportive activities between educational institutions and employers.
Young person/people (16 to 24 years) not in education, employment or training	NEET(S)	
Schools		State funded educational establishments providing secondary education to students
Further education college(s)	FE college(s)	Colleges receiving state funding for post-secondary students providing a variety of basic skills training and higher vocational qualifications
Primary Schools		Schools for students between 4 and 10 years
Special Schools		Schools for students between the ages of 11 to 16 or 19 with learning disabilities
Work experience		Usually a programme arranged by a school of which a placement with an employer is a part. The placement usually lasts a week or sometimes two
Science, technology, engineering and mathematics	STEM	Umbrella term used mainly in education to refer to the study of subjects relating to science, technology, engineering and mathematics
Oxfordshire County Council	OCC	
Local Enterprise Partnership	LEP	

Table 1: Terms, abbreviations and definitions

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	6
1 RATIONALE AND APPROACH	7
2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	9
3 RECOMMENDATIONS	14
4 DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4.1 An overview of Oxfordshire• 4.2 Employability skills• 4.3 What do EBLs and associated CEIAG activities involve?• 4.4 How are EBLs and associated CEIAG activities set up, developed and managed?• 4.5 Why do businesses engage in EBLs?• 4.6 What are the obstacles and barriers to engagement in EBLs and associated CEIAG activities?• 4.7 What support is needed?• 4.8 What would stimulate greater engagement in EBLs?• 4.9 How is the impact of EBLs and associated CEIAG activities measured?• 4.10 Future plans	
5 LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	53
6 REFERENCES	54

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Profile of schools/FE colleges participating in interviews/providing online feedback
- Appendix B: Breakdown of fieldwork participants
- Appendix C: CBI definition of employability skills
- Appendix D: Profile of businesses participating in online survey
- Appendix E: CEIAG online resources mentioned by research participants
- Appendix F: Educational Business Link Organisations (EBLOs)

LIST OF CHARTS

- Chart 1: Ease of recruiting good people - Oxfordshire Businesses
- Chart 2: Perceptions of employability skills of school leavers - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 3: Perceptions of the importance of work experiencing in developing employability skills - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 4: Perceptions of effectiveness of work experiencing in developing employability skills - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 5: Views about responsibilities for the development of employability skills in young people – Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 6: Types of current or previous EBL engagement activities - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 7: Established relationships with schools/FE colleges - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 8: Reasons for engagement in EBL activities - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 9: Perceptions of obstacles and barriers to increasing EBL engagement - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 10: Perceptions of how best to stimulate more engagement in EBLs - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 11: Location (by district council areas) - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 12: Number of years trading - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 13: Number of employees - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 14: Changes in workforce size over next 12 months - Oxfordshire businesses
- Chart 15: Approximate annual turnover - Oxfordshire businesses

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1: Terms, abbreviations and definitions
- Table 2: Active enterprises by District
- Table 3: Businesses by size (employees) in Oxfordshire
- Table 4: Young people by age range (source: ONS Census 2011)
- Table 5: Number of primary, secondary and further education establishments operating in Oxfordshire (Nov 2013)
- Table 6: Undergraduate intake for Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford
Source: www.ucas.com/data-analysis/data-resources
- Table 7: Education Business Link Organisations (EBLOs) in Oxfordshire
- Table 8: Research stage 1 -Education (breakdown of fieldwork participants)
- Table 9: Research stage 2 - Businesses (breakdown of fieldwork participants)
- Table 10: Businesses by sector
- Table 11: CEIAG Online services and tools referred to during the research
- Table 12: Education Business Link Organisations referred to or known through the research

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Six steps to improving EBLs and associated CEIAG activities

FOREWORD

Education

Our vision is for Oxfordshire to be a dynamic and forward looking place for education and learning, providing the best quality experiences for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve.

We want to engage and harness the resources of all who care about children and young people and the future of a thriving Oxfordshire to work together to deliver our vision. The children of Oxfordshire deserve only the best. These principles and aspirations are set out in *A Strategy for Change; Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire*.



It is therefore encouraging to see examples in this report of very positive collaborations between schools, FE colleges and businesses across the county. When such support and relationships are facilitated well, very powerful and even life changing results can be achieved.

The findings and subsequent recommendations echo the emphasis on developing and enhancing 'Aspiration Networks' incorporated in the *Strategy for Change* to encourage schools to work with each other to challenge and support each other to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

In order to grasp the opportunities identified through this research, strong leadership is required within the schools to build a vision and engage staff to ensure vital educational business links can be developed alongside the ever-pressing priorities of academic achievement.

Councillor Melinda Tilley

Oxfordshire County Council: Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families

Local Economic Development

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership has developed a Strategic Economic Plan to 2030 within which growth presents significant opportunity. A considerable challenge is the difficulty employers have recruiting suitably qualified staff, and this includes employability skills amongst young people.

Working closely with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxfordshire Skills Board is driven to achieve improvements in the skills available to the county's employers and the learning opportunities available to students, residents and workforce. Within its strategy to 2020 it aims to encourage and enable 35% of businesses in Oxfordshire to work with schools and FE colleges to support young people in their transition to work. It has also set a target to provide an additional 1,150 apprenticeships for young people.

This timely research has revealed some excellent examples of the valuable work and relationships that already exist between schools, FE Colleges and business across Oxfordshire that can inspire and assist these ambitions. It has also identified a number of barriers and challenges that need be addressed. However, contributors to the research also identified some insightful ideas and opportunities to overcome these.

We look forward to the accelerated development of education business links in Oxfordshire and the subsequent results as the Skills Board and Oxfordshire County Council Economy and Skills team develop this exciting concept further.



Nigel Tipple

Chief Executive, Oxfordshire LEP

1. RATIONALE AND APPROACH

1.1 Rationale

The Oxfordshire Skills Board has identified addressing deficiencies in employability skills amongst young people in the county as a priority for action:

Oxfordshire Skills Strategy to 2020 outlines the following as one of the key challenges:

There will be an ever increasing demand for higher-level skills. Skills shortages and gaps are present now. We are faced with an ageing workforce alongside a shrinking supply of young people. Too many young people are not achieving their potential or finding employment or training opportunities

(Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, 2014, 3)

They aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of EBLs and associated CEIAG activities to tackle this challenge.

This independent research was commissioned as part of Oxfordshire County Council's Economy & Skills Business plan, to understand the Education Business Links (EBLs) which exist across the county and how the development of these might help address the issues outlined above. Its purpose was to establish a clear picture of the current situation and gain insights into perceptions, drivers, barriers, obstacles and strategies underway.

The research canvassed schools and FE colleges in the first phase (see appendix A), and a wide range of businesses based or operating in Oxfordshire in the second phase, including many classed as STEM. It included input from each of the district councils in Oxfordshire in terms of their awareness of and the ways in which they support EBL. There is also a snapshot of the main Education Business Link Organisations working across the county.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 Education

- To understand what is happening with EBLs and associated CEIAG activities on the ground in Oxfordshire
- To understand the barriers to effective EBLs and associated CEIAG activities
- To identify potential local and national partners in EBL and associated CEIAG activities
- To understand the EBL and associated CEIAG activities' needs and priorities for schools and FE colleges
- To provide a picture of the current and planned approach to EBLs for district councils in Oxfordshire

1.2.3 Business Perspective

- To identify factors that differentiate those businesses engaged in EBL from those who are not engaged
- For those who are engaged, to establish key factors, including:
 - Types of activities
 - Ways in which relationships are formed
 - Perceived benefits
 - Barriers and obstacles
 - Key drivers

- For those who are not currently engaged, to establish key factors, including:
 - Why they are not engaged
 - Barriers and obstacles to engagement
 - Potential motivators that would encourage engagement

1.3 Scope and approach

All research was carried out in strict adherence to the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct. No individual participant or organisation is identified in this report unless their express permission has been given.

1.3.1 Education sector

Scope

- Detailed understanding of current situation in secondary schools – especially at KS3 & KS4
- Overview of situation in primary schools, special schools and FE colleges
- Identify any key activities and priorities across Oxfordshire’s five District Councils
- Overview of activities and services of relevant EBLOs

Approach

- Data were gathered during fieldwork using a mix of interviews (face-to-face and telephone) and online surveys (see appendix B)
- Secondary schools: face-to-face interviews/online survey
- Primary schools: online survey
- Special schools: telephone interviews
- EBLOs: desk research; use of various networks
- FE colleges: telephone interviews
- District councils: face-to-face interviews/telephone interviews
- Fieldwork was conducted from December 2013 to February 2014

1.3.2 Business sector

Scope

- Face-to-face in-depth interviews (20) were conducted with businesses across the county (see appendix B). This included a good range in terms of size, location and industry sector. Nine businesses classed as STEM were included as well as others from key growth sectors as identified by Oxfordshire LEP, such as hospitality, logistics and construction. Some (just over half) were currently engaged in EBL activities while the remainder were not.
- Businesses were asked how easy they found it to recruit good people and other questions intended to gain their perceptions of any obstacles or barriers.

Approach

- Data were gathered using a mix of face-to-face interviews and an online survey
- Fieldwork was conducted from April to June 2014

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Summary of key findings

2.1.1 Employability Skills

Schools/FE colleges express an acute awareness of the importance of helping their students to develop employability skills. However, they are also clear that any further commitment to this will conflict with time needed for core curriculum subjects to ensure students achieve their target GCSE grades. There was also a perception that some parents do not help their children to develop employability skills, are too protective and need to encourage them to gain exposure to the world of work while still at school or college. In general, schools/FE colleges saw the provision of work experience placements as an effective way of helping students to develop employability skills.

Given that 47% of businesses said that they find it 'not very' or 'not at all' easy to recruit good people, they are clearly mindful of the skills gap that exists in Oxfordshire. They see the need for improvement in the development of employability skills of school leavers. They acknowledge that the provision of work experience plays a pivotal part in this. Some employers are concerned that work experience is not always as effective as it could be. The vast majority of businesses accept that they have a responsibility for the development of employability skills in young people before they leave school.

Feedback from schools/FE colleges and businesses highlighted that the effectiveness of work experience programmes is dependent on close collaboration between those involved and the alignment of the students, employers and schools' objectives.

2.1.2 What do EBLs and associated CEIAG activities involve?

Work experience placements: Provision of work experience placements is seen as the primary form of EBL activity by both the schools and businesses and is by far the most common. There is clear evidence that effective work experience can be positively life changing. However, in some cases, there appears to be no or very limited benefit for students. Improvements are needed to increase the quality of the process and experience for students, employers and those responsible for organising it.

The range of placements offered is very broad but some schools/FE colleges secure placements in a much more comprehensive range of sectors and disciplines than others. This reflects the different approaches they have to developing EBLs and the perceived obstacles and barriers (which are outlined below).

Special schools place particular importance on work experience to help develop the employability skills of their students and give them the opportunity to engage with their local community. This is regarded as critical to widening students' horizons and encouraging an inclusive approach to the employment of those with learning difficulties among businesses.

Talks and lectures: After work experience, this is the most common form of EBL. Some schools arrange these for large groups of students, such as whole year groups, and assemblies, while others take a more targeted approach aiming to match speakers from business with students who have a particular interest in their sector or discipline. Students are seen to relate well to speakers who used to attend their own school/FE college. Businesses that have not delivered talks in schools/FE showed a keen interest to do so. However, they expect the schools/FE colleges to make the first move and invite them to contribute.

Taking on apprentice(s): Results indicate that well over a third of Oxfordshire businesses have taken on an apprentice at some time but there is debate over whether apprenticeships are an EBL activity or not. Businesses tend to class them as such but schools/FE colleges see them as employment and therefore a destination as opposed to a step in an on-going educational process. This is one of several examples of schools/FE colleges and businesses using different definitions and language about employability skills (see appendix C), EBLs and associated CEIAG activities.

Findings confirmed that well-managed apprenticeships, in which students are genuinely enthusiastic about the type of work and training offered, can result in impressive outcomes for all stakeholders. However, there is also evidence that some businesses are disillusioned with the standard apprenticeship scheme due to issues with the quality and relevance of the training provided. In some cases, they are putting their own processes together to ensure they achieve the desired outcomes.

Careers fairs/events: Schools/FE colleges and various other organisations arrange events aimed at helping students explore career options and meet with potential employers. The approach to this differs between schools/FE colleges with some arranging their own and others collaborating to pool resources and streamline activities. Oxford Careers Fest arranged by Oxford City Learning is a large event which many students and employers attend. Views are mixed about the effectiveness of this and other similar events in helping students find positive employment opportunities.

Other EBL activities: Other less common EBL activities include mentoring, mock interviews and enterprise activities. Feedback from schools/FE colleges indicates that these can be of great value in helping students to become work-ready and gain a clearer perspective on the world of work. Feedback from businesses suggests that there is an opportunity for more schools to engage them in this way but they need to make the first move and invite them to be involved.

2.1.3 How are EBLs and associated CEIAG activities set up, developed and managed?

The primary focus of most schools/FE colleges which are developing EBLs is to secure work experience placements for students. Extending invitations for them to engage in other activities such as delivering talks and conducting mock interviews, appears to be relatively uncommon.

Schools generally adopt an individual approach to setting up EBLs resulting in a great deal of inconsistency. Some powerful collaborations exist, often within a particular geographical area. These can be between individual schools, schools and FE colleges, schools/FE colleges and businesses. Some FE colleges have also developed strategic EBL partnerships that are closely aligned with local labour market forecasts.

There is also evidence that some educational establishments see the EBL landscape as highly competitive resulting in a non-collaborative culture of self-protection and reluctance to share resources and ideas. In addition, there is significant duplication of effort across the schools and FE colleges and sometimes within the same establishment across different departments.

The style of leadership and organisational culture of educational establishments fundamentally influence the extent and ways in which they engage with businesses. There is currently very limited direct involvement from governors and parents in EBL and associated CEIAG activities. In the isolated cases where these groups are involved, some useful contributions are being made. This suggests a potentially under-utilised resource.

Numerous EBLOs offer a range of activities and services but awareness and use of these is inconsistent and generally very low across for schools/FE colleges and businesses meaning they are likely to have limited impact overall for young people in the county.

It is rare that a specific budget is allocated to EBL and associated CEIAG activity in schools/FE colleges other than remuneration for the staff responsible and/or the cost of buying in services from third parties to provide CEIAG and any other related services. Where there is a budget, the amount and method of allocation varies greatly.

Businesses do not tend to calculate a monetary value for the EBL activities in which they are involved. They make decisions based on the time that can be allocated to these.

As mentioned above, businesses often view taking on apprentices as a form of EBL even though, from the educational perspective, it is seen as a form of employment.

2.1.4 Why do businesses engage in EBLs?

The majority of businesses engaging in EBL do so because they want to contribute to and support their local community and see this as fulfilling their social responsibilities. Simply receiving an invitation to become involved can also provide sufficient motivation to kick-start a relationship. Other reasons include helping to develop a talent pipeline for the business and creating a positive profile for the company among its clients, potential clients and suppliers.

2.1.5 What are the obstacles and barriers to engagement in EBLs and associated CEIAG activities?

Schools/FE colleges: For schools/FE colleges, the main obstacles and barriers to EBL engagement are seen as limited resources (time and money) and conflicting priorities in relation to achievement of grades and other performance targets versus developing employability skills. They often perceive a reluctance of businesses (especially SMEs) to provide work placements because of the legislative requirements and perceived onerous paperwork. Specific legislative factors include minimum age restrictions for some types of work and the need to have appropriate insurance in place.

Many barriers and obstacles identified relate specifically to work placements: competition with other schools/FE colleges and concern that they lack the contacts and knowledge to develop relationships with businesses. Location is a significant problem in rural areas with poor public transport links for students to get to work placements. Parents' and students' perceptions often present challenges because they have fixed ideas about what is acceptable.

Businesses: Businesses identify barriers and obstacles to engagement in EBLs in relation to work placements, as opposed to any other form of EBL. Their most pronounced concerns relate to having too little time and resources, the legislative requirements and necessary administration. Some also see the approach by schools/FE colleges (or sometimes the lack of it) as a barrier to developing EBLs as well as the absence of a third party which could act as a conduit between the education and business sectors.

Communication: There are some issues around communication between the education and business sectors due, in the main, to using sector-specific terminology or jargon. In other words, the parties sometimes speak different languages.

2.1.6 What support is needed?

The majority of schools/FE colleges are keen to have support to help develop links within their own sector and with businesses. Consolidating the many sources of EBL and CEIAG information is seen as important, ideally with the opportunity to access information from a central online location. Schools/FE colleges recognise the difficulties some businesses have with the legislative and procedural requirements of providing work placements would like more support for them in this area. Direct support from businesses to deliver some of the less common forms of EBL, such as mock interviews and mentoring, is also of interest as is help to secure more apprenticeships for students. Special schools are particularly keen for help to maximise engagement with their local communities.

2.1.7 What would stimulate greater engagement in EBLs?

To stimulate further EBL engagement, there is a need to look at the perspectives, not only of schools and businesses, but also students and parents. Further research is needed to capture information from these two groups. That said, feedback from representatives of schools/FE colleges provided some perceptions of what students need and want.

- **Students:** Emphasis needs to be placed on customising EBL activities to students' interests and subject choices while avoiding the temptation to pigeon-hole and limit horizons too early. In general, it is felt that students need to gain more experience in the world of work as well as more direct contact with, and support from, employers while still at school/FE college.
- **Schools:** More and closer collaboration between schools/FE colleges in the same geographic area would help maximise the potential of what they can achieve in terms of EBL engagement. This will help reduce duplication of effort and develop a more efficient, consistent approach.

More and closer collaboration with the business sector is also needed to stimulate further EBL engagements. A more consolidated, user-friendly approach to information provision across the full spectrum of related subjects is needed. This includes labour market information, local opportunities, a central database of businesses who are willing to engage and where and how to get help from third party organisations.

- **Businesses:** Businesses are more likely to engage in EBLs if they can see positive, tangible outcomes. This does not always need to be directly related to their business. Some would be content to see evidence that students have begun or progressed on a positive career path.

Businesses, particularly small firms and start-ups, need support with human resource management issues because they lack the infrastructure and resources to cover this internally. In general, businesses also wanted the process be made simple. However, these concerns are both based on an assumption that EBLs are primarily about providing work experience. This underlines the need to shift and broaden perceptions about what EBLs can be.

The research suggested that some additional EBL engagement could be stimulated by more schools/FE colleges actively approaching businesses and asking them to become involved. However, it is important to note that there was emphasis placed on ensuring the invitation is extended in a positive and compelling way.

As with schools/FE colleges, businesses also see that changes in the education curriculum are needed to achieve any major shift in the extent and effectiveness of EBL activities in Oxfordshire.

Another relevant issue is the limitation of a single one-week placement organised by schools, as opposed to something more regular such as a Saturday job or longer-term association with a business.

2.1.8 How is the impact of EBLs and associated CEIAG activities measured?

The approach to evaluation of EBLs in schools and FE colleges is ad hoc, very limited and generally lacks independence. Monitoring of return on investment of EBLs, benchmarking across schools and tracking EBL performance were not evident. There was some interest expressed in monitoring performance over time in terms of securing positive employment destinations for students.

Businesses engaged in EBLs tend to base their evaluation of the activities on intuition and gut feel. In general, there is a sense that it is the 'right thing to do' and makes good sense for the business. However, any formal type of evaluation is regarded as difficult to undertake.

NEETS: Minimising NEETS is recognised as critically important across all schools/FE colleges with particular focus placed on this in the more deprived areas of the county. An increase or decrease in the numbers of NEETS was generally regarded as a clear indication of the impact of EBL activities provided by schools. Strategies for minimising NEETS vary from one establishment to another, demonstrating the same inconsistency apparent throughout EBL activities.

2.1.9 Future plans

For schools and FE colleges, future plans include increasing or resuming work experience, and finding new ways to deliver information and develop employability skills by using online tools and providing insights into the local labour market. Focus is also directed towards building closer and more collaboration with local businesses. Some are keen to promote change by raising students' aspirations and challenging gender stereotyping, particular for STEM-related subjects. Maintaining a watchful eye on minimising NEETS is also a priority. Increasing awareness of, and access to, information about apprenticeships is also important for some schools/FE colleges.

For businesses that are not currently engaged in EBL activities, very few plan to start doing so, at least in the short to medium term. This is especially relevant to those that have only recently begun trading and/or that employ fewer than 10 people. Any potential plans to engage appear to be compromised by an absence of information about how to go about it.

Businesses engaged in EBL activities are set to continue with them. There is a sense that the extent of engagement is governed not only by the capacity and enthusiasm within each business but also the need for schools/FE colleges to place sufficient importance on EBLs.

There is a consistent desire across all five Oxfordshire district councils to work more collaboratively on EBL activities and to share resources and best practice across the districts and at county level.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

To tackle the key challenges highlighted in this research, a progressive **Six-step plan** is recommended to strengthen and develop Education Business Links and associated CEIAG activities across Oxfordshire. The details are set out below:

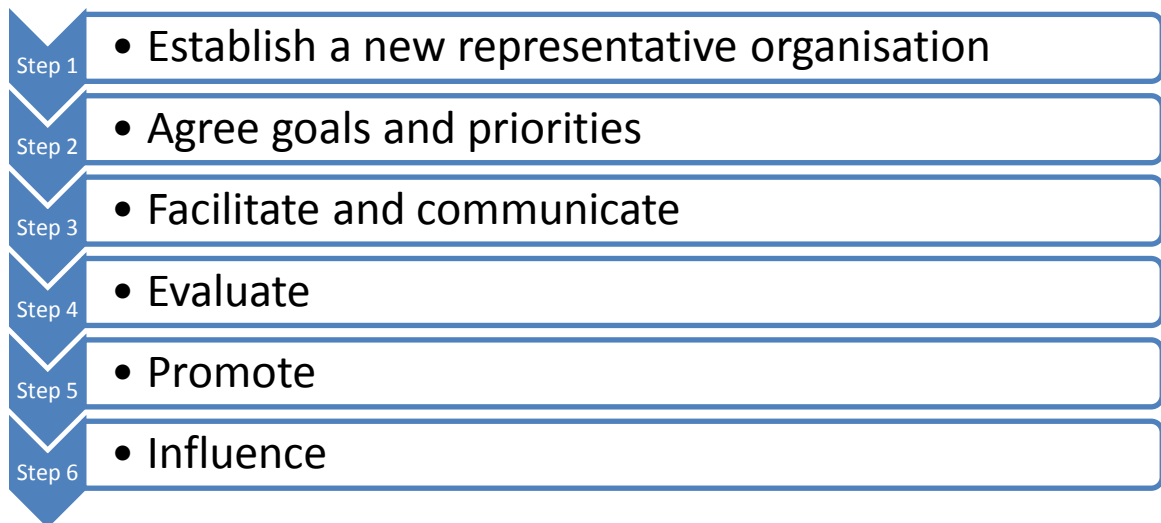


Figure 1: Six steps to improving EBLs and associated CEIAG activities

Step 1: Establish a new organisation, representative of all stakeholders

- It is recommended that a new, proactive organisation representing all stakeholders is established to meet the need for closer connections, understanding and engagement between individuals and stakeholder groups.
- It is critical that the new organisation is representative of all stakeholders:
 - - Schools and FE colleges
 - Businesses
 - Students
 - Parents
 - Other Education Business Link Organisations (EBLOs)
 - Local authorities
 - Other bodies, such as business and education associations
- For the new organisation to survive and thrive, the development and implementation of a clear strategic plan is essential.

Step 2: Agree goals and priorities

- Place emphasis on creating an environment in which needs and issues can be raised and priorities agreed inclusively.
- When setting goals and priorities, seek opportunities to achieve quick wins by identifying examples of good practice and demonstrate benefits from existing, proven initiatives and activities.

Step 3: Facilitate and communicate

- Ensure help is available to those who would like to develop links, require support, or are looking for new or alternative opportunities.
- Signpost and/or broker opportunities to engage with established and proven EBL activities and providers. Avoid unnecessary involvement where existing activities and relationships are working well.
- Provide regular opportunities for improved communications, networking and sharing across all stakeholder groups.
- Using relevant local and national contacts, build a consolidated database to provide the most comprehensive range of opportunities, information and resources available.

Step 4: Evaluate

- Develop an objective, consistent and robust approach to evaluation of EBL and associated CEIAG activities across the county.
- Identify potential improvements and areas for action based on the evaluation aligned to goals and priorities.
- Use the outputs from the evaluation to define and illustrate best practice.

Step 5: Promote

- Promote awareness of and engagement in existing established mechanisms to promote STEM among students, parents and teachers, beginning at an early stage - ideally with primary schools.
- Develop and coordinate regular promotional campaigns aimed at maximising the value of and engagement in EBL and associated CEIAG activities
- Work with local and national organisations to link with their initiatives.

Step 6: Influence

- Develop credibility as a central organisation representing all stakeholder groups with the aim of positively influencing policy.
- Develop the strong connections of The Oxfordshire Skills Board with central government to communicate key messages nationally as well as locally, with a view to bringing about change in the education curriculum.

4. DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 An overview of Oxfordshire

This brief overview of relevant demographic information provides a context to the research findings.

The business landscape: There were just over 30,000 businesses in Oxfordshire in March 2013 - the vast majority of which were micro businesses employing up to nine people (see tables 2 and 4 below).

Area	Active Enterprises
Cherwell	7,085
Oxford	5,605
South Oxfordshire	8,040
Vale of White Horse	5,920
West Oxfordshire	5,785
Oxfordshire	32,435

Table 2: Active enterprises by District Oxfordshire

Size: No of employees	Oxfordshire Businesses
0-9	83.3%
10-249	16.3%
250+	0.4%

Source: ONS tables produced from a snapshot of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) taken on 12 March 2013

Table 3: Businesses by size (employees) in

This underlines the point made in the *Oxfordshire Skills Strategy to 2020* (2013) that Oxfordshire is “A small and medium enterprise led economy” with about 18% of businesses operating “in the professional, scientific and technical sector.” In its *Business Plan for Growth* (2013), Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) identified specific sectors with the greatest potential for economic growth as precision engineering, life sciences, cryogenics and space. The LEP is also supporting newer sectors that are yet to reach their full potential. These include energy and environmental technologies, digital, publishing and media. Other sectors including retail, hospitality, tourism and construction have been acknowledged as of continuing importance. These sectors are heavily dependent on the provision of a high level of STEM skills. The LEP’s *European structural and investment fund plan* also puts significant emphasis on employment growth. During the period April 2012 to March 2013, 346,600 Oxfordshire residents were in employment - 77.9% of them were aged 16 to 64 years (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, October 2013, 4).

Fewer than 6,000 of the working age population claim Job Seekers Allowance which was circa 1.3% in August 2013. This was a drop of almost 4,000 from the peak in April 2009. A challenge to virtual full employment is the ability of employers to find and recruit suitably qualified staff, especially in professional (level 4 and above) and technical and associate professional level business sectors (level 3 and above) where more than 7,500 vacancies exist with fewer than 600 people seeking those roles. Similar labour shortages exist in skilled trade occupations, with circa 1,150 vacancies registered against 500 people seeking them (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, October 2013, 5).

Oxfordshire Skills Strategy to 2020 identifies several strategies, including strategic priority 2:

“Creating the ‘skills continuum’ to support young people through their learning journey: the ambition is to develop integrated, seamless services that support young people through school and on into training, further education, employment or business, where they understand the full breadth of career options, including local demand, and the training path to succeed in that career.”

(Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, 2014, 7)

The recruitment challenge in Oxfordshire: *Oxfordshire Skills Strategy to 2020* (2014) also stated that businesses in the county find it increasingly difficult to recruit the right people to work for them. To explore this further, all businesses in this research (see appendix D) were asked to identify how easy they found it to recruit good people. As shown in Chart 1 below, 47% said they found it ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ easy.



Chart 1: Ease of recruiting good people - Oxfordshire businesses

Comments suggested that even the newer companies, not yet ready to expand, were well aware of the challenge ahead in terms of recruitment – especially at technician level and for very highly skilled roles. This finding alone emphasises the importance of ensuring that young people leaving Oxfordshire’s schools and FE colleges are work ready.

Young people in Oxfordshire: At the time of the 2011 census there were 132,145 people aged 3 to 19 years living in Oxfordshire. This represents 20% of the total population.

District Council	Total pop	Total 3-19	Age range			
			3-5	6-11	12-16	17-19
Cherwell	141,868	29,225	5,732	9,870	8,751	4,872
Oxford	151,906	30,926	5,101	8,626	7,204	9,995
South Oxfordshire	134,257	27,174	5,089	9,359	8,369	4,357
Vale of White Horse	120,988	24,468	4,342	8,229	7,673	4,224
West Oxfordshire	104,779	20,352	3,708	6,933	6,276	3,435
Oxfordshire	653,798	132,145	23,972	43,017	38,273	26,883

Table 4: Young people by age range (source: ONS Census 2011)

NEETS: The proportion of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are not in any form of education, employment or training is 5.6% (997 individuals) according to the *Detailed Performance Report* produced by the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board in June 2013. This report also confirms that “NEET is not evenly spread across the county” with notable pockets in the north, south and west of the county, and east Oxford and Littlemore in the city.

The educational landscape

Type of establishment	Number in Oxfordshire (November 2013)
Primary schools	234
Secondary schools (including academies & community colleges)	33
Special schools	12
FE colleges	4

Table 5: Number of primary, secondary and further education establishments operating in Oxfordshire (November 2013)

It is also important to note that Oxford is home to two leading universities – the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University, although both were outside the scope of this research.

University	Undergraduate intake (2012)
Oxford Brookes University	4,052
University of Oxford	3,189

Table 6: Undergraduate intake for Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford
Source: www.ucas.com/data-analysis/data-resources

Apprenticeships: Provisional data for the third quarter of 2014 (February to April), show an increase in the number of apprenticeship starts when compared with the number in the same period for last year. A target has been set, as part of the Oxfordshire City Deal, to increase the number of apprenticeships starts for 16 to 23-year-olds by at least 525 by 2017. This would be a 20% increase over 3 years (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, January 2014, 2).

4.2 Employability skills

The importance of helping young people to develop employability skills, in the context of building an effective talent pipeline, has been very much in the spotlight of late (Confederation of British Industry, 2012). The significance of this to Oxfordshire is outlined in the *Oxfordshire Skills Strategy to 2020* (2013). This research asked participants from local businesses to provide an understanding of their perspective on employability skills of young people in the county. They were also asked for their views about the part work experience placements played in developing these skills.

4.2.1 Schools/FE colleges

Most respondents from schools/FE colleges saw the need to increase the focus on employability skills. However, it was clear that this competed with other aspects of the core curriculum for time and human resources.

Some talked about this in the context of achieving grades versus developing “softer skills.” Literacy and numeracy were identified as top priorities. Other softer employability skills, including teamwork, presentation, creativity, resilience and a positive attitude tended to be covered by enrichment enterprise days and other additional activities rather than regularly scheduled core curriculum classes.

“We use Skills Force quite a bit. They come in and run a course for year 10 and 11 students. They are good at focusing on employability skills - it is very team based and they take them off camping which is good to help them work together.”

There was a clear awareness among many of those in schools/FE colleges that employers are more concerned about attitude than qualifications and that this creates a difficult conflict for them.

“We have had a massive push on literacy which we know is important for employability.”

“We are always being told that to go into work or FE college they have got to have those grades so those boxes have to be ticked fundamentally. That has to be our primary focus. Most of our students go to further or higher education. Employability skills are not really discussed as such.”

“I am aware of the mixed views of employers and the debate as to whether there is a skills gap, and if so, what those skills are. Some say it is literacy and numeracy, others say IT and the vast majority say it's attitude to work. The manager of [local employer] has said they employ based upon enthusiasm rather than qualifications.”

“The pressure in a school is all around measurement by qualification. But the push around businesses and CEIAG - businesses want these things from kids - communication, interpersonal skills, ability to adapt and learn, teamwork, using your initiative and being self-motivated, problem solving, organisational skills, working under pressure and to deadlines, valuing diversity and difference, negotiation skills and numeracy. If they want - we can provide those things; we can start to prepare kids like that. But all the pressure is on qualifications.”

Often support in schools, for development of employability skills, is focused on the most vulnerable. Many said they would like to see more focus on this across the board, although it was also pointed out that it is critical to understand the challenges facing different types of students and that one size definitely does not fit all.

“This challenge is really apparent with the difficult students who have no skills at all. I think it's not the skills - it is the maturity - and their inabilities because of the chaotic lives they lead.”

Some felt that the attitude and expectations of students and their parents can cause difficulties when it comes to the development of employability skills through work experience placements.

“Students don't expect to go in at the bottom and have to do mundane jobs. This generation is 'entitled', they don't have to fight for anything, and they expect it to be given to them on a plate. They lack commitment. Some of them can't even fill in a form or spell correctly.”

“There is pressure from parents and an expectation from school and parents that young people should stay in education and keep their options open as much as possible. Equally, society has protected and cotton wool-bound them so they are less aware of work. Going into work and having to grow up and make a commitment to a particular line of work is really scary.”

4.2.2 Business perspective

As part of the survey of businesses, respondents were asked to rate the employability skills of school leavers in Oxfordshire. As shown in Chart 2, only about a fifth (21%) of all businesses gave a rating of ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, with only 1% giving the top rating. Almost half (49%) rated employability skills of school-leavers as either ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’. For businesses currently engaged in EBLs, this figure rose to 53%. It is also noteworthy that nearly a third of all businesses (31%) said that they ‘didn’t know’ or chose not to answer.

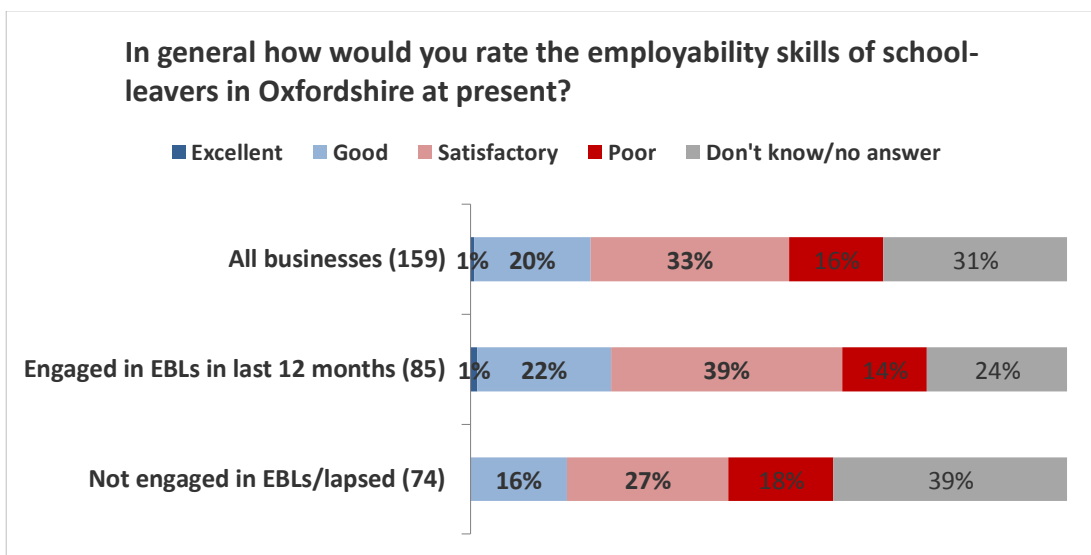


Chart 2: Perceptions of employability skills of school leavers - Oxfordshire businesses

Importance and effectiveness of work experience: The survey also asked businesses to give their view of the importance of work experience gained before leaving school in developing young people’s employability skills. The results, summarised in Chart 3 below, show that the vast majority (86%) of all businesses rate work experience as very or quite important. The importance of work experience was rated higher by businesses currently engaged in EBLs (93%) than those which are not currently engaged (78%).

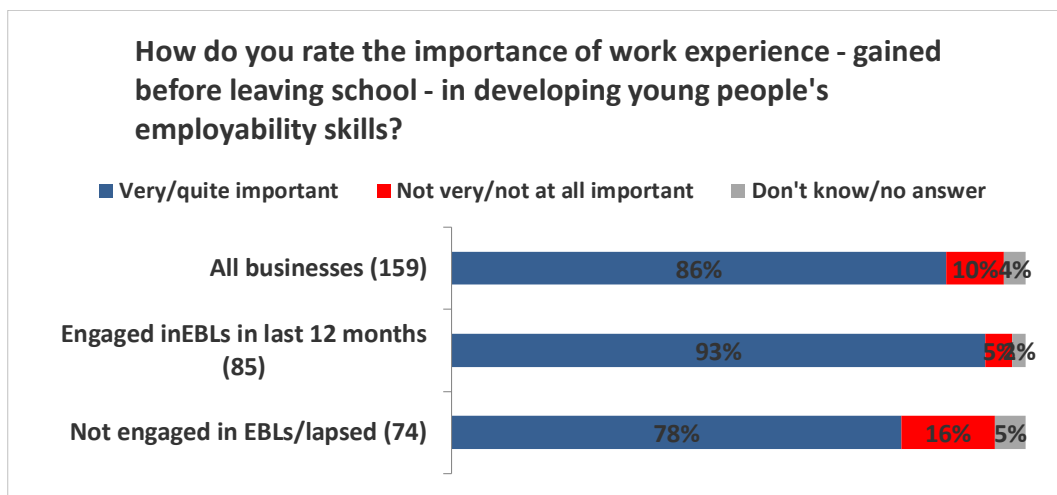


Chart 3: Perceptions of the importance of work experiencing in developing employability skills - Oxfordshire businesses

Businesses were also asked to rate the effectiveness of work experience in developing young people's employability skills (Chart 4). This showed that two thirds (66%) of all businesses saw work experience as either 'very' or 'quite' effective. Those which were not engaged in EBLs were more likely to give a rating of 'not very' or 'not at all' effective (26%) compared with those that which engaged (19%).

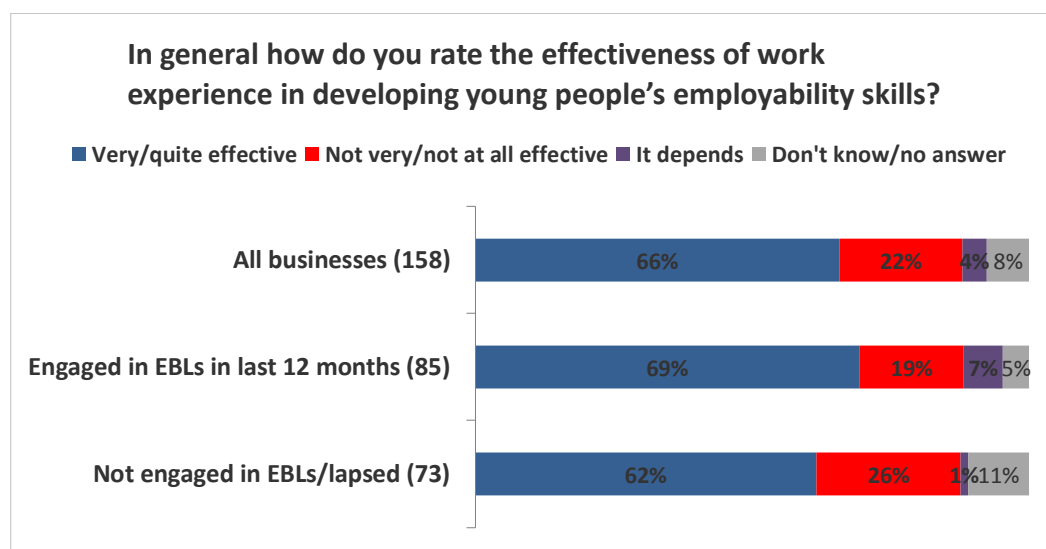


Chart 4: Perceptions of effectiveness of work experiencing in developing employability skills - Oxfordshire businesses

In general, comments from secondary schools about the effectiveness of work experience programmes were positive.

"I have never had anything but positive feedback from work-related learning as part of the school package. Generally the Year 10 teachers and tutors embrace it and recognise the impact it has on the students. They really like the fact that they can go out and visit (on the placement). They see a benefit. It forms a closer relationship between the student and the teacher. They see the young person in a completely different role. They are being independent and can show something different about themselves. It really helps the transition into Year 11."

However, comments from both businesses and schools highlighted that work experience programmes could become relatively ineffective when the key stakeholders (student, employer and school staff) failed to collaborate and communicate well and/or where their expectations and objectives were not aligned.

The role of businesses in developing employability skills: Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed that businesses, as future employers, have a responsibility for the development of the employability skills of young people before they leave school. Chart 5 below shows that an overwhelming majority of all respondents (80%) agreed that businesses do have a responsibility. The data further showed that of those agreeing almost half agreed 'strongly' as opposed to 'slightly' with the statement. Those engaged in EBLs were slightly more inclined to agree (86%) than those that were not (74%).

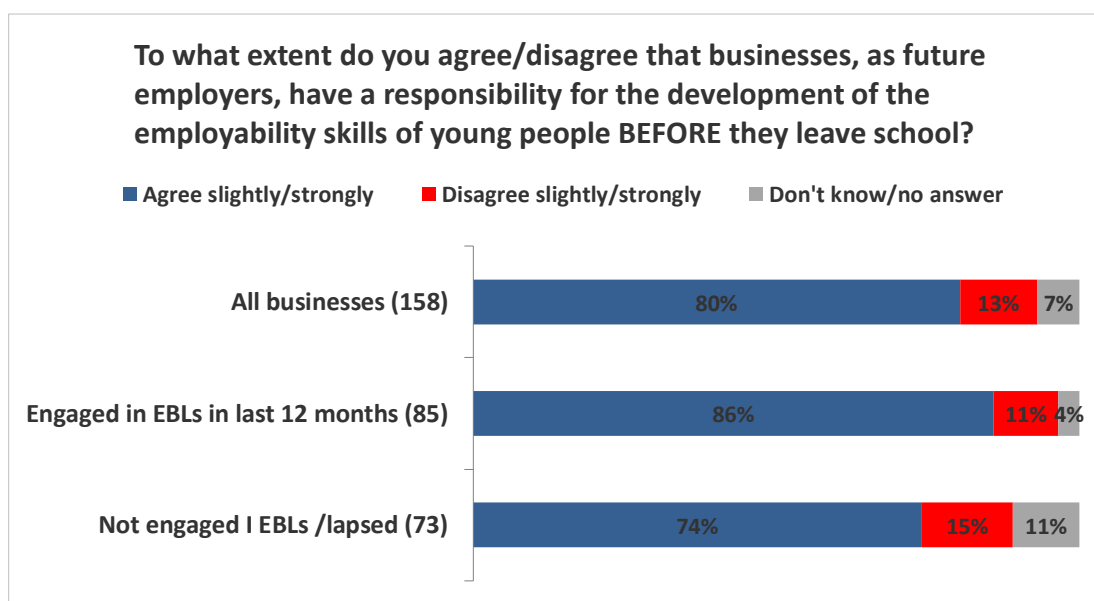


Chart 5: Views about responsibilities for the development of employability skills in young people - Oxfordshire businesses

4.3 What do EBLs and associated CEIAG activities involve?

Evidence for a range of EBL activities was provided via feedback from the primary and secondary schools, FE colleges and businesses. A detailed summary and examples of these follow.

“We have a wide range of businesses that we work with on different levels - all with the aim of raising awareness and experience amongst the young people about the world of work, about different sectors and about employability skills.”

4.3.1 Work experience

Businesses were asked to identify which types of activities they engaged in either currently or previously. Chart 6 highlights that by far the most common EBL activity was provision of work experience placements (67%).

A total of 78% (21 out of 27) of secondary schools said that they provided some kind of work experience programme. Most of these involved students going out on a one-week work

placement during Year 10 or 11. In a very small number of schools, the placement lasted two weeks. Three of the 21 schools also arranged additional work experience placements for sixth formers (Year 12). Two arranged work experience for the sixth form students only. Two of the 27 schools did not send students out on work experience.

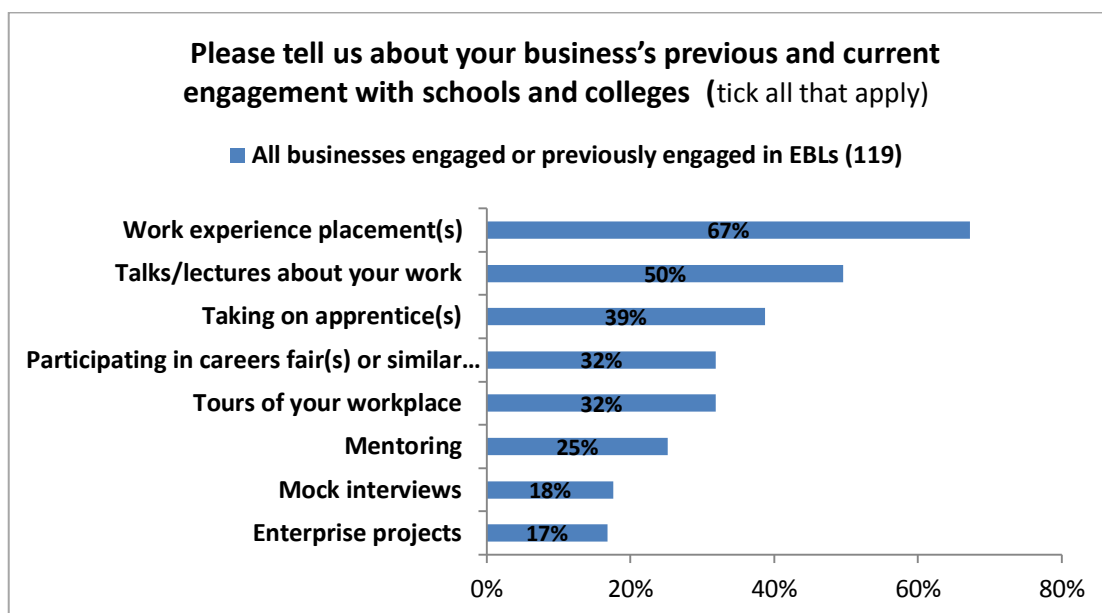


Chart 6: Types of current or previous EBL engagement activities - Oxfordshire businesses

Range of placements: Some schools had developed a comprehensive range of work placements to offer their students and some examples demonstrated that this could be an excellent way of helping them to develop skills and gain experience.

"We have a wide range of employers involved for work placements from [named large companies] with structured programmes, to the guy who cuts lawns."

"[Named large company] have been a brilliant local business to engage with and they have always offered an excellent work experience programme exclusively to our students. This could be held up as a useful blue print for other employers to follow as they make it really worthwhile for the students rather than just expecting them to stand/sit and watch other people all week."

Other schools/FE colleges offered a more limited choice of placements and were working with out-of-date information.

"The database of placements we have is mostly educational so the local nursery always takes maybe four or five students. A lot of the primary schools in [the local area] take them."

"A lot of the contacts on the database have been there for years and if the person has left then what happens to the letters when we send them?"

Some said that they thought that certain placements resulted in very little benefit for a number of reasons, such as the student's own attitude or what they are expected to do.

For example, employers sometimes said that the student “doesn't want to be here, has no enthusiasm and isn't behaving.”

“For some in Year 10 ‘it's useless.’ For example, there are questions around the value of work experience for a student that stacks shelves who wants to work in STEM”

“... some inherent value, but limited. At the other end, where students don't know what they want to do they get shoved into something and either don't last or struggle on. The best placements are where students have to work hard to get them, and they understand it's a privilege.”

4.3.2 Talks or lectures

Talks/lectures were the second most common EBL activity among businesses surveyed with 50% saying they engaged in this way.

The approach of secondary schools in arranging talks or lectures differed from school to school. Some only targeted students who expressed an interest in the specific sector of the visiting speaker. Others took a more blanket approach by inviting speakers to address a large group of students, for example, during assembly. Pros and cons for each approach were identified. The targeted approach was recognised for its value in engaging and informing those who already have an interest in the specific sector. However, this was not seen as helpful in raising awareness in students who have little or no knowledge about the sector. Conversely, the blanket approach was thought to help raise awareness but runs the risk of alienating large groups of students who have already decided the sector is not for them.

“We find a lot of males go on the business studies courses - so we got two female business owners to talk to all the Year 9s. One was from a headhunting business, the other was a business consultancy. There were lines of girls afterwards to ask questions - asking what do we need to do to become this?”

Several schools explained that students tended to engage very well with speakers from industry who had previously attended the school and were relatively near to their own age group.

Interviews with business people revealed that those who had not delivered talks or lectures in schools/FE colleges were generally quite motivated to do so. However, they said that they had not been approached and invited to contribute in this way.

4.3.3 Taking on apprentice(s)

There was a difference in the way apprenticeships were classified in the context of EBLs. Employers tended to think of them as a type of EBL activity whereas schools/FE colleges saw them as employment and not directly part of the EBL landscape. A total of 39% of businesses surveyed said that they had taken on one or more apprentices at some time.

The first example below, provided by an FE college, shows how an apprenticeship proved to be a more suitable next step after GCSEs than A levels.

The second shows how an apprenticeship had resulted in positive outcomes for the employer, the apprentice and the college.

“A student was coming to the end of his first year of A levels when he saw the advert for the motor sport apprenticeship. He said he wasn't enjoying the A level route - he had always been more practical. 'I was interested in working in engineering but hadn't considered that I could start my career with an apprenticeship.' The college is now delivering his apprenticeship and he is travelling the world as part of [high profile racing team]. He is a classic example of people going to do A levels because they don't know enough about these other routes.”

“Another apprentice has said 'When I'm on the starting grid in Bahrain or China talking to the drivers and preparing for the race - I can't quite believe where I am and what I've achieved - it's a dream come true.' He completed his GCSEs, he went to one of the colleges to do Level 3 Engineering/Motor Sport. He completed that and took up an apprenticeship at [a well-known motor engineering company] delivered by the college. He also said 'My route so far has been incredibly smooth from completing my course to moving into the apprenticeship and building my skills and experience. I hope that it continues and will keep working hard to ensure it does.’”

Interviews with some businesses revealed that past experiences of offering apprenticeships and engaging with the process of using training providers has proved problematic. This either related to difficulties they had with the attitude and poor levels of commitment of young people or the standard of service and training provided by the nominated training provider. Some had chosen to develop their own apprenticeship scheme rather than using the standard format. It is important to note that some larger businesses allocate a specific budget to recruiting and managing apprentices.

“You have to take on ten apprentices to find one good one “

“When you are recruiting now (versus, say 15 years ago), there is a distinct lack of young people that 'light you up' ... We don't get any greater thrill than helping to develop young people and just meeting young people who you can really see potential in but there seem to be less and less of them

“Our experience has been that people talk to us about apprenticeships and they say ‘We've got lots of funding for you’ which is fine but I am much more interested in what they are going to deliver than how much money they are going to give me. I am not interested in a few certificates on the wall and them delivering me someone who just isn't good enough. Instead, it can be better to identify potential within the company and support those people. We have tended to put our own plan together - not called an apprenticeship scheme but to achieve the kind of outcomes we want. It has involved us putting people through their City and Guilds and that involves six weeks off site.

The original apprenticeships meant you learnt real engineering - proper maths, proper science, how things work etc. Our last experience was that the training provided has all become dumbed down and so we are better off putting something together ourselves. In an effort to tick boxes, government after government have never quite got it right.”

4.3.4 Careers fairs/events

Schools hold and attend a variety of internal and external events. They see these as important activities in their EBL and CEIAG calendar.

Some schools arrange their own careers fairs which are typically held during an evening on their premises. They invite local employers and FE colleges to attend and talk to the students about their career options.

“We have a very large careers convention each year - where we have over 70 employers and FE colleges and apprenticeship providers come to the school.”

Some schools within certain geographical areas had collaborated to run a syndicated careers fair. This allowed them to pool resources and was more manageable in terms of time for the employers as they only needed to attend one event to come into contact with students from a number of schools. Schools also pointed out the value for the students of mixing with their peers from schools other than their own.

The majority of schools mentioned Oxford Careers Fest. This annual event is run by Oxford City Learning and hosted at the Mini plant in Oxford. It lasts two days and is aimed at 15 to 17-year-olds “from within the city and across the county.” The 2014 event was supported by The Skills Show, the European Social Fund and the National Careers Service. Oxfordshire County Council Business Skills Team and the hosts were local partners: “Some 50 exhibitors from all key industry sectors provided interactive activities for students to ‘have a go’ and find out more about career opportunities, routes to employment, apprenticeships and higher education” (Oxford City Learning, 2014).

Awareness of Careers Fest among the schools was high and some said they took students to the event every year. Opinions about it were mixed with some seeing it as a useful awareness exercise and others feeling that students needed more support to get the most out of it.

“They find it semi-useful but they don't always ask the right questions - they get very excited about the free pens etc. We prepare them for it but not sure if they make the most of it. Could be where mentoring comes in.”

Some felt strongly that the larger events were not always seen the best way to engage with students. They favoured more focused activities involving smaller groups of students.

“There is too much emphasis on, say, careers fairs - it will tick the box and that is it. Students need more. They need small group sessions with employers to find out about the job, ask questions etc.”

Some schools said that they did not take students to Careers Fest because it was too far away and there were issues with time, cost and logistics.

“You would like to think you could take a group of students out somewhere - but whether that is going to work is very difficult because of the logistics. Having teachers available to take them, providing transport, covering the teachers’ lessons. We looked at going to Careers Fest - but the timing of it just wasn’t going to work.”

Those schools situated near the borders of the county felt that similar events held in neighbouring counties were potentially more relevant for their students. For example, The Skills Show at Birmingham NEC for those in the north of the county. Very few businesses talked about involvement in, or awareness of, Careers Fest although a few mentioned careers events more generically.

Apprenticeship events: The Apprenticeship Launchpad (see appendix E) was mentioned by a few schools but it was not mentioned by businesses - indicating very limited awareness across both sectors. The Apprenticeship Launchpad was developed at the beginning of 2013 by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of the Science Vale UK Skills Steering Group: “The aim is to raise the profile of science, engineering and technology careers as well as promoting apprenticeships particularly in STEM-related industries.”

A few schools mentioned holding their own events that focused on raising awareness of apprenticeships.

“We run a dedicated apprenticeship convention. It is now in its second year. It has gone down very well. We have aimed it at Years 11, 12 and 13.

Not everyone who stays on to do A levels necessarily wants to go to university - particularly with rising tuition fees - so I felt there was a real market for this. It links in with companies and training organisations - who come and support the event and talk to students.

You have to think about who you contact - actual employers would only really want to come along if they annually recruit apprentices - ...there has to be something in it for them. A smaller employer who perhaps just wants one apprentice every other year or on an ad-hoc basis is not going to want to come along. But that is where the role of the training organisations comes in - because they deal with lots of different companies and there is something in it for them.”

4.3.5 Tours and involvement at the workplace

As shown in Chart 6 above, 32% of businesses said they had engaged in this form of EBL at some point. Overwhelmingly, participants from business and education thought that this was a good way of engaging and raising the awareness of students about the world of work and specific industries.

“We have set up our own hospitality-based activity for gifted and talented students in Year 8. We have very good links with local restaurants and hotels - including the Waddesden Manor and Le Manoir - we have worked closely with them. Students go to the venues, come back and work on an activity and then present. The kids learn a lot about how business works just from that one day.”

“Some of the maths students went to GE Aviation recently for a day that was specially arranged for them. They were able to experience what it was like to work at the company and they did activities and tasks and really enjoyed it.”

However, this was also seen as one of the more demanding type so EBL activities in terms of time and other resources.

4.3.6 Mentoring and mock interviews

Mentoring; Only one quarter of businesses surveyed said that they had been involved in providing mentoring to schools/FE colleges (see Chart 6 above). Interviews identified that the mentoring may be for members of staff or for students.

“We have business mentoring. It is quite a small programme now but it used to be big a couple of years ago. We are looking to build it up again. We have three business mentors including Oxford University and a local quantity surveyor. Our contacts were through a business breakfast club - word of mouth.”

“We have introduced a Career Academy - part of Career Academies UK. It focuses on linking students to the real world of work, through guru lectures, mentoring, workplace visits and internships.”

Mock interviews: Again, for businesses surveyed this was an infrequent activity with just 18% saying they had been involved in this way. However, the schools which did arrange mock interviews perceived that there were substantial benefits for the students to have input from and contact with local employers.

“We do mock interviews for Year 10. We arrange it but we get people in from companies to do the interviews so that it is more like a real interview. The students choose the area that they would like to be interviewed for. Then we do some coaching with them in terms of the questions they might be asked and possible answers they could give then we ‘send them on their way.’ So they make decisions about the sorts of clothing they think is going to be appropriate, how they present themselves and speak to people. Having people in from outside really adds something valuable to the process. If it was their teachers doing it they wouldn't take it seriously. We try to impress on them how important it is - i.e. meeting people from the community where one day they may work and is an opportunity to start building up their links.”

One school mentioned that their district council had been helpful in developing local business links for the purpose of mock interviews. The value of engaging with Inspiring Futures (an EBLO) was also mentioned in terms of finding businesses to help with mock interviews.

"[I have been] engaging with Inspiring Futures to access people from particular industry sectors. It is free and I have had a really huge response from putting out an appeal for people to do mock interviews. Examples include [a] prison warden, fire and rescue, HR people, lots of local people in the science park, entrepreneurs, people who work for the universities. Amazing range - I wanted 10 people for each of 3 days (30) and have actually been able to pick and choose. Very useful - highly praised!"

4.3.7 Enterprise activities

Again a relatively small percentage (17%) of businesses had engaged in some kind of enterprise activity with schools/FE colleges. Feedback from schools suggested that enterprise activities tended to be more focused on the sixth form students rather than the younger age groups although not in every case. Young Enterprise, an EBLO, was engaged by some schools to run enterprise projects.

"Young Enterprise is a sixth form thing. It is timetabled and it is a choice they have as one of the enrichment activities. They set up their own business."

Some schools saw the costs as prohibitive.

"We have run a Young Enterprise group - that was useful. However, the cost of registration was too much ... As we tend to do in this school - we [now] do it ourselves."

"Young Enterprise seems expensive to me because the people who come to us are volunteers. Not sure where the money goes - there is a lot of paperwork."

As with most of the EBL activities, their profile was augmented when supported by senior staff.

"The head[teacher] gives full backing to all the enterprise projects. For example - some students went on a construction challenge - when they came back she met with them in her office and commended them and gave them praise. It is something we value in the school."

4.4 How are EBLs and associated CEIAG activities set up, developed and managed?

4.4.1 Setting up and developing EBLs

Schools/FE colleges: Approaches to setting up and developing EBLs within schools/FE colleges varied widely but finding employers to provide work experience placements tended to be the primary focus for all.

“The starting point, in terms of making links, has always been work experience. Every year we are renewing contacts – phone and email - and finding new ones and establishing those.”

“A lot of our really good business links come out of work experience because we have developed a relationship over the last ten years. We use those people for other things.”

Generally there is a silo approach to developing EBLs in and across schools with each department and establishment doing it on a ‘need to’ basis. Feedback from schools/FE colleges demonstrated that this resulted in a great deal of duplication of effort across the sector and sometimes even within the same establishment.

“Generally ad hoc - depends on subject areas and syllabus ... different departments in the school work out who they need to contact in terms of local businesses and they will contact directly but if they get stuck they come to me.”

“It seems that lots of schools are duplicating effort - chasing various employers.”

A small number of schools took a proactive approach to developing links by the head teacher or another member of staff engaging in some direct networking. Examples included running and attending business breakfast events.

“When putting together the business breakfast agenda - I wonder ‘how can we best use this group, how can we make the most of their combined skills and experience’.”

While many schools employed a fairly set process in terms of developing EBLs, a few talked about how they recognised the need to take a more personal approach.

“You build up a trust with the businesses. They know that we are at the end of a phone and they like a clear idea of the commitment. They want to help, there is a trust there and a commitment to the school - they can see what we are trying to do.”

Again, a small number of schools mentioned making links via ex-students, teachers, parents and/or governors.

“Because we are quite isolated, a lot of this is done through the right parents and people we know.”

“We are currently developing links with alumni students. We are signed up to Future First which basically develops a database of our ex-students.”

Those on county borders linked with businesses in neighbouring counties.

“We are on the border so we have a cross county view of things. We will work with businesses in [a neighbouring county] as strongly as we would Oxfordshire - it doesn't matter to us.”

There were generally positive perceptions of how businesses respond to requests for involvement but some were concerned that they, that is the schools, needed to make the first move.

“Everyone is enthusiastic. You cannot knock the enthusiasm of business to link with schools but no-one comes to you.”

There was also evidence that the way in which schools invite businesses to engage is sometimes less than effective than it could be.

“It's all fine to go out to networking and talk to the businesses but it actually needs to be happening in the schools which is why we have arranged that. [Recently] 700 invites went out to [businesses for] that event but we had about 15 people [respond] so the businesses can't say that we don't engage - they need to actually engage with us! The current climate doesn't help though.”

Businesses: Businesses which had engaged in EBLs were asked how the relationship with the school/FE college had begun. As shown in Chart 7 below, well over half said it was as a result of direct contact with the school/FE college, while a much smaller proportion (16%) said that a third party organisation was involved. Another 20% identified that EBLs had been developed through both direct contact and through a third party.

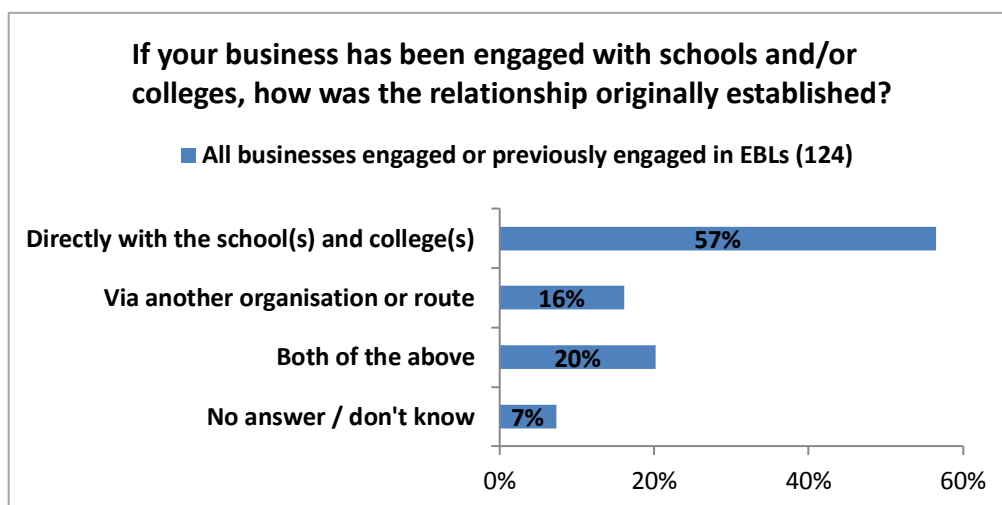


Chart 7: Established relationships with schools/FE colleges - Oxfordshire businesses

Businesses identified the EBLOs listed in Table 7 below as the third party organisation(s) which had been involved in establishing their relationship(s) with schools/FE colleges. This shows that the total number of mentions of any EBLOs by the 127 businesses currently or previously engaged in EBLs was 49. This confirmed that 61% (78) of these had no links with an EBLO. This identifies a significant opportunity for development in terms of how and through whom EBLs can be set up in the future.

It is also important to note that some businesses identified organisations other than EBLOs which had been involved in helping them set up EBLs. Individual mentions included Faringdon Chamber of Commerce, “various arts organisations”, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP), Rotary Club, Oxford Business First, Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and “business networks.”

If the relationship(s) were established via another organisation(s) or route please tell us which ones were involved - tick all that apply	Businesses involved in EBLs mentioning (count)
Young enterprise	10
O2I (Opportunity to Inspire)	7
Oxfordshire Business Education Alliance	6
ROBIN (Responsible Oxfordshire Business Involvement Network)	6
Oxfordshire County Council Work Experience Team	4
Working Knowledge	4
Business In The Community/ Business Class	3
Oxford Business X (Obx)	2
Science Oxford – STEM Ambassadors	2
Skillforce	1
Teach First	1
Inspiring The Future	1
Oxford Learning Collaboration	1
NiTP IT Apprenticeships	1
Total number of mentions of any EBLO	49
<i>Base size (all businesses engaged or previously engaged in EBLs)</i>	<i>(127)</i>

Table 7: Education Business Link Organisations (EBLOs) in Oxfordshire

The following provides an example of how one business used various different routes and organisations to develop their EBLs.

“We have links with lots of community groups, parents, governors, etc and have also met with the council and related groups, all of whom have had input into generating relationships with schools.”

4.4.2 Managing EBLs and associated CEIAG activities in schools/FE colleges

Work experience: There was no set formula for how EBLs were managed for the purposes of arranging work experience placements. However, all schools engaged the services of Oxfordshire County Council’s Work Experience Team to some extent. Sometimes they took up the bare minimum service which involved carrying out health, safety and insurance checks on employers. Others engaged the more enhanced levels of service including the placement of the majority of students with employers or arranging placements for those students who had not found one through their school or on their own by a certain date in the programme calendar.

“We subscribe to the mid-level of the County Council’s service for this. They do the checks and we run it ... [the students] are encouraged to find their own [placement] first up to January. After that, they can see what else is available. OCC don’t find placements they just hold them on their database.”

In general Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) was seen as doing a good job by the schools.

“Direct services in the OCC team do a fantastic job – there are a lot of different areas – plumbers, electricians, carpenters, garages – they take on a huge amount of people – they are a really good contact but we need more.”

“We subscribe to the county council service. I like that because they have fairly detailed job descriptions and the pupils can look at them at home with their parents. Being electronic – it speeds things up as well.”

However, some identified challenges in meeting the relevant deadlines.

“OCC have a timeframe to get forms submitted which is a challenge and some forms are not submitted by then.”

A work experience co-ordinator was in place in some schools or the work was covered by the careers co-ordinator or another member of staff. Some schools placed strong emphasis on students finding their own work placements, seeing this as an important part of the development process, while others took the lead on this for them.

“Normally with Year 10 – 80% I organise, 20% will find their own.”

There was evidence that some additional support was provided or an alternative approach adopted for more vulnerable students.

“We have a special programme in place that we used this year for those students that we don’t feel can cope in [a work placement], left it late to arrange, or for whom arrangements had fallen through. It was fantastic, we have got two student support members of staff, both ex-Army, both teach PE but their main focus is difficult students. They ran a week-long course on things like interview skills and at the end of that week those students (about eight or ten of them) got a certificate in emergency first aid at work and a BTEC either level 2 or 3 in work experience skills. So they got something out of the week as well as those who went out on work experience [placements].”

Delivery of CEIAG: The delivery of CEIAG in schools/FE colleges is intrinsically linked to the set-up, delivery and management of EBLs in schools. Indeed, some participants from schools/FE colleges argued that things could be better managed if EBLs and CEIAG were viewed ‘as one’. However, the way in which these activities were delivered differed between individual schools/FE colleges. In some schools, one person was responsible for managing most aspects of EBLs and CEIAG, in others the responsibilities were kept separate.

OFSTED requires schools to provide impartial CEIAG. For this reason, many schools buy in the services of an organisation called Adviza to provide careers advice services.

“The reason we have gone for Adviza, rather than employing someone internally, is that we have an obligation to provide impartial advice. At one point we talked about [someone internal] taking that role on but we felt there would be a lack of impartiality.”

Those with CEIAG covered by internal team member(s) argue that this does not compromise the ability to give independent advice.

"I am employed directly by the school. You could ask - does that make me independent/impartial? I would say that if you analyse where our students go - you will see they all have positive outcomes."

"We have talked about employing our own careers adviser so we could have more use of that time. You get so much more for your money. I am confident that with checks and balances, observations and the destinations report, action plans after interviews giving the full range of advice covered - that will prove it is independent."

The careers advisers employed directly by schools appeared to collaborate and communicate to support and learn from each other.

"There are about 12 of us careers advisers [employed by schools directly]. We meet up every term to discuss what works well etc, arrange to visit conferences, share resources etc. It is really useful to have that."

Some schools provided every student with a one-to-one interview with a careers advisor.

"I give an hour to every Year 11 - to discuss where they are going/what they want to do/whether there is any way I can help them or provide any information they need. Sometimes even though they are absolutely sure where they are going, it is nice for them to have an hour to talk about themselves. We talk about social networking, extra curricular, revision, and managing time - all the things that link to them. It is impartial because I am impartial. I write a report on every student I see, with an action plan and they get a copy."

In other schools, there was a targeted approach focusing mainly on the more vulnerable students with a higher risk of becoming NEET.

"We tend to work with targeted groups - more the lower ability - those who might struggle to get into work - this will be targeted in Year 10 and then again in Year 11. We work very closely with the pastoral support and the learning support departments. This gets the students confident about their skills and talking about themselves - all those softer qualitative skills. They get more used to being in that set up."

Some schools mentioned online tools and services used to support delivery of CEIAG (see Appendix E).

4.5 Why do businesses engage in EBLs?

According to those surveyed, the most common reasons for businesses engaging in EBLs were related to giving back to or supporting the local community and 60% said that they engaged to fulfil social responsibilities (see Chart 8 below).

"It makes you feel good to give something back."

"I love it because I wanted to be a teacher. I like seeing them blossom."

"The CSR [corporate social responsibility] agenda in general – it's the right thing to do."

"It's just about realising your place in the community – we have an obligation to do this for each other."

"Business owes it ... we have a duty to help the education system."

Just over a third (35%) said that they engaged simply because they were asked. This begs the question of how many non-engaged businesses would become engaged if they were simply invited to do so by a school/FE college.

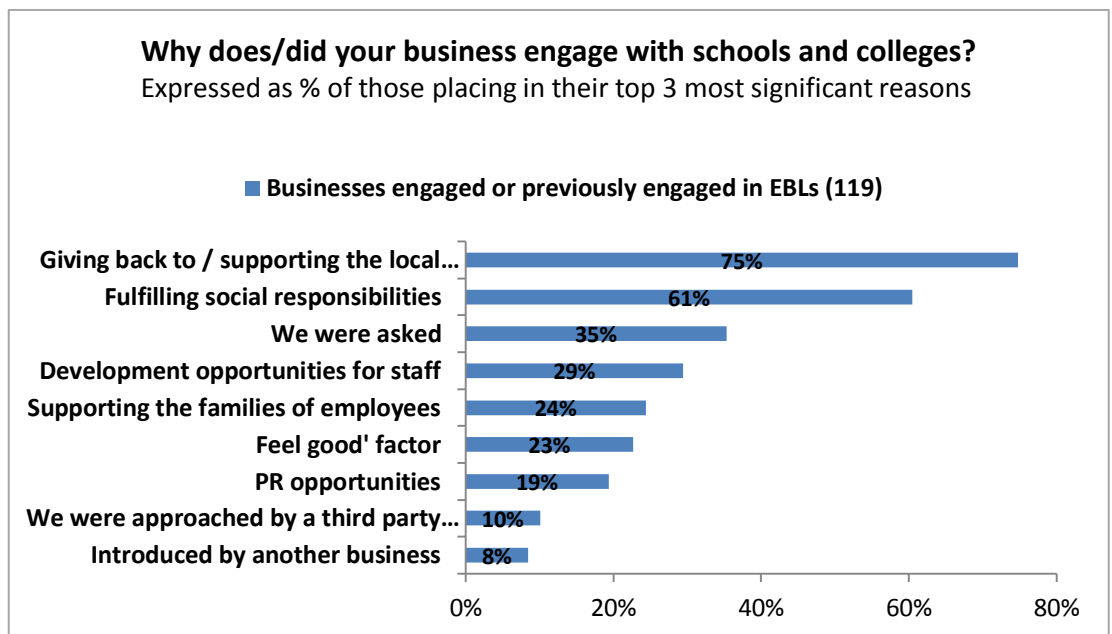


Chart 8: Reasons for engagement in EBL activities - Oxfordshire businesses

Where other reasons for engagement were provided, there was a clear message that some businesses see EBL engagement as a way of developing their talent pipeline and their profile as an employer and supplier.

"Students helped may be future employees/future clients."

"Good for employee engagement."

"Improves the business' image/good marketing/brand awareness."

"It helps our image - engagement with potential customers - e.g. parents at careers conventions ... It's just about realising your place in the community - we have an obligation to do this for each other."

4.6 What are the obstacles and barriers to engagement in EBLs and associated CEIAG activities?

4.6.1 Schools/FE colleges

Resources: Money and time were seen as the main barriers to developing EBLs for schools/FE colleges. It is important to note that the budget for EBLs was often viewed within the broader context of EBL **and** all other CEIAG activities and support.

"If half of my teaching timetable could be taken away from me, I'm sure I could work wonders. It is time for the staff and it is taking the students off timetable. It is really difficult - making sure that we are hitting everything."

"You would like to think you could take a group of students out somewhere - but whether that is going to work is very difficult because of the logistics. Having teachers available to take them, providing transport, covering the teachers' lessons."

Often participants focused on the cost of providing careers advice which, for the majority, involved paying for the services of one or more careers advisers from Adviza.

"It is ok, obviously in an ideal world you would like Adviza in more. You would like them to be able to see every single Year 11, every single sixth former - and realistically that is not going to happen on the number of days we have. There would be a very good case for having more days."

"One challenge is always funding. How do we fund these extra services? Ideally, we would like to employ Adviza full time but we cannot afford that."

"We have money within 'core' to pay for careers advice teaching and have some money available for the work experience programme but it's not a huge amount."

Conflicting priorities: Another significant obstacle to maximising EBL engagement was seen as the level of importance placed on EBL and associated CEIAG activities in terms of the core curriculum and performance measurement of schools. With the emphasis placed firmly on achievement of five GCSEs grade A* to C and level C or above for Maths and English, many schools felt that they were forced to give very limited time and resources to EBL and associated CEIAG activities. This was particularly pronounced in schools where there was a strong focus on as many students as possible going to university or college.

“We have to get them 5 A to Cs or whatever they need to get to Uni. That is the emphasis of the curriculum and that is what we have to get on with - emphasis is on teaching and learning. We are always being told that to go into work or college they have got to have those grades so those boxes have to be ticked fundamentally. That has to be our primary focus. Most of our students go to further or higher ed. Employability skills are not really discussed as such.”

“The focus as a teacher here is made pretty clear - it is to get the grades ... Also, they think I deal with careers and they do not need to worry about it.”

“In Year 10 a lot do their optional subjects - BTECS or GCSEs - done over one year – so [they may do] say, two optional subjects in Year 9, two optional subjects in Year 10 and two in Year 11. Before - in Year 11 - they had a bit more time - now it is quite hard to get students out.”

Low awareness of EBLOs: There was generally low awareness of EBLOs across schools/FE colleges and this, in itself, highlights a significant barrier to engagement. A list of EBLOs mentioned by one or more schools/FE colleges is provided in appendix F.

Challenges with specific sectors: Further obstacles related to specific industry sectors. Schools, mainly when referring to work experience placements, identified that they found it difficult to find them for students in particular sectors, including:

- Media/journalism
- The arts
- Medicine and healthcare
- Animal care
- Police/security
- Photography
- Catering
- Sport
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Other public services

In addition, schools pointed out that students’ lack of interest in certain sectors or types of work represented a barrier to engagement.

To an extent, this was related to the problem of gender stereotyping. Schools find it difficult to place female students with businesses that focused on science and engineering, for example.

“I believe there will be so many science and engineering jobs ... If they have work experience [in this sector] and enjoy it, they may think that type of career is more for them.”

Red tape/legislation: Some recognised that, although certain businesses would like to be involved, they do not feel able to engage due to various legislative restrictions, including health and safety and insurance. This was identified as being particularly relevant to SMEs that have limited budget to spend in putting such things in place. Age restrictions were identified as a further legislative barrier, for example, students must be aged 16 years or more to be offered a work placement in security or medical settings.

“We need more local people. We need more local science - employers sometimes say they have to be over 16 in science and healthcare.”

Competition with other schools: While a small number of schools demonstrated that they collaborated to achieve their EBL objectives, some saw other schools as competition when looking to engage with local businesses and secure relevant work placements.

"We use [name of large local employer]. They always offer us placements. They get a lot of requests from local schools so we have to get in quick although they probably do give us a little bit of priority but they won't hold places for us."

"The work experience is unbelievably competitive (against other schools) - it is not helpful because we all go out at the same time."

Access to business contacts: While many schools had reasonably comprehensive databases of local business contacts, others appeared to have difficulty maintaining or gaining access to up-to-date information of this kind. Comments from some participants confirmed this.

"We surf the net and cold call to get the contacts we need. It is really hard."

"Sometimes it is very difficult to convince them of what is in it for them (ROI)."

Location: Schools in more rural areas struggled to overcome barriers relating to where they were located. Even when good work placements were found for students, they sometimes could not accept them because public transport was inadequate.

Aspirations and expectations of students and parents: There was a sense of frustration from some schools that parents' and students' expectations of work placements were too high.

"Parents, students and employers do not understand what Year 10 work experience is. It is only for a week - you do not have to do it for the rest of your life. It is about getting all those skills and going somewhere where you are going to be busy. That is one of the hardest nuts to crack. We try to address it every year. Parents think - for example - their child aged 14 wants to be a lawyer - therefore they should be in a legal practice. They want to be a doctor therefore they should go to the hospital - at 14 you cannot do that. If you want to do any of these jobs - you have to demonstrate the skills - and you can do that in a variety of settings. Some of them get it straightaway and others just do not get it at all."

"When it comes to choosing work and a career - young people are more likely to go for the more transparent roles that we see out and about. So, if you say to a typical Year 10 - here is the opportunity to work in an office for your work experience - they will say they don't want to - it is boring."

In other cases, the aspirations of students were perceived to be too low.

"Our main problem - greater than not having many resources or [our] location - is the aspiration that the students come in with. They tend to be extremely low. Only a handful consider university. Most think I'll leave school and just get a job."

"No matter how it is dressed up for them, it is difficult for students to understand the value of what is on offer until they are actually in the workplace and they realise what it is all about."

The different levels of expectations and aspirations appeared to be broadly determined by geographical area. Expectations were higher in the affluent areas than those in the less well-off and deprived areas of the county.

Differences in parents' perceptions: Additional barriers and obstacles relating to parents were highlighted: some parents, often those of the more vulnerable students, gave very little support for work experience and other EBL activities offered to their children. Another issue was seen to be a general lack of understanding about the various options available.

"My concern is that parents do not understand pathways anymore. They have fears of higher education because of the costs and will put their children off at a young age."

Other mentions of obstacles and barriers to developing EBLs:

- Lack of clear, regularly updated information about the local labour market
- The way in which work experience programmes were presented to students – lack of energy, passion and alignment with what 'makes them tick'

4.6.2 Special schools

There were some barriers and obstacles to developing EBLs, in addition to those discussed above that were of particular relevance to special schools:

- Communicating students' capabilities to those who are not familiar with learning disabilities
- Obtaining credible external references for students
- Cost and provision of transport - students were generally unable to drive and some had physical disabilities
- Reduced funding and other support from local and central government in recent years for work experience checks
- Competition with mainstream schools for work experience placements

4.6.3 Businesses

Businesses were asked to identify the top three most significant obstacles and barriers to increasing their engagement (if they were already engaged) or initiating engagement (if they were not engaged or lapsed) with schools/FE colleges in the next 12 months. As shown in Chart 9 below, time was the main concern followed by having insufficient resources to oversee students. This demonstrates that participants were clearly thinking in terms of work placements as opposed to any other form of EBL activity. Other significant obstacles were identified as legal red tape and administration. Businesses which were not currently engaged in EBL activities were even more likely to identify legal and administrative obstacles (53%) than those which were engaged (43%). They also identified limited or no business benefits as being greater barriers to engagement (34%) than their engaged counterparts (20%).

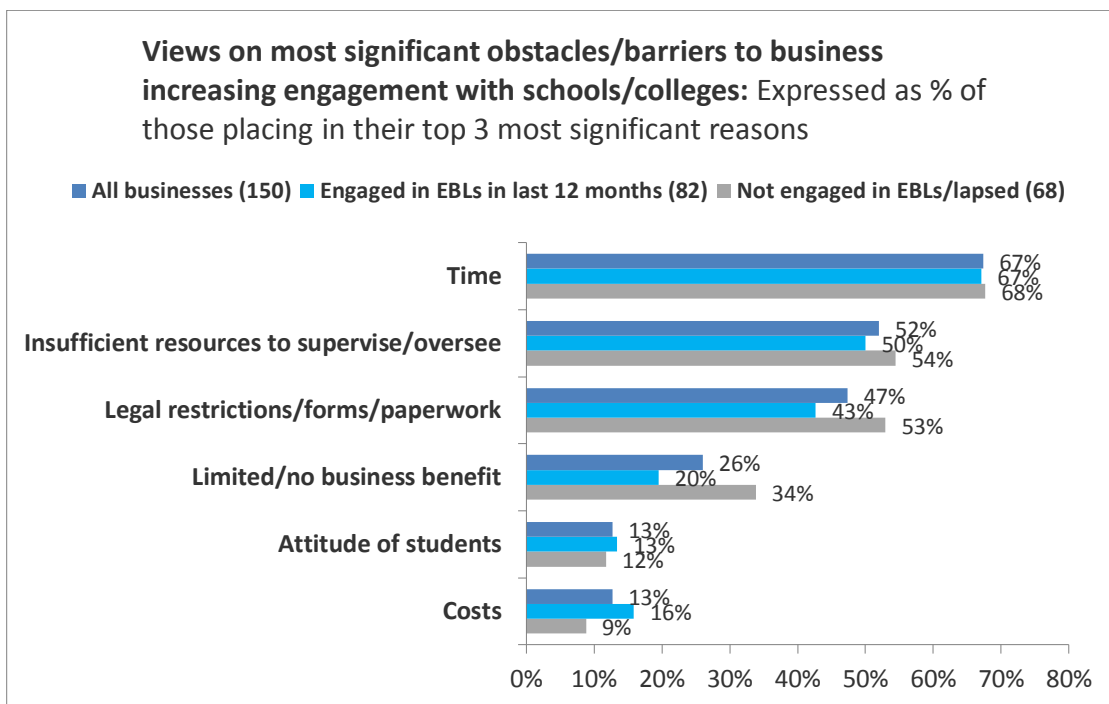


Chart 9: Perceptions of obstacles and barriers to increasing EBL engagement - Oxfordshire businesses

Comments showed that some businesses saw schools and FE colleges as part of the challenge.

“Schools’ reluctance and inability to engage” (Non-engaged business)

“Attitude of learning providers. No relationship building between placements” (Non-engaged business)

“Schools don’t make it easy. We receive general e-mails, which feel impersonal, which don’t inspire me to be involved” (Engaged business)

“[A lack of] willingness of schools to engage with us” (Engaged business)

“Schools seem very focused on their own priorities and targets” (Engaged business)

“Attitude of teachers” (Engaged business)

While others saw the need for some kind of additional support and information to drive action and bring education and business closer together.

"We need someone outside to drive the thing. We are generally too busy and it falls off the radar" (Non-engaged business)

"Administrative and organisation demand it puts on us - simple as that. We don't have people here (yet) whose job it is to manage others. There needs to be an existing structure to engage with" (Non-engaged business)

"Inadequate accurate information that is easily available" (Non-engaged business)

"How do you go about getting engaged?" (Non-engaged business)

"Maybe it's in the resources, but for me it's an organisation that makes the bridge between schools and business, maintaining the relationship with both and giving both confidence that the outcomes will be achieved" (Engaged business)

Communication: Throughout the research, evidence emerged that schools/FE colleges use terms and abbreviations that are not necessarily understood by those in the business sector and vice versa. For example, STEM is a term that educators used as common currency whereas some businesses, even those under the STEM umbrella, were not familiar with the term. There are many abbreviations – EBL and CEIAG included – that are generally used in schools/FE colleges but are less familiar to those outside the education sector. This situation was summarised quite simply but one of the business participants:

"Schools and businesses do not speak the same language."

4.7 What support is needed?

The types of help and support research participants said were needed aligned with, and generally linked to, addressing the barriers and obstacles summarised in section 4.6 above.

4.7.1 Schools/FE colleges

Schools/FE colleges identified various areas in which they would like support. A number were keen to connect and share more with other schools/FE colleges in many ways from finding work experience placements to sharing careers fairs and other events.

"Help and encourage all schools, and people who work in my area to share ideas and resources and breakdown any perceptions that we are in competition with each other."

They also expressed enthusiasm for more organised events (possibly for clusters of schools).

"There is no reason why [we] couldn't work with [our] peers in other schools to arrange joint events/trips etc. Go as a partnership. This would mean the kids would get to interact with other kids - very important. Partnerships are about sharing resources and ideas, not about cherry picking. We could even share a careers adviser and students could go between schools to attend talks by people they are interested in."

"It would be good to communicate about the planned dates for everyone's Careers Fair so that we can ensure that we don't clash or could share."

There was also an appetite for help in connecting with businesses, especially in the sectors where they found it more difficult to develop EBLs. These were the same sectors identified in section 4.6.1 (page 35) in relation to finding work placements. With limited resources, a few were also keen for help accessing grants or other forms of income to go towards transporting students to work experience placements, courses and events.

Many participants said they would welcome easier access to and more consolidation of information about EBLs and associated CEIAG topics. This included details about the local labour market and provision of a more joined-up approach to accessing the large amounts of “fragmented information, on and off-line” that is available.

“Helping to get 'adverts' of opportunities from employers to Year 11. We get overwhelmed with it all.”

“We get overwhelmed sometimes with everything we want to tell them about but making it accessible and ensuring they access it is a challenge.”

Schools were generally aware of the difficulties that smaller businesses had with offering work placements and could see value in there being help available for them to reduce the red tape. Specifically, this was perceived to relate to health and safety, insurance and paperwork.

Conducting mock interviews, CV preparation, mentoring and providing talks to students were all areas where schools saw the opportunity for local businesses to support them directly.

“We would really like more employers to come and do mock interviews. It is not the same when your teacher does it! Having that 'unknown adult' doing the interview it is so much more realistic and they can give more neutral feedback on that too.”

“Mentoring from people in industry to help develop employability skills.”

Other areas where schools said they would like further help were to get more students into apprenticeships and ensuring more time and budget be devoted to CEIAG/EBL and associated CEIAG activities within the core curriculum.

Feedback from special schools suggested that support would be particularly welcome in helping them to link with their local community as well as help from local authorities with securing work experience placements for student with learning difficulties.

“Employing more people with learning disabilities in this area would improve EBLs and CIAG support. It would enable them to speak with credibility to employers about what they would gain by supporting students and employing people with disabilities and raise awareness of the ways in which barriers to perceived efficiency and output can be overcome.”

4.7.2 Businesses

While businesses generally did not feel they needed direct support in the area of EBLs, they did provide a number of suggestions and thoughts on how greater EBL engagement could be stimulated. A summary of this feedback is provided in section 4.8.3 (page 44).

4.7.3 District councils

When representatives from district councils were asked what their views were about priorities for help and support in the development of EBLs, the key themes were mainly strategic and included:

- Help to inform the design of courses so that they map directly on to the needs of the local job market in the short, medium and longer term
- Action to help change the perception of apprenticeships
- Support the idea of focus on primary school level as well as secondary level and beyond
- Provision of a connection facility that has responsibility for developing links between schools and businesses
- Sharing more data, unifying processes and plans, and minimising duplication
- Improved communication between the district councils and the county council

4.8 What would stimulate greater engagement in EBLs?

4.8.1 Stimulating engagement of young people

Tapping into student's interests and preferences: Many schools accept that one size does not fit all and see value in involving business people as mentors to work with small groups of students. This is in contrast to the idea of expecting all students in a year group to listen to a talk from someone from a particular industry that is only of interest to a relatively small proportion of the students. Some students need to be offered work placements which are relevant to their interests, resulting in a better outcome for all stakeholders. Demand for placements in certain sectors seems to outstrip supply including media/journalism, the arts, medicine and healthcare, animal care, police/security, photography, catering, sport, manufacturing, construction and public services.

To maximise engagement in EBL activities, it was also generally recognised that work is needed to help overcome gender stereotyping in career choices and provide more support and information to get students into apprenticeships and to secure more time for this and associated CEIAG activities in the school curriculum and budget.

“We know that some of our students do lack employability skills. This is where mentoring might help or business people being able to work with small groups of students.”

Helping students to discover their preferred career path(s) was also highlighted as something that can be forgotten. This included the need to help students to identify what motivates and interests them.

Work experience: Some schools suggested that it was important for students to go out in to the world of work earlier than is currently the norm or more often. It was observed that what used to be common - most teenagers having Saturday and holiday jobs - is now unusual and that this has a negative impact on the early development of employability skills.

Improving how work experience is presented to students was seen as a way of stimulating their engagement in EBL activities. In particular, reducing the focus on process to make it upbeat, motivational, fun and engaging was emphasised.

More direct contact with employers: Many of those interviewed in schools felt that students would engage in and benefit more from EBL activities that involved direct contact with employers. These included mock interviews.

In addition, help with CV preparation and real business people coming in to talk to students about what they do was welcomed.

“We forget sometimes that the only people - adults - that the students regularly get to see in school are teachers and they have generally all followed the same career route!”

Help with delivering employability skills workshops at different levels (Year 7 up to sixth form) was also welcomed.

4.8.2 Stimulating engagement of schools

Same-sector collaboration: Some schools saw that to create greater EBL activity, they needed to connect and share with other schools and FE colleges, and to tackle particular challenges.

“Help and encourage all schools, and people who work in my area, to share ideas and resources and breakdown any perceptions that we are in competition with each other.”

“We have collaborated with another local school to attempt to get more girls into construction ... and [a local company] is beginning to engage to help get girls into this area too.”

An example of how collaboration could be useful was holding careers fairs. A road show approach was suggested, taking a fair to different schools at different times rather than having schools competing for the same employers on the same or different dates.

Cross-sector collaboration: Some schools also recognised the need to network better with businesses and employers.

“There is a company in Oxford called Opportunities to Inspire - a charity. Their purpose is to try to link businesses to education. I go to that meeting once every six weeks. I tell them what I am going to teach and they try to fit businesses to schools (one of the speakers I got in was through this).”

Access to information: Some but not all schools also recognised the importance of obtaining regularly updated and comprehensive labour market information for the local area and nationally.

“Knowing how the labour market has changed. [We need] more support with this information in a form that is accessible to students and parents. There is some information available on the Oxcentric website [see appendix E] but it is out of date.”

Many schools explained that there is an overwhelming amount of fragmented information available (on and offline). They felt that EBL activity could improve if they had access to all the information they needed more easily and in one place.

“Helping to get 'adverts' of opportunities from employers to Year 11. We get overwhelmed with it all.”

“We get overwhelmed sometimes with everything we want to tell them about but making it accessible and ensuring they access it is a challenge.”

A number mentioned the idea of having a shared online database of businesses with contact details and activities they are willing to engage with or support.

STEM: The need to step up to the STEM skills gap challenge was also acknowledged by some schools as well as the opportunities that a greater focus on STEM provides. For example, by providing the chance to facilitate and develop stronger EBLs and partnerships with relevant businesses.

Logistics and resources: There was a clear need for money and grants for transporting students to work experience, employability courses and events.

4.8.3 Stimulating engagement of businesses

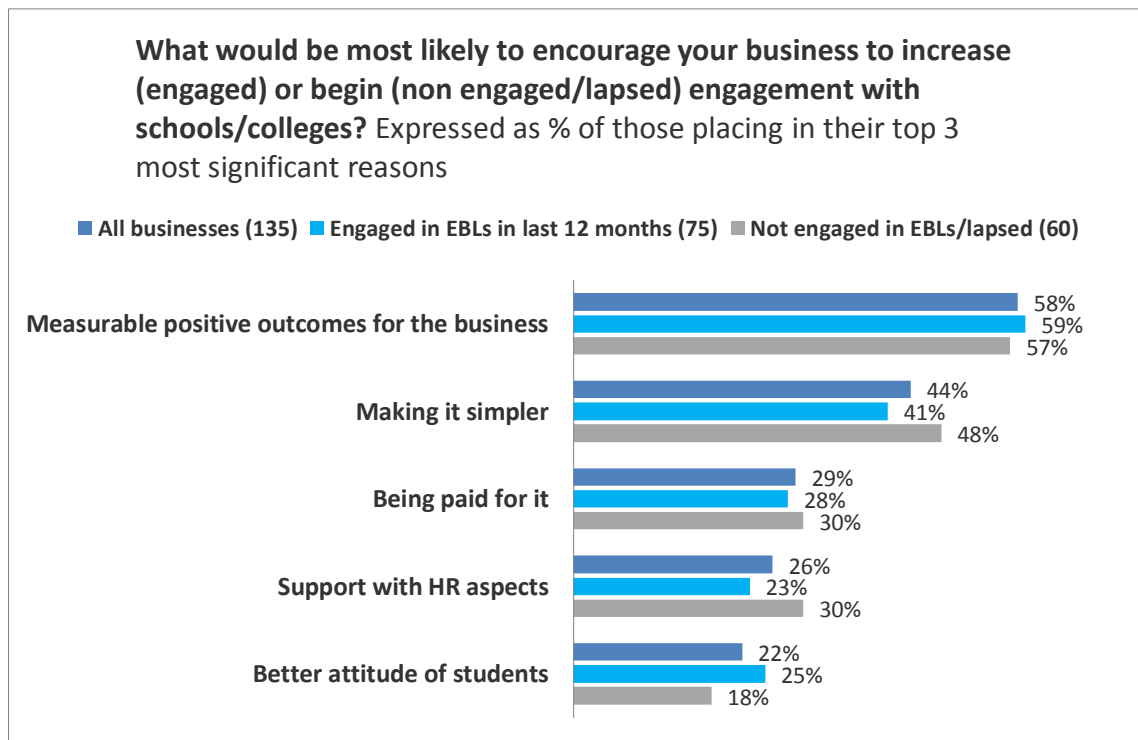


Chart 10: Perceptions of how best to stimulate more engagement in EBLs - Oxfordshire businesses

When asked what would be most likely to encourage them to increase engagement (for the engaged) or begin engagement (for the non-engaged/lapsed) with schools/FE colleges, businesses highlighted the ability to ‘see measurable positive outcomes for the business’ and a move to ‘making it simpler’ as the strongest motivators (as shown in Chart 10). Views on this topic were similar for engaged and non-engaged/lapsed businesses, although the latter place slightly more importance on ‘making it simpler’, ‘being paid for it’ and ‘support with HR aspects’.

Knowing there is going to be a positive, tangible outcome: In line with the survey findings, those interviewed felt that this would make EBL a more compelling proposition. They provided ideas about what this might look like, including the provision of reverse mentoring from students for businesses on social media and/or proposing and undertaking a mini-project while placed in the business.

"[We] need to establish what we're trying to get out of it and be very visible in what you are doing. Current activities/events are great at the time but then are over until the next year. For example the 'Going for it' event was fantastic but how many kids got something out of it? How could we have linked it back to what's happening in schools?"

"I would really like to see some really positive case studies of people who have gone into businesses straight from school and through an apprenticeship or whatever has been able to realise how they can apply their potential and made them want to do different things i.e. evidence that it does work."

Focused resources: The idea of having an EBL champion in each secondary school was suggested and to ensure that this person had a solid understanding of the local business and employment context.

"It makes a big difference if you're local because the job requires quite a lot of parochial intelligence. It's much easier if you already know your local landscape."

A further idea was that businesses could have a nominated EBL champion providing a clear point of contact for schools and FE colleges.

Support/making it simpler: Echoing the survey findings, the need for support, particularly in the area of human resources, was highlighted. This was seen as critical for those businesses which are new to EBL and may have very limited internal resources. This was coupled with a plea to ensure such support was 'no-nonsense help' involving minimal bureaucracy, otherwise it would be in danger of being put in the 'too hard' box.

Feedback from some schools also showed that they are acutely aware of the difficulties experienced by smaller businesses in terms of engagement. They highlighted the need to reduce the red tape – paperwork, health and safety requirements, and insurance for small businesses wanting to get involved.

There was some appreciation among schools that it can be quite challenging for people from the business world to come into schools and work with students. For this reason, they suggested the provision of guidance for employers/businesspeople to help them engage with students before expecting them to do so.

Curriculum and performance measurement: Some businesses saw the need to make wholesale changes to the core curriculum, including the addition of business engagement as a key area. In addition, there was a notable amount of support for the idea of bringing employability into the measurement framework for schools.

"If employability was one of those things that was judged and how many people get jobs as a result of being at that school and they were ranked across the county on employment in the next six months/12 months/five years – then the schools would engage with businesses."

The idea of developing a national standard approach to EBLs was also mentioned along with requiring teachers to complete some shadowing in the workplace to help with their professional development.

Being asked to engage: A number of those representing non-engaged businesses said that, if they were invited to engage by a school/FE college, they would be interested in helping if they could. This highlighted the key message that more EBL engagement could be encouraged by simply asking more businesses to get involved and helping them to understand how to do it. There was a sense from a number of businesses that the level of interest from schools/FE colleges in EBLs needed to increase in order to see a step change in engagement.

4.9 How is the impact of EBLs and associated activities measured?

4.9.1 Schools/FE colleges

While student destinations were recorded, tracking and analysis of the information was limited and inconsistent.

"If you look beyond school, some of the barriers relate to all those young people who are not in something. This has been made so much more difficult because we have nobody in school tracking them as we would have done in the past - that is what Connexions would have done. We could pay somebody to do that - we do it to a certain degree but we don't want to pay someone. The school thinks we have fulfilled our responsibility. They (the kids) have moved on. They are not our responsibility anymore. They come back a lot for help - the ones who did not want to be here in the first place. It is familiar and safe."

"The only real measure is to reduce the NEETS."

Schools/FE colleges highlighted that this lack of tracking information was an issue and saw value in having access to it.

"We need to find out where students are going if they are not staying in education which is a massive piece of work. That's what Connexions used to do."

"Measuring impact is becoming more important because OFSTED are now focusing on careers and will want to see us demonstrate our impact in this area, not just about students but also feedback from parents and carers etc."

"We don't do enough, very ad hoc. No satisfactions surveys carried out by OCC or Adviza either."

A number of schools evaluated individual activities, such as enrichment days, careers fairs and work experience. This was normally done using simple satisfaction questionnaires.

"We do evaluate the individual activities - i.e. the enrichment days, work experience programme etc but we don't have a tool for evaluating the whole thing."

"At the careers fair we had last month everyone got feedback forms - the exhibitors and the students. We analyse this and report on what went well and how we can improve etc."

"Over the last couple of weeks we have been using voting pads in the classroom and generating pie charts. That has always been pretty positive. What is really nice is the little anecdotes - e.g. 'that speaker was brilliant', 'I have got an application form'."

Some did not do any evaluation and felt they did not have the time.

"No we don't do any evaluation. When would you do it?"

There was a level of scepticism from others about the quality of the data they would capture.

"You are going to get a mixed response from children aren't you? Those that are keen and know what they want will give you honest feedback, which is good."

Those who did some evaluation aimed to use the feedback to make improvements but time was, once again, seen as a barrier.

"Ideally I would have more time to analyse [the feedback] and write a report and some action points. It would be good to use the data more and share via reporting internally and externally (e.g. with local employers)."

There was no consistency in terms of questionnaire design, data collection or analysis which prevents comparisons, any form of benchmarking or sharing insights between schools/FE colleges. All evaluation activities that did take place were conducted 'in house' so lacked independence.

A few participants said they were aware that OFSTED was focusing more on careers and wants to see measurement of impact and outcomes in this area (OFSTED, 2013, 43).

Examples of evaluation activities

School A: *“They engage very well. I collect ad hoc data throughout each enrichment day asking how they did and recording it and taking photographs (the winning team won a prize). I get them to complete a very basic survey monkey at the end in terms of scales - how much did you enjoy it and would you do it again. Then, I list the skills I think they should have developed (e.g. teamwork, confidence etc.) and asked them to rate their improvement. I could see there had been a big impact - for instance, on teamwork and confidence - and they all said they would do it again. On the negative side, they wished it had been longer over a couple of days rather than one and a half.”*

School B: *“I have to produce a careers/work-related learning/business links report for the governors. I was given a really good clear template by Adviza - with standards that we are working towards and red, amber, green indicators of where we are. It is a fantastic document. Maybe schools need to be more aware of it. It has made me sit back and think about all aspects of our work-related learning and careers in terms of the operational and strategic leadership. It has also made me realise which areas we need to improve and develop.”*

School C: *“I added an extra question to the careers feedback - about the careers lessons - asking whether they had raised career aspirations - about 52 to 53% said yes. I thought that was going to be much lower. But that’s great - over half of that year group - 110 kids saying their aspirations have been raised.”*

4.9.2 Business

Feedback from the in-depth interviews indicated that businesses engaged in EBLs did not generally carry out formal measurement of the impact or return on investment of engaging in EBLs. This was partly because it was seen as too difficult. Nevertheless, there was a level of confidence that they instinctively knew and experienced the value of the engagement.

“We know intuitively it’s the right thing to do.”

“It’s not an altruistic act – we get stuff out of it.”

4.10 Future plans

4.10.1 Schools/FE colleges

Interviews with participants from schools/FE colleges identified a range of plans and aspirations for how to enrich and improve their provision for students in the area of EBL and associated CEIAG activities. These have been grouped into key areas with examples provided under each:

Work experience

- More work experience placements in the sixth form
- Potentially resume work experience
- Develop opportunities for extended work placements from Year 9 onwards

Apprenticeships

- Aim to raise awareness of, and secure more, apprenticeships.

“More apprenticeships are becoming available but not as many students from this school get them - probably 1 to 2%. Sometimes students think if they do them they cannot go to university or feel they are not ready to go into full-time employment - which is fair enough. At least there are some out there - but I would possibly like to see more. There are hardly any higher apprenticeships - they would encourage more students to think seriously about apprenticeships.”

Information provision and developmental support for students

- Add a careers section on the school website
- Trial an online employability skills tool
- Inform students about the demands of the labour market
- CEIAG coverage for all year groups

Professional development

- Staff development within schools/FE colleges

“Learn from my peers.”

“Work towards Career Quality Mark.”

- Aspiration to develop a culture where careers is not the responsibility of one person but embedded in all teachers’ work

Closer and more collaboration with local businesses

- Focus on securing positive destinations for students

“Supporting my Year 11 and Year 13 leavers to secure positive destinations. Listening to what they want and getting the right people in who are of interest to them.”

- Build a database of businesses to support different events
- Make connections with businesses on the large business parks
- Make and maintain links with future employers
- Arrange for more external speakers to visit the school and link this to core curriculum subjects

“Getting businesses into schools to deliver sessions/assemblies so students have a wider knowledge of employability skills etc.”

“I wonder if there is any scope for links with business to enliven and develop some of the curriculum - including other areas such as history, geography and media studies. It would be good to have some good speakers, people willing to give up some time. It is good to have external people coming in to develop and motivate pupils. The more schools can draw on that sort of talent for assemblies or other events - anything like that we could develop would be advantageous.”

- Arrange lunchtime clubs with employers to help develop EBLs
- Map work and input from EBLs more directly on to the core curriculum (FE college)
- Aim to attract employers to the college to employ students because they will know they can get a young person who has been properly trained and will benefit their workforce (FE college)
- Targets for every vocational area to have a Learning Company with significant links to business (FE college)

Encouraging change/challenge the status quo

- Raise and broaden aspirations of students
- Challenge gender stereotyping by encouraging more females into engineering, sciences or IT

Continue reducing NEETS

“To continue to reduce the NEETS in Year 11, 12 and 13. If that goes up then I am not doing my job and it gives a bad stigma to the school. It doesn't help anyone in the Oxfordshire community. It doesn't help the student because they can become isolated and demotivated. It can form massive problems within the family. So that is one massive thing I am trying to work on.”

4.10.2 Businesses

Non-engaged: Interviews revealed that businesses not engaging in EBLs were unlikely to engage in the short to medium term as they did not see this as a priority. This was especially relevant to those that had begun trading within the last few years and/or that employed fewer than 10 people.

Where there was some interest, it centred on wanting to give students an insight into their industry but there was a lack of knowledge about who to contact to make this happen.

Interviewees suggested that there was some interest in taking on apprentices but that they did not know how to go about it. Some interest was also shown, albeit in the longer term, in going to schools and helping to inspire young people to explore working in their industry.

Engaged: All the businesses which were already engaged in some form of EBLs said that they planned to continue with their activities in this area. Participants identified that their level of engagement was directly influenced by capacity in the workplace. Also, as a more general observation, the importance of all key stakeholders having a genuine interest and belief in the value of EBLs was highlighted.

“You need passionate employers who want to do it [and] people at schools saying this is really important - need to get involved and a broker in the middle saying this is really important.”

4.10.3 District councils

There was real eagerness across all district councils to focus on EBLs and associated CEIAG activity, in particular to collaborate with colleagues across the district and county councils; also to work in partnership with other local organisations.

“We are finding that there are a number of organisations that we are very keen to support [in this area of work].”

In general, they saw supporting the development of connections between education and businesses in their areas as an important responsibility. However, they did underline that currently budgets for this area of their work were extremely limited. Some future plans linked closely to the need to focus on identifying and securing local jobs for local young people.

“We want to create a system of referrals between the schools and colleges to look at the skill sets that will be required in the future - horizon scanning but paying particular attention to the big regeneration and development projects. [We need to] ensure the right courses are being put on and that local people are being linked in to take advantage of those jobs rather than everyone coming from surrounding places to take those jobs.”

This included the need to communicate clearly and effectively.

“Need to understand how best to sell/promote the local jobs to the local young people and point them clearly in their direction. For example, [we] need to change the perception of apprenticeships being dirty and manual because now many of them are quite high-tech clean jobs with good prospects. Opportunities will include not only construction but also landscaping, back office stuff etc with good career paths. We need to be better at identifying where the skill gaps will be and then sell those to young people.”

There was also evidence that district councils planned to continue their direct involvement in EBLs and associated CEIAG activities.

“I am going into about eight careers fairs. In the last year or so, schools have got much better at arranging careers fairs. I get invited as a largish employer - I go along with all the opportunities that we have in our council - many of which young people have never even considered ... I also do mock interviews – I have four or five of those lined up.”

“We are in the third cohort of our apprenticeship scheme. Last January, we took on another six, now we have taken on a seventh. Six were in business administration; the seventh has been in the workshop. I have an apprentice in my small team who helps us run job clubs - the idea being that we lead by example as a council.”

5. LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The aim of this two-stage research project was to gather insights and views from schools/FE colleges, district councils and local businesses. It has provided a clear picture from the perspective of these stakeholders of how best to maximise the effectiveness of EBLs and associated CEIAG activities in developing employability skills of young people and, in turn, reduce the skills gap in Oxfordshire.

This research has made it clear that it is also vitally important to consult with and involve other relevant stakeholders and influencers. Views and input from students, past and present, as well as parents and representatives from the many existing EBLOs will be critical to the development of effective strategies, action plans and support mechanisms. For this reason, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to gather views and insights from these remaining stakeholders.

This research has identified the need to focus on the promotion and quality of apprenticeships and acknowledged that there are clear targets for increasing the number of apprenticeships in Oxfordshire over the next few years. For this reason, a further recommendation is to develop a robust, consistent method of measuring and tracking the number and effectiveness of apprenticeships, as well as the satisfaction levels of all key stakeholders (students, employers, educators). This would not only pinpoint areas for action but also capture examples of best practice and opportunities to share this.

6. REFERENCES

Confederation of British Industry (2012)

Education and skills survey, available at

www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf (accessed 29 September 2014)

Health & Safety Executive (2014)

What the law says about young people at work, available at

www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/index.htm (accessed 28 September 2014)

OFSTED (September 2013)

Ofsted School Inspection Handbook and Subsidiary Guidance, available at

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/inspection--forms-and-guides/s/School%20inspection%20handbook.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2014)

Oxford City Learning (2014)

available at www.oxfordcitylearning.org.uk (accessed 28 September 2014)

Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board (June 2013)

Raising achievement for all children and young people: Detailed Performance Report, available at

mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s21227/NEETs%20report%20card.pdf (accessed 28 September 2014)

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2013)

Business Plan for Growth, available at

[www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/cms/sites/lep/files/folders/documents/About%20Oxfordshire/Oxfordshire LEP Business Plan for Growth 2013 \(pdf format 233Kb\).pdf](http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/cms/sites/lep/files/folders/documents/About%20Oxfordshire/Oxfordshire%20LEP%20Business%20Plan%20for%20Growth%202013%20(pdf%20format%20233Kb).pdf) (accessed 29 September 2014)

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (October, 2013)

European structural and investment fund plan, available at:

[http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/cms/sites/lep/files/folders/Oxfordshire EU SIF FINAL for BIS pdf.pdf](http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/cms/sites/lep/files/folders/Oxfordshire%20EU%20SIF%20FINAL%20for%20BIS.pdf) (accessed 29 September 2014)

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2014)

Oxfordshire skills strategy to 2020: Building a responsive skills support system, available at:

www.oxfordshireskillsboard.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/OXFORDSHIRE-SKILLS-STRATEGY-FINAL.pdf (accessed 22 September 2014)

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (January 2014)

Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal, available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/276205/Oxford-Oxfordshire-City-Deal.pdf (accessed 29 September 2014)

Science Vale UK Skills Steering Group (2014)

Apprenticeship Launchpad, available at [www.sciencevale.com/edit/wp-](http://www.sciencevale.com/edit/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Apprenticeship-Launchpad-2013-14-report.pdf)

[content/uploads/2014/06/Apprenticeship-Launchpad-2013-14-report.pdf](http://www.sciencevale.com/edit/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Apprenticeship-Launchpad-2013-14-report.pdf) (accessed 29 September 2014)

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Profile of schools/FE colleges participating in interviews/providing online feedback

Participants represented state-funded schools/FE colleges within Oxfordshire.

Participants' roles varied, including full and part-time careers co-ordinators; careers, enterprise and vocational education advisors; business and enterprise coordinator; head teachers; careers advisor and work experience coordinators/managers and heads of personal development. Some, but not all, had teaching responsibilities.

Representatives from the careers advice organisation, Adviza, were also present at several interviews at the request of individual schools.

Appendix B: Breakdown of fieldwork participants

Stage 1

Research Population	Population Size	Approach	Number of Participants/ records	Percent of population
Secondary schools	33	In-depth Interviews (plus online follow-up)	27	82%
Special schools	12	Depth interviews	5	42%
Primary schools	234	Online survey	12	5%
EBLOs	Unknown	Desk research	24	n/a
FE colleges	4	In-depth Interviews	3	75%
District councils	5	In-depth Interviews	5	100%

Table 8: Research stage 1 -Education (breakdown of fieldwork participants)

Stage 2

Research Population	Population Size	Approach	No. of Participants/ records	Percent of population
Oxfordshire-based businesses	Circa 32,435	In-depth interviews	20	n/a
		Online survey	202*	0.62%

* Provides 95% confidence level with a +/- 7% confidence interval

Table 9: Research stage 2 - Businesses (breakdown of fieldwork participants)

Appendix C: CBI definition of and employers' satisfaction with school/college leavers' employability skills

Employer satisfaction with school/college leavers' employability skills (%)			
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
Application of information technology – Basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines	12	75	13
Application of numeracy – Manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts	4	65	30
Teamworking – Respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions	3	65	32
Communication and literacy – Application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning	4	61	35
A positive attitude (readiness to take part, openness to new ideas and activities, desire to achieve) underpinning:	5	59	37
Problem solving – Analysing facts and circumstances and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions	1	53	46
Self-management – Readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, time management, readiness to improve own performance	2	37	61
Business and customer awareness – Basic understanding of the key drivers for business success and the need to provide customer satisfaction	2	29	69

Source:

www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf, page 32 (accessed 22 September 2014)

Appendix D: Profile of businesses participating in online survey

Location: There was a wide representation of businesses from across the county and of those engaged and not engaged in EBLs at the time of the research.

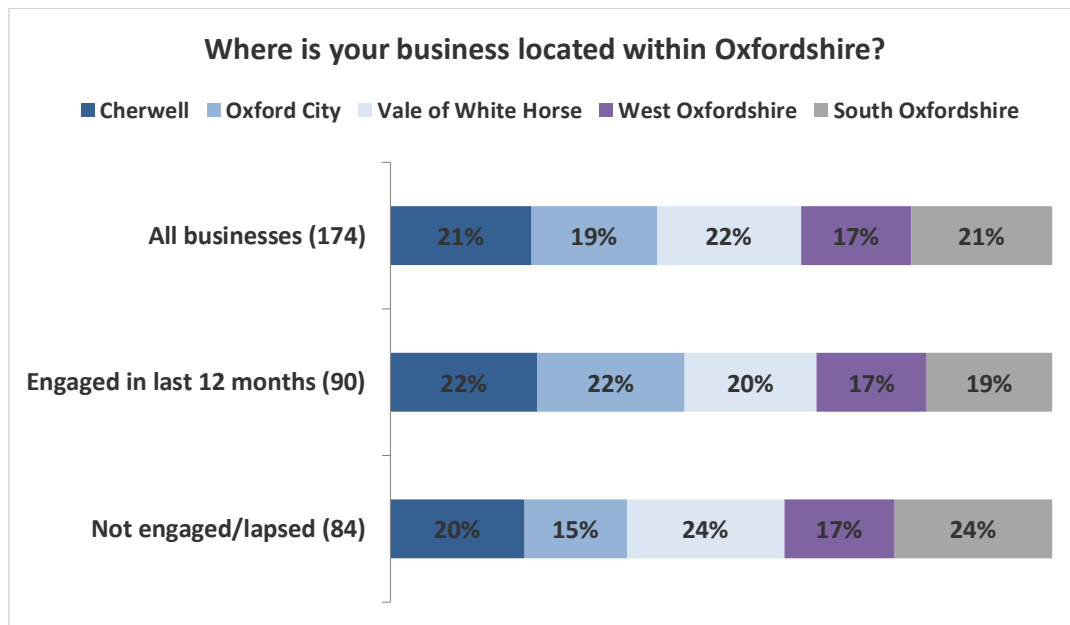


Chart 11: Location (by district council areas) - Oxfordshire businesses

Number of years trading: Almost two-thirds of businesses surveyed were well established having been trading for more than ten years. 27% had traded for between one and ten years and fewer than 4% were in their first year of trading. The profile of businesses, in terms of years trading, was very similar for those engaged and those not engaged in EBLs at the time of the survey.



Chart 12: Number of years trading - Oxfordshire businesses

Size by number of employees: The survey covered a wide range of different sized businesses although there was an intentional focus on a sufficiently robust sample of those which employed ten or more employees. These made up 55% of all respondents.

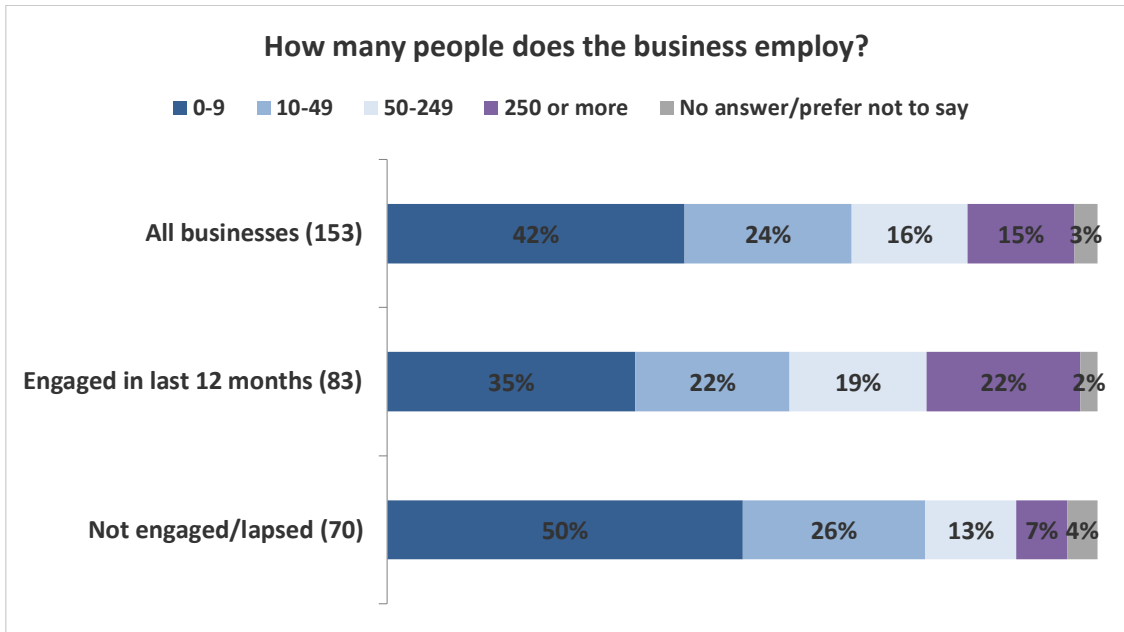


Chart 13: Number of employees - Oxfordshire businesses

Forecast changes in workforce size: Businesses were asked to forecast how the size of their workforces would change over the coming 12 months. Over half expected it to grow with most others saying that there was likely to be no change. Only 1% forecasted a decrease in size. A greater proportion of those engaged in EBLs (58%) expected to grow compared to their non-engaged counterparts (45%) – a difference of +13%.

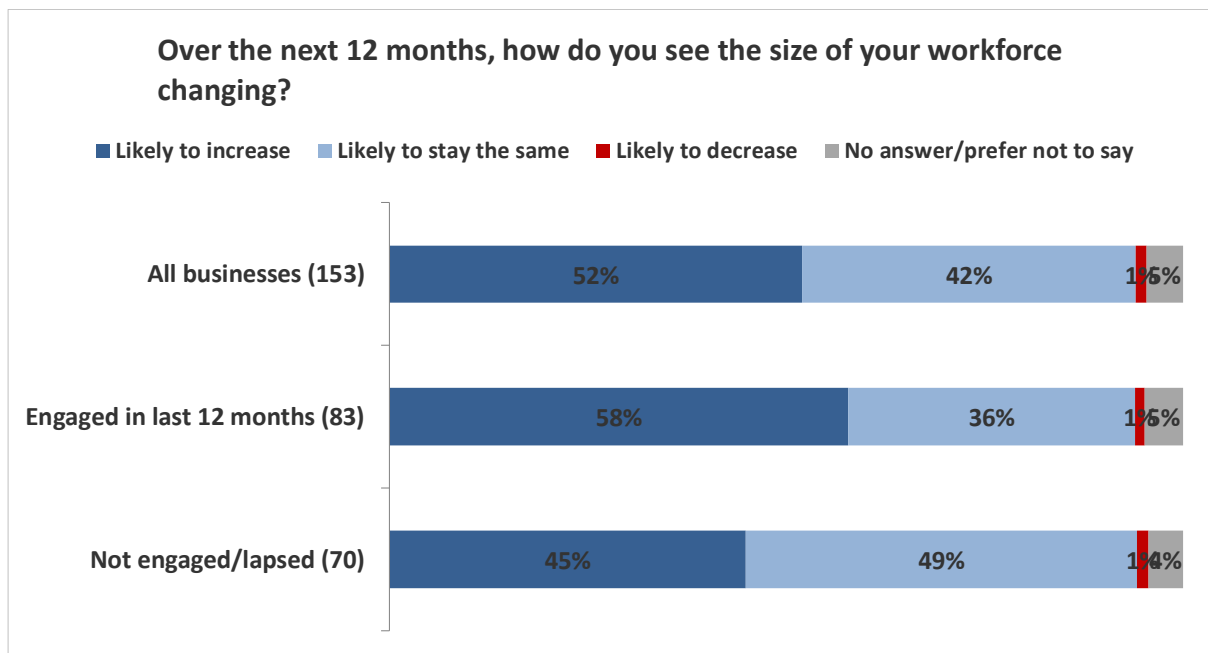


Chart 14: Changes in workforce size over next 12 months - Oxfordshire businesses

Annual turnover: Businesses were asked for an indication of their annual turnover. While about a fifth declined to answer those who did represented businesses with a wide range of turnover levels from those trading under the VAT threshold of 79K (18%) to those turning over more than £2 million (30%). The main difference between those engaged in EBLs and those not engaged was that that the latter included more businesses in the lowest turnover bracket, whereas there were more of the former in the highest bracket.

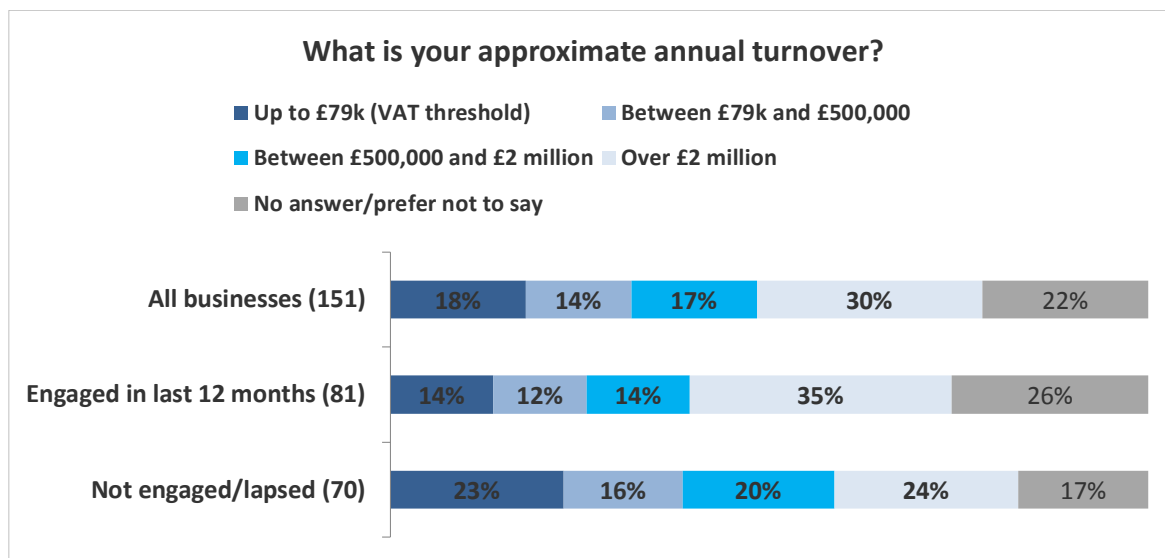


Chart 15: Approximate annual turnover - Oxfordshire businesses

Sector: Survey respondents were asked if their business was in a specified list of sectors. As shown in Table 10 below, a quarter were STEM businesses. A further 13% were businesses from other key growth sectors. A wide range of other sectors were also represented, identified here as ‘another sector’ including legal, medical, publishing, financial, care and various business services.

SECTOR	All businesses (151)	Engaged in last 12 months (82)	Not engaged/lapsed (69)
STEM (Science, technology, engineering, mathematics)	25%	30%	17%
Retail	3%	4%	1%
Construction	3%	4%	3%
Hospitality	3%	4%	3%
Logistics	2%	2%	1%
Care	2%	4%	0%
Another sector	62%	52%	74%

Table 10: Businesses by sector

Appendix E:
CEIAG online resources mentioned by research participants

A wide range of online services and tools were referred to during the research, as follows:

RESOURCE	URL
Oxcentric website	oxcentric.oxme.info/cms/
CareerScope	careerscope.uk.net/
Passport Folio	www.passportfolio.com
U-Explore	www.u-explore.com
Kudos (via Cascade)	www.cascaid.co.uk/kudos/
Apprenticeship Launchpad	http://www.oxfordshireskillsboard.org/news/the-apprenticeship-launchpad-made-in-oxfordshire/
Fast Tomato	www.fasttomato.com/
Eclips	www.eclips-online.co.uk/
Higher Ideas	www.careersoft.co.uk/products/

Table 11: CEIAG Online services and tools referred to during the research

Appendix F: Educational Business Link Organisations (EBLOs)

This table includes all those EBLOs mentioned by respondents during the primary research and a snapshot of what was identified during desk research and networking:

Name	Mentioned by one or more:			No mentions - identified via desk research only
	School/FE college and business	School/FE college only	Business only	
Business in The Community/ Business Class	✓			
Barclays Life Skill				
Blue Partnership		✓		
British Science Association (CREST)				
Career Academies UK		✓		
Future First		✓		
Inspiring Futures		✓		
Inspiring The Futures	✓			
NiTP IT Apprenticeships			✓	
Opportunity to Inspire (O2i)	✓			
Oxford Business X (OBX)	✓			
Oxford City Learning		✓		
Oxford Learning Collaboration	✓			
Oxfordshire Business Education Alliance	✓			
Oxfordshire County Council Work Experience Team	✓			
Oxfordshire Entrepreneurs (TATA Idea Idol)				✓
Responsible Oxfordshire Business Involvement Network (ROBIN)	✓			
Science Oxford STEM Ambassadors	✓			
Skillforce	✓			
Teach First	✓			
TRAX		✓		
Working Knowledge	✓			
Young Chamber UK				✓
Young Enterprise	✓			

Table 12: Education Business Link Organisations referred to or known through the research