

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
25th April, 2018

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Clark, Cusworth, Mallinder, Napper, Sheppard, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Cowles, Brookes, Evans and Short.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

132. WELCOME FROM COUNCILLOR STEELE, CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD.

Councillor Steele welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the OSMB which was once again supporting the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge (CCTOC) by working with Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC). Brief introductions were made to assist the young people in directing questions to the most appropriate person.

Toni Paxford (Rotherham Youth Cabinet) assumed the Chair.

133. INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION FROM ROTHERHAM YOUTH CABINET - WORK EXPERIENCE

Emilia Ashton set the context for the choice of theme and presented the initial recommendations developed by RYC following their research to capture young people's views of work experience in Rotherham. It was recognised that these recommendations might be amended in light of the discussion and information provided during the meeting.

Images of RYC

Around 20 young people were involved in the Youth Cabinet, working on different issues that matter to children and young people and acting as their voice.

Work experience – why is it important?

- Top issue for the young people of Rotherham – 1166 votes out of 7000 in Make Your Mark consultation
- It helps young people make life choices
- It helps them become more employable

Our manifesto aim:

We want to increase opportunities for young people to take part in positive work experience and highlight where they can find existing work experience and volunteering opportunities.

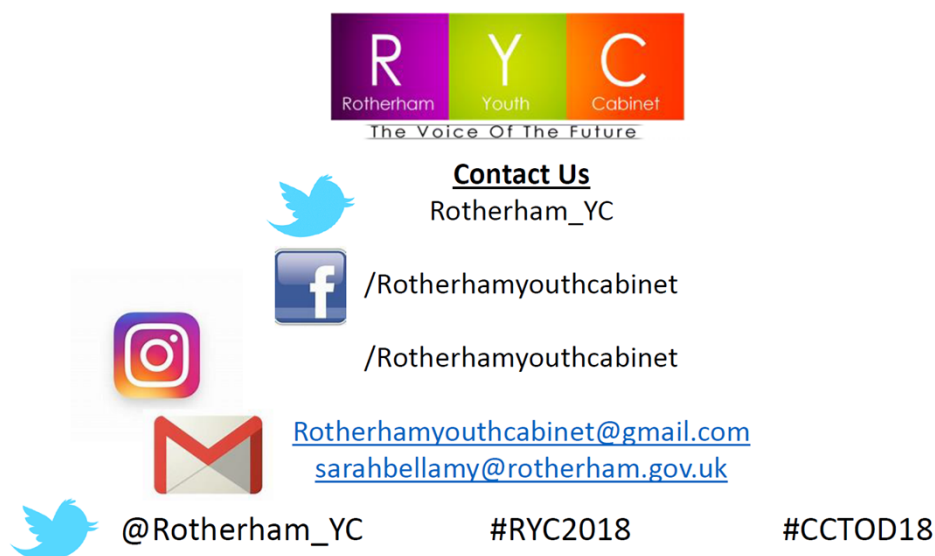
Report recommendations

- 1) Have a system so that all young people can have work experience.
- 2) Publicise available work experience in schools.
- 3) All schools to deliver work experience.
- 4) Have a quality control for work experience offered.
- 5) Make work experience count.
- 6) Wider sector of jobs included in work experience opportunities.
- 7) Support for young people doing work experience including expenses if needed.
- 8) To provide more support for young people with disabilities.
- 9) Carry out regular research to ensure young people aren't forgotten about.
- 10) To share positive practices among organisations.

In relation to developing the recommendations the following points were emphasised during the presentation:

- All young people having equal access to any opportunities that were out there, including young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- Although work experience was not offered by all schools, young people did want to partake in it, so it was important to know what was available and where if people wanted to be proactive themselves.
- All schools to give young people at least one chance of taking part.
- Quality control was important as young people's ratings of their work experience revealed quite a lot of 1s (not very good) and not enough 5s (outstanding).
- Meaningful activities not just photocopying and making tea.
- Providing a real insight into the career path so people knew if it would be the right career path or sector for them.
- Research to ensure consistency within a placement over time and high standards across all sectors/industries.
- Sharing good practice between employers and from school to school.

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134. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH SCHOOLS AND PARTNER AGENCIES.

1) Have you had work experience? Was it useful? (Jonathan Badger)

Ian Goodall – Yes, when I was 15 I went on Trident work experience for three weeks at Herringthorpe Leisure Centre and experienced the tasks and jobs that leisure centre attendants did at the time, including supervising the courts, counting children using the slide and making tea. It was very valuable and I think every child should be doing that now more than ever.

John Barber – No and now that I am involved in it I regret not having the opportunity. Although I was lucky enough to know people who had their own businesses and was able to go in and look round for a day. But I've realised now how valuable it is and what a great opportunity it is. I recognise that a lot of young people would not know anyone or have those connections that I had but I agree that every young person should have the opportunity of a good quality work experience.

Tim O'Connell – I did not have formal arranged work experience, but delivered on a milk round when I was still at school. It was not relevant to what I wanted to do but there were useful lessons on timeliness with a 4a.m. start, attitude, work rate and aptitude towards work. It was really practical and useful and put me in good stead for work in the future, even though it was not work experience.

Kerry McGrath – I also did some Trident work experience and think anything like that is valuable to try something and learn new skills. But I think for me, and I'm probably going to be biased, I did some volunteering and found that more useful as that was the sector I wanted to go into. I

think the voluntary and community sector (VCS) gets forgotten about a little bit and we are a massive sector, a really massive employer with some really well paid jobs and opportunities. Volunteering is a great way to break into that sector as I think it's very difficult without it.

Emilia Ashton – I have been lucky enough to do two lots. The first was in primary school and that was quite useful for me because I decided that I did not want to work with small children. The second I did with the Youth Service and that was really interesting because though it was not the career path I knew that I was going to go down, all the hard work and different skills I learned were vital. I am now a university student and I know that I could have taken a completely different degree if it had not been for some of the work experience opportunities I have had. So I am very fortunate but I know other young people who have not been so lucky with their opportunities.

Cllr Yasseen - I went to Oakwood School and went on Trident and as I wanted to become a lawyer in those days I asked for experience in a law office. I remember someone saying they were not sure if that was right for me and we could put you in retail. It took many years to get the experience that I really wanted so it is about how we build up aspirations as well and respond to that.

2) Why is work experience so patchy in Rotherham? (Amaan Saqlain)

John Barber – National policy changed around six years ago, as until then every young person in the country had been entitled to work experience funded through the Government. That was withdrawn and it was really up to each school to decide what value they saw in it, so that was when it started to become patchy. Now from my perspective it seems more a decision for individual schools or academy groups.

Ewan Cumming – I think that this is a timely moment for work experience because one of the things that schools are required to do under the new guidance for schools about careers advice is that every pupil should have a range of experiences with work and this can be through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience. It does not make it compulsory again but I think it is back for schools to strongly consider that actually this is a valuable experience, as some of the people who have experienced it have said already.

David Naisbitt – There are a couple of things I would say, one as a headteacher and one as Chair of the Schools Forum (group including teachers, headteachers and RMBC officers that discusses budgets and school budgets across the borough). As a headteacher, schools have been reticent about offering work experience because it has been patchy, so if as a child you have some influence or connection or you know somebody, you might get a half decent work experience.

Trident has been mentioned and although I did not have work experience personally, as a teacher I have gone through the experience of trying to organise Trident work experiences. To be frank a lot of children got an awful work experience that they did not value and whether it was for one, two or three weeks we as teachers spent a big chunk of that time trying to get them back in the work experience because it was so poor. So a number of schools have said it is just not fair to make children go into a work experience when it is so poor. If it can be better and if it can be centrally organised I think schools would be interested in that and some of the regulation schools have to consider around the Gatsby benchmarks is going to be interesting.

With a finance hat on, schools have less money than they have ever had; in real terms students are less valuable than they were last year and the year before. Headteachers and others working in schools are making decisions all the time based upon how the money brought in by students should be spent. A choice for headteachers could be as simple as a textbook and a teacher versus a work experience; it is not quite that stark, but sometimes you make those sorts of choices. Most headteachers would say money is tight, sorry but it is going to go into that really high-quality teacher or resources for your science or maths lesson, so it is a difficult one.

Cllr Watson – One of the issues was that you had to find a place for every single child in the year group and as time went by, and businesses had less money to look after people on work experience, it got to the stage where we could only find placements for say half the year with the other half still in school. You then had the significant issue of children saying they were not going on work experience because they would miss a lesson at school. The alternative was not having a lesson for the children staying in school who were then offered nothing. It became really problematic once schools could not find placements for every child in the year group.

A rolling programme would be one option but all schools wanted their work experience at the end of the year, resulting in schools looking for placements at the same time and there were not 1000 quality placements available. An example of a poor placement at a garden centre was given which resulted in the young person leaving on day three after the teacher visit. As quality is the issue here, if you cannot find a thousand quality placements then you have a problem and that is why it was so patchy and schools prioritised placements for the courses such as BTEC that require them. These are the real practical problems and one of the reasons why fewer schools are offering them.

Paul Silvester – From a SEND point of view a couple of figures partly address this issue - only 7% of young people and adults with a learning disability go into full time work, which means young people at Newman School have very little chance of going into full time employment, according to the statistics, so therefore work experience and work engagement is essential.

At another special school where I worked before, in 35 years before I joined not one single person had gone from the school into paid employment but when I left in three years, seven people were in full time employment. That was related to work experience, a quality work experience that was fundamentally part of the curriculum and the curriculum had led up to that work experience, not as a bolt on but integrally. We were given the opportunity as we have a different way of doing the curriculum in a special school. But for us in the special needs sector in particular, if we do not have thoroughly good work experience as part of an overall delivery in mainstream as well as in special schools, we will not change that 7% employment offer, because not only will the young people not have the skill-set nor the thought processes but the employers out there will not actually understand what needs the young people have and how easy is in a lot of cases to adapt. So work experience for us is a fundamental right and we need mainstream and special schools to have that.

Tim O'Connell - On top of talking about quality work experience and patchy work experience I was going to say quality work experience is a two way process but it is probably a three way process:

- the employer to engage properly, prepare for it and spend time to do that
- the school to engage and prepare pupils before they go to work experience and to speak to them afterwards and make sure they understand what they get out of work experience
- obligation on the young person to really buy into it and turn up

There are negative examples as mentioned but equally other examples where somebody who comes along for work experience fully embraces that and takes things on. So if we are thinking about patchiness, it is not all on the basis of businesses not responding back to work experience opportunities, although I am sure that there are real issues and difficulties that businesses have, but there are equal responsibilities on both schools and young people themselves to make work experience useful.

John Barber – I think there's also a responsibility on the parents as well to support that. There are many well-meaning employers out there but work experience is not their day job and we have employers who say they would like to take someone on work experience but do not know where to start, which is when they end up filing, making tea or being handed a spade. Small businesses in particular are busy doing the business, so a big part is the preparation of the employer and that is what we do on a small scale with employers through a “Be Prepared” course. The

managing director might be behind it but if it is a charge hand on the shop floor that is busy managing a production line who has the young person, there will be times when they cannot look after that person properly. It is about making sure that well-meaning employers, who may end up giving a poor work experience, not because they want to but because they have not been prepared, are prepared, including the person who is actually going to be looking after the young person.

We tell every employer we work with that the first thing to do is talk to the young person on the first morning and find out about them and their interests as you might be putting them on the shop floor but actually find they are really interested in accounts or finance, or they might have a hobby that you can relate to. In addition to experience of a particular job there is also experience of the world of work which involves getting up every morning and getting to work at the same time and doing menial jobs as well as really exciting jobs.

Expectations of young people from work experience, particularly those working in engineering, is an issue as you cannot put them on the shop floor in a dangerous environment working on a machine. It is not possible from a health and safety point of view or a safeguarding point of view, so it may be that they do spend time observing rather than doing, but it is important to help the employer put a good plan together for that young person and that is when you get a quality work experience rather than a young person just dumped on an employer for a couple of weeks.

Cllr Yasseen – We need to follow through on the ambitions and aspirations of young people. There is nothing that I have heard that makes me think we cannot remove these difficulties and it is as much about will and commitment on all sides. Responsibilities for making this happen and making it a good experience have been mentioned but it is also about being creative in partnerships. It is not just the business world but you have the voluntary and community sector, public sector, the Council and also things like for example the Prince's Trust.

I was with a group of young volunteers at Thrybergh Park recently who spent a couple of weeks in the awful snowy weather and laid down an amazing track there. It was a great experience working with the parks and the rangers and went beyond what we usually would count as a worthwhile experience in life.

Cllr Walsh – Work experience happens every year and we hope it is the same employers every time with a few changes here and there, just a different group of young people. An individual employer might work out what they could offer in terms of work experience, implement it one particular year and then that scheme is ready to be re-used year after year. So if we could get some employers onside to do a little bit of internal development in that respect perhaps the offer could become better from year to year as more employers became skilled at providing work experience.

Where I used to work we had science and engineering undergraduates on work experience and even though we were not tremendously organised we aimed to do a good job and they were actually doing industrial Research and Development and deciding whether it was what they wanted in addition to doing a useful job for us.

Ian Goodall – There will be no issues in engaging businesses in work experience. Speaking as an employer or owner of a small business, but also as the Chair of a board of people that come from large- and medium-sized businesses, voluntary sector and the NHS, everybody wants it to happen. If you look at the responsibility falling on three or four people for making it work, that element of it is not going to be any kind of problem. The biggest problem that businesses seem to have now is the work readiness of young people leaving education, whether at comprehensive level, further education or higher education level, and anything that helps towards solving that problem will be supported and helped.

John made a good point about businesses being really willing and happy to help and I would include our business and say we probably do not offer the best of work experiences at times because we are a small business and have to get on with what we are doing. We are happy for people to come in but I think work may be needed to say to us well could they do that, that, and that, because it is limited as to what we can do for young people. You will not struggle to get businesses to offer the places but all at the same time of year possibly is a problem but again these are not big issues that cannot be worked around with a little bit of thought and process.

3) Where are young people meant to access work experience if schools do not offer it? (Omair Kasim)

John Barber – We recognised four years ago that some schools were not offering work experience so we run a summer academy, a summer camp where we offer work experience to young people. Promotion is through schools but it is done directly with families, but it is quite small scale with 50-60 young people a year. It is something that a lot of people do take up; sometimes young people who have already had one good experience and want another. It is small pockets and there does need to be more. Some schools now say they will offer work experience but expect the student to take a week during term time and a week during their own time, so it might be the last week of term before Easter and the first week of Easter holidays because again that is less time off curriculum and less time out of the classroom. There are creative ways around it but that is down to individual schools and down to young people and it tends to be the young people with the drive to want to do that in their own time. Again it is about getting that message out there to young people.

Sharon Kemp – When I was 19 I worked for a police service and struggled to get more responsibility. I was moaning about this one day when talking to the Chief Executive of Manchester YMCA who suggested I did some voluntary work for them and they would give me pieces of work to do in a supported environment and a reference. So as Kerry was saying, sometimes if it does not necessarily present itself to you there are creative ways, particularly through the VCS where you can get experience. I think for organisations some of the things that make young people stand out are the fact that they have participated in work experience or worked within the voluntary and community sector. Where you have done something like that you really stand out as a candidate because it shows that passion, that ambition and that you have had the opportunity to learn and experience something different.

Emilia Ashton – As a university student I have been bombarded with summer placement opportunities and advised by tutors to take one as employers look for it. If schools cannot offer work experience in term time for financial reasons, why can't they proactively advertise available work experience in summer holiday time to young people?

Ian Goodall – They could if a scheme were put in place that has the backing of employers and schools, there is no reason certainly from a business point of view why that could not operate in school holidays. In terms of where can you find work experience opportunities, there is nothing out there that you are missing out on, they just do not exist hence the reason why we are probably all sitting in this room. What John does is fantastic but as he rightly says it only impacts on a very small number of people. In some ways the only option that young people have is to start approaching businesses yourself and try and generate your own work experience opportunities. We have had people approach us as we work in the video games sector so we are quite attractive for people and we get quite a few young people asking about work experience in Easter or summer holidays and we always say yes wherever possible, so at the moment it is kind of over to you.

David Naisbitt – I am reticent to talk on behalf of all schools because each school will do it differently and each school will take their responsibilities differently. I want to reassure the young people that schools take very seriously the need to lift aspirations and expectations and that is not just all about work experience but a whole plethora of things that schools do to change how young people in Rotherham think about themselves and their futures. What would drive a school day in and day out is getting the core business right, so that is the educational package, the teaching and learning and giving you the opportunities to be as successful as you can academically. As part of that I think schools accept there is a whole range of other things that we would want to offer that would make the school experience better and different and that might include being involved in some sport or some arts performance. Work experience could play a part in that but I think headteachers and schoolteachers would be apprehensive about pushing at children things that are not as good as

they could be. I do accept that if professionals were to work together to develop a programme that children could elect or buy into that might be something useful. I would not want to go down a route where I am saying to 210 children every year you have to do something that perhaps they do not really want to do and it is not as valuable for them as they might otherwise have expected.

What I would say on reflecting and listening to what people were saying, was we used to push children in probably year 9 or 10 into work experience (aged 13-15) and I'm wondering whether that is now too early. As many young people are staying in education for much longer I wonder whether we ought to be thinking about more substantial work experience packages over a period of time. So between the ages of 15 and 18 that might be more suited to what a young person needed at a given moment rather than where we have a quota and we have to push children through that in any particular timescale.

I do not think in general schools are particularly against work experience but they would absolutely be against something that was forcing children down a route or into something that they were not particularly keen on. I started by saying about schools wanting to raise aspirations and expectations because you quash aspirations and expectations if you give children or young people a poor experience, for work experience or anything else.

Paul Silvester – This is a little bit like being an employer as well as a school, as in my school we have 70+ people who support the children at Newman School. Of those 70, if they do not come in we get supply, now is a bit different to supply teachers as it is supply staff. Of those supply, we've probably got ten young people who are either in Year 13 at school or students are coming back from university in term time between semesters and they come in. I think we might need to collect those opportunities together centrally because firstly they get paid and I'd say for 99.9% of people it's a very enjoyable experience. It develops things like their communication skills and work readiness and the things that people actually do fit in with the experience of working in schools. We've got young people who volunteer. The other thing I would look at is there is something called Gig Buddies in London where young people aged 17, 18 or 19 take young people out who have special needs to gigs or concerts, or cinemas etc. whereby that sort of relationship, which is generally unpaid, builds up awareness of themselves and what they want and communication skills. So I think if you look at non-work experience opportunities, there are quite a few things where if young people want to do that then we can be part of organising that. Those experiences break down not only the work experience barrier but the barrier between mainstream and special and between young people with special needs and those without.

Cllr Clark – I used to work in a small political office and had a number of work experience students come through. Some came from recommendations from a local secondary school but the majority came with young people actually writing or e-mailing in and asking if there were opportunities, in the holidays if not in school time, or knocking on the door and saying they were looking for something. Although it was unpaid we did pay a lunch allowance and reimbursed all the travel or bought travel passes as you should try to make it as easy as you can for young people because not everybody's got spare cash to get on a bus and it soon adds up if you're doing it for nothing.

What is really important is that on personal statements when applying for university one of the things they look for, and are telling us they look for, is work experience and we should embrace that, but it is down to everybody really to open those doors.

Cllr Hoddinott – Following on from that and I think one of the recommendations from Emelia surrounding expenses I guess it is that equality aspect which is really important. So I am hearing on one hand that you should go and try and find your own work experience but there is a really important point that we saw in the presentation around equality and the equality of those opportunities. I think we know that in some sectors, like the media, it is based around internships and work experience based on who you know in asking friends or family. I am very conscious that not all young people have those connections to be able to get them into the right places for work experience and there is also the whole issue with people who can afford to take two weeks, then actually taking a job elsewhere. Yes people should go out and take their own initiative but I think there are some really important recommendations that are probably up for discussion about how we equalise the playing field and how you cover things like expenses and access into some of those more difficult sectors like the media as well.

Ewan Cumming – One potential suggestion is that every summer there is a fabulous opportunity for year 11 people to take part in volunteering activities and team building through the National Citizenship Service. Perhaps one of the suggestions that could go up is that some of this money could be separated off into more of an employment strand where there is more of an employer focus, building on what was said by my colleague behind me. There are organisations that could help do this so maybe there's something there around thinking what we already have and could some of this be diverted for those that wish it to have more an employer focus.

- 4) **In the 2018 statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff around careers guidance, benchmark 6 states that by the age of 16 every pupil should have had at least one experience of a workplace additional to any part-time jobs plus another experience by the age of 18. How are schools going to meet these benchmarks?** (William Brown)

David Naisbitt – You have to be careful what is in the legislation as it is not saying that every young person has to have a work experience, but rather every young person has got to have experience of work and there is a difference. Schools will take responsibility, but as I said earlier, will not be deflected from the core business which is ensuring that children get the very best teaching and learning opportunities. I think with what we have talked about here this evening in the past this was not done particularly well for all children, so to go back to a situation where we just say right every child has to have a work experience is not likely to give all children and young people a positive experience. For me it would be about the strength of an experience that was related to work rather than a work experience per se.

Cllr Cusworth – I think you've got to the crux of it there and I wonder how much of this from a school point of view is about releasing pupils to attend something that is vocational and therefore they may slip back on the academic? Having said that about the academic, people do have different abilities and what I would be conscious of, if it were an issue, was would we then be selecting the people we thought were achieving and meeting expectations to be able to be released? The thing about the summer and doing work experience in the holidays is that children have other responsibilities and whether they are young carers or carers for younger siblings the times that they are at school in term time are not an issue as that is expected by parents and anybody else. It may be not possible for them to go in the school holidays; they may have different responsibilities, so I wonder how willing are schools generally to release pupils from the academic curriculum for a set period of time?

David Naisbitt – It is a really simple question but really complicated answer. Schools, as many of you will know right now are driven by quite a narrow academic curriculum and Oakwood High School in the past, amongst lots of other secondary schools in Rotherham, offered a broad and balanced curriculum package with a guided options programme where young people were able to do a whole range of activities and a whole range of curriculum opportunities. So for example Oakwood had quite a wonderful vocational learning centre on Fitzwilliam Road. We have shut that because the qualifications and the experiences that we delivered in that building no longer added value for young people or the skills were not recognised anymore. I could say that those children could still have those opportunities one day a week but when that young person goes out into the workplace they have a qualification deficit. They have not got as many qualifications that are deemed to be acceptable and are then not able to compete toe-to-toe with children from other schools in other areas, so schools have their hands tied.

I get what you are saying about opportunities beyond the school day, or school week or term, but it is very difficult for schools to manage. I think there is a willingness in schools to give young people opportunities but how we do that beyond what we would regard as our core time is actually

really quite challenging because as rightly said in comments here, equality of opportunity is really important. What some children might be able to do beyond the school day is very different to what other children might be able to do. The truth is that those children who are able to find opportunities because of their wider experiences or wider contacts are likely to be those who would be able to do something in a holiday because somebody will get them there or somebody will facilitate it. I think what I'm hearing is that it is not about schools or employers, adults or young people but collectively if we want something to move forward then we need to work collectively over a period of time to find the solutions as there are no quick fixes here.

Cllr Beck – I've been thinking since the start of the meeting about why we have got to where we are in terms of work experience, the experience of a workplace. Seven or eight years ago all secondary schools used to receive quite a significant ring fenced grant for enterprise education. Schools right across Rotherham did so much in terms of enterprise and in the classroom with young people, which gave people the opportunity to experience what it would be like to be in a working environment, short of work experience. When I was at school we had all this and there was a lot going on that was linked to work experience as well, now as you know the government withdrew all that funding at the time and so enterprise as a concept in schools got depleted. Fortunately my experience, mainly with Wales High School and in Dinnington, is that a lot of that work was embedded within the curriculum and was not all lost. But my point here I suppose is that with this if we do still have some proper funding directed to enterprise education and business skills being taught in the classroom, all schools would probably be meeting this without having to provide work experience. I think that, coupled with the non-statutory duty for all young people to experience work, has culminated in where we are today, so I think it's a shame people in the education system now have not had the same opportunities I did.

Emilia Ashton – The benchmark says an experience of work could be an employer coming in and talking to a hall of 300 people, which to me is not very useful. I came out with qualifications, 14 GCSE's which were all A*-C, but was told by my current employer the reason I was not hired until a year after I turned 16 was because I had no experience; they did not care that I had got all these amazing qualifications. Actually the CV I got employed on did not include my qualifications; they want the real practical work skills so this might not be sending somebody on work experience but maybe schools could utilise this and having job interviews or skills that employers are looking for rather than utilising this benchmark six just for work experience.

Ian Goodall – Earlier I mentioned that I am an Enterprise Adviser and the Enterprise Advisers are trying to fulfil the role you are talking about and thereby helping to provide some kind of enterprise education within schools. We meet as a group as we have one in each school in Rotherham, special schools and comprehensives. In terms of Councillor

Cusworth's question, overall very reluctant and that is not directed at Oakwood or any school in particular but I sit in a room with 10 or 12 different Enterprise Advisers working with different schools. The major concern that most of us have is that when we go into a school we give up time, we try and give some experience and try and help them to connect with businesses but the school is not prepared to designate any time apart from 20 minutes here or 20 minutes there to employees even coming in to talk to the students. Bringing it back to Emelia's point, that is a very good one, but even that for me is difficult at times, so Trident work experience in three weeks is a complete world away from what is possible at the moment. I appreciate it has to be good and it has got to be right and maybe the schools want something back that they feel is correct but at the minute it does seem to be a straight choice between academic experience or enterprise experience and I think the bit that schools tend to miss is that an engaged student will achieve more academically. If you can inspire a student to think "wow I want to do what that person does" or who has listened to a person who works as a computer programmer or as an analyst or in finance and found out they need A levels or degrees to do whatever they need to do, for me that student becomes engaged and the battle to teach them perhaps becomes a little bit easier. It is a tough problem to solve.

Tim O'Connell – Work experience and an experience with employers needs to be positioned as part of somebody's education not perceived as something that is vocational because really it does matter if you are going to go to university not looking to go into work. Actually having work experience is really important for that, so it very much picks up on the point Emelia was saying. I really do think we need to do that and other people here know far more about our education policy but it seems to me that at a national level from my side of economic strategy I do not think it is well linked to skills nationally nor is the skills stuff really well linked to education and as a result of that when money comes down to local level it is all quite disjointed. I think this is quite a big issue that probably more than Rotherham on its own can tackle about perceptions of what the importance of work experience in somebody's education is; it is part of somebody's education not something different to academic stuff, it is vital.

Omair Kasim – Maybe in some cases it should be the people's responsibility or they should be encouraged to do so, because some people may not make the effort to do work experience while others might want to work in a certain sector and the school cannot provide that so they should not be complaining about it they should actually try to do so themselves.

Kerry McGrath – I am listening to some of the challenges around offering work placements and good quality work placements and at the risk of plugging our own service, in effect VAR has taken the job on of providing that brokerage. We have got a menu of opportunities that people can have a look at so it is not a case of you have got to go out and try to locate. They are all in one place which hopefully also levels that playing

field mentioned earlier so we have got a lot of choice for people to choose something that is right for them. I think the key difference is that we worked with our organisations to make sure that they have identified what that voluntary role looks like before someone is placed in that role. So hopefully that does mean that it is a little bit more meaningful because the key tasks are already identified within that role, they know what they need somebody to do to come in and help that organisation as that preparative work has already been done. So I think yes it could be more meaningful, the opportunities are there, people can come in and see us or apply online so it is accessible. I think we have got work to do with some of our organisations still to increase that menu and also to make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for under 16s as well, but the opportunities are there.

Cllr Watson – Coming back to Cllr Cusworth's question about how keen schools are to let students go out. Schools, well head teachers, are only one bad Ofsted away from walking the streets, so at the beginning of the year David will have a meeting with all heads of department and say he needs this many ABCs out of your department, as head of science I then say to my young teachers: "That class you've got there I need 10 As, 7 Bs and 3Cs or there's going to be a problem" and that problem for them could be not progressing up the pay spine next year. So then somebody comes in from outside and says: "Can I have three weeks of your teaching time?" which for a science teacher is 15 lessons out of the time. You want 10 As but you want three weeks out of that curriculum time, no thank you. So as willing as David might be to set this up, the people on the chalk face as we used to call it, are actually the resistant ones here because we are the ones that would get the flak if we did not get the results. We know in our heart of hearts that the work experience is what gets you the job, we know all those things, but our job is dependent on getting the results.

Cllr Mallinder - I think we all agree that work experience is the ticket here but it is how we implement it. Kerry made a good point about students having the right things and I wonder if we need to develop a pro forma - what do I want from that job? And what does that employer want from me? The other thing I have an issue about is affording it and bus fares can be prohibitive for some students, so perhaps partners could look at funding a small common pot to support students.

John Barber - I am a governor at a disadvantaged school in Sheffield and at the recent Ofsted inspection six months ago the Chair of Governors asked the Ofsted inspector "If I told you that 60% of our young people left here and went straight into a job would you be interested in that statistic" and the answer was no as only interested in the qualifications, so until there is a national policy change we cannot change that. I absolutely agree you need the qualifications to get in front of an employer but that employer is not going to then choose the person with the best qualifications. They are going to choose the person who fits their job role/person specification and that might be the most confident, the most outgoing, it might be the most dedicated, it can be many different things,

but just to get the qualifications alone is for an employer not the right answer, it has to be that all round person. The young people are to be commended for what you're doing and that puts you near the front of the queue for any future job because you are doing something over and above your academic qualifications. An employer would say: "Wow that person's taken control and done something to help themselves", so that is equally as important. Yes the qualifications to get you through the door but then it is about the person because employers go people by people not qualifications alone.

Ewan Cumming – My first point is that there is a lot of onus on schools and just to make schools aware that the authority in Rotherham along with Sheffield and Barnsley and other interested authorities are trying to bid in for some central government money to support schools in trying to meet these benchmarks. Because we do appreciate that schools have a very difficult time and they have been given a series of instructions but no additional money to do this. We are attempting to support schools to deliver these benchmarks, particularly benchmark 6. I do have some information around that bid and although it is not strictly work experience it is about meaningful engagement with employers and we are doing slightly better than the UK average on measure 6 in that we have nearly 40% of schools managing to achieve this benchmark across South Yorkshire so it's not like we're starting from the worst position ever and sadly there are places in a worse position than us.

The second point is just to feedback on something said behind me, I think that the Ofsted inspector John spoke of might soon be saying something different because Ofsted released new guidance in March around what schools should do and they say they'll be looking at how well schools prepare pupils and students for their next step, with a focus on the impact and quality of what they do around careers.

- 5) **Have there been any previous attempts to have consistent work experience across all Rotherham Secondary Schools?**
(Maks Golus)

Ian Goodall – Just Trident work experience as far as I know that was a uniform policy for all Rotherham secondaries or felt like it was at the time and it sounds like it had mixed results. For me personally I think it was a positive experience in that it showed me that I did not want to do that job but something more challenging, so it helped me to think I probably needed to work quite hard and get some qualifications.

- 6) **Do you agree work experience should be a valuable opportunity? How should we manage this?** (Hamaad Hussain)

Ian Goodall – As an employer I do feel slightly concerned by the issue of quality. I think that is something that will need a lot of thought and discussion - what quality is, what the expectation is of students, parents, teachers or schools. We've got nothing in place at the moment that says

when we do get the opportunity to take someone, whether pre-16 or 16+ nobody really tells us what we are supposed to deliver in terms of work experience so I think that's the issue for me. I think it is very valuable but there needs to be some work put into that quality aspect and make sure everyone's expectations are the same because to be honest if the expectations are way high then many employers will be quite rightly put off because they're not able to deliver that kind of thing, so there needs to be some balance in there.

Paul Silvester – From experience in the context of special education I would look at other things as well as work experience because when I said we got seven young people over three years into full-time work, when actually in 35 years nobody had got in there, we had to look at those seven young people and what was it that actually got them into that employment opportunity. They had no academic qualifications and in fact the employer changed the rules and said we no longer need entry level maths and English, we will accept the work experience that those young people undertook as validation for what they did. So they actually changed the way they worked because the experience in that work had been done but when we looked back at what made those young people ready it was two things really.

One was that the school had a really strong Duke of Edinburgh award (DoE) which we took to a different level but it gave those skills and confidence and being able to communicate and these are young people who generally often had words spoken for them or were not put in a position to do that. The DoE, which is similar to the mainstream experience of going off and doing overnights and camping and all the other bits and pieces, had actually given those young people something they could talk about, some confidence in the skills that they could do things and new experiences and they took that skill set into the work environment. Then when we look at work experience you have also got to talk about the preparedness for that experience for work. There are different ways to do that and I would definitely say things like this as already mentioned in terms of DoE and other extra bits and pieces that are out there are really valuable as well, so whilst the focus is on work experience do not forget the other bits that improve the quality of the communication skills of people.

Emilia Ashton – Referring back to something Kerry mentioned earlier, obviously VAR have a programme in place where the employer says what they are looking for in a volunteer but also the volunteer says what is interesting for them as well. Maybe that could work as a consistent way, not necessarily writing it down but maybe in a previous interview so the young person knows what they are letting themselves in for and then the employer says we're offering you this, so there is a sort of match made. Is that something that they would be interested in?

Sharon Kemp – I think you are exposing some of the different drivers from a national policy context that are creating difference or strains within the system for what you want to achieve. We talked about the schools and how the schools are driven and how that happens. We talked around the fact that national funding has changed and actually one of the things I would say to you is the work you've done really exposes that actually there is not a joined up approach that is helping local partners to do the things that we know are important. One of the things that you might want to consider from your work is being able to write to the appropriate Minister to explain to them actually how government policy at this time is not always helping partners to come together to deliver the best possible things that we can for children and young people and I think that would be extremely valuable.

Ian Goodall – It would be interesting to add details about that vote that you took as work experience came out as number one on the list.

Emilia Ashton – Make Your Mark is delivered by the UK Youth Parliament which is an organisation of elected young people who work on national campaigns across the country. The way their campaigns are decided is they hold a ballot and that has ten issues that come down to what members of Youth Parliament stood upon and that gets put across to young people every year in summertime where they get a choice of ten to vote on. Unfortunately work experience did make the top five nationally but did not get selected in the House of Commons then to become a national campaign but it was highlighted in Rotherham as the priority issue from the 7000 young people who took part.

Toni Paxford - Just to reinforce that it is the largest youth consultation in the whole of Europe with just shy of a million people who took part in that vote nationally and the Young MPs who are here as well will get to vote in the House of Commons on their top two issues, so it is kind of a big deal.

7) **Without work experience how are young people meant to implement their academic skills into the workplace?** (Edana Munnik)

John Barber – It is a challenge and I mean for us and the employers we work with, we believe that every single lesson should be related to the world of work, so whether it's a maths lesson or a history lesson, whatever it is it should end with "... and this is how you will use this learning when you get out there and in the world of work". That's a challenge in itself for it again involves employers working with schools and translating that it is really important to get your head around the maths you have just learned if you want to do this sort of engineering or work in this industry. It is about making the learning in the classroom relevant to the world of work and how you can use it in the future. I am biased but I think you know I think every young person should have that experience of the world of work not necessarily work experience.

We had a big event at Magna in Rotherham last week with 2,500 young people focused around STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and it would be interesting to know how many people knew about it. We had everybody there from McLaren to traditional industry in the region to show young people what the opportunities are, broadening people's horizons. About 150 were there I think from Oakwood so that was the school grasping the mettle and saying you know this is really important and these young people need to see this and the jobs out there.

Ian Goodall - How many Rotherham schools attended John?

John Barber - Seven Rotherham schools, well six schools and the college, so we had 51 schools there including schools from Leicester, I think two from Barnsley and most schools from Sheffield. There are different priorities in schools but for me that was disappointing and I'm sure it was about communication but you've got some schools who have taken up opportunity and young people get that experience and people there at the show had been previously themselves and got jobs as a result of it. I think that's down to communication for us all to get that message out not just to schools but to parents and to the wider community.

Kerry McGrath – It strikes me that there is a step missing before we are placing people into these work placements. I think there is a bit of work to do first and I know that our VCS partners do that, so people would apply like they would do for a job and would be taken through an application process and as John mentioned actually having that conversation with them before you even set them off doing something. Maybe we're approaching this wrongly, maybe we need to be looking at what both sides can bring to this equation rather than as looking at it like OK we've got a work placement for two to three weeks for people and this is what we want them to do. So let's turn it round and have a conversation about what both sides can offer and I think some of the organisations or companies might find that actually they can do a more meaningful role then but it's a bit of work to do beforehand which is going to be investment later on.

Cllr Cusworth – To fully endorse what Kerry just said the point I was making earlier was that if schools are too nervous to release pupils to attend any work experience then it does not matter how good the offer of the work experience is unless you are starting from what you both can agree on and take it from there.

Emilia Ashton – I think we are saying here that clearly work experience is not available to everybody and obviously VAR has some amazing opportunities that are more flexible and over a longer period of time. Perhaps the suggestion should be as possibly a short term fix that VAR works alongside schools to say these are the volunteer opportunities out here and these can work similarly.

Kerry McGrath - We do have some work to do around that as there are some challenges we need to address and a lot of our opportunities are 16+, not all of them do cater for under 16s, I think there is some work for us to do with our VCS partners about what their offer is and make that flexible for people who are in school and still studying as well, but I would love to be able to get to work more with schools on that.

Emilia Ashton – Young people have to stay in education until 18 in either an apprenticeship, school or college, so even as a first step you could work with sixth form and colleges because I know universities look in your personal statement and they want you to prove that that career is the right choice for you, so something like volunteer opportunities would work.

Ian Goodall – In terms of what can we do, don't rely on work experience or rely this system being created solely for yourselves because I suspect it's a little way off judging by the number of barriers we might have to cross to get there. It sounds like VAR have something which is great for that sector but broadening that out on a huge scale will be challenging and might take a little bit of time. But you can get a job, paid employment when you're old enough to do that and I am not suggesting that you get up at 4am like Tim did but it didn't do him any harm. I got a job at McDonald's when I was 16/17 and looking back on that now I realise that that set me on a path that showed me what hard work was. So there are many opportunities to get out into the world of work and if that means having a think about where you want to go and what you want to do then knock on some doors and send off letters and e-mails to people working in that sector, whether it is the legal profession or whether it is the health service and go find it yourself and do it that way.

David Naisbitt – Just to reflect on some of the things that have been said and maybe find a way forward. To a degree I think listening to us all this evening we've got a bit fixated on what work experience is and what I'm hearing is that young people do not necessarily want to go out and go in to a work place. For some it might be the right thing, for some it might not be. Schools are not necessarily able to offer that, employers may or may not be able to facilitate that, but there's lots of work that goes on in schools that is preparing young people for life beyond their school that is related to work readiness, to enterprise. There are a number of Oakwood pupils over there and we have just gone through a process of appointing a head boy, head girl, house captains and prefects. There is a written application process which is exactly the same format as if you're applying to come and work at the school, shortlisting and an interview process. We do not flag that up as work related activity but goodness me it is. I think maybe schools have got something they can do to share with the young people a little bit more obviously the sorts of things that they are writing into their daily activities that might prepare young people for the world of work that are not necessarily going out to work.

Emilia Ashton – This probably links into the next question but those work readiness processes like house captain and head boy or girl tend to go from what I see to the more academic students, so not necessarily the students maybe with SEND needs. How can you make sure that that work readiness is open and available to all and those that might really need it get those work readiness opportunities?

David Naisbitt – That's your experience, not necessarily the experience of young people at Oakwood as anybody can apply to be a house captain or prefect, head boy or head girl and who gets it is a different issue. I was using that as an illustrative example of a whole range of things that schools do that may be similar to that, which gives children the opportunity to have a go at practising what it might be like in the real world. We do not make it as clear as maybe we should do that that experience will prepare you for life, so engage in it.

8) What is in place to ensure that young people with SEND requirements have work experience that is accessible for them? (Molly Crossmore)

Paul Silvester – I can say that question is really important and I just want to repeat the figure that only 7% of young people with a learning disability are in paid employment and I think if you reflect on that, that's an astonishingly poor figure and behind that there are all sorts of reasons. The stuff I am going to say is for the special needs sector and you linked in special needs pupils in mainstream and I'll do that. The joy of working in a special school is that I do not have Ofsted come and say "what are your exam results and how have you done that". I left the mainstream sector because of those things but we've had Ofsted and we have data and progress but we do not have that almost grindingly difficult question to answer about the exam statistics. What we've got to do with special needs is actually embed it and what we've embedded in our curriculum is all the things that you would like to see everywhere else and it's a fantastic thing. So we start off with Ulley Country Park, if anybody wants to come down on the Monday they are welcome, you'll see our students serving cups of tea and things like that and they do that really not for the work behind but for the communication skills and confidence skills. We actually have a link with Whiston Grange, which is the old people's home and it's great because our young people talk to the residents there and get feedback, it's a good experience and both sides get something out of it which is the crucial part. I've mentioned DoE and we've got work experience.

When everybody did Trident young people with special needs did not find it easy to get a work placement because all the work placements were taken up by the mainstream schools. Although I think that's a good thing since that stopped for young people with special needs there is now quite a lot available, so it is a small silver lining, it's our silver lining and we are proud of it.

Then there is working with employers. I mentioned work earlier and the employer was NEXT in their warehouse who changed their rules across the company and said their supported internship is actually a year-long work experience but if somebody had gone through that they did not have to have that set of qualifications.

The other thing we've got especially is parents and expectations because a lot of parents have been in a situation when the child was one or two years old with a doctor or people saying "your child will never ..." or "your child will ..." and those things live for many years in the lives of their parents. What it does mean is that they over protect their young people, therefore the idea of going to that employment when they do not necessarily have to is a problem. So this area is so much easier for me in a special school but we have to work with schools and clubs in the mainstream to make sure that we link in with special needs factors. There was a lot going on but a much of the issue was trying to change that 7% figure and getting everybody else, so it's no point scoping work experience and doing all those things that are positive if they then turn up with what we think is a really broad and balanced option and then they go to an employer who does not understand e.g. autism, so we have got some work to do with regard to special needs and it's not just about ramps. It's about the way of working but I do think the doors have been opened for that so is quite positive.

Ian Goodall – How does this 7% compare with other countries?

Paul Silvester – I've been on two trips abroad last year to Sweden and to Lithuania. In Sweden they have a completely different process; all the special schools for instance are attached to mainstream schools but also their employers, and when we explain enterprise they burst out laughing saying you always talk of enterprise. Each employer has a duty to take people on work experience in the local area and so they have integrated even the special needs sector. In the classrooms I went into, the local firms had given the products that they will actually work with and then they visited. Anybody who wants a job was given one but it is a managed job, so actually the bit I saw it was 100 percent but not everybody wanted one and for anyone who did they wanted to ensure the skills were done. So that is Sweden but it's a different system with the employers government-funded to do that and it was a really good system but we can do things differently.

Emilia Ashton - So from all the work experience you've done with employers, do you think that they are now more understanding of people's needs and more likely to take on these young people in full-time employment?

Paul Silvester - You have to spend some time with employers, it does not happen overnight but I will go back to Next with whom we had a three-year relationship. It was not just the seven young people; there were 20 people with significant learning difficulties employed, including from a

severe learning difficulty school and a college. A woman came up to me at the end last time and thanked me saying we had changed the culture of work and the young people had added value to the workplace. So the thing is you can change things and I only ever liked situations where our young people don't get things just because, it is that they give and they get and that's a natural combination but it can change things. Next had an 85% target and our young people never achieved more than 60% but they appreciated what they gave was slightly different and they changed the rules with the unions and with everybody else joining in because there was an acceptance of it and that they also had the skills for the jobs that they went for. One was to look for errors along huge things and for anybody with autism who could walk down a long stretch, spot something and enjoy every single day was positive. Their attendance was fantastic, their work rate was brilliant and that shows the culture but you do have spent some time with them to start off.

John Barber – In a practical example we had a young man 14 with autism who came to us and went on work experience and I went see the employer after two days in trepidation because he'd taken a risk. He said he wanted to employ him and when could he start and I said you cannot he is only 14! He carried on going in every holiday and is now half way through his first year of apprenticeship with that company. The employer said if he had known the focus and dedication he would get, then half the workforce would be recruited from people with autism.

Mollie Crossmore – Can I ask about other schools as well not just Newman school?

Paul Silvester - You're looking at a very mixed picture but in terms of special there is the changing nature and opportunities we've got. Talking about schools where the focus is perhaps making sure that young people can communicate effectively to be independent can to do that but I do think the idea now of Ofsted and other such things is driving us to make sure we've got valid data. But the reason why only 7% of young people with learning difficulties are in employment is because the system has failed those young people across the board for many years. It is not just school itself generally and it's not just employers but it is the funding and the other bits and pieces that have led to this situation.

Cllr Yasseen – I worked for the DWP and as an ambassador for their programme that checks accessibility for employing disabled people. I think it's already been previously mentioned about policy and policy is really important because with policy comes resources and on that particular programme we worked with a plethora of businesses from all different sectors and that was across the UK. One of the big things we found was about the cultural shift and it takes time and money for cultural shifts to happen. A lot of employers are not used to working with or employing or understanding the social model of disability, so the investment from that particular programme in terms of accessibility allowed us to look at what people can do for you, it looked at different jobs working with the

employer to break those jobs down and how could they be reorganised so actually somebody then that might have a particular adaptation or a requirement actually could do that job. The job still got done but it was performed in a different way and that's a very different way of looking at employment. Now whether or not the government would ever invest that money when it comes to work experience is not known but on a wider issue about accessibility it is also things like independent living so being able to use public transport because that is also part of the world of work, about having to get somewhere on time or are having to access other things. So I think it's wider than just the employers, it is about how structurally we organise ourselves in our society and about what we think is important in terms of inequalities and fairness.

9) **How do you ensure that no young person is put off work experience for external factors e.g. financial implications?**
(Ashcon Chobeh)

Ian Goodall – Financial resources is a tough one to start with as there is a need to put some cash in from somewhere as I think we are all well aware that cash was removed, the ring fence was taken away or whatever you want to call it. It is just not there at the moment to probably even fund bus fare to make sure every young person can get to work experience, so I'm not sure the financial one is easy to solve.

In terms of how you can make sure people do not have a bad experience, I think that again is a communication issue, it is about making sure that employers know what's expected of them, making sure that students and schools have got an expectation of what's possible from different employers and then follow up after to make sure that it's done right at that whole system level. Clearly Trident was tried and it's probably looking at what was good and bad with that and coming up with something better.

Emilia Ashton – You have the book of contacts and obviously we understand that the money is not always there because of the cut backs or squeezes, then there is inflation etc. Maybe if I was based in Sheffield but you are a firm in Rotherham and I cannot afford that commute you might know a similar firm in Sheffield that is close to me but offers something similar. Perhaps it's that connection between the business world saying: "I've had someone interested in this, could you offer them ...?"

Abigail Smith – Moving on from the financial to make different point, about children with mental health issues in mainstream schools, as we talked about being in a hall and someone coming in and talking to them but for children with anxiety who were in mainstream schools they wouldn't be able to go into the hall.

John Barber – We've had some young people in that situation and it's about the support you put around them to make them feel comfortable, picking the right employer to put them with. It is about the young person

pushing themselves as well but it is about trying to find the right sort of support in the right placement and spending more time with that young person. Again that's an issue because that time is not there.

Just picking up on the financial point as well, there are some employers who will pay bus fares for young people; there are some employers we get donations from as we are a charity; or we can put in a bursary for them to go on that work experience, but it is limited. There really needs to be a bigger pot and that sort of support needs to be there because no young person should be disadvantaged by their background to get this opportunity.

Cllr Watson – The only way you can do that is by making it in the school day so that people with other responsibilities at home are not put off. You have to make sure the funding is still there like it used to be so that you do not get situations like when I taught at Maltby and we had work experience. I would ask my tutor group where they wanted to go and people said somewhere they could walk to, someone wanted to be a graphic designer but would do retail at Tesco because graphic designers were in Sheffield. So it has got to be a blanket if you are not going to exclude anybody because as soon as you make it like David said earlier about whom you know or who your parents know or what you can find out yourself, you will exclude somebody. As Cllr Hoddinott said if you are going to make it any way an equality thing, you have to fund it and that means probably nationally and you have got to make it in the school day and it has to be everybody that has got to do it.

Sharon Kemp – A really practical point I think is actually an expectation around what young people will wear and I know that it can create big anxieties for young people around how they are perceived. Certainly I would have found it very difficult to go into the world of work as my mum made my clothes when I was their age. I think the expectation is that the uniform is the uniform and actually it's thinking through some of the things that we might not think about now that are inhibitors to how people might feel walking into a workplace and the situation they might be in. So I think there's something around the more work we do with young people because there might be many things there we would not necessarily think about that could be really off-putting for young person when actually within that environment.

Emilia – Communication.

Following the Question and Answer session the Scrutiny Officer highlighted some key themes that had emerged, namely:

- Quality of experience, whether that was a traditional work placement or another opportunity
- Need for partnership and a collective approach across sectors
- Awareness that there were some competing forces at play on policy

- Young people's expectations and aspirations
- Preparation from all sides to ensure placements were successful
- An asset-based approach - what young people could bring, which linked to points raised regarding opportunities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability

Next steps would be to collate and type up all the information and produce a draft report. The Scrutiny Team would liaise with Sarah Bellamy once this was done and meet with RYC again to tweak the recommendations that would go forward to partners for a response. This would probably be towards the end of June once examinations had finished, with a view to having the final report in July. A response would be expected about September time, which would correspond with the new academic year.

Toni thanked everyone for their attendance and thanked Cllr Steele and the other Elected Members present.

135. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Councillor Steele thanked the partners for their contributions in answering the Youth Cabinet's questions and thanked the Youth Cabinet for their questions and input and doing an excellent job. Toni Paxford was also commended for doing an excellent job as Chair.