



The Scottish  
Government

Evaluation of Skills  
for Work Pilot Courses  
Final Report

# **EVALUATION OF SKILLS FOR WORK PILOT COURSES**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Scottish Executive made a commitment in 2004 to deliver a new programme of qualifications in learning about skills for work by 2007. It announced that Skills for Work (SfW) courses were going to be introduced to help young people to develop skills and knowledge in a broad vocational area, core skills, an understanding of the workplace, positive attitudes to learning, and employability skills. The courses are intended to provide progression pathways to further learning, training or employment for pupils of all abilities. The new Scottish administration – the Scottish Government – has expressed its commitment to SfW courses. The results reported here are findings from research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) examining the piloting of SfW courses over two years. The SfW pilot involved approximately 40 delivery centres in the first year in 2005/06 and 70 in the second year of the pilot, working in partnership with nearly 60 per cent of Scotland's secondary schools – 255 schools in total.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

- The study revealed four delivery models adopted across the SfW pilot partnerships, of which the in-college delivery model was the most common one. However, delivery centres were increasingly moving towards adopting more diversified delivery models, including delivering courses in schools or in vocational centres.
- Most schools and colleges felt that the pilot had led to stronger partnerships between their organisations.
- Respondents in many delivery centres documented ways in which the pilot had helped them to develop teaching approaches to better suit the needs of younger students. Progress had also been made in embedding the teaching of employability skills into courses since the beginning of the pilot.
- Schools and colleges had made progress in developing more robust selection procedures for SfW courses, which in several delivery centres were seen as lowering student drop-out in the second year of the pilot.
- Most interviewees in schools agreed that the SfW pilot had raised the status of vocational learning among teachers and students and all felt that it had enabled them to offer a more relevant curriculum to their pupils.
- However, some providers still complained that some schools did not give SfW courses the same status as Standard Grades and viewed them as mainly suited to low-ability students. Several colleges and local authorities were taking active steps to challenge such perceptions.
- Respondents in almost all schools and colleges agreed that the courses had had a positive impact on students' vocational skills and knowledge, motivation and behaviour. Most also thought that they had helped students to make better and more informed decisions about their post-school transitions.
- All 41 candidates interviewed were able to identify positive impacts of participating in SfW courses. Almost three-quarters said that they thought it had improved their chances of finding work in the future.
- Student retention on SfW courses was very good in over two-thirds of the 29 schools contacted. Analysis of SQA data revealed that 85.6% of students had passed their courses by the end of the second year of the pilot.

## **ABOUT THE STUDY**

The overarching purpose of the research was to undertake a process evaluation of the SfW pilot courses in order to inform the roll-out of these courses. The evaluation of the SfW pilot was based around a qualitative methodology in order to get to the heart of the implementation process. It consisted of four distinct, but interrelated, research methods. These are as follows:

- **Strategic interviews:** face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Scottish Executive, HMIe, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) during September and November 2005.
- **Telephone survey:** of a representative sample of 20 delivery centres and their partners, including 29 schools, 15 colleges and one training provider at two time points (around November 2005 and May 2007), as well as a survey of a sample of ten delivery centres (interviews with 14 schools, six colleges and two employers) who only started delivering SfW courses in the second year of the pilot (June 2007).
- **Case study visits:** to six partnerships involving interviews with 16 course lecturers, teachers or trainers, 22 school staff (including headteachers, deputies and guidance teachers), six college senior managers and/or programme coordinators, three local authority staff, one employer working with a school and 41 SfW students (between April 2006 and November 2006).
- **Analysis of SQA data:** from all pilot delivery centres in order to determine student pass rates overall and across courses.

## **KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **Aims and objectives of the pilot**

Interviews with key stakeholders at the start of the pilot revealed that one of the key aims of the pilot was to test out the practicalities of delivering the SfW courses. Other key measures of success were seen to be retention and completion rates, pupils' achievement on the courses, and the status the qualifications had with employers and universities. It was also hoped that the courses would be successful at developing young people's general employability skills.

### **Delivery models**

The evaluation helped to identify four delivery models, which included:

- College or training provider delivery off-site (i.e. not in schools);
- College or training provider delivery in school;
- Joint delivery by college/provider and school staff;
- School-only delivery.

The first of these was the most common delivery model for the pilot. Each of the four delivery models were found to have their own strengths and challenges associated with them. Delivery centres were increasingly moving towards adopting more diversified delivery models towards the end of the second year of the pilot. Some

delivery centres had adopted two or more models. Other colleges already had or were planning to start delivering courses in schools or in vocational centres as a way of overcoming transport barriers and lack of college accommodation. Some schools were working with private training providers or using school staff to deliver courses. The main issues associated with such alternative approaches included, for some centres, teachers' skills and knowledge, lack of in-school facilities and funding to support the purchase of teaching resources and consumables.

### **Partnership working**

Most schools said they were working with a range of partners to deliver SfW courses, including colleges, training providers, local authorities or other partner schools. Respondents in both schools and colleges felt that the pilot had led to stronger partnerships between their organisations. Significant progress had been made in collecting and sharing attendance data between colleges and schools. Partnership working was seen to be facilitated by two-way visits between schools and colleges, and having a single key contact within organisations to liaise with. Some challenges were identified, though, in relation to college-reporting procedures and insufficient links being made between what students were learning in college and the rest of the curriculum. Employer involvement was also variable across courses and delivery centres, even though several employer organisations were active in the design of SfW courses at SQA level.

### **Delivering the SfW courses**

Most delivery centres believed that the pilot had helped them to develop teaching approaches to better suit the needs of younger students. This included making lessons as practical as possible, keeping students busy and breaking topics into small chunks. Delivery centres had also made considerable progress in embedding the teaching of employability skills into courses since the beginning of the pilot. Most said that they were now a theme that ran through all of their teaching and that they were explicitly built into lesson plans. Almost all delivery centres had shared practice on delivery with other colleges or providers, most frequently via SQA meetings or SFEU conferences. However, several of the ten delivery centres interviewed who only got involved in the second year of the pilot said that they had so far not accessed such good practice or lessons learnt.

### **Views on course materials**

The majority of respondents interviewed as part of the telephone surveys and the case studies were extremely positive about the support materials provided by the SFEU for use and adaptation by colleges and schools. Several interviewees reported that they had adapted the provided materials or developed additional ones to better match their own students' needs and requirements.

### **Staff development**

All providers agreed that the SfW pilot had provided new and valuable opportunities for staff development and most teaching staff in delivery centres were said to have accessed internal or external training. Most commonly this related to teaching and managing groups of young learners.



## **Student selection**

Schools and colleges had made considerable progress in developing a more robust selection process by the end of the pilot. The most common selection approach was for schools to offer the courses to students as a free option choice and then for either schools, colleges or a combination of the two to select the most suitable ones to participate in the courses. There was evidence that colleges were increasingly being involved in this process. There was virtually no evidence that schools were using SfW courses specifically for disengaged or problem students especially in the second year of the pilot, although some colleges felt that higher ability students were often dissuaded from participating in courses. Students' course choices continued to conform largely to traditional gender stereotypes in the second year of the pilot, with only a minority of schools and providers making specific efforts to address this issue.

## **Impact and course completion**

Respondents in almost all schools and colleges agreed that the SfW courses had had a positive impact on students' vocational skills and knowledge, motivation and behaviour. Most also thought that they had helped students to make better and more informed decisions about their post-school transitions. Similarly, all of the 41 students interviewed were able to identify positive impacts of participating in SfW courses. Almost three-quarters said that they thought that participating in the courses had improved their chances of finding work in the future. Student retention on SfW courses was good in most of the schools surveyed. Analysis of SQA data showed that overall 85.6 per cent of the SfW candidates who had been entered to complete their courses in July 2007 had achieved a full SfW qualification. Of those not achieving a full award, more than four-fifths had completed at least one course unit.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES**

### **Conclusions**

The evaluation has shown that the SfW pilot has been successful in achieving the objectives and key measures of success identified by the stakeholders interviewed at the start of the pilot. Schools, colleges and providers are committed to the value of SfW courses and see them as having raised the status of vocational learning in schools; providers have developed and tested out different approaches to delivering courses and overcome various obstacles and challenges; schools and colleges are increasingly recognising the need to work more closely together and have started to implement strategies to strengthen their partnerships; colleges and schools are positive about the impact of courses on students' attitudes and skills relevant to employment, their motivation to learn, and their ability to work with and relate to adults; finally, more than four-fifths of students had passed their courses by the end of the second year of the pilot.

### **Key messages**

The evaluation has provided an insight into a variety of delivery models and highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each of them, although the evaluation has not identified a preferred model. The study has shown that schools and colleges are increasingly adopting more diversified and flexible models of delivery in order to overcome capacity issues and travel distances in rural areas. These alternative models

do, however, have their own issues and challenges and the Scottish Government, local authorities and colleges should consider ways to overcome some of them, including:

- Providing continuous training and development opportunities for school staff teaching SfW courses;
- Supporting the approach planned by some colleges of providing a mentoring and quality assurance role to schools delivering SfW courses.

The evaluation has shown that both schools and colleges believed that the pilot had really helped to make a positive contribution to improved partnership working. Even schools which had previously had strong links with providers were able to identify ways in which it had further improved links. However, there was still some evidence of a need for schools and colleges to work more closely together to overcome some remaining barriers. These included issues related to the timing of the selection of students, college involvement in providing pre-course guidance to students and sharing the recording and reporting of progress on courses. There was also evidence that very little progress had so far been made by schools to make links between students' learning on SfW courses and the rest of the curriculum. Furthermore, even though almost all delivery centres surveyed had carried out some form of evaluation or review of the pilot, joint working between partners on quality assurance and improvement had not been sufficiently developed. The Scottish Government and HMIE should encourage this to happen more often.

Timetabling of courses is an issue in several partnerships – approaches adopted vary considerably across schools. On balance the evaluation suggests that replacing a Standard Grade with a SfW course should be regarded as the ideal approach. The Scottish Government should consider ways in which the awareness and status of courses can be further raised among teachers, parents, employers and universities, which may encourage more schools to adopt this approach. It should also consider providing more guidance to schools on what approaches can and should be used to allow students to take SfW courses.

The Scottish Government, SQA and local authorities also should make sure that new providers and new staff benefit from the lessons learnt from the first two years of the pilot and that staff teaching the courses in schools and college benefit from relevant continuing professional development opportunities. School and college partners could also be encouraged to work more closely together to share ideas on teaching and learning approaches – such links were currently being used mainly to focus on managing groups of young learners.

# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

1.1 In the ministerial response to *A Curriculum for Excellence*, the Scottish Executive<sup>1</sup> (2004a) made a commitment to deliver a new programme and qualifications in learning about Skills for Work (SfW) for 14-16 year olds by 2007. It announced that SfW courses were going to be developed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in conjunction with Learning and Teaching Scotland, the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU), the Scottish Executive and a range of stakeholders through a programme of national consultation seminars.

1.2 The rationale for the SfW courses is that they would be introduced to help young people to develop skills and knowledge in a broad vocational area, core skills<sup>2</sup>, an understanding of the workplace, positive attitudes to learning, and employability skills<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, “*a key feature of these courses is the emphasis on experiential learning. This means learning through practical experience and learning by reflecting on experience*” (Scottish Executive (2005b), p.50). The courses are intended to provide progression pathways to employment, training or further learning for pupils of all abilities.

1.3 Significantly, the Scottish Executive positioned SfW in the broader educational policy and lifelong learning agendas. SfW was identified as a contributor to Learning for Life, one of the five National Priorities in Education, which focuses on equipping young people with “*the initial skills, attitudes and outlook to prosper in a changing world and to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and ambition*” (Scottish Executive, 2005b, p.8). The Scottish Executive also stated that SfW would make a major contribution to achieving the aspirations for young people, enunciated in *A Curriculum for Excellence*, that “*they should be successful*

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<sup>1</sup> Since May 2007, following the election of the new administration, the Scottish Executive has been renamed the Scottish Government.

<sup>2</sup> The five Core Skills are: Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others (SQA, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The skills and attitudes for employability, including self-employment, include the generic skills or attitudes valued by employers and specific vocational skills or knowledge. Opportunities for developing these skills and attitudes are highlighted in each of the Course and Unit Specifications (SQA, 2006).

*learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work”* (Scottish Executive (2005c), p.1). Furthermore, it was noted that SfW would help to fulfil the commitment in the Scottish Executive Partnership Agreement, *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, “*to enable 14-16 year olds to develop vocational skills and improve their employment prospects by allowing them to undertake courses in further education colleges as part of the school-based curriculum*” (Scottish Executive, 2005c, p.2).

1.4 This approach is part of the lifelong learning strategy, *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*, which aims to “*encourage locally relevant links between schools, FE colleges and local employers to ease school leavers transitions into further learning, training or employment*” (Scottish Executive, 2005b, p.5). The Scottish Executive explained that it encouraged school-college partnerships for several reasons, including “*to give pupils the opportunity to undertake meaningful courses and experiences in vocational areas*” and “*to stimulate pupils’ creativity and enterprise, including through Enterprise in Education under Determined to Succeed*” (Scottish Executive (2005a), p.3). Significantly, the Scottish Executive pointed out that it has no preferred model of delivery for school-college partnerships or for the type of delivery of vocational education.

1.5 It was recognised that collaboration and partnership between schools, colleges and employers would be important for the delivery of SfW courses. *Lifelong Partners, A Strategy for Partnership*, stated that “*SfW courses will provide a greater range of learning opportunities for pupils augmenting existing school/college activities*” (Scottish Executive, 2005b, p.17). It also observed that: “*It may be possible for some schools to provide such courses, but many will be delivered in partnership with colleges*” (Scottish Executive, 2005b, p.17). Interestingly, a review by Wood (2004) reported that there was a general consensus that “*colleges provide a stimulating and supportive environment for pupils*” (p.7), adding that “*the schools that make the best links with colleges are those which realise that not all pupils are suitable for college education*” (p 14).

1.6 The new Scottish administration has expressed its commitment to SfW courses. In *Skills for Scotland: a Lifelong Skills Strategy*, the Scottish Government emphasised the “*need to increase opportunities for and the esteem to, vocational learning and training*” by building on the ‘*design of Curriculum for Excellence (...) to help young people develop, and see the*

*relevance of, essential skills and other skills of value in developing the capacities that will underpin their personal, social and economic futures”* (Scottish Government, 2007, p.15).

1.7 The SfW pilot was run over two years, involving approximately 40 delivery centres working in partnership with a total of 145 schools in the first year, and 70 delivery centres in partnership with 255 schools in the second year of the pilot. The courses piloted from 2005-2006 onwards were:

- Construction Crafts (Intermediate 1)
- Sport and Recreation (Intermediate 1)
- Early Education and Childcare (Intermediate 1 and 2)
- Financial Services (Intermediate 2).

Additional courses piloted in Year 2 included:

- Practical Experiences: Construction and Engineering (Access 3)
- Hairdressing (Intermediate 1)
- Rural Skills (Intermediate 1)
- Construction Crafts (Intermediate 2)
- Sport and Recreation (Intermediate 2).

Although the main target group for SfW courses were pupils in S3 and S4, it was anticipated that the courses would also be taken by older pupils and adult learners.

1.8 The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the former Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) – now the Scottish Government’s Schools Directorate – to carry out an evaluation of the SfW pilot between September 2005 and October 2007. This report presents the main findings of the whole evaluation with a particular focus on the final survey of 20 partnerships carried out between April 2007 and July 2007. Two other reports (initial and interim) were produced during the evaluation – summaries of these are available on the Scottish Government’s website.<sup>4</sup> In addition, SQA (SQA, 2006) and HMIE (HMIE, 2007) carried out their own reviews of the SfW pilot.

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<sup>4</sup> see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/07/06105338/0> and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/skillsforwork>

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

1.9 The overarching purpose of the research was to undertake a process evaluation of the SfW pilot courses in order to inform the roll-out of these and other courses. The evaluation aimed to identify the critical factors that facilitated or hindered the implementation of the courses, and to draw out learning points for policy-makers and practitioners.

1.10 The main aims of the evaluation were to examine key aspects of SfW course design, including course rationale and purposes, design principles, assessment regimes, timetabling and delivery issues and to obtain the views and experiences of key stakeholders, including pupils and teaching staff involved in the pilots.

1.11 More specifically, the key objectives of the study were:

- **To collate and analyse** monitoring information relating to pupil characteristics, retention rates and achievement of qualifications.
- **To evaluate** course content, materials and design in the light of policy intentions and official guidance.
- **To collect and explore** the views of key stakeholders on the design, implementation, and piloting of the SfW courses.

## METHODOLOGY

1.12 The evaluation of the SfW pilot was based around a qualitative methodology in order to get to the heart of the implementation process. It consisted of four distinct, but interrelated, research methods. These were as follows:

- **Strategic interviews:** face-to-face meetings with eight key stakeholders at the start of the pilot.
- **Telephone surveys:** telephone surveys of a representative sample of 20 delivery centres at the beginning of the pilot (this survey is referred to in the report as ‘the first survey’) and towards the end of the pilot (this is referred to as ‘the final survey’), as well as a telephone survey of a sample of ten delivery centres who only started delivering SfW courses in the second year of the pilot (referred to as the ‘Year 2 Partnership Survey’)
- **Partnership case-study visits:** to six delivery centres and their partners
- **Analysis of monitoring data:** collected by the SQA from all pilot delivery centres and analysed by the NFER at the end of the pilot

1.13 More details on each of the five research exercises are provided below:

### **Strategic Interviews**

Interviews were carried out with eight key representatives from the SQA, the Scottish Government, HMIE, Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU). The interviews were conducted between September and November 2005.

### **Telephone Surveys**

The first telephone survey of 20 partnerships was carried out between November 2005 and February 2006. Interviews were conducted by telephone with a senior manager in each delivery centre and up to two partners, across 20 partnerships. Interviewees in colleges tended to be sector managers or schools liaison coordinators, who were responsible for the organisation and operation of the SfW pilot. Respondents from schools tended to be a member of the senior management team such as the depute headteacher or they were Principal Teachers. These individuals usually had responsibility for coordinating the pilot at school level and for liaising with the college or training provider. The sample included: 15 colleges, 29 schools (four of the schools were delivery centres) and one training provider. Interviews were conducted with 50 members of staff from these organisations.

The final telephone survey was carried out between April 2007 and June 2007 and involved re-contacting the same colleges, schools and provider as in the first round.

In addition to the main survey, the NFER also conducted a telephone survey (in June, August and September 2007) of a sample of ten delivery centres who only started delivering SfW courses in the second year of the pilot. The focus of these interviews was on the extent to which these delivery centres had managed to build on the lessons learnt by those centres involved from the start of the pilot. Interviews were conducted with 14 schools, six colleges and two employers (four of the schools acted as delivery centres – two of these were working in partnership with local employers).

### **Case-Study Visits**

Visits were carried out to six purposefully selected partnerships – three towards the end of Year 1 and three just after the beginning of Year 2 of the pilot. Partnerships were chosen in consultation with the Research Advisory Group with the aim of examining different delivery models (see Chapter 3) and a variety of SfW courses.

Depending on the partnership model, visits were conducted to the lead organisation and one or two of its partners. In three cases, the lead organisation was a college working with a number of schools, of which two each were visited as part of the research. Of the other three case-studies, one was a school working with another school, one was working with an employer, and the third had set up a partnership with a private training provider. In each of these cases, interviews were conducted with representatives of both the lead and partner organisations.

Overall, visits were carried out in three colleges and nine schools. As part of this, one-to-one interviews were conducted with 16 course lecturers, teachers or trainers, 22 school staff (including headteachers, deputies and guidance teachers), six college senior managers and/or programme coordinators, three local authority staff, and one employer working with a school. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with 41 SfW students across the six case-study partnerships.

### **Analysis of monitoring data**

The NFER carried out an analysis of data collected by the SQA from all delivery centres. The analysis was used to determine overall levels of completion of SfW courses of those students expected to complete their courses at the end of the two-year pilot. Additional analysis was conducted to examine any differences in relation to different courses and by student gender.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

1.14 Chapter 2 explores the views of the key stakeholders interviewed at the start of the pilot in order to gain an in-depth perspective on their views of the aims and objectives of the SfW pilot.

Chapter 3 presents the different delivery models adopted across partnerships and examines their strengths and challenges associated with them, and the extent to which schools and colleges had taken up and changed the delivery models used by the end of the second year of the pilot.



Chapter 4 focuses on the characteristics of partnerships set up between schools, colleges, providers, local authorities or employers in order to deliver SfW courses and explores respondents' views on the effectiveness of these links

Chapter 5 explores the experience and impact of the delivery of SfW courses from the point of view of schools and colleges acting as delivery centres, including the practicalities of providing the SfW courses, accessing staff training and development opportunities, sharing good practice with other delivery centres, and evaluating their practice and the success of the courses. Finally, it presents their views on what impact being involved in the pilot had on their organisations.

Chapter 6 focuses on the students involved in the SfW courses – how they were selected for involvement, students' own views of the courses, their reasons for not completing the courses, and student and staff perceptions of what impact the courses had on students.

Chapter 7 explores the main challenges encountered by partnerships and the key lessons learned from the two years of the pilot.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents the main conclusion from the research and details key messages relevant to the future roll-out of SfW across the rest of Scotland.

## CHAPTER TWO            STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

2.1     This chapter presents the findings from the face-to-face interviews with eight key representatives of the Scottish Government, the SQA, Learning and Teaching Scotland, HMIe, and the SFEU carried out **at the start of the pilot** between September and November 2005. Interviews were conducted with individuals who the research advisory group had identified as having been instrumental in the development and implementation of the SfW pilot courses.

2.2     The NFER research team used a semi-structured framework, agreed with the research advisory group, which explored respondents' views on the aims and objectives of the SfW pilot, its key measures of success, and potential barriers, as well as more factual information relating to the design and structure of the qualifications. The interviews also provided valuable contextual information, which was used to inform the development of research instruments for the telephone survey and case-studies.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SKILLS FOR WORK PILOT

2.3     Interviews with key respondents revealed a variety of shared aims and objectives of the SfW pilot in general and the SfW courses more specifically. Those referred to most frequently included:

- Testing out the design of the new SfW qualifications (including the concept of non-graded qualifications)
- Delivering qualifications that develop young people's general employability skills
- Introducing vocational qualifications into the curriculum that are accepted on a par with academic courses
- Testing and developing schools' and colleges' abilities to work together in partnership to deliver vocational options for pupils in S3 and S4 (and other stages)
- Developing courses for young people of all abilities.

These stated aims and objectives are explored in more detail below.

2.4     All respondents regarded one of the key aims of the pilot as being that of **testing out the design of the SfW courses** as well as the practicalities of delivering the SfW qualifications, as one interviewee stated:

*“The objectives for the pilot are to find out if we have got the Skills for Work design right and if we have got in place effective ways of making sure that the delivery leads to effective learning.”*

2.5 As part of this, several interviewees were particularly interested in investigating teachers’, parents’, pupils’ and other stakeholders’ responses to the fact that in contrast to traditional Standard Grades, SfW qualifications are non-graded – pupils successfully pass the course when they complete all the required units (those not passing the course can still achieve individual units).<sup>5</sup>

2.6 Six of the eight key representatives focused on the aim of developing qualifications that engendered young people’s **general employability skills** rather than preparing them for a specific job. Thus, several respondents emphasised that they hoped the qualifications would build young people’s “*general awareness and skills with respect to the work environment*” or “*basically to prepare them for later life*” but “*not necessarily preparing them for a job*”. In the words of one interviewee:

*“We are looking at quite young pupils taking this qualification and I’ve argued long and hard that we don’t want to turn out mini-construction workers, but to give them the whole concept of what it means to be employed. We want to see whether it can keep that broad focus.”*

2.7 Respondents saw the pilot as a way of testing out the extent to which employability skills were embedded into the qualification and what approaches were adopted to deliver them. As one respondent explained:

*“How this is going to be done in college is going to be interesting – because so many college lecturers I suspect will say ‘We do this, it’s just part of what we do’, but whether that is good enough I am not convinced of that. I think it needs to be specifically thought out how they are going to deliver it to young people and then done in a really clever and constructive way just as any teaching can be done.”*

2.8 Half the interviewees saw one of the key aims of the pilot as being to **introduce more of a vocational aspect into the S3 and S4 curriculum** with the view of “*replacing one*

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<sup>5</sup> This evaluation did not include collecting information on parents’ or employers’ views of Skills for Work courses. However, as noted in *Skills for Scotland: a Lifelong Skills Strategy*, the Scottish Government is planning to undertake research to investigate attitudes to vocational learning by a wide range of interested parties.

*Standard Grade with an equivalent, relevant vocational qualification*". Of particular importance to these respondents was the hope that the SfW courses would be accepted "*on a par with other academic courses*".

2.9 The need to **test and develop school-college partnerships** was identified by the same proportion of respondents as a key objective of the pilot. It was seen as an opportunity to test out "*manageability and practicability issues*" of school-college partnerships, as well as a way of identifying and overcoming barriers to successful working partnerships. Of particular interest to some respondents was the need to explore "*rural issues*" related to transport between institutions in order to find out "*what is good practice and how can things go wrong?*"

2.10 Finally, three of the eight key respondents said that one of the main aims of the SfW pilot was to **develop courses for young people of all abilities**. On this note, respondents emphasised the need for SfW college courses to be offered not only to low ability students, but be seen as qualifications suitable for all types of young people. As one interviewee explained:

*"It should be a type of course which young people of all abilities should be able to benefit from. (...) This is a critical objective – and also a political one. One key theme of political debate was that this should not be one way of dumping low achievers or problem children who are disengaged from school into the college sector; instead it should be a positive opportunity for all."*

## **KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

2.11 In contrast with the aims and objectives of the pilot, respondents were less in agreement over its key measures of success. The one mentioned most frequently (five interviewees) was whether those pupils participating in SfW courses regarded it as "*a worthwhile educational experience*" or not. The main measure of this – apart from evidence from the national evaluation – was seen to be pupils' **attendance and retention rates** on the courses.

2.12 Pupils' **achievements** were seen as another hard measure of the success of the pilot by half the respondents, although several emphasised the need also to look beyond pupils' achievement of formal qualifications. In the words of one interviewee:

*“On the output side I think there will be some need to try and quantify the level of attainment in respect of both individual units and whole courses, although I think there will need to be some way of trying to quantify achievement in things other than the externally awarded certificates. Particularly in relation to the development of employability skills which are not always explicit within a whole unit.”*

2.13 On this note, reflecting the perceived key aims of the pilot, four interviewees said that they thought that one of the key measures of success was whether pupils developed their employability skills as a result of participating in the SfW courses. One future hard measure of this was seen to be whether employers subsequently reported that *“they were getting young people into the workplace who have the skills and core attitudes that they felt were missing before”*.

2.14 Finally, several respondents identified how the qualifications were valued by schools and colleges and what status they had with employers and universities as important measures of success of the pilot. As regards employers, interviewees hoped that *“those that have interaction with [the pilot] have a positive view of it and value it, and don’t see it as a soft option”*.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- All respondents thought that one of the key aims of the pilot was to test out the practicalities of design, and the delivery of, the SfW courses.
- Interviewees hoped that the courses would be successful at developing young people’s employability skills rather than just focusing on preparing them for a specific occupation.
- The key measures of success identified by key stakeholders were seen to be, in the short term, attendance and retention rates, pupils’ achievement on the courses, and, in the medium or longer term, the status the qualifications had with employers and universities.

## **CHAPTER THREE MODELS OF DELIVERY**

3.1 This chapter examines the four delivery models identified via telephone surveys and case-study visits to six partnerships. The first section presents the main delivery models and some sub-models, while the subsequent section outlines the strengths and challenges associated with each of these. The final section of this chapter then goes on to examine the extent to which the different delivery models were adopted by the 20 delivery centres contacted as part of the final survey and also those ten which only got involved in the second year of the pilot.

### **OVERVIEW OF DELIVERY MODELS**

3.2 The first telephone survey helped to identify four delivery models, which included:

- College or training provider delivery off-site (i.e. not in schools)
- College or training provider delivery in school
- Joint delivery (courses delivered by college or training provider staff and school staff)
- School-only delivery.

3.3 The six case-study partnerships were purposefully chosen to explore each of these four models and helped to identify some additional sub-models of the fourth one (school-only delivery), including:

- Joint delivery between two schools
- School-only delivery with employer(s) support.

3.4 Table 1 provides an overview of the delivery approaches adopted in the six case-study areas. It shows that some partnerships were using more than one delivery approach – in some cases, this was a result of arrangements with different Local Authorities, in others, variable approaches were adopted for different courses. In one school, for example, the Early Education and Childcare course was delivered jointly with another school (whose staff had experience of teaching the child development unit), while the Financial Services course was taught by the school's staff only, with the support of an employer (Partnership 2). As can be seen the 'delivery in college' model was present in three of the six case-studies – this

reflected the fact that this model is most widely adopted nationally. Case-study areas were also chosen to ensure that as many of the different pilot courses were explored.

**Table1 Delivery models used by case-study partnerships**

<b>Case-study partnerships</b>	<b>Delivery Models</b>
Partnership 1	School with employer
Partnership 2	School with employer School with other school
Partnership 3	School with training provider
Partnership 4	College delivery in school Delivery in college
Partnership 5	Delivery in college
Partnership 6	Delivery in college

3.5 The following section explores each of the four main delivery models in greater detail, and describes their strengths and challenges.

## **STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF MODELS**

3.6 **College or training provider delivery off-site (i.e. not in schools):** This was the most common delivery model in the first year of the pilot (SQA, 2006) and was used by ten of the 20 partnerships contacted as part of the first telephone survey. As can be seen in Table 1 above, three of the six case-study partnerships had adopted this approach. All three involved a college working with several schools within a fairly large geographical area.

3.7 Interviewees, both within colleges and in schools (including staff and students), suggested that attending college can motivate students and make them more mature. As one college lecturer, who delivered the Construction Crafts course to students both in college and in schools (with dedicated facilities), stated:

*“I think the advantage of the in-college model is that they are taken out of their school environment and get to see a more mature environment, which I think is good for them as part of this growing up thing. That’s one of the things they miss if they are just in the school.”*

3.8 In addition, colleges usually have existing facilities for other courses, which can be used for SfW courses. This was found to be of particular benefit for Construction Crafts and

Practical Experiences: Construction and Engineering courses, which require fairly expensive equipment and resources. Another potential strength of this delivery model is that it can ease some students' transition to college-based courses after leaving school (rather than going into a job without training), which supports the findings of other research studies (Golden *et al.*, 2005). A Guidance teacher in a school also suggested that travelling to college can "*challenge some young people's fears of travelling outside their own area*", enabling them to consider more options once they leave school.

### SCHOOL A – IN-COLLEGE DELIVERY

School A is a denominational school that serves a socio-economically mixed community, but is generally an academically focused school. The make-up of the local community has changed over time and, according to the headteacher, the school is changing to meet students' needs and the changing agendas within education:

*"In the past we had a few vocational courses but not much – mainly because of the make-up of the school. That make-up has changed and so has society and youngsters need different skills."*

The school had eight S3 students doing the Construction Crafts and the Early Education and Childcare course (four on each course) at Intermediate 1 in the first year of the pilot. The courses were presented as a free option to all students, which meant a range of ability-levels were represented. Students replaced one Standard Grade to go to college, but also sacrificed some of their free time as their session at college finished at 4.30pm and they did not get back to school until nearly 5pm. They travelled to the college in small groups by taxi.

Timetabling was reported to be a "*big challenge for this school*". The SfW coordinator said that they had chosen to replace a Standard Grade rather than expecting students to miss core subjects like other schools were doing, because "*we feel the core curriculum and RE in particular are central to what we do. No one subject is more important than the other – they are all important and it is hard to timetable for that reason*".

However, the school was very positive about their involvement in the pilot and reported that students had got a lot out of their experience at college: "*It has been very successful this year and we have increased numbers applying for next year*".

3.9 The evaluation revealed some potential challenges for this delivery model. In particular, transport between schools and college can be a real issue especially within large authorities where schools are often far away from the provider sites. This has consequences both for the cost and sustainability of provision and on timetabling within schools. An Assistant Principal in a college identified transport as a big issue in his local authority:



*“We’re swallowing up thousands of pounds each year for transport. It’s almost prohibitively expensive. It is particularly a big issue because of the rurality of the local authority with some pupils having to travel one to one and a half hours to college.”*

3.10 To save costs, schools in this area had decided only to select pupils with a good record of behaviour to attend SfW courses who could be trusted to travel to and from college without supervision.

3.11 Interviews also suggested that this delivery model can also lead to a more ‘detached’ experience for students as teachers tended to be less aware of what they were doing on their courses. One Construction Crafts student attending college for four periods each week, for example, complained that: *“my teachers have no idea what I’m doing in college just that it’s construction”*. Similarly, teachers in areas adopting this delivery model were found to be much less aware of the course details. As illustrated in Chapter 4, this issue can be alleviated by organising teacher visits to college.

3.12 Another challenge identified by several schools is that colleges are usually only able to offer limited places to each school (mainly due to capacity issues), which means that pupils’ demand for attending SfW courses cannot always be met. It also means that schools are not able to offer the course as a genuine free option choice, but have to limit the offer to just a few places (as discussed in paragraph 7.41, seven of the 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey had been significantly affected by such a restriction).

3.13 **College or training provider delivery in school:** This approach was taken by one college visited (Partnership 4), which had links with schools in two local authorities. In one authority, schools had adopted the in-college delivery model. However, the other authority had equipped some of its secondary schools with on-site vocational facilities, so that SfW (and other vocational) courses could be delivered on-site. Another case-study (Partnership 3) consisted of a training provider delivering the Early Education and Childcare course in a school, although delivery was shared with school staff (this latter approach is discussed in greater details in 3.20-23).

3.14 The main strength of this approach appeared to be that students’ experiences were more closely integrated into the rest of their school life. Schools adopting this delivery model

were more likely to offer the courses as free-option choices and were less likely to report timetabling problems. The depute of one of the schools using this approach explained that the courses are “*listed in the same way as any other subject, so the students make an open choice*”. Staff awareness of the course was said to be very high in the school.

3.15 A college lecturer teaching the Construction Crafts course in schools in this authority commented on some of the advantages of this approach:

*“From the school’s point of view there are advantages because it fits into their time-table; the bell rings and boys leave their maths class and they put on their overalls and their boots on and start their work; and at the end of the class before the bell rings the lecturer gets them to clear up, put their tools away, wash their hands and change into their blazers before going into their geography lessons.”*

### **SCHOOL B – COLLEGE IN-SCHOOL DELIVERY**

School B is a comprehensive school with a high proportion of less able students, serving quite a deprived community. The school has a history of offering a more flexible curriculum and has offered vocational courses for a number of years. While such provision was in the past seen as targeted at disengaged pupils only, it was now seen as relevant to all pupils. As the school depute contended:

*“I see the courses as being of value to anyone who wants to do them. I refuse to get drawn into the idea that these courses are suitable for folk who are not quite so bright.”*

In Year 1 of the pilot, there were 15 boys in S3 doing the Construction Crafts course in the first year of the pilot in a specially-designed construction area in the schools, financed by the local authority. The students had replaced a Standard Grade and the SfW course appeared on the options list:

*“They are listed in the same way as any other subject, so the students make an open choice. We then look at those who have chosen it and if there is space they will get to do it.”*

The school was very satisfied with the delivery model. Communication with the lecturers coming into the school was said to be good and they were glad not to have to contend with any travel issues. School staff felt that there were major advantages to in-school delivery and said that they had not really experienced any challenges. The school was planning to expand provision in Year 2 of the pilot, offering two classes in the following year in construction and hairdressing.

3.16 One of the schools which adopted such a school-based model also emphasised that they favoured it because they wanted to be able to make SfW courses be delivered in the school itself just like all other courses. As a SfW school coordinator explained:

*“I think there can be a sense of rejection when kids are sent to college and we wanted to try and make the provision within the school and have someone come here to deliver the course.”*

3.17 Another strength of this model (compared to the school-only delivery model) is that college lecturers *“bring experience and expertise into the school and this is seen as important for the students”*. This view was reflected in interviews with students, who generally appreciated being taught by lecturers with recent experience of working in the vocational area. Finally, because courses are delivered on-site there are no transport costs. However, this is only the case if delivery is not shared with other local schools (as was found to happen in some of the final survey schools – see paragraph 3.31 below).

3.18 The main disadvantages of this delivery model are that students miss out on possible benefits derived from attending college (see paragraph 3.7 above) and the cost-implications of setting up purpose-built facilities in schools. Some schools may not have the space for such facilities – as a teacher in a school currently using the in-college model pointed out:

*“In an ideal world we would like an area in the school where you could teach plumbing and stuff like that, so you could cut down on travel time and allow more young people to get involved. But you’d need the physical space and there are constraints in that area in this school.”*

3.19 This model is likely to limit the choice of courses available to students in individual schools, as it would be too expensive to set up facilities for many different vocational areas in each school in an authority. It is also not clear whether one school would on its own be able to make sufficient use of the vocational facilities, but would have to link up with other local schools to deliver courses. This again would necessitate transport to the school with the facilities and would negate one of the main rationales for adopting this model.

**3.20 Joint delivery (courses delivered by college or training provider staff and school staff):** This approach was only undertaken by one of the six case-study partnerships (Partnership 3) and involved a training provider working with one school to deliver the Early

Education and Childcare course. Most of the lessons were delivered by the external trainer but with the help of the school Principal Teacher in Home Economics. It is worth noting that school teachers are required to be present in the classroom when a private training provider teaches in school, unless the instructor holds a teaching qualification and is General Teaching Council (GTC) registered. However, in this case, the school had actually chosen to adopt a joint teaching approach as they saw this as a more effective, though costly, way of delivering the course.

3.21 This model shared all the strengths of the in-school delivery model. However, because school teachers were actually involved in the delivery, staff awareness of the course was even higher and so the course was even more integrated into the school. The training provider was also able to draw on many existing links with employers to help organise visits to local nurseries.

3.22 The main challenge for this partnership was reported to be its long-term sustainability. The case-study school used Determined to Succeed (DtS) funding to support the delivery of SfW courses during the pilot, but the headteacher reported that the training provider was finding that it was not really covering their time and the school also had to invest a lot in terms of staff time as well. He concluded that: *“This model is quite costly to run in its current form and is not really sustainable in the long term despite the success of the course”*. He felt that in the long term they would have to look at trying to resource the course in a more cost-efficient way – perhaps having school staff teach other aspects of the course.

3.23 This issue would not be the same for a joint delivery approach involving a school and a college, as colleges would be able to access funds in the normal way from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for this purpose (unlike a private training provider). It is worth noting that schools delivering SfW courses (or sending students to college) do continue to receive mainstream funding for those pupils participating in such courses. However, the cost of funding the delivery and resourcing of SfW courses and/or paying a training provider to do so was often seen as not sustainable.

## SCHOOL C – JOINT-DELIVERY MODEL

School C is delivering the Early Education and Childcare course using an accelerated model of delivery in partnership with a private training provider – students complete the course at Intermediate 1 in the first year in S3 and at Intermediate 2 in S4. The school is a state comprehensive school serving two distinct communities – about 40 per cent of pupils come from advantaged backgrounds but the school also serves a more deprived area.

There were 12 S3 girls on the course in the first year of the pilot, all at general/credit level. The course was presented within the course options booklet against two column options and the school replaced two Standard Grades in order to accommodate the course on their timetable. A trainer comes into the school to teach the majority of the course, although she has the assistance of the Home Economics Principal Teacher (PT). The students have eight 40-minute periods a week and are covering the Intermediate 1 course in one year, and will move onto Intermediate 2 next year.

The main challenge of delivering the course has been the time and cost of having the course taught across eight sessions with two members of staff. The trainer and the PT Home Economics teach the course together and there is a lot of preparation time needed.

The PT Home Economics said the whole experience had been very positive and their involvement in the pilot had helped to raise the profile of the school within the local authority and her department within the school. She felt the course had helped to boost students' confidence and they had really matured and become more motivated as a result of taking part.

3.24 **School-only delivery:** Two of the six case-studies used this delivery model (Partnerships 1 and 2), but for different reasons. One school was a considerable distance from its local college and had no other option than to adopt this approach, while the other school had made a positive decision to do so. The school coordinator described their reasoning in the following way:

*“There are issues with (...) kids travelling to college and not getting back to school, or needing staff to accompany them, so we felt we would try and make the provision here.”*

3.25 Partnership 1 was only delivering the Construction Crafts course and was working with a local employer. Partnership 2 had developed similar links with a retail bank in order to deliver the Financial Services course. For the Early Education and Childcare course it had taken a different approach, linking with another local school to share delivery. This arrangement was outlined as follows by the school coordinator:

*“We arranged that we would work with [other school] and we drew up an agreement. [Teacher] from [other school] comes here to do the child development part of the course and one of our staff – the outdoor education teacher here – goes to [the other school] to do the health and safety aspects of the course.”*

3.26 The main advantages of this approach are that the courses can be more easily integrated into the schools’ curriculum and timetabling, there are no travel issues, as long as there is no need to share facilities with other schools and to set up and coordinate arrangements with an outside organisation.

3.27 Interviewees in both partnerships identified funding additional resources needed to deliver the courses as the main challenge for the in-school delivery model. Partnership 1 had received a lump sum payment of £20,000 from its local authority to deliver the Construction Crafts course, but had not received any continuation funding. As the school headteacher pointed out:

*“We didn’t get any additional funding this year and we have concerns about the long-term sustainability because there are consumables that are needed for the course and funds are needed on an on-going basis.”*

3.28 Other disadvantages associated with this model, include that students miss out on the benefits of attending college and that schools do not have the same facilities or resources to deliver courses as colleges.

## **SCHOOL D – SCHOOL ONLY DELIVERY**

This island school is many miles away from its local college and serves a socio-economically mixed, largely rural community. It decided to deliver the Construction Crafts course on its own, because of its geographical location. The school got a lump sum from the council to run the course in the first year of the pilot *“as a kick-start for vocational development”*. They are supported by a local business man, who runs a DIY store and building supplies firm. The SfW coordinator pointed out that *“on a day-to-day basis he isn’t part of the course, but it’s his overall assistance and the advice and the support and his knowledge of the building trade that are so useful”*.

The course is delivered over six periods per week and students have the opportunity to complete the course either at Intermediate 1 or 2, depending on their ability and progress over the year.

In the first year of the pilot 14 S5 students started the course and seven completed it (most of those not completing it left to get jobs before the end of the academic year). Of the seven students that finished the course at the end of the first year of the pilot, two stayed on at school, one had got a job, and four were working in the construction industry doing an apprenticeship. In the second year, 36 S5 students had chosen the course. It was offered as a free option and included all types of students: *“Some really want to go into construction, but others just enjoy it. We have some very able pupils and we have some girls doing the course which is great and we have one boy who has support needs”*.

The main challenge has been that the school did not get any funding for the second year of the pilot to cover additional expenses arising from delivering the course themselves. However, the school was very eager to continue providing the course and, maybe, offer it at S3 and S4 as well in the future.

## **YEAR 2 OF THE PILOT**

3.29 Interviews carried out as part of the final survey revealed that delivery centres were increasingly adopting more diversified delivery models in response to local needs or circumstances. Of the 20 delivery centres contacted as part of the final survey:

- Six continued to use the in-college delivery model;
- One continued to use the in-school delivery by a training provider model;
- One continued to use the joint delivery model;
- Two continued to use the school-only delivery model;
- Ten had adopted two or more delivery models.

3.30 The most common diversification was to move from a college-only delivery approach to delivering the course both in-college and in-school. Seven of the 20 delivery centres were doing this by the time of the final survey – only one of these had done so from the start of the

pilot. The main reason for offering an in-school delivery model was to overcome transport issues. One college had decided to send lecturers out to two of its partner schools:

*“The main reason was because SfW needed to go in column choices and these need to be considered as a whole, so timetabling for schools in relation to travelling time to and from college was proving rather difficult for some schools. For example, one school’s travel time to the college was an hour, so two hours add-on. So we’ve provided materials in school and are sending college lecturers to school who are delivering the course at school premises.”*

3.31 In some cases, this approach was also seen as a way of overcoming lack of college accommodation to expand provision (see Chapter 7). As one college manager explained: *“we also get an advantage of delivering out of the campus because of capacity limitations. We’re looking at Construction next year out of school as well because we just haven’t got the capacity now within the college”*. Some colleges were also planning to support schools to deliver the courses themselves while taking on a mentoring and quality assurance role.

3.32 It is worth noting that two of the seven colleges offering such a mixed approach were delivering courses in hub-schools, which other local schools accessed. In both cases, this hub-school was much closer to the local schools than the college was. One college, for example, had set up a mock hairdressing salon in one of its partner schools and delivered the Hairdressing course to local schools on that site.

3.33 Colleges did not always offer this option to schools for all of its courses. In some cases, the in-college approach was, for example, used for Construction Craft (because of the need for college facilities), but the Early Education and Childcare course was offered either in-college or in-school. Several colleges were also delivering the Hairdressing course in schools.

3.34 Two partnerships had adopted three different delivery models by the time of the final survey. One of these, for example, was offering the Hairdressing course in college and in one partner school and had adopted a joint delivery approach with a school to teach the Early Education and Childcare course.

3.35 Five delivery centres indicated that they were planning to adopt different delivery models in the following year. Again, the most common planned change was to offer in-



school delivery by college lecturers. One school, which was a delivery centre, was planning to use various delivery models in their third year of offering SfW course. The planned models were all seen as best suited to the four courses they had chosen:

*“We’re going to be using various delivery models next year – for [Education and Childcare] it’s going to be joint delivery between college and the school; [Financial Services] will be a block of lessons in school and the rest in college, Engineering will be one-third in school and two-thirds in college, while Construction [Crafts] will continue to be just in college.”*

3.36 Even though in-school delivery was seen as the way forward by many schools and colleges, respondents on both sides were aware of challenges associated with this. These included lack of in-school resources and facilities, persuading college staff to deliver courses in schools (as discussed in Chapter 7, some staff were afraid of becoming isolated and not being able to access the support available in college), and the time costs for college lecturers to travel to schools. Some interviewees also noted that in those schools already adopting this model, it was sometimes difficult to ensure sufficient numbers of students on courses. One college said that it was unable to use its normal selection process when delivering in schools:

*“As soon as you do that you’re limiting your selection because they tend to be smallish groups in schools and if you’re trying to get a reasonable number to make it viable you’re into taking who you can as opposed to selecting.”*

3.37 **The Survey of Year 2 partnerships** (involved only in the second year of the pilot) revealed a similar pattern as in those delivery centres involved from the start of the pilot. Thus, five of the six school-college partnerships started off adopting the standard in-college delivery model only. One school was using the in-school delivery by college staff model because of its distance from colleges. The remaining four delivery centres were all single schools working either on their own (two schools) or with local employers (two) – in all four cases this was due to very particular local circumstances. One school, for example, was a special school, while another was an island school. As in the case of the main survey, some of the Year 2 partnerships were considering adopting more diversified delivery models in the following years. This suggests that while most partnerships start with the assumption that SfW courses are best delivered in colleges, other more flexible approaches are developed in subsequent years to respond to some of the challenges associated with this model. It is

interesting to note that a similar development was observed in England with regard to the Increased Flexibilities Programme (Golden *et al.*, 2006).

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- The study revealed four delivery models adopted across the SfW pilot partnerships, of which the in-college delivery model was the most common one.
- The main advantages of the in-college delivery model were found to be the motivating and maturing effect of attending courses in an alternative environment and the potential of easing students' transition to post-16 college courses.
- The main challenges of this model were the monetary and time cost of transporting students between schools and colleges, and that this approach can sometimes lead to a more detached experience for students if teachers are not aware of the content of courses.
- The in-school delivery model (by college or training provider staff) was found to alleviate most of the challenges associated with the in-college delivery model. However, it meant that students missed out on the potentially beneficial effects of attending college and some courses were reliant on the funding of purpose-built facilities in schools.
- The joint-delivery model, involving school and college or training provider staff, and the school-only delivery model enabled the SfW courses to be more integrated into school timetables, while also benefiting from greater school staff awareness of the course.
- The main challenges of these two models were the funding challenges for consumables and facilities and the ability of school staff to deliver elements of SfW courses to the same level as college or training provider staff.
- Delivery centres were increasingly moving towards adopting more diversified delivery models towards the end of the second year of the pilot. Some delivery centres had adopted two or more models. Other colleges already had or were planning to start delivering courses in schools or in vocational centres as a way of overcoming transport barriers and lack of college accommodation.

## CHAPTER FOUR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

4.1 This chapter is based on the final survey of the 20 partnerships involved over the two years of the pilot. It starts by examining the links between schools and colleges, including the perceived effectiveness of the links between partner organisations, while the second section focuses on the frequency of contact between schools and colleges and the extent to which attendance data and other information was shared between the two. The third section explores employer involvement across the 20 partnerships, and the extent to which this has changed since the first year of the pilot. Finally, the last section discusses local authority involvement and support in relation to the SfW pilot.

### THE LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

4.2 **School staff** were asked to identify the range of organisations they had had links with during the SfW pilot. Most schools (25 out of 29 schools surveyed) said they had worked with colleges and/or training providers, seven said they had worked closely with their local authority, while eight schools said they had worked with employers. A small number of schools (six) said they had strong links with other organisations including partner schools, Careers Scotland, and the SQA.<sup>6</sup>

4.3 Of those schools responding to a question asking whether these links with other organisations already existed or whether they were newly developed, approximately half said they had developed new links with organisations since the first year of the SfW pilot. Some of these new links had been with employers which had been facilitated with the help of local authority business liaison officers.

4.4 The majority of schools (23) were generally very positive about the effectiveness of their links with other organisations in delivering the SfW programme. In most cases, school staff said they mainly liaised with a single key contact in these other organisations. This allowed good working relationships to develop and streamlined communication

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<sup>6</sup> See Scottish Executive (2005a, paragraph 5.7) for recommendations on the range of organisations local authorities should consult with when planning the delivery of courses such as SfW.

procedures, as a Principal teacher explained: *“Things are better now – each piece in the jigsaw has a named person who you can email or telephone”*.

4.5 Many school interviewees said they had built up relationships with colleges or training providers ‘*over several years*’, and that SfW was just one of several programmes in which collaboration with other organisations, and particularly colleges, was taking place. The depute headteacher of one school explained how, owing to the effectiveness of the procedures between college and school, a problem with a student who attended the college had been resolved:

*“We had an issue with the behaviour of one of our students within the college with a college student. That was highlighted to myself by the college. [The college liaison officer] came out to the school and spoke to our student and that was resolved. A new contract was signed [by the student] – it was laid down again that these are the rules and they have to be kept. It was a very effective process.”*

4.6 Schools that had forged new links with other organisations as part of SfW explained how they had gained a greater understanding and awareness of how these institutions operated. The depute headteacher from one school, for example, commented on how having a close rapport with the college had resulted in a positive working relationship.

*“The fact that we’ve met so often as a group has really helped to make it a positive partnership. At the beginning we weren’t really aware of the college processes and likewise they weren’t really aware of our school processes, so because we’ve met together and because we all get on together it’s made a huge difference.”*

4.7 Interviewees from four schools described their relationships with other organisations as being more mixed. The main problem-areas related to issues of communication or planning, specifically between the school and the college. For example, a deputy headteacher explained how the college had unexpectedly requested that a teacher from the school attend all college-delivered SfW courses, placing an additional burden on the school:

*“The links with the college haven’t been completely satisfactory. Originally we were supposed to send our children to the college but then they asked if we could send a member of our staff with the pupils as well. So there have been staffing difficulties for us because we’ve always had to release one member of our staff to go with the children to be another body there”.*

4.8 Interviewees from only two schools said that overall the links with other organisations had not been very effective. Both schools experienced difficulties in managing the expectations and involvement of partner organisations, specifically a college and an employer. The deputy headteacher from one school explained how, despite having written agreements in place, a partner employer never had time to contribute to the programme:

*“[We had] wonderful looking agreements [with the employer] that promised the earth, but when you go to them to say: “Can you do this, this and this?” – and I appreciate they’re always very busy – they can never usually do it.”*

## **FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF CONTACT**

4.9 Representatives from the schools and delivery centres were asked how frequently they had contact with one another. Of those 25 schools that were working in partnership with an external provider, most (13) said that they were in weekly contact, while others (four) were in daily contact. The remaining schools had either no direct contact with the providers, liaising with their local authority instead, or they said that the college only got in touch if an issue in relation to student behaviour or attendance arose. Some interviewees said they required more regular contact during the initial stages of the programme to initially “*get things going*”. For some, this level of contact had subsequently and deliberately been reduced.

4.10 School and delivery centre staff generally discussed more ‘strategic’ issues, such as planning for the future and evaluating the success of courses and procedures, less frequently. This could take place as often as once a month or as little as once a year. Some school and college interviewees also said they met together at least once a year to discuss and review the selection procedures for recruiting young people to SfW courses.

4.11 Not all of the contact was directly between colleges and delivery centres. In at least three partnerships where SfW courses were being delivered by a college, information on attendance and achievement reached the school via the local authority. The deputy headteacher at one school explained that while he considered the level of direct contact with the delivery centre to be “*sufficient*”, he only heard from the college when a problem arose:

*“I only get contact from them [the college] when there are any problems. We do get reports on the children’s progress from the college, but that goes through the local authority and then it comes to me.”*

4.12 Similarly, a college-based Schools Liaison Officer explained that the local authority acted as an intermediary between the college and SfW schools, but that he thought that this form of communication was no less effective:

*“The council has a coordinator that brings together groups of schools. They form the link between us and the schools, so we have less direct contact with the schools but it’s certainly not less effective, just different.”*

4.13 While some college and school staff said that there were “*always ways to improve*” the strength and depth of the links between partner organisations, the majority of interviewees were very happy with the level of contact they had with one another. Some teaching staff expressed the view that they would like to visit the college or training provider more often, but that this was difficult due to pressures of work, as one Principal Teacher explained:

*“The links we have with the college are sufficient, but we could improve them further. We could, for example, visit the college more often – but with all the school commitments I have it is very difficult. I make every effort to see each pupil [being taught in college] at least once a year.”*

4.14 Other suggestions for improving the links between organisations included:

- Having named contacts and agreeing procedures for day-to-day contact and the exchange of information
- Ensuring all partner organisations (including schools, colleges, local authorities and employers) were represented on any working groups that had been established
- Developing a year planner so that all partner organisations could work towards agreed milestones (for example, timetabled activities and report writing).

4.15 All 20 partnerships kept records of students' attendance on SfW courses. This information was either recorded by the school or by the delivery centres. Where students were taught outside of school, attendance data was recorded in one of four ways:

- Individual college tutors would take a register
- A member of the school staff (e.g. a teacher or teaching assistant) would accompany the students to the delivery centre and take a register once there
- A single contact at a college or training provider would be responsible for recording attendance data for students on all SfW courses
- The school would take a register before students left for the college or training provider.

4.16 Where attendance was recorded off the school premises, this information would be sent to the school by phone, email, or fax. Most school staff working with an external provider reported that attendance data was collected daily or weekly (23 schools out of 25). A minority of interviewees reported that where such information was recorded by individual course tutors or by more than one person at the delivery centre, the process for getting this information back to school could be *"more ad hoc"*.

4.17 Most of the staff from schools that were working with colleges or training providers to deliver the SfW programme said that they or someone from the school had visited the delivery centre at least once as part of the SfW pilot. The nature and frequency of the visits varied, although visits were generally mutually initiated. A similar number of school staff said they visited once or twice a year to those that visited more frequently (up to once a week).

4.18 Most delivery centre staff agreed that visits from school staff were beneficial and indeed necessary in order for schools to achieve a *"full understanding of what colleges do"*. The need for school staff to visit the college or training provider was said to be even greater where schools were solely responsible for the recruitment and selection of young people to SfW courses, as one college coordinator explained:

*“Schools make decisions about who does certain courses and [school-based] guidance staff need to make decisions based on course knowledge, not misconceptions. It makes for better selection.”*

4.19 A small number of schools regularly sent school staff to accompany their students to college. In one school, this was done in response to the perceived need that someone with or at least working towards a teaching qualification should be present in every college class.<sup>7</sup>

4.20 All of those schools (23) that had sent staff to visit a college or training provider said the visits had been useful. The visits helped staff from both organisations to get to know to one another, and helped familiarise teaching staff with the college environment, as well as reassure them about the quality and standard of teaching being delivered to their students. Visits by school staff also helped to maintain a visible link for students between school and college life, while reminding them that school expectations regarding attendance and behaviour needed to be maintained, as one Principal Teacher explained:

*“The value for us [in visiting the pupils at college] is that the pupils out there don’t feel forgotten, they feel we’ve still got an interest in what they’re doing, and that there’s a link between what they’re doing at college and at the school. I think some pupils think because they’re not in school that day, it’s nothing to do with the school so attendance and behaviour doesn’t really matter...So I think it gives them the idea that it’s every bit as important as the other subjects they do in school.”*

4.21 Staff from only three schools involved in school-college partnerships said they had not carried out a visit to their local delivery centre. The main reasons given were pressures of time and workload, although all three schools said they had excellent links with their delivery partners and that they had *“a good feeling for what was happening in college”*.

4.22 Delivery centre staff thought it was equally important that they visited their partner schools. A representative from only one delivery centre said he had not visited his partnership’s schools, but that he planned to do so in the future.

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<sup>7</sup> Detailed guidance on these requirements is set out in the *Lifelong Partners* guidance (Scottish Executive, 2005a). It states that ‘college staff who teach pupils in college should possess or be working towards an appropriate teaching qualification, or have other means to demonstrate that they can teach to the requisite standard’.



## LINKS WITH EMPLOYERS

4.23 Employer involvement appeared mixed across the 20 partnership areas. More than half of the delivery centre staff (11) reported that employers played little or no part in the delivery of SfW courses, while staff from nine delivery centres reported that employers did contribute to the delivery of the programme. Where employers were involved, they tended to visit delivery centres, give talks to the students, and provide work experience placements, as the representative for one college explained:

*“Employers are involved because we work with a number of nurseries across the city and students get the opportunity to go out and work in those nurseries, so those nurseries are very closely involved in helping us to deliver the course.”*

4.24 Rural Skills and Construction Crafts were identified as the courses which had most employer involvement (this was the case also in Year 2 Partnerships). Some Early Education and Childcare courses had also managed to establish very strong links with local nurseries or accessed school or college facilities. The spokesperson for one college suggested that the Sports and Recreation course *“uses employers and work practitioners to a greater extent than the other courses”*, although this was not substantiated by any other interviewees.

4.25 Many of the interviewees from partnerships where employers played little or no part in the delivery of SfW courses wanted to involve employers more, but felt restrained, either because of the young age of students on SfW courses, or because of difficulties experienced in recruiting employers to the programme. The relatively short time students spent each week on their SfW courses was also said by some to limit their exposure to the world of work, as the schools’ liaison officer from one college explained:

*“We do have a good bank of employer contacts but obviously these pupils are only coming half a day a week and they’re a lot younger than our full-time students. [For this reason] you can’t expect these pupils to go anywhere outside the city. For example, for Sport and Recreation we put them into a primary school to carry out their work experience but ideally it would be a leisure centre.”*

4.26 It is worth noting that while several interviewees stressed that they already had good working relationships with employers before the start of the pilot, most delivery centre staff (15) reported that they had not managed to develop any more effective links with employers in the second year of the programme. Many partnerships were still trying to engage employers, although all were happy with the current programme of activities being offered to pupils. Where links with employers had been strengthened, SfW courses were thought to have benefited, though, as one college representative explained:

*“In Construction, employers have been involved in the adaptation of the course when switching to school delivery at the satellite centres. Their involvement has been fantastic. If only that happened in other areas.”*

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT**

4.27 About two thirds of the school staff interviewees reported that local authority involvement had been “*considerable*” and that they valued the support provided, as the following quotation from a depute headteacher illustrates:

*“The local authority has a strong involvement with the programme and it’s very much appreciated. If we’ve had any problems either [our contact at the local authority] or one of his colleagues has come straightaway. They also come to school at options time and during parents’ evening and parents can ask him questions”.*

4.28 In only two of the 29 schools, interviewees said that their local authorities had had “*no real involvement*” in the SfW pilot so far. An interviewee in one of these schools said that while their local authority had not had much involvement they did not require any further help, while a Principal Teacher at the second school said he was encouraged by the appointment of a new educational development officer by his local authority:

*“We’ve had very little involvement from the local authority so far, but I think things will improve in future as they have a new educational development officer who is an ex-principal teacher from the school and*

*who is very behind Skills for Work. The more involvement [the local authority has with the programme] the better.”*

4.29 Almost all of the school interviewees said they were satisfied with the level of support provided by their local authority. Many said that local authority involvement and support had improved in the second year of the programme, with local authority officers increasingly attending partnership meetings. Some school staff also reported that local authority officers were involved in interviewing SfW applicants and contributed to the selection of students for SfW courses.

4.30 Staff from only three schools said that more support, in addition to that already received from partner organisations, would have been helpful. In particular, school staff said they would have liked:

- More help from the local authority and college in selecting and recruiting young people to SfW courses
- The partnership to take a more strategic and less ad hoc approach to developing SfW and other vocational programmes.
- More help in developing school-based SfW courses.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- Most schools said they were working with a range of partners to deliver the SfW programme, including colleges, training providers, the local authority and other partner schools.
- Most schools were very positive about the effectiveness of their links with other organisations, helped in part by the fact that in most cases, school staff said they mainly liaised with a single key contact in these other organisations. This allowed good working relationships to develop and streamlined communication procedures.
- Some interviewees said that the level of contact between schools and delivery centres had naturally decreased since the start of the pilot and the setting up of the programme. However despite this, most school and delivery centre interviewees said they were still in weekly or daily contact with one another.
- Information on attendance and recruitment was regularly exchanged between provider and school. In three partnerships information on attendance and achievement reached the school via the local authority.
- There was some variation in the level of involvement from local authorities and employers. Although in most cases local authorities had provided support to schools and delivery centres, in the partnerships surveyed as part of the evaluation around half were still struggling to engage employers in the SfW courses.

## **CHAPTER FIVE            DELIVERING SKILLS FOR WORK COURSES**

5.1     This chapter focuses on respondents' views on the practicalities of delivering the SfW courses. It compares the experiences of college senior managers and course leaders contacted at the start and end of the pilot, and also draws on the views of lecturers, teachers and trainers interviewed in the six case-study partnerships. Reference is also made to the survey of Year 2 partnerships where relevant. The chapter presents respondents' views on the teaching approaches they had adopted and any changes introduced in relation to:

- Providing a course induction
- Delivering the SfW course overall
- Teaching employability and core skills
- Assessing the course.

5.2     This chapter also reports on the extent to which interviewees had accessed training and development opportunities, shared good practice with other delivery centres, and evaluated their practice and the success of the courses. It also presents their views on the course materials provided and explores what impact being involved in the pilot had on schools and colleges.

### **COURSE INDUCTION PROCEDURES**

5.3     All of the delivery centres contacted provided some sort of induction for students undertaking a SfW course. Induction procedures adopted varied depending on the type and size of partnership. Most colleges said they had given students a customised version of the standard college induction, which usually included a tour of the college and information about health and safety, travel arrangements and an introduction to staff. Schools that were delivering courses and smaller partnerships tended to offer more informal induction procedures, sometimes in the form of an introductory session to the course.

5.4     Just under half of the delivery centres contacted at the end of the pilot reported that they had *changed* their induction process in the second year of the pilot. In

several cases, interviewees said they had made small changes; for example, making it ‘shorter and more concise’, putting more emphasis on health and safety issues or providing separate inductions for the different courses.

5.5 Four interviewees said that in Year 2 they had either introduced or provided more taster sessions. These usually happened in June before the beginning of the courses. In one case, this involved putting “*prospective students in classes alongside existing SfW students to get a genuine ‘inside’ feel to the course*”. This was seen as helping students recognise early on whether the course suited them, in order to reduce student drop out later on during the course. A similar approach had been taken by a training provider delivering the Early Education and Childcare course in several schools. They had adapted their approach in the second year of the pilot and now started the course with:

*“A number of activities, the first being ‘Is this the course for me?’. So we give pupils some idea of what would be expected of them on the course and how the course can benefit them in the future. They answer a tick-box sheet to indicate their level of commitment.”*

5.6 As at the start of the pilot, only a minority of colleges invited parents to come into college as part of the induction process. Those doing so emphasised that they felt that it could help alleviate any concerns parents might have and could raise awareness of what the students would “*get out of the college experience*”. These visits were also reported to provide opportunities for “*parents to have an informal chat*” and/or ask any questions.

## **COURSE DELIVERY APPROACHES**

5.7 At all stages of the evaluation, interviewees emphasised the need to “*make the course as practical as possible*”, as this was seen as the best way to engage and motivate students. Many course leaders interviewed as part of the final survey emphasised that this was one of the areas in which their approach had most changed since the beginning of the pilot. While those delivering Construction Crafts, in particular, found this approach easiest to adopt right from the start of the pilot, lecturers teaching courses such as Financial Services and Early Education and

Childcare indicated that they had needed to be more pro-active to achieve this. One teacher involved in the delivery of the Early Education and Childcare course described her method as follows:

*“I use a lot of enterprising approaches and it is quite practical and hands on. There is not a lot of chalk and talk. We have a lot of discussions and we work in groups and use ICT. We do a lot of creative stuff too and they enjoy that. We have quite a mixed approach to teaching really.”*

5.8 A lecturer teaching the Financial Services course similarly commented on the way he had adapted his delivery approach over the last two years. He said that he had faced some challenges at the beginning as most of *“the pupils want to be doing things all the time and where we tend to get any issues is when they’re asked to be more settled and you’re doing more theoretical stuff”*. He had learnt from this to teach more theoretical content *‘in short, sharp time bursts’*. Similarly, a senior manager of a college, delivering this course alongside several other SfW courses, reported that she had implemented various changes to the delivery of the Financial Services course to make it more practical. She said that this was part of:

*“The college’s drive to make all the courses more pro-active, by providing better teaching and making them more practical so that students get the opportunity to do visits, conduct research, take part in internet working, etcetera.”*

5.9 Interviewees in 11 of the 20 delivery centres contacted at the end of the pilot emphasised that they had changed their approaches adopted to suit the needs of younger students. This was obviously more of an issue for providers and lecturers with little or no previous experience of teaching this age group. In many cases, it was again linked with the need for practical activities and keeping students *“busy all the time – busy, busy, busy, so they don’t have the time to think about messing around”*. An Early Education and Childcare course leader, on the other hand, said that she and her colleagues had become increasingly *“aware of the fact that things have to be broken into small chunks and to vary the pace and techniques throughout the classes to meet the needs of young learners”*. Many of the delivery centres reported that staff had accessed specific training opportunities to help them teach this age group (see paragraphs 5.24-26).

5.10 Many interviewees also stressed the need to treat course participants as adults. The positive effect of this approach was reflected in students' comments (interviewed in the six case-study partnerships), many of which highlighted this aspect as one of the best parts of doing a SfW course. One lecturer explained what this meant for her:

*"I try to be very laid back with them. I try to treat them like adults – a couple of them call me by my first name and that is fine with me. I think it is important for them to feel as though they are grown up – I don't want there to be a barrier there."*

5.11 Others emphasised that "giving responsibility to students for their own learning" helped them to grow up and behave in a more adult way. One Sports and Recreation lecturer, for example, detailed the teaching approach she had adopted:

*"What we did was we asked them to select a sport or a fitness activity and, with my help, they had to design a training session. There had to be a warm up, drills where I could see them helping the others with their skills, and they could have a five minute game at the end. And we used that to reflect on their performance and to think about the skills and qualities they would need as a coach – like being patient and things like that. And they did really well and I think it changed them a bit. I think giving them that responsibility made them behave in a more adult way."*

## **TEACHING EMPLOYABILITY AND CORE SKILLS**

5.12 The final survey revealed that delivery centres had made considerable progress in embedding employability skills in the SfW courses. The first survey (November 2005) had shown that several centres had initially put off the delivery of this component to the second year of the course or were teaching it as a separate unit only. In contrast, towards the end of the second year almost all of those contacted reported that they were now delivering it fully integrated into the course. As one respondent explained:

*"We started off thinking that this was just a separate unit that we'd do at some stage towards the end of the course. But we changed all of that in the second year, so now it's implicit in all of the course and every session plan has it at the forefront."*

5.13 There was evidence that the approach taken differed between courses even within colleges. This can partly be explained by the fact that not all Sfw courses contain an (explicitly titled) ‘Employability Skills’ unit – this is the case, for example, with regard to the Early Education and Childcare course (although it does have one entitled ‘Working in Early Education and Childcare’). Furthermore, some delivery centres or course leaders had chosen not to teach the unit as a separate class, but were teaching and assessing it throughout the whole course. As one Construction Crafts lecturer explained:

*“The employability skills are a theme that runs through everything – you are reinforcing the skills as you do everything, as an attitude. There is a specific unit, but it is assessed throughout the course – embedded in everything – the attitudes of employment.”*

5.14 In one college, the same approach was taken for the Construction Crafts course, but a different one adopted for Hairdressing in the second year of the pilot because of the delivery model used for this course (see Chapter 3). In particular, while the former course was taught exclusively within the college, the partner school had chosen to deliver the employability skills unit within their own building. Initially, it was taught by a teacher, but:

*“It didn’t work out so a member of college staff went down and that’s working well. (...) It increases the credibility amongst pupils of the course when a college lecturer delivers employability skills at the school.”*

5.15 The final survey also revealed that some delivery centres had adapted their approach as a result of accessing ‘the SFEU package on employability skills’, while others had done so after attending SQA events. One college senior manager also said that they had “*Sfw meetings [within the college] to share thoughts and practice, so our Construction staff have benefited from the Early Education and Childcare experience*”.

5.16 The final survey also showed that most centres had adopted an integrated approach for teaching core skills. In some cases, respondents indicated that it was assumed that most of the course would cover the core skills and they had not taken



any specific steps to develop students' skills. A minority of delivery centres had taken more pro-active steps, as one interviewee pointed out:

*“Building up students’ core skills was written into the course at the design stage. These include things like practical internet skills, compiling a portfolio, team-working skills, writing a report and numeracy skills.”*

5.17 In some cases, core skills were seen as linking very closely, or even overlapping, with the employability skills taught as part of the SfW courses. A college senior manager, for example, said that:

*“We have a big thing in the college here about what we call Employability Skills, which is core skills, and we encourage the staff at all opportunities to reinforce these to all students in whatever they’re doing. So rather than being ad hoc, I like to believe that they’re covering it but also reinforcing it because that’s college policy.”*

5.18 None of the respondents said that they were explicitly assessing SfW students' core skills. However, there were a few instances in which centres had taken specific steps to teach particular core skills. One college, for example, reported that in response to an HMIE visit, which had *“identified IT as a weakness in the college delivery in Construction”, they had ‘invested in improving that area – so SfW students benefit from a greater use of their IT skills’*. This meant that in the second year of the pilot they embedded the use of IT equipment more firmly into the teaching of the course, including *“showing DVDs, looking at websites and moving from chalk and talk to a more electronic presentation”* of the course.

5.19 Interviews with **Year 2 partnerships** (who only started delivering courses in the second year of the pilot) showed that only a few of the sample of ten delivery centres contacted had so far fully integrated the teaching of employability or core skills into the SfW courses. Instead, several delivery centres saw them as stand-alone activities that were delivered either at the beginning of the course or at certain intervals. As reported in paragraph 5.33, there was no evidence in the sample of delivery centres contacted that colleges and schools had accessed good practice developed in this area by others involved from the start of the pilot.

## ASSESSING THE COURSE

5.20 Lecturers interviewed within the six case-study partnerships were specifically asked how they monitored and assessed students' progress on the courses. Most said that they combined formal and informal approaches. Interviewees reported that they largely relied on the SQA National Assessment Banks (NABs) for formal assessment purposes and were generally satisfied with the materials. As one Early Education and Childcare teacher observed: *"we use the NABs – it's pretty straight forward really and we're satisfied that they're assessing what they need to be assessing"*. However, some respondents working with lower ability students, interviewed in the first year of the pilot, commented on the time-intensive nature of completing the NABs. Two Financial Services lecturers said that they had particularly struggled to keep on time in completing the assessment materials. As one interviewee explained:

*"I know that the NAB they are working through is taking them ages. I am learning from the students how long things are taking but it is happening as we go along. I have discussed it with SQA and I know there are problems with it."*

5.21 It is also worth noting that many of the students interviewed highlighted completing the assessment materials as the least enjoyable aspects of their courses. One lecturer also said that she spent a lot of additional non-contact time checking students' written work:

*"I spend an awful lot of time on it – I've got four afternoons of formal teaching time. The NABs for it takes so much time – I spend at least two or three nights per week on marking them, because of the sheer volume of students we've got on it."*

5.22 Many lecturers emphasised that they used more informal approaches as well, including discussions with pupils and observing their work. One respondent, for example, reported that he monitored students' progress mainly via such informal assessment *"we have got to know each other really well over time, so I can pick up on things"*. One college interviewed as part of the final survey had also piloted the use of an e-portfolio in the second year of the pilot for the Financial Services course, which students had found more engaging:

*“For the second year group, we are involved in a pilot of an e-portfolio; [the tutor] has been using the [e-portfolio] with the students to build up their Skills for Work portfolio. She’s found it very successful. They really enjoy working with it and she’s enjoyed it too.”*

## **STAFF SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT**

5.23 As part of the final survey, interviewees working in colleges were asked to say to what extent they agreed with the statement that their organisations’ involvement in the SfW pilot had *“provided new opportunities for staff development”*. All of them either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with this, which indicates that SfW was seen by all as a valuable opportunity for staff development.

5.24 Interviewees were also asked whether staff delivering the SfW pilot courses had received any additional training or support and whether they had any outstanding needs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most commonly mentioned development opportunities (12 delivery centres) said to have been accessed by staff included either external or internal training related to teaching or managing the behaviour of younger pupils. In particular, this related to areas such as ‘how to handle disruptive behaviour’, ‘how to motivate younger learners’, and ‘child protection issues’.

5.25 Delivery centres had adopted different approaches to provide this support or training. This included internal workshops and staff meetings or training days, SQA training events, SFEU seminars, external speakers or trainers, or via accredited courses such as the Teaching Qualification for Further Education (TQFE). One interviewee reported that the college had provided the training as part of its ongoing staff development:

*“We put together a ‘school strategy’ by talking to staff, asking what people wanted. They said they wanted more training in working with young people, and training in keeping young people safe. And obviously we’re encouraging all staff doing TQFE to do the module on teaching 14-16.”*

5.26 In another instance, the delivery centre had linked with their partner schools to inform them on how best to deal with particular students:

*“A weakness of our Skills for Work programme is how to form relationships with pupils when you only see them for half a day a week. It is a difficulty – and one not easily overcome. As a result of internal meetings we visited some schools to seek information on certain individuals and how they can be handled successfully.”*

5.27 Several interviewees commented very favourably on the support received from the SFEU and SQA on specific areas or in general. One teacher delivering the Early Education and Childcare course in a school, for example, noted:

*“[The SQA contact] has been fantastic. Any difficulty and I just phone him. I don’t feel neglected in any way – it’s a very good support network.”*

5.28 Other staff development opportunities accessed over the two years of the pilot which were only mentioned by one or two delivery centres included training on using ICT equipment, *“consistency of marking and consistency of assessment”* and teaching employability skills.

5.29 Respondents in only three of the 20 delivery centres said that they were not aware of any specific training received, although two of these said that they planned to do so in the future. One training provider working with several schools, for example, indicated that all its tutors had applied to do the TQFE to enable them *“to go for GTC approval, so that they can teach 14-16 year olds without a teacher having to be there too”*.

5.30 All interviewees were asked whether they had shared good practice on delivery with any of the other colleges or providers delivering SfW pilot courses and respondents from all of the 20 delivery centres reported that they had done so. Almost all said that they had attended SQA meetings or a SFEU conference and it was universally seen to be a useful opportunity for sharing good practices, learning from others as well as more informal networking. Several interviewees said that they had picked up very useful tips which had informed their own delivery or organisation

of SfW courses. One college, for example, said that they had discussed moves towards delivering SfW in schools and what others regarded as best practice in this area. Another college reported that they had learnt about using “*daily feedback sheets with space for comments as well as attendance that go back to schools*”.

5.31 Other ways of sharing good practice identified by fewer respondents, included direct contact with other schools or colleges (three interviewees), putting good practice case-studies on the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LtS) website (three), via events organised by the local authority (two), and through the SQA external verifier who visited the college (two).

5.32 Two providers complained that even though there had been many opportunities to share good practice in the first year of the pilot, they had not been aware of any in the second year of the pilot. One college manager, for example, said that in “*Year 1 we had quality network meetings for organisers and delivery staff, but not in Year 2. I would really like these to continue*”. However, other providers had accessed such events in both years, so it may indicate that the interviews took place before such events were organised in these areas or that they had not been sufficiently widely publicised within some colleges.

5.33 **Year 2 survey partnerships** (who had only got involved in the second year of the pilot) were also asked whether they had received any support, guidance or materials from schools or colleges involved in the first year of the pilot. However, only two of ten delivery centres said that they had received any such help when interviewed. One school delivering the Construction Crafts course reported that they had attended an SQA seminar: “*There were copies of paperwork and worksheets that other colleges and schools were using and they were useful*”. Another college reported that they had contacted lecturers in other colleges to get “*tips on how best to deliver particular parts of the course and what to do first and stuff like that*”. But otherwise none of the other delivery centres reported any such learning from other providers.

## COURSE MATERIALS

5.34 The majority of respondents interviewed as part of the telephone surveys (final and Year 2 partnership surveys) and the case-studies were extremely positive about the support materials provided by the SFEU for use and adaptation by colleges and schools. One college senior manager, for example, said that *“they’ve obviously had money invested in them and have turned out to be very good packs – the staff like them”*.

5.35 Several interviewees said they had either adapted the provided materials or developed additional ones to better suit their own students’ needs and requirements. One delivery centre had done this with the help of employers who were providing work experience opportunities for students completing the Early Education and Childcare course. The employers received *“information on the course and the units and are asked to input into the learning materials that we develop”*.

5.36 In relation to the specific materials for the different courses, interviewees (spoken to as part of both the final and Year 2 partnership surveys) were generally very positive about the Sport and Recreation, Rural Skills and Hairdressing course materials. Two respondents said that the Construction Crafts materials had, initially, contained some *“inaccurate terminology”* and omitted some important areas, such as *“working with different materials”*, but that these had been rectified since then.

5.37 The only really critical comments were raised in relation to the materials provided for the Early Education and Childcare and Financial Services courses, although only by very few respondents. As regards the former, two delivery centres, for example, criticised them as being not practical enough and inappropriate for the age group. One interviewee, for example, explained:

*“Our main concern about the SFEU materials was that we didn't feel that they met the criteria of the Skills for Work course to be based upon interactive, experiential learning – with employability skills being embedded. On the whole the SFEU materials are very dry – if we thought they were boring, the likelihood is that the candidates would also be bored.”*

5.38 In contrast, however, there were some interviewees who were very positive about the course materials for Early Education and Childcare: *“We’re delighted with the materials – they worked very well for me. I don’t use everything – there is a huge amount of paper – but I’m able to extract what I need”*.

## **EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

5.39 Almost all of the 20 delivery centres contacted as part of the final survey stated that they had carried out some form of evaluation of the SfW pilot programme. Some of the colleges had used the HMIe ‘How good is our school? School/college partnership’ self-evaluation framework, while others used the college’s own internal evaluation procedures. A minority of centres had carried out more than one evaluation – in three cases, one each at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 of the pilot, and in another instance, at the end of each semester. Two schools delivering courses had not carried out a formal evaluation, but had reviewed the SfW pilot via informal meetings and staff discussions. One college also said that they were planning a more detailed evaluation in the future.

5.40 Very few college staff indicated that the self-evaluation had involved their partner schools. In fact, one respondent commented that they:

*“Were a little disappointed about not having more engagement with the schools in looking at that document – we’re both supposed to be looking at it with the school as a joint thing. What we’ve done is we’ve written it from a college point of view for our relationships with all the schools. The schools haven’t been as forthcoming as we’d like, so it’s something we need to build on.”*

5.41 Interviews with school staff also showed that very few had been involved in such a process – only eight of the 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey said that they had carried out an evaluation or review of the SfW programme and only four said that they had done this with their college or provider partners.

5.42 Those delivery centres which had carried out a self-evaluation at the end of the first year of the pilot were particularly positive about the benefits of such a process having made changes to the delivery and organisation of the SfW courses as a result. One college, which had used the HMIe self-evaluation framework, said that its main outcomes had been an action plan for the second year of the pilot focussing on:

- Issues regarding retention
- Improved communication with schools on both behaviour and attendance
- Improved communication of the details of courses to schools (for example, via presentations at option evenings)
- Improved strategic planning to allow the college to identify problems more quickly.

5.43 Similarly, a training provider working with several schools said that they had carried out an evaluation involving their staff, students and their partner schools. This had included examining *“how pupils felt about the course and we’ve also asked schools for feedback on the partnership arrangement and on team teaching and how it works”*. It had resulted in a development plan, which set out concrete steps for improvement in the future.

5.44 Several interviewees commented on the way carrying out regular evaluations helped not only to identify issues, but also to demonstrate progress that had been made over the two years. As one college senior manager remarked:

*“What comes out is that despite the practical difficulties, we’re overwhelmingly getting there. That’s what’s coming out. Schools are beginning to take cognisance of our agenda and our requirements for delivery and the practical things are beginning to get solved bit by bit.”*

## **PERCEIVED IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS**

5.45 Schools and colleges were asked a series of closed questions on what impact participating in the SfW pilot had had on their own organisations. Tables 2 and 3 summarise the findings from these questions.

5.46 As can be seen, there was very strong agreement from both types of organisation that the pilot had led to stronger partnerships with other organisations. Thus, all 15 colleges contacted as part of the final survey agreed that it had led to more effective partnerships with schools. Similarly, almost all the schools interviewed felt that the pilot had strengthened their partnerships with other organisations – mostly with colleges, but, in some cases, with other schools, training providers, or employers. As regards employers, only four of the 15 colleges felt that they had managed to develop stronger relationships with employers as part of the SfW pilot. Several interviewees stressed though that they already had good relationships with employers before the start of the pilot.



**Table 2**      **Impact of SfW pilot on colleges**

<b>What impact has SfW had on your college?</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know/ Not sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>
It has led to more effective partnerships with schools	8	7	0	0	0
It has provided new opportunities for staff development	8	6	0	1	0
It has enhanced the status of colleges or training providers among schools	5	9	1	0	0
It has increased the workload of staff	4	7	0	3	1
It has led to more effective partnerships with employers	1	3	10	0	1
<b>N = 15</b>					

5.47 There was an overall positive response in relation to the impact the pilot had had on the status of providers within schools (see Table 3). Only three schools working with external providers did not think that SfW had made a difference in this respect and this included one respondent who said that “*we’ve always been pleased with the college*”. Most interviewees in schools also agreed that SfW had raised the status of vocational learning among teachers and pupils in their schools. However, the effect was reported to be more pronounced in relation to pupils rather than teachers. Indeed, eleven respondents were either unsure or disagreed with the view that it had had such an impact. One interviewee who had disagreed with this statement explained:

*“I’m afraid that many of my colleagues’ view is that going to college is for the less able and less important than getting a Standard Grade – some people think for example that getting a Grade 5 in History is of greater value to them than doing a Skills for Work course, but it’s the teacher that’s wrong there I’m afraid.”*

**Table 3**      **Impact of SfW pilot on schools**

<b>What impact has SfW had on your school?</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No strong opinion/ N/A</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>
It has enabled us to offer a more relevant curriculum to our pupils	15	13	0	0	0
It has led to stronger partnerships with other organisations (schools/colleges/providers)	12	14	1	1	0
It has enhanced the status of colleges or training providers in the school	6	14	4	3	0
It has increased the status of vocational learning among pupils in the school	5	21	1	1	0
It has increased the workload of staff	4	11	5	8	0
It has increased the status of vocational learning among teachers in the school	3	14	6	5	0
<b>N = 29</b>					

5.48 All schools agreed that SfW had enabled them to offer a more relevant curriculum to their pupils – with 15 respondents strongly agreeing with this statement. The SfW coordinator in one school, for example, commented:

*“This is something I’ve been needing for a long time and I could do with much more of it. I could do with an even greater provision – I could fill the places no problem!”*

Another teacher described the SfW courses as *“ideal for the type of curriculum that we as a school are continually striving to deliver”*.

5.49 On the negative side, most interviewees in colleges and schools agreed that the SfW pilot had increased the workload of staff – although very few respondents suggested that this was a very serious issue. Some respondents in college commented, for example, that ‘it’s the nature of most new courses that there is more work involved at the start before things settle down’. There were some colleges, however, who said that the course itself involved more

paperwork and assessments than other similar college courses and that this had put pressure on staff. As one respondent explained: *“There is quite a time cost of feedback in paperwork associated with it or providing information for report cards – that can take quite a long while to do”*.

5.50 All interviewees were also asked an open question on whether there had been any other impacts on their organisations. Two schools reported that it has improved their relationship with parents because *“they see that we are actively trying to get the kids into something that they regard is appropriate to get them a job”*. A deputy rector in one school reported that:

*“We’ve had very positive feedback from parents – they think it’s a wonderful opportunity we’re providing the kids with. They’re aware of the amount of work involved in getting these things off the ground and the amount of liaison between school and college. It actually helps us to bond with parents.”*

5.51 Similarly, a college manager said that SfW had raised the status of college provision among parents, in particular as it provided a nationally recognised qualification:

*“I think what we’re probably looking at is prestige value. When I’m talking to parents, they want something out of the college, not just an experience. They would wish to have a qualification. And in the past we have given them experience in different areas without actually qualifying them to do anything. Skills for Work has provided a framework for qualification. Parents would be more willing to see their young people going for an actual qualification which is going to be supplied and provided by SQA along with their Standard Grades. This, I think, has impact back at the schools.”*

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- Respondents in many delivery centres documented ways in which the pilot had helped them to develop teaching approaches to better suit the needs of younger students. This included making lessons as practical as possible, keeping students busy and breaking topics into small chunks.
- Delivery centres had also made considerable progress in embedding the teaching of employability skills into courses since the beginning of the pilot. Most said that they were now a theme that ran through all of their teaching and that they were explicitly built into lesson plans.
- All providers agreed that the SfW pilot had provided new and valuable opportunities for staff development and most teaching staff were said to have had accessed internal or

external training. Most commonly this related to teaching or managing the behaviour of younger students.

- Almost all delivery centres had shared practice on delivery with other colleges or providers via direct contact with others or, more frequently, via SQA meetings or SFEU conferences. However, very few of the delivery centres that got involved only in the second year of the pilot had so far accessed such good practice or lessons learnt.
- The majority of respondents interviewed as part of the telephone surveys and case-studies were extremely positive about the support materials provided by the SFEU. Several interviewees reported that they had adapted the provided materials or developed additional ones to better suit their students' needs and requirements.
- Almost all of the 20 delivery centres had carried out some form of evaluation or review of the SfW pilot and had found the process very useful. Those which had done this at the end of the first year were able to document ways in which it had resulted in changes to the delivery and organisation of courses in the following year.
- Schools and colleges both felt that the pilot had led to stronger partnerships between their organisations. However, only four of the 15 colleges felt that it had improved their relationships with employers.
- Most interviewees in schools agreed that the SfW pilot had raised the status of vocational learning among teachers and students and all felt that it had enabled them to offer a more relevant curriculum to their pupils.

## CHAPTER SIX THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

6.1 This chapter focuses on SfW students – how they were selected for involvement in courses, what their characteristics were, their views of the courses, as well as on retention and impact of the courses. It draws on all the main data sources of the NFER evaluation: comparing the views of schools and colleges interviewed at the start and the end of the pilot and those getting involved in only the second year of the pilot; presenting the views of 41 students interviewed as part of the case-study visits, and data collected by SQA<sup>8</sup>.

### STUDENT SELECTION

6.2 There was strong evidence from the final survey that schools and providers had made considerable progress in developing a more robust selection process of students in the second year of the pilot. In particular, there was evidence that many partnerships had developed a more rigorous approach and that more schools were involving colleges in selecting and providing pre-course guidance to students. Most schools and colleges indicated that this had resulted in more suitable students being selected in the second year of the pilot leading to less drop-out and higher predicted completion rates.

6.3 Table 4 provides an overview of the selection approaches adopted by the 29 schools surveyed as part of the evaluation:

**Table 4 Overview of selection approaches used by 29 survey schools**

<b>Selection approach adopted</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>
Free option choice (no selection)	five schools
Free option choice and school selection	nine schools
Free option choice and college selection	eight schools
Targeted approach and college selection	five schools
Targeted approach (no college involvement)	two schools

6.4 As in the first year of the pilot, the most common selection approach for SfW courses was to offer it to students as a ‘free option choice’ and then for either schools, colleges, local authorities or a combination of these to select students from all those who put their names

<sup>8</sup> Data provided to NFER from SQA’s database on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and analysed by NFER.

forward. Overall, 17 of the 29 schools surveyed had adopted this approach. Of these, nine selected students themselves, usually involving Guidance staff, parents, and discussion or interviews with the students; eight schools allowed the college to select the students best suited for the courses.

6.5 Only five schools had been able or chosen to adopt a completely free option choice, without any subsequent selection. Two of these were delivering the course on their own; two indicated that they were able to do this only because *“so few students put themselves forward, so we didn’t really need to select”*; and only one school had adopted this approach as a matter of principle. This school was using the in-school college delivery model (see paragraph 3.13 above) and strongly argued against the use of selection. The depute headteacher in the school explained their reasons for opposing this in the following way:

*“Skills for Work is just another option on the option sheet. We give colleges as much input to the selection of pupils who choose subjects as we give to principal teachers in charge of the department. They don’t get to pick and choose who does and does not do their subject. It’s the same with Sfw courses.”*

6.6 It is worth noting that some other schools wanted to adopt such an approach, but were not able to do so because of limited college places available to them. As one interviewee pointed out: *“The ethos of the course means it should be offered to everyone, but we are restricted logistically, so there needs to be some”*.

6.7 Seven of the 29 schools contacted said that they had used a **targeted approach** to selecting students, offering it only to a subset of their students. This was either done by offering it as a free choice to particular types of students – often those in lower ability sets – or via Guidance staff targeting individual students *“who they think will benefit most from this provision”* or *“based on them showing a clear interest in a linked career”*. Five of these seven schools allowed colleges to select course participants from this targeted group of students.

6.8 In total, 13 schools had involved a college or provider in selecting students and were generally very positive about the process. Two of these had changed their selection process

to involve a college in the second year of the pilot. One school explained what they saw as the advantages of adopting such an approach:

*“We find that very successful because the choice is made by the local authority and college and not by the school, so the children didn’t feel it was because their teacher wanted them there or that the teacher had more influence with someone else. It was totally done out of their control, so the students felt they had really achieved something by being selected to go to college, so there was a kind of kudos to it.”*

6.9 Of the remaining 16 schools, two did not work with an external provider, in two the local authority took responsibility for selection, while the remaining schools did not involve any external agencies. Of these 12 schools, three said that they would have liked to have had some college involvement but had not done so for logistical reasons or because of time-constraints. The remaining nine schools said that they were content with the current arrangements and, in most cases, that the college trusted them to select the most appropriate students.

6.10 Overall, more than half of the schools contacted (15) at the end of the second year of the pilot were able to document ways in which the **selection process had changed** in the second year of the pilot. Six schools said that they had made the process more rigorous, including requiring students to complete application forms or involving guidance staff, other teachers, college or local authority staff in the process. As one interviewee reported:

*“We have got a lot better at selection. Now students have to fill in an application form, and each one of them will talk to Guidance staff about why they want to do the course and how it fits in with their future careers. And then the college comes in and does an interview with them, so that way we know that really those most suited will get in and we won’t have so many dropping out saying ‘It wasn’t for me’.”*

6.11 In Year 2 of the pilot, almost all the schools contacted said that parents and guidance staff had been consulted or actively involved in the selection process – this contrasted with Year 1 of the pilot where this happened far less.

6.12 Nine schools said that they had changed the selection criteria or who the courses were offered to in the second year of the pilot. Of these, five schools indicated that they had

moved away from targeting, or offering the courses mainly to, low ability and/or disengaged students. In the words of one interviewee:

*“When it first started it was really aimed at youngsters who weren’t doing very well in school. That’s changed now and we’re finding it’s a lot more successful now.”*

6.13 Three of the schools reported that they had moved away from a targeted approach to offering the course as a free option choice to all pupils. A depute described how they had changed their selection process over the two years of the pilot:

*“The first year was targeted selection and we decided which area we thought there would be demand for. We then asked heads of departments which pupils they thought would be committed to such-and-such a course. Pupils then went through an interview at college. In the second year, pupils chose themselves. We offered all the courses to them and it turned out that most uptake was in hairdressing. So we decided to run with that. So in the second year it was more pupils seeing the range of subjects first of all rather than us deciding where the demand might have been. So they chose themselves.”*

6.14 In contrast, two schools said that they had moved the opposite way from an open-choice approach to offering it only to a targeted part of the school population – in both cases, interviewees explained that they had chosen to offer it to lower ability sets as they did not want the SfW courses to “*affect students’ achievement at Standard Grade*”.

6.15 The **survey of Year 2 partnerships** (who only got involved in the second year of the pilot) did not reveal any major differences in the selection procedures adopted, although there was some evidence of less college involvement and a move towards involving them more in the following year – which reflects the trend in the Year 1 partnerships. In fact, as pointed out in Chapter 5 (paragraph 5.33), very few of the delivery centres who only got involved in the second year of the pilot said that they had drawn on the experiences of those involved in the first year of the pilot. Instead, they had adopted the selection processes that they felt most suited their own circumstances and were learning their own lessons from it.

6.16 Interviews with **providers** as part of the final survey showed a similar trend towards more involvement in the selection process as detected in schools. Overall, ten of the 16 providers working in partnership with schools reported that they had been involved in



selecting students for the courses. Two of these had not done so in the first year of the pilot. In one of these, students were previously selected by the schools and the local authority. However, “*the real change was that schools recognised and the [local authority] recognised that the college would have an informed and useful part in the selection process*”. The interviewee felt that this had resulted in more suitable and more motivated students joining the courses in the second year of the pilot.

6.17 Several of the providers also said that they had got a lot more involved in providing **pre-course guidance** to students. This took various forms, including providing talks at options or parents’ evenings, sending out course documentations or DVDs, or via college taster days. A Schools Coordinating Liaison Officer in one college described the systematic approach adopted for pre-course guidance and selection for the second year of the pilot:

*“I personally go out to schools. We talk to parents at parents’ evenings. I sometimes address whole S3 year groups – I tell them what courses the college has on offer (...). We deliver a letter to schools and pupils will apply to come on a course. (...) We then get back application forms. We process these. We then give those forms to the different college departments involved. They go through them because there are obviously comments from teachers about their educational progress on the form. They will go through a formal interview with me and a member of college staff in that sector.”*

6.18 Six of the 16 providers working in partnership with schools said that they had not been involved in selecting students so far. However, three of them said they would be next year and the other three were striving for greater involvement. It is also worth noting that even some of those already involved in selecting students expressed the desire for even greater involvement in pre-selection guidance or selection. In particular, three colleges said that they would like to offer their courses to a broader selection of students in schools or even to the whole S2 group (before selecting their S3 options). As one interviewee commented:

*“Presentations don’t always work because for various reasons you may only be talking to a small number of pre-picked S2s – it should be to the whole cohort, that’s what we want access to, and we’re working on it to change that.”*

## **STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS**

6.19 The changes in the selection processes adopted by both schools and providers can be seen as having had an impact on the **characteristics of students** selected in Year 2 of the

pilot. Overall, there was a fairly strong consensus that this had resulted in more suitable candidates starting on courses, which in turn led to fewer problems and lower drop-out rates. On this note, there was virtually no evidence that SfW courses were seen by schools just for disengaged or problem students – quite the contrary, schools indicated that they generally selected students with good behaviour and attendance records and, for some courses, the necessary academic ability. As many interviewees explained, they were aware that the courses required students to be engaged for two years. Also, they did not want to damage their good, and improving, relationships with providers.

6.20 Evidence from interviews with schools and providers showed that, in most cases, this had resulted in more suitable students being selected for courses. In the words of a school coordinator: *“The second cohort was more interested and more focussed than the first cohort – that was because there was a selection process with the second cohort”*. Interviewees reported that the second cohort of students *tended* to have better levels of pre-course attendance and behaviour, and be less likely to be disengaged from education (this does not mean that the second cohort of student did not include any students with behavioural or attendance issues). As one teacher explained:

*“We’ve made the assumption that if they don’t attend school on a regular basis, they are not likely to be attending college on a regular basis. That was borne out by our experience in Year 1”*.

6.21 However, a minority of schools and providers voiced some concerns about the impact of a more rigorous selection procedure, involving college staff, on those students who were thereby excluded from such courses. A depute headteacher in a school expressed this concern in the following way:

*“The kids that are quite disaffected come across that way in interview and therefore don’t get a place. I would argue that these kids are probably best suited to those types of courses and maybe get more out of them. I know that’s not generally the feeling here but it’s very much the feeling across the local authority; that the kids who you really want to go to college don’t get the places because they don’t come over well in interview. They would benefit best from going.”*

6.22 The actual characteristics of students involved in courses was said to differ depending on the courses on offer. Thus, SfW courses at Intermediate 2 were more likely to involve

higher ability students at ‘general or credit level’, while Access 3 and Intermediate 1 courses, and Construction Crafts and Hairdressing courses, usually, but not exclusively, involved lower ability students.

6.23 As regards gender, there was very little evidence of any reverse in the gender bias identified in the first survey with regard to courses such as Construction Crafts, Early Education and Childcare and, now, Hairdressing. Only one college contacted as part of the final survey reported that they had actively tried to address the gender unbalance on such courses by offering a Construction Crafts course for girls only. However, as the college manager commented:

*“We’ve offered this year Construction for girls only and we’ve got just one person applying. In our full-time apprenticeship courses the best students we have in Construction are girls – they walk away with all the prizes. So we were serious about offering it for Skills for Work but the take-up is disappointing. The schools objected to us suggesting that we offer it only to girls.”*

6.24 In contrast, an interviewee in another college explained their reasons for not introducing any such attempts at reducing the gender bias:

*“Stereotypes in the age groups mean we don’t get much of a gender mix from the applicants – and given the oversubscribed nature of applicants for places, it would be very difficult to deny very suitable boys from a place just to try and include a girl, say for a Construction course, although it would be nice to see.”*

6.25 Interviewees in only three of the 20 delivery centres said that the second cohort of students (starting in the second year of the pilot) was less suited to the SfW courses than the first cohort (joining at the start of the pilot). These were all providers which expanded their partnerships in Year 2 of the pilot from one to more schools.

6.26 Analysis of the **survey of Year 2 partnerships** again showed a similar trend as revealed in the final survey – several schools, but by no means all of them, had started by selecting more lower ability and disengaged students for SfW courses, but had realised that they needed to change their selection procedures for the following year (mainly to reduce drop-out and/or problems with the behaviour of students in college or travelling to college). Thus, five of the 14 schools contacted said that most of the students selected tended to be in

this category in the first year of offering SfW courses. In one partnership, the college had not been involved in selection and schools had selected students who were “*deemed not to be academic*” and who had some “*serious behaviour issues, because it was thought that this would be more suitable for them*”. However, this had led to a drop-out rate of 50 per cent on a Construction course after 12 of the 24 students were excluded due to serious behavioural issues. College staff said that they had decided to “*tighten up the selection process*” in the following year by drawing up more explicit selection criteria and being directly involved in interviewing students.

6.27 Almost all of the Year 2 survey partnerships contacted also documented a similar gender bias for most of the courses as detected in the final survey (see paragraph 6.23). One school, however, was planning to address this bias. In the first year, only one girl had been involved in the Construction Craft course being delivered in the school. The teacher delivering the course said that he “*would like to include more (...) by giving all the year group taster sessions*”. He hoped that this might attract more girls to choose to do a SfW course. Another school documented that several girls had put themselves forward for a Construction Crafts course being run by a college, but that none of them had been selected.

## **VIEWS ON THE COURSES**

6.28 Almost all the candidates interviewed as part of the case-study visits said that they really enjoyed the courses they were doing.<sup>9</sup> Aspects appreciated by many of the 41 respondents interviewed included:

- Particular activities, such as bricklaying or going out on visits
- Learning new things of interest to them
- Visits to or from employers
- Meeting pupils from other schools and making new friends
- The college environment.

6.29 When asked what students liked best about their courses, many interviewees identified specific activities or events as being particularly enjoyable. One girl said she had

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<sup>9</sup> Similarly, a survey carried out by SQA (SQA, 2006) of 325 candidates at the end of the first year of the pilot revealed that 97.8 per cent had enjoyed their SfW courses.

liked: *“the virtual babies that we got to take home – that was really good even though they kept you up all night”*. One student, who described his experience of school generally as ‘boring’ and said that he struggled at Maths and English, described the Construction Crafts course he was undertaking as *“inspiring”*. He reported that:

*“I liked the bricklaying best. You felt dead good when you had built your first wall. It was quite hard to do and it looked really good so I was really pleased with myself when I had done that.”*

6.30 A girl, also on a Construction Crafts course, similarly highlighted the enjoyment of *“making things that are useful, like now we are making a bench”*.

6.31 Many interviewees, especially those on the Financial Services and Early Education and Childcare courses, said that they particularly liked learning new things of interest to them and which they thought might benefit them in the future. As one respondent explained:

*“I’ve liked learning new things – like the child development which I know really well now. Also we have done stuff on play which is really helpful. If I get a job in a nursery then I will be able to take on what I have been told.”*

6.32 Others emphasised the practical nature of the courses and how they were learning useful skills for the future. A boy completing a Construction Crafts course commented:

*“I think it is much more useful than other courses [done in school]. You can actually get prepared for working and it is first hand – they are actually teaching things you can use.”*

6.33 Very few deliverers within the six case-study partnerships had so far developed strong links with employers. The importance of such links was highlighted by the positive remarks made by those students who had either visited employers or had benefited from employer talks or visits. An interviewee, who had recently started on a Hairdressing course, described the benefits of a visit by a local salon owner in the following way:

*“A lady who owns a salon came in recently and we had to ask her questions and write down the answers. It was really useful – she told us things even our teacher didn’t know, that only a real person that owns a salon knows.”*

6.34 Students on Early Education and Childcare and Financial Services courses, in particular, were very appreciative of the way visits to nurseries helped them to “*put theory into practice*”, as one respondent explained:

*“I really like them. The first couple of visits were mainly observing but after them we were told to mix with the children and ask them questions to test their language skills and to see how they interact with each other. When you talk about things in the classroom it is hard sometimes to imagine, but when you actually go in to the nurseries you can see it happening.”*

6.35 Several interviewees attending college courses also said that they had liked the social side of meeting pupils from other schools and making friends with them. One interviewee, for example, said that: “*There are about 20 in my class and they come from different schools and I have made friends with everyone*”.

6.36 Even though several students said that they really appreciated the college environment, there was no obvious indication that students attending college were more positive about their experiences than those doing their courses in their own schools. Analysis of the data gathered from the discussions with the 41 students involved in the case-studies suggests that what was more important to them was *how* rather than *where* they were taught. As one student being taught by college lecturers in his own school, for example, pointed out: “*Sometimes you forget you are actually at school. It feels like you are somewhere else*”.

6.37 Almost all candidates expressed positive views on the qualities of the lecturers teaching the courses. Students particularly appreciated lecturers with direct experience of working in the vocational area, who could give them an insight into “*the reality of working*”. As one Construction Crafts student explained:

*“I think learning how you would work in the proper site and not as a student but as a work man and learning it from teachers who have worked there themselves has been good. They’ve done it by making it fun but also helping us by showing a lot of patience towards us – they are always helping us to get faster and more accurate at what we do.”*

6.38 Students often said that they were treated differently – “*more like an adult*” was the phrase used again and again. There seemed to be a different dynamic to the staff-learner relationship which was not dependant on the teaching environment, as it was also present

when courses were delivered in schools. Students seemed to view the relationship that they had with their lecturers as more of an adult relationship – they had respect for their lecturer and in turn felt more respected by them. A Financial Services student, for example, commended her lecturer: *“She’s great – because she treats us like adults, we behave like adults”*. Another student characterised this more positive relationship in the following way:

*“She is not like a normal teacher she is almost more like a friend. She does have deadlines and everything but she is not too hard on us. She treats us like young adults because that is who she works with normally.”*

6.39 Slightly more than half of those interviewed (21) said that there was nothing about the courses that they were doing that they did not like and could not think of any way of improving them. Critical comments related most frequently to doing too much, or simply doing any, writing, as one student explained: *“I’m not a fan of writing – I get bored and so I end up not doing it”*. While most Construction Crafts students commended the practical nature of their course, those on the Early Education and Child course quite often stated that they *“thought it would be more practical than what it is”*. HMIE identified similar issues with regard to these courses in the first year of the pilot, but noted that *“SQA and SFEU addressed this issue for the second year of the pilot by modifying assessment arrangements and teaching materials to deliver an increased practical component”* (HMIE, 2007, p.19).

6.40 Several interviewees identified particular activities or parts of the course that they had not enjoyed or not enjoyed as much as the rest of the course. One Construction Craft student, for example, said that he *“didn’t really enjoy the plumbing. It was quite hard and I couldn’t really do it. It ended up being a bit boring – it isn’t really my thing”*.

6.41 Other critical comments made by just a few respondents related to the behaviour of others on the course: *“when we first went and everyone was noisy and we hardly got anything done. They were just telling us to be quiet and taking minutes off our break”*; two students complained about *“finishing later than you do at school because it means I have to try and get transport from here back to my house”* and one Financial Service student was dissatisfied with the content of the course:

*“I’m not sure. There is quite a lot about banking and it is too much for me. I’m not really interested in that so maybe some more normal things – different aspects, not just banking.”*

6.42 Just under half of the students interviewed missed other lessons when doing their SfW courses. However, very few of those we spoke to identified this as a major issue. The extent to which this was seen as an issue depended on what subjects they were missing and the pupils’ attitude towards school and their expectations of doing well at school. A student doing a Hairdressing course, for example, pointed out that she did not mind missing subjects as long as they were not Standard Grade subjects:

*“It was good because I knew I’d only be missing PE and Modern Studies so it wasn’t really important – it might have been different if I’d be[en] missing some Standard Grade subjects.”*

6.43 Only five students identified missing timetabled lessons as something that bothered them. One interviewee said that they *“were originally told we’d miss some of our easier subjects but they’ve not managed it with the timetable they’ve got, so that’s not been so good”*. Another boy pointed out that he was concerned about the effect missing a Chemistry lesson each week would have on his exam results:

*“I’ve got quite high hopes in Chemistry and it’s quite hard doing it without having the teacher explaining it – she does offer help at lunch-time and she goes over it with you at her base.”*

## **STUDENT RETENTION AND COURSE COMPLETION**

6.44 Levels of student drop-out varied across the 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey. While very few or no students left the SfW courses in 20 schools, in nine retention levels were below 80 per cent over the two years (for those students starting in Year 1 of the pilot). However, this included some schools with very small numbers of students – in one case, for example, one out of three students had dropped out. It also included two delivery centres offering the course to S5s only – this included many, so called, Christmas leavers, who left school to start working as soon as they had completed their compulsory education.

6.45 There appeared to be many different and often personal reasons for individuals dropping out of courses. In some cases, students were said to have left the school altogether



or were suffering from severe personal problems which affected all parts of their schooling. In other cases, candidates had been excluded from courses due to behavioural issues or attendance problems. Interviewees in three schools said that some students had left courses because they were missing other subjects and were afraid of “*the impact this would have on their Standard Grade results*”. It is worth noting, that six of the nine schools with higher drop-out rates had not replaced a Standard Grade with a SfW course but were expecting students to miss lessons and catch up in their own time.

6.46 Interviewees in schools were asked whether the college environment or different teaching styles of college lecturers had been an issue or contributing factor for any students dropping out of courses. Even though several respondents agreed that this had been an issue for some students, very few saw this as the main reason for students not completing their courses. Furthermore, many emphasised that colleges had been very responsive to comments by schools on this issue and had changed their approaches over the two years of the pilot. In response to the question of whether the teaching style of lecturers had been an issue for students, one depute, for example, replied:

*“Yes, a little. Not only the different atmosphere but in particular the pace and level the course was pitched at. But as soon as that awareness was raised it was addressed. College staff turned to the school for some advice in terms of the level at which some of the stuff should be presented. The tutor delivering the course came into school and met with us and discussed the issues. I’ve no criticism of the college personnel – they realised they needed some advice and they were prepared to take it.”*

6.47 Interviewees in three schools also said that there had been fewer students dropping out of courses in the second year of the pilot. This was linked to various factors, including better selection and pre-course advice and guidance. This was reflected in interviews with college and provider staff. Overall, seven of the 20 delivery centres said that student drop out had been lower in the second year of the pilot. One college, which had improved its retention rate from 70 per cent in Year 1 to 90 per cent in Year 2 put this down to the following factors:

- Improved communication between the college and schools
- Improved information to students about the courses to allow more informed choices
- Staff confidence in delivering the course and better overall management of the SfW programme.

6.48 Many of the schools who had had students dropping out of a SfW course said that integrating them back into the normal school timetable had been problematic. It was more likely to be difficult where students left the course later on in the year and in those schools where the SfW course replaced a Standard Grade subject. It was less of an issue in those schools where students missed other lessons to attend college or where students were on a reduced curriculum. A teacher in a school which required students choosing a SfW course to replace a Standard Grade subject explained the difficulties of reintegrating drop-outs into the timetable:

*“It doesn’t help when they come back to school after six months or whatever where they have no timetabled classes and we have to provide some sort of timetable for them. If a kid starts at college in August and really doesn’t enjoy it, then they probably have until October in S3 to organise coming out and getting into other subjects. But once you get past Christmas in S3 it’s really difficult to relocate them into something meaningful when they come back into school.”*

6.49 Drop-out levels seemed to be quite similar in the **Year 2 partnerships** contacted. In particular, retention rates were lower in four of the 14 schools, linked to similar reasons as given by those interviewed as part of the final survey. There was again some evidence of higher drop out rates in schools which had not replaced a Standard Grade with a SfW course and were expecting students to miss lessons and catch up in their own time.

6.50 As regards **course completion**, at the time of the interviews carried out as part of the final survey, 15 of the 20 delivery centres expected all or almost all of those candidates still involved to complete their courses on time. Those expecting lower completion rates said that this was mainly due to non-attendance issues, the difficulty of the course, or students taking time out to prepare for Standard Grade exams. Most providers, even those who expected 100 per cent to complete, were able to suggest strategies for dealing with non-completion. This included informing schools early on that students on study leave still needed to come to college and arranging an opportunity for S4 students to attend college after their exams. As one college manager said: *“once the exams and everything are over at school, we will arrange to bring them in for a week, even 2 weeks on a block basis to mop up any outstanding things”*.

## PASS RATES

6.51 Analysis of SQA data showed that overall 85.6 per cent of the SfW candidates who had been entered to complete their courses in July 2007 had achieved a full SfW qualification.<sup>10</sup> As can be seen from Table 5, pass rates varied for the different courses – with pass rates being over 80 per cent for most courses and the highest rates being recorded for Financial Services (Intermediate 2) and Hairdressing (Intermediate 1). Pass rates were lowest for Construction Crafts (Intermediate 1 and 2) and Sports and Recreation (Intermediate 2). However, for some of these courses only very few young people were expected to complete in July 2007 and the overall pass rates were affected by very few individuals not passing these courses. It is possible that some of these may, for example, have been incorrectly entered for completion in July 2007 and this may have adversely affected the overall pass rate for these courses. The SQA data also showed that more than four-fifths (85.4 per cent) of those 211 candidates who completed the course without achieving a full award had achieved at least one unit or more (which they could carry forward to gain a full award in the future).

**Table 5 SfW candidate pass rates for pilot courses (candidates expected to complete in July 2007)**

Skills for Work Course	Number of Entries	Number of Passes	No Awards	Pass Rate
Construction and Engineering (Access 3)	59	55	4	93.2%
Construction Crafts (Int. 1)	517	418	99	80.9%
Construction Crafts (Int. 2)	38	24	14	63.2%
Early Education and Childcare (Int. 1)	391	326	65	83.4%
Early Education and Childcare (Int. 2)	212	194	18	91.5%
Financial Services (Int. 2)	17	17	0	100.0%
Hairdressing (Int. 1)	139	135	4	97.1%
Rural Skills (Int. 1)	19	18	1	94.7%
Sport and Recreation (Int. 1)	63	59	4	93.7%
Sport and Recreation (Int. 2)	7	5	2	71.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1462</b>	<b>1251</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>85.6%</b>

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that this proportion only refers to candidates who were entered for a SfW qualification by their delivery centres and excludes any candidates who may have dropped out of their courses at an earlier date – no figures were available on how many young people did so.

6.52 Analysis by gender showed that girls were more likely to pass their courses than boys – with 88.2 per cent of the former having passed their courses compared to 82.7 per cent of the latter.

## STUDENT IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENT

6.53 As part of the final survey, all interviewees in schools and colleges were asked a series of closed questions on what impact the SfW course had had on students. Their responses are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6 The impact of SfW courses on students – perceptions of college, providers and school staff**

<b>It has:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree No.</b>	<b>Agree No.</b>	<b>Don't know/ Not sure No.</b>	<b>Disagree No.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree No.</b>
Enhanced students' specific vocational skills/knowledge	23	21	1	0	0
Enhanced students' skills/attitudes relevant to employment	19	20	5	1	0
Helped students to make decisions about post-school transitions	17	27	1	0	0
Enhanced students' ability to work with, and relate to, adults	16	23	6	0	0
Improved students' motivation to learn	4	34	7	0	0
Improved the behaviour of students	1	31	9	4	0
Led to higher attendance rates by students at college than at school*	1	17	11	10	0
Improved the attendance of students in school	1	15	24	5	0
<b>N = 45</b>					

\*This question was not answered by six schools with no links with a college.

6.54 Table 6 shows that interviewees in both schools and colleges were particularly positive about the impact of the courses on **students' vocational skills and knowledge**. Thus, 44 respondents agreed – and 23 strongly – that the course had had an impact on students' specific vocational skills and knowledge. A slightly lower, but still high, proportion of respondents detected a similar impact on students' employability skills and their ability to work with, and relate to, adults.

6.55 In response to an open question on the impact of the course on students' skills and knowledge relevant to employment, many respondents commented on the way the courses had significantly improved students' employability skills. One interviewee in a college said that:

*“Their communication has improved, their social skills have improved, their willingness to tidy up, to be aware of health and safety issues has also improved – because of the constant employability skills approach.”*

6.56 Similarly, a teacher in a school said that travelling to college itself had taught the students a valuable lesson:

*“Things like turning up for a bus or taxi on time. It leads to the idea that work is a much more formal thing. They're well aware that if they don't get that bus or that taxi then they don't get the course.”*

6.57 Several interviewees also commented on the way the SfW course and, in particular, the college environment had helped students to mature and to develop more positive relationships with adults. As one depute in a school observed:

*“It also helps maturity, it helps relationships with teachers. I think kids become more mature, they get more responsibility at college than at school – they're on first-name terms with lecturers. It's a lot less formal, the situation is looser.”*

6.58 These views were reflected in students' own comments, interviewed as part of the case-studies in six partnerships. Of the 41 interviewees, about three-quarters (31) said that the course had helped them develop useful skills or knowledge related to the vocational field. A girl on an Early Education and Childcare course, for example, thought that both the lectures and the practical experience of visiting nurseries had helped her

*“Become more aware of what is going on with younger people – like what they are thinking and everything. I think I know what they need when they are crying and stuff like that.”*

A student on the Financial Service course said that as a result of the course, he now knew *“more about the cards like debit cards and credit cards and I understand payslips and I know how easy it is to get into debt”*.

6.59 Some students also reported that the courses had helped them become more aware of the world of work and its requirements. These tended to be those who had been on workplace visits (most often Early Education and Childcare courses) and those on courses which had integrated the employability skills element into their course delivery most successfully (most often Construction Crafts courses). One respondent, for example, explained:

*“My mind has changed about how it would be out working – it’s helped to know how to get the job done, working out a schedule and then getting it done. I’ve learnt to run on time and to get myself organised before and make sure you keep your work tidy and safe as well.”*

6.60 Table 6 also shows that almost all interviewees in schools and colleges agreed with the statement that the course had helped students to make decisions about their **post-school transitions**. In response to an open question, many respondents emphasised the way the courses had enabled students to make more informed decisions. While in some cases it was said to have confirmed their choices, in others it was said to have challenged them, as one college lecturer explained:

*“It’s made them more aware of what they want to do or even don’t want to do. So someone might end up saying: ‘I know why I’m definitely not going to be a plumber and I don’t want to be a plumber – but that’s good because I’m better informed and I’m not making a bad choice’.”*

6.61 Similarly, an interviewee in a school said that the courses had not only helped some students to move on in that particular vocational field, but had helped others to make more informed choices:

*“It’s certainly given them a good grounding and understanding of the particular industry they’ve picked. It allows them to make probably better choices at the end of fourth year about what they want to do. A number of youngsters have gone on to take up the line of work they did in the vocational course through college courses. So that’s a benefit to them.”*

6.62 Interviews with students conducted as part of the case-studies identified a similar impact of the courses. Thus, more than half of those interviewed said that doing the course had helped clarify their career objectives. This included:

- Confirming their choices: *“I knew I wanted to work in childcare but it made me realise that is definitely what I want to do”*
- Disconfirming their choices: *“I thought I was definitely going to be a childcare assistant or a nursery teacher but it hasn’t been what I thought it would be and I want to try beauty now”*
- Refining their choices: *“I used to really want to be a joiner but now I have got to do different things as part of the course and it has opened up a wider variety of different things. I could go into a different area if I want to”*
- Raising their awareness of alternative options: *“It’s just helped me to see there are a lot more jobs out there and to think a little bit more about what would suit me”*.

6.63 Students were also asked whether they thought that the course had made them more likely to find work in the future, and almost three-quarters said that they thought it had. Interviewees gave different reasons on how they thought it had done so, including:

- Achieving a relevant qualification
- Developing skills and knowledge
- Having relevant experience
- Improving confidence in their own abilities.

6.64 A very high proportion of interviewees across schools and colleges also agreed with the two statements relating to students’ **improved motivation and behaviour** (see Table 6). While very few strongly agreed with either of these statements, only four disagreed that the course had had an impact on students’ behaviour and none did so in relation to students’ motivation. It is also worth noting that schools were slightly more likely to report that they were not sure about whether there had been a change in students’ motivation and behaviour – possibly as a result of the fact that this impact was most highly visible in the college environment.

6.65 In response to the open question on the impact of the course, several respondents commented on the way going to college and *“learning about things they are really interested in”* had given students *‘more motivation to learn’*. While in some cases this impact was said to be restricted to the SfW course, other interviewees in both schools and colleges were able to detect a wider effect. One college SfW course manager, for example, said that most of their partner schools had told them about the positive impact of the course on students’ behaviour in school. However, this was not the case in all of the partner schools, as he reported:

*“It’s rather anecdotal – through what the schools tell us – they talk about the enthusiasm that the pupils have got: they turn up at school better; they talk enthusiastically about college; they appear to be more highly motivated. On the downside, in one school they found the student behaviour was worse. The students complained – why couldn’t the school teachers teach them like they did at college?”*

6.66 Interviews with students (conducted as part of the case-study visits) also provided examples of a similar impact on students’ behaviour and attitudes towards learning. In response to an open-ended question of how the course had benefited them, seven of the 41 interviewees said that the course had made them more mature and they now behaved better at school or in college. One girl on the Hairdressing course, for example, explained how mixing with pupils from other schools had helped her grow up and affected her behaviour even in school:

*“Yes, I’ve become more mature because I’ve been making new friends and seeing the way they act. I never used to wear school uniform and I used to be bad and I know I’m not bad anymore and I wear a school uniform. My teachers say I’m a changed girl!”*

6.67 Another interviewee completing a Financial Services course reported that the teaching style adopted had encouraged him to take more responsibility for his own learning and had changed his attitude towards school:

*“I’ve become a wee bit more grown up (...). I’m a bit more responsible at study and doing my work myself, because of the way the teacher gives us a task and lets us get on with it ourselves – she only helps us if we get stuck and trusts you that you’ll do it. I think it’s also had an effect on how I behave at school.”*

6.68 Table 6 shows that a much smaller proportion of respondents believed that the SfW courses had had an impact on students’ **attendance**. It is also worth noting that schools were less likely to identify such an effect than colleges. Thus, only nine of the 23 schools working in partnership with a college believed that the SfW courses had improved students’ attendance at school, and only seven agreed with the statement that it had led to higher attendance rates at college than at school.

6.69 As a result, it is not surprising that far fewer interviewees made comments in relation to improved attendance in relation to the open question on the impact of the course.



However, there were some exceptions. A depute in one school, for example, said that the positive experience of college had also impacted on attendance in school:

*“We have found that on the whole attendance has improved at school, behaviour has improved at school – so it’s definitely had a positive effect on pupils’ motivation in school.”*

6.70 Several interviewees in both schools and colleges said, though, that there had been no such impact because they had specifically selected students with good attendance records for the courses.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- Schools and colleges had made considerable progress in developing a more robust selection process by the end of the pilot, which in several delivery centres was seen as having resulted in less student drop-out in the second year of the pilot.
- The most common selection approach was for schools to offer the courses to students as a free option choice and then for either schools, colleges or a combination of the two to select the most suitable candidates to participate in the courses. There was evidence that colleges were increasingly being involved in this process.
- There was virtually no evidence that schools were using SfW courses just for disengaged or problem students especially in the second year of the pilot. However, some colleges felt that higher ability students were often dissuaded from participating in course, whilst some respondents were concerned that more disaffected learners were often excluded from participating where college selection processes existed for SfW courses.
- Students’ course choices continued to conform largely to traditional gender stereotypes in the second year of the pilot, with only a minority of schools and providers making specific efforts to address this issue.
- Retention levels of students were quite high in most of the 29 schools contacted at the end of the pilot, although in nine schools it was below 80 per cent. The most common reasons for students leaving courses included personal issues, moving to another school, and being excluded by the provider due to behavioural or attendance problems. Drop-out rates also appeared to be higher in those schools which expected students to do a SfW course without replacing a Standard Grade.
- Analysis of SQA data showed that overall 85.6 per cent of the SfW candidates who had been entered to complete their courses in July 2007 had achieved a full SfW qualification. Of those not achieving a full award, more than four-fifths had completed at least one course unit.
- Respondents in almost all schools and colleges agreed that the SfW courses had had a positive impact on students’ vocational skills and knowledge, motivation and behaviour. Most also thought that they had helped students to make better and more informed decisions about their post-school transitions.

- Similarly, all of the 41 students interviewed were able to identify positive impacts of participating in SfW courses, including increasing their skills, knowledge, confidence and awareness of the world of work. Almost three-quarters said that they thought that participating in the courses had improved their chances of finding work in the future.
- Almost all candidates interviewed said that they really enjoyed the courses they were doing, and more than half of them were not able to identify any way in their courses could have been improved. Interviewees particularly appreciated learning new things and participating in activities and events that were relevant to their own interests or career aspirations.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT**

7.1 This chapter presents the main challenges identified by respondents across schools and colleges involved in the SfW pilot and the main lessons learned in addressing them, detailing any evidence of good practice.

7.2 The main challenges identified by schools and colleges at the end of the second year of the pilot related to:

- Timetabling of courses
- Selection and parity of esteem
- Partnership working between schools and colleges
- Training and development issues for college staff working with under-16s
- Providing and accessing courses in large, rural areas
- Limited capacity of colleges to respond to increasing demand.

7.3 Even though most of these challenges were identified both at the start and the end of the pilot, it is worth noting that many respondents were able to document ways in which they had either been overcome or that they had strategies in place to address them in the following year. Most progress appears to have been made in particular in addressing the challenges experienced in relation to selecting the most appropriate students for courses, partnership working between schools and colleges and college staff's ability and willingness to teach the younger age group – as discussed below.

### **TIMETABLING OF COURSES**

7.4 Schools and colleges identified the timetabling of SfW courses as a considerable challenge throughout the pilot. In response to an open question of what had been the main challenges associated with the pilot, ten out of 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey identified this as one of the main issues.

7.5 Timetabling approaches adopted included:

- Replacing two Standard Grades to enable students to complete an Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 course over two years
- Replacing one Standard Grade with a SfW course at Access 3, Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2
- Students missing core subjects without replacing a Standard Grade to enable students to also do a SfW course at Access 3, Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2
- Students missing a mixture of Standard Grade and other subjects to enable students to also do a SfW course at Access 3, Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2.

7.6 Schools gave different reasons for the adopted approaches. The most frequent explanation for offering the courses without replacing a Standard Grade was that this approach enabled more academic students to opt for them. Others said that it enabled them to overcome timetabling issues, which they would have faced if they had expected students to replace a Standard Grade. One school, for example, explained their reasons for adopting an approach in which students missed core subjects but did not replace a Standard Grade:

*“We did consider putting Skills for Work against a Standard Grade, but practically pupils would miss two-thirds of the course each week. We didn’t know what we could do with them for the other period – we’d have 50 kids wandering about. We felt it would not work. Also we would be depriving them of an academic qualification. That’s why we opted for it against core. Legally they’re meant to have core but at least they were not missing a qualification by doing SfW. So we argued for the opportunity of a qualification versus them having access to RE, PE and life skills, and I think we may be criticised for that.”*

7.7 Those schools offering SfW courses instead of a Standard Grade usually argued that this approach raised the status of the courses and allowed them to offer them to pupils in the same way as any other subjects. As one headteacher argued:

*“Skills for Work needs to be seen as a truly optional subject rather than just dropping PE. We need to break the mould of seeing such courses as just being for pupils who are opting out of the curriculum – this needs to also involve persuading parents that it is a valuable option.”*

7.8 Overall, most of the 41 students interviewed as part of the case-studies did not express any strong opinions relating to the approach adopted, although some

individuals complained about having to attend college beyond normal school hours. Furthermore, some students aiming to continue at school or go to university expressed some concerns about missing lessons for Standard Grade subjects and having to catch up in their own time. Interviews with school and college staff confirmed this view – one common reason for dropping out or deciding against doing a SfW course was often said to be students’ or their parents’ concern of the impact missing lessons would have on the rest of their studies.

7.9 Some schools adopting this approach – not replacing a Standard Grade and requiring students to miss lessons – had developed strategies to ensure that students were able to catch up any work they missed. One school, for example, had initiated a so-called “*catch-up period*” which was used to formalise the process of teachers working with SfW students to ensure they knew what work they had missed. The deputy headteacher explained the school’s rationale for adopting this approach:

*“The main challenge has been making sure that staff help the youngsters to keep up-to-date with their school work and making sure the kids stay motivated in those subjects. That’s why we started the catch-up period so we could say: ‘Go and get the work!’ If they were left to their own devices they would just sit there. And staff also need a prod to make sure they give the work to students.”*

7.10 It is worth noting that timetabling problems were most likely to be reported by those schools which were not expecting students to replace a Standard Grade and those adopting the in-college delivery model.

7.11 Timetabling was reported to be less of an issue in schools adopting the in-school delivery model, which saved on travel time and allowed schools to integrate courses in their timetable more easily. As a teacher delivering the Financial Services Intermediate 2 course explained:

*“We have had daily sessions for one hour a week and that has worked really well because you can deliver it in bits and keep them engaged. We were able to cater for that because we were offering the course in school. The colleges can’t really offer the course in that way. I think timetabling is very important.”*

7.12 Interviews with school staff revealed that several schools were hoping to overcome timetabling issues (as well as transport problems) by moving towards more in-school delivery by college staff (as reported in Chapter 3 – paragraph 3.34). One school, for example, said that *“timetabling may be better next year because the Engineering course may be accommodated in the school”*.

### **SELECTION AND PARITY OF ESTEEM**

7.13 As reported in Chapter 6, the final survey revealed that schools and providers had made considerable progress in developing a more robust selection process of students by the end of the second year of the pilot. This was reflected in the fact that far fewer respondents identified selection as a key challenge at this stage of the evaluation than in the first survey at the beginning of the pilot. In fact, while some schools did mention selection as an issue, they often also said that they had improved their practice through experience of the course and working more closely with providers. As a Principal Teacher in a school reported:

*“When I think back to our first year it was an absolute shambles and nobody knew what anybody was doing. But it’s really quite tight now and that’s because we have the [college] coordinators so that we know who to get involved with, we know who to contact and it’s much better. Again I think you have to be really careful about the sorts of youngsters that you send, because in the past we’ve thought of vocational as being for the disengaged and that isn’t the right approach.”*

7.14 Still, some providers still complained that they were not satisfied with the selection process adopted. Even though most were involved in selecting students for courses by the second year of the pilot, several complained that many schools were not offering SfW courses as an equivalent option to other courses. This was particularly the case in those schools which expected students to complete courses in addition to eight Standard Grades. This meant that SfW courses were seen as a useful addition but not as an equivalent qualification. One college manager was of the

opinion that: *“if you’re doing it as well as your Standard Grades, if you get a bad report card your mummy says drop your additionality”*.

7.15 Colleges also complained that some schools persisted to view SfW courses as only suited for low-ability and ‘vocationally-minded’ students. One college course coordinator, for example, related his experience of attending information sessions for S2 pupils:

*“I’ve been at parents’ information sessions where people have stood up and said things like: ‘Well it’s a choice, you either have an academic child who does eight Standard Grades or if your child doesn’t do too well they can go to college and do a Skills for Work course’.”*

7.16 It is important to note though that several of the 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey did not hold this view and, instead, emphasised the importance of viewing SfW courses as equivalent options. This was most likely the case in those schools which expected students to replace a Standard Grade in order to complete a SfW course.

7.17 There was also evidence that several local authorities and colleges were taking active steps to challenge the view that *“it’s only a certain kind of young person who comes to do Construction”*. Adopted approaches included working with schools to view SfW courses as part of a local authority-wide ‘curriculum pathway’ and presenting information to schools and parents. As one college coordinator emphasised, he felt the need for parity of esteem being given to these courses by making it clear to parents and teachers that *“if I employed an architect, for example, I’d want one that could lay a brick”*.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

7.18 Even though several respondents in schools and colleges reported that *“partnership working has not always been easy”*, there was very strong evidence that relationships had improved over the two years of the pilot and that schools and colleges were adopting more effective ways of working together. As reported in Chapter 5, all 15 colleges contacted as part of the final survey agreed that the pilot

had led to more effective partnerships with schools. Similarly, almost all the schools interviewed felt that the pilot had strengthened their partnerships with other organisations – mostly with colleges, but, in some cases, with other schools, training providers, or employers.

7.19 The main issues reported related to:

- Cultural barriers – that schools did not understand how colleges worked and vice versa
- Lack of effective reporting procedures in relation to student absences and progress on the course
- Insufficient links being made between what students were doing in college and the rest of the curriculum

7.20 Several respondents commented on the cultural barriers between schools and colleges. As one college manager reported:

*“I think the main challenge has been the constant getting people to understand the college system. People don’t necessarily understand that young people can’t just be taken out for one session because there’s something else on at school; or they don’t necessarily understand that actually we don’t need those two days because we’ve got all these young people on work experience. These need to be addressed in the future.”*

7.21 Similarly, a school teacher likened the process of establishing better communication and understanding between her school and the college to *“painting the Forth Road Bridge – it’s something that will never be finished”*.

7.22 However, when comparing interviewees’ responses in the first survey (and the Year 2 survey) with the final survey, it was evident that such conflicts were reported by far fewer respondents towards the end of the second year of the pilot. Such an improvement was often related to stronger strategic links and school-college visits (see Chapter 3), many of which had been initiated in the second year of the pilot.

7.23 A lack of effective reporting procedures was also more likely to be reported in the first year than at the end of the second year of the pilot. Indeed, there was



evidence that several partnerships had developed good practice in this area, although some issues continued to persist. As one school, for example, commented:

*“Although we work well together and we can pick up the phone at any time and we know each other well, we probably need to formalise certain aspects of the reporting procedures – we would like more feedback on progress”.*

Similarly, the depute in another school argued that:

*“I would like to see the regularity of reports coming back from college improve. It’s not regular enough. They do the reports at the same time they do their own reports. We tend to get them in bits and pieces and not all at the same time. For one course they’re sent to the local authority and then we get them. I would rather get them for all the children at the same time but that’s not happening.”*

7.24 However, some colleges reported that they had adopted more systematic reporting procedures on student progress. A Sport and Recreation lecturer interviewed in one of the case-study partnerships said, for example, that in Year 2 of the pilot they now had:

*“School report cards, where we have to write down what we’ve covered and not covered yet and also a personalised part for each one on general behaviour and attainment. A copy goes to the school and a copy goes to the parents, which means that the parents know exactly what we’re doing but the school knows too. Because I think sometimes the school put them out to these courses and they don’t know what we’re doing.”*

7.25 Similarly, although some schools and colleges still commented on some difficulties in reporting student absences, others were able to document ways in which the pilot had been used to develop good practice approaches. One school, for example, reported that in the second year of the pilot:

*“Pupils at this end are getting checked on to the bus, and then within half an hour of the pupils attending college we get a fax into school saying what the attendance is”.*

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES FOR COLLEGE STAFF WORKING WITH UNDER-16 YEAR OLDS**

7.26 Many of the colleges reported that teaching the younger age group of S3 and S4 students was one of the main challenges of delivering the SfW courses (see Chapter 5). Still, most respondents in schools and colleges felt that this had largely been successfully overcome via staff development, careful selection of staff to teach on the courses, and close consultation with schools.

7.27 However, issues continued to exist in some partnerships towards the end of the second year of the pilot in relation to persuading some college staff:

- To teach SfW courses
- To deliver SfW courses in schools – this had become more of a concern in the second year of the pilot given the increased numbers of colleges adopting, or planning to adopt, this delivery model.

7.28 Interviewees in five of the 15 colleges contacted as part of the final survey reported that even though most staff were very happy to teach SfW courses once they had received support and guidance on how to deal with the particular challenges associated with the younger age group, there were others who were more resistant. As one respondent explained:

*“It has been a challenge getting used to a different way of teaching. It’s meant we’ve had to adjust our teaching methods and it’s been a challenge, but an enjoyable one at times. But there is a challenge convincing some members of staff in FE that there is a place for school students in colleges and that we won’t be overrun with lots of kids who don’t want to be there.”*

7.29 Another college manager made a similar point, commenting that one of the main challenges of the pilot so far had been winning college staff over to having school pupils on site:

*“Many lecturers chose to teach in further education rather than in schools and some feel slightly resentful that, having made that choice, they are now becoming involved in delivery to school children. But there are other staff who have welcomed the change and driven the programme forward enthusiastically.”*

7.30 Most of those interviewed, though, suggested that this process had been largely successful. Improved partnerships with schools and better selection of students for courses was said to have “*won over*” many college staff who had initially been afraid of “*being dumped on by schools*” – only getting students who were disengaged and were not sufficiently interested in learning. Although as one interviewee concluded: “*Winning hearts and minds is certainly an ongoing challenge with these vocational programmes to schools because there are still people for it and against it*”.

7.31 Two colleges which had recently moved to, or were planning to move to, offering delivery of SfW courses in schools also reported that some staff were resistant to this. One respondent, for example, said:

*“The trouble is I’ve got to persuade my staff to do it. The Early Education and Childcare staff are not keen to go out to schools; they worry about going out and being isolated and left on their own and the students running riot.”*

7.32 However, most respondents felt that improved partnerships with schools, staff development and the mainly positive experience of delivering SfW courses in college were persuading most staff. In the words of one respondent: “*What we’re hoping is that the experience they’ve had with the children [in college] has made them confident that they can handle those situations*”.

## **PROVIDING AND ACCESSING COURSES IN RURAL AREAS**

7.33 There was evidence from the final survey that some schools in rural areas were more likely to face barriers to accessing SfW courses than those in more urban settings. The main reason, in most cases, was the physical distance from colleges and the time it took for students to travel to and from providers. Indeed, one college reported that many of its rural schools had not sent pupils to college in the first year of the pilot for this reason. They had changed their approach in the second year to accommodate their needs. However, it still meant that these schools were only able to access one of the SfW courses on offer, as the interviewee explained:

*“This year particularly we were trying to be fair because it’s very easy to open your doors and say ‘here’s a course, come along’ and we have all the town schools coming in. But you’ve got to think about those that are further away and what you can do for them. So, this year we’re delivering the Rural [Skills] course only in two satellite schools, because of that distance.”*

7.34 It is worth noting that several rural schools involved in the pilot had accessed a variety of SfW college courses, but almost all of them identified transport as a major issue. As discussed in Chapter 3, the final survey suggested that colleges were increasingly moving towards delivering more courses in schools or in vocational centres accessed by several schools in an area. Other solutions adopted in some areas included working with private training providers or using school staff to deliver courses.

7.35 One school in the final survey and two of the schools contacted as part of the Year 2 partnerships survey (which only got involved in the second year of the pilot) had chosen to deliver courses on their own because of their distance from the nearest college. Respondents identified various challenges to delivering courses in such a way, including teachers’ skills and knowledge, lack of in-school facilities and lack of additional funding to resource the programme. As noted in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.23), schools delivering SfW courses do continue to receive mainstream funding for those pupils participating in these courses. However, several schools felt that this was not enough to cover the additional costs incurred for setting up and resourcing these courses. One school, for example, which was delivering the Construction Crafts course complained about the lack of additional funding to support the delivery of SfW courses for schools like his own which made it unsustainable in the long term and which he saw as disadvantaging students living in rural or island communities:

*“If the kids went out to a college – that is funded via central government. But we have to fund it ourselves, so rural kids are at a disadvantage. The money should go with the kid, not the establishment. We should have the same opportunities to get the finances for the course.”*

7.36 One rural school contacted as part of the final survey had decided to stop sending students to college to access a broad set of SfW courses next year and to use

school staff instead to deliver just a Rural Skills course only in the school. The depute explained her school's decision in the following way:

*“It's lots to do with our locality, that I think our children are rural children and it's quite a psychological and emotional trauma for them to be involved in travelling off to be educated somewhere else, in a big building. We're a good 30-35 minutes on the bus from college – from October to March when it's dark, these kids are being dropped off in pitch black and there are issues to do with that. There are some things we're not going to be able to offer them, including Early Education and Childcare and Construction, so there will be a few pupils who will not have the same opportunity as their predecessors had, but it just was not viable to continue.”*

7.37 The teacher concluded by saying that they we're really looking forward to in-house delivery because *“our biggest challenge will be eliminated because there won't be transport issues”*. However, as noted in Chapter 3, there are various pros and cons associated with the school-only delivery of SfW courses, as well as for the in-school delivery by college staff.

### **LIMITED CAPACITY OF COLLEGES TO RESPOND TO INCREASING DEMAND**

7.38 Almost all of the colleges contacted as part of the final survey reported that they were increasing the number of students involved in SfW courses in the following year. However, the schools liaison coordinators or sector managers in five out of 15 colleges said that they would soon reach capacity and would not be able to expand provision much further even if increased funding was made available. Capacity issues were mainly related to lack of physical space in colleges rather than staffing for courses, although some providers did identify the latter as an issue for particular SfW courses:

*“There will be capacity issues on two fronts – it is both staff and space. In [one area] it is accommodation that is the main issue – we've built a new campus, but it has already reached capacity. But there is also a staffing problem – in Construction this year, the demand, because of the perception of opportunities in construction, is so great that we've had problems identifying staff especially at the S5 and S6 level. I think that we will probably reach our plateau next year.”*

7.39 Many of those colleges expanding provision in the third year of SfW courses said that they were only able to do this by adopting different delivery models, including delivering directly in schools or in purpose-built skills or vocational centres.

7.40 As regards schools, 16 of the 29 schools contacted as part of the final survey said that they had excluded some students from participating in SfW courses in the second year of the pilot. In most cases, this was due to restricted numbers of places being made available to them by providers, although in others it was said to be due to students not meeting the criteria (related to interest, behaviour or attendance) set out by the college. In some cases, the lack of available places was said to have got worse in the second year of the pilot due to increased popularity of courses and more schools getting involved. A depute in one school commented, for example, that previously:

*“All our kids that wanted to go on the course got in. But now names go in a hat with names from other schools. The only thing I’m miffed about is that the programme has been so successful that we have fewer places than we did in the past because it’s widely publicised and other schools are involved.”*

7.41 The discrepancy between available places and students interested in pursuing a SfW course was found only to be high in seven of the 29 schools contacted. In one of these, for example, in *“each year we’ve had 50, 60 or 70 that don’t get in”*. Another school documented the difference between available places and student demand, as follows:

*“We’re hugely oversubscribed. For Hairdressing, it was roughly 30 pupils interested and eight places on offer. Construction – roughly 14 pupils interested and three places on offer. Sport and Recreation roughly 20 to 30 pupils interested and eight places on offer.”*

7.42 As noted above, many schools felt a need for in-school delivery of SfW courses. This was particularly the case in those schools in which colleges were not able to meet the high, and frequently growing, demand for such courses. A teacher in one such establishment felt that:

*“I think we could get many more kids through it if we had a purpose-built facility on-site and people delivering it – I think we could have it as an option and we could have loads of kids going through in every year group.”*

7.43 Similarly, a depute in a rural school argued for the need to invest more heavily in building schools with vocational facilities on site:

*“In the long term the Scottish Executive have got to think about the layout of schools and especially the way education is going, (...). And I think we should offer [SfW] to everyone and we need to look at how we build schools in the future.”*

7.44 However, it is not clear whether schools would currently have staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver SfW courses to the same standards as colleges; furthermore, there may be insufficient demand for courses in some schools for the same range of courses on offer in most colleges.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- Timetabling was reported to be a key issue in several schools throughout the pilot, but particularly in those in which the students did not replace a Standard Grade and in schools adopting the in-college delivery model. As a consequence, several schools were moving towards more in-school delivery by college staff.
- Student selection was far less likely to be identified as a major challenge towards the end of the pilot, although some providers still complained that some schools did not give SfW courses the same status as Standard Grades and viewed them as mainly suited to low-ability students. Several colleges and local authorities were taking active steps to challenge such perceptions.
- Even though partnership working between schools and colleges had clearly improved over the two years of the pilots some issues still remained. In particular, challenges continued to be identified in some cases in relation to college reporting procedures and insufficient links being made between what students were learning in college and the rest of the curriculum.
- Many of the colleges reported that teaching the younger age group had been a challenge, but that this had been largely overcome via staff development, choice of staff to teach these courses and close consultation with schools. However, some college staff were still said to be reluctant to teach on SfW courses, particularly in those cases in which they were increasingly asked to do so in schools.
- Schools in rural areas were more likely to face barriers to accessing SfW courses than those in more urban areas because of the physical distance from colleges. As a result, several such colleges were delivering courses in schools or in vocational

centres and schools were working with private training providers or using school staff to deliver courses. The main issues associated with such alternative approaches included teachers' skills and knowledge, lack of in-school facilities and funding consumables needed to deliver such courses.

- Even though almost all colleges contacted said that they were increasing student numbers in the following year, several said that they were reaching capacity and would not be able to expand provision much further. The main issue related to physical space in colleges, and several providers saw expanding in-school provision as the only way to meet the increasing demands of schools for more students to participate in courses.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT      CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES**

8.1 This chapter presents the main conclusions from the evaluation and key messages relevant to the future development and roll-out of SfW courses.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

8.2 Interviews with schools, colleges and providers revealed that they are committed to the value of SfW courses and see them as having raised the status of vocational learning in schools. Most interviewees saw the main aim of the courses as enhancing students' skills and knowledge in a broad occupational field, changing their attitudes to employment, developing their employability skills and helping them to make more informed choices about their future transitions.

8.3 The evaluation has shown that the SfW pilot has been largely successful in achieving the objectives and key measures of success identified by the stakeholders interviewed at the start of the pilot (see Chapter 2).

8.4 In particular, there was clear evidence that providers had tested out and developed different approaches to delivering courses and overcome various obstacles and challenges. They had adapted their teaching methods and developed staff skills to suit the needs of the main age group targeted by the courses (S3 and S4 students), embedded the teaching of employability and core skills into the courses and tested out various delivery models. Progress had also been made in the second year of the pilot with regard to developing more robust selection processes and improving the partnership working between schools and colleges, which is critical to the success of most delivery models.

8.5 The evaluation revealed a generally positive response to the design and structure of the SfW courses and the support materials provided by SQA and SFEU. Some delivery centres had adapted the materials or developed additional ones over the course of the pilot to better suit their students' needs and requirements. Similarly, most respondents were positive about the National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials

provided by SQA, although some found that particularly lower ability students took a lot of time to complete them or were resistant to them. In response, some colleges had adopted alternative approaches including the use of e-portfolios.

8.6 Student retention on SfW courses was good in over two-thirds of schools surveyed. Higher drop-out rates were more likely to occur where schools had not replaced a Standard Grade with a SfW course and expected students to catch up with studies from missed lessons in their own time. Turning to candidates that stayed on the courses, three-quarters of the delivery centres surveyed expected all or almost all the candidates still involved to complete their courses on time. Analysis of monitoring data collected by SQA revealed that more than four-fifths (85.6 per cent) of students had passed their courses by the end of the second year of the pilot.

8.7 School and college staff interviewed were positive about the impact of SfW courses on students. Enhancement of students' specific vocational skills and knowledge was seen as a key impact. Other main areas of impact identified included helping students to make decisions about post-school transitions, improving students' motivation to learn, enhancing students' attitudes and skills relevant to employment and enhancing their ability to work with and relate to adults. Interviews with students also showed that they really enjoyed the courses, that they had developed useful skills and knowledge and that they had helped clarify their career objectives. However, some teachers still consider SfW courses as most suitable for less able or only 'practically-minded' students, which raises the issue of whether they currently provide genuine pathways to employment, training or further learning for pupils of all abilities.<sup>11</sup>

8.8 No information was collected from employers or universities about their views on the value of the SfW qualification as part of this evaluation. However, a study commissioned by SQA (Ashbrook Research & Consultancy, 2007) showed that

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<sup>11</sup> According to information provided by The Scottish Government, SfW courses will have the same credit value in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as existing National Courses, and will appear on pupils' Scottish Qualifications Certificates in exactly the same way as other courses. SQA have also submitted the SfW Higher (SCQF Level 6) for inclusion on the UCAS Tariff at the same level as other Scottish Highers and will seek the continuing inclusion of all appropriate qualifications.

employers were increasingly becoming more aware of the SfW courses. It is probably too early to seek the view of universities, but the Scottish Government may wish to commission research in the future to explore admission tutors' awareness and views of SfW courses.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

### **Timetabling of courses**

8.9 The evaluation has shown that timetabling issues have continued to persist in the second year of the pilot. Schools are using various approaches to enable students to access SfW courses, each with their own associated problems or challenges. Even where schools adopt the intended approach of replacing a Standard Grade, they still sometimes encounter timetabling problems. Schools using this approach also find it harder to integrate “*drop-outs*” back into the normal timetable, especially if this happens later on in the year or even in the second year of the course. Also, there was some evidence that higher ability students were less likely to choose SfW courses if it meant replacing a Standard Grade – this was both a result of school and parental pressures and expectations to achieve eight Standard Grades.

8.10 The alternative approach of expecting students to complete a SfW course on top of their eight Standard Grades further strengthens the perception that they are not equivalent and that they are just of additional, rather than equal, value. In addition, the evaluation suggested that schools adopting this approach were more likely to report timetabling problems and higher levels of drop-out. This was particularly the case in those schools in which students missed lessons for Standard Grade subjects, which led to various catch-up issues. Some schools had tried to address this by implementing approaches to enable students to catch up, but this was only done in a few schools. Other schools had timetabled it in such a way that students only missed core subjects – however, this approach is not sustainable in the long term as it means that schools are not meeting their statutory obligations.

8.11 On balance the evaluation appears to suggest, therefore, that replacing a Standard Grade should be regarded as ideal. The Scottish Government, SQA, local authorities and schools should consider ways in which the awareness and status of

courses can be further raised among teachers, parents, employers and universities, which may encourage more schools to adopt this approach. It should also consider providing more guidance to schools on what approaches can and should be used to allow students to take SfW courses.

### **Delivery models**

8.12 The evaluation has provided an insight into a variety of delivery models and highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each of them, although the evaluation has not been able to identify a preferred model. Instead, it is clear that different models are more suited for certain types of courses, partnerships or geographical areas.

8.13 Even though the in-college delivery model is still the most common one, the study has also shown that providers are increasingly adopting more diversified and flexible models of delivery – several colleges are using different models for different schools and/or different courses. Others were expecting to change their approaches in the coming year or years.

8.14 Generally, this trend should be viewed positively. It reflects the fact that providers are working closely with their partner schools and responding to their differential needs. Thus, several colleges had moved to delivering SfW courses in schools, vocational hubs, or other college sites to alleviate the transport issues experienced by rural schools which, in some cases, were located a considerable distance from the college main site. Some colleges also indicated that they saw the delivery of courses in schools as the main way of increasing their capacity to meet the increasing demands of schools for more students to participate in courses. There was also evidence of some schools adopting other approaches, including using private training providers and using school staff to deliver courses (sometimes with college staff providing a mentoring and quality assurance role).

8.15 These models do, however, raise issues for further consideration. These include that:

- School staff may not always have the skills, knowledge or experience to teach these courses to *the same level* as college lecturers
- Very few schools currently have the facilities to provide students with *the same level* of experience as within a college setting
- Vocational facilities set up in schools, such as hairdressing salons or areas to develop construction skills, may be under-utilised in some schools
- Schools are unlikely to be able to offer the same range of SfW courses as colleges
- There may not be enough demand for SfW courses, especially in smaller, rural schools to sustain the provision of sufficiently large class sizes or to allow for selection of the most suitable students.

8.16 However, given the capacity issues identified by colleges in this evaluation and transport issues faced by many rural schools, the Scottish Government, SQA, local authorities and schools may need to consider ways to overcome some of these barriers, including:

- Providing continuous training and development opportunities for school staff teaching SfW courses
- Supporting the approach planned by some colleges of providing a mentoring and quality assurance role to schools delivering SfW courses.

### **Partnership working**

8.17 The evaluation has shown that both schools and colleges believed that the pilot had really helped to make a positive contribution to improved partnership working. Even schools which had previously had strong links with providers were able to identify ways in which it had further improved links. However, there was still some evidence of a need for schools and colleges to work more closely together to overcome some existing barriers. These included issues related to the timetabling of courses, the approach to and timing of selection, college involvement in providing pre-course guidance to students and the recording and reporting of progress on courses. There was also evidence that very little progress had been made by schools to make links between students' learning on SfW courses and the rest of the curriculum. Also, even though almost all delivery centres surveyed had carried out some form of evaluation or review of the pilot, very few colleges had involved school staff in this process. The Scottish Government, SQA, local authorities and HMIe should encourage this to happen more often.

## **Teaching approaches**

8.18 The evaluation has shown that colleges have made progress in developing good practice in teaching approaches used for SfW courses. Many lecturers involved in the pilot had previously not had any experience of teaching students aged below 16 and they had realised that to keep them engaged they needed to ensure that:

- Courses were delivered in as practical a way as possible
- Students were kept busy
- Students were treated as much as possible as adults (bearing in mind child protection issues)
- Students were given responsibility for their own learning.

8.19 This has implications for sharing practice and deliverers' continuing professional development. Even though most delivery centres said that they had participated in events, workshops and conferences which enabled them to share good practice and network with other schools and colleges, some delivery centres said that they had not done so in the second year of the pilot. Also, many of those centres which only got involved in the second year of the pilot said that they had not received any help, guidance or materials from those involved from the start of the pilot. The Scottish Government, SQA and local authorities need to make sure that new providers and new staff benefit from the lessons learnt from the first two years of the pilot and that staff teaching the courses in schools and college have access to relevant continuing professional development opportunities. School and college partners could also be encouraged to work more closely together to share ideas on teaching and learning approaches – such links were currently being used mainly to focus on strategies to manage the behaviour of under-16 year olds.

8.20 There was also evidence that many centres were continuously adapting the SFEU support materials or developing their own. The Scottish Government, SQA and SFEU need to ensure that these are being fully disseminated to other providers so that fellow practitioners can benefit.

## **Employer engagement**

8.21 Employer involvement in delivery was variable across courses and delivery centres. Some courses, particularly Rural Skills, Construction, and Early Education

and Childcare were more likely to involve employers, but this was not the case across all delivery centres. Furthermore, only four out of 15 colleges said that they had developed stronger partnerships with employers by the end of the pilot. It is not clear though to what extent employer involvement is needed to deliver these courses successfully – they can provide a valuable insight into the reality of the workplace and offer opportunities for applying knowledge in practical situations. However, some courses appeared to be achieving these things even without strong links with employers. Further research to examine the benefits and costs of stronger employer engagement would be beneficial. The Scottish Government, SQA and local authorities may also want to explore ways of helping delivery centres to share successful strategies of involving employers. This could include establishing stronger links with employer bodies, such as sector skills councils (some of which were already involved in the initial design teams for some SfW courses), to assist this process.

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