

Access Aspiration: 2016 Programme evaluation

Introduction

Access Aspiration is a charity that works to provide outstanding work placement opportunities coupled with practical school-based and employer-based training, mentoring and support to students aged 16-18 who face significant disadvantage. We particularly focus on students who do not have the connections or confidence to set up their own work placements, and schools where a high proportion of students receive the pupil premium. We aim to give as many students as possible the chance to gain worthwhile work experience which they can use on their CVs and/or UCAS application forms, and which may help them to decide on the most appropriate career path.

Social mobility is a big problem in the UK today. The link between social mobility and good career provision in schools, which includes organizing work placement opportunities, is well documented¹. Students from state schools still receive significantly poorer quality placement opportunities than their independent school peers, reducing their ability to get into top universities, or study the most popular courses.²

In 2012 schools were made responsible for securing independent careers advice for their students with no additional funding to support this transition. Recent Careers England research suggests that despite this statutory obligation only 32% of schools currently employ qualified career advisors, whilst 57% subcontract this work out externally to a variety of partners (with and without quality control). Eleven percent of schools either chose not to respond to the survey, or confirmed that they still had no provision³. In 2016, the Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy (ESE)⁴ released a report stating that inadequate careers guidance in many English schools is exacerbating skills shortages and having a negative impact on the country's productivity. The findings described above indicate that social mobility could become even more problematic for the UK in the future.

Through our programme we aim to:

- 1) Broaden young people's understanding of the workplace

Within the Careers Development Institute (CDI) 2015 framework this aim meets their criteria of: Exploring careers and career development, investigating work and working life, understanding business and industry, investigating jobs and labour market information, valuing equality, diversity and inclusion⁵).

¹Careers and Enterprise Annual Report 2016

² Sutton Trust (2012), *The Personal Statement: A fair way to assess university applications?*, p13

³ Survey of Career Education and Guidance in Schools and Links with Employers Career Development Institute (CDI) with Careers England May 2015

⁴ 29 June 2016 First Joint Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees of Session 2016–17

⁵ Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education 7-19, 2015 Career Development Institute

- 2) Increase access to aspirational work experience in vocational and practical careers

CDI framework: Identifying choices and opportunities, planning and deciding

- 3) Develop inter-personal skills and professional conduct

CDI framework: Preparing for employability, showing initiative and enterprise, managing changes and transitions

- 4) Improve access to higher education

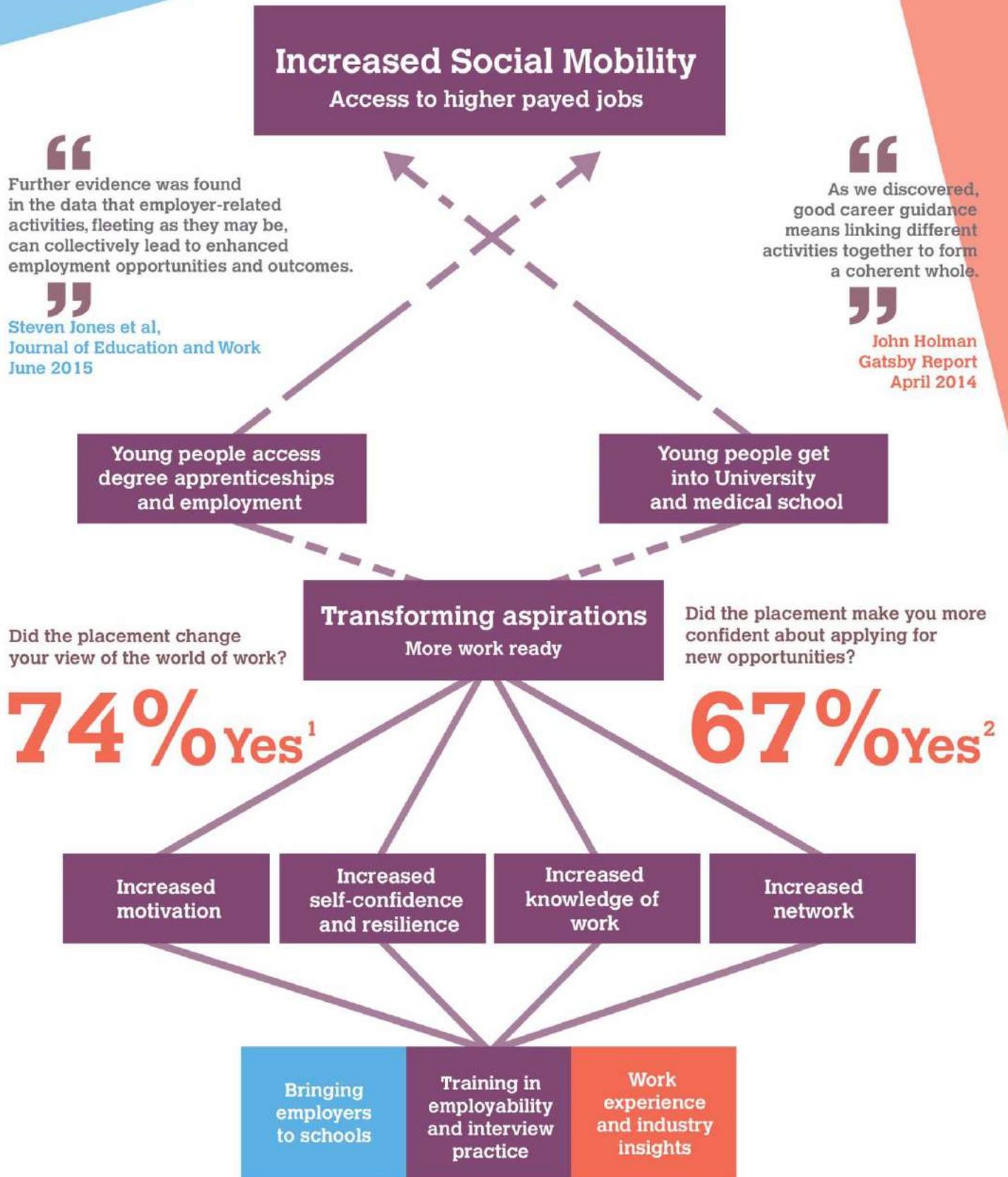
CDI framework: Identifying choices and opportunities

- 5) Increase social mobility

CDI framework: Valuing equality, diversity and inclusion, handling applications and interviews, exploring careers and career development, investigating jobs and labour market information

Access Aspiration Change Journey

Fig 1



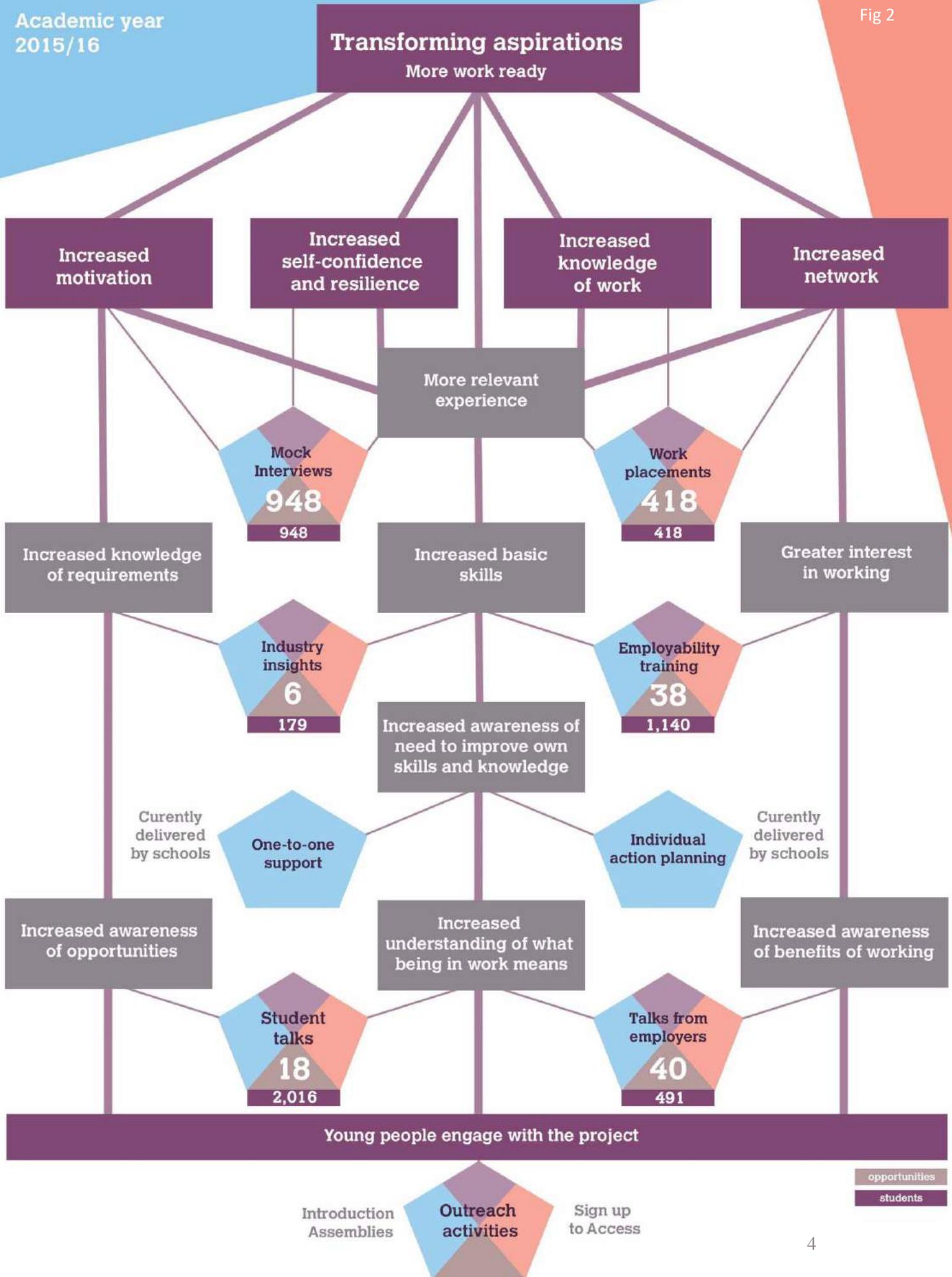
1. Taken from 2016 Evaluation data 'Student work experience evaluation form'
2. Taken from 2016 Evaluation data 'Student work experience evaluation form'

Access Aspiration

Mapping outputs to outcomes

Academic year
2015/16

Fig 2



Methodology

This year's evaluation builds on earlier Access Aspiration evaluations and includes questionnaires designed for students, businesses and schools that we work with. Each group received automated feedback forms covering various sections of our activities. Salesforce and Excel were used to analyse the data.

Students

Students were asked to fill in a pre and post work placement questionnaires in order to:

- Assess their aspirations before and after engagement with the charity
- Allow matching of their interests to work placements available
- Investigate the charity's impact

Work placements: Although questionnaires were sent throughout the year, new questionnaires were developed from March 2016. The new format questionnaires were sent out to students taking part in the 261 work placements over July/August 2016, of these, 227 responses were received (87% response rate).

Short insights: In 2015/16 students were also asked to complete feedback on shorter 'employer insight' activities. These included speed networking sessions, one day placements and face to face engagements with those at the top of their profession. New format questionnaires were sent to 238 students attending these sessions and 183 responses were received (77% response rate).

Businesses

Questionnaires were designed to examine impact on strategy, staff morale and motivation. 57 businesses received questionnaires and 15 responses were received. Separately, businesses were asked to fill-in a questionnaire on each student who took up a work placement with them.

Schools

Questionnaires were developed to assess the charity's delivery and performance, identify weaknesses and gauge overall impact. Of the 18 schools who received questionnaires, 15 responded.

Volunteers

A new questionnaire was designed to assess volunteers experience. 56 out of 227 responded.

See appendix A for all questionnaires (available on request from the Access Aspiration office).

RESULTS: 2015/16

1. Broaden young people's understanding of the workplace

Table 1 shows the numbers of students that have undertaken activities (other than work placements) organised by Access Aspiration since 2013. The number of students undertaking almost every activity has increased again since 2015. However, the key change for Access Aspiration in 2015/16 has been our focus on shorter career-related experiences for young people. A stream of varied 'employer insight' events⁶ has been timetabled to enable those students who do not yet have the confidence, or capacity, to take on a week's work experience to still obtain access to useful and trusted information networks while interacting with professionals. Academic research indicates that the accumulation of these types of experiences gives students greater insight into their own potential, and helps them to direct their commitment to longer experiences, internships and placements in the future⁷.

Table 1: Interventions excluding placement

	TYPE	2013	2014	2015	2016
Students on programme		300	640	1,424	1,388
Mock Interviews	1:1	200	420	780	948
Employer speed networking	1:1	0	0	150	224
Employability training	1:few	200	387	840	1,140
Employer industry insights	1:few	0	0	126	179
Assembly presentations	1:many	0	700	1,400	2,016
Employer speaker events	1:many	0	0	300	267
Careers fairs	1:many	10	15	40	89

Figure 2 below shows the kinds of topics discussed by the students during employer insights. The results show that most of the students are finding out about what it would be like to work in a specific company (85%). This is exactly the kind of result we are looking for. Figure 3 shows that 91% of students would definitely recommend an employer insight activity to their friends. Access Aspiration intends to continue to increase the amount of employer insight activities in our programming next year.

'Some young people do not realise that versatility of many professional firms and the fact that although an organisation might be a Legal firm, there are many other types of job available within that organisation.'

Richard Soyoye, Paralegal at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Volunteers are the critical component of being able to deliver mock interviews and the employer insight activities in schools. In 2015/16, 227 individuals undertook 1,548 hours of volunteer work for Access Aspiration. If we want to expand these activities we will need to continue to expand our volunteer base.

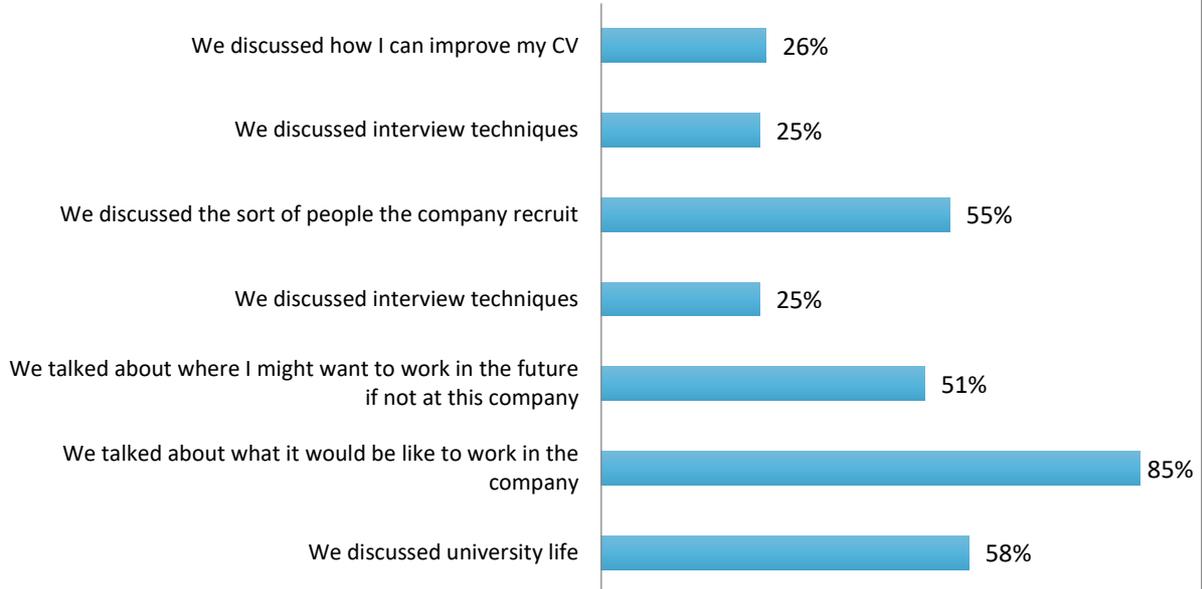
⁶ Access defines 'employer insights' as (i) speed networking - a mass event with students and volunteers where students get a few minutes to ask a professional career questions, (ii) an industry insight where students go to a business and receive a tour and talks from industry volunteers in their workplace, and, (iii) an expert talk comprises a small group of students engaging in discussion with an expert at the top of their field on career paths and choices.

⁷ 'Career education that works: an economic analysis using the British Cohort Study' published by the Education and Employers Taskforce on the 17th May 2016.

What did you learn about the world of work and / or further education from your interactions with the volunteers during your employer insight activities?

n = 183

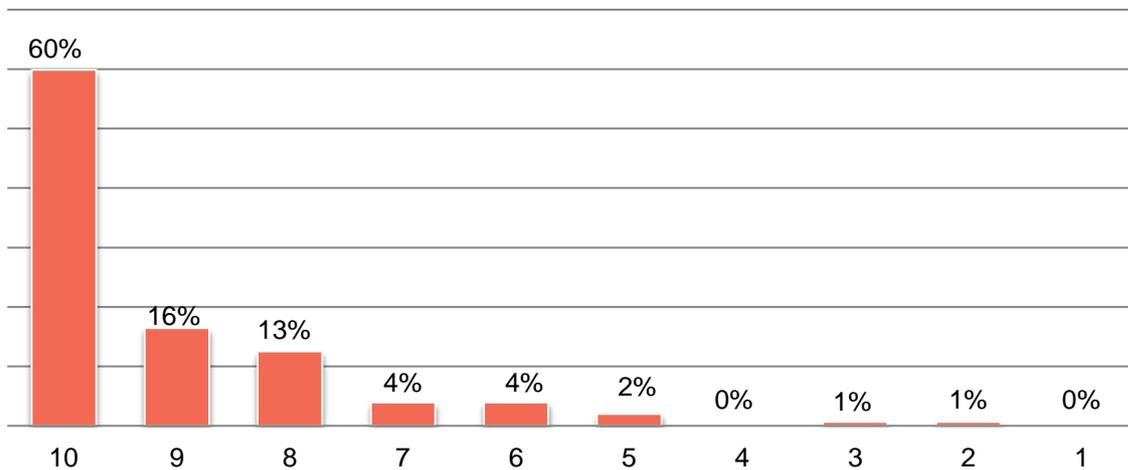
Fig 3



Access Aspiration organised this employer insight workshop for you, would you recommend Access Aspiration to your friends (0 = WILL NOT recommend, 10 = definitely will recommend)?

n = 183

Fig 4



2. Increase access to aspirational work experience in vocational and practical careers

Table 2 shows that we have continued to organize a large number of work experience placements in 2015/16. There has been a big increase in work placements compared to last year. We believe this is due to several reasons (i) we finally have a full staff team in place including a dedicated business manager, (ii) our salesforce database is now fully functioning and (iii) alumni students are encouraging others to take part. We have managed to get 23 new businesses involved with

Access Aspiration this year and 26 have either dropped out or, due to business commitments, postponed for a year.

Table 2: Placements 2013-2016

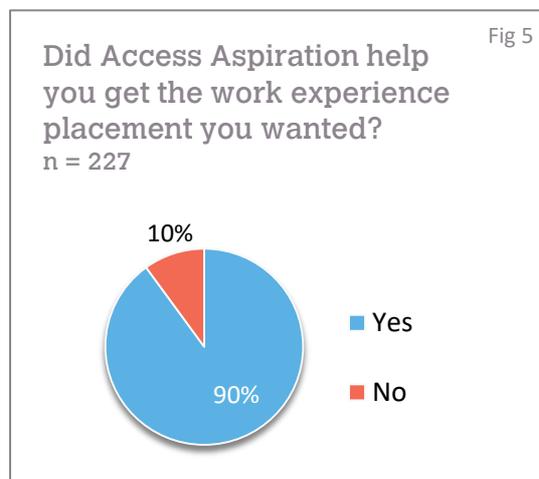
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Offered placements	150	341	284	418
Completed placements	76	243	241	311
Completion rate	61%	86%	85%	74%

Table 3 shows that drop-out rates remain pleasingly low especially given the fragility of some of our students – we believe this is due to intensive communication between the students and the Access Aspiration team. The communications include (but are not limited to): an individual phone call to each student the day before the placement, contact via whatsapp groups, screen-shots and videos of how to use interactive maps to find the businesses and contact with parents.

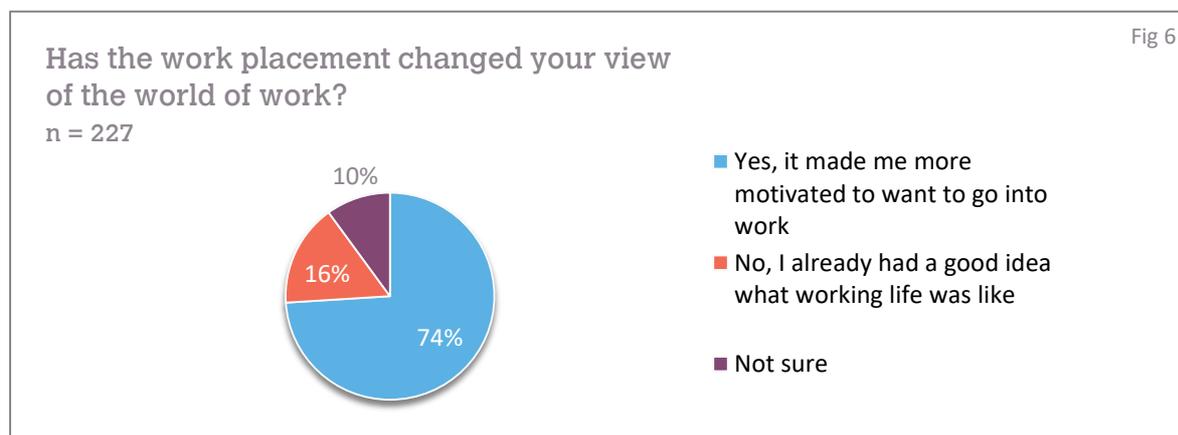
Table 2: Placements 2016 analysis

	Placements offered	Placements completed	No show students	Incomplete	Unfilled	Cancelled
October half term 2015	61	50	4	4	0	3
February half term	34	15	4	5	1	9
Easter half term	46	27	14	1	0	4
Summer	227	219	28	13	9	8
Total*	418	311	50	23	10	24
%	100%	74%	13%	5%	3%	6%

*Of the 418 total placements, 384 were confirmed with a completion rate of 81%.



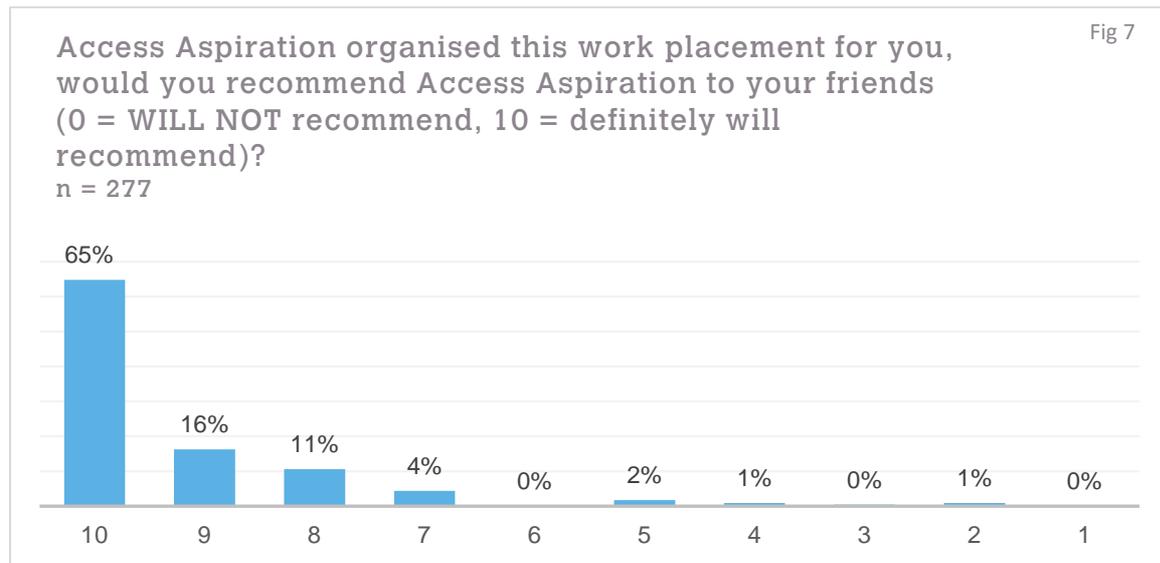
We believe that one of Access Aspiration’s key strengths, when compared to other work-placement providers, is the breadth of choice of industries we can offer. We aim to obtain information on each students’ interests and qualifications in the autumn term and try to match them to a relevant work experience placement where possible. This has resulted in a 90% satisfaction rating (figure 4). Note that this figure is similar to that obtained in our previous evaluation.



The work placements also seemed to have been successful in terms of further motivating students to go into work (74%, figure 5) and allowing them to have useful discussions about their careers (figure 6). Several school contacts confirmed that they believed the placements to be beneficial for their students as well, for example:

One young man who has achieved a lot from this experience is CP. He was extremely under confident before completing his placement. He was extremely successful in this placement and came back to school having thoroughly enjoying the experience and he had more confidence in his own abilities. We were extremely delighted that he completed the week and that he took so much away from it."

Lisa Williams, Assistant Director, Watford, UTC



It is important to note that we believe that work placements are not only useful to show students what they would like to do in the future but also to allow them decide what not to do. Zein’s case study shows this clearly!



Zein
Burlington Danes ARK Academy
Work placement at EE

Zein is currently in Y13 in Burlington Danes ARK Academy. When he came across Access Aspiration during Mock Interviews at his school he lacked an idea for a future career and did not know how to apply for work experience *“it was the bridge that I needed to get the experience needed, it really helped me. I like the sign up process – simple and easy. It’s a winning formula”*.



New path

We provided Zein with two opportunities, in medicine and in the digital industry. A week-long placement at EE turned out to be a life changing experience for him.

“Access gave me the chance to experience different things and really work out what it is that I want to do in the future. At first I thought I wanted to be a doctor and now I know I don't want to do this. Now I am thinking of computer science. The work experience at EE helped me make that decision.”

“What I liked most about this week was learning how EE as a business works. How it doesn't matter what background you come from, it's not where you are from is where you end up. I find that very inspirational. I find it fascinating how all the sectors work together to form this big picture.”

“It was the bridge that I needed”

This year, Access Aspiration has worked hard to get students into organisations which may ultimately offer them an apprenticeship. The idea of a traineeship leading to an apprenticeship is a well-established and funded route, but many of Access Aspiration's employers are struggling to attract young people into their newly developed range of apprenticeships. Access Aspiration is developing a range of contact points for employers, to both raise the value and understanding of their apprenticeship offer in school. We are also trying to encourage students to investigate an employer and take part in some taster events before deciding to apply for an apprenticeship. The pilot employer within this programme is EE and Access Aspiration will be rolling this approach out to other employers in the 2016/17 programme.



Hafsah

Access Alumni & Volunteer

Digital Marketing Apprentice at All Response Media

Hafsah went through our programme with EE last year and applied for their apprenticeship. Sadly – she was not successful but her experience has led her to another digital apprenticeship and a burning desire to get a job at EE.



Apprenticeship path

“After going to EE and seeing the different departments I believed that the Digital route was perfect for me as it is very versatile. I've never been keen to go to University as I believe I am more practical and learn efficiently by taking part ... My first task was to get an apprenticeship within the Digital industry, which I have achieved at All Response Media. My second goal set is to complete my Apprenticeship and then be able to move into a different team, in this case being the Digital or Online team. After getting more experience, apply to EE's head office!”

Giving back

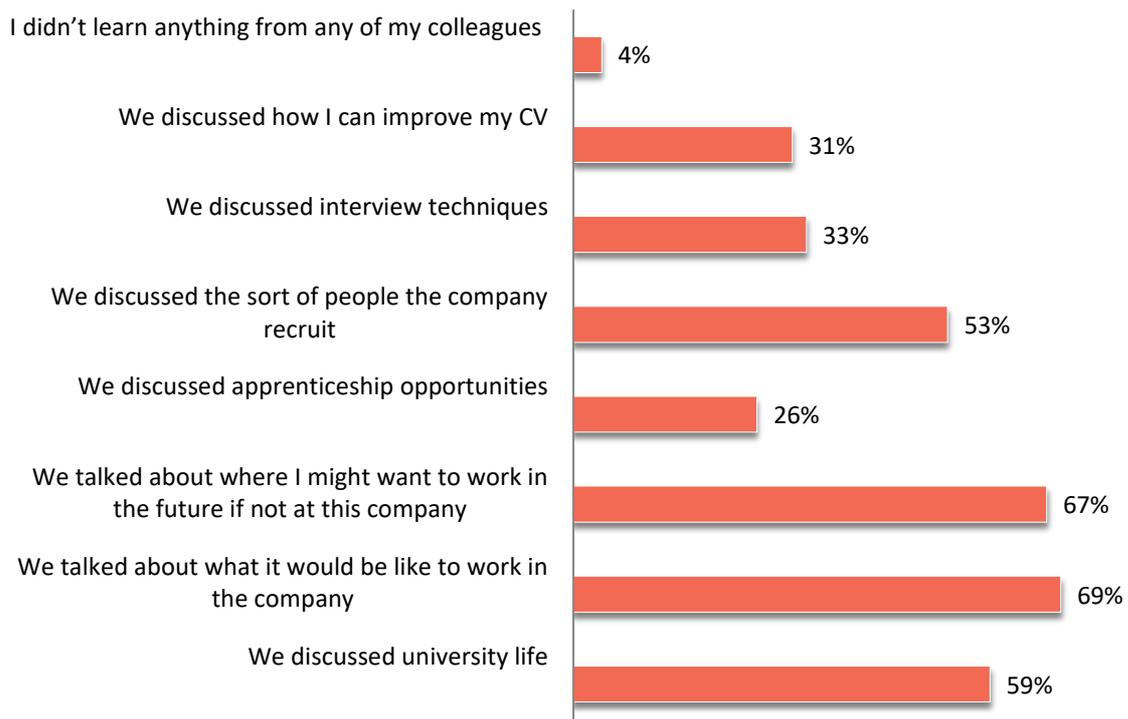
After leaving school Hafsaah joined Access team as a Volunteer. Representing Access Alumni she networks with students at schools to give advice and encourage them to reach for opportunities.



Figure 7 shows that 65% of students would definitely recommend Access Aspiration to organize a placement for their friend.

What did you learn about the world of work and / or further education from your interactions with other colleagues during your work placement?

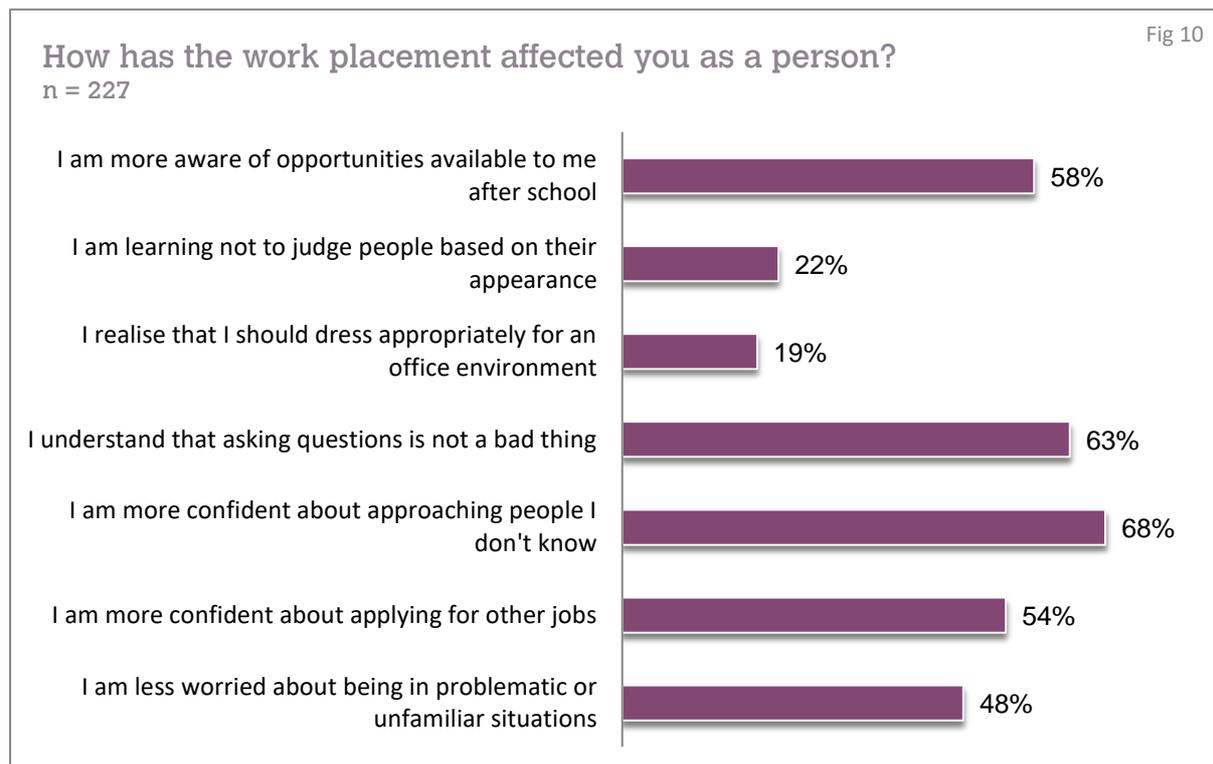
Fig 8



3. Developing inter-personal skills and professional conduct

Access Aspiration has developed its evaluations to examine students' views on their inter-personal skills and professional conduct as well as polling teachers and businesses on their views of the students. Figures 8 and 9 show the results from the students after employer insight activities and work-placements respectively.

We are pleased with the students' self-reported improvements on inter-personal skills and professional conduct. The results are in line with those from last year and are particularly good in terms of improved self-confidence (around 70% report increased self-confidence in approaching new people after their work placements). These findings were also reflected in the student feedback from the businesses.





“Access Aspiration is a great organisation. Working alongside business they provide opportunities and open doors for young people, helping them realise their true potential. Our experience was entirely positive, seeing first-hand the effect that Access have had on the blossoming careers of these great young people. Truly inspirational and EE are proud to be part of this.”

Marc Allera, CEO of EE



Charlie Parker

Watford UTC

Placement: Oxford Scientifics Films

Signing up with Access, Charlie stated *“I am keen to gain as much experience as I can, and learn how different business operate to find out what I am really interested in.”*

After participating in an employability training and mock interview he said *“I learned new skills and I understand what I need to do in order to approach an interview professionally. I found confidence issues, but doing that I am a lot more confident of myself.”* Charlie’s self-awareness was what impressed the mock interviewers the most.



Looking for a career path

*“The whole process of film and design is really interesting to me. Normally when I am watching a film or TV show I am analysing it in my head thinking what could have been done or how they did it, and **what I could add to the industry.**”*



Giving him a chance to explore the film industry Access Aspiration secured a week-long placement for Charlie at the Oxford Scientifics Films during the Easter break.



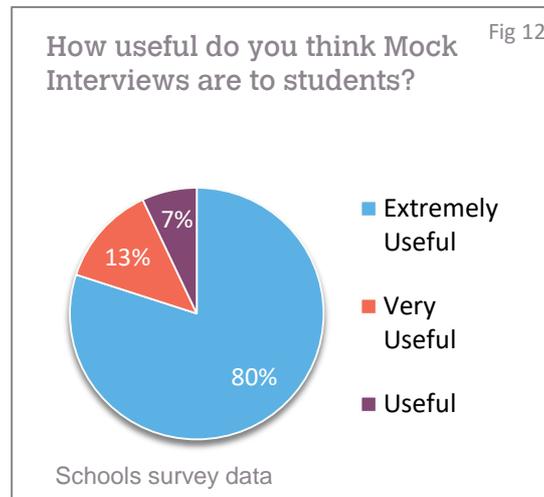
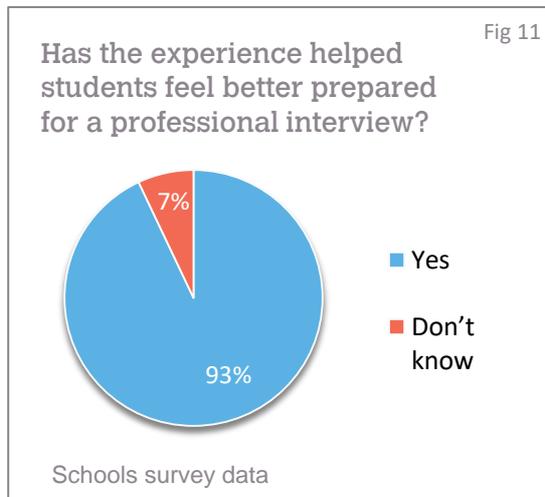
“I’ve never been in an office environment, it’s very different from school really.”

This required from him to commute across London on his own for the first time. He openly admitted he never thought he would do work experience because of his lack of confidence. During the first few days of the placement Charlie discovered his interest in editing. He gained confidence in traveling and went to visit one of the production company’s sites.

“Thanks to this experience I have more to present myself with and shows that I am committed at pushing myself beyond my comfort zone.”

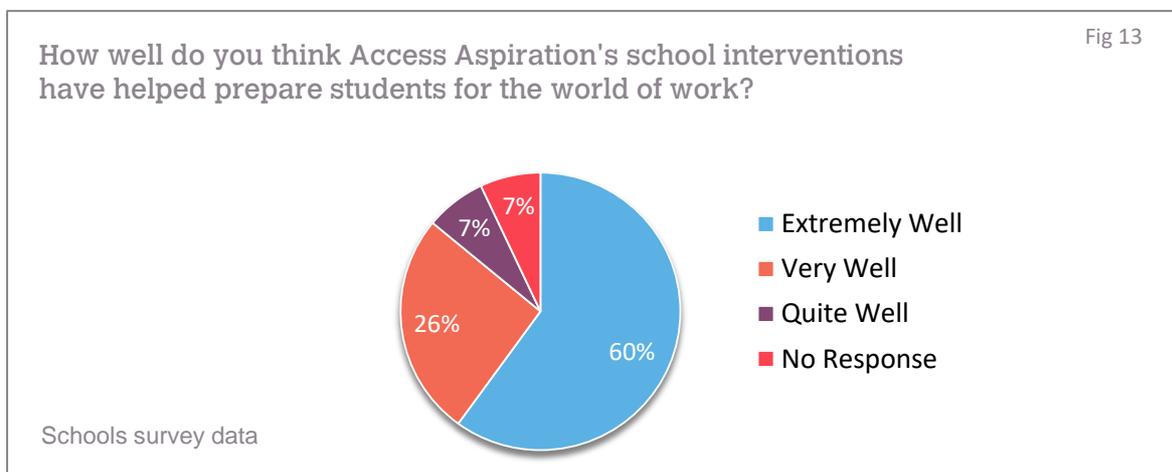
“I’ve done some things I never thought I would and I really enjoyed it.”

Schools also reported that the mock-interviews conducted by volunteers had positive impacts on their students.



“The volunteers were excellent for the mock interviews. All students that took part in both the interview and the Employability skills workshop commented on how good they were and useful to them for the future. As a school we had excellent feedback following the Mock Interviews.”
 Lisa Williams, Watford UTC

“It really is an invaluable experience for students to talk to someone they don't know about themselves so that they have to present themselves professionally, even if they are not interested in the particular field the interviewer is from.”
 Adele Hughes, Dormers Wells High School



4. Improving access to higher education

The key role of exceptional work experience is the use that students can make of it on their personal statements and CVs. The UCAS current advice says that students should include their work history on their personal statement, particularly if it is relevant to their chosen course, in order to demonstrate that they have developed new skills and to show how work experience has made them think about their future plans. The personal statement requires students to show that there are things that they enjoy and are good at that can relate to their future study.

Access Aspiration works extremely hard to provide experiences that can relate to students' personal and academic interests to illuminate career and study paths for their futures. We believe that our approach adds valuable insights for further education admissions processes and reveals the passions and interests of our students in a tangible way.



"I personally think that this experience is the most valuable career and life advice one can get, and we are proud to have hosted a young student. This has translated into success stories, such as our student getting into his university of choice."

Christina Seilern Goulandris RIBA SBA, Studio Seilern, Founder & CEO

For the first time, our evaluation this year has looked more in-depth at our provision to students who want work experience to help them to get into courses leading to specialised careers such as medicine, law and engineering. There is plenty of evidence that suggests that high quality work experience in these types of industries is extremely difficult to get if you come from a disadvantaged background.⁸ A cursory glance at the NHS work experience guidelines and the Medical Schools Council advice for students (box below) will help explain why these findings are true for medicine at least.

Current NHS work experience guidance:

"Most UK medical schools will look at an applicant's work experience as part of the selection process. This document defines work experience as any activity that allows you to demonstrate:

- *That you have had people focused experience of providing care or help to other people and that you understand the realities of working in a caring profession.*
- *That you have developed some of the attitudes and behaviours essential to being a doctor such as conscientiousness, good communication skills, and the ability to interact with a wide variety of people.*
- *That you have a realistic understanding of medicine and in particular the physical, organisational and emotional demands of a medical career."*

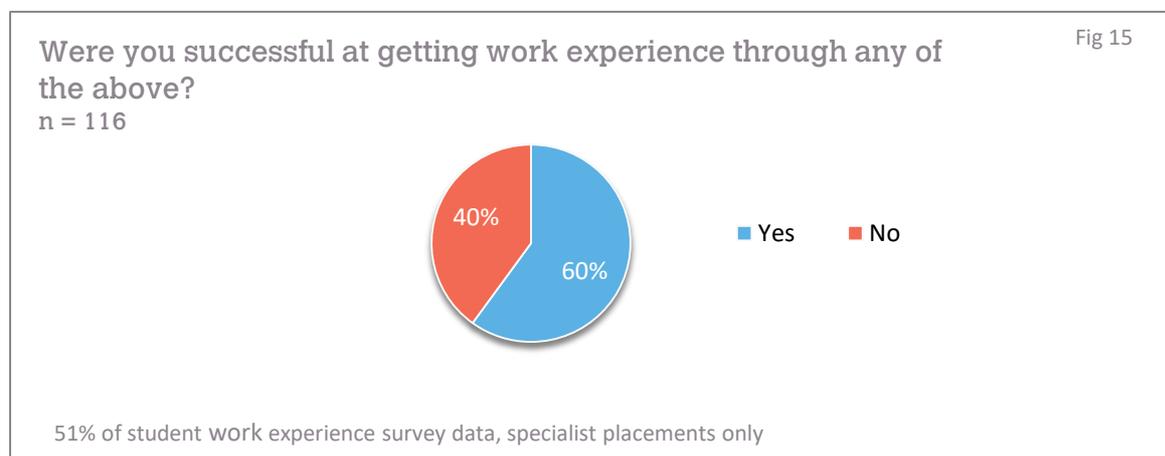
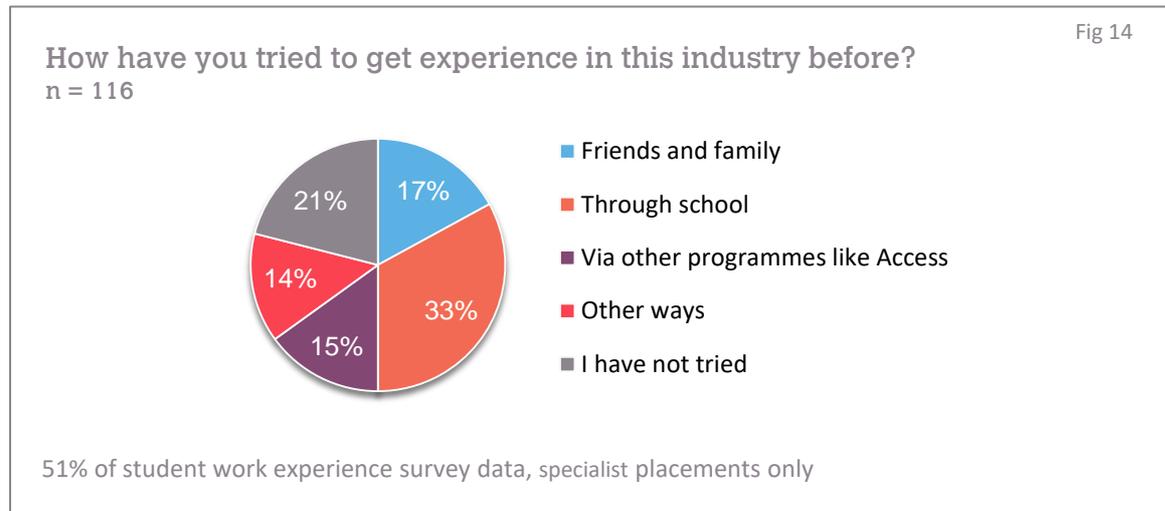
2014 Medical Schools Council advice for students on medical work experience necessary for application to medical school:

"Many students organise their placements through their school or by contacting the NHS themselves but it can help if you have good contacts. For example, do you or your friends or family know someone who works in the NHS? Does your careers adviser or teacher know someone who could help? Maybe you've been treated as a patient and could get back in touch with the healthcare team? Keep as many options open as possible."

Medical work experience is de facto a compulsory part of an UCAS application to medical school.

⁸ Leading People 2016 Categories: [Employability and apprenticeships](#), [Social Mobility](#) Author: [Dr Philip Kirby](#)
Posted on: February 24, 2016 see recommendation 7

Access Aspiration asked students who were interested in law, medicine and engineering where they had tried to get experience in the industry before. As figure 13 shows they had tried a range of different channels. However, only 40% of them had been successful (figure 14).



This year 85 students who took part in our programme were interested in a career in medicine (37% of the total signed up group). We had 72 work placements available in this field and therefore 85% of Access Aspiration students did manage to get a medical placement. We are extremely pleased with this result but are constantly working to expand the range of medical work placements we can offer and have added Imperial College and the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to our offer in 2016/17 to pilot additional placements. We have also been working with a consulting group of NHS trusts to develop relevant work placements for students wishing to enter nursing or ancillary hospital careers.



Siham

Phoenix High School

Work experience: Barts Cancer Research, STARS programme

Siham is currently in Y13 at Phoenix High School. She has qualified as a young interpreter in her borough to help the people in her community. Her drive and motivation to become a doctor was noticed by the professional volunteers who interviewed her at school.

True drive

“A real appreciation of the benefits that she would get from work experience and how she would engage with the experience. Really fantastic and inspirational - very active in her community. Please use all your wonderful resources to help her get to medical school.” – Mock Interviewer, Callista Anderson.

Variety of careers in medicine

We were able to place her at our annual work experience programme STARS hosted by BARTS Cancer Institute at Queen Mary’s University. It was an experience, she said not only *“allowed me to see a wider scope in science has helped me understand the variety of careers available”* but also *“definitely developed my skills in team working and thinking strategically. I have become more confident in speaking and engaging with professionals as well as my peers”*.

I would definitely recommend Access to find more clinical placements for students as it is very vital for prospective medical students and is very hard to find unless you have external connections.

5. Increasing social mobility

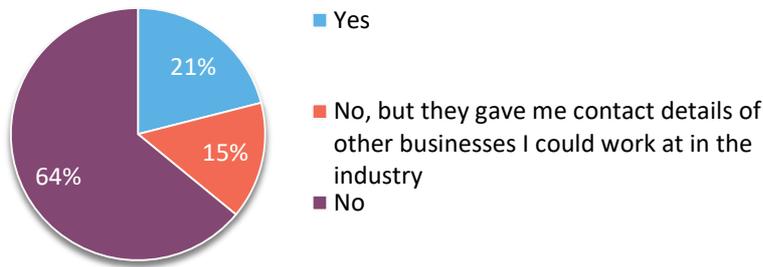
Data about increasing social mobility can only truly be collected by tracking individuals over the long-term. Access Aspiration is not yet able to do this as we have only been operational for a few years. We have, however, taken some proxy measures of this important objective by asking students, volunteers and businesses about their intention to stay in touch with each other, offer jobs, offer other contacts and change recruitment processes.

Students reported that 21% of businesses offered them future work after their placements and that a further 15% gave them contact details of other businesses they could work at in the industry (figure 15). These are very positive findings and although the proportions are much the same as last year, the overall number of students being offered future work or contacts is much higher.

Has the business you worked with during your placement offered any potential work in the future?

n = 116

Fig 16



51% of student work experience survey data, specialist placements only

Access Aspiration aims to provide quality work experience of the sort rarely available elsewhere. Data produced by the Education and Employers Taskforce⁹ demonstrates that students usually take part in work experience that is likely not to have been directly relevant. The key importance of measuring these particular types of experiences is helpful when examining leadership or professional careers¹⁰.



Myriam Saghir

London Academy

Placement: Halpern PR, Quadrant Chambers Industry Insight, Freshfields Industry Insight

Myriam is currently in Y13 at London Academy. Having left for a year to live with her father in Iran she missed out on work experience opportunities in Y11. We were able to provide her with the Access Aspiration programme including an Employability Training, a Mock Interview, two Industry Insights and Work Experience. She is an Oxfam Volunteer and aspires to a career in law.

⁹ "Career education that works: an economic analysis using the British Cohort Study' 17 May 2016 By Elnaz T. Kashefpakdel & Christian Percy In Journal of Education and Work, 2016.

¹⁰ Profession	Independent school	State school
UK Population	7%	93%
Law (Judiciary)	74%	26%
Law (Barristers)	71%	29%
Military	71%	29%
Medicine	61%	39%
Journalism	51%	49%
Law (Solicitors)	51%	49%
Politics (Cabinet)	50%	50%
Civil Service	48%	52%
Business	34%	66%

Leading People 2016 Dr Philip Kirby February 24, 2016 Sutton Trust

Greatest achievement

“On my mock interview I was asked about my greatest achievement. I think I should have mentioned the fact that I was confident enough to go to the placement. (...) I am quite nervous in new situations, but Access has definitely helped me overcome that kind of habit that I have of just backing out at the last minute.”

Benefits from the variety of opportunities

“Thanks to the work placement I became more open to meeting new people and to become more independent since I was trusted with many responsibilities. The [industry insight] benefited me with information. I was able to ask my own questions, it was better to learn about this from a professional than a book or the internet.”

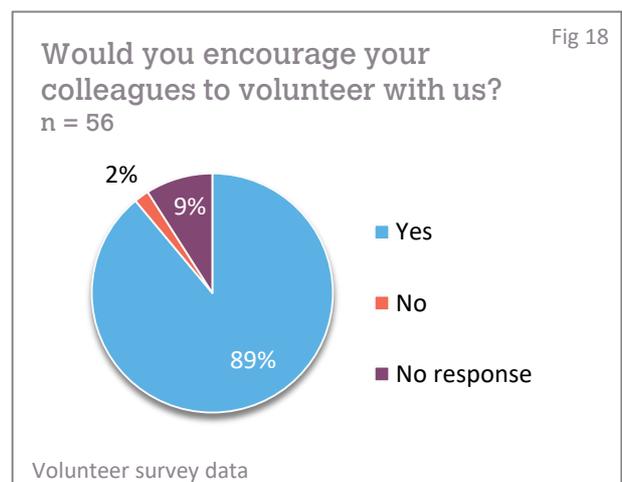
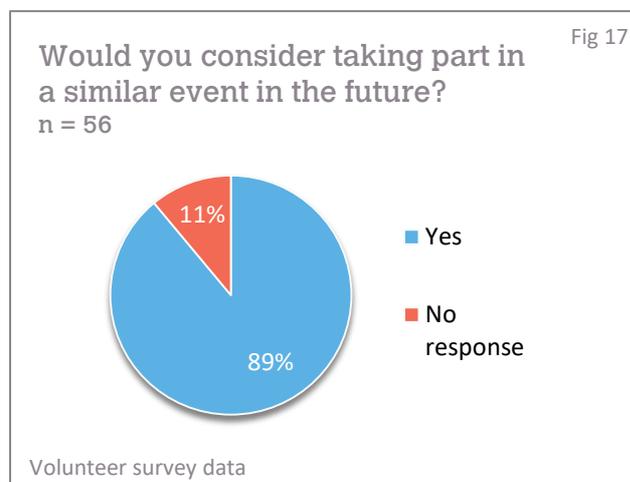
Professional volunteers who interviewed Myriam at school said that they *“were very impressed with Myriam. Her answers were well thought through and interesting. She engaged with us from the start.”*

“I am really grateful that I was given this opportunity as it was the first time I entered a proper work environment and it made me learn a lot.”



“It’s nice to feel that someone is looking out for you. Helping you build a journey towards where you want to go.”

Trying to change businesses’ attitudes to students from backgrounds that Access Aspiration works with is an important part of our push to improve social mobility. Volunteers were generally impressed with the students and reported high satisfaction levels (figure 16 and 17).





Volunteers during Mock Interviewing at Evelyn Grace Academy, Julia in the middle

Julia Servi

Access Volunteer
Senior Accountant at Equitable Life Assurance Society

“This is my third year, I really enjoy learning about the students and their aspirations. I always do my best to encourage them in their endeavours. It is a great opportunity for me to be able to use my experience to help them to start mapping out their futures.”

Julia provided dozens of students with professional advice through mock interviewing in schools. She lists as her motivation: sharing her knowledge derived from 30 years of experience, as well as giving the students an opportunity to understand what working in finance entails and what the employers are looking for.

She noted personal and professional benefits from volunteering *“It gives me fresh understanding of the difficulties young people might be facing when currently entering the world of work. When you're in the process of recruiting all you see are CVs. Having these insights is helpful, it reminds you to see the person on the other side of the screen. Each year I have been paired with a professional from a distinctly different industry than myself whilst interviewing the students. I am looking forward to volunteering next year.”*

Furthermore, figure 18 shows that many businesses reported improved management skills, morale and confidence amongst their employees after taking on the students for work placements. Surveys done by the Corporate Leadership Council of 50,000 employees show that employees who are most engaged with their employer perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave the organisation.¹¹

- PWC are one of the leading companies putting social mobility at the core of their employment practices, for example removing UCAS points as an entry requirement in 2016. They conducted a survey in 2014 that found that more than half of recent college graduates are seeking a company that has corporate social responsibility values that align with their own, and 56% would consider leaving a company that didn't have the values they expected.¹²
- A YouGov survey in 2010 showed that volunteering increases staff morale, commitment and performance, driving benefit straight to the bottom line. Employees actively engaged in community programmes are more satisfied in their work, with 85% saying their perception of their company had improved and 71% of employees citing volunteering programmes as key to improving personal well-being.¹³

Next year, Access Aspiration should make these points explicit in order to deepen, or further develop, its relationships with employers and volunteers.

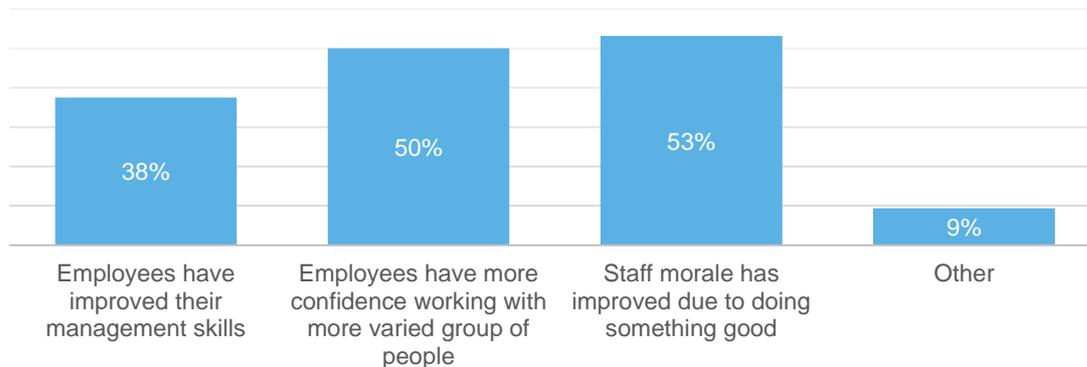
¹¹ Towers Perrin (2003) Working today: understanding what drives employee engagement

¹² Millennials at work Reshaping the workplace – PWC 2014

¹³ Volunteering is the Business, Employers' and employees' attitudes to workplace based volunteering December 2010 (Anne Gammon & Gavin Ellison)

What sort of impact have the Access Aspiration work experience placements had on your employees?
n = 15

Fig 19



Business survey data



[Access Aspiration] “(...) have allowed our employees to engage with students from a range of backgrounds and provide opportunities for students to practice and develop skills whilst sharing information and knowledge. Our programme ensures that students are exposed to as many people, roles and departments as possible...”

Ben Bolt, Corporate Responsibility Assistant,
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Access Aspiration aims to make business more aware of the pools of talent that often go overlooked. According to the business questionnaire, more than 80% of Access Aspiration’s businesses still take friends and family recommendations for work experience. These results demonstrate that we are targeting industries that do not take part in other national programmes for work experience and lend weight to all the previous research that suggests certain industries are effectively closed to people if they do not have the right social capital. This is a clear demonstration of where Access Aspiration provides a unique offer. We are targeting businesses and employers who would not engage with this demographic in any other way.

According to the business questionnaire, 22% of businesses interviewed work with Access Aspiration in order to increase the size of their recruitment pool (figure 19). However, only 7% of respondents said working with Access Aspiration had made them reconsider their recruitment process (figure 20). We will be actively working with our employers to look at this issue in 2016/17. More encouragingly 40% of businesses recognized that the students provided them with new marketing ideas to reach a broader customer base.

87% of businesses said they would like to work with Access next year.



“I am delighted to be involved with Access as I believe these work placements can give a young adult confidence that their contributions are valued, and dispel any misconceptions they may have about business environments. Hard work can be fun when you're part of a team that cares about your input. Our teams enjoyed involving these young people in their work, and I think both parties gained a lot from this. **Our mantra was let's work them hard, involve them, but also roll out the red carpet for them - we wanted them to understand just how valuable they can be to an**

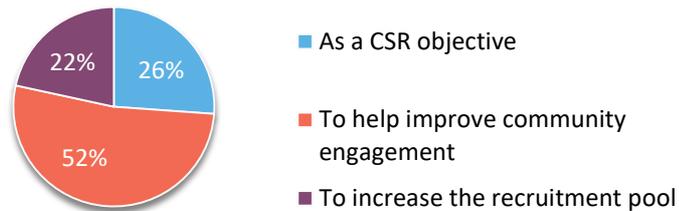


environment like ours. *We were assigned bright curious teenagers who I hope left with an insight into how the growing business of fashion operates, and how they could be a part of it. We hope to continue to be involved in this brilliant initiative.”*
Ruth Chapman, Founder of MATCHESFASHION.COM

Why does your business provide work experience placements with Access Aspiration?

Fig 20

n = 15



Business survey data

Concluding Remarks

Reflections from last year

On the whole Access Aspiration is maintaining and improving the level of services provided to students from last year. The number of students benefiting from our programme has increased.

Successes can be seen in addressing travel problems which has reduced to a small minority of cases (7% of students thought they had trouble with traveling to their placement). Last year we knew that improvements had to be made to data tracking and recording. The systems put in place last year have made this process a lot more efficient and we have done a good job at collecting data from a variety of sources (notably, the introduction of improved questionnaires for schools and businesses). However, it is clear there is more work to be done here – both with the data collected and with the communication between the different audiences.

Areas of Improvement

- Specialist Students – 15% of the respondents who required a work experience placement in law, engineering or medicine did not get a placement in any of these areas. While 15% is a relatively small amount it is still crucial that this number is reduced to an absolute minimum as university courses in these areas often require very specific work experience criteria.
- Communication – Although communication has improved immensely over the past year, it was still an issue for some students and businesses. Some students reported feeling confused by exactly what placement they were going on. Others thought they were not given enough notice before their placement. Access should have an explicit minimum notice period of two weeks before the placement to help both students and businesses prepare.
- Businesses – Working with businesses to understand how to tweak their recruitment processes to allow our students opportunities.
- Data Collection – Questionnaires need further revision to get further depth of understanding on longitudinal impact.

Final words from head teachers

“The students are more mature and sensitive - attuned a little more to the qualities and skills required of them in the workplace It's a great service and I am happy with the way that it is run, the support they offer the students and the progress that they students make.”

Martin Hanlon, Evelyn Grace Academy

*“The students that I have seen participate in this programme have grown considerably in confidence. This is in their approach to their studies and in their abilities to converse with a range of different people. I feel that taking students out of their comfort zone allows them to become more independent and focuses them on their future. A lot of students I have worked with, previously, would **never be able to travel into London themselves at this age**. This programme gives students the ability to travel on their own, navigate the rail/underground system and then complete a day at work.*

The placements raise the aspirations of the students and makes them more aware of jobs that could be available to them. It enables them to meet and work with a variety of different people, which then develops their social and communication skills.”

Lisa Williams, Assistant Director, Watford, UTC