

Changing Attitudes to Apprenticeships

**Report of Focus Groups held with
Young People from BME Communities
in the Mandela Centre, Chapeltown,
Leeds**

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Executive Summary

Changing Attitudes aims to shape perceptions of Apprenticeships, inform and engage young people from BME communities, to raise awareness and increase take up.

As part of a range of initiatives which formed the pilot project in Leeds, focus groups were held with young people from BME communities. This research examined their current understanding of Apprenticeships and their views on information, marketing material, messages and images.

There were key findings around information needs of the young people, most popular and most trusted communication channels, content, format and presentation of marketing and publicity material.

A number of recommendations are made:

- 1. The identified gaps in knowledge and information about apprenticeships should be addressed**
- 2. Third party endorsement should be sought and publicised from peers and other people recognised and respected by the young people being targeted; role models preferably from the same locality should be used**
- 3. Communications and marketing should be multi channel and include face to face engagement in a comprehensive campaign**
- 4. Advertising should be very targeted and local to the young people's preferences of bus, outdoor and limited newspaper advertising; however wider advertising eg radio and newspapers can be undertaken to raise awareness of family members and others in the household**
- 5. Future campaigns should make use of electronic channels specifically Facebook and YouTube; websites or microsites should include local information, news, events and people, and more interactive channels should be developed**
- 6. Printed material eg leaflets should be distributed locally to venues including youth centres, community centres, leisure centres, shops and businesses**
- 7. Communications and marketing material should take into account the preferences expressed in terms of size, colours, format, and messages**
- 8. Content for communication materials should focus on questions and answer style format plus 'real and local' case studies, experiences and role models**
- 9. Young people should be involved in developing and/ or user testing future communication and marketing materials**

1. Introduction

Focus Groups were held to engage directly with young people from BME communities and explore the issues around not just the barriers but the hooks, incentives and communications which could have the highest positive impact when reaching them as a target audience.

Sessions were held over two days at the Mandela Centre in Chapeltown. Many young people visited the centre and were interested in the focus groups, contact was made with over 30 young people, although some attendees came and went during the sessions. A total core of 22 young males stayed and contributed to the whole focus group sessions over the two days.

Overall the focus groups were well attended and well received, with positive engagement from the young people who were present. In particular those in the age group 17-21 year olds, and not in education, employment or training took an interest in apprenticeships and were keen to give their views and ideas on the future promotion and information of them.

A number of key findings are highlighted which lead to recommendations about communications and marketing of Apprenticeships to this target audience in the future.

Aims

The aims of the focus groups were to explore issues around:

- Current perceptions and knowledge of apprenticeships
This was not to repeat previous work but to gain an appreciation of where the attendees understanding currently was and what their individual experiences and perceptions were
- How communications can influence young people's attitudes
To understand how to engage best with the young people we need to understand what the current influences are on them in their environment
- The information channels most used and trusted by young people
To avoid making broadbrush assumptions it is important to get this information direct from the young people and not just identify what channels are most popular but also what is most trusted and influential
- What specific types of communications and marketing could have the most impact – ie messages, words, images, format
This was to drill down to real specifics, examining some existing examples of marketing material and identify the key elements which could have the highest impact and influence over the target group.

Format

The focus groups were held at a community centre where the focus group attendees regularly attend. The environment was one in which the young people felt comfortable and confident about participating.

The full agenda is attached in appendix 1, while the sessions covered all of the topics and areas set out in the agenda, the flow of the sessions were flexible depending on the participation and influence of the young people.

For most of the sessions, the young people were split up into small groups which ensured contributions from each individual as well as fluid and energetic discussions and feedback.

2 Findings

2.1 Current perceptions and knowledge about apprenticeships

All attendees could describe apprenticeships in some way, although perceptions were both positive and negative. Some could not say where they had got their information from, but others cited the careers on show event at the Armouries in November 2008 and, unprompted, were able to recall the Versa presence there – largely because they were approached and took part in the competition to win an iPod. Despite the hook being the competition, the key messages around apprenticeships had been absorbed. Other sources of information about apprenticeships were school. No participant could recall specific advertising or other marketing material other than that available at the Armouries event.

Key words associated with Apprenticeships were

- Job
- Skills
- Money
- Training

The general positive perceptions included that

It's getting a job and learning

You get good experience

It's working and studying

You get paid

Around 60% of the attendees indicated they would consider applying for an apprenticeship based on their current perceptions.

Negative perceptions focused more around perceived problems in getting onto an apprenticeship and then the experience of the actual apprenticeship.

"They look good, but they're not really for us"

'I heard they were dead hard to apply for and it's not worth trying as you don't get in'

'My mate knew someone who did one and he was just treated really badly and poorly paid'

There was also concern that apprenticeships were seen as not being secure, and that getting a job at the end was not guaranteed.

The gaps in knowledge were identified as the practicalities of getting further specific information about what types of apprenticeships are on offer, what are the entry requirements and how to apply as well as who to contact for further information and support.

'I know kind of what they are but don't know how to get one'

'Wouldn't know how to apply'

'what do you need to do, I wouldn't know where to go to find out more'

Recommendation 1

The identified gaps in knowledge and information about apprenticeships should be addressed in future communications and marketing

2 Influences on young people

The key influence on young people was word of mouth and experience – personal or of others. The negative views were much more likely to have been formed by their peers' opinion or experience – 'My brother's friend was on one' and also unsubstantiated claims–'they're just cheap labour' – which when explored further there was no evidence or experience for this view to have been based on but was formed because 'that's what you hear'.

Although some had gained some knowledge and been given information through schools, teachers were not necessarily deemed to have influence on some of the young men

'I never listen at school, so I wouldn't take notice of a teacher'

'I got expelled so I didn't get told about apprenticeships there – now I want to know'

As well as each other, key influences were figures they trusted in their leisure time or outside of the home and included youth workers, staff at community centres, and social workers.

Recommendation 2

Third party endorsement should be sought and publicised from peers and other people recognised and respected by the young people being targeted; role models preferably from the same location should be used in future promotions and publicity

3 Information and communication channels

Participants were asked to list how and where they currently get information from and how they communicate with each other as well. They were then asked to identify which channels were most popular, then those that were most trusted. Finally they were asked to identify where in their view they would be most likely to see and take notice of information about apprenticeships if it was placed.

There were large lists of information channels which were then explored further (the full lists are in Appendix 2 of this report).

Examining the current use of various channels identified a number of key issues.

Publications

Local and national newspapers were mentioned but when discussed the participants unanimously agreed that they did not regularly read a newspaper. The ones most likely to be read at some time by this group were the Yorkshire Evening Post on a Thursday (when the job section is included) and Metro, the free daily paper.

A number of participants did mention that their parents or families get regular newspapers and cited Asian Express and the Evening Post as likely to be within the household although not read by themselves.

None of the participants were regular readers of any magazines or specialist publications and were not able to name any that they would read or seek out.

*The Metro – it's free and it's there when you've nothing else to do
I just never even look at a magazine – and I'd never buy them*

Broadcast media

Every participant watched television at some point every day. The most popular times were between 4-6pm and between 8-11pm. However advertisement breaks were frequently switched off
You just flick over when the ads are on don't you

The most popular programmes were Top Gear and the Simpsons, with MTV and Sky 1 cited as the most watched channels.

No participant could recall actively choosing to listen to a radio station or radio programme. However their household is likely to have a radio switched on by someone else.

It's on in the house cos my mum puts it on

When discussing which radio stations they were likely to hear within their households, Galaxy and Asian Fever were the most frequently tuned into.

Internet and e-channels

All of the participants regularly use the internet for a variety of purposes, mainly recreational. All used social networking sites and email to keep in touch and share information between peers. Advertising on the internet was seen as partly irritating and somewhat untrustworthy; sources of information similarly could be seen as not necessarily credible.

*You go on something and those pop ups start, that's really annoying
You get some dodgy ads on there, I wouldn't take any notice of them
Anyone can put anything on the internet*

Websites from organisations eg local councils, were often 'boring' or 'out of date' when young people were looking for information, and they would only return to websites they liked and trusted.

Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia were cited as popular and frequently used sites. Others, eg Bebo, were seen as 'outdated' or 'uncool'.

All participants regularly use email but again have reservations in terms of credibility and trustworthiness of any emails they receive from external organisations or third parties.

Participants were asked to identify the top channels in their view would be the most effective and credible which should be used for promoting apprenticeships, taking into consideration messages and channels they themselves and their peers would take notice of. The top four were:

Face to face

The most popular method was through events and promotions taking place at youth centres/ community centres/ sports and leisure clubs, venues where they already attend, are comfortable with and trusting of.
*Its great coming here to talk to us about it – that's what we need and someone who can answer all our questions
We already come here all the time so this is where to find us*

Although there was some debate around whether schools should be the places for events about apprenticeships, overall it was felt that young people would take more notice, be more trusting, and more comfortable in venues where they choose to spend their leisure time.
I'd take more notice of something here than at school – there I just wanted to get out of the door

They also cited trusted figures such as youth workers, connexions, and social workers as people they would be likely to be comfortable with and be able to discuss the issues with.
If XX is here and tells us its important then we know it is

Events in their local neighbourhoods eg at their local community centres, which were well publicised locally and had incentives were cited as another preferred method of engagement
*My mum and dad would want me to go
If it was just a few minutes walk away I'd go
If I knew I'd get something from it*

Large scale events which are well publicised and in a central venue or ideally with organised transport so groups of young people could be taken

together were welcomed – the Careers on Show event was cited as a good example and those who attended were positive about the experience. However there were issues raised about local venues being preferable, more accessible and less intimidating.

Advertising

Participants felt that advertisements were relevant as long as they were placed in targeted places where they would be likely to see them. Adverts on local buses and billboards were cited as most visual and high impact, other suggestions were in the jobs section of the Yorkshire Evening Post, in the Metro newspaper and also in cinemas.

You're sitting there waiting for the film to start, so you have to watch the adverts

Adverts would have to be eye catching, recognisable and relevant to the participants (further elements of advertising are discussed in the next section below)

Internet and e-communications

Although there were issues raised about the credibility and trustworthiness of advertising on the internet, it is undoubtedly the most used channel by the participants. They agreed that as long as information was obviously from a credible source, that more use should be made of the internet and e-communications. Campaigns and activities using Facebook and YouTube, were popular suggestions. A website which featured local news, events, local people and success stories – as well as signposting to further information – would be welcomed. The key issues were that it should be relevant and up to date. All participants would welcome the opportunity to sign up to email updates and news.

Publications

All participants felt there was a need to use a variety of information channels and leaflets and printed material eg posters were seen as a key element. The key issues highlighted were that any publications should be relevant, attractive, informative and placed in areas they would be easily seen and picked up.

It was suggested that leaflets and flyers were best placed in youth centres, leisure centres and gyms, community centres, schools, local shops and businesses, as well as given out at events.

If it caught my eye I'd pick a leaflet up if I was walking past

Posters would be good to publicise events and things but would have to be put where we're already standing around

Recommendation 3

Communications and marketing should be multi channel and include face to face engagement in a comprehensive campaign

Recommendation 4

Advertising should be very targeted and local to the young people's preferences of bus, outdoor and limited newspaper advertising; however wider advertising eg radio and newspapers can be undertaken to raise awareness of family members and others in the household

Recommendation 5

Future campaigns should make use of electronic channels specifically Facebook and YouTube; websites or microsites should include local information, news, events and people, and more interactive channels should be developed

Recommendation 6

Printed material eg leaflets should be distributed locally to venues including youth centres, community centres, leisure centres, shops and businesses

4. Specific elements of communications and marketing material

Participants were asked to do two things to explore their preferences for key elements such as wording, tone, messages, format, content and presentation of marketing materials.

First the groups were given a wide variety of publications and printed materials – the aim was to test different opinions of and reactions to different types of marketing material so, to get as varied selection as possible, the publications did not just relate to apprenticeships or work based learning but came from a range of sources.

The groups were asked to collectively allocate the materials into two piles – ones they felt were 'Good' and 'Bad' examples. They then discussed the elements of particular materials which had influenced their decision as to which pile to allocate the material to.

Format

Varying formats were available, including credit card size, A5, A4 and non standard sizes eg a triangular shaped brochure.

Overwhelmingly the participants preferred A5 sized leaflets. They were seen as easy to pick up and carry around. They gave the impression

there would be enough information to be useful without being too complicated.

*That size [A5] is easy to put in your pocket or bag
Anything bigger is too big, I wouldn't pick it up*

Credit card size publications were not popular, being seen as too small and 'fiddly', easy to lose and difficult to spot in the first place. They did not think they would retain them or put them in their pockets or wallets.

*I wouldn't pick it up, don't think I'd even notice it
I'd lose that
It doesn't look like a leaflet*

Although a few expressed interest in the more unusual shaped materials, they said they would not pick them up, retain them or be able to carry them around easily.

Colour

Although colour wasn't an explicit issue initially when choosing publications, all participants agreed that if anything was produced without colour it would be 'boring' and 'look unprofessional'

There was agreement that colour did make things look visually appealing and could also be a deterrent – one publication which utilised two tones of green colour only was picked as an example of 'poor' use of colour.

Bright colours were preferable and thought to be eye catching, as long as text was still legible, however overuse of colours ie too many, was cited as off-putting.

Content

It was agreed that the front cover was crucial in whether they would pick up and read the publication

*"Boring - I wouldn't pick that up. But if you read it the stuff inside is ok"
The front cover had to be relevant, interesting and attractive.*

Participants agreed that they wanted content that was informative without being too complex or lengthy.

Whereas the front of the leaflet had to be eye-catching and interesting enough to read further, to retain interest a publication had to have the right amount and type of information inside, otherwise was 'a waste of money'

Throughout the publications, the preferred content was one which asked and answered questions relevant to them (Want a better life, What kind of job could I do), was a specific call to action (do something right now), or advertised opportunities of any type (eg trainees wanted, or win an i-pod)

Concise and constructive statements, which gave the message in short sharp sentences were preferred.

In discussing the material, the one issue every participant highlighted was the leaflet incorporating the case study of a young woman from Chapeltown. This was felt to be the most interesting and powerful message, comments included:

“She’s from here [Chapeltown] that’s really cool”

“Wow – a lass from where I live – and she’s got a great job in London”

Case studies generally were welcomed ‘as long as they’re real people’ and generated the most discussion.

Signposting to further information was seen as essential. However the overwhelming view was that websites were preferable to phone lines, all participants said they would be happy to go onto a website and seek out further details but were more reluctant to ring a helpline or phone number.

Images

Photographic images were preferred to cartoons or illustrations ‘unless its really funny or clever’

Images of people had to be relevant, ones the young people could relate to, again the case study featuring the young woman from Chapeltown caused the most interest. Differentiation was made between ‘real’ people and those who were obviously professional models used in publications.

Eyecatching images included those which were sports related and where it was made obvious that there was some incentive/ reward/ prize
It [picture of an i-pod] shows exactly what you’re going to get

There were some criticisms for publications that ‘tried too hard’ to be youth orientated – in particular one featuring a mobile phone and one featuring graffiti style writing on a wall.

Too babyish

Finally, the groups were asked to given an exercise to come up with their own advertisements. They worked in small groups to develop their own advert (a choice of poster/ newspaper advert; radio ad; or ad for TV) which they believed would appeal and attract themselves and their peers.

Two radio ads and five posters/ newspaper adverts were produced. The groups then discussed why they had produced the material the way they had and how they thought it could be delivered in reality.

All of the advertising had an element of incentivising, straplines included

- What’s in it 4 u
- Make some extra cash
- Are you on the right path
- Want to achieve your goals

- Win a prize

All of the groups used questions which they felt acted as hooks to get interest, and posters were very structured around what the individual could get from an apprentice, highlighting direct and immediate benefits.

Clear language and clear visuals were preferable

'you have to understand it straight away'

And images they would relate to

'someone I know or from round here would be on our poster'

Signposting to a website and possibly a phone number for further information was felt to be vital as more details eg how to apply for an apprenticeship and what job you can do, were crucial questions to answer but recognised as too complex or lengthy to appear in a short advert.

Recommendation 7

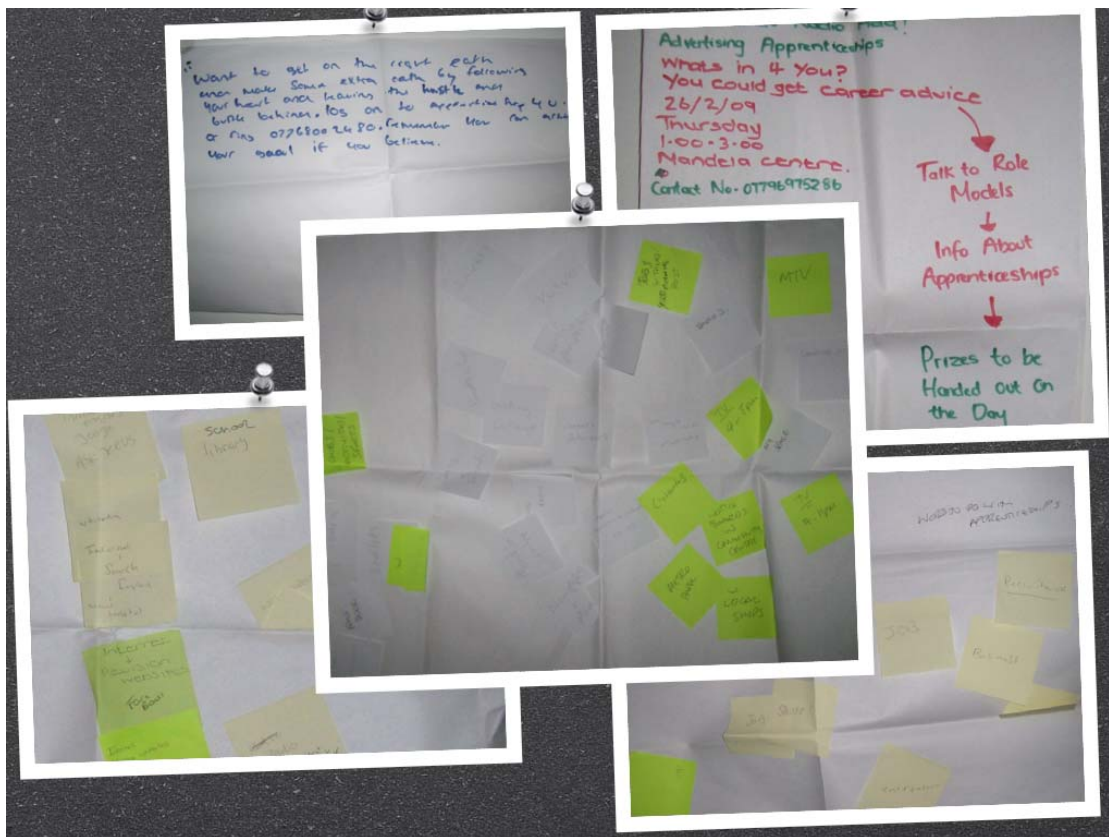
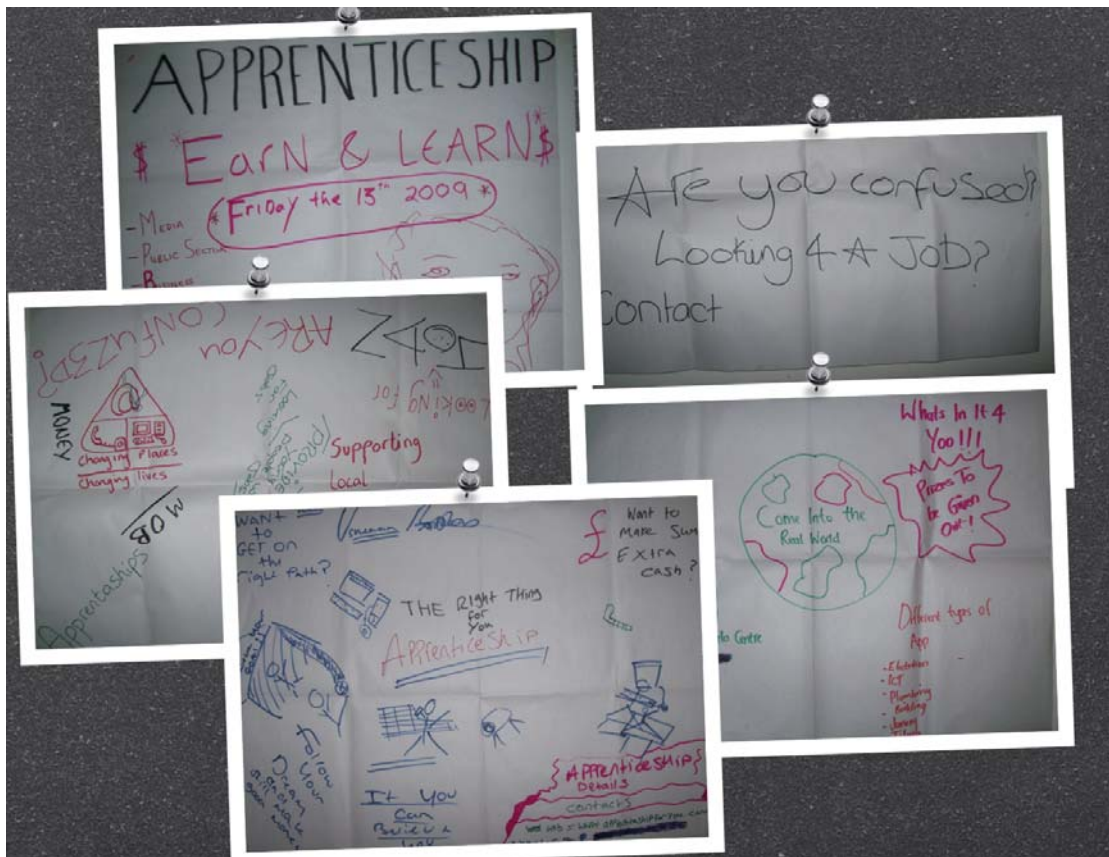
Communications and marketing material should take into account the preferences expressed in terms of size, colours, format, and messages

Recommendation 8

Content for communication materials should focus on questions and answer style format plus 'real and local' case studies, experiences and role models

Recommendation 9

Young people should be involved in developing and/ or user testing future communication and marketing materials



**Focus Groups with young people from BME communities
31st Jan & 1st Feb****Aims:**

- To explore more in depth current perceptions about apprenticeships
- To identify key influences and most trusted and effective communications channels
- To identify key messages, images and words for use in marketing and communications

1. Introduction

What we're here for, set the scene

2. Current Perceptions

Discussion around what people currently think of apprenticeships and why they have formed this opinion.

3. Current communication channels

What information/ communication channels do they use and how frequently (discussion with list) Get group to write on cards so they can move around. (don't prompt unless necessary) – this may include:

- peers
- family
- school/ teachers
- community or other groups
- Internet/ electronic media – ask to specify
- Publications – ask to specify
- TV – ask to specify
- Radio – ask to specify
- Other marketing collateral – eg ads/ posters/ brochures/ (specify what and where)

4. Trust & influence

Of the list collated in 3. get the group to identify which of these channels are most trusted and which have the most influence (nb these are not necessarily interlinked). Discuss why.

5. Examining publications and printed material

Examine a range of printed material – which are 'the good the bad and the ugly'; discuss what they like/ don't like; what makes an impact and why

6. Messages and images

Discuss what words/ messages/images used in relation to apprenticeships in the future would have most impact/ influence on the group

(Don't prompt unless necessary – this could include issues of:

earning money

getting good qualifications

gaining experience

as good as college/ university

case studies

recognition by others

a different name).

7. Group task

Split into groups – taking into account the previous discussions and key words etc – each group is to develop within time limit, an ad to sell apprenticeships to other young people from BME communities. Each group allocated one of the following - to deliver a campaign for:

- TV – a 30 second TV ad (they will need to write and deliver a script)
- Radio – a 20 second radio ad (write and deliver a script)
- Press – an advert that could be placed in publications (including words and visuals)
-

8. Summary and finish

Summarise session and explain what happens next.

Collect age and postcode data and hand out vouchers.

Appendix 2

Data of focus group participants

Age	Postcode
16	LS7 3ER
16	LS7 3EF
16	LS7 3HZ
16	LS8 5EQ
16	LS8 2RV
16	LS7 3ER
18	LS8 5JX
18	LS7 3EF
18	LS7 3EH
21	LS7 3ER
17	LS7 4ED
21	LS8 3RE
16	LS7 4ED
16	LS7 3EQ
17	LS8 1AJ
14	LS7 3EB
14	LS7 6QJ
14	LS7 3ER
16	LS7 3ES
15	LS7 3EF
17	LS7 3ES