



**Evidence for
Excellence in
Education**

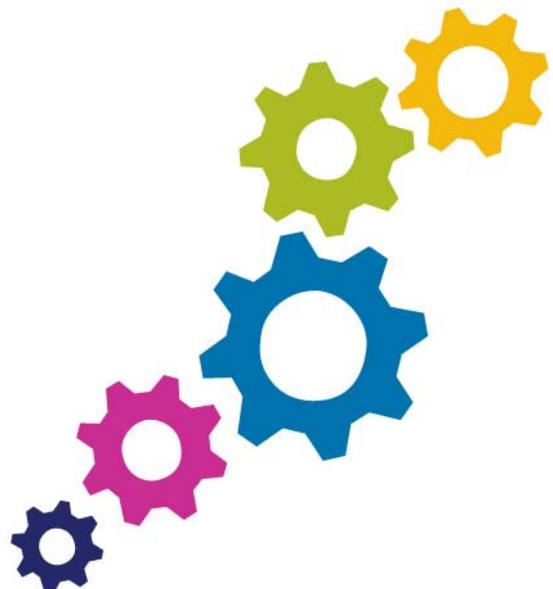


FAIR ACCESS TO QUALITY
WORK EXPERIENCE

Report

Evaluation of the Second Year of PRIME

National Foundation for Educational
Research (NFER)



● independent ● insights ● breadth ● connections ● outcomes

Evaluation of the Second Year of PRIME

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Executive summary

Improving access to the professions is key to promoting social mobility. Many young people aspire to a career in the legal profession but those from disadvantaged backgrounds face multiple challenges to fulfilling these aspirations. The *State of the Nation* report (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013) acknowledged that the professions had made progress in opening up access and praised the leading example set by the legal profession through initiatives such as PRIME. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that talent rather than background determines students' ability to enter the professions.

PRIME¹ is a commitment to ensure fair and equal access to quality work experience in the legal profession for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Launched in September 2011, PRIME sets out minimum standards that work experience should reach and what it should achieve.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is undertaking a robust and independent evaluation of the first two years of the PRIME commitment. The evaluation of the first year of PRIME highlighted that the quality of placements being offered was high and that firms were successfully targeting students who would not traditionally have had such an opportunity. This report is prepared for the PRIME Board and participating law firms. It contains findings from the second year of the evaluation, comprising surveys of students at the beginning and end of their placements. The evaluation measured the effectiveness of placements by students completing pre- and post-placement surveys. In total 1202 students from 52 law firms completed the pre-placement survey and 967 completed a post-placement survey.

Key findings from the second year of PRIME

When firms sign up to the PRIME commitment, they agree to provide no less than half of the number of training contracts they offer each year as PRIME work experience placements².

Firms exceeded their targets

- Firms offered placements equivalent to 69 per cent of the total number of training contracts.

Firms offered placements to those students least likely to have the opportunity to access work experience in the legal profession

- Eighty-four per cent of students met the PRIME criteria meaning that they attended a state school and were either eligible for free school meals (FSM), attended a school with

¹ More information can be found at: www.primecommitment.org

² The term 'placement' is used to describe the different work experience or work insight programmes offered to students under the banner of PRIME.

a higher than average proportion of students eligible for FSM or would be of the first generation in their immediate family to attend university. This represents a small increase compared with year one and suggests that firms are continuing to be successful in reaching students who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities.

Student satisfaction remains high in the second year of PRIME

- Ninety-six per cent of students were satisfied with their placement and a similar proportion would recommend it to others, mirroring the high satisfaction levels from year one.
- Students particularly valued gaining an insight into the legal profession and the different careers available, and learning about the day-to-day running of a law firm.

Students developed their skills and confidence

- Students' confidence in preparing a CV, presenting to others, being interviewed and networking with others had significantly increased over the course of their PRIME placement.
- Students furthered their understanding of the legal profession including the careers available and the skills required.
- Most students felt that their PRIME placement had made them more likely to want to enter the legal profession.

Placements included a range of activities in order to provide a quality experience

- Work experience comprised a mix of workshops, presentations, shadowing opportunities and enrichment activities.
- Most firms offered a one-week placement. Some firms provided pre-placement sessions or workshops while others offered contact or support after the placement had finished.

Conclusion

Findings indicate that firms continue to offer high quality placements and are committed to reaching their target numbers. Building for the future, it is important that firms maintain effective targeting of students who meet the PRIME criteria. We recommend that the PRIME Board should take steps to identify the longer-term impact of the initiative, especially the extent to which exposure to such opportunities results in opening up access to careers in the legal profession.

1 Introduction

Improving social mobility is vital to ensure a fair society in which a person's talent and potential, rather than their background, determines their ability to progress (HM Government, 2011). However, currently in the UK, only one in eight children from low-income households go on to achieve a high income as an adult (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

Socio-economic background is a bigger barrier than gender to getting a top job and people who are privately educated are disproportionately represented in senior professional positions (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013). While just seven per cent of the population has been privately educated, 70 per cent of high court judges and more than half of FTSE Chief Executives attended private school (Sutton Trust, 2009). Access to the Russell Group universities amongst students who have received a state education is limited. It is estimated that over 3500 students with the required grades are not enrolled in these universities (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

Opening up access to the professions is a key aspect of improving social mobility. Unfair practices in recruitment (such as only recruiting from certain universities), limited access to work experience and unpaid internships deny businesses access to the widest pool of talent (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

The final report of the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions entitled *Unleashing Aspiration* (2009) identified key actions for employers and professions to take forward. These included raising students' aspirations, especially in schools, and making work experience and internships more transparent and accessible. The *State of the Nation* report (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013) outlined the progress already made by the professions in opening up access. In particular, the report highlighted the leading example set by the legal profession through initiatives such as PRIME.

PRIME is a commitment on behalf of law firms to offer work experience to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is undertaking a robust and independent evaluation of the first two years of the PRIME commitment. This report is prepared for the PRIME Board and participating law firms. It contains findings from the second year of the evaluation, comprising surveys of students at the beginning and end of their placements.

1.1 What is PRIME?

To help improve social mobility in the legal profession, the 22 founding firms of PRIME, supported by the Law Societies of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and The Sutton Trust, created a commitment to ensure fair and equal access to quality work experience in the legal profession for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

PRIME³ sets out, for the first time, minimum standards that work experience should reach and what it should achieve⁴. This includes focusing eligibility criteria on disadvantaged students and outlining the minimum standards of what work experience should provide. PRIME was launched in September 2011, with 20 of the 22 founding firms offering placements in the first academic year. Over 80 law firms are now signed up to the PRIME commitment, with 52 firms taking part in the evaluation in the second year⁵. Further details about the evaluation approach can be found in Appendix B.

The evaluation of the first year of PRIME (Kettlewell *et al.*, 2012) highlighted that the quality of placements being offered were high and that firms were successfully targeting students who would not traditionally have had such an opportunity. Most students were satisfied with their placement and enjoyed it. Students also felt that they had developed a wide range of business-related skills, made contacts within the firm and gained a much greater understanding of the legal profession.

The second year of the evaluation builds on these findings to measure the ongoing effectiveness of PRIME. Student profiles are included throughout the report to illustrate typical responses. Unless otherwise stated, the findings are based on all respondents. This includes a small number of students who completed more than one placement.

1.2 Who is eligible for a placement through PRIME?

For students to be eligible for PRIME placements they must be attending a state-funded secondary school/college, be in Years 9 to 13⁶ and meet either of the following criteria (as summarised in Figure 1.1):

- are or have been eligible for free school meals⁷ (FSM) (or where this information is difficult or sensitive to obtain, the participant attends a school that is significantly above the regional average⁸ in terms of number of students eligible for FSM); or
- would be of the first generation in their immediate family to attend university.

³ Details of PRIME can be found at www.primecommitment.org

⁴ The PRIME commitment that firms signed up to can be found in Appendix A.

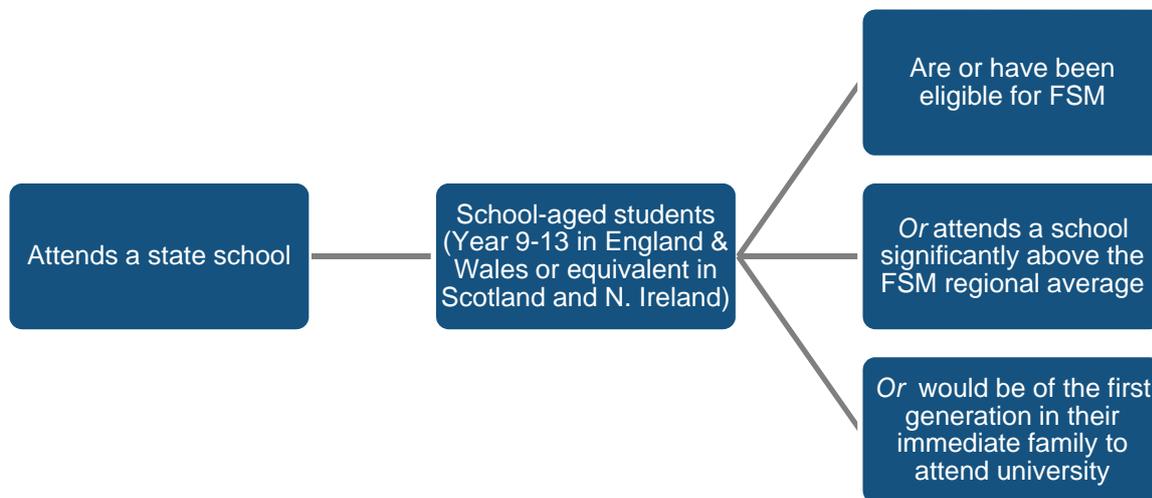
⁵ Not all firms that signed up to the PRIME commitment provided placements during the evaluation. If a firm signed up to PRIME after January 2013, they were not included in the evaluation.

⁶ These English year groups are equivalent to S2 to S6 in Scotland; or Year 3 to 5, or Lower and Upper Sixth in Northern Ireland.

⁷ In England, children are eligible to receive FSM if their parents are in receipt of any of the following benefits: Income Support, income-based Job Seekers' Allowance; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; the Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit; Child Tax Credit, provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

⁸ For the purpose of the evaluation, schools were judged to be above the average for their region (Government Office Region) if they were in the top third of schools in their region in terms of eligibility for FSM.

Figure 1.1 PRIME eligibility criteria



In state funded schools in England, 16.3 per cent of students are eligible for, and claiming, FSM (Department for Education, 2013), while it is estimated that over half of students (55 per cent) in Years 10 to 13 in England are from families where neither of their parents have been to university (Smith and Brzyska, 2012).

The importance of targeting students who meet these criteria is well documented. High performing students at GCSE level who are eligible for FSM are less likely to attend university than their peers (National Equality Panel, 2010). Furthermore, students who are of the first generation to aspire to university have lower levels of expectation and aspirations compared to their peers, and are less likely to view university as a natural progression and have lower predicted grades at 'A' Level (Curtis *et al.* 2008).

2 Proportion of students who met the PRIME criteria in 2013

Key Findings

- In the second year of PRIME, law firms offered 69 per cent of the total number of training contracts in PRIME placements. This exceeded the target level of 50 per cent.
- Eighty-four per cent of students met the PRIME criteria, representing a small increase compared with year one.

Firms have committed to providing no less than half of the number of training contracts they offer each year as PRIME work experience placements. For example, if a firm offers ten training contracts per year, they have committed to offering no less than five work experience placements that meet the PRIME criteria. In the second year of PRIME, 51⁹ firms offered a total of 1752 training contracts.

By the end of the survey period, 1202 students had completed a pre-placement questionnaire (**69 per cent of the total number of training contracts**). This means that firms exceeded their targets with regards to the number of PRIME placements offered.

Eighty-four per cent of students¹⁰ met the PRIME criteria (i.e. they were in Years 9 to 13 (or equivalent) in the UK and Northern Ireland¹¹, who were either eligible for FSM or attended a school with a higher than average proportion of students eligible for FSM or were first generation in their immediate family to potentially go on to study at university). This builds on the proportion in year one in which 82 per cent met the PRIME criteria, and suggests firms are continuing to be successful in reaching those students who, due to their background, may have fewer opportunities to undertake work experience in the legal sector.

⁹ We have excluded one firm from the PRIME criteria analysis; one firm held placements outside of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, this firm has been included in the main analysis.

¹⁰ Students who did not specify the name of their school were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, this analysis was based on 1197 students.

¹¹ No students from Northern Ireland participated in the second year of PRIME.

3 Student characteristics and engagement

Key Findings

- PRIME students were more likely to be female and the majority were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Students were high achievers: seventy-seven per cent of students in England had achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C.
- Most students had not undertaken a placement in the legal profession prior to their PRIME placement.

3.1 Who were the students on PRIME placements?

The characteristics of PRIME placement students were similar to those students involved in the first year of the evaluation:

- 66 per cent were female
- 61 per cent were from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds¹²
- 37 per cent were from White backgrounds (including White European)
- nearly a quarter (23 per cent) were females from White backgrounds (and most were White British)
- 14 per cent were males from White backgrounds (and most commonly White British).

Additionally, 15 per cent of students spoke English as a second language and two per cent of students said that they had a learning difficulty or disability.

Around a third of students (35 per cent) identified their religion as Christian and a similar proportion (31 per cent) were Muslim. Twenty-one per cent of students said that they did not have a religion.

Most students attended schools or colleges in England (95 per cent), four per cent in Scotland and one per cent went to school in Wales. Most students were aged 17 or 18. Students recruited to PRIME reported having strong academic backgrounds, with 77 per cent of those studying in England having achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C.

Most PRIME placements (97 per cent) took place in England, with three-quarters of these being offered in London. Outside of London, other placements were located in

¹² The ethnicity data has been aggregated: students were given the opportunity to select from a more exact list of ethnicities and these were grouped into broader categories.

(in descending order of number of placements) Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Southampton, Sheffield, Oxford, Newcastle, Liverpool, Eastleigh, Guildford and York. Welsh placements were located in firms in Cardiff, while Scottish placements were located in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

3.2 What were students' future plans?

Prior to their placement, the majority of students (63 per cent) indicated that their first choice of career would be within the legal sector. However, a high proportion of students had not had an opportunity to get a first-hand insight into the profession: 80 per cent of students had not accessed any other work experience placement in the legal profession during that academic year. (See Chapter 5 for the impact of PRIME on students' interest in pursuing a career in law.)

Despite nearly four-fifths (78 per cent) of students commenting that they were confident they would reach their career goal, students identified a number of barriers that may prevent them from reaching their career aspirations. These included:

- not having the right experience (62 per cent)
- not achieving the necessary grades or qualifications (65 per cent)
- financial worries (58 per cent)
- lack of opportunities or jobs in their local area (58 per cent).

Female student, Cardiff, aged 17

Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

I am interested in a career in law and wanted to know more about it.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

I felt it was a very valuable course that I was lucky to have attended. It gave me confidence and more motivation to achieve. It also helped a lot with networking, which previously I had not thought about.

3.3 How did students find out about PRIME and why did they want to take part?

Consistent with findings from the first year of the evaluation, students most commonly heard about PRIME through their school or college, either through a teacher encouraging them to take part (36 per cent) or through a teacher giving a talk

on PRIME (23 per cent). A fifth of students had also heard about PRIME through Pathways to Law¹³.

The majority of students (58 per cent) were motivated to take part in PRIME because they wanted to gain experience or insight into the world of law (such as the working environment and the qualities required to succeed in a legal career).

I would like to experience first-hand what it's like to be a solicitor to get a better understanding of the job (Male student, aged 18).

Other reasons given included a desire to work in the legal profession in the future (20 per cent) and the perception that it would help in their choice of career or university subject (18 per cent).

I registered to do this work experience because I am hoping to go into the field of law in the future. Through this experience I hope to gain an insight into the life of a legal professional and be sure that this is what I wish to do (Female student, aged 17).

Half of the students (51 per cent) reported that they knew someone who worked in the legal profession prior to their placement, which may have contributed to their interest in a legal career (although we do not have any further information on the extent and nature of these relationships).

**Male student, Sheffield,
aged 15**

Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

I am interested in a future career in law and I wanted to get a good insight [into] my options.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

I now clearly understand the different departments that make up a law firm and feel I have improved my self confidence.

¹³ Pathways to Law is a widening access initiative for 16-19 year old students who have an interest in studying and/or a career in law.

4 Content of placements and student satisfaction

Key Findings

- Student satisfaction is high; 96 per cent of students were satisfied with their placement and a similar proportion would recommend it to others.
- Students particularly benefited from receiving information on the legal profession, different careers available and the day-to-day running of a law firm.
- In most cases, firms offered students block placements lasting one week. Students took part in a range of activities including shadowing and workshops.

4.1 How satisfied were students?

Ninety-six per cent of students were either very satisfied or satisfied with their placement, which is the same proportion as seen in the first year of PRIME.

Most students (96 per cent) would also recommend their placement to another student interested in the legal profession.

Nearly all students enjoyed their placement, felt that it was well organised and believed it was worth-doing (97 per cent of students agreed or strongly agreed with these statements). Again, this reflects the findings from the first year of PRIME and suggests the quality of the placements has remained high.

Students most commonly reported the following benefits from the placement:

Female student, Bristol, aged 16

Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

It is important to get work experience for university applications and to make sure you know what you want to do.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

I gained really good experience into working in an office and in the legal profession. Also, I learnt how to write a good CV, I learnt interview and presentation skills and I made some really good friends.

1. gained an insight in to the legal profession and the different careers available
2. gained an insight into the day-to-day running of a law firm
3. developed new skills (such as communication, organisation, negotiation)
4. increased confidence or self-belief.

When asked to identify improvements, students frequently reported that they did not feel their placement needed to be improved. However, of those who did, the most common suggestions were to provide more opportunities for work shadowing (13 per cent), provide more practical activities (11 per cent), and increase the length of the placement (10 per cent).

4.2 How were placements structured?

Nearly all firms offered block placements which generally lasted one week¹⁴. Some firms also provided pre-placement sessions or workshops while others offered ongoing mentoring or follow-up sessions for students once the placement had finished. The illustration below highlights three models adopted by different firms:

Block placement with pre-placement sessions	Staggered delivery	Block delivery with post-placement support
Students are introduced to the firm gradually, through a series of awareness raising events (prior to the application stage) hosted by the school and at the firm's office. This is followed by a placement at the firm lasting one week.	Students begin the programme at the start of their GCSEs and continue until the end of their A Levels (four years in total). The programme involves ongoing tutoring, events and work placements.	Three-day work placement followed by two days with a mentor at a later date.

4.3 What activities did firms offer to students?

Most firms offered a mix of workshops, presentations, shadowing opportunities and enrichment activities. This variety is reflected in students' responses, with most stating that the activities or opportunities they experienced included:

- being given information about careers in the legal profession
- having opportunities to network and make contacts
- being mentored by or working closely with someone in the law firm
- giving presentations
- observing the work of legal professionals

¹⁴ Law firms completed a proforma detailing the design of their work experience placements.

-
- learning how to take part in interviews
 - learning how to write applications
 - writing reports
 - dealing with clients.

Students were particularly positive about the activities that they had undertaken, with 90 per cent agreeing that they were given worthwhile tasks to do during their placement. Of the activities listed above, students particularly valued:

- being given information about careers in the legal profession
- observing work of legal professionals
- taking part in interviews
- being mentored
- networking.

As in the first year of PRIME, the majority of firms were planning to provide a structured timetable of activities. The different aspects of placements are explained below.

Timetabled workshops, activities and presentations focused on developing skills identified in the PRIME commitment as being essential for entry into the legal profession and wider business world such as networking, team work, communication, presentation and negotiation skills. Examples of workshop sessions and activities include:

- a simulated case study which involved preparing questions and interviewing a witness and preparing and presenting findings to a client
- mock trials
- an introduction to different departments
- personal organisation and time management training
- workshops on presentation skills and networking.

Most firms also offered students some form of support or tuition with their CV and applications, and the opportunity to learn about different careers within the legal profession.

Male student, London, aged 17

Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

I felt that acquiring work experience at one of the UK's leading firms would be pertinent to my future aspirations of one day becoming a lawyer. I felt [the experience], would provide me with an informative insight into the profession and the environment in which lawyers work.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

I feel the work experience programme has benefitted me significantly. I have acquired a better understanding of the legal profession, contacts, invaluable advice on my CV and the way in which I should proceed with my legal studies in the future. I also feel that I have become more confident when networking, a skill that is pertinent in any profession.

Many of the firms offered activities that were aimed to challenge or stretch the students. For example, taking part in mock interviews or undertaking presentations to lawyers. Students' survey responses show that they found such activities particularly rewarding.

Work shadowing. Nearly all firms offered students some form of work shadowing experience to further build their understanding and provide practical experiences of the legal profession and how the business works. Students were generally located within one specific team over the course of the placement, although in a few instances they spent a short amount of time in a number of different departments. In the majority of cases students sat with lawyers within a fee-earning practice team but some firms were offering students the opportunity to sit within business services teams (such as Finance, Information Technology, Marketing, Public Relations and Human Resources).

Enrichment activities. The majority of the firms were planning to offer other activities in order to provide a rich experience for students. These activities included:

- visits to law courts and court attendance
- walking tour of the square mile in London
- fine dining experience
- client visits.

The impact of these activities and the placement as a whole on students is discussed in Chapter 5.

5 Impact on students

Key Findings

- Students' confidence in preparing a CV, presenting to others, being interviewed and networking with others increased significantly over the course of their PRIME placement.
- Students furthered their understanding about the legal profession including the careers available and skills needed.
- Most students felt that their PRIME placement had made them more likely to want to enter the profession.
- Consistent with findings from the first year of the evaluation, the majority of students reported an interest in pursuing a career in the legal profession.

5.1 What impact have the placements had on students' skills development?

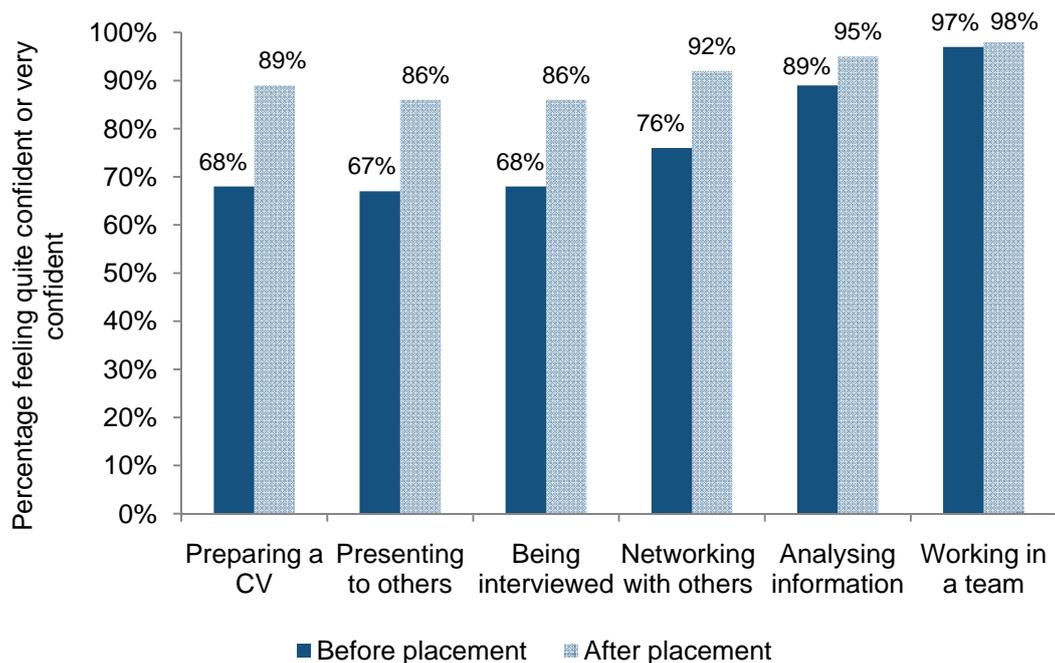
As Figure 5.1 shows, students' confidence had increased significantly¹⁵ across a range of skills when comparing their views before and after their placement. Most notably, their confidence improved in the following areas:

- preparing a CV
- presenting to others
- being interviewed
- networking with others.

Students have less opportunity to develop these skills in a school setting, highlighting the potential offered through PRIME placements to expand their skills set.

¹⁵ Findings identified as 'significant' are statistically significant at the five per cent level $p < .05$. Significance tests were run on a matched sub-sample of survey respondents. The sub-sample only included those students who had answered both the pre and post survey questionnaire. For students who completed more than one placement, only their responses to the first placement were included in this analysis.

Figure 5.1 Students' confidence across a range of skills



Most students believed their placement had benefited them in a variety of ways. The most notable benefits included:

- increased motivation to achieve their career goals (92 per cent)
- improved communication skills (91 per cent)
- improved self confidence (90 per cent).

5.2 What impact have the placements had on students' knowledge and understanding of the legal profession?

Students' were significantly more knowledgeable about the legal profession upon completing their work experience (see Figure 5.2); a finding which is in line with the first year of the evaluation. Ninety-one per cent said that they knew a fair amount or a lot about the legal profession compared with 49 per cent prior to commencing their placement.

Female student, Glasgow, aged 17

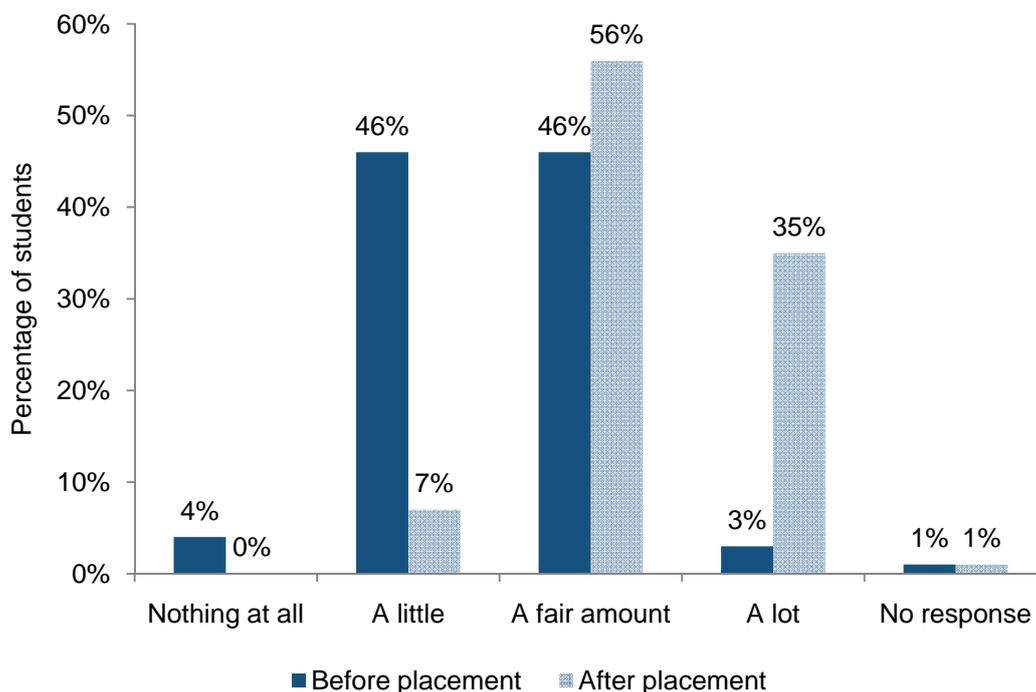
Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

I really wanted to see what life would be like in the legal sector and if continuing to study law was the right path for me.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

It gave me lots of experience in law and helped me see if [it] was a good choice for me to go down. I feel I got a good insight into all the various aspects of law and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Figure 5.2 Students' knowledge about the legal profession



Most students said they had gained a better understanding of career progression within the legal sector, including:

- the different careers available in the legal profession (96 per cent)
- the qualifications and skills needed to get a career in law (95 per cent).

Nearly all students felt that their PRIME placement had given them a positive opinion of the legal profession.

5.3 What impact did the placements have on students' future plans?

The majority of students responding to the end-point survey (92 per cent) were planning to study a course at a university/higher education institution in the future. Nearly two-thirds reported that their PRIME placement had helped them to make this decision.

In the majority of cases, students had some idea about their desired career

Male student, London, aged 17

Why did you want to take part in PRIME?

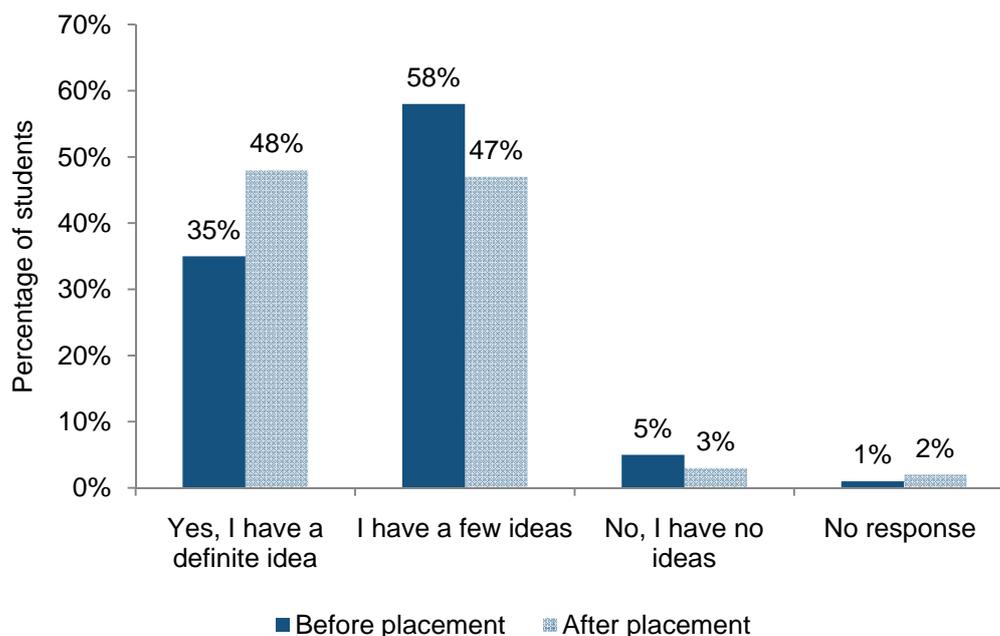
I have had a passion for Law since I studied it at GCSE in year 10...I believe this work experience will help me decide if I want to work in [the profession] in the future.

What did you get out of your work experience placement?

It developed my interest to pursue in law by allowing me to observe and communicate with current lawyers; it has also... developed my confidence in general which means that I am more comfortable in groups, presenting and also networking.

before they started their placement (see Figure 5.3). However, students' ideas appeared to become more concrete after their placement: the number of students who had a *definite idea* of what they wanted to do had risen to 48 per cent upon completion of their work experience (compared with 35 per cent before they started). This increase was statistically significant.

Figure 5.3 Extent to which students had an idea about their future career choices



As was the case during the first year of the evaluation, most students wanted to pursue a career in the legal profession (64 per cent). The careers that students were most interested in were¹⁶:

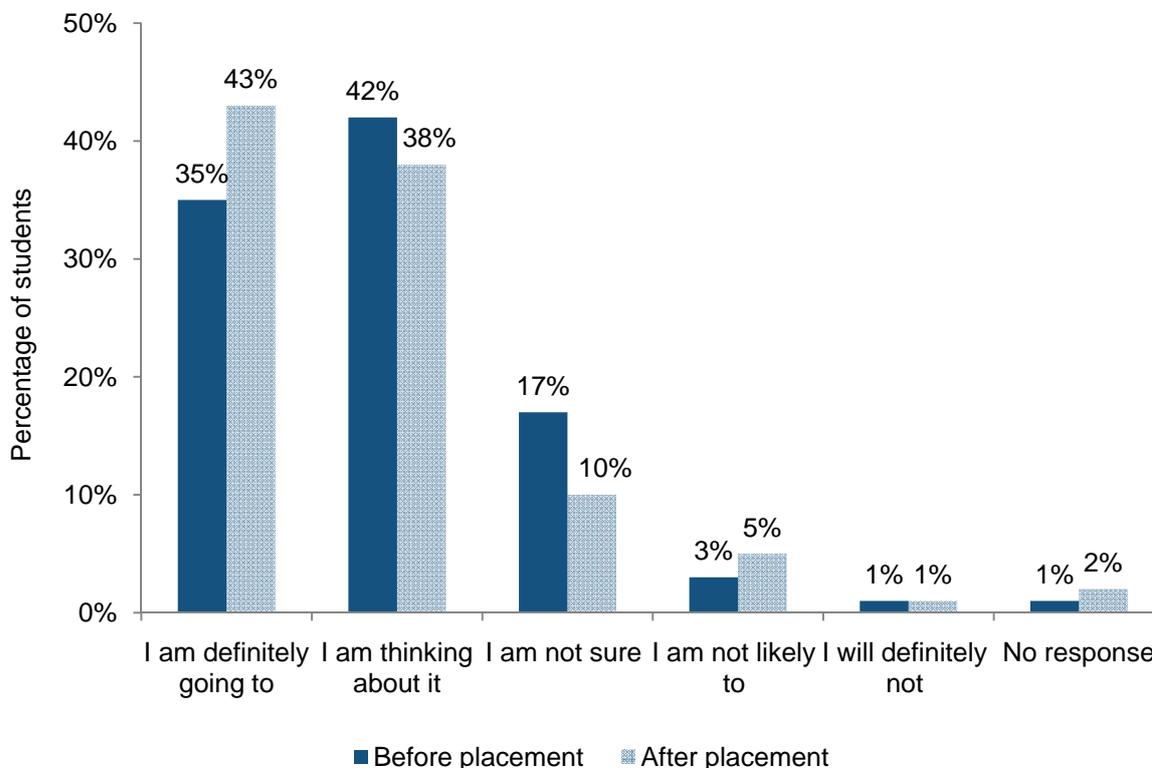
- Solicitor (22 per cent)
- Lawyer (20 per cent)
- A career in the legal profession (but unsure which area) (11 per cent).

A wide range of careers were mentioned by other students including banking, finance and the medical profession, although the number of responses in each category were very small.

Students' confidence in achieving their career goals increased significantly over the course of their placement (see Figure 5.4). By the end of the placement, the number of students who were *very confident* about reaching their desired career goal had risen from 16 per cent to 26 per cent; a finding which is consistent with year one.

¹⁶ Responses to an open-ended question.

Figure 5.4 Extent to which students are planning to pursue a career in the legal profession



Four in five students (81 per cent) said that their PRIME placement had made them more likely to want to enter the legal profession, representing a slight increase compared with the first year of the evaluation (76 per cent).

The majority of students were considering pursuing a career in the legal profession. By the end of the placement, the number of students who *definitely* wanted to follow this career path had risen from 35 per cent to 43 per cent.

Ninety-six per cent of the 416 students who were definitely going to pursue a career in the legal profession felt that their placement had contributed to their decision making process.

6. What can we conclude from the second year of PRIME?

Findings from the second year of the evaluation indicate that firms continue to offer high quality placements and are committed to reaching their target numbers. New firms have embraced the commitment which in turn has widened the opportunities to access work experience in the legal profession.

Despite scaling up the number of law firms that have signed up to the PRIME commitment, the proportion of students meeting the criteria has been sustained. This suggests that firms are continuing to successfully reach those students who might not otherwise have had access to such opportunities. Participating firms provided placements in excess of the 50 per cent of the number of training contract places they offer each year.

Feedback from students was almost universally positive. Students felt that they had gained a better understanding of the legal profession and the different careers available, and were more certain about their future career path. Students had developed a range of skills such as negotiation and communication skills, all of which are essential to gain employment opportunities in the legal sector and beyond.

PRIME has built on last year's positive beginnings in terms of increasing access to the legal profession. The content of the placements are engaging to students and this is reflected in their high levels of satisfaction. Building for the future, the evaluation has identified a number of next steps for consideration by the PRIME Board:

- **Continue to maintain effective targeting of students** who meet the PRIME criteria to ensure access to opportunities continue to be made available.
- **Continue to provide a variety of activities.** Providing opportunities to undertake work shadowing as well as other activities provides a breadth of experience and exposure to the work undertaken within a law firm.
- **If not already on offer, firms should provide opportunities for students to keep in touch** with someone at the firm after their placements have finished (through, for example, providing a mentor) to help maintain momentum for them to reach their future career goals.
- **PRIME needs to establish the longer-term impact of the placements on students** to determine whether this model ultimately opens up access to careers in the legal profession.

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Appendix A: The PRIME commitment

Signatories of PRIME commit to the following principles:

1. Target work experience at school age students who have the least opportunity to access it otherwise.
2. Support participants by providing financial assistance to ensure they can attend work experience.
3. Properly prepare participants in advance of work experience.
4. Inform participants about the range of careers available in the legal profession and wider business (for lawyers and non-lawyers) and the potential routes into those careers, including the relevance of university education.
5. Develop in participants the key personal and business skills that are essential to entry into the legal profession and wider business world (e.g. team working, communication, presentation/impact, negotiation, and networking).
6. Provide a way for participants to maintain contact with the firm after work experience has ended (e.g. through a structured mentoring programme or an annual reunion event).
7. Monitor on a firm by firm basis and share and publish best practice and data. Agree to fund and participate in an externally commissioned evaluation to develop and assure the quality of the commitments made under PRIME.
8. Each provide a number of work experience places that is not less than 50 per cent of the number of training contract places that the firm offers each year. The headline target for the wider profession is 2,500 places by 2015.

Appendix B: About the NFER evaluation

NFER was commissioned by PRIME to undertake an evaluation of PRIME in years one and two. This section sets out the aims of the evaluation and the approach used.

Aims of the evaluation

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- Monitor the implementation of the programme to ensure that PRIME is reaching its intended beneficiaries.
- Identify and share information on best practice amongst firms around the implementation, recruitment of participants, programme content, preparatory and follow-up work.
- Assess the impact of PRIME (e.g. benefits of engagement) on its participants.

Methodology

The evaluation of the second year of PRIME gathered 'baseline' and 'follow-up' data on students offered a placement through PRIME.

- Baseline data on participants was gathered via an online pre-placement survey (October 2012-November 2013).
- Follow-up data was collected via an online post-placement survey once students had completed their placement (October 2012-November 2013).

Firms were responsible for sending out links to the surveys to their students when they recruited the students for PRIME placements and for ensuring completion of the surveys. In total 1202 students completed a pre-placement questionnaire and of these 967 completed a post-placement questionnaire (a response rate of 80 per cent of all students on PRIME placements). The surveys gathered information on:

- Student characteristics (age, postcode, academic qualifications to date, subjects being studied, ethnicity, whether English is an Additional Language, levels of parental education) (pre-placement survey).
- Aspiration measures, including career intentions (pre- and post-placement surveys).
- Reasons for applying (pre-placement survey).
- Benefits of the work experience placement, both actual and predicted (e.g. insight into law careers, understanding about how to secure a career in law, confidence to enter the legal profession, development of key skills and likelihood of progressing into the legal profession) (post-placement survey).

-
- Improvements to the placement and satisfaction (post-placement survey).

NFER undertook data verification to check that PRIME participants met the eligibility criteria. This was done through analysis of the pre-placement survey responses which were matched to the NFER's Register of Schools (which holds the latest data on school characteristics) to verify the state school status of participants and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM compared with the average for schools in the same region. Only those students who included a school name in their pre-placement survey were included in this analysis (1197 students).

Law firms completed a proforma providing details of the placements they planned to offer.

Ethical conduct

The research was carried out in accordance with NFER's Code of Practice (2011). In particular, the team used the following procedures:

- Research participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and were informed of how their data would be used and stored.
- The research team asked all survey participants for their active consent to take part.
- All NFER staff that had access to the system and the data held within it have undergone Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) enhanced checks.
- All personal data was kept confidential and not divulged to anyone outside the research team. The data is located in a secure hosting facility that undergoes regular security audits and has full backup and redundancy policies in place.

NFER provides evidence for excellence through its independence and insights, the breadth of its work, its connections, and a focus on outcomes.

- independent
- insights
- breadth
- connections
- outcomes

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