

Emerging Provision and Practice in 14-19 Education and Training A Report on the Evaluation of the Third Year of the 14-19 Pathfinder Initiative

Jeremy Higham and David Yeomans

Post-14 Research Group
School of Education
University of Leeds

Research Report
No 737

*Emerging Provision and Practice in
14-19 Education and Training*
*A Report on the Evaluation of the Third Year
of the 14-19 Pathfinder Initiative*

Jeremy Higham and David Yeomans

*Post-14 Research Group
School of Education
University of Leeds*

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

© University of Leeds 2006
ISBN 1 84478 719 2

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	5
14-19 PATHFINDERS IN POLICY CONTEXT	7
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	11
DEVELOPING A COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM	16
SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN THE 14-19 PHASE	32
SUSTAINING AND PROMOTING 14-19 LEARNING	38
SUMMING UP 14-19 PATHFINDERS: LEGACIES, KEY FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT	57
REFERENCES	63

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank staff and students participating in 14-19 Pathfinders and the other partnerships visited for their help in this evaluation.

Particular appreciation goes to coordinators in the case study areas for their work in arranging programmes for our fieldwork visits. Thanks also to our colleague Isobel Jenkins of the School of Education, University of Leeds for her help in data collection and analysis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on the national evaluation of the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative describes and analyses the work undertaken by the thirty-nine pathfinders and two partnerships not funded through the initiative. With the end of pathfinder funding it focuses upon legacies from the initiative, key factors for effective working and sustainability. It looks ahead to the contribution which the pathfinder experience may make to the continuing reform of the 14-19 phase.

Key new findings from the third year evaluation

In their third (Phase One) and second (Phase Two) years of operation the pathfinders largely focused upon maintaining and consolidating progress.

Features of the third year included:

- A growing commitment to the concept of a coherent 14-19 phase and the identification and development of 14-19 progression routes.
- A continued commitment to substantial collaborative working, local strategic leadership and the development of collaborative infrastructure between a wide range of partners.
- The continued refining and honing of collaborative curricular arrangements between schools, colleges and training providers, especially for 14-16 year olds.
- The sustaining of broader, more relevant curricula in a wider range of settings.
- Patchy implementation of individual learning plans.
- Development work in the use of on-line portfolios in a minority of pathfinders.
- Moves towards the development of on-line areas prospectuses in a minority of pathfinders.
- Substantial activity in the provision of information, advice and guidance to young people.

- Greater clarity concerning the costs of collaborative activity and evidence that some institutions were prepared to bear greater costs.
- Development of a range of strategies to disseminate and replicate pathfinder developments.

Key legacies from 14-19 pathfinders

These were:

- A growing and stronger emphasis on 14-19 as a coherent phase with clearly defined and appropriate progression routes.
- The emergence of the concept of a 14-19 entitlement.
- Broader, more relevant curricula giving learners greater choice and access to a much wider range of sites and modes of learning leading to increasing curricular differentiation from age 14.
- The development of substantial collaborative arrangements frequently drawing in a wide range of partners and tackling a broad range of 14-19 issues.
- Illumination of the ways in which local responsiveness can be combined with central steering to produce change at local level.
- The development of a variety of forms of innovative learning for some learners.
- The development of strategic, collaborative leadership within the structural complexities of the 14-19 phase and in the context of high levels of institutional autonomy.
- The establishment of organisational infrastructures which supported collaborative working.
- The development of staff with networking skills able to facilitate collaboration within the 14-19 phase.

Key factors in effective working and sustainability

These were:

- Understanding the interaction of policy levers and local contexts in developing collaborative working.
- Strategic vision and high level commitment when developing broad-based collaboration involving a wide range of partners.
- The exercise of strategic leadership in order to build consensus and partnership which can be translated in practical activities.
- The establishment of a robust collaborative infrastructure with skilled staff in order to be able to translate strategic vision into operational activities.
- Clearer modelling and estimation of the costs of various kinds of collaborative activities in order to inform decision-making.
- Understanding of the effects of different institutional structures, interests and ethos upon collaborative development.
- Consideration of fundamental curricular principles in order to make deliberative rather than default decisions about curriculum provision and structure and progression routes.
- Understanding of students' learning identities, the ways in which these translate into learning careers and consideration of the moral and practical implications of these for the structure of curriculum provision, the planning of learning and information, advice and guidance.

Pathfinders and the continuing reform of the 14-19 phase

The 14-19 pathfinder experience can contribute to continuing reform through informing:

- The establishment of 14-19 partnerships throughout England
- The development and publication of on-line area prospectuses
- The development of specialised Diplomas

- The development of multi-agency collaborative working in local areas.

14-19 Pathfinders in policy context

The legacies of the 14-19 Pathfinders must be seen in the context of evolving policy and especially in relation to:

- The 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper
- The 14-19 Implementation Plan
- The emerging Every Child Matters agenda.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation had five main aims addressing:

- issues in best practice
- key factors in effective working
- sustainability
- costing
- implications for longer term development.

The methods used were:

- documentary analysis
- selective literature review
- survey of all pathfinders
- case study visits to sixteen pathfinders and unfunded partnerships
- stand-alone costing study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Key points

- Reports on the work of thirty-nine 14-19 Pathfinders and two unfunded partnerships.
- Focuses upon the key factors in effective working, legacies of the pathfinders and issues in sustaining developments with the end of pathfinder funding.

1. This report on the national evaluation of the third year of the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), describes the progress made by the thirty-nine pathfinders and also two partnerships not funded through the pathfinder programme during 2005/6. Since the 14-19 Pathfinder programme has now ended it is appropriate in this report to focus upon its legacies and the ways in which these may be sustained. The report raises some key issues from the evaluation for the development of 14-19 education and training as this moves into a new phase following the publication of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper and the subsequent 14-19 Implementation Plan.

2. Following this brief introduction, the report is divided into six main sections. We begin by placing the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative in the wider context of the current 14-19 reform agenda. This is followed by a description of the evaluation methodology detailing the data sources and the data base upon which our findings are based. The next three sections contain our main thematic findings.

3. The first of these focuses upon the curricular impact of the 14-19 Pathfinders and outlines the different ways in which the curriculum has been broadened and greater choice and flexibility have been introduced for learners. We consider the extent to which the 14-19 Pathfinders have

been able to develop more differentiated and customised curricula. This section will also consider evidence for the development of progression routes through the 14-19 phase and beyond to higher education, further education and training and employment.

4. The following section highlights the ways in which learners have been supported to access learning opportunities and progress through the 14-19 phase. This explores the ways in which the 14-19 Pathfinders have been encouraging students to develop their learning identities, especially through the development of individual learning plans, including on-line portfolios. The section also examines the provision of information, advice and guidance for learners as they enter, progress through and leave the 14-19 phase and assesses the extent to which this is adequate to meet the needs of learners as their choice of what to learn, how to learn and where to learn increases.

5. In section six we focus explicitly on sustainability issues and highlight several factors which are likely to be important in sustaining 14-19 pathfinder developments. This section also considers the ways in which the 14-19 Pathfinders are looking to replicate, transfer and scale-up the work they have done and help to shape 14-19 education as it enters a new phase of development.

6. The final section of the report looks both backwards and forwards - backwards to distil the lessons learned from the 14-19 Pathfinders and forwards to the implications of these lessons for the continuing reform of 14-19 education and training.

2. 14-19 PATHFINDERS IN POLICY CONTEXT

Key points

- Places 14-19 Pathfinders in a broader policy context.
- Focuses upon the implications of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, the 14-19 Implementation Plan and the Every Child Matters agenda

7. In earlier reports we emphasised that the 14-19 Pathfinders programme was only one of an ensemble of programmes and initiatives which were impacting on 14-19 education and training. This continued to be the case in the third year of the programme and we do not propose to repeat our earlier discussion here. Instead we focus briefly on those elements of the broader context where policy shifts were beginning to have an impact in 2005.

8. A significant development was the publication of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (DfES, 2005a) which followed the final report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform (DfES, 2004a). A number of participants in the evaluation followed some media and academic commentary in seeing the White Paper as rejecting Tomlinson and argued that this had had a detrimental effect upon 14-19 development. We will return to this issue in section six of the report. A key element of the White Paper was the proposal for the development of fourteen specialised Diplomas at each of three levels which would eventually have to be made available to every 14-19 learner in England.

9. The White Paper was followed in December 2005 by the publication of the 14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan (DfES, 2005b). With the implementation plan and the establishment of Diploma Development Partnerships for the first five diplomas there was heightened interest in

the development of the specialised Diplomas. Partnerships were beginning to consider how they might be involved in the formal piloting of diplomas or align their development work to the introduction of the first five diplomas in 2008. Alongside this there was also considerable interest in the development and piloting of the functional skills content. Another element of the 14-19 reform process which engaged partnerships was the requirement to develop and publish local area prospectuses from Autumn 2006. In the final section of the report we will consider the extent to which 14-19 Pathfinders have helped to prepare partnerships to take on these developments.

10. The White Paper and the Implementation Plan also reinforced the importance of partnership and collaboration, with all areas required to have 14-19 partnerships in place by the end of 2006. This continued emphasis upon local collaboration was coupled with a commitment to local delivery. The Implementation Plan stated that 'there can be no one-size-fits-all model of implementation' so that 'The detail of how the entitlement is to be delivered in an area must be decided locally' (DfES, 2005b, p.44). In the final section we will consider some of the lessons which have been learned from the 14-19 Pathfinders with respect to local delivery.

11. At a broader policy level a key development for 14-19 reform was the continued emergence of the Every Child Matters reform agenda with the formation of Children's Trusts. There were two particular aspects of this reform agenda which participants saw as initially impacting on the 14-19 phase. First, Ofsted area-wide 14-19 inspections were ended and inspection of 14-19 provision on an area basis was incorporated into the new Joint Area Reviews. The reviews are being undertaken by ten commissions and agencies under the leadership of Ofsted and are designed to assess the extent to which areas are meeting the five outcomes for children and young people identified in Every Child Matters

(HM Treasury, 2003). The framework for joint area reviews and the associated annual performance assessments require the inspectors to make key judgements that 'action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way' and to certify that education and training up to the age of 19 is of good quality (Ofsted, 2005, p.8).

12. The first five Joint Area Review reports published by Ofsted in December 2005 all include commentary and judgements on the provision and adequacy of 14-19 education and training. However, given the broad remit of the joint area reviews they inevitably give less attention to 14-19 education and training than the focused area-wide inspections which they have replaced. Our earlier reports indicated that the area-wide inspections had been important levers for change in many partnerships through their judgements on existing provision, the legitimisation which they provided for change and the funding provided through local Learning and Skills Councils for post-inspection action plans. Some partnership participants expressed doubt as to whether the joint area reviews would provide equally effective levers for change specifically related to 14-19 education and training. The national evaluation of Children's Trusts Pathfinders reported that some in schools saw the children's trusts, and the integration of children's services more generally, being mainly concerned with targeted groups of vulnerable children and young people rather than with universal service provision (University of East Anglia, 2005), suggesting that if this finding is replicated, mainstream educators may be less responsive to potential implications for their policy and practice.

13. Set against these concerns, however, participants also recognised the potential for the Every Child Matters agenda and the new Children's Trusts to make a positive contribution to the development of the 14-19

phase, especially through promoting multi-agency working which would benefit teenagers with multiple educational and social problems.

14. A second element of the Every Child Matters reform agenda, with an obvious impact on the 14-19 phase, concerns the possible changes in the provision of information, advice and guidance and other forms of student support as a result of the proposals in Youth Matters (DfES, 2005d) with potential implications for the roles of Connexions, local authorities and individual institutions.

15. Other aspects of current policy which are likely to impact upon 14-19 include school improvement strategies, especially School Improvement Partnerships and workforce reform, both of which have the potential to promote and support collaboration.

16. At a more general policy level some participants continued to see tension and lack of consistency between the focus on partnership and collaboration within some policy strands and that upon institutional autonomy in others, especially in the Five Year Strategy (DfES, 2004b) and the Schools White Paper (DfES, 2005c). We consider the interplay between institutional autonomy and collaboration in section six.

17. It is important to emphasise that most participants in the 14-19 partnerships were not unduly exercised by the policy context described above, nor by apparent complementarities or tensions between different policy strands. Most were proceeding pragmatically and in response to local imperatives and circumstances with practical measures to reform 14-19. However, the policy context is important because it helps to create the climate in which local policies and practices are developed and implemented and because, for the future, it is likely that much will hang upon the ways in which different policies interact nationally and locally and are interpreted by policy makers, practitioners and learners.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key points

- Five main aims addressing issues in best practice, key factors in effective working, sustainability, costing and the implications for longer term development.
- Methods used were: documentary analysis; selective literature review; survey of all pathfinders; case study visits to sixteen pathfinders and unfunded partnerships; stand-alone costing study.

18. The evaluation built on the work undertaken by the universities of Leeds and Exeter during 2002/3 and by the University of Leeds in 2003/4 which led to reports on the first two years of the 14-19 Pathfinders (Higham et al., 2004; Higham & Yeomans, 2005).

19. The third year evaluation had the following main aims:

1. to document and assess the extent to which the 14-19 Pathfinders and unfunded 14-19 partnerships continue to develop best practice in creating a more coherent and flexible 14-19 phase at local authority, consortia, institutional and individual levels;
2. to identify and analyse the key factors contributing to effective working in pathfinders and partnerships and assess the extent to which these might be transferable between local contexts;
3. to assess the extent to which best practice developments are sustainable and to identify those aspects which are crucial to this sustainability;
4. to provide a detailed study of the costs associated with the collaborative development and delivery of key pathfinder activities in a range of local contexts;
5. to relate the findings from the 14-19 Pathfinders to the academic and official literature and to models of provision and practice developed for 14-19 provision and draw out implications for longer-term 14-19 development.

The methodology had five main elements which will be described in turn.

Documentary analysis

20. The documentary analysis covered the following:

- a wide range of pathfinder-level documentation for the case study 14-19 Pathfinders and unfunded 14-19 partnerships, including mission and strategy papers, working group reports, relevant Ofsted/ALI area-wide inspection reports
- 2005 termly progress reports and 2005 annual reports from 14-19 Pathfinders to DfES. (The 2005 annual reports included a series of additional questions which asked pathfinder coordinators to reflect upon their experience of the whole programme)
- proposals for additional funding from 26 pathfinders
- exit strategies from each of the 39 pathfinders.

Literature review

21. Selective literature reviews of academic and official literature were undertaken, addressing concepts such as curricular coherence and progression; institutional collaboration; curriculum change approaches as well as specific aspects of the 14-19 reform agenda. This literature is drawn upon selectively within this report.

Surveys

22. A survey of all pathfinder coordinators was undertaken in November 2005. This aimed to provide coverage of all pathfinders and supply additional detail on aspects of implementation which could not be obtained through documentary analysis.

23. While the surveys were designed to produce some quantitative information, they comprised largely open questions which gave pathfinder coordinators opportunities to describe in some detail work in their pathfinders. Some survey responses have been lengthy, detailed and self-evaluative providing a rich source of data.

24. Twenty-six questionnaires were completed giving a response rate of 67%¹. Four of the non-responders had been visited as case studies and therefore the evaluation held substantial data on those pathfinders. For the other nine non-responders only documentary evidence was available.

Case studies

25. In-depth case studies of a sample of fourteen 14-19 Pathfinders were undertaken. Two further case study visits were made to partnerships which had not been funded through the pathfinders programme but where there was evidence of collaborative work in the 14-19 phase.

26. The case studies were selected to reflect: different approaches to providing a coherent 14-19 phase; a geographical spread of pathfinders; pathfinders operating in different socio-economic circumstances; pathfinders operating in areas with differing mixes of schools, colleges and training providers; pathfinders with differing histories of collaboration. Thus they reflected the diversity of locations within the pathfinder programme.

¹ The response rate was lower than in 2003 and 2004. However, it must be remembered that pathfinder funding had largely ceased at the time when the survey was conducted. The expanded 2005 annual reports also provided us with more information on non-responders than was the case in earlier years.

27. The case studies selected were:

Phase One 14-19 Pathfinders

1. Coventry
2. Cumbria
3. Gateshead
4. Knowsley
5. South Gloucestershire
6. Southampton
7. Southwark

Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders

8. Hampshire
9. Islington
10. Lewisham
11. Norfolk
12. Nottingham
13. Sheffield
14. Tower Hamlets²

Unfunded 14-19 partnerships³

15. East Devon
16. Bradford⁴

28. In addition to the documentary analysis outlined above, each Phase Two case study involved five days of fieldwork during which in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were conducted and visits were undertaken to a range of institutions. Interviews were typically conducted with: the pathfinder or partnership co-ordinator; headteachers; college principals; employers; managers from work-based training providers; key stage 4 and post-16 curriculum managers in schools and colleges; focus groups of young people approaching key decision points

² This pathfinder was visited for the first time in 2005.

³ For the sake of simplicity we use the term 'unfunded' to refer to partnerships which had not obtained funding through the 14-19 Pathfinders programme, although we recognise that they were often in receipt of other additional central and local funds.

within the 14-19 phase; higher education representatives; school careers staff and Connexions staff. In several case studies it was also possible to observe meetings of pathfinder management groups and other working groups.

29. Since the Phase One and unfunded partnerships had been visited on two previous occasions (in 2003 and 2004) shorter three day visits were undertaken focusing particularly upon strategic and sustainability issues.

Costing Study

30. A detailed study was undertaken by York Consulting (Rix & Cowen, 2006). The evaluation methodology for this aspect of the evaluation is detailed in that report. Its findings are briefly summarised and drawn upon in section six of this report.

31. It was agreed that case study pathfinders (but not individual institutions or people) would be named in this report and in what follows we use brief illustrations to exemplify aspects of pathfinder developments. However, a great many case studies and examples of good practice in 14-19 Pathfinders have now been published through our earlier reports, the 14-19 website, the Manual of Good Practice and by individual pathfinders and therefore we have used illustrations more sparingly than in our earlier reports.

⁴ This partnership was visited for the first time as part of this evaluation in 2006.

4. DEVELOPING A COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM

Key points

- Review of curricular aims of 14-19 Pathfinder programme.
- Review of estimation of progress on six curricular themes showing significant developments in establishing broader curriculum offerings and innovative vocational learning.
- Analysis of curricular developments in terms of sites and modes of learning showing how the curriculum has been broadened.
- Review of significant progress made by pathfinders in establishing 14-19 progression pathways with less focus on 19+ progression.
- Illustrations of the shift to more differentiated and route-based curricula at 14-16.

32. This section will outline some of the main impacts of the 14-19 Pathfinders and the unfunded partnerships on the curriculum. This is crucial because the 14-19 Pathfinders programme (in common with much 14-19 policy) was predicated on the belief that the aims of improving participation, retention and achievement would be brought about principally through curriculum change and particularly through changes which would engage and motivate a wider range of learners.

33. The curricular changes will be described in terms of increasing differentiation, flexibility and choice within the curriculum offering the potential to lead to greater customisation and personalisation. The changes will be analysed in relation to the *sites* and *modes* for learning which were developed by the 14-19 Pathfinders. The section will also examine the extent to which the pathfinders and partnerships were able

to promote coherence within the 14-19 curriculum through the development of clearly defined pathways through to age 19 and beyond.

14-19 Pathfinders Curricular Aims

34. Before turning to the specific developments promoted by the 14-19 Pathfinders it is worth briefly considering the main curricular aims embodied in the initiative. These can be seen as part of a process which began with the Dearing review of the national curriculum (Dearing, 1993) designed to introduce more flexibility and choice into the 14-16 curriculum. This process evolved through initial stages which enabled disapplication for some students from some elements of the national curriculum in order to undertake work-related learning to a major revision of the national curriculum which reduced the statutory content with some subjects becoming entitlements rather than being compulsory. *14-19: opportunity and excellence* (DfES, 2003) called for a combination of breadth of study with more flexibility for schools and colleges to tailor programmes of study to individual needs and aptitudes. This was followed through in the Pathfinder Prospectus which stated that: 'the flexibility of the curriculum of all participating schools must be increased'. The prospectus also stressed the importance of coherence, although this was expressed as vertical coherence with emphasis upon the creation of a 14-19 phase with coherence achieved through progression routes. There was less emphasis upon horizontal coherence i.e. making links between different concurrent experiences.

35. This curricular thrust was subsequently taken up in both the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper and the Implementation Plan, although with greater specificity through the focus on the specialised Diplomas and the development of functional skills. These later policy documents also emphasise the importance of personalised learning which can be seen as a further extension of the concepts of differentiation, flexibility and choice. We return in the final section of the report to consider the extent

to which the 14-19 Pathfinders have paved the way for the next stages of curricular development.

An overview of curriculum change in 14-19 Pathfinders

36. As in previous years the survey of pathfinder coordinators asked them to estimate progress on a range of curriculum elements derived from an analysis of the pathfinder prospectuses and other policy documents. The results are shown in the following table:

	More than expected progress	As expected	Less than expected	Not included in proposal
Broader curriculum offerings	14	9	2	2
Work-related learning	5	18	0	5
Innovative vocational learning	12	13	0	0
Variations in the pace of learning	2	4	3	15
Enterprise capability	3	8	1	12
Work-based learning	2	6	2	15

37. The findings confirm those for earlier years. They show the strong emphasis which 14-19 Pathfinders have placed upon broadening the curriculum and promoting innovative vocational learning. Most have also sought to engage with the promotion of work-related learning. The other three curricular elements were engaged in by only about half or less than half of the pathfinders responding to the survey. Survey responses in 2003 and 2004 were broadly similar suggesting that non-responding

pathfinders were likely to have confirmed the general pattern revealed above.

38. We will now proceed to analyse the curricular changes which have taken place in terms of the *sites* in which they were enacted – these included schools, colleges, skills centres, training providers and workplaces and the *modes of learning* which were deployed which included: enrichment of subjects and courses; hands-on practical activities; e-learning; variations in the pace of learning; engagement in realistic task-based learning.

39. We separate sites and modes of learning for analytical purposes but clearly the interplay of site and mode is crucial in determining the nature of the activities and has important implications for policy-makers, institutions, teachers and learners to which we return in the final section of the report.

Sites for learning

40. One of the thrusts of 14-19 developments has been to increase the range of sites in which students learn and much of the collaborative activity has been undertaken to bring this about, ensure that off-site learning is effective and to look for ways in which it can be sustained.

41. A great deal of off-site learning for 14-16 students has taken place in *colleges*. This has been stimulated by the Increased Flexibility (IF) programme and by other funding streams such as the European Social Fund (ESF) as well as by the 14-19 Pathfinders. In the third year of evaluation, learning at college continued to be a highly significant activity in the pathfinders and other partnerships. A wide range of courses and qualifications was offered and a good deal of collaborative effort was put into shaping the course offers, presenting them to potential learners, embedding them into school and college policies and procedures and

establishing quality assurance mechanisms. A considerable amount of data has been gathered on school – college collaborations through the national evaluation of the IF programme (Golden et al., 2004; Golden, O'Donnell, Benton et al., 2005; Golden, O'Donnell & Rudd, 2005) and case studies of the programme in action (LSC, 2004). The IF evaluation evidence suggests there have been learning gains. There is also evidence that as the programme has proceeded it has become better honed. Our evaluation supported this latter point with evidence that selection and induction processes had been refined, there had been increased staff development for college staff teaching 14-16 year olds and there was closer collaboration between partners in the management of the programme. However, there remained considerable variation in the forms of collaboration. The integration of college courses into school option blocks remained a key issue since this both ensured that learners did not miss lessons at school and opened up the possibility for schools to make staff savings and thus impact upon sustainability issues.

42. Another site for learning was with *training providers*. Training providers were able to offer authentic learning experiences of the occupational sectors which they served, through their facilities, the experience of their staff and their close links with employers. The extent to which pathfinders accessed training provider facilities varied considerably. This partly reflected the patchy distribution of training providers. They tended to be concentrated in urban areas, although there were also urban areas where they appeared scarce. The extent to which the training providers wished to engage with pathfinders also depended upon their commercial priorities and capacities. Some preferred to focus upon their main post-16 work contracted through local LSCs and not engage with 14-16 year olds. A further limiting factor was the capacity or willingness of local employers to provide placements for learners who were attached to training providers. This often proved particularly difficult in sectors with large numbers of small and medium sized

enterprises. In addition to these factors there were also variations in the extent to which 14-19 Pathfinders sought to utilise training providers within their programmes.

43. A third site for learning was *local skills centres*. These were most prevalent in rural areas where their principal advantage was that they reduced the travelling time for students. In both the Hampshire and East Devon partnerships travel time was cut by over half for some students by establishing skills centres and this helped to sustain a broader range of options for students. Skills centres were also established in some urban areas. Sometimes this was because additional capacity was needed in some occupational areas, for example in construction in Sheffield. In Bradford however, at least in some occupational areas, there was spare capacity in the colleges but learners from some parts of the city were reluctant to access this provision, preferring to learn in their local areas and a network of local skills centres was being established partly to cater for the needs of such learners. Skills centres tended to provide level 1 and 2 courses and were intended to encourage progression to level 3 courses at college sites or to apprenticeships.

44. *Workplaces* provided a further site for learning. As we showed in our second evaluation report pathfinders varied considerably in the extent to which they engaged with employers (Higham & Yeomans, 2005, p. 26) with just over half of pathfinders reporting extensive or very extensive involvement. Where there was engagement this took several different forms including workplace visits, extended placements and the provision of learning tasks or projects.

45. The final site for learning was within *schools* themselves. One manifestation of this was in the sharing of post-16 courses. In some areas such as South Gloucestershire, Coventry and parts of Bradford this built upon long-standing arrangements for the joint provision and

teaching of A-levels and extended such arrangements to level 1 and 2 post-16 courses. These arrangements preserved minority subjects, extended choice and made provision more cost-effective. Some pathfinders also promoted school-to-school movement of students at 14-16 although such movement was much more limited than that to colleges and training providers. Schools also acted as sites for learning when college lecturers, training provider staff or employers came in to schools to teach. Such arrangements had the advantages of eliminating student travel but tended to be most useful in vocational areas such as business and leisure and tourism where specialist accommodation and equipment were not required. Some occupational courses were split with practical work done at college or a training provider and 'theory' at school but while this reduced travel it introduced an often unhelpful structural split between practice and theory in the teaching of the courses. There was also some limited evidence in this third year of evaluation that some schools were looking to provide more vocational learning on their own sites, either in partnership with other providers or through their own resources. Where this trend was apparent it appeared to be due to concern with the cost and sustainability of off-site provision and increased confidence in the ability of schools to provide vocational learning themselves.

Modes for learning

46. Our analysis of the curriculum changes brought about by the 14-19 Pathfinders and other partnerships now turns to examine the modes of learning which were developed.

47. The most common mode involved an emphasis upon *hands-on, practical learning*. This was deployed in courses and other activities which focused upon specific occupational skills such as those used in construction, motor mechanics, hairdressing, child care and so on. Courses including this mode of learning often led to NVQs, usually took

place in colleges and training provider premises and were mainly confined to level 1 and 2 qualifications.

48. An extension of this mode was the provision of *hybrid learning*. This involved hands-on, practical learning but combined this with more generic learning in basic and personal skills. This mode often combined to constitute the whole of a student's learning programme. The different forms of learning often took place at different sites. The Go-Live project in Bradford, for example, involved three days in school and two days at a training provider. The work-based learning programme in Knowsley involved training providers but also a substantial element of work experience and basic skills learning. The one-year post-16 course developed in Southwark, mainly in 11-16 schools, involved two days in school, two days at college or a training provider and one day at a work placement. Another variant of this mode of learning was the Skills4Retail course developed by the Tower Hamlets Pathfinder which combined extended work experience with college-based work focused upon employability skills. As we will show below these types of courses were designed to have an impact upon post-16 participation and progression for particular groups of learners.

49. The third mode of learning identified focused upon the *enrichment* of learning. This came most strongly to the fore in applied GCSEs and was designed to inject elements of vocationalism into the courses. Examples included: visits by Health and Social Care students to a medical simulation unit in the Islington Pathfinder; placements with professional sports clubs for students taking GCSE PE in the Nottingham Pathfinder; teaching and visits by Jaguar staff as part of GCSE Engineering in Knowsley.

50. The fourth mode of learning involved *realistic, task-based learning*. Realism here refers to activities which were designed to have impact

beyond the course or educational activity of which they were part. Examples might include real, extended tasks or projects tackled in partnership with an employer or immersion into workplace activities. The essence of this mode of learning is that it places learners in real contexts in which they have to attend to clients and customers, meet deadlines, work to budgets and generally have to get things right. The realistic context thus gives meaning and authenticity to the learning. Work experience and some forms of work-based learning might be considered weak forms of this mode of learning. Stronger forms give greater explicit attention to learning and to integrating knowledge, skills and experience. Examples included: students working at a commercial farm and visitor centre in the Hampshire Pathfinder; students who were commissioned to provide information and advice on the design of an Aim Higher website in the Nottingham Pathfinder; the planning and taking part in an expedition in the South Gloucestershire Pathfinder.

51. *E-learning* was identified as a fifth mode of learning. This was most often used as a means of enriching learning activities, sometimes through the use of online or electronic case studies of vocational sectors, as developed in the Sheffield and Coventry Pathfinders. Other examples included the use of a Virtual Learning Environment to increase access to vocational options in Lewisham; the provision of on-line revision materials in Cumbria; the use of PDAs and video-conferencing in Shropshire; the development of e-mentoring in Norfolk; the use of Extranet to support personalised learning in South Gloucestershire.

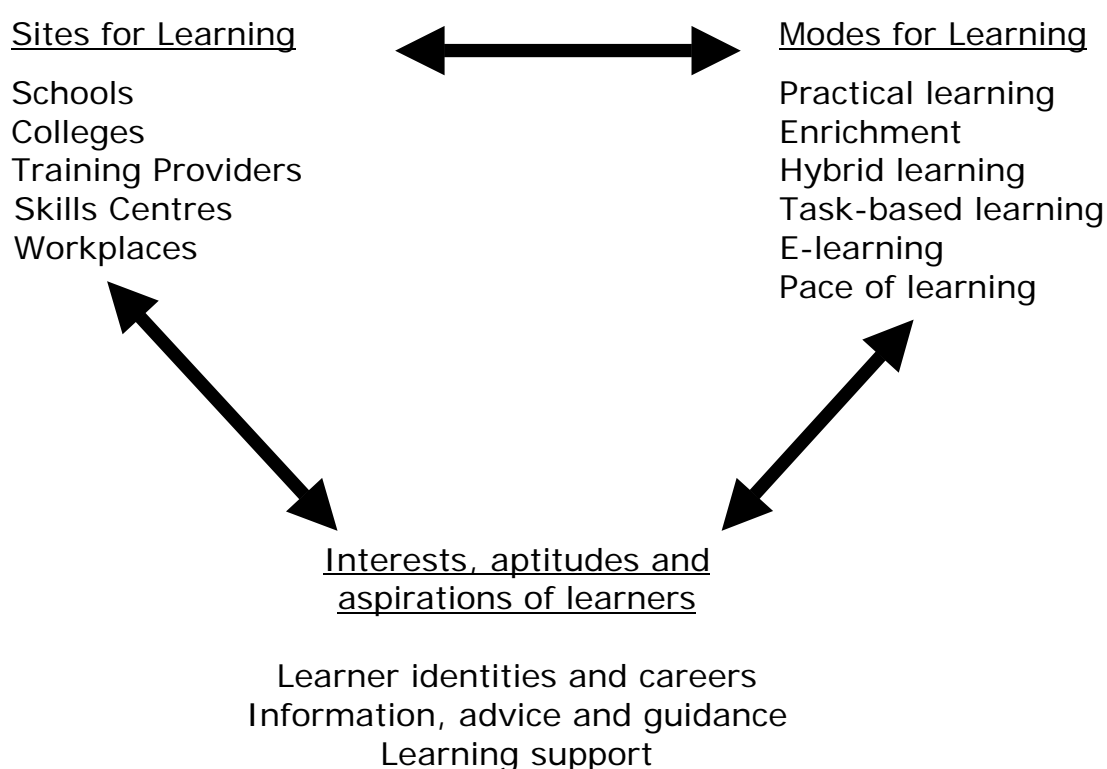
52. The final mode of learning identified involved *variations in the pace of learning*. In earlier reports we noted that where this had been developed it focused mainly upon accelerated learning for higher achieving students, especially in Mathematics, modern foreign languages and critical thinking and most commonly involved the study of AS levels by 14-16 year olds. However, the most extensive development of

variations in the pace of learning was undertaken in East Manchester where all young people in years 9 to 11 were offered opportunities to participate in accelerated or decelerated learning through starting key stage 4 at the beginning of year 9.

Conceptualising curriculum change in 14-19 Pathfinders

53. Analysing the curriculum developments which have taken place in the 14-19 Pathfinders and other partnerships in terms of sites and modes of learning assists with understanding the changes which have taken place and provides a potential framework for collaborative curriculum planning and development and support and guidance for students.

54. The diagram below provides a summary of such a framework:



55. Thus in this report we reiterate our findings from earlier reports that the 14-19 Pathfinders have significantly broadened the curriculum choices and curriculum experiences for many students by expanding both the

range of sites at which learning has taken place and the modes of learning which have been deployed. Within the pathfinders there has been greatest emphasis upon access for learners to a wider range of sites through collaborative arrangements. In terms of modes of learning most emphasis has been upon providing opportunities for practical learning and the enrichment of learning. There have been some innovative developments in the use of hybrid and task-based learning although these have remained more limited. The development of e-learning has been patchy in the 14-19 Pathfinders. Some partnerships have pursued its development vigorously, while others have given it very little attention. We noted in our earlier reports that in relation to variations in the pace of learning most interest had been shown in accelerated learning, especially in the introduction of AS levels at 14-16. The third year of evaluation showed no evidence of the expansion of these activities and, in some areas, retrenchment. This retrenchment was partly because where accelerated learning had been tried not all examination results were encouraging but also because of the difficulties of timetabling, organisation and progression in learning.

56. The development of the different modes of learning was supported by a wide range of staff development activities. Much staff development in partnerships took place incidentally as staff engaged in developmental processes, especially when working in groups. There were also some formal staff development activities, for example, for college and training provider staff in teaching 14-16 year olds; for staff teaching new applied GCSE courses; training in the use of new software packages. Staff development was highly localised being determined by individual partnerships or institutions and driven by local needs. However, in their survey and annual report responses some coordinators argued for larger scale national level training especially in relation to teaching vocational subjects. Several also called for changes in initial teacher education to reflect the changes in the 14-19 curriculum and the different demands

which this was placing on teachers. There were also calls for more training for non-teaching members of the workforce along with arguments that learning support assistants, for example, could undertake some the tasks required by collaborative working currently undertaken by teachers.

57. In terms of sites for learning schools and colleges continued to work closely together and some pathfinders made extensive use of training providers. Skills centres were being developed in some areas. The use of workplaces varied, reflecting the nature of the employment base and the extent to which employers were engaged with the pathfinders. Finally we noted some tendency for some schools to look to 'go it alone' in their vocational provision (and this was frequently an expression of future plans rather than current practices). Where this tendency was apparent it was influenced by funding, organisational issues such as transport and timetabling and quality assurance concerns about off-site provision.

58. The third element of the framework concerns the interests, aptitudes and aspirations of the learners and will be dealt with in some detail below but it is worth noting at this point that, in planning the curriculum, pathfinders found that it was crucially important to attempt to match provision to learner needs in relation to both sites and modes of learning. This has implications for the design of the new specialised Diplomas to which we return in the final section of the report.

Progression pathways 14-19 and beyond

59. We noted above that coherence in 14-19 education and training had been largely interpreted as being vertical cohesion, that is the development and promotion of 14-19 progression pathways. There was much less emphasis upon horizontal cohesion, that is making links across and between subjects and experiences. There were some exceptions to this, especially where pathfinders had taken opportunities to develop coherent whole programmes at levels 1 and 2 in the post-16 phase (what

we described above as hybrid learning). Another strong example of the development of horizontal cohesion was the development of the Personal Challenge programme in South Gloucestershire. The introduction of individual learning plans could also be seen as an attempt to help learners integrate, understand and evaluate their learning across different subjects and experiences. In curriculum terms, however, the broadening described in the previous section had limited effects on the mainstream GCSE curriculum at 14-16 and on most AS/A level subjects post-16. Subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Art and others were largely untouched by the pathfinder experience.

60. In our first report we stated that the focus of most of the 14-19 Pathfinders had been on the 14-16 phase. It was debatable in 2003 as to what extent institutions and staff were seeing 14-19 as a coherent phase. We reported in 2004 that there was some strengthening of commitment to the concept of a 14-19 phase and the third year evaluation confirmed the continuation of this trend. Participants offered several explanations for this. First the establishment of broader programmes at 14-16 had encouraged them to consider progression routes post-16 and there was a wide and palpable determination to avoid the ad-hocery sometimes apparent in earlier initiatives where innovative programmes had been established at 14-16 but without clear progression routes post-16. It was one of the strengths of the 14-19 Pathfinders that the collaborative arrangements which were established helped to avoid this. Second, the consistent central policy emphasis on 14-19 had fed through into the institutions and encouraged staff to see 14-19 as a distinct phase and a government priority (although as we shall see below not all staff were happy with the policy response to Tomlinson or progression planning from pathfinders). Thus, allowing for inevitable local unevenness, in 2005 there was a stronger commitment to the concept of 14-19 as a coherent phase than had been the case when pathfinders began. Despite this several participants still made the point that the structural divide at 16

remains and brought into question the extent to which 14-19 could really be considered a single phase. We also have little or no evidence as to the extent to which 14-19 year olds consider 14-19 a coherent phase.

61. Coordinator responses when asked about progress in promoting and planning progression 14-19 and 19+ are shown on the following table:

	More than expected progress	As expected	Less than expected	Not included in proposal
14-19 progression	8	13	2	2
19+ progression	1	7	1	16

62. In comparison to the results from earlier years this shows stronger estimations of progress on 14-19 progression.

63. One important feature of the work done on progression in several areas was a restructuring of the proportions of post-16 courses offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. Area-Wide Inspection reports prior to the 14-19 Pathfinder programme had consistently criticised the preponderance of level 3 courses in areas where the majority of learners did not achieve level 2 at age 16. The inspectors pointed out that this practice caused either lack of progression or inappropriate progression. Several partnerships, including Gateshead, Bradford, Sheffield, Coventry and Southwark made significant changes, both rationalising level 3 provision thus making it more cost-effective and increasing post-16 provision at levels 1 and 2. In Southwark and Bradford programmes were developed which enabled students to stay on in school and access specially designed one year hybrid learning courses. In Bradford there was sound evidence that this had contributed to a 25% reduction in the numbers of young people in the NEET category and in both areas there was evidence of

learners on the courses progressing to full-time or work-based learning. The CG6 development in Gateshead also developed post-16 provision in 11-16 schools which helped to raise post-16 participation rates.

64. Much of the work done on 14-19 progression focused upon the development of pathways within particular occupational sectors. Examples included the focus upon construction in Durham, health and social care in Islington, motor vehicle mechanics in Nottingham and digital media in Coventry.

65. On progression at 19+ the picture remained very much as reported in our second evaluation report. This was priority for only a minority of pathfinders and where it was pursued was almost always related to progression to higher education and carried out in collaboration with Aim Higher projects. The exception to this pattern was the Tower Hamlets Pathfinder which had an explicit commitment to promote progression into work at the end of the Skills4Retail programme. The employability skills which were built into the programme were designed to equip the learners with skills which would make them attractive permanent employees. The Pathfinder had ensured that through the Skills4Retail programme learners were placed with companies with a strong commitment to training and thus it was expected that those progressing to employee status would continue to benefit from in-house training and may have been offered the opportunity to progress to a level 3 apprenticeship.

66. In conclusion, the 14-19 Pathfinders have contributed significantly to the strengthening of 14-19 progression routes. There is now widespread recognition that courses and activities planned at 14-16 must lead to progression at 16-19. The much closer links between schools, colleges and other post-16 providers were crucial in this development.

67. An important consequence of this development was the introduction of relatively clearly differentiated routes or pathways from age 14 in schools. For example, one school in its year 9 options booklet presented three routes, 'Green', 'Red' and 'Blue'. The Green route focused on 'traditional' GCSEs including a modern foreign language; the Red route on applied GCSEs and the Blue route emphasised NVQs offered at college sites. Students were informed that: 'The route that you will follow will be decided after your interview in school and will be based upon prior attainment and assessment criteria'. In similar fashion the Lewisham Pathfinder identified five pathways: Academic Pathway (GCSE and Accelerated AS); Applied Pathway (5 GCSEs + Applied GCSE/GNVQ/BTEC); Vocational Pathway (BTEC/GNVQ + specialised curriculum); Work Related Pathway; Pre-vocational Pathway. Similar developments were noted in many other pathfinders and individual schools.

68. This approach represented a clear move away from the largely common 14-16 curriculum promoted from the middle of the 1980s and given statutory force by the 1988 National Curriculum to a considerably more differentiated curriculum. It marks a continuation and acceleration of the trend started by the revision of the National Curriculum from the early 1990s. This shift raises fundamental questions about access to areas of knowledge, about the value and meaning of breadth and balance in curriculum, about the balance between choice and compulsion and about the aims and values which inform the curriculum. We return to these issues briefly in the final section of the report.

5. SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN THE 14-19 PHASE

Key points

- Explores the significance of learner identities and learning careers.
- Describes the variable progress in implementing Individual Learning Plans and outlines developmental work in some pathfinders on the use of e-portfolios
- Reviews progress in the development of Information, Advice and Guidance and raises questions about the extent of changes in institutional practices.

69. It has been widely recognised that the curricular changes described in the previous section have placed a high premium on supporting learners as they make choices prior to entering the 14-19 phase, as they progress through it and as they exit the phase. The extension of the sites at which learning takes place and the modes which are employed has also required increased support for learners as they progress through the 14-19 phase and not only at specific formal choice points.

70. Within the 14-19 Pathfinders these issues were expected to be addressed through the development of enhanced information, advice and guidance which would support learners in making the more varied and complex choices which would be on offer. Linking with this was the development of Individual Learning Plans through which students would be encouraged to reflect upon their learning and plan their next steps in learning.

71. Before we proceed to describe findings on these issues from the third year evaluation it is worth placing them in a broader context of research on learner identities and learner careers (Ball et al., 2000; Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000; Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Yates,

2004). The essence of this research is that students have perceptions of themselves as learners. For example, they might see themselves as excellent or failing learners; with the growth in the popularity of learning styles inventories they may see themselves as cognitive, kinaesthetic or holistic learners; they may see themselves as learners who perform well in formal examinations or on coursework assessment. Learning identities are not fixed but may be influenced by a whole range of in- and out-of-school experiences. They also interact with other identities – for example, gender, ethnicity, social class and lifestyle identities. The learning identity gives rise to a learning career – a term which can be both descriptive in describing what learning has been experienced and prescriptive in providing a framework to plan what learning should be undertaken in future. Some students have clearly defined learning careers, for example: successfully to complete a large number of traditional GCSEs, obtain four top-grade A-levels and proceed to a prestigious university; to seek out opportunities for vocational learning at the earliest possibility, leave full-time education at 16 and undertake an apprenticeship in the family business. The research reveals that for most students learning careers will be much vaguer than these examples and for many their learning identities may not translate into any sense of a learning career at all. It follows from this that notions of routes, pathways and progression may be much less specific for these young people, indeed may have little meaning for some.

72. The point of this analysis is that students perceptions of themselves as learners and what expectations they have of learning will fundamentally affect the ways in which they respond to the broader range of learning opportunities which the 14-19 reform process is opening up. The research suggests that the provision of information, advice and guidance is likely to be necessary but not sufficient in supporting students. Support processes will need to engage with the learning identities and perceptions of learning careers held by students, respond to

these through the provision of information and curriculum activities but also challenge and possibly disrupt them (as much for learners who see themselves on a straight road to university or into a family business as for those who have no sense of direction), although this raises fundamental ethical questions about the purposes of information, advice, guidance and student support.

73. This analysis, and the research which stands behind it, has implications for the forms and processes of support and guidance of learners in the 14-19 phase to which we return at the end of this section.

The development of Individual Learning Plans

74. ILPs have the potential to stimulate and support the sort of reflection and planning on learning which is implied by the analysis above. However, as we have reported previously, progress in the implementation of ILPs has been patchy across the pathfinders and this was confirmed when coordinators were asked for their estimations of progress in the third year. These are presented in the table below:

	More than expected progress	As expected	Less than expected	Not included in proposal
Development of ILPs	8	10	7	2

75. Thus despite the lower response rate to the survey more coordinators reported less than expected progress than in 2004. One coordinator commented that: "Heads do not see the contribution which ILPs make to raising achievement. It's not a big priority for them", another commented on "Lack of ownership by county schools; there appeared to be a feeling that the ILP model was being imposed".

76. Where progress was being made however, a key feature was the development of on-line ILPs or portfolios. These were reported in more than ten pathfinders. A variety of models were being used. Most had been purchased from commercial providers, although some were being developed locally. The e-portfolios typically included sets of exercises designed to help students identify learning working styles, personal skills and attributes as well as record their achievements, interests, aspirations and learning aims. Thus in terms of the analysis above the e-portfolio was a space in which students could construct and display their learner identities and learning careers. E-portfolios could also link to other on-line resources such as the Fast Tomato careers package, on-line prospectuses and careers information.

77. One of the great advantages of on-line ILPs was that they offered 'anytime, anywhere' access for students with home computers. In the case studies where e-portfolios were being developed they were still in the very early stages and had hardly been used with students. Their introduction raised issues of access for students without home computers, although it was suggested that after hours access to school and college computers would alleviate any difficulties. More fundamentally it was recognised that more work needed to be done on ways to integrate the use of the e-portfolios with institutional guidance and support programmes. It was argued that the use of e-portfolios would only reach their potential for supporting 14-19 learners if they were combined with effective face-to-face support from school or college staff and Connexions personal advisers. This blended support was likely to be particularly significant for learners with fragile learning identities.

The development of information, advice and guidance

78. IAG continued to have a high profile within the pathfinders and in the unfunded partnerships which we visited. Pathfinder coordinators' assessment of progress in the third year was as follows:

	More than expected progress	As expected	Less than expected	Not included in proposal
Development of IAG	6	18	5	0

79. A great deal of activity was reported by coordinators. One feature of the third year was the development of comprehensive on-line prospectuses for both 14-16 and post-16 courses in several pathfinders. The 'anytime, anywhere' characteristic of these on-line resources had the potentially radical effect of making access to area-wide course much more easily available to students, and conversely of limiting any possible gatekeeper actions by institutions currently attended by them. A small number of pathfinders had gone further and instituted on-line application procedures. The New Forest consortium of the Hampshire pathfinder had developed a relatively small scale but very effective on-line process for 14-16 courses. By the simple expedient of only accepting on-line applications they had ensured that the system was widely used. In Coventry there are plans to develop an on-line post-16 application process covering Coventry and Warwickshire. Within Coventry this development is most advanced in the North-East Federation. Here a centralised application process is being linked to the federation website, to the Connexions website and to individual school and college on-line prospectuses. This had the potential to make the entitlement in principle of learners to access information about all post-16 provision in the area a much more realistic practical possibility.

80. Across the pathfinders and other partnerships a great deal of IAG activity was reported including the publication of paper-based prospectuses, taster events, roadshows, contributions to school option

events, the production of CDs and DVDs and a great deal of printed material. What was less certain was the extent to which this activity was linked in to mainstream school and college information, advice and guidance processes and the work of careers teachers, Connexions personal advisers and subject teachers. There was little or no evidence that there had been significant increases in the time and other resources available for IAG work, especially in the schools. Also, while there were exceptions, overall there was limited evidence for staff development activities to update the knowledge of school and college staff and Connexions advisers. Coordinators and others involved in IAG frequently reported that practice was highly varied across the schools and therefore the extent to which the overall quality and quantity of IAG has been raised remains extremely difficult to ascertain.

81. Overall progress in both the development of ILPs and in IAG appeared to be quite patchy. There was no real sense that IAG in most schools had undergone a substantial change to match the changes in the curriculum brought by the 14-19 Pathfinders. However, school participants tended to be quite sanguine about the provision of IAG and where concern was expressed this was more likely to come from staff outside the schools such as Connexions staff or pathfinder team members. The methodology employed in this evaluation with its broad focus did not provide sufficiently detailed data to allow reliable judgements on the adequacy of IAG.

82. On ILPs there was a considerable amount of development work in some partnerships (although little or none in others) but there were few examples of the extensive implementation of learning plans. Where they were used with students this tended to be through relatively small scale pilot projects. Thus the feasibility of the large scale introduction of ILPs into schools, colleges and training providers remains open to question.

6. SUSTAINING AND PROMOTING 14-19 LEARNING

Key points

- Provides an overview of sustainability in the pathfinder and partnership areas.
- Identifies strategic vision and commitment; local strategic leadership; local organisational and collaborative mechanisms; the work of networking professionals; funding; capacity and the interplay of collaboration and institutional autonomy as key factors in effective working and sustainability.
- Describes arrangements for disseminating the work of the pathfinders.
- Considers issues in the transfer and scaling-up of successful practice.

83. Sustainability was a key theme of the third year evaluation and in this section we report upon the extent to which developments in the pathfinder and partnership areas were being sustained and the key factors which contributed to effective working and were therefore important for sustainability.

84. This section also addresses more briefly issues of replicability, transferability and the scaling-up of developments. In terms of the overall development of the 14-19 phase these are important issues because the 14-19 Pathfinder programme operated only in a minority of areas and therefore any systemic effects will depend upon the extent to which any gains can be extended to other areas.

Sustainability in the pathfinder areas

85. Both the 2005 survey and the case study visits to the seven phase one pathfinders took place after the end of the main pathfinder funding. We were therefore able to explore the extent to which developments had been sustained or not sustained at that stage.

86. The balance was very strongly in favour of sustainability. Developments which had not been sustained tended to be peripheral to the main thrust of the pathfinders. Typical examples included: some accelerated learning in Coventry and Hertfordshire; tasters and simulations in Doncaster; vocational training at an agricultural showground in Somerset; gifted and talented provision in Warwickshire; short courses in Shropshire; some work placements in North Lincolnshire.

87. Major developments such as the broadening of the curriculum in terms of the sites and modes of learning had been largely sustained as had the development of area prospectuses and, although rather more patchily, the enhancement of learning planning and the provision of information, advice and guidance. Underpinning these changes was the development of collaboration and partnership and all coordinators stressed that relationships, organisational arrangements and ways of working which had been established through pathfinders (and other 14-19 initiatives) had very largely been sustained.

88. Of course, this healthy picture of sustainability was not surprising given that pathfinder funding had only just ceased and institutions and partnerships would at a very minimum wish to guarantee that students who had started on programmes and courses e.g. in year 10 or year 12, would at least be supported complete these. Equally it would have been very surprising if collaborative relationships built up over two or three years had suddenly collapsed. More problematic and significant was the sustaining of developments in the medium and longer term. As one coordinator put it: "The acid test will be to ask the question in five years time - what remains of that which pathfinder started?".

89. We turn now to consider the key factors which contributed to effective working and are therefore likely to influence the sustainability of 'that which pathfinder started' in the medium and longer term.

Strategic vision and commitment

90. The establishment and maintenance of a strong, shared local strategic vision and high level commitment to developing the 14-19 phase was one factor in which was identified as sustaining pathfinder developments. Such vision provided direction for the curricular developments and the glue which held together collaborative arrangements. Vision could be established around strong 'brands' such as the Knowsley Collegiate, the Southwark Guarantee or the Kingswood Partnership. It could be built around strong organisational structures such as the Coventry federations or the CG6 in Gateshead. It could emerge through identification with broader patterns of local regeneration as in Sheffield and Nottingham. It was sometimes a response to adversity, for example a critical area wide inspection report or poor examination results.

91. The development and sustenance of local vision and commitment was also influenced by national policies. Generally over the three years of the evaluation there was local recognition of national consistency in the promotion of 14-19, especially since the publication of *14-19: opportunity and excellence* (DfES, 2003). This had helped convince participants that the national focus upon 14-19 was not a passing fad but an enduring policy emphasis which would need to be attended to. This was strengthened by the commitment of national funding to 14-19, not only through the 14-19 Pathfinders but through other national projects, especially the Increased Flexibility programme. The 14-19 Pathfinders programme was particularly significant because of the breadth of the approach which was encouraged encompassing curriculum across the 14-19 phase, information advice and guidance and collaboration and

partnership. More than other, narrower, 14-19 initiatives the pathfinder promoted the development of a broad, strategic vision.

92. However, there was some criticism that in 2005 the DfES had, as one participant put it "taken their eye off the ball" as far as 14-19 was concerned. For some this was related to what they saw as the 'rejection' of the Tomlinson group proposals, more significant though was what another participant described as "an unfortunate hiatus" between the publication of the 14-19 White Paper and the 14-19 Implementation Plan. This was reflected in uncertainties about post-pathfinder funding but more generally in what some saw as a loss of impetus in 14-19 policy. In some local areas there was concern that attention was switching to the establishment of Children's Trusts and the Building Schools for the Future programme and that 14-19 was not being given sufficient emphasis within these developments.

93. At the end of 2005 however, there was increasing engagement with specialised Diplomas and functional skills development and several pathfinders were looking for opportunities to become involved in these processes. The reiteration the entitlement of every young person to have access to the fourteen diplomas at each of three levels also appeared to have reinforced the continued importance of collaboration.

Local strategic leadership

94. Local strategic leadership was key in establishing and sustaining vision and commitment. The 14-19 context required particular forms of leadership because the policy levers which could be wielded were restricted and institutions exercised considerable autonomy. Leadership therefore involved persuasion, understanding of the local context, strong relationships and an ability to read and exploit the broader national context. The ability to access and integrate different initiatives and funding streams and shape them to local circumstances was crucial.

95. Where local leadership was vested was of lesser importance than whether it was present, and given the need to promote collaboration among a wide range of autonomous partners, leadership was thus collective rather than individual. In many of the case studies local authorities played important roles in establishing strategic directions. Examples included Lewisham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Norfolk, Coventry and Knowsley. In these areas, and others, the local authorities were seen as playing a vital role in mediating individual institutional interests, helping to obtain and distribute resources and provide a relatively neutral perspective on planned developments. Local LSCs varied in their involvement. They took the lead in some partnerships, for example, in Southwark, Hampshire and Bradford. In others they worked closely with the local authorities. Elsewhere the local LSCs were seen as semi-detached partners, distant from the developmental activities of partnerships.

96. The development of strategic leadership was most uncertain in the case studies where the pathfinders were led by individual institutions or private sector partners, where there was less evidence for the integration of the pathfinder developments with other initiatives. This lack of integration was also evident in pathfinders where local authority responsibilities for the management of schools had been contracted to private sector companies. In these areas the focus in the schools sector was very strongly upon school improvement 5-16 and particularly upon raising test and examination results. The contractors had no responsibility or targets for post-16 education and this was reflected in the ways in which priorities were decided and resources allocated. Leadership for 14-19 in these areas was thus vested elsewhere and with somewhat different priorities which were sometimes not closely articulated with the school improvement measures being prioritised within the schools sector.

Local organisational and collaborative mechanisms

97. Strategic vision, commitment and leadership was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the establishment and sustainability of pathfinder and other 14-19 developments. The vision needed to be translated into practice through operational leadership and activities and this depended upon robust and effective organisational arrangements and mechanisms.

98. A key element of this was the ability to ensure that strategic decisions were carried through into individual institutions. Talking about this one coordinator commented: "It works well here because the people on the executive group have the authority to make things stick in their own institutions, so once we decide something we know it is going to happen".

99. Strategic decisions which were widely supported could nevertheless fail to have impact upon practice or be sustained if the operational steps needed to make them work were not taken. Pathfinder teams and groups were important in undertaking these practical activities and thus driving and implementing change. Examples included federation managers in Cumbria, Hampshire, Coventry and Bradford; strand coordinators in Gateshead and Sheffield; enterprise development managers in Nottingham; increased flexibility coordinators in East Devon and programme managers in Tower Hamlets. The potential scale of such organisational infrastructures was illustrated by the South Gloucestershire Pathfinder had a full-time and part-time staff of ten to support the different strands of the partnership.

100. A further facet of the development of local collaboration was the establishment of a wide variety of working groups which supported pathfinder and other developments. These were typically composed of representatives from partners and addressed particular themes within

local partnerships. They often performed an informal staff development role and were important in translating strategic decisions into practice and also in feeding back and influencing the strategic direction of partnerships.

101. For medium and longer term sustainability key issues concerned how far it was desirable and feasible to maintain the collaborative infrastructures of people and groups which had been established. This was partly a matter of funding since pathfinder team posts which were to be retained would need to be funded, while release time would have to be funded for those attending development groups. Judgements also had to be made as to how far the developments which had been started were now self-sustaining without the need for an extensive infrastructure. These were judgements for individual schools and colleges but also for local authorities and local LSCs who had to decide which posts could and should be retained. We return to some of the financial implications of this analysis below.

Sustaining networking professionals

102. Closely connected to the establishment of an organisational infrastructure has been the development of a cadre of professionals across the 14-19 Pathfinders skilled as hybrid professionals (Atkinson et al., 2002) or partnership champions (Audit Commission, 1998) which we dub networking professionals. These are the staff who make up the pathfinder teams described above as well as those in institutions who had cross-institutional and cross-partnership working responsibilities.

103. These professionals were skilled at promoting and facilitating collaboration. The complex institutional context for 14-19 development required them to have credibility and trust with a wide range of stakeholders, authority and access to resources, skills of diplomacy and persuasion and local and national knowledge of the 14-19 scene and of

the particular facets of development with which they are concerned. They needed to be able to cope with frequent ambiguity and uncertainty in which both goals and procedures were unclear.

104. A sustainability issue for the pathfinder partnerships is thus how they can preserve, deploy and continue to develop the skills of those staff who have spent two or three years making 14-19 Pathfinders work. In this context it has been argued that one of the main legacies of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative of the 1980s was the way knowledge, skills and understanding inhered in the thinking and ways of working of staff who had been involved as project and school coordinators, advisory teachers and so on (we came across many individuals in 14-19 Pathfinders who had been involved in TVEI earlier in their careers and regarded the experience as important in developing their understanding and skills) although it may be that more could have been done to systematically exploit the networking skills developed through TVEI. The nurturing of some of those staff who have gained experience of collaborative working through the 14-19 Pathfinders might be seen as one of the challenges for 14-19 development as the work goes forward.

105. Staff development for these networking professionals was very much 'on-the-job', involving informal sharing and learning with colleagues. We are not aware of any formal training which was made available for these staff and this is an area which might be looked at as the 14-19 reform agenda outlined in the Implementation Plan goes forward and partnerships are established in all areas.

Sustainability and funding

106. In discussing sustainability in the partnerships funding almost always emerged as the most significant factor for the participants. They

focused upon issues such as the costs of: facilitating collaboration; maintaining posts; transport and teaching of courses.

107. Costing issues in 14-19 Pathfinders were thoroughly explored in a study by York Consulting in 2005 (Rix & Cowen, 2006) and therefore will not be addressed in detail here. The purposes of the York Consulting study were to establish the costs associated with collaborative development and delivery of pathfinders. The study provided new and important information about the types of costs, influencing factors and likely levels of costs.

108. The main findings from the study are summarised below, followed by consideration of the ways in which the partnerships are looking to financially sustain the developments which have been undertaken.

109. The York Consulting study identified three main forms of costing within the pathfinders. These were: (i) the costs of generic collaborative working; (ii) the costs of the development of collaborative provision; (iii) the costs of the delivery of collaborative provision. One of the main features of the study was that it illustrated that pathfinder costs were extremely complex and varied because of the wide remit of the programme, the differing sizes of the partnerships and differing scales of operation within them. Due to this wide-ranging variability, and the different ways in which costs were estimated and presented across the fifteen pathfinders studied in detail, the study identified indicative estimates of likely average costs, taking into account the range of variability factors which impacted on actual costs incurred in specific contexts.

110. In the fifteen case studies visited for the costing study indicative estimates of cost for generic collaborative working varied from £61,832 to £832,300 per year. York Consulting was able to model annual costs for

small, medium and large partnerships - these were £198,000, £312,000 and £476,000. On a rough rule of thumb these equated to annual costs of £100,000 for central funding and £10,000 for each institution. The study concluded that these costs might reduce over time as collaborative working matured but that many of the costs would need to be sustained on an annual basis.

111. Development costs included the provision of learning materials and the planning and introduction of new programmes and courses. Indicative annual costs provided by the pathfinders for these activities varied between £560 and £242,250 depending upon scale and scope of the development activity. These costs would also reduce over time, probably by more than the costs for generic collaborative working, but there would also be some continuing costs for review and further development activities.

112. Costs of delivery also varied widely depending upon the nature of the activities. Teaching costs varied between £29 and £65 per hour. In their study of the costs of the IF programme York Consulting had estimated the total cost of the delivery of an Applied GCSE Health and Social Care Course at between £1,377 and £1,716 per student per year and of an NVQ Engineering at between £2,123 and £2,755.

113. Our less systematic exploration of funding in our case studies suggested that the typical charges (i.e. that paid to a provider) per student for an off-site one-day-per-week course conducted in a college for 14-16 year olds were typically around £550 - £600 per student per year. Training provider charges were generally somewhat higher. Charges at these levels constituted a disproportionate element of the Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) allocated to schools per student. At the more expensive training providers costs for one day per week for a year could account for 50% of the AWPU. The Knowsley Pathfinder estimated that

even if the AWPU or a proportionate amount were to 'follow the learner' there would still, on average, be a funding gap of between 20% and 30%. Even at these levels of charging many colleges and training providers argued that they were not charging full economic costs for their provision and were therefore offering a hidden subsidy.

114. There were other costs of collaborative delivery. Transport was particularly significant with a mean cost per person for weekly travel to provision of £3.20. The cost of a 'round trip' varied from £0.30 to £6.30 with the cheapest option of using a school mini-bus costing an average of £1.22 per person per round trip.

115. The costing study suggested that there was scope to make cost savings through collaborative arrangements and indeed this was well recognised in many partnerships through their experience of the rationalisation of post-16 courses. The South Gloucestershire partnership, for example, had saved around £80,000 per year through its sharing of level 3 courses. At 14-16 however, savings were more difficult to achieve because programmes and courses were frequently bolt-on additions to existing school provision and brought slightly smaller teaching groups across a timetable rather than a reduction in the number of whole groups. York Consulting emphasised that the potential for cost savings varied considerably depending upon the curriculum and timetable model which was adopted. Cost savings also had to be offset against additional costs of collaborative delivery. E-learning was proposed in some pathfinders as a means of reducing transport costs. However, the study found that the scope for achieving this while maintaining the authenticity of vocational learning was circumscribed.

116. Thus an important finding of the study was that while the generic and development costs of collaborative working might reduce over time (and by how much would depend upon the scope, scale and nature of the

collaborative working) and be offset by some cost savings there would always be additional costs from collaborative working.

117. Partnerships were taking a number of actions to ensure financial sustainability with the end of pathfinder funding. The first of these was to continue to access alternative funding sources. Both ESF and AWI Action Plan funding continued to be available in some areas and some local LSCs had other discretionary funds which were made available. The Increased Flexibility and Young Apprenticeships programmes also continue. Some local authorities were also taking on some costs, especially the funding of some pathfinder team posts.

118. Some institutions were also contributing a greater proportion of the costs. This took two main forms. In some partnerships they agreed to jointly fund posts. Examples here included: pathfinder team members in South Gloucestershire; federation managers in Coventry; the appointment of a 14-19 manager in Norfolk. In some partnerships institutions also agreed to provide some funding to pay for the release of staff involved in working groups, curriculum development groups and so on. In these ways institutions committed themselves to funding at least some of the partnership infrastructures which had been established through 14-19 Pathfinders.

119. The second main way in which institutions were contributing to the financial sustainability of pathfinder and other partnership developments was by taking on a proportion of the direct costs of collaborative delivery. In several partnerships a process of gradual reduction of direct subsidy of off-site teaching costs was introduced and schools funded an increasing proportion of the cost from mainstream budgets. Alongside this development there was greater awareness of the possibilities of cost savings and more schools were building off-site 14-16 provision into curriculum structures and timetables. Along with this some schools also

acknowledged the need to adjust staffing structures to take account of the changes brought by collaborative provision, although they were proceeding gradually and cautiously in this restructuring.

120. For the future, in addition to the continuation of existing sources of additional funding, partnerships were also anticipating accessing the LSC-controlled flexible funding pot. The Dedicated Schools Grant for 2006/8 also identified 14-16 practical learning as one of five priorities to be specially supported and allocated £110m over the two years although the details of how this money would ring-fenced were still uncertain.

121. Thus funding arrangements remained complex. The pathfinder experience and the work done by York Consulting had helped to clarify the costs, but there remained wide variations because of the different size, scope and scale of the partnerships. There continued to be a number of national pots through which collaborative 14-19 working could be funded and there was some evidence that schools were committing more of their own resources, while support also came from local authorities and local LSCs. Whether, what one coordinator referred to as this "cocktail of funding" would be sufficient to maintain levels of activity in the pathfinder areas remained a moot point.

Sustainability and capacity

122. Sustainability was also dependent upon the existence of capacity to meet the demand for new sites and modes of learning. There were limits on the capacity and accessibility of vocational learning opportunities. This particularly applied to vocational areas such as construction, motor vehicle studies, hairdressing and catering where specialist facilities were required. There was usually strong demand for these facilities for full-time post-16 courses and therefore colleges and training providers sometimes found it difficult to accommodate 14-16 year olds. In earlier reports we highlighted some of the approaches to increasing capacity

which included: the development of small skills centres; increased use of training providers; expanding school-based vocational facilities; the use of mobile vocational units; the development of dedicated 14-16 centres in colleges; greater use of work placements.

123. These approaches had expanded capacity but partnerships were limited in the extent to which they were able to estimate future demand since this would to a large extent be dependent upon student choices. Thus matching capacity to learner demand remained a difficult task and in reality was more likely to involve tailoring demand to fit capacity.

Sustainability and institutional autonomy

124. Underpinning many of the issues explored in this section are questions concerning the interplay of collaboration and institutional autonomy which was a key factor in pathfinder practice and is likely to have a significant impact upon sustainability. One case study participant responding to a question about sustainability, funding and capacity stated: "If they (the partners) want to find the money and provide the places they can do it. It depends on how important they see collaboration. It's fine talking about vision and commitment but the real test is whether they put their own resources into it rather than into something else".

125. This was perhaps over-stating the case, since undoubtedly institutions are affected in different ways and to different extents by budgetary and capacity constraints. But it expresses an important truth about the sustainability of 14-19 Pathfinder developments. Collaborative working is fundamentally dependent upon the voluntary participation of partners. Policy makers can deploy various incentives and levers which make collaboration more or less likely but it remains open to institutions to engage or not engage with collaboration (there may be a distinct reduction in this degree of voluntarism when the fourteen specialised

Diplomas are fully developed since it is difficult to envisage any individual institution meeting the entitlement of access for all 14-19 years to all diplomas at all levels). Also it should not be assumed that because an area applied for pathfinder status all institutions were committed to collaborative working. In practice very few institutions in the case study areas had chosen not to engage at all with collaborative development but many had chosen to engage selectively. This selectivity manifested itself in many different ways, for example: the numbers and types of students attending off-site provision; the aspects of off-site provision which were accessed; participation in curriculum development activities; distribution of area prospectuses; accessing of e-learning activities and so on. For many forms of participation there was some sort of trade-off. Examples included: changes in school timetables in order to access off-site learning; loss of learning time due to transport to off-site learning; subsidisation of 14-16 learning by predominantly post-16 institutions; use of supply staff to cover for those involved in development activities. Individual institutions had to make judgements about the value of these sorts of trade-offs.

126. Not only did these judgements vary between institutions but they also varied over time. Thus changes in the funding or quality of off-site provision, for example, affected the balance of judgement for individual institutions. Relationships between institutions also changed. Competition between them might increase or decrease with consequent effects upon collaboration. Institutions themselves also changed - there might be a change of headteacher or principal or other key staff, an adverse or favourable inspection report or changes in financial position all or any of which might affect the ways in which they engaged with collaborative endeavours.

127. Decisions by individual institutions could have collective effects. For example, decisions to withdraw from collaborative provision could

significantly reduce the cost-effectiveness of such provision making it ultimately unviable for all. Similarly engagement or non-engagement in some collaborative arenas could have an impact in others. For example, successful collaboration in post-16 provision provided a springboard in several areas for collaboration in 14-16 provision.

128. Institutions may also wish to engage in collaboration with different partners in different aspects of development, thus giving rise to overlapping partnerships. They might also wish to engage in collaboration with partners outside the geographical or administrative boundaries of a particular partnership. For example, an individual institution might have naturally occurring closer links with another institution in another local authority than with other institutions in its own authority but such links may not be acknowledged or supported by initiatives such as 14-19 Pathfinders or the IF programme. Again the prevalence of voluntarism meant that institutions could decide to engage in multiple partnerships or none, but the individual decisions taken would have a collective impact.

129. Thus the sustainability of pathfinder developments in the medium and longer term is substantially dependent upon decisions taken by individual institutions. These decisions will be influenced by the ways in which the institutions respond to national and policy drivers, the particular local contexts in which they operate and the values and priorities which they bring to bear in judging what is in the best interests of their learners and the institution itself.

Disseminating and replicating pathfinder developments

130. As noted above the 14-19 Pathfinder programme operated within a minority of local authorities and in some of the authorities in which it was located it operated in only some areas. Therefore if the programme is to have a wider effect on 14-19 education and training there is a need for any lessons learned to be widely disseminated.

131. One way in which this could be achieved was through influencing national 14-19 policy and although this was outside the remit of the evaluation there was evidence that the pathfinder experience had informed the Tomlinson Report, the 14-19 White Paper and the 14-19 Implementation Plan.

132. For the individual pathfinders however, the initial task was to disseminate within their own local areas as well as more widely. A range of strategies were employed including conferences, websites, publications and staff development events. Three regions – the north-west, West Midlands and London obtained central funding to employ Regional Dissemination Managers (RDMs). These managers were in post for about a year (although not all of them worked full-time) and were charged with disseminating the work of the pathfinders within their regions. They worked in somewhat different ways with different emphases which reflected their personal styles and the roles which they were given by their regional pathfinder organisations.

133. The RDMs and others involved in dissemination and replication stressed that these are complex processes. Good practice cannot simply be copied from one context to another but must be recontextualised and adapted by those taking it on, as also emphasised by Fielding et al (2005) in their study of the transfer of good practice. For this reason Fielding et al preferred the term 'joint practice development' to 'transfer of practice'. The north-west RDM had been struck by the very wide variations of awareness of the 14-19 reform agenda among the institutions he visited. The RDMs agreed that these sort of variations made it important to disseminate broad principles and procedures although sufficient detail needed to be provided so that recipients could relate to their own circumstances. The RDMs and others who spoke about dissemination favoured what one called "soft dissemination" by which was meant

personalised, face-to-face dissemination to 14-19 groups within partnerships or individual institutions. This sort of process gave greater scope for 'vicarious generalisation' (Stake, 1980) through which recipients could gain understanding of what had been done and envisage ways in which such developments might be applied in their own circumstances and contexts. The drawback to this approach was that it was labour intensive and could only reach limited numbers of those potentially interested in 14-19 development.

134. The 14-19 Implementation Plan contains provision and funding for 'learning visits' to areas which are thought to have made most progress in 14-19 development and this mechanism is intended to support continued dissemination of developments undertaken through pathfinders.

135. The DfES has also contributed to the dissemination of pathfinder practice through its 14-19 Gateway website. This now contains a large array of information on 14-19 development. On pathfinders this includes the manual of good practice, other good practice case studies, video clips of pathfinder practice, national evaluation reports and the study of equality issues undertaken by the University of Exeter. Annual and termly reports and contact details of individual pathfinders can also be found on the website. This represents a substantial corpus of information about the ways in which the 14-19 pathfinders worked. We have no information about how frequently this is accessed by 14-19 practitioners or how it is used.

136. Another replication issue concerned the scaling-up of pathfinder developments, often initially within partnerships themselves. This is well-recognised in studies of pilot schemes and was recognised by Fielding et al (2005) in their transferability study. Pilot studies can often be highly effective when carried out with small groups of carefully selected participants, highly committed and expert teachers and with relatively

lavish resources. However, great care has to be taken when scaling-up such programmes that the very conditions which brought about the success are not lost. Partnerships which had scaled-up small projects developed staff development programmes, procedures for inducting new institutions and protocols governing the ways in which students were to be selected and the operation of the projects in order to address these issues.

137. As the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative recedes into history and other developments in 14-19 come to fore it will inevitably become more difficult to identify specific aspects which have been replicated since these will become inextricably entangled with newer developments located in different contexts. Therefore to look for systemic effects from the programme may be neither feasible or desirable. However, based on experience of earlier initiatives and programmes it is likely that elements of pathfinder practice and thinking will become embedded in 14-19 education both in the pathfinder areas and others as well as becoming internalised in the thinking and practice of those individuals and institutions which were involved.

7. SUMMING UP 14-19 PATHFINDERS: LEGACIES, KEY FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Key points

- Identifies ten key legacies of the pathfinder areas.
- Identifies eight key factors for effective working, sustainability and replicability.
- Discusses ways in which the pathfinder experience can contribute to the establishment of 14-19 partnerships throughout England; the development and publication of on-line area prospectuses; the development of specialised Diplomas and the development of multi-agency collaborative working in local areas.

138. In this final section we identify some of the main legacies in the pathfinder and partnership areas, summarise some of the key factors which have led to effective practice and draw out some of the implications for the future development of the 14-19 phase as outlined in the 14-19 White Paper and the Implementation Plan.

Legacies and key factors for effective practice⁵

139. In thinking about the legacies of the 14-19 pathfinders it is useful to distinguish between specific developments on the ground in the partnerships and the more general understandings which have been developed through the programme. It is important to acknowledge that the legacies which are summarised below are not solely products of the 14-19 pathfinders but of other programmes and initiatives and of the broader 14-19 reform agenda. This was confirmed by the existence of

⁵ In this section we draw upon our earlier evaluation work and especially our analysis of collaborative working which was presented in the second year evaluation report.

similar legacies in two of the three unfunded partnerships visited as part of the evaluation⁶ where many comparable developments had taken place. However, pathfinder funding had both accelerated development and supported it across a broader range of issues.

140. The key legacies in the pathfinder areas were:

- A growing and stronger emphasis on 14-19 as a coherent phase with clearly defined and appropriate progression routes (although with recognition of the structural divide at 16 which encompassed curriculum, qualifications, funding, staff conditions of service and, for many learners, an institutional divide. Indeed, for many young people the significance of age 16 was not that it was the possible mid-point of a 14-19 phase but that it marked the end of compulsory schooling).
- The emergence of the concept of a 14-19 entitlement in many areas (in a few partnerships this was made explicit but it was implicit in many others).
- Broader, more relevant curricula giving learners greater choice and access to a much wider range of sites and modes of learning leading to increasing curricular differentiation from age 14.
- The development of substantial collaborative arrangements frequently drawing in a wide range of partners and tackling a broad range of 14-19 issues.
- Illumination of the ways in which local responsiveness can be combined with central steering to produce change at local level.

⁶ We visited the Salford 14-19 partnership in the first and second years of the evaluation but were unable to return for the third year.

- The development of a variety of forms of innovative learning for some learners.
- The development of strategic, collaborative leadership within the structural complexities of the 14-19 phase and in the context of high levels of institutional autonomy.
- The establishment of organisational infrastructures which supported collaborative working.
- The development of staff with networking skills able to facilitate collaboration within the 14-19 phase.

141. These legacies gave rise to understanding of some of the key factors in achieving good practice in the 14-19 phase. These were:

- The importance of the interaction of policy levers and local contexts in developing collaborative working.
- The importance of strategic vision and being able to see the 'big picture' when developing broad-based collaboration, involving a wide range of partners.
- Ways of exercising leadership in order to build consensus and partnership which can be translated in practical activities.
- The need to establish a robust collaborative infrastructure with skilled staff in order to be able to translate strategic vision into operational activities.
- The need to be able to model and estimate more clearly the costs of various kinds of collaborative activities in order to inform decision-

making while incorporating understanding that achieving high levels of precision was not feasible.

- The importance of the effects of different institutional structures, interests and ethos upon collaborative development.
- The need to consider fundamental curricular principles in order to make deliberative rather than default decisions about curriculum provision and structure and progression routes.
- The need to understand students' learning identities, the ways in which these translate into learning careers and to consider the moral and practical implications of these for the structure of curriculum provision, the planning of learning and information, advice and guidance.

Looking forward – using the 14-19 Pathfinder experience to inform the next stages of development

142. To conclude this report we consider some of the key elements of the next stages in the 14-19 reform process and suggest ways in which these might be informed by the 14-19 Pathfinders. We structure this brief discussion around three central proposals within the 14-19 Implementation Plan and place these within the broader context of other current educational reform policies.

The establishment of 14-19 partnerships

143. The experience of 14-19 Pathfinders has much to contribute to the process of establishing 14-19 partnerships throughout England. For those charged with building partnerships many of the aspects highlighted above are relevant - strategic vision and leadership, establishment of a robust infrastructure, deployment of networking professionals to get things moving. But central to the whole process is an understanding of the local context and the ways in which policy levers can be used to maximise

those factors which enable collaboration and minimise those which constrain it. The 14-19 Pathfinder experience also has some lessons for central government about the need for consistent and constant messages about partnership across educational and other policy fields, about the selection and utilisation of appropriate policy levers and about the provision of realistic and assured levels of funding to support partnership working.

The development and publication of area prospectuses

144. Several pathfinder and other partnership areas have produced area-wide prospectuses and some are close to putting these on-line. These partnerships are in a position to provide advice on the processes and technical aspects of putting together an area prospectus and on ways in which this can be made accessible to students and parents. At a more fundamental level pathfinders also have experience of attending to the issues which arise around student entitlement and attempting to ensure that all students have access to all learning opportunities within a defined area. Pathfinders have also provided some insights into the implications of area prospectuses for information, advice and guidance processes.

The development of specialised Diplomas

145. Pathfinders have contributed very significantly to the development of vocational learning and have experience of a wide range of forms of such learning including courses accredited as NVOs, applied GCSEs, GNVQs, BTECs, AVCE and many other awards. They have greatly expanded both the sites at which learning takes place and the modes of learning which have been deployed. They have experience of the ways in which different sites and modes of learning interact in order to produce different forms of learning which appeal to different groups of learners.

146. All these experiences have the potential to make a fruitful contribution to the diploma development process. This, in turn, will help

in the continuing conceptualisation and operationalisation of personalised learning which requires matching the needs of individual learners to learning opportunities. If the new specialised Diplomas are to avoid adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach they will need to be designed to allow flexibility which will reflect the characteristics of the occupational sectors on which they are based, the local contexts in which they are implemented and the learning preferences of the students who will enrol on them.

Promoting policy and practice coherence in local contexts

147. Within the wider policy context the next few years will see the rapid development of children's services and the increase of accountability measures focused upon the Every Child Matters agenda. Simultaneously, in some areas, the Building Schools for the Future programme will get substantially underway. It is important that 14-19 development finds a place within these and other major areas of educational policy development for schools and colleges and that joined-up thinking in local contexts is promoted. Given the diversity of institutional arrangements and stakeholder interests, it is important that the work which is undertaken in terms of planning and provision is mutually supportive and driven by a common vision rather than being divisive or dominated by particular concerns or agendas. Some of the 14-19 Pathfinders, with experience of building partnerships among disparate partners, integrating different priorities and agendas and generating commitment to broad vision have the potential to make contributions to these local exercises in partnership building and working and to ensuring that 14-19 priorities are given due attention within them.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A., Doherty, P. & Kinder, K. (2002) *Multi-agency working: a detailed study*. Slough: NFER.
- Audit Commission. (1998) *A Fruitful Partnership: effective partnership working*. London: Audit Commission.
- Ball, S., Maguire, M. & Macrae, S. (2000) *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Bloomer, M. & Hodkinson, P. (2000) Learning Careers: continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26(5), 583-597.
- Dearing, R. (1993) *The National Curriculum and its Assessment*. York/London: NCC/SEAC.
- DfES. (2003) *14-19: opportunity and excellence*. London: DfES.
- DfES. (2004a) *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform: Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform*. London: DfES.
- DfES. (2004b) *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: putting people at the heart of public services*. London: DfES Cm 6272.
- DfES. (2005a) *14-19 Education and Skills*. London: HMSO Cm 6476.
- DfES. (2005b). *14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan*. London: DfES.
- DfES. (2005c). *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All: More choice for parents and pupils*. London: DfES.
- DfES. (2005d) *Youth matters*. London: DfES.
- Fielding, M., Bragg, S., Craig, J., Cunningham, I., Eraut, M., Gillinson, S., et al. (2005). *Factors Influencing the Transfer of Good Practice. Research Report 615*. London: DfES.
- Foskett, N. & Hemsley-Brown, J. (2001) *Choosing Futures: Young people's decision-making in education, training and careers markets*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Golden, S., Nelson, J., O'Donnell, L. & Morris, M. (2004) *Evaluation of Increased Flexibilities for 14-16 Year Olds: The First Year. Tesearch Report RR511*. London: DfES.

- Golden, S., O'Donnell, L., Benton, T. & Rudd, P. (2005) *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: Outcomes for the First Cohort. Research Report RR668*. London: DfES.
- Golden, S., O'Donnell, L. & Rudd, P. (2005) *Evaluation of the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds Programme: the Second Year. Research Report RR609*. London: DfES.
- Higham, J., Haynes, G., Wragg, C. & Yeomans, D. (2004) *14-19 Pathfinders: An Evaluation of the First Year. Research Report RR504*. London: DfES.
- Higham, J. & Yeomans, D. (2005) *Collaborative Approaches to 14-19 Provision: an Evaluation of the Second Year of the 14-19 Pathfinder Initiative. Research Report RR642*. London: DfES.
- HM Treasury. (2003). *Every Child Matters*. London: HM Treasury.
- LSC. (2004). *Increased Flexibility: Case Studies in Improving Practice*. Coventry: LSC.
- Ofsted. (2005). *Every child matters: Framework for the inspection of children's services*. London: Ofsted.
- Rix, M. & Cowen, G. (2006) *14-19 Pathfinder Costing Study. Research Report RW66*. London: DfES.
- Stake, R. (1980). The Case Study Method in Social Enquiry. In Simons, H. (Ed.), *Towards a Science of the Singular* (pp. 64-75). Norwich: Centre for Applied Research in Education.
- University of East Anglia. (2005). *Children's Trusts: Developing Integrated Services for Children in England*. London: DfES.
- Yates, L. (2004). *Creating Identities in the New Vocationalism: rhetoric, regulation, reproduction and repositioning in Australian schooling*. Paper presented at the BERA Annual Conference, Manchester.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
P.O. Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham
NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60
Online: www.dfespublications.gov.uk

© University of Leeds 2006

Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 1 84478 719 2
Ref No: RR737
www.dfes.go.uk/research