14-19 Pathfinders: An Evaluation of the First Year

Jeremy Higham, Gill Haynes,
Caroline Wragg and David Yeomans
University of Leeds
and
University of Exeter
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University of Leeds
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1. INTRODUCTION

Key points
♦ Reports on first year of Phase One pathfinders
♦ Focuses mainly on intentions, plans and early developments

1. This report on the national evaluation of the first year of the Phase One 14-19 pathfinders, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), describes the progress made by the twenty-five Phase One pathfinders and also a number of partnerships not funded through the pathfinder programme and raises key issues from the evaluation.

2. Following this brief introduction, the report is divided into five main sections. We begin by placing the 14-19 pathfinders in the wider context of the current 14-19 reform agenda and provide an overview of the Phase One pathfinders. This is followed by a description of the evaluation methodology detailing the data sources and the database upon which our findings are founded. The main section of the report then follows, with our account of the main evaluation findings. This is sub-divided into sections on Organisation, Curriculum Provision and Development, Targeting and Involvement of Young People and Supporting Young People. These sub-sections are further structured around a series of themes drawn from the wider context of 14-19 reform and, more specifically, the 2002-2003 14-19 Pathfinder prospectus. The following section draws out some of the key issues which have emerged from the evaluation. The report ends by outlining some directions for future evaluation.

3. It is important to acknowledge that since the majority of the data collection for this report took place in the second half of the 2002-2003 academic year and since the Phase One pathfinders did not begin operating until January 2003, we report mainly upon intentions, plans and early developments rather than upon changes which had taken place in student experience. However, particularly by the time of our case study work in the summer of 2003 and our second survey in the autumn, plans were well advanced and were beginning to be implemented. Also, as we shall show, the
pathfinders were often being used to take forward other national or local initiatives. Thus, despite the evaluation taking place at a relatively early stage of the 14-19 pathfinder initiative, the general directions taken by pathfinders developments were apparent. This early involvement of the national evaluation also opens up opportunities to continue to describe and analyse the development and shaping of the pathfinders in future evaluation reports.
2. THE 14-19 PATHFINDER INITIATIVE

Key points
♦ Part of larger process of 14-19 reform
♦ Links with other initiatives and programmes
♦ Extensive and ambitious aims and objectives
♦ Encourages diversity and local responsiveness

4. This section describes the main features of the pathfinder initiative and places it in the context of the wider 14-19 reform agenda. It includes an analysis of the proposals which came forward in response to the Pathfinder prospectus.

2.1 Policy context

5. The 14-19 pathfinders are part of a larger process of reforming the 14-19 phase of learning which was given particular emphasis first by the Green Paper 14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards (DfES, 2002), published in February 2002, then by the DfES response to the consultation in 14-19: opportunity and excellence (DfES, 2003a). The Green Paper proposed the introduction of 14-19 pathfinders which would test a variety of models of collaborative working which would help to secure the vision and principles for the 14-19 phase.

6. Following the Green Paper, the prospectus for Phase One of the 14-19 pathfinders was issued and partnerships were invited to submit proposals in September 2002. Following this, 25 Phase One pathfinders were selected and began operating from January 2003. In July 2003, 14 Phase Two pathfinders were announced. These began operating from September 2003.

7. There are a number of other initiatives and programmes which have implications for the 14-19 reform agenda and with which pathfinders are expected to link. These include Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Excellence Challenge, Diversity Pathfinders,
Enterprise Pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds programme (IFP), Partnerships for Progression and Entry to Employment (E2E). 14-19 pathfinders are also expected to contribute to broader local economic and social policy developments promoted by, for example, neighbourhood renewal projects and local strategic partnerships.

8. The importance of institutional collaboration in developing a flexible, coherent 14-19 phase has been a central feature of the reform agenda. Therefore pathfinders are required to work closely with a wide range of local partners including Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs), local education authorities, employers, colleges, schools, training providers, higher education institutions and Connexions. Pathfinders were also expected to show how they proposed to take account of the views of young people in developing and implementing their plans.

9. Paralleling the development of the pathfinders has been the work of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform. This was established as part of the outcome of the consultation on the Green Paper with a remit to put forward proposals for reform in order to achieve:

- greater coherence in 14-19 learning programmes and strengthened structure and content of full-time vocational programmes
- suitable 14-19 assessment arrangements
- a unified framework of qualifications.


11. This overview has served to illustrate the complex and developing policy environment within which the 14-19 pathfinders have been operating. The local circumstances and institutional arrangements within which pathfinders operate, with different combinations of institutions providing 14-19 learning, different histories of collaborative work, varying competitive pressures and a diverse range of socio-economic and educational contexts adds to this complexity. Pathfinders have been
encouraged to reflect local imperatives and circumstances within broad parameters and thus diversity has been encouraged within the initiative.

12. Within this policy environment, pathfinders have a key role in testing out new ways of working which will take the 14-19 reform agenda forward. It is intended that the pathfinders should help to provide a strong sense of direction for the 14-19 agenda, develop examples of good practice and raise key issues which will need to be tackled in order to take the reform process forward.

2.2 **Pathfinder aims and objectives**

13. The Green Paper indicated that pathfinders should:

- test out a range of ideas and discover new ones
- develop best practice in 14-19 education and training to guide the steps to, and pace of, a national roll-out
- see how 14-19 policy will fit with other policies, identify barriers to a coherent 14-19 phase and design ways to overcome them
- show that a coherent 14-19 phase can be achieved nationally in a variety of locations with different social circumstances and different mixes of schools and colleges.

14. The 14-19 Pathfinder prospectus elaborated on these objectives, emphasising choice and flexibility, clear progression routes from 14 to 19, increases in the amount and quality of work-related learning and opportunities to experience enterprise activity. Institutional collaboration was seen as the key to the achievement of many of these objectives, especially in the crucial area of increasing choice and flexibility in curriculum pathways from 14.
15. The prospectus indicated the types of areas in which it was hoped to run pathfinders. These included:

- areas already developing a coherent 14-19 phase using vocational qualifications and work-related learning
- areas (or institutions) suffering from multiple disadvantage and low levels of student attainment and progression
- areas with high levels of attainment
- rural areas.

16. It was stated that areas chosen would include those which are ethnically diverse and that at least one pathfinder should include a special school or schools.

17. The prospectus outlined the ways in which the pathfinders should be managed with further emphasis upon the importance of collaboration.

18. In its guidance the prospectus stressed the need for pathfinders to cover the whole of the 14-19 phase, address the needs of students throughout the ability range, include advice guidance and support and the development of individual learning plans. A number of indicative areas of development were further outlined including:

- the development of substantial programmes of vocational learning, including new GCSEs in vocational subjects
- combinations of AS, A2, AVCE and NVQ qualifications at advanced level
- opportunities for work-related learning at 14-16
- extension of work-based learning including enterprise activity
- the use of Student Apprenticeships as a basis for progression to Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)
- variations in the pace of learning
- effective approaches to working with a range of young people including those from ethnic minority groups, including Travellers, and the disadvantaged and disaffected
- work with Connexions Partnerships supporting effective advice and guidance in the 14-19 phase.
19. This summary of the aims and objectives of the 14-19 Pathfinders programme gives some indication of its wide scope, although with an emphasis on the promotion of vocational learning which reflected its centrality in the Green Paper. The clear intention of establishing a diverse group of pathfinders was in keeping with the developmental character of the 14-19 reform agenda as a whole and the need to reflect and respond to local circumstances and imperatives.

20. Pathfinders were required to set area and institutional targets for attainment and progression with a focus on results and destinations at 19. Specifically these must include:

- increases in participation rates post-16
- increases in the numbers achieving level 2 and 3 qualifications at age 19
- decreases in the numbers achieving no qualifications by 19
- reductions in truancy rates 14-16
- reductions in drop-out rates 16-19
- increased entry rate to higher education.

21. It was suggested that other indicators might include: take-up of vocational qualifications at both levels 2 and 3, increases in early entry to GCSE, increased take-up of work-related learning and increased take-up of MAs.

22. The DfES made available £5 million to support the pathfinders in 2002/3 and the LSC made a further £5 million available and agreed to manage the pathfinders with the Department. Additional funding of £16 million split equally between the Department and the LSC was made available for 2003/4 to support both the Phase One and Two pathfinders.

23. Having outlined the policy context within which pathfinders are operating and the aims and objectives of the programme, we turn now to an analysis of the proposals from the partnerships which put themselves forward in response to the prospectus.
2.3 Pathfinder proposals

24. Forty-nine partnerships submitted proposals for Phase One pathfinder funding. The proposals were assessed by advisors from the DfES and LSC and a wide range of agencies and organisations including Ofsted, QCA, the Local Government Association and the Association of Colleges. Twenty-five partnerships were awarded 14-19 pathfinder status for 2002/3 and subsequently received further funding for 2003/4.

2.3.1 Geographical locations

25. Geographically, proposals were received from as far south west as Cornwall to Gateshead in the North East and from as far south as the Isle of Wight to Cumbria in the North West. Several partnerships were based in large urban areas including London, Manchester and Coventry. Others had been set up to address issues of rural isolation and deprivation, such as the Lincolnshire pathfinder, while others were located in mixed urban/suburban/rural areas e.g. Gateshead and Doncaster.

2.3.2 Scale and scope of the pathfinders

26. There were three main dimensions of difference in the scale and scope of the proposals. These were: (i) the size of the geographical area; (ii) the number and types of institutions involved; (iii) the extent to which they addressed the full range of potential 14-19 issues or focused upon selected elements of the agenda.

27. In relation to (i) some pathfinders covered large geographical areas e.g. Cumbria and Shropshire, while at the other end of the spectrum there were geographically small, inner city pathfinders e.g. Newham, with a whole range of pathfinders between these two extremes. The number and types of institutions involved also varied considerably. Taking the most obvious variation, in some pathfinders e.g. Harrow, there were no school sixth-forms and therefore all students would be required to transfer between institutions during the 14-19 phase. In most other pathfinders, however, there was a mixture of institutions providing 14-19 learning, typically
including 11-16 schools, 11-18 schools, further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and work-based training providers. Pathfinders also included different combinations of maintained, voluntary and voluntary-aided schools.

28. Most pathfinders sought to take the 14-19 agenda forward across a broad front, particularly in relation to the development of greater curricular choice and flexibility, the promotion of vocational learning, the establishment of progression routes and improved advice and guidance. There were pathfinders with a somewhat tighter focus, for example the Black Country pathfinder emphasised modern foreign and community languages, while in the Shropshire proposal there was a particularly strong focus on e-learning.

2.3.3 Lead partners

29. The 14-19 Pathfinder prospectus did not specify which type of partnerships were expected to submit proposals and therefore it was left to local groups, institutions and leaders to decide how to respond to the call for proposals.

30. Ten pathfinders were led by local authorities and six by local learning partnerships, a further three were led by other forms of partnership, for example the South Gloucestershire pathfinder is led by the Kingswood Partnership. There was evidence that even where an LEA was not a named lead partner it was, in effect, taking the lead under the auspices of a local learning partnership or some other type of partnership. Two pathfinders are led by limited companies, a further two by individual colleges and schools and one by a LLSC (a further LLSC is playing a leading role in another partnership).
2.3.4 Performance indicators

31. We noted above that pathfinders were required to provide performance indicators for a range of measures using 2001/2 as a baseline and projecting outcomes for 2005. Some of these performance indicators were mandatory while others could be selected by the individual pathfinders to reflect local aims and objectives. Scrutiny of these performance indicators was undertaken in order to examine where smaller and larger impacts of the 14-19 pathfinder funding were predicted.

32. There were some difficulties in comparing targets across proposals but where information could be compared the range of targets in relation to the mandatory targets are indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance indicator</th>
<th>Range (up to 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in participation post-16</td>
<td>3 - 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in number achieving level 2 at 19</td>
<td>3 - 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in number achieving level 3 by 19</td>
<td>4 - 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in number achieving no qualifications at 19</td>
<td>1.5 - 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in truancy</td>
<td>0.03 - 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates of entry into higher education</td>
<td>1.5 - 13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. In nearly all cases, where the percentage increase is apparently small, this may be because the pathfinder is already performing reasonably well in this area. Where the percentage increase is large, this may be because the proposer is starting from a low baseline.

2.3.5 Existing collaboration and links to other programmes

34. The 14-19 Pathfinder prospectus stated "we anticipate that pathfinders will be in areas where relevant collaborative working is already well-established; where there are strong partnership arrangements already in place; and where there is evidence of the outcome from existing collaborative work". Many proposers sought to show
evidence of prior collaboration through involvement in a range of other programmes. In most pathfinders there were colleges and schools participating in the IFP and these partnerships were often planning to use the pathfinder to build on IFP developments to develop the whole of the 14-19 curriculum. There were often strong links with other programmes such as EiC and E2E.

2.3.6 Summarising the proposals

35. The developmental character of the pathfinder initiative and its responsiveness to local circumstances and imperatives clearly implied the establishment of a diverse set of pathfinders. The application process for the Phase One pathfinders produced a geographically dispersed set of pathfinders, operating in a wide variety of socio-economic and educational settings. The pathfinders also varied considerably in scale and scope. As discussed above, there was a range of lead partners and the overall diversity evident in the funded proposals is likely to prove of considerable value in testing out new ways of working and thus advancing the 14-19 reform agenda.
3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key points
♦ Main methods: documentary analysis, selective literature review, surveys, case studies
♦ Conducted February 2003 – December 2003

36. The evaluation team from the universities of Leeds and Exeter began work in February 2003. The survey and field work for this report was completed in October 2003.

37. The evaluation had four main aims:

• To assess the extent to which the 14-19 pathfinders have begun to develop best practice in creating a more coherent 14-19 phase at LEA, consortia, institutional and individual levels and to identify a number of models of 14-19 provision;

• To explore and analyse the opportunities for, and constraints on, the development of the 14-19 phase in the pathfinders and elsewhere;

• To examine the potential value-added effects of the 14-19 pathfinders and associated funding arrangements;

• To identify possible approaches to the continued evaluation of the 14-19 pathfinder initiative.

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

3.1. Documentary analysis

39. The documentary analysis covered the following:

- the 49 successful and unsuccessful pathfinder proposals
- 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
- the spring and summer 2003 termly progress reports from 14-19 pathfinders to DfES.

3.2 Literature review

40. Selective literature reviews of academic and official literature 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.

3.3 Surveys

41. Surveys in April 2003 and September 2003 of the 14-19 pathfinders and (in April 2003) of unsuccessful 14-19 Partnerships provided greater detail on aspects of the proposals which could not be obtained through documentary analysis.

42. 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. The typical survey response has been lengthy, detailed and self-evaluative providing a very rich source of data.

43. Twenty-two questionnaires were completed in April 2003 and twenty in September 2003. Two pathfinders, which were not case studies, did not respond to either survey and therefore the only data on these is from documentary materials.

44. A parallel survey was sent to the 24 unsuccessful proposers in April 2003 to seek to discover the extent to which they have been able to take forward the agenda outlined in their proposals or were otherwise seeking to develop the 14-19 phase.
However, only six unfunded 14-19 partnerships responded positively despite a follow-up reminder.

3.4 Case studies

45. In-depth case studies of a sample of six 14-19 pathfinders were undertaken. Three further case studies were carried out in partnerships which had not been funded through the pathfinders programme but where there was evidence of collaborative work in the 14-19 phase.

46. 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 approaches described in section 2.3.

47. The case studies selected were:

14-19 Pathfinders
1. Coventry
2. Cumbria
3. Gateshead
4. Knowsley
5. South Gloucestershire
6. Southampton

Unfunded 14-19 partnerships\(^1\)
1. East Devon
2. Nottinghamshire
3. Salford

\(^1\) 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.
48. In addition to the documentary analysis outlined above, each case study involved five days of fieldwork during which in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were conducted and visits were made 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 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.

49. 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 illustrations drawn mainly from the case studies to exemplify aspects of pathfinder developments. References to named pathfinders have been checked with coordinators for accuracy.

3.5 **London dimension**

50. Initial work on the evaluation suggested that the London-based 14-19 pathfinders may have a unique context that could pose particular challenges to the development of a coherent 14-19 phase of learning and its associated institutional collaboration. This London dimension was the subject of further investigation which involved five days fieldwork in the three London pathfinders during which key staff were interviewed and two or three institutions in each pathfinder were visited. This took place in October 2003. We develop some of the issues which arose from this London work and visits to other urban pathfinders in paragraphs 91-99.
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

51. In this section we draw predominantly on data from the surveys and case study work, supplemented, where appropriate, with information from termly reports from the pathfinders to the DfES. Throughout the section we insert illustrations, mainly drawn from our case studies, to exemplify particular developments.

4.1 Pathfinder assessments of progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Expected or more than expected progress reported by most pathfinders on most aspects of development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52. In the surveys, pathfinders were asked to assess the extent of progress made towards their objectives grouped by theme or to state that the theme was not an objective. These evaluation themes were agreed with the Department, having been derived from 14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards, the DfES response: 14-19: opportunity and excellence, the Phase One pathfinder prospectus and from our early evaluation work.

53. The self-reported responses on progress made by pathfinder coordinators in both April 2003 (n = 22) and September 2003 (n = 20) are given in the following table.
## AREA OF DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PROGRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader curriculum offerings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations in the pace of learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-16 access to level 2 in key skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of enterprise capability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending work-related programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative use of vocational learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of vocational route to encourage participation post 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeting a range of young people - from those at risk of exclusion to high achievers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming gender/ethnicity differences in young people’s choices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced advice and guidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Individual Learning Plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Missing data

** Two pathfinders who had responded to this section in April stated, in September, that this had not been amongst their original objectives.
54. It can be seen from the table that pathfinders reported at least as much progress as expected in most areas. In particular, in September 2003 all pathfinders reported expected or better than expected progress on collaboration and on offering a broader curriculum. The extension of work-related learning, the innovative use of vocational learning and the targeting of a range of young people were other areas which emerged strongly from both surveys.

55. Comparison of the data collected in April and September suggests that, while some pathfinders had struggled somewhat in the early days to put in place the frameworks to facilitate progress towards their objectives, during the intervening period there had been an increase in activity across a number of areas. For example, the number of pathfinders reporting ‘more than expected’ progress on ‘variations in the pace of learning’ over the period from April to September increased from one to five, although, as will be reported later, initiatives were mostly targeted at more able students, rather than those who might benefit from a slower pace of learning.

56. Another feature emerging from the comparison of the April and September data was that some pathfinders who indicated in April that a particular area had not featured in their declared objectives were now undertaking work in this area. For example, four pathfinders indicated that they were developing work in enterprise capability. This may suggest that, as the collaborative structures for the 14-19 phase have become embedded in the pathfinders, the networks which have been established allow them to explore opportunities to extend provision in other areas.

57. The findings from these surveys would suggest, however, that some areas are not benefiting strongly from the 14-19 pathfinder initiative. A majority of Phase One pathfinders reported that they were not addressing the issue of overcoming gender/ethnic differences/stereotyping in young people’s choices. It was also reported that ensuring post 16 access to level 2 in key skills was not a priority in almost half the pathfinders. More work may also need to be undertaken to encourage the use of the vocational route to widen post-19 participation. Also, while most pathfinders reported at least as expected progress in enhanced advice and guidance and the development of individual learning plans (ILPs), more than a quarter of pathfinders
responding to the survey indicated that progress had been less than expected in these areas or that these elements had not been included in their original proposals.

4.2 Organisation of the pathfinders

**Key points**
- Extensive collaboration involving a wide range of partners
- Funding of vocational courses a major issue
- Fruitful links with other programmes especially IFP and EiC

58. In this section we focus upon three key aspects of the infrastructure of the pathfinders - that is, those aspects of the ways in which they were organised which were seen as being pre-requisites for the achievement of changes in student experience which should come to the fore in 2003/4 and subsequent years.

4.2.1 Collaboration

59. As noted above, the notion of collaboration has been central to the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative and to the broader 14-19 reform agenda. Evidence from the surveys indicates that by September 2003 all responding pathfinders considered that they had made at least ‘as expected’ progress in this area, with 60% stating they had achieved ‘more than expected progress’. This survey evidence was confirmed and illuminated through the case studies, where increased collaboration was seen as a notable feature of early progress.

60. Collaboration can exist in a variety of forms and along several dimensions and in this section we will unpack the characteristics of the collaborative efforts revealed by our data. We will consider who collaborated, why they collaborated, what they collaborated about and the scale and scope of the collaboration.
Who collaborates?

61. Partnerships typically comprised the following members: LEA, LLSC, Connexions, Education Business Partnership (EBP), FE colleges, secondary schools, special schools, higher education institutions, employers or employers groups, and training providers. Partnerships also made arrangements to link to other programmes, such as the IFP and EiC, which were playing key roles in local areas. Partners were typically represented on 14-19 Pathfinder Steering Groups or equivalent bodies which were responsible for providing policy direction and broad monitoring of the pathfinder.

62. However, the formal presence of organisations within partnerships did not guarantee that all of those organisations would necessarily play an active role in the operational activities of the pathfinder. Some pathfinders reported that difficulties within partner organisations, such as Connexions and EBPs, had slowed progress on collaboration in those aspects of development.

63. Important dimensions of difference concerned whether all or most institutions (especially schools and colleges) in a partnership area were involved, whether the pathfinder operated through consortia or was targeted on particular groups of institutions. Pathfinders saw advantages in including all or most institutions, since this promoted inclusivity and ownership across an area, the potential disadvantage was that resources would be spread thinly and a coherent vision might be difficult to establish or could be diluted. This raises issues about the size of pathfinders, or more broadly of how to identify and promote the optimum size of partnerships through which to develop the 14-19 reforms.

64. Most pathfinders had some form of operations or management group, usually consisting of representatives of the same partners which took responsibility for implementation and more detailed monitoring. Coordinators tended to report to these groups, at least in the first instance. In geographically large pathfinders consortia were common. Cumbria, for example, involved all schools and colleges through five consortia. Consortia-based pathfinders raised issues around the extent to which consortia were able to determine their own foci or were required to contribute to
pathfinder-wide objectives and the extent to which funding was devolved to the consortia.

65. As we noted in paragraph 30 there were variations in the institutions which took the lead in the pathfinders and this could have implications for the ways in which collaboration developed, since lead partners were often in a position to emphasise particular aspects of the pathfinder agenda.

66. In some pathfinders, there was a further tier of collaboration which comprised separate task groups responsible for particular aspects of the programme. Knowsley, for example, had set up five groups responsible for: curriculum; the vocational skills centre; e-learning; student entitlement and employer liaison, each headed by an individual with specific expertise in that area. Coventry had established a Work-Related Learning Forum to ensure delivery of a coherent and co-ordinated city wide work-related learning programme. South Gloucestershire had introduced seven Teacher-Learner Groups under three overall headings: curriculum; guidance; and ICT. These sorts of groups were important in translating broad policies into operational actions and involving middle-level institutional managers and practitioners in the pathfinders.

Why collaborate?

67. The reasons for collaboration were many and varied. Partly it was prompted by the reform agenda and the funding made available through 14-19 Pathfinders and other sources. However, it is important to acknowledge that in many areas collaboration was long-standing and was driven by local imperatives as much as by national policies and funding.

68. There was a widespread acceptance of the rationale for collaboration laid out in the Green Paper and the pathfinder prospectus. Institutions recognised that collaboration was required in order to provide a broader, more flexible, more relevant curriculum. It was anticipated that this would in turn help to motivate more students, raise achievement and reduce disaffection and truancy. At post-16, collaboration was described as a potentially 'win-win' approach through encouraging and enabling
participation from groups of students who would otherwise not participate in full-time education and training. Some respondents contrasted this with an approach in which institutions competed for students who would have stayed-on anyway, rather than seeking to widen participation.

69. Thus collaboration tended to be fuelled by a mixture of recognition of its intrinsic, educational benefits and institutional self-interests. However, the ways in which these motivations were perceived and balanced varied considerably across pathfinders and could not be abstracted from local educational politics and histories.

70. Individual institutions also responded differently according to their perceived positions within local status hierarchies. For example, in Knowsley, where collaboration was particularly strong, it was argued that this was facilitated by the absence of a clear hierarchy of schools. Here, no institution saw itself as significantly above others in the local pecking order and therefore as having little to gain from collaboration, or conversely, having something to lose through disturbance of the status quo.

71. Elsewhere, there was evidence that successful institutions (as defined by performance tables and locally perceived academic standing) could be cautious in developing collaborative relationships, especially where this involved their students being taught in other institutions. Adnett and Davies (2003), in their commentary on schooling reforms in England comment:

   For schools at the top of the local hierarchy, there are no market incentives to undertake costly and risky innovation. (p.401)

72. In some pathfinders there were concerns about the quality of teaching, maintenance of discipline and provision of pastoral care where students were taught in other institutions. Some headteachers stated that their governors had been reluctant to sanction such collaboration. Thus the scale and scope of collaboration involving these institutions could be attenuated and was more likely to involve disaffected and/or
lower ability students and to be focused on the vocational rather than the academic curriculum and therefore to be arguably less ‘risky’.

73. In some pathfinders there was evidence that some voluntary-aided schools also approached increased collaboration cautiously since they were anxious to maintain their distinctive ethos and feared that this might be diluted if extensive collaborative arrangements were to be developed.

74. In some pathfinders it was stated that the status of the local FE colleges was low and this hampered collaboration because of resistance from parents and sometimes from school governors. These responses had apparently sometimes been prompted by adverse college inspection reports, but were also said to be a reflection of more general disquiet about vocational education and to students ‘being out of school’.

75. There was a strong personalised element to some collaborations which were driven by an individual or small group of individuals within pathfinders. These were normally senior managers or officers who were committed to the concept of collaboration and had a clear vision of the benefits they thought it could bring, particularly to their own institutions. The commitment of these individuals or groups was often crucial in promoting collaboration, and indeed in obtaining pathfinder funds, but could also stimulate suspicion and engender caution in some potential partners. There was also the risk that a collaboration driven by an individual and not embedded more widely within an institutional framework would be vulnerable if that individual moved posts.

76. Thus, while there was widespread acceptance of the educational advantages of collaboration, the ways in which this was played out varied widely and institutions and partners varied considerably in the extent and ways in which they embraced collaboration. This has implications for the sustainability and funding of collaboration which will be pursued in the following sections.
What did they collaborate about?

77. The major area of collaboration was in the provision of broader curriculum offerings, particularly the extension of work-related learning, especially at 14-16. We describe the details of these offerings in the next section and here will comment on some of the organisational features of this collaboration. These arrangements typically included partnerships between schools and colleges and sometimes training providers, through which some courses could be provided wholly or partly in other institutions. Less commonly employers were involved in these arrangements through the provision of work placements.

78. The levels of collaboration involved varied considerably. In Knowsley, for example, a common prospectus had been produced for the Knowsley Collegiate, showing all the courses available in all schools and the college across the partnership. Thus the potential options had been built into school option blocks and elements of common timetabling had been introduced. An illustration of some aspects of the scheme is included in illustration 6. Where approaches were less comprehensive and systemic, courses were established on an ad-hoc basis, were not built into options blocks and therefore students undertaking courses away from their home institutions were likely to miss mainstream lessons.

79. In addition to this collaboration around curriculum provision, there had also been some collaborative curriculum and staff development. The following illustration describes this type of work in the South Gloucestershire pathfinder.
Illustration 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Teacher Learner Groups (TLGs) have been set up under three main headings:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum: Curriculum Framework, Specialist Courses, Personal Challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance: Unified Guidance, Off-side Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT: Extranet, E-Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each TLG is made up of representatives from the different centres (schools/college were known as ‘centres’) and there is a ‘development manager’ for each who takes the leading role within the group. The TLGs have ensured that not only is there cross-centre collaboration, planning and implementation, but also that within each centre a member of staff is developing their own knowledge and skills in one of the seven areas and then liaising with colleagues in their centre who are members of the other TLGs, ensuring that a unified approach is taken to 14-19 education and training. The TLGs meet for half a day every 2 weeks and the location of the meetings varies from centre to centre.

Each TLG has identified a task or a number of tasks which it will undertake related to its specific focus and the members work together towards these. It is through this structure that curriculum development, the delivery of enhanced guidance and advice, and the introduction of the extranet with its e-learning facilities and e-ILPs is taking place.

The professional development needs of the South Gloucestershire Pathfinder TLG members are being supported by the International Learning and Research Centre (ILRC), an independently funded centre which provides a communication and research base for teachers in the community to investigate, evaluate and share innovative and best practice, through a School Based Enquiry model. The members of the TLGs displayed an evenness of commitment and enthusiasm, but there was not initially an evenness of understanding. Half day training sessions were run by the ILRC to remedy this.

Members of the TLGs were enthusiastic and committed. The meetings of each TLG had been timetabled in advance by the Pathfinder Co-ordinator and this ensured that members were released from their school duties to attend. The pathfinder had facilitated the release of staff time though the provision of supply cover for TLGs. Some bemoaned the disruption the meetings caused to teaching, but it was felt that this situation would improve after September 2003 because there would be more time to plan staff timetables so as to avoid TLG meetings. The importance of continuity in the personnel of the TLGs was highlighted. Headteachers were reluctant to guarantee to release staff until year two pathfinder funding had been confirmed.

Although the pathfinder funding had been received only in January 2003, the development of the collaborative networks had been undertaken extremely speedily and effectively. Members of TLGs understood the need to produce outcomes within short timescales and believed the structures were in place for this to be achieved. Many felt that success had been achieved in a short time scale because of the good working relationships and trust which had developed during the previous partnership years. Pathfinder has provided the opportunity for staff development and given staff time to plan and ‘evaluate’ what they are doing. The pathfinder collaboration was seen as a bolder, stronger force than previously.
80. Elsewhere staff development was often focused around supporting college staff in working with 14-16 year old students. In Cumbria, a member of school staff had been seconded to oversee the development of links between her school and its partner college. As part of this she had provided a substantial training programme for FE staff.

What is the scale and scope of their collaboration?

81. Scale here refers to the numbers (or proportions) of students involved, or likely to be involved, in collaborative activities. In some pathfinders, several hundred students, comprising large proportions of cohorts, will be involved in collaborative provision in two or more institutions. In others, numbers were much smaller. For example, one pathfinder consortia involved fewer than 20 students in particular collaborative activities.

82. Scope here refers to the range of potential aspects which particular pathfinders were attempting to tackle in some depth. For instance, this covers whether they were aspiring to focus equally on the 14-16 and 16-19 elements, and how many subjects and vocational areas were involved. The Coventry pathfinder, for example, was broad in both scale and scope, involving large numbers of students both pre- and post-16, including students from special schools and ‘cared for children’. This pathfinder also involved a wide range of academic and vocational subjects and other areas of pathfinder development, including variations in the pace of learning, e-learning and student apprenticeships.

83. The concepts of scale and scope in collaboration can also be applied to staff involvement, in relation to both numbers involved and depth of involvement. Examples of deeper level involvement include participation in the TLGs in South Gloucestershire and the introduction of joint head of department appointments between schools and colleges in both Knowsley and Harrow. The scope of collaboration was also reflected in the extent to which courses were jointly taught by staff from different institutions, thus necessitating shared curriculum planning, which might extend to team teaching. Collaboration of this type is of a different, deeper nature than collaboration which involves different staff teaching different subjects in
different institutions and offers therefore more limited opportunities for joint curriculum planning and development and shared pedagogy.

Collaboration in rural pathfinders

84. In the September survey, pathfinders were asked to comment upon the extent to which rurality impacted upon their work. Seven of the twenty pathfinders responding to the survey indicated that rurality is a problem for their pathfinder. The key challenges attributed to rurality were related to travel: the time expended in ‘travelling to learn’; the cost of transportation; the supervision of students when travelling; the organisation of timetables to take account of travelling arrangements.

85. Provision could be up to 30 miles away from the home institution and in these circumstances travelling could take at least 90 minutes out of a school day. Thus school and college timetables needed to be adjusted to take account of travelling time. In one rural pathfinder collaborative provision began at 10.00am and ended at 2.30pm.

86. Some local bus company timetables were also reported to be too inflexible to accommodate collaborative provision, particularly where this involved twilight provision. Where companies were prepared to put on additional services their tenders were often ‘exorbitant’.

87. Another issue related to the promotion of work-related and work-based learning identified by several rural pathfinders was the relative absence of training providers and employers able to provide placements. Where these were available they tended to be some distance away and because they tended to take small numbers of students transport difficulties were exacerbated.

88. However, all the rural pathfinders reported that they were striving to find solutions to these challenges. Indeed, they placed considerable importance on collaboration since some rural schools were small and therefore were only able to offer restricted curricular choices and progression pathways. Thus a range of IFP funding and current
pathfinder funding had helped with transport costs for some courses, though concerns were expressed about sustainability once these sources of funding ceased. It was also argued that funding should reflect increased costs in rural pathfinders.

89. More flexible approaches to the location of courses were being explored. There was interest in establishing satellite units of local FE colleges which could reduce travelling time and open up vocational opportunities. Some pathfinders were considering moving staff and not students between institutions. Interest was also expressed in the development of e-learning and video-conferencing strategies, though these were not seen as offering the complete solution.

90. The restrictions imposed by rurality could prompt the development of innovative partnerships, as illustrated by the following example from the Cumbria pathfinder.

Illustration 2

In one Cumbrian consortium, two schools have developed strong links with a heritage centre, which acts as a form of training provider. The centre is situated next to a railway line and uses the refurbishment of railway carriages as a means for developing some of its work in engineering and other vocational areas. The schools send some key stage 4 pupils and sixth formers to the centre for a variety of vocational courses. Some of these courses are integrated into the GCSE options and in one school there is also a six week block included in a modular core course during which students work at the heritage centre. Some AVCEs are offered post-16 as well as other vocational courses e.g. the European Computer Driving Licence. The centre thus provides facilities and expertise not available in the schools, which, because of their rurality, tend to be small and lacking in some specialist accommodation.

School staff argued that it was the rurality of the schools which had encouraged them to explore and exploit these opportunities in ways which they may not have done had a more obvious partner, such as a local college, been available.
Collaboration in urban pathfinders

91. Collaborative arrangements raised some different issues in urban areas. Travel and transport was obviously easier and cheaper than in rural areas, although the use of public transport in and between suburban areas could pose difficulties and restricted choices for some students. Schools and pathfinders also varied in their approaches to students travelling between institutions. Some allowed them to make their own way while others provided dedicated transport.

92. Urban pathfinders also had more training providers and employers able to provide placements, although there could be shortages in specific employment sectors.

93. Collaboration in urban areas, however, could be affected by local governance issues and the transfer of learners between institutions and LEAs at 11 and post-16. In some urban pathfinders, for example, a strong driver was the addressing of the outflow of students post-16 into institutions in neighbouring urban local authorities. In some cases this movement was facilitated by local transport routes which made it easier for students to travel out of the pathfinder area than to attend in-area institutions. Students may also have been actively encouraged to transfer by receiving institutions. Pathfinders facing this situation argued that this disadvantaged students who were unable or unwilling to travel in this way by impoverishing the curriculum which ‘exporting’ areas were able to offer and that therefore collaboration which encouraged more students to stay at ‘home’ was justified, even if this duplicated provision available relatively locally.

94. These issues were particularly salient in London where travel was relatively easy thus making it feasible for students to choose from a wide range of institutions. The three Phase One London pathfinders were each based on LEA areas. In each there were outflows of students at both 11 and 16. It was suggested that outflows at 11 could be partly explained by parents considering the institutional and curricular options which would be available at 16.

95. In Newham it was estimated that in 2000/2001 58% of those staying in full-time education at 16 did so in Newham institutions. The Newham pathfinder aimed to
increase this to 65% by 2004/2005. Similarly in Harrow a pathfinder aim was to raise the proportion of Harrow students staying on in Harrow colleges from 61% in 2002 to 72% in 2005.

96. As was stated in *The London Challenge: Transforming London Secondary Schools*:

> ..... the fact that there are so many LEAs, some relatively small, can make it harder for pan-London issues to be tackled easily. It can be difficult to reach a strategic view since problems manifest themselves differently in different parts of London. (DfES, 2003c, p.47)

This raises issues about the selection of the optimum units for London pathfinders and the 14-19 phase more generally, in order to create broad, flexible provision offering good progression which is locally available and yet which does not unhelpfully duplicate provision elsewhere.

97. However, while student movements across pathfinder boundaries were particularly visible in London they were also apparent in other urban areas where the boundaries did not reflect ‘naturally occurring’ local learning areas as defined by the movements and choices of young people. In these urban pathfinders there was concern to establish local provision, since it was argued that while transport and travel to out-of-pathfinder areas was relatively easy, many of the hardest-to-reach students (including those most likely to fall into the group of young people who not in education, employment or training) required the incentive of broad and flexible local provision if they were to be encouraged to stay on.

98. Thus while urban locations offered many advantages in relation to collaboration, including good transport links and the numbers of potential partner schools, colleges, training providers and employers, the situation could be complicated by local authority boundaries and by competition between institutions.
99. However, where pathfinder boundaries coincided with local learning areas and where an LEA or other body provided good leadership, collaboration could be particularly effective in urban areas in producing choice, flexibility and progression in the 14-19 phase.

Collaboration in unfunded partnerships and the advantages of pathfinder funding

100. Similar patterns of collaboration to those noted in the pathfinders had developed in the unfunded partnerships. Since these had often been stimulated by the IFP and leadership tended to be located in further education colleges.

101. All three unfunded partnerships had received IFP funding. One LLSC had agreed to provide substantial matched funding to allow the Increased Flexibility programme to extend to 2004/2005. Two of the partnerships had also obtained funding through LLSCs to support post-inspection action plans. In Salford the LLSC had stepped in at short notice with funding for one year, in the first instance, when pressure on schools budgets threatened collaborative work between schools and colleges.

102. The following illustration describes the sort of collaboration typically promoted by the IFP.

Illustration 3

In East Devon two colleges were providing a variety of vocational courses, one specialising in agriculture mainly leading to NVQs, to cohorts largely from the same participating schools partnership. Over two hundred 14-16 students are involved in these courses. This collaboration had been funded through the IFP and staff were concerned about the sustainability of collaboration once this funding ended.

Students attend the colleges for and can choose from: agriculture; animal care; catering; construction; hair and beauty; horse care; horticulture; land-based operations; motor vehicle maintenance; sport and recreation (outdoors). Several of these courses were selected to reflect the rural location of the college and the type of employment prospects locally. Students are able to work at their own pace within the NVQ. They attend college for between two hours and a full day per week.
103. Some unfunded partnerships were institutionally extensive. The Salford partnership had drawn in a range of partners similar to those found in pathfinders, including all Salford secondary schools and colleges, training providers, the education-business partnership and Connexions. Special schools were also integral partnership members. This partnership focused on the development of vocational alternatives for key stage 4 students in colleges and, through the IFP, had also embarked on the development of jointly developed and taught GCSEs in vocational subjects. The partnership had also developed a specialist out-of-school Vocational Skills Centre (see illustration 9) to cater for the needs of students for whom mainstream provision is deemed inappropriate.

104. The Nottinghamshire partnership was particularly extensive, taking in the City of Nottingham LEA area as well as parts of Nottinghamshire. Under the leadership of the LLSC this partnership had applied for Phase 1 pathfinder funding but had not been selected. For Phase 2 two separate proposals had been put forward and both obtained pathfinder funding. The Nottinghamshire partnership also focused principally on the 14-16 age range and used the IFP to provide a variety of college-based vocational options.

105. City of Nottingham was interested in developing a tariff-based curriculum. This is described in the following illustration.

Illustration 4

The tariff-based curriculum is guided by the belief that it is crucially important for young people to be able to see themselves as successful. Thus, in the tariff-based curriculum, credits are given for a wide range of qualifications, parts of qualifications and other activities e.g. work experience, part-time work. The aim is to accredit a much wider range of courses and activities, and therefore redefine what counts as achievement and allow greater numbers of students to achieve.

The curriculum is based on the Open College Network framework model but is being modified for Nottingham purposes. Students will have an on-line Progress File through which they will be able to check their accumulation of credits and download appropriate certificates of achievement when they reach required credit totals. This development is planned to start in September 2003 and will be implemented in stages. Its proposers suggest that this scheme will enable progression to appropriate areas and levels, address retention and drop-out by ensuring students are on appropriate post-16 courses, lead to more informed choices and raise motivation through continual feedback on credit accumulation.
106. Thus, across the unfunded partnerships, the thinking, aspirations and responses to the 14-19 agenda were not markedly different to that found in the pathfinders. In all three partnerships collaboration had begun to impact on student experience.

107. As noted above the unfunded partnerships had been able to access IFP and LLSC funding for their work. Despite this, in comparison to the pathfinders the unfunded partnerships found it more difficult to take plans forward. One respondent commented:

> We have been able to take on the 14-19 agenda, we’ve agreed aims and objectives and plans in our 14-19 group. There is a lot of goodwill, but we lack bodies on the ground to drive plans forward and so progress tends to be slow and it is difficult to maintain impetus between meetings.

108. This perspective on the importance of funding was also reflected in the pathfinders when we asked what they had been able to do which they would not have been able to do without pathfinder money. Respondents tended to suggest that the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative had helped them to undertake developments they had wished to undertake anyway, or to take forward developments which had already begun.

109. Thus there was no strong sense that the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative had changed thinking, since this was framed by the Green Paper, the wider policy context and local aspirations. The initiative had, however, concentrated thinking through the need to develop proposals and respond to monitoring and evaluation requirements. (It is worth noting that the 2003/2004 Pathfinder prospectus invited proposers to “test out more radical ways of providing 14-19 education and training than was possible in 2002/2003” and thus may promote more new thinking than was evident in the initial stages of the Phase One pathfinders).

110. Phase One funding had facilitated progress through financing tuition and transport costs for students studying away from their home institutions. Equally important was the funding of managerial and development time, so that, in contrast to what sometimes happened in the unfunded partnerships, plans could be driven forward. Pathfinder coordinators played important roles in taking plans forward and in
promoting collaboration, whereas in unfunded partnerships this work often had to be undertaken by officers in addition to their other work. Pathfinder staff argued that funding was crucial in providing the resources for the nuts-and-bolts of collaborative working e.g. funding supply cover, allowing the engagement of consultants to carry out specific tasks, providing administrative back-up, funding the hiring of rooms and purchase of catering services.

### 4.2.2 Funding

111. Funding, especially in relation to the provision of vocational courses for 14-16 year olds in colleges, but also more generally in terms of the costs of collaboration, emerged as a significant issue during the evaluation.

112. As indicated above, one of the main dimensions of collaboration within the pathfinders was the broadening of the curriculum through the provision of courses for 14-16 year olds, mainly in colleges, but also by training providers or occasionally in other schools.

113. There were a variety of ways of calculating the costs of this provision. In one unfunded partnership, for example, tuition fees of £5 per student hour were charged. This meant, for example, that the cost for a student attending a college five hours per week for 30 weeks would be £750. We were informed that this represented about 20% of the standard spending assessment per student in that authority while the activity accounted for only about 15% of curriculum time. Depending upon how provision was organised and timetabled, it was difficult for schools to make savings from having students taught in other institutions, since, unless the provision had been included in option blocks and timetabled, there would be no saving in school teacher time. Even where provision was timetabled, it was not easy to translate savings in teacher time into financial savings which could, potentially, be used to fund college placements.

114. Twelve of the pathfinder coordinators responding to the September survey indicated that the cost of vocational courses was a barrier to their provision within
their pathfinder. Eight identified courses that they would like to have offered but had been unable to, due to the cost, though they usually only mentioned one or two courses. In addition, a couple reported that they had had to limit the number of places available on some courses due to insufficient funding.

115. The way around these difficulties has largely been to fund the provision through a wide range of funding streams including the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative, IFP, local LSC area-wide standards fund money and other LSC funding, European Union Objective 1 funds and New Opportunities funds. However, it was frequently argued that this type of funding is typically short-term and that this casts doubt upon the sustainability of the provision. In their report on 14-19 education Ofsted stated:

> While the various funding arrangements do encourage attention to be focused on important priorities, their current short-term nature and the lack of coherence do not encourage longer-term planning. (Ofsted, 2003b, p.10)

116. Several pathfinder coordinators and other senior managers argued that in the long-term it would be necessary for schools to fund this provision from their mainstream budgets and there was support for the development of a course-based tariff methodology similar to that operating in FE. (Some Phase One pathfinders are experimenting with alternative funding mechanisms based on course tariffs in 2003/4). Schools, however, were not confident that this could be achieved and found it difficult to foresee such provision being funded from mainstream budgets. Their view was that without continued project funding collaborative provision would be vulnerable.

117. Interestingly, the Salford partnership stated that it had been able to establish a sustainable self-funded model based on schools paying for college and training provider places from mainstream budgets. This, however, had subsequently been undermined by unanticipated pressure on school budgets in 2002/3 and recourse had had to be made to LLSC short-term project funds and it was uncertain if the previous self-funding model could be re-established.
118. In addition to the direct costs of tuition, collaborative provision also incurred other costs. Transport was a significant cost in rural areas (although there were also transport costs in urban pathfinders as well). Some pathfinders were looking at innovative ways of limiting transport costs. Knowsley, for example was developing the use of low-cost, non-profit community transport. In rural pathfinders e-learning was seen as an alternative to student travel. Another approach was for teachers to travel rather than students, although opportunities for using this approach were limited where specialist equipment was required. For some courses ‘theory’ lessons were taught in school and ‘practical’ lessons in college, although this clearly had significant curricular and pedagogical implications.

119. Joint school/college provision also had to be managed carefully, with records kept of student attendance and achievement. In order for it to work well there needed to be good liaison between the schools and colleges (and other providers), ideally with opportunities for school teachers to visit students in their college or work placements. This liaison, which participants argued was crucial to raising the quality of provision, also added to the costs.

120. More generally, some pathfinders claimed that the true cost of collaboration is not being recognised, particularly in terms of provider capacity to manage and engage with collaborative activities from within current staff establishments. This, together with short-term funding, was reported as sometimes being a barrier to motivating potential partners to engage in collaboration.

121. Pathfinders also raised a number of time-related and more technical issues about funding. The cross-over of academic, financial and pathfinder years has meant that budgeting and financial monitoring are challenging. There were also numerous complaints about the late receipt of pathfinder funding in 2002/3 and late confirmation of funding for 2003/4 which it was argued had inhibited curriculum planning.

122. Thus, overall, a significant number of concerns and issues were raised about funding by the pathfinders, particularly in relation to sustainability. Although we were
unable to pursue this in depth, it was clear that at this stage pathfinders had not made significant progress in specifying the funding implications of sustainability. Some had calculated tuition costs for various forms of collaborative provision, but there was no common methodology for this and tariffs seemed to vary considerably, casting some doubt on the assumptions used in making the calculations. Also, while there was support for a shift to a tariff-based system of funding, there was also concern to avoid an overly complex and bureaucratic system which would itself generate additional costs. In addition, the hidden costs of collaboration in terms of management and teacher time were mainly left unspecified.

123. In the view of pathfinder and partnership staff the provision of adequate and secure funding has a significant effect upon the scale and scope of collaboration and the speed with which the 14-19 reform agenda can be taken forward.

4.2.3 Links with other programmes

124. Successes under other programmes had often provided the impetus for partnerships to address further the 14-19 curriculum. Particularly influential had been the IFP which had enabled education providers to fund collaborative provision. For some proposers, this had been the first occasion when co-operation had taken place and it had resulted in a broader curriculum for the young people in the area. It had shown providers what was possible and what more could and should be achieved.

125. The IFP consists of 269 partnerships, most led by further education colleges, established to ‘create enhanced vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds of all abilities who can benefit most’ (NFER, 2003). Several of these IFP partnerships were located in pathfinders or the unfunded areas visited. The National Evaluation of the IFP estimated that around 42000 young people are involved in the programme. In projects responding to their survey, 58% of students were pursuing GCSEs in vocational subjects, 17% were taking NVQs and 19% other vocational qualifications. The evaluators stated that:

IFP students were more likely to be male, to be white and to be in receipt of free school meals than their peers in year 10. (NFER, 2003, p.3)
126. They were also less likely to have achieved level 5 or above in their Key Stage 3 assessments. As we will show in section 4.4.1 there are similarities between the target group of pupils identified as taking part in IFP and those participating in pathfinder activities.

127. Proposers located within the EiC programme had been able to develop the use of learning support units and learning mentors for the disaffected and disengaged as well as strategies for enhancing the learning experiences of Gifted & Talented young people. Several 14-19 pathfinders were intending to develop these areas further, particularly in the context of Individual Learning Plans. The increased support offered by learning mentors could be significant in managing collaborative provision and in maintaining liaison between schools and colleges.

128. Another set of programmes which often linked closely with pathfinders were the action plans developed by LLSCs following Ofsted/ALI area inspections. The area-wide inspections emerged as significant drivers of local 14-19 reform and although inspections conducted before April 2003 related to the 16-19 age range, the action plans often focused on 14-16 since this was judged to be key in terms of raising participation, retention and achievement at 16-19\(^2\). The action plans were also backed with substantial funds from LLSC standards funds and this funding was often important in establishing the collaborative provision described in this report. Beyond this, the action plans had provided a focus for analysis and planning which, with associated funding and monitoring, had given a significant impetus to identifying and taking forward strategic developments in 14-19 education and training.

129. In many respects the existence of a range of programmes operating in contiguous or partly contiguous geographical areas and addressing cognate issues was advantageous, not least because this provided a range of sources of funding. However, it could also contribute to a feeling of what was described as ‘initiativitis’ for participants and unhelpful duplication in monitoring and reviewing. Some respondents commented on what they saw as fragmented national policy initiatives, for example:
Lack of coherence with other DfES initiatives risks cutting across still fragile pathfinder partnerships, e.g. the Federation pilots being promoted by the Standards and Effectiveness Unit.

(In relation to the above it should be noted that some Phase Two pathfinders have partnerships with federations of schools as part of their proposals).

130. There was widespread recognition that there was a major local task to be done in establishing and maintaining strategic direction in such a complex policy field. Some respondents were concerned about local strategic management capacity and the possibility of managing strategically where schools, colleges and other providers had high degrees of institutional autonomy.

4.3 Curriculum provision and development

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Key points</th>
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<td>♦ Significant broadening of the curriculum, especially at 14-16, mainly through work-related learning</td>
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<td>♦ Significant development of accelerated learning for higher achieving students</td>
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<td>♦ Uneven development of work-based learning</td>
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<td>♦ Increasing emphasis in some pathfinders on enterprise capability</td>
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<td>♦ Some development of sector-focused progression routes</td>
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131. In this section we turn to what we take to be the heart of the pathfinder initiative - the attempt to create a more flexible and coherent curriculum offering choice and progression throughout the 14-19 phase.

4.3.1 Broader curriculum offerings and the promotion of work-related learning

132. As noted in section 4.1 this has been an area in which 14-19 pathfinders judge there to have been considerable progress. The most common way in which partnerships are planning to extend the 14-19 curriculum is through increasing the number and variety of vocational GCSEs and NVQs and other vocational courses on offer and making these available to more students.

2 From April 2003 all area inspections have been extended to include the 14-19 phase.
133. Examples of this approach follow:

Illustration 5

Over 45 per cent of Year 10 students in the Warwickshire pathfinder are taking vocational GCSEs from September 2003. Approximately, 13 per cent of sixth formers are taking AVCEs. Ten mainstream schools are offering, at key stage 4, joint curriculum opportunities with FE, work-based learning providers and specialist employers as a mainstream curriculum option. Where this is happening, 40% of the cohort have opted for non school-based curriculum courses. In total, 73 programmes are on offer, all of which lead to full qualifications at levels 1 -3. The Pupil Referral Unit is redesigning its key stage 4 provision to incorporate accredited vocational programmes.

Illustration 6

The Knowsley Collegiate enabled year 10 students in September 2003 to choose from over 35 optional courses including GCSEs, GCSEs in vocational subjects and NVQs. These options were available in several different centres, including a newly built vocational skills centre at a college.

An LEA-wide key stage 4 prospectus has been produced giving details of each of the courses. Introducing these “exciting new developments in academic and vocational studies” the Director of Education stated that “The Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate Initiative has made possible a much wider range of choices of courses available than ever before”.

It was anticipated that in September 2003 over 500 Y10 students would be studying for part of their time at other institutions, representing around 28% of the cohort. While the majority of students were expected to move to study in college, there will also be movement of students between schools. This is seen as important in establishing that the collegiate is a broad collaborative scheme which involves more than one-way movement between schools and the college.

One of the new GCSEs in vocational subjects is to be provided jointly with a local employer while another is taught jointly by a school, a college and a training provider. All schools have agreed to timetable one Y10 option on a Wednesday afternoon and in some cases there has been further coordination of timetables.

There are considerable variations between schools in the extent to which students either have access to, or opt for, the opportunities made available through the collegiate. One school anticipates that it will have over 100 students on collegiate courses, while another has enrolled ninety. In some schools, however, the numbers opting to participate in the scheme have been very low.
134. The next example shows a more targeted approach focused on community languages and based on collaboration with training providers:

**Illustration 7**

In the Black Country pathfinder new programmes are being developed in collaboration with training providers and work-based learning providers. In particular, there is work on two strategic developments: (a) vocational training packages with language provision for non-native speakers; (b) vocational training packages with inherent high-level community language recognition, though an obstacle here has been that there are currently no high-level accreditation routes for community languages with a business language focus. However, this issue is being addressed and the pathfinder is working closely with one of the pilot organisations of the new national Language Ladder scheme and one which is represented on the pathfinder executive group.

135. The Coventry pathfinder employed another approach to broadening the curriculum through the innovative use of e-learning. This is described in the next illustration.

**Illustration 8**

This project delivers live lessons over the internet, taught by expert teachers. Gradepoint Inc, a company based in Detroit, is working with Coventry to customise their application to meet the city's needs. Some teachers have already been trained to teach live over the internet. Trials have been undertaken involving groups of more able students from four schools: students from different schools have joined AS Sociology, AS English and AS Germans lessons taught by a teacher at another location. The NW Federation has now made a commitment to projects supporting accelerated learning courses in maths and French. Teachers are to be seconded, using Pathfinder funding, to develop the e-teaching with the intention of producing a programme of lessons for participating schools in the second half of Autumn 2003 term.

All schools in Coventry have broadband and will therefore be able to use this facility in the future. Students and teachers can also access the lessons from home. All participating students/teachers have a headset and a microphone, and the normal keyboard. The teacher is not visible on the screen; the screen is used to display primary and secondary sources and a ‘text’ area where students can ask or respond to questions. The teacher communicates with the students through their headphones and by making items appear on the screen. Students respond to the teacher by choosing from ‘menus’ on the computer, by typing in their responses (like emailing); or they can opt to speak directly to the teacher using the microphone.
The content of lessons appeared to be of a high standard with a good pace. Our interviews with the teacher and the students following the lesson indicated that this innovative way of learning is valued by both groups. Students felt that having interactions through headphones and on screen focused them more on the lesson; it provided more opportunities for quality interaction with the teacher than they would get in a normal classroom setting; and they felt more relaxed about expressing their views because they could not see the teacher. The teacher reported that, because she could not see the students, she responded to them as learners with no pre-conceptions, and she agreed that this method of learning helped students to focus closely on a particular aspect of what was being studied. She also highlighted the value of using one Advanced Skills Teacher to deliver a lesson to many students and the opportunity to archive each lesson so that it can be used again or for revision purposes.

136. A further approach has been to develop comprehensive out-of-school provision for groups of disaffected students thought to be at risk of exclusion or self-exclusion. This is exemplified by a development in Salford.

Illustration 9

The Salford Partnership has established a Vocational Learning Centre which provides training in construction and catering. These vocational areas were selected on the basis of information on gaps in the local labour market. Since its opening in February 2002, the centre has accommodated over 200 students and has a capacity of 29 students per day.

Students attend for differing lengths of time negotiated between themselves, their parents, their school and the centre. Students are encouraged to progress onto MAs, possibly via the E2E programme, although it is still too early to say how many are progressing in this way. The centre provides a controlled, intimate environment for students who have often not done well at school and for whom appropriate work placements are not available.

Provision has been charged at £30 per student per day with costs met by schools, although this arrangement has been threatened by pressure on school budgets in Salford.
137. Similarly, another pathfinder has in place five day a week provision as part of a dedicated programme for young people who, for a variety of reasons, are not accessing mainstream education. A 14-19 Learning Resource Centre has been created and county tutor networks have been established to enable schools to deliver some vocational options using their own staff and an FE college as an assessment centre. This has apparently increased overall capacity and is seen as a step towards resolving some of the issues of rurality.

138. It is worth noting that most of the broadening of the 14-19 curriculum reported by pathfinders and unfunded partnerships related to the provision of vocational courses, especially at key stage 4.

139. There was considerable emphasis on the development of applied GCSE courses. For example, Coventry reported that the take-up of GCSEs in vocational subjects is high with almost half of the Year 10 and one third of the Year 11 cohorts taking a vocational GCSE or six unit GNVQ as part of their key stage 4 programme.

140. Another pathfinder stated that the number and range of vocational GCSEs which they offered has increased from four to eight subjects with effect from September 2003, while another has introduced four new vocational double award courses run jointly by schools and the local colleges and is developing a vocationally based Science option for 2004. Thus our findings tended to confirm those of the National Evaluation of the IFP on the development of GCSEs in vocational subjects and indeed many of these developments had been started as a result of that programme.

141. There were some exceptions to this focus on vocational learning at 14-16. The following examples illustrate collaborative developments aimed at widening choice of academic options and post-16 choices.
Illustration 10

In Southampton, the three colleges have made available a wide range of courses to students in key stage 4 from September 2004. These include a full AS in Critical Thinking, AS units in Classical Civilisation, Psychology and Economics, level 3 courses in Mathematics and ICT, and additional GCSE courses in Mandarin Chinese, Law and Engineering. There are also some examples of collaboration between neighbouring schools, for instance, where students from one school attend GCSE Dance in another school.

Illustration 11

A major thrust of the Gateshead pathfinder has been the establishment of the Central Gateshead 6th Form (CG6). This collaborative venture between the college and three schools provides what is described as a “complete package” for sixth formers in central Gateshead.

The development of CG6 was partly prompted by the outflow of young people from the central area at 16. This had the effect of impoverishing the curriculum which could be offered to students who were unable or unwilling to travel out of the area. CG6 is intended to raise full-time participation post-16, particularly through working with two 11-16 schools which are part of the consortia.

A novel feature of the collaboration is that it provides opportunities for young people to continue to be based in these schools and pursue some of their post-16 studies there. It was anticipated that this would encourage reluctant students to stay on at 16 by making available a base in a familiar environment, as well as providing key stage 4 students at the schools with post-16 role models to raise aspirations and increase confidence.

For September 2003 CG6 was able to produce a common prospectus and offer a wide range of academic and vocational courses from entry level to level 3. It was reported that the publicity surrounding CG6 had resulted in more young people taking up courses and twenty new AS and A2 courses were offered for September 2003.

142. However, considering the whole of our evidence, it is apparent that in relation to broadening the curriculum the major emphasis has been on introducing vocational courses at 14-16. This has usually been done through collaboration between schools and colleges. Generally, less has been attempted in the development of collaboration involving work-based training providers and employers, although again there have been exceptions to this.
4.3.2 Barriers to broadening the curriculum

143. Pathfinders were asked about barriers to broadening the curriculum. Many reiterated points about timescales, funding, historical and geographical factors and national issues which were addressed in section 4.2, but some also raised issues which were more specific to planning and implementing curriculum provision.

144. Lack of capacity was identified as an issue by several pathfinders. This had several dimensions including: lack of equipment for vocational courses; lack of staff expertise in vocational areas; lack of employers prepared to offer work-based placements. While collaboration with FE colleges could help to overcome the first two barriers within some colleges there was pressure on specialised facilities such as hairdressing and beauty salons and engineering and construction workshops. Specialist staff time could also be at a premium.

145. Lack of parity between vocational and academic qualifications was identified as a further barrier and it was suggested that parental and student perceptions may discourage take-up. We noted earlier the variations in school responses to collaborative opportunities and some coordinators argued that schools with sixth forms are more difficult to engage in terms of vocational provision at level 3.

146. There were sometimes concerns about the educational quality of courses put on by some providers and anxiety about potential effects on performance table league points if students under-performed. More specifically, there were occasionally issues around different approaches to student discipline, behaviour and pastoral care between providers. In some pathfinders this was being tackled through the development of protocols with agreed common approaches to these issues.

147. A further factor was concern about the eligibility of some vocational courses in terms of performance league tables. One respondent commented:

*It's seriously appalling that in performance tables F and G grades in History count for more than an NVQ in Hairdressing, which is far more useful for many students, but they get no credit for this. This makes it harder to kick against the status quo, everyone knows that it's silly.*
148. It was also suggested that there was a lack of appropriate qualifications in some vocational sectors, e.g. construction, although the increasing number and complexity of accredited courses available could also be a barrier. Generally speaking, there were few concerns about Section 96 though a number of isolated examples were put forward in specific cases where greater flexibility to adopt or design a recognised qualification for a desirable learning experience would have been appreciated.

149. Pathfinders also identified staff training and development issues which limited broadening of the curriculum. These included: lack of knowledge and understanding of vocational pathways by school staff and lack of staff experience with some qualifications such as BTEC diplomas.

4.3.3 Variations in the pace of learning

150. The surveys showed that in the view of coordinators there has been increased progress in this aspect of pathfinders, with 70% reporting at least ‘as expected’ progress in the September survey.

151. The data revealed that variations in the pace of learning were almost exclusively related to accelerating the learning of more able students.

152. Fourteen pathfinders reported that some young people are being offered the opportunity to take GCSEs early, although this may not be in every member school. In general, a maximum of two subjects are likely to be taken early, most commonly Mathematics, followed by English and a modern foreign language.

153. A number of pathfinders have also introduced level 3 programmes to more able students in key stage 4. In one, Key Skills IT level 3 is being offered to gifted and talented year 11 students through the medium of a twilight session at a local sixth-form college. In Coventry, two accelerated programmes are currently running, one in Mathematics, where Year 10 able pupils will, over the next two years, take AS Mathematics alongside their GCSE, supported by additional teaching time, e-learning
and a university residential programme. The second is in French where the aim is for pupils to sit their GCSEs at the end of year 10.

154. An extensive programme of accelerated learning was taking place in another pathfinder. This is described below and gives a good indication of the range of approaches to providing accelerated learning.

**Illustration 12**

In Warwickshire several collaborative strategies have been introduced to enable cost-effective fast-tracking of small numbers of able students. These strategies include: using transport and ICT to bring learners together and to include twilight and summer school delivery, extended schools and satellite learning hubs.

Ten schools are currently offering access to or delivering AS courses or three unit VCEs over two years at key stage 4. Specialist schools are offering twilight AS/VCE in their specialism. FE colleges are offering a mixture of twilight and summer school provision, some under Phase 2 of IFP. Three schools are looking at introducing a two-year KS3 followed by either early entry to GCSE or 3 years in key stage 4 to offer more breadth. One school has made links with three higher education institutions which will deliver level 4 modules to sixth-form students. A local university has agreed to credit these, should students progress on to its courses.

A recent addition to curriculum offerings has been a Gifted and Talented twilight opportunity for Motor Vehicle Studies which has attracted “seven very able girls and three boys”. Links have also been established with a local company to provide twilight sessions for able students to study two areas from a choice including Theatre Design, Interior Design, Soft Furnishings, Corsetry and Millinery. They will achieve two City and Guild qualifications at Levels 2 or 3.

155. From the April survey and case study work, there was much less evidence of variations in the pace of learning for slower learners and therefore in the September survey coordinators were asked specifically if differently paced curricula had been made available for slower learners.

156. Nine coordinators responded positively, but only two responses described strategies which would allow young people to learn more slowly. One pathfinder has developed a new modular vocational accreditation route (Certificate in Business Language Competence) aimed at both faster and slower learners. The pathfinder
coordinator reported that initial feedback was very positive from both groups of learners. Another pathfinder reported that it is extending key stage 4 to three years for some students.

157. The other responses described particular vocational courses which were now available and some commented on better and more targeted support for disaffected and disengaged young people, rather than specifically focusing on the pace of learning.

4.3.4 Barriers to achieving variations in the pace of learning

158. Only four pathfinders identified barriers to achieving variations in the pace of learning. Two of these responses reflected some ambivalence about the practice of accelerated learning. One coordinator stated:

There is well founded scepticism about the value of accelerated key stage 4 progression within the current system i.e. where 16 is still the key threshold to level 3 courses.

159. Another reported differing views on accelerated programmes amongst the schools within that partnership:

Headteachers seem either in favour of this concept or strongly opposed. Those who do not support it do not see it as an entitlement for able students; they seek other forms of an enhanced curriculum or make a case that able students have enough challenge in what already exists.

4.3.5 Access to key skills post-16

160. This was one of the least addressed aspects of the pathfinder initiative. In both surveys, half of the responding pathfinders indicated that it was not included among their objectives and only one reported ‘more than expected’ progress. It may be that with the considerable emphasis on key skills in recent years most pathfinders took the view that the arrangements already in place are adequate to address this issue.
161. Several pathfinders had, however, made this a feature of their work. Examples from four pathfinders include: the development of new resources for key skills delivery, particularly ICT; the implementation of a new key skills policy supporting an entitlement to access to level 2 for full and part-time learners, including those on work-based programmes; the development of materials for a full baseline audit of key skills levels for all new students at college; work with Read On, Write Away to develop modules that are literacy/numeracy based but set in contexts expected to interest disaffected students such as cars/driving test, local football clubs.

4.3.6 Work-based learning

162. By work-based learning we refer to learning undertaken in workplaces by young people with employed or apprenticeship status (thus distinguishing work-based learning from work-related learning which is undertaken by young people enrolled in full-time courses in schools and colleges).

163. Work-based learning has not achieved a high profile within pathfinders. Introducing or increasing MAs had not been included in 10 of the 20 pathfinders’ original proposals. Only seven pathfinders reported making progress on this front and the survey responses revealed, even amongst these, different levels of achievement.

164. However, one pathfinder reported that it had established a pathway for GCSE Engineering students to move onto a Modern Apprenticeship in Engineering by establishing links with a network of local engineering employers. In another pathfinder, where the emphasis is on language learning, MAs had been set up in Health & Social Care with Punjabi, with Urdu and with British Sign Language.

165. Seven pathfinders in the September survey reported that they had made some progress in setting up Student Apprenticeships. Three also said that they had not made as much progress as they had expected to. The remainder either stated that they had made no progress or that this aspect had not been included as one of their objectives.
166. A range of obstacles to increasing work-based learning were reported including:

- lack of local employers able/willing to offer placements and Student/Modern Apprenticeships especially in rural pathfinders and in those with a high proportion of small and medium sized employers;
- business pressures on companies which sometimes necessitated them withdrawing from previously agreed schemes
- lack of local training providers
- disparateness of training providers and employers which makes communication and planning difficult
- lack of appropriate qualifications at entry level and level 1 in some areas, e.g. construction, plumbing
- uneven quality of provision across training providers and employers
- lack of support from some EBPs/EBLOs
- time required to set up placements and apprenticeships.

167. It was recognised that with the introduction of Student Apprenticeships, the E2E programme and the establishment of Foundation Modern Apprenticeships there was now a coherent work-based pathway offering good opportunities for progression. However, as indicated by the list of barriers reported above it appears there are problems implementing this pathway.

168. At a policy level Keep & Payne (2002) have identified competition with full-time education as one of several factors inhibiting the development of work-based learning. They argue that there is an inherent bias in current government policies in favour of yet further expansion of full-time post-compulsory education.

4.3.7 Enterprise capability

169. It should be noted that it was not a requirement that all phase one pathfinders include an element of enterprise capability. It was one of eight specific aspects pathfinders were invited to test, but all pathfinders were not required to test all eight. The survey evidence suggested that progress was becoming more rapid in this area.
170. Several schools and consortia within the pathfinders have been designated Enterprise Pathfinders. Knowsley, for example, has developed work through two successful Enterprise Pathfinder bids and all youth enterprise work is now being co-ordinated through a new Youth Enterprise Strategy Group. A new enterprise programme has been established at a college to develop Year 11 students’ enterprise skills. This developmental process is being supported by a secondment to develop enterprise education across the pathfinder, including progression from 14 to 19 and beyond.

171. Another pathfinder reported that a significant increase in funding to Young Enterprise from Advantage West Midlands has led to renewed activity. Pathfinder funding is being used to develop four interactive learning modules based on key economic concepts. Enterprise Challenges were undertaken over the summer. Enterprise and business days based on management development exercises and key skills are taking place, particularly with the four schools awarded Enterprise Pathfinder status. A “Framework for Enterprise” is being developed.

172. The introduction of enterprise pathfinders has undoubtedly promoted progress in this area although in evaluatory terms it has made it difficult to distinguish the effects of these pathfinders from those of the 14-19 pathfinders.

173. The number of different initiatives in the area of enterprise is causing problems as one pathfinder reported:

*It has been difficult to bring coherence to this aspect of the pathfinder and to Government policy initiatives, given the fragmentary manner in which initiatives have been developed. In our area several partners/competitors are offering/supporting this curriculum development: the EBLO, Young Enterprise, Business Dynamics and [Local] EBP, as well as a number of other private providers such as the Industrial Society - and, in the near future, Enterprise Pathfinder schools and Enterprise advisers. However, as yet, schools have no clear framework for enterprise education. Some of these organisations receive central funding to deliver activities for schools free of charge; others have earnings targets to achieve from the same activities. As a result, and possibly because it is early days, decisions about provision are being too often driven by funding and not by quality or, indeed, well thought out curriculum principles.*
4.3.8 Progression routes

174. Finally, in this section, we turn to consider the extent to which pathfinders are planning to establish clear progression routes through the 14-19 phase.

175. One of the ways in which several pathfinders are attempting to address this issue is through using labour market information to identify skills gaps which can then be used as a basis to establish particular vocational routes. The Gateshead pathfinder, for example, has identified gaps in the health, tourism, engineering and culture sectors and is working with employers and organisations, as well as with schools and colleges, to establish vocational pathways in these areas.

176. The following illustration gives a further example of the development of sector-specific pathways:

Illustration 13

In Coventry, a city-wide Engineering Collaboration Group has been set up. Its membership comprises school headteachers, EAZ and HE representatives and LEA personnel and will, in the future, include a local training provider. It meets every one or two months and aims to develop the status of engineering within the 14-19 curriculum, in order to respond to and take advantage of the opportunities available to young people in the local employment sector. One of its first priorities is to develop "a more exciting" GCSE Engineering to keep students engaged post 16.

Agreement has also been reached to set up a focus group of HE, the FE colleges and schools’ heads of department to jointly plan the GCSE Engineering curriculum to incorporate additionalities (i.e. enrichment activities), to stimulate and maintain young people’s interest in the subject area post 16.

177. Some other pathfinders had identified likely shortages of health personnel and were involved in discussions with local NHS trusts into ways in which curriculum pathways might be established leading to entry to health professions at 19.

178. The Southampton pathfinder was giving particular attention to progression to HE as illustrated below:
Illustration 14

Only 12 per cent of Southampton young people entered higher education in 2001/2. A key focus of the Pathfinder is to raise aspirations amongst the more able students. Considerable progress has been made in the provision of master classes. These comprise 2 or 3 sessions of 2 hours each during the summer term, in a range of areas for Year 9 students, e.g. History & the Future of Politics in the UK, Photography, Business Leadership, Industrial Problem Solving, Hands On Surveying. These are being delivered by the FE College, the two sixth form colleges and Skills Quest (EBP) and Pathfinder funding is being used to cover the tuition and transport costs. It is intended to repeat this programme next year.

179. However, an explicit focus upon progression pathways was the exception rather than the rule in the pathfinders. In some pathfinders labour market information was either believed to be not available or was treated with considerable scepticism as a basis for curriculum planning.

180. In many pathfinders the implicit assumption seemed to be that pathways were available through the 14-19 phase and that the major task was to persuade young people to identify and access these existing routes rather than develop new ones.

181. Related to this was the focus in many pathfinders on the 14-16 age range, rather than on 14-19 *per se*. For example, in the Nottinghamshire partnership the low level of participation at 16-19 was identified as an action point following an area-wide inspection. However, the partnership decided that the way to tackle this was by collaborating to provide a broader, more flexible, more vocational curriculum at 14-16, especially for lower achievers and disengaged/disaffected young people in the belief that experience of this sort of curriculum would encourage greater participation by this group post-16.
4.4 Targeting and involvement of young people

Key points

♦ Pathfinder activities mainly targeted on disaffected/disengaged/lower achieving students and higher achieving students
♦ Limited attention to addressing gender/ethnic differences in young people’s choices
♦ Structures in place in most pathfinders to consult young people on 14-19 reform
♦ Most young people positive about 14-19 changes

182. In the previous section we considered in some detail the curricular changes which have been promoted by the pathfinders. We turn now to consider the extent to which particular groups of young people have been targeted for engagement in pathfinder activities. We also consider the extent to which young people have had, and will continue to have, opportunities to help shape the pathfinders in their local areas.

4.4.1 Types of young people participating in pathfinder activities

183. The pathfinder prospectus indicated that pathfinders should be aiming to change the learning experiences of all 14-19 students. In practice, however, pathfinders have tended to emphasise provision for the disaffected and/or disengaged and others for whom the academic route through conventional GCSEs to AS/A2s and beyond was considered less appropriate.

184. We have already described the sorts of broader provision which is being developed for these groups of learners. This includes vocational courses usually wholly or partly based in colleges, work placements with employers or training providers. For young people considered most at risk comprehensive ‘alternative’ curricula which take them out of the school environment for part or even the whole of the week and place them in a college environment, a specialised vocational centre, a training provider, a workplace or some combination of these, were developed.
185. For the more able students, we have already referred to accelerated learning, sometimes with the involvement of higher education institutions and the introduction of master classes and summer schools designed to facilitate progression to higher education.

186. Provision for those with moderate or severe learning difficulties was not a major element of the pathfinders although one was planning the setting up of a special schools consortium to develop provision and accreditation for this group of young people. Coventry's four federations each included a special school and the Salford partnership also included special schools.

187. Coventry was also notable for its use of pathfinder funding to meet the needs of ‘looked after’ young people as described in the following illustration.

**Illustration 15**

There are approximately 200 ‘Looked After’ young people in the 14-19 age range within the City. Pathfinder funding is being used to set up a Financial Literacy Project, organised by the LEA coordinator for Personal and Social Health Education and a personal adviser from Connexions, aimed at this group of young people who have been identified as particularly vulnerable to financial exclusion. It will be a 10 hour programme over a period of weeks, delivered to 6-8 young people at a time at the One Stop Shop in Coventry, away from the school environment. Other groups who will be targeted using other sources of funding include young people at risk of offending, teenage parents and reluctant learners.

188. It was rare for pathfinders to address the needs of traveller children, but one pathfinder, where there is a large transient population, was intending to build on work already being undertaken in this area in conjunction with the LEA Traveller Education Service.

189. What was noticeable in the survey responses, the case studies and indeed in the original pathfinder proposals, was the lack of reference by the majority of pathfinders to the large group of students ‘in the middle’ of the achievement range. Considerable
resources are undoubtedly being directed at the less able, the disaffected and disengaged and, to a lesser extent, the more able students.

190. The introduction of the new GCSEs in vocational subjects may provide more students with wider curriculum choices, although in its report on these courses Ofsted stated that in nearly half the schools they visited the courses were regarded by senior management as options for lower attaining pupils, although this varied from subject to subject (Ofsted, 2003a).

191. Thus there is a danger that the needs and aspirations of the majority of students may be being neglected as students at the extreme ends of the ability/motivation continuum are targeted. Only one pathfinder in its survey response explicitly referred to all students. It cited its aim as: “to increase achievement, progression and participation across the 14-19 cohort”. In order to facilitate this, a number of strategies are being deployed, including the piloting of a data sharing system to enable the sharing of data with Connexions, the LLSC, the national LSC, and a neighbouring LEA to determine progression routes for all young people across the 14-19 phase. This is designed “to link achievement, progression and destination across all learners from 5 - 24”.

4.4.2 Addressing gender/ethnicity issues

192. The Green Paper stated that the 14-19 phase must become more responsive to students from a range of ethnic backgrounds, while the creation of a more flexible, coherent curriculum with greater opportunities for student choice implied that gender stereotyping in these choices should be combated.

193. Analysis of the proposals and the surveys revealed, however, that the majority of pathfinders had not included the overcoming of gender/ethnic differences in their objectives. Where gender issues did feature, it was only as part of performance indicators to measure the take-up of particular courses by males and females. Where ethnicity was discussed, it was mainly in the context of identifying particular groups of young people to be targeted within the broader curriculum, rather than addressing
why some ethnic groups favour or shun particular curriculum pathways; or
monitoring the take-up of courses by different groups, rather than putting forward
strategies to overcome stereotyping in young people’s choices. For example, one
survey response stated 'we will target young people from ethnic minorities who might
not have considered vocational choices within the pathways we will pilot' but gave no
details of how this would be approached. Few pathfinder proposals described
strategies to engage young people in areas traditionally avoided by certain groups.

194. However, five pathfinders reported that progress was as expected or better on
gender/ethnicity issues. They gave examples of such progress as follows.

195. One pathfinder aims, through its emphasis on enhancing and developing
language learning in vocational contexts to overcome language and cultural barriers
and thereby reduce stereotyping in young people’s choices and to engage young
people from community groups amongst which there have historically been low levels
of participation in vocational training.

196. Another pathfinder has attracted girls into engineering by a specifically targeted
‘Girls into Engineering’ key stage 4 course at an FE college. The majority of students
on a catering course at an FE college are boys, while the majority on a twilight motor
vehicle course are girls, and there is an even mix of boys and girls on the Young
Designers’ twilight provision with a local textiles company.

197. We noted above that many pathfinder activities have targeted the lower
achieving, the disaffected and disengaged and one implication of this is that since
more boys than girls fall into these categories there is greater engagement of
pathfinders with boys than with girls. Similarly with ethnicity, engagement in
pathfinder activities is likely to vary according to gender and membership of
particular ethnic groups - thus low achieving boys from some ethnic minorities may
be more likely to be involved in pathfinder activities.
4.4.3 The role of young people in shaping pathfinders

198. The evaluation sought information on whether, and how, young people within pathfinders are being consulted about the 14-19 curriculum. Eighteen of the 20 pathfinder coordinators said the views of this client group were being investigated. Methods described included questionnaire surveys, focus groups, school councils, attendance of young people at pathfinder steering group meetings, interviews at parents evenings and other events. In some pathfinders, this consultation was being undertaken by local external evaluators, in others it was being carried out in-house.

199. Examples of these activities included: in Gateshead, an event to seek the views of young people and their partners had been held for each of the three strands of the pathfinder. In Southampton, in addition to the collection of statistical data, young people's perceptions of the provision are to be investigated through questionnaire surveys and interviews with the students themselves. In Cumbria, there is strong emphasis on eliciting ideas from students about what counts as 'quality' in the 14-19 phase, rather than basing developments on pre-conceived ideas. In Newham, a group of young people helped to develop a logo for the Newham Young People’s College.

Illustration 16

A key feature of the South Gloucestershire Pathfinder is the emphasis placed on student feedback. Research undertaken by the Institute of Education, University of London has involved a longitudinal study of students through the use of questionnaires and interviews.

The International Learning and Research Centre and some of the centres are also now working with Professor Jean Ruddock from Homerton College, Cambridge in developing the student voice. Students are to be given a voice through student councils in all schools and colleges from September 2003. At the moment, there are different systems in place in different institutions and a need has been identified to set up councils which work in the same way. Representatives from each institution will also sit on the International Student Council by the end of the autumn term 2003. This will be tied in with the development of an extranet and video conferencing.
200. In our case study work we sought interviews with small groups of young people who were likely to be embarking on pathfinder or partnership activities from September 2003. Although there were exceptions, particularly among older students, many of the young people did not have a wider picture of 14-19 education and training. This is not to suggest that they do not have a contribution to make, and indeed they often had strong views on, for example, the operation of the Curriculum 2000 reforms or the ways in which the key stage 4 options process operated in their schools. However, their experience is limited in that only the most articulate and knowledgeable are really in a position to comment on variation in provision outside their local context or that of previous years.

201. What young people generally do appreciate are wider choices, greater information and increased flexibility to specialise in areas that are of interest to them. Students were also seen to be responding positively to opportunities to study in locations away from their home institutions, especially where reliable transport was provided and timetables were co-ordinated. They seemed resistant to compulsion in terms of curricula and keen to gain new experiences and have access to different curricula, particularly ones that are more tailored to their vocational interests. The opportunities created by the IFP funding had clearly made a significant difference to some pupils.

202. In general though, those interviewed, particularly at 14-16, had a less clear understanding of which courses they were currently following and to which qualifications they led than might have been expected. Often they did not see themselves on a particular 'path' or as having any clear destination in mind but simply doing what seemed to be the next good thing to do, influenced by a range of advisers in school or at home and by perceptions among their peer group.
4.5 Supporting young people

Key points
♦ Some developments in the provision of advice and guidance
♦ Some strong partnerships established with Connexions
♦ Uneven localised development of ILPs

203. It has been widely recognised that the development of a more flexible and coherent 14-19 phase with greater scope for student choice would require enhanced advice and guidance and other forms of support for young people as they negotiate their way through what is likely to become a more complex curricular and institutional context. Students are likely to have greater choices about what they learn, where their learning takes place, the qualifications which they are pursuing and the pace at which they will learn.

204. There has been long-standing concern about the quality and effectiveness of advice and guidance on career and progression routes. Several approaches have been developed to enhance advice and guidance, notably the establishment of the Connexions service and the publication of a national framework for Careers Education and Guidance for 11-19 year olds in England (DfES, 2003b).

205. In this section we consider the progress made in enhancing advice and guidance within the 14-19 Pathfinders and then focus specifically on the development of ILPs.

4.5.1 Enhanced advice and guidance

206. As noted in paragraph 18 it was a prerequisite for all pathfinders to provide enhanced advice and guidance. The overall picture with regard to plans to implement this was mixed. Most pathfinders give this area a high priority (although surprisingly there were pathfinders in both surveys which indicated that it was not among their objectives). Most pathfinders stated that they were making at least ‘as expected’
progress. There was widespread recognition that, where it had not already happened, advice and guidance would need to move down the school to at least year 9 and that the Key Stage 4 options process had gained renewed significance. The substantial increase in collaboration and the broader curriculum offerings meant that the location of study and the qualifications to be obtained became significant elements of choice.

207. The function of Connexions within these choice processes has been an issue within some pathfinder schools, with uncertainty being expressed about the division of responsibility and work between school careers staff and Connexions advisers. Some strong and productive relationships had been established but there was also criticism in some pathfinders that Connexions, driven by key targets e.g. relating to young people not in education, employment or training, was prioritising its efforts into priority 1 and 2 cases rather than providing a universal, impartial service of information, guidance and support in decision-making. It was widely recognised within pathfinders, including by Connexions staff, that, given finite resources and the broad Connexions remit, there was potential tension between universal provision and more intensive guidance to those young people most in need of support.

208. Our most recent evidence suggests that, in many pathfinders, the Connexions service is now playing a key role in the development of better systems of advice and guidance for students. In many of those areas where the Connexions service was piloted and has therefore been operational for over two years, good working relationships exist. For example, in one pathfinder collaborative work is being led by Prospects/Connexions in order to provide quality guidance for progression routes from the secondary sector into FE as well as to design curriculum materials for use by careers advisers and teachers.

209. In another pathfinder, funding is being used to undertake research by Connexions into how young people access and use information and what formats and styles of information are most effective. The findings will be used to inform the design and production of new materials. Different forms of media are being used to reach young people: a promotional video has been produced involving key stage 4 pupils for use at school events; a book containing a collection of young people’s
experiences of 14-19 vocational learning is being published; a 14-19 website is being created.

210. In Coventry, a 14-19 pathfinder consultant has been appointed with particular responsibility for working with the Connexions service in the management of advice and guidance. Another pathfinder reports that Connexions personal advisers working with the ‘at risk’ cohort have worked with more young people than originally planned and that additional personal adviser input on key stage 4 option choices has proved 'effective'.

211. Overall, however, there are still mixed views on the extent to which Connexions has been able to help to provide enhanced advice and guidance. This unevenness almost certainly reflects the different ways in which different Connexions partnerships work as well as the diverse nature of the pathfinders themselves. Where pathfinders have yet to forge strong links with the Connexions service, they reported that this is proving an obstacle to progress.

212. In some pathfinders, Connexions did not start up until September 2002 and is therefore still in its infancy. Thus, on the basis of the stronger relationships noted in areas where Connexions was piloted, it may be that links will strengthen over time as both the pathfinders and Connexions become established.

213. However, even where the partnership is strong, some pathfinders have reported that lack of Connexions capacity has imposed restrictions on what is possible and, while Connexions has a remit to operate as a universal service, its officers have been clear that this does not imply that the individual interviews traditionally offered by the old careers services are either feasible or desirable in the current context. Thus, for the majority of students, schools, colleges and training providers will be required to play a key role in advising and guiding them into and through the 14-19 phase and into employment and continuing education and training.

214. Concerns were expressed about the capacity of schools to take on this enhanced role (this concern tended to be voiced by college staff, schools themselves
were more sanguine about their ability to take it on). Particular concerns were expressed about school teachers' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, vocational options and progression routes at 14 and 16. (This was also recognised as an issue for some Connexions personal advisers, especially those from a youth service background). It was argued that this lack of expert advice contributed to the absence of parity of esteem for vocational courses and the directing of the less able, disaffected and disengaged towards these courses. The long-standing issue of the provision of impartial advice and guidance to 16 year olds attending schools with sixth forms was also raised. Additionally, it was recognised that schools varied considerably in the ways they organised advice and guidance, the amount of curriculum time allocated and the quality of the provision.

215. Some pathfinders stated that they were providing staff development activities aimed at improving the quality of advice and guidance offered by schools and in some pathfinders Connexions staff were being deployed in training and working with school teachers, as well as directly with selected students.

4.5.2 Development of individual learning plans

216. The development of ILPs has been uneven across the pathfinders. Some pathfinders have stated that developing ILPs is not among their objectives. For most pathfinders, ILPs were a new tool which they needed to develop and several pathfinders were undertaking reviews before committing to the development of a particular form of ILP. A number of pathfinders had plans to undertake a pilot with selected groups of students before introducing ILPs to all 14-19 learners. One pathfinder, for example, plans to develop ILPs around two target groups: 120 students engaged in their 'Skills for Working Life' project; and, a group of Gifted & Talented students. Several partnerships have begun the development of electronic ILPs.

217. South Gloucestershire is one pathfinder which has focused on this area of development.
Illustration 17

One South Gloucestershire school piloted with its Year 9 students new software in 2002-2003 and the rest of the pathfinder schools will be using the same software in 2003-2004. “AP4L” (A Plan for Life) was developed by the company S-cool for online ILPs in conjunction with the local Connexions service and local teachers. The students undertake a series of quizzes which help them to identify their own skills and qualities. They then input their own interests, achievements and work skills, their ambitions in the short and long term, and their options choices for key stage 4. They develop an ‘Action Plan’ which will help them realise their aspirations. They identify who they require support from to achieve the items in the Action Plan and their ILP is updated throughout their school career. It will eventually become an electronic CV. The package also includes an extremely comprehensive library of careers and occupations which give descriptions of what a job entails, the type of working conditions, the entry qualification, the level of salary etc. As work on the extranet linking all of the pathfinder centres has developed, this concept of an ILP has expanded to include guidance plans (AP4L) and learning plans (based on work done in the classroom) and, in time, will link to the assessment information stored on information management systems. The ILPs will be part of the school management systems and should therefore also allow ‘social factors’, ‘progress’ and ‘timetables’ to be available on-line. There is a staff pilot group utilising this and the pathfinder will enable these staff to train others.

Interviews with the students using this software package showed they were very positive about it. They liked using a computer for their ILP because they said it would be easy to update the information regularly. They said it helped them ‘identify what you’re good at’, that it would ‘help me get a job in the future’, that it told them ‘what sorts of jobs you can do’. It was intended that the students would spend two sessions on completing the quizzes, and would develop their ILP over a 4-5 week period which would be updated periodically.

Through the extranet they would also be able to find work experience placement opportunities and apply on line, attaching their CV from their ILP to their application.

218. In some partnerships, the Progress File was referred to in positive terms as an effective vehicle for skill development, recording achievement and defining individual learning pathways. However, there was some lack of clarity about the relationship of a Progress File to an ILP, though some areas had extensive plans for their integration, with one partnership aspiring to an individual planning process which would extend from age 5 to post-HE employment.

219. Thus, currently, ILP development is being undertaken very much on a local basis, which helps to explain variations in pace and degrees of commitment to the concept. There were calls from some pathfinders for a stronger lead from government suggesting this might lead to the identification of an approach which could be recommended to pathfinders and other partnerships.
5 ISSUES FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT ARISING FROM THE EVALUATION

Key points
♦ Extent of focus on 14-19 as whole
♦ Extent of change to experience of all young people
♦ Local capacity to provide strategic direction
♦ Sustainability of development
♦ Quality and quantity of advice and guidance
♦ Promotion of work-based learning pathway

220. In this section we turn to some of the key issues which have emerged from the evaluation so far. We draw selectively on literature relevant to the 14-19 initiative to illustrate some of these issues.

221. It is important to reiterate that it is still early days for pathfinders and that this evaluation reports on progress in their first nine months. This section, and the overall report, is therefore, intended to be formative and to suggest areas for discussion and potential development. Inevitably, this section also introduces a stronger element of generalisation into the report. This carries the danger of suggesting a substantial degree of homogeneity across the pathfinders, whereas the reality is of considerable diversity and adaptation to local aspirations and circumstances.

222. Despite these caveats, there were several key issues which emerged from the evaluation which can be usefully drawn to the attention of policy-makers and practitioners. Because pathfinders are at such an early stage in their development we pose these issues as questions to be considered rather than definitive statements on pathfinder practice.
5.1. To what extent are pathfinders addressing the whole 14-19 phase?

223. *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES, 2002) called for the creation of a coherent 14-19 phase which would provide clear progression pathways. However, our evidence (see section 4.3.1) suggests that many pathfinders have prioritised the 14-16 age range and particularly the broadening of the curriculum through increasing access to vocational options and work-related learning. A minority of projects have focused attention on the 16-19 age range. However, there is limited evidence at this stage for pathfinders addressing 14-19 as an holistic phase.

224. Interestingly, the prioritisation of 14-16 in some ways mirrors what occurred in an earlier 14-19 initiative, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). Gleeson & Smith (1987) referred to 16-18 as ‘the neglected territory of TVEI provision’ and most research and evaluation on TVEI concluded that it had limited impact at 16-18 e.g. Barnes et al, (1989); Dale et al, (1990).

225. Clearly the policy context for pathfinders is very different to that which existed in the 1980s when TVEI was at its most influential. Unlike TVEI, pathfinders are not an isolated, individual initiative but part of a concerted, comprehensive policy approach to reforming 14-19 education. It may also be that the focus on 14-16 in the pathfinders is part of an incremental approach to achieving an holistic aim – the rationale may be to get 14-16 right first, as a pre-condition for achieving coherence across 14-19.

226. Nevertheless, the TVEI example might still contain some relevant lessons about the difficulties of working across what remains an important legal, psychological, institutional and curricular divide at 16.
5.2 To what extent are pathfinders aiming to change the experience of all young people 14-19?

227. Again the policy intention is clear that pathfinders should be changing the experience of all young people within the 14-19 phase, although not necessarily in the same ways and to the same extent. Our evidence suggest however, that at this stage pathfinders are likely to impact much more strongly on some groups of young people than on others – with some groups left largely untouched.

228. The greatest impact is likely to be on a rather mixed group of lower achieving, disengaged or disaffected young people who, through pathfinders, are gaining access to a wider range of vocational courses, often provided in colleges and sometimes through training providers. Within this broad area of curriculum development there has also been development of new GCSEs in vocational areas which may open participation to a wider group of students, although Ofsted evidence on the introduction of these new courses suggests that some schools perceive them as being intended for the less able (Ofsted, 2003a).

229. The other group which is likely to be substantially affected by pathfinder developments is the more able and we describe in section 4.3.3 some of the developments in accelerated learning at levels 2, 3 and 4 which are being developed for this group. These developments often build on work done through the gifted and talented strand of EiC.

230. What is much less evident in our data are ways in which pathfinders are likely to impact on the large numbers of young people who do not fall into the categories above – who are likely to follow GCSE courses in predominantly academic subjects and then proceed to some combination of AS/A2/AVCE courses at post-16.

231. We also noted the relative lack of attention to gender and ethnicity issues in pathfinders so that where particular patterns of participation emerge these are likely to be the consequences of other decisions about provision or targeting of particular
institutions rather than explicit attempts to promote particular patterns of participation by gender or ethnicity.

232. Of course, the targeting of pathfinder activities described above may be fully justified and partnerships may well argue that it is right to focus upon specific groups, such as the disaffected and disengaged and pay far less attention to other groups where participation, retention and achievement is less problematic.

233. However, more specifically, there is little evidence that pathfinders have given priority to preparing for the requirement, to be introduced in September 2004, under which it will be a statutory for all schools to provide all students at Key Stage 4 with work-related learning. In its consultation on this development QCA stated:

Work-related learning aims to benefit the general education and career planning of all students; it is not a response to disaffection and/or underachievement (QCA/NFER, 2003, p.12)

234. The framework provided by QCA for work-related learning suggests that some schools will need to go beyond what they currently offer in order to meet the statutory requirement.

5.3 Within local areas what capacity is there to provide strategic direction to the 14-19 reform agenda, including the operation of pathfinders?

235. This issue is rather broader than the pathfinder initiative but impacts upon the ways in which pathfinders operate. The 14-19 reform agenda has placed great emphasis on the importance of collaboration and this has been reflected in the pathfinders. As we reported in section 4.2.1, this encouragement to collaborate has been enthusiastically embraced by the pathfinders.

236. However, this collaboration takes place in complicated local policy contexts in which schools, colleges and training providers have large degrees of institutional autonomy and which contain a variety of organisations, including LLSCs, local
learning partnerships, Connexions, education-business partnerships and LEAs which all have roles to play in promoting collaboration and partnership.

237. We also noted the number and diversity of national and local programmes and initiatives relevant to the 14-19 reform agenda.

238. Within the complex policy environment, the relative autonomy of schools and colleges, in particular, poses challenges to notions of collaboration and partnership since they are able to engage selectively with the reform agenda in ways which they perceive as being in their institutional interests. These collaborations also take place within more or less intense contexts of institutional competition.

239. Adnett & Davies (2003) argue that in such circumstances competition and co-operation can co-exist, operating along different dimensions, but that the maintenance of co-operation requires careful and continuing nurturing and use of appropriate incentives and drivers. This has important implications for the ways in which pathfinders are led and continue to develop if inclusive, resilient and enduring partnerships are to be established.

240. It raises issues of where such leadership may be best located and what capacity exists for taking on such a role. We noted in section 2.3.3 that most pathfinders are being led by LEAs and local learning partnerships and some of these have provided excellent leadership. However, LEA and learning partnership boundaries do not always coincide with ‘naturally’ occurring local learning areas, i.e. areas defined by the actual distribution and movements of 14-19 learners within particular localities. This might indicate the need for broader foci for strategic planning and collaboration. LLSCs might be in the best position to provide this, although at this stage they appear to be playing a relatively low profile in the development of pathfinders. However, this may change as strategic area reviews get underway.
5.4 How can developments begun under pathfinders be sustained?

241. Although we have stressed that it is still early days for 14-19 Pathfinders, since funding is time-limited, there is also a degree of urgency in ensuring that developments are embedded and become part of the taken-for-granted operation of the 14-19 phase. Again earlier attempts to promote aspects of the pathfinder agenda might be instructive here.

242. For example, Jamieson (1993) and Yeomans (2003) have drawn attention to the waxing and waning of work-related learning at different periods of the preceding twenty years and respondents in several partnerships referred to earlier school/college partnerships which had subsequently withered.

243. The demise of particular funding streams was an important factor in the waning of some of these earlier initiatives, but were themselves indicative of shifts in national policy, for example away from TVEI and related developments towards a more prescriptive and academic curriculum. In this respect the current policy context is more propitious, with a long-term commitment to the development of the 14-19 reform agenda, although as described above funding issues remain important.

244. However, while constancy in national policy and funding are important issues in sustainability, they are not the only factors. Sustainability also requires that collaborative approaches become embedded in the values and practices of institutions and practitioners and this implies that they penetrate more deeply into the individual institutions and inhere in relationships which are built up between teachers, lecturers, personal advisers, employers, training providers and so on, so that there is grass roots support for the collaborative development. Goodson (2003), for example, has argued that change requires personal investment from participants and engagement with personal missions as well as external pressure and support and institutional commitment.

245. For pathfinders, then, the challenge is for thinking and practice to spread from the Steering Groups and become embedded in the day-to-day practices and thinking
of practitioners - as has already begun to happen in many cases (see section 4.2.1) especially where collaboration is long-established.

246. Pathfinders, or more precisely the opportunities which they are opening up, also need to engage the interests of students and influence their choices and behaviours. A coherent, flexible 14-19 phase may be offered by schools, colleges and providers but will only become a reality through the choices exercised and learning activities experienced by many thousands of young people.

5.5 Is there sufficient capacity to provide the quantity and quality of advice and guidance required?

247. We have noted the somewhat mixed evidence of the ways in which pathfinders and other partnerships are responding to the implications of 14-19 developments for advice and guidance. Put simply, these developments require a significant increase in the volume and quality of advice and guidance which is required since the parameters of choice are likely to be substantially increased.

248. Our evidence showed that in many partnerships there is still work to be done in establishing the respective roles of schools and Connexions in providing appropriate advice and guidance. While the Connexions Service National Unit has provided guidance about respective roles this has to be adapted to specific pathfinder circumstances. However, even where roles have been clarified there are further questions about the overall expertise and capacity to provide advice and guidance. Connexions is required to focus upon priority 1 and 2 young people as well as providing information and initial advice to all, while schools vary considerably in the priority which they attach to advice and guidance.

249. Effective advice and guidance will depend partly upon knowledge and understanding of the options open to young people at the increased number of decision points within the 14-19 phase. However, it will also depend upon knowledge of the ways in which young people actually take what have been called ‘pragmatically
rational career decisions’ (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996) within their learning careers (Bloomer, 1997).

250. There is a growing body of evidence that, for many young people, decisions about careers and learning contain elements of discontinuity, serendipity and whimsicality alongside pragmatic rationality, as well as being influenced by class, gender, ethnicity and peer effects (Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2000; Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000; Foskett, Maringe, & Lumby, 2003).

251. Thus effective advice and guidance within pathfinders will need to take account of the lived realities of the ways in which young people take decisions, as well as being grounded in sound knowledge of the options available.

5.6 Are pathfinders doing enough to promote participation in work-based learning and improve its quality?

252. Difficulties in establishing a high quality work-based learning route which can meet targets for participation, retention and achievement have long been recognised (Keep & Payne, 2002). The chief inspector of the adult learning inspectorate (ALI) has commented on the continuing poor success rates, uneven quality of provision and high proportion of entrants lacking the required entry qualifications for MAs (Sherlock, 2003). We noted that some pathfinders have established student apprenticeships and are promoting the work-based route which also includes E2E as well as MAs. However, the profile of work-based learning within pathfinders as a whole has not been high and what Keep & Payne referred to as an inherent bias towards full-time education and training was apparent in some pathfinders. There is a 2004 target of 28% of young people entering apprenticeships before the age of 22. This will require a substantial increase from current levels of participation (Denholm & MacLeod, 2003).

253. Given this evidence of continuing challenges in developing a high quality work-based learning route it is reasonable to question whether pathfinders are doing all they can to raise the quality and status of work-based learning.
6 FUTURE EVALUATION

Key points
♦ Continuing national evaluation
♦ Local evaluations getting underway
♦ Possibility of focused evaluations of selected aspects of pathfinder developments

254. The national evaluation of 14-19 pathfinders will extend its work in 2003/4 to the Phase Two pathfinders. Evaluation work will continue with the Phase One pathfinders. A similar combination of evaluation methods including documentary analysis, surveys of all pathfinders and case study work will be used. Evaluation will also continue in some unfunded partnerships.

255. Pathfinders are also making arrangements for their own local evaluations, often using higher education institutions. These evaluations will be responsive to local needs in their foci, approaches and reporting, however, where it is deemed appropriate by individual pathfinders it may be worthwhile to develop arrangements through which evaluation findings can be shared.

256. There may be particular aspects of the pathfinders, as they develop, which are worthy of more focused evaluation than can be provided through the current national and local evaluations and which require additional arrangements.
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