Collaborative Approaches to 14-19 Provision: an Evaluation of the Second Year of the 14-19 Pathfinder Initiative

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank staff and students participating in 14-19 Pathfinders for their help in this evaluation. Particular appreciation goes to pathfinder coordinators in the case study areas for their work in arranging programmes for our fieldwork visits. Thanks also to our colleagues Isobel Jenkins and Paul Sharp of the School of Education, University of Leeds for their help in data collection and analysis and literature review.
Executive Summary

♦ This report on the national evaluation of the second year of the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative describes the progress made by the thirty-nine pathfinders (and two 14-19 partnerships not funded through pathfinders) and raises key issues from the evaluation for practitioners and policy makers.

♦ The pathfinders have made very positive progress in many aspects of development including:
  ➢ the continued development of extensive collaborative arrangements which provide a strong basis for further development
  ➢ the development of broader curricula, mainly involving the provision of vocational and work-related learning in colleges, training providers and workplaces, which offer greater choice and flexibility to students
  ➢ increasing focus on 14-19 progression routes
  ➢ substantial development work leading to enhanced information, advice and guidance throughout the 14-19 phase
  ➢ substantial work on developing individual learning plans
  ➢ supporting continued development of strategic planning of the 14-19 phase.

THE 14-19 PATHFINDER INITIATIVE


♦ The pathfinders are expected to link with a wide variety of other initiatives including Excellence in Cities, Diversity Pathfinders, Enterprise Pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds programme, Aim Higher and Entry to Employment.
Pathfinders are expected to: 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; identify barriers to a coherent 14-19 phase and design ways to overcome them; demonstrate that the reforms can work in a variety of locations with different social circumstances and different mixes of schools and colleges.

Twenty-five Phase One Pathfinders began operating in January 2003 and were followed in September 2003 by fourteen Phase Two Pathfinders. The pathfinders were drawn from each of the nine Government Office regions. Some are based in large urban areas, including deprived inner city areas, others have been set up to address issues of rural isolation while some are located in mixed urban/suburban/rural areas. Pathfinders vary in the size of the geographical area covered, the number and types of institutions involved and the extent to which they address the full range of potential 14-19 issues or focused upon selected elements of the agenda.

The 14-19 Pathfinders have been jointly funded by the DfES and the Learning and Skills Council.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation had five main aims:

1. to assess the extent to which the Phase One 14-19 Pathfinders and unfunded 14-19 partnerships continue to develop and take forward best practice in creating a more coherent 14-19 phase at LEA, consortia, institutional and individual levels

2. to assess the extent to which the new Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders develop best practice in creating a more coherent 14-19 phase, including in the more radical ways outlined in the 2003/04 prospectus

3. to relate the findings from the Phase One and Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders to the academic and official literature and to models of provision and practice developed for 14-19 provision
4. to continue to explore and analyse the opportunities for, and constraints on, the development of the 14-19 phase in the 14-19 Pathfinders

5. to examine the potential value-added effects of the 14-19 Pathfinders and associated funding arrangements.

♦ Four main methods were used to address these aims:

(i) documentary analysis
(ii) selective literature review of cognate approaches to educational change
(iii) survey of all pathfinders
(iv) case studies of thirteen pathfinders and two unfunded 14-19 partnerships

MAIN FINDINGS

Collaborative Working

➢ Collaboration remains at the heart of the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative

➢ The vast majority of pathfinders continue to report good progress in collaborative working

➢ The forms which collaboration takes in individual pathfinders is brought about by interaction between national, local and institutional policies and local contextual factors

➢ Collaboration in individual pathfinders varies in institutional inclusivity, the levels at which it operates, its substantive focus and its geographical scope

➢ It is still too early to assess the impact of collaboration on student participation, retention, achievement and progression but it has brought a significant broadening of curriculum provision and has enhanced student information, support and guidance processes.

Curriculum Provision

➢ The broadening of curricular provision has been a key feature of all the 14-19 Pathfinders
Different pathfinders have given somewhat different emphases to different aspects of curriculum provision

Most pathfinders have focused strongly upon the promotion of work-related learning and innovative vocational learning

There has been emphasis in most pathfinders on broadening the 14-16 curriculum

A minority of pathfinders have emphasised curriculum broadening at 16-19

Only some pathfinders have focused upon developments in work-based learning, enterprise learning and variations in the pace of learning but where these have been the foci significant progress has been made

There has been increased attention to the development and promotion of 14-19 progression routes and on the development of the 14-19 phase as a whole

Pathfinders vary in the emphasis they give to promoting post-19 progression and where this is a focus attention is almost always directed to progression into higher education

Student Experience and Support

A wide range of young people is engaged in pathfinder activities although many continue to be drawn from the lower achieving groups and from students who are disaffected and disengaged

A minority of pathfinders are involving higher achieving students through the provision of accelerated learning

There is some evidence that pathfinders activities are impacting positively on student attendance and behaviour but this has not been systematically tested

There has been innovative curricular and pedagogical development, especially in Phase Two Pathfinders

The importance of enhanced information, advice and guidance is widely recognised and there has been substantial development work taking place

Partnerships between individual institutions and the Connexions service have become grounded in increased understanding of respective roles
Provision of information, guidance and advice at institutional levels appears to continue to vary in quality and quantity

The development of ILPs continues to be variable although considerable development work has been undertaken

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

*Sustainability*

- Sustainability will require the maintenance and extension of collaboration, broader curriculum provision and innovation
- The establishment of financial underpinning and increased capacity are important elements of sustainability
- Maintaining or developing increased commitment amongst partners is likely to be key to sustainability

*Curriculum Development*

- The continued reform of the 14-19 phase will require that fundamental curricular principles concerning breadth and differentiation, relationships between academic and vocational learning and different forms of vocationalism be kept continually under review

*Information, advice, guidance and support for students*

- Information, advice, guidance and support continues to be crucial to the development of the 14-19 phase. Policy-makers and practitioners need to continue to identify strengths and weaknesses in current provision and devise ways in which problems can be tackled

*14-19 reform*

- 14-19 Pathfinders have sought to bring about change through a combination of central steering and local responsiveness. It will be important for policy-makers and practitioners to review this approach to bringing about change in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses and its continued potential for promoting change in the 14-19 phase.
INTRODUCTION

Key points
- Reports on progress in the thirty-nine 14-19 Pathfinders and two other 14-19 partnerships not funded through the pathfinder initiative.
- Focuses upon implementation in the Phase One Pathfinders and mainly upon intentions, plans and early developments in the Phase Two Pathfinders

1. This report on the national evaluation of the second year of the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), describes the progress made by the thirty-nine pathfinders and also two partnerships not funded through the pathfinder programme during 2003/04. The report raises some key issues from the evaluation for the development of the 14-19 phase in England.

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

3. The first of these focuses upon the collaborative arrangements which have been established in the pathfinders and provide the basis for much of the work which has been done. The following two sections then turn to developments in curricular provision and student experiences and support. The next section contains detailed case studies of pathfinders in action in a wide range of local contexts. These case studies illustrate the ways in which the themes are worked out in practice and provide more holistic accounts of the work done under the auspices of 14-19 Pathfinder. The report ends by drawing out some of the wider issues which are relevant to the continuing reform of the 14-19 phase.

4. It is important to acknowledge that since the data collection for this report took place in the second half of the 2003-2004 academic year and since the Phase Two Pathfinders had not, at that stage, been operating for a full year, in their case 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 2004 and our second survey in the autumn, plans were well advanced and were beginning to be implemented. The Phase One Pathfinders, however, were well into their second year of funding and implementation was well advanced.

5. It should also be noted that 14-19 Pathfinders was only one of several local and national initiatives and funding streams impacting upon the 14-19 phase. The evaluation did not seek to erect artificial boundaries around pathfinder developments and aimed to understand the ways in which different initiatives interacted. However, it was not possible to explore all 14-19 developments in particular areas and therefore what follows, particularly in the case studies, does not claim to tell the full story of 14-19 developments in particular areas.
SECTION ONE: 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
- Encouragement of testing of more radical ways of providing 14-19 education and training in Phase Two Pathfinders.

6. This section describes the main features of the 14-19 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 prospectuses.

Policy Context

7. 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, published in February 2002, then by the DfES response to the consultation in 14-19: opportunity and excellence (DfES, 2003). The Green Paper proposed the introduction of 14-19 Pathfinders which would test a variety of models of collaborative working to help secure the vision and principles for the 14-19 phase.

8. 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. A revised prospectus for 2003/4 was published and partnerships were invited to submit proposals by May 2003. Subsequently, in July 2003, 14 Phase Two Pathfinders were announced. These began operating from September 2003. The pathfinders will be funded until July 2005 meaning that Phase One Pathfinders will have received funding for three years and Phase Two Pathfinders for two years. In both cases, however, the first months of funding were mainly used for development work rather than implementation of new programmes and activities with students. In 2004, the pathfinders were invited to bid for additional funding addressing a wide range of issues. Twenty-three pathfinders were
awarded additional funding. The most common issues addressed through this additional funding were: addressing key skills shortages in specific professions (7 pathfinders); testing elements of personalised learning (5 pathfinders); replicability (4 pathfinders); innovative use of transport (4 pathfinders) and partnerships with higher education institutions (4 pathfinders). Developments through this additional funding will be the subject of detailed research in our evaluation of the third year of pathfinders.

9. 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), Diversity Pathfinders, Enterprise Pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds programme (IFP), Partnerships for Progression, Entry to Employment (E2E), Aim Higher and European Union ESF schemes. At local level, integration with Area Wide Inspection action plan funding has also been important. 14-19 Pathfinders are also expected to contribute to broader local economic and social policy developments promoted by, for example, Regional Development Agencies, neighbourhood renewal projects and local strategic partnerships.

10. 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, local education authorities, employers, colleges, schools, training providers, higher education institutions and the Connexions service. Pathfinders are also expected to show how they propose to take account of the views of young people in developing and implementing their plans.

11. Paralleling much of the development of the pathfinders has been the work of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform. This was established 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.
12. The final report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform was published in October 2004 (DfES, 2004a) leading to the publication of a government white paper on 14-19 reform in February 2005, *14-19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005). A further significant policy development will be the publication of a green paper on youth services which is scheduled for spring 2005 and will also have consequences for the support which will be available to 14-19 year olds.

13. 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, which is illustrated through the case studies. 14-19 Pathfinders have been encouraged to reflect local imperatives and circumstances within broad parameters and thus diversity has been encouraged within the initiative.

14. 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.

**Pathfinder aims and objectives**

15. *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES, 2002) indicated that 14-19 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
- identify barriers to a coherent 14-19 phase and design ways to overcome them
- demonstrate that the reforms can work in a variety of locations with different social circumstances and different mixes of schools and colleges.
16. The 14-19 Pathfinder prospectuses 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.

17. The prospectuses indicated the types of locations 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.

18. It was stated that areas chosen would include those which are ethnically diverse and that some pathfinders should include a special school or schools. The prospectus outlined the ways in which the pathfinders should be managed with further emphasis upon the importance of collaboration.

19. In their guidance the prospectuses stressed the need for pathfinders to cover the whole of the 14-19 phase, address the needs of students throughout the ability range, include the enhancement of 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
• 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.

20. Interestingly, the 2003/4 Prospectus (i.e. for Phase Two Pathfinders), stated that “we want pathfinders in 2003/4 to test out more radical ways of providing 14-19 education and training than was possible in 2002/3” (p.7). A list of fourteen radical options was then proposed, of which the three most commonly taken up were: Innovative proposals for engaging employers (10 pathfinders); Innovative approaches to designing and delivering vocational courses (8 pathfinders); Addressing key skill shortages in specific professions (6 projects). (The additional funding mechanism described above subsequently provided Phase One Pathfinders with opportunities to specifically address some of these radical options).

21. 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.

22. Pathfinders were required to set area and institutional targets for attainment and progression with a focus on results and destinations at 19. Specifically these were to 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.
23. 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 Modern Apprenticeships.

24. 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.

25. 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 were subsequently funded through the programme.

Pathfinder proposals

26. Pathfinder 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. As noted, twenty-five partnerships were awarded 14-19 Pathfinder status for 2002/3 and a further fourteen in 2003/4.

Geographical locations

The regional distribution of the pathfinders is:

North-east 3  North-west 6  West Midlands 5  
Yorkshire & Humberside 5  East Midlands 5  Eastern 3  
London 7  South-east 2  South-west 3

The pathfinders comprise a mix of inner city, urban, suburban and rural locations.

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Scale and scope of the pathfinders

27. 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.

28. 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. Islington), with a whole range of pathfinders between these two extremes. Some pathfinders included all institutions within an administrative area, others focused on particular geographic areas (e.g. Hampshire focused its pathfinder upon East Hampshire and the New Forest area). These decisions had obvious implications for the distribution of resources.

29. The number and types of institutions involved also varied considerably – this being partly dependent upon the size of the geographical area covered. 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 wider 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.

30. 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 Islington the pathfinder had a strong focus on developing links with local health and social services as a vehicle for curriculum development and promoting progression.
31. These variations in scope and scale and the consequences for collaboration will be explored in some detail in section three.

*Lead Partners*

32. The 14-19 Pathfinder prospectuses 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.

33. More than half of the pathfinders are led by LEAs, with a further ten led by learning partnerships, in many of which LEAs took a leading role. Other lead bodies included local LSCs, colleges and schools. There are also two pathfinders led by private sector organisations.

*Existing collaboration and links to other programmes*

34. The 2002/3 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 pathfinder areas there were colleges and schools participating in the IFP and these partnerships were often planning to use the pathfinder to build on IFP developments in order to develop the whole of the 14-19 curriculum. There were often strong links with other programmes such as EiC, E2E and Aim Higher.

*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 pathfinder application process 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 has proved of considerable value in testing out new ways of working and thus advancing the 14-19 reform agenda, as will be shown in the following sections.
SECTION TWO: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key points
- Main methods: documentary analysis, selective literature review, surveys, case studies
- Conducted February 2004 – December 2004

36. The evaluation built on the work undertaken by the universities of Leeds and Exeter during 2002/3 which led to a report on the first year of the 14-19 Pathfinders  (Higham, Haynes, Wragg & Yeomans, 2004).

37. The second year evaluation had the following main aims:
1. to assess the extent to which the Phase One 14-19 Pathfinders and unfunded 14-19 partnerships continue to develop and take forward best practice in creating a more coherent 14-19 phase at LEA, consortia, institutional and individual levels;
2. to assess the extent to which the new Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders develop best practice in creating a more coherent 14-19 phase, including in the more radical ways outlined in the 2003/04 prospectus;
3. to relate the findings from the Phase One and Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders to the academic and official literature and to models of provision and practice developed for 14-19 provision;
4. to continue to explore and analyse the opportunities for, and constraints on, the development of the 14-19 phase in the 14-19 Pathfinders;
5. to examine the potential value-added effects of the 14-19 Pathfinders and associated funding arrangements.

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

Documentary analysis
38. The documentary analysis covered the following:
- the 39 successful 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
- 2004 termly progress reports and 2004 annual reports from 14-19 Pathfinders to DfES
- proposals for additional funding from 26 pathfinders
- exit strategies from each of the 39 pathfinders

Literature review

39. Selective literature reviews of academic and official literature were undertaken, addressing concepts such as curricular coherence and progression; institutional collaboration; curriculum change approaches as well as specific aspects of the 14-19 reform agenda. This literature is drawn upon selectively within this report. For this report there was particular focus on the literature on institutional collaboration, including that undertaken in other areas of social policy.

Surveys

40. A survey of all pathfinder coordinators was undertaken in October 2004. This aimed to provide coverage of all pathfinders and supply additional detail on aspects of implementation which could not be obtained through documentary analysis.

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

42. Thirty-five questionnaires were completed giving a response rate of 90%. Two of the non-responders had been visited as case studies and therefore the evaluation held substantial data on those pathfinders. For the other two non-responders only documentary evidence was available.

Case studies

43. In-depth case studies of a sample of thirteen 14-19 Pathfinders were undertaken. Two further case study visits 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.
44. The case studies were selected to reflect: different approaches to providing a coherent 14-19 phase; a geographical spread of pathfinders; pathfinders operating in different socio-economic circumstances; pathfinders operating in areas with differing mixes of schools, colleges and training providers; pathfinders with differing histories of collaboration. Thus they reflected the diversity of locations described in paragraphs 27-31.

45. The case studies selected were:

**Phase One 14-19 Pathfinders**
1. Coventry
2. Cumbria
3. Gateshead
4. Knowsley
5. South Gloucestershire
6. Southampton
7. Southwark

**Phase Two 14-19 Pathfinders**
8. Hampshire
9. Islington
10. Lewisham
11. Norfolk
12. Nottingham
13. Sheffield

**Unfunded 14-19 partnerships**
14. East Devon
15. Salford

46. 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

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2 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.
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.

47. 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 and detailed case study reports to exemplify aspects of pathfinder developments. Each of the case studies have been checked with the pathfinder coordinators for accuracy and agreed amendments incorporated.
SECTION THREE: APPROACHES TO COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Key points

- Collaboration remains at the heart of the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative
- The vast majority of pathfinders continue to report good progress in collaborative working
- The forms which collaboration takes in individual pathfinders is brought about by interaction between national, local and institutional policies and local contextual factors
- Collaboration in individual pathfinders varies in institutional inclusivity, the levels at which it operates, its substantive focus and its geographical scope
- It is still too early to assess the impact of collaboration on student participation, retention, achievement and progression but it has brought a significant broadening of curriculum provision and has enhanced student information, support and guidance processes.

48. As we have seen in the previous section, collaboration between institutions across an area continues to be central to the pathfinder initiative and to the broader 14-19 reform agenda. This was highlighted by the Tomlinson Report which stated:

   Collaboration is not a new idea and we want to build on existing good practice, such as that developed in the 14-19 Pathfinders and the Increased Flexibility Programme. However, collaboration would need to happen more systematically if all learners are to have access to a range of options, delivered in institutions with appropriate facilities and expertise.

   (DfES, 2004a)

49. The main justification for this focus on collaboration was stated in the subsequent White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills*:

   Our vision for the 14-19 phase sets out a range of opportunities that should be available to young people in every area of the country. Schools, colleges and training providers will need to collaborate, because no single institution will be able to provide them all on its own.

   (DfES, 2005)
The evaluation has confirmed the continuing importance of collaboration. In the questionnaire surveys coordinators were asked what specifically they had been able to do which they would not have been able to do without pathfinder. The great majority mentioned collaboration as a key pathfinder effect. Representative responses include:

The accelerated development of Federations which provide the leadership and management structure for the development of a wide and increasing range of collaborative provision.

(We would not have) developed collaborative working as rapidly – at strategic and operational levels

Strengthening of collaboration and action planning – pathfinder provides a focus

The strong commitment to partnership working has been assisted by the Pathfinder initiative, which supported city-wide collaboration and helped to build capacity for further development. (14 – 19 Area Inspection Report; paragraph 3, page 4. OFSTED, 2004).

ongoing collaborative professional development for a significant number of staff, focusing on 14 – 19 issues

50. The coordinators were asked to judge progress towards collaboration against their own expectations. The results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More than expected</th>
<th>As expected</th>
<th>Less than expected</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses confirmed the pattern reported in our earlier surveys in April and September 2003 (Higham et al., 2004). Interestingly the pathfinder where there was reported to be less than expected progress in collaboration was one of our case studies and our interpretation was that collaboration had proceeded well and it may therefore have been that the coordinator held particularly high expectations of what could be achieved.

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3 In this and subsequent tables figures refer to numbers of coordinators completing the item. Some did not answer some questions or their answers were ambiguous and have been excluded.
51. Having established the importance attached to collaboration in a very general sense both in policy and practice we will now present a fairly simple model of the ways in which we see collaboration working in the pathfinders. This is necessary because while most participants agree that collaboration is a good thing it is important to understand the levers and drivers which promote collaboration, the contextual factors which may either enable or constrain it, the different forms which it might take and the sorts of outcomes which may result. The latter element is particularly important since collaboration is a means to a variety of ends, of which the most fundamentally important are student participation, retention, achievement and progression.

52. The model will also help us to structure the evaluation findings on collaboration. However, it should be noted that the model requires further development and is not fully elaborated in this report.
Dimensions of Collaboration

**Institutional inclusiveness**

**Focus**

**Levels Sco**

**Outcomes**
- Curriculum provision
- Student advice and guidance
- Student retention
- Student achievement
- Student progression
- Institutional development
- Staff development
- Sustainable collaborative infrastructures

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**National and Local Policy Drivers**
- Educational aims and values
- DfES policy statements
- Tomlinson Report
- Funding streams e.g. IFP, Pathfinders
- LSC and LEA policies
- StARs
- Inspections
- Performance measures
- Institutional priorities and interests

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**Contextual Factors**
- Geography
- Demography
- History
- Structures
- Culture
- Transport
- Skills gaps
- Competition
- Leadership capacity
We will now discuss each of the elements of the model in turn with illustrations from the evaluation data.

**National and Local Policy Drivers**

53. There were a number of factors which encouraged and facilitated collaboration within the pathfinders. The national policy context was clearly important and the pathfinder prospectuses made clear that collaboration would need to be at the heart of proposals both in terms of the partners to be involved and in providing a suitably wide range of curricular options for students. In the context of these national policies, some participants looked back to earlier 14-19 initiatives, especially the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative of the 1980s, and asserted that their long-term impact had been limited. However, they also made a distinction between these earlier initiatives, which they perceived as being one-off or stand-alone projects, and the current national policy drive which was seen as both long-term and coherent in relation to the 14-19 phase and role of collaboration within it. As noted above the work of the Tomlinson group has paralleled much of the pathfinder development and there was much support for the approach taken by the group and recognition that the proposals, with their emphasis on breadth, flexibility and choice, which would require high degrees of collaboration, were likely to point the way to continuing long-term reform.

54. At the same time some respondents pointed to some aspects of national policy which they saw as less consistent with the overall 14-19 policy thrust. One aspect which was picked out was the encouragement for the opening of new school sixth forms and sixth form colleges in the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004b). This development and the continued growth of the Academies programme were seen as potentially militating against increased collaboration (see also (Pring, 2005)). Beyond this, several coordinators asserted that the continuation of institutional performance measures sometimes inhibited collaboration.

55. **Inspection** processes and follow-up activities were also important in promoting collaboration. The Ofsted Handbook for 14-19 area inspections makes clear that the presence or absence of effective collaboration will affect inspection grades and findings and the onus is placed upon local LSCs and LEAs to support effective and continuing collaboration.
56. This policy focus on collaboration was further reinforced in both *Success for All* and in the guidance issued to local LSCs on the conduct of *Strategic Area Reviews* where it was stated that proposals must: “Strengthen collaboration and progression in the 14-19 phase” and where the:

> Active promotion of collaboration and cooperation between providers and localities in meeting learner, employment and community needs

was recognised as one of the ‘core values’ which must inform the StARs.

57. Local LSCs and LEAs also emphasised the importance which they attached to institutional collaboration in their strategic and development plans. There were then a powerful set of local and national policies which were emphasising the importance of collaboration.

58. These policies were also backed up with funding. Various *funding streams* were available to support collaborative activities. These included not only 14-19 Pathfinder funding but funding for diversity and enterprise pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility programme and Area-Wide Inspection Action Plan funding. The European Union Social Fund was another source of potential funding. Local LSCs also had other sources of discretionary funding e.g. local innovation funds, which might also be accessed. Taken together these funding streams provided substantial incentives to collaborate. The case studies show that some local areas e.g. Sheffield and Coventry, had proved particularly adept at accessing a wide range of funding (some areas also benefited through being able to access funding which was restricted to areas of social and economic disadvantage). We discuss later in the report some of the managerial and sustainability issues raised by this preponderance of project and initiative-based funding.

59. Collaboration was also powerfully driven by *institutional priorities and interests.* Colleges, for example, often made the calculation that collaborating with schools in the provision of courses for 14-16 year olds could help them to recruit students onto full-time post-16 courses. Some schools saw post-16 collaboration as a means of protecting vulnerable small sixth forms. For private training providers collaborative arrangements provided access
to local decision-making networks from which they had often felt excluded. These are just a few examples among many, but serve to show the synergy which existed between national policies and imperatives and institutional priorities and interests.

60. Finally, in this brief review of the sorts of factors which encouraged collaboration it is important to stress that it was often driven as much by educational aims and values as by instrumental institutional concerns or policy imperatives. Partners recognised that collaboration benefited learners and the notion of putting learner interests before institutional interests did appear in many pathfinders to be more than a rhetorical flourish. Collaboration was also acknowledged as potentially fruitful and professionally rewarding by staff and came as a relief after what was seen in some areas as a period of intense competition between institutions during which collaborative activity was severely curtailed.

**Contextual Factors Impacting on Collaboration**

61. While there are a number of factors tending to promote collaboration, its extent and the forms which it took were affected by a wide range of contextual factors. Some of these were permanent or durable features of localities and therefore partners needed to work within the parameters set by these features of their local context. Other contextual features were more evanescent and susceptible to manipulation.

62. Among the permanent features are geography and demography. Geography is an important factor in determining the forms of collaboration. In Norfolk, for example, journeys from schools to colleges typically took at least 45 minutes, meaning that school students who attended college courses would spend a minimum of 90 minutes travelling to learning, a substantial loss of learning time, particularly when school starting and finishing times were themselves determined by the timing of buses bringing students to school and taking them back home. Such factors typically came into play in rural pathfinders and have obvious impacts upon costs as well as learning time. They might encourage partners to look at other forms of collaboration such as distance e-learning or staff or facilities being transported to where the students are rather than vice versa (see the Hampshire Case Study for the use of mobile vocational facilities).
63. The numbers and mobility of students could also be significant in the promotion of collaboration since this affected the financial viability of the range of curricular options which could be provided. The establishment of the Gateshead CG6 (see Gateshead Case Study) was prompted by the ease with which post-16 students could cross the Tyne to attend college in Newcastle, thus leaving fewer post-16 students studying in Gateshead thereby creating a ‘vicious circle’ in which the range of provision which could be offered was narrowed.

64. **History** is another crucial contextual factor. The success of the Kingswood Partnership in South Gloucestershire and the four federations in Coventry (see case studies) owed much to their longevity and to the stores of trust and shared practices which had been built up. Long experience in those two partnerships had showed that collaboration could produce results, both in terms of student achievement and organisational effectiveness. History, however, was not always a benign influence. Examples of previous collaborative arrangements which had subsequently withered could be a source of caution, or cynicism. Past competitive relationships could also put a brake upon collaboration, as could ‘mythical’ institutional reputations, especially where these raised parental concerns.

65. **Culture** could also be significant and might operate at various levels. In one case study, despite strong institutional partnerships and good transport links, students from one area within the pathfinder were reluctant to travel to institutions in another area because they feared they would be victims of violence, abuse and racism. These fears were reciprocated by students who had opportunities to travel in the opposite direction. This was one example among several where students were described as insular or timid and as being reluctant to travel. Institutional cultural similarities or differences could also be important in enabling or constraining collaboration and many pathfinders engaged in the careful and explicit development of protocols through which such differences could be managed.

66. **Strong local identities** were often important in generating support for collaborative approaches, especially where these coincided closely with pathfinder or consortia boundaries. In Sheffield and Knowsley, for example, there was a strong commitment to doing the best possible for young people in the areas. In other pathfinders there was local commitment within clearly identifiable sub-areas, such as West Cumbria or the New Forest. Sometimes,
this committed localism had been forged through socio-economic and educational
disadvantage, which the 14-19 Pathfinder was seen as helping to address. This strong sense
of local commitment and identity should not be under-estimated as a driver of collaboration.
It sometimes linked to broader programmes of socio-economic regeneration which further
helped to develop a sense of local empowerment.

67. The structures of 14-19 provision exerted considerable influence upon collaboration.
Generally speaking collaboration between schools and colleges was easier where schools did
not have sixth forms and thus were not in competition with colleges for post-16 students.
However, as the Coventry case study shows, there could be excellent collaboration even
where there were school sixth forms. In some pathfinders we were struck by the sheer
complexity of the institutional structures. In Southwark, for example, there were 11-16
schools, 11-18 schools, a further education college, two recently opened city academies and a
City Technology College. Voluntary-aided faith schools also often had their own networks
of partnerships which sometimes only partially over-lapped with pathfinder boundaries.
There were also structural variations in Connexions partnerships since some were direct
providers while others sub-contracted the service. In Southampton, for example, the
Connexions service was sub-contracted to three different providers with responsibility for
different functions. An absence of structural relationships among training providers could
also inhibit their participation in collaborative activities. In some localities training providers
tended to be small, isolated and to have no common voice, all factors which made
participation in collaborative networks more difficult.

68. Transport resources inevitably impacted on collaborative approaches. This was a
particular factor in rural pathfinders where the absence of viable public transport meant that if
students were to travel between institutions either school minibuses would have to be used or
commercial operators employed. The latter were expensive and not always reliable, the
former imposed significant capacity limitations. Some roads could also be particularly
hazardous. The A66 in Cumbria, for example, was a notoriously busy, dangerous road
subject to poor weather. Transport could also be problematic in urban and suburban areas
since bus routes tended to run into town and city centres rather than between suburbs. Thus
although distances between partner institutions might not be great it could take some time to
travel between them using public transport.
69. The identification of significant local skills gaps and labour market needs could act as a spur to collaboration. In the Islington pathfinder, for example, skill shortages in local health and social services had brought about a major collaboration between the NHS, local social services and Islington schools and the college. Similarly in Sheffield the pathfinder was closely linked to the city’s regeneration agenda in ways which had helped to promote broad-based collaboration with a range of employers and training providers. In other pathfinders where skills gaps were not clearly defined and where there was a preponderance of small and medium-sized employers collaboration between the education and employment sectors was often more difficult to achieve.

70. We noted above the imperatives driving institutional collaboration, but there were also contextual pressures which might inhibit collaboration. These included competition between institutions and/or cultural differences. There were also instances where some institutions were reluctant to allow their students to be taught in other institutions because they were not convinced that they would be as well taught as if they stayed at ‘home’. This was particularly likely to be the case where ‘high stakes’ GCSE or AS/A2 subjects were being taught collaboratively.

71. More generally, individual institutions enjoy high levels of autonomy and despite all the drivers towards collaboration identified above, it was still open to individual schools and colleges to resist or selectively engage with collaborative arrangements. We noted some tendency for this to occur where schools were large and perceived as being successful in terms of exam results and where the institutional incentives to collaborate were thus seen as being somewhat limited.

72. Local leadership capacity was another important contextual factor influencing collaboration. We noted in paragraph 33 that in most pathfinders leadership was exercised by the LEAs and some were outstandingly successful in providing effective leadership e.g. Knowsley, Nottingham and Salford, although other agencies were also effective in other pathfinders, for example, local LSCs in Hampshire and Southwark and consortia of schools and colleges in South Gloucestershire. What was evident, however, was that strong strategic leadership needed to be provided. In the complex policy and funding environment described
above it was important to retain a sense of the ‘big picture’ and a vision of how disparate initiatives and funding streams could be integrated.

73. In the absence of such leadership pathfinders could make some progress on the basis of broad, general commitment to collaboration based on collective goodwill, but this tended to break down in the absence of full-time coordination and leadership. Leadership and facilitation resources were also required for the development of specific facets of pathfinder development. For example, in Nottingham the four full-time Enterprise Partnership managers played a crucial role in promoting and facilitating change. As one coordinator put it having “bodies on the ground who could move things forward” was important, a contention which is confirmed by studies of collaboration in action (Powell & Exworthy, 2002). Of course, pathfinder funding could be used to generate leadership and support but this only occurred when institutions, such as an LEA, had the capacity and will to seize the opportunity.

**Dimensions of Collaboration**

74. Having described quite briefly the policies and practices driving collaboration and the contextual features which influence the forms which that collaboration might take we turn now to describe in greater detail the sorts of collaboration which was taking place under the auspices of pathfinder. As implied above in our account of contextual features this varied considerably across the pathfinders, not only because the local contexts were different but because national policies were mediated in different ways by local agencies and individual institutions and were filtered through the educational aims and values of the participants. To put it rather more baldly, forms of collaboration were not only different because the localities were different but because different pathfinders aimed to do different things.

75. Collaboration can be understood in terms of four main dimensions:

1. **Inclusivity**: the extent to which to which the collaboration involves a wide range of partners and participants

2. **Levels**: levels at which collaboration takes place and which reflects the *intensity* with different partners engage with collaborative activities
3. **Focus**: topic areas or elements of the pathfinder agenda which are addressed

4. **Scope**: numbers of institutions, staff and students involved and the size of the geographical area covered.

76. While for analytical purposes these dimensions are addressed separately in what follows, in practice in the pathfinders, the four dimensions interacted to give each pathfinder its distinctive character. Within this report the case studies are designed to provide more holistic descriptions of pathfinders in action to complement the more analytical and thematic accounts in this and the two following sections. We now address each of the dimensions in turn.

**Inclusivity**

77. In the questionnaire survey coordinators were asked to assess the extent of involvement of a range of potential partners\(^4\) (they were not asked about schools and colleges since it was assumed that they would be extensively involved in all pathfinders). The results are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Special Schools</th>
<th>Independent Schools</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Training Providers</th>
<th>Higher Education Institutions</th>
<th>Young People(^5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very extensive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78. The table shows extensive or very extensive involvement by employers and training providers in over half of the pathfinders. In both cases there was a slight tendency for involvement to be less in rural pathfinders but this was by no means clear-cut. There were rural pathfinders which reported extensive or very extensive involvement of employers or training providers and urban pathfinders which reported none or limited involvement. Explanations for these varying levels of involvement are highly complex and depended both

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\(^4\) The assessments made by coordinators in response to this and other questions inevitably included a subjective element as each would have applied somewhat different criteria in reaching their judgements. Despite this we believe that the data does reveal some broad general trends in the inclusivity of collaboration in the pathfinders.

\(^5\) This refers to the involvement of young people in planning and shaping the pathfinders.
upon the character and aims of the pathfinder and the characteristics of the local employers and training providers. In Cumbria, for example, employers and training providers, varied across the different consortia, being particularly strong in West Cumbria and rather weaker elsewhere. We provide specific examples of employer and training provider involvement in the context of curriculum development work in Section Four.

79. The involvement of higher education institutions was slightly weaker than that of employers or training providers and this was reflected in a number of coordinators reporting that their pathfinders were not addressing post-19 progression. It may also reflect the finding in our first report that across the pathfinder initiative as a whole a high proportion of targeted students tended to be those who were disengaged or disaffected 14-16 year olds and that therefore pathfinders focused upon encouraging them to stay in school and then progress to post-16 education and training. However, many pathfinders had developed effective collaboration with higher education, especially through Aim Higher links. The Islington pathfinder, for example, had very extensive higher education links through its links with university medical education (see case study).

80. The involvement of special schools was very mixed, although three-quarters of coordinators reported no stronger than limited involvement in collaboration. An outstanding example of the involvement of special schools was the unfunded Salford partnership, where not only were all special schools involved but the three Pupil Referral Units in the LEA were also full members of the partnership. It was difficult to account for the variations in involvement and no clear patterns emerged from the survey data. From the case studies variations seemed to relate to the extent to which special schools had historically been integrated into local developments and also to the focus of the pathfinders.

81. There was very limited involvement of independent schools in pathfinders, despite partnerships with the independent sector being among the radical options offered in the 2003/4 Pathfinder Prospectus. No pathfinder decided to take up this option as part of its proposal. A small number of pathfinders indicated in their survey responses that they had attempted to make links with local independent schools only to be met with indifference, but in most cases it was apparent that collaborating with the independent sector was not a priority for pathfinders. From the case studies the outstanding example of such collaboration was
from the Lewisham pathfinder where an independent school was taking the lead in one of the pathfinder’s ICT initiatives (see case study).

82. The pathfinder prospectuses stated that “Partnerships will be expected to show how they propose to take account of the views of young people in developing and implementing the pathfinder”. It was further suggested that young people and parents\(^6\) should be involved in the oversight of pathfinders. These aspects of involvement, however, were rather weakly developed in most pathfinders. It was argued by some coordinators that the short timescales for developing pathfinder submissions made the involvement of young people at that stage difficult and there was some evidence that involvement was increasing, usually as part of wider consultation on the development of the 14-19 phase, as pathfinders became more established. Strong examples of student involvement were evident in Cumbria (see case study and http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=8) and Lewisham (see case study).

83. When considering the institutional inclusivity of pathfinder collaborative activity it is also important to analyse the extent to which individual pathfinders involved each of the six potential collaborator groups described above (Special Schools, Independent Schools, Employers, Training Providers, Higher Education Institutions, Young People). In order to do this we combined the ‘None’ & ‘Limited’ categories and the ‘Extensive’ & ‘Very Extensive’ categories. We then labelled these combined categories ‘Weak’ and ‘Strong’. For each of the pathfinders we then calculated their responses which are represented on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak/Strong collaboration with identified groups</th>
<th>6weak/0strong</th>
<th>5weak/1strong</th>
<th>4weak/2strong</th>
<th>3weak/3strong</th>
<th>2weak/4strong</th>
<th>1weak/5strong</th>
<th>0weak/6strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pathfinders</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84. Those case study pathfinders which reported none or weak collaboration with all or five of the six groups were strongly school and college focused and less concerned, or able, to promote collaboration with a wider range of partners. The analysis also suggests that it may be difficult to promote strong collaboration with more than three of the identified groups,

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\(^6\) We did not ask about the involvement of parents in the questionnaire survey but we came across no examples in the case studies of parents or their representatives being involved specifically in the oversight of pathfinders.
since only five pathfinders reported having achieved this. As will be clear from the case studies the extent of institutional inclusivity reflects particular local circumstances, but the overall pattern is perhaps also indicative of the capacity for collaborative activity within the resources and time offered by pathfinder. Among the case studies the two pathfinders which reported the greatest degree of inclusivity (weak collaboration with two groups, strong collaboration with four groups) were Coventry and South Gloucestershire. In these case studies our assessments of the strength of collaboration coincided with those of the coordinators. In both cases it was significant that collaboration between schools and colleges had been strongly established for a long period of time. Pathfinder built on this collaboration, enabled new partners to be brought in and collaboration extended into other areas. This highlights findings from the wider literature that time and money, both to develop and sustain collaboration, is an enormously important resource (Audit Commission, 1998).

Levels of collaboration

85. The levels at which collaboration takes place are crucial in influencing the forms which it takes and, more importantly, the outcomes which result. Our literature review suggested that this was important not just in education but across social policy fields (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Glendinning, Powell & Rummery, 2002). These levels range from the relatively abstract policy and strategic planning level to the classroom, workshop or workplace. Intermediate levels representing different depths of collaboration might include pathfinder steering groups; the joint institutional planning of course provision; the development of common course information; the provision of coordinated courses; joint course provision; shared facilities and formal, joint governance. To put it another way, the depth of collaboration was a significant variation and was likely to be different for different partners within individual pathfinders. The point can be further clarified through some examples.

86. Employer involvement took place at a variety of levels. All pathfinders had employer representation at strategic levels (although this might be in wider 14-19 strategic groups rather than in groups specifically steering the pathfinder) but in some pathfinders employer involvement was largely limited to the strategic level (where the intensity of their involvement might also vary). However, in some pathfinders employer involvement went much deeper. In the Knowsley pathfinder, for example, Jaguar are represented on the
Governance Forum which oversees the Knowsley Collegiate, which is the main vehicle for the strategic planning of the pathfinder. However, company involvement goes far deeper than that. A senior company manager also sits on the Executive Group which is a key decision-making and implementation body. Further depth is added by company involvement in the development and teaching of a GCSE Engineering course. The course is jointly taught by company and college staff and involves sessions both at college and at the company training centre.

87. Teachers, lecturers and training provider staff were also involved in different ways. They might be drawn in mainly as ‘deliverers’ of courses which were introduced as a result of decisions taken at strategic levels e.g. in response to skills gaps analyses. This approach might involve staff development activities to support teachers in taking on new courses or groups of students. Alternatively, they might be involved in shaping the pathfinder through curriculum development activities, piloting new pedagogical approaches and developing new approaches to assessment.

88. The South Gloucestershire pathfinder was particularly strong in its involvement of teachers through its seven Teacher Learner Groups which have met for half a day fortnightly for each year of the pathfinder. Each group has been lead by a Development Manager who have become leaders in their respective fields of enquiry, e.g. e-learning, unified guidance.

89. Coordinators were asked to assess progress in staff development. The results are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More than expected</th>
<th>As expected</th>
<th>Less than expected</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These survey findings reinforce those from the case studies and show that pathfinders have been investing increasing efforts in staff development as they move from initial planning and setting up into detailed planning and implementation. Coordinators gave examples of a very wide range of collaborative staff development which evidenced the growing depth and
intensity of collaboration within the pathfinders. We argue later in the report that depth of collaboration may be an important factor in sustaining collaboration.

90. Rather more speculatively in terms of the levels and intensity of collaboration within pathfinders we have tentatively begun to identify different orientations to collaboration. Those identified are:

   i. Technical
   ii. Instrumental
   iii. Committed

Technical collaboration is primarily contractual in nature, operates largely at strategic levels where agreement is reached at high levels of generality which tends not to be translated into effective implementation. Instrumental collaboration is often generated by the need to satisfy external imperatives or take advantage of external funding streams. It results in some implementation although this may be limited and fragile. Committed collaboration, while it will also have contractual and instrumental elements, may be generated by external policies and encouraged by funding streams, involves internal commitment by partners who are likely to wish to shape external policies and funding according to their own values, educational aims and circumstances. Committed collaboration is likely to be sustained, whereas technical and instrumental collaboration may collapse once contractual responsibilities lapse or funding ends. Participants in several pathfinders recalled such disintegration of collaboration following earlier 14-19 initiatives.

91. However, we suggest that technical and instrumental collaboration may lead to committed collaboration given sufficient time and support. This may occur when there is growing understanding and trust between partners and when mutual (although not identical) benefits for partners begin to emerge (Principal Learning, 2003). Examples of long-lasting collaboration suggest that where there is commitment, trust and credibility collaboration is more likely to be sustained (Harris, 2003; Hudson & Hardy, 2002). Hudson & Hardy also suggest that it is not necessary to start with a well-worked shared vision but that this can be generated through practical collaborative working as long as the costs do not outweigh the benefits.
92. In the final section of this report we address the issue of sustainability which was a prominent concern in many pathfinders. This had many facets, but in the context of this section of the report we suggest that the orientation to collaboration which has been developed within individual pathfinders may be highly significant in sustaining collaboration. As we focus ever more strongly on the issue of sustainability in the third year of our evaluation we anticipate being able to elaborate the different orientations more fully.

93. The concept of levels of collaboration is also useful in understanding some of the obstacles to its achievement. While there were examples of schools and colleges holding themselves aloof from collaboration these were comparatively rare. There was widespread welcome for the general notion of collaboration. However, in many cases the devil of collaboration lay in the detail. This emerged particularly in relation to 14-16 timetabling which was identified by several coordinators as a significant obstacle to collaboration. Several pathfinders had made determined attempts to tackle this issue and had gone some way towards introducing elements of common timetabling at 14-16. However, full synchronisation of 14-16 timetables, which would allow a substantial expansion of the options open to students, was very difficult to achieve. This was because such synchronisation would likely involve changes in the timing of school days, introduce rigidities into timetables and have knock-on effects on the 11-14 and 16-19 phases. These timetabling issues, in turn, had potential implications for sustainable funding, since schools could only save on staff costs and therefore, they argued, sustain the cost of off-site learning if such learning could be timetabled.

94. These examples serve to illustrate the point that strategic agreement to collaborate, even when reached in good faith, was not always easy to implement in practice at different levels,

**Focus of Collaboration**

95. This dimension of collaboration concerns the topics or content of collaboration, that is, what it is that the pathfinders collaborate about. In order to analyse this we have drawn upon a set of themes which were developed in order to describe the pathfinder initiative as a whole. These themes were derived from the pathfinder prospectuses and the wider 14-19
reform agenda. They give an indication of the potential breadth of the reform agenda and of the role of the 14-19 Pathfinders within it.

96. In Sections Four and Five of the report we describe in some detail the developments which took place under each of the themes. Here our interest is in which of the themes were addressed within the pathfinders in order to gain insights into the possible variations in breadth of collaborative focus. This is illustrated through the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Themes</th>
<th>Number of pathfinders addressing this theme</th>
<th>Number of pathfinders not addressing this theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broader curriculum</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related learning</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative approaches to vocational learning</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise learning</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations in the pace of learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression 14-19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression post-19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Experience and Support Themes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of pathfinders</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of pathfinders not addressing this theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeting a range of learners</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice and Guidance</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Learning Plans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

97. It is clear that across the pathfinders there was a consistent collaborative focus on the elements of student experience and support, with only a small minority of pathfinders not addressing these issues.

98. The focus on curriculum issues, however, was more varied. Most pathfinders focused on developing broader curricula, work-related learning, innovative approaches to vocational learning and progression 14-19. However, over a third of pathfinders reported that they were not addressing work-based learning or post-19 progression and only a minority of pathfinders were tackling variations in the pace of learning and enterprise learning. Thus there were
significant variations in the breadth of curriculum focus across the pathfinders. These variations both reflected and affected the inclusivity and levels of collaboration. For example, where a pathfinder was not focusing upon work-based learning this restricted the opportunities and incentives for training providers to participate. Where training providers did participate in such pathfinders the depth of their collaborative involvement was quite shallow e.g. they might be represented on pathfinder steering groups but not be involved in curriculum development or teaching. Similarly where a pathfinder was not addressing post-19 progression the role of higher education institutions was more peripheral than in pathfinders where this issue had a higher profile.

99. It should be noted, however, that most pathfinders were focusing on at least eight of the eleven themes and thus although the focus might be different from pathfinder to pathfinder it was invariably broad.

Scope of collaboration

100. There were wide variations here. One dimension of scope concerned the number of institutions involved. Some were geographically large. The Black Country Pathfinder, for example, extends over several LEAs and is working with over 50 schools (in contrast to its wide scope this pathfinder has a tight focus on modern foreign languages). The geographical and institutional scope of other pathfinders was more limited. Islington, for example, contains eleven mainstream secondary schools and one college within a tight geographical area.

101. Two rural pathfinders provide an instructive comparison in scope. In Cumbria the pathfinder covers the whole LEA and thus potentially involves all schools, colleges and training providers providing 14-19 education and training. In Hampshire it was decided that the pathfinder would be concentrated in two areas of the county. These decisions about scope had important consequences for the form of collaboration especially in relation to inclusivity and focus since this was partly dependent upon an analysis of which aspects of the pathfinder agenda needed to be tackled in the two areas which were selected. In both examples, however, the pathfinder operated through federations or consortia (five in Cumbria, two in Hampshire). This raised issues about the relationship of the consortia to the overall aims of
the pathfinder, how collaboration was managed in individual consortia and how cross-consortia collaboration was promoted.

Summary

102. In conclusion, in analysing collaboration in pathfinders it is important to take account of national local and institutional values, aims, policies and practices which facilitate or inhibit collaboration and the ways in which these interact with each other and either enable or constrain collaboration.

103. These collaborative processes are operationalised within distinct local contexts, which in turn influence and shape the forms and extent of collaboration which is feasible and desirable.

104. The interaction of these two sets of factors gives rise to different local forms of collaboration with: differing degrees of institutional inclusivity; operating at different levels and with differing degrees of intensity; focusing on different aspects of the pathfinder agenda; varying in geographical and institutional scope.

105. The interplay of these three elements of our model of collaboration thus produce the different forms of collaboration seen across the 14-19 Pathfinder initiative.

Outcomes

106. The fourth element of our model of collaboration is the most important. This is because collaboration is not, fundamentally, an end in itself but a means by which various desirable outcomes can be achieved. In Sections Four and Five we describe the outcomes which have been achieved in relation to Curricular Provision and Student Experience and Support. Arguably, however, the most important outcomes are those relating to student participation, retention, progression and achievement. It is still too early in the pathfinder programme to draw any conclusions about these outcomes. This is not only because no students have yet completed a full 14-16 or 16-19 cycle, let alone a complete 14-19 phase, under the pathfinder initiative, but because virtually all research evidence on collaboration in
education and other social policy fields emphasises the time which is needed to establish strong and effective collaboration. This suggests that in relation to its specific life cycle the most important short-term outcome from the pathfinder initiative may well be the establishment of sustainable collaborative infrastructures in 39 localities. We return to this key issue of sustainability in Section Seven of the report.
SECTION FOUR: CURRICULAR PROVISION

**Key points**

- The broadening of curricular provision has been key feature of all the 14-19 Pathfinders.
- Different pathfinders have given somewhat different emphases to different aspects of curriculum provision.
- Most pathfinders have focused strongly upon the promotion of work-related learning, and innovative vocational learning.
- There has been emphasis in most pathfinders on the 14-16 curriculum.
- A minority of pathfinders have emphasised curriculum broadening at 16-19.
- Only some pathfinders have focused upon developments in work-based learning, enterprise learning and variations in the pace of learning but where these have been the foci significant progress has been made.
- There has been increased attention to the development and promotion of 14-19 progression routes and on the development of the 14-19 phase as a whole.
- Pathfinders vary in the emphasis they give to promoting post-19 progression and where this is a focus attention is almost always directed to progression into higher education.

107. We turn now to the first of two major sections on the outcomes or products of the collaborative approaches described in the previous section. Here we focus upon a range of curricular approaches which have been developed under the auspices of pathfinder. We describe: approaches to providing broader curricular offerings and work-related learning; innovative approaches to vocational learning; the development of work-based learning; the promotion of enterprise learning; variations in the pace of learning; the development of 14-19 progression routes and the promotion of post-19 progression.

108. We showed in the previous section that there were some significant variations between pathfinders in the emphasis which they gave to these different approaches. However, this should not disguise the powerful curricular effects of the pathfinder initiative. To a large extent it has been a curriculum initiative aiming to raise participation, retention,
achievement and progression through collaborative changes in curriculum provision and practice.

**Broader curriculum provision and work-related learning**

109. In the survey coordinators were asked to assess the extent of progress on these elements, which are considered together here because, in practice, they were largely synonymous.

110. On the provision of broader curriculum offerings their responses were:

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This gives an indication of the importance which pathfinders were according to this aspect of their work and the willingness of partners to bring about change. Across the pathfinders there was a commitment to provider broader provision with greater student choice.

111. On work-related learning the responses were:

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The slightly different assessments of progress between these two items may be explained by a distinction between putting provision in place and implementing those courses.

112. Much of the emphasis across the pathfinders was on the broadening of the 14-16 curriculum and most aimed to do this through increasing the vocational options. The IF programme continued to play a crucial role in this 14-16 broadening through the partnerships which developed between schools, colleges and training providers (Golden, Nelson, O'Donnell & Morris, 2004; Golden, O'Donnell & Rudd, 2005). There are now almost 300 IF partnerships involving about 90,000 students. The DfES has announced that it will support a fourth cohort of IF students from September 2005.
113. This focus on 14-16 led in several pathfinders to the establishment of the provision of common course information across a range of providers. The Knowsley Collegiate was a particularly extensive and ambitious example of this approach but several other pathfinders including Nottingham and Southampton had developed similar common prospectuses. Cumbria has developed an on-line prospectus which provides information on all learning and progression opportunities in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers for 14-19 year olds in Cumbria. One issue which emerged in relation to the provision of common course information concerned entitlement to access to the information. Some pathfinders took the view that all students and parents approaching the 14-19 phase should have access to all the information and be entitled, in principle, to choose from any of the options on offer. In other pathfinders it was agreed that schools should perform a gatekeeper role and only release to students and parents information which was deemed practically relevant. It was argued that this was necessary in order to avoid raising expectations which could not be fulfilled or were inappropriate for some students.

114. Provision at 14-16 took various forms. GCSEs in vocational subjects continued to be important. They were promoted in the vast majority of pathfinders and across the initiative as a whole all the available subject areas were represented. We describe in the next sub-section of the report some of the ways in which pathfinders were working to make the experience of undertaking the courses distinctively vocational. The evaluation confirmed Ofsted findings that GCSEs in vocational subjects were often taught in schools, although sometimes with some input from college staff (Ofsted, 2003a, 2004).

115. Another substantial area of provision comprised an extensive range of level 1 and level 2 vocational courses including NVQs, BTECs and OCN modules. These were offered in a very wide range of vocational areas which were usually related to the expertise, facilities and capacity available in colleges and training providers. They might also be closely linked to analyses of local labour market needs and skills gaps (see Sheffield and Islington case studies). These courses were usually taught in colleges and sometimes by training providers. In some pathfinders college-based courses were linked to training provider and/or employer placements in integrated ‘student apprenticeships’ which might occupy between 40% and 60% of a student’s time (see Nottingham case study). These approaches required specialised
timetabling to ensure that students were able to access the core curriculum during their time in school.

116. A few pathfinders had gone further than this and established entirely discrete provision for smaller groups of the most disengaged learners who were on the brink of exclusion or were thought likely to drop-out of school (see Knowsley case study). These programmes employed a mix of college, training provider and employer placements and combine this vocational work with key skills study.

117. A fourth form of broadening of the 14-16 curriculum was the early introduction of AS-levels. As indicated at paragraph 154 this option was pursued by a minority of pathfinders. It will be described in more detail below.

118. While the main focus on broadening the curriculum and developing work-related learning took place at 14-16, there were a number of pathfinders which also focused strongly on post-16. In these cases collaboration was used to expand the range of both academic and vocational options open to post-16 learners. For example, the development of CG6 in Gateshead involving several schools and the college opened up a wider range of AS/A2 and AVCE courses. There was evidence that this collaborative approach was beginning to impact upon full-time staying on rates in the inner city area of Gateshead. In Norfolk a new one-year Leadership and Management course had been developed in collaboration with a local company and council. In Coventry there was a particular emphasis on developing level 2 post-16 courses which combined BTEC First with NVQs and involved collaborative working between schools, colleges and training providers (see case studies for more details on these examples).

119. A number of barriers to the broadening of the curriculum and the development of work-related learning were identified. Some of these were highly localised but several emerged as common to a number of pathfinders.

120. The first of these concerned the capacity of colleges and training providers to provide sufficient vocational opportunities. This was partly because of pressure on specialised facilities, such as hairdressing salons and motor vehicle workshops. Some colleges had
responded by expanding their physical capacity, although the scope and finances to do this were often limited. College and training provider staffing capacity was another limiting factor. Taking on more 14-16 year olds often meant that colleges and providers had to engage more staff, often on part-time and temporary contracts. It could be difficult to engage such staff, especially in vocational areas where pay was more attractive than could be offered by colleges and training providers.

121. In addition to these issues of physical and staff capacity there was also some ambivalence in colleges about taking on more 14-16 year olds. Not all college staff welcomed this development, either in general terms, or where they were required to teach these groups. Some college senior managers also expressed the view that there was a ceiling on the numbers of 14-16 year olds which they could absorb in their institution before its culture and ethos was irretrievably changed in ways which might discourage attendance by 16-18 year olds and adult learners (although some college staff argued that such changes in culture and ethos would be welcome and would benefit all students by increasing the emphasis on learning within colleges).

122. The timetabling of 14-16 off-site provision remained problematic for the reasons described in paragraph 93. In a similar vein, transport also provided an obstacle to the broadening of the curriculum. This was particularly acute in rural pathfinders where students could spend up to 90 minutes travelling to and from off-site learning locations. Thus, in the course of a week, students might lose close to 10% of their learning time. Costs could also be high. In Lincolnshire and East Devon, for example, up to 50% of IF funds were spent on transport costs.

123. The parity of esteem of vocational courses was also identified as an obstacle to the broadening of the curriculum in some schools and for some students. This was manifested in several ways: (i) by schools eschewing or restricting their involvement in collaborative broadening activities; (ii) through students, sometimes encouraged by their parents, being reluctant to take-up vocational options.

124. Relatedly, in the first year of our evaluation, the exclusion of vocational qualifications from performance tables was cited as an obstacle to the broadening of the curriculum and
promotion of work-related learning. However, from 2004 the Secondary School
Achievement and Attainment Tables (formerly Performance Tables) have included all
qualifications approved for use pre-16 at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 (except graded
examinations which will follow in 2005). AS levels taken early will also be counted. General
vocational, occupational, vocational-related and key skills qualifications are all included and
have been allocated points under the new scoring system. There was some evidence that this
was beginning to impact on school attitudes towards vocational qualifications. This change
has the potential to reverse the incentives for broadening the curriculum, making it possible
for students who may not achieve through GCSE to contribute to school scores through
alternative qualifications.

125. The most common barrier to broadening the curriculum and developing work-related
learning, however, was the cost of such provision. These costs had several dimensions,
including the direct costs of teaching, transport costs and the costs of collaboration. Much of
the funding for provision was channelled through initiatives and projects including
pathfinder, IFP, ESF and Area-Wide Action Plans. Some pathfinders had decided to restrict
the use of funding to developmental activities in an attempt to increase the likelihood of
sustaining the provision. In other pathfinders there were attempts to gradually reduce project
funding and encourage schools to pay for provision from their mainstream budgets (for
examples, see Sheffield and Knowsley case studies). Some schools expressed willingness to
achieve this, but a more common response was that it would not be possible to maintain
current levels of provision and if funding was lost there would be an inevitable narrowing of
the curriculum. While some pathfinders seriously attempted to address the issue of financial
sustainability, others seemed implicitly to expect that other forms of project funding would
become available once current streams expired.

126. We return to the issue of sustainability in the final section of this report. The various
dimensions of sustainability, including the financial, will also be a major theme of the
evaluation of the third year of pathfinders.
127. Finally, in this sub-section we reported in our report on the first year of 14-19 Pathfinders that there was:

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.

(Higham et al., 2004)

128. This continued to be the case in the second year. Some respondents expressed the view that the current mandatory requirements for work-related learning were not sufficiently broad to require schools to extend their current provision. However, despite this caveat the 14-19 Pathfinders have brought about a significant broadening of the curriculum, largely through the development of vocational courses and the promotion of work-related learning.

Innovative approaches to vocational learning

129. Having established the extent to which the 14-19 curriculum had been broadened, largely through the expansion of vocational courses, we also explored some of the ways in which this vocational learning was practised in the pathfinders. We were particularly interested in innovative approaches, especially in the light of the invitation in the 2003/4 prospectus to Phase Two Pathfinders to explore arrange of radical options.

130. While there was no hard-and-fast distinction, there was in the Phase Two Pathfinders a greater emphasis on innovation and the enhancement of curriculum and pedagogy than was evident in the Phase One Pathfinders. Thus the promotion of a series of radical options by the DfES did influence the character of the proposals, although as we showed (see paragraph 20) these were taken up quite selectively by the pathfinders. There were many instances of innovative approaches some of which are detailed in the case studies.

131. These more innovative approaches, while being responses to DfES encouragement, may also have been a product of the timing of the Phase Two Pathfinders. Many of the areas in which the Phase Two Pathfinders were located had already been involved in other 14-19 reform initiatives. Thus, in several of the case studies, structures and patterns of provision were already in place and the pathfinders were able to focus upon enhancing and developing
curriculum and pedagogy rather than developing structures and systems through which broader curricula were provided.

132. Coordinator assessments of progress on this theme were as follows:

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Half of the Phase Two Pathfinders reported more than expected progress on this theme, compared with a somewhat lower proportion for Phase One Pathfinders.

133. The innovative developments fell into five broad categories. These were: (i) links with employers; (ii) implementation of vocational learning; (iii) the development of learning materials for GCSEs in vocational subjects; (iv) e-learning; (v) personalised learning.

134. The development of the vocational curriculum through links with employers has, of course, been undertaken for many years by schools, colleges and training providers. However, several pathfinders pioneered new ways of working with employers. The Islington pathfinder was notable for its work in forging close links with the health and social service sectors (see case study for details). This was partly based upon an analysis of skills gaps, particularly in the NHS. One interesting outcome of this collaboration was the development of a series of Progression-Readiness-Skills and Qualities which identified a range of generic skills and qualities which were needed for progression both within education and the health and social care workplaces. The Nottingham and Plymouth pathfinders were other pathfinders which were focusing on developing links with the NHS. Nottingham was developing the use of occupational ambassadors from the NHS Workforce Development Corporation.

135. In Sheffield, a number of sector intermediaries had been appointed to develop links between identified sectors of employment and schools and colleges. Part of the work of these intermediaries was to help to translate complex local labour market information, which highlighted skills gaps, into curriculum development activities and curriculum provision in
the schools and colleges. This approach linked closely to the broader regeneration agenda in Sheffield which had recognised the need to diversify the city’s employment base.

Norfolk was another pathfinder which had developed innovative links with employers. Two business links coordinators had been appointed from the private sector with the brief to develop these links. A variety of activities had been developed including a one-year post-16 Leadership and Management course aimed at those who ‘wish to aspire to a higher level of employment and want to know how to become leaders and managers’.

136. In relation to the implementation of vocational learning we pick out two noteworthy aspects. The first was the development of what were variously called ‘young apprenticeships’, ‘student apprenticeships’ or ‘junior apprenticeships’ for 14-16 year olds. These were established in several pathfinders. They took various forms but fundamentally involved the integration of school-based learning (usually involving core subjects), college courses (e.g. leading to NVQ qualifications) and work placements. It was anticipated that some of the students undertaking these courses would progress onto full-time post-16 Apprenticeships.

137. The second aspect concerned the development of small local skills centres providing vocational learning. Some were located within schools and others at off-site locations. This approach was used in the Hampshire pathfinder (see case study) and was being considered in the East Devon partnership and the Cumbria pathfinder. For rural areas these skills centres had the advantage of reducing travelling for students. A variant on this approach was the use of mobile vocational units in Hampshire and Lincolnshire.

138. The development of these skills centres has some resonance with the arguments recently advanced by HMCI David Bell for school-based centres of vocational excellence. He argued that “schools will want to establish their own capability for particular vocational areas where they can effectively compete with colleges” (Bell, 2004). An alternative approach was seen in the Knowsley Collegiate where a large scale 14-16 vocational skills centre had been established as part of the local college. A number of colleges in other areas were looking at similar developments in order to address limitations on capacity.
139. As indicated in the previous sub-section pathfinders, together with the IF programme, have promoted a substantial growth in GCSEs in vocational subjects. However, it had become apparent that there were problems in the implementation of the courses. Ofsted reported:

Most schools attempt to provide pupils on the new courses with relevant experience of industry, but the gap between the most and least effective is very wide indeed. Few schools are adequately organised for the efficient use of business links in the courses and many small and medium-sized businesses do not have the time or personnel to meet the demand from schools. Too few schools make enough use of visiting speakers or relevant case studies to bring to life the vocational nature of the courses. Schools which have good links with industry to support their teaching of the new GCSEs are in a minority. The links between pupils’ work experience and their vocational GCSE courses are weak.

(Ofsted, 2004)

140. These observations were echoed in many pathfinders and were often seen as part of a wider process of ‘academic drift’ within vocational courses. Students taking GCSEs in vocational subjects spoken to as part of the evaluation were frequently unable to identify distinctive features of the courses as compared to ‘ordinary’ GCSEs. In order to put the 'vocational' back into GCSEs in vocational subjects, several pathfinders had undertaken the development of curriculum materials for the courses (for example, see Sheffield and Coventry case studies). These materials had been developed in conjunction with local employers in order to provide easily accessible illustrations of vocational concepts. They were intended to complement visits to workplaces and visiting speakers from industry and commerce, but were based on recognition of the limitations of time, expertise and contacts in schools.

141. Another innovative approach (although not exclusively concerned with vocational learning) was the development of e-learning. Several pathfinders laid considerable emphasis on e-learning and this has been a theme within pathfinders from the start, usually in connection with issues of rurality, although e-learning was by no means restricted to rural pathfinders.
142. A significant feature in some pathfinders was the development of e-learning to provide a comprehensive framework through which the 14-19 reform agenda might be substantially realised. This vision is particularly focused upon the establishment of virtual learning environments which would encompass curriculum content, assessment tasks and materials, management information data, video-conferencing, websites, assessment data and so on. Taken to its conclusion this approach could theoretically lead to exclusively on-line learning of elements of the 14-19 agenda, although even where this was seen as desirable it was recognised as a distant prospect in all the pathfinders developing e-learning.

143. These ambitious developments in e-learning are still in the relatively early stages of development and there are many curricular, pedagogical and technical challenges to be overcome. Details of planned developments in e-learning can be found particularly in the Lewisham, South Gloucestershire, Norfolk and Coventry case studies.

144. Finally, in this brief review of innovative approaches to vocational learning, it is worth drawing attention to the development of personalised learning in the South Gloucestershire pathfinder. This was the only one of the case studies which had explicitly addressed personalised learning (although at least some elements of the approach were implicit within the work of many pathfinders). In South Gloucestershire a Personal Challenge for students is being developed throughout the 14-19 phase as a deliberate response to some of the proposals of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform (see case study for more details).

145. One development which was particularly relevant to the conceptualisation of personalised learning was the development of the tariff-based curriculum in the Nottingham pathfinder. The broad intention of this approach to assessment is to accredit and recognise a wider range of achievement than can be achieved through GCSE. Credit ratings are attached to a range of alternative qualifications. A broad range of assessment techniques can also be used. In these ways assessment is made more flexible and comprehensive in ways which may support the development of personalised learning (see case study for more details).

146. When coordinators were asked about obstacles to the development of innovative approaches to vocational learning they raised many of the issues outlined previously in
relation to broadening the curriculum and developing work-related learning (see paragraphs 119-126). However, a number of coordinators raised a variety of issues concerned with engaging employers. One obstacle noted by several was the difficulty of linking with small and medium sized employers. This was a particular factor in rural areas, where often there were no large employers. Some coordinators had concerns about the continuing commitment of employers while others criticised the narrow focus of some. A number of respondents argued that the engagement of employers was made more difficult by the frequent changes in vocational qualifications. One coordinator stated the need for employers champions, but commented: “People who combine relevant commercial/industrial experience with the necessary personal and negotiation skills, and a sound understanding of 14-19 policy do not fall off trees!” This emphasised the need for staff on the ground, like the Norfolk business links coordinators, to drive forward collaboration (see paragraph 73).

**Work-based learning**

147. 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).

148. Coordinator assessments of progress on this theme were:

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Thus a substantial minority of pathfinders were not addressing this theme, while those which were assessed overall progress as being somewhat slower than on other themes. Overall there have been few changes in this area since our report on the first year of pathfinders, save in one respect. This is the focus on ‘apprenticeships’ for 14-16 year olds described in the previous sub-section. These do not meet our stipulative criteria for work-based learning, but they do provide a basis for progression onto full-time apprenticeships at 16. As yet, however, there is little evidence that pathfinders have given a high priority to the strengthening of the
work-based learning route post-16 (the coordinators who reported ‘more than expected’ or ‘as expected’ progress on this theme mainly referred to 14-16 developments).

149. Some pathfinders reported links with E2E projects. One coordinator stated that there had been no funding for E2E but the partners had set up their own provision. Several coordinators commented that there were insufficient E2E placements and some complained about the poor quality of some placements. Rural pathfinders reported the absence of large employers and training providers who could provide work-based learning placements.

150. The notable exception to this neglect of work-based learning in 14-19 Pathfinder initiative is the Tower Hamlets Pathfinder which is strongly focused on the work-based route. This pathfinder aims to deliver “new employability opportunities” to 45 young people from disadvantaged London boroughs. The focus is upon the retail sector and the aim is to provider retailers with a “stream of young recruits who have the skills, qualifications and practical experience required for entry-level jobs in the sector”. We hope to have opportunities to explore this approach in some detail as part of the evaluation of the third year of pathfinders. An independent evaluation report from the National Foundation for Educational Research can be accessed through the Tower Hamlets Pathfinder website (http://www.skills4industry.org/index.cfm?p_id=149).

**Enterprise learning**

151. This theme has not figured strongly in the 14-19 Pathfinders. Reported progress was:

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Good progress was reported by the great majority of those who were pursuing it but these were fewer than half of all the pathfinders. Virtually all pathfinders which reported progress on this theme referred to links with Enterprise Pathfinders and Enterprise Advisors. The Nottingham Pathfinder, for example, reported:
Close links have been established with the Enterprise Pathfinder co-ordinated by Djanogly Academy and the Enterprise Advisors through links with the Education Business Partnership. An exciting range of enterprise activities and courses have been developed for example:- students working with a local company to investigate the feasibility of selling holiday cottages on the Internet, a range of enterprise apprenticeships involving young people setting up and running their own social enterprise and range of enterprise activities linked to a GCSE programme for example a group of students undertaking a feasibility study of siting a wind turbine on their school site with the support of a local company.

Knowsley had three Enterprise Pathfinders and a group of enterprise consultants (rather than a single enterprise advisor). In South Gloucestershire one centre has successfully integrated Enterprise teaching into their Personal Challenge programme (see paragraphs 144 and 493). Pathfinders which were addressing this theme had also put on a variety of events such enterprise fairs, Young Enterprise programmes, enterprise conferences and enterprise challenges, often sponsored by private sector companies.

152. The survey did not allow us to probe as to why pathfinders had not chosen to address this theme. Some though volunteered comments about too many initiatives and difficulties in making links with enterprise advisors. One particularly interesting observation was that the breadth of the definition of enterprise was so wide that it allowed schools to claim that their existing activities would suffice.

153. The evidence showed that where pathfinders were addressing this theme good progress was being made and the influence of Enterprise Pathfinders and enterprise advisors was being brought to bear, but that it remained a low priority for most 14-19 Pathfinders.
Variations in the pace of learning

154. As the following assessments show, this theme continued to be pursued by a minority of the pathfinders:

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In some of the pathfinders which were pursuing this theme there were substantial developments. In East Manchester key stage 4 begins in year 9. This enables students to enter GCSE either at the end of year 10 or year 11 (i.e. it supports both acceleration and deceleration of learning). A majority of Cumbrian schools enabled some students to take GCSE a year earlier and some developed early entrance to AS levels (DfES, 2004a). The AS in Critical Thinking had been provided in year 11 in several areas including Southampton, Hampshire and the Salford partnership.

155. The Coventry pathfinder provided an interesting example of different approaches to AS acceleration, with an AS Maths course running parallel with GCSE Maths in years 10 and 11 and an AS French course end-on with GCSE, i.e. French GCSE was completed in year 10 and AS in year 11. Harrow was another pathfinder which had piloted different approaches to accelerated AS work. There had been some preliminary discussions in a few pathfinders about the possible implementation of higher education work in year 13.

156. Coordinators identified the timetabling of variations in the pace of learning as being an obstacle. Much of the accelerated AS learning was conducted in twilight time and there was concern that this was not sustainable in the longer term. Acceleration also raised planning progression issues (see Coventry case study for more on this matter).

157. Thus, there was some radical piloting of variations in the pace of learning in some pathfinders and these approaches have the potential to help in the conceptualisation of personalised learning and increase understanding of issues involved in a shift away from rigidly age-related learning. However, this was a minority pursuit within pathfinders, most
were not addressing this theme and there was no evidence that doing so was seen as a priority.

14-19 progression routes

158. We noted in our evaluation of the first year of 14-19 Pathfinders that an “explicit focus upon progression pathways was the exception rather than the rule in the pathfinders” and explained this partly by the overall focus on 14-16 rather than 14-19 within the pathfinders (Higham et al., 2004). Progress in the second year was assessed by coordinators as follows:

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Thus this theme was confirmed as important within pathfinders (although it was surprising that five coordinators judged that it was not applicable to their proposal). Progress was identified, although this was not rapid as on some other themes.

159. The overall evidence base suggests that the focus remains on 14-16 within pathfinders, although this is rather less prominent than it was in the first year. This appears to be both because of developmental processes in Phase One Pathfinders and a stronger focus upon the whole 14-19 phase among the Phase Two Pathfinders. For Phase One Pathfinders it may have been that the entry of their first cohort of students to year 11 encouraged a greater focus on progression across the post-16 divide.

160. The greater attention to progression in Phase Two Pathfinders was partly a consequence of the focus within several of them upon sector specific 14-19 progression routes. This feature was particularly evident in the Islington Pathfinder where considerable attention was being paid to mapping progression routes in health care and social services both up to and beyond 19. Southwark was another pathfinder which focused strongly upon progression routes within occupational sectors. Similarly in Sheffield part of the function of the sector intermediaries was to work with their occupational sectors and the schools and
colleges to identify 14-19 progression routes (see case studies for further details on all these examples).

161. Other developments in the case studies were also strongly focused on promoting 14-19 progression. The CG6 in Gateshead had been established with the primary purpose of facilitating progression from 11-16 schools to full-time post-16 education. This was achieved through making it possible for some students to access some of their post-16 learning in their 11-16 schools thus encouraging progression and easing transition. A similar development, but with a different client group of students was being developed in Southwark with the introduction of some year 12 provision in four 11-16 schools. This is intended to tackle the low rates of participation post-16 by 16 and 17 year olds. It is based on the assumption that some students are uncomfortable about making the transition to college or training providers at 16. Thus the intention is to provide a one-year course in school, which as well as improving basic and vocational skills, will also aim to ease progression to the next stage at age 17. Similar concerns, although with yet another client group, had prompted the development of level 2 vocational courses in Coventry schools (see case study). In all these cases it was intended that students would progress to full-time college courses at 17.

162. When considering obstacles to the development of progression routes coordinators raised several broad issues – in addition to endemic problems of shortage of time to do all that needed to be done. The first of these concerned the lack of provision of information in schools with sixth forms about progression routes into colleges and work-based learning. This issue has been clearly identified in previous research (Foskett, Dyke & Maringe, 2004) and although there was some evidence that the collaborative approaches required by pathfinders has ameliorated its effects, the institutional autonomy which can be exercised by schools meant that these effects were by no means eradicated.

163. A second issue which was raised concerned the reliability and/or durability of the labour market information upon which some progression route planning was based. Some participants were concerned that aspirations and expectations of employment in particular sectors might be raised but then dashed either because of insufficient capacity or because of unpredictable changes in labour and skills needs within sectors.
164. A third issue was raised by only one coordinator but brought a different perspective on progression. Most thinking within pathfinders has focused upon progression at the level of curricular provision but this coordinator raised the issue of what she called “true progression” by which was meant the avoidance of unhelpful duplication across courses, a focus on building on skills and knowledge which have already been acquired and sense of progression in terms of concepts and capabilities. This deeper, more learning-centred conceptualisation of progression was rather rare in pathfinders and in terms of our collaborative model in Section Three would require engagement at different levels of collaboration e.g. between teachers, lecturers, training providers and workplace practitioners in order to construct detailed, specific progression models which might help to provide a basis for personalised learning.

**Progression routes post-19**

165. A new section was included in our October 2004 survey asking coordinators about progress on this theme. The results were:

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From this data and from the case studies it was evident that the promotion of post-19 progression was not a high priority for a number of pathfinders. There was progress on this theme but it was patchy and was not being addressed by a substantial minority of pathfinders.

166. Where it was being addressed as an aim it was almost exclusively construed as promotion of progression to higher education rather than to further non-advanced education or work-based learning. The clear exception to this was the Tower Hamlets Pathfinder which reported that the retailers with whom they worked were encouraged to enrol students on to their own in-house training programmes in order to encourage them to continue training after they had completed the pathfinder programme.
167. Linking with Aim Higher was the main means by which pathfinders promoted post-19 progression to higher education. A variety of activities had been undertaken including visits to HEIs, master classes and after school activities. One pathfinder referred to activities designed to promote Foundation degrees. In several pathfinders there were special agreements with local universities e.g. guaranteed interviews for candidates who met minimum entry requirements.

168. Few obstacles to the promotion of post-19 progression were raised by coordinators. Those mentioned included distance from universities and absence of a local tradition of attending higher education. One coordinator reported that attempts to build a partnership based on evidence of wider activities (i.e. a personal challenge or extended project) with one university foundered because the HEI wanted a direct compact based on A Level grades.
SECTION FIVE: STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT

Key points

- A wide range of young people are engaged in pathfinder activities although many continue to be drawn from the lower achieving groups and students who are disaffected and disengaged.
- A minority of pathfinders are involving higher achieving students through the provision of accelerated learning.
- There is some evidence that pathfinders activities are impacting positively on student attendance and behaviour but this has not been systematically tested.
- There has been innovative curricular and pedagogical development, especially in Phase Two Pathfinders.
- The importance of enhanced information, advice and guidance is widely recognised and there has been substantial development work taking place.
- Partnerships between individual institutions and the Connexions service have become grounded in increased understanding of respective roles.
- Provision of information, guidance and advice at institutional levels appears to continue to vary in quality and quantity.
- The development of ILPs continues to be variable although considerable development work has been undertaken.

169. Having analysed and described in the previous sections the ways in which the pathfinders are collaborating and the sorts of curriculum provision they are putting in place, we turn in this section to the nature of the student experience and the ways in which they are being supported as they enter and progress through the 14-19 phase.

170. There are limitations on the extent of findings in this section as they relate to student experiences springing partly from the current stage of development of pathfinders and partly from the nature of this evaluation. As noted at paragraph 4 Phase Two Pathfinders were still at a largely developmental phase at the time of our case study visits and full-scale activities with students were still to get underway. Such activities were underway in the Phase One Pathfinders and we were able to see some learning activities and talk to small groups of students. We draw upon such data, where appropriate, in what follows in this section and in
the case studies. However, given the breadth of pathfinder activities, the focus of the evaluation and the time available for case study visits it was not possible to conduct systematic exploration of student experiences. We took advantage of opportunities for direct observation of pathfinder learning activities and chances to talk to students as and when they arose. This was important in giving a flavour of the kinds of learning which was taking place and helped to structure our interviews with staff.

171. In the survey we asked coordinators to estimate the effects of pathfinder activities on student attendance and behaviour. We present the results from these questions below. However, most coordinators were anxious to stress that their estimates were not strongly based on systematic, quantitative data. Even where some quantitative data was available it was necessary to be cautious in attributing any changes to pathfinder activities both because of the difficulties of identifying exclusively pathfinder activities and establishing causal links between educational processes and outcomes.

172. This section addresses four main themes. We begin by exploring the extent to which the pathfinder involved particular groups of young people in learning activities. We then provide some examples of student experiences within pathfinders and early indications of the possible effects. We then turn to the ways in which students are being supported on their entry and progression through the 14-19 phase. This involves reporting our findings on both the provision of advice and guidance and the arrangements for reviewing progress and supporting students through individual learning plans or other mechanisms.

**Involving a range of young people in learning activities**

173. This theme is concerned with the inclusivity of pathfinder activities in relation to different groups of students. We were interested to discover the extent to which the pathfinders were aiming to potentially change learning experiences for all groups of learners or targeting their efforts on particular groups.
174. In our report on the first year of the 14-19 Pathfinders we stated that:

Pathfinder activities were mainly targeted on disaffected/disengaged/lower achieving students and higher achieving students.  
(Higham et al., 2004)

and that

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.  
(Higham et al., 2004)

There have not been fundamental changes in this pattern of involvement across the pathfinders although we are now in a better position to understand the ways in which the patterns of involvement occurred.

175. Coordinators reported progress on this theme as follows:

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Patterns of involvement by different groups of young people varied greatly across the pathfinders. Several processes were in play in determining which young people became involved in pathfinders. Some pathfinders quite explicitly targeted particular groups of young people. The Tower Hamlets Pathfinder, for example, was very specific in wishing to support 16-18 year olds “who are at risk of dropping out of education and training but who demonstrate an above average aptitude for employment”. Detailed criteria were set for students wishing to enter this pathfinder programme. Other pathfinders also explicitly targeted disengaged or disaffected young people. In some, this was combined with an explicit focus on gifted and talented young people, often with the intention of engaging them in accelerated learning. Other pathfinders targeted young people with special educational needs and this was signalled through the inclusion of special schools in collaborative arrangements (see paragraph 77).
176. Several pathfinders were explicit in aiming to engage all 14-19 year olds. For example, one coordinator wrote:

The original Pathfinder proposal was always intended to develop a universal curriculum model for all students

while another stated that:

It is an important tenet of this Pathfinder that the 14-19 phase of education is the individual career development phase. This applies equally to all students, be they following academic or vocational courses, be they underachievers, high-flyers or somewhere in between.

177. However, the patterns of involvement by different groups of young people were also a product of the curriculum provision which was offered. For example, if at 14-16 the majority of additional provision was in level 1 courses, these would inevitably tend to recruit lower achieving students, especially where they were set against GCSE courses in school options blocks. Alternatively if the focus of provision was on GCSEs in vocational subjects this would attract a group of learners who were considered capable of achieving at level 2. In this case however, the precise nature of the students recruited might also depend upon how the courses were placed in school option blocks. For example, if their placement precluded the possibility of students taking three science subjects or two modern foreign languages this would reduce the likelihood of higher achieving students taking the courses.

178. This leads on to a third set of processes which helped to determine the patterns of involvement which emerged. These were concerned with the ways in which the provision was perceived by different participants. For example, a number of respondents complained that although the activities were aimed at a wide range of students, in practice it had generally been easier to persuade schools to let lower achieving and more challenging students engage in pathfinder activities. One coordinator put this point quite bluntly: “Reluctance of some schools to target higher ability students for inclusion on the project”. In their report on GCSEs in vocational subjects Ofsted stated that there was the perception in several schools that the courses should be targeted at lower attaining students (Ofsted, 2003a).

179. Reluctance to participate might also come from students themselves, or their parents, and might be related to the nature of the activity or its location e.g. if this involved travelling
to another school, college or training provider. Equally, of course, particular activities and locations might attract some students and be welcome to their parents.

180. For this second year evaluation we did not focus specifically upon the gender and ethnic dimensions of student involvement in pathfinder activities since this is the subject of a separate study funded by the DfES and the Equal Opportunities Commission. However, there was no evidence from our work of any major shift from the rather low profile given to this issue in many pathfinders.

Student outcomes and experiences

181. In the survey coordinators were asked to estimate if there had been changes in the attendance of students when taking part in pathfinder activities compared to other activities. The results were as follows:

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<th>Significant improvement</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Deterioration</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
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Some of the coordinators claiming Significant improvement/Improvement provided some quantitative data but these often did not relate to pathfinder activities in any straightforward way e.g. aggregate 14-16 attendance data for all LEA schools which were likely to have been influenced by many factors and initiatives. However, as part of the pathfinder, or more commonly as part of other initiatives such as the IFP, some partnerships had conducted some formal evaluation of aspects of their 14-19 activities which informed their estimates of effects. Despite this many coordinators stated that they based their estimates on informal and anecdotal feedback from the schools, colleges and training providers. Several also made the point that it was difficult, and probably not very useful, to attempt to aggregate any pathfinder attendance effects across a wide range of activities with different groups of students. Any effects were likely to differ between activities and in many respects it was these differences which were of the greatest interest and value.
182. The coordinators were also asked if there had been changes in the behaviour of students when taking part in pathfinder activities compared to other activities. The responses were:

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Similar caveats were entered as for estimates of attendance concerning the evidence base upon which these assessments were made.

183. Clearly these findings on attendance and behaviour need to be treated with caution but insofar as they refer to a variety of mainly off-site, vocational and work-related experiences (and as we saw in Section Four the curricular thrust of pathfinders is very much in those directions) they accord with many systematic quantitative and qualitative evaluations of such schemes. For example, both Ofsted in its review of GCSEs in vocational subjects and the NFER evaluation of the IF programme reported positive effects on motivation, behaviour and social skills (Golden et al., 2005; Ofsted, 2004). Ofsted’s report on a variety of alternative curricular arrangements at key stage 4 portrayed considerable variations in quality but recognised that the best schemes had improved student motivation and attitudes (Ofsted, 2003b). A wide variety of other studies have shown that work-related learning of the type being developed in pathfinders can have positive effects upon attitudes to learning, although evidence of effects on achievement and progression is sparse (e.g. Hall & Raffo, 2004; Raffo, 2003; Watson, Stuart & Ferguson, 2002; Yeomans, 2002).

184. Our own observations and conversations with students undertaking work-related or vocational learning in a wide variety of settings under the auspices of the 14-19 Pathfinders reinforced these findings from other research and evaluation studies. Students invariably expressed satisfaction at the activities they were involved in at colleges and training providers and often compared these experiences favourably with those of school. However, from our own observations and the studies quoted above students gave several main reasons as to why they enjoyed these activities.
(i) Some liked going off-site to a college or training provider both as a break from school and as experience of a different physical environment.

(ii) Many preferred the relationships which they had with college or training provider staff to those they had with teachers. ‘They treat you like an adult’ was a recurring theme.

(iii) Some responded to the hidden curriculum of colleges and training providers, for example, being able to wear ‘ordinary’ clothes rather than school uniforms, not having to ask permission to go to the toilet during lessons.

(iv) Some preferred the vocational, practical forms of learning involved in the courses (and the biggest source of dissatisfaction was when there was more ‘theory’ work than had been anticipated).

(v) Some welcomed the opportunity to re-invent their identities, away from familiar school teachers and students, in the new contexts of colleges or training providers.

185. Of course, for many students, a combination of these factors influenced their responses to off-site learning. However, in relation to the sustainability and future development of such curricular activities it may be important to understand as clearly as possible the factors which produce positive results. For example, if it is the location of a course away from a school which is the primary source of satisfaction for some students, siting the same activity in a school setting is unlikely to be effective. Alternatively, if it is the vocational content which is the prime motivator, then as long as adequate facilities are available the location may not impact upon effectiveness. A clear understanding of precisely what makes particular learning activities and contexts effective will help pathfinders to match curricular provision as closely as possible to student needs.

186. Finally in this section it is important to note that in the course of the evaluation we observed, even if only briefly, many innovative and exciting developments. Some of these are explored in the case studies. Other examples can be accessed through the DfES 14-19 Gateway at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=1. The following examples can be found in the case studies in Section Six:
The use of the Fast Tomato advice and guidance software in Lewisham
- An arts and digital media course in Coventry
- A GCSE course linked to professional sports clubs in Nottingham
- The use of mobile vocational units in Hampshire
- Full-time work-based learning provision for disaffected learners in Knowsley
- A link course with the estates department of a local hospital in Islington
- A link course with a prestigious bakery college in Southwark
- An accelerated apprenticeship course in Sheffield

187. These, and other examples in the case studies, showed the ability of teachers, lecturers and training providers to innovate. The Phase Two Pathfinders were particularly active in promoting curricular and pedagogical innovation. What remains at issue however, is the ability of the pathfinders to sustain innovation and disseminate it within their local areas. We return to this issue in Section Seven and will focus upon it during the evaluation of year three of the 14-19 Pathfinders.

Enhanced advice and guidance

188. In our report on the first year of 14-19 Pathfinders we described the overall picture with respect to the enhancement of advice and guidance as mixed (Higham et al., 2004). In the year two survey coordinators assessed progress as follows:

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There was evidence of a great deal of activity in this area. This will be described in terms of three elements: the role of Connexions within pathfinders; the development of various forms of support for students; staff development.

189. In year one the function of Connexions within the process of enhancing advice and guidance had been of concern, particularly within some schools, where there was lack of
clarity about the division of responsibility and work between schools careers staff and Connexions advisers. In year two this issue was much less prominent and in many pathfinders the good collaborative arrangements which involved Connexions at strategic levels had become more widespread at school levels. It appeared that, over time, agreed working practices between Connexions staff and individual schools were being developed and there was greater understanding of the respective roles. Several pathfinders, for example, Durham and Norfolk, were working with dedicated Connexions advisors.

190. This is not to say that all problems concerning the role of Connexions had been resolved. Several Connexions partnerships were undergoing restructuring, suffering from financial difficulties or renegotiating contracts and this impacted upon the extent to which they were able to articulate their work with that of the pathfinders. The widely recognised tension between the universal and targeted roles of Connexions was also still apparent. As one coordinator put it:

> There are still significant challenges associated with the tension between the Connexions ‘universal service’ and the ability to ensure or monitor its delivery on the ground.

There was however, evidence that this tension was both better understood and better managed.

191. A significant feature of activity in the second year of pathfinder was the production of a considerable amount of advice and guidance material. This took many forms. Some was web-based e.g. Plymouth, Sheffield. Other pathfinders had produced materials on DVD, CD-ROM or video e.g. Southampton, Wakefield. Some were using commercially available software – the Fast Tomato web-based material which can be customised to reflect local labour patterns was being used in several pathfinders. Some pathfinders had focused upon producing guidance materials relating to specific occupational pathways e.g. Southwark, Islington. Several pathfinders were also moving towards a common post-16, UCAS-type application procedure which would include strong web-based elements. In addition to the production of materials many pathfinders had put on a range of advice and guidance events to help students to make choices within the 14-19 phase.
192. Several pathfinders had also developed substantial mentoring schemes to provide guidance to students. Progression coaches have been an important part of the Stockton Pathfinder where 13 coaches support students in nine schools. Some have specialised roles in relation to ethnic minority and disabled students. The Gateshead Pathfinder has deployed a Progression Mentor within its rural strand. The Progression Mentor works in both schools within the strand and advises on courses and progression routes at age 16 and 19. Mentors from both business and higher education also play an important role in supporting learning and progression in the Norfolk Pathfinder (see case studies for more detail on these latter two examples).

193. A further area of considerable activity within the pathfinders was the provision of staff development for school careers staff and Connexions advisers. This work was often aimed at increasing staff knowledge of provision, progression routes, qualifications and local labour markets.

194. Thus there had been significant progress in the enhancement of advice and guidance. Despite this, when coordinators were asked about the obstacles to development, a common theme emerged. This concerned the patchiness of provision and practice in schools. This was succinctly put by one coordinator:

> Although there is a national framework for the teaching of CEG the staffing structures in schools do not always reflect its importance as the amount of time given to careers co-ordinators varies widely.

195. Another coordinator said “the absence of compulsion on, in particular, schools makes delivery very difficult to assure”. In contrast, most of the schools visited were quite sanguine about the quality of the advice and guidance which they were providing, although some school careers staff were concerned about pressure of time on their work, especially with the introduction of citizenship education.

196. Thus, although pathfinders had put considerable effort into the production of advice and guidance material, staff development activities had increased and partnerships with Connexions were settling down, there was uncertainty about how far these developments had filtered through into schools and impacted upon the quantity and quality of advice and
guidance received by students. It appears that the perennial problem of the patchiness of advice and guidance in schools continues (for earlier research and inspection evidence see Cleaton, 1993; HMI, 1990).

**Development of individual learning plans**

197. The development of ILPs in the first year of pathfinders was uneven, although a substantial amount of development work was getting underway (Higham et al., 2004).

198. Coordinator assessments of second year progress were:

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This assessment represented a substantial increase in the pace of development compared with September 2003 when only three coordinators reported more than expected progress. This shift can be explained by many of the development activities which were being put in place in 2003 bearing some fruit in 2004.

199. Many pathfinders reported on a wide range of piloting activities. These often involved only some of the schools and colleges involved in the pathfinder. In Coventry, for example, ILPs were being developed in one federation with the intention that successful practice would be disseminated to the other three federations.

200. Much of the development focused on electronic and on-line ILPs. In some these were linked to broader developments in e-learning. In Lewisham, for example, the electronic ILP was seen as being accommodated within the VLE which was being developed (see case study). The Nottingham ILP was being developed as part of the electronic portfolio and Nottingham Passport, which was in turn linked to the tariff-based curriculum (see paragraph 145 and the case study).
201. This aspiration to link electronic ILPs with wider e-learning developments was also part of a broader approach to see ILPs as part of an holistic programme of support for learning and choice-making for students. In Hampshire, for example, ILPs were being seen in the context of the development of advice and guidance, PSHE, citizenship education and subject-based reviews.

202. While much activity was still at the levels of development and piloting the Doncaster and East Manchester Pathfinders had moved into larger scale implementation. In Doncaster all year 9 students in the eleven pathfinder schools (1,504 students) had completed an ILP and had an Individual Review (usually with the form tutor). This was seen as an integral part of the planning process for all young people and as key to ensuring that their individual needs are met. A substantial programme of staff development had taken place to support these developments. In East Manchester an electronic ILP had been developed and implemented for Year 8 and complementary education cohorts. A further version had been developed for years 9, 10 and 11 and a post-16 version was in development.

203. DfES policy has been to enable the local development of ILPs. However, when asked about the obstacles to development this policy was criticised by a few coordinators. One complained about the lack of a national template and another of little guidance from DfES. It was clear that there was a proliferation of models, although there was some evidence of sharing of practice across pathfinders. Whether this proliferation was evidence of healthy diversity and local responsiveness or muddle and confusion was a matter of some disagreement.

204. The development of electronic ILPs, while enthusiastically adopted by several pathfinders, was affected by a range of local, technical IT issues. Several commercial IT companies were getting involved, but for one coordinator one of the obstacles was: “Being pestered by numerous commercial IT companies to investigate their wonder products”.

205. More fundamentally, there was also lack of consensus about the purposes, processes and products of ILPs. One respondent claimed that most ILPs were not ‘working documents’ but somewhat inert tools for monitoring and recording. Questions about ‘ownership’ and student participation were also unresolved in some pathfinders. The debate about the relative
importance of formative processes and summative products which had been an important part of the development of records of achievement in the 1980s (Broadfoot, 1988, 2001) was evident in discussions around ILPs in some pathfinders. One person responsible for the development of ILPs insisted that their adoption in schools would require a ‘culture change’ involving both relationships between teachers and students and in school organisation. This respondent was not convinced that there was widespread commitment to such change in the schools with which he was familiar.

Thus, although there was been substantial development activity of ILPs large-scale implementation is still some way off in many. The bottom-up approach to development has been welcomed but is a source of frustration to some. A number of staff involved in developing ILPs believe the time is now ripe to move to a more common, national approach while others argue that this would be premature, or perhaps not desirable at all, in view of the lack of consensus around the purposes of ILPs.
SECTION SIX: CASE STUDIES

207. The following case studies are based principally upon five days fieldwork carried out in each pathfinder in the spring and summer terms of 2004. The text of each case study has been checked and agreed with the pathfinders. Two important points should be kept in mind when reading the case studies. First, they are accounts of the 14-19 Pathfinders at particular points in time. Since the fieldwork was completed development has continued and some of the identified issues may have been resolved and others may have arisen. Second, these do not constitute comprehensive accounts of all that it is happening in 14-19 in the case study areas. While we were flexible in our fieldwork, it was necessary in the time available to focus particularly on pathfinder-funded activities and neglect or ignore other activities. Therefore because certain 14-19 activities or developments are not mentioned in the individual case studies it should not be assumed that they are not taking place, since it may have been that they were not part of our fieldwork.

COVENTRY PATHFINDER

The local context

208. Coventry had a population of just over 300000 according to the 2001 census. This population was slightly younger than the England average, with 21.2% under 16 in 2001 compared to an England average of 20.2%. The population is ethnically diverse, with 11.3% of Asian or British Asian origin (compared to an England average of 4.6%) making up the largest ethnic minority. The city is geographically compact with bus journey times of around 30 minutes from the outskirts to the city centre.

209. The unemployment rate, at 4%, was slightly above the England average in 2000. The economy of the city has diversified over the last 20 years, although employment in manufacturing remains above the England average. Other significant employment sectors include public administration; distribution, hotels and restaurants; and banking, finance and insurance. In its report ‘Driving the Sub-Region Forward: The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Economy 2003/04’ the local LSC emphasised the evolution of the sub-regional
economy, its growing integration with global markets, the importance of skills development and the uneven character of economic development across the sub-region.

210. This latter point is of relevance to Coventry because, while the city has become increasingly affluent, it does contain areas of significant deprivation, especially in the north and east. These varying levels of deprivation are reflected in the examination results of Coventry’s secondary schools, which on the five A* - C GCSE measure varied in 2004 between 15% and 73%. The LEA average was 45.4%, some eight points below the England average, although OFSTED reported that attainment was in line with statistical neighbours.

211. Coventry has 19 secondary schools, 6 secondary special schools and 3 pupil referral units (PRUs). There are two single-sex schools in the city. All of Coventry’s secondary schools are 11 to 18, and none is selective. Twelve secondary schools have specialist status. There are three general FE colleges in Coventry, including a national college catering for the needs of young people with disabilities.

212. In the context of the Pathfinder a key feature was the existence of consortia of schools. These have over the last few years been developed as four, geographically-based 14-19 federations providing pre and post-16 education in the city. These federations provided joint A-level courses and had developed a variety of collaborative timetabling arrangements. The strength of the federations varies from area to area but the tradition of collaborative working was an important basis for Pathfinder and other 14-19 developments. Relationships between the schools and colleges had become more competitive in the 1990s but through the establishment of a 14-24 Strategic Forum and the formation of Federations is now much more collaborative.

213. An area-wide 14-19 inspection of Coventry and Warwickshire was undertaken in February and March 2004, while Coventry LEA was inspected in May 2004. Both inspections provided positive assessments of progress in 14-19 education and training. The AWI stated that “The effectiveness and efficiency of education and training across the area in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community are good”. The LEA inspection stated that there was good support for 14-19 education and training, while the authority
overall was praised for its facilitation of collaboration and partnership which was recognised as a strength.

The Pathfinder focus
214. The Coventry Pathfinder should be seen in the context of the overall development of the 14-19 phase across the city. Other key developments include the strengthening and broadening of the school federations providing post-16 education and projects funded through the European Social Fund and the Increased Flexibility programme intended to open up a range of vocational provision for 14-16 year olds.

215. The Pathfinder has four main aims:
   ➢ To raise the level of achievement of all young people 14-19;
   ➢ To further increase participation rates in learning post 16.
   ➢ To increase and enhance 14-19 provision and pathways by collaborative working in both the City and Sub-Region
   ➢ To raise the attainment and motivation for learning of under-achieving groups, particularly White UK heritage boys and Black Caribbean heritage boys.

216. The key objectives are:
   ➢ To provide a curriculum that is more responsive to students’ individual needs aspirations and aptitudes.
   ➢ To introduce e-learning thus both widening access to specialist subject teaching, and increasing cost-effectiveness.
   ➢ To provide an enhanced programme of guidance and support

217. These objectives were to be achieved through:
1. Widening the choice of courses and pathways at 14-16 through the introduction and enhancement of GCSEs in vocational subjects and at post-16 by increased and enhanced provision in VCEs and GNVQs.
2. Providing a wide range of off-site work related learning to which all young people at 14-16 and post-16 have access, and which is appropriate to the needs, talents and aspirations of each individual.
3. Developing approaches to e-learning which improve the quality of teaching, accelerates learning, and increases the cost-effectiveness of provision.

4. Improving advice, guidance and support by developing Individual Learning Plans and Progress File.

218. The federations were to be key vehicles for achieving these aims and objectives and the intention was to strengthen these and extend their remit from post-16 to the whole 14-19 phase. This strengthening would involve both a focus upon those areas of the city where not all schools were fully signed up to federation activities and to integrating colleges, special schools and training providers into the federations.

Main developments

219. The key features of the Coventry Pathfinder were its inclusiveness and comprehensiveness.

220. The inclusiveness took two main forms. First, it involved institutional inclusiveness. The Pathfinder incorporated a wide range of partners including schools, colleges, pupil referral units, training providers, employers, higher education institutions and Connexions. The majority of these partners, as well as being represented through the 14-24 Strategic Forum, were involved in 14-19 implementation mainly through their federation participation.

221. A particularly noteworthy development was the growing involvement of the colleges in the federations (because the two large general further education colleges draw students from across the city they were involved in all four federations). As noted above the federations had begun as school-based organisations and we were told that a few years previously there had been only limited collaboration between the schools and colleges. This, however, was changing and schools and colleges were working together on course provision and development. There was broad agreement that post-16 the schools would mainly provide AS/A2 courses while the colleges would focus particularly upon vocational provision. However, within the terms of this division of provision the colleges were helping the schools to develop post-16 level 2 vocational courses which, it was anticipated, would attract learners who were not yet ready to move to college. That a college principal was chairing one federation was emblematic of the greatly increased role which the colleges were playing
within the federations. The institutional inclusivity of the pathfinder was also reflected in the strong involvement of special schools and a college catering for the needs of young people with disabilities in the federations.

222. Inevitably schools varied somewhat in the extent to which they engaged with federation initiatives and activities and there was a tendency for schools with larger sixth forms to engage less. However, at the time of our visit the south-east federation was in the process of strengthening through the greater involvement of two schools which had previously been somewhat on the periphery of collaborative activities.

223. The federations each had funded coordinator time, which was used in different ways. In one a full-time coordinator was employed, elsewhere the functions were split between seconded post-holders who took responsibility for different facets of the work. Large proportions of the funding from Pathfinder and other initiatives were devolved to the federations who could decide how to deploy the money within the broad parameters of the various initiatives and the Coventry strategic plan for 14-19.

224. This devolution of funding and responsibility to the federations however, did not detract from the very important leadership role exercised by the LEA, both strategically and in relation to specific development activities described below. Both the AWI and LEA inspection reports highlighted this leadership and we were impressed by the ability of the LEA officers to grasp the ‘big picture’ at 14-19 both nationally and locally and focus upon the realistic ways in which Coventry could respond to, and shape, national imperatives and initiatives.

225. The second element of the inclusivity of 14-19 developments in Coventry concerned important curricular dimensions. This, in turn had several features: (i) development across the 14-19 phase (in contrast to a focus upon 14-16 or 16-19); (ii) intention to impact across a wide ability range from gifted and talented students to those with special educational needs; (iii) intention to impact at levels 1, 2 and 3; (iv) the development of provision and pedagogy through e-learning. Some specific examples which illustrate the wide-ranging curricular focus of Pathfinder (and other developments) follow.
226. At 14-16 considerable emphasis has been placed upon the development of GCSEs in vocational subjects. In September 2004 about 45% of the cohort were undertaking these courses. The first groups had been examined in the summer of 2004 and some implementation problems had been exposed. These partly sprang from the relative paucity of supporting curriculum materials provided by the awarding bodies and commercial publishers. This contributed to a process of ‘academic drift’ within the courses (we met a group of students taking a GCSE in a vocational subject who were unable to distinguish this course from ‘ordinary’ GCSEs). In order to inject greater vocationalism into these subjects and to support teachers and students packs of multi-media resources had been developed by staff seconded as part of the Pathfinder. Subjects covered were ICT, Leisure & Tourism, Business and Health and Social Care. The materials had been developed through work with local employers and were also intended to stimulate closer links between the GCSEs in vocational subjects which were being taken and student work experience.

227. Also at 14-16 there has been focus on accelerated learning for gifted and talented students. This involves students taking AS levels in Mathematics and Modern Foreign Language in years 10 and 11. Mixed school groups undertake these AS studies in twilight time. Interestingly, two separate approaches were used for this accelerated learning. In MFL the group had completed GCSE in year 10 and commenced AS French in year 11, in Maths the group was pursuing the AS Maths in parallel with GCSE Maths. The Maths group stayed with the same teacher in the same school, the French group rotated around the three schools involved. Both approaches had been successful in achieving high levels of student commitment and motivation but had also thrown up some implementation issues. For the students taking French these concerned what MFL activities they would undertake in year 11 during their mainstream school timetables having completed GCSE a year early. In Maths the students had been entered for some AS modules at the end of year 10 but their examination results had been disappointing. Both subjects had recruited new cohorts in September 2004 and evaluation of the two approaches would continue, although it was recognised that in the longer-term accelerated learning of this type would need to be mainstreamed within the schools by being integrated into the timetable rather than taking place in twilight time.
228. In addition to these developments an extensive programme of work-related learning for 14-16 year olds in the two mainstream colleges and through training providers had been developed. This had been funded mainly through ESF and the IF programme. ESF conditions of funding had meant that this provision had tended to be skewed towards lower-achieving and disaffected students.

229. At 16-19 a major thrust of the Pathfinder has been the development of level 2 vocational courses. Across the city there were 200-300 learners taking these courses and it was recognised that provision and quality needed to be raised. Coventry is aiming to tackle these issues through the development of student apprenticeships which typically combine a BTEC First course and NVQ qualifications taken during work placements. Development is often being undertaken through partnerships between schools who act as the main providers, colleges who give support on the vocational elements and training providers who arrange work placements and undertake NVQ assessments. Areas in which this model is being developed include Early Years, Business, ICT, Digital Arts, Engineering, Media Studies and Sports Studies. The inclusivity of the Coventry approach was symbolised by the Digital Arts course which was jointly provided by a training provider and a school and attended by students from mainstream schools and two special schools.

230. Some development of post-16 level 1 courses had also been undertaken and further work in this area is planned in order to help meet the needs of around 13% of 16 year olds in Coventry who did not achieve five GCSE A* - G grades in 2004.

231. In another federation the focus at 16-19 was on the development of enrichment activities including work in drama, art, cookery and sport. Mainstream schools, special schools and a college were all involved in the programme.

232. In e-learning the focus has been on the use of a system called Gradepoint. This allows live lessons to be taught over the internet by expert teachers. All participating students/teachers in a class 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 (as in a chat room); or they can opt to speak directly to the teacher using the microphone. Archived lessons can be accessed from any computer connected to the internet. The American developer is working with Coventry to customise their application to meet the city’s needs. Teachers in a range of subjects have been trained to use Gradepoint and a substantial number of lessons have been developed. Evaluation of Gradepoint is continuing.

233. A second strand of e-learning development has focused upon the development of a virtual learning environment and a college which is a CoVE in ICT has taken a lead on this work. It is recognised that there is potential for development although there are licensing and cost issues involved in making the college VLE available to schools. The possibilities of developing cheaper website-based alternatives were being explored.

234. Developments in Individual Learning Plans and Progress Files have been undertaken in two federations. One has used the Fast Tomato software programme. An interesting development was the use of a Decision Making Readiness questionnaire in one school which revealed some unexpected patterns among the students and implied some re-targeting of advice and guidance. A Connexions advisor was fully involved in this work and more generally there was evidence of a good partnership between the schools and Connexions in the provision of advice and guidance.

Summary and emerging issues

235. 14-19 is an area of vibrant development in Coventry. This development is marked both by a strong strategic overview and a wide range of developments in schools, colleges and training providers which are already making significant impact on student experiences. The role of the LEA in accessing external funding, providing strategic leadership and promoting specific developments has been very important. However, at the heart of the developments have been the collaborative federation arrangements. These have undoubtedly benefited from the history of collaboration and partnership in the city and the stores of trust which have been built up. However, the federations have been strengthened and broadened through recent 14-19 developments.
236. Coventry developments are also notable for the ways in which they extend across the whole 14-19 phase, involve a wide range of partners, aim to change the learning of experiences of students with a wide range of achievement and impact on a large number of curricular areas. As noted above this wide range of activities are located within a broad strategic approach and are based upon a clear-sighted analysis of the sort of development which is feasible and desirable across the city.

237. As in other pathfinders sustainability is a key issue for the future. There is well-founded confidence that the federations will continue and provide the basis for future development. However, some of the more specific developments, such as the provision of work-related learning at 14-16, are heavily dependent upon specific funding streams while Pathfinder has funded important development work. In the absence of specific funding streams it may be that there will be some retrenchment in these activities. In the past Coventry has funded the overwhelming majority of the costs of off-site work related learning provision from external funds, but in preparation for a cessation of external funding, the schools are now funding a greater proportion of the true costs from their mainstream budget than previously. The true cost of off-site learning has also been made clear to schools.
CUMBRIA PATHFINDER

The local context

238. This Pathfinder is led by the LEA and covers the entire authority area. Thus the Cumbria Pathfinder reflects the diversity of the area itself. It encompasses, for example, the urban areas of Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness, West Cumbria with its several large employers, the rural Eden Valley and the South Lakes area with its focus on tourism and service industries.

239. Attainment at 16 in Cumbria schools as measured by the secondary school GCSE/GNVQ performance tables is very close to the England average. Participation in full-time education and training at both 16 and 17 is also very close to the England average. These averages however, conceal considerable variations between schools in attainment and size. Some school sixth forms, for example, have close to 400 students while others have fewer than 70. In contrast to most other areas, the majority of those 16 and 17 year olds participating in full-time education and training attend school sixth forms rather than sixth form or further education colleges.

240. The geographical size and diversity of the Cumbria Pathfinder raises important issues in relation to the 14-19 agenda, including the size of the optimal local unit for the development of 14-19 provision and its provision in rural areas where schools and sixth forms are small, the further education presence may be distant, public transport is sparse and training providers are scarce.

Focus of the Pathfinder

241. The overall aim of the pathfinder is: To develop a universal learning and achievement entitlement for Cumbrian 14-19 year olds. This statement translates into more specific aims concerned with outcomes including choice, participation, achievement and meeting a diversity of needs and aspirations. These aims are to be met through collaboration, innovation and the effective use of expertise and best practice.
Partly as a response to its diversity, the Cumbria Pathfinder operates through both county-wide objectives and five local consortia. The county-wide objectives include the development of a comprehensive learning opportunities and qualifications map, a quality framework for on-line learning and the promotion of vocational and work-related learning. The five geographically-based consortia were able to develop their own objectives and included, for example, improving opportunities in science, technology, engineering and business and enterprise activities (West Cumbria), increasing and widening work-based learning (Furness and South West Cumbria) and promoting the use of ICT and e-learning (Eden Valley and Remote Rural Areas).

242. The Pathfinder included all the significant partners including 43 secondary schools, four further education and one sixth form college.

243. Our evaluation visit focused particularly upon two consortia - in West Cumbria and the South Lakes - and also involved some exploration of Pathfinder-wide issues. However, in what follows it is particularly important that readers bear in mind that this is a geographically partial account of the Cumbria Pathfinder and that, for example, 14-19 developments in Carlisle raise rather different issues than those in the more rural areas of the county.

**Key features of the Pathfinder**

244. A feature of the Cumbria Pathfinder both county-wide and also in the local areas is that it is closely integrated with, and often difficult to separate from, other national initiatives and funding streams. In West Cumbria, for example, these include the Increased Flexibility Programme which funds some vocational courses run by Lakes College and the West Cumbria Achievement Zone which supports vocational skills training for students who may drop out of education. This is financed from schools’ pupil retention funds and supported by the Education to Employment (E2E) initiative. Excellence in Cities funds are also supporting some collaboration in the area.

245. The aims and objectives of the Pathfinder are also becoming indistinguishable from the local area action plans arising from the ‘14-19 travel to study’ Area Reviews
which have taken place in each of the five consortia areas. These predated the more wide ranging LSC Strategic Area Review currently being conducted. In addition, as a result of an Ofsted Area Wide Inspection of 16-19 provision that was undertaken in the Spring of 2003, there is a detailed West Cumbria Action Plan which acknowledges that plans for Pathfinder and post-inspection ‘complement and enhance each other’ and that ‘The achievement of the Pathfinder aims will effectively address most of the 14 issues for attention identified in the Area Wide Inspection report’.

246. Personnel also have dual roles. For example, the area Pathfinder coordinator for South Lakes is also responsible for the South Lakes Action Plan and the West Cumbria coordinator is also employed by the LSC and spends half of her time with responsibility for the implementation of the West Cumbria Action Plan.

247. These high levels of strategic integration are probably helped by the fact that the LEA and local LSC boundaries are contiguous and there are good working relationships between the two organisations.

248. Among the county-wide objectives there have been significant developments in e-learning. These have been facilitated by the appointment of a consultant.

249. The focus has been on interactive teaching and learning which has been encouraged by 11-19 schools in Cumbria piloting Herriot Watt’s Scholar software. This is a series of interactive learning packages to support A level Physics, Chemistry, Maths, Biology. It has been used as an example of how learning might be helped using ICT. In addition there have been some CPD courses to encourage teachers to develop their own curriculum materials. This has led, for example, to a teachers group working together to develop GCSE engineering materials. To support these developments the consultant has been researching appropriate virtual learning environment (VLE) packages which can be used to publish and access the learning materials created by teachers in Cumbria. It has been recognised that there is a need for a robust platform which can also link to the SIMS management system used in the schools. Recently an agreement has been made to undertake a pilot scheme to test a commercially developed VLE system which, it is anticipated, will provide a sound basis for further development.
250. A SAM licence has also been bought for Cumbria schools. This is a GCSE revision package which covers many subjects. It is interactive and available to the students at home. Student use is logged and information about use and achievement is sent periodically to schools. This has been a revelation to teachers as students proved to be using the packages much more than anyone expected. For example, one headteacher was surprised to learn that one of his students who had been excluded from school had spent much of the two days at home working through SAM packages!

251. As a result of these and other developments e-learning is being seen by some Cumbrian heads as having great potential for supporting 14-19 teaching and learning. One headteacher suggested that one way in which collaboration on courses might take place in the near future is by students working through part of a module in their own school with an interactive learning package written for the course. Teacher support could be online, via email and through occasional face-to-face lessons.

252. A common online prospectus, Futures 4 Me, will be fully operational by the summer of 2004. This will provide information on all learning and progression opportunities in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers for 14-19 year olds in Cumbria. At the time of our visit data for West Cumbria and Barrow-in-Furness had been entered. The prospectus will have links to Connexions and higher education and will provide information on careers areas.

253. Another interesting Pathfinder project, the Summer Project, was held in West Cumbria in summer 2003. Thirteen young people aged 16-17 spent a week working out what the government’s plans for 14-19 education published in the White Paper ‘14-19: Opportunity and Excellence’ might mean in West Cumbria. They represented every secondary school in the area and the local college. They did not know each other before they met on the first day. The young people used their pooled experience of their own schools and other information to help them plan and carry out research into the potential for better co-operation between all learning providers. In groups they investigated a range of issues including the achievement of maximum choice of sixth form subjects, ways of making learning attractive for all young people, provision of post-16 learning by
the local college and training providers and the ways in which young people could be supported in making their choices 14-19.

254. At the end of the week their findings were presented to an invited audience some of whom were headteachers. Some of the recommendations have been incorporated into action plans.

255. We met eight of the young people involved in the summer project and six months later they remained enthusiastic about what they had done and clear about their findings. Cumbria plans to continue to involve groups of young people in quality reviews of 14-19 provision.

256. There was a strong collaborative culture in West Cumbria organised around three learning entitlement and curriculum clusters based upon travel-to-learn areas. This collaborative culture grew out of common problems caused by post-industrial deprivation along the coastal strip. More specifically change had been driven by the AWI Action Plan, which is closely aligned to Pathfinder objectives. The West Cumbria Achievement Zone is providing vocational opportunities, work experience and basic skills for 14-16 year olds through the involvement of the college and training providers. There is also shared delivery of some post-16 courses with some common timetabling, the development of Modern Apprenticeships and some accelerated learning in Maths and French.

257. School links with employers in West Cumbria are particularly strong. All of the secondary schools have specialist status and BAe and BNFL have provided funds to support all schools’ specialist bids. Links with BNFL are particularly strong. For example, a specialist engineering school has a BNFL project worker on site. West Cumbria has sponsored the development of the Learning in Future Technologies (LIFT) project with the aim of raising students and parents’ awareness of the skills needed for work with large technological employers. In July 2003 a LIFT week took place during which students were able to visit employers and take part in a range of activities, with further technological activities available in the schools
For the future, nuclear decommissioning will change employment and skill needs and, through the West Cumbria 14-19 strategy, plans are being developed to respond to these changes.

**Key issues from the Pathfinder**

One of the key issues concerned the balance of priorities between the county-wide objectives and the consortia objectives and the resources deployed to support each. This was particularly pertinent given the geographical extent of the Pathfinder, the number of institutions involved, especially schools, and the high degrees of autonomy exercised by the schools. These factors, together with the patchy provision of further education and work-based learning across Cumbria made the strategic management of the Pathfinder and 14-19 developments particularly complex.

There is concern within the Pathfinder about the high costs of collaboration. A group of heads, principals, LEA and LSC staff are working to specify these costs and produce proposals for ways in which they may be met. Some of these costs are invested in staff appointments and the Pathfinder coordinator estimated that a minimum of £250k per annum in staff appointments is needed to make collaboration work. Since our first visit in 2003 the management of the Pathfinder had been strengthened through the appointment of consortia coordinators on fixed term contracts working 50% on Pathfinder activities. We have also noted the use of consultants to drive the work forward in other areas.

Travel is another source of costs although there seemed to be no overall approach to paying for student transport between institutions and practice appeared to vary across and within consortia. This issue is acknowledged and there are plans to bring the various transport related activities in the five areas together under one co-ordinating plan, driven by the county Transport (Education) Forum.
GATESHEAD PATHFINDER

The local context

262. The Gateshead Pathfinder contains eleven secondary schools, four special schools and one further education college. The Pathfinder project reports to the local 14-19 Task group which is an important component of the Lifelong Learning Partnership.

263. The area encompasses considerable diversity. There is deprivation and disadvantage in the central Gateshead area, while some of the suburban areas are more affluent. The western part of the area is relatively rural and contains some former mining areas as well as small commuting towns. There are significant pockets of deprivation in these former mining communities.

264. Gateshead schools reflect this diversity with wide differences in attainment levels at 16 and 18, although overall performance at 16 is better than the average for England. Participation rates in full-time and part-time education and training at 16 and 17 are slightly below the England average. There are also opportunities for students to study outside Gateshead, especially across the Tyne in Newcastle, and in some areas transport routes to Newcastle are better than those to central Gateshead.

265. Economically, Gateshead has benefited from the wider regeneration of the Tyne and Wear area which has brought about shifts in the labour market, which as we shall see, the Pathfinder is aiming to respond to.

Focus of the Pathfinder

266. The Pathfinder objectives include: building a new post-16 curriculum in central Gateshead, enhancing and developing the range and scope of the 14-19 curriculum in the rural west, developing new vocational pathways and new concepts in enterprise education.
These objectives are translated into three main strands:

- The development of the Central Gateshead sixth form (CG6) - based on collaboration between the college and three secondary schools
- A rural strand which involves two schools in the western area
- A vocational strand which has a Pathfinder-wide remit.

Features of the Pathfinder

The major development has been the establishment of the Central Gateshead Sixth Form.

This collaboration between the college and the three schools in central Gateshead began as a result of the Pathfinder in 2003 and is now well established. It has been based on mutual need. Central Gateshead was described to us as a relatively deprived area of the authority with low staying on rates at 16, limited parental experience of post-16 education and low aspirations. Some of those who did stay-on in education post-16 did not study in Gateshead. These factors contributed to a relatively small post-16 cohort studying in central Gateshead which in turn led to restricted curricular choices. The college and an 11-18 school provided post 16 education. The school sixth form was small, while the college was keen to develop AS/A2 courses.

The area also contains two 11-16 schools. These schools have been successful in raising attainment at 16. In spite of this they have found that participation in locally delivered post-16 education and training remained relatively low among their students. This, we were informed, was a product of an historical situation in which many of the progression routes were unclear. As a means of addressing this issue these schools wanted to be able to offer clearer local progression for students from 11-18.

These factors encouraged the establishment of CG6 in 2003. A choice of 29 AVCE’s and AS/A2 courses was offered to students at the schools and college. The result of this collaboration and the publicity surrounding CG6 has been a considerable
increase in numbers of students staying on in central Gateshead many of whom, we were told, would have been lost to education. Although not all of the students staying on are in CG6 nevertheless the numbers are impressive. The college intake from the two 11-16 schools increased from 93 students in 2002 to 174 in 2003. Numbers of students staying on in the 11-18 school increased from 50 to 83. There are approximately 160 students in CG6 in 2003/4.

272. An interesting development has been the teaching of some of the post-16 courses at one of the 11-16 schools. This arose when it was found, in early 2003, that 23 Year 11 students from this school were keen to take post-16 courses in ICT and Business Studies provided they could be taught by the ICT and Business Studies teachers in the school. This was implemented in 2003/4. The second 11-16 school is planning to provide post-16 courses in 2004/5.

273. We were told that the existence of post-16 courses in the 11-16 schools was proving of great benefit to the students, the schools and to potential recruitment to CG6. The schools are seen no longer as simply ‘recruitment agencies’ for the college or schools which have a sixth form. But more than that, it is anticipated that students in the 11-16 schools will be more willing to stay on to study with teachers and in an environment that they know. We were told that 14-16 year olds are increasingly aware of full time post-16 progression routes as there are now older students in the school. Parents are becoming aware that these schools can support their child’s progression after the age of 16 and it is expected that recruitment at 11 will increase. Teachers, seeing the opportunity for professional development, are keen to work with colleagues in CG6 preparing themselves to teach post-16 courses. There is some evidence that recruitment of teachers has improved, with sixty possible candidates recently expressing interest in a deputy head post at one school.

274. In the 2004-05 CG6 prospectus all three schools and the college are indicated as teaching centres. Students express their interest by completing an application form and a best fit timetable is then worked out. Pathfinder has employed a timetable consultant to work out timetable blocks for CG6 for the next academic year.
Post-16 progression from vocational courses at 14-16 is becoming established. Each of the CG6 schools offers vocational GCSE’s and a range of other vocational options provided through the college and training providers are available.

275. Post-19 progression routes are also being established. A CG6 AS/A2 Law course is currently being taught at the 11-18 school by staff from Sunderland University. These Law students will have preferential access to the LLB course at the university, provided they achieve two specified A2 grades. The college collaborates with the Universities of Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland on the provision of Foundation degrees and has long standing contact with Sheffield, Newcastle and Northumbria universities on franchised degree provision.

276. CG6 has been strongly marketed, led by the college marketing department, and has all of the characteristics of a ‘brand’. There is a snappy name and logo. A prospectus and publicity material have promoted this brand identity. A launch event took place in 2002/3 and was repeated in 2003/4. A CG6 bus shelter and shopping centre advertising campaign is also being planned for summer 2004. This marketing strategy is aimed at increasing post-16 participation in central Gateshead and encouraging learners to study within the area rather than going outside.

277. The college marketing manager has been particularly careful to involve and inform school staff about CG6 so that students’ questions can be answered immediately and effectively and students progression post-16 can be supported. PowerPoint presentations are available which teachers can use for school parents’ evenings. There is evidence that parents are becoming aware of CG6 as a result of the publicity. The marketing manager at the college had recently gained a prize from her professional association for the collaborative marketing of CG6.

278. The rural strand of the Pathfinder involves two schools in the western area of Gateshead, outside of the main conurbation. One is a specialist language college with a fairly large sixth form while the other, although it has raised achievement at 16, still has a small sixth form and needs access to more post-16 options. Although the schools are relatively close there was little collaboration before the Pathfinder
279. Curriculum collaboration post-16 has enjoyed mixed success. The intention was to collaborate in post-16 Modern Foreign Languages, Music and ICT courses. There has been no blocking of the timetable - although this is planned for next year - and as a result some AS level courses e.g. Music, are taught in twilight sessions.

280. There has been successful collaboration in Music and ICT. The ICT Strategy Manager at the larger school is funded by Pathfinder to work one day a week at the other school where he has been supporting the upgrading of the ICT systems and encouraging the use of ICT for teaching and learning. He anticipates that a BTEC level 3 course in ICT will be offered to students in the two schools next year. He is also hoping to develop a CISCO Academy networking course.

281. The ICT support worker, funded by Pathfinder, divides his time equally between the two schools. His work is particularly appreciated by staff in the two schools. The current holder of the post is an ICT graduate with some experience of supporting ICT in teaching and learning. His role is wide and particularly relates to supporting the use of ICT in the classroom. He has trained teachers in the use of applications. The two headteachers feel that this role would be useful throughout the Pathfinder and should continue when Pathfinder funding is no longer available.

282. Another feature of the rural strand which the heads are particularly enthusiastic about is a new post of Progression Mentor funded by Pathfinder. The Progression Mentor works in both schools and advises on courses and progression routes at age 16 and 19. The mentor also targets underachievers in year 11 and supports post 16 students in overcoming barriers that may prevent applications to higher education. The mentor also has a remit to organise and support Aim Higher and Widening Participation events and events for Gifted and Talented students. The role of Progression Mentor has been adapted from an idea operating in Newcastle—developed under the Excellence in Cities programme. This idea is to be adopted across the Pathfinder with Progression Mentors shared between schools – an appointment to CG6 was taken up in March. The
Progression Mentor was supported by Pathfinder until April 2004 after which the posts were funded by the Regional Development Agency.

283. An important aspect of the **vocational strand** is its focus on four main vocational pathways within the region which provide varied work opportunities. These are Health and Social Care, Tourism, Engineering and Culture. The principal role of the vocational strand is to help schools, colleges and training providers translate the labour market information about skills gaps and employment opportunities in the local economy into curricular activities which will encourage learners to access curricular pathways which will lead to the identified occupational areas. A range of activities have been provided for students across Gateshead schools and the strand has also provided staff and curriculum development opportunities for teachers. The establishment of a range of teacher networks to take developments forward has been an important feature of the Pathfinder. With support from Area Wide Inspection funding secondments are being made from a school, the College and the work based learning sector to promote and facilitate vocational learning opportunities in schools.

**Key issues from the Pathfinder**

284. While CG6 has made an important impact a whole series of detailed but important issues still have to be tackled. These include:

- transport between centres

- the development of a more sustainable timetable

- the development of a fees and registration structure which is fair and equitable and reflects institutional contributions

- suitable arrangements for exam entries where students in the same teaching groups are registered at different centres
the development of means by which 11-16 institutions can take credit for students’ achievements on post 16 courses which are being taught by the school’s staff.

the possible appointment of an overall head of CG6

285. These issues all bear upon the sustainability of CG6 and the ways in which it can become embedded in the organisational structures and cultures of the three schools and the college.

286. More fundamentally CG6 raises important issues about planning and provision of the 14-19 phase. The justifications offered for CG6 relate to the need to raise participation and progression among students in central Gateshead. The approach is to establish provision locally, including in 11-16 schools, and there is early evidence that this is raising participation in central Gateshead. While some of the increase in enrolments are attributable to young people who would have gone elsewhere rather than choosing to stay in Gateshead there is evidence that some also represents new learners and it is the local view is that stronger post 16 provision in Central Gateshead will lead to higher participation.

287. The development of post-16 learning in 11-16 schools also raises questions about the proliferation of sites of provision of post-16 courses and whether there might be other ways of encouraging potentially reluctant post-16 learners who study at 11-16 schools to progress to further learning.
HAMPshire Pathfinder

The local context

288. The Hampshire LEA area has over 100 state schools, colleges and special schools catering for 14-19 year olds. Most of the schools are for 11-16 year olds from which students staying in full-time education and training progress to a variety of further education, tertiary and sixth form colleges. Across the local LSC area (which is wider than Hampshire) around five out of six 16 year olds in full time education attended college (compared with an England average of around three out of six). In 2001 73% of 16 year olds in Hampshire were in full-time education and training compared to an England average of 71%. In 2002 56.2% of pupils aged 15 achieved 5+ A* - C GCSE/GNVQ results which was 4.6 percentage points above the England average. The average points score at GCE/AVCE level was also above the England average.

289. The 14-19 Pathfinder is located in two distinct areas of Hampshire and operates through two partnerships. One of these partnerships is in East Hampshire, centred on small towns such as Alton, Petersfield and Liphook. None of the schools in this area have sixth forms. Students progress to the local sixth form college or travel to other colleges, including several GFE colleges, on the periphery of the partnership area.

290. The other partnership is in South-West Hampshire, in and around the New Forest area. Here there are a number of schools with sixth forms and two main colleges. There is a history of strong competition between institutions for post-16 students in this area, partly stemming from the establishment of five school sixth forms in the 1980s.

291. While the configurations of schools and colleges are different in the two areas there are issues which are common to both. One is the relative under-development of vocational and work-based learning. There are no training providers located in either of the two areas, although some providers outside the areas do recruit trainees from within them. There is also a relative lack of entry level and level 1 and 2 provision for post-16 learners so that while level 3 learners have extensive choice of provision that available for learners at lower levels is much more circumscribed. Vocational provision was particularly patchy in East
Hampshire where there had been no Increased Flexibility project. Two colleges in South-West Hampshire had operated IF schemes which had significantly increased the numbers of 14-16 year olds taking vocational courses, especially GCSEs in vocational subjects.

292. Both areas are also largely rural with journeys to neighbouring institutions typically taking around 30 minutes and public transport scarce. This has implications for the ways in which collaborative provision can be developed and choice widened for students.

*The pathfinder focus*

293. The Hampshire pathfinder, led by the local LSC, focused upon three of the radical options outlined in the Pathfinder prospectus - innovative approaches to designing and delivering vocational courses, e-learning and innovative use of transport – although radical option three was redefined by the pathfinder to include the development of flexible learning strategies. The three radical options were closely entwined in order to address the first objective outlined in the pathfinder proposal: To overcome barriers for young people in rural environments by establishing coherent and collaborative models of 14-19 education and training.

294. In curriculum, a major aim was to develop vocational learning. As noted above the base for this was stronger in the South-West because of the work of the IF projects although further development was necessary, while in East Hampshire there was limited development save that undertaken by individual schools. However, in developing vocational provision the pathfinder needed to take account of the rural character of the two partnerships. The frequent movement of large numbers of students between institutions was not a viable solution, although some movement of students was anticipated. However, the pathfinder looked to develop other approaches to developing and implementing courses involving the use of e-learning, local skills centres, mobile vocational facilities as well as strengthening links between partners through which a more diverse curriculum, which offered greater student choice could be developed.
Main developments

295. In order to meet its objectives the pathfinder had first to develop collaborative structures in the two pathfinder areas. In neither was collaboration deeply rooted, although the challenges and processes of building partnerships were rather different. Partnership coordinators were appointed for each of the two areas and worked under the direction of the overall pathfinder manager and steering group. However, the two partnerships had considerable autonomy to develop the work in ways which suited the particular circumstances and history of the areas.

296. In East Hampshire, although there was no great history of institutional collaboration, a strong collaborative culture was quickly established, particularly at deputy head/deputy principal level, between the schools and colleges. This culture became established partly as a result of the process of developing the pathfinder proposal. It was marked by a willingness to compromise and to locate resources where need was greatest. For example, as part of the development of vocational learning it was decided to set-up a catering base (see below) and it was agreed that this should be sited at one of the schools, while being made available to all the partners. Similarly with the mobile vocational units (see below) agreement was reached that these should move around the schools in ways which would minimise the numbers of students travelling to other sites. Several interviewees emphasised the excellent culture of collaboration which had been developed through the pathfinder.

297. In South-West Hampshire there was much stronger competition between institutions centred on the post-16 market – this was described by one interviewee as “fierce”. Several of the school sixth forms were small in size, while the two main colleges in the area also competed for students. In this context institutions engaged with the collaborative 14-19 agenda with different degrees of enthusiasm – some embraced it whole-heartedly, others were seeking to acquire additional resources while one school distanced itself completely. This context for collaboration was reflected, for example, in the decision to site the local skills centres (see below) at what were described as ‘neutral’ venues rather than at any of the partner schools and colleges.
298. In developing innovative approaches to vocational courses the pathfinder employed several approaches. One of these involved the establishment of skills centres. These took somewhat different forms in the two partnerships. In East Hampshire a catering facility is being developed through the conversion of a home economics room in a partnership school. Advice on facilities and equipment have been sought from a further education college and the intention is to equip the facility in ways which will support the introduction of catering courses at a variety of levels. Although located at a school there is clear understanding that the skills centre will be a partnership resource available to all schools. Preliminary discussions are also underway concerning the establishment of a similar facility for hairdressing in another partnership school. These facilities are likely to be available in 2005 and the courses which they will make possible will be included in the year 9 options in partnership schools.

299. In the South-West partnership, as noted above, the skills centres are not located in any of the partner institutions. The centres are managed by a group which includes partner representatives. Several centres are being developed. One, located on an industrial estate, will provide facilities for courses in construction, hair & beauty and ICT. Another centre is to be based at an outdoor activity centre which provides both tourist and education facilities and is also a working farm and thus offers learners opportunities to access a range of learning experiences. The courses provided in these centres are being provided in collaboration with local companies and colleges. The ‘neutral venues’ are aimed at offering an alternative and more employer-focused learning environment, which in several cases it is hoped will also attract disengaged learners aged 16-19.

300. In the South-West the opportunities being opened up through the skills centres were made available to local schools via a prospectus published in January 2004 in time to be included in school option processes. This detailed ten courses, mainly at NVQ level 1, which were likely to be available. These courses have recruited around 160 students for a September 2004 start although the partnership coordinator was of the opinion that larger numbers could have been recruited. The shorter timescale of two-year funding for the Phase 2 pathfinders (as opposed to three years for Phase 1) was felt to have contributed to a degree of caution by the schools.
301. A second innovative approach to vocational courses has been through the deployment of mobile units in East Hampshire. In 2003/04 one of these units was used to provide a range of experiences in construction work leading to OCN accreditation. The mobile unit comprises a van equipped with an awning and canvas side walls (when the weather requires) which then provides a workspace for around ten students. The mobile units are provided by a private supplier who also operates in a neighbouring authority. In 2003/04, year 10 students from three schools came together to work at the construction unit, either using public transport to get to the site or being transported in a school mini-bus. In 2003/04 the mobile unit was being used to re-engage a small group of disaffected learners and there was positive feedback from the schools involved. For 2004/05 further mobile units in motor vehicle maintenance and hairdressing will be introduced at which point over 50 students and at least six partner schools will be involved. In September 2004 a further pilot project with a small group of ‘looked after children’ not in mainstream education will commence. The group will access the construction mobile unit, whilst on-site at one of the local schools.

302. The impetus behind the establishment of the skills centres and the use of the mobile units is to provide relatively small-scale vocational provision locally, so that while some travel will be required by students, this will not be excessive and, in the case of the mobile units, can be distributed among the partners by the units being based at different schools at different times.

303. A further aspect of the radical options being undertaken by the pathfinder is the development of e-learning. Again there are some differences in emphasis between the two partnerships. In East Hampshire partner schools will be able to access a well-established and successful virtual learning environment (VLE) operating in a local college. Staff development activities to support this are underway. Pathfinder funding has been used to increase server capacity to support the extension of the VLE to the schools. A particular feature of this development is that it will give the schools selected access to on-line National Learning Network materials which have been developed to support vocational courses and thus help the schools to support the learning of students undertaking vocational courses. In addition in East Hampshire a range of small research projects are being implemented in some partner schools, testing for example, the use of tablet PCs and wireless networks. The results will be disseminated to partners schools and thus inform procurement decisions.
304. In the South-West a similar process is being developed under the leadership of a college which is a COVE in ICT, although here the intention is not only to provide access to curriculum and assessment materials but a range of other functions including management information systems and assessment data. This is going to require higher levels of integration in ICT systems between the partners than is necessary in East Hampshire.

305. E-learning is still in the relatively early stages of development in both partnerships. At this stage there is no intention of providing courses exclusively through distance e-learning but to use it to supplement face-to-face learning, especially in vocational subjects.

306. In addition to the developments already described links have also been developed between the schools and the colleges.

307. In East Hampshire an important new link has been established with an agricultural college and in September 2004 over 60 students will be attending seven vocational courses at this college. East Hampshire also has links with two other colleges which will be attended by a further 70 students. A large programme of GCSEs in vocational subjects has also been developed with over 160 places on new school-based provision from September 2004. Accelerated learning for year 11 students in AS ICT and Critical Thinking has also been developed in partnership between a local college and schools. There has been positive feedback on this development and the provision is likely to cater for around 50 students in 2004/05.

308. In the South-West there is also very extensive provision of GCSEs in vocational subjects, developed through the auspices of the two IF projects referred to above, with over 700 students enrolled in 2003/04. Different models have been used by the two colleges. One has provided subsidised direct teaching of courses, while the other has supported school-based teaching through providing equipment, training and facilities.

309. The pathfinder and the LEA have been promoting an holistic approach to **advice and guidance** involving CEG, citizenship education, PSHE, progress files and ILPs and subject-based work. It is intended that this combination of approaches will provide good quality
advice and guidance to all students. Connexions and the LEA are currently embarking on a programme which will provide bespoke advice to individual schools on how they can develop their overall programmes. The schools visited as part of our evaluation seemed confident that they were providing adequate advice and guidance and were satisfied with Connexions support, while recognising that restructuring of the Connexions service created some difficulties.

**Summary and emerging issues**

310. Hampshire is a relatively high-performing area on conventional educational performance measures, with high levels of progression, including onto academic courses post-16 and higher education after that. Thus the issues of achievement, participation and progression which lie at the heart of the 14-19 reform agenda might appear less pressing than in other areas visited as part of this evaluation.

311. However, it was recognised that there was a substantial minority of learners for whom the largely academic curriculum diet was not appropriate, while others might prefer a more mixed diet. As with all areas, there are also communities in the towns and more rural areas, where aspirations, achievement and progression remain issues. Thus there had been a major thrust to develop vocational learning. This was being achieved through greatly increased collaboration between partners in the two partnership areas and through a mix of strategies including establishing skills centres, using mobile units, developing e-learning and strengthening school-college links.

312. These developments had begun to substantially broaden curriculum choices for students. The pathfinder had concluded that there was no obvious, single solution to issues of rurality – transport could be expensive and raised issues of supervision during journeys. However, it was contended that the combination of approaches was able to overcome many of the barriers to increasing choice.

313. It was accepted that two issues which needed greater attention were employer involvement and post-16 development. Employer involvement was particularly limited in East Hampshire where there are no large employers. Attempts to forge links through
employers representatives had not borne much fruit. There was somewhat stronger employer engagement in the South-West where the employment base is somewhat more clearly defined, although here, as in the East, the work-based learning route remained weak.

314. Discussions have begun on the implications of 14-16 development for post-16 provision and it is anticipated that this will be taken on in the second year of pathfinder. However, it was argued, convincingly, that the key early objectives involved establishing and strengthening collaborative cultures and structures and working hard to broaden the curriculum at 14-16.

315. Throughout our visit considerable concern was expressed about the sustainability of developments. The pathfinder had balanced subsidies for provision with wider development activities, and schools had been prepared to take on some of the costs of provision, but there was anxiety that this may have to be cut back. These concerns were exacerbated by the two-year span of funding for the Phase Two pathfinder areas, which will reduce the funding available in the middle of two year programmes and at the point a second Year 10 cohort would be due to start.
ISLINGTON PATHFINDER

The local context

316. Islington is a highly diverse inner London borough. It is the tenth most deprived borough in England but also contains pockets of considerable wealth. Around two-thirds of residents live in rented accommodation compared with less than one-third nationally. Unemployment is above the national average.

317. 49% of secondary school students are entitled to free school meals and a significant minority of learners in Islington schools are not fluent English speakers. In 2002 almost 70% of 16 year olds were in full-time education while 13.6% were not in education, training or employment. Achievement on the 5 A* - C GCSE/GNVQ measure was fourteen points below the England average in 2003, although this gap had reduced substantially since 2000 and most Islington schools had positive value-added KS3 and GCSE/GNVQ scores. There is considerable outflow of students from Islington to neighbouring inner and outer London boroughs at both 11 and 16 and, although there is also some inflow of students, Islington is a net exporter of students. Butler and Robson (2003) in their study of educational markets in inner London noted a very marked flight from state secondary education among middle class Islington families - one parent described “going private” as a “no brainer”.

318. The area-wide inspection of 16-19 provision in Islington and Hackney conducted in 1999 recognised strengths in provision and performance, especially in the colleges, but reported that there was lack of strategic planning with too many disconnected initiatives, expressed concern about some sixth form provision and stated that some students were taking inappropriate level 3 courses. Some mismatch was identified between extensive provision at level 3 and the needs of the many post-16 learners requiring level 1 and 2 provision.

319. Since the area-wide inspection, planning for 14-19 in Islington has been strengthened through the establishment of a 14-19 partnership and provision has been developed both through the AW Action Plan and an Increased Flexibility project.
The pathfinder was thus able to be embedded within a series of developments designed to strengthen 14-19 education and training in Islington.

**The pathfinder focus**

320. The pathfinder took on three of the radical options proposed in the prospectus: (i) addressing skills shortages in specific professions; (ii) innovative approaches to designing and delivering vocational courses; (iii) partnerships with HE institutions.

321. These three options were to be closely integrated through the development of a close partnership with the health and social services sectors, based on the premise of mutuality of need and benefit. Thus the intention has been to develop collaboration with health and social care professionals which will enhance learning at school/college whilst helping to overcome acute local skills gaps in those sectors and provide a focus for new ways of developing vocational courses. Links with higher education were also to be developed in the fields of medical education, radiography, health sciences and nursing in the context of concerns to widen participation.

322. Islington contains, or is in close proximity to, many NHS trusts, hospitals and other services which have been experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff in some sectors and consequently have recruited overseas-trained staff. The NHS was anxious to reduce this recruitment and the use of expensive agency staff and to ensure that its workforce better reflected the local population.

323. The pathfinder is attempting to bring two public service agendas together. On the education (supply) side, raising the achievement of learners by improving their motivation by clearly demonstrating to them and engaging them in the link between learning and preparation for a career or higher education and to raising post-16 participation in education and training. On the health (demand) side the need to address their skill shortages, particularly through having a supply of knowledgeable, motivated and skilled young people which would also contribute to workforce stability. The pathfinder is predicated on the view that bringing these two agendas together would provide a beneficial force for change in both public sectors.
324. While this approach to the pathfinder may appear strongly instrumental it was also informed by educational values which stressed the raising of esteem and aspirations, the motivational effects of close engagement with an employment sector and the development of transferable skills. This was reflected in the emphasis which was given within the pathfinder to the development of individual career development planning.

*Main developments*

325. A central feature of the first stages of the pathfinder was the development of **collaboration and partnership** between the educational partners, the NHS (the development of partnerships with social services occurred later in the first year) and higher education.

326. In the case of higher education there were strong relationships to build on between some of the local universities providing medical education and health sciences and the local college. Mentoring schemes, for example, were already in existence and various workshops and visits were being developed. In 2004/05 the pathfinder is funding a dedicated health courses event for all Islington post-16 learners. A health summer school was to be held in July 2004. Some local universities are also developing foundation degrees in health-related areas and are working closely with the local college to promote these. The pathfinder also made links with an Aim Higher-funded project designed to promote study and careers in the health sector across London. Thus the pathfinder objectives articulated well with the widening participation agenda in higher education.

327. Developing collaboration with the NHS however, was considerably more complex. This was partly because, as the AWI revealed, on the education side there had been limited collaboration between schools and colleges in Islington, although the 14-19 partnership had done much to overcome this prior to the introduction of the pathfinder. However, this pointed to the difficulties of establishing broad-based collaboration between largely autonomous institutions – be they schools, colleges, hospitals, trusts or other NHS institutions. The institutional complexity of the NHS proved challenging for the educational partners – in addition to the hospital and trusts other key partners were the Workforce Development Confederation (WDC) and the National Health Service University (NHSU).
Relationships within and between the various health institutions could be complex and ambiguous.

328. In addition, although there may have been some limited links between individual schools and individual hospitals – or more likely individual health professionals and individual schools, there was little history of systematic links between the NHS and schools in Islington. In the NHS there was no established schools links infrastructure, such as exists in some large companies, through which partnership could be built. Indeed one way of understanding the pathfinder is as one of several catalysts through which such an infrastructure might be developed. A major development within this process was the appointment of a key member of staff (soon to be followed by another) within the WDC with responsibility for linking with schools (although this person is responsible for work across five London boroughs containing many schools, colleges, hospitals and other health institutions).

329. Thus knowing who to collaborate with within the health and social services sectors and at what levels was far from self-evident. It seemed that high level strategic support might be needed but even when secured sometimes was not translated into action at lower levels. Alternatively, commitment secured at lower levels might be undermined by absence of higher level support.

330. A balance also had to be struck between the careful building of partnerships based on shared, relatively deep understandings and the need to embark on specific, practical activities which could capture the commitment and imagination of both education and health professionals and make a difference to the learning experiences of young people. As one interviewee put it: Too much partnership building and the pathfinder could be perceived as becoming a talking shop, too rapid transition to action and all sorts of misunderstandings could be brushed over only to emerge later.

331. However, despite these difficulties collaboration was being built. Education and health professionals found that despite some initially off-putting jargon (from both sides!) they did have much in common and were able to agree on some common principles and begin to work on some practical activities.
332. This early building of collaboration was achieved through a series of workshops bringing together health and education professionals. These workshops were funded and facilitated jointly by the pathfinder and the NHSU and a major outcome was the identification of a series of Progression-Readiness-Skills and Qualities (PRSQs). Seven of these skills and qualities were identified and then specified in somewhat greater detail. They bear some similarities to the national wider key skills and both education and health professionals agreed that they were central to progression in both learning (at KS4 and in further and higher education) and employment. They have subsequently undergone further development and examples of the ways in which they might be built into learning activities have been produced. They are also seen as being central to career development planning.

333. While the identification of the PRSQs represents an important conceptual achievement for the pathfinder their further elaboration and incorporation into learning programmes is recognised as a longer-term endeavour.

334. A key mechanism through which this was to be achieved and collaboration further strengthened was the proposed establishment of four Curriculum/Occupational Groupings comprised of school and college staff, NHS and social services practitioners and higher education staff. The four groupings are: (i) Facilities & Premises, ICT, HR and Business Support; (ii) Health Sciences & Medicine; (iii) Social Care, Community, Mental Care; (iv) Nursing & Midwifery, Allied Health Care. Each group is expected to contain around 15-18 members and is led by a Product Champion from the pathfinder or the NHSU. Their role will be to promote partnerships and curriculum development and enhancement related to their specialised fields.

335. Alongside this work some specific partnerships have been developed between schools and individual NHS partners.

336. One school, for example, has worked with a local hospital to introduce a student group to the work the Estates department. A major concern of NHS staff had been to challenge what one interviewee called the Holby City/Casualty syndrome through which students believed that the only careers in the NHS are as doctors, nurses and para-medics –
hence the interest in making students aware of the work of electricians, plumbers and joiners - and to show that there was a career development route within the NHS associated with these jobs.

337. Another school had developed a link with the laboratory manager at another hospital and was developing a partnership which would be used to enhance the teaching of GCSE Science as a vocational subject.

338. In another link a human relations manager in a primary care trust would introduce students to the processes of career planning and development within the NHS as a means of promoting career development planning within their schools.

339. The pathfinder is also aiming to strengthen advice and guidance, especially in relation to health-related careers, since it was argued by some that schools careers staff and Connexions PAs were not aware of the wide range of potential careers in the NHS, particularly in non-clinical occupations. The pathfinder had mapped careers education and guidance provision in Islington schools and discovered variable provision and practice. The WDC was planning to provide some staff development activities for school and Connexions staff in order to raise awareness of opportunities in the NHS. The pathfinder is also developing a series of self-review and developmental activities for schools aiming at further strengthening advice and guidance.

Summary and emerging issues

340. The Islington pathfinder was unique among our case studies in seeking to build a close partnership with just two linked public service sectors. This gave the pathfinder a strongly instrumental and vocational veneer and seemed to place a high premium on the accuracy of skills gaps analyses and the capability and capacity of the education system to address these skills gaps. There was certainly some room for differing perspectives here. At least some NHS professionals saw the pathfinder approach, if it was maintained, as having the potential to impact significantly on skills shortages in the sector (although some health professionals were more sceptical about this, arguing that there were many factors outside the influence of education which caused skills shortages). Education professionals however,
tended to emphasise the importance of transferable skills, particularly the PRSQs, which they claimed were important precisely because they facilitated progression to a wide range of further learning and employment. How significant these different perspectives might prove in the longer-term is a moot point.

341. Within the pathfinder there was some frustration at what was seen as the slow pace of collaboration between education and the NHS. While this frustration was understandable, our view was that given the complexity, institutional autonomy and somewhat different values and working practices within what one interviewee called “two massive state industries”, within the pathfinder timescale a great deal had been achieved and the partnership had already begun to impact upon student experiences through activities such as those described above.

342. However, another interviewee described the partnership between education and the NHS as “fragile”. It was argued that it was threatened by performance pressures both within the health and education systems. However, whilst the partnership could potentially impact positively on educational performance indicators by, for example, making courses more relevant and motivating and thus raising participation, progression and achievement, it would not impact upon the immediate performance indicators upon which health professionals would be judged. Their engagement seemed to be marginal to their central tasks – as a laboratory manager or estates manager, for example - and they were taking on their school partnership work in addition to their existing responsibilities. It was suggested that unless such work was institutionalised within the NHS, by being written into job descriptions and time allowances, for example, the activities might be vulnerable when immediate performance pressures became particularly acute.
KNOWSLEY PATHFINDER

The local context

343. Knowsley was in many ways a by-word for disadvantage in the 1980s and early 1990s with high levels of unemployment and poverty. However, while unemployment remains above the national average it is much lower than it was, although variable across the area. Substantial regeneration has taken place in the local economy with a significant shift away from manufacturing towards service industries, which now account for 70% of employment within Knowsley. Some firms find difficulty in filling jobs. However, wages remain low in the area and there are lower than average numbers of business starts. 43% of Knowsley residents aged 16-74 were reported by the 2001 census as having no educational qualifications. Despite the overall improvement in employment, youth unemployment remains high by national standards, with about 17% of 16-19 year olds falling into the NEET category.

344. Educational achievement as measured by qualifications remains well below national averages at both 16 and 19. Participation in both full-time and part-time education and training is over ten points below national averages at both 16 and 17. Thus in terms of the objectives of the 14-19 reform agenda Knowsley faces major challenges in raising participation and achievement. However, recently both the LEA and the further education college have received excellent Ofsted reports providing evidence that education in Knowsley is improving significantly, with the Pathfinder playing an important role in the 14-19 phase.

Focus of the Pathfinder

345. The major thrust of 14-19 development in Knowsley is the establishment of the Knowsley Collegiate. This was described in the pathfinder proposal as “an ambitious and unique approach to education in Knowsley bringing together in a coherent way a partnership that will support both the Collegiate and each individual student”. The aspiration is to create a new, coherent single phase of education in which “the traditional break at 16 will disappear” and in which all education and training institutions and all 14-19 year olds see
themselves as members of the Collegiate. Specific objectives include widening the choice of curriculum pathways, developing individual learning plans and establishing a Vocational Skills Centre.

**Features of the Pathfinder**

346. The main development has been the growth of the Knowsley Collegiate programme. Through this around 500 14-16 year olds learn for part of the week at institutions other than their home school. They are able to select from a wide variety of courses presented in an authority-wide prospectus. When the 250 students on the work-based learning programme are added to this around 33% of the 2003/4 year 10 cohort are learning away from their home schools for part of their time. This development has thus expanded the choices open to students very substantially, especially in vocational learning. The majority of the courses are provided by the college, many in the newly opened Vocational Skills Centre. However, in addition to the provision offered by the college some training providers also offer places and there is a small amount of movement of students between schools.

347. The Collegiate development is supported through a strong infrastructure and is led the Collegiate Executive group. Within the college development is led by a senior manager and there are coordinators in each school. The Collegiate concept is strongly supported by the college management and teaching is carried out by experienced lecturers who are enthusiastic about teaching 14-16 year olds. A programme of staff development has been provided to support college staff in this work. A set of protocols has been developed by school and college staff to govern arrangements for monitoring attainment, attendance, behaviour and so on. The college exercises some control over recruitment to the courses through conducting interviews with students and there are procedures for removing students from inappropriate courses. These developments have thus enabled the ambitious Collegiate concept to be implemented at 14-16 thus broadening choice of learning and progression pathways for a large proportion of Knowsley students.

348. A key development within the collegiate has been the opening of the Vocational Skills Centre at one of the two main college campuses. This large capital development, funded from a variety of sources, has facilities for catering, electronics, engineering,
hairdressing and beauty care courses. It provides dedicated accommodation on the college campus for 14-16 learners (although this does not preclude 14-16 year olds accessing other areas of college provision). The skills centre has been built and equipped flexibly so that the rooms can be reconfigured to take account of changes in student demand and/or labour market requirements. Connexions and Aim Higher advisors are also based at the centre.

349. **Transport** is provided by Knowsley Community Transport and because the drivers are volunteers and the schedule is arranged by another volunteer this is cheap. This appears to work reasonably effectively, although the fact that the buses have to go round all the schools results in some students arriving late/leaving early for some lessons. There is also some use of commercial operators where community transport has reached capacity.

350. There is an element of **common timetabling** with all schools agreeing to reserve Wednesday afternoon for Collegiate courses. However, this is not sufficient time for most of the courses and so additional time has to be provided. NVQ courses are provided either on two half-days or one whole day. Thus there were a whole series of ad hoc and/or bi-lateral timetabling arrangements between the college and individual schools. It is accepted within the Collegiate that while progress has been made in joint timetabling more still needs to be done. A group has been set up to explore potential for further progress.

351. A separate development (although still under the umbrella of the Collegiate) is the development of a **work-based learning programme**. This provides an alternative comprehensive curriculum for disaffected and disengaged students, many of whom were considered to be at risk of permanent exclusion from school. The programme makes extensive use of training providers and work experience placements to provide a predominantly vocational experience for the students. This programme continues to recruit strongly and was praised by Ofsted during their recent LEA inspection. It is run by very committed staff both in the Collegiate and in the training providers. Students are supported by a strong central team including a project coordinator, a basics skills tutor and a Connexions advisor. Staff are convinced that through this programme a significant number of students who would otherwise have disappeared from the schooling system have been retained, with the possibility of achieving some national qualifications at 16 and progressing to further education or training post-16.
352. The Pathfinder also has some important employer links. Jaguar is represented on the Collegiate management group. In addition to providing work experience placements and factory visits Jaguar has also seconded a member of staff to the Pathfinder to work principally on the development of a GCSE Engineering course, working with college staff. A number of other local employers have also been involved in collaboration, for example, in the production of e-learning material to support vocational learning. The Pathfinder has also begun to develop a strand of enterprise work which is linked to a recently approved Enterprise Pathfinder.

Key issues from the Pathfinder

353. A key issue within the Pathfinder concerns the entitlement of 14-16 year olds students to access all the opportunities within the Collegiate programme. There were very considerable variations between schools in the extent to which they have taken up the Collegiate offer leading to suggestions that not all students were given opportunities to choose from all options. At the time of our visit the Director of Education was visiting school governing bodies and encouraging them to sign a contract which confirmed their participation in the Collegiate and would thus reinforce the entitlement of all students to choose from all options.

354. The Collegiate focus is strongly on 14-16 and at this stage there have not been major developments post-16. Collegiate leaders justify this partly by reference to the urgent need to raise attainment at 16 and because this will enable the greatest impact on the greatest number of students. However, post-16 development has also been affected by the possibilities of structural change through the LSC strategic area review and an on-going comprehensive review of Knowsley schools which may involve complex processes of rationalisation and capital investment.

355. The Pathfinder has attempted to tackle some of the funding issues involved in collaboration. Plans have been developed for the gradual reduction of central subsidisation of college places with funding following the students from the schools. However, it is recognised that it will be difficult for schools to pay the full cost of college provision.
Knowsley is piloting the alternative funding mechanisms which are being tested in some Pathfinders in 2003/4 but our visit was too early to evaluate the effects of these different mechanisms.
LEWISHAM PATHFINDER

The local context

356. Lewisham is the second largest inner London borough. The population is highly diverse and 56% of students in Lewisham schools are from minority ethnic groups. Many students are from African or Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, many drawn from long-established communities. However, there are also significant numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers living in the borough, which contains over 100 language communities.

357. There is significant deprivation in the borough with several wards among the 10% most deprived nationally. Most employed Lewisham residents work outside the borough and although there are a small number of large companies and an increasingly vibrant small business sector, overall, in London terms, the private sector is relatively weak and under-developed.

358. The post-16 staying on rate in full-time education and training was 80.7% in 2002 – a rise of almost ten percentage points over two years placing Lewisham well above the national average. The latest Careers Service Destinations survey showed around 10% of year 11 school leavers out of education or training. In common with other inner London boroughs there is considerable movement of learners into and out of Lewisham at both 11 and 16. Lewisham is a net exporter of students.

359. In its 2002 area-wide inspection OFSTED/ALI found that provision and practice in most school sixth forms and colleges was good. The inspectors’ main criticism concerned provision, recruitment and retention in work-based learning. A 2004 LEA OFSTED inspection identified the new approach to 14-19 education as ‘an area of strength’. Since 1999 Lewisham has had a 14-19 strategy overseen by a Strategic Forum composed of all partners.

360. A* - C GCSE/GNVQ results are below national averages, although the gap has narrowed since 2000. There are considerable variations in performance between Lewisham schools which appear to largely reflect the social compositions of their intakes.
361. Lewisham has been in receipt of funding through its AW Action Plan, Increased Flexibility programmes and Excellence in Cities. There is a long history of collaboration in post-16 education and training with federations of schools in the north and south of the borough establishing joint sixth forms, while inter-denominational schools and a Catholic college also work closely together. There are also good links between the further education college and the schools. Strong leadership has been provided by the local authority.

362. Thus although socially and economically Lewisham is somewhat deprived, educationally the area has a strong infrastructure and history of collaboration which provided a sound basis for the pathfinder.

Pathfinder focus

363. The pathfinder focused on two of the radical options outlined in the 14-19 Pathfinder prospectus. These were: Partnerships with Federations of schools and Entitlement. Lewisham was the only Phase Two pathfinder which adopted these options.

364. As indicated above the area already had federations of schools working together in 16-19 education and thus the aim was to extend this partnership working to 14-16, strengthen the partnerships and draw in other schools. There is considerable institutional development taking place in Lewisham with the opening of a newly built 16-19 centre in September 2004 which will work with four schools in the north of the borough. Two federated city academies with a single chief executive, governing body and sixth form will come into existence in September 2005, while there are plans for a new 11-16 school scheduled to open in 2006.

365. The key stage 4 entitlement is conceived in terms of four curriculum pathways - an academic pathway focused on GCSEs and Accelerated AS levels; an applied pathway focused on GCSE/GNVQ/BTEC; a work-related pathway focused on NVQs and other vocational qualifications; a pre-vocational pathway intended to re-engage disaffected students. The intention is that all students will have access to each pathway within their federation of schools - rather than within individual institutions.
366. Although not one of the radical options selected from the pathfinder prospectus the development of e-learning is also a central aspect of the development of the Lewisham pathfinder. The intention is to use ICT to ensure accessibility to the key stage 4 entitlement for all students, while minimising student travel between institutions. The pathfinder is seeking to establish a VLE across the borough which will provide a framework for the development of e-learning.

Main developments

367. A key feature of the Lewisham pathfinder is its institutional and individual inclusiveness. The patterns of partnership within the pathfinder are complex and consist of several federations - two of these are geographically-based being based in the north and south of the borough, a third is built around a Catholic sixth form college and associated schools. Another is based on the two schools which will form the linked academies - and it was notable that the academies appeared to be fully signed-up to the collaborative approach to provision within Lewisham and played a full part in the planning processes. One school stands outside these more formal partnerships but links with several schools, especially in relation to modern foreign languages and music. The further education college also links into each of the partnerships and gives access to a wide range of vocational courses at 14-16. This pattern of partnerships has arisen partly out of existing collaboration at post-16 level. Each school and college in Lewisham is involved in partnership working and it was evident that there is a strong culture of collaboration across the pathfinder. A further feature of the institutional inclusivity of the pathfinder was the involvement of an independent school which is leading development of an ICT course which will be implemented through the developing VLE (see below). Special schools and the pupil referral unit are also members of appropriate partnerships.

368. The pathfinder through its promotion of differentiated curriculum pathways is also aiming to influence the curriculum experiences of all students in Lewisham schools. Thus there is provision for gifted and talented students in the form of master classes and accelerated learning. The pathfinder is funding attendance at Global Graduates, which encourages students to pursue careers in law. For disaffected students at risk of exclusion from school the pathfinder funds programmes which emphasise work-related and pre-
vocational learning. Each of the partnerships offers a wide range of choices of GCSEs in vocational subjects, GNVQ, BTECs and other vocational courses. For example the northern partnership will offer six GCSEs in vocational subjects, four GNVQs and around twenty other vocational courses in conjunction with the further education college. The partnerships have thus focused particularly on ensuring that there is adequate provision on the applied, work-related and pre-vocational pathways.

369. A key element in the implementation of the key stage four entitlement is the development of the VLE. This is intended to provide an holistic ICT environment which will enable the integration of curriculum content and assessment materials, assessment data, management information systems, video-conferencing and website hosting, advice and guidance materials and ILPs and progress files. The vision is that students will be able to access curriculum materials from any learning site as well as from home, retrieve their own work and receive marks and feedback from teachers. The VLE is intended to enable teachers to access and enter information about individual students as well as access and upload curriculum materials, assessment tasks and formative assessment feedback.

370. At the time of our visit the pathfinder was in the process of tendering for commercial companies to provide the VLE architecture and some content. One important criteria for the selection of a VLE system is that it should be easy for teachers to upload their own content onto the system. It was anticipated that the tender process would be completed by July and that the VLE would then begin to be implemented, although it was accepted that full implementation would not be achieved until at least March 2005.

371. It is intended that specialist schools will take the lead in developing materials related to their specialisms and the Lewisham City Learning Centre will also play a leading role in providing material. One school will be piloting online materials in Spanish and German for gifted and talented students which the school is unable to offer through the options programme. The languages will be taught in twilight time to a mixed group of students from partnership schools and will combine on-line and face-to-face learning. Students will have access to an on-line discussion forum, email contact with the teacher and some on-line assessment. If the students make good progress it is likely that this will lead to accelerated progression to AS courses in year 11.
372. In another school we observed the teaching of an RE lesson using the London Learning Network online resources which gave a flavour of the ways in which the Lewisham VLE would work.

373. The VLE is expected to work through what is described as blended learning - that is combinations of on-line and face-to-face learning, although purely distance learning on-line courses may also be developed.

374. As part of the preparation for the development of the VLE the pathfinder used a consultant to survey the state of ICT provision across Lewisham schools. It was discovered that this was patchy and that the use of MIS was particularly idiosyncratic. About six different systems were being used across the schools - one was still using an MS-DOS based system for some work. It was recognised that this patchwork of approaches would pose difficulties for the implementation of a comprehensive, holistic VLE across all schools.

375. Another feature of the pathfinder is the involvement of young people in the shaping of 14-19 provision. This builds upon a tradition of such involvement in Lewisham, which has a Young Mayor. A Young People's Forum has been established, with representation from each of the schools and colleges. The forum has discussed a range of issues including curriculum and choice, new technologies and partnerships and information, advice & guidance. We attended a meeting at which the forum received a presentation on the VLE which was followed by a lively discussion in which a wide range of views from the deeply sceptical to the enthusiastic were expressed about the potential of the VLE.

376. The 2002 AWI reported that quality of advice and guidance provided at that time by the local careers company and school staff on post-16 opportunities was inconsistent. One of the issues for attention in their report was to “enhance the quality of guidance for post-16 options and ensure all school-leavers receive a basic entitlement of comprehensive and impartial advice”. Since that report some of the responsibility for advice and guidance has passed to the Connexions service. There was some evidence that schools were receiving varying levels of service from Connexions. Despite this a meeting of careers teachers which we attended appeared reasonably confident that the advice and guidance systems in their
schools were working effectively. However, there was concern that time for careers work was being squeezed by the demands of citizenship education and elements of PSHE.

377. It is intended to introduce electronic ILPs and integrate these with school careers education programmes and Connexions work as part of the development of the VLE. Some schools have been piloting an on-line advice and guidance programme which has been funded through pathfinder. Initial feedback from these schools has been positive and this resource may be made available to more schools in 2004/05.

Summary and emerging issues

378. The three key elements of the Lewisham pathfinder are closely and logically related. The central objective is the establishment of a key stage 4 curriculum entitlement which will give every student access to the identified curriculum pathways. The school and college partnerships and the VLE are means through which this entitlement is to be provided.

379. In implementing its pathfinder agenda Lewisham has the advantage of building upon existing partnerships of various kinds. These partnerships are strong and inclusive and, despite the proliferation of different kinds of institutions involved in full-time 14-19 education (11-16 schools, 11-18 schools, sixth form college, further education college, city academies, special schools), all are involved, as are two independent schools.

380. The pathfinder has also been able to take advantage of work done through the AW Action Plan and the IF project which had put in place many of the building blocks for the entitlement curriculum, especially relating to the applied and vocational curriculum pathways. Thus some of the practical issues concerning timetabling, reporting and monitoring of students studying away from their home schools have already been tackled. In addition many of the schools already have experience of running joint sixth forms. However, it was accepted that there are continuing practical issues involved in implementing the key stage 4 entitlement and this may not be fully in place for September 2004.

381. Substantial energy is being invested in the establishment of the VLE and a great deal hangs upon the selection of the provider and their ability to meet the tender requirements.
The scope of the VLE is very ambitious, particularly in view of the somewhat patchy and idiosyncratic development of ICT in Lewisham schools. It is acknowledged that there are technical challenges involved in integrating different systems. Apart from these technical issues the VLE will also need to capture the imagination of teachers and students in order to be widely used and thus contribute to the opening up of student choices and the enhancement of curriculum in the ways intended. At the time of our visit the development of the VLE was in its early stages and it is likely to be well into 2004/05 before even a preliminary assessment can be made of its impact upon student entitlement and choice and teaching and learning.

382. There was limited involvement of employers and training providers in the pathfinder and the vocational options which were being offered through the curriculum pathways were mainly college rather than employer or training provider-based. This may be partly due to the relative weakness of the private sector in Lewisham. The pathfinder itself was not explicitly addressing the weaknesses in work-based learning identified in the AWI, although a work-based learning coordinator had been appointed through the AW Action Plan.
NORFOLK PATHFINDER

The local context

383. This pathfinder involves four schools (two 11-18 schools, a 12-18 school and an 11-16 school). Three colleges are also central to the partnership. The pathfinder is led by the LEA, LSC and Learning Partnership while other partners include the local Education-Business Partnership, Connexions, a local university, the chamber of commerce, an industry training board and individual employers.

384. Norfolk is a highly rural county with a mixed economy, marked by pockets of seasonal employment and areas of significant deprivation. The pathfinder is set in one of the most rural areas within county. Travel time between the schools is at least 30 minutes and between the schools and the colleges often an hour or more.

385. The area is characterised by low skill levels, low pay, low aspirations and low levels of educational attainment. Participation in full-time post-16 education and training in Norfolk is below the national averages at both 16 and 17 and participation rates in the pathfinder area have been lower than for the LEA as a whole. Significant proportions of 16 year olds leave school with no qualifications since they effectively drop-out of school early. Some able students may also have few aspirations to progress to higher education. Experience of higher education among parents is well below the national average in the vast majority of the wards serving the four schools.

386. Research conducted by the LEA revealed that year 9 students tended to aspire to the types of jobs which they know are available in the locality. They often did not see the value of the subjects and courses they were studying in schools. Part of the explanation for the limited aspirations held by some students may be the relative abundance of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Unemployment is below the national average and young people and adults can easily obtain unskilled or semi-skilled work in agriculture, food processing and the tourist industry and make a reasonable living and have a car.
387. In 2003 three of the schools 5 A*-C GCSE scores were below the LEA average and have been tending to decline over the previous three years. Thus the West Norfolk area was proposed for pathfinder funding because this was an area of the LEA in which achievement, participation and aspirations particularly needed raising.

**The pathfinder focus**

388. In its pathfinder proposal Norfolk did not refer to any of the radical options outlined in the pathfinder prospectus. The overall aim was: To increase the levels of educational achievement 14-19, to increase levels of participation in learning post-16, and to increase progression into sustainable employment with training. The key objective was: **To increase employer involvement in learning** and it was this which was emphasised in the proposal and the subsequent progress reports. This was to be realised through three ‘radical options’ – Co-working with employers; Increase employability skills; Improve the aspirations of learners to stay on in learning.

389. It was anticipated that formal partnerships between schools, colleges and local employers would be established and a menu of possible activities was outlined. This process was to be supported through a programme of staff development for teachers, employers and Connexions staff.

390. Employers would help to determine employability skills which would be built into the curriculum. The range of possible developments included taster programmes for year 9 students, the establishment of GCSEs in vocational subjects and the provision of quality work experience placements.

391. A series of activities including enhanced advice and guidance, mentoring programmes, master classes and student apprenticeships were to be developed to raise aspirations and promote progression to further learning.

392. Overall, the pathfinder aimed to increase employer engagement and through this promote curriculum change and student support in ways which would help to raise achievement, promote progression and lift aspirations.
Main Developments

393. Underpinning the developments which are described below has been the growth of collaboration and partnership within the pathfinder. The headteachers stressed that the outstanding benefit to them of the pathfinder has been the new spirit of cooperation which it had inspired and the opportunity for staff of the four schools to work together. It was recognised that the schools faced similar problems of achievement, participation and aspirations. The commitment of the heads to joint working is such that they meet fortnightly at 7.30 am. Partnership working is also reflected in the growing involvement of employers and the collaborative working between the schools, colleges and Connexions.

394. In addition to the developments described below this increased collaboration has encouraged joint post-16 provision. For example, two teachers from one school travel to another to teach AS Psychology. In 2004/05 it is anticipated that A level Maths will be offered by one school to students in another through the medium of video-conferencing. A further development in 2004/05 will be the offer to all schools of German and French AS levels, again through video conferencing.

395. There has been significant progress in the key objective of increasing employer involvement in learning. While individual schools had some employer links prior to the pathfinder these varied across the schools and under the ambit of the pathfinder have been substantially expanded and deepened. For example, one school has a series of work-related activities running through years 9 to 11. These include industry days facilitated by the EBP, preparation for work experience and days focused on post 16 opportunities. Pupils meet professionals, for example, from the NHS and the private sector, who speak to them about their own education and careers. The pathfinder has helped to develop these and similar activities and embed them in the curriculum in ways which will help schools to meet the requirements for work-related learning.

396. Some specific examples of co-working with employers follow.

397. The appointment of two business links coordinators, both recruited from the private sector, has been key to the development of this co-working. The coordinators have developed contacts with employers which have led to offers of work placements and visits to
workplaces. For example, five students from each of the four schools interested in working in
the construction industry visited a CITB training centre. A more able group from one school,
studying GCSE engineering, visited a local company where they learned not only about
engineering but also the structure of the company. Another visit was being arranged for a
group to visit a local furniture manufacturer as part of their textiles course. The coordinators
have also begun to work closely with the Connexions Pathfinder PA to link the vocational
experiences of students to possible progression routes.

398. A key aspect of this pathfinder is the concern that employers should become closely
involved in helping to determine employability skills and build them into the curriculum. An
example of this approach is the development of a one year post-16 course entitled Leadership
and Management. This is aimed at those who ‘wish to aspire to a higher level of employment
and want to know how to become leaders and managers’. The course was developed with
support from Trox Ltd and Forest Heath District Council who will contribute towards its
delivery. The course will be piloted from September 2004 with students drawn from three
schools. Students will spend three days in school and two days in high quality work
placements. The curriculum will be structured through the ASDAN Gold Award key skills
programme with elements drawn from the Institute of Management Insight courses, ICT for
Business (CLAIT) and communications skills supported by Toastmasters International. A
range of employers will make regular inputs into the course using their own in-house training
materials which have been adapted for the course. The Ministry of Defence Skillforce
programme, as well as Young Enterprise entrepreneurship master classes, will also contribute
to the course.

399. Another feature of the co-working with employers has been the development of a
range of staff development activities. Interestingly, these have been aimed at employers as
well as teachers, so that they can work together effectively in developing and implementing
the curriculum. Training of teachers to understand local business and develop the vocational
curriculum has taken place. There have been sessions related to business, engineering and
health & social care as well as more specifically focused sessions for ICT teachers with a
local technology company. Teachers have also been involved in training for GCSE subjects
in ICT, Engineering and Health & Social Care.
400. The second, closely related aspect, of addressing the key objective of the pathfinder proposal is the focus on **employability skills**. This is being tackled through a range of activities.

401. For example, a series of taster activities for year 9 students, including construction and engineering, have been established with provision from employers and colleges.

402. All of the pathfinder schools have been involved in work related learning courses for 14-16 year olds at one of the colleges. These programmes have been developed through the IF programme and are also supported through pathfinder. About twenty year 10 students from each school are involved. They are offered a wide range of Foundation or NVQ level 1 courses from the Creative Studies, Technology, Business and IT, Community and Land-based faculties. It was anticipated that numbers taking vocational courses in colleges would show a further increase for 2004/5.

403. Typically these students spend three days at school studying for GCSEs within the core curriculum, one day at college and usually one day in a work placement. The current year 10 will continue in year 11 and year 9 pupils are being recruited for the new cohort. Students we spoke to were pleased to have the opportunity to do the courses. They welcomed the vocational elements and the fact that they would only be required to do five GCSEs in school. They had attended taster events at college and had been interviewed by college staff and this had helped to raise the status of the courses by showing that entry was not automatic. Parents were supportive of the courses which they saw as offering their children ‘realistic’ prospects for achievement and progression. The students we spoke to were aware of post-16 opportunities available to them.

404. Each school makes arrangements to supervise students while they are at college. A teaching assistant is always present at college and deals with attendance and other issues. This teaching assistant has been allowed specialist training through pathfinder.

405. The cost of delivering these courses is considerable and will further increase with two cohorts involved. Pathfinder funding has enabled schools to offset the cost of transport, equipment and other costs.
406. GCSEs in vocational subjects are being developed throughout the pathfinder e.g. at one school in Travel & Tourism and Engineering. This school is a specialist technology college and is offering three single sciences at GCSE together with engineering. This provision is intended to increase employability. In addition, in 2004/05 fifteen year 10 students will take part in the NHSU junior scholarships scheme. This will involve a commitment of one day a week over two years.

407. A further strand of the employability agenda within the pathfinder has been increased emphasis on **e-learning**. The LEA is working through a consultant to establish a sustainable broadband network for Norfolk schools. This should be established by September 2004. The pathfinder schools will have access to the facilities of Norfolk Campus VLE. Subject teachers will have access to ICT tools including interactive whiteboards, PC tablets and laptops, and a video and lesson library. E-learning will enable students to make distance contact with partner colleges and with industry and employers through video-conferencing and other collaborative tools. Community access will also support internet use by students at home and in libraries and should also link to school administrative systems.

408. A rural training centre is being established at one school. This will have good ICT equipment and CAD/CAM software. The centre was formally opened in June 2004 with video conferencing between two schools and a college. As in other rural pathfinders there is support for the development of local skills centres of this type which will provide local provision and cut down on expensive and time consuming travel to colleges.

409. As indicated above the **raising of aspirations** is a further central objective of the pathfinder.

410. A key aspect of raising aspirations has been the strengthening of pupil support, guidance and personal development. In common with the service in many other areas Connexions has undergone some restructuring but has been able to offer significant support to the pathfinder through the appointment of a dedicated Connexions Personal Adviser to provide enhanced information, advice and guidance. It is anticipated that this person will lead the development of ILPs and arrangements have been made to explore developments in
other pathfinders. The adviser is working closely with the LEA Adviser for Pupil Support, Guidance & Personal Development, school-based PAs and the pathfinder business link coordinators.

411. Mentoring is seen as another means of raising aspirations and a range of mentoring programmes have been developed. The pathfinder has taken considerable care to target students throughout the age range and ability levels for mentoring support. For example, mentors from two large financial and legal companies have had email contact with students on post-16 business studies courses in three of the schools. The mentors and students have worked through a 10 week course structured around a European Union module. At the end of the module the students will visit the company. These students had to apply to take part and had to justify their inclusion in the programme.

412. Another company is providing mentoring for younger pupils and some year 10 business studies students. Mentoring by university students is also about to start. The Workwise programme, organised by the Chamber of Commerce, also supports students who are disaffected or not achieving standards expected of them. The Skillforce programme is also helping to raise the aspirations and self respect of 54 students in three of the schools. These pupils are mainly boys from year 10 who are in danger of dropping out of education.

413. Mentoring has also been targeted at gifted and talented students. The coordinators in the four schools are working together to provide joint activities. Media being used include email and video-conferencing.

414. Mentoring has also been extended to staff. Two of the headteachers are being mentored on different aspects of their work through a Business in the Community Partners in Leadership scheme.

Summary and emerging issues

415. The Norfolk pathfinder is targeted on one area of the LEA and a relatively small number of schools. It is aiming to build on existing employer links and substantially expand and deepen these. Significant progress has been made on this, supported by the work of the
business links coordinators. Much has also been done to enhance and broaden the curriculum, especially through the growth of school/college links supported by the IF programme. Strengthening of advice and guidance and mentoring are being developed as strategies for raising aspirations among targeted groups of learners.

416. The pathfinder, through strong links to the LEA ICT development strategy, is looking to ways in which e-learning and video-conferencing can be used to enhance and extend the curriculum.

417. One interesting thrust, which matches developments in other rural pathfinders, is the suggestion that local skills centres should be established to provide vocational learning and thus limit the need for lengthy journeys to access college resources. An alternative approach may be to link with local training providers in order to access additional vocational learning capacity. We found that currently training providers were not playing a major role in the pathfinder and this reflected the relative neglect of work-based learning in the pathfinder.
CITY OF NOTTINGHAM PATHFINDER

The local context

418. Nottingham has a population of around 270000 of whom about a quarter are under twenty years of age. The city is ethnically diverse with substantial Asian and black populations. Unemployment in Nottingham has been falling, although it remains above the national average. Over 85% of jobs in the city are in the service sector, with most in education, health & public administration; retail, hotels & restaurants and business & finance. Around 10% of jobs are in manufacturing.

419. Over one third of Nottingham residents have no educational qualifications – several points above the average for England. Achievement has been low in the city's schools and although performance on the 5 A* - C GCSE measure has been improving, in 2003 it remained over 17 points below the England average. Full-time participation in education and training post-16 has also been several points below the England average at ages 16 and 17.

420. The DfES funded an initiative, Transforming Secondary Education, to help raise achievement in the city's schools. This was important in promoting collaboration among Nottingham schools. Nottingham has also received funding through Excellence in Cities and the Increased Flexibility programme. Nottinghamshire LSC has also provided substantial funding to support the AW Action Plan and will continue to support Nottingham schools in this way until at least 2007.

421. Some of these developments, especially the IF programme, have led to the production of a Common Prospectus developed by colleges and training providers which lists all the courses available for 14-16 year olds. As will be shown below this provides an important context for the development of pathfinder initiatives.

422. Another important development which links with pathfinder has been the development of a tariff-based curriculum in Nottingham. This specifies credit-values for a wide range of qualifications and is intended to broaden the basis of achievement in the city. Its articulation with the pathfinder agenda is elaborated below.
Finally, at the time of our visit discussions were continuing on the future of further education colleges in Nottingham. It seemed likely that the number of colleges would be reduced to two or three through a process of amalgamation.

**The pathfinder focus**

The pathfinder adopted three of the radical options presented in the prospectus. These were: innovative proposals for engaging employers; innovative approaches to designing and delivering vocational courses; addressing key skill shortages in specific professions. The key objectives were to:

- Pioneer innovative teaching and learning techniques developed in partnership with companies.
- Engage young people in all stages of planning, delivering and evaluating learning opportunities through making the ‘voice of the learner’ model a reality.
- Enhance the ‘core’ skills needed by companies to include enterprise, creativity and innovation skills and aptitudes.
- Address the needs of the local economy by engaging employers experiencing skill shortages at the heart of planning and delivering provision in the 14-19 phase.
- Increase the range and availability of exciting vocational learning opportunities for young people to stimulate their motivation to learn.

This approach invested the pathfinder proposal and development with considerable coherence and a strong flavour of vocationalism. The intention was to engage a wide range of small and large, private and public employers in both the design and implementation of new curricula. A novel feature of the proposal was that it allocated around a quarter of pathfinder funding to pay for the release of staff by employers and employers organisations.

The pathfinder was to involve all secondary schools and colleges in the city, training providers and at least one special school. Post-16 education in Nottingham is mainly provided through four further education colleges, although there are also some schools with sixth forms. The city also contains a recently formed city academy (formerly a CTC).
Main developments

427. A key feature of the pathfinder was the recruitment of a team of four full-time Enterprise Partnership managers. These staff, who were only appointed in November 2003, have played a key role in driving the pathfinder agenda forward under the leadership of the LEA 14-19 Coordinator. Over 50 projects have been initiated as part of the pathfinder and the Enterprise Partnership managers take responsibility for developing these and supporting the schools, colleges, training providers and employers involved.

428. Examples of some of the developments which have taken place now follow.

429. Two projects which show both employer engagement and innovative approaches to developing vocational courses revolve around a partnership between two schools and three professional football and rugby clubs in the city. One project is based on a GCSE PE course and involves students from the two schools undertaking part of their coursework in the professional clubs, under the supervision of their staff, developing and implementing personal exercise plans (PEPs) which will contribute importantly to their final GCSE grades. These PEPs are developed using the professional exercise equipment and expertise available in the clubs. As an offshoot of this link the clubs and the schools have also developed what are called Vocational Sports Experiences through which students learn about other aspects of the professional clubs such as community development activities, publicity and marketing and media training. Additional accreditation has been arranged through the Open College Network (OCN) for this work. A second project with the professional clubs involved an eight week programme designed for disaffected students at danger of exclusion from school. Feedback from both these activities has been positive and both are likely to be retained, expanded and included in the Common Prospectus in the future.

430. Another innovative project involved a partnership with the Institute of Groundsmanship (sic) which will introduce students to the skills and progression opportunities available for grounds people. The project will provide placements for a group of students drawn from three schools. They will gain experience at various sports clubs around the city and will obtain City & Guilds certification.
431. A third example of the kind of vocational projects being developed through the pathfinder is the development of a BTEC First in Media which will be run partly through a training provider. This will involve producing a pathfinder magazine and running an internet radio station. Tutoring will be provided by a professional magazine journalist and training provider and school staff.

432. Pathfinder is piloting a wide range of innovative projects of this kind. The intention is that they can be trialled, evaluated, refined where necessary and then offered to schools more widely through the Common Prospectus.

433. At a more systemic level the pathfinder is also helping to develop a series of student apprenticeships. These will be available in Catering & Hospitality, Health & Social Care, Horticulture and Motor Vehicle Maintenance. These student apprenticeships are being developed through partnerships of schools, colleges and employers and students will combine school-based study in the core subjects and basic skills, college-based vocational study and work placements. Post-16 progression routes in the colleges are available and apprenticeship places are guaranteed for all those completing the courses.

434. Another example of larger scale provision is the involvement of a large training provider to the motor vehicle industry. This provider offers training at its workshops for students drawn from several schools leading to the achievement of technical certificates in Light Vehicle Maintenance. Students attend for three hours per week and experience a mixture of theoretical and practical work. This provision is likely to be expanded to more schools in 2004/05. The training provider hopes that this will lead to a greater flow of post-16 apprenticeships in motor vehicle maintenance where there are skills gaps, especially at master (sic) technician level.

435. In the slightly longer term there are also plans to use health and social care ambassadors drawn from the NHS and the wider health and social care sector to promote careers in the health sector where there are skills gaps, especially in non-clinical areas and some clinical support services. The intention is to develop training materials and induct a range of health professionals who can work with schools. The key partners in this development are the NHS, Social Services and the Trent Health Authority Workforce
Development Confederation schools and colleges. While some links exist between individual schools and hospitals or trusts or individual NHS staff these are not systematised. The lead manager for Trent WDC, who also sits on the pathfinder steering group, wants to institutionalise links and ensure that NHS staff are given dedicated time for training, development and ambassadorial work in the schools.

436. Another notable feature of the pathfinder was its institutional inclusiveness, although inevitably not all schools engaged with the agenda with equal enthusiasm. Two examples of this inclusiveness will be given.

437. The first concerns the promotion of an Industry Day at a special school. The school had undertaken these previously on a small scale, but they were described by a member of staff as ‘not inspiring’. She wanted something both more extensive and practical. Working with one of the Enterprise Partnership managers fifteen employers and colleges were brought on site at the school. A wide range of taster activities were provided including motor vehicle maintenance, bricklaying, pizza-making and digital design. The Connexions service was also represented and demonstrated an interactive on-line job search facility. Students and staff from other special schools attended and the event was considered a great success.

438. The other example of institutional inclusiveness concerns the newly established city academy which is playing a central part in the collaborative development of the pathfinder. For example, the academy provides construction facilities which are open to students from other schools and where courses are taught by college construction staff. A similar arrangement operates in hairdressing. Another project developed in the academy involved a group of GNVQ Engineering students building a two-seater sports car using a commercially available kit and second-hand engine.

439. It is important to emphasise the part which was played by the Enterprise Partnership managers in the development of all these projects. They brokered partnerships, supplied many ideas and provided mostly small quantities of funding for development work and the purchase of small items of equipment and so on which enabled projects to move forward. The pathfinder has a licence to innovate. It was accepted that not all the projects would be
successful, not all would be cost-effective but it was intended that those which were successful and cost-effective would be mainstreamed to all Nottingham schools.

440. Nottingham’s **tariff-based curriculum** was also deployed to support this innovative agenda. The broad intention of this approach to assessment is to accredit and recognise a wider range of achievement than can be achieved through GCSE. Credit ratings are attached to a range of alternative qualifications. A broad range of assessment techniques can also be used including reports, witness statements, mind-maps, presentations, photographs and so on. It is considered important to avoid the tedious tick-box approach of competence-based qualifications and the narrow written forms of assessment of traditional qualifications. In relation to work-related learning, for example, as envisaged as part of the student apprenticeships described above, it will be important to induct employers into the assessment practices so that they ensure that students get opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Credits can be accumulated and used to achieve over-arching awards. In these ways Nottingham claims to be anticipating the Tomlinson reform process. This process is useful for the pathfinder because it allows the accreditation, largely through the development of OCN units, of some of the activities which have been developed.

441. The tariff-based curriculum is designed to link to the Nottingham Passport which is an electronic portfolio in which students are intended to collect their accumulated credits as well as other documents such as ILPs and personal statements. These electronic portfolios are being introduced into schools, although their use is patchy at present. It is planned that they will be used when applying for college places. This will give college staff better information on students enrolled for their courses. It will also help to allocate students to the appropriate level courses. It is hoped that once the passport begins to be used by the colleges in this way it will gain credibility. The promoters of the passport also emphasise that it has implications for teaching and learning and requires more negotiated relationships between teachers and students, especially around assessment. The debates around the balance between formative and summative assessment which surrounded the development of records of achievement in the 1980s were said to be still highly relevant.

442. Familiar issues emerged in respect of advice and guidance. Nottinghamshire Connexions was described to us as one of the most highly targeted Connexions partnerships.
72% of resources are allocated to priority 1 students, as a result of which priority 2 students receive a few hours per year of PA time, while priority 3 students get nine minutes per year. Of course, priority 3 students were likely to have experience of group sessions with PAs, they could also access Connexions materials and websites and visit Connexions centres. However, it was accepted by Connexions staff that there was a tension between their focus on the most disadvantaged and at risk young people and the provision of universal services. Connexions staff were limited by the policies laid down by the local Connexions board and national targets. (In fact there is a NEET group of only 3-4% in Nottingham – low in comparison to similar areas, and this could be taken as a vindication of the targeting policy). Therefore a lot of emphasis in providing advice and guidance fell on the schools. Pathfinder and Connexions staff perceived practice to be variable in the schools, although those we visited were confident they were doing a good job (although we only visited 11-16 schools whereas problems in providing advice and guidance are often attributed to 11-18 schools).

**Summary and emerging issues**

443. The Nottingham pathfinder has made very rapid progress in the eight months since the Enterprise Partnership managers were appointed and specific developments were able to begin. A wide range of projects have been instigated and partnerships established between schools, colleges, training providers and employers – although some of the companies named in the pathfinder proposal do not appear to be involved.

444. The pathfinder has been able to build upon an infrastructure developed through the IF programme and AW Action Plan as well as the Transforming Secondary Education initiative. Thus it has been less about developing collaborative systems and large scale provision than about curriculum enhancement and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment.

445. It is acknowledged that major challenges will be involved in identifying successful innovations and modifying and mainstreaming them. Many curriculum change projects illustrate the difficulties of scaling up innovative approaches and moving beyond early adopters and enthusiasts. Mainstreaming is probably inappropriate for most projects at this stage since they need more time to run as pilots before valid evaluations can be made about their potential for dissemination.
446. The Nottingham approach to accrediting a wider range of achievement through its tariff-based curriculum and its linking to the Nottingham Passport is a bold and potentially important initiative which has certainly supported some of the innovations brought by the pathfinder. However, questions must remain about the external currency of this development in relation to further education, higher education and employment. Nottingham colleges, universities and some employers are said to be signed up to the approach, although it is uncertain how far this agreement runs within those organisations, while outside Nottingham the value of any over-arching awards separate from established, recognisable components such as GCSEs is also uncertain.
SHEFFIELD PATHFINDER

The local context

447. Sheffield is the fourth largest city in England with a population of over half a million. From the 1970s it suffered severe economic decline with a loss of a quarter of all jobs in its traditional metals and manufacturing base. The growth of the service sector, retail and creative industries since the 1990s means that it now has an unemployment rate only slightly above the national average and an economic strategy designed to attract inward investors and to build on its strengths in a number of key areas such as Advanced Manufacturing and the Creative and Digital Industries. Thus there has been substantial regeneration in the city with funding from the European Union, central and local government and the regional development agency. As we show below the pathfinder is aiming to respond to the regeneration context in the city.

448. Sheffield tends to be geographically polarised in terms of virtually every socio-economic indicator between the affluent suburbs of the south and the west and those wards in the north and the east where disadvantage remains a persistent problem. Sheffield has both the parliamentary constituency with the highest proportion of graduates in any English city whilst, elsewhere, one third of its population lives in wards that fall into the category of the 10% most deprived in the country. The city is addressing these disparities through its ‘Closing the Gap’ policy.

449. These disparities are reflected in achievement levels in secondary schools. Overall performance on the 5 A* - C GCSE/GNVQ measure was over nine points below the England average in 2003 but this masks wide disparities between schools. Unsurprisingly high performing schools (on raw measures) are found in the south-west although the greatest rate of improvement in performance is seen in those secondary schools facing the greatest challenges. Seven schools in the south west have sixth forms where 16-19 year olds perform above national averages but the majority of the city is catered for by 11-16 schools with post-16 progression to a large FE college, a new sixth form college and work based learning.
450. In an AWI 16-19 inspection conducted in December 2002 OFSTED/ALI identified a range of strengths and weaknesses in policy, provision and practice in Sheffield. The inspectors praised the strong strategic leadership provided by the LEA and LSC and the prospects offered by its plans for a range of 14-19 vocational pathways. In the issues for attention they highlighted the needs to raise attainment and participation, equalise opportunities across the city and improve the match between curriculum offered and needs identified. A particularly strong focus of the report concerned weaknesses in work-based learning and several of the issues for attention addressed these problems.

451. Sheffield has been in receipt of several funding streams used to address issues in 14-19 education and training. These include Objective 1 funds, AW Action Plan funding, the Increased Flexibility programme, as well as pathfinder. These initiatives are combined in the Learning for Life (L4L) project which aims to provide a strategic approach to 14-19 developments and ‘one-pot funding’. L4L offers a multi-agency approach delivered through a team comprising experienced managers drawn from the LEA, LSC, Sheffield Futures (Connexions), the Sheffield College, the Learning Partnership and a representative of the work-based learning providers.

The pathfinder focus

452. As noted above a key aim of the pathfinder is to support the broader regeneration of Sheffield. In pursuit of this objective it was decided to take on three of the radical objectives in the pathfinder prospectus. These were (with local modifications): (i) Innovative approaches to designing and delivering vocational courses and qualifications which expand the range and coherence of the options currently available and which provide models of teaching and learning strategies; (ii) Addressing key skills shortages in specific professions through an employer led programme by offering 14-19 year-olds innovative packages of provision of learning opportunities and work experience to provide a clear pathway into particular occupations; (iii) Innovative proposals for engaging employers and in particular small and medium sized enterprises.

453. These objectives translated into two broad thrusts within the pathfinder. The first involved working with schools, the college, training providers and employers to broaden the
14-16 curriculum particularly through the introduction of a range of differentiated vocational opportunities. This would build upon the earlier work developed through the funding streams identified above. It will be linked up with the Objective 1 Project ‘16-19 Progression in Education’ in the FE colleges to ensure the continuity of the Pathways into post 16 and establish the 14-19 continuum.

454. The second thrust focused upon building links with a range of employment sectors, identifying skills shortages, promoting links between employers and educational institutions and helping to shape curriculum planning, provision and implementation. This work was to be carried out by sector intermediaries (sector-specific employer liaison coordinators) who would broker links between the sectors and the schools and college.

455. The two approaches were intended to work closely together in order to develop a more diverse and flexible curriculum, which would offer greater choice and relevance to learners while reflecting the regeneration needs of Sheffield.

456. In order to achieve these objectives the pathfinder also needed to further strengthen collaboration between the partners and to strengthen advice and guidance so that students could be helped to choose appropriate curriculum pathways, while continuing to improve the quality of delivery in relation to teaching and learning and achievement in recognised qualifications.

Main developments

457. As in other Phase Two Pathfinders the major focus of the first year has been to put in place arrangements for September 2004 at which point over 3,000 14-16 year olds will have embarked upon vocational courses. It is estimated that around 60% of the year 10 cohort in the city will be taking at least one vocational course in 2004/05.

458. A very wide range of vocational provision has been developed. Courses on offer include GCSEs in vocational subjects in nine subjects and GNVQs including Engineering, Manufacturing and Health & Social Care. A range of NVQs will also be available including
courses in Customer Care, Retail, Business Languages, Electrical Installations, Horticulture, Construction, Engineering and Office Administration. In addition to these two year courses a range of one term taster courses are available in vocational areas including retail, brickwork, computer maintenance, hair & beauty and catering. These courses have been developed in cognisance of the employment growth sectors and with the future addition of opportunities post 16 will provide young people with the skills relevant to the forecast labour market in South Yorkshire.

459. Within the pathfinder a clear distinction is made between vocational learning which is seen as being appropriate at different levels for all learners and learning designed to re-engage disaffected learners – which may or may not include vocational learning. It was considered ‘lazy thinking’ by one interviewee to assume that vocational learning as such would automatically re-engage disaffected learners since what they often needed was help with basic and life skills and the curriculum offer included provision tailored to the needs of this group. It is a feature of all the Pathways that in their initial stages the development of generic and transferable skills will be emphasised. This will equip learners with the flexibility to switch pathways during the course of their 14-19 Individual Learning Plans.

460. It is important to note that this range of provision had been developed and organised through a collaborative process involving a series of workshops for curriculum managers from schools and the college. Topics covered in the workshops included timetabling models and support for professional developments as well as the planning of the curriculum offer. Curriculum managers in the schools we visited welcomed this process, not least because of the contacts it facilitated with other schools and the sharing of good practice. At a meeting which we attended a strong consensus on the 14-19 reform agenda came through from the curriculum managers. Personalised learning was a strong theme - they wanted provision to suit individuals needs – and it was felt this could only be achieved through collaboration and co-ordination of the curriculum offer in the ways being developed.

461. A wide variety of ways of implementing the courses are being employed. Some, especially GCSEs in vocational subjects will be school-based, others will make use of the college, training providers and work placements. In retail, for example, a partnership between the LEA and a large retail management company has enabled the development of a
programme at the company training centre which is located at a large shopping centre thus giving learners access to work experience as well as training facilities.

462. Off-site provision is subsidised through the ‘one pot’ funding described above. Placements in 2004/05 typically cost £30 per student of which schools are being asked to pay £7.50. The intention is to build a model of sustainability over three years with schools and providers which through careful timetabling, a shift of existing resources to vocational learning in schools, workforce reform and more efficient use of off-site provision will allow the per capita cost to be reduced and provision accommodated within core budgets, although it is not yet clear that the full cost of off-site provision can be met in this way. This planning is intended to avoid a situation, recalled by some interviewees, when earlier developments funded through the Single Regeneration Budget tended to disappear once funding ended.

463. L4L has developed an innovative approach to retaining those at risk of disengaging within learning, through careful targeting of activity. This involves using a range of school performance and attainment data to predict the number of year 9 students unlikely to continue in post-16 learning in 2006. Schools are then allocated funding in proportion to the numbers of students in these categories i.e. the more students they have the more funding they get. For example, one school received funding for only four days while two other schools received funding for 22 days. Schools can then use this funding to purchase the provision which they judge most appropriate to their students. They can, of course, purchase more placements, but must use their own resources. While we have only limited evidence on how schools perceived this approach there was support for the general principle of the L4L team brokering and organising provision with the college and training providers.

464. The pathfinder proposal specified that sector intermediaries would be appointed in four areas: retail; engineering/manufacturing/metals; creative & digital industries; construction.

465. Different approaches have been taken to sector intermediaries. In some sectors the role is filled by an individual, in others it is taken on by an organisation, for example the EBP or the college, and staff deployed as appropriate. For example, the latest termly report indicated that the intermediary function for business & finance, health & social care,
hospitality & catering and leisure & tourism has been taken on jointly by Sheffield College, the local education-business partnership and the Employers’ Forum who organised a series of sector specific events for employers. The work of the intermediaries is still at a relatively early stage and it is too early to judge which of the various approaches is most effective. While the broad objectives of the role are clear the ways in which these are worked out in relation to specific employers and schools needs to be interpreted flexibly.

466. One innovative development has been the introduction of an accelerated apprenticeship route. This is operated through a partnership between two schools and a training provider. Students drawn from the two schools are studying for a GCSE in Health & Social Care. Alongside this they are able to study for some units of an apprenticeship. This will facilitate progression to an apprenticeship post-16. The course is taught by training provider staff mainly in the schools, but with some sessions at the training provider premises. A range of visits to health and social care establishments is also an integral part of the course. This initiative is also linked to two LSDA-funded development projects and has excited considerable interest in the possibilities of combining GCSE study with accelerated apprenticeship training.

467. During our visit we met a group of students undertaking the course. They were very enthusiastic about the course so far, particularly their relationships with training provider staff, the visits which they had undertaken and the adults other than teachers who had been involved in the course. Feedback from schools and the training provider staff was also positive and the early indications are that the students are on course to achieve both GCSE and apprenticeship qualifications.

468. This example draws attention to the role of training providers within the pathfinder. As noted above the AWI had been critical of several aspects of work-based learning and therefore the pathfinder has tended to be cautious in its use of training providers in order to ensure quality provision.

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7 We intend to carry out additional research into the work of the sector intermediaries and will be able to report further on their work in our February 2005 report.
469. Another development within the pathfinder is the production of some on-line case studies. These are building upon work done in a neighbouring pathfinder. They are designed to support work in Leisure & Tourism, Engineering and Health & Social Care. The case studies will include material gathered in local companies and made available both on-line and on CD-ROM. They are designed to match the GCSE specifications in each subject. The materials have been piloted with teachers and are expected to be made generally available during 2004/05. These case studies address the major issues identified in OFSTED inspection reports on GCSEs in vocational subjects concerning the lack of knowledge and access to local companies. The case studies are used by the curriculum support groups for GCSEs in vocational subjects.

470. The pathfinder is working to improve advice and guidance and link this to the development of individual learning plans. Pilot work was been carried out in four schools. Connexions is playing a role within this process but has been hampered by restructuring and financial difficulties in 2003/04. A new contract has now been negotiated which should clarify the resources which Connexions can provide to schools, although as elsewhere they are required to focus on disadvantaged and at risk young people. The schools we visited are aware of the challenges which the 14-19 reform agenda poses for advice and guidance and are working to improve their programmes. They were relatively sanguine that they can achieve this within their existing resources and staff. The view of pathfinder managers however, was that advice and guidance remains variable across schools and more work needs to be done.

**Summary and emerging issues**

471. The Sheffield pathfinder is building on, and is strongly integrated with, a series of other initiatives designed to reform secondary education, and 14-19 in particular, in Sheffield. There is strong but collaborative leadership provided through the L4L team and schools, colleges and training providers are working well together.

472. This approach has led to the development of an extensive and varied curriculum offer which was made available to schools and will be implemented from September 2004. Over 3500 year 10 students will be embarking on vocational courses.
473. The pathfinder has developed an innovative approach to linking curriculum development to labour market and skills gaps analyses through the appointment of sector intermediaries. Their essential role is to liaise and broker contacts and agreements between schools and occupational sectors and in this way ensure that the curriculum is responsive to the regeneration agenda in Sheffield. The work of the sector intermediaries will be mediated by the schools and teachers and the intention is that there will be a fruitful engagement between the expressed needs of the employers and the educational perspectives of teachers thus avoiding criticism of an overly instrumental approach to curriculum development. The focus on generic skills within the pathways will also offer protection for learners against unanticipated shifts in local skills gaps. We noted above that the sector intermediaries operate in different ways and there is an important local evaluation task in identifying some of the consequences of these different approaches.

474. At a more specific level we have not come across another example of early entry to apprenticeship combined with GCSE study as described above. The early indications are that this approach is working well but again this will repay close attention and evaluation in order to ascertain if this is a model which can be tried in other vocational areas and settings.
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE PATHFINDER

The local context

475. The key contextual aspect of the South Gloucestershire Pathfinder is that it is based on the Kingswood Partnership which leads the Pathfinder. Collaboration in Kingswood began over 15 years ago when the LEA took a policy decision that all secondary schools should have sixth forms. The six schools in the Kingswood area found it difficult to sustain varied sixth form provision (particularly in languages) and together with the local college there has been some sharing of post-16 courses ever since. Full collaboration, including blocked timetables, has been achieved within the last 5 years.

476. South Gloucestershire is an area of relatively low unemployment. Young people can obtain reasonably paid work at the age of 16 or 17 with little or no further education or training. There are few large employers in the area but a high percentage of self employed workers and small employers. There are hardly any training providers in the area. A relatively low percentage of parents have experience of higher education. We were told that attitudes in the area are parochial and that many young people are unwilling to travel outside the area (even into Bristol) for further or higher education. These perceived cultural attitudes, as well as the characteristics of the employment base have helped to shape the Pathfinder.

Focus of the Pathfinder

477. The over-arching aim of the Pathfinder is to develop a broad, inclusive and vocationally relevant 14-19 curriculum framework which will raise the levels of achievement and participation of all young people in the Kingswood area.

478. The specific focus which the Pathfinder has taken is the development of a curriculum structure that will be sustainable by building on the capacities of staff and the Pathfinder institutions. Indeed the key word in the Pathfinder proposal is capacity.
479. The Pathfinder has strong links to current national curriculum developments and developers. Two influential academics from the Institute of Education, University of London are members of the management group and their curriculum thinking (around the introduction of a diploma or baccalaureate) has both influenced, and been influenced by, developments in the Kingswood Partnership and the Pathfinder and has fed into the current work of the DfES 14-19 Working Group. Other leading members of the Pathfinder are also contributing significantly to current national policy-making on the 14-19 phase.

480. The Partnership and Pathfinder have also benefited from strong links with an international learning and research centre which is based in one of the schools.

Features of the Pathfinder

481. A key feature of the Pathfinder is its focus on **staff and curriculum development** which is realised largely through the Teacher Learner Groups (TLGs). This development is central to the focus within the Pathfinder on increasing capacity within the partnership. The TLG’s are composed of one teacher from each of the partners. The groups meet fortnightly with supply cover funded through the Pathfinder and are chaired by Development Managers. The International Learning and Research Centre has provided training and support for the Development Managers.

482. There are currently seven TLGs;

- Curriculum Framework Group – overall responsibility for curriculum planning
- Specialist Courses Group - introduction of new courses
- Personal Challenge Group - planning the core curriculum
- Unified Guidance Group - development of ILPs and course and career guidance procedures
- Off-site Education Group - development of protocols and arrangements for all courses and other experiences provided away from ‘home’ sites
- Extranet Group - development of a virtual learning environment system
- E learning Group - application of the extranet system in teaching and learning, interactive teaching and learning systems and video conferencing.
Thus the purpose of the TLGs is to translate and, occasionally, suggest policy and its practical application and conduct research into implementation. For example, the Curriculum Framework Group has developed approaches to tackling practical problems in post-16 collaboration such as timetabling, travel and funding. The Unified Guidance Group has surveyed 1000 students on guidance structures and ILP software and decided on the development of an ILP system. The Off-site Education Group has developed common administration protocols, reporting and recording procedures to be followed by all centres which 'host' students from other centres. The Specialist Courses Group is currently undertaking an audit of work related learning experience in all centres.

The structure of the TLGs evolves and it is likely that in 2004/5 the current structure will be revised – as some of the TLGs will have achieved what they were set up to do. There may be fewer TLGs established in the future, with more shorter-term, ad-hoc groups (e.g. subject groups working on interactive e-learning materials). This will have the effect of increasing the number of teachers involved in the organisation, maintenance and development of the Pathfinder and is part of its the capacity-building focus.

Through their involvement in the TLGs headteachers, deputies and a core of staff in each institution are actively involved in the planning, organisation and evolution of the Pathfinder. Thus there are groups of teachers in each centre with a strong commitment to the Pathfinder and knowledge of how it operates and why. We gained a strong sense of ownership of the Pathfinder and Partnership and no sense from anyone that we met that the Pathfinder was something being imposed either from ‘above’ or ‘outside’. The unity of purpose and commitment to collaboration was striking.

Post-16 collaboration within the Pathfinder is well advanced because of the pioneering work of the Kingswood Partnership. There is a post-16 prospectus available across the Partnership and effectively a common post-16 timetable. Students apply for courses through their own school and, when it is seen which courses are in demand, subjects are finally grouped into option blocks and best-fit timetabling undertaken.
487. Although students can, in theory, choose all of their subjects away from their home centre, they are encouraged to choose at least half of their options at ‘home’ in order to avoid excessive travelling. In practice there is usually enough choice of courses available at ‘home’ for this to happen. About 40 varied courses are available and include AS/A2, AVCE as well as Level 2 courses.

488. Collaboration is now being refined by the Curriculum TLG:

- some courses are available at several centres and it is now the practice that centres are paired in the same option block so that if students numbers drop (as frequently happens at the end of AS) the courses can then be taught in one centre.
- some courses have shared teaching between two centres so that teacher expertise is maintained and there is obvious pairing
- centres are working towards the adoption of common specifications – i.e. the same courses and examination board options being offered in several centres to assist availability and make pairing and sharing feasible
- common assessment, guidance and reporting arrangements have been developed and are regularly reviewed

489. Some level 2 vocational ‘packages’ are being piloted in two schools with the aim of producing greater curriculum coherence. One package, for example, combines ICT and Leisure and Tourism courses, in addition to which students may retake some subjects, do one day a week work placement and be involved in the Personal Challenge (see below).

490. One effect of this post-16 collaboration is that average group sizes rarely fall below 13 and pairing and sharing will prevent very small groups running year 13, thus making provision more cost-effective.

491. Building from the long-established post-16 partnership, **14-16 collaboration** is increasing, sometimes drawing on specialist school facilities and expertise. The college also provides three of the schools with the option of fifty places at its vocational centre. Students will be able to work in a variety of vocational areas e.g. motor vehicle
technology, hair and beauty, construction. In addition these schools have agreed to timetable ‘core’ provision in two linked blocks which will also provide time for a Personal Challenge pilot.

492. There is a willingness to increase common timetabling across the schools but an awareness that this decreases flexibility at 11-14 and post-16.

493. A key feature of the Pathfinder is the development of the Personal Challenge which is intended to have a central place in the 14-19 curriculum. This is being piloted in several schools. At a basic level the Personal Challenge encompasses the statutory core elements of the 14-16 curriculum (e.g. RS, PE, citizenship) and is the means through which at post-16 the key skills are continued. However, the Personal Challenge is more than this since it may also include some accelerated learning for very able students as well as a personal research study. This development has obvious resonance with some of the proposals of the 14-19 Working Group. Personal Challenge models are being piloted at either pre- or post – 16 with some students in all of the Pathfinder centres. Appropriate accreditation is also being piloted.

494. Another important strand of development in the Pathfinder is in ICT and e-learning. A powerful Extranet is seen as being vital to the Pathfinder’s needs. This Extranet is being developed by an Australian company, who are willing to customise their product for the Pathfinder. The Extranet is currently housed on a large capacity server run and supported by LEA technical staff. Each school centre has a high capacity link to this server.

495. The Extranet will allow, for example;

- each user to have individualised access to data
- the development of a library of resources
- students to use resources in more than one centre and from home
- access to powerful flexible learning materials
- teachers to create interactive learning materials which can be used in all centres
- parents and support staff to have access to some teaching materials and selected information
links to SIMs
- access to the careers and guidance system
- access to a database of courses.
- the development of an online ILP

Other ICT developments supported through the Pathfinder include the purchase of the SAM revision programme and whiteboard and data projector packages. Video conferencing equipment is also being supplied to all centres.

**Key issues from the Pathfinder**

The Pathfinder draws much of its strength from the long-established Kingswood Partnership, which as well as helping to establish trust and mutual understanding among the partners has developed an infrastructure to support collaboration. The Partnership is funded through a £9000 contribution from each centre. The Pathfinder has enabled development to be taken on in several areas including at 14-16.

The focus on staff and curriculum development appears to have helped to embed the Pathfinder and establish a sense of ownership among a wide group of staff so that there is bottom-up, as well as top-down, development.

Much of the staffing and development work in the Pathfinder and the Partnership has been achieved through secondments from existing posts and the provision of supply cover e.g. to enable participation in the TLGs. There have also been a number of long-term professional and administrative appointments which have enabled the establishment of an infrastructure which supports the Pathfinder and the Partnership.

Transport between centres is provided in a number of ways: by commercial coach operators, taxis and school mini-buses and different costs have been calculated for each. There has been some discussion of the development of a more uniform and systematic approach to transport involving a fleet of liveried minibuses.
501. In relation to funding courses away from home institutions the principle is that funding should follow the learner, with some remaining with 'home' institutions, although the proportions remain matters for debate. At 14-16 some courses have been supported through the Increased Flexibility programme while some activities currently being piloted are funded through the Pathfinder or other sources or involve roughly equal exchanges of students.

502. Thus while in many respects collaboration is well-honed in the Pathfinder and Partnership there are aspects of staffing, travel and funding which, as in other Pathfinders, remain to be placed on a firm footing.

503. Within this Pathfinder there was an absence of strong articulation with the local labour market and with employers. There was little evidence that curriculum development was being informed by labour market information or knowledge of local skills gaps. Within the Pathfinder this was accounted for by reference to the nature of the local economy. There was limited involvement of training providers in the Pathfinder. The work-based learning route remains undeveloped with little focus on modern apprenticeships. It is recognised within the Pathfinder that development is needed within this area and an appointment has been made to develop employer and business links.
SOUTHAMPTON PATHFINDER

The local context

504. This Pathfinder is led by the LEA and involves all schools and colleges within the authority. Southampton is relatively affluent, but contains some areas of considerable disadvantage. There are some important contextual issues relating to parental and student choices in education and training which bear on the Pathfinder. Our interviewees often made a distinction between young people resident in Southampton and those educated in the city, since there is an outflow of students from Southampton to neighbouring authorities at 11 and 16. This is a concern for Southampton staff because, they argued, many of those who were educated outside the city tended to be higher achieving students and this slanted the ability profile in Southampton schools and colleges which thus depressed achievement and narrowed the curriculum.

505. Thus, for example, on the five A*-C GCSE/GNVQ measure Southampton was eight points below the England average and this was paralleled by lower than average attainment on GCE and AVCE scores. Post-16 participation was below the England average and further below the regional average at both 16 and 17.

506. This context helps to explain several of the features of the Pathfinder which is aiming to encourage more learners to remain in Southampton schools and colleges, not just because this will raise achievement in those institutions, but because it will facilitate the development of greater choice and flexibility for all 14-19 learners in the city.

Focus of the Pathfinder

507. The Southampton Pathfinder aims to build on existing good practice in vocational and work related developments and the collaborative partnerships already established, in order to raise standards by: providing greater choice of courses, promoting personal development and improving motivation, attendance and staying on rates.
508. Specific objectives relate to guidance and support, broader curriculum offerings, increased collaboration and variations in the pace of learning.

509. The Pathfinder is authority-wide and involves fourteen secondary schools and four special schools serving the secondary age range. Eight of the mainstream schools are co-educational, three are boys only and three are girls only, with one being 11-18 and the remainder being 11-16. Within the city boundary, there are also two sixth form colleges and one general FE college which are also key Pathfinder partners.

*Features of the Pathfinder*

510. A major feature of the Pathfinder is the increased collaboration between schools and colleges which we were told was creating strong impetus for change. We were told that the major challenge had been to get commitment to 'corporate aims' but a strong sense of collaborative culture was apparent among those we interviewed. As a result of this increased collaboration a much expanded 14-16 Course Menu is being offered across the city. Schools and colleges were asked what they wanted to offer to other institutions and these offerings were placed in the Course Menu. This contains over fifty courses offered by eight schools and colleges. Courses range from entry level to vocational GCSE double awards.

511. One of the features of the Course Menu was that there were substantial offerings from schools, as well as from colleges. There was particular emphasis on using the Course Menu as a framework through which specialist schools (about half of all schools) could share their expertise and facilities. For example, one school could not recruit a viable modern foreign languages group, but through the Course Menu concept those who wanted to do languages would be able to attend a specialist languages school. Similarly a school which will become a specialist Science and Engineering school is offering GCSE Engineering within the Course Menu. It was argued by Pathfinder leaders that the element of reciprocity within the context of the Course Menu offer would lessen the sense that specialist schools were distributing favours to less fortunate schools. More generally, there was a sense of an equal partnership between the schools and colleges in developing the Course Menu, which thus helped to develop a wider sense of ownership and dispel fears that the process only involved schools sending students to the colleges.
512. Interestingly, however, the Course Menu was described to us as a ‘tool for senior managers in the schools’ and it was for each individual school to decide how to use it within their options system. Thus there was no commitment to provide an entitlement for every 14 year old in Southampton to have a choice from all the options. This was largely justified on pragmatic grounds – it would not be possible for travel reasons for some students to access some options.

513. There was no overall approach to transport – one school, for example, provides a minibus to take students to other sites, in another the headteacher was adamant that students should make their own way, seeing this as an important element of independent learning.

514. Elements of common timetabling have been agreed with the allocation of two afternoons per week to the Course Menu options which have also been integrated into the options blocks.

515. In curriculum there is a strong emphasis on vocational GCSEs and there has been some staff development related to these through LEA-established subject panels and through the specialist schools. There is also a wide range of pre-NVQ courses available at the FE college, building on earlier Increased Flexibility-funded work. However, there was an absence of alternatives to GCSE at level 2 although the Pathfinder leaders argued that if vocational GCSEs are taught ‘properly’ they can provide a viable alternative for students who prefer different learning and teaching styles.

516. A further feature of the Pathfinder was an emphasis on accelerated learning at 14-16, supported by the colleges. There are opportunities for accelerated learning of AS courses – courses offered include Critical Thinking and Psychology. This focus on accelerated learning aims to promote not only progression generally, but also boost progression to Southampton colleges from Southampton schools and so address the outflow of students from the city post-16. Twelve of the fourteen secondary schools within the city have also expressed interest in an accelerated KS3 and three workshops have been undertaken for school staff. For example, one school is enabling its students to take early GCSEs English, Maths, Science, History and
Geography from September 2003. It is intended that more schools will offer this opportunity from September 2004.

517. Progression was also emphasised within structured training in advice and guidance for school staff provided by the LEA. Individual schools had supplemented this through in-house staff development. One feature of the Pathfinder is that it has strengthened links between colleges and schools and raised the profile of progression post-16. Despite this one college principal argued that some schools continue to give insufficient attention to post-16 progression since this is not included in the measures for which they are held accountable.

*Key issues from the Pathfinder*

518. The development of the Course Menu was recognised within the Pathfinder as an important step forward in collaboration and through that the broadening of access and widening of provision. It was acknowledged that both the processes through which the Course Menu was produced and the product itself would benefit from further honing and there was confidence that the menu for 2005/6 would be a significant advance on that for 2004/5.

519. However, the development of the Course Menu raised the issue of student entitlement. In this Pathfinder there was no intention, at this stage, that all students should, in principle, be able to choose from all options and it was accepted that home schools would act as gatekeepers in communicating the options to the students.

520. Leadership in this Pathfinder was firmly located with the LEA, schools and colleges. The roles played by training providers and employers were somewhat limited, although work-related learning was promoted through the Education Business Partnership and examples were given of various activities in schools. The EBP has also recruited business mentors to work in schools. However, it was accepted that there was scope to increase the involvement of employers and training providers and to raise the profile of work-based learning.
THE SOUTHWARK PATHFINDER

The local context

521. Southwark is highly disadvantaged on all the conventional measures. Unemployment is around twice the national average and owner occupation is half the national average. The school population is extremely diverse and this diversity transforms very rapidly – we were told that within the last 6/8 years children of African descent had become the largest single ethnic group in Southwark schools. There are high levels of pupil mobility, high teacher turnover and difficulties in teacher recruitment – at one school we were informed that 40% of staff are ‘overseas trained’.

522. Educational attainment as measured by GCSE, GNVQ, GCE and AVCE qualifications is below national averages, although there are wide disparities between schools. Participation in full-time and part-time education and training at 16 and 17 is also below national averages. One of the consequences of this relatively low attainment is that the level 3 cohort in Southwark is relatively small and the entry/level 1/level2 16-19 cohort is proportionately larger and this has implications for matching the post-16 curriculum to students needs. In considering attainment however, it is worth noting that Southwark education overall, and all Southwark schools, do well on KS3 - GCSE/GNVQ value added measures.

523. There are a wide variety of institutions involved in 14-19 education in Southwark – 11-16 schools, 11-18 schools, a further education college, two recently opened city academies and a CTC. This makes strategic leadership and planning particularly complex and raises particular issues about collaboration and institutional autonomy.

524. The running of the Southwark schools service has in recent years been undertaken by two private companies appointed by the LEA (there was a change from one company to the other in 2003). This rather unstable situation has further complicated planning, not least because responsibility for the schools service ended at 16.
Focus of the Pathfinder

525. Central to 14-19 development in Southwark is the Southwark Guarantee which integrates the Pathfinder, the AWI Action Plan and the Increased Flexibility project. The Guarantee will ensure that all 14-19 year olds in Southwark institutions:

- are offered, and receive, high quality provision by all Southwark providers, irrespective of which route or combination of routes a young person follows in the borough 14-19
- are equipped to make well-informed choices about their path through education training and employment;
- are well supported in order to achieve their goals by the age of 19.

526. The Pathfinder is supporting the implementation of the Guarantee, particularly through facilitating collaboration and funding the appointment of Southwark Guarantee managers in the schools and college. More specifically, through the Pathfinder, there was in-depth auditing of two vocational areas in order to identify career pathways across academic, vocational and work-based routes for students at all levels. This led to the production of clear mapping advice for students and parents about opportunities, qualifications and progression paths in those vocational areas.

Features of the Pathfinder

527. A major feature of the Pathfinder has been the way in which Southwark schools, colleges, training providers and other partners have been drawn into collaboration around the Southwark Guarantee. The Southwark Guarantee forum and managers groups have become important sources of policies, ideas and the sharing good practice. It is anticipated that these collaborative structures will outlive short-term funding streams and continue to influence the 14-19 phase in Southwark.

528. In this Pathfinder there is considerable emphasis on labour market and skills gap analyses which have identified half a dozen sectors around which development should be based. The Pathfinder has innovatively linked this analysis to the work done in
schools through an on-going continuing professional development programme through which subject teachers are introduced to the implications for their subjects. In 2003/4 the focus was on science education and a series of seminars had been held at a local university on science-based occupations in sport, catering, tourism, leisure and within the general manufacturing sector. The initial aim of these seminars was to raise awareness among science staff of the different progression routes through further and higher education and training into these occupations with a longer-term aim of impacting on curriculum development in science. The university is making available some science-based modules for teachers who want to update their subject knowledge.

529. A second series of seminars focusing on the career opportunities and skills gaps in the NHS will be starting soon. Pathfinder leaders argued that it is important that knowledge of progression routes is made available to subject teachers both in order to influence the curriculum and because these teachers can often be sources of informal advice to students on progression routes within particular discipline-based occupations. It was also argued that the CPD programme is filling a gap left by the absence of LEA specialist subject advisors.

530. The Pathfinder is also notable for the substantial involvement of training providers in providing broader opportunities to students at 14-16. For example, students have access to a prestigious catering training organisation located in a local university. Here students have experience top quality facilities and high levels of expertise. This provision leads to an NVQ level 2 award. Through the Southwark Guarantee a menu of opportunities for vocational learning has been developed involving training providers and the local college. A staff appointment has recently been made to support this continued implementation and to strengthen links between the schools, college and training providers as well as to broaden the curriculum offer.

531. In vocational learning the Pathfinder has also supported a range of school-based activities, many built around the Asdan scheme, involving a wide range of vocational visits, short work placements and other activities, all of which are helping to provide a wider range of curriculum offerings for 14-16 year olds in Southwark schools.
This increased focus on vocational learning 14-16 is reflected at 16-19 in increased emphasis on work-based learning and other vocational provision. In line with the findings of the AWI the college has worked hard to increase level one and two provision and has developed a large E2E programme. The Pathfinder has produced an attractive directory of post-16 courses and progression routes which gives equal prominence to the work-based and full-time education routes.

A further major planned development is the introduction of some year 12 provision in four 11-16 schools. This is intended to tackle the low rates of participation post-16 by 16 and 17 year olds. It is based on the assumption that some students are uncomfortable about making the transition to college or training providers at 16. Thus the intention is to provide a one-year course in school, which as well as improving basic and vocational skills, will also aim to ease progression to the next stage at age 17. Four schools have been identified to take part in this scheme and it is anticipated that each will recruit about twenty-five students. At the time of our visit the curriculum for this group was still being planned but it is likely to focus on level one provision and thus help to address the objective of providing more level 1 and 2 provision within Southwark which was identified by the AWI.

Key issues from the Pathfinder

The multiplicity of kinds of institutions involved in 14-19 education and training raised important issues for strategic leadership of 14-19 developments. This issue was heightened by the presence of several institutions funded directly from the DfES. Some of these were newly founded and were understandably keen to make a positive impact by, for example, establishing broad-based sixth forms with some emphasis on level 3 courses. However, these and other developments left Pathfinder participants uncertain as to how these institutional imperatives would relate to the collaborative structures and cultures developed around the Southwark Guarantee.

The local LSC has played a key leadership role in this Pathfinder and has helped to drive forward collaboration in a very institutionally complex setting. However, it is uncertain how long the LSC will be able and/or willing to continue to take such a
hands-on operational role within Southwark and it is also uncertain as to whether the individual institutions collectively or the LEA have the managerial capacity to take up the baton.
SECTION SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Key points

- Sustainability is a key theme as the 14-19 Pathfinders move towards the end of their funding period
- Sustainability will require the maintenance and extension of collaboration, curriculum provision and innovation
- The establishment of financial underpinning and increased capacity are important elements of sustainability
- Maintaining or developing increased commitment amongst partners is likely to be key to sustainability
- The continued reform of the 14-19 phase will require that fundamental curricular principles concerning breadth, differentiation, relationships between academic and vocational learning and different forms of vocationalism be kept continually under review
- Information, advice, guidance and support continues to be crucial to the development of the 14-19 phase. Policy-makers and practitioners need to continue to identify strengths and weaknesses in current provision and devise ways in which problems can be tackled
- 14-19 Pathfinders have sought to bring about change through a combination of central steering and local responsiveness. It will be important for policy-makers and practitioners to review this approach to bringing about change in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses and its continued potential for promoting change in the 14-19 phase.

536. In this final section of the report we focus upon some of the implications of the key findings for policy and practice. We do so under four main headings: sustainability; curriculum provision and practice; student support and guidance; local responsiveness and central steering.
Sustainability

537. Sustainability was not tackled as an explicit theme in the body of this report but was implicit in many of the findings. As 14-19 Pathfinder funding will end in 2005 it takes on ever greater significance. It was an issue which was raised by many pathfinder participants. Unsurprisingly most were primarily concerned with the financial sustainability of the pathfinder developments. This is clearly an important matter which will require detailed specification of the costs of the collaborative activities, the additional provision and the enhanced support and guidance which have been brought about. This task will be undertaken as part of the year three evaluation. However, it is also important to place the issue of financial sustainability in a broader context. We suggest that financial underpinning is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for overall sustainability.

538. We focus here on three dimensions of sustainability.

539. The first of these is collaboration. 14-19 Pathfinders have been extremely successful in promoting collaboration and while Hodgson, Spours and Wright (2005) may be correct in characterising the current 14-19 picture across England as being strongly competitive/weakly collaborative, the balance is rather different within the 14-19 Pathfinders. (It should also be recognised that partners may collaborate in order to compete more effectively with external competitors, see for example the Gateshead and Southampton case studies and also Adnett and Davies (2003)). Thus, if the pathfinder benefits are to be maintained, it will be necessary to sustain collaboration. One way in which this may be achieved is by translating technical and instrumental commitment to collaboration into committed collaboration. Such commitment, by definition, must spring from the collaborators themselves on the basis of educational aims and values and understanding of mutual benefits. We suggest this is more likely to be fostered where the levels of collaboration are deep rather than shallow. However, while committed collaboration needs to be largely internally generated it can be constrained or enabled by national and local policy drivers such as funding, inspection regimes, accountability mechanisms, pay and conditions in different sectors and staff development programmes. If policy-makers see collaboration as a key element in achieving the aims set
out in the February 2005 Education White Paper (DfES, 2005), it will be important to ensure that the appropriate policy drivers are set in place to encourage it.

540. The second element of sustainability to be considered is provision.

541. The 14-19 Pathfinder initiative, together with the IF Programme, has gone a long way towards establishing the sort of broad and flexible provision which is foreseen for the 14-19 phase for most students, especially at 14-16. Students have opportunities to learn in more than one location. Opportunities to learn in colleges, training providers and workplaces have broadened choice and experience substantially. Sustaining this breadth raises key issues of funding and capacity.

542. In relation to funding there is wide acceptance that vocational learning is more expensive than academic learning (although there are important questions about how much more expensive). Such provision has typically been funded through a wide variety of projects (including 14-19 Pathfinders). Project funding has been criticised by many respondents for its wasteful bureaucratic and accountability procedures and for short-termism. Several interviewees, especially from schools, argued that as schools move to three year budgets they should be given an increase in funding which takes account of the extra costs of vocational provision and then have freedom to purchase such provision or provide it themselves. Others, including some in schools, argued against this, or at least suggested that additional funds should be ring-fenced in order to prevent the money simply being absorbed into school budgets. There are clearly important policy decisions to be taken here, although it should be noted that the only choices are not project funding or devolution to schools since a balance between the two might be sought.

543. Capacity emerged as a significant issue in sustaining and expanding provision. A number of colleges and training providers indicated that they were near to capacity, particularly in relation to courses requiring specialised facilities. Various approaches to increasing capacity were being developed including colleges and training providers increasing their own capacity through new build or reconfiguring their buildings. Smaller, local skills centres were also being proposed. Some schools planned to develop their own vocational facilities and either teach the courses themselves or in collaboration with colleges.
E-learning was seen as another means of increasing capacity. All of these approaches have the potential to increase capacity but will also impact upon the character and quality of the learning which takes place. As we suggest in paragraph 184 it will be important that in deciding how capacity might be increased local policy-makers take account of the factors which make vocational learning attractive to students.

544. The third element of sustainability concerns innovation. The 14-19 Pathfinders have produced exciting and imaginative practice. A key question at this stage is how such innovation can be both maintained where it has been piloted and disseminated both within the pathfinders and more widely. Collaborative networks which operate at appropriate levels and thus ensure that innovations are disseminated to staff who are responsible for implementation are crucial. The forms of dissemination are also likely to be important and it may be more important to disseminate key principles rather than to expect those on the receiving end of dissemination to accept wholesale practices which have been developed elsewhere in contexts which might be quite different. Sustainability and dissemination of innovation therefore requires considerable skill and personal qualities from disseminators if it is to be effective.

Curriculum Provision and Experience

545. We described in Section Four the ways in which the 14-19 Pathfinders have brought about a substantial broadening of the curriculum (especially at 14-16), largely through the expansion of vocational and work-related learning. Variations in the pace of learning, the development of work-based learning and enterprise learning have also been developed under the auspices of pathfinders. These processes of curriculum change raise some fundamental questions for policy-makers and practitioners about the nature of the 14-19 curriculum which will need to be addressed explicitly as the process of 14-19 reform proceeds. For example, for ease of reading we have treated the terms academic and vocational as though they are unproblematic and have clear, agreed meanings. This, of course is far from the case and as the reform process continues it will be important to constantly reappraise these terms for meaning and usefulness both in relation to each other and in their own terms. In relation to vocational learning pathfinder has promoted both broad, general vocationalism and narrower occupationalism. Questions arise as to whether the balance is right between these, whether
the balance needs to be different at different stages of learning and for different groups and the extent to which it needs to respond to local labour markets and skills gaps. The issue of curricular breadth also raises important questions. Does it refer to subjects or vocational areas or should it be defined more in experiential terms? Should there be concepts of breadth and balance in relation to pedagogies and forms of assessment? Differentiation is a further key concept as the 14-16 curriculum moves away from the commonality of the national curriculum towards a situation in which students have much more choice about what they learn, how they learn and where they learn. How far should this process go? Are there certain common elements which should be provided for all students? How and by whom should these issues be decided? These are not new questions in curriculum but they are arising anew in the context of 14-19 reform and, we suggest, require careful attention in order that curriculum change proceeds on the basis of an explicit exploration of curricular aims and values (for more on this see Hayward et al., 2004; Pring, 1993; Pring, 2005).

Information, advice, guidance and support

546. It has been widely recognised that the much wider range of choice of curricula, institutions, learning styles, qualifications and progression pathways which the 14-19 reform agenda will open up for students places great premium on the provision of high quality information, advice and guidance. Greater choice has the potential to generate increased commitment to learning among all students and thus reduce disaffection and disengagement and subsequent social exclusion. However, the capability to make choices is not equally distributed among the student population and greater choice, if not well supported, has the potential to increase disaffection and disengagement if student learning choices are not well matched to their needs and if the system is not flexible enough to accommodate changes of direction and developing learning careers and dispositions (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1999; Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000). Where students lack resources to make well-founded decisions there is a particular responsibility on schools, colleges, training providers, employers and Connexions to compensate for this lack of resources.

547. The important role of information, advice and guidance in relation to the 14-19 reform agenda is well understood in the pathfinders. Several pathfinders have made the provision of good quality, impartial advice and guidance part of their student entitlement. There is general
agreement that the National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance in England provides a sound basis for practice. What is less clear is whether the resources or commitment are available in individual institutions to implement the framework satisfactorily.

548. There were widespread claims during the evaluation that advice and guidance, especially in schools, tends to be patchy and recent research in twenty-four London schools has confirmed this (Foskett et al., 2004). However, it is difficult to be sure exactly how patchy practice is. There may be a case for systematic, large scale research to clarify the size of the problems, identify potential gaps in existing provision and suggest ways forward which take account of the factors which lead to inadequate practice in some schools.

549. While advice and guidance is crucial as students approach the 14-19 phase and vital decisions points within it at 16, 17 and 18, different forms of support are also needed to assist students as learners as they progress through the phase. The 14-19 phase is likely to become increasingly flexible and complex. The barriers between schools, colleges, training providers and employers will be lowered. Some forms of personalised learning may become possible. Individual students may lose the security of being a clearly identified member of a school, college or training provider. While this may have many advantages in terms of student choice and breadth of curriculum and experience, it raises the risk of students becoming lost and disorientated in the new, more fluid learning environment. If this is the case it will be important to put in place mechanisms and approaches which can identify problems and provide support for students. Such support will need to be provided for all students, since it will not be possible to predict where problems might occur. The focus on support in learning is important since it may become increasingly important that students are able to monitor, review and diagnose their own learning needs.

550. Individual learning plans provide a possible framework for such processes of support and review. Considerable development and piloting work is going on but at this stage there is no consensus over the purposes, processes and products of individual learning planning. There is some sharing of good practice but this is not extensive. Policy makers will need to give careful consideration to the future development of ILPs and the broader issues related to student support and review which lie behind them.
Local responsiveness and national steering

551. The 14-19 Pathfinder initiative combined national steering with local responsiveness by laying down broad directions and aims through the pathfinder prospectuses while allowing substantial room for local interpretations in terms of the scale and scope of the partnerships which were formed, their leadership and their focus. The pathfinders were required to set a series of targets relating to participation, provision and achievement. They were also asked to report termly and annually to the DfES, but other than through these accountability mechanisms the initiative was steered with a light touch from the centre. The 14-19 Pathfinder has also been evaluated flexibly in ways which have sought to understand local contexts and have not tried to artificially separate the pathfinder from other cognate initiatives, such as the IF programme.

552. The strength of this policy approach has been that it has allowed pathfinders to take a account of the range of local contextual factors described in the model of collaboration in Section Three. Individual pathfinders have also been able to be shaped by local diagnoses of weaknesses and strengths in the 14-19 phase. This approach has produced a wide range of different approaches – although not too wide in our judgement. It has promoted a good deal of collaboration, curriculum and staff development and some exciting and innovative work. It has helped individuals to develop as hybrid professionals with networking skills (Atkinson, Wilkin, Stott, Doherty & Kinder, 2002).

553. A possible weakness of the approach to policy development embodied by the 14-19 Pathfinders initiative is that the developments it has promoted will potentially flower briefly in the 39 areas where pathfinders have been located then wither without leaving a significant legacy either in those areas or on the national system. The development with which the 14-19 Pathfinder was quite often compared during our case study visits was the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) of the 1980s. This combined a similar balance of central steering, local responsiveness, breadth of vision and scope for innovation. Many respondents however were critical (a little unfairly in our view) of what they saw as the very weak legacy of TVEI. It is beyond the scope of this report to develop this comparison but it does emphasise the importance of sustaining, embedding and disseminating the developments.
which have taken place under the auspices of the 14-19 Pathfinder. The third year of pathfinder evaluation will focus on the issues of sustainability, embedding and further development.
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