

# Delivering the 'front end' of the Learning Gateway

**Simon Bysse**

Senior Associate

**Deirdre Hughes**

Director, CeGS

*A partnership between*



The Learning Gateway has been in operation across the country for well over two years. Its rapid introduction in September 1999 was part of a dramatic change in policy, which led to major operational changes within Careers Services, in particular moving resources from pre-16 work to work with disengaged young people aged 16-18.

Despite its size and significance, the Learning Gateway has not been subject to ongoing evaluation at a national or regional level. So, how well is the programme working in practice? What delivery models are being used? Do some delivery methods work better than others? How is assessment, guidance and support in the 'front-end' contributing to the achievement of outcomes?

This paper summarises a regional research project undertaken by CeGS for the Government Office East Midlands (GOEM) which aimed to explore these, and other questions, in relation to the operation of the 'front-end' of the Learning Gateway in the East Midlands. Copies of the full report are available on the CeGS web-site.

Given the issues emerging from the study have significance outside the region, GOEM kindly agreed to sponsor the production of this paper in order to share the East Midlands experience with others, and to inform developing policy and practice.

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- Representatives in partner bodies (referral and delivery) who responded to the postal survey.

*The Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) was created in 1998 by the University of Derby and five careers service companies (the Careers Consortium (East Midlands) Ltd.). The centre aims to bridge the gap between guidance theory and practice. It supports and connects guidance practitioners, policy-makers and researchers through research activities; learning opportunities; and by providing access to resources related to guidance and lifelong learning.*

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CeGS, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB  
E-mail: [cegsinfo@derby.ac.uk](mailto:cegsinfo@derby.ac.uk)  
Centre Director: Deirdre Hughes

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*'It was such a change. I'd been told I was useless, but now I'm treated like I'm worthwhile, like I have something to offer.....'*

*'So much has happened to me since May. I've now got my own flat. I do work experience four days a week, and I'm on Life Skills....I'm more confident and ambitious....He (my PA) arranged for me to have counselling, he helped me sort out my benefits and my flat, arranged my work experience and my course. I couldn't have done any of this without him'.*

Young person on Learning Gateway in Leicestershire

## Introduction

This paper is based on research that the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) was commissioned to undertake by Government Office East Midlands (GOEM) between September - December 2001 into the quality of the 'front-end' of the Learning Gateway within the East Midlands. The research was planned with the active co-operation of the Careers and Connexions Services in the region - CareerPath (Northamptonshire) Ltd, Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland, Derbyshire Career Services Ltd, GuideLine Career Services, and Leicestershire Careers and Guidance Services.

## Aim

The aim of the research was to explore the quality of the 'front-end' of the Learning Gateway in the East Midlands. This involved benchmarking the activities of the four Careers Services, and the Lincolnshire and Rutland Connexions Partnership in relation to the client group, and undertaking an analysis of their systems and procedures for supporting both their clients and Personal Advisers (PAs). Feedback was also gathered from samples of young people and key delivery partners, and an analysis of management information to consider the linkages between the 'front-end' and the destinations of Learning Gateway clients was undertaken.

## Methodology

The research was undertaken in four stages, and involved:

- **Stage One: Preparation and Desk Research.**
- **Stage Two: Fieldwork.** The fieldwork was undertaken primarily in November 2001. Researchers undertook a planned programme of fieldwork visits, of approximately 2.5 days in length, in each area. The visits involved meetings with staff in the Careers Service and Connexions Partnerships, Learning and Skills Council staff, and young people (a total of 72 against a target of 50).
- **Stage Three: Postal Survey.** A total of 137 key delivery and referral partners nominated by Careers Service/Connexions Partnerships were surveyed and 57 responded (a response rate of 42%).
- **Stage Four: Reporting.** A verbal presentation, and workshop style discussion of preliminary findings was undertaken with the Steering Group on 7 January 2002, and a regional summary report at the end of January 2002. Follow-up work has involved the production of area reports, and the conduct of action-planning workshops.

## Background

The Government set out its vision for enhancing participation in learning for both adults and young people in its 1999 White Paper *Learning to Succeed*<sup>1</sup>. The White Paper argued that too many young people stop learning at, or before, 16 and that this significantly affects their chances of making a success of their lives. The Paper, building on the Social Exclusion Unit's influential report *Bridging the Gap*<sup>2</sup>, proposed a new set of arrangements as part of the developing Connexions strategy, to provide support and guidance to young people.

The national analysis at the time, through what became known as the 'focusing agenda', concluded that what was required was a major shift of Careers Service emphasis and resources<sup>3</sup> from the pre-16 to the post-16 sector, with a particular emphasis on working with disengaged and unemployed young people<sup>4</sup>. The Learning Gateway specification<sup>5</sup> issued by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in May 1999 set out the planning framework for the delivery of the programme to be targeted at 16-18 year olds. Its key purpose was described in the specification as being a vital component of the Investing in Young People Strategy<sup>6</sup>, and as being required to, '*ensure that all young people continue in education and training until they are 19 and reach at least Level 2*'.

<sup>1</sup> Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Learning*. London: Stationery Office.

<sup>2</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-19 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training*. London: Stationery Office.

<sup>3</sup> Gross spending on Learning Gateway in 1999-2000 was estimated to be £33.2 million, of which £29.8 million was from the statutory careers service budget (Source: Careers Service

National Association (2000) *The Impact of Learning Gateway on Careers Service Providers* (A Report by Sheila Wooliscroft for CSNA on behalf of DfEE).

<sup>4</sup> One company in the East Midlands indicated in their 2001/2 business plan that work planned in their Learning Gateway Policy has involved, '*transferring 40% of Company resources from education-based work into more pro-active work with registrants; the provision of Gateway Personal Advisers; appointing a senior manager to be responsible for the Learning Gateway; making use of possible New Start funding*'.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Learning Gateway Specification*. Sheffield: DfEE (mimeo).

<sup>6</sup> Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Investing in Young People: A Strategy for the Education and Training of 16-18 Year Olds*. Sheffield: DfEE

The key planning principles set out in the Learning Gateway specification included that:

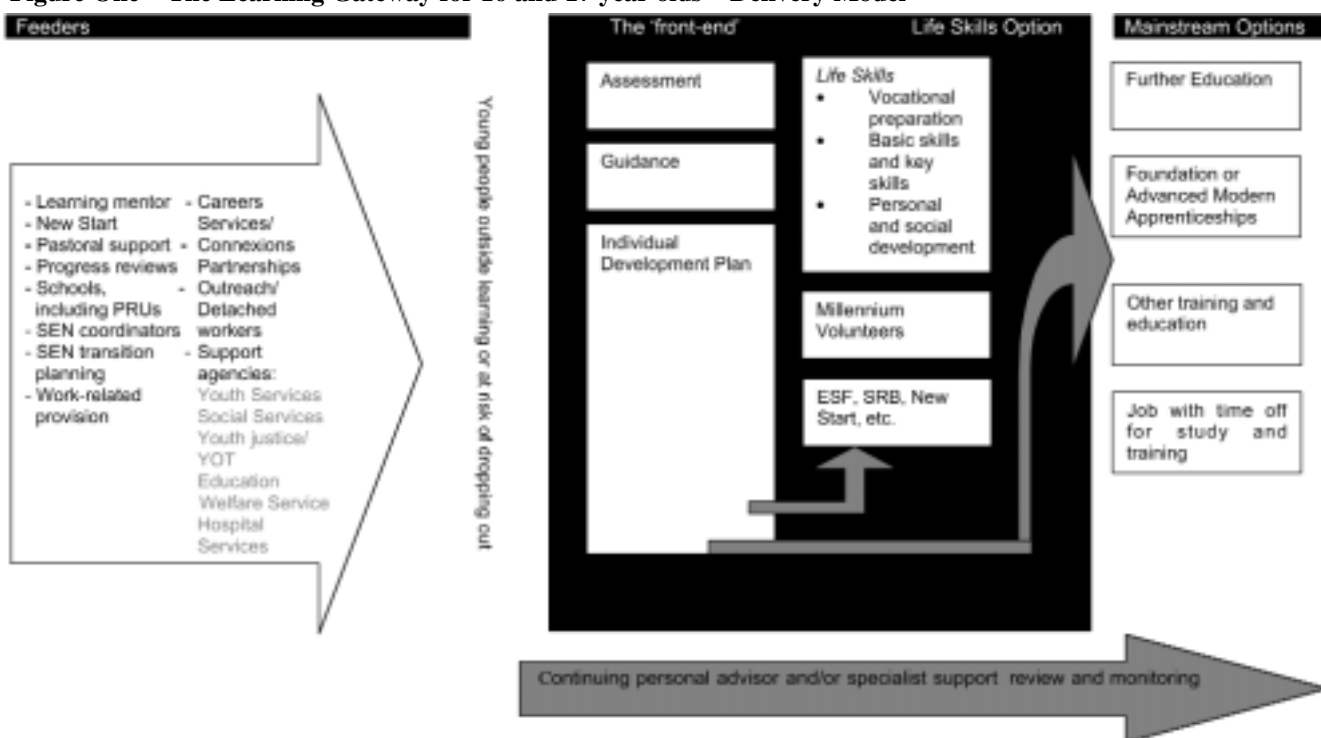
- (i) The Learning Gateway was to be delivered through a multi-agency approach, though it gave key accountabilities to the Careers Service for the 'front-end', and to Training and Enterprise Councils (CCTE/TECs) for the 'customised Life Skills option'.
- (ii) The priority target group for the Learning Gateway was those who are **disengaged from learning**. However, it was indicated that it should also aim to help those who are, 'in danger of dropping out of learning'; and added that, 'the precise eligibility of an individual young person will be a discretionary matter'.
- (iii) **Personal Advisers** were envisaged as, 'perhaps the single most important feature of the Learning Gateway', and were given the role to, 'bind together the front-end and menu options, providing seamless support for an individual'.
- (iv) A thorough **client-centred assessment process** was deemed an essential component of the Learning Gateway, and it was indicated that a variety of approaches should be used.
- (v) No fixed duration for the **front-end** was set. The aim was to enable an effective transition to

subsequent options at an 'appropriate pace'.

- (vi) The Learning Gateway programme was to be: **negotiated** between the learner and the personal adviser; to be **customised** ('to meet the choices, needs and aspirations of each individual'); to be flexible ('in regard to mode of attendance and length of time'); supported; and monitored ('to ensure continuous review of progress').
- (vii) The focus of much of the **learning activity** was to be on, 'developing employability, active citizenship and personal development with a view to progression to mainstream learning', although it was stressed, 'qualifications (except in basic skills) are not the principal outcomes'.
- (viii) It was recognised that in the Learning Gateway it will, 'be difficult - but still necessary - to measure outcomes which arise from supporting and recognising change in the young person and their progress in re-engagement ('distance travelled').
- (ix) Providers were expected to give, 'some account of the added value that they have provided at different points in the young person's **journey** through the Learning Gateway'.

The overall delivery model for the Learning Gateway is set out in Figure One.

**Figure One – The Learning Gateway for 16 and 17 year olds – Delivery Model**



Source: Based on Department of Education and Employment, Further Education Development Agency 'Engaging with the Learning Gateway' Report, 2000.

The key planning assumptions in the model were that:

- Young people would be identified and signposted by a variety of agencies onto 'front-end' provision, which would consist of appropriate assessment and guidance from a Personal Adviser, and the creation of an Individual Development Plan (IDP);
- Young people would proceed from the 'front end' either onto Life Skills, or direct into other options. In relation to Life Skills, this was described - in the Learning Gateway specification - as aimed at improving, '*motivation and confidence*', and at developing, '*key skills and personal effectiveness skills and to provide opportunities to sample different work and learning opportunities*'. Training and Enterprise Councils<sup>7</sup> (TECs/CCTEs) were tasked with contracting with appropriate providers to develop, '*flexible and tailor made packages*' for individual young people. It was recognised from the outset that this would require a wide range of providers to be available, and might need to include organisations which had not previously been involved in TEC-delivered provision (e.g. Youth Services);
- Following Life Skills it was assumed that young people would be ready to enter into mainstream options, in particular further education, Foundation or Modern Apprenticeships, other training and education, or a job with time off for study and training.

## Review of Current Research

A range of research has been undertaken into the operation of the Learning Gateway. However, the depth, focus and timescale of the studies have differed considerably. Most are area rather than national studies, and/or focus on a specific aspect of the operation of the Learning Gateway (e.g. Life Skills), rather than viewing the Gateway holistically and in the context of other related initiatives and developments. Many suffer also from being based on a limited sample of activity, and/or from having been undertaken in the first operational year of the programme.

The current lack of national research into the operation of the Learning Gateway causes difficulties when attempting to build a picture of the overall impact, effectiveness and outcome of the programme since its national launch. For clarity, key findings from available studies - which are relevant to the research - have been grouped under three main headings:

### (i) Careers service role and work in Learning Gateway

A national study<sup>8</sup> (May 2000) into the early implementation of the Learning Gateway by the Careers Service found that:

- areas where previous partnership-based approaches to tackle youth disaffection existed were at an advantage in developing the Learning Gateway;
- Learning Gateway management was predominantly undertaken by Careers Service staff on a part-time basis (raising issues of the initiative being an additional burden for management staff, with implications for other areas of operation);
- at the time, the duration of the 'front-end' ranged from a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of 16 weeks, and was determined by individual need and the funding available to the Careers Service to offer a range of options and activities;
- the use of '*distance travelled*'<sup>9</sup> as opposed to '*hard outcome measures*' emerged as a key principle, and it was felt that only effective longitudinal tracking of young people could provide information on whether a sustainable outcome had been achieved.

A study into the operation of the Learning Gateway (2000) in London<sup>10</sup> highlighted that:

- London Careers Services had adopted a range of approaches in regard to the organisation and management of staff to deliver Learning Gateway support;
- There was a '*substantial variation*' between services in their interpretation of young people's eligibility for the Learning Gateway, with some

<sup>7</sup> Following their introduction this role is now fulfilled by local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs).

<sup>8</sup> GHK Economics and Management (2000) *The Early Implementation of the Learning Gateway by the Careers Service*, Research Report 203. Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment.

<sup>9</sup> This point was also highlighted in QPID (2000) research, where measuring outcomes and '*distance travelled*' was felt to be extremely difficult, '*and is clearly an area where considerable research and development is required*'. (Source: Quality and Performance Improvement Division (2000) *TEC/CCTEs and the Learning Gateway*, QPID Study Report No. 87. Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment.)

<sup>10</sup> Mc Gregor D., (2000) *The Learning Gateway in London*. London Careers Service Association (mimeo)

taking a far broader definition than others. This was evidenced by the considerable differences that exist in the numbers of young people on the Gateway, as a percentage of the total numbers on the live register;

- There were '*considerable variations*' too in levels of staff resources which seemed to reflect both different approaches to eligibility and levels of funding available;
- Some services in London had produced criteria to assess the levels of support young people require. The lack of such criteria made it very difficult to compare the relative performance of careers companies across the city;
- Targets for entry into Life Skills were reported to have been '*over optimistic*', with concerns expressed about varying - though improving - quality of provision.

The wider implications of the changes initiated as a result of the 'focusing agenda', and the impact it had on wider Careers Service work, has been considered in a recent DfEE study<sup>11</sup>. This highlighted that '*positive outcomes*' were reported (by one third of careers companies surveyed) to include fewer students '*lost to the system*', and more '*at risk*' students moving on to further education and training. The main '*negative outcomes*', reported by careers companies were summarised as representing:

- '*a significant deterioration in Careers Service inputs to clients in education, particularly to those who might be seen as of average ability or the most able*'.
- '*a great deal of careers adviser time spent tracking down young people who were 'hard to reach', with levels of success not commensurate with the effort involved*'.

#### (ii) The management and delivery of the Life Skills Option

A national overview of Life Skills provision<sup>12</sup> was undertaken in 2000 and reviewed 25 Training Standards Council (TSC) reports on Life Skills provision, and on area wide inspections of education and training for 16-19 year olds. Some key findings were that:

- the number of Life Skills Learners in any organisation / training provider was generally low (with 28% having 10 learners or less, and 52% having 11-25 learners);
- the extent of overall participation in some parts of the country was 'low' (and well below Government Office targets), and there were also reported shortages of provision (particularly in some rural areas);
- the length of time learners could remain on Life Skills varied considerably, '*ranging from 10 to 52 weeks*'. Regional reports provide examples of where Life Skills was operated to '*fixed timetables*', and was not seen as flexible and tailored to the needs of individuals;
- the quality of information gathered during initial assessment within the 'front-end' of Learning Gateway was assessed as being in need of improvement;
- the quality of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) was questioned in a number of reports and concerns included that little evidence of assessment appeared in them, and that they were insufficiently individual (e.g. in regard to specific targets or areas for improvement);
- TSC reports provided limited information about progression.

Research<sup>13</sup> (January 2001) undertaken for CCTE/TECs in the South-East echoed these findings, and additionally raised issues pertaining to the relationship between the 'front-end' and Life Skills provision, including that:

- some Life Skills providers were concerned that young people spend '*too much time*' on the 'front-end', leading to reduced occupancy on their programmes<sup>14</sup>; and
- there was a lack of a common definition and shared understanding of '*readiness*' in regard to transitions, with understanding being greatly enhanced between PAs and providers when there were planned training and development activities between the two.

#### (iii) Young people's perspectives on the Learning Gateway

Recent national research<sup>15</sup> (July 2001) into young

<sup>11</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), (2001), Survey of the Delivery of Careers Education and Guidance in Schools. www.nfer.ac.uk

<sup>12</sup> Clough L., (2001) *Review of Life Skills Provision*. Connexions Service National Unit (mimeo)

<sup>13</sup> Berry-Lound, D.B., Bysshe S., and Rowe V. (2001) *South-East Region Review of Life Skills*, South East Region TECs (mimeo).

<sup>14</sup> This concern was echoed in the QPID 2000 research, which added that, 'low occupancy levels, linked with low levels of funding, restricted the ability of providers to deliver the more personalised programme that this particular client group needed'.

<sup>15</sup> Sims D., Nelson J., Golden S., Spielhofer T. (2001) *Young People's Experience of the Learning Gateway*, Research Report 277. Sheffield : Department for Education and Skills.

people's experience of the Learning Gateway (based on a sample of 152 young people in 8 Careers Service areas) revealed that:

- young people's backgrounds and lifestyles indicated that many faced major challenges linked to multiple disadvantage;
- the main motive for joining the Learning Gateway included a need to get some money, find a job, gain some qualifications, change lifestyle or as a response to family pressure;
- those who had been on the 'front-end' for a significant period of time were often grappling with a range of complex problems;
- young people valued the personal help and practical support provided by PAs on a one to one basis;
- young people involved in Life Skills were particularly appreciative of courses that were individually tailored to meet their interests and needs, including work placements and/or outward bound activities;
- young people felt that the Learning Gateway had helped them develop a more positive attitude, enhanced their self-confidence, improved communication and social skills, and increased their motivation to organise their lives more productively.

### Delivery Models

The research in the East Midlands set out to benchmark and review practice across the region. A key element of this was to seek to describe the different delivery models in operation. The research identified three main models of provision:

- **Model A:** In this model, the Careers Service/Connexions Partnership delivers 'front-end' provision, and, working with partner agencies, also holds a contract with the LSC to deliver Life Skills provision, alongside other learning providers.
- **Model B:** In this model, the Careers Service/Connexions Partnership delivers 'front-end' provision, and also has a contract to manage Life Skills provision which is delivered by agreed learning providers, and other local partners.
- **Model C:** In this model, the Careers Service/Connexions Partnership delivers 'front-end' provision, and the LSC contracts with a range of learning providers to deliver Life Skills.

A review of available evidence in the existing research literature on the Learning Gateway would suggest that the predominant model nationally is Model C. In the East Midlands three out of the five areas deliver the Learning Gateway in this way, with one using Model A and one other, Model B.

A range of concerns was raised in the research concerning the current operation of the Learning Gateway, some of which were specific to the delivery model chosen. These included that:

- the planning guidance for the Learning Gateway model puts Personal Advisers in the role of being 'gatekeepers' to Life Skills provision. This is because young people cannot proceed onto Life Skills unless they are referred to provision by a Personal Adviser (PA). This can, and does, cause inter-organisational tensions. This is particularly the case of Model A provision, where 'conflicts of interest' arise when organisations are at one and the same time partners in delivering Life Skills, and the only method of entry onto other providers' programmes;
- the lack of funding support for young people who are not eligible for benefits means that there are pressures to foreshorten the 'front-end' to enable them to access training allowance available when on Life Skills;
- different approaches are adopted by local LSCs in regard to the length of time young people can spend on Life Skills, which can affect the nature of those being encouraged to enter the programme;
- there is uncertainty, and some confusion, about the respective roles of Preparatory Training and the Learning Gateway;
- there are concerns in some areas about the availability and/or quality of Life Skills provision. Echoing national research, this seems to be particularly problematic in some rural areas. Here, a combination of low client throughput, and lack of available providers, means choice can be severely restricted. Indeed, despite best endeavours to date, there are a few - mainly rural areas - in the region where young



people have to travel outside the area to find provision.

### Learning Gateway Performance

The research sought a range of views to assess the operation and role of the 'front-end' across the region, including the relative performance of the different delivery models employed.

In regard to the latter, the team focused on work during the first full operational year of the Learning Gateway. The reason for this was by then the programme was established in all areas, and full data was at the time not available for the current operational year.

A total of 1,626 young people joined the Learning Gateway in the East Midlands between April 2000 and March 2001 (GOEM, Regional and Head Office Management Information System (RHOMIS) data, 2002). The number of starters in the five sub-regions varied quite considerably as follows: 576 (35.4%) GuideLine Career Services; 328 (20.2%) Derbyshire Career Services; 321 (19.7%) CareerPath (Northamptonshire); 218 (13.4%) Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland; 183 (11.3%) Leicestershire Careers and Guidance Services.

In terms of outcomes, an analysis of the 2000/1 East Midlands data shows that 3,226 young people left the Learning Gateway. Of them, 1,144 (35%) are recorded as entering 'into learning' - through further education, work-based training, or other training routes. Interestingly, despite different labour market conditions across the region, and the different Learning Gateway delivery models being used, there was no substantial difference between performance on this key measure between the five sub-regions.

A mixed picture emerged in terms of those entering into learning leading directly to Level 2. Again, no clear evidence emerged about linkages between 'front-end' practice and obtaining outcomes at this level. The situation here is complicated too by the need to make judgements about Level 2 equivalencies in a situation when provision is not being delivered in the context of the NVQ Framework, or National Occupational Standards (NOS).

In regard to those not entering learning, over a quarter of young people (543 - 26%) entered employment, most of which was assessed as being below Level 2. Many staff were keen to indicate that

attaining employment represented for many a significant achievement for young people concerned.

Indeed, some argued in the research, and in subsequent action planning workshops, that they felt the 'goal posts' had moved, in that they indicated an increasing emphasis had been placed on the attainment of Level 2 on programme exit, rather than the wider inclusion goals, highlighted in the original specification. PAs, and others working directly with young people, emphasised the considerable input that was sometimes required over a period to attain even modest gains, and that indicators other than qualification outcomes were necessary to demonstrate the full value of the programme.

Unfortunately the available Regional and Head Office Management Information System (RHOMIS) on the Learning Gateway has severe limitations in terms of its ability to evidence or inform the planning, management and development of the Learning Gateway. The information it provides is mainly to do with 'stocks' and 'flows', in regard to a wide range of inputs and initial outcomes. Critically, it does not include any data about the type, or nature of young people on the programme (e.g. in regard to gender, age, disability, entry qualifications) and so can provide no insights into the progression of key target groups. Furthermore, there is no current requirement - even on a sample basis - to record baseline assessments of clients, so that issues such as 'distance traveled' can be considered (a necessary dimension identified in the original specification).

### Personal Advisers

A key feature of the Learning Gateway was the widespread introduction of Personal Advisers to work with the designated client group. The research in the East Midlands showed that the organisation of Personal Adviser (PA) work and caseloads varies across the region, and in some cases across sub-regions.

Many PAs fulfil a dual role as a Careers Adviser as well as working as a PA. No particular pattern of loading can be linked to particular delivery models, except that in Model A some PAs are also involved in delivering Life Skills provision.

Most PAs seen during fieldwork showed considerable interest in their work, and spoke with enthusiasm about what they were seeking to achieve with young people on the Learning Gateway. However, it is clear that not all staff are happy or

settled in their roles. There are tensions in some areas regarding models of practice - in particular the issue of 'professional autonomy v centralised control'. This manifests itself in areas such as data collection and views on meeting targets.

All PAs seen during fieldwork stressed the critical importance of developing effecting relationships with young people. In relation to assessment, the predominant model in the region is discussion/interview-based work. There is limited evidence of the use of formal assessment tools, although this is being addressed in some areas. A key difficulty here is that without a proven baseline, it is very difficult to assess 'distance traveled'.

### Views and Experience of delivery partners

A postal survey of 137 delivery/referral partners - recommended by Connexions Partnerships/Careers Services as ones they work closely with in relation to the delivery of Learning Gateway across the region - was undertaken, of whom 57 responded (42%).

In terms of their profile 47% were training providers, 14% Youth Services, 12% Further Education Colleges, and 7% voluntary and community groups.

The majority of respondents (57%) assessed the operation of the Learning Gateway in their area as effective or very effective. Slightly less (48%) gave similar ratings to the effectiveness of transition arrangements from the 'front-end' to Life Skills, and/or other options, with 15% indicating that were not effective, and over a third (37%) being unsure.

Just under two-thirds of respondents (65%) rated PAs work as effective or very effective in assessing young people's overall support needs, with 4% believing they are ineffective, and again around a third (31%) being unsure. Given the level of uncertainty expressed throughout the survey, an issue that was considered in follow-up action planning sessions with senior managers and practitioners was how to develop a shared understanding of Learning Gateway, and to build closer links with partners. Proposed solutions included joint training sessions with staff, which is already a feature in more than one sub-region.

### Views of young people

72 young people were interviewed individually, in pairs, or in small groups, as part of the research in the East Midlands. Generally speaking, young people in the sample group were very positive about the personal and practical support they received from their PAs, and were content with their Learning Gateway experience to date.

In terms of particular likes and dislikes, they seemed to most appreciate provision when there was integrated personal support (*'people who have time for you'*), and tailored and varied provision. Dislikes (and/or ambivalence) related to certain activities (e.g. residential training - although the benefits of this are well documented), and periods of inactivity (*'hate just sitting around'*). Other individual concerns related to matters such as a lack in one instance of work experience places, and in another that they would have liked to undertake more than 16 hours on the Life Skills course.

Interestingly, the issue of bonus payments was not widely raised. In the past, research has indicated the value young people placed on them, and urged strongly that they should be part of the promotional strategy. Where the matter was discussed a number of young people in the research said that it was not an incentive. They indicated that they, *'would have joined the programme anyway'*, and that end bonuses would not make them any more willing to do a job with training. There are bound to be issues of deadweight here. Possibly what is required is more consultative work with young people on incentives, and the idea of using monies to provide more targeted support for those in particular need<sup>16</sup>.

### Overview

The aim of the research in the East Midlands was to explore the quality of the 'front-end' and to benchmark and model delivery activities. The quality of the programme has to be first of all considered in relation to its 'fitness for purpose'. The key purpose of the Learning Gateway has been seen in terms of enabling young people to achieve Level 2 (as defined in the National Learning Targets). In the 2000/1 operational year in the East Midlands, only just over a third (35%) of leavers entered learning from the Learning Gateway. It is apparent in this context that there must be concerns about the overall effectiveness, and value for money of current arrangements.

<sup>16</sup> It was argued by PAs in one area that £50 *'does not go very far'* (particularly in circumstances where a young person is having to work *'a week in hand'*, and/or where they need funds to buy necessary clothes or equipment. A hypothesis worth testing is that smaller numbers of larger/more targeted funds might have a greater impact.

The research identified and examined delivery models in order to provide a method of benchmarking. The findings show that there is no marked variation between the effectiveness of the models in increasing outcomes, despite very differing practices. However, critically, the available RHOMIS data fails to describe what is actually happening in relation to progression within, and outside, the programme. As a result, it is not possible to clearly identify the distinctive contribution of 'front-end' providers in achieving the desired learning outcomes.

The main body of available evidence currently resides with young people, practitioners and key delivery partners who provided their own accounts of what constitutes effective policies and practices. They indicate that practice is more effective than the limited intelligence that RHOMIS provides would suggest. In particular they highlighted work in engaging previously disengaged young people, some with multiple-disadvantage, and helping them achieve outcomes such as personal/social development and employment outcomes, as well as learning outcomes.

### Next Steps

The period since the introduction of the Learning Gateway has been one of considerable change and development. For example, the Learning and Skills Council has taken over the functions of TECs, and other bodies, Connexions Partnerships have formed and are planning - or are now delivering - more integrated services to young people, and the Government has recently set out its 14-19 strategy<sup>17</sup>.

The research findings would suggest that the Learning Gateway is in need of review to consider how best it, or a successor programme, can best contribute to policy objectives.

The Government has recently accepted the report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee<sup>18</sup>, chaired by Sir John Cassels, which included recommendations for the development of a new programme called Entry to Employment (E2E). The report indicated that the programmes would have the following features:

- Expert assessment of trainees referred to them to determine barriers to entry into employment and how best to resolve them;
- The development of a programme by means of which identified problems could be addressed,

through for example, life skills training, tuition in basic skills, and work sampling or experience;

- Ongoing assessment of needs, placement and workplace support (as necessary with the assistance of the Connexions Service).

The future development of Learning Gateway provision will clearly need to take place in connection with planned developments of 'E2E'. If it is to be successful, it will need to take account of the lessons learned through the operation of the Learning Gateway to date, and through predecessor programmes such as New Start. Furthermore, clear systems will need to be introduced, to enable those managing and delivering provision to have the necessary intelligence to inform developments and enhance performance, combined with an evidence based evaluation strategy, to show what works and why.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2002) 14-19: *extending opportunities, raising standards: consultation document*. London: The Stationery Office

<sup>18</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2001) *Modern Apprenticeships: The Way to Work. The Report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee*. Sheffield: DJES.

