

The Learning Agreement Pilot in Lancashire, England: supporting young people in jobs without training

Janine Blythe, Head of Service, Connexions delivered by CXL
Louise Elo, Project Manager, Learning Agreement Pilot, CXL
Geoff Gration, Senior Associate, International Centre for Guidance Studies
Deirdre Hughes, Director, International Centre for Guidance Studies

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The International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) is delighted to publish key findings from the first year of the Lancashire Learning Agreement Pilot in England. This initiative aims to re-engage in learning those 16 and 17 year olds who are in jobs with no accredited training. A number of important issues are raised in relation to the effectiveness of brokerage and learning agreements deployed to re-engage 16 and 17-year-olds who are in jobs without training. Findings from this initiative, and other relevant research and evaluation reports, highlight key lessons learned in reaching out and connecting with young people in employment. Clearly, there is significant scope for Personal Advisers to offer enhanced brokerage support for young people and employers. This report illustrates a framework designed to ensure greater coherence in the Lancashire area. This should be of interest to the Skills Funding Agency and allied sub-groups, the UK Commission for Employment & Skills, other government agencies and professionals working with young people and employers.

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- The Lancashire Work Based Learning Executive Forum.

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Formerly known as the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) was launched in April, 2008. Within the context of its significant national and international achievements, the Centre will continue to deliver a research and training programme to bridge the gap between policy and practice within the career guidance field.

International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB
Tel: 01332 591267
Fax: 01332 59776
Email: icegsenquiry@derby.ac.uk
Centre Director: Deirdre Hughes

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Learning Agreement Pilot (LAP) began in April 2006 in eight areas in England as part of the Government's continuing commitment to improve the skills base of young people. Lancashire is one of the LAP areas and CXL (formerly Connexions Lancashire) is working in partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council to re-engage in learning those 16 and 17 year olds who are in jobs with no accredited training. CXL commissioned an evaluation of the first year of the Lancashire LAP focussing upon both its delivery and its impact upon young people and employers¹. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned two separate evaluations of the first year of the LAP nationally, one focussing upon delivery and management issues² and one focussing upon a model of youth re-engagement to test aspects of policy³.

1.2 This paper summarises the key findings from the Lancashire year one evaluation, supplemented by findings from the national evaluations, and raises a number of important issues about the central role of the Personal Advisers and of Information, Advice and Guidance in the LAP. Following a summary of the policy context and a description of the key organisational and delivery features, both nationally and in Lancashire, the results of the CXL evaluation are discussed in relation to the impact of the Lancashire LAP for young people and employers. Drawing upon the model of re-engagement from the DCSF report (Johnson et. al. 2008) the central role of the Personal Advisers, and Information, Advice and Guidance, is discussed. We highlight the added value of strengthening brokerage arrangements at a local level and also providing a level of personalised support to young people. Also, this initiative identified that the financial bonus incentive available to young people was *not* the most significant factor in their engagement, a finding corroborated by the DCSF national evaluation of the pilots. Finally, we set the emerging issues within the current policy

landscape and highlight important lessons learned from the LAP.

1.3 New structural and organisational arrangements for funding, managing and delivering provision for young people provide an opportunity to capitalise upon key lessons from the LAP initiative. This is particularly important given the government's £80 million investment in LAPs and the uncertainty regarding future arrangements after 2009. Key lessons learned include:

- investing in personalised support and ongoing follow-up for young people in jobs without training, building upon existing frameworks that have benefited from piloting funds;
- flexibility of provision both in terms of what can be provided and funded and where the learning and training takes place;
- moving beyond 'basic' brokerage activities towards an enhanced approach that not only connects young people to labour market information opportunities, but also provides employability skills⁴ designed to help young people thrive and survive in the world of work;
- developing a shared understanding of employability skills and how these can improve both productivity and individual skill sets;
- strengthening the linkage between Personal Advisers and other government funded 'brokers' who are working with employers on behalf of young people and/or adults;
- tracking and monitoring young people's employment and/or career journeys over time in order to build the evidence-base for effective careers education, Information, Advice and Guidance interventions.

1.4 It is important that lessons from the LAP are not lost. Also, given the statement made within the White Paper 2008⁵ (p.65; para. 8.9) in relation to 'Train to Gain', it will be essential to achieve greater clarity on the relationship between Connexions

1 Brambles, J. & Lo, J. (2007). *Learning Agreement Pilot: Year One Evaluation*. Unpublished Report: CXL Business Psychology Services.

2 Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Hillage, J., Dewson, S., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P. & Page, P. (2008). *Evaluation of the Activity and Learning Agreement Pilot, Process Evaluation: Year One Report*. DCSF Research Report RW027.

3 Johnson, C., Page, R. & Munro, M. (2008) *Programme Theory Evaluation, Working paper 2 – Signing Up to a Learning Agreement*. DCSF Research Report RW029.

4 Meed, J., Rossetti, A & Knasel, E. (2006) *An Introduction for Subject Learning Coaches: Employability*. London: DfES. Page 2: 'We define employability not just in terms of basic literacy and numeracy, but in the broader terms of the generic and occupational skills that people need to enter and progress through their chosen occupation.'

5 Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) White Paper (2008) *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*. The Stationery Office, Norwich: England.

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Personal Advisers working with employers, and other 'brokers', to ensure the continuation of the kind of personal support much valued within the LAP.

1.5 Within the rapidly changing skills landscape in England, findings from the LAP initiative highlight key issues that need to be addressed:

- how employability skills can be better understood and developed for the benefit of young people and employers;
- the type of training and continuous professional development required to ensure that Personal Advisers are suitably equipped to understand the business needs of employers; and
- the structures and arrangements required to ensure a seamless service to employers whereby 'brokers' for young people better co-ordinate their activities.

1.6 The LAP initiative shows that there is significant potential to increase the emphasis of Personal Advisers connecting with employers to help them develop their workforce plans, specifically with young people in mind. It also demonstrates that local partners need to have clear frameworks within which they operate and well-equipped practitioners who are confident in their dealings with young people *and* employers. There are real benefits in sharing Lancashire's experience with policy-makers within and beyond the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), particularly with those responsible for implementing the National Apprenticeship Service, and to feed into the proposed apprenticeship tracking system.

2. Context and background

The national policy context

2.1 In England, the government's 14-19⁶ agenda, supported by the recently published joint White Paper (2008)⁷ 'Raising expectations: enabling the

system to deliver' highlighted significant economic and social benefits that can potentially be achieved from young people staying in education and training until at least the age of 18. New approaches that identify and respond to young people's learning, employability and information support needs will now be managed at a local level through Local Authority Children's Services. One hundred and fifty Local Authorities will be responsible for commissioning and funding education and training for all young people, working alongside the Learning and Skills Council, to assess and respond effectively to the supply and demand side of education and training provision. Major changes in government policies will now result in new structural and organisational arrangements for funding, managing and delivering provision for young people organised primarily through the Skills Funding Agency which includes: Employment Skills Boards; the National Apprenticeship Service and its relationship to Train to Gain and the National Employer Service and Adult Advancement Careers Service. It will be necessary to work closely with the Young People's Learning Agency and local 14-19 partnerships. Schools, further education colleges and other learning providers, Connexions services, and employers will now perform a vital role in the design and delivery of new approaches including a new Foundation Learning Tier framework⁸, Vocational Diplomas and Apprenticeships. Ideally, these key players will adopt new approaches and new tools designed to signpost, connect and reconnect young people with the labour market in order to help them access relevant paid work and skills development opportunities.

2.2 The challenge ahead is significant given that just under ten percent of 16 and 17 year olds in England – around 100,000 young people – do not participate in any form of education, training or employment. A further 85,000 are in jobs but do not receive any form of accredited training. The problem is repeated throughout the UK and it is

⁶ Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Youth Matters: Next Steps*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

⁷ Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) White Paper (2008) *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*. The Stationery Office, Norwich: England.

⁸ Extract taken from White Paper (2008) – *The Foundation Learning Tier will replace and rationalise the current complex range of provision and qualifications below level 2 to create a coherent set of units and qualifications that are easier for the learners and employers to navigate, and are focused on skills for life and work, subject and vocational based learning and personal and social development* p.90.

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well documented that our nation has one of the lowest rates of participation in full-time education, especially at age 17, in Europe. Whilst the proportion of 16 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) is reported by the Learning & Skills Council to be falling⁹, the latest Labour Force Survey figures show an increase in the proportion of 17 year olds who are NEET. As a result, government Ministers have requested that the September Guarantee in 2008 is extended to cover all 16 *and* 17 year olds. The purpose of the Guarantee arrangement is for youth support agencies to systematically target learners who have not been successful in securing a post-16 place during their final year at school. The overarching aim is to reach out and support non-participants beyond their school experience to enter suitable learning and work.

2.3 In 2004, the *'Supporting Young People To Achieve'* review¹⁰ identified a need to offer financial support alongside a series of approved activities as the best means to encourage greater levels of participation in mainstream education and training provision. It highlighted a requirement to look at further ways to encourage employers to support 'time off for study and training' for young people. Some researchers¹¹ indicate that if policy makers are serious about this, it is necessary to create and sustain young people's interest in learning, and to develop through new arrangements more flexible packages of learning.

2.4 The Chancellor's 2005 Budget announcement formally launched the introduction of two pilot initiatives designed to help achieve the Government's commitment to education and training:

- £80 million over two years for LAPs aimed at increasing learning options for 16-17 year olds in jobs without training (JWT);
- £60 million over two years for Activity Agreement Pilots aimed at supporting and

encouraging back into learning 16-17 year old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

2.5 In policy terms, the LAP builds on the 'Time off for Study and Training' legislation which makes it the statutory right of every 16 and 17 year old young person to have paid time off for study if they have not reached a level 2 qualification during their compulsory education.

2.6 The government's Children's Plan (2007)¹² sets 10 new targets for 2020 to improve pupils' educational attainment, health and well-being. By 2020, 90% of school pupils will be expected to achieve five A* to C GCSEs, up from 60% this year. In view of this and the recent myriad of new youth policy initiatives, including the commencement of a National Apprenticeship Service in April 2009, it is now timely to reflect on key lessons learned from the LAP initiative and to consider how new arrangements can potentially incorporate models of good and interesting policies and practices at a local and national level.

Background information on the Learning Agreement Pilot

2.7 The LAP began in April 2006 in eight areas in England, initially for 2 years but has now been extended by a further year to March 2009. It is a joint initiative between Connexions and the local Learning and Skills Council in each pilot area and is targeted at young people aged 16–17 who are working but not engaged in any accredited training. The Pilot has two aims:

- firstly, to test the effectiveness of brokerage and learning agreements at re-engaging 16- and 17-year-olds who are in jobs without training;
- and, secondly, to test the effectiveness of financial incentives as a means of encouraging employees and employers to take up the offer of training.

9 Mark Haysom, Chief Executive, National Learning and Skills Council *September Guarantee Letter* 7 March 2008, Coventry.

10 M Government (2004). *Supporting Young People to Achieve: Towards a New Deal for Skills*. Norwich: HMSO.

11 Maguire, S. & Thompson, J. (2006). *Paying for young people to stay in school – does it work? Evidence from the evaluation of the piloting of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)*. Research Report 3. Paper prepared for SKOPE and the Nuffield Review. Warwick: Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

12 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007). *Children's Plans: Building Brighter Futures*. CM 7280. London: DCSF. http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The_Childrens_Plan.pdf.

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2.8 Three variants of financial incentives are being piloted and their potential impact on the success of the scheme will form a key feature of the national evaluation. The three variants are: learning agreement only; learning agreement plus bonuses; and, learning agreement plus bonuses and wage compensation. Lancashire was awarded the second variant. **Table 1** below sets out the LAP areas and the variants which are in evidence within the pilot areas. From 1st April 2008, the bonus and wage compensation variant became the bonus only variant; therefore in Year 3 of the Pilot, 2 variants only are being tested.

Changing guidance on delivery meant that some qualifications initially within the Pilot offer were subsequently changed, once LSC guidance was in place by Autumn of the first year, to align the Pilot to increased apprenticeship uptake.

2.10 A Learning Agreement, which outlines the accredited training that the young person will undertake, is drawn up between a Personal Adviser, the young person and their employer. The Personal Advisers also monitor progress in relation to the Learning Agreement and use the Connexions

Table 1. LAP Variant and Pilot Areas	
Learning Agreement variant	Local Authority area
Agreement only	Black Country
Agreement only	Essex, Southend and Thurrock
Agreement only	West Yorkshire
Agreement plus bonus payment	Cornwall and Devon
Agreement plus bonus payment	Lancashire
Agreement plus bonus payment	South Yorkshire
Agreement plus bonus payment and wage compensation	Greater Manchester
Agreement plus bonus payment and wage compensation	London East
<i>Source: McGuire et. al. (2008)</i>	

2.9 Issues encountered during the lifetime of the Pilot, both within Lancashire and the other Pilot areas, have included those linked to the changing delivery and partnership context and to the changing guidance on delivery. The issues linked to the changing delivery and partnership context included:

- the re-organisation of local LSC departments in the first year of delivery which meant that some Pilots were up and running from the Connexions side but had little guidance initially from local LSC partners (these LSC local changes are ongoing and affecting both national and local arrangements);
- the re-organisation of the Connexions service, with most services being re-integrated back into local authority delivery of Children and Young People's Services (although this was not true of the Lancashire delivery which went over to an independent 'social enterprise' as the parent organisation for the Pilot).

Customer Information System (CCIS) to record progress. The Learning Agreement follows key principles, outlined in the Learning Agreement Delivery Specification (December 2005):

- Personalised: agreed activities are tailored to the individual and take account of personal needs and abilities, determined by the profiling and assessment process undertaken by the young person with the Personal Adviser.
- Participation: focusing on encouraging and supporting the young person to participate in accredited training.
- Flexibility: ensuring, where possible, that learning provision is responsive and flexible to meet the needs of the young person and, where applicable, their employer.
- Progression: support and learning provision that provides appropriate progression routes for the young person to achieve higher-level qualifications if appropriate.

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The eligible learning provision comprises all qualifications listed under Section 96 of LSC's Learning Aims Database, except employer-led qualifications. This includes qualifications accredited at Level 2 or above but does not include stand alone National Vocational Qualifications. It does include:

- Apprenticeships
- Advanced Apprenticeships
- BTEC and similar FE courses
- GCSEs
- A-levels

The provision may be that which supports progression to Level 2, as long as the learning plan also addresses basic and/or key skills; including:

- NVQ1
- Technical Certificates
- Basic Skills (literacy and numeracy)
- Short courses over ten guided learning hours (and on Section 96)

Stand alone Key Skills qualifications, including wider skills and those which support the LSC's Skills for Life Target, are also eligible.¹³

3. Organisation and delivery of the Learning Agreement Pilot – in Lancashire and other LAP areas

Demographic context

3.1 Across England, most of the pilots cover large geographical areas where there are pockets of economic prosperity as well as areas where there are high levels of social deprivation, including youth unemployment and a concentration of low skilled/low paid work. Encouraging young people to seek opportunities beyond their immediate locality is a challenge in most areas. Considerable movement or 'churning' takes place among young people in the NEET and JWT groups and this is largely attributed to the nature and content of the employment available to young people in JWT and to the low level of aspirations often found among young people in the NEET group.

3.2 The service sector drives Lancashire's economy, combined with the manufacturing sector which is changing into an advanced high technology, high skill sector led by aerospace and advanced engineering. There are skills priorities identified for Lancashire to support growth sectors in creative industries, aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Against this changing industrial landscape there is also a number of key developments taking place which include:

- development of Blackpool as a world class resort destination with town centre renewal, neighbourhood improvements and improved transport facilities;
- investment of £2bn Preston City Vision, Tithebarn retail scheme, Central Commercial Quarter and Riverworks residential, leisure & tourism facilities; and
- the Pennine Lancashire Transformation Agenda involving the Elevate housing renewal, the Pennine Lancashire Gateway Strategic Employment Site and town centre investment in Blackburn & Burnley.

A number of areas where skills need to be developed have been identified and these include:

- enhancing enterprise and entrepreneurship;
- skills in tourism and hospitality;
- construction related opportunities to support housing market renewal;
- retail and leisure developments; and
- digital, information technology and science-based industries.

There are over 855,000 people of working age in Lancashire and of these 73.5% are employed, 3.7% are unemployed and 22.8% are economically inactive. Maximising the number of people who are active and in work with the skills employers need is key to improving economic performance and prosperity. Given this, it is clear that the concept of 'employability skills' needs to acquire a greater currency for individuals and employers.

¹³ Sources: *Learning Agreement Pilot Delivery Specification*, December 2005. *Learning Agreement Pilots Local/Regional Guidance*, May 2006. *Learning Agreement Pilot Guidance*, February 2007.

Organisational context

3.3 The piloting of the Learning Agreements came at a time of major change for many of the key partners coinciding with a programme of structural reorganisation for national and local LSCs and within Connexions Partnerships. Local LSC arrangements had shifted towards a regional agenda, resulting in changes to staff levels, roles and responsibilities. Connexions Partnerships and services were also facing structural change over a two-year period. In each local authority, arrangements for Children's Trusts were being set up and the funding that previously went directly to 47 Connexions Partnerships was, by April 2008, redirected to 150 local authority areas in England. The speed at which this process has taken place has varied significantly across areas.

3.4 When the pilot was launched in 2006, Connexions Lancashire Ltd was commissioned, through the three Local Authorities, to continue to deliver the Connexions Service sub-regionally. It was agreed at this time that the Pilot would be delivered the same way. In April 2007, CX Limited (trading as CXL) was formed and LAP staff continued with the ongoing delivery of the pilot which enabled stability in terms of ongoing delivery. Lancashire LSC was also in the midst of significant upheaval which prevented both the deployment and recruitment of staff until the third quarter of the year. To mitigate against the potential risk of this, the Project Manager worked across both Connexions and the LSC for the first nine months and was significantly supported at a senior management level from Lancashire LSC enabling planning and contracting to take place with relative ease.

Management and staffing arrangements

3.5 Across the pilot areas there are two types of management structure in evidence.

- In pilot areas where few local authorities are involved, project managers tend to have a direct involvement in staff recruitment and operate centralised control over the delivery of the pilot, including both centralised management and standardised delivery.
- In pilot areas where a greater number of local authorities are involved, a devolved management structure is in place. Here, local managers report to their project manager, and have responsibility for the recruitment of operational staff.

3.6 A particular strength of the Lancashire LAP is the subcontracting model between Connexions and the Learning Providers. During the planning phase it was decided that Lancashire would build upon the collaborative approach, trialled by previous projects, and extend the engagement activities to include:

- Learning Providers;
- Education Business Partnership; and
- Business Link.

This approach helped maximise the pilot's ability to engage with employers and thus support the achievement of targets for engagement, both with employers and young people.

Having a Personal Adviser located with the organisation that would deliver the learning had the added benefit of increasing the profile of the pilot. This approach helped to promote a better understanding of what the pilot was trying to achieve and how it would complement mainstream delivery. Ultimately this created flexibility in terms of what learning was offered, at what level and where it could be delivered.

This subcontracted model of engagement was also extended to provision. Where there was an evidenced need, learning providers were encouraged to extend their offer, thereby widening participation. One example of this is the 'Construction Award': CXL collated details of individuals wanting to undertake Construction Awards either to further their career in construction or to facilitate their movement into the sector. Unfortunately, construction provision across Lancashire was heavily oversubscribed, especially at the lower levels. CXL worked with a private provider (Multitask) to develop a foundation level award and then brokered a link with Accrington and Rossendale College's Construction COVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence). This approach provided significant flexibility in terms of how the learning was delivered extending it to include delivery on employers' premises. It has been continuously developed to the extent that Multitask are about to launch their mobile assessment unit, enabling the award to be delivered totally off the college premises, ultimately enabling 60 young people to complete their Construction Award.

3.7 Effective management of the Lancashire pilot is ensured by constant communication at all levels characterised by:

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- regular KiT (Keep in Touch) meetings between the project manager and the partnership manager LSC;
- monthly project management meetings, with an emphasis on performance and problem solving, comprising project manager, team leaders, LSC partnership adviser, management information specialists and funding and contracts personnel;
- team meetings with team leaders and all staff, including provider and partner-based personal advisers to communicate changes, share good practice and to reward achievement; and
- quarterly 'buddy' group meetings between advisers in localised areas to give peer support and to discuss particular issues as they arise.

3.8 Nationally, the majority of LAP Personal Advisers are located in Connexions Offices. In some cases, LAP teams are quite separate from mainstream staff and their responsibilities are organised either on a geographical basis or in terms of responsibility for young people working in specified occupational groupings. Some LAP Personal Advisers work with both young people and employers, while in other areas two separate teams of LAP Personal Advisers co-exist. In the DCSF national evaluation report (McGuire et. al. 2008, p. 47) the role of LAP Advisers was reported by many respondents to be very different to that of the generic Personal Adviser operating within mainstream Connexions Services. These Personal Advisers focus on working with young people and have generic training to recognise and empathise with young people's personal needs. However, delivery of LAP requires a different set of skills, which includes 'selling' the concept of LAP to both young people and employers, and many areas had struggled to recruit staff who could effectively work with both client groups.

Within the Lancashire team, it was recognised that specialised training on 'employer engagement', 'sales' and mentoring/coaching support would enhance the varied skill set of the Personal Advisers. This type of training, together with a minimum standard of NVQ 4 in Information, Advice and Guidance, ensured that all Personal Advisers possessed a combination of skills whereby each was comfortable talking to the employer network and could also offer high quality Information, Advice and Guidance and mentoring support to each young person that was engaged with the Pilot.

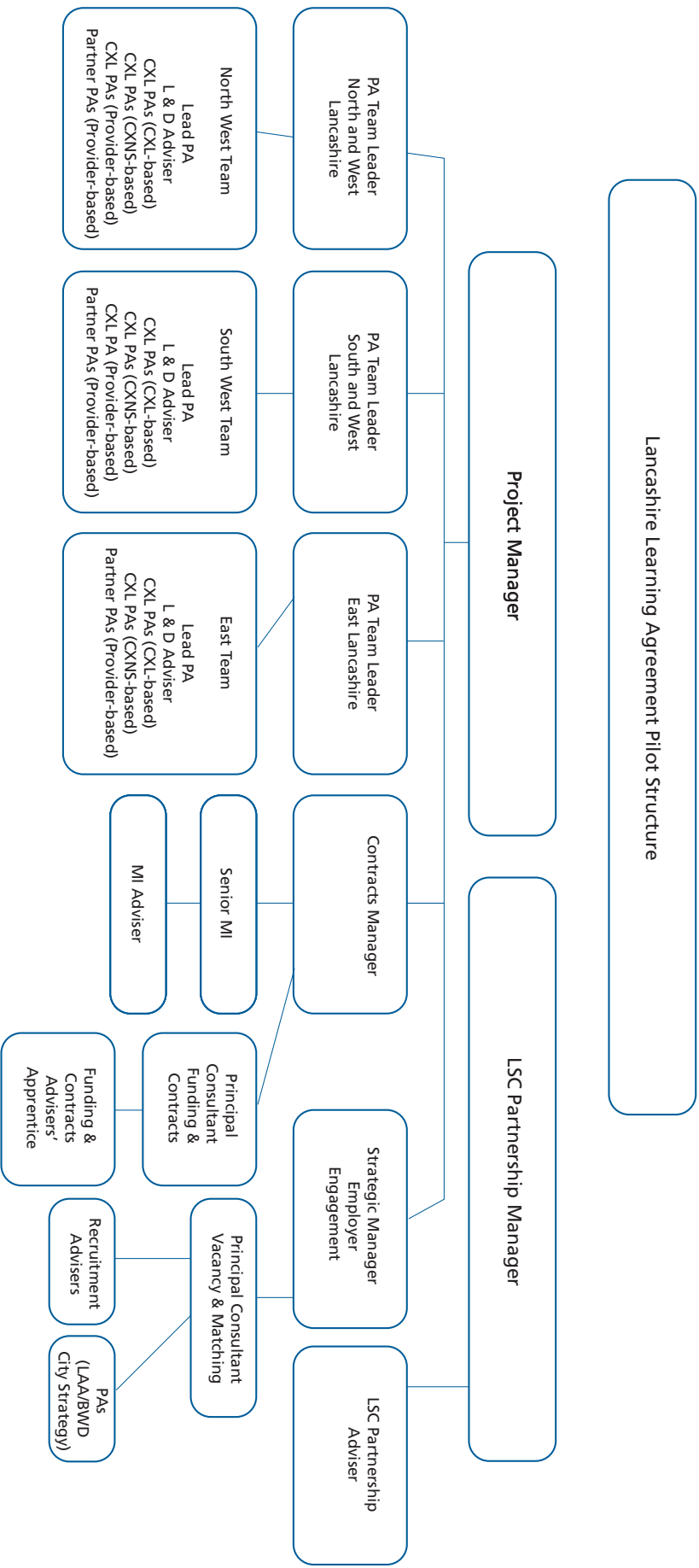
3.9 CXL took the decision to deliver the Pilot with the majority of Personal Advisers based within Connexions Lancashire, approximately 22, and with 13 Personal Advisers based within the local provider network. In Lancashire the role of the Personal Advisers is to support the employer and young person to ensure that the learning needs of each individual is met. However, within the Personal Adviser role based within the local learning provider network, a more specialist function is in operation whereby the Personal Adviser also acts as the main conduit for referrals from the wider team of Connexions-based Personal Advisers. This local arrangement for delivery ensures cohesive cross-boundary working relationships and an effective partnership approach. Supporting the work of the Personal Advisers are the following roles:

- *Learning and Development Advisers (LDAs)* providing up to date information on a range of learning opportunities available. The LDA is a unique role, used initially to work creatively with providers to identify the qualifications and learning that could be offered, including breaking down existing programmes into their component parts. One example of this is NVQ level 1 and key skills provision. Initially, none of the providers were able to deliver this on a stand alone basis as none had previously been contracted to deliver this by the LSC; however, many had delivered this type of provision through E2E programmes. With the LDAs lead on this, and with the support of the LSC, an infrastructure was created to pay providers for this separate delivery. The LDAs also lead on the development of learning, for example, the Construction Award detailed earlier and the sourcing of learning.
- *Funding and Contract Advisers* monitoring payments and sign ups for the agreement.
- *Management Information Advisers* collating management information in relation to targets, project data and reporting.

A particular strength of the Lancashire pilot is the partnership established between the local LSC, Connexions and the Learning Providers mediated through the activities of the Learning Provider Personal Advisers.

The diagram on the next page summarises the key management arrangements in the Lancashire pilot and the relationship between the partners.

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PA refers to Personal Adviser

Awareness raising and marketing

3.10 Nationally, a wide range of promotional events and materials have been developed within pilot areas including:

- project launch briefing sessions/visits to local stakeholders;
- production of information materials for young people and employers;
- media coverage including radio, and dedicated LAP websites such as the Lancashire Learning Agreement website: www.cxl-nextlevel.co.uk and the CXL website: www.cxl-uk.com;
- the targeting of specific employment sectors with high numbers of young people in jobs without training; and
- the location of LAP Personal Advisers within providers' premises.

In Lancashire, all of these forms of marketing were in evidence, though the first year evaluation of this pilot area suggested that some promotional materials could have been made available earlier. The Personal Advisers were central in marketing the scheme throughout Lancashire and in ensuring effective communication between young people, employers and learning providers. In particular, Personal Advisers became involved in networking events such as Chamber of Commerce and local employer forums.

Identifying and securing learning provision

3.11 As highlighted in 2.9, Context and background, nationally there has been some confusion about what could, and what could not, be offered within LAP and this had resulted in some agreements being offered which included stand alone NVQ qualifications at Level 2. Subsequent changes to the national guidance on the delivery of LAP had clearly set out the boundaries of the qualifications that can be offered. The eligible learning provision comprises all qualifications listed which are included under Section 96 of LSC's Learning Aims Database. This includes qualifications accredited at Level 2 or above but does not include standalone NVQs. There is a general recognition, both in the Lancashire pilot and elsewhere nationally, that the withdrawal of the NVQ 'bite size' and short courses from the LAP offer has reduced the ability to meet individualised learning needs.

3.12 In Lancashire the providers, in particular, recognise that many of the intended LAP cohort are those described as 'disengaged learners' some of

whom for a variety of reasons have found little, if any, academic success. The provider strategy to engage these young people has been to present material in a manner which enables the learner to achieve at regular intervals, thereby maintaining motivation and engendering the possibility of qualifications. NVQ units and short courses have been utilised to this effect and providers have been able to provide extra learning support as necessary on this basis.

3.13 The withdrawal of the NVQ unit offer is also problematic to those Lancashire providers who would like to work with seasonal employers and their young employees. Whereas initially the providers' aim was to select appropriate units tailored to the individual's need that could be completed within the seasonal time span, there is now a significantly reduced offer on the table. To further challenge the providers, with the stand alone NVQ 2 no longer part of the LAP offer, many providers are currently struggling to find available level 1 provision to meet employer need. This leaves, in some instances, the offer of key skills which is often rejected by those young people who have not enjoyed success in main stream education.

3.14 In response to these challenges some Lancashire providers have been in a position to develop:

- a level 1 alternative in conjunction with the LSC to harness employer/employee demand with the hope in the future to be able to progress their young people to the level 2 qualification; and
- a range of innovative new courses to stimulate and further the existing interests of young people.

Take-up rates and delivery targets

3.15 As the DCSF evaluation report makes clear (McGuire et. al. 2008, p. 60), there have been significant variations nationally in terms of levels of take-up, both between pilot areas and within pilot areas. Take-up rates were highest in pilot areas which comprised a small number of local authority areas and where the pilot was centrally managed. This appeared to have facilitated a clearer understanding of expectations from all parties, since communication strategies were in place between much smaller numbers of key players. In terms of take-up a distinction needs to be made between the total number of young people eligible for the pilot, the number of those eligible that the LAP Personal Advisers were able to contact, and the number of contacts who sign up to a LAP. A distinction is often

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made in reporting learner agreement participation between those young people who are eligible but prefer not to sign up to a learning agreement (non-signers) and those who do sign up (signers).

A further complication is the distinction between a 'starter' and a 'learner.' Among Connexions personnel, a young person was classified as having started LAP, when the Learning Agreement had been signed by all parties. However, signing a Learning Agreement did not signify that a young person had started their accredited training programme and therefore local and national LSC relied on an ILR (Individual Learning Record) being activated by the provider, which established that a young person's training had started.

3.16 Across all pilot areas many providers reported difficulties uploading ILR data onto LSC systems, and this impacted on accurate data being recorded on LAP take-up rates.

In Lancashire, a 'buddy system' was introduced to help providers support one another with ILR/LAP data submission. The providers were also supported by the LSC Partnership Adviser to ensure that accurate coding of the ILR using a LAP specific tracking number was clearly communicated to other staff within the provider organisations involved in processing ILRs. Using these transparent processes and support enabled CXL management systems and LSC's in-learning data to be cross-referenced to ensure an accurate 'in-learning' figure was established.

3.17 **Table 2** below summarises the relevant take-up data for the Lancashire pilot in the first two years of its operation.

	2006/2007		2007/2008	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Eligible young people in JWT	N.A	1,918	N.A	2,506
Sign-ups	1,133	1,078	1,366	1,095

3.18 As already noted above, the Personal Advisers have been central in marketing the scheme in Lancashire and in ensuring effective communication between young people, employers and learning providers. A detailed breakdown of the Lancashire data shows that, as the year progressed, steady improvements against targets were made in contacting eligible young people and in signing them up to the Learning Agreement.

Contacting eligible young people is the first important step in the process of engagement that leads to many of them successfully signing a Learning Agreement and participating in accredited learning or training.

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Chart 1 below shows the monthly contacts against targets for the first year of the Lancashire pilot; the steady increase in contacts reflects the growing experience of Personal Advisers in the community and the greater efficiency that now exists within the LAP sign-up and course engagement process. The chart also indicates the accurate profiling of targets to reflect the initial build up of marketing and related start-up activity.

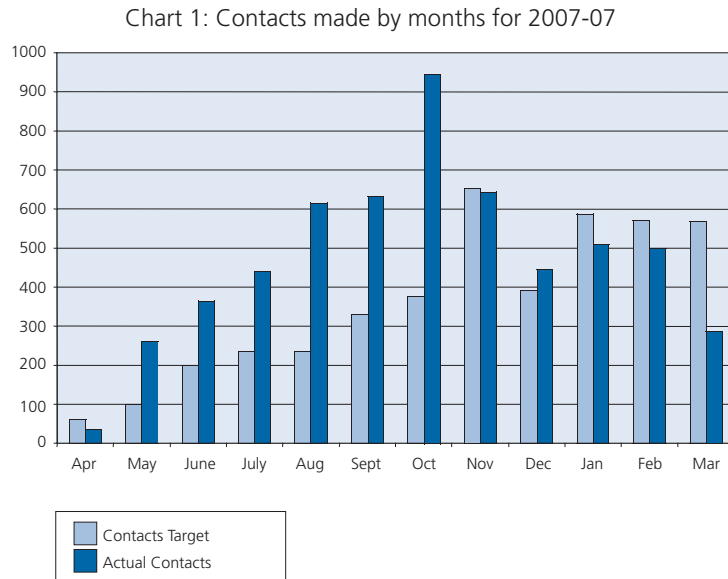
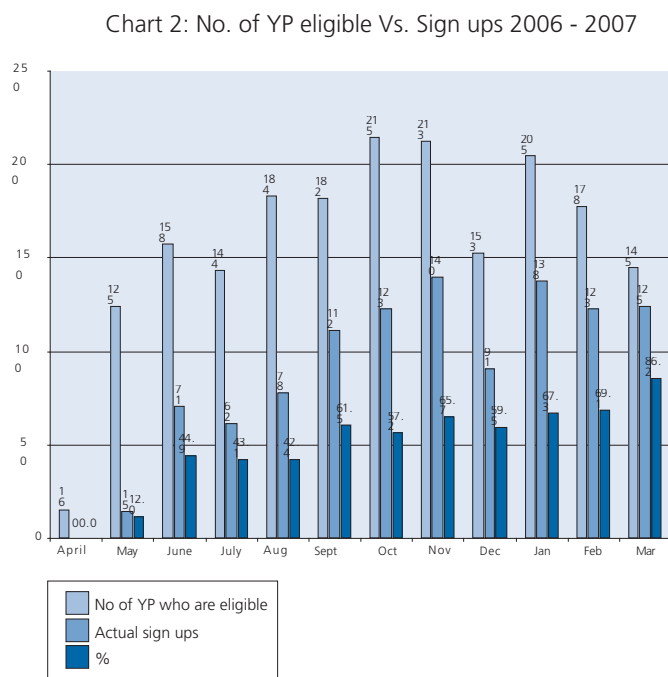


Chart 2 below shows the monthly actual sign-ups against the number of eligible young people in the first year of the Lancashire pilot; although there was still a short fall between the number of young people engaged on the pilot and those who are eligible, this differential steadily decreased as the pilot progressed, again reflecting the growing experience of the LAP Personal Advisers.



4. Impact of the Learning Agreement Pilot for young people and employers in Lancashire

The young people survey

4.1 As part of the CXL evaluation of the first year of the Lancashire pilot, a sample of 82 young people representing 10% of the pilot beneficiaries was selected from the available management information. The sample proportionally represented the delivery areas, the Personal Advisers to whom they were assigned, gender, ethnicity and disability. The sample group was also selected with a view to representing young people who were at different stages of engagement with the pilot. The following stages were examined:

- young people who had just signed up to the pilot;
- young people in the middle of their learning agreement;
- young people near completion;
- those fully completed; and
- early leavers.

The young people sample group was surveyed by telephone using a semi-structured questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction levels against a number of service delivery elements using a five-point scale where 1 represented 'very dissatisfied' and 5 represented 'very satisfied.' Respondents were also asked a number of open-ended questions about the perceived impact of the pilot. These questions focussed upon a number of areas ranging from how they had found out about the pilot, how the Personal Adviser support had helped them in the workplace, whether the training had helped them at work, through to whether they would recommend the service to others.

Young people's perceptions – survey results

4.2 In summary, the results for the satisfaction ratings show that a clear majority of respondents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the programme overall and with all of the specific elements of the pilot they were asked to rate. The Personal Advisers' knowledge of the training available, the effectiveness of their support and advice and their understanding of the young people's needs were particularly highly rated by the respondents. Generally, only a very small minority of young people were dissatisfied with the elements of the programme they were asked to rate. These high satisfaction ratings are further reflected in the findings that a clear majority of respondents said that they would recommend the service to a friend and that there was nothing that could have been done differently to improve their experience. The value that the young people surveyed place on the training they received, and its impact on their future careers, is reflected in the finding that for the majority of respondents participation in the pilot was not dependent upon the financial bonus payment. The detailed results from the young people survey are shown in the tables below.

4.3 A clear majority of respondents (90.2%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the effectiveness of the support and advice offered by the Personal Adviser, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This was supported by an overall mean score of 4.5. A full break down can be found in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with the effectiveness of the PA in giving support and advice?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
2.4%	-	1.2%	6.1%	32.9%	57.3%
Mean score: 4.5					

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A clear majority of respondents (85.4%) also reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the Personal Adviser's knowledge of the training available, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This was supported by an overall mean score of 4.43 suggesting that the Personal Advisers were up-to-date with the training in their corresponding areas. A full breakdown can be found in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with the PA's knowledge of training available?'						
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not relevant – no opportunity to discuss training
2.4%	-	1.2%	9.8%	31.7%	53.7%	1.2%
Mean score: 4.43						

Of the respondents who had started the training and were therefore potentially able to comment, just over half (54.3%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with accessing the training, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This is supported by a mean score of 4.28. See **Table 5** below.

Table 5. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with accessing the training?'						
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not relevant – not started training yet
11.1%	-	2.5%	8.6%	22.2%	32.1%	23.5%
Mean score: 4.28						

Of the respondents who had started the training and were therefore potentially able to comment, just over half (51.2%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the learning/training they had received, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This is supported by a mean score of 4.28. See **Table 6** below.

Table 6. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with the learning/training you received?'						
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not relevant – not started training yet
14.6%	-	1.2%	2.4%	20.7%	30.5%	25.6%
Mean score: 4.28						

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A majority of respondents (70.7%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the information they received about the pilot, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This suggests that the materials used with young people were effective and fit for purpose. This is supported by a mean score of 3.94. See **Table 7** below.

Table 7. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with the information you received (brochures, materials) about the pilot?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
3.7%	4.9%	3.7%	17.1%	36.6%	34.1%
Mean score: 3.94					

A clear majority of respondents (90.3%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the Personal Adviser's understanding of their needs, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This was supported by a mean score of 4.45. See **Table 8** below.

Table 8. Young people: 'How satisfied were you with the PA's understanding of your needs?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
2.4%	-	1.2%	6.1%	36.6%	53.7%
Mean score: 4.45					

In terms of overall satisfaction with the programme, 85.3% of respondents reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', giving a rating of either 4 or 5. Only 10.9% reported that they were either dissatisfied or unsure about the pilot experience overall. The mean score was 4.39. See **Table 9** below.

Table 9. Young people: 'Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the programme?'						
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not relevant
2.4%	-	2.4%	8.5%	34.1%	51.2%	1.2%
Mean score: 4.39						

4.4 In addition to the satisfaction ratings above, all young people in the sample were asked to comment on a number of areas ranging from how they had found out about the pilot, how the Personal Adviser support had helped them in the workplace, whether the training had helped them at work, through to whether they would recommend the service to others.

4.5 The young people were asked how they had found out about the pilot; 75.6% of respondents in the sample said that this had been through Connexions or a Personal Adviser; 10.8% found out about the service through a friend or relative; and 6% were informed through work (the remainder did not comment). This

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suggests that the direct contacting of young people, by the Personal Advisers, is having the positive impact required.

4.6 When asked to comment on how the support offered through the Personal Adviser had helped them at work, 48.8% of respondents commented positively on the help they had received to support them in the workplace; 35.4% reported that they didn't really feel there had been a change or that the support had made a difference in the workplace; and 15.8% commented that the support they were receiving was outside of work so this question didn't apply. A sample of positive comments from young people about the Personal Adviser support in the workplace is shown below.

Lancashire young people's comments on the Personal Adviser support:

'always there to help'
'can move departments, more flexibility in job role'
'has helped with sorting out a course alongside work'
'has helped with interview techniques and hence got the job I wanted'
'helped me to feel comfortable and motivated'
'identified what I want to do in life'
'kept in contact with me'
'made me realise how important getting a
'made me feel like I was doing something right'
'taught me more about the job'

4.7 When asked how the training or learning helped in the workplace, 33.6% reported the training had helped them; 19.0% reported they felt there had been no change or impact as a result of the training; 9.6% could not comment because they had not yet started the training; and the remaining 37.8% made no comment at all or said this question was not relevant because they had not yet started training. The positive comments about the effect of training or learning ranged from specific help (percentages, improved numeracy, improved basic skills) through to help at work, improved

knowledge, being more aware, customer service and better focus.

4.8 The young people were asked to say how important receiving payments was in their decision to start/finish the programme; 16.8% saw the payment as important, suggesting this may have been a motivating factor in participating; 31.2% saw the payment as an additional bonus and felt other benefits were more important and that they would have taken part anyway; and 38.4% didn't see the payment as important at all, again suggesting they would have participated anyway (the remainder did not comment). Thus, 69.6% of participation was not dependent upon the bonus.

4.9 When asked to say how they felt the pilot had helped them on a personal level, 32.4% said it had increased their confidence; 9.6% reported that it had helped them understand what they wanted to do and gain a sense of direction; and 32.4% reported that they did not perceive any changes on a personal level (the remainder did not comment). Thus, 42% of the total sample felt that the pilot had had and impact on a personal level.

4.10 When asked what the LAP could have done differently, 75.6% said there was nothing they thought should have been changed; 4.8% felt that there could have been more information about the availability of courses; and 6% felt that accessibility to their Personal Adviser could be improved (the remainder did not comment). Some young people reported that more sessions with the Personal Adviser, and their getting back to them when they had left messages, would have been welcomed. Increased information could have helped one young person who said they were 'having problems deciding which career path to choose and had spoken to three different Advisers.'

4.11 Finally, the young people were asked if they would recommend the pilot experience to their friends; 88.8 % people said that they would and a number of these reported they had already recommended the pilot to a friend (the remainder did not comment). This clearly indicates the value the clear majority of beneficiaries place on the pilot.

Case Study 1

Samantha left school at 16 to work in child care at a local nursery. She didn't enjoy school for a variety of personal reasons and she was reluctant to go to college. With the support of her employer and Personal Adviser she was encouraged to join the Lancashire LAP and began an NVQ2 programme in Child Development at a local college of further education. Having successfully completed the NVQ, Samantha signed up for a second Learning Agreement to complete an Apprenticeship in Childcare. Whilst participating in the LAP she also regularly volunteered to support young children and babies with special needs. Samantha describes the benefits of the LAP:

'I really enjoyed going to college and then applying the knowledge at work the same week, it made me understand the reasons behind our working practices and made me want to learn more. I enjoy my job at the Nursery but knew that if I didn't go back to education I would be limited to the more basic tasks rather than the challenging jobs that I wanted to do.'

Both her employer and her college assessor felt that the LAP experience had increased Samantha's confidence and strengthened her position within the Nursery team.

The employer survey

4.12 As part of the CXL evaluation of the first year of the Lancashire pilot, a sample of 41 employers was selected from management information supplied by Connexions Lancashire. The sample group represented 8% of those having engaged with the Pilot. Employers were selected according to the following criteria:

- geographical location;
- representation of Personal Adviser engagement; and
- length of time on the pilot.

The employer sample group was surveyed by telephone using a semi-structured questionnaire. Employers were asked to rate their satisfaction levels against a number of service delivery elements using the same five-point scale used in the young people survey. Employers were also asked a number of open-ended questions about the perceived impact of the pilot.

The employers' perceptions – survey results

4.13 In summary, the mean satisfaction scores from the employer survey were generally slightly lower than those from the young people survey. Nevertheless, a clear majority of the employers surveyed were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the overall service they received from the Personal Adviser and how they saw the

professionalism of the Personal Adviser. A smaller majority of employers were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the more specific aspects of the Personal Adviser service that employers were asked to rate. Employers were least satisfied with how useful and informative the available marketing materials were. A clear majority of the employer sample reported that they would be happy to recommend the service to others. However, a greater proportion of the employer sample gave examples of what aspects of the pilot they would like to change compared to the equivalent group from the young people survey.

The number of employers who were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the service provided was quite small with some possible development issues identified from the employer survey including: greater effectiveness and relevance of the marketing materials used; more communication from the Personal Advisers; a greater focus on the business needs for some employers; and in some cases, greater speed in setting up the learning/training programme. The results from the employer survey are detailed below.

4.14 A majority of employers (65.8%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in providing support and advice, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. A significant minority of the sample (19.5%) did not

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comment including a number where the service was not working with their organisation, possibly where the young person is undertaking training/learning not related to the workplace and therefore not in work time. The mean satisfaction score was 4.09. See **Table 10** below.

Table 10. Employers: 'How effective was the PA in giving support and advice?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
19.5%	2.4%	4.9%	7.3%	34.1%	31.7%
Mean score: 4.09					

Just over half of the employers surveyed (56.1%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the relevance to their needs of the information and guidance provided by the Personal Adviser, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. A significant minority (12.2%) were not satisfied; 14.6% did not comment which may be attributable to the point already made above, namely the possibility that the young person is undertaking a course of study outside of the workplace. The mean satisfaction score was 3.82. See **Table 11** below.

Table 11. Employers: 'How relevant to your needs did you find the information and guidance you were given by your PA?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
14.6%	2.4%	9.8%	17.1%	26.8%	29.3%
Mean score: 3.82					

A majority of employers (61.0%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' that the Personal Adviser fully understood their business needs, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. Once again, a significant minority (17.1%) did not comment. The mean satisfaction score was 3.94. See **Table 12** below.

Table 12. Employers: 'Do you feel the PA fully understood your Business Needs?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
17.1%	-	9.8%	12.2%	36.6%	24.4%
Mean score: 3.94					

A majority of employers (70.7%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how knowledgeable the Personal Adviser was about the available training provision, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. The mean satisfaction score was 4.22. See **Table 13** below.

Table 13. Employers: 'How knowledgeable was your PA of the available training provision?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
14.6%	-	4.9%	9.8%	31.7%	39.0%
Mean score: 4.22					

Just over half of the employers (51.3%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how effectively they thought the training was organised, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This result, together with the significant minority (22.0%) who were 'unsure', is reflected in the mean satisfaction score of 3.84. A significant minority (22%) did not comment, possibly due to their lack of involvement in the external training of the young person. See **Table 14** below.

Table 14. Employers: 'How effectively do you think the training was organised?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
22%	2.4%	2.4%	22%	29.3%	22%
Mean score: 3.84					

Only a third of the employers surveyed (34.1%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how useful and informative the available marketing materials were, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. This result, together with the significant minority (24.4%) who were 'unsure' and those who were dissatisfied (21.9%), is reflected in the lowest mean satisfaction score for employers of 3.15. A significant minority (19.5%) were not able to comment possibly due to the delay in the LAP providing the marketing materials. See **Table 15** below.

Table 15. Employers: 'How useful and in formative were the available marketing materials?'					
No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
19.5%	14.6%	7.3%	24.4%	19.5%	14.6%
Mean score: 3.15					

A clear majority of employers (75.6%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how they saw the professionalism of the Personal Adviser, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. Only 2 respondents (4.9%) reported that they were dissatisfied with the service reflected in the highest mean satisfaction score for employers of 4.37. See **Table 16** below.

Table 16. Employers: 'Did you consider the PA to be Professional?'

No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
14.6%	-	4.9%	4.9%	29.3%	46.3%
Mean score: 4.37					

A clear majority of employers (75.6%) reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' overall with the service they received from the Personal Adviser, giving a rating of either 4 or 5. Although the percentage of employers satisfied with the overall service from the Personal Adviser is the same as that for satisfaction with their professionalism (previous question), the proportion of 'satisfied' to 'very satisfied' is different; this is reflected in the slightly lower mean score of 4.2 for this question. See **Table 17** below.

Table 17. Employers: 'Taking everything in to account, how satisfied were you with the service you received from the PAs'

No comment	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Unsure (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
14.6%	-	4.9%	4.9%	43.9%	31.7%
Mean score: 4.2					

4.15 In addition to the satisfaction ratings above, all of the employers in the sample were asked to comment on a number of areas ranging from how they felt the young person had developed, what changes, if any, they would make to the pilot, through to whether they would recommend the pilot experience to others.

4.16 When asked how employers felt the young person had developed, 38.4% of respondents reported that the young person had developed positively, though a significant minority of employers (21.6%) reported that they could not see a positive change in the young person. An even smaller minority (14.4%) reported that they could not comment as the young person had either not started the training or had only been on the training for a short period of time, making it difficult at the stage of the evaluation to comment on any possible impact (the remainder did not comment for other reasons).

The reasons for seeing positive changes varied: some employers tended to focus on more tangible work-related outcomes such as learning different ways of doing things, improving customer relations and taking more responsibility; others focussed on more generic outcomes, such as increased confidence, motivation and maturity. To illustrate this, one employer commented: 'Attitude; customer service; developed herself; self motivated and more ready for work.' Another commented the young person had 'grown up a bit and opened his mind to what's involved.' One employer stated the young person was 'getting worse.' Another employer stated there had been some improvement but was not sure if this was due to the training provided by the LAP or what had been provided in house.

4.17 When asked what changes employers could suggest to improve the process or their experience of being involved with the pilot, 46.2% reported there was nothing that they would change; 11.8% reported they would have liked more focus on their business needs and, in particular, more relevant training; 9.6% reported they would have liked more communication; 4.8% reported they would have liked the set-up process to be quicker overall; and 4.8% reported they could not comment as they were not involved from the start (the remainder did not comment for a variety of other reasons).

4.18 Employers were asked whether they would recommend the service to others and 76.8% of the sample reported that they would. For example, one stated: 'Yes ... good for young person to get qualification'; another commented it was: '...a good idea helping young people.' A minority of employers who were happy to recommend the service commented on the benefits to the organisation. For example, one reported: '...helps business and the young person'; another reported: '.... it helps employees learn more and if they can't train them it's a great way for them to get training'; yet another said: '...takes the burden off the employer to be able to speak to some one with regard to training and also without intervention of the Adviser I would not know about technical certificates.'

5. The role of Personal Advisers and Information, Advice and Guidance in the workplace

The role of Personal Advisers

5.1 The key conclusion of the CXL evaluation of the first year of the Lancashire pilot is that it has been effective in engaging with young people in jobs without training, and with their employers, principally through the professionalism and pro-activity of the Personal Advisers. As already noted in an earlier section, a clear majority of young people participating in the pilot were satisfied, or very satisfied, with the Personal Advisers' support and with their understanding of needs. Similarly, a clear majority of employers were satisfied, or very satisfied, with the overall service they received from Personal Advisers and with their professionalism.

The CXL evaluation has also identified that the financial bonus incentive available to young people was not the most significant factor in their engagement, a finding corroborated by the DCSF national evaluation of the pilots. Young people's comments about the critical influence of the Personal Advisers in increasing their motivation and focus, also already noted in an earlier section, point to the *significance* of the Adviser role in engagement especially when viewed alongside the relative *insignificance* of the financial bonus.

The importance of the Adviser role in engagement is further supported through the findings of the DCSF programme theory evaluation (Johnson et. al. 2008); it is reported (p. viii) that:

'Most signers regarded the main benefit of doing learning via the Learning Agreement rather than in another way as the one-to-one support they received from their Connexions adviser. Some said they would not have done any learning if it had not been for their adviser, although others felt that they would have done so eventually. The personalised nature of the support and guidance was very important, in particular for those young people who had been 'turned off' school or college. It was crucial that these young people did not feel 'forced' into something which they felt they had already turned down by leaving education.'

A model of re-engaging young people

5.2 The DCSF programme theory evaluation report provides further insight into the role of the Adviser; given the importance of this role in motivating and focussing young people we will examine it in more detail. In the DCSF programme theory evaluation, discussion groups were carried out with Connexions staff, particularly Personal Advisers, and in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of young people who had either signed up to the Learning Agreement or who had decided against it. Through this process a model of 'learner types' was constructed and, for each learner type, the likely impact of the Personal Adviser role was described. The DCSF main conclusion was that the impact of the Personal Adviser role appears to be more complex than first hypothesised and depends upon

the young person's individual circumstances and his or her learner type.

5.3 A key difference between 'signers' and 'non-signers' is not so much any significant difference in personal characteristics but has more to do with their circumstances at the time that they are approached, including their experience of work; for example whether they are working in what they consider to be a 'good job' that they enjoy, or whether they are already receiving on the job training or were already planning to learn. Interestingly, for those who do decide to participate in the Learning Agreement, their experience of work continues to have an impact by frequently determining the type of learning they sign up to. Young people who were in a job they liked were more interested in doing some work-related training, whereas those who were in a job they disliked tended to be interested in doing a more general, transferable course such as a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), or to work on improving their key skills if they had low GCSE grades for Maths and English.

5.4 Another key conclusion from the DCSF process evaluation is that many, though not all, young people were already interested in doing some further learning and for them the contact from the Personal Adviser was seen as a timely and welcomed opportunity to take this interest forward. Others, although not actively interested in or seeking learning opportunities, were nevertheless open to the possibility especially if they felt it would improve their job prospects over the medium-term. A consequence of this is that for many signers the Personal Advisers acted as 'door-openers', helping them to channel an existing interest by supporting them to find and apply for relevant courses. However, for other young people the Personal Adviser acted as a 'kickstarter', encouraging and supporting the young person to develop their interest in learning.

5.5 Although the DCSF evaluation did not find a particular type of young person who was more or less likely to sign-up to a Learning Agreement, it did identify a number of learner types which determined when the 'door-opener' or 'kickstarter' Personal Adviser support and high quality Information, Advice and Guidance was most appropriate. These learner types range from the 'stuck in a rut' type (those likely

to have periods of being NEET, with very low or no GCSEs and who are open to the possibility of learning but haven't really thought about it before), to the 'go-getter' type (those with reasonable GCSE grades, very interested in learning and likely to have approached Connexions for advice about learning/training opportunities).

5.6 For the 'stuck in a rut' and similar types of learner the Personal Adviser's role is as a kickstarter, encouraging and supporting the young person to develop their interest in learning. For the 'go-getter' and similar types of learners the Personal Adviser role is as a door-opener, directing young people to learning opportunities and channelling their existing interest in learning, rather than kickstarting it. In such cases, the support and, in particular, the Information Advice and Guidance sessions provided by the Personal Adviser may trigger the learning itself, rather than the initial interest in learning. In some cases, in particular among non-signers, Personal Advisers were not able to open the door to learning, for example by not being able to find the appropriate provision. Other non-signers might be 'go-getters' but already have learning opportunities or progression available to them within their existing work. **Table 18** below is reproduced from the DCSF process evaluation report and shows all of the identified learner types and appropriate Personal Adviser role.

5.7 In developing this model further, the DCSF report goes on to describe in more detail the different levels of Personal Adviser support appropriate to the different learner types. For example, the door-opener role may include help with finding and applying for courses, and may involve help with the pre-course assessment process and even support with preparing for entrance exams and interviews. The kickstarter role involves a higher level of one-to-one support, both initially and throughout any learning, and is likely to be more demanding on Connexions in terms of staff time and the tracking of young people and their progress. The kickstarter role may include providing Information, Advice and Guidance, career planning, building confidence and interest in learning and possible additional support such as attending the first day of learning provision.

Table 18: Learner types and Adviser role (reproduced from Johnson et al. Op cit.)

Learner type	Background and circumstances	Interest in learning	Adviser role
Go-getters	Reasonable GCSEs, know what they want to do, have direction, employer might suggest they do some learning.	Very interested in learning and likely to have approached Connexions for advice about this.	Door-opener
Killing time	Clear future plans – i.e. starting college (may have dropped out before), or working in a job for which they have to be 18.	Interested in learning already. May approach Connexions or Connexions may approach them.	Door-opener
Trying again	Know what learning they want (often an apprenticeship), and what job they would like (often skilled trades). Previously failed to get onto a relevant course.	Interested in learning to secure favoured job which requires qualifications. Likely to have approached Connexions for help.	Door-opener
Drifters and Flitters	Move between different jobs/ sectors, and circumstances change frequently. Unsure of what they want to do in the future and lack direction.	Some interest in learning, but unsure what to do or how to go forward. Connexions likely to have approached them.	Kickstarter
Stuck in a rut	Likely to have periods of being NEET, in and out of work, and change jobs frequently. Very low or no GCSEs. Usually low-skilled, low paid work and not sure of what they want to do.	Want to improve prospects, but unsure how. Open to possibility of learning, but have not really thought about it before. Connexions has approached them.	Kickstarter

Case Study 2

Zac was one of a number of young people on the Lancashire LAP who won awards for personal achievement at a local awards ceremony. Zac's Most Committed Learner Award and Learner of the Year Award were in recognition of his enthusiasm and commitment to gaining qualifications. Zac has overcome many hurdles in his personal life and has still been enthusiastic and committed to successfully completing his NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service and his Application of Number Key Skill at Level 2; he has now signed up to complete his full Apprenticeship. Zac describes the benefits of the LAP:

'I've got a qualification that I can take away with me wherever I go - I can say I have a customer service qualification. The best thing of how I benefited is that I am better with customers. I'm hoping to become a manager or own my own shop. My PA rings me up at least once every 2 weeks to see what's going on. There is nothing bad to say about it really, it's all good. It's been brilliant!'

Beyond 'brokerage'

5.8 The term 'brokerage' is currently used within the guidance community, both in practitioner and policy circles, to refer to the process of guidance professionals mediating between service customers and organisations such as training/learning providers and employers. Indeed, as already noted, one of the two aims of the LAP is: 'to test the effectiveness of brokerage and learning agreements at re-engaging 16- and 17-year-olds who are in jobs without training.' However, this implies that the key role of the Personal Adviser is *simply* to connect the young person with the most appropriate learning or training option. In many cases this is true; as we have discussed above, for

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several learner types the Personal Adviser's main role is to signpost young people in the appropriate direction and assist in opening the door to learning and/or training opportunities. However, the experience of the Lancashire pilot, and of other pilot areas, is that for a significant number of young people more than 'brokerage' is required to inspire and motivate them to engage successfully in learning and training. In these cases, the Personal Adviser role goes beyond 'brokerage' to include career planning through individual Information, Advice and Guidance sessions to enable young people to develop a longer-

term vision for themselves together with personal, social and emotional support through coaching and advocacy to enable their career plans to be achieved.

5.9 This wider role of the Personal Adviser, and of Information, Advice and Guidance, is illustrated by **Case Studies 3 & 4** from the Lancashire pilot. The case studies show the range of 'beyond brokerage' support provided by the Personal Advisers that has been needed to enable these learners to put into place their career plans and personal goals.

Case Study 3

At the time of meeting his Personal Adviser, Nathan was happy to earn a good regular wage, cash in hand, as a motor mechanic in the 'black economy.' This meant that joining a formal work-related learning programme was problematic; furthermore he was apprehensive about classroom-based learning. The Personal Adviser met him on a regular basis to try and reinforce the benefits of working in the legitimate economy including long-term career development, national insurance and PAYE contributions and health and safety considerations. Following up a lead from a learning provider, the Personal Adviser identified a full-time vacancy at a local garage and negotiated a 'trial day.' The employer was impressed with Nathan and, with continued personal support, he eventually accepted a full-time job at the garage and signed up to a Learning Agreement following a level 2 Apprenticeship at a local college of further education. He sums up the benefits of the experience:

'I am really enjoying my time at the garage – I've been gaining really good experience in all aspects of the job from assisting with MOTs to tyre changes. I would really recommend the Learning Agreement Pilot as you get the best of both worlds – working and learning.'

Case Study 4

In a relatively short period of time, Elizabeth worked in a number of different jobs in Lancashire, first as a seasonal worker in catering, then as an assistant at a local kennels and, most recently, at a local store. Throughout this process of changing employment, Elizabeth was supported by her Personal Adviser who discussed a variety of career development pathways and possible work-based learning options. Eventually, Elizabeth started an apprenticeship in Business and Administration to support her current job at the local store.

Although Elizabeth is now in a job with training, her Personal Adviser was concerned as to how long she would stay in her current employment given her recent history; as a result, the Personal Adviser continued to support her by providing a mentoring role. The Personal Adviser has also maintained liaison with Elizabeth's training provider and ensured that her Assessor is aware of her employment history. This follow-up and multi-agency approach has helped Elizabeth to identify potential issues that could become a barrier to her learning. She continues to attend her training course, the feedback from her Assessor is positive and her employer is pleased with her progress. Elizabeth has requested additional portfolio work and at her current pace of work is on target to achieve a full level 2 earlier than originally expected.

6. Lessons learned: where next?

6.1 In England, a major challenge for all agencies and employers working with young people is to raise the skills base of those at level 2 or below. It is generally recognised that considerable movement or 'churning' takes place among young people in the jobs without training (JWT) and for those not in education, employment and training (NEET). This is largely attributed to the nature and content of the employment and training opportunities available to young people. The LAP initiative has clearly demonstrated the added value of strengthening brokerage arrangements at a local level and also providing a level of personalised support to young people. CXL also identified that the financial bonus incentive available to young people was *not* the most significant factor in their engagement, a finding corroborated by the DCSF national evaluation of the pilots.

6.2 As discussed in Section 1, new structural and organisational arrangements for funding, managing and delivering provision for young people provide an opportunity to capitalise upon key lessons from the LAP initiative. This is particularly important given the government's £80 million investment in LAPs and the uncertainty regarding future arrangements after 2009. Key lessons learned include:

- investing in personalised support and ongoing follow-up for young people in jobs without training, building upon existing frameworks that have benefited from piloting funds;
- flexibility of provision both in terms of what can be provided and funded and where the learning and training takes place;
- moving beyond 'basic' brokerage activities towards an enhanced approach that not only connects young people to labour market information opportunities, but also provides employability skills designed to help young people thrive and survive in the world of work;
- developing a shared understanding of employability skills and how these can improve both productivity and individual skill sets;
- strengthening the linkage between Personal

Advisers and other government funded 'brokers' who are working with employers on behalf of young people and/or adults;

- tracking and monitoring young people's employment and/or career journeys over time in order to build the evidence-base for effective careers education and Information, Advice and Guidance interventions.

6.3 It is important that lessons from the LAP are not lost. Also, given the statement made within the White Paper 2008¹⁴ in relation to 'Train to Gain', it will be essential to achieve greater clarity on the relationship between Connexions Personal Advisers working with employers, and other 'brokers', to ensure the continuation of the kind of personal support much valued within the LAP.

6.4 In the context of the new employability skills landscape with a plethora of new emerging Agencies, Boards, Partnerships, Sub-Regional Groups and a new National Apprenticeship Service, key findings from the LAP initiative offer a number of connecting themes such as:

- how employability skills can be better understood and developed for the benefit of young people and employers;
- the type of training and continuous professional development required to ensure that Personal Advisers are suitably equipped to understand the business needs of employers; and
- the structures and arrangements that need be put in place to ensure a seamless service to employers whereby 'brokers' for young people better co-ordinate their activities.

6.5 Clearly, the issue of making more readily available good quality jobs for young people is a major challenge. The LAP initiative shows that there is significant potential to increase the emphasis of Personal Advisers connecting with employers to help them develop their workforce plans, specifically with young people in mind.

6.6 The emergence of the Foundation Learning Tier, the roll-out of vocational diplomas and emerging new qualifications in the post-16 landscape offer

14 Op cit. "... the Train to Gain service (which is to be integrated with Business Link) will encompass those in employment under 19 who are not on apprenticeships to ensure they have access to the necessary training." (p.65, para. 8.9).

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potentially increased opportunities but, at present, there is significant confusion for many individuals who want to know more about 'the returns' for investing their time and money in training. The LAP initiative demonstrates that local partners need to have clear frameworks within which they operate and well-equipped practitioners who are confident in their dealings with young people *and* employers.

Finally, there are real benefits in sharing Lancashire's experience with policy-makers within and beyond the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), particularly with those responsible for implementing the National Apprenticeship Service, and to feed into the proposed apprenticeship tracking system.

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