Effective Collaboration in Post-16 Education

Local Government Association

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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The purpose of the FEFC is to secure further education provision which meets the needs and demands of individuals, employers and the requirements of government in respect of the location, nature and quality of provision.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

The LGA speaks for nearly 500 local authorities representing more than 50 million people and spending £65 billion a year on local services. It promotes the case for democratic local communities which are prosperous, safe, healthy and environmentally stable, and which provide equality of opportunity for all citizens.

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■ 1 *Introduction*

Background

1.1   This guide is one result of the joint determination of the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) to harness their resources as effectively as possible to tackle under-participation and to raise standards in post-16 education and training. This work is a response to the new government's emerging agenda. It builds in particular on the ambitious priorities set out by Baroness Blackstone in a letter to the two organisations of 5 March 1998:

To make our Investing in Young People strategy a reality we must ensure that educational institutions are focused on what really matters – raising standards, improving real choices for young people, and being accountable for the quality of education provision on offer. In recent years too many institutions have been distracted from their task by the demands of a competitive market in post-16 education. This has led to expensive duplication of provision and has undermined the effective local partnerships that can support high standards. We must do more to improve collaboration, accountability and cost-effectiveness in 16–19 education.

1.2   The delivery of coherent, cost-effective and high-quality learning opportunities for young people and adults has been at the heart of the work of local education authorities (LEAs) and further education (FE) colleges for many years. Since 1992, colleges have been operating independently of the local authorities, although some colleges have continued to work closely with the LEA, particularly in the areas of adult and community education. Whilst respecting the autonomy of the individual providers, the LGA and the FEFC have committed themselves to working together to identify areas where collaboration could lead to:

- ■ raising educational standards
- ■ improving the quality of education
- ■ increasing choice and enhancing the quality of guidance
- ■ encouraging suitable broadening of the curriculum
- ■ improving cost-effectiveness
- ■ ensuring access to local provision
- ■ encouraging coherence of local planning and avoiding wasteful duplication of provision.

Case Studies

1.3   The case studies which have been selected for this guide are intended to illustrate good practice in many of these areas. Individually and severally they also demonstrate how effective collaboration could lead to:

- ■ better guidance at transition
- ■ local and regional information sharing
- ■ enhanced accountability through mutual representation at college, LEA and school level and open planning mechanisms
- ■ co-ordinated provision whilst maintaining a network of autonomous providers.

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1.4   These case studies contained in this report are based upon analysis of documents and interviews with a small number of key players. Further details about working methods can be found in the concluding section of the report. It is important to remember that the case studies offer only a partial snapshot of the collaboration. They provide brief summaries of rather complex patterns of human relationships and activities in order to enable colleges, schools and LEAs to identify new possibilities and to decide whether they want to find out more. These outline case studies are due to be followed up by a more extensive and detailed study by a joint team of Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and FEFC inspectors during the course of 1998.

1.5   The report begins with the individual case studies. It moves from the general to the particular, beginning with a broad partnership which involves a wide variety of players and supports the development of specific, targeted partnerships which respond to a local need. The remaining case studies explore focused partnerships in more detail. The report concludes with a summary of common problems and of factors leading to success which seem to have emerged in the study, together with a short description of the working methods. These include the use of a postcard survey of colleges and LEAs and thanks are due to the very large numbers of hard-pressed LEA and college managers who responded so quickly.

2 Networking and Collaboration: The Staffordshire Example

Profile: Purpose and Policy

2.1   This case study illustrates how the apparently 'soft' activities of establishing and sustaining networks of relationships can result in a wide range of harder, more concrete outcomes. It explores the web of formal and informal committees, panels, working groups and channels of communication which exist in Staffordshire and the contribution they make to students in the region.

Origins and duration

2.2   Staffordshire has a long history of taking a keen interest in post-16 education. The process of school reorganisation in the early 1980s highlighted the problem of providing coherent, cost-effective post-16 provision. In the mid-1980s Staffordshire's technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI) programme gave very strong emphasis to the role of clusters of schools and associated colleges. In 1993 the LEA ensured that the colleges entered the FE sector with a resource base which would enable them to continue to flourish and to maintain effective relations with local schools and indeed with the LEA. The county's developing policy was described by one senior officer as 'giving priority to the needs of students by providing a tertiary offer without, in the main, tertiary institutions'.

Operation

2.3   The LEA, schools and colleges have identified a range of channels of communication including:

- regular termly meetings between the chief education officer, one of his deputies and the college principals
- appointment of a college principal to the continuing education subcommittee of the education committee and to the education committee itself
- appointment to the board of four of the FE colleges of the three members of the senior management team of the education department
- a group exploring 'a partnership for lifelong learning' chaired by the chief education officer, involving the colleges, schools, library service, the training and enterprise council (TEC) and the youth and community service
- a chief education officer's working party involving schools and colleges focused on lifelong learning. From this has grown a series of district groups of schools and colleges managing devolved community funding and taking a 14+ perspective of education development. These local groups will be linked with a county-wide umbrella organisation to take an overview and manage discretionary awards, transport and planning.

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2.4   College principals, through other management panels and working groups, are able to make a formative contribution to the shaping of LEA policy. For example, a college principal participates in the panel which oversees one of the education support services and two college principals represent others on the management panel for the Staffordshire Learning Net.

2.5   In short, education providers in Staffordshire can draw on close connections between colleges, schools and the LEA at many levels and upon cross-representation on committees to underpin specific, task-focused working parties.

Scale of activities

2.6   Typically, both formal and informal activities contribute to effective working. Meetings of the different forums such as college corporations, education subcommittees and working parties are dictated by the rhythms of the teaching year. The proceedings of these and of LEA subcommittees and panels are public.

2.7   Underpinned by a shared commitment to meeting student needs and raising their aspirations and attainments, these activities:

- encourage multi-agency trust
- provide a means of responding jointly to the practical tasks, opportunities or challenges as they occur
- whilst not preventing conflicts of interest, do establish communities capable of ensuring that resulting tensions do not become major battles
- build such confidence in shared educational goals that the LEA, the schools and the colleges can, from time to time, make concrete sacrifices in the interests of the students whose needs they serve.

2.8   The test of the operational effectiveness of these networks lies more in the activities they generate than in the detailed workings of conferences and meetings. The overt proceedings of the groups are much like others:

- papers are prepared and discussed
- where one college or school represents several, attempts are made to allow time for consultation
- meetings comprise a mix of formal agenda items raised in response to national policy and local needs and more general issues raised in the course of discussion.

Examples of collaborative outcomes

2.9   The arrangements outlined above underpin concrete projects. This section describes the operational arrangements for three of the projects which have been generated by the communications network:

- the Staffordshire Learning Net
- school–college collaboration
- the Community Education Programme.

2.10   Each of these mini-projects has its own arrangements for communication, decision-making, resourcing and quality assurance. Few of the projects are directly answerable to the discussion groups and committees identified at the start of the case study. The role of these groups may therefore seem tangential. Yet interviews with participants and evidence from paperwork suggest a consistent picture for a good number of schools and colleges, that is, a picture of channels of communication robust enough to:

- symbolise the importance of collaboration; and
- release the energy needed to enable people to create and respond to a vision, take risks and see beyond short-term conflicts of interests.

The Staffordshire Learning Net

2.11   Progress towards widespread harnessing of the capacity of information and communications technology (ICT) was piecemeal and slow. The chief education officer was widely credited with having taken the initiative to drive the creation of a critical mass of networked resources, thus improving teaching and existing collaboration in a single venture.

2.12   The Learning Net is intended to connect all education providers in Staffordshire (schools, colleges, Staffordshire University and the careers service), through a partnership between providers, the LEA and the TEC. It will also connect schools with the business community through college–business relations, through sponsorship from two large companies and by providing resources for small business and job-seekers. The electronic connections are to be accessed through learning centres, many of which are open learning centres, available for community use. At the learning centres, ICT will be used to connect learners to appropriate course materials, tutors and other resources.

2.13   The purpose of the learning centres is to help meet the need for:

- increasing the number of adult lessons in the centre
- enhancing local facilities for existing students who live some distance from their college or university (and, incidentally, reduce traffic)
- enhancing the curriculum for all pupils in all schools
- supporting homework clubs
- developing new procedures and courses which can be used elsewhere
- supporting small businesses and job-seekers.

2.14   Progress at the start was slow. But once one college started to put materials on the system, other colleges and schools began to follow suit. As new teaching materials are prepared from ICT resources faster progress is anticipated. Whilst schools and colleges recognise the steep learning curve and consequent slow progress to date, they also recognise the potential and symbolic power of the Staffordshire Learning Net and believe that it was important for the community that the LEA provided leadership rather than waiting for all the appropriate conditions to be in place.

School–college collaboration

2.15   Staffordshire schools cover a range of ages; many have sixth forms and some are large and growing. Colleges are more self-contained in some areas than in others; for example, in Newcastle and Stoke, college catchment areas overlap and competition creates

the potential for conflict. However, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent FE colleges, together with the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College have prepared a joint application to the further education collaboration fund in an attempt to rationalise provision within the new unitary authority of Stoke-on-Trent. Each college has established very specific approaches to school collaboration with varying levels of perceived success. Nevertheless, the basic collaborative infrastructure does appear to create a predisposition to collaboration. There are attempts to work together as cost-effectively as possible and, as one principal put it, 'to demonstrate that the focus of FE is not poaching but raising standards'.

2.16   School–college collaboration takes other, more detailed, and very practical forms:

- north Staffordshire schools and colleges have been working together to establish operating procedures which reduce bureaucratic burdens on teachers by, amongst other things, creating common application and reference forms

- a collaborative 'Aiming High' project was established in north Staffordshire to provide a 'shot in the arm to year 9 pupils' through a series of intensive activities such as providing high-profile national speakers and music and dance workshops. Here the college provided sponsorship and the LEA provided pump-priming resources.

2.17   The patterns of collaboration between schools and colleges are, of course, complex. The LEA's commitment to encouraging schools to promote and to mount vocational education had the effect, for a time, of increasing the sense of competitiveness between schools and colleges. But over a longer period it seems to have enabled school and college staff to work together more closely. This has resulted in a shared understanding of the importance of increasing the parity of esteem for vocational and academic education and the pedagogic implications of vocational teaching and learning.

The Community Education Programme

2.18   The Staffordshire colleges record quite active involvement in community education and point out that mechanisms exist to enable imaginative use of LEA community funds to support a wide range of inter-agency collaboration, including FE–schools collaboration, such as the Newcastle-under-Lyme College involvement in the Chesterton Community College project.

2.19   In 1996 the LEA agreed to lease to Tamworth College a building and site in Lichfield previously designated as an adult education college. This enabled the two enterprises to merge, as Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges, and to develop a collaborative community education programme encouraging, for example:

- a family literacy programme

- a bridging programme for disaffected year 11 students

- courses for parents who want to provide classroom support

- progression routes from these activities into further education and training.

2.20   As one member of the college staff put it, 'combining our resources for [secondary] community and further education enables us to try to cater for everyone and to zoom in on specific problems such as disaffection'.

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2.21   The colleges participate in the Partnership for Lifelong Learning chaired by the chief education officer, which has recently recommended the devolution of community education funds to district level. Those colleges which have close and formal ties and agreements with schools are, of course, much more confident about sustaining the creativity and flexibility which such funds have offered in the past. It seems likely that any early insecurities will be explored and reduced through committee discussion and through well-established channels of communication to ensure that policy goals focus on the needs of learners.

2.22   Most of the projects have internal quality assurance mechanisms which help to ensure that loosely structured relationships do not lead to inattentive management. Nevertheless there seems to be a consistent view that there is scope for further, more focused attention on some of the harder-edged aspects of collaboration. In some cases, this process has already begun and schools and colleges are focusing in on narrowing some of the gaps between the different approaches of the FE and schools sectors to issues such as quality assurance. Specifically the two approaches to target-setting are thought to be an important area for further development.

Benefits

2.23   For school and college managers the benefits of the county-wide encouragement of the collaboration include:

- being well informed of developments across sector and institutional boundaries
- having the chance to influence developments in the local educational community
- access to resources either directly in terms of LEA, school and college resources or indirectly through applications to the single regeneration budget (SRB) or to the European Union (EU) funding programmes which require collaboration
- access to discussions which encourage trust, extend thinking and open up creative possibilities
- access to a forum which is capable of creating and taking a longer-term view
- a route for developing creative interventions.

2.24   For teachers, the county-wide forums help to create:

- access to staff development resources and opportunities
- opportunities to teach in a wider range of programmes and to maintain contact with students for longer
- access to ICT materials and resources and, through ICT, to teaching materials developed across the schools, FE and higher education (HE) sectors.

2.25   For students, the county-wide forums help to create:

- access to a wider choice of vocational and non-vocational programmes
- greater access to ICT facilities
- more coherent continuity and progression routes and better information about post-16 education
- access to connected programmes of activity focused on raising attainment; for example, parent support courses, family literacy programmes and post-16 programmes.

2.26   For the community as a whole, county-wide forums help to create:

■ better use of resources by reducing unnecessary competition or duplication

■ more continuity and better transition between school, post-school, further and higher education

■ a clearer focus on raising aspiration and attainment

■ better access to ICT resources

■ a sense of connection with a wider community with a vision for the future.

Obstacles

2.27   The obstacles encountered by the forums are mainly those which confront most initiatives:

■ the need to identify common meeting times for a wide range of hard-pressed senior managers

■ the need for cash, human and capital resources

■ the need to balance a desire for swift action against the need for inclusive consultation processes

■ the need to allow for the way in which the annual education cycle slows down progress

■ the need to overcome short-term apparent self-interest in order to secure longer-term, common goals.

2.28   However some obstacles are particular to colleges and schools:

■ the complexity of the nature and remits of the organisations involved and of the nature of the post-16 offer

■ the differences in funding, quality assurance and accountability mechanisms which apply to schools and colleges. Personalities are an important factor here. As one senior officer put it, 'incorporation didn't really disrupt collaboration between the LEA and some colleges . . . People will work through structures if they are inclined to do so'. In Staffordshire, many were. The chief education officer's experience of reconciling different interest groups across the FE and schools sectors in the Inner London Education Authority was one factor. Several college principals had some common experiences and built on them. This is not universal. Individual college principals and headteachers face particular, inescapable and immediate demands which periodically absorb their attention and make collaboration seem either unattainable or of secondary importance

■ the high political profile of post-16 education in general and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) provision in particular and the lack of parity of esteem between vocational and academic programmes which can create disproportionate insecurities within institutions

■ the discontinuities created by local government reorganisation.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

2.29   The success of the relatively abstract goals of the forums is demonstrated in part by their outcomes in the form of projects geared towards improving teaching, learning, cost-effectiveness, coherence and accountability.

2.30   Other indicators of success evident in the Staffordshire network include:

- good rates of attendance at meetings

- an interest in the work of the groups and a desire to be involved on the part of others

- a capacity to anticipate and to respond flexibly to new initiatives (for example, the Staffordshire Learning Net and the National Grid for Learning)

- the compromises made at different times by different partners

- increased participation and attainment in post-16 education and training in the county.

3 Raising Standards: The Tamworth Opportunities Post Sixteen Collaboration

Profile: Purpose and Policy

3.1   The Tamworth Opportunities Post Sixteen (TOPS) collaboration is a substantial collaborative partnership between one college and 11 local schools supported by the LEA and the training and enterprise council (TEC). The major aim is to enable access to a tertiary curriculum whilst retaining the autonomy of individual institutions.

3.2   Although the partnership has a specific identity it contributes to and draws upon a complex network of collaborative relationships between the college, the schools, the LEA, the local university and other local colleges. Both the college and the LEA have used collaboration to create and reinforce networks of educational opportunities. The local TEC has also, periodically, been able to provide strong financial support for vocational collaboration.

3.3   This case study highlights the activities focused upon raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. It also illustrates how the collaboration tackles issues of access and choice and improves value for money. This project co-ordinates and assures the quality of full-time 16–19 provision in the Tamworth and Lichfield area.

Origins and duration

3.4   The project has its roots in the certificate of pre-vocational education (CPVE) and the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI). The first significant collaborative venture was in 1982-83, when the college and the schools jointly secured approval to offer part-time business and technical education (BTEC) first certificates; a mode which was particularly relevant to local students. The explicit, comprehensive, joint development of 16–18 vocational programmes which determines the nature and quality of the vocational opportunities now offered to students, started in 1991.

3.5   Factors which seem to have been influential in securing the collaboration include:

- a commitment to high-quality post-16 education and the leadership of the chief education officer and some of the college principals

- a unifying experience in arguing for local flexibility with a national agency

- an explicit and enthusiastic emphasis on collaboration within the Staffordshire approach to TVEI, supported at a local level by financial incentives

- a strong commitment to school clusters by the LEA and success in developing and sustaining these

- the college decision to cease to compete with schools on full-time GCE A level programmes

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- a determination in 1990, brokered by the LEA, to seek a solution to 'the tertiary problem'. The partners describe the partnership as 'a tertiary curriculum without a tertiary college'

- continuing support by the LEA through grants for education support and training (GEST) funding

- continuing and growing interest in the vocational programme by students.

Operation

3.6   The project steering group is convened by the project director and makes strategic and management decisions. The group includes representatives from the college, each school, the LEA, the careers service and the TEC.

3.7   The project director meets weekly with school and college co-ordinators, for both operational decision-making and staff development purposes. This group reports to the project steering group.

3.8   The TOPS project provides a comprehensive range of vocational courses to all students within the catchment area of the college and 11 schools (three of which are out of county). Courses at a basic level involve attendance for three days a week at school and two days a week at the college. More advanced courses involve three days at the college and two days at school.

3.9   The project has been a catalyst for joint staff development. For example, staff in school and in college have worked together to acquire training and development lead body (TDLB) assessor awards. Staff work together from all institutions on professional development relating to teaching styles and in response to particular issues which cause concern, such as disaffection.

3.10   The project has also resulted in the development of joint teaching materials and the pooling of teaching resources.

3.11   The project enables teaching across institutional boundaries. For example, teachers from special schools teach college courses as part of an arrangement to enable year 11 special school students to be taught for part of the time on college courses.

3.12   All schools have a designated co-ordinator at a senior level who is timetabled for consortium business each Friday morning and who is therefore free to attend meetings and staff development activity. Other staff are timetabled to cover agreed teaching on the basis of a shared unit of resource which is roughly comparable to FEFC funding units.

Quality assurance

3.13   Quality assurance operates jointly. College staff visit schools to moderate work and schools also bring work to the TOPS panel for moderation.

3.14   The project has been evaluated regularly and independently. Independent evaluation is, for example, a condition of TEC funding.

3.15   The LEA has worked very hard with the schools on target-setting and this also makes a contribution to quality assurance. The joint development of key skills teaching has been an important aspect of this work.

3.16   The integration of the different approaches by the college and schools to target-setting is the next challenge for the project.

Benefits

3.17 For the community:

- increasing levels of 16–18 participation in education

- rising levels of educational aspiration

- a capacity to develop an inclusive educational offer

- a broader choice of 16–18 programmes

- no unnecessary duplication or competition and thus better value for money

- clearer progression routes

- coherent and focused approaches to monitoring and raising the quality of teaching and learning.

3.18 For the college, in addition to the community benefits:

- reliable information to students about the college offer both pre- and post-16

- some infilling on part-time GCE A level programmes for minority subjects

- a pivotal position between the schools and the university in respect of vocational education

- keeping staff in touch with developments in schools such as target-setting

- growing parity of esteem in schools and the community between vocational and academic work

- a springboard for the community educational and special needs programme (for example, family literacy, courses for parent volunteers).

3.19 For the LEA and schools, in addition to the community benefits:

- less competition in the provision of GCE A level courses

- increased staff development opportunities

- improved progression routes for students

- smoother transition from school to college

- a springboard for enterprises such as the Learning Net.

Obstacles

3.20 In the early days:

- lack of trust

- lack of conviction that the senior managers from the college and the schools really meant what they said; it took time for convictions and deeds to follow words

- the temptation for the college to continue and develop full-time GCE A level programmes

- the temptation for schools to develop high-profile general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) offers, reinforced by proposals by the then government to fund capital development of popular sixth forms

- long-standing low educational aspirations in the community

- lack of experience; the depth of the TOPS intervention in quality has grown incrementally and is rooted in experience over time.

3.21   Now:

- lack of funding. Both GEST funding and the TEC funding which facilitate the all-important Friday morning meetings have gradually been squeezed. Changes to GEST to make room for new priorities make this more difficult still

- suggestions of new funding requirements for 16–18 provision in schools, although this will be less of a concern for Staffordshire schools than most because they receive the second-lowest levels in England for funding of 16–18 provision.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

3.22   Other indicators of the strength and commitment of partners to the project are:

- real compromises made by all parties

- commitments recorded in writing in TOPS documents are understood and shared at all levels across the partnership and the risks they involve are also understood

- the TOPS initiative has supported and is supported by other important examples of collaboration, such as the amalgamation of the adult education service and the FE college and the use of the local authority leisure and adult budget creatively to support a college-based community education programme

- all parties share goals and progress is monitored regularly

- operational arrangements extend to the difficult areas of quality assurance and pooling teaching resources

- educational aspirations, participation and achievements are rising.

4 *Promoting Progression to Post-16 Education: The Cambridge Collegiate Board*

Profile: Purpose and Policy

4.1   The Cambridge Collegiate Board (the board) is a partnership between the post-16 centres and pre-16 schools in the Cambridge area, and was established to promote progression to post-16 education.

4.2   The board involves: one general FE college; two sixth form colleges; one specialist college; three 11–18 schools; and 15 11–16 schools. All partners are committed to promoting progression through the provision of impartial guidance and equality of access to information for all students.

4.3   The board draws on a long history of collaboration and consultation on the part of Cambridgeshire county council. There is an LEA-sponsored post-16 strategic forum attended by all college principals and the local TEC.   The administration of community education is devolved to local 'patches', and there is a post-16 operational forum which includes patch co-ordinators and college liaison staff.

4.4   This case study illustrates the community and institutional benefits of planned and co-ordinated guidance and admissions. Its primary focus is on improving access and choice through good-quality guidance and co-ordinated transition arrangements at 15+. There is also some evidence that the collaborative approach at transition can be both more cost-effective and more efficient for all participating institutions, notwithstanding that they are recruiting for post-16 students from the same pool.

Origins and duration

4.5   The board was established by the LEA in 1972-73 to co-ordinate liaison between centres on post-16 progression issues and to ensure the effective management of the admissions process. At that time, the LEA planned the entire post-16 curriculum offering through the board.

Operation

4.6   In January 1997 there were 3,037 enrolments at board post-16 centres by students progressing from year 11 in schools. Of these, 2,052 were students from maintained schools in the Cambridge and Ely areas. All of the post-16 centres draw heavily on the board for their full-time post-16 numbers. Cambridge Regional College, the largest partner, draws about half of its full-time year 1 students from the board.

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Staffing and operations

4.7   Initially, the LEA provided the secretariat for the board. Following financial devolvement and budget reductions, the schools employed a co-ordinator, although LEA officers continued to attend the regular board meetings. At present, the board operations group appoints a co-ordinator from each post-16 institution on a rotating, two-year basis.

4.8   The full board meets twice a year and reviews curricular and operational issues. The operations group meets more frequently and is responsible for the smooth running of the board. The operations group comprises: one representative from each of the post-16 centres; three from the 11–16 schools; and one each from a special school, the careers company and the TEC. Its responsibilities include:

- the organisation of curriculum liaison meetings between staff in particular subject areas

- liaison with special schools in terms of information on courses and applications

- a series of subject visits to pre-16 centres (a core function of the board's operations).

Post-16 specialist teachers, drawn from a selection of post-16 centres talk to year 11 students. The purpose of the visits is to give information to students about syllabuses and choices in subject areas at a higher level of study. These subject visits are evaluated and modified annually.

4.9   The operations group is responsible for the production of board student guides and common application forms. It also co-ordinates board events and post-16 open evenings. It also produces a handbook for careers guidance staff.

4.10   There is a post-16 principals' group which meets at least twice a term, where emerging disputes or problems can be resolved.

Quality assurance

4.11   Each year there is a questionnaire-based evaluation, organised by the co-ordinator. The subsequent report is discussed by both the operations group and by the full board. Because the system is so well known and widely understood, pre-16 centres with a problem of any sort can quickly contact the appropriate agency for clarification.

4.12   Cambridgeshire Careers Guidance Ltd produces an annual report on behalf of the board which enables year-on-year enrolment monitoring by centre, course, subject and sex, amongst others.

4.13   An annual conference for schools' careers co-ordinators and key players in year 11 transition has now become an established feature of the collaboration. This provides an opportunity for the discussion of a range of issues, from curriculum changes in individual centres to key national influences on post-16 choice.

Benefits

4.14   For pupils and their parents:

- clear presentation of the full curriculum on offer

- they have only one application to fill out, on which they can identify up to four choices of centre. The centres take responsibility for passing on the form in the event they are unable to offer first choice applicants a place

- a guide in which all post-16 centres are featured and from which they can choose type of institution as well as subject offer. This guide precedes individual centre prospectuses

- better quality guidance and access to information. Guidance is offered impartially and evaluated regularly. Centres are committed to provide good-quality advice and do not use the guidance sessions for individual centre promotion

- standards take priority as institutions compete on quality and niche market rather than aggressive marketing.

4.15 For the LEA and schools there is:

- effective post-16 organisation

- a managed post-16 admissions process

- an information forum for national curriculum and vocational developments

- full and coherent presentation of the range of choice post-16

- organisation and management benefits arising out of one liaison point

- co-ordination of board evenings and post-16 open evenings, minimising clashes and ensuring parity of access to information

- exposure and involvement of a range of staff, not just careers staff, to the post-16 options, and how individual students can access those to which they are best suited

- value for money. All centres and programmes are economically viable: for example the sixth form at Netherhall School is not subsidised by the 11–16 part of the school.

4.16 For the colleges and post-16 centres there is:

- shared information on trends, numbers and enrolments which enables more reliable planning and greater certainty about take-up of places in September

- joint planning for new pre-16 developments such as part 1 GNVQ

- a forum for discussion of all post-16 developments

- parity of access to pre-16 centres

- access to networks and to colleagues in schools

- better prepared students enrolling on full-time post-16 courses.

Spin-off benefits

4.17 Board members have initiated curriculum discussions and provided joint responses to national initiatives.

4.18 Other collaborative projects have been successfully implemented as a result of the well-established networks created by the board and other Cambridgeshire initiatives such as the post-16 forum. These include a major consortium of community schools and Cambridge Regional College which has enabled the authority to maintain and develop its provision of adult education despite funding reductions.

Obstacles

4.19   Lack of funding and the withdrawal of independent co-ordination has meant that much of the burden has fallen on the operations group. Partners have been willing to take on a substantial organising role. The careers company has been a valuable resource not only for its expertise but for its role in data collation and analysis and in the production of student guides.

4.20   Competition has caused tensions at times. Mutual trust plays a key role, and the frequent meetings of key players at the various board and LEA forums is critical in the maintenance of this trust.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

4.21   Partners appear to be willing to make compromises to maintain the integrity of the collaboration. For example, one of the post-16 schools decided to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB); as a consequence one of the colleges which had been thinking about providing IB decided not to duplicate provision and dropped its plans.

4.22   All the schools, the colleges and the LEA are well acquainted with the system which is also widely understood within the community as a whole. All transition planning takes place under the umbrella of the board, down to the planning of dates so that progression events do not clash.

5 *Reducing Wastage Rates: The Huntingdon Youth Work Project, Cambridgeshire*

Profile: Purpose and Policy

5.1   The collaboration between Huntingdonshire Regional College (the college) and Huntingdon youth centre aims to reduce student drop-out from college by enabling youth workers to work with college staff and directly with the students themselves. To the extent that drop-out wastes resources and staff time, the project should result in improved value for money. From the community perspective, improved retention should result in improved attainment.

5.2   The college draws students from a catchment area which includes seven 11–18 schools. The Huntingdon 'patch' is the devolved unit of local authority community education administration, responsible for all adult and youth work. Two members of the local authority sit on the college's governing body and the college principal is a member of the patch executive.

5.3   This case study illustrates how the voluntary collaboration between an FE college and the LEA's youth centre can serve the immediate interests and the aims of both partners. The collaboration has also led to an expanded and more formal programme application under the government's New Start initiative.

Origins and duration

5.4   The first steps were taken in 1996 when the youth centre began limited work in the college, targeted at 16–18 year olds who were progressing to further education but subsequently dropping out, for a variety of reasons. The youth centre had built up expertise on drop-out through work on GEST-funded schemes from 1992 to 1995. The college had already identified an unacceptably high level of drop-out in certain groups. The publication of FEFC data (*Measuring Achievement: Further education performance indicators 1994-95* The Stationery Office, 1995) enabled the college to measure its own performance against national norms and against colleges of similar size, and the college began setting targets for improvement. The prevalence and strong recruitment of 11–18 schools in the area meant that the college was increasingly recruiting students who were disengaged from their schooling and who had lower levels of prior achievement. Detailed discussions between the youth centre and college senior management led to the first full pilot project in 1997.

Operation

5.5   The project involves staff from a range of disciplines and tutor groups in staff development activities. Work with students has been confined to selected groups, although that is now expanding to a whole-college strategy by involving the students union and establishing a college base for the youth workers. The college catchment area is wider than the patch area although most students are recruited from the patch.

Staffing and operations

5.6   The project has developed incrementally. Two approaches were adopted in the pilot stage: these involved a youth worker working with students in their tutor groups; and youth workers conducting staff development sessions for tutors. In the following year, lessons learned were applied and a further youth worker was added to the team.

5.7   The college recognised at an early stage that external factors were not the only factors in drop-out and that the strengths and weaknesses of individual tutors could play a part. Hence staff development has been a key aspect of the project.

5.8   One example of the approach is youth workers working with tutors and students in establishing the value of developing short-term achievable targets which are clearly understood by both. This includes curricular development of short-term and intermediate targets as well as mutually agreed target-setting on behaviour.

5.9   The financial resources for the project have been made available by the patch, although the college is now allocating designated staff development time during the teaching day. With the allocation of New Start funding, the project will expand by tracking students from national curriculum key stage 4.

Quality assurance

5.10   The staff development courses are evaluated regularly, with structured feedback from the youth centre. Both the college and the youth centre report regularly to their respective boards on progress of the project.

5.11   The college commitment to reducing drop-out and to the youth work project is reflected in its strategic plan, annual review and operating statements and objectives.

Benefits

5.12   For the community:

■ young people who have been identified as disaffected at key stage 4 and earlier can be supported through to post-16 education and training by the youth centre. That support should lead to reduced levels of drop-out and disaffection which in turn should reduce levels of crime, drug abuse and other effects of social exclusion.

5.13   For the college:

■ there are no figures yet available for overall retention rates, but the college has reviewed its tutorial advice systems, and transfer between courses has increased

■ staff have benefited from the development work and many are trying new ways of working with their groups

■ overall, the college expects its retention rates to improve, which will improve its financial position as well as reducing wastage.

5.14   For the youth centre:

- the patch allocates some 70 per cent of its budget to youth work. The youth centre was aware that many amongst its client group were going into college, taking their social needs with them

- access to college students and tutors has enabled the youth centre to target disengaged young people at post-16 and to help improve their life chances before they reach drop-out stage

- the youth centre has been able to offer the college an alternative range of techniques to help in their day-to-day work with young people and thereby to increase the capacity within the patch to reach its targets of meeting the needs of young people locally.

Spin-off benefits

5.15   The voluntary collaboration between the college and the youth centre will form the basis of the patch's New Start initiative. The youth centre is now collaborating with the college, the careers service, local schools and others to work with young people who are likely to move from school to college. Youth workers will operate with small groups of students who have been identified as likely to find transition difficult, both pre-transition, in schools, and subsequently at college.

Obstacles

5.16   Timetabling presented problems in two respects. First, joint tutoring time was also curriculum time which caused a tension between the youth work and the course requirements. The solution tried was to split the group in two, with the youth worker concentrating on previously targeted students. However this is continuing to cause some tensions which the partners are working to resolve. Secondly, the staff development sessions had to take place at the end of a long working day. Now the college has further demonstrated its long-term commitment to the project and is reorganising its timetable to accommodate daytime staff development.

5.17   Timing was also a problem. The youth centre found that some students dropped out before work with the college started. Now the youth workers are establishing themselves as a recognised resource for help among students and will work with students as soon as they enrol, in September.

5.18   Defensiveness and mistrust amongst some staff had to be overcome, although many were fully committed to the project from the start. The youth centre has worked hard to show staff that there is no one to 'blame' for student drop-out while the college management has adopted a 'hands off' approach to the project, believing peer group influence to be the key to eliminating suspicions and tensions.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

5.19   The college has been prepared to make significant timetabling changes in order to facilitate the staff development sessions which are critical to the success of the project.

5.20   The patch, as part of the LEA, allocated the initial resources from limited funds.

6 *Using Common Funding Mechanisms in Schools and Colleges: East Sussex*

Profile: Purpose and Policy

6.1   This case study describes how partnership and policy developments between the LEA and FE colleges have continued to be promoted through termly meeting between the county education officer and the principals of the nine county FE colleges.

6.2   The forum was initially a continuation of friendly contacts between County Hall and the colleges before the establishment of the further education sector. However, since 1993, the forum has been the symbol of a culture of collaboration both between the colleges and the LEA, the colleges and the 11–18 schools, and between the colleges themselves. This culture has facilitated a number of initiatives, in particular the introduction of a broadly common system of funding for 16–19 education both in schools under local management of schools (LMS) and in colleges.

6.3   The collaboration between the LEA and the nine FE colleges began with an agreement to share information. Over time the forum has become more diverse in its remit, including joint applications for funds and franchising arrangements between colleges and schools.

Origins and duration

6.4   For many years before the establishment of the further education sector there had been good relations over the planning and provision of post-16 education between the LEA, schools and FE colleges. Nearly six years on, those good relations have been maintained. The existence of the forum and opportunities to discuss with principals the changes which followed from the establishment of the FE sector helped maintain awareness amongst East Sussex officers of the need for cross-sector planning and shared responsibility for effective progression in students' learning. This has influenced, for example, the stance the LEA adopted to proposals for new sixth forms in schools.

6.5   Through the forum, officers also came to reflect on how the key principles of the FEFC funding methodology might be applied to sixth form funding in a way which would support good practice in teaching, learning and student support, and help raise achievement. The advice principals were able to give on this helped officers to answer headteachers' concerns, and to persuade headteachers of the benefits of a unit-based funding formula.

Operation

6.6   The LEA proposed at a seminar in 1995 that consideration be given to devising a new funding system for school sixth forms. To take that consideration forward, the LEA established a working party with representatives from all the 11–18 schools.

6.7   The working party found that:

- the actual costs of providing sixth form education in an 11–18 school varied considerably between schools
- the teaching time associated with each student differed enormously
- the group size of each class taught differed substantially within and between schools
- the LMS scheme made no distinction between the resources required for students preparing for four GCE A levels and those enrolled for one GNVQ
- a lack of accounting precision failed to discriminate between costs associated with sixth forms run with an average class size of four and those operating with 14.

6.8   The working group examined the actual costs of providing a sixth form place in East Sussex during 1994-95 and compared them with the FEFC allocation per place in general FE and sixth form colleges. It found that:

- the LEA paid £2,964 for each sixth form place in an East Sussex school
- the FEFC allocated £2,648 for each place in an FE college
- the FEFC allocated £2,544 for each place in a sixth form college.

6.9   Adding the costs associated with pastoral care, management, staff training, administration, supplies and examination fees it became clear from the study that the average costs per pupil in an East Sussex school sixth form varied from £3,174 where the average class size was eight, to £2,172 where the average class size was 14. This represented a surcharge of about 50 per cent to the LEA when institutions ran sixth forms with small groups of students. In addition, students in small sixth forms were studying a narrow range of subjects chosen from a restricted curriculum.

6.10   The findings of the working party suggested that the introduction in East Sussex sixth forms of a funding system similar to the FEFC unit-driven system was likely to encourage good practice and high achievement, and to reward and provide incentives for the well-performing, effective institution.

6.11   The working group proposed that funding for 16–19 students should reflect actual costs, and reward achievement. A new funding scheme was developed, which resembled the broad approach of the FEFC funding methodology. After consultation, and modelling based on the 1996-97 teaching year, the new scheme 'went live' in time for the student intake in September 1997.

6.12   Building on the success of the working group, in 1998 the LEA brokered a new forum including representatives from all FE colleges in East Sussex and West Sussex, Sussex Enterprise (TEC), and the LEA. This body will provide a wider regional forum for consideration of issues relating to post-16 education, training and employment.

Staffing and operations

6.13   The LEA provides the secretariat for the FE principals' forum, and normally makes the arrangements for meetings, seminars and other events. A college principal continues to serve on the East Sussex education committee. Many of the FE colleges have invited elected members of the LEA or senior members of the education department to serve on their governing bodies. Although Brighton and Hove is no longer part of East Sussex LEA, the director of education of that new unitary authority has become a member of the forum.

6.14   Each term the forum meets and discusses items on an agreed agenda such as:

- the post-16 curriculum on offer in the county
- the adequacy and sufficiency of the provision for academic and vocational education for 16–19 year olds
- raising standards, improving staying-on rates and levels of attainment for 16–19 year olds in the county
- problems created by the disparate funding methodologies used for 16–19 year olds generally, and the impact upon the effective management of resources in schools and colleges, whether in fact the resources come from the LEA or FEFC
- other matters of common interest.

Quality assurance

6.15   The colleges have few formal mechanisms for evaluating collaborative ventures. However, the high level of attendance by FE principals at the forum over the last six years appears to confirm the view they have expressed in discussion that the opportunity to meet with the LEA has a continuing and constant value to them. The LEA for its part has taken the satisfaction levels among the FE principals as confirmation of the contribution the forum is making to the quality of cross-county post-16 provision. Building on the success of the funding task group, the LEA has established a task group to devise county guidelines on best practice regarding guidance and student support.

Benefits

6.16   When the FE sector was established, the FE colleges welcomed the stance taken by the LEA. This amounted to practical assistance and a clear willingness on the part of the LEA to give support and continue to work closely with the colleges under the arrangements. The LEA provided assistance through:

- facilitating property transfers
- continued availability to the colleges of LEA services, for example payroll
- contracting for the delivery of the LEA's adult education programme (and in Brighton of the youth service also) through the colleges
- signalling a positive view of mutual collaboration, against a national agenda driven by competition.

6.17   The forum generated a shared perception among principals and LEA officers that the benefits to a small number of pupils in a small number of schools of allowing the unrestrained development of new sixth forms may well be outweighed by the high costs involved and the impact on other schools and colleges.

6.18   A further benefit was growing joint awareness of the need, highlighted by the Tomlinson report *Inclusive Learning*, to provide better for students with special needs.

Spin-off benefits

6.19   The forum has led to:

- seminars with key speakers, including the FEFC chair, chief executive, and chief inspector, as well as officials from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

- improved relations with the TEC following approaches from the county education officer, leading to the formation of a new planning forum extending over East and West Sussex

- the development of a centre for young people with severe learning difficulties, owned and maintained by the LEA, but located within the grounds of Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology. The college will provide opportunities for integrated teaching and learning for the students. A second centre is already being planned, to be located at another college.

Obstacles

6.20   The partners have had to overcome:

- wariness on the part of principals over sharing information and details of their strategic planning

- an initial unwillingness on the part of schools to 'risk losing out' with a 16–19 funding review

- the possibility of 11–18 schools (and even some 11–16 schools) seeking grant-maintained status

- the possibility of parents preferring small schools with restricted sixth forms rather than a wider curriculum choice which might involve study at more than one institution

- the loss by the LEA of most of its staff expertise in FE; the developing collaboration with the colleges created a need to add responsibilities for FE to the job descriptions of a number of key LEA staff.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

6.21   An important aspect of the forum's credibility has been the early agreement that the named participants (county education officer and principals of the nine FE colleges in East Sussex) should be the members of the forum, but without any right of nominating a substitute.

6.22   It is also significant that the group agreed to expand by the addition of an additional college principal from outside the county in West Sussex. Adjacent and overlapping catchment areas, the existence of regional patterns of employment and travel-to-work movements, and an awareness of the benefits of collaborating in the planning of provision generally have made the forum increasingly valuable to its members.

7   *Stepping Stones: Adult Education and Mental Health Provision in FE Colleges, Lancashire*

Profile: Purpose and Policy

7.1   This case study illustrates a multi-agency collaboration which promotes access to education and training for people experiencing a wide variety of forms of mental health difficulties. Since 1993, the number of enrolments on the programme has increased from 300 to over 4,000. The county council, the health service, and the voluntary sector are partners in an innovative guidance and access project involving 11 FE and adult education colleges in Lancashire.

7.2   'Stepping Stones' supports people resuming a variety of forms of adult education, and helps them overcome the personal and institutional barriers that can discourage re-entry into education, training and employment. It also supports existing students who experience difficulties completing their studies as a result of mental health difficulties.

7.3   The project provides appropriate staff development for college tutors and other staff so they can work effectively with a section of the population that is under-represented in all traditional forms of education and training.

7.4   This imaginative collaboration illustrates the wider benefits that are possible when the advice and guidance expertise found in an LEA and individual colleges is linked with the very different expertise and insights of a range of health professionals. This spectrum of care includes general practitioner and primary health care teams, day-centre and hospital services, community psychiatric workers, social services and the voluntary sector.

Origins and duration

7.5   A 'New Directions' programme was piloted in the 1980s by the Lancashire adult education service at the Adult College, Lancaster. The project established courses of non-vocational adult education for people with a wide spectrum of need, including:

- patients being treated in hospital for mental health conditions
- people attending day centres
- students already studying at the college who might be experiencing mental health difficulties
- others in the community capable of benefiting from the courses including people who may not have identified themselves as in need of medical help, but who might be experiencing depression, isolation and confusion.

7.6   Building on the success of that programme, the 'Stepping Stones' project was set up by the LEA in 1993 to develop the work across the county through the creation of a series of local health and community partnerships based on the county's FE and adult colleges. The project includes 10 FE colleges, an adult education college, Lancashire social services department, all four Lancashire health authorities, and a range of voluntary agencies, including Making Space and MIND.

7.7   Local groups were established to facilitate access for students with mental health difficulties into FE colleges, to design new and more appropriate curricula, and to influence the necessary staff development programmes.

7.8   'Stepping Stones' was consistent with the LEA's policies to promote inclusion. At the same time it addressed two national initiatives:

- the government's priorities as set out in its 1992 white paper
  Health of the Nation
- the Tomlinson report, *Inclusive Learning*.

Operation

7.9   Each college receives approximately £15,000 each year from its local health authority for the project to support a development worker, and agrees a memorandum of agreement with the LEA covering the operation of the project.

7.10   Local community alliances have been established by the 'Stepping Stones' project around each of the colleges across the county, with membership drawn from a network of representative agencies in that locality.

7.11   The role of these alliances is to:

- act as steering groups for the work undertaken in each college and offer input to the overall planning network of 'Stepping Stones'
- provide the governance and management of the project
- support the work of the development worker
- encourage a referral process between service users and the college
- give a focus for a wide range of professionals whose support and guidance are essential.

7.12   Potential students, normally referred from service users, voluntary organisations or on their own initiative, are given special help. This takes the form of:

- advice and guidance in choosing and enrolling on a course
- help with assimilation into the college and the learning community
- assistance with study
- liaison over difficulties encountered on and off campus
- guidance in relation to progression on completion.

7.13   There is a need for high levels of sensitivity on the part of those who teach, recruit to, and manage courses for these students. The 'Stepping Stones' students present colleges with many challenges, which often require changes to normal practices. For example, students taking medication may be unable to study before mid-morning; for some students, crowded buildings can be intimidating, as can rush-hour transport.

7.14   The inter-agency approach is underpinned by a mix of funding which comes from the LEA, social services, health authorities and the colleges.

Staffing and operations

7.15   The LEA and the Adult College, Lancaster (which is maintained by the LEA, and is not in the FE sector) do not take a direct management role in the 'Stepping Stones' project, although as funding bodies they play a key part in discussions over its direction and evolution. The Adult College, Lancaster seconds a county project director, whose salary is refunded to the college by the LEA.

7.16   The LEA co-ordinates and facilitates the overall support and strategic direction of the programme.

7.17   Each college funds the appointment of a development worker for 'Stepping Stones' who:

- liaises with the county project director
- works alongside college advice and guidance staff, and keeps a senior college manager and the college governing body informed of project developments
- acts as a contact point for students and their carers
- develops courses on and off campus
- monitors performance
- designs and implements staff development and training programmes.

7.18   The development worker is supported by a senior college manager who:

- provides visible backing for the project aims
- facilitates cross-college initiatives
- reports on the work of the project to the college governing body.

7.19   All the development workers network with external agencies and, through the local alliances, promote the service into the wider community.

7.20   Most sections and staff of the colleges have been affected by the project. Receptionists and site-related staff, as well as teachers, tutors and technicians have undertaken continuing programmes of staff development in order that they understand and can respond to the special needs of students with mental health difficulties. A training video and pack is available to support the development.

7.21   The funding and support provided by the LEA adult education service and the colleges is supplemented by resources committed by the four Lancashire health authorities. The joint core funding pays for the salaries, support costs of the college development workers, and contributes to the staff training. In addition, it supplements the costs of courses provided by the LEA and the colleges.

Quality assurance

7.22   'Stepping Stones' complies with the quality assurance frameworks of the FEFC and the LEA, and is consistent with the guidelines set out in the Tomlinson report. In addition:

- all 'Stepping Stones' students are assessed on entry and provided with an individual learning plan

- college-wide student surveys report on user satisfaction generally across the college. This has been developed by the use of focus groups for 'Stepping Stones' students

- the memorandum of agreement provides for a monitoring arrangement, which enables the health authorities to assess details of take-up, progress, outcomes, and value for money

- the LEA evaluates the non-vocational adult education delivered by the Adult College.

7.23   Each local community alliance also reviews progress, take-up, and the part played by all of the partners in supporting the work of the development workers and the colleges.

7.24   The county project director operates to an annual business plan, and is accountable to the county manager of adult education services.

7.25   The LEA provides regular oversight of the whole project, and reviews procedures in the light of feedback.

Benefits

7.26   For students with mental health difficulties:

- development of new approaches in adult and FE colleges that have provided courses, learning and student support, and inclusive provision

- a wider awareness of their specific learning needs

- increased understanding and developing good practice on the importance of study location, enrolment procedures and the provision of transport

- multi-skilled teams of health and education professionals with a shared commitment to offering equality of opportunity

- access to education that is not arbitrary, or a lottery, but is tailored to the needs of students.

7.27   For the colleges, the 'Stepping Stones' project has helped colleges to:

- develop close links with their local communities

- address formally issues of inclusive learning

- develop partnership strategies with health authorities, social services and voluntary organisations

- introduce college-based procedures for the early identification of mainstream students with symptoms of mental health difficulties

- revise the whole area of course provision to assist a significant, and vulnerable, section of the population

- enhance their advice and guidance capacity in relation to existing and potential students

- enhance the training of teaching and non-teaching staff.

7.28   For the LEA, the leadership role played by the adult education service has helped to:

- develop key partnerships in health and social work provision, leading to improvements in the welfare and recovery prospects of those with mental health difficulties

- build an effective educational model that is delivering real benefits each year to some 2,000 vulnerable members of the community

- facilitate and enable the delivery of courses of supported learning.

7.29   For the other partners, involvement with the LEA and colleges has produced:

- recognition of the value of joint working with the education service in identifying and meeting a shared agenda

- achievement of a highly successful delivery of key national health objectives

- new professional networks established.

Spin-off benefits

7.30   In 1996 the project was awarded first prize in the health alliance awards competition run by the department of health for innovation and management in the mental health services. As a result, health authorities and education services nationally have expressed interest in the project and the collaborative structure upon which it is based.

7.31   'Stepping Stones' has achieved recognition from national bodies, leading to further funding and research into its success.

7.32   The video and training pack based on the project has disseminated good practice more widely.

7.33   Staff development for tutors and staff on issues related to mental health awareness has improved staff skills in:

- how to listen

- how to approach prospective students

- how to help the return to education

- preventing drop-out

- identifying and removing barriers to participation

- concentrating on the quality of study and learning.

7.34   The programmes developed through the project to enable staff to identify and cope with the needs and expectations of prospective and actual students with mental health difficulties, have proved to be equally applicable to other students, and have been adopted as such by the participating institutions.

7.35   Health professionals have welcomed the opportunity to contribute and to relate their areas of expertise wider issues such as education, training and employability.

Obstacles

7.36   Obstacles which have had to be surmounted include:

- health authority boundaries, which mean that four different health authorities cover the county council area, and each of these contains two or three local planning teams with an interest in the project; this produced delays which affected the start of funding to individual colleges

- devising appropriate funding from a variety of participating organisations
- initial resistance to the project from principals and governing bodies meant that establishing good working relationships between college-based development workers and advice and guidance staff in FE colleges often took some time
- creating effective bridges between the development workers and senior managers in colleges depended on senior LEA staff showing their commitment and support
- little tradition of joint working between social and health services, and FE colleges
- lack of knowledge or understanding in colleges about mental health issues and the needs of students with mental health difficulties.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

7.37 Although funding was provided initially on a limited basis, all the project partners have renewed their commitment to fund, or otherwise support, the project for another three-year period, acknowledging that it will now be developing pathways into vocational as well as non-vocational adult education.

7.38   The national health service NHS Executive (North West) has committed £100,000 to a research project to explore whether 'Stepping Stones' can be developed to provide a valid and effective community model for referral mechanisms from primary health care to education.

7.39   Lancashire LEA is now developing programmes for blind and deaf people, and those with aural and visual impairment, to enable these groups to access and benefit from adult education.

7.40   The project has recently extended its focus from access to adult education to embrace student support across the full range of FEFC- and LEA-funded provision.

8 Joint Approaches to Training and Economic Regeneration in Greenwich

Profile: Purpose and Policy

8.1   This case study illustrates a local forum, the Greenwich Lifelong Learning Partnership (GLLP), set up in 1992 by the London borough of Greenwich (the borough) and Woolwich College, the only FE sector college in the borough. Besides providing the most significant focus for local planning on education and employment issues, it has also made a series of practical contributions to the borough's agenda for urban regeneration.

8.2   A variety of other partners now contribute to the GLLP, but both the routine information-sharing which marked the early days, and the subsequent development of joint delivery of specific education and related employment and training projects, are firmly based on the practical nature of the forum.

8.3   The number of joint projects has grown over time and several imaginative innovations are now firmly established as regular programmes in the borough's annual planning cycle.

8.4   Over the six years of the partnership, relationships between the borough and Woolwich College have strengthened. An amalgamation is now planned between the borough-maintained Greenwich Community College and the FEFC-funded Woolwich College. This is only the most recent (although arguably the most significant) example of the close relations and unified planning of post-school provision that the partnership has generated.

Origins and duration

8.5   The close co-operation and collaboration began in 1992 with the passage of the legislation that removed Woolwich College from local authority control. In other case studies, there was a feeling that a vacuum had been created by the removal of LEAs from involvement in planning post-16 education and training. This view was confirmed in Greenwich both by the borough's assistant director of education and by the college principal.

8.6   The forum was set up initially to provide a venue for discussions about the delivery of further education and training across the borough. It soon attracted a series of other organisations eager to join the debates. It generated an overall borough plan and practical suggestions about local schemes would enhance the offer of accessible guidance and training for young people and adults who lacked the skills and qualifications necessary to obtain work and contribute profitably to the Greenwich economy.

8.7   GLLP provided opportunities for:

- detailed analyses of the local labour market

- planning small, and occasionally larger, collaborative ventures involving subgroups of the forum

- devising projects, organising conferences, seminars and presentations

- joint fact-finding visits to explore apparent solutions to similar problems.

Operation

8.8   For a new principal of the FE college, appointed in 1992 shortly before the college left LEA control, collaboration with the borough was a useful way of making contacts and promoting the college with key audiences.

8.9   The borough took over responsibility for education in 1990, on the abolition of the inner London education authority (ILEA). In 1991, the borough considered, but decided against, a reorganisation of post-16 provision in schools. In respect of adult education, the borough decided to bring together two adult education institutes and a number of youth centres, to form Greenwich Community College. The community college remained in the control of the borough after the establishment of the FE sector.

8.10   During the early 1990s there were a number of significant closures in the local economy, including the dockyards and Woolwich Arsenal. This made adult training and reskilling of the local population an urgent priority. The borough needed a strong integrated training mechanism to support it in its mission of urban regeneration.

8.11   The college welcomed the chance to work closely with the borough's education department, and the strategic and economic planning teams of the borough's directorate of development.

8.12   Formal statements of collaboration by the borough and Woolwich College were made in 1993, recognising shared objectives:

- to maximise the participation of Greenwich residents in post-compulsory education

- to ease transition and progression for students

- to secure the highest quality of provision of post-compulsory education and training.

8.13   For its part, the borough, as the largest employer in the area, agreed to look in future to Woolwich College for its own training requirements. The borough and the college agreed to:

- exchange routine information on a regular basis

- set up mechanisms for collaboration, including with other local bodies such as the TEC and Greenwich University

- work co-operatively on a variety of projects (sharing premises, links with local schools, developing access arrangements, adult guidance, and applications for external funds).

8.14   An agreement of partnership was signed in 1994 between Greenwich Community College and Woolwich College, approved by both governing bodies and endorsed by the borough. It defined the distinctive role of each college and the areas for co-operation in terms of FEFC-funded and other work.

8.15   The GLLP in its early years promoted a number of jointly planned ideas into practical outcomes, including:

- a jointly produced post-16 education and training plan
- a 'One-stop Shop' for adult guidance in the main shopping centre
- successful joint applications for funds from EU, SRB and successor programmes
- 'Opportunities 2000' (a major summer programme of community-based education and training activities)
- joint research and action research
- study visits.

8.16   In 1995, the partners established an annual planning cycle. Having set up a large number of projects, it now monitors them through an annual action plan, a blueprint which plays an important part in the borough's regeneration agenda.

8.17   The action plan for 1997-98 detailed a number of collaborative projects, involving in each case at least two partners. Funding had yet to be agreed for about half the projects.

8.18   There are five defined areas for collaborative ventures; the summary below shows the new projects in the plan in respect of each of these areas:

Advice and guidance

- East Greenwich Adult Guidance and Training Centre
- Youth Café
- estate-based outreach project for careers information and guidance for disadvantaged adults
- access to further and higher education – identifying the skills for success
- black mentor scheme for university students
- links with the employment service over Welfare to Work.

Skills for local businesses, especially small and medium enterprises

- owner–manager training programme
- an on-site training centre for hotel, museum/gallery, sports venue and tourism industries
- annual promotional events
- integrated 'Second Chance' estate-based ICT, life and social skills programme
- 'Quality Improvement' and 'Spirit of Greenwich' programme for raising competitiveness of local business
- development of 'Teleservices Centre'
- customised training
- Millennium Radio Training.

Improving the employability skills of local people

- heritage restoration skills programme
- training tourist guides and junior tourist guides for the millennium
- key skills and record of achievement development with schools
- childcare projects
- economic awareness and enterprise activities
- widening participation in FE, particularly amongst white males.

Flexible approaches to the delivery and accreditation of learning

- tourism resource centre
- multimedia for young people
- design and technology centre
- junior degree routes
- open learning facilities with after-school homework centres
- 'Music Greenwich', focusing on vocational music training
- curriculum development in arts administration, and business studies with an arts/hospitality focus.

Developing learning communities in a 'Learning City Network'

- public art, display and gallery facilities for minority groups
- visits by local youth jazz band and other musicians to USA, Spain and Germany
- 'Opportunities 2000', extending the successful summer scheme to Easter holidays
- Greenwich Music Trust 'Arts for Everyone' programme
- photography/video training project.

Staffing and operations

8.19   GLLP meets at least once a term in a formal session. Its membership has expanded and varied both in terms of organisations represented and the individuals serving on the GLLP. Broadly speaking, the main partner organisations have been:

- Greenwich borough directorates of education and development
- Woolwich College
- Greenwich Community College
- Greenwich University
- Greenwich Education Business Partnership
- the local TEC
- the youth service
- a representative of Greenwich schools
- the careers service
- representatives of the employment service (in an observer capacity).

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8.20   The borough has provided a secretariat for the GLLP, and been the main point of contact.

8.21   The borough has been represented on the governing bodies of both Greenwich Community College and Woolwich College. Following the proposed amalgamation between those two institutions there will be additional seats on the board of governors for the borough or for community representatives.

8.22   The key individuals in the GLLP have been the assistant director of education for the borough and the principal of Woolwich College. The strength of their working relationship over the six years since GLLP was established has come from a shared vision about the key role that a flexible and responsive post-16 delivery system can play in the regeneration of the urban infrastructure.

Quality assurance

8.23   The work of the GLLP has been monitored through:

- annual review by the borough
- college contribution assessed through self-assessment process
- continued high level of attendance at GLLP meetings.

Benefits

8.24   Generally:

- better planning and delivery of a range of joint projects, relevant to the needs of young people and adults seeking skills and employment in Greenwich
- a forum for discussion where the borough, FE colleges, the TEC, careers and youth services, the university and representatives of local schools can respond collaboratively to education and training needs that are not being offered by an existing provider
- the proposed amalgamation of Woolwich College and Greenwich Community College.

8.25   To the borough:

- a real involvement in planning post-school provision
- access to a range of significant partners with a commitment to improving access to education and training.

8.26   To the college:

- visibility through membership of the major borough-wide forum for employment and training issues
- additional funding through SRB, ESF, and TECs
- an opportunity to gain access to, and to share in planning the college's contribution, with leading figures in the borough.

8.27   To the other partners:

- access to an effective major network, and early information of strategic initiatives
- opportunities to make inputs at key planning stages in borough-wide regeneration projects.

Spin-off benefits

8.28   Many of the projects mentioned above have been generated by the GLLP. The success of the forum has been in getting them off the ground, winning funding, and seeing them implemented effectively. This has been due to:

- the breadth of the activities from which members have been drawn
- the willingness of all partners to collaborate and commit time to planning and implementation
- the systematic approach to the identification of need in an action plan
- the supportive and corporate role played by the borough, including the leader who consistently supported GLLP and gave it his personal backing
- the critical role played by Woolwich College.

Obstacles

8.29 Obstacles which have had to be surmounted include:

- ensuring regular attendance by nominees, and continuity of membership, particularly as the membership grew
- lack of appropriate seniority of some nominees
- problems with access to premises by shared projects
- retaining the identity and purpose of GLLP over an extended period of time when other partnerships with related objectives were being established
- the borough's prime focus on schools meant that, initially, collaboration was not accorded a high priority.

Other indicators of collaborative strength

8.30   The assistant director of education for the borough and the principal of Greenwich College, although relatively new to their respective posts, brought continuity to the various stages of the development of the project.

8.31   The existence of a clear borough identity (river frontage, former dockyards, arsenal, museum, observatory, millennium dome and so on), with a distinct economic profile, helped focus the planning framework for economic regeneration.

8.32   Accessibility for GLLP partners to key figures in the borough, particularly the leader who participated in meetings, study visits, and presentations.

9 *Joint Sixth Form Provision: The Welwyn Garden City Consortium, Hertfordshire*

Profile: Purpose and Policy

9.1   Four 11–18 schools and an FE college jointly offer post-16 provision to the people of Welwyn Garden City through a consortium. The aim of the consortium is to provide and sustain a wide range of academic and vocational courses for the 16–19 age-group, through shared resources and teaching skills at each of the four establishments.

9.2   The consortium enables a much wider post-16 curriculum than would have been possible in any single institution. Joint planning also enables the creation of viable teaching groups.

9.3   A memorandum of agreement governs the funding and partnership arrangements; there is a co-ordinator, funded jointly by consortium partners and managed by the heads of the schools and a senior college manager.

9.4   The LEA funds the daily transport between delivery sites and provides the office accommodation and facilities for the co-ordinator.

Origins and duration

9.5   The consortium began in 1987, largely on the initiative of the headteacher of one of the secondary schools. The schools and the college (then De Havilland College, now part of Oaklands College) realised that they could meet the needs of post-16 study more effectively through collaboration rather than competition. Supported by the LEA, the five institutions drew up the operational framework for what is, in effect, one sixth form for Welwyn Garden City. The consortium can offer 36 GCE A level options, plus intermediate and advanced GNVQ. The latter is delivered exclusively by the college. About 550 students are catered for through the consortium arrangements.

Operation

9.6   The transfer of the college to the FE sector in 1993 led to a more formal framework. All partners now sign a memorandum of agreement, in which they commit themselves to 'full collaboration' in order to:

- provide and sustain a wide range of academic and vocational courses for the 16–19 age-group, through shared resources and teaching skills at each of the four establishments

- maintain and develop teaching expertise in these areas

- increase the proportion of students continuing in full-time education and training

- fulfil the needs of all 16–19 students who wish to remain in education
- raise levels of achievement and work towards the national targets for education and training (NTETs).

9.7　　A funding formula of 10 per cent of the per pupil element in the schools' budget as determined by the LEA is payable to delivering institutions for each half-day of teaching.

9.8　　The consortium is managed by a group of directors comprising the heads of the schools and the head of the college's school of humanities, arts and sciences. The co-ordinator reports to the directors and sets the agendas for regular subject panels.

9.9　　Joint guidance is offered through the consortium at transition and the pitfalls of competitive recruitment are avoided. All year 11 students are made aware of the full range of choices, including the vocational courses on offer at the college. The consortium produces its own prospectus and issues annual detailed guidance notes for all staff and students. There are joint open evenings at all partner institutions. Joint consultative events are held at transition and parents are able to meet staff from partner institutions where their children will be studying.

9.10　　The LEA provides buses which run between the sites at midday and all timetabling is in half-day blocks to facilitate student travel between sites.

9.11　　Two schools outside the city have now been accepted as associate members of the consortium. This means that they can offer a broader choice to their own students by using the consortium arrangements. The consortium does not intend to send any students outside Welwyn Garden City.

9.12　　Value for money is achieved through achieving larger GCE A level teaching groups than would otherwise be possible and through shared delivery. Partners have to be prepared to rotate subject delivery if necessary to maintain high teaching group size. There is an agreed maximum of 23 on group sizes and an average class size of between 15 and 16.

Quality assurance

9.13　　Subject panels work together to review teaching strategies and joint staff development.

9.14　　The LEA has data on individual school post-16 performance, and the consortium keeps data on the performance of the consortium as a whole. Examination results and retention rates are closely monitored by the co-ordinator, and may inform changes to the delivery of a course.

9.15　　Consortium provision has been inspected by both FEFC and OFSTED, but only in the context of individual institutional inspections.

9.16　　Currently the overall consortium results are slightly below the national average, but the LEA points out that this is in line with the county as a whole. The LEA is taking steps to raise results on a county-wide basis and is encouraging voluntary collaborative arrangements using Welwyn Garden City as a model of good practice.

9.17　　Individually, each of the collaborating institutions' GCE A level point scores were higher in 1997 than they were in 1992.

9.18　　The average drop-out across all subjects is around 16 per cent over the consortium's history. This figure includes students who have transferred from one subject to another.

Benefits

9.19   For the college:

- viable numbers for GCE A level groups through infilling by school students

- an income stream from schools

- professional development for staff

- shared information on curricular and management issues.

9.20   For the LEA:

- an enhanced post-16 curriculum offer across academic and vocational areas

- cost-effective class sizes

- effective post-16 management

- increased participation rates

- improved progression rates in the 10 years of the consortium's operation. In 1987 the school progression rate (excluding FE) was 31 per cent; in 1997 it was close to 50 per cent

- the consortium arrangements enable a city-wide strategic plan for 16–19 education, adjusted annually according to need and demand

- one of the four schools is being closed by the LEA. Because of the consortium arrangements there will be no lost 16–19 opportunities.

9.21   For the schools:

- ability to maintain viable sixth forms despite small numbers

- ability to offer wide range of GCE A levels to students

- collaborative vocational development

- enhanced staff development opportunities

- increase in post-16 participation rates.

9.22   For the students:

- choice of over 36 GCE A and AS levels

- ability to choose to remain in a supportive school base

- ability to 'taste' college life

- access to enhanced library and technological resources

- opportunity to take all three of their GCE A level choices, as consortium arrangements avoid timetable clashes

- ability to mix vocational and traditional courses.

Spin-off benefits

9.23   The consortium is widely known and understood within Welwyn Garden City. There are: consortium exhibitions (art, photography); theatre productions; open evenings; consultation (guidance) events; and joint closures for INSET days.

9.24   The directors of the consortium are already exploring how they might overcome the next possible big obstacle: level funding post-16. Subject panels are being encouraged to look at technological solutions to lower resource bases, such as those which colleges have been introducing in recent years. The consortium is able to draw on the experience of the college over recent years in responding to a new funding methodology.

Obstacles

9.25   Initial barriers to collaboration included suspicion and rivalry and the need for each institution to retain its autonomy. The appointment of a co-ordinator is seen by all partners as the key to success.

9.26   When the college left LEA control in 1993, all partners negotiated ways of dealing with the new status of the colleges which avoided the negative effects of aggressive competition. Annual negotiations take place in order to rotate delivery, avoid replication and keep group numbers high.

9.27   Two further factors in overcoming obstacles identified by partners were the individual personalities involved and their level of commitment and the level of teacher involvement and integration.

9.28   Difficulties which arise in the operation of the consortium are resolved primarily through subject panels which meet regularly to review teaching strategies and other issues as they arise. The analysis of key data, including examination results, recruitment and retention data, enables problems to be identified at an early stage.

9.29   Circumstances favourable to successful collaboration include the relatively compact geographical area which makes inter-site transport easier. However, the college recruits from as far south as central London and north of Stevenage.

9.30   The fact that there are no GM schools in Welwyn Garden City has simplified the financial elements of the collaboration.

Further indicators of collaborative strength

9.31   The consortium is driven at all times by the partners' commitment to maintaining and developing the range, quality and cost-effectiveness of the 16–19 offering, sometimes at real cost to the aims and aspirations of individual partners (for example, if they were unable to mount a course which would be non-viable in consortium terms but would benefit the school or college in other ways). Much compromise is required. This could mean that a course may be shared between two establishments. Close communication and joint planning within subject areas has now become an integral part of consortium operations.

10 *Collaboration: Trends and Patterns within the Case Studies*

10.1   Each of the projects described in this guide illustrates a distinctive aspect of LEA, school and college efforts to improve their services, although some tackle similar issues. Some common problems and common factors leading to success seem to have emerged.

Critical success factors

10.2   Particular aspects of successful collaboration which stood out across this small group of case studies included:

■ the ethos or culture of the local education community. Often this has been defined through LEA or college leadership. For example, where there is a tradition of talking, and sharing information at a general level, partners have found it easier to move to closer collaboration on specific projects with clearly defined aims

■ the importance of top-down commitment to the projects seems crucial. As one group of college and school collaborators remarked, 'senior managers had kept repeating the message about collaboration until other colleagues began to see that they really meant it'. Even where the substantive operational responsibility is delegated, senior managers have tended to keep themselves briefed, to be ready to step in where problems arise and to show, in a variety of ways, that the project is a mainstream part of their planning

■ the contribution, drive or personality of key individuals has often been fundamental to getting projects started, to overcoming potentially serious obstacles, or to maintaining commitment to the collaboration when other issues appear likely to take over the planning agenda. This is particularly striking where a new appointment in the LEA, a new college principal or school headteacher has created a new willingness to work together

■ the identification of designated staffing time. Some partnerships have flourished on that basis while others have gone further and contributed to an independent co-ordinator or rotated a secretariat

■ the structure of provision, which can inhibit or foster collaboration. Collaboration has worked most effectively where there are fewer schools with 11–18 provision, although, as the Welwyn Garden City (chapter 9) and Tamworth (chapter 3) case studies demonstrate, structural barriers can and will be overcome by those determined to do so.

Obstacles

10.3   Some common obstacles which projects have encountered and overcome are:

■ lack of money. Often this problem has been solved by a degree of compromise on all sides and willingness from all partners to recognise that the overall potential gain from the project exceeds the immediate financial commitment

- mutual suspicion and mistrust. This was a recurring feature. The establishment of regular and frequent forums for discussion, in-built mechanisms for problem-solving and clear lines of communication were all helpful in overcoming this problem

- the pressure on some schools to develop GNVQ offerings and the temptation amongst all partners to enhance their individual curriculum offerings at the risk of both duplication and non-viable provision. The solution here sometimes required real compromises and a willingness on the part of all partners to review the situation regularly, from the perspective of the collaboration as a whole

- conflicting priorities, especially when centres were responding to new national initiatives. Again, the clear identification of staff time or appointment of an independent co-ordinator ensured that the collaboration continued to thrive.

Agreements and contracts

10.4   In several instances collaboration has been helpfully underpinned by specific agreements and contracts:

- projects with a formal memorandum of agreement or statement of aims and operations carried a sense of conviction and appeared to lead to greater unanimity about goals

- where different groups of staff are involved at various levels of operation within the collaboration, effective joint work appeared to be enhanced by the production of operational guides which are regularly reviewed

- specified evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms, though rarer than many would have liked, enabled partners to assess the progress of the project and to spot difficulties before they escalated

- in many cases the operational and evaluative mechanisms developed incrementally, over time, as local forums evolved from 'talking-shops' to planning and running substantive projects

- resource inputs are not necessarily shared equally between partners. Typically, the local authority may sponsor secretariat support, or office accommodation, with partner institutions committing staff time. The careers service or the local TEC has sometimes been able to enhance the resource base significantly.

10.5   In following the logic and development of this small sample of collaborative projects it has become increasingly clear that in collaboration one thing leads to another. There seemed to be significant potential for further development once collaboration had been established. This appeared to happen in three ways:

- new developments take place within a project. For example, in Hertfordshire (chapter 9) the collaboration on joint provision led to joint staff development and joint curriculum development work

- the development of one project leads to recognition of opportunities for collaborating in different aspects of post-16 provision. For example, in East Sussex (chapter 6), the collaboration on unit-based funding on school sixth form provision led to the building of an LEA-maintained special educational needs centre for 16–19 year-old students on the premises of one of the FE colleges

- the development of substantive projects out of local information-sharing forums. These can range from joint analysis of recruitment patterns and agreements about niche markets and viable provision to joint applications for new initiatives, joint approaches to widening participation, new partnerships with other agencies, such as youth workers, and new partnerships with local schools.

Democratisation and mutual accountability

10.6   Local authority membership of college governing bodies, college membership of school governing bodies and college involvement in local authority committees emerged as important factors in creating a local ethos or culture capable of promoting collaboration. In areas where these patterns of membership had continued after 1992, the principal benefit was that people in different sectors were able to understand the issues from wider perspectives and that it increased mutual trust and understanding. 'We became very aware of the aspirations and problems of different providers,' one LEA member of a college governing body said. Others spoke of bringing different expertise to bear. Several said that they often acted as a 'catalyst' by effecting introductions.

10.7   In Cambridgeshire, the chief education officer and his deputy sit on the governing bodies of the two general FE colleges; the principal of one of the colleges sits on the executive of the local authority youth centre.

10.8   In Hertfordshire, the deputy head of a school within the consortium is one of several new appointments to the college governing body in 1998. This is viewed very positively by the college, both for the broader perspective and secondary expertise which he will bring to the board and for the extension of further links within the consortium at governor level.

10.9   In Staffordshire, two LEA deputy chief education officers, another senior officer and two headteachers sit on the college corporations. These are the benefits as they see them:

- 'assuring the LEA and the schools that what goes on in college is open and above board. There are no smoke-filled rooms in which dark deeds are done. It increases trust'
- enabling the college to know its concerns are heard within the LEA at an informal but senior level, as well as through formal channels
- enabling the LEA to understand post-16 issues at a much deeper level
- enabling the LEA to bring in FE talent to some of its broader-based activities. For example it enabled the LEA to identify a college principal to sit on the management panel of one of the education service units.

10.10   In East Sussex a college principal continues to serve on the education committee. Many FE colleges have invited elected members or senior officers of the education department to serve on their governing bodies.

10.11   Overall, although the formal break between LEAs and colleges meant that LEAs lost direct involvement in governance and therefore some influence, it did not necessarily lead to a profound disruption in LEA–school–college relations as some of these studies show. Individual personalities are critical here. As one LEA officer put it, 'structures don't create impermeable barriers. People will always work through structures to achieve their goals if they are inclined to do so'. The degree of support offered to colleges in the run-up to establishing the new FE sector also emerged as an important factor. In Staffordshire, for

example, the LEA had ensured that the colleges were sufficiently well set up to compete effectively in the new sector. This was almost certainly helpful in securing a warm welcome for the LEA's informal suggestion that deputy chief education officers might have a useful role to play as college governors.

11 *Collaboration: A National Snapshot*

11.1   For 16–19 providers, one of the disincentives (although by no means insuperable) to closer collaboration has been competitive recruitment between post-16 centres. In many cases, this has created a situation where students at national curriculum key stage 4 are deprived of access to the full range of information and advice about the options open to them at transition. In consequence, students enrol on inappropriate courses, often with wasteful results.

11.2   The postcard survey which informed this study reports widespread attempts to establish examples inter-institutional collaboration, in part as a response to shared concern by colleges and LEAs about the guidance being given to students. Good practice in this area seems to be encapsulated, for example, in West Suffolk, where a code of practice was developed by the college principal and local headteachers and implemented in 1996. It covers all aspects of transition from marketing and information distribution to guidance and progression and has led to a marked improvement in the quantity and quality of transition advice to which students have access.

11.3   In Cambridge, a common admissions system for college and school post-16 centres ensures that all students are fully briefed on the options available to them, helps to keep standards high, ensures cost-effectiveness and a co-ordinated approach to curricular issues (the Cambridge system is described in detail in the case studies included in this guide, as is a related example of collaboration in Tamworth).

11.4   In Bury, the college is working closely with the local authority and the TEC to map provision. By sharing postcode analysis on student movements, looking at duplication and using a range of inputs from different providers, the consortium approach is intended to widen participation and strengthen provision.

11.5   In Kirklees, a long-standing local strategy group shares information about local authority planning, sixth form development, student and pupil numbers, retention data and a wealth of other planning information. Providers get a clear picture of progression and where to address under-participation. It has also enabled productive partnerships to develop around specific projects.

11.6   The needs of disaffected young adults is another area of concern shared widely by colleges and LEA; this is confirmed by the levels of activity reported in the postcard survey. In Suffolk, the college, supported by the LEA's director of education, has developed an effective scheme for identifying and working with disaffected high school students who spend one day a week in college. A county consultative group which includes the college and heads of schools has met regularly since incorporation under the auspices of the local authority to share strategic information.

11.7   In Lancashire an award-winning collaboration has included the NHS as a major partner with the LEA and the colleges. The East Sussex initiative has created a model which is now being studied by government as a possible route for creating equitable 16–19 school and college funding.
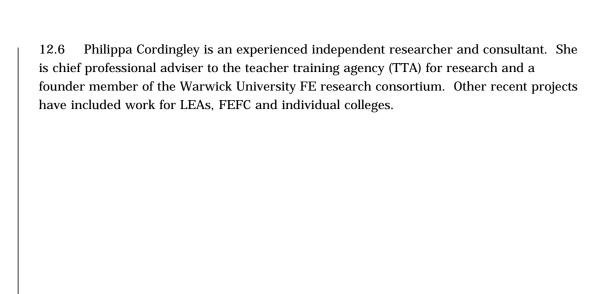
11.8   In North Somerset, agreement has been reached by the LEA and Weston College for a proposal which, if approved by the secretary of state, would see the closure of school-based sixth form provision in Weston, and the development of a sixth form centre by the college.

11.9   This small sample from around the country shows only a fraction of the amount of good practice that is beginning to develop. In addition, specific collaborations are developing rapidly around initiatives such as New Deal, New Start, applications to the single regeneration fund, various European projects and, of course, the FE collaboration fund. New partnerships are being put together, often including the TECs and the careers services.

11.10   However, there are many areas where collaboration either simply does not happen or where it has never gone beyond the talking stage. One college with two discrete campuses found it relatively simple to achieve joint planned provision in one area but has encountered formidable obstacles in the other. Another described its relations with local schools and with the local TEC as 'cut-throat'. The postcard survey shows again and again that whilst several colleges in one LEA area may be involved in and value collaboration with the schools and/or the LEA, other colleges feel that collaboration is less effective or simply report less extensive involvement. This reflects the genuine diversity of the FE and sixth form colleges and the range of patterns of post-16 provision within quite small areas as well as the different approaches and histories shaping specific institutions.

12 *Working Methods*

12.1   Studies were selected in the light of evidence from FEFC and LGA officers, desk and archive research and the results of a postcard survey of local authorities and FE colleges which provided signposts from 271 colleges and 97 LEAs. LEAs and a majority of colleges reported a wide variety of effective initiatives. It is interesting to note both the high levels of response from colleges and LEAs and the relatively high levels of reported collaborative activity. Whilst this is no doubt in part a specific response to the new government's explicit commitment to promoting collaboration, it includes a good deal of activity which pre-dates the new government and so indicates the existence of a sustained attempt to promote collaboration across 16–19 providers in the period since the new sector was established. It is interesting to note too, the strong college responses relating to responding to the needs of disaffected pupils and student guidance and the considerable scope for future collaborative work in the areas of value for money and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

12.2   Subsequent investigation established positive and concrete outcomes in one or more of the themes which were the focus for this project. These investigations involved interviews with key players in schools, colleges and LEAs and scrutiny of policy and project documents and inspection reports.

12.3   The case studies which are set out here are intended to offer selected insights into the collaborative process and to illustrate ways in which effective collaboration has taken place despite the autonomous and often competitive position of individual providers. The case studies illustrate key themes and offer pointers for further enquiry by those who are considering developing work in this area. They were selected to illustrate practice which was felt to be effective by key participants and which was shown to take place in areas in which inspections record good-quality teaching and learning at a general level (inspection reports rarely focus extensively and specifically upon post-16 collaboration). The studies aim to provide sufficient information to enable readers to decide whether there may be more that they could achieve and whether they would like to find out more about what is going on in a case study area rather than comprehensive and detailed accounts. The text has been checked, as far as possible, for authenticity with those involved in the studies. Although the summaries are not written to any standard length or format, standard questions which emerged as important in gathering information have been used to guide the reader through the key themes.

Project team

12.4   The team was led by Neil Fletcher who has been a schoolteacher, lecturer, manager and governor in a number of FE colleges in Yorkshire and in London. He was for 12 years a local government elected member on Camden Council and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) and where he was leader in the three years before abolition. He has served in a number of capacities on national bodies concerned with post-school education, and worked in management and as a consultant. In July 1998 he became head of education for the Local Government Association (LGA).

12.5   Miranda Bell has held senior management and directorate level posts in higher education, with a background in marketing and communications. Most of her recent work as an independent consultant has been in the FE sector where she has extensive writing, commissioning and editorial experience.

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12.6   Philippa Cordingley is an experienced independent researcher and consultant. She is chief professional adviser to the teacher training agency (TTA) for research and a founder member of the Warwick University FE research consortium. Other recent projects have included work for LEAs, FEFC and individual colleges.