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Research into the Phase 4 Locally-Led Delivery Projects for Raising the Participation Age

Research report

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Executive summary

The 2008 Education and Skills Act included legislation to raise the age at which young people are required to stay in education or training in England to 17 years from 2013 and to their 18th birthday from 2015. To support the implementation of the legislation to raise the participation age (RPA), the Department for Education funded local authorities (LAs) to undertake trials and locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs) over four years, with the Phase 4 projects forming the last phase of work.

An evaluation of the Phase 4 LLDPs was commissioned to gather evidence on new activities and effective practice, as well as to assist LAs with planning and preparing for RPA. Over the course of the evaluation, the interests of the Department became focused on some critical issues associated with operationalising RPA, which became a guiding framework for reporting the research findings. These issues were: strategic ownership and partnership delivery; data and tracking; early intervention; the needs of vulnerable groups; and the 17+ agenda.

The research was undertaken with specific regard to the changed economic, social, political, and LA context since the announcement of the RPA policy. It comprised an interim stage which included an online survey and telephone interviews with a sample of LAs involved in Phase 4 projects, and a final stage encompassing ten case studies and two master class workshops.

This report presents a summary of findings emerging from the evaluation of the previous trials and LLDPs to provide some context to the Phase 4 LLDPs. It then turns to the challenges encountered, and solutions reached by LAs involved in the Phase 4 LLDPs. These LAs had been granted considerable flexibility in devising and implementing actions to provide intelligence on how challenges associated with the delivery of RPA could be overcome.

Lessons from the earlier RPA trials and projects

The trials and LLDPs have operated in a changing political and economic context, including a change of government between Phases 2 and 3 which created some uncertainty and affected local engagement with the RPA agenda. Over time, the trials and LLDPs have benefited from increased flexibility. The development and implementation of localised approaches to address the challenges posed by the RPA policy have resulted from this approach. This is likely to have become increasingly important in light of new national policies, such as schools' duty to provide independent and impartial careers guidance. As part of Phase 3 LLDPs, local leaders were appointed to provide peer support and challenge to LAs within a defined area, and to take a lead in disseminating the learning arising from the projects.

The previous evaluations established an overall framework which LAs can use for RPA delivery. LAs involved in the trials and LLDPs have responded to this. However, LAs may have prioritised 'stemming the flow' of young people to NEET status post-16, through identifying young people at risk of disengagement and implementing early intervention activities, over addressing the 'stock of NEET', ie the needs of non-participants in post-16 provision.

Strategic ownership and local partnerships

The Phase 4 LLDPs demonstrated that successful strategic planning and local implementation of RPA is built upon strong collaborative links between LAs and their key local stakeholders. This emanated from many years of partnership working. LAs had learnt extensively from previous phases of the RPA projects and trials, notably in developing tools to identify young people 'at risk' of non-participation and to identify, and meet the support needs of, young people in employment.

Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that the ongoing programme of restructuring within local authorities, as a result of budget cuts, was directly impacting on staffing and services. This process, in itself, had led to a diminution of the priority given to the implementation of RPA, in some areas, due to competing pressures within LAs. Also, in the majority of LAs, the funding allocated to youth services and advice and guidance services (previously Connexions Services) had been drastically reduced, thereby heightening the challenge to achieve full participation among the 16-17 year old cohort.

For LAs, an important contextual factor in the delivery of Phase 4 LLDPs was the impending introduction of RPA from September 2013, and the additional duties which would be required of them.

Data and tracking

Planning and intervention around mapping and tracking, as well as data sharing, was invariably linked to the introduction of the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure for schools and colleges. Moreover, there was an awareness that the issue of engaging young people until the age of 18, from September 2015, was imminent and that maintaining these older cohorts in sustained learning for longer periods of time presented a considerable challenge.

It was also felt that the ability to accrue accurate data had been compromised by the duty on schools and colleges to make their own careers guidance arrangements, as this placed some LAs 'at arm's length' from working with young people considering their post-16 destinations. Thus, determining the uniformity of destinations data, as well as the timing of its delivery, has increasingly become dependent on goodwill arrangements between local providers and the LA.

Many LAs were working in partnership with local schools and colleges to establish data-sharing protocols which provide information on:

- year 11 destinations data;
- young people 'at risk' of dropping out of learning; and
- young people who had dropped out of post-16 provision.

Where protocols had been established, the main lesson learnt was that clear agreement needs to be reached on the content (quality), timeliness and security of information received, and how it will be used to support the needs of the young person. This emphasis on meeting both the needs of the young person and data collection requirements should not be understated.

Leading early interventions

Supporting transitions through the provision of dedicated support workers was identified by LA respondents as constituting effective practice. Some common critical success factors for delivering early and preventative interventions include the appointment of skilled staff with attributes such as patience, tenacity and resilience, to reach out and sustain support to young people. These staff also needed to be capable of developing networks and securing collaboration to bring about positive outcomes for young people.

LAs recommended that each local intervention should be carefully targeted at those who can most benefit from the approach and that the interventions available through the range of local partners are used in a coordinated way to provide preventative support. Emphasis was also placed on utilising established knowledge and good practice and bringing this to bear in supporting young people to participate.

Furthermore, it was felt that the full range of factors that can identify young people as being at risk of NEET status may extend beyond those typically included in risk of NEET indicator (RONI) tools, as some young people who do not have characteristics that make them obvious targets for additional support may still be at risk. This can be addressed by using local intelligence in parallel with data driven tools.

Supporting vulnerable groups

The research demonstrated that a range of approaches is likely to be required to support vulnerable groups. Some of these may be tailored to particular types of vulnerability or disadvantage, while others are more generic. In designing approaches, it is crucial to understand the match, or lack of it, between local provision and young people's aspirations. The work undertaken by Phase 4 LAs demonstrated that, for some of the most vulnerable young people, work-based learning at a lower level than an apprenticeship provided a novel and attractive route to encourage participation. Moreover, the delivery of impartial careers guidance, accompanied by support to ensure that young people understand the full range of post-16 options, was seen as vital.

The work among Phase 4 LAs indicated a strong need for collaboration and coordination among local stakeholders, particularly about the funding that some groups may access. Young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), care leavers and young parents may have access to specific funding streams and require support to use these to best effect.

Although the re-engagement provision required by vulnerable groups varied, this was not necessarily determined by the nature of their vulnerability or disadvantage. Exploring young people's aspirations, and providing increased work-based learning opportunities that were consistent with, or built towards these aspirations, provided a mechanism to address this point.

Retaining 17 year olds in learning and training

In the Phase 4 LLDPs, as in earlier trials and projects, retaining 17 year olds in education and training had received less attention than work to identify and support those at risk of NEET pre-16, despite this being a growing concern among Phase 4 LAs. The research indicated that there was a need to understand more fully the reasons for disengagement among 17 year olds. Lessons emerging from the Phase 4 LAs indicated that the characteristics of young people disengaging at the age of 17 differ from those of the 'at risk' of non-participation pre-16 group. It was therefore concluded that tools to identify risk of disengagement require some different factors and weightings than those seeking to identify risk of NEET pre-16. It was also considered to be important to combine local intelligence with data driven tools to identify all young people at risk of disengagement.

Some of the Phase 4 LAs had carried out studies which sought to understand the reasons for young people disengaging at the age of 17. These were found to be multiple and complex, and included wrong choices of courses and institutions, stress and anxiety related to performance, and family and/or social factors. For those leading re-engagement activities, this may entail developing alternatives to classroom learning, such as pre-apprenticeship work-based training or Traineeships that allow young people to build a bridge between learning and the labour market. This type of provision also offers an alternative means for young people to understand their capabilities and achievements.

Conclusions

The Phase 4 LLDPs made considerable progress towards identifying and addressing some of the key challenges in the delivery of RPA. Support from the local leaders, who were effective in communicating good practice, offering advice to sub-groups of LAs, and acting as a key support to the delivery of LLDPs, was appreciated and valued.

The work of the Phase 4 LAs demonstrated that progress was heavily dependent upon collaboration with key local stakeholders, including training providers, schools, colleges, and, in some cases, employers, as well as working across different LA services and LA boundaries.

Data sharing, which was viewed as a critical element of delivery, relied heavily upon goodwill among local partners. While tracking was also regarded as crucial, there was uncertainty about whether the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure would provide sufficient impetus for schools and colleges to share data, knowledge and intelligence about young people with LAs.

Critical success factors were identified as being:

- intervening early to prevent entry to NEET status. This required skilled staff capable of maintaining support to young people and securing the collaboration of local stakeholders;
- supporting vulnerable young people through suitable provision, which met aspirations; and
- addressing the 17+ agenda by developing a deeper understanding of disengagement, along with an increased emphasis on work-based learning opportunities.

The evidence from the research shows that there are many examples of innovative practice to support the implementation of RPA in September 2013 and to help prepare for the inclusion of young people in learning or training to the age of 18 from 2015. Recommendations are made for key stakeholders at local levels - LAs, schools and colleges and employers – in relation to RPA, as specified in DfE guidance notes¹. Table 5.1 sets out these duties, the key issues raised by the research and suggested policy implications.

¹ Department for Education (2013), *Statutory Guidance on the Participation of Young people in Education, Employment or Training. For Local Authorities*. March.

Department for Education (2013), *Participation of Young People Statutory Guidance – Advice. Annex 2 – Duties on other organisations in relation to Raising the Participation Age*. March.

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy overview

The 2008 Education and Skills Act legislated to raise the age at which young people are required to stay in education and training in England to the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and to their 18th birthday from 2015. While the 2010 White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' confirmed the coalition government's commitment to the implementation of the RPA², it also specified that the enforcement process would not be introduced in 2013/15, but would remain in statute and could be introduced at a later stage³. Recently published RPA regulations and statutory guidance make clear that the duties on employers will also not be commenced in 2013, although young people in full-time work will retain the responsibility to participate in some form of education or training⁴.

Among the issues which need to be addressed in implementing the RPA are:

- executing the duties placed on local authorities in England to promote participation among the eligible cohort and to identify young people who fail to do so;
- shifting the emphasis within post-16 education and training to expectation rather than choice;
- defining what will constitute learning options which are readily available and attractive to young people who currently fail to engage with post-16 learning; and
- supporting young people who drop out of education and training.

In addition, RPA is coming into effect at a time when, as is widely believed⁵, the rate of youth unemployment is projected to remain high.

Local authorities (LAs) are charged with responsibility for the delivery of RPA in their area. Since 2009, as part of the preparation for RPA, trials and locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs) have been implemented across a number of different LAs in three distinct phases, which have been independently evaluated. A fourth and final phase of LLDPs operated between April 2012 and March 2013, and formed the focus of this evaluation. More information about the trials and projects, prior to Phase 4, and summaries of messages arising from their evaluation, is provided in chapter 2 of this report and provides some context to the delivery of the Phase 4 projects.

² The policy to raise the participation age (RPA)

³ DfE (2010), *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010*. Norwich: TSO; HM Government (2011) Building Engagement, Building Futures p50.

⁴ DfE (2012), *Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Regulations*. (July)

⁵ ACEVO (2012), *Youth Unemployment: The Crisis We Cannot Afford*. The ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment.

1.2 The research approach

1.2.1 Research aims

The overall aim of this study was to identify and evaluate examples of good practice in preparing for RPA among the Phase 4 LLDPs, exploring what had an impact on improving participation rates, and why. The objectives for the Phase 4 research were to:

- gather evidence on new activities being undertaken in Phase 4;
- provide evidence of effective practice; and
- develop guidance for local areas to help them with their planning and preparation for RPA.

Over the course of the evaluation, the interests of the Department became focused on some critical issues associated with delivery of RPA, which became a guiding framework for the reporting of the evaluation findings. These issues were:

- strategic ownership and partnership delivery;
- data and tracking;
- early intervention;
- the needs of vulnerable groups;
- the 17+ agenda.

The research was undertaken with specific regard to the changed economic, social, political and LA context since the announcement of the RPA policy and the implementation of LLDPs to inform its delivery.

1.2.2 Overview of the research approach

A multi-method evaluation approach was commissioned, comprising:

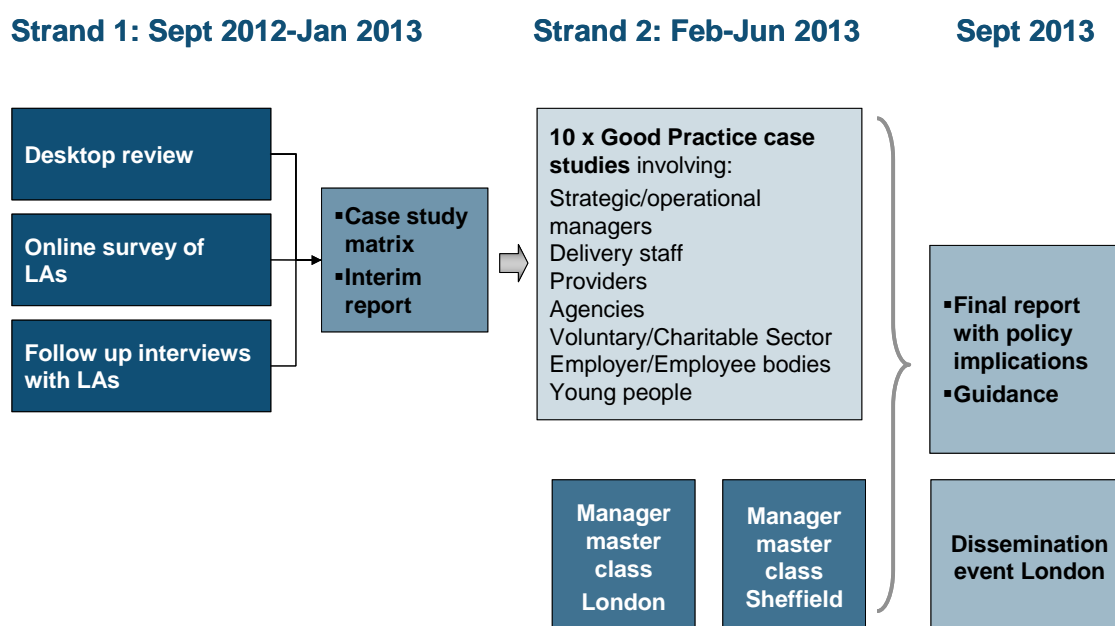
Strand 1

- **A Desktop review** including analysis of published administrative data (such as participation rates, rates of NEET), a review of LA Action Plans and earlier research into the LLDPs and wider research on preparation towards RPA implementation. The analysis of published administrative data was used to check for non-response bias in the online survey (see next bullet point) and is included in the annexes to the current report.
- **An Online survey of LAs**, including Phase 4 LAs and LAs previously, but no longer involved in the trials and projects, which aimed to examine progress made in respect of RPA generally, and in Phase 4 LLDPs, as well as mechanisms to track and monitor effectiveness in order to begin to identify examples of good and promising practice. The survey findings are included in the annexes to this report, with key material being integrated into the main body of the report.
- **Thirteen follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of LAs**, in order to deepen the insights available from the survey and to provide illustrations of the trends and issues identified. These interviews have been used throughout the analysis reported here.

Strand 2

- **Ten 360⁰ case studies** where a range of stakeholders were involved in research to explore effective practice surrounding themes agreed with the Department, and to draw out key learning points from delivery. The scale and scope of the case studies varied depending upon the case study theme and facet(s) of effective practice that was explored, and the extent of interaction between different local solutions that had been developed. It should be noted that case studies were selected in order to extend, and avoid repetition, of the themes explored by the Local Leader⁶ case study reports. These case studies have been critical to the analysis presented in this report.
- **Two managers' master classes** where LA lead staff involved in RPA Phase 4 participated in workshops to identify the key issues associated with the introduction of RPA, share experiences and good practice. The aim was to review and disseminate emerging good practice, detect key issues for transfer to other LAs, and to help to improve practice. The workshops also provided an opportunity for LAs to endorse the evaluation findings.

Figure 1.1: Overview of the research



Source: IES and CEI, 2013

1.2.3 Response rates to the online surveys

Among the 39 LAs involved in the Phase 4 LLDPs, 36 LAs responded to the survey, providing an overall response rate of 92 per cent. Table 1.1 provides a breakdown of Phase 4 respondents in terms of their length of involvement in the RPA Trials/LLDPs.

Ten LAs were funded in previous phases of the trials and LLDPs but were no longer involved by Phase 4. Seven of these responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 70 per cent. It must be noted that this is a very small sample, and as a consequence comparisons with the Phase 4

⁶ As part of Phase 3 LLDPs, local leaders were appointed to provide peer support and challenge to LAs within a defined area, and to take a lead in disseminating the learning arising from the projects.

LAs must be interpreted with some caution. Table 1.2 shows the spread of these respondents by their involvement in earlier phases.

Table 1.1: Spread of respondents across current and earlier phases

Phase	N respondents
Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4	6
Phases 2, 3 and 4	3
Phases 3 and 4	6
Phase 4 only	21
Total	36

Source: Online survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Table 1.2: Spread of respondents across earlier phases of the projects

Phase	N respondents
Phase 1 and 2	2
Phase 1, 2 and 3	2
Phase 2 only	1
Phase 3 only	2
Total	7

Source: Online Survey of LAs involved in previous funding rounds

1.2.4 Composition of the case studies

As part of the case study research, discussions were held with 143 individuals as part of individual, paired and group interviews. The number of interviewees in each case study varied between five and 33, which reflected the local context and the aspect of practice under examination. The mix of case study respondents is shown in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: Mix of case study interviewees

Type	N respondents
Strategic and operational lead staff	22
Delivery staff	28
Local stakeholders and delivery partners	71
Young people and parents	22
Total	143

Source: IES and CEI, 2013

Strategic staff were those with responsibility for RPA implementation within the LA, while operational staff were responsible for coordinating the delivery of the LLDP activity under examination in the case study. Local delivery staff included young person advisers and support workers; these were not present in all case studies. Local stakeholders were interviewed in all ten case studies and comprised staff in local agencies, careers advisers, schools, education and training providers, who had collaborated with the RPA lead to support the LLDP activity that provided the focus for the case study. Young people were interviewed in seven case studies where they had direct experience of the activity examined by the case study.

1.2.5 Engagement in the master class workshops

Both of the master class workshops were well attended and staff from the Phase 4 LLDPs made a significant contribution to refining and elaborating the analysis of findings, and endorsed the research. The number of attendees at each workshop is shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Attendance at the master class workshops

Phase	N attendees
London	17
Sheffield	21
Total	38

Source: IES and CEI, 2013

1.3 Report structure

The second chapter of this report provides a brief summary of findings arising from the evaluation of the earlier trials and LLDPs in order to provide some context to the Phase 4 projects and their evaluation. Chapter 3 presents data arising from the research to evaluate the Phase 4 LLDPs and explores strategic ownership and local partnership, tracking and management of data and data sharing.

The fourth chapter explores three key themes: early intervention, work to address the needs of vulnerable groups and the 17+ agenda. Chapter 5 considers the conclusions and policy implications arising from the research.

The review of secondary sources is included in the first annex to this report. The online surveys are reported in annexes two to four. Annexe 2 contains the Phase 4 survey, annexe 3 covers the survey of the ten LAs no longer involved by Phase 4 and annexe 4 provides a comparative analysis to demonstrate the impact of previous involvement in the trials and projects.

2 Lessons from the earlier phases of work

Key points

- The trials and LLDPs have operated in a changing political and economic context and for Phases 2 and 3 this had created some uncertainty, and caused some delays in respect of local engagement with the RPA agenda.
- Over time, the trials and LLDPs benefited from increased flexibility to develop and implement localised approaches to address the challenges posed by the RPA policy. This is likely to have become increasingly important in light of national policy changes such as increased autonomy in respect of schools and careers guidance provision.
- The previous evaluations established an overall framework that LAs may use for RPA delivery. LAs involved in the trials and LLDPs have responded to this. LAs may have prioritised ‘stemming the flow’ of young people to NEET status post-16, through identifying at risk of disengagement and implementing early intervention activities, over addressing the ‘stock of NEET’, ie the needs of non-participants in post-16 provision.
- The repetition of themes across phases may suggest that highly localised solutions are required for RPA delivery, which would be supported by the divergence of structures within LAs as well as in local education systems.

This chapter provides a brief summary of the information and lessons arising from the evaluation of earlier trials and LLDPs to provide context to the Phase 4 LLDPs and their evaluation. As noted in Table 2.1, the scale and scope of these earlier phases broadened considerably over the three years in which they operated. Each phase is considered in turn in the following sections.

2.1 About the RPA trials and locally-led delivery projects

Phases 1 and 2 of the RPA trials concentrated on the development of three key themes across all participating areas, which were: securing a full careers guidance offer, utilising the September Guarantee to develop systems to prevent/address disengagement and establishing area-wide strategies to encourage full participation.

In Phases 3 and 4 there was a shift towards locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs), which focus on local areas identifying challenges to RPA delivery themselves and developing local solutions specific to local circumstances. In Phase 4, there was a concentration on preparing for RPA in a new social and fiscal context and developing good practice (through LLDP activity) specifically with regard to:

- working with voluntary and community sector organisations/a diverse range of providers;
- developing support for 17 year olds;
- structuring of post-16 teams;
- partnership working; and
- overcoming delivery challenges.

A summary of the RPA trials and LLDPs, and associated evidence is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Summary of the RPA Trials/LLDPs and evidence gathered

Phase 1: 2009-2010		
Areas	Objectives	Outcomes
<p>20 LAs 10 LAs and one sub-region (Greater Manchester) comprised of 10 LAs</p>	<p>3 themes: Securing a full careers guidance offer. Utilising the September Guarantee to develop systems to prevent/address disengagement. Establishing area-wide strategies to encourage full participation.</p>	<p>LAs had differing degrees of understanding and assessment of the RPA cohort and current post-16 provision. Careers guidance Development of new approaches to assessing quality of careers guidance. Re-engagement Development of RONIs⁷. Merging pre and post-16 tracking systems. Local solutions Formulating approaches to employer engagement /working with the JWT group. Identifying ways to work across LAs/travel to learn areas. Isos Partnership (2010), Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Trials: Phase 1 Evaluation Final Report. Department for Education Research Report DFE-RR020.</p>
Phase 2: 2010-2011		
Areas	Objectives	Outcomes
<p>27 LAs 20 LAs from Phase 1 plus 4 new LAs and one new sub-region (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire)</p>	<p>3 themes: Securing a full careers guidance offer. Utilising the September Guarantee to develop systems to prevent/address disengagement. Establishing area-wide strategies to encourage full participation.</p>	<p>Most trial areas were completing RPA plans. Careers guidance Greater focus on supporting transitions. Development of strategies to improve careers guidance. Re-engagement RONIs remained an important mechanism. Development of 'participation adviser' roles. Local solutions Developing catalogues of alternative provision. Developing approaches to employer engagement. Isos Partnership (2011), Evaluation of the Raising the Phase 2 Participation Age Trials: Final Report. Department for Education Research Report DFE-RR135.</p>

⁷ Risk of NEET indicators (RONIs)

Phase 3: 2011-2012

Areas	Objectives	Outcomes
<p>35 LAs Some LAs from Phases 1 and 2 and new representatives plus three sub-regions covering 16 LAs</p>	<p>Identifying local challenges to RPA delivery. Developing local solutions specific to local circumstances.</p>	<p>There was a greater range and scale of activity seen in the LLDPs than seen in previous phases of the RPA trials. Areas found it difficult to measure impact within the evaluation timescales.</p> <p>Range of projects focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEET prevention/intervention • Increasing participation • Development of strategic plans to deliver RPA, and • Sharing good practice. <p>Six local areas appointed as 'Local Leaders'.</p> <p>Day, S., Sandals L., Kettlewell, K., Easton, C., and Durbin, B. (2012). <i>The evaluation of the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Locally-Led Delivery Projects 2011 to 2012: case study findings</i> (DfE RR236). Isos/NFER</p> <p>Day, S., Sandals L., Kettlewell, K., Easton, C., and Durbin, B. (2012). <i>The evaluation of the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Locally-Led Delivery Projects 2011 to 2012: survey findings</i> (DfE RR236B). Isos/NFER</p>

Phase 4: 2012-2013

Areas	Objectives	Description and Outcomes
<p>44 LAs (39 projects) including some LAs from previous phases as well as 21 LAs new to the LLDPs and one sub-region, formed of 4 LAs, new to the LLDPs.</p>	<p>Preparing for RPA in a new social and fiscal context</p> <p>Good practice with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with voluntary and community sector organisations/diverse range of providers • support for 17 year olds • structuring of post-16 teams • partnership working • overcoming challenges. 	<p>This evaluation report</p> <p>Survey of 117 LAs (excluding 35 LAs involved in Phases 1-3 of RPA trials/LLDPs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 per cent had written strategy for RPA • LAs find engagement with employers/parents/carers difficult • 93 per cent have shared best practice about RPA • 59 per cent had completed estimates of RPA cohort in 2013 • 23 per cent had developed RONIs <p>DfE/CAYT (2012), <i>Raising the Participation Age: a survey of local authorities' preparations for full participation in 2013/2015</i></p>

Source: IES and CEI, 2013

The following sections provide a more detailed insight into the issues arising from the evaluations of each of the earlier phases of RPA trials and LLDPs.

2.2 Evaluation findings from Phase 1: RPA trials

The Phase 1 trials were implemented in 2009-10, following the Education and Skills Act of 2008 which legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation until at least 18 by 2015, with an intermediate stage where participation would continue at least until a young person finished the academic year after turning 17 in 2013. These trials were tasked to address one of three areas:

- how LAs might work most effectively to secure a full **careers guidance** offer to support young people to participate in light of RPA policy implementation;
- how, building on the September Guarantee, LAs could plan a system to identify and **re-engage** 16-17 year olds who disengage with learning post-16; or
- how area wide strategies could be developed by LAs which would enable full participation, to demonstrate the challenges, barriers and **local solutions** required for success.

These trials operated in the context of the former Labour administration, which introduced the policy intention to raise the participation age. The evaluation (DfE, 2010, RR020) noted considerable variation in the starting points of the LAs involved in terms of participation rates and provision. It noted that understanding the cohort was a critical factor in determining local priorities and addressing this had led to LAs gaining a better understanding of the data available to them.

In respect of **careers guidance**, activities targeted early years, the Key Stage 4-5 transition point as well as the 16-18 years phase. The work demonstrated a need to coordinate resources and activities such as combining careers guidance with the now defunct Aim Higher initiative in early years delivery; it was also seen as crucial that later years careers guidance encompassed all available pathways and providers. A focus on quality, building on national standards, was recommended as a key activity.

Turning to **re-engagement**, the LAs placed emphasis on tracking systems and some were joining up systems to link pre- and post-16 tracking. The development of RONI (risk of NEET indicators) and early leaver and managed moves protocols began in this phase. Local prospectuses were developed which included alternative provision and foundation learning.

The LAs involved in **local solutions** explored the development of models for managing the delivery of RPA across LAs or 'travel to learn' areas. Developments included RPA plans and trajectories. Within this theme, some LAs led activities related to employer engagement and young people in jobs without training (JWT).

Lessons arising for LAs from this first phase of trials included:

- the analysis of data to determine local priorities;
- the importance of senior, strategic leadership;
- using data to understand more about sub-groups within the cohort, joining up tracking systems and developing indicators to signal a need for intervention;

- establishing and supporting collaborative working with careers guidance providers as well as schools, colleges and training providers; and
- recruiting RPA champions to spread the message among young people, parents and employers.

The evaluation also identified some policy recommendations for the then Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), which included: leading communications work to raise awareness of the RPA policy; introducing a national post-16 progression indicator; clarifying financial support arrangements for young people; providing guidance on foundation learning; and aligning post-16 funding to promote provision of young people with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD).

2.3 Evaluation findings from Phase 2: RPA trials

The Phase 2 trials commenced as the current coalition government came into office. The commitment of the new administration to the raising of the participation age was confirmed in the October 2010 Spending Review and 'The Importance of Teaching' white paper (November 2010). This second phase of the trials shared the objectives of Phase 1 specifically to: undertake work to secure full **careers guidance**, to plan and deliver an effective system for **re-engagement** of young people, and to design **local solutions** to address challenges and barriers associated with RPA.

The evaluation (DfE, 2011; RR135) noted that the Phase 2 LAs had remained committed to delivery despite the uncertainty generated by the change of government. A growing concern about measuring the effects of the activities undertaken for the trials was also reported. The report notes that most trial LAs did not have a complete delivery plan for RPA although it noted that LAs had outline delivery plans in place. Governance was given less emphasis by those involved in Phase 2, although managing relationships between LA and Connexions had become more critical. Significant attention had also been directed at provider engagement, which had been challenging in a period of policy uncertainty.

Findings in respect of **careers guidance** indicated a strong focus on supporting transitions, starting in key stage 3 and continuing into key stage 5. Transitions had become a guiding narrative for LA interventions. Improving careers guidance was a crucial concern and to address this, audits, quality marks and guidance had been introduced. However there was concern about the sustainability of these initiatives in light of policy to devolve the commissioning of independent and impartial career guidance to schools and colleges and the demise of the Connexions service. Engaging parents/carers with the RPA agenda was viewed as problematic. However, improvements were noted in the identification of those with specific barriers to participation, such as young parents, and young people with LDD.

RONI tools remained important for identifying those young people in need of **re-engagement** support. Many areas had focused on relationships between Connexions and providers in order to increase pastoral care to support young people at risk. A question was raised about whether systems to report early leaving were being used as intended. Two models of participation adviser had emerged: one generalist and one targeted on the most vulnerable. Multi-agency work had increased and in some cases had been aligned to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

The Phase 2 trials had also made progress with young people understood to have a reasonable excuse not to participate, although it was noted that more work was needed on this issue.

The unique features of the Phase 2 **local solutions** surrounded filling gaps in provision. Employer engagement activities had been undertaken involving third party organisations that had credibility with employers. There were also examples of innovative and novel provision being introduced, eg developing a supported pre-apprenticeship model for vulnerable learners, and progress was also made with developing local prospectuses.

The evaluation of the second phase of trials suggested the need for: a comprehensive RPA delivery plan; further work to understand cohorts and activities to plan and monitor trajectories; and a review of wider engagement with the RPA agenda to maximise collaborative working. There were also recommendations in respect of an increased focus on employer engagement leveraged through local economic partnerships and regeneration teams; further work to engage young people and parents in planning for RPA; and further work on provider engagement, particularly to challenge providers on progression and retention; as well as strengthening engagement with schools and colleges, and encouraging the establishment of RPA strategic leads within them. The mapping of support and provision available throughout the 11 to 19 phase to identify gaps, and maximise efficiencies – more work to understand the needs and aspirations of non-learners to confirm gaps and develop suitable provision was viewed as important, as was identifying key ‘at risk’ groups and linking support and provision to their transitions; and systematic approaches to identify and seek to re-engage young people who have withdrawn from post-16 learning.

A key output from this report, was the establishment of six priorities in the following order, for RPA delivery, which encompassed:

- **Priority one:** Understanding the cohort (projecting participation, identifying risk, analysing reasons for drop out);
- **Priority two:** Determining local priorities (prioritising actions, establishing trajectories, governance and leadership);
- **Priority three:** Managing transitions and tracking (intervening early, careers guidance protocols and strategies, post-16 careers guidance and pastoral support);
- **Priority four:** Establishing support mechanisms (participation advisers, multi-agency support, learning and support agreements, defining reasonable excuse);
- **Priority five:** Identifying and meeting provision needs (personal pathways and foundation learning, increasing level 1 and 2 opportunities, converting JWT to apprenticeships, targeted provision for vulnerable groups); and
- **Priority six:** Communicating the RPA message (prioritising audiences and stakeholders, identifying key messages, moving up activity, involving young people and parents, engaging employers, careers guidance materials and CPD for tutors).

2.4 Evaluation findings from Phase 3 LLDPs

In the third phase, LAs were offered significant freedom to develop a set of activities under the umbrella of a locally-led delivery project. A multi-method evaluation was conducted which involved case studies and surveys (DfE, 2012a and 2012b). The evaluation evidence was organised using the narrative structure of the RPA priorities established in Phase 2 (see above). Findings from the two evaluation reports are summarised below.

In respect of **priorities one and two** (understanding the cohort and local priorities), the evaluation found a strong focus on identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET and the use of RONI tools was widespread. Further work had been achieved in respect of understanding the cohort and more LAs had or were developing an RPA plan.

In terms of **priority three** (managing transitions and tracking) the majority of LAs were involved in related activities and there was a focus on improving tracking. There was an increased focus on starting work in key stage 3, but less evidence of the use of managed moves protocols and RONI tools to share data for pre- and post-16 transitions. A few areas had delivered support to colleges to improve retention.

Less focus had been given to **priority four** (establishing support mechanisms) in respect of vulnerable groups. Activities here included creating support mechanisms and packages, and introducing new roles to support vulnerable young people. There was some activity related to early leaver protocols and impacts were demonstrated from work to engage schools in providing support to those at risk, through reduced NEET and unknown rates.

About half of the Phase 3 LAs were engaged in activities related to **priority five** (identifying and meeting provision needs) and these surrounded developing new provision or particular types of provision, such as apprenticeships and work-based learning. LAs had mapped provision gaps, linking gaps to progression routes and breaks in learning. Some flexible provision had been developed including volunteering, work experience and pre-apprenticeship provision. Some LAs were noted to be prioritising the engagement of young people in JWT.

Priority six (communicating the RPA message) typically encompassed ongoing dissemination of the RPA message. Awareness of RPA among schools and post-16 providers was reported to be high and on senior management team agendas. However, teachers and tutors were said to demonstrate less understanding of the policy.

The evaluation survey report noted a greater range and scale of activity in Phase 3 than in earlier phases. Confidence among the LAs about RPA delivery had increased. Targets for participation were in some cases reported as ambitious. Most LAs had identified priority groups for support. The survey explored how the LLDP funding was being spent which showed an emphasis on priorities one and two, and also match funding provided by LAs. However, it noted that establishing value for money was problematic in light of a lack of evidence about the impact of the activities (which was reported to be challenging within the timescale of the LLDPs).

The case study report suggested some lessons for LAs, which included:

- developing/adapting RONI tools and other indicators for use in the post-16 environment and using RONI and indicators as a means to target and deploy early intervention strategies;
- developing projections for participation that take account of assumptions relating to non-participants, strengthening trajectory planning; clarifying the links between the data and actions; and mapping progression routes to establish provision gaps;
- working with post-16 providers that have low participation rates for 17 year olds to explore and improve retention practices and to share good practice;
- sharing accountability and responsibility for pastoral care and making this explicit within protocols, such as for early leavers and managed moves;
- assessing any distinguishing characteristics of young people in JWT, to help to develop indicators of risk of entry to JWT; and
- communicating the RPA message broadly, and consideration of the development of a local brand for RPA.

These earlier phases of work provided context for the LAs involved in the design and delivery of the Phase 4 LLDPs. The evaluations identified some key strategies and practices with implications for all LAs in England planning for RPA implementation.

The project plans for Phase 4 LLDPs suggested that LAs had welcomed the opportunity to design and implement activities that were highly tailored to their local contexts. Moreover, the plans suggested that LAs worked within the guiding framework established by the foregoing evaluations and drew upon the lessons and products developed in the earlier stages of work (for more information in respect of the utility of the earlier phases to design and implementation of Phase 4 see survey findings, contained in the annexes to this report).

A new evaluation (reported here) was commissioned, using new contractors, which was tasked to elaborate the learning arising from this fourth and final phase of work towards RPA, in a changed economic, social, political and LA context from when the policy was first devised. The research was also tasked with considering messages for effective practice, which could be disseminated.

3 Findings from Phase 4: Strategic and operational management of RPA

Key points

- Successful strategic planning and local implementation of RPA is built upon strong collaborative links between LAs and their key local stakeholders. This is derived from partnership working which has been developed over many years.
- LAs had learnt extensively from previous phases of the RPA projects and trials, in particular with regard to developing tools to identify young people 'at risk' of non-participation and to identify and to meet the support needs of young people in employment.
- The delivery of Phase 4 LLDPs was intertwined with the impending duties placed on LAs with regard to the Raising of the Participation Age from September 2013.
- The ability of LAs to meet their statutory obligations for RPA implementation, and to sustain the developments achieved through LLDP funding, was challenged due to: cuts to LA funding and their impact on staffing and services; the rise in the number of academies and free schools; and responsibility for careers guidance being devolved to schools and colleges.
- Planning and intervention around mapping and tracking, as well as data sharing, was invariably linked to the introduction of the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure for schools and colleges.
- There was an awareness that the bigger issue of engaging young people until the age of 18, from September 2015, was imminent and that far greater challenges lay ahead, in terms of planning to maintain older learners in sustained learning for longer periods of time.

This chapter explores LAs' strategic and operational management of RPA within the context of the local implementation of the Phase 4 LLDPs. It also examines how the Phase 4 projects, and any previous rounds of work which some LAs may have received, have helped to shape local preparations for the national implementation of RPA from September 2013, with particular regard to the role of LAs in offering strategic leadership to local stakeholders. LAs' responsibility for tracking, management of data and data sharing are discussed, within new boundaries which place a responsibility on schools and colleges to: secure independent and impartial advice for their students; promote good attendance; and inform local authority support services if a young person (aged 16 or 17) has dropped out of learning⁸. Issues stemming from the introduction of the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure, which provides public information on the performance of individual schools and colleges in securing positive outcomes for their students, is reviewed.

A requirement of the project was that *'the research will be undertaken with specific regard to the changed economic, social and LA context since the announcement of RPA and the*

⁸ Department for Education (2013), *Participation of Young People Statutory Guidance – Advice. Annex 2 – Duties on other organisations in relation to Raising the Participation Age*. March.

implementation of local delivery projects to inform support of its delivery'. This section provides some evidence with regard to meeting this aim.

3.1 Strategic ownership and local partnership

There was an overall consensus that preparation for RPA, including LLDP delivery, was highly dependent on respondents exploiting their existing strong collaborative links with other local stakeholders, most notably LAs' senior management, other departments within the LA (eg Social Services, Economic Development Units), schools, colleges and training providers. Positive engagement with local partners was more successful, and sustainable, where the RPA agenda had been implanted in existing networks and where there was an established track record of partnership working. For example, respondents cited 14-19 Partnership Boards, Apprenticeship Boards, 14-18 Improvement Partnerships, Learning Communities, and Vocational and Academic Boards as existing forums where a range of stakeholders met to discuss participation issues, and where the RPA agenda had been fully embraced within current priorities.

There was little evidence that LAs were 'starting from scratch', in terms of engaging with the local stakeholders, to deliver their commitments regarding LLDPs or RPA implementation. Rather, the delivery of LLDPs and the implementation of RPA were heavily dependent upon strong local relationships which had been developed over many years. Some respondents reported that LLDP funding had enabled local partners to gain a better understanding of the work of other stakeholders and to offer more support to schools through the delivery of local projects.

'Other people, other colleagues as well, have got years of experience of working with partners and with stakeholders and I think that is key. It's key to the work that you do, because you can't do it alone, particularly with the shift moving away from local authorities and over to schools. Trying to maintain the relationship with schools is tricky but if you've got contacts lower down in the school, sometimes that helps you with getting in a more senior level as well.'

RPA Lead

'I think what we want to be clear is that we're not tackling (RPA). We don't have the capacity. What we've got to do is to convince the providers, the schools, the colleges, that this needs to be done. That's our purpose, you know, our strategic influencing role.'

LA Principal Advisor

Box 1 Example of good practice: Year 11 Progression calendar to support post-16 transitions among off-site learners

As part of the Phase 4 LLDP developed by Leeds some of the funding was utilised to improve progression routes for young people in off-site learning provision, who were identified as being disproportionately represented in local NEET statistics. Building on existing partnership links between the LA, careers guidance providers and local off-site partners, the group shared good practice (including a training day), and produced both a progression agreement template and a Year 11 progression calendar.

The purpose of the calendar (which is a laminated poster) is to give providers a timetable of key events and activities, thereby enabling them to map, support and track the progression of their learners during the course of Year 11. The poster includes colour coded information relating to progression activities, post-16 provider offers, and collaborative learner-manager actions (tracking). Users can add their own activity to the laminated poster to reflect their individual practice. It supports the LA in obtaining more accurate destination data about a vulnerable group of young people who, historically, are more likely to need support at the end of Year 11, and/or as part of the September Guarantee.

Box 2 Example of good practice: Harnessing local partnership working

Phase 4 LLDP funding was perceived to be the catalyst to the development of a number of different activities for the Isle of Wight. Crucially, the development of this programme of activities was underpinned by close partnership working and supplementary funding from the LA and other local agencies. The LA can measure the impact of this range of interventions through a reduced local NEET population, which has fallen from 6.6 per cent in June 2010 to 3.2 per cent in June 2013. Additional funding secured from ESF (European Social Fund) grants and other national and local initiatives will be used to sustain the activities currently supported through LLDP funds, which included:

- A risk of NEET indicator (RONI) tool, which has been extensively used to support schools with their Destination Measure and, at the same time, has been used by the LA to develop links with schools which are outside of their direct control;
- a series of engagement programmes for the NEET group (approximately ten participants in each programme), including a re-engagement programme, and a Get Ready to Work programme, which is run in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus to support cohorts of young people with job seeking skills;
- an outdoor activity programme;
- a customer services training course and first aid/care courses, which were run in conjunction with the local college. The third cohort of young people will be starting their programme in 2013; and
- a pre-apprenticeship programme, which was largely funded by the LA, but also received support from RPA Phase 4 LLDP funding. There were 49 young people on the programme, of whom 23 secured Apprenticeships, nine found other types of employment, and 16 moved onto education or training (January 2013).

Funding has also been used to support a:

- Young Entrepreneurs Programme, which has been developed in conjunction with the local Chamber of Commerce;
- Volunteering Programme, which is run in conjunction with the local Rural Community Council; and
- café facility staffed by students with learning disabilities or difficulties.

Among the thirty nine LAs involved in the Phase 4 local delivery projects, thirty six LAs responded to the on-line survey, providing an overall response rate of 92 per cent⁹. The survey tool contained five categories of local partner that might be involved in strategy development. These were: local schools; post-16 education and training institutions; local services; agencies; employer bodies and others. In the broadest terms, all of these local partners had been consulted as part of strategy development. However, there is substantial variation in their level and role of involvement in the development of local RPA strategies.

Schools, with the exception of free schools¹⁰, were generally quite involved in strategy development (see Figure 3.1). Among other post-16 education and training providers, further education colleges and training providers were highly involved in the majority of LA areas.

Among the local services who might be involved, social services teams tended to be slightly involved, while youth services, youth offending teams and care leaving teams were typically more involved.

Guidance providers, including where guidance provision had been contracted out, appear either extremely involved in strategy development or to have little involvement or relevance to strategy development.

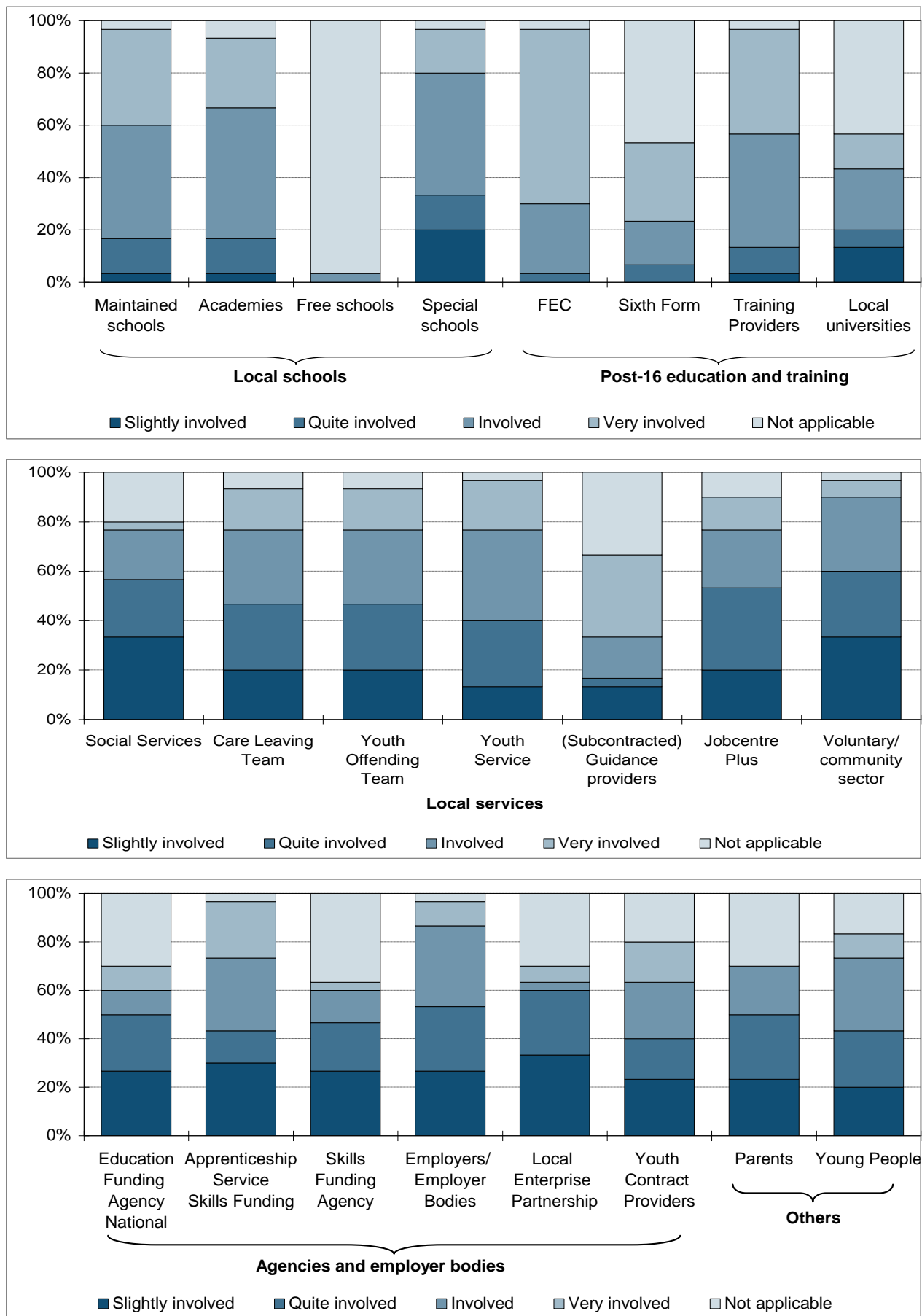
Of the agencies and employer bodies, most involved in RPA strategy development were the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), employers/employer bodies and Youth Contract providers.

Young people and their parents were less likely to be involved in strategy development than other partners noted in the survey, although where they were involved, young people had greater input than parents.

⁹ The LA survey is reported in full in the annexes to this report

¹⁰ Which were not present in most (29) of the LAs

Figure 3.1: Involvement of different local partners in design of RPA strategy



Figures present composite data from multiple questions; overall survey response 92 per cent

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LA (2012)

LAs had also learnt extensively from previous phases of the RPA projects and trials, notably through developing 'nuggets' of good practice within their own areas. The development of 'risk of NEET' indicators (RONIs) was a prime example of local areas adapting models which had been developed in other areas. While the emphasis within Phase 4 was on the delivery of locally-led projects which were designed to meet their local needs, the LAs participating in this phase valued the opportunities to engage with other local areas, as well as the financial support that they received. Opportunities included:

- events organised by DfE which brought participating LAs together to discuss new and emerging practice;
- support from the local leaders, who were effective in communicating good practice and offering advice to sub-groups of LAs, which were working within different regional localities; and
- the knowledge hub, which enabled LAs to access and exchange examples of effective practice through the provision of a shared internet portal, where examples of good practice (including copies of locally produced materials) were stored and peer-to-peer support was available.

Invariably, the delivery of Phase 4 LLDPs became intertwined with the impending duties placed on LAs with regard to the Raising of the Participation Age from September 2013. These duties involve promoting effective participation of young people in education and training, identifying, as far as possible, young people who are failing to fulfil the duty to participate. These new duties complement local authorities' existing duties to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16-19 and for those aged 20-24 with a learning assessment in their area¹¹, and to encourage, enable and assist them to participate¹². While there was widespread evidence that collaborative links between LAs and strategic partners were strong, the ability of LAs to meet their statutory obligations for RPA implementation, and to sustain the developments achieved through LLDP funding, was perceived by LAs to be challenged due to:

- cuts to LA funding and their impact on staffing and services;
- reduced overall control as a result of the rise in the number of academies and free schools; and
- responsibility for careers guidance being devolved to schools and colleges.

Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that the ongoing programme of restructuring within local authorities, as a result of budget cuts, was directly impacting on staffing and services. This process, in itself, had led to a diminution of the priority given to the implementation of RPA, in some areas, due to competing pressures within LAs. Also, in the majority of LAs, the funding allocated to youth services and advice and guidance services (previously Connexions Services) had been drastically reduced, thereby heightening the challenge to achieve full participation

¹¹ Department for Education (2013), *Statutory Guidance on the Participation of Young people in Education, Employment or Training. For Local Authorities*. March.

¹² 2008 Education and Skills Act (Section 68).

among the 16-17 year old cohort. It was also reported that cuts to infrastructure budgets, in particular for local transport services, were affecting RPA implementation. The resultant reductions in local bus services were adversely affecting the ability of young people in jobs without training (JWT) in rural areas to access suitable learning provision.

'Well, no, it's not chaos... but what I would say is it's definitely not looking the same and there have been lots of redundancies and there have been people leave and people's jobs have changed and people have different job descriptions now, so it has been a major, major restructure... we no longer have a widening participation service. The whole team has gone and some of the work's going to different teams within different areas.'

RPA Operations Manager

Analysis of data generated from the online survey, which was conducted in December 2012, showed that more than half (53 per cent) of the responding Phase 4 LAs reported that their current staffing levels were insufficient to deliver RPA. However, just under a third (31 per cent) thought their current staffing levels were adequate, and the remainder (17 per cent) did not comment either way on this point.

LA respondents from the case study interviews were acutely aware that promoting full participation was being operationalised in a climate where LAs had a changed relationship with local schools. Firstly, the growing number of schools adopting academy status and the creation of free schools had weakened LAs' capacity to secure participation/destination data beyond securing 'goodwill' arrangements with schools which operate outside of LA control. While, in many areas, data sharing agreements/protocols had been set up with local schools, the duty on Academies to provide information on young people's intended destinations must be supported by local arrangements to supply the LA with accurate, timely and consistent data. Although there was some debate about the extent to which the introduction of the Destination Measure had provided a carrot or a stick to engagement (see section 3.2), the ability of LAs to force local schools to provide information on their students was considered to be problematic. In some LAs, the engagement of non-participating schools was achieved by offering them access to the locally developed RONI tool/data, which has enabled 'at risk' students to be identified and supported both within school and by local authority supported guidance services.

Secondly, within new boundaries which place a responsibility on schools and colleges to secure independent and impartial advice to their students, there was widespread disquiet about the extent to which schools and colleges are offering impartial careers guidance to their students. The issue of a lack of impartiality in guidance services appeared to be particularly acute among 11-18 schools, many of which were perceived to have a vested interest in retaining students to maintain their school-based sixth forms.

'... the current government has created a dog-eat-dog environment as institutions lose money for learners, even if they progress to positive destinations. There is no such thing as impartial IAG'¹³

Head of 6th Form

In response to schools and colleges assuming responsibility for independent and impartial careers guidance delivery, institutions tended to either appoint their own staff (in some cases their previous Connexions worker or teaching staff) or buy in the services of local guidance services, which may or may not have continued with the Connexions branding. Local guidance services may be part or wholly maintained by the local authority or delivered solely by a third party contractor. The lack of consistency, in terms of 'what is provided where and to whom', raised concerns not only in relation to issues of the impartiality of guidance offered to young people, but also in terms of the coverage and quality of guidance and how this would impact on the standard of information which is available to LAs, in order for them to fulfil the requirements of the implementation of RPA. It was reported that a lack of impartiality in guidance provision may heighten post-16 student drop-out, if young people are signposted in the wrong direction to support the short-term interests of boosting post-16 figures in individual schools/colleges.

'But yes, I mean that relationship has suffered, I think, just because we're working with such a small amount of young people and have less profile in the schools.'

LA RPA Lead

'It's a bizarre situation really... It's a bit like giving the local authority all the responsibility but taking the teeth out of the wolf really.'

LA Operational Manager

It was stated that collaboration between local partners was also challenged by reductions in the funding received to support individual students, and by heightened competition for students among providers. In terms of funding, the falling level provided to schools in recent years was reported to be placing pressure on school budgets and recruitment practices in some local areas. As far as competition for students is concerned, in one locality, the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund was being used by colleges as a 'carrot' to attract students. Since colleges have the discretion to set their own limits with regard to the level of Student Bursary Funding which students receive, one college had set a higher level, in order to recruit students.

While some local areas have utilised funding via LLDP and their own resources, to promote awareness about the national implementation of RPA from September 2013, including poster campaigns, advertising on buses and within cinemas, and promotional leaflets to young people, parents and employers, there was some concern expressed about the lack of national publicity to support their efforts.

¹³ IAG is an abbreviation for information, advice and guidance. The term careers guidance has been used in this report.

'My sense is that it's not the same kind of emotional thing featuring in the national consciousness that we've had previously.'

LA RPA Lead

Notably, challenging aspects of most areas' engagement strategy with key stakeholders have been to:

- persuade local and national employers to expand the number of apprenticeships open to young people; and
- assess and meet the needs of young people in the JWT group.

In many areas, the demand for apprenticeships from young people was reported to have grown at a time when the number of places available to them has fallen. Examples were found of innovative practice, often involving links with Local Economic Units within LAs, whereby LLDP funding had been utilised by LAs to: a) expand their links with employers; b) promote awareness about national and local funding opportunities to support apprenticeship funding; and c) expand the base and sectors of employers offering opportunities to young people.

Meeting the requirement to support young people in JWT to engage in education and training had proved to be more problematic. While the numbers in the JWT group in each locality were usually small, providing support was often very difficult, given that they tended to find their own routes into employment, were predominantly employed in small firms (sometimes family businesses), and finding suitable, flexible local education and training provision to match their diverse needs was difficult. Some areas had established systems for identifying young people who had decided to move directly into employment at the end of Y11, so that their transition into employment could be supported. In particular, rather than trying to identify and track young people once they had moved into employment, suitable learning could be arranged for them before they started work.

Box 3 Example of good practice: Expansion of apprenticeships opportunities for young people

In Gateshead, Phase 4 LLDP funding enabled the RPA lead to work in close collaboration with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), a partnership of local training providers and the College, and other key council colleagues to fund a suite of activities to access employers (especially SMEs) who had not traditionally offered vacancies (including apprenticeships) and work placements to young people. This included a tele-marketing campaign generating appointments with employers to encourage their engagement, as well as offering additional recruitment incentives, a job matching service, job squads and a talent scouting initiative with local schools. Strong partnership working has enabled key local players to develop and promote a single apprenticeship offer and to adopt a more coordinated approach to engaging with employers.

These initiatives will continue to be used by the LA in order to maximise local employer engagement. The impact stemming from Phase 4 LLDP funding will be measured through an increase in the number of apprenticeship vacancies that are available locally. Demand for apprenticeships is high among young people.

While LAs will be responsible, from September 2013, for collecting information to identify young people who are not participating (see Section 3.2) and to work with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support, the LLDPs have enabled appropriate systems to be developed. RONIs had been operationalised in most local areas to identify 'at risk' students. The disproportionate number of young people with special needs who were identified as 'at risk' of non-participation, together with some non-statemented young people (School Action Plus), was a significant finding. Concern was expressed about the viability of lag-funding, which will be introduced within post-16 funding mechanisms in 2013. It was felt that the requirement to prove successful outcomes would deter some providers from recruiting young people with challenging needs onto their programmes.

The lack of coherence between different types of provision within the post-16 foundation learning offer was also questioned by some respondents, as the funding, programme content and expected outcomes were determined by a number of different funders/initiatives. One respondent cited the example of providers which had secured funding from the Big Lottery and ESF and where provision was competing with, rather than complementing, mainstream local provision.

'And that's very frustrating because they have targets within their contract that we know of, because of the relationship I have... and want to share them. But that's a result of me pursuing them and their targets aren't always necessarily our targets but they're the contracted targets which don't necessarily relate to local authority or DfE targets... What they don't do is that they don't complement existing activity...'

RPA Lead

'But actually, when it comes to the Foundation offer, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who have been very poor attenders or show that challenging behaviour, the learning offer isn't solid enough, it's tangible enough for advisers and schools... I think that the local planning of the offer is great, but because it's commissioned from the ESF money or other pots of money, you've got restrictions on places, so sometimes you're oversubscribed, sometimes you're undersubscribed, sometimes young people are waiting for places because the numbers are already full... It seems to me there's a better way of organising that and I think there will be some challenges for the post-16 programme, because I don't think that it is a natural fit with the sort of re-engagement activity that we need for young people.'

Participation and Progression Manager

The different types of provision and funding streams underpinning these programmes raised issues about how young people can navigate pathways through these various types of programme. Concern was also raised about the length of some programmes such as those commissioned through the European Social Fund (ESF), which may last for a period of 24 weeks or less, in terms of full-time course provision being readily available at the points when students leave these programmes. In essence, young people may experience a significant lag between finishing a short-term programme and being able to access full-time learning opportunities offered by schools and colleges.

3.2 Tracking, management of data and data sharing

There was significant evidence that many LAs had invested, in many cases with support from LLDP funding, in processes that would enhance their performance with regard to tracking, management of data and data sharing. In a climate where staffing levels were being reduced and restructuring within LAs was commonplace, the emphasis was on developing Year 11 transition management systems and data sharing protocols which would help facilitate the dual requirement on LAs to support full participation and produce destinations data via CCIS. Local systems had also been developed for exchanging information on young people who drop out of post-16 education and training. This is an area where the exchange of information had tended to be limited, to the detriment of attempts to re-engage young people. Many respondents were acutely aware that reductions to staffing and budgets, within individual LAs, principally concerning the funding of the Connexions Service, had adversely affected their ability to undertake effective mapping and tracking of 16 and 17 year olds. In some cases, this had resulted in escalating levels of destinations being recorded as 'unknown'.

In response, a number of LAs reported that, instead of contracting out this service, they had returned their tracking responsibilities to 'in house' management. Some LAs were in the process of transition to assuming this role. As well as improving the quality of CCIS¹⁴ data, it was hoped that internal management of the system would assist with local planning and delivery for achieving full participation.

Planning and intervention around mapping and tracking, as well as data sharing, was invariably linked to the introduction of the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure for schools and colleges. The measure shows both the percentage of pupils achieving a sustained destination in school, further education or sixth form colleges and the percentage undertaking training through an apprenticeship or work-based learning. While some LA respondents regarded the introduction of the Destination Measure as a very important lever, in terms of engaging with schools, as they would now be assessed on their performance in securing positive outcomes for their students, others felt that, some schools would fall short in providing robust and consistent data to LAs.

'Yes, it's basically that there is concern in terms of getting information from the schools because what we've found with the RPA, the early leaver lists, is that some institutions are pretty good at it and then other institutions aren't. So it's great if all the schools, if all institutions send their early leavers fine, we can pick them up, but if we don't know who they are that is a concern really.'

RPA Lead

¹⁴ As part of their duty to support young people to participate, LAs track young people's participation and record information about current activity, characteristics and aspirations on their caseload management system (CCIS). This information is used to plan support and intervention. CCIS also enables LAs to provide management information to the Department for Education via the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS).

Box 4 Example of good practice: Identifying and supporting young people ‘at risk’ or who have dropped out of learning

Through a collaborative agreement reached at a Post-16 Leaders meeting, Wakefield had introduced an integrated, electronic system (following a paper-based trial) which collated data on a monthly basis on young people who were either at risk or who had dropped out of learning or training. The system was supported by most schools, colleges and local training providers who pledged to agree to data sharing and helped to design the agreed protocol.

The electronic system was reported to be easy to use and it had increased the accuracy of data stored in CCIS. Crucially, it had also enabled young people to access additional careers guidance, which was delivered by a dedicated team of advisers, at the point of need. The initiative was funded by the RPA LLDP. Wakefield LA covers a small geographical location, which comprises a limited number of post-16 providers which have strong local networks.

Some LAs had set up data sharing protocols with neighbouring LAs/providers in order to capture the number of young people who were accessing cross-boundary provision, thereby minimising the proportion of destinations that were recorded by schools as being ‘unknown’.

Box 5 Example of good practice: Extending partnerships, establishing a cross-boundary data sharing protocol

In order to reduce the number of young people recorded as having an ‘unknown destination’ Worcestershire had coordinated a partnership forum with surrounding LAs with a view to sharing information on young people engaged in learning across borders. While LAs have a statutory duty to inform surrounding LAs of cross-boundary learners who drop out of provision, there is no responsibility to provide information on young people who start cross-boundary learning. The forum benefited the LAs since it contributed towards reducing the proportion of ‘unknown’ destinations in their areas.

Worcestershire provided leadership and coordination to the forum, and devised a draft protocol to underpin information sharing which the surrounding LAs agreed to use. This tool is to be implemented from September 2013 and has the potential to significantly improve information on and the tracking of local young people who choose to attend provision ‘out of area’.

It was also felt that the ability to accrue accurate data had been compromised by the duty on schools and colleges to make their own careers guidance arrangements, as this placed some LAs ‘at arm’s length’ from working with young people considering their post-16 destinations. Thus, producing destinations data has increasingly become dependent on goodwill arrangements between local providers and the LA. Some concern was also expressed about the usefulness of Key Stage 4 Destination Measure data published in 2012, which related to young people leaving school three years previously, provided no information on LLDD pupils, and did not categorise entry into employment as a separate outcome¹⁵. However, other respondents felt that the

¹⁵ Destination Measures subsequently published in June 2013 did include destinations into employment. Further breakdowns of the data by individual characteristics were published in July 2013, this included breakdowns by SEN for former KS4 pupils and this will continue in future.

Destination Measure would help schools to re-evaluate their careers guidance offer and help LAs to gauge how they might best support schools in achieving full participation.

Many LAs were working in partnership with local schools and colleges to establish transition data-sharing protocols which provide information on:

- year 11 destinations data;
- young people 'at risk' of dropping out of learning; and
- young people who had dropped out of post-16 provision.

Where protocols had been established, the lessons learnt were that clear agreement needs to be reached on the content (quality), timeliness and security of information received, and how it will be used to support the needs of the young person. This emphasis on meeting both the needs of the young person and data collection requirements should not be understated.

'The transition protocol with schools is about sharing information with schools relating to those high risk young people, and sharing it in a timely way with appropriate providers... it sets out key guidelines for how we share information, what information is shared and then we have a referral form, which is completed by the school. The schools have been very receptive and moving forward it needs to be more formalised for sharing information that is rigorous and secure. So we produced a referral form and we've got the protocol that sets out how that information should be shared.'

RPA Lead

In some areas, tracking had been enhanced by the use of a common online application form for all post-16 provision. This had helped in the identification of young people who had failed to apply or had been unsuccessful in securing a place in learning/training.

Local areas' use of RONI data as a tool to engage with schools to identify young people who were 'at risk' of dropping out was a recurring finding. It was reported that many schools found the RONI data extremely helpful in identifying and supporting vulnerable young people (see Section 4.1). There were many examples of LAs working in conjunction with schools to identify young people who were at risk of failing to make successful post-16 transitions and operating support packages to help sustain young people's continued participation in learning. This included running courses throughout the summer vacation for some vulnerable groups of learners, who were classified as being at risk of not re-joining provision if they had to wait until the beginning of the following academic year.

In some LAs, Provider Network Groups had been set up, in order to effect closer working with local training providers and colleges. The prime foci of these were the assessment of local provision needs and generating information about the status of trainees - whether 'at risk', 'dropping-out' or having completed programmes. Similar protocols, whereby providers undertook to communicate information in a timely, accurate and consistent format, had been established.

While there was evidence of the establishment of data systems and data sharing protocols to map and track young people's destinations in the quest for full participation, concerns were raised

about the need to bolster support services to meet the needs of those young people who fail to participate or who drop-out of post-16 provision.

'That support is under pressure here and everywhere else, but without it there will always be a group of young people who will not be participating and, to certain extent (and I don't really like this sort of phrase), the system is bailing them out. The system could be supporting them better, I think is a better way of putting it. Unless that is recognised, I think there will be a small level of non-participation which is not just the obvious things about pregnancy, illness, youth offending, severe disabilities and so on, but that they can't be bothered.'

Partnership Adviser

Respondents felt that, with existing local support services being under severe strain, there was a lack of clarity about where the resources to engage or to re-engage non-participants would be drawn from. For example, there was little evidence that Jobcentre Plus had actively engaged with LAs in the local implementation of RPA from September 2013, to support employer engagement. Also, there was awareness in many LAs that the bigger issue of engaging young people until the age of 18, from September 2015, was just around the corner and that far greater challenges lay ahead, in terms of planning to maintain older learners in sustained learning for longer periods of time.

4 Findings from Phase 4: Delivering RPA

Key points

- Early identification of young people who are at risk of non-participation is critical. However, reliance on a single means of identification may overlook some young people at risk of disengagement if tools are not sufficiently fine tuned. Combining data driven assessments with local intelligence can overcome this.
- Intervening early is effective, although a range of approaches, led by different partners, is necessary. Collaboration is required to ensure new interventions do not duplicate existing services or provision. Careful targeting of the early intervention support delivered by different partners is needed.
- Vulnerable groups may benefit from targeted as well as generalised approaches. Work to understand gaps in provision as well as the ambitions and aspirations of young people can enable the right support choices to be made.
- Young people at risk of disengagement when they are 17+ may vary as a group and have differing, potentially more complex, needs from those at risk pre-16. Factors to feed into data assessments and tools to identify this group will vary from those used in pre-16 RONI tools. They are likely to be seeking a route to the labour market, rather than to education.

This chapter explores three key themes emerging from the delivery of the Phase 4 LLDPs, specifically approaches to: early intervention, working with vulnerable groups, and sustaining young people in post-16 learning. An emphasis has been placed on describing practice within selected LLDPs in respect of the key themes, as well as the challenges encountered and factors that were seen as critical for success, in order to assist other areas to transfer practice into their own contexts.

Table 4.1, which reports the surveys of LAs undertaken for this project, shows the work that had already been started or completed by December 2012, as well as further work planned in respect of defined categories which reflect some of the RPA priorities established by previous evaluations. This demonstrates that all LA respondents (those LAs which were part of Phase 4 LLDPs as well as those that were no longer part of the LLDPs or trials) emphasised the early identification, of young people at risk of non-participation. All respondents also had, or planned to put in place, mechanisms to identify and support young people who drop out of post-16 learning. These two categories received the highest level of agreement from survey respondents.

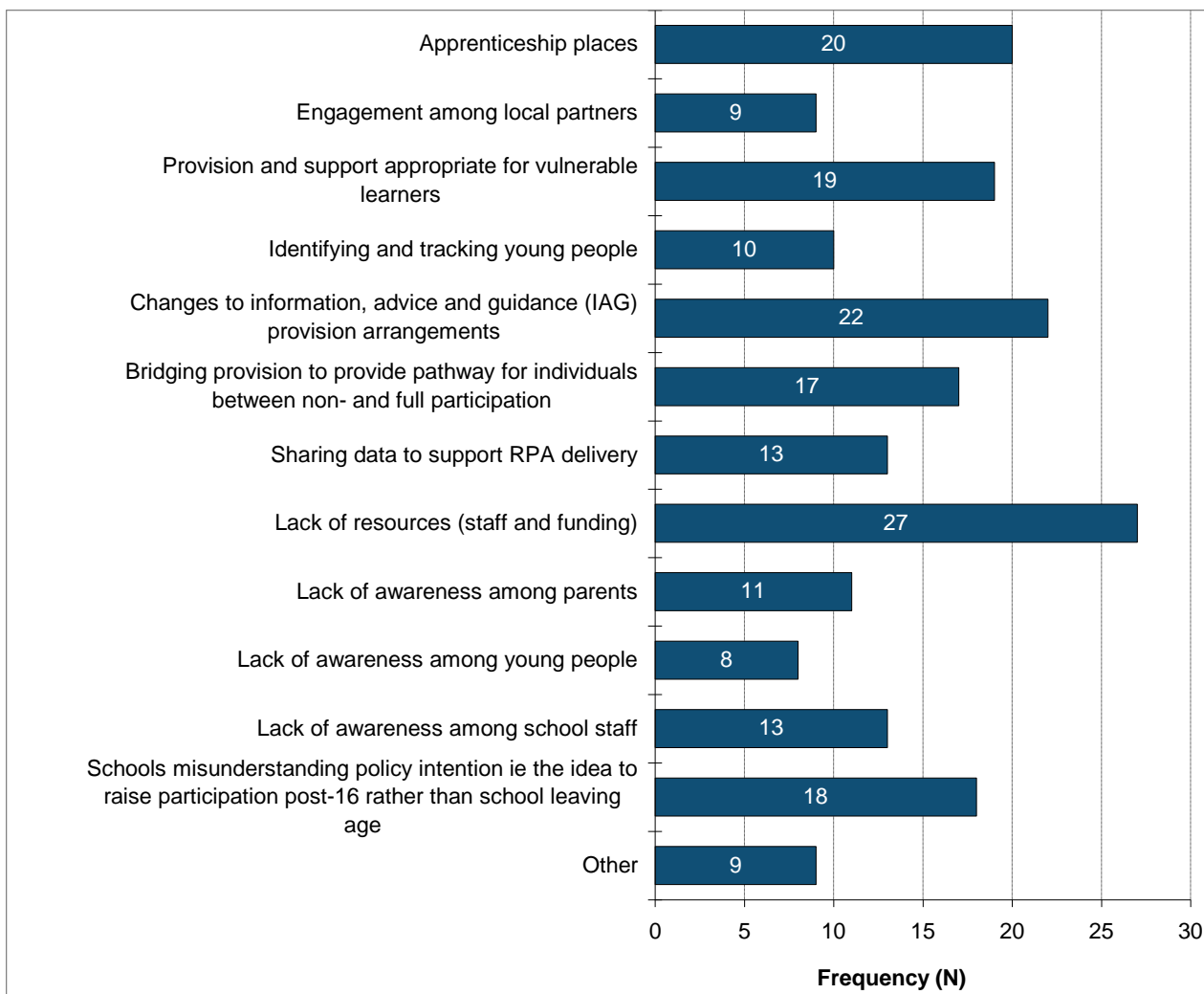
Table 4.1: Current or planned engagement with key issues of RPA

	Phase 4 LAs		LAs no longer involved	
	Work completed or underway	Planning to do	Work completed or underway	Planning to do
Early identification of those at risk of non-participation post-16	36	-	7	-
Protocols to support and re-engage young people not in post-16 education or training	32	4	7	-
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter or are in jobs without training	16	19	2	5
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter other activities (eg volunteering) without formal, accredited learning or training	10	23	4	3
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who drop out of post-16 learning or training	33	3	7	
	Base = 36 respondents to the survey of Phase 4 LLDPs; 92 per cent response rate		Base = 7 respondents to the survey of LAs no longer part of LLDPs/trials; 70 per cent response rate	

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LA (December 2012)

In respect to delivering full participation, provision and support for vulnerable learners was the fourth most frequently cited challenge reported in the survey with only staffing and resources, the changes to information, advice and guidance (IAG) ie careers guidance arrangements and apprenticeship places were seen as greater challenges (Figure 4.1; survey of Phase 4 LA).

Figure 4.1: Challenges for the preparation of delivering full participation



Frequencies total more than 100 per cent, since respondents could note multiple responses to this question; overall response rate 92 per cent

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LA (December 2012)

4.1 Early intervention

In order to identify those young people, pre-16, who would benefit from early intervention to reduce their risk of NEET post-16, most LAs have adopted a RONI tool (risk of NEET indicator). The survey findings show that 22 of the 36 respondents to the Phase 4 survey reported their RPA strategies included the use of RONI tools. Work in schools to gain support for implementation of RONI tools across LAs was also reported to be common. The use of RONI tools was identified by Phase 4 LAs as a key point of learning arising from the earlier phases for Phase 4 LAs. The wide use of the tools indicates that these are seen as valuable in local contexts and the Phase 4 LAs identify evidence of their effect on reducing NEET figures.

It was apparent from interview data that the RONI tools ranged in complexity and many have been adapted for local contexts, for instance using local weightings of some factors, consistent with advice issued by the previous evaluations of the LLDPs and trials. LAs that had been involved in the projects or trials previously had developed the tools as part of earlier phases of work. This

meant that those joining the projects in Phase 4 could adapt existing tools for local use and there was a wealth of evidence relating to ways in which tools had been shared between LAs in the earlier and current phase of the LLDPs and trials.

There was also evidence that access to RONI tools could leverage collaboration among local schools. In two LAs, the engagement of non-participating schools was achieved by offering them access to the locally developed RONI tool/data. Whereas in another LA, the collaboration of local schools was seen as critical to the effective implementation of the RONI and this had evolved through working with an 'early adopter' school to champion the tool.

'Our RONI... has, I think, a good chance of being successful because we've got schools on board and championing it, working with us on developing it. So again, with that sort of partnership work it's about drawing someone in, someone that the partners are going to listen to basically.'

RPA Lead

Benefits and impacts of the RONI tool implementation had also been evidenced, heightened by growing awareness among schools of the Destination Measure that would apply alongside RPA implementation. This, in turn, was leading to increased work to intervene to reduce risks of non-engagement at an earlier stage.

'Since we've done the RONI, and we've given all that information to schools, because they've all had copies of all their year groups' RONI data, it is starting to focus their minds on the characteristics of predisposed young people becoming NEET. And they are starting to do more work, more intervention work, particularly at key stage 3 as well as the offer that we have at Key Stage 4.'

RPA Lead

The interview data suggest that among the Phase 4 LLDP LAs, there is growing effort to issue schools with historic RONI data combined with destination data, in order that schools understood the value of utilising early intervention data to reduce their post-16 NEET rates. However, the impact of RONI was reported by LAs to vary and lead staff in LAs noted that it could be problematic for some schools to act upon RONI tool information in order to lead early intervention. Schools identified by LAs that had struggled to support early intervention were often those performing least well in general and with higher than average NEET destinations. It was reported by LA staff that capacity and resource was being spent on more general improvements to the school's performance and could not be released to support NEET reduction activities. This is likely to have implications for LAs seeking to implement the use of RONI tools linked to Destination Measure data in their local area. While all schools may appreciate early access to NEET prevention data, those schools seeking to improve their general performance may struggle to allocate sufficient resource to intervene on the basis of data supplied to them.

In some LAs, it was also apparent that RONI tools were not viewed as sufficiently sensitive in terms of identifying some young people at risk of becoming NEET post-16. In these cases, LA representatives referred to the 'overlooked middle' or the 'grey group' who did not possess attributes that would draw attention to them (such as poor attendance or low attainment) However,

low self esteem or confidence might also lead to a failed or stalled transition from Key Stage 4 to key stage 5. Some LAs were leading activities to refine the RONI tools, while others (see below) used transition workers to help identify these cases.

The survey of Phase 4 LAs indicated that LAs viewed the implementation of RONI tools as an area of effective practice. The wide use of these tools indicated that they are seen as valuable in local contexts and the Phase 4 LAs indicated evidence of their effect within their NEET figures. However, the evidence also indicates a need to also draw on intelligence from teachers and others to ensure that all young people who require additional support at an early stage are identified.

4.1.1 From identification to intervention

The implementation of RONI tools in a large majority of the LAs involved in the Phase 4 LLDPs meant that there was increased awareness of young people at risk of becoming NEET post-16. This, in turn, led to a focus on intervention in order to reduce the risk of a failed or stalled transition between key stages 4 and 5. It was apparent from LA action plans, the end of year reports, as well as case study evidence, that a range of approaches was required in respect of early intervention. For example, schools could be encouraged to lead activities in key stages 2, 3 and 4 based on information arising from RONI tools and it was viewed as appropriate that they supply this 'nurturing' support.

'We've got one or two other schools [and] the data would suggest [they] have just as many people likely to become NEET going in [but] they don't have those numbers coming out, which does show how much a school can provide a set of protective factors for young people. It's not just the teaching and learning, it is those schools that have really high quality personalised interventions and make use of the programmes and opportunities outside of the school and can use alternative education properly.'

RPA Lead

However, within the LLDPs some approaches were also trialled which extended the offer that schools could typically make available. These included the provision of transition workers as well as 'support around the child' including family support. Two good practice examples were selected from the Phase 4 LLDPs which covered these themes although numerous of the LAs had implemented projects with similar aims and/or approaches.

Box 6 Example of good practice: Providing support to make and sustain transitions

In Berkshire, LLDP funding was used to support the provision of transition workers (TWs) within 17 schools and 5 FE colleges¹⁶. TWs were tasked to continue support to young people for around six months into post-16 learning or training and were funded on the basis of the notional cost of 50 per cent of a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) post. Most TWs already worked as LSAs which was seen as a critical success factor since they already knew the targeted young people well.

¹⁶ In addition, two other TW models were also trialled: a TW in a college setting, and a TW working across an LA; for simplicity these are not reported separately in this description.

The TWs, in conjunction with school staff, used Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) tool data to identify the young people for support. TWs were also able to identify the young people who were at risk but who were *'off the RONI radar'*. TWs believed that this delivery model was not suitable for young people with the greatest challenges however, the interviews with other stakeholders suggested that young people with significant challenges had been effectively supported through other provision to make and sustain transitions.

The TWs led work with young people to help them make choices about post-16 destinations. This could involve supporting young people to visit local colleges, delivering support on employability skills, or coaching young people for college or job interviews. A large part of the TWs' role entailed building a local network to find opportunities, set in place support arrangements, and ensure effective communications. It was also critical for them to become skilled in anticipating problems and taking a preventive, rather than a reactive approach. It was also viewed as necessary that TWs were prepared to deliver support beyond the confines of the school environment or by making themselves available by telephone to young people and their parents/carers. An awareness of peaks and troughs in post-16 drop-out was also considered to be crucial since additional and preventative support could be offered during peak times, such as in the winter term.

Stakeholders reported significant impact locally. Support was delivered to 239 young people. Of these, 89.1 per cent had been retained in post-16 learning and training. While no counterfactual measure is available to identify what would have happened without TW support, stakeholders saw this intervention as having had a strong impact, for example noting *'we have less drop out since this project'* attributed to more informed choices being made by young people in respect of their post-16 destinations. The collaborative working relationships established locally were also viewed as a critical benefit arising from implementation.

Some risks and challenges were highlighted from the work. For example, there can be a risk of *'intervention overload'* for young people with high and multiple challenges; therefore it is important to embed a co-ordinated approach or to decide to target support differently (where fewer other professionals are involved). More general challenges surrounded the time needed to secure the necessary engagement from schools.

Box 7 Example of good practice: Action around the child to support participation

Projects involving family intervention to support young people to participate were less common in the Phase 4 LLDPs. An example was found in the Wirral, where young people who were targeted by family support workers (FSWs) were identified using a RONI tool. The young people had not, in some cases, been identified as at risk of NEET post-16 because of their relatively high attainment levels. As with the transition worker example, the family support provision was carefully targeted in order to avoid duplicating the support that schools delivered, and to ensure a gap was being filled in the support available from other agencies and services.

'We've tried to integrate it across the local authority. So we've been working with the troubled families team, the social work team and also with multiple agencies that are involved. So, it's not rocket science but you have to get involved with all parts.'

RPA Project Lead, Wirral Local Authority

The support model varied by young people's and their family's circumstances. If a key worker or coordinating lead organisation was already in place, FSWs would take a supporting role. In other instances, FSWs provided the coordinating function, which implemented multi-agency action to support the young person and their family. A critical success factor was the recruitment of staff who were capable of tailoring delivery. The two FSWs were drawn from different backgrounds and specialisms and this was seen as beneficial since they had different networks to draw upon, as well as different skill sets. Patience, tenacity and resilience were seen as critical attributes for FSWs, along with capability to interact with other professionals, together with young people and families. A learning point identified by the FSWs, concerned the need to keep professional boundaries in order to avoid dependency or over-reliance from families. It was apparent that providing support while increasing young people's and families' capacities to cope was critical but crucially it also required a careful balancing act.

The amount of support needed by some families was unexpected. The FSWs had supported young people and families to set in place bank accounts, or to claim benefit entitlements. It was also important that FSWs provided continuity of support while young people experimented with post-16 options. Interviewees discussed how young people sometimes churned between local provision before settling in one destination and that on-going support was needed. It helped to support young people to make informed decisions which facilitated access to sustained and positive outcomes. While, without doubt, this project was seen as resource intensive, it was also regarded as delivering a high impact, and schools and colleges had been convinced of the benefits of the model.

'I think we can demonstrate here the significant impact this has had on the lives of young people and families in retaining young people in educational training, and that's critical. We can also, from a school attainment perspective, we can see young people achieving. It's not just a matter of keeping them here, it's actually that they're doing something.'

Headteacher, Wallasey School, Wirral

4.2 Working with vulnerable groups

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, working with vulnerable groups was identified as a high priority among Phase 4 LAs (see Figure 4.1). The survey of Phase 4 LAs also showed that LAs were involved in a variety of activities, which included the theme of supporting vulnerable groups. This included:

- Supporting, monitoring and improving the delivery of independent and impartial careers guidance including projects targeting the careers guidance needs of specific groups, eg young people with learning disabilities or difficulties (LDD).
- Work to scope and develop provision with some LAs having created additional pathways and support for young people, including for example volunteering opportunities. Other LAs had focused on specific groups, such as young people in pupil referral units (PRUs), or vulnerable groups of young people. Some sought to fill identified provision gaps and deliver bridging and re-engagement support.

- The development of alternative formats for learning delivery, in order to target and support specific groups including the use of distance learning for some vulnerable groups of young people.
- The promotion of partnership work locally, in order to capture and build on local expertise in supporting some groups of young people.

The action plans submitted by LAs at the start of Phase 4 suggested that around half were leading work to address the needs of particular vulnerable groups, such as young people with learning disabilities or difficulties (LDD), young people in care, young offenders or teen parents. In addition, other LAs were developing provision to support a range of different learners considered to be vulnerable. There are a few points of debate surrounding the needs of vulnerable learners, with some LAs noting that personalised service was required while others developed or embedded specialised provision for different vulnerabilities. Some LAs argued that specialist advice was required to help vulnerable learners navigate existing provision and that this would be more valuable and sustainable.

'It's been quite apparent from the work we've been doing with vulnerable learners, it's not necessarily that the provision isn't meeting their needs. It's the fact that they don't access the provision... We thought at first we need a whole host of new provision for vulnerable groups. In fact the provision is there and is fit for purpose. But actually it's the intensive support and mentoring to get them to access something that's already there, is the key challenge.'

RPA Lead

Funding to provide support to vulnerable learners was seen as problematic by some of the Phase 4 LAs. Their concerns surrounded the costs of providing sufficient careers guidance support to vulnerable learners in an environment of public sector budgetary restraint. Furthermore, the funding system was feared to be undermining the delivery of provision appropriate for vulnerable learners, particularly flexible, re-engagement provision.

'I'm not a funding expert by any means [but] I think that the work that's needed with the more vulnerable groups does need a more flexible approach. It's that re-engagement type provision... with ESA funding, we could, if there was more flexibility, if it allowed for delivery of projects, for example re-engagement type projects, then we would be able to have more local influence and control over some of that provision. Basically we're working with [provider] at the moment to put together a pilot programme, working with the youth offending service... They're going to be delivering on a one-to-one basis and it's going to be a fairly fluid programme... We're going to use the foundation learning flexible funding that won't exist next year... I think if we want continuity, if we want sustainability, we need to look at how the funding works.'

RPA Lead

However, in contrast to this, were views that greater flexibility was being introduced. The Department's RPA guidance for LAs had just been launched at the time of the case study fieldwork research. Some interviewees made reference to this guidance, and anticipated benefits

arising from being able to remove young people taking part in re-engagement provision from the NEET register which it allows. In addition, the 16-19 study programme was seen by some to be opening up funding to become more learner and less qualification centric. It was anticipated that this would offer vulnerable learners an increased range of programmes and intermediate achievement opportunities than would previously have been available.

The two good practice examples selected to examine this theme had taken differing approaches to establishing and supporting young people to access suitable post-16 provision. One was selected for its focus on supporting young people with LDD, while the other was embedding provision based on volunteering in order to provide a transition pathway for vulnerable learners in general.

Box 8 Example of good practice: Supporting young people with LDD/SEND

In York, the Phase 4 LLDP funding had been prioritised towards work to support young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Local management information showed that while the overall number of young people NEET was reducing, progress had been slower for the group flagged as having SEND. The starting point for the LLDP was that if local provision was suitable and attractive then young people would be participating; and therefore something different was required.

The local education and training offer has been developed to accommodate the ambitions of young people with SEND who wish to develop employability skills. Education provision for young people with high level SEND has expanded in range in recent years and young people would flow from special schools into post-16 education, increasingly into local provision. In particular, the LA has encouraged the development of programmes similar to an apprenticeship model, through which young people develop vocational and employability skills. They also study qualifications at entry level and level 1. It is hoped that with traineeship funding, this model will further expand.

A key learning point that emerged from working with the families of young people with LDD/SEND surrounded the concerns of parents/carers about the extent to which young people are able to cope with full-time learning and training, or for example, their ability to travel independently. The team has encouraged young people with SEND/LDD and their families, to become attuned pre-16 to mainstream development milestones ie among those without SEND, with the aim of increasing their capability and thereby widening young people's options within post-16 learning and training. The LA has promoted the development of provision with the intention that progression from school should be to provision in York which develops the skills and independence needed to progress into adult life in the city. For those young people with the highest needs a coordinated multi-agency approach has been necessary and this has included contributions from the budgets of different services and the alignment of other money (eg. Personal budget, benefits) received by the young person to support development of independent living skills, as well as participation in education and training. Support has also been given to assist young people and families navigate their way through the post-16 education and training offer.

Initially the plan was to extend the provision and support offered to young people flagged as school action plus. However, this group was perceived to have differing needs, with a much greater prevalence of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and significant disengagement from education and training, which was more challenging. This required

intensive support from a key worker to broker a suitable package. There is now a two strand approach of supporting earlier intervention for this group, as well as adapting provision and support, in order that young people making transitions can access provision suitable for their needs.

Box 9 Example of good practice: Providing a transition route for vulnerable learners

Phase 4 LLDP funding enabled Blackburn and Darwen to provide a volunteering route to assist young people to re-engage and to gain skills that would meet their duties in respect of RPA. The initiative was informed by the vTalent Year programme. The RPA agenda meant a greater emphasis on qualification attainment was necessary or at minimum progression to RPA-compliant learning or training after a short period in a re-engagement phase.

An assumption was made that the programme would readily attract young people NEET and this proved to be the case although some local stakeholders reported that recruitment was challenging in some respects because the programme was new and young people were not familiar with it. Despite this, young people were still prepared to engage with it and early cohorts subsequently promoted the programme to their peers. It became apparent that volunteering was attractive to the young people who had been NEET for a relatively short period and who were already in contact with advisers who could refer them to it, and was seen as an alternative to mainstream provision because of the experiential learning opportunities it affords. As the programme becomes embedded in local provision, it is anticipated that it will attract a wider group of young people including those who have been NEET for a longer period back into participation.

An unanticipated challenge was engaging the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in delivering volunteering placements of 20+ hours per week since most were unable to resource this commitment in the current economic climate. In addition, young people who are NEET often lack the confidence and skills to volunteer for this number of hours. To address these issues, the college offered group volunteering placements in and around College offering a greater element of security and personal support alongside a programme of personal development with some accredited personalised learning in line with individual learners' abilities. Consideration is now being given to whether a number of VCS organisations can collaborate to provide a variety of volunteering opportunities totalling 20+ hours between them.

The opportunity to undertake a highly supported programme, experiencing success and achievement in accordance with their own personal strengths had provided sufficient incentive for most young people to support their engagement in enhancing their Maths and English.

A critical success factor was the delivery of mentoring support to young people. This helped them to consider the learning arising from their voluntary activities, from personal development activities, including group or team work, and to consider what they were learning about themselves, their perceptions and their ambitions which could support their progression. This led to altered plans and aspirations, and/or to more informed choices among young people. Moreover, young people came to understand the importance of formal learning and the achievement of qualifications in supporting their transition into the labour market.

Looking to the future, the LA and college were seeking to develop new models of mentoring, potentially using mentoring as a CPD (continuing professional development) opportunity for staff or embedding some elements of peer mentoring, possibly involving students from local higher education institutions.

From a staff perspective the voluntary option requires great observational and reflective skills to draw out and explore not only the learning that is taking place but individuals innate talent

'We were instrumental in uncovering people's talents. What we did was very much observing people and pointing out, "you were really good at that". And it was amazing how they were really surprised... observing and reflecting ... makes them aware of what they're doing because they really don't think about it.'

Voluntary option coordinator

'The voluntary option visibly builds confidence, self-esteem and overcomes fears'.

Voluntary option coordinator

The voluntary option became a stepping stone to accessing mainstream provision. Young people might undertake some learning or training as part of the programme, however participating in courses leading to major elements of accreditation were found to be a progression outcome rather than a direct outcome of the volunteering itself. The majority (84 per cent) of young people participating in the volunteering programme were reported to have been retained in learning or training. A critical success factor to this progression was the increase in self belief and successfully attaining numeracy and literacy accreditation alongside volunteering.

4.3 Sustaining young people in post-16 learning and training

The evidence from the Phase 4 LAs LLDPs suggests that there was a need for an increased focus on developing measures that would sustain young people in post-16 learning or training. A range of interviewees noted that participation among 16 year olds is typically quite high. However the rate of participation reduces by the age of 17 and again, reduces among 18 year olds. This is confirmed by recently released national figures¹⁷ which show overall participation among 16 year olds is at 91 per cent, while participation among 17 year olds is lower at 85 per cent, and among 18 year olds the participation rate is considerably lower at 59 per cent.

Responses to the online survey of Phase 4 LA indicated there were lower expectations in respect of the LLDPs having an impact on the participation rate of 17 year olds (academic age). While much of the focus of the current and earlier projects and trials has been on stemming the flow of young people to NEET status post-16, it was also recognised that attention needs to be given to reducing the stock of NEET in these slightly older age groups and preventing disengagement from

¹⁷ Participation Statistical First Release, end of 2012, published June 2013, Downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/participation-in-education-training-and-employment-by-16-to-18-year-olds-in-england-end-2012>

learning at the age of 17. However, within this, there was a view that experimentation in the 16-18 years phase should be accepted since it may offer a route to continued engagement.

'In [LA] it isn't so much about year 11 transition; it's the drop out at 17. And it's getting them into the right pathways and, some of that's to do with competitiveness and some of it's to do with just – there's lots of supply there but it's a little bit complex. And the other thing as well, well – you might argue that – at 16 is it such a bad thing that their approach to life is a bit more experiential? You might try a few things and not like it and then move on. The important thing is that you find it eventually what's right for you and some people like to do that by engagement as opposed to knowledge based. And not everyone gets it right first time. Adults don't do that in terms of their career paths so why should we expect 16 year olds to? Some of the churn isn't necessarily all negative.'

RPA lead

Among the Phase 4 LAs some respondents identified that the characteristics of young people who did not sustain engagement post-16 learning and training varied in some respects from pre-16 groups, identified by RONI tools. This had led one LA to develop a RODI (risk of disengagement indicator) tool in recognition of the differing needs, and disengagement factors, of 17 and 18 year olds. Where re-engagement support work had been successful with some young people, there was growing awareness of the different and more complex needs of slightly older young people who remained outside learning and training.

'The young people that we've got left, quite a number of those are young people who have got a range of issues, not just the issues that you would expect. A range of complex issues. It's about changing courses, changing institutions, changing backgrounds, but in virtually every single case, it's family and social reasons that are grinding them out, not really the problems – the problems that they're taking with them if you like into the learning institutions rather than other things.'

RPA Lead

Fewer of the LLDPs in Phase 4 were focused on the retention of 17 and 18 year olds in learning and training which may have reflected the number of LAs new to the projects in Phase 4 and/or more pressing local priorities. More certainly, this is an area of growing concern and one which has particular effects for young people with LDD who LAs have a statutory duty to support to a later age. The two good practice examples selected for this theme shared aims of understanding more about young people whose learning and training stalled post-16, in order to develop activities and provision that would provide a route-way for them.

Box 10 Example of good practice: Exploring reasons why young people leave post-16 learning and training

As part of its Phase 4 LLDP delivery, Brighton and Hove undertook research to explore the reasons why young people had left post-16 courses and training, and to compare and contrast the reasons given by young people with those obtained from providers. To be able to lead this research, it was necessary to gain details of young people leaving learning from a range of

local education and training providers. The sample gathered comprised an estimated five to ten per cent of the early leaver cohort.

Interviewees were drawn from years 12 and 13 and represented those whose participation stalled in the early phases of their post-16 learning and training, as well as young people who completed a first year of learning or training. The research demonstrated that typically young people had varied and frequently multiple reasons for disengagement. The categories of reasons that emerged illustrated the range of situations that re-engagement activity must address including: dissatisfaction with course or college; inability to cope with study; stress; financial problem, home-to-learning travel distances/time; lack of careers education and information, advice and guidance, including having no future career plan and being asked to leave (for behavioural or performance reasons).

While it was acknowledged that these reasons were likely to be consistent with previous research evidence, it, represented localised case studies which could be reflected back to providers for their views and to agree an action plan. Reviewing the reasons quantitatively, the local research team noted that around two-thirds of the reasons for withdrawal were related to dissatisfaction with the course or college, around half were attributed to an inability to cope with the demands of study/college and four in ten were linked to young people not having established a future career ambition. It was concluded that there was a need for improved careers guidance which could be addressed in partnership by schools, providers and the team providing post-16 careers guidance.

Young people who had dropped out of learning were contacted by support workers as soon as possible for intensive support and this approach was successful in reducing post-16 drop out rates. A final stage of work planned was to disseminate the research report among local providers and to challenge them to change and adapt their practices in light of its findings.

'The students we spoke to were very open about their experiences in learning, giving us confidence that we are tackling the real issues for them and their successors. Through our post 16 careers guidance and support service, we will continue the work with colleges and schools in the city and further strengthen the support to students at risk of dropping out and to those who need to re-engage.'

Head of Education Planning and Contracts

Box 11 Example of good practice: Supporting retention of 17 year olds in learning and training

Data sharing and extending the use of a RONI tool underpinned LLPD activities in Staffordshire. It had been involved in earlier RPA projects and had demonstrated the value of its RONI through identifying young people in need of additional pre-16 support. The final year of the LLDP offered an opportunity to develop intervention to prevent early leaving among 17 year olds. To achieve this, the LA continued to support careers guidance workers to deliver services with post-16 learning and training providers. Through this approach, it was hoped that early intelligence could be gained about early leavers, and thereby support to re-engage could be offered before a young person became either actively or entrenched in NEET status. Securing support from providers was challenging in some instances and had involved setting

out the new regulations and the reasons why sharing data would help the providers as well as the LA.

The information gathering was supported through the creation of partnership forums for providers, in order that they could collaborate with the LA with regard to the 17+ agenda. This allowed providers to share experiences, which helped to inform and to shape interventions to support the retention of 17 year olds. It also meant a greater amount of, and more current, information was shared with the LA.

The next step was to support the identification of young people at risk of disengaging. This involved disseminating the RONI tool. The LA worked with a small number of providers as pilot sites, who could later champion the tool among their peers.

Embedding data sharing to support the transition from pre-16 to post-16 provision and the identification of those likely to be in need of additional support to be retained in learning, strengthened Staffordshire's ability to challenge providers about the actions that they would take to retain 'at risk' learners.

Sharing information about young people at risk of disengagement was reported to have been instrumental in increasing retention and progression, since it had been possible to deliver additional support, such as mentoring, at crucial points in young people's learning experiences.

5 Conclusions, policy implications and recommendations

Key points

- The Phase 4 LLDPs had made considerable progress in preparing for RPA. Their work demonstrated that progress was heavily dependent upon local partnership working including with local key stakeholders, working across different LA services, linking with training providers, working with schools and colleges, and, in some cases, employers. Funding cuts, increased autonomy among schools (academies and free schools) as well as the transfer of responsibility for careers guidance to schools and colleges were seen to hamper progress.
- Data sharing was seen as a critical element of delivery; however it relied heavily upon goodwill among local partners. Tracking was viewed as critical but there was uncertainty about whether the requirement for schools to inform LAs about young people's intended destinations and the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure would provide sufficient motivation to schools and colleges to share data knowledge and intelligence about young people.
- Critical success factors were identified in relation to three key themes: to intervene early to prevent entry to NEET status required the appointment of skilled staff capable of maintaining support to young people and securing the engagement of local stakeholders. To support vulnerable young people it was vital that suitable provision, which met their aspirations, was available. Young people with SEND, care leavers and young parents may benefit from careers guidance in order to maximise their use of specific funding streams. To address 17+ agenda work to understand disengagement is necessary along with an increased emphasis on work-based learning opportunities.
- Recommendations are made for key stakeholders at local levels including LAs, schools and colleges and employers in relation to RPA, as specified in DfE guidance notes.
- A final point concerns the challenges posed by the second phase of RPA, where participation is expected until the age of 18. This will require LAs and their partners to understand much more about post-16 disengagement, become more efficient at tracking and to gain greater insight into the local youth labour market.

This final chapter considers the conclusions that may be drawn from the evaluation of the Phase 4 projects, and presents implications and recommendations for policymakers.

5.1 Conclusions

Since 2009, as part of the preparation for RPA, trials and locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs) have been implemented across a number of different LAs in four distinct phases. This report focuses on research findings from the Phase 4 LLDPs, which were operational between April 2012 and March 2013. During this period, there was a concentration on preparing for RPA in a new social and fiscal context and developing good practice (through LLDP activity) specifically with regard to: working with a diverse range of providers; developing support for 17 year olds; structuring of post-16 teams; partnership working; and overcoming challenges. Phase 4 comprised 44 participating LAs, including some LAs from previous phases, as well as 21 LAs and one sub-

region (formed of four LAs), which were new to the LLDPs. In total, they were responsible for the delivery of 39 different projects.

Local authorities that had been involved in RPA trials/projects in previous years, together with LAs that had joined LLDPs in Phase 4, were unanimous in their perspective that both the planning for RPA and delivery of LLDPs was heavily dependent on local partnership working. LAs drew extensively on their existing links with local key stakeholders, including working across different LA services, linking with training providers, working with schools and colleges, and, in some areas, employers to deliver LLDPs and to prepare for RPA delivery. In some cases, LLDP funding had enabled stakeholders to extend their collaborative working and to develop a greater understanding about their respective roles and responsibilities.

However, LAs were acutely aware that their relationships with some local stakeholders were being compromised by the:

- cuts to LA funding and their subsequent impact on staffing and services;
- rise in the number of academies and free schools and the consequent devolvement of responsibilities from LAs; and
- transfer of careers guidance delivery from LAs to individual schools and colleges.

In some cases, these developments had undermined effective collaborative links with some schools and colleges and had adversely affected their capacity and capability for achieving full participation. It was perceived that the ethos of achieving full participation continued to be challenged by funding regimes which create competition between post-16 providers for students to enrol on programmes, and which lead to resistance among many providers about notifying guidance services when young people are 'at risk' of or when they drop-out of learning. Although some effective local systems had been developed for exchanging information on young people who drop out of post-16 education and training, this tended to be limited and often subject to time-lags, to the detriment of attempts to re-engage young people.

While, in many areas, data sharing agreements/protocols had been successfully set up and their development had often been supported by LLDP funding, these were heavily dependent upon 'goodwill' agreements between the LA and local providers, with regard to the timing of its delivery and content. In some LAs, the engagement of non-participating schools was achieved by offering them access to the locally developed RONI tool/data, which has enabled 'at risk' students to be identified and supported both within school and by local authority supported guidance services.

Employer engagement, particularly with regard to identifying and supporting the needs of young people in JWT, remained the weakest link in meeting full participation requirements. Lessons learnt from Phase 4 LLDPs indicate that systems for identifying young people who had decided to move directly into employment at the end of Year 11 need to be established, so that their transition into employment could be supported. Also, coordinating and streamlining local efforts to improve the number of apprenticeship places open to young people proved highly effective, through simplifying processes and making the recruitment of young people more attractive to employers.

While many LAs, often with support from LLDP funding, had invested in systems that would enhance their performance with regard to tracking, management of data and data sharing, there

was widespread concern that systems could not be sustained if staffing levels within LAs continued to be reduced. Moreover, there was considerable debate about the extent to which the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure would act as either a carrot or a stick to encourage schools and colleges to share their knowledge about young people's transitions. There remained an underlying concern that if data is not shared in a timely, consistent and accurate way, young people who fail to participate, or who drop out of learning, may simply fall through the net, through shortfalls in systems management, reduced information intelligence and crucially, support and guidance from trained and impartial personnel.

Messages arising from activities focusing on early and preventative interventions

- The appointment of skilled staff, with attributes such as patience, tenacity and resilience, as well as the ability to develop and sustain local networks which would help facilitate positive outcomes for young people, is critical.
- There is a need for collaborative approaches and multi-agency work to identify and fill gaps in support and to avoid a duplication of effort.
- An awareness of the full range of factors that may indicate risk of NEET is required, which may extend beyond those typically included in RONI tools.
- Resources should be carefully targeted, to ensure that interventions are timely and appropriate.

Messages arising from activities focusing on support vulnerable groups

- New types of policy intervention should seek to fill gaps in existing provision. For example, the new traineeships programme may provide an opportunity to develop a work-based learning route for some vulnerable groups.
- Targeted support is necessary to ensure that young people understand the full range of post-16 options.
- There is a need for collaboration and coordination, particularly about the funding that some groups may access. The resources of young people with SEND were considered by the good practice example, other vulnerable groups, such as care leavers and young parents, may also access specific funding and may need support to use these to best effect.
- Re-engagement provision needs to vary and be responsive to different types of learners: a point which is demonstrated by the volunteering example, since it was most effective at the early stage of a withdrawal from learning.

Messages arising from activities addressing retention in post-16 learning and training

- Pre and post-16 risk factors to identify early leavers differ significantly and this needs to be reflected in the composition and use of assessment tools.
- Reasons for disengagement at the age of 17 are multiple and complex and include wrong choices, in respect of courses and institution, stress and anxiety related to performance, financial barriers to learning, and family/social factors.

- Re-engagement may entail developing alternative options to full-time learning, such as taster programmes, Traineeships and pre-apprenticeship work-based training, which allow young people to explore pathways into the labour market.

5.2 Policy implications and recommendations

Phase 4 LLDPs (2012/3) concentrated on preparing for RPA through the delivery of local initiatives in a climate of significant change within LAs and at a time when schools and colleges were assuming ownership of two key strands underpinning the achievement of full participation, namely responsibility for providing careers guidance for young people and for collating destination data on their students. The evidence from the research shows that there are many examples of innovative practice to support the implementation of RPA in September 2013 and to help prepare for the inclusion of young people in learning or training to the age of 18 from 2015. The final section focuses on the responsibilities of the key stakeholders at local levels - LAs, schools and colleges and employers – in relation to RPA, as specified in DfE guidance notes¹⁸. Table 5.1 sets out these responsibilities, the key issues raised by the research and suggested policy implications.

Table 5.1: Responsibilities of key stakeholders

Responsibilities	Key issues	Policy implications
Local authorities		
To provide strategic leadership in their areas	Evidence of strong local partnership working through RPA Trials/LLDPs LAs have extensive experience of partnership working which has been developed over many years	Evidence of good practice needs to be shared more widely and harnessed, in particular among LAs that did not participate in delivery of RPA Trials/LLDPs
To collect information to identify young people who are not participating	Data sharing protocols rely heavily on local agreements and can be variable in terms of their content and rigour	There is a need to ensure that data sharing practices are timely, consistent and reliable
To continue to identify those in need of targeted support	There is a strong reliance on schools, colleges and training providers referring young people who fail to participate/drop out Time-lags often occur between young people leaving/dropping out of programmes and their referral for targeted support	Timely and consistent approaches to referral management are required across all LAs Staffing and capacity issues to address the needs of young people who fail to participate or drop out warrant attention by at national and at local level
To lead the September Guarantee and to collate	Ensuring that local intelligence on the cohort and its provision needs	Ensuring that ESF and other funded learning options offer

¹⁸ Department for Education (2013), *Statutory Guidance on the Participation of Young people in Education, Employment or Training. For Local Authorities*. March.

Department for Education (2013), *Participation of Young People Statutory Guidance – Advice. Annex 2 – Duties on other organisations in relation to Raising the Participation Age*. March.

Responsibilities	Key issues	Policy implications
information on young people who are EET, NEET or unknown	is accurate and appropriate LAs' local intelligence and information sharing on young people's destinations has been fractured in many areas due to devolved responsibilities to individual schools with regard to schools management and careers guidance	coordinated, appropriate and timely progression routes
To hold schools, colleges and training providers to account for leavers' destinations through the annual Destination Measure	DfE now issues published data on the annual Destination Measure	Ensuring that together the CCIS and the Key Stage 4 Destination Measure provide a robust, timely and relevant assessment of young people's intended, actual and sustained destinations in England.
To develop data sharing within and/or outside areas	Evidence of good practice	Lessons learnt with regard to cross-boundary data sharing protocols need to be shared more widely in order to help reduce 'unknown' destinations
Other organisations		
<p><i>Schools</i> To offer independent, impartial careers guidance to Years 9-11</p> <p><i>Colleges</i> The careers duty is extended to colleges for 16-18-year old students from September 2013</p>	<p>Multitude of different types of careers guidance arrangements in operation</p> <p>Concerns about securing impartiality within careers guidance</p> <p>Concerns about skill levels of staff delivering careers guidance</p>	The training needs of careers guidance delivery staff in schools and colleges warrants further investigation to ensure that all young people have access to independent and impartial careers guidance
<p><i>Sixth forms, colleges and training providers</i> To inform the LA if a young person (aged 16 or 17) has dropped out</p>	<p>Ensuring drop-out information is shared in a timely and consistent way is crucial</p> <p>Funding allocations to support post-16 providers, which are based on course take-up and retention rates, should not act as a deterrent to informing LAs about young people who drop out or who would benefit from transferring to another learning provider</p>	Delivery of statutory responsibilities need to be monitored and consistently applied
Employers		
No duties will be brought into force at this stage and this will be kept under review	Employer engagement and supporting young people in employment remains the weakest link in terms of achieving full participation	Responsibility for employer engagement and support for young people in work (outside of Apprenticeships) with regard to RPA and other related policy

Responsibilities	Key issues	Policy implications
		<p>developments needs to be determined at national, as well as at local level</p> <p>There is a need to develop robust local intelligence on the structure and functioning of the youth labour market to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> underpin the delivery of effective careers guidance and support the needs of young people who opt for a work-based post-16 participation route

Source: IES and CEI, 2013

Finally, the research highlighted that planning to address the additional requirements to sustain young people in learning until their 18th birthday, which will be operationalised from September 2015, is imperative. This requires investment in:

- developing a much greater understanding about the reasons and consequences for young people who drop-out of post-16 learning;
- identifying, addressing and resourcing their support needs to minimise the number of young people whose destinations become unknown, or who become long-term NEET; and
- developing a much better understanding of the youth labour market, as the proportion of young people seeking access to work and entry to further/higher education will invariably increase, in line with completion rates from post-16 learning.

Annex 1: Review of published data

This annex presents findings from the review of published secondary data relevant to the Raising Participation Age (RPA) agenda. This analysis was used to establish any differences between the Phase 4 LAs and the remainder of LAs in England.

A number of sources were reviewed, specifically statistical first release data about:

- young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those whose destination is not known – these analysis encompassed the overall rates among 16-18 year olds as well as the segmented age data (ie for 16 year olds, 17 year olds and 18 year olds) where data were available;
- overall participation and participation in learning (full- and part-time as well as work-based learning), and training (apprenticeships);
- the September Guarantee; and
- the achievement of five A*-C GCSE grades.

This summary highlights those aspects of the data which differentiate the local authorities (LAs) involved in delivering Phase 4 locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs) towards the RPA (hereafter called Phase 4 LAs) from the 'all England' data, and those data which differentiate between the Phase 4 LAs.

In these analyses, the LAs that worked as part of the Berkshire Sub-Regional Group (SRG) were considered separately since this reflects their presentation in the national data sets. Consequently, the data for 44 LAs have been reviewed.

Twenty-nine of these areas were urban, and 14 were rural. Owing to a higher number of rural areas in the Phase 4 LAs (some of which cover several local authorities) than is seen across England, the population of young people included in these analyses is divided equally between urban and rural areas¹⁹.

Young people between aged 16-18 year olds NEET, 2011 data

In the Phase 4 LAs, there were over 500,000 people aged between 16-18 years. Of these, an estimated 6.3 per cent were NEET, against an average of 6.1 per cent for England as a whole (based on DfE Statistical First Release (SFR) supplementary tables on participation)²⁰. It was not

¹⁹ The rural/urban status of a district has been decided by: 1) Defra rural/urban classification (April 2009) of LA; 2) Defra higher level geographies when the area encompasses more than one LA; and 3) For areas spanning multiple LAs which are not included in the Defra Higher Geographies Dataset, rural population figures for each constituent district were summed and the totals were used to determine rural/urban status using the same methodology outlined in Defra guidance for classifying local authorities. This only applies to Worcestershire in the case of the Phase 4 LA.

²⁰ DfE reports the NEET rate for England overall as 8.1 per cent at this time, but averaging the combined LA figures available in the supplementary tables to the SFR produces a lower NEET rate of 6.1 per cent. This discrepancy is due to LAs basing their NEET rates on the number of 16-18 year olds known to be in the area, which misses many

possible to compare these figures to those of previous years since the 2011 data recorded young people according to where they lived, rather than where they studied.

Of the Phase 4 LAs, 20 had a lower proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET than the average for England, whereas 22 had a higher proportion of NEET in the age group. There was considerable variation between the Phase 4 LAs (mean = 6.3 per cent, standard deviation (SD) = 1.55). NEET rates were lowest in Ealing (3.2 per cent), Kingston-upon-Thames (3.3 per cent) and Bexley (3.4 per cent), and highest in Gateshead (9 per cent), Wirral (8.9 per cent) and Reading (8.7 per cent). However, there was no variation between rural and urban Phase 4 LAs, both of which had aggregate NEET rates of 6.3 per cent.

Among 16 year olds, 25 Phase 4 LAs had a higher proportion of young people NEET than national average, and 16 LAs showed a lower proportion. Among 17 year olds, there were 17 Phase 4 LAs with lower rates of NEET than national average, while 24 had a higher rate. Among 18 year olds, 23 of the LAs with available data had a lower rate of NEET than the national average, while 20 LAs reported NEET rates above the national average.

Table A 1: 16-18 year olds NEET IN England and in Phase 4 LAs

	England		RPA-P4	
	N	%	N	%
16-18	108,620	6.1	33,430	6.3
16	22,230	3.9	6,870	4.0
17	36,560	6.1	11,470	6.4
18	50,760	8.5	15,600	8.7

Note: The DfE calculates a national rate of NEET at 8.1 per cent for 16 to 18 year olds. The footnote below explains why the data for LAs varies from the national published figure.

Source: DfE Statistical First Release (SFR) participation supplementary tables.

Proportion of 16-18 year olds with 'not known' status in 2011

The average rate for young people aged 16-18 years whose status was 'not known' among Phase 4 LAs was 8.5 per cent (SD = 6), while the national average was 9.4 per cent (based on DfE Statistical First Release (SFR) participation supplementary tables). Twenty-six of the Phase 4 LAs showed a rate beneath the national figure, while 16 LAs reported higher rates of not known status for 16-18 year olds in their area. The lowest rates were in Torbay (1.5 per cent), Plymouth, and Devon (both 2.1 per cent), while the highest were in Croydon (30.8 per cent), Essex (24.8 per cent), and County Durham (20.6 per cent).

young people and underestimates the true number of NEETs. The analysis of Phase 4 LAs uses local data. The analysis therefore compares these with the average for England as calculated from the combined LA figures for England. As the DfE national figure indicates, the true number of NEETs is higher, and it must be assumed in this analysis of the Phase 4 LA that NEET rates are underestimated as well as that for across England.

Participation rates

In June 2012, 27 Phase 4 LAs had fewer 16-17 year olds participating in education or training than the national average, which was 87.3 per cent, while 17 LAs had more than the average number of young people participating. LAs with the lowest proportion of young people participating were Derby (79.2 per cent), Medway (82.5 per cent) and Norfolk (83.2 per cent) whereas the highest proportions were in Ealing (93.9 per cent), Hounslow (91.9 per cent) and Bexley (90.7 per cent). A slightly lower proportion of 16-17 year olds in Phase 4 LAs were in full-time education (80.7 per cent) than the national average (81.7 per cent). The proportion of young people in apprenticeships was slightly higher than the national rate (the rate in Phase 4 LAs was 4.7 per cent, while the national rate was 3.8 per cent). However, there were higher rates of 16-17 year olds in employment with training in Phase 4 LAs (3.8 per cent) than in England overall (1.1 per cent).

Rural and urban Phase 4 LAs showed little variation in respect of participation type. Urban areas had a higher proportion of 16-17 years olds in full-time education (81.9 per cent) than rural areas (79.6 per cent), while for this age group, rural areas had more apprentices (3.9 per cent compared to 3.6 per cent) and young people in training (1.3 per cent compared to 1.1 per cent). The overall participation rate was higher in urban areas (87.4 per cent) than in rural (85.4 per cent), but the most striking feature of this analysis was the lack of variation. This may be attributable to the size of the units of analysis, since combining multiple local authorities into single districts may amalgamate diverse locations, rendering accurate allocation of these areas to rural/urban categories somewhat difficult.

Table A 2: Participation of 16-17 year olds: June 2012

	England		RPA-P4	
	N	%	N	%
Full-time education	950,988	81.7	282,565	80.7
Apprenticeships	44,232	3.8	13,242	4.7
Employment with training	12,804	1.1	4,310	3.8
Other	8,148	0.7	2,389	1.5
Total	1,016,172	87.3	302,480	86.3
All aged 16-18	1,164,000	100	350,300	100

Source: DfE Statistical First Release (SFR) participation supplementary tables

16-17 year olds in full/part-time education in 2010

- Participation in full-time education:** Overall, the Phase 4 LAs had very similar rates of 16-17 year olds in full-time education to the national average of 82 per cent, with a mean of 81 per cent (SD = 7.47) (based on DfE Statistical First Release (SFR) participation supplementary tables). Twenty-five LAs had a rate of participation in full-time education below national average, and 16 LAs had a rate above it. The highest proportion of 16-17 year olds in full-time education were in Ealing (99 per cent), Croydon and Hounslow (both

97 per cent), while the lowest rates were in Doncaster (64 per cent), Barnsley and Rotherham (both 71 per cent) and Gateshead (70 per cent).

- **Participation in part-time education:** As a whole, Phase 4 LAs had a rate equal to the national average of 5 per cent in respect of young people studying part-time. Individually, 22 LAs had a proportion of 16-17 year olds in part-time education below this figure, and 14 LAs had a higher proportion. Doncaster had the highest rate of part-time learners aged 16-17 (12 per cent), followed by Brighton and Hove (11 per cent) while the lowest rates were in Windsor and Maidenhead, and Blackburn and Darwen (both two per cent).

September Guarantee in 2010 and 2011

In 2010, 20 Phase 4 LAs made offers, under the September Guarantee,²¹ to 16-17 year olds at a rate below the national average of 94 per cent, and 21 LAs made more offers than this national average (available from the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)). Overall, Phase 4 LAs made offers to 94 per cent of 16-17 years olds, in line with the national average. In 2011, 19 Phase 4 LAs made fewer than the average number of offers, and 24 made more, although in 2011 the variation was greater than in the previous year (in 2010, SD = 2.4, in 2011 SD = 3.8). The most offers were made in Wakefield (98.4 per cent), Bexley (97.7 per cent) and Doncaster (96.5 per cent) with the fewest having been made in Croydon (74.4 per cent), followed by Gateshead (88.8) and Wiltshire (88.7 per cent).

Pupils achieving more than 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C

In 2007 and 2008, more Phase 4 LAs reported lower rates of GCSE 5+ A* to C achievement than those reporting higher than national average rates, but from 2009-2012 more Phase 4 LAs reported above average achievement. Overall, improvement in GCSE results has been similar in Phase 4 LAs to England overall.

Table A 3: Proportion of pupils achieving GCSE 5+ A*-C

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
RPA-P4 %	60.5	64.7	69.9	76.3	80.6	82.4
England %	61.4	65.3	70	75.4	79.6	81.1

Source: Based on the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) 2012 data published by DfE

²¹ The September Guarantee is a process that helps LAs to meet their statutory duty to secure enough suitable education and training places for 16- to 18-year-olds in their area. LAs provide all 16- and 17-year-olds with an offer, by the end of September, of a suitable place in education or training. The offer should be appropriate to meet the young person's needs and may be in a school, college or in work-based training. (Source: DfE website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies/educationtermsandtags/7043>)

Annex 2: Survey of Phase 4 local authorities

This chapter presents findings from the survey of Phase 4 LAs. The sample for the survey comprised 39 local authority contacts, including the nominated contact for the Berkshire Sub-Regional Group (SRG) as opposed to a representative from each of the six LAs originally planned to participate in the SRG.²² The survey achieved a 92 per cent response rate (see Section 1.2.3).

Respondents' role and achieving full participation

Only one respondent who completed the survey was not the local project lead. Twenty-nine respondents were also the lead for RPA implementation within their LAs, while seven were supporting the local lead for RPA delivery or were part of the team that was responsible for RPA.

More than half (21) of the Phase 4 LAs did not anticipate that their LA would be able to achieve full participation among local young people aged 16 and 17 by 2015. Only one respondent thought that achieving full participation was highly likely, while 14 respondents thought it was likely, and two respondents thought it was highly unlikely. Some respondents added commentary to the effect that 'full' or 100 per cent participation might not be feasible because RPA policy lacked immediate enforcement. However, respondents also asserted that forcing participation was not desirable since it might further disengage young people from accessing support, education and training.

Area-wide preparation for RPA

Local strategies for RPA

Thirty respondents had developed strategies for the implementation of RPA. In the majority of cases, the strategy included communications, activities to understand the cohort and to embed a tracking system. Table A 4 ranks the activities that were included within local authority strategies.

The survey categories did not fully capture the full range of activities undertaken. LAs were asked to add additional activities which formed part of their strategy. Additional responses included role definitions for board members overseeing the implementation of RPA, a review of alternative curricula, an assessment of attainment levels in English and maths, branding, employer engagement and the development of local partnership strategies.

Six respondents reported that their LA had not developed an RPA strategy. This was largely attributed to it being 'work in progress' and was either in the process of being drafted or was at the consultation stage. Two LAs did not see RPA as an isolated activity and preferred to incorporate the policy into their existing partnership strategies for youth work and more broadly within their education agenda.

²² This reduced to four LAs although the remaining two continued to informally collaborate with the SRG

Table A 4: Topics covered in local RPA strategies by importance

Strategy covers	Number of LAs
RPA communications	29
Understanding the cohort	29
Tracking systems	29
Determining local priorities	27
Transition management systems	27
Mapping provision	26
Data sharing protocols	23
Support arrangements	23
Risk of NEET indicator (RONI)	22
Other	7

Source: Online survey of Phase 4 LAs

Just over half of all respondents (56 per cent) reported that the LA retained responsibility for RPA strategy, although in just under half of the Phase 4 LAs (44 per cent), partnership boards were the responsible body for the strategy.

Six out of ten of Phase 4 respondents thought that their strategy would be effective in achieving full participation and one respondent was more confident, asserting that their strategy would be highly effective. Nine respondents were unsure about the effectiveness of their strategy, while two others thought that their strategies would be ineffective²³.

Involvement of local partners in strategy

The survey tool contained five categories of local partner that might be involved in strategy development. These were: local schools; post-16 education and training providers; local services; agencies; employer bodies and others.

In the broadest terms, all of these local partners had been consulted as part of strategy development. However, there was substantial variation in their level and role of involvement in the development of local RPA strategies.

Schools, with the exception of free schools²⁴, were generally quite involved in strategy development (see Figure A 1). Among other post-16 education and training providers, further education colleges and training organisations were highly involved in the majority of LA areas while sixth form colleges and universities, which were not present in all LAs were less involved.

²³ The survey did not collect information on why they thought this would be the case.

²⁴ Which were not present in most (29) of the LAs.

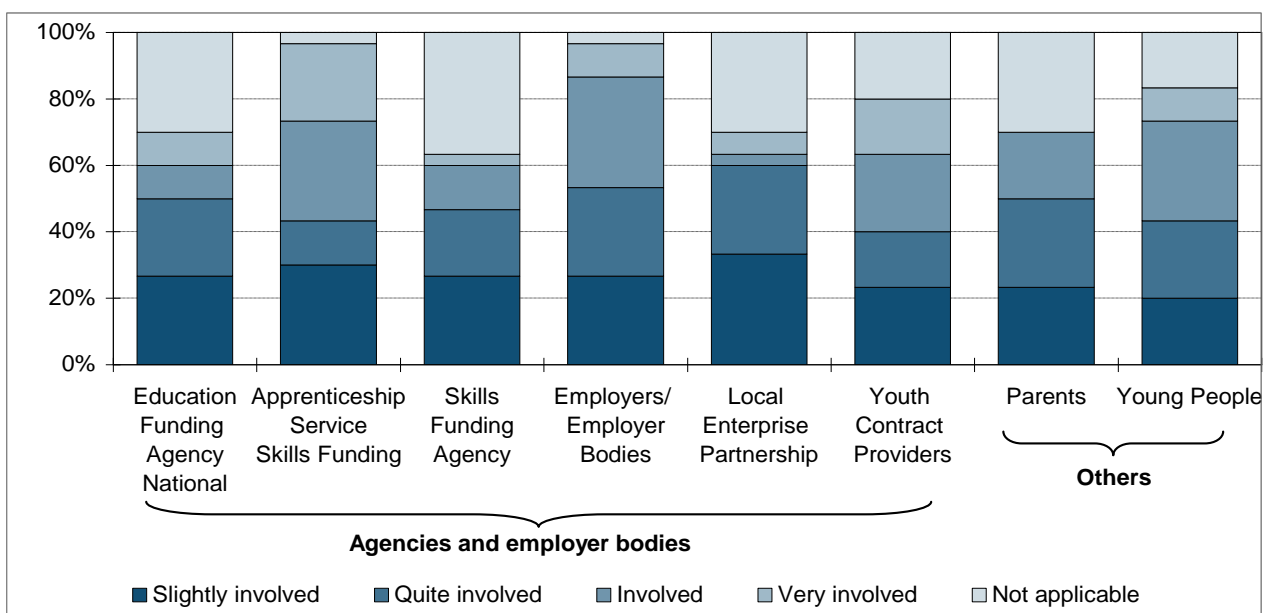
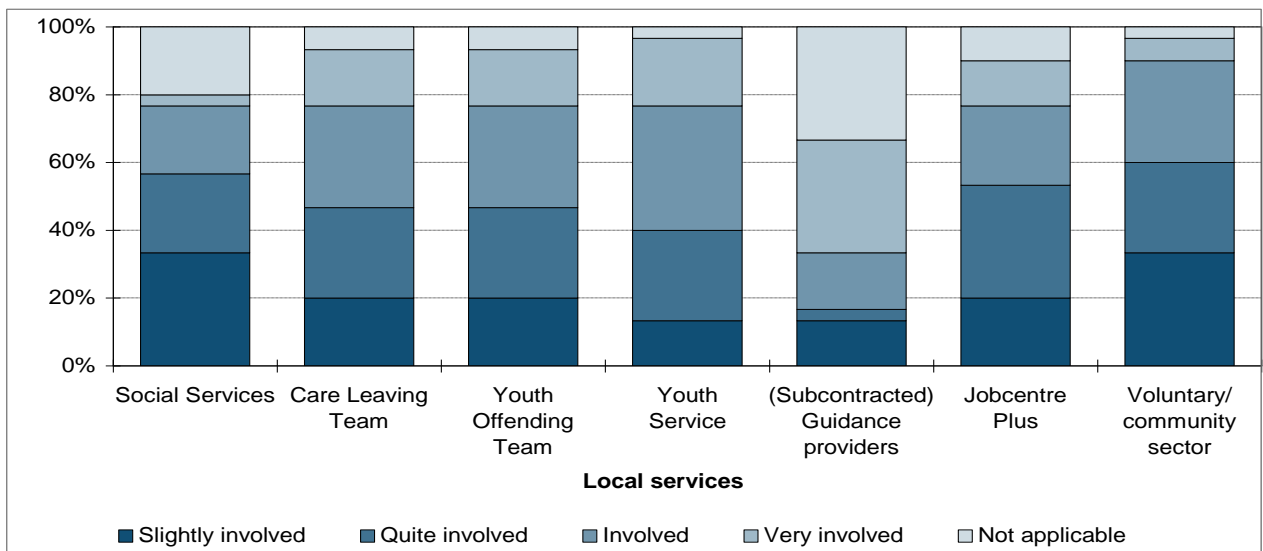
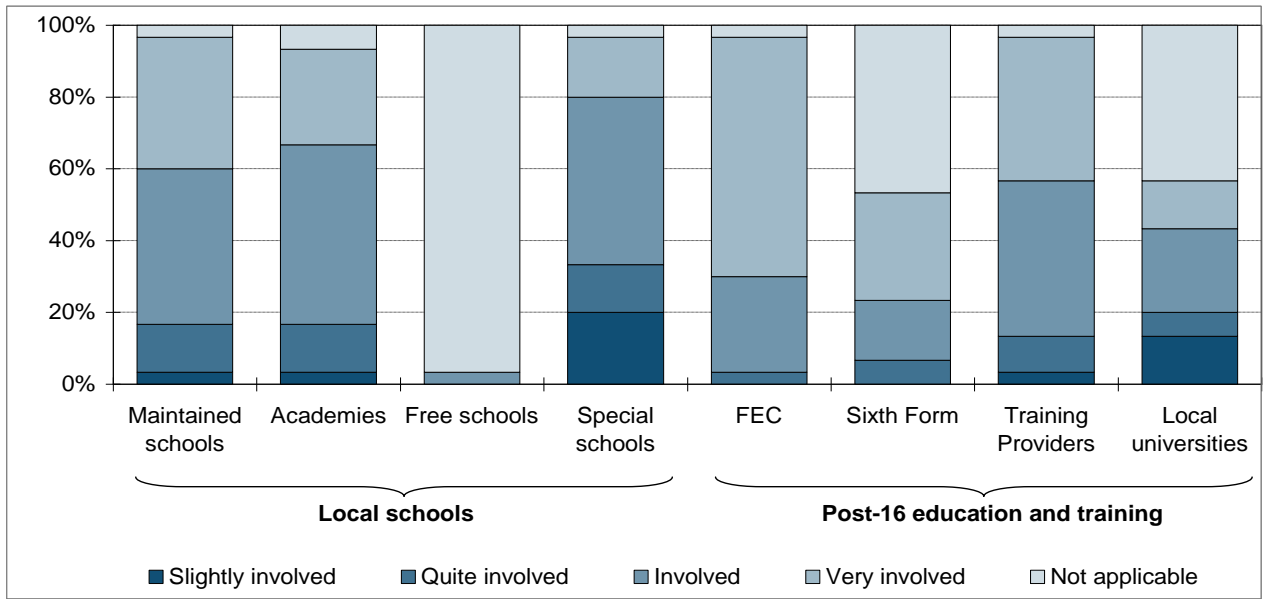
Among the local services who might be involved, social services teams tended to be slightly involved, while youth services, youth offending teams and care leaving teams were typically more involved.

Guidance providers, including where guidance provision had been contracted out, appear either extremely involved in strategy development or to have little involvement or relevance to strategy development.

Of the agencies and employer bodies, most involved in RPA strategy development were the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), employers/employer bodies and Youth Contract providers.

Young people and their parents were less likely to be involved in strategy development than other partners noted in the survey, although where they were involved, young people had greater input than parents.

Figure A 1: Involvement of different local partners in design of RPA strategy



Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Delivering RPA

This section of the questionnaire aimed to establish the type of work Phase 4 LAs had undertaken towards RPA implementation, the local partners they were engaging with to support delivery and the extent to which they felt this work had prepared them for the implementation of RPA policy.

Current and planned activities to prepare for RPA

Table A 5 outlines the work already undertaken, or that is currently underway among Phase 4 LAs in respect of defined categories which reflect RPA building blocks²⁵ including some groups of young people who do not currently participate in post-16 education, employment or training (EET).

Table A 5: Current or planned engagement with key issues of RPA

	Work undertaken/ underway	Planning to do	Number of LAs
Early identification of those at risk of non-participation post-16	36	0	36
Protocols to support and re-engage young people not in post-16 education or training	32	4	36
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter or are in jobs without training	16	19	35
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter other activities (eg volunteering) without formal, accredited learning or training	10	23	33
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who drop out of post-16 learning or training	33	3	36

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Table A 6 shows that the categories specified in the survey were reasonably effective in capturing activities that were underway or planned within the Phase 4 projects. However, the survey results demonstrate that LAs were likely to be involved in a much wider variety of activities than those specified which included:

- communications work to raise the RPA agenda which was targeted at a range of local stakeholders (for example, schools, providers, young people, parents, employers, and LA staff) and in some cases this included the use of social media approaches;
- delivery of pre-apprenticeship provision and employability support – also within this broad agenda was work to develop a pathway between pre-apprenticeship provision and apprenticeships; work was also underway to engage with employers and to expand apprenticeship places locally;

²⁵ These were defined by ISOS Partnership following their research into earlier phases of the trials/LLDPs.

- supporting, monitoring and improving the delivery of impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) ie careers guidance. This involved projects targeting the guidance needs of specific groups, eg young people with learning disabilities or difficulties (LLDD);
- developing RONI tools, processes to address temporary breaks in learning, as well as research into the needs of local young people who are NEET and their reasons for not participating or dropping out of post-16 learning or training;
- provision of initial and continued support for young people making transitions between pre- and post-16 learning with continued support focused on retention in learning; and
- work to scope provision and ensure an appropriate range exists for young people in their localities – some LAs are creating additional pathways to support young people, for example volunteering, while others are focusing this work on specific groups of young people such as those in pupil referral units (PRUs), or vulnerable groups of young people; some are filling identified provision gaps and delivering bridging and engagement support.

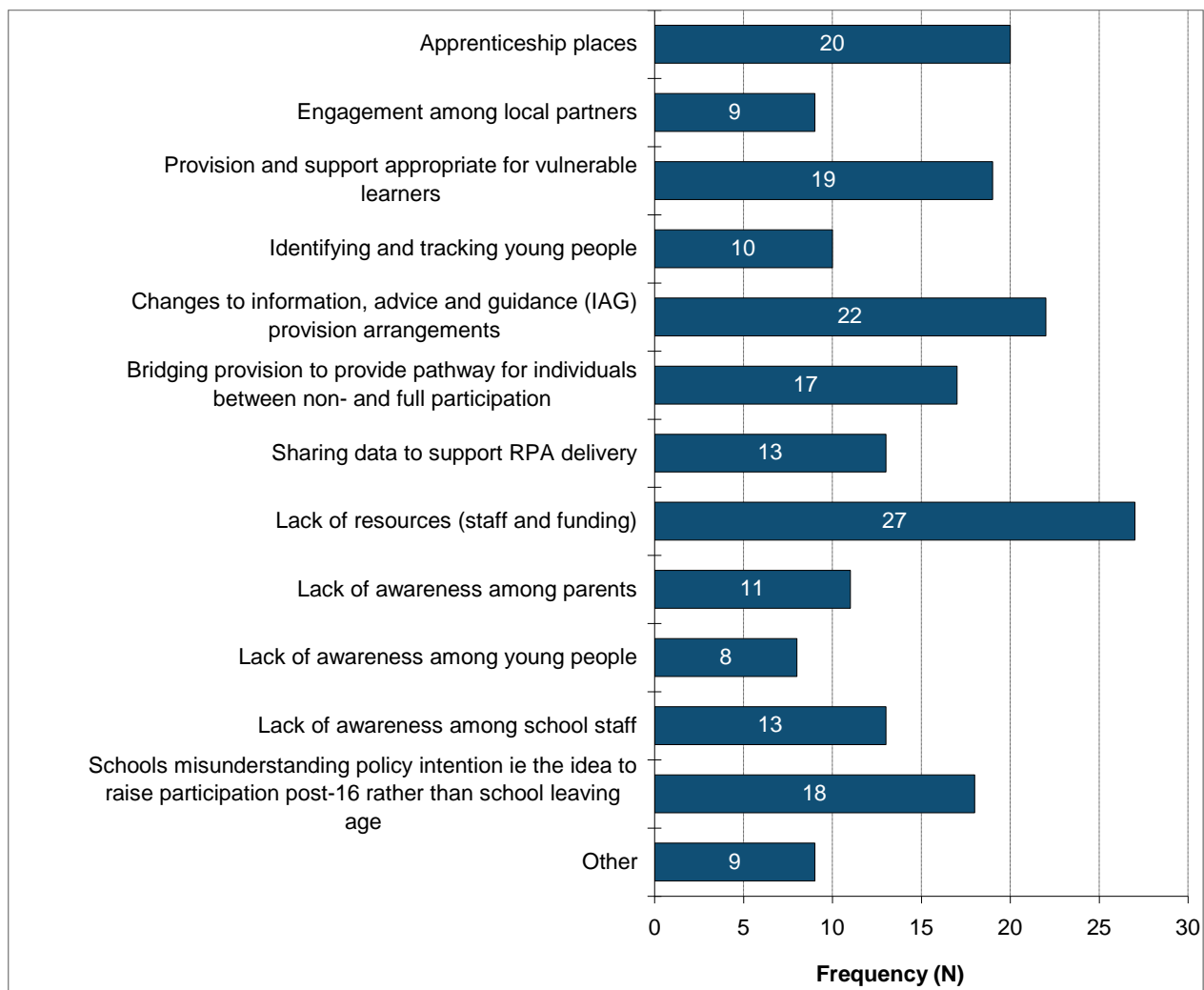
A smaller number of the Phase 4 LAs had some activities planned that would be delivered in the near future, which mirror those noted above as currently underway. Planned activities not covered by the above list included:

- the development of an RPA strategy (in a LA which currently does not have a strategy) and building local partnership boards to assist the implementation of RPA;
- capacity building through delivery of a continuing professional development (CPD) programme for education providers;
- the development of alternative formats for learning, in order to target and support specific groups eg the use of distance learning for some vulnerable groups of young people;
- the promotion of partnership work locally, in order to capture and build on local expertise in supporting some groups of young people; and
- addressing the needs of young people in jobs without training (JWT), including targeting employers, working with local partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, and use of a payment by results model to incentivise employers to progress young people on long-term work experience into a positive destinations, including jobs with training.

Delivery challenges

Respondents identified a number of challenges that impact on LAs' ability to deliver full participation. Chief among these were staffing and funding constraints. Changes in the provision arrangements for information, advice and guidance (primarily the demise of local Connexions Services), the availability of apprenticeship places locally, appropriate provision, support for vulnerable learners and misunderstanding among schools and their staff about the objectives of RPA are some of the challenges that were expressed (Figure A 2).

Figure A 2: Challenges for the preparation of delivering full participation



Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Respondents identified additional challenges faced within their local context. Responses included:

- addressing the needs of young people who are interested in moving into work/training, but who lack the necessary employability skills and attributes to gain a job;
- identifying and supporting young people in jobs without training (JWT) and their employers. Linked to this point, was the need to appraise and accredit employer-led training in some JWT roles; to work with national companies that offer apprenticeship schemes but do not deliver these in all localities; and to address the lack of funding for transport to enable young people in JWT to access local training/learning;
- achieving full participation among local young people which was seen as an unrealisable target/goal;
- gathering intelligence about residency and learning across LA boundaries and the need for common/consistent cross-border support to identify and support young people at risk;
- tracking young people post-16, which was noted as becoming progressively more difficult due to cutbacks and in some cases the withdrawal of local guidance services, most notably Connexions Services. In addition, young people’s age affects which agency/department

leads the responsibility for tracking and their transition between youth and adult services and this adds complexity; and

- challenges presented by school funding reforms generally, and often the lack of capacity to support the RPA agenda and all it entails in schools which are under-performing and which have high NEET rates post-16.

Despite the number of challenges identified most respondents provided a variety of ways in which their locally-led delivery project (LLDP) would address at least some of the issues that they faced. This information was used to support case study selection.

However, some common themes emerge that can be aligned to the earlier findings (see earlier section on current and planned activities to prepare for RPA). Examples include: a focus on promoting partnership working; finding multiple channels and approaches to communicate the RPA message and working to engage employers in order to increase apprenticeship opportunities and support young people in JWT. Building capability and sharing knowledge locally to address the challenges of RPA implementation is also an important theme arising from these data.

Involvement of local partners in delivery

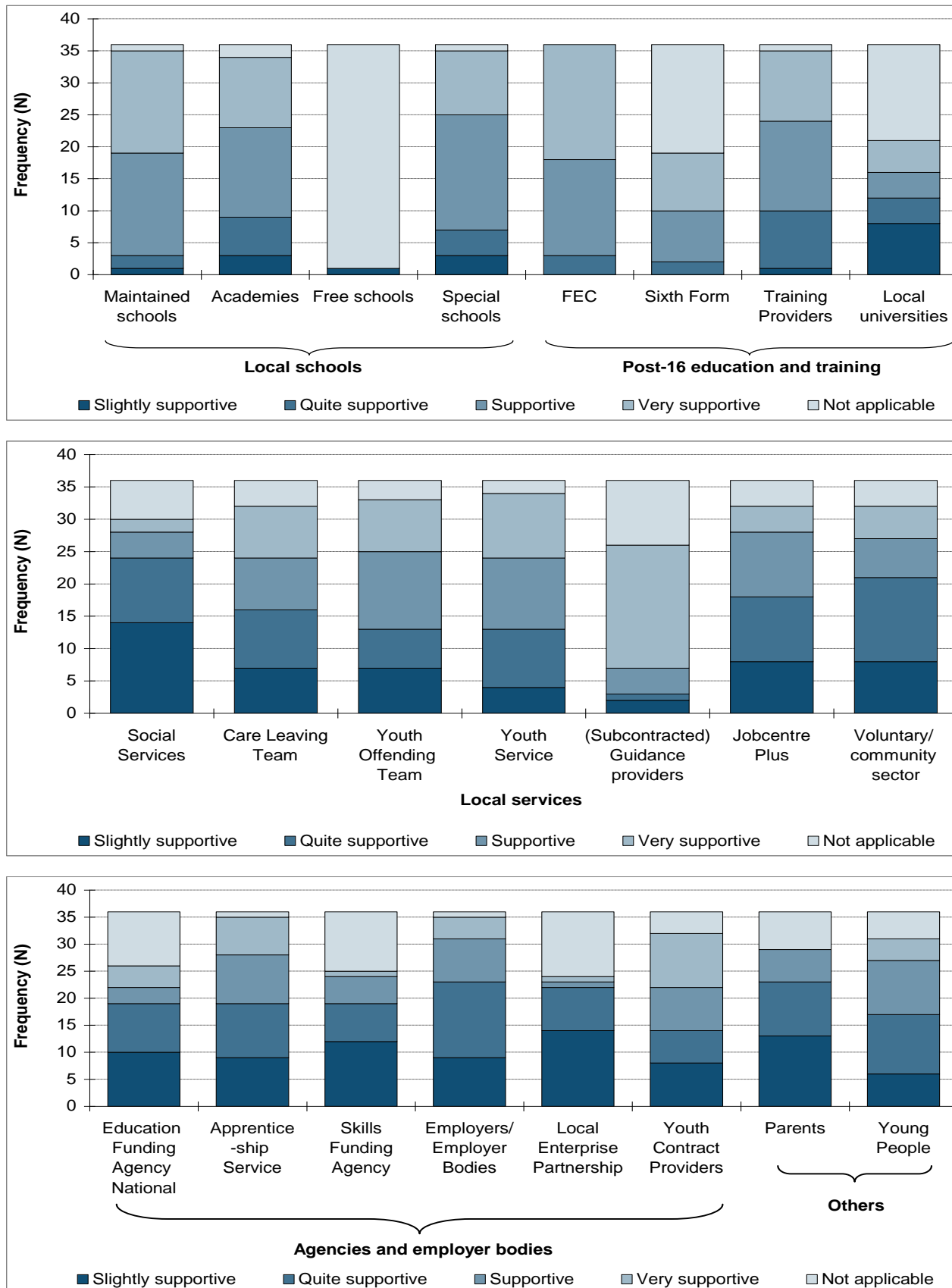
Local partners involved in the design of RPA strategy were often also involved in supporting its delivery. However, there was some degree of variation between localities in the extent of the support that was offered by local partners (see Figure A 3).

- Maintained schools, academies and special schools appear highly supportive in the delivery of RPA.
- Further education colleges are heavily involved across all LAs, while training providers also offered strong support.
- Sixth form colleges are either very supportive or not involved, depending on the context and, in particular, if they remained part of the maintained sector.
- Youth services, youth offending teams and the care leaving teams appeared to offer a considerable degree of support.
- Careers guidance providers again were either highly supportive or do not feature in delivery. This replicates their involvement in strategy development and may reflect local variation in whether these services remain as part of LAs or have been contracted out²⁶.
- The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), employers/employer bodies and Youth Contract providers appear involved in RPA delivery in many RPA 4 Project areas.
- Overall young people are far more involved than parents in preparations for delivery.

In addition to the partners listed in the survey tool, respondents noted some other organisations that were involved in some localities. These included housing associations, local Education and Business Partnerships (EBPs), Boards of Governors and Consortia for Learning and Economic Development.

²⁶ The survey did not systematically capture information on arrangements for IAG in each LA.

Figure A 3: Extent of supporting the delivery of RPA by local partners



Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Views of preparedness for RPA implementation

The majority of the Phase 4 LA respondents (27 of 36) reported that they were very well or well prepared for the implementation of RPA. One noted that their LA was not very well prepared at all, while the remainder were neutral about their LA's preparedness.

Just over half of the Phase 4 LAs believed their preparations would be effective in achieving full participation. Sixteen respondents were not sure how effective their LA's preparations would be in achieving full participation, while one respondent thought that their preparations would be ineffective in achieving full participation.

Comparing views of the effectiveness of RPA preparations to the effectiveness of RPA strategies, the Phase 4 LAs were slightly more confident about their strategy than about their current preparations. However, examining the data further reveals a correlation between views of the effectiveness of strategy and preparations: respondents who noted that their strategy would be effective or very effective also noted that their preparations would be similarly effective.

Staffing and resources

This section of the questionnaire explored the configuration of staff teams as well as respondents' views about the current levels of staffing and financial resources available to deliver RPA locally.

Staff teams delivering RPA

None of the LAs surveyed had a team dedicated solely to RPA delivery, rather the delivery teams comprised combinations of staff who worked on RPA and related projects, and staff working on RPA and other non-related projects. Table A 6 illustrates the team structures.

The most common combination was teams that consisted of staff working on RPA and related projects (see row 2 in Table A 6), followed by teams working on RPA and non-related projects (row 3). In four LAs, teams were made up of people that worked solely on RPA, RPA and related and non-related projects (row 1).

Table A 6: Staffing structures for RPA delivery

	Solely on RPA delivery	RPA delivery and related projects	RPA delivery and non-related projects	RPA delivery and related and non-related projects	N respondents
Solely on RPA delivery		1	1	4	6
RPA delivery and related projects		14	4		18
RPA delivery and non-related projects			12		12
N respondents					36

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Adequacy of staffing for RPA

More than half (53 per cent) of the Phase 4 LAs noted that their current staffing levels were insufficient to deliver RPA. However, just under a third (31 per cent) thought their current staffing levels were adequate, and the remainder (17 per cent) did not comment either way on this point.

Looking ahead to summer 2013, when the LLDP funding would cease and following the LA settlement, 22 respondents predicted that the staffing levels for RPA delivery within their LA would decrease, nine thought staffing levels would remain the same, and one respondent reported that there would be an increase in staff resources. A further four respondents could not predict how staffing levels might change. Consequently, two-thirds (64 per cent) of Phase 4 LAs representatives, reported that future staffing levels would be insufficient to deliver RPA; six respondents reported that they would have enough staff for RPA delivery, and seven did not comment on future staffing.

Some among the group of the Phase 4 LA respondents who were confident that current and future staffing would be adequate, provided reasons, which included: that local prioritisation of the RPA agenda had assured sufficient staff resource, and that capacity building within LLDPs had played an important role, as did sharing responsibility with local partners. Their responses also indicated that the resource required for liaison with local partners should not be under-estimated. In one area, while overall staffing levels were perceived to be adequate overall, there was some concern about staffing allocation not being appropriately targeted and that some restructuring would be required. The LAs that were concerned about current and future staffing levels highlighted the dramatic cuts in budgets and the ongoing restructuring of local teams.

Resourcing RPA

Of the 36 LAs that responded to the survey, 19 reported that they planned to apply for alternative sources of funding to replace the funding available for the LLDPs, 16 LAs had yet to decide, while one LA did not envisage seeking alternative funding.

Among the 19 LAs which were considering alternative funding, their considerations most commonly centred on ESF funding, the Youth Contract, any future RPA bidding rounds, business partnerships, provider buy-back solutions, the lottery fund, as well as charities, foundations and other DfE programmes. Many pointed out that involvement in funding bids was resource intensive and this would be problematic in the light of reduced staff resource.

LAs were extremely concerned about the impact the economic crisis had on their ability to deliver RPA and this focused on the increased financial pressures on LAs. In this climate, many envisaged difficulties for the second stage of RPA implementation ie participation among 17 year olds (academic age), due to lack of funding for building partnerships and engaging schools and other stakeholder in delivery activities. Many of the LAs identified 17 year olds as substantially harder to reach and to engage than the younger age group and estimated that the cost of re-engagement would be substantially higher. Some concern was also expressed about a trend towards increasing marketisation and sub-contracting, with the Youth Contract frequently being given as an example of this.

About the locally-led Delivery Projects

This section of the questionnaire focused on the locally-led delivery projects (LLDPs). It explored with respondents the factors that had influenced their decisions in respect of choosing their respective projects, what was proving or promised to be effective and any activities that had not worked as well as any key learning that had been observed. Respondents were also asked about the emerging impact of their project.

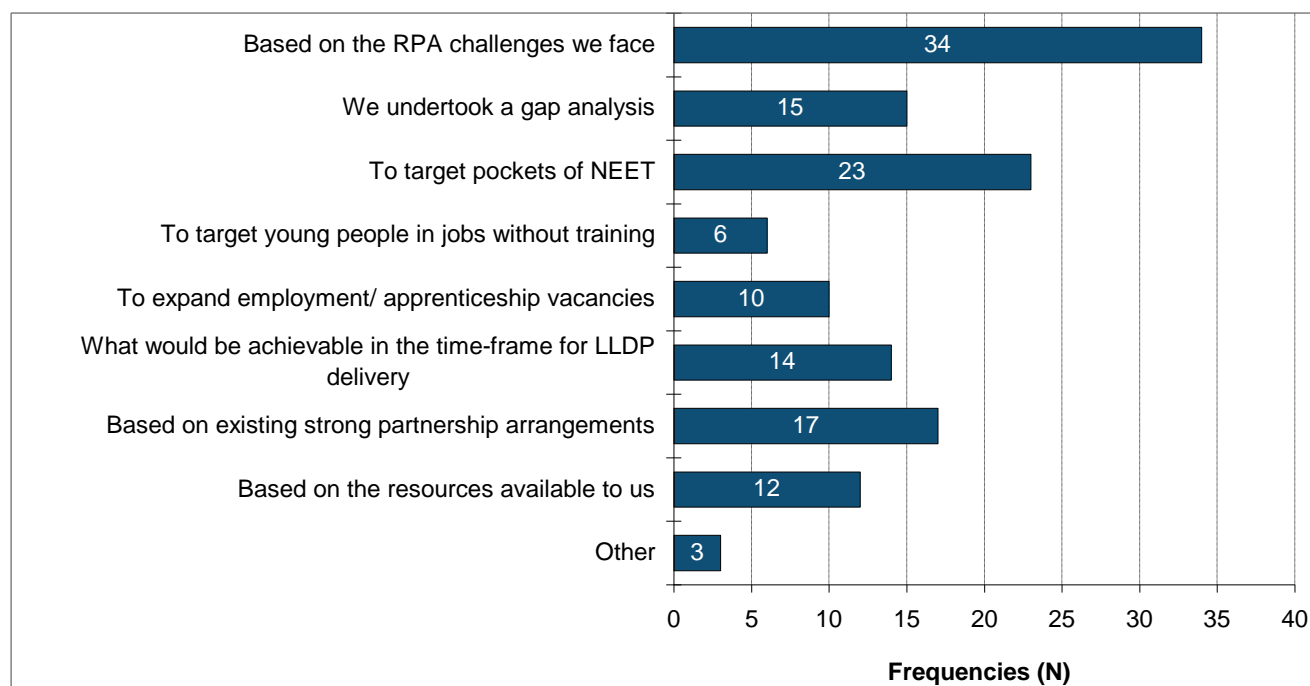
Devising the projects

The overwhelming majority of Phase 4 LA respondents had devised their LLDP based on their local challenges to delivering RPA. Some LAs had also considered the NEET agenda or pre-existing local partnership arrangements (see Figure A 4).

Many of the LAs had undertaken a gap analysis to inform project selection thereby ensuring that the project would deliver to a specific need in terms of local RPA delivery. Available resources and concerns about what would be possible to deliver within the relatively short period of time allocated to project funding were also considerations when LAs devised their plans.

The specified categories within the questionnaire did not capture all the design considerations noted by the Phase 4 LAs. Among 'other' issues that had informed design were issues surrounding the loss of key personnel, eg those who had been responsible for developing local provision for all young people, strategic tie-ins with the local Education Commission and analysis of strategic information to highlight common problem areas.

Figure A 4: How Phase 4 LAs selected and devised LLDPs



Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Activities that are proving effective

The respondents were asked about the activities that they were currently implementing or had started work on that were proving effective. This generated a high volume of responses, with multiple aspects of work highlighted as effective by Phase 4 LAs. Their responses also indicated that effectiveness was being evidenced in data such as reducing NEET rates or earlier and enhanced information to support those at risk of NEET. Aspects of their activities that were commonly cited as effective included the following points.

- Communication strategies which highlighted the range of provision available locally as well as those which focused on the requirements of RPA ie post-16 participation.
- Work in schools and gaining school support for RONI tools. The wide use of the tools indicates that these are seen as valuable in the local context and the Phase 4 LAs identify evidence of their effect in terms of reducing NEET figures. Promoting and facilitating data sharing is also a critical area where LAs note some considerable success.
- Developing local apprenticeship offers through activities such as 100/100 campaigns²⁷, formulation and delivery of pre-apprenticeship support (including after school clubs and pre-apprenticeship training), and work to ensure apprenticeships are inclusive notably among young people with learning disabilities or difficulties. Some LAs noted success in converting JWT into apprenticeships.
- Research and consultations to improve understanding of the needs of different groups of young people. For example an early leavers' forum, and targeting the needs of vulnerable young people. One area noted success in using volunteering to increase the self-esteem among vulnerable groups of young people.
- Supporting transitions through provision of dedicated transition workers. Some models within this broad theme employed dedicated support workers to assist troubled/chaotic families by coordinating support through inter-agency working which was reported to improve participation in learning or training among children in these families.

Planned activities that LAs anticipated would be effective

The survey also asked about activities that had yet to be delivered within projects at the time of the survey (November 2012) and which LAs thought were highly promising in terms of effectiveness. There were slightly fewer responses to this question. This can be attributed to the fact that some of the LAs had all of their activities underway and did not plan to implement any others during the project period.

Aspects of planned activities that LAs thought would be effective were:

- use of social media and the publication and promotion of new education, employment and training opportunities using these channels;

²⁷ Shorthand for 100 apprentices in 100 days – an initiative originated by the National Apprenticeship Service which has been widely taken up by local authorities to stimulate the supply of apprenticeships locally.

- developing a RONI tool that would help schools identify the ‘middle’ group who are at risk although they are often overlooked since their needs are not extreme and consequently often lack support;
- focusing on drop-outs post-16 and among 17 year olds through research and examination of administrative data, use of RONI-type tools, and notably, data sharing;
- commissioning approaches for youth support, careers guidance and work to fill gaps in provision;
- managed moves approaches and data systems to support these; and
- focusing on employer engagement to address JWT and support apprenticeships.

Unsuccessful activities

A final question in this section of the survey asked the LAs about any of their activities that had been unsuccessful and this gained 20 responses. It detailed aspects of work that had not proved effective, the reasons for this and/or the success criteria used to assess this. The responses are helpful since they indicate areas that are hard to tackle and reasons for this. Some examples included:

- an activity to identify young people in JWT was effective. However the second stage which involved converting the JWT into apprenticeships was deemed unsuccessful due to lack of interest among employers. A related issue encountered by another LA was that young people in JWT were unwilling to share information about their employers;
- some approaches to employer engagement have been ineffective eg events such as breakfast meetings;
- a partnership approach to the provision of careers and education guidance would not continue since schools were not interested in continuing to work together on this agenda;
- a project to increase higher apprenticeship opportunities did not take off due to challenges in respect of funding streams and securing the necessary local partnerships;
- a lack of capacity to develop new opportunities within local education and training providers limited activities to engage in a work pairing project; and
- providers had been unwilling to consider delivering innovative new provision ahead of information about new national policies being available eg 16-19 study programmes.

Anticipated effects and impacts of the LLDPs

The majority of the Phase 4 LAs (29) thought that participation among 16 year olds would increase by 2013 as a result of their project, with the remainder (seven LAs) noting that the local participation rate among 16 year olds would remain the same. None expected that there would be a decrease in the participation for this age group.

Of those that believed there would be an increase in participation among 16 year olds as a result of their project, nine in ten (90 per cent) expected that this increase would be in the one to five percentage point range, while the remainder (10 per cent) anticipated a more substantial impact in the range of eight to ten percentage points.

There were lower expectations in respect of having an impact on the participation rate of 17 year olds (academic age). Twenty-six of the Phase 4 LAs believed that the participation rate among this group would increase while nine thought it would remain unchanged.

The extent of the change anticipated by those who thought participation among 17 year olds would increase was also more moderate. Most (87.5 per cent) thought that an increase would lie in the one to six percentage point range although three LAs expected that the increased rate participation among 17 year olds (academic age) as a result of their project would be around 10 percentage points.

Dissemination and learning

The final section of the questionnaire explored the utility of information arising from the previous funding rounds of the RPA LLDPs. It also explored the ways in which respondents learned about practice in other areas and the means they used to disseminate their own work.

Making use of the lessons from previous phases of the projects

The research into the previous LLDPs for RPA has led to the production of tools to assist in the dissemination of good practice among LAs. Twenty-nine of the 36 Phase 4 LAs that responded to the survey had used these tools to support the development of their own strategy and activities. A large majority of those using the tools (20 Phase 4 LAs) thought they were either useful or very useful, eight were neutral on the utility of the tools and one LA had not found the tools useful.

Most of the Phase 4 LA respondents appreciated the opportunity to draw on lessons from the earlier phases of the LLDPs. Twenty-six of the Phase 4 LAs thought that the lessons arising from earlier phases of work have been useful or very useful. Most of the remainder were neutral on the value of the previous project phases to their own developments although three noted that the earlier phases had been of little benefit to them.

Notably, the ability to transfer lessons from other contexts to their own was seen as more challenging by many of the Phase 4 LAs. Most (15 Phase 4 LAs) noted it had been reasonably easy to transfer learning and only one thought it had been very easy. The majority of the Phase 4 respondents (17 LAs) were undecided on the ease or difficulty of transferring learning, although three noted it had not been at all easy to apply lessons from the previous projects.

Lessons learned from previous phases of the LLDPs

Responses to these questions indicated that the Phase 4 LAs placed great value on the previous phases of the projects, as well as opportunities to share information and learning. Some commonly mentioned lessons included the:

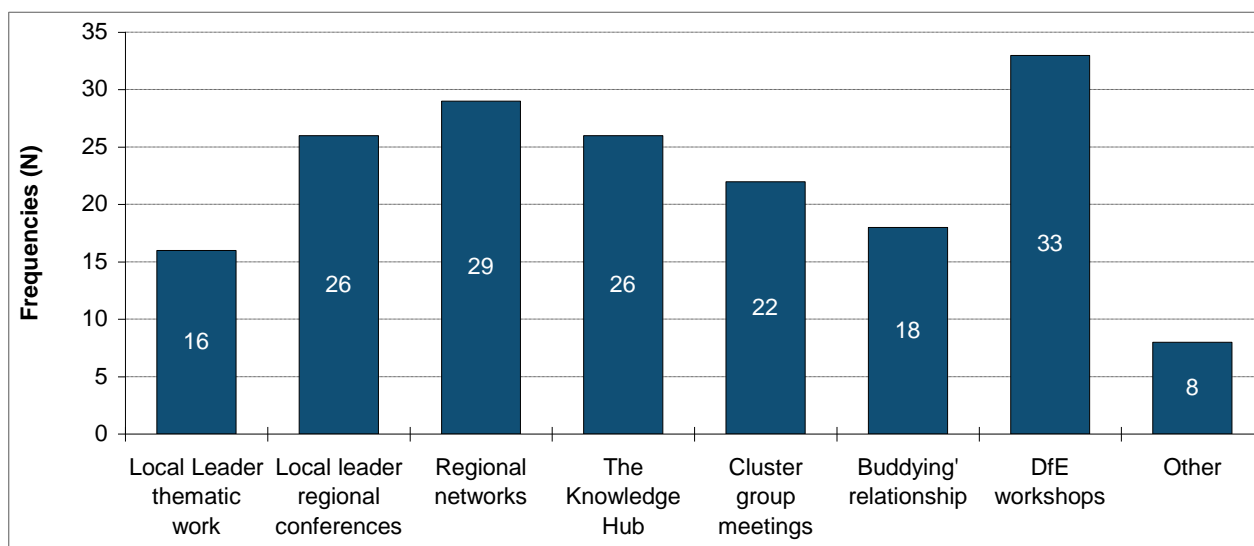
- need for early identification of those at risk through use of RONI as well as the need to share data in order to support transition and participation;
- importance of partnership working and gaining the support of local stakeholders;
- need for work to be undertaken to understand the cohort and to scope local provision;

- significance of the local context and local arrangements, for example, for the provision of careers guidance and support and staff structures within LAs;
- importance of having a strategy and/or plan for RPA delivery; and
- difficulty in marshalling action among local stakeholders in a changing policy context.

Sharing knowledge and learning from others

A range of options and routes exist for LAs to exchange knowledge and experiences and some of these were provided as categories in the survey. By far the most frequently cited option was the DfE workshops that all the Phase 4 LAs are invited to attend (see Figure A 5). Regional networks are also a common means to share knowledge and learn from others. The least frequently cited options were Local Leader thematic work and buddying relationships, although they were still used by close to half of the Phase 4 LA respondents.

Figure A 5: Knowledge sharing activities



Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

All of the LAs were engaged in sharing good practice with other LAs and each gave detailed information about the activities and tools they had disseminated. Responses were too detailed to provide headline categorisations in this report. However, this information was used to inform the selection of the case study sample.

Sustainability and mainstreaming

While the funding for the LLDPs ceased by Spring 2013, the DfE expected that the activities delivered would have some lasting impact or would become embedded (if appropriate) in local contexts.

Survey responses show that most of the Phase 4 LAs had put plans in place to ensure the continuation of their activities. Twenty-six of the LAs anticipated having completed their project and then planned to disseminate the learning locally, and 29 planned to mainstream their project's activities with local partners.

As previously noted, half of the LAs intended to seek further funding to continue their work and seven had put other plans in place for continuance. Table A 7 provides a breakdown of the combinations of activities and plans.

In one LA, while the activities themselves had been planned with sustainability in mind from the start, the funding for the leadership position to coordinate the continued development and implementation was under threat. Consequently, there was a fear that the benefits gained from the project to date might not be realised in the future.

Table A 7: Combinations of activities to continue LLDP

	Project to be completed and learning disseminated locally	Activities to be mainstreamed by local partners	LA will seek funding to continue	Mainstreamed and seek funding	Other	N respondents
LLDP will be completed and learning will be disseminated locally	3	10	-	14		27
LLDP activities will be mainstreamed by local partners	-	4	2	-		6
LA will seek funding for work to continue	-	-	2	-		2
Other	-	-	-	-	1	1
N respondents						36

Source: Online Survey of Phase 4 LAs (2012)

Annex 3: Survey of LAs involved in previous funding rounds

Six of the respondents to this survey of LAs involved in previous funding rounds²⁸ were the RPA lead in their LA, while one respondent was part of a team that was responsible for RPA. Only two of the LAs thought it was likely they would achieve full participation.

Area-wide preparation for RPA

All of the LA respondents (seven) that were no longer part of projects had strategies in place to deliver RPA. These strategies covered communications, activities to understand the cohort, development of a RONI, determination of local priorities, mapping provision, developing tracking systems and support arrangements. Only one of these LAs' strategies did not include data sharing protocols and transition management systems. Two LAs had included other factors in their strategy specifically, the progression of 18-24 year olds and mobility of learners. One of the LAs had embedded parts of their RPA strategy in various other policy documents and thus did not have a stand alone RPA strategy document.

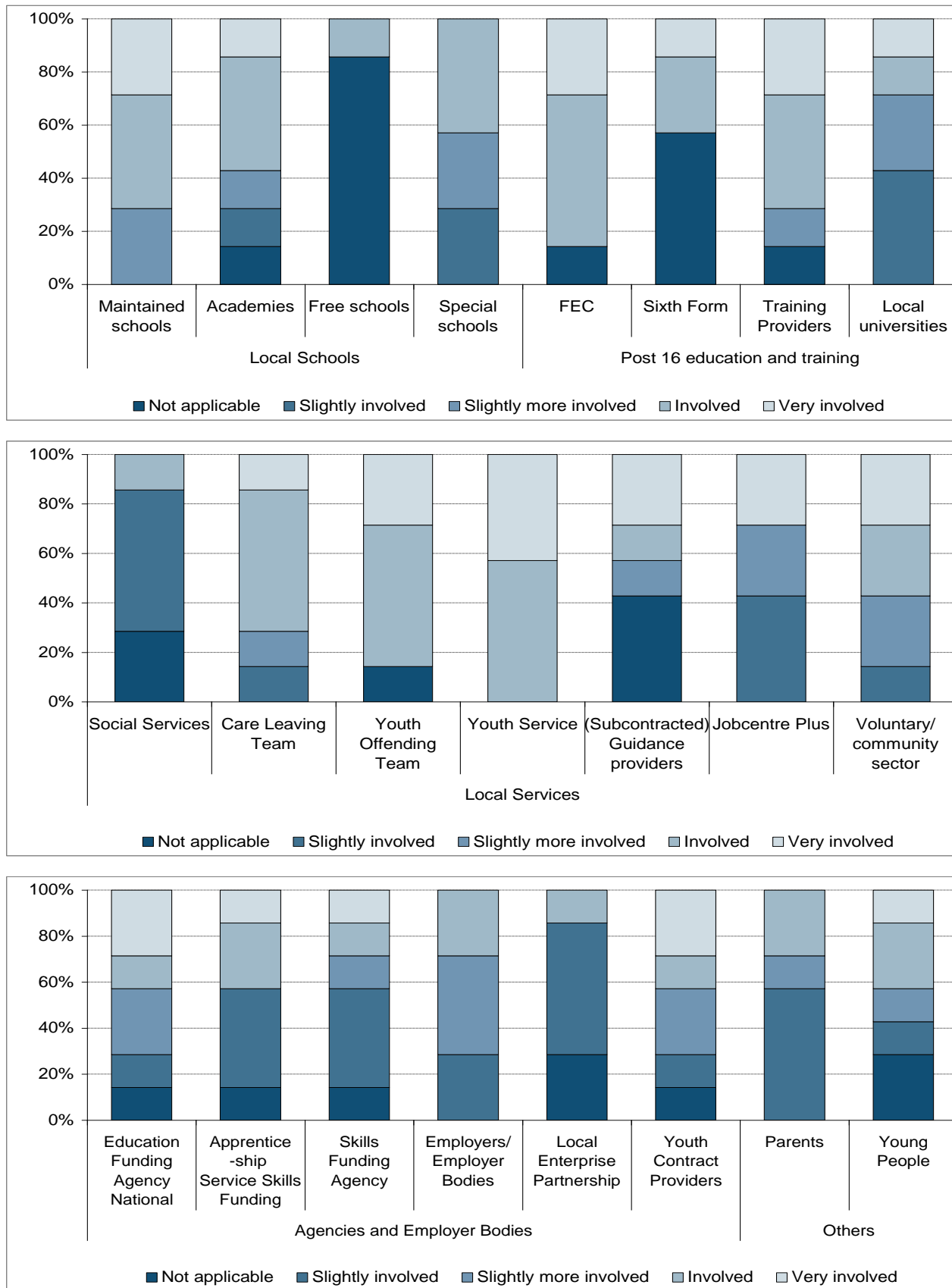
Respondents noted that responsibility for RPA was dispersed over various stakeholders. In one LA, there was a partner board, in four the LA was responsible, and in two LAs, different arrangements had been put in place: a 'buy in' structure of key stakeholders in one and in the other a combination of the LA having responsibility together with a partnership board of key stakeholder organisations.

Four of respondents from the LAs that were no longer part of the trials/LLDPs thought their strategies would be effective, while three LAs were neutral on the likely effectiveness of their strategies.

Similar to the Phase 4 LAs, those that were no longer involved in the projects had strong strategic links with maintained schools, academies, further education colleges and training providers (see Figure A 6).

²⁸ This survey received a 70 per cent response rate, representing seven LAs

Figure A 6: Involvement of local partners involved in strategy development



Source: Online Survey of LA involved in previous funding rounds (2012)

Among the local services involved in strategy development, youth services, youth offending teams and care leaving teams were highly involved. This differs markedly from the Phase 4 LAs where there appears lesser involvement of these services and teams. Other agencies and

employers/employer bodies, as well as parents and young people were only moderately involved in the design of the strategies of those LAs that were no longer part of trials/LLDPs. Additionally, various training provider networks, local politicians, psychology specialists, lone parent specialists, Sure Start coordinators, as well as young people with disabilities, were noted as being involved.

Delivering RPA

Typically, the LAs that were no longer part of the LLDPs had undertaken extensive work on the key building blocks and needs of key groups included within RPA policy. The only areas where not all of these LAs had completed or were underway with activities were approaches to identify and support young people in jobs without training and mechanisms to identify and support young people in other activities (eg volunteering) that were not formally accredited (see Table A 8).

Table A 8: Work undertaken/ underway or planned on certain RPA issues

	Work undertaken/ underway (N)	Planned work (N)
Early identification of those at risk of non-participation post-16	7	-
Protocols to support and re-engage young people not in post-16 education or training	7	-
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter or are in jobs without training	2	5
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who enter other activities (eg volunteering) without formal, accredited learning or training	4	3
Mechanisms to identify and support young people who drop out of post-16 learning or training	7	-

Source: Online Survey of LA involved in previous funding rounds (2012)

Other work towards RPA undertaken included the establishment of data exchange procedures with other stakeholders, the strengthening of partner networks in order that they are able to react quickly to emerging challenges, communication about employer engagement, and development of specific activities with local schools. While planned activities were to be targeted at specific groups of young people, the implementation of these was reported to be endangered due to the funding environment.

Four of the seven LAs reported feeling well or very well prepared for the implementation of RPA. Other respondents were neutral on this point. These feelings were repeated when responding to the question about the effectiveness of their preparations, with the exception of two LAs. One of these indicated that their LA was well prepared but gave a lower rating as to the effectiveness of its strategy. The other was neutral on their LA's preparedness although it was indicated that its strategy would be effective.

Staffing and resources

The staffing structures for RPA in the LAs no longer involved in the projects were similar to those of the Phase 4 LAs. None had teams solely dedicated to RPA.

The responses to questions about whether staffing levels were sufficient to deliver RPA were mixed. Two LAs thought they had sufficient staff for delivery, another two respondents thought that their staffing levels were insufficient, and three respondents did not know whether staffing levels would be sufficient. Three LAs indicated that they expected staffing levels to decrease, while two respondents thought they would increase, with another two LAs unable to say how staffing levels would change in the future.

Only one of these LAs thought they would have sufficient staff to deliver RPA in 2013. Three thought staffing levels in 2013 would be insufficient, and the other three LAs were neutral on this point.

In respect of staffing levels, LAs had concerns about the effects of ring-fenced funding: concerns surrounded staff being dedicated to particular activities, or that ring-fenced funding constrained decision-making about appropriate allocation of staff. Some LAs were neutral on whether staffing would be sufficient in the future because the further development of activities to achieve full participation would also depend on the reaction of young people to their duty to participate under RPA policy.

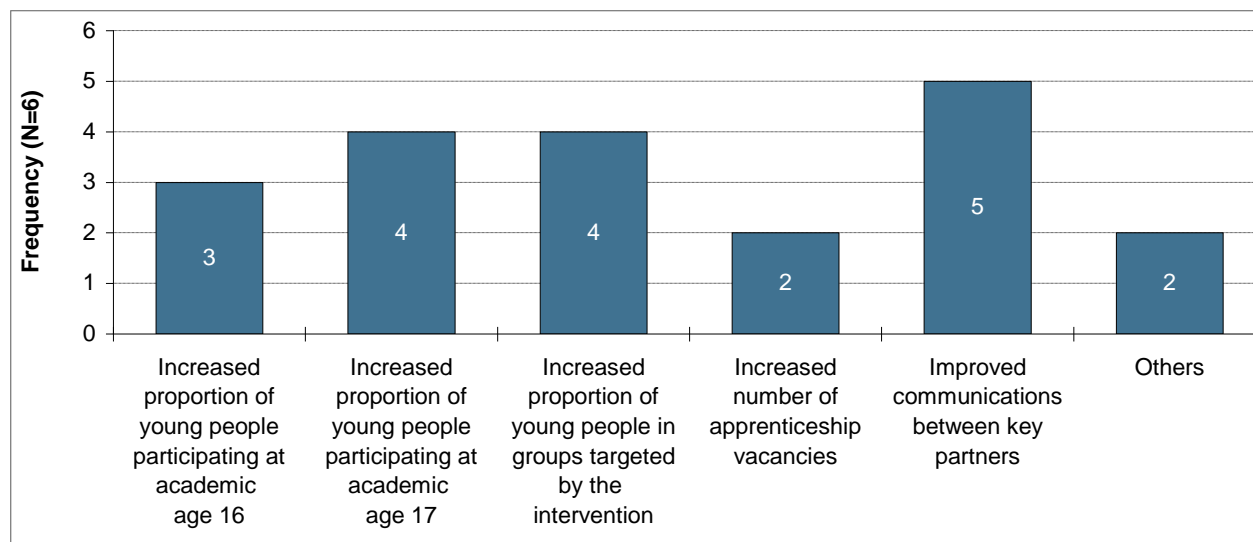
Five of the seven LAs intended to access alternative funding resources to continue work to deliver RPA, with the remaining two undecided upon their future course of action. The most popular alternative funding sources included ESF funding and local area development funds. Some LAs were already co-operating with Youth Contract providers. Concerns were raised about the availability of support open to young people who were ineligible for the Youth Contract.

The respondents from the LAs no longer involved in the projects expressed concerns about future funding, particularly in respect of identifying and supporting the most vulnerable learners. To many, ESF funding was vital to implement specialist provision for these young people. LAs also struggled with funding being dedicated (ring-fenced) to the delivery of particular programmes, when they had already developed a wide range of (equivalent) activities. There were also concerns about the growing complexity within the education and training system, due to the increasing array of programmes and funders and its associated impact on RPA delivery.

Effects and impacts of the LLDPs

Six of the seven LAs noted that the activities they had developed for LLDPs had created some impact. The majority reported improved communications between key partners as the biggest impact, as well as increased proportions of young people at academic age 17 and specific target groups participating in education (see Figure A 7). Other impacts noted included the creation of tools and guidance for example, employer engagement toolkits.

Figure A 7: Impacts of projects and activities developed under LLDP



Source: Online Survey of LA involved in previous funding rounds (2012)

Dissemination and learning

Opinions about the usefulness of the earlier phases of the LLDPs to their own developments varied widely. One LA indicated that the earlier phases were very useful, two LAs each thought they were useful, neither useful or not useful, and not useful. Equally spread were opinions about the transferability of lessons from earlier projects to their own context. Three thought this task was difficult and three thought it was relatively easy. One did not comment on the degree of difficulty.

The main lessons noted by these LAs centred on the development of RONIs and the establishment of strong communication with to local partners, engagement in data analysis, the implementation of tools acquired from other LAs (eg 'managed moves'), the development of individualised learning offers and knowledge about them, as well as the development of building blocks that could be inserted into future policy initiatives, such as early identification and intervention.

All of the LAs were strongly engaged in local, regional and national networks of stakeholders and with other local authorities to share best practice and information. In addition, some of these LAs are now involved in consultancy work for other LAs currently involved in developing strategies and preparing to implement their activities for RPA. Others reported regular sharing of information and best practice with neighbouring LAs, while other LAs still had shared specific activities and toolkits.

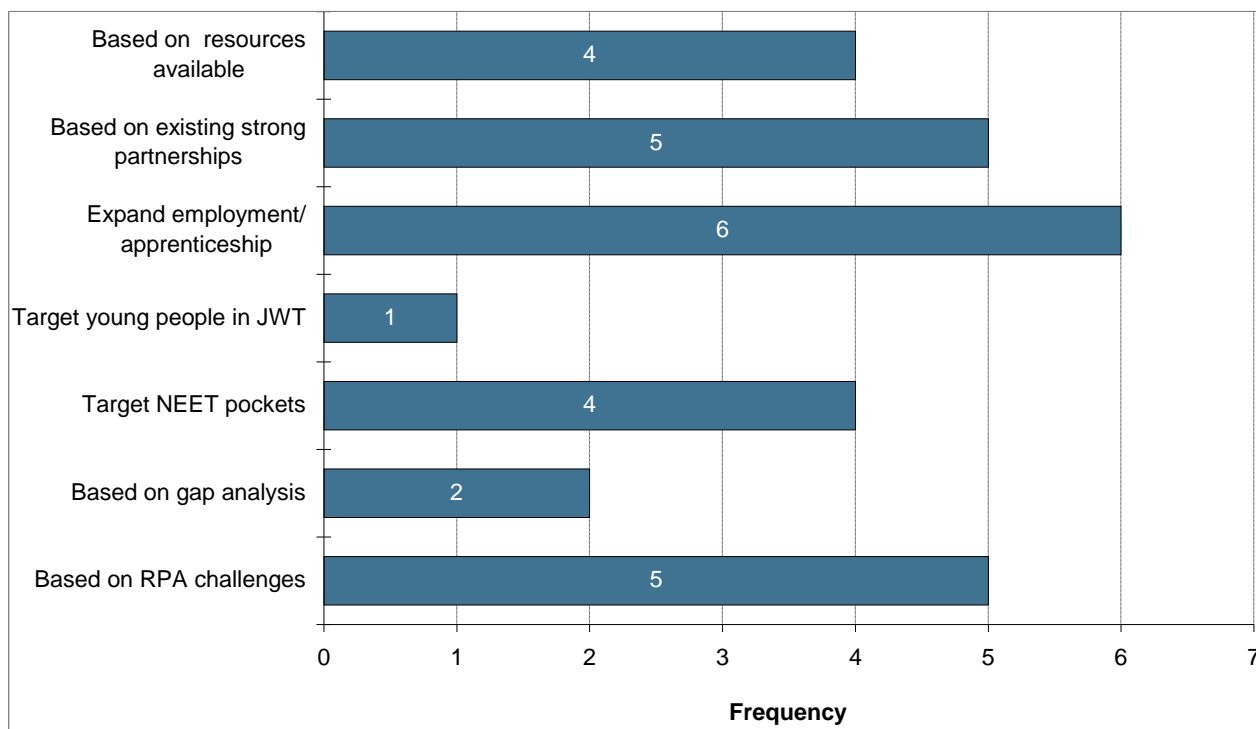
Sustainability

All of the LAs that were no longer part of LLDPs had continued to prepare for RPA and five had continued with the activities and projects they had developed when they were part of projects. The activities and projects the LAs had continued to implement covered a wide range of issues from the development of a RONI, developing tools for tracking and transitions, data analysis, development of activities targeting vulnerable learners, strengthening of networks to the application of toolkits. Additionally, six LAs had started new activities since LLDP funding had

ceased. These centred on improving communications with local employers and engaging them in apprenticeships, continued data analysis to further improve understanding of target groups, development of new curricula and forms of learning and the establishment of new activities for target groups, in partnership with local partners.

In determining their focus for further work and in contrast to the Phase 4 LA, the strongest factors in decision-making were increasing employment with training and apprenticeship places, the challenges faced by the LA to increasing participation and existing partnership arrangements (see Figure A 8).

Figure A 8: Identification mechanisms for identification of new project areas



Source: LA Online Survey (2012)

Each of the seven LAs noted lessons arising from their involvement in the projects. These included:

- the importance of communication, bringing all stakeholders together to ensure their buy in;
- an understanding of the local data, the importance of early identification;
- effective solutions need to be developed that meet the requirements of the local context and interventions cannot simply be transferred from other LAs;
- understanding the various local learning opportunities and determining their suitability for their target groups;
- effective tracking; and
- learning to work within a context of reduced funding was critical.

Annex 4: Comparing LAs new to Phase 4 with those involved in the earlier phases

This short section compares the experiences and views of the LAs which had joined the LLDPs in Phase 4, with those LAs which had been involved in Phase 4 and previous phases and with those who were previously involved in the trials/LLDPs but are no longer.

The 36 respondents included in the Phase 4 survey can be categorised into two groups: 22 LAs that were new to the LLDPs in Phase 4 and 14 LAs that were involved in previous phases. In addition, the survey of the LAs no longer involved in the trials/LLDPs received responses from seven LAs.

Likelihood of achieving full-participation

Those LAs that had joined the LLDPs in Phase 4 were more confident about achieving full participation compared with LAs that had been involved for longer or are no longer involved. Thirteen of the 22 LAs that were new in Phase 4 thought that it was highly likely or likely that they would achieve full participation.

Grouping LAs that were in Phase 4 and also part of previous phases, with those LAs that were no longer involved, 17 respondents thought it was unlikely or highly unlikely that they would achieve full participation and four respondents thought it was likely that they would achieve full participation.

RPA Strategy

All seven of the LAs that responded to the survey of LAs no longer involved, had a strategy for RPA in place. In number, there was little difference between the two groups in the Phase 4 survey: all but three respondents in each group had a strategy in place. However, since those LAs that were new to the Phase 4 LLDPs outnumbered those which were also previously involved, the proportion of LAs new to Phase 4 with a strategy (86 per cent) exceeded the proportion amongst those LAs in Phase 4 which were part of previous phases (80 per cent).

Overall, 70 per cent of the LAs involved in the surveys had a strategy in place, which was slightly higher (by three percentage points) than that which was noted in the related survey of LAs not involved in the LLDPs and undertaken by CAYT²⁹.

Effectiveness of strategy

Slightly more of the LAs that had previous experience of the RPA trials/LLDPs believed that their strategies for achieving higher participation would be effective, than those that did not have previous experience.

²⁹ DfE/CAYT (2012), Raising the Participation Age: a survey of local authorities' preparations for full participation in 2013/2015

Nine respondents new to Phase 4 LLDPs reported their strategy would be effective and one more thought their strategy would be very effective. Respondents that had been involved in the LLDPs in Phase 4 and previous funding rounds seemed to have generated increased confidence about the effectiveness strategy: 75 per cent of this group reported their strategy would be effective compared to 50 per cent of those new to Phase 4 and 57 per cent of those no longer involved.

Table A 9: Confidence in the effectiveness of RPA strategy

		Ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Effective	Very effective	Total
LA involved in earlier phases and Phase 4	N	1	2	9	0	12
	%	8	17	75	0	100
LA new to Phase 4	N	1	7	9	1	18
	%	6	39	50	6	100
LA no longer involved	N	0	3	4	0	7
	%	-	43	57	-	100
Total	N	2	12	22	1	37
	%	5	32	60	3	100

Source: Online surveys of Phase 4 LA and LA no longer involved (2012)

Preparedness for the implementation of RPA

LAs that had been involved previously in RPA (whether they are now or not) were slightly more positive than new participants about their preparedness for RPA implementation. A substantially higher number reported feeling very well prepared, whereas newly involved LAs were more likely to indicate that they could not judge how well prepared their LA was, or reported that it was not well prepared. Among LAs that were no longer involved, an equal number felt well prepared or could not judge the extent of their preparedness.

Table A 10: Extent of preparedness for RPA implementation

		Not well prepared	Neither well nor not well prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Total
LA involved in earlier phases and Phase 4	N	0	1	9	4	14
	%	-	7	64	29	
LA new to Phase 4	N	1	7	12	2	22
	%	5	32	55	9	
LA no longer involved	N	0	3	3	1	7
	%	-	43	43	14	
Total	N	1	11	24	7	43
	%	2	26	56	16	

Source: Online surveys of Phase 4 LA and LA no longer involved (2012)

Effectiveness of preparations

There were no particular differences in the respondents' perception of the effectiveness of their preparations. Broadly equal numbers of experienced and new LAs thought that their preparations were very effective or effective, and similar numbers in each group could not judge whether their preparations would be effective.

Changes in participation rates among 16 year olds and 17 year olds

The effects of the LLDP on enhancing participation rates among 16 and 17 year olds respectively were explored in the survey of Phase 4 LA. LAs involved in Phase 4 LLDPs that had also been involved in the trials/LLDPs in previous phases, tended to be extremely positive that participation rates among 16 year olds would increase. Thirteen out of 14 of these LAs thought the rate of participation among 16 year olds would increase, compared with 16 out of 22 of those LAs that are new in Phase 4.

A slightly higher proportion of the Phase 4 LAs that were also part in earlier phases thought that the participation rate among 17 year olds would increase as a result of their project.

Impact of current and earlier involvement on dissemination and learning

Comparing responses in respect of dissemination and learning by whether LAs had been part of earlier phases of RPA or had joined in Phase 4, suggested some differences. A slightly higher proportion of the LAs new to the LLDPs in Phase 4 found the tools developed in earlier phases useful or very useful, but in each group around 70 per cent that were positive about the tools which suggested they were well configured to support LAs.

Respondents from the earlier phases of trials/LLDPs scored the utility of the earlier phases more highly than Phase 4 LAs. Over 90 per cent of the previously involved LAs found earlier phases useful compared with 57 per cent of Phase 4 respondents. However, it was impossible to say on the basis of the survey data whether this reflected the benefits of leading a project rather than lessons arising from projects led by other LAs.

There was no association between current or earlier involvement in respect of the ease of transfer of best practice since both groups rated ease of transfer at around the same score.

Finally, a higher proportion of the LAs involved in earlier phases were involved in information sharing than those LAs that had joined in Phase 4. It may be that the long-term participants were more engaged and more active in information sharing activities or that LAs new to Phase 4 did not feel ready to share lessons to the same degree since their work was, at the point of the survey, still ongoing.



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