Evaluation of Adult Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships

Pat Irving, Ashfa Slater
ECOTEC Research & Consulting

Evaluation of Adult Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships

Pat Irving, Ashfa Slater
ECOTEC Research & Consulting

CONTENTS

ANNEX A: RESPONSES TO THE CLIENT SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and methodology

Context

In January 1999, the Government announced additional funding of £54 million for 1999 to 2002 to improve local adult information, advice and guidance (IAG) services. IAG services were seen as the next stage in providing support to adults following the establishment of the University for Industry and **learndirect**. The overall aim is to develop a "learning society in which everyone, from whatever background, routinely expects to learn and upgrade their skills throughout life" (Green Paper, *The Learning Age*, Department for Education and Employment, 1998).

There were originally 76 IAG partnerships, but as a result of mergers and demergers there are now 75. Boundary changes have taken place to ensure coterminous boundaries linked to Connexions areas and Learning and Skills Council (LSC) boundaries.

The key national priorities for IAG partnerships were as follows:

Priority 1   Ensure provision of a co-ordinated local network of information, advice and guidance on opportunities in learning and work.

Priority 2   Ensure that all members of the community (with no upper age limit) have access to free information and advice services, giving particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged clients.

Priority 3   Ensure that IAG services meet the relevant quality standards for learning and work.

Priority 4   Work with the LSC to ensure coherence between local IAG services and other related services (basic skills provision, careers/Connexions services for young people, higher education, the Employment Service, **learndirect**, individual learning accounts and career development loans).

Methodology

The research comprised postal and telephone surveys of IAG lead partners, a postal survey of clients and case-study research. Three phases of research were conducted:

- Phase 1 comprised a review of IAG partnerships' business plans, a survey of all partnerships, and case-study research with nine partnerships;
- Phase 2 consisted of a telephone survey with partnerships to ascertain the extent to which they were monitoring their activities with service users, and where possible to secure access to any useful results; and
- Phase 3 comprised case-study research with 10 partnerships, a postal survey of all partnerships, and a postal survey of service users in the case-study areas.

Evaluation aims

The five aims were to:

- evaluate progress made by partnerships in relation to their priorities, and the extent to which they were addressing the particular needs of disadvantaged people in their local area;
- identify examples of effective practice, particularly in raising awareness, ensuring equality of access, identifying and meeting the needs of disadvantaged people, and co-ordination and coherence of local services;
- evaluate whether the IAG programme has encouraged more people to become involved in learning and to improve their prospects in the labour market;
- evaluate the extent to which the IAG programme has been widening participation in learning; and
- assess the extent to which clients require more in-depth support, in addition to information and advice, to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Key findings

Partnership structures

IAG partnerships continued to evolve throughout the first three years of operation, though management structures such as steering and management groups generally remained unchanged. Partnerships' varying scale of activity and membership influenced the management structures put in place.

By understanding clients' needs and using this information to develop coherent priorities, partnerships identified that they had put in place the necessary structures to provide flexible, responsive information and advice services for their identified client groups.

Partners were drawn from a range of sectors, and included traditional public-sector and education providers. Partnerships worked hard to widen their profile of partners by involving voluntary and community organisations, private-sector organisations and employers, particularly as associate partners.

Partnership development and capacity building

Partners were particularly satisfied that being part of IAG partnerships meant benefiting from development activities focused on capacity building and ensuring quality. Capacity building was evident at two levels: organisational and for individual staff. For organisations, capacity-building support frequently assisted them to work towards National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. For individual practitioners, support provided access to partnership-wide training opportunities. Quality assurance remained a high priority for partnerships, with considerable resources allocated to achieving these standards. In some cases, however, the appropriateness of the National Quality Standards for all partners was questioned and alternative standards were put in place.

Partnerships' priorities

Partnerships' priorities included strategic priorities concerning provision and delivery of services, and local priorities relating to client groups and the nature of the services provided. The second round of case-study visits found that partnership activities were focused on service delivery, alongside network expansion and/or consolidation, updating their understanding of clients' needs, and improving provision and resources.

Initially, network development and capacity building were scheduled as 'timebound' activities to be completed by the end of March 2000. In practice, network development activities continued as partnerships expanded and developed.

Monitoring

Partnerships collected two types of monitoring information:

- information about their progress relative to their priorities; and
- information about clients.

Partnerships were required to provide quarterly monitoring reports to the Department for Education and Skills. These reports outlined progress relative to the four key national priorities.

Where partnerships collected monitoring information about clients, this tended to focus on client groups' characteristics and clients' perceptions of service delivery. Little data was collected on clients' actions following the information and/or advice intervention. In some cases, partners collected data on clients' progression and how support helped them, but there was no attempt to collate this information at partnership level. Many partnerships only really started to monitor clients from April 2001.

Coherence

As partnerships' funding was additional to existing IAG money, coherence with organisations delivering these services though other funding streams was paramount. Partnerships identified a high degree of external coherence, particularly with other careers and adult guidance provision. Funding proved to be a key element in coherence, in that many partnerships were unable to disaggregate the impact of IAG funding from other funding sources. However, those partnerships with European or Single Regeneration Budget funding tended to put in place better monitoring systems, even if IAG could not be disaggregated.

Widening participation

When asked about whether they had helped clients from excluded groups into education or training opportunities, there were key differences in how partnerships responded:

- almost half neither agreed or disagreed with the statement that "there has been no change in the number of disadvantaged people taking up learning opportunities";

- around two-thirds identified that they had encouraged people with disabilities to become involved in learning opportunities; and
- more than four-fifths said that the range of clients participating in learning had widened.

The majority of partnership co-ordinators also identified that IAG support had helped clients to move towards their goals, including moving into education, training or employment. This suggested that partnerships understood that they were helping people into outcomes, though they did not necessarily know whether these clients were from excluded groups.

Clients' perspective on IAG support

The client survey, despite its limitations, showed that clients' main reasons for seeking information and advice were to find out about education and training opportunities, job opportunities and how to go about getting back into work. Most respondents were satisfied with the service they had received. Adviser intervention appeared to play a key role in client satisfaction.

The survey also showed that the majority of clients acted on the support they received in very practical ways. Actions varied from simply reading the information they were given, to enrolling on/completing education or training courses, or attending interview and/or getting a job, or changing jobs. More than a fifth of the respondents had entered employment or changed jobs since receiving IAG support, and more than a quarter had enrolled on an education or training course. A small proportion (7%) had secured qualifications.

The small proportion of clients who were dissatisfied with the service they had received identified that the level of support available to them was inadequate. They wanted more in-depth support than was made available.

Research recommendations

The key recommendation concerns monitoring and data-collection requirements. The paucity of information available at partnership level means that there is only limited evidence to demonstrate the role of information and advice services in helping clients to move into education, training or employment.

For IAG services to continue, there is a real need for evidence to construct a case to demonstrate the value of such services. The approach to data collection needs to be consistent across partnerships so that a complete picture of provision can be built at national level.

1.0 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) partnerships became operational in the 1999-2000 financial year. This study, conducted by ECOTEC Research & Consulting, was commissioned by the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to evaluate the progress and impact of these partnerships. The DfEE is now known as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

This section of the report outlines the research aims, objectives and methodology and outlines the structure of the remainder of the report.

1.2 Research aims

The aims of the study are to:

- evaluate progress made by IAG partnerships on the key priorities identified by the Department for 2000-1 and the extent to which partnerships are addressing the particular needs of disadvantaged people in their local area by ensuring:

  - provision of a co-ordinated local advice and guidance network in learning and work opportunities,
  - that all community members have access to free of charge information and advice,
  - that all IAG services meet the relevant quality standards, and
  - coherence between local IAG services and other related existing services;

- identify examples of effective practice, particularly in raising awareness of the services, ensuring equality of access, identifying and meeting the specific needs of disadvantaged people, and co-ordinating coherent local services;
- evaluate whether the IAG programme is encouraging more people to become involved in learning and to improve their prospects in the labour market;
- evaluate the extent to which the IAG programme is widening participation in learning, in particular whether it is encouraging socially disadvantaged people and people with disabilities to become involved in learning; and
- assess the extent to which clients require more in-depth support, in addition to information and advice, to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

1.3 Research methodology

The research was conducted in three stages.

Phase one (February – April 2001)

The first phase comprised the following three key elements:
1. A review of IAG partnerships' 2000-1 business plans;

2. An e-mail survey of all IAG partnerships;
3. Case-study research with nine IAG partnerships.

The review of the IAG partnerships' business plans took place at the same time as development of the questionnaire and topic guides for the survey and the case-study research. A total of 48 business plans were reviewed. The review showed that there was considerable variation in the quality and consistency of the information provided to the DfEE.

The survey concentrated on the following issues:

- a profile of the partnership in terms of the numbers and types of organisations involved;
- information on the partnership arrangements;
- information on IAG clients and the monitoring data collected by a partnership about its clients;
- links with other services such as Connexions, adult guidance provision, basic skills provision, the Employment Service (ES) and **learndirect;**
- quality assurance and standards; and
- the IAG partnership's impact.

Completed questionnaires were received from 51 IAG partnerships.

The case-study research involved a series of interviews with IAG partnership co-ordinators, partner organisations and advice workers. The DfEE selected the nine case-study areas in consultation with the research team. In selecting the case studies, the following criteria were considered:

- socio-economic context; and
- geographical factors (population and urban/rural split).

The case studies provided the opportunity to explore in detail different aspects of partnership working with both the lead partner and partner organisations. To ensure consistency with the survey, the following issues were discussed with consultees:

- how the partnership was formed and the procedures for partnership working;
- partnership priorities;
- organisations' roles within the partnership;
- communication;
- changes in the partnership;
- the effectiveness of the partnership;
- targeting clients and identifying priority groups;
- quality assurance;
- coherence, both within the partnership and with other IAG services;
- impacts and outputs; and
- achievements and added value.

Phase two – interim telephone survey (July – August 2001)

The interim telephone survey was conducted in summer 2001 to ascertain the extent to which IAG partnerships were monitoring their activities with service users and to gain access to any useful results. Telephone interviews were conducted with 52 partnerships. The information that the telephone survey sought to establish is outlined below.

1. Whether coherent, consistent data existed at partnership level, identifying the numbers of service users, their key characteristics, the services they had received, and actions following information and advice from partner organisations. The survey asked about the following:

   - if data was collected, whether it was collected/collated before the 2001-2 operating year. If so, what data was collected, for whom (funding agencies), why it was collected, and whether the partnership had to alter/change data collection methods;
   - what data was collected, whether it was collected/collated for the whole partnership and if so, the methods used;
   - which organisations collected the data (in order to ascertain whether all partners collected some data or whether only those giving advice collected data – this sought to identify whether unmediated information providers were required to collect data about their clients);
   - the frequency of data collection/collation; and
   - the time period over which data was collected (including data collection pre/post April 2001).

2. Client satisfaction with the service received – to ascertain whether IAG partnerships collected client feedback data as suggested in the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. Partnerships were asked about:

   - the methods used to secure client follow-up data;
   - the questions asked of clients;
   - whether all partners were required to collect data on service satisfaction, or whether collection of this type of data was co-ordinated centrally by the IAG partnership;
   - whether the data collated generated service satisfaction for the partnership as a whole; where this was the case, how data was fed back to partners;
   - the time of client satisfaction feedback (at point of intervention or later); and
   - frequency of data collection (and the time period for which data was available).

3. Client destinations – to establish the data collected by partnerships about clients' actions following IAG intervention. Partnerships were asked:

   - whether IAG partners recorded suggested referral destinations for clients;
   - if data was gathered, what data was collected;
   - the methods used for data collection;
   - whether outcome/destination data for priority groups was gathered and if so, what data was collected;

- whether mechanisms were in place with education and training providers to feed back enrolment or starts data to IAG providers/the partnership co-ordinator; and
- whether clients were encouraged to notify IAG providers to let them know what actions they have taken.

4. Contextual information – factors influencing partnerships' rationale for the collection of monitoring data on client characteristics, throughput and outputs.

Phase three (September 2001 – January 2002)

The final phase of the study comprised five elements.

1. A postal survey of all IAG partnerships, to which 51 partnership responses were received. This survey focused on the following issues:

   - a profile of the partnership in terms of the numbers and types of organisations involved;
   - the partnership's methods for monitoring quality assurance and Guidance Council quality standards;
   - impact of the IAG partnership;
   - the role of IAG funding in the partnership;
   - information about IAG clients and the monitoring information collected by the partnership about its clients;
   - links with other services such as Connexions, adult guidance provision, basic skills provision, the Employment Service and **learndirect**; and
   - factors influencing IAG partnership performance and the partnership's key achievements.

2. Case-study research with IAG partnerships. The DfES and the research team used information gained as a result of the interim telephone survey to inform selection of the partnerships to be visited in the final stage of the evaluation. The case-study research included a series of interviews with IAG partnership co-ordinators and partner organisations in 10 case-study areas. Interviews focused on:

   - the impact of the partnership's/partners' provision on widening the participation of service users;
   - the impact of the partnership on clients' progression into learning and work;
   - changes to the partnership's priorities, membership and management; roles and relations within the partnership; and communication;
   - quality assurance;
   - partnership coherence;
   - good practice; and
   - achievements and added value.

3. A review of the case-study partnerships' 2001-2 business plans to inform the case-study fieldwork

4. A review of the case-study partnerships' Quarter 1 management information (MI) returns to inform the case-study fieldwork

5. A postal survey with service users from the case-study partnership areas, to which a total of 190 responses were received. This survey sought to identify the impact of IAG partnerships and their provision on users of advice services. It focused on the following:

- clients' reasons for seeking advice and information, and how clients found out about the services they visited;
- the nature of the IAG support received by clients and the helpfulness of this support;
- clients' actions following support, whether clients acted upon support received and/or returned to the IAG service, clients' need for guidance provision; and
- clients' progression into learning and work following IAG provision.

1.4   Report structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines updates to the policy and operational context since the production of the interim report;
- Section 3 looks at IAG partnership structures;
- Section 4 assesses the level of impact that IAG partnerships have had on coherence, bidding for external funds and partnership performance;
- Section 5 shows the level of impact that partnerships or individual partners have had on their service users; and
- Initial conclusions and recommendations are outlined in Section 6.

Annex A outlines the responses to the client survey.

2.0 POLICY AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the policy and operational context within which the IAG partnerships have been implemented and have been operating.

2.2 Policies concerning the provision of information, advice and guidance

Historical context

Through the 1990s, there were a number of policies and initiatives relating to the provision of IAG services to adults. In the early 1990s, responsibility for IAG lay with local education authorities (LEAs). By 1997, all careers services had been privatised and contracted directly with the former DfEE. In turn, this privatisation resulted in a number of careers services being run by Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)/LEA partnerships.

Current national policies

Information, advice and guidance partnerships

The Government's overall aim in launching IAG partnerships in January 1999 was to ensure that free local information and advice services of consistent quality were available to all adults across England. The new service was built on existing provision with which local people were already familiar. In the interests of customers, the service was to comply with relevant quality standards, but no uniform model was imposed.

The key national priorities for IAG partnerships, which have been similar in each operational year, are outlined below:

Priority 1   To ensure provision of a co-ordinated local network of information, advice and guidance on opportunities in learning and work.

Priority 2   To ensure that all members of the community (with no upper age limit) have access to information and advice services, which are available free of charge, with particular attention given to the needs of disadvantaged clients.

Priority 3   To ensure information, advice and guidance services meet the relevant quality standards for learning and work.

Priority 4   To work with the LSC to ensure coherence between local information, advice and guidance services and other related services (Basic Skills Provision, Careers/Connexions services to young people, Higher Education, Employment Service, **learndirect**, individual learning accounts and career development loans).

Guidance pilots

In autumn 2001, the Government commissioned 20 adult guidance pilots from providers of IAG services which have been accredited by the Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB) against the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. These pilots will operate for a maximum of 15 months. The pilots' main purpose is to help disadvantaged people to overcome their barriers into learning and work, and to provide what clients need, measure the likely take-up, and assess the cost of providing such a service. The pilot scheme aims to:

- explore the potential added value of offering in-depth guidance in ways which complement the existing information and advice services offered through IAG partnerships;
- ensure that people have access to services in a variety of settings suited to their needs; and
- explore models to develop a seamless IAG service for disadvantaged people.

Links between IAG partnerships and complementary developments

learndirect

In its Green Paper 'The Learning Age', the Government set out its vision of "a learning society in which everyone, from whatever background, routinely expects to learn and upgrade their skills throughout life" (DfEE, 1998). As part of fulfilling this vision, the Government's University for Industry initiative created **learndirect,** a national telephone helpline to provide information and advice to potential adult learners. The service provides access to a national database of learning opportunities (for fun or work), and advice on accessing information relevant to their enquiry and needs. IAG partnerships need to specify the methods they have put in place to ensure coherence between services provided by their partnership members and **learndirect.** There is a national protocol between **learndirect** and IAG partnerships which is designed to promote coherence and a seamless service for clients.

Connexions

The Connexions service, introduced in April 2001, provides a co-ordinated range of support services for young people aged 13-19, including information, advice and guidance about learning and work. The service consists of locally developed Connexions partnerships which include a range of organisations and services that provide support for young people. In order to ensure coherence between Connexions and IAG for adults, Connexions partnerships need to work with their local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). LSCs replaced Training and Enterprise Councils in April 2001 and are responsible for securing local IAG provision for adults on learning and work. Connexions partnerships should also be represented as members of IAG partnerships, as recommended in the Specification for IAG partnerships, 2001-2002 issued jointly by the National Learning and Skills Council and the (former) Department for Education and Employment.

Ad hoc funding for adults through the European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget

Funding is available to finance the provision of information and advice services. IAG partnerships are able to access funding for free guidance provision through sources such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and European Social Fund (ESF). These funding streams are designed to assist disadvantaged groups in society, and provision funded in this manner must only be made available to individuals who meet the necessary funding requirements. Some providers can thus secure funding through these sources to ensure the availability of free guidance provision for disadvantaged service users. However, other service users remain in the position of having to pay for more in-depth support.

2.3   *Understanding information, advice and guidance*

Changes to National Quality Standards for Learning and Work

The quality assurance of services has been a key feature of IAG partnerships in ensuring that provision meets standards accredited by the Guidance Accreditation Board. These quality standards have recently been revised to make them simpler, more dynamic, flexible and user-friendly without any loss of rigour. This follows a statement in October 2001 from the Minister for Adult Skills declaring the intention to establish a set of quality standards that are outcome based and even more relevant to all types of delivery organisations. The Government intends the quality standards to be at the heart of its drive for continuous improvement in IAG services. The new **matrix** standard[1], formally launched in February 2002, will be available from April 2002.

Key players in IAG

Qualified professionals have traditionally provided IAG services through mainstream agencies such as careers services, the ES and the (FE) sector. The voluntary and community sector has also provided a range of careers information and advice services to adults, often targeted at specific client groups such as ex-offenders, ethnic minorities and single parents. This provision has often been fragmented and localised, with services being dependent on a variety of funding streams. IAG partnerships are trying to overcome these problems by actively developing more links with the voluntary and community sector.

Mainstream providers have long acknowledged the strengths of voluntary and community sector provision in terms of accessing particular hard-to-reach client groups. However, concerns have been raised about the difficulty which some voluntary and community providers might face in meeting the quality standards outlined in the specification for IAG partnerships.

The value of voluntary and community provision is the traditional focus on client-centred and more innovative delivery styles. These have resulted in a move by the voluntary and community sector to incorporate IAG delivery as one part of a comprehensive package of support for clients

---

[1] The new matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance services is a fundamental revision of the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. They are designed to be more flexible and relevant to a range of sectors and settings.

to assist them in entering the labour market. This integrated approach includes IAG services, vocational training, personal development training (in areas such as confidence building and personal appearance) and preparation for the labour market (e.g. mock job interviews and CV preparation).

3.0 PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of IAG partnership structures at local level. It is informed by analysis of the three full partnership surveys, and case studies. The following issues are explored:

- partnership development and capacity building;
- partnership administration and communication; and
- service delivery.

The section concludes with a summary of key findings.

3.2 Partnership development and capacity building

It was originally intended that by March 2000, partnerships would have completed the following development activities:

- background research to understand the nature of 'need' within their area, and development work to plan and target services accordingly;
- capacity building at partnership level by bringing local partners together in a network;
- capacity building at partner level through training provision to ensure that staff were appropriately qualified;
- allowing partnerships to improve the quality of service delivery and work towards Guidance Council quality standards; and
- developing and delivering services.

Guidance issued to partnerships for the 2001-2 operating year strongly emphasised a shift towards service delivery. The guidance required partnerships to allocate at least 60% of their IAG resources to direct service delivery. In practice, partnership development and capacity building have continued throughout the three-year period that partnerships have been operational. This sub-section explores progress made and issues faced.

IAG partnership priorities

Partnerships have detailed priorities at two levels:

- strategic priorities concerning provision and delivery of local IAG services; and
- local priorities relating to client groups and the nature of the services they require.

In general, partnerships' priorities have corresponded with DfES strategic priorities for the overall development and delivery of information and advice services. However, the first round of case-study research and early partnership survey demonstrated that partnerships have used different means to identify local priorities. Approaches have ranged from the lead partner and a management group identifying priorities, to all partnership members contributing to the process.

Partners involved in the process were positive about the opportunity to contribute to identifying priorities, as it gave them more focus in addressing local needs. One second-round case-study partnership has conducted annual needs analyses to identify relevant priorities.

Partnerships have identified a range of additional local priorities relating to client groups and the nature of services required. They have embraced the need to develop and expand to include voluntary and community bodies, assure quality in response to identified clients' needs, and improve the marketing and promotion of their IAG services to target client groups. At the time of the second round of case-study research, partnerships had a strong emphasis on priorities for network expansion and/or consolidation, updating their understanding of clients' needs, and improving provision and resources. Service delivery was also now evident as a priority, particularly establishing outreach services.

The second round of case-study research revealed some evidence of changes in strategic priorities. Where this was acknowledged, external factors had brought about this change, including:

- partnership priorities being altered to reflect the priorities set by local learning partnerships;
- boundary changes to ensure consistency with Connexions partnerships and/or LSC boundaries; and
- issues concerning payment of VAT on deliverables. Confusion over whether partnerships would have to pay VAT as part of new LSC rulings resulted in partnerships freezing or altering development activities while the issues were resolved and confirmation received that IAG partnerships are still exempt from VAT.

The partnership survey (summer 2001) and the second round of case-study research identified relatively little change in the type of priority client groups. The types of client groups partnerships are working with are illustrated in Table 3.1. In the second-round case studies, partnerships were working with very similar priority groups as those in the earlier survey. However, several partnerships reported a change in the number of priority groups. Some had expanded the number of groups, although others were concentrating on a smaller range of clients. Factors influencing change in the number of groups included boundary changes, as indicated above, and new groups being included at the request of the DfES (for further information, see Section 5).

Table 3.1: Partnership priority client groups

Priority client group	Nos. recording them as a priority	% all respondents	Instances where client group is a high priority	% all respondents
Learning difficulties	31	58.5	4	7.5
Disabilities	34	64.2	7	13.2
Basic Skills	46	86.8	26	49.1
Low/outdated skills	38	71.7	13	24.5
Areas of high unemployment	41	77.4	25	47.2
Unemployed	41	77.4	10	18.9
English Language needs	27	50.9	5	9.4
Rural areas	32	60.4	18	34.0
Older clients	28	52.8	2	3.8
Labour market returners	33	62.3	6	11.3
Offenders	23	43.4	5	9.4
Other	2	3.8	9	17.0

N=53

Partnerships have taken a systematic approach to identifying and addressing clients' needs. All of the second-round case-study partnerships reported conducting some form of research or needs analysis to identify relevant priorities, based on clients' needs. This information has allowed partnerships to develop ways to address identified needs. One has addressed need on a geographical basis through funding key projects in each borough; others have taken a more flexible approach through developing outreach services. In general, the strategy has been to expand the network of provision, based on the specific needs of the partnership area.

Partnership structures and changes within partnerships

Originally, there were 76 IAG partnerships, but as a result of mergers there are now 75. The merger of a number of smaller partnerships has led to the formation of four larger ones. Twelve other partnerships have changed their structures as a result of mergers, in line with new LSC boundaries introduced in April 2001. Currently, in 34 areas IAG partnerships correspond one for one with the local LSC area.

The earlier partnership survey and the first round of the case-study research explored IAG partnerships' early stages of development. Partnerships tended to develop in one of two ways: through the evolution of an existing network, or by introducing a new partnership in response to the DfES brief. Interviewees regarded the partnership as a natural progression for work in the IAG area; many members of existing networks recognised the opportunity for a strategic approach to capacity building and quality assurance. Where partnerships evolved from existing networks delivering IAG, the research identified concerns about the exclusivity of the core group of GAB accredited members and the difference in status of associate partners.

A number of first-round case-study partnerships developed through widening membership to include non-traditional IAG providers. New partners included voluntary/community organisations, employers, libraries, trade unions, and other statutory services such as probation services. Partnerships viewed their involvement as necessary for IAG service delivery to represent client groups accurately. This step was generally viewed positively, although potential issues were identified. These included capacity and resource constraints that limit the extent to which such organisations are able to contribute actively to partnership activities.

Membership can be at full, associate and, in one partnership, affiliate level. Partners need to fulfil different criteria to secure full or associate membership. Roles and responsibilities in the various membership categories differ according to partners' level of commitment. In the majority of cases, full membership involves a commitment to achieve (or achievement of) the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. The first-round case-study research identified some variation in the criteria adopted to allow organisations to become associate members. In some cases, organisations commit to achieving the National Standards for Learning and Work within a longer timescale (such as one year later than full members). In others, organisations offering signposting and referral services are included as associate members, even though they do not deliver information and advice. The partnership with affiliate membership requires a commitment from partners to achieve the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work in the future.

Partnerships' members come from organisations in a range of sectors, including statutory and voluntary organisations. Table 3.2 shows the profile of members from the start of the initiative and again in January 2001 among those partnerships responding to the initial partnership survey.

Table 3.2: Profile of members of IAG partnerships

	Full members		Associate members	
Sectors	**Start**	**Jan '01**	**Start**	**Jan '01**
Total no.	**372**	**1,096**	**404**	**1,207**
Further Education	30.6%	24.1%	12.9%	5.2%
Higher Education	7.8%	5.7%	1.5%	2.3%
Careers	11.8%	6.6%	1.7%	0.6%
Connexions	0	0.4%	0	0.2%
Employment Service	7.3%	9.6%	4.5%	3.6%
Local Authority	18.8%	18.2%	27.7%	24.0%
Voluntary/community	20.7%	29.3%	39.4%	52.2%
Ufi	0	1.2%	0.5%	1.7%
Employer	0	0.6%	0.7%	1.5%
Private sector	3%	4.3%	11.1%	8.7%

All partnerships have endeavoured to involve more partners from a wider range of sectors that are not traditionally involved in the delivery of information, advice and guidance about careers and learning opportunities. These include voluntary and community organisations, employers, libraries, trade unions and the Probation Service. In absolute terms there has been growth in the numbers of members by sector across all sectors for both full and associate partners. In percentage terms however, the profiles for full and associate members have changed somewhat, particularly in relation to the relative importance of the voluntary and community sector. Private-sector providers accounted for a noteworthy proportion of associate members. In absolute terms this represents:

- 11 private sector providers as full members when the partnerships started and 47 by January 2001
- 45 private sector providers as associate members when the partnerships started and 105 by January 2001.

The number of members varies among partnerships. One small case-study partnership reported only nine member organisations; one medium-sized partnership had 16 full members and 29 associates; and one larger partnership reported 49 full members and 41 associates. Other partnerships reported an on-going focus on increasing membership. The partnership survey showed an on-going effort to increase the number of members with GAB accreditation; 39 partnerships reported a total of 207 members accredited since April 2001.

The partnership's size, in terms of area and membership, plays a role in determining how it is managed, although key structures exist across the partnerships. Steering groups and management groups (including task-specific groups) are commonplace. Among larger partnerships, strategy and management tend to be addressed separately from practitioner or operational issues. In one large case-study partnership, the management structure had to be reformulated because of membership growth and the deployment of peripatetic advice workers. The partnership was managed by a co-ordinator and administrator, but wanted to improve short and long-term strategic planning. It now has a strategy group for long-term strategy formulation, a steering group for short-term planning, and an IAG network forum. A number of smaller second-round case-study partnerships reported some difficulties in undertaking development work such as marketing because of lack of administrative or other support available from partners.

Some changes in partnership structure were seen in the second-round case-study research. Of the 10 partnerships visited, four had seen a change in structure as a result of mergers in line with new LSC boundaries. In two of these, one area was added or lost; in the partnership where an area was added, the number of IAG sites increased from 120 to 300, requiring significant management and administrative changes. In the third partnership, three former partnerships merged to form a single partnership. In the fourth, a lead organisation operates in the four autonomous partnerships and maintains links between them, facilitating regular meetings between the four partnership co-ordinators.

Partnership capacity building

Capacity building takes places at two levels:

- organisational – whereby partner organisations are supported to secure or work towards the achievement of GAB accreditation; and
- individual staff – training for staff from partner organisations (e.g. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in advice and guidance, and non-accredited training in aspects of service delivery such as widening access to provision for priority client groups or bidding for funding).

Partnerships have implemented strategies to support organisations in securing or working towards accreditation against the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. In both phases of the case-study research, partnerships reported providing financial support for smaller voluntary/community organisations to undertake continuous quality improvement. However, in some cases partnerships reported supporting other smaller organisations even though such expenditure was not allowed within the specification of services.[2]

Partnerships have also provided the necessary information concerning accreditation against the National Quality Standards, in the form of written materials or resources, or specific training/workshop sessions delivered to partners' staff. In addition to covering the accreditation requirements, one second-round case-study partnership has covered topics such as identifying and meeting the needs of various priority groups, personal safety and project management.

Good practice:

In one first-round case-study partnership area, the FE colleges formed a sub-group to look at developing the National Quality Standards for the colleges. The partnership spoke very positively of this process, and added that it has had the unexpected bonus of founding a new network for local colleges, encouraging the sharing of best practice.

Training individual staff has been another method of capacity building, most notably for staff to achieve NVQ level 3 in advice and guidance. Feedback concerning the NVQ, however, has proved less positive than that for accreditation support. Partners had mixed views on the NVQ's appropriateness for frontline staff offering signposting and advice. In one case-study area, an Open College Network-accredited course in information and advice services has been introduced as an alternative. This course has generated wide interest, and has been bought by other IAG partnerships.

---

[2] Annex 6 to both the 2000-01 and 2001-02 guidance to partnerships states that IAG funding must not be used for National Quality Standards accreditation/application fees (except for smaller providers in the voluntary and community sectors).

Continuous service improvement for organisations that have achieved GAB accreditation remains a priority for most partnerships. Comprehensive training programmes and network meetings are the most common methods used. Additional methods include workshops to demonstrate the benefits of following the National Quality Standards, audits of client feedback, and quality focus groups.

Networking and referrals

Networking arrangements are highly developed and embedded in the majority of case-study partnerships. Networking events include open days, partnership conferences, regular meetings, workshops and training. Several second-round case-study partnerships have also implemented infrastructure such as network directories updated annually.

Interviewees in the initial case-study research stated that the regular network meetings, often without a specific focus, were an ineffective use of time. The second phase identified different views, however. Interviewees reported that networking and sharing good practice at meetings and training events was a valuable way to learn about other services in the partnership area. This was especially true for smaller voluntary and community organisations. They believed that awareness of their services had increased among mainstream partners through attendance at network meetings.

As a result of networking, coherence of local provision was generally reported as being good. One second-round case-study partnership has formalised strategies for achieving coherence with local IAG through the partnership's delivery plan. Others have achieved external coherence through staff's relationships and previous employment experience. One partnership has good contact with the ES, basic skills provision and Connexions because current IAG workers previously worked in these sectors. Consequently, the staff have good knowledge of the services available across the partnership.

The case study partnerships reported that they have referral policies and most of them identified that simple referral systems had been put in place to facilitate referral between partners. Some of the case study partnerships have also developed systems to monitor and evaluate referrals. Some referral systems are more formalised; one partnership requires network partners to sign up to a referral policy incorporating a code of practice. Another's policy works on the principle that referrals should be based on current, accurate knowledge of partners, with reference to clients' needs and their full understanding and agreement. Where this happened, a partnership directory helped partners select appropriate referral destinations. In practice, some partnerships were mindful that partners did not always follow the referral procedures, but that monitoring was helping to address this issue.

Various methods are used for the practical aspects of referral. One case-study partnership has adopted a 'cheque-book' approach in which the numbered forms are attached to a corresponding stub. The referring partner completes both parts and the stub is forwarded to the lead partner. Evidence of the effectiveness of this process is not yet available. Another partnership has a similar method using triplicate copies. The lead partner completes a quarterly report for each

partnership organisation, showing referrals to and from the organisation, and a partnership-level report with similar information.

In both case-study rounds, partners demonstrating good awareness of the referral processes attributed this to user-friendly partnership directories. Interviewees also stated that referral systems worked best when they had met staff from the organisations to which they were referring clients.

Marketing

The relative importance of marketing varied across the partnerships interviewed. Whereas half of first-round case-study partnerships had implemented a marketing strategy, all of the second round partnerships had implemented or developed some sort of strategy. Clients were the main focus for marketing activities, although there was some evidence to show that partnerships were starting to widen the marketing focus to include intermediaries and learning providers in their plans to reach their target client groups.
Partnerships have employed various methods to develop a coherent, targeted marketing strategy, including the following:

Active approaches

- partnership marketing sub-group;
- network co-ordinator with marketing responsibilities; and
- commissioning an external marketing consultant.

Passive approaches

- standard agenda item on steering-group or network meetings; and
- written marketing plan.

In one partnership, the lead partner wanted to establish a marketing sub-group, but the partner organisations did not want the time commitment of this. The lead partner still wanted marketing to be informed and developed by partnership members, and addressed this by having marketing as a regular agenda item for the operational group. This approach has worked well.

Other marketing approaches include the following:

- directory distributed to all network members;
- posters;
- business cards;
- newsletters;
- local media;
- network publicity leaflets;
- marketing carried out where possible on the back of high-profile national or local campaigns (e.g. adult learners week);
- attendance at local events;

- websites; and
- close links with PR companies and media.

Some second-round case-study partnerships have used local market and consumer research to inform marketing strategies. One has developed different marketing strategies for different target groups; another is developing a marketing information system to track customers' use of the service and develop a customer database.

Only three first-round case-study partnerships had adopted a brand name to give the partnership an identity. However, among the second-round case studies the number had risen to six. The common reason for adopting a brand name was to gain recognition within the community for the partnership's IAG services. Of the partnerships with their own brand name, some had inherited it from previous projects. Others have developed entirely new brands, in some cases by hiring professional help.

Some partnerships have not concentrated on establishing a high local profile, and put off developing their own brand because of awaiting government plans for national branding. One partnership reported preferring to concentrate on communicating the services offered. However, several second-round case-study partnerships are now developing their own brand due to delays at national level.

Some partnerships with their own branding see it as a key way to establish and raise the partnership's profile. Branding is used to advertise services in the local press and in publicity materials. Partnerships also use branding to advertise service outlets, for instance using signage in libraries or stickers on partners' windows and doors. A recognisable brand name and image also contributes to bringing partners together across a diverse geographical area. However, interviewees' opinions on partnership identity and promotional material appeared to be split. Some regarded this material as a waste of valuable resources and the name to have little meaning to potential users, while others thought the materials were helpful.

Two early case-study partnerships suggested that providers are wary of marketing, as it may promote a demand that cannot be met. However, there is little evidence from the second-round case studies that this is a consideration. Their approach is to use marketing to stimulate demand for services, then develop the services accordingly. One partnership, however, indicated a conflict between the need to meet existing demand and pressures from the LSC to concentrate on developing services, particularly outreach activity.

The consensus from second-round case-study partnerships was that marketing aimed at raising awareness of IAG services has been successful, and demand has consequently increased. Partners indicated that they are largely working at full capacity as a result. When probed about what actions would be taken when demand increased above available capacity, only two partnerships gave responses. These included no longer trying to attract additional interest in IAG services, and limiting the amount of time spent with each client.

Ensuring quality

Developing quality systems has been a key feature of IAG activities to date. In many cases this process has taken longer and demanded a higher level of support than planned. Some interviewees felt that the National Quality Standards did not complement existing (HE and FE) quality systems and that the work involved outweighed the benefits. Where achievement of NVQ3 was identified as inappropriate – for example because of time commitments within pressed services – steps were taken to identify an 'interim' solution. Two case-study partnerships developed modular courses, accredited by the Open College Network (OCN), which could count towards NVQ3 at a later date. The second round case studies showed that the development work with OCN has led to at least two other partnerships implementing this qualification for signposting and advice staff.

3.3   Partnership administration and communication

The lead partner's roles

In most partnerships, the lead partner is responsible for operational delivery and contract management. The lead partner is usually the IAG contract holder and is accountable to the steering/management group. The lead partner is also responsible for reporting to the LSC on progress towards meeting business plan objectives.

The majority of partnerships have a single central co-ordinator, though lead partners in larger partnerships tend to employ a central partnership co-ordination team. A number of partnerships have devolved management structures because of their geographical size. Three round-two case-study partnerships operate in this way. The first has three co-ordinators for each of the former partnership areas; they report to the overall lead co-ordinator. The second uses four task groups which work on different aspects of the partnership. The third (four partnerships operating autonomously but with similar systems) has an overall co-ordinator who attends meetings in each partnership area, but does not co-ordinate the partnerships.

The lead partner's role can be problematic. The lead partner in one large second-round case study mentioned that managing an extensive partnership could be difficult at times; the partnership's management team highlighted that management training would be beneficial. Another difficult aspect is that in some cases the lead partner is involved in service delivery as well as being the contract provider. Partners in several second-round case studies expressed concern with this fusion of roles. One suggested that it would be better if the LSC were more active in managing contracts.

In one second-round case-study partnership, the lead partner's management team makes the final decisions about processes. At times this has resulted in minor conflict between the lead organisation's and the partnership's priorities.

Partnership monitoring

IAG partnerships reported that they use a variety of data-collection processes to monitor clients, covering client characteristics, their satisfaction with the services received, and their progression and destination following contact with the partnership. The case study research and the survey of partnerships' data systems found that partnerships adopted a wide range of localised approaches to monitoring. Where monitoring information has been collected, this tends to focus on the characteristics of the clients using IAG provision. For some partnerships monitoring data only focuses on the clients accessing advice services, a small albeit significant part of the overall service. While the survey found that majority of partnerships said that they collected monitoring information, very few of them provided useable and comparable data.

Client monitoring

Data collection

Client throughput information varies. Most partnerships indicated that providers have been required to collect MI systematically from April 2001 onwards, when their formal contracts began. A few have only been able to cement their data-collection systems since then, one as late as July 2001. A remaining few still do not have adequate systems.

Partnerships generally require service providers who receive funding to submit MI; this requirement is usually written into contracts. Where MI is not collected on time or with the required accuracy, partnerships said that they might adopt a 'no data, no payment' approach. Conversely, where providers are not paid for their delivery functions, partnerships have more difficulty in ensuring regular collection of standardised MI.

A number of partnerships indicated that getting the systems in place had required input from partnership staff, including visits to providers to discuss data-collection methods. There have also been attempts to develop data-collection specification in line with other organisations' requirements. Several partnerships were waiting to see LSC requirements before changing their data-collection methods.

The degree to which client monitoring information is collected and the nature of this information vary according to the IAG services received by clients. The numbers and percentages of partnerships offering each of the IAG services and collecting client monitoring information are shown in Table 3.3 from the initial partnership survey.

Table 3.3: Services offered and client monitoring information collected

Service (Base-52)	No. of partnerships providing service	% of partnerships providing service	No. of partnerships collecting data for service	% of partnerships collecting data for service	% of partnerships providing service that collect data
Signposting	40	77	9	17	23
Information	47	90	24	46	51
Advice	51	98	46	89	90
Guidance	23	44	13	25	57

The following differences can be seen between the types of client monitoring data collected for each service:

- **Signposting** – 40 of the partnerships surveyed said that they offer signposting services, and only 17% collect any client data for this service. Those that do only collect very basic data, generally restricted to age, gender, ethnicity, employment status and referral information.

- **Information** – just under half (46%) collect client data for information services. In addition to basic demographic information, data is collected on disabilities and disadvantages that clients may face. However, the amount and type of data vary considerably.

- **Advice** – almost all (89%) of the partnerships collect information on advice services. This information is far more exhaustive, considering all aspects of the client's life and subsequent service needs. It is also the service where partnerships are most likely to request additional information from clients (52%).

- **Guidance** – guidance is currently not funded under IAG, and is most often monitored as part of ESF requirements. Only 23 partnerships in the survey said that they provide guidance services. As partnerships are unable to provide guidance services with IAG money, only those with additional funding can provide guidance, which may account for this relatively low figure. The information collected by partnerships who do offer guidance is mainly restricted to basic characteristics, although some collect more detailed information about disadvantages faced by clients.

Examples of good practice concerning client monitoring are outlined in the box overleaf.

Good practice: Client monitoring

Partnership A
The lead partner requires partnership organisations to submit client summary forms for advice service users on a monthly basis. The summary forms outline client characteristics, mutually agreed action steps and indicate whether the client is willing to participate in follow-up activities.

At regular intervals the partnership administrator follows up a random sample of clients consenting to participate in follow up activities by postal questionnaire by post or, in some instances, by telephone. 10% of clients receiving advice are followed up at least one month after the intervention. The partnership administrator monitors that this target is being met and that selected clients are drawn from a range of advice providers. During the 2001-2 financial year, the partnership administrator has followed up 338 clients.

The questionnaire asks clients:

- to rate the service they received;
- to indicate whether they followed the agreed action steps;
- to inform the partnership of their progress since the advice intervention(s); and
- whether they require any further support.

To date a total of 106 clients (31%) have responded to client questionnaires. The following results indicate the number of clients that have progressed to an outcome following intervention(s):

Employment   21
Education   30
Voluntary Work   5

All other responding clients have either made some progress or no progress. This includes clients that have either not followed the action steps agreed with their adviser or clients that are making progress towards an outcome (e.g. in the process of sending job applications to employers, finding out about education/training courses), but that have not yet achieved their desired goal.

Partnership B

The lead partner in this partnership collects impact information at two levels:

- impact and outcome information for users of IAG funded provision, delivered through the outreach team, on a monthly basis.
- impact of activities occurring because of the partnership structure.

The partnership conducted a needs analysis which identified twelve areas for development concerning service delivery. As a result of this research 'Community Information Points' staffed by IAG-funded outreach advisers have been established. Advisers caseload clients and conduct individual follow-up periodically after the initial intervention. Follow-up determines whether the client needs further assistance, and any progression into learning and/or work. Advisers collate the data monthly and report to the lead partner. This data is then used to further develop service provision.

Outreach workers collect the following data from clients:

- *Client information:* clients' status at the point of intervention, duration of unemployment; registered disabled; ethnic origin; qualifications at point of intervention; length of time that client was last involved in training
- *Service received* - referral to service; signposting; information; information and advice; CV produced/updated; groupwork; Career Development Loan endorsements; referral to other network members; referred to basic skills training
- *Outcomes recorded* - employment gained, F/T, P/T; entered education / training; qualification gained; entered voluntary/community work; learndirect futures account; use Languageline; referred to another service**.**

The partnership also asks clients about how they used the Community Information Points and how the service might be improved.

The lead partner is currently planning a partnership-wide client postal survey for service users since May 2001 to gain information on client progression and a partnership-wide account of progress.

Use of monitoring information

Of the partnerships surveyed, 80% said that client monitoring data is collated at partnership level. Most of these partnerships (81%) collect this data monthly and collate it quarterly, in line with LSC requirements. As mentioned above, this information mainly focuses on basic client characteristics (gender, employment status, age), it can cover all types of services, or elements of the service and is presented in a variety of different ways.

Most partnerships collect the information to comply with contract requirements and to identify priority groups. The content of MI reports is, however, usually restricted to DfES requirements, although . The information is used to inform decisions on resources and funding, determine next year's business plan, identify priority groups, and ensure that the partnership is meeting clients' needs. Partnerships also collect and collate data for distribution to network members, access by other agencies, and monitoring of referrals.

In most cases, MI is shared with organisations other than the DfES, including:

- local LSC;
- local learning partnerships;
- ESF;
- SRB;
- Employment Service;
- Connexions; and
- learndirect.

Good practice: Using survey data to improve IAG services

One partnership conducted a survey of partners to ascertain impressions of the added value associated with being involved in the partnership. The partnership's evaluating and monitoring group developed the survey which generated a 53% response rate.

In addition to the survey, the partnership also conducted 'SWOT' analyses with each local steering group to focus on the following of partnership themes:

- Referrals
- Quality Standards
- Partnerships
- Access
- Client Information Services

The outcomes of each of these have been drawn together to identify necessary common areas of development and to highlight and transfer good practice across the sub-areas. The partnership's strategic planning group is using the results and recommendations of the SWOT analyses to help further develop the service and inform the preparation of the 2002-3 business plan.

One further form of client monitoring emerged from the second-round case-study research. Several partnerships analysed collected information from clients about why they were seeking advice and information. Client information forms have been used successfully at partnership level. One lead partner reported conducting a website traffic analysis, to trace key search phrases, as a means of determining clients' initial information needs.

Monitoring: Emerging issues

The surveys and case study research yielded a number concerns about monitoring information. Although there was widespread recognition among partnerships that the collection of monitoring and follow-up information for IAG provision was desirable, most partnerships found the process difficult. The following concerns were raised:

- **Reluctance to collect data** - interviewees said that service providers were often reluctant to ask for detailed information from clients who may only have picked up a document or brochure, or had a short conversation with a member of staff.
- **Reluctance to request data from non-funded partners** - some lead partners were concerned that it is inappropriate to ask non- IAG funded organisations to collect monitoring information when IAG funding has not been made available to resource this activities.
- **Practicalities of data collection** - many interviewees identified concerns about the practicalities of collecting detailed throughput information for clients using signposting and information services. In some instances this issue concerned how IAG clients were isolated from other service users.

- **Lack of funding -** some interviewees from small partner organisations identified that they would welcome user friendly data-gathering systems, but that were concerned about the lack of funding available vis a vis service delivery.

Client satisfaction

Data collection

Of the partnerships surveyed, 49 reported that they collect satisfaction information. In the majority (79%), it is collected at individual service-provider level. Despite this high level of activity, not all the partners collect data, and data is not standardised across the partnership. In 4% of partnerships, the IAG co-ordinator is responsible for collecting the information.

The majority of information collected (56%) is about clients' perceptions of the service; one partnership also collects information on referrals. Only 4% of partnerships reported collecting satisfaction information about the partnership, whereas 17% collect information on individual partners. Only 6% of partnerships collect information on all clients; 41% collect it from a sample. Satisfaction information is most often collected from clients receiving advice (29%). Fewer partnerships collect information on clients receiving guidance (15%), and only 4% on clients receiving information.

Partnerships employ various methods to conduct follow-up work, including surveys with a sample of clients, data collection at point of intervention, telephone surveys and focus groups. 'Mystery shopping', where an individual completes the process of receiving information and advice while reporting back on the experience is also used to monitor the standard of partners' services. The information collected is principally concerned with clients' perceptions of the service received, although the specifics vary among the partners collecting the information.

Partnerships stated that it is difficult to generalise about the timing of feedback collection because the data is collected by individual providers and varies considerably. In 27% of partnerships, clients are asked for feedback on the IAG service offered to them at the time of their visit. Where information and signposting only are offered, this is the most appropriate way to collect the information because these clients' addresses are not noted. In other instances, clients are contacted by post or telephone at a later date, though this varies a great deal among partnerships.

Use of satisfaction information

Information on client satisfaction is almost exclusively collected at individual service-provider level. Only 8% of partnerships reported that this information is then sent to the partnership; 25% said that partners do not send their information to the partnership, as there is no formal requirement to do so. Only one partnership collates data on client satisfaction with partnership-level activities. However, a number of partnerships noted that this would be desirable in the future, particularly in relation to clients' satisfaction with referral mechanisms.

Some 56% of partnerships collect client satisfaction information in relation to GAB requirements and for service improvements. One partnership feeds the information back to partners, and in another two some partners produce quarterly client satisfaction reports. Some partnerships share information through newsletters and partnership meetings.

Clients' destination

Data collection

The case-study research and survey revealed partnership/partner-level systems to track clients' progression and trace their destinations. In the survey, 57% of partnerships reported that they collect some form of destination information.

In 36% of partnerships collecting destination/progression information, individual partners collect it. Where career centres, job centres and colleges are the lead partner, destination information is most likely to be collected. One partnership reported implementing a system of partnership-wide surveys to be sent to clients three months after their IAG intervention, to ascertain their progression. Although the system has only recently been implemented, the partnership reported that there is insufficient capacity within the IAG-funded adviser team to collate and analyse the information.

Partnerships commented that because individual providers collect destination information, there is a high degree of variation in content, sample and method. Some 11% of partnerships collect information from a sample of clients. One partnership requires IAG-funded partners to track the progression of 2% of its service users. Destination information is most often collected from clients receiving advice (7%); only a few partnerships collect information on clients receiving information and guidance (4% each).

Collection methods vary, although a number of partnerships use postal and telephone surveys. The lead partner in one second-round case-study partnership is developing a new database, designed to allow coherent, comprehensive compilation of information about destinations. Another partnership is able to determine some information by matching client records with enrolment forms or completer forms used to claim outcome-based payments.

The aim of collecting destination information is to determine any widening of participation in learning and impact on labour-market participation. Table 3.4 shows the reported types of destination information collected. Sixteen partnerships collect information on clients' current status, including entry to employment, education and training. The case-study research also revealed that some partnerships/partners' surveys to trace clients' progression investigate any barriers clients might have faced to entering employment or training.

Table 3.4: Type of destination information collected

Type of information	No. of partnerships collecting destination information (Base-49*)	% of all partnerships that collect destination information (Base=28**)
Current status	16	57
Actions taken following IAG	7	25
Satisfaction with current status	1	4
Point of referral	1	4

*49 completed surveys returned in second partnership survey
**28 partnerships collect some sort of destination information

The timing for data collection varies, although most partnerships in the survey reported a three to six-month timescale.

Use of destination information

In the second-round case studies, the most commonly cited reason for monitoring clients' progression is to determine the effectiveness of current delivery systems. The information is used to further develop a client-focused service, identify training needs, and inform future business plans and external funding applications. One case-study partnership also intends to use monitoring data to inform future business plans.

Issues with data collection

The interim telephone survey and case-study visits yielded a number of issues of concern to partnerships and partners in relation to collecting follow-up information. Although there was widespread recognition that collecting monitoring and follow-up information for IAG provision is desirable, most partnerships find the process difficult and they raised a number of issues. Partnerships indicated that service providers are often reluctant to ask for detailed information from clients who may only have picked up a brochure or had a short conversation with a member of staff. They felt that clients would be reluctant to spend time filling out data-collection forms, and unwilling to volunteer personal information. Attempting to collect this information was likely to impede providers' ability to deliver signposting and information services.

Case-study interviewees discussed the feasibility of collecting information about all clients who access IAG services. Many concerns related to the practicalities of collecting detailed throughput data for clients using signposting and information services. Various partners – particularly those delivering these services in libraries – highlighted the difficulties of separating throughput information for IAG purposes because of the vast number of visitors they receive and the open, drop-in format of the service provided. One service deliverer records those accessing its

resources using a tally system; this provides some information, but is not able to reflect visitor profiles or record the number of return visitors.

Interviewees also highlighted the need to build a level of rapport with clients before personal information can be collected. Many believed that the need for clients to complete forms should be minimised in monitoring client throughput.

A number of smaller partner organisations were positive about developing processes to collect throughput information as part of GAB standard requirements, since it gives them the opportunity to formally acknowledge their service provision. Other small organisations raised concerns about the administrative burden in relation to their limited resources. They would welcome data-gathering systems that are user-friendly to both partners and clients.

Some lead partners were concerned that it is inappropriate to ask non-IAG-funded organisations to collect monitoring information, when IAG funding has not been made available to them.

Funding for partners

A marked change in partnership funding structures was found between the early and late case-study partnerships. In the first-round case-study partnerships, funding arrangements were devised according to need, with the common focus of capacity building. In three cases, partnerships had used their funding to give partners resources and financial support towards achieving the GAB standards, in order to build capacity. In three other cases, funds for service delivery were distributed on a needs-based system involving partners bidding for available funds. Another partnership paid providers according to advice-interview targets, and used incentive payments to encourage partners to take on additional responsibilities.

The second-round case-study partnerships have all distributed funding and adopted a variety of funding mechanisms. Two reported funding per client intervention; in one, providers receive £25 per signposting episode. Other partnerships have distributed funding to GAB-accredited partners on receipt of a funding proposal outlining the added value of the planned work.

Other methods of distributing funding include supplying resources for information providers. Mostly these comprise books and other information material, although one partnership provides funding for partners to gain internet access. One partnership pays for an IAG co-ordinator and outreach workers. Another two fund information and advice delivery through their own outreach workers.

Three second-round case-study partnerships have secured additional funding from other sources (SRB and ESF), generally at individual partner level. The funding pays for guidance provision in a specific area.

Case-study interviews indicated that the majority of partners are happy about the resources they have been allocated, and find them very helpful. One second-round case-study partnership is evaluating information and advice resources. Preliminary findings show that there is generally a high level of satisfaction with the resources received, although usage is rarely monitored.

Communication

In both rounds of case studies, no formal communication protocols were reported. However, a variety of different communication methods are used, with partnership meetings being the most common. One partnership holds meetings at various levels, including senior and middle-management group meetings attended by representatives of all partners.

The use of e-mail has increased since the first-round case-study visits, and was a significant communication method in a number of second-round case-study areas. E-mail was seen as a particularly effective way of communicating, especially for large partnerships. Partners remarked on the high level of e-mails received, although some voluntary-sector partners commented on accessibility issues.

The use of websites seems to vary across partnerships, and was mentioned by only three second-round case studies. In partnership areas where websites are established, they are used to post significant documents for partners to access. One partnership has also developed an Intranet accessible by all partners, who find it useful.

Newsletters are a much used method of communication. The frequency of newsletters and bulletins varies from bi-monthly to quarterly. Opinions of the purpose and usefulness of newsletters vary. Partners in one partnership area regarded it as a dissemination forum and information source for service users and deliverers. In another, the lead partner was not wholly positive about the purpose of a newsletter; this was reflected in partners' lack of awareness of and contribution to the newsletter.

Partnership co-ordinators play a significant role in encouraging communication among partners. In many cases, informal communication among practitioners has increased over the partnership's lifetime. In one partnership, however, the partners rely on the lead partner to drive communication among members. This appears to have resulted in partners taking little initiative to increase communication among themselves.

3.4   Service delivery

The initial partnership survey provided quantitative information on the types of services provided (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Different services provided by organisations

	Total returns under each category
Signposting	26
Information	32
Information and advice	35
Info, advice and guidance	47

The survey returns and case-study research showed that partner organisations provide a different profile of services. The case-study research, however, indicated that some organisations are solely IAG providers, whereas others include IAG as part of a comprehensive package of support available to users. One partner in a second-round case-study partnership delivers IAG as part of a wider package of support for women returners to the labour market, forming part of a training course which includes IT, CV preparation and confidence building. Another partnership reported that delivery was originally based in a local careers office and IAG was delivered for clients 'walking into' the service.

All the second-round case-study partnerships offer clients free information and advice services through IAG funding. Partner organisations in all case study areas also offer free guidance provision, funded mainly through the SRB and ESF. However, the competitive nature of these funding mechanisms means that the availability of guidance provision remains inconsistent. Some user groups, such as employed adults, are required to pay for these services.

Widening service delivery was an early priority for all second-round case-study partnerships, as a number had previously only had traditional IAG service deliverers operating in the area. Partnerships reported using different methods to encourage clients and organisations representing client groups to access IAG services. Examples are as follows:

- One partnership has introduced 20 information points in host institutions such as libraries, FE colleges and community centres across the area. These information points are designed as a drop-in resource for potential clients.
- A number of partnerships said that they had employed outreach workers to provide impartial advice, widen participation and encourage a broader user group to enter learning and/or employment. In one particular case, this has led to the partnership establishing links with voluntary and community groups who have regular contact with the priority client group.

Both approaches take IAG service to clients. The information points provide a useful community resource, but clients themselves have to seek out the services they can offer. Outreach activities on the other hand seem to enable a proactive approach to penetrating harder to reach client groups, who might be reluctant to approach an information service.

A number of second-round case-study partnerships acknowledged that members prioritise certain client groups. One organisation interviewed was a specialist service deliverer targeting people with disabilities, responding to their specific needs through fully accessible premises, resources for various disabilities and outreach for those unable to visit the service. This service fits in with the overall partnership priorities and provides a valuable resource for other mainstream providers unable to meet this target group's specific needs.

Other methods used to deliver services in response to the specific needs of different priority groups include producing materials in different languages or formats to enable access for particular groups. A number of partnerships also reported employing advice staff with knowledge and experience of working with particular groups.

Although most of the second-round case-study partnerships work with unemployed adults, a few also provide support for people in work. One does this through its relationship with **learndirect**. It has relationships with two **learndirect** hubs, and has undertaken joint training sessions with **learndirect** staff. In line with the national protocol, the partnership also has a relationship with national **learndirect** and callers to the '0800' telephone number are referred to its delivery and development workers who, in addition to other information and advice, publicise career development loans.

Another partnership offers support for people in work through trade union workers providing what they described as guidance in the workplace. The partnership aims to develop further contacts with trade union workplace learning advisers and employers to expand the provision of information and advice in the workplace.

3.5   *Summary*

Partnership development and capacity building

- Partnership development and capacity building have been evident throughout the three-year period that IAG partnerships have been operational.
- Partnership priorities at strategic level have illustrated some change and development. External factors are implicated in addition to partnerships' natural evolution to a greater focus on service delivery. Partnerships' priorities show less change in terms of client groups.
- A number of partnerships have merged, although partnership structures have generally remained unchanged. Key structures include steering and management groups. Changes within the partnership are mostly related to expanding membership. Members can be full, associate or, in one partnership, affiliate members from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations. A different membership profile is visible for full and associate members. There is some degree of variety in the size of partnerships.
- Capacity building within the partnership takes place at both organisational level, including supporting partner organisations to work towards GAB accreditation, and individual staff level, where training is available for staff from partner organisations.
- Networking arrangements are highly developed and embedded in the majority of partnerships. Mechanisms include meetings, conferences, workshops and training events. Networking has had a positive impact on the awareness and coherence of local provision. There is some variety in the formality of referral systems and the methods used.
- Partnerships are at different stages in developing their marketing strategies and services, although a greater degree of implementation was visible in the second-round case-study research. Active and passive approaches to marketing are both used. Partnerships have concentrated on branding to establish and raise their profile.

Partnership administration and communication

- Partnerships have a variety of data collection processes to monitor clients, including client characteristics, satisfaction with the services received, and progression following IAG intervention.

- Distribution of funding was more developed at the later stages of the research. Two principal means of distributing funding are payments for each IAG intervention, or submission of a funding proposal.
- Communication is relatively well developed, although there are no formal protocols. E-mail, websites and newsletters are all used.

Service delivery

- The profile of services delivered varies across partnerships and organisations. Some organisations provide specific aspects, others a combination, and examples exist of IAG being delivered as part of a wider package of support.
- Partnerships also include a number of organisations that deliver specialist support to particular priority groups. A number of organisations also provide support for people in work.

4.0 PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

4.1   Introduction

This section considers the impact of IAG funding on the partnerships as a whole and on individual partner organisations. Two information sources have been used: the second partnership survey and the case-study visits. The section examines:

- partnerships' internal levels of coherence of IAG provision;
- partnerships' external levels of coherence of IAG provision;
- the impact that funding has had on partnerships and partner organisations;
- partnerships' performance to date.

The section concludes with a summary of key points.

4.2   Internal coherence of IAG provision

Identifying priorities and meeting clients' needs

Responses to the partnership survey (53 in total for this section) indicated that 83% of partnerships either strongly agreed or agreed that they had effectively identified the needs of their priority groups in the local area; 58.5% reported that they are meeting the demand for services from clients. Access for people with disabilities does not appear to be an issue for service providers, with 88.7% of partnerships stating that these clients are able to access their IAG services.

The most common method of identifying priority groups cited by the case-study partnerships was local analysis of needs. Other methods included reference to local indices of deprivation, local authority or LSC research reports, and consultation with partners. Five case-study areas stated that regular reviews of clients' needs and consultation with providers ensured that gaps in provision were addressed.

One case-study partnership has also undertaken research with non-service users to determine their reasons for not using IAG services and the access barriers they face. The results have been used to inform future publicity material, and to revise the outreach programme to be more proactive and available in venues used by client groups (e.g. shopping centres and libraries).

Most partnerships, 94.4%, stated that they have identified coherent priorities (49.1% strongly agreed; 45.3% agreed). Partnerships funding their own IAG advisers, often outreach advisers, regularly review service delivery locations. As a result, they are flexible and able to respond to needs as necessary. Their outreach provision combines delivery in partner providers' premises and community venues, allowing frequent contact with providers to avoid gaps and overlaps in provision. Other IAG partnerships funding delivery across partner organisations continue to ensure coherence of provision by increasing sectoral and geographical representation in their partnerships. They also discuss gaps and overlaps in provision at network meetings.

Referrals

Of the nine case-study partnerships with formal referral systems, lead partners/providers in five reported inconsistent use of forms. Four partnerships were in the early stages of using their referral system, and interviewees were unable to comment on the system's effectiveness. In one partnership, it appears that reliance on clients to return referral documentation, and the need for providers to convince them of the importance of doing so, were the main reasons for inconsistency. Another area had developed what was regarded as a user-friendly referral system which included a client tracking mechanism.

Many areas reported the continuing use of informal telephone referrals, often to a small number of known providers. A provider in the one case study with no formal referral system stated that sometimes they purposely would not refer a client to a mainstream provider; as they believed that the client's needs would not be fully recognised.

Quality

Partnerships were asked to comment on two aspects of quality: support for partners to work towards the quality standards, and methods for ensuring continuous improvement among GAB-accredited partners. The results from the 44 partnerships that responded to this question are outlined in Table 4.1. They indicate the steps that partnerships have taken to support and monitor Guidance Council quality standards.

Table 4.1: Steps to monitor Guidance Council quality standards

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Advice from quality improvement consultants	92.5	7.5
Development of common partnership quality systems	64.0	36.0
Ensuring sufficient resources for all partners to work towards quality standards	69.4	30.6
Quality on agenda at network meetings	80.4	19.6
Regular reviews of quality systems	78.0	22.0
Partnership has a quality focus group or similar	53.1	46.9

To assist partners in working towards the quality standards, 69.4% of responding partnerships indicated that they ensure that sufficient resources are available for all partners. The case-study visits highlighted mentors, training events, one-to-one support and financial support as methods used to assist organisations undertaking GAB accreditation. The partnerships value the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. They feel that the standards have made providers more client-focused in their delivery, and have provided the impetus needed to revise operational systems and documentation.

The survey results indicate that continuous quality improvement remains a high priority for partnerships. A significant majority seek advice from quality improvement consultants, include quality as an agenda item at network meetings, and undertake regular reviews of quality systems. More than half (53.1%) of the responding partnerships have developed a quality focus group.

One case-study partnership has also developed its own internal quality system to ensure continuous quality development among all its partners, including those who are GAB accredited.

Partnership survey returns also identified a range of activities designed to ensure continuous improvement among GAB-accredited partners. These activities include formal quality improvement strategies, training, partnership groups and monitoring activities (mystery shopping, internal audits and evaluations).

Although the survey question sought to investigate activities encouraging continuous improvement among GAB-accredited partners, some partnerships reported activities for pre-accredited partners. One partnership concentrates exclusively on guiding members through the accreditation process rather than ensuring continuous improvement among accredited partners.

Monitoring client progression

The partnership survey sought to assess whether partnerships were able to identify the impact of their IAG support on client progression. Responses were received from 49 partnerships (*48 responded to this question). Table 4.2 illustrates their responses; further information on client monitoring is given in Section 3.3.2.

Table 4.2: Impact of IAG support on client progression

	Yes (%)	No (%)
IAG support helps clients to move towards their goals	89	11
IAG support helps clients to move into education or training	89	11
IAG support helps clients to gain employment	82	18
*IAG support helps clients to change jobs	81	19

The responses suggest that the majority of the partnerships are able to identify that IAG support has had a positive impact on client progression in various ways. In all, 42 responding partnerships (85.7%) highlighted the ability to identify IAG support's impact as having helped clients to move towards their goals, and into education or training. Overall, 38 partnerships (77.6%) stated the ability to identify that IAG had helped clients to gain employment and 36 (75%) that IAG had helped clients to change jobs. It is important to note that these high percentages actually represent between 49.3% and 57.5% of all IAG partnerships.

However, further research (examining additional information from the interim telephone survey) showed that very little information on impact is actually collected, and in only a couple of cases was this evidenced. Furthermore, in those instances where evidence was available, it was based on a very small proportion of service users – 10% or less.

The earlier partnership survey also resulted in similarly positive information and formed the basis for selecting the second round of case-study partnerships. On visiting these partnerships, it became apparent that there is a difference in understanding of the term 'client follow-up'. Two types of follow-up activity take place within partnerships: determining clients' satisfaction

regarding the services received, and tracking client progression and the impact of the IAG intervention(s). As a result of discussions with partnerships, it emerged that the majority are actually collecting client satisfaction information, in line with GAB requirements, as opposed to tracking the progression of IAG service users.

The collection systems used by partnerships are outlined in Section 3. The information collected is for different purposes and is used in various ways, including the following:

- client satisfaction information collected in line with GAB requirements;
- impact information to meet the audit needs of various funding requirements (e.g. ESF, SRB); and
- individual case studies for marketing purposes (e.g. partnership newsletter, website).

In addition, four partnerships use the information gathered as a management tool to monitor their partnership's performance, inform business plans and plan future provision.

4.3   External coherence of IAG provision

The partnership survey obtained information on the coherence of the IAG provision; both between partner services in the area and with external services in the area. Partnerships were asked to report their perceptions of the external coherence of their IAG provision, using a series of rating statements. Responses were obtained from 47 partnerships; Table 4.3 illustrates the results in percentages.

Table 4.3: Perceptions of the external coherence of IAG provision

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Offers a co-ordinated local network of IAG on learning/work opportunities	59.6	40.4	0	0	0
Offers services free to all members of the community	37.7	43.4	7.5	9.4	1.9
Priority clients have free access to information and advice services	38.5	51.9	5.8	3.8	0
IAG services meet the relevant quality standards for learning and work	40.4	48.1	11.5	0	0
There is coherence between IAG services	28.8	63.5	7.7	0	0
There is coherence between local IAG and other related services	21.2	51.9	19.2	5.8	1.9

The results suggest that partnerships perceive there to be a high degree of external coherence. All respondents stated that they offer a co-ordinated local network of IAG on learning/work opportunities, and 88.5% of partnerships reported that their IAG services meet the relevant quality standards for learning and work. Notably, 92.3% consider their IAG services to be coherent. However, fewer – 73.1% – reported coherence between local IAG services and other related services.

With IAG partnerships established to offer information and advice services to all members of local communities, it is interesting to note that approximately one fifth of respondents either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that partnerships offer services free to all members of the community. The significant majority, 90.4%, however, offers free access to information and advice services for priority clients. This reflects an issue raised during the first round of case study research concerning the allocation of resources, with partnerships attempting to balance the twin aims of working with all members of communities and priority target groups.

The case-study partnerships' external coherence was generally found to be good, especially at strategic level, with good communication systems between IAG partnerships and LSCs, IAG strategy groups and local learning partnerships. Fewer case-study partnerships were able to report positively on coherence at delivery level. Some partners reported coherence between services where individuals from different organisations are familiar with each other.

External coherence with specific services

The extent and nature of coherence between local IAG services and other related services were investigated further through the partnership survey and case-study visits. Partnerships were asked to identify, on a scale of one to five, the extent to which their services are coherent with a range of other services, and where progress is still required before services become fully coherent.

The majority of responding partnerships reported that little further work is needed to ensure full coherence between IAG partnerships and careers services (75.5%) and between IAG partnerships and adult guidance provision (71.1%). The case-study visits highlighted the fact that in nine areas the careers service (often including adult guidance provision) is the lead partner.

Half of the survey respondents (50%) reported coherence with Employment Service provision, with 15.4% reporting that services are fully coherent. The other half of respondents reported coherence with the ES to varying extents: the ES is represented on steering groups, is a IAG partner, operates joint training programmes with partnership staff, and in one partnership outreach advisers use ES premises to deliver services.

Figure 4.1: Perceived coherence between IAG services and Employment Service
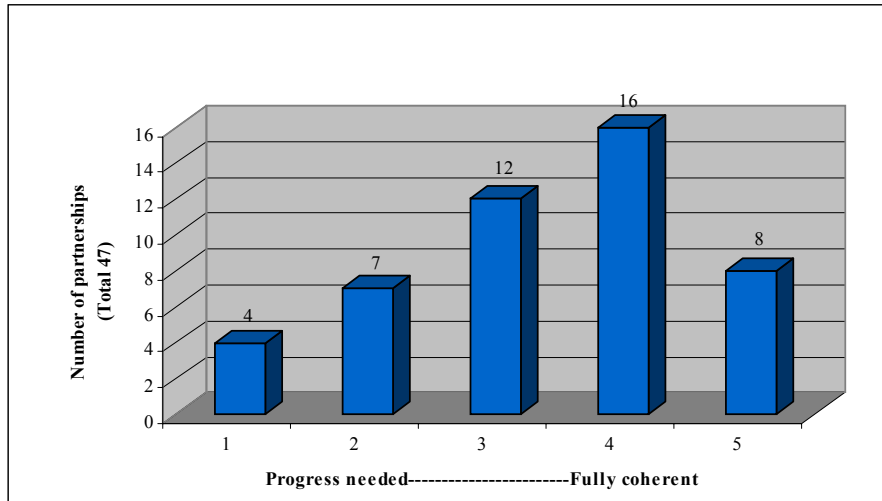
Fewer partnerships, 33.4%, reported coherence between local IAG services and basic skills provision. An additional 37.3% recorded responses around the middle of the scale, suggesting that some progress has been made but work remains to be done to ensure that services are fully coherent. There were similar findings from the case-study visits, with mixed levels of coherence between partnerships and local basic skills provision. In one area, a FE provider partner delivers basic skills sessions to employees at Remploy (another partner), which trainees find particularly helpful. In other areas, partnerships are undertaking or planning to undertake audits of basic skills provision, and partnership representation from basic skills providers is still being sought.

Figure 4.2: Perceived coherence between IAG services and Basic Skills
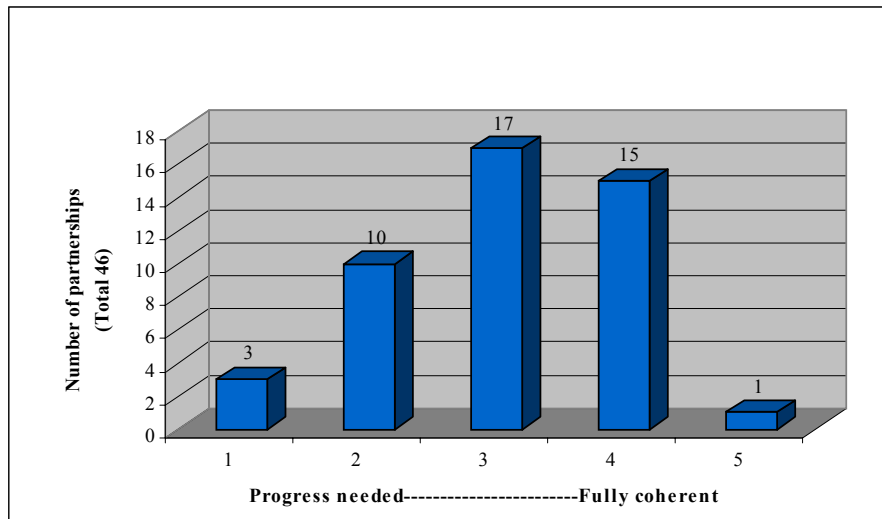
Nearly one-third of respondents, 29.3%, perceived coherence between partnership services and Connexions, but with only 9.8% reporting fully coherent services. When the case-study visits were undertaken, not all Connexions services were operational in the areas visited. Where Connexions services were established, the level of coherence varied between full coherence and developed structures to ensure smooth transition from Connexions to IAG services for 20 year olds, to little coherence, resulting in overlaps in provision. One partnership raised concerns over the shortage of qualified advice and guidance staff since Connexions was established. This has caused recruitment difficulties for IAG providers unable to attract appropriate staff.

Figure 4.3: Perceived coherence between IAG services and Connexions
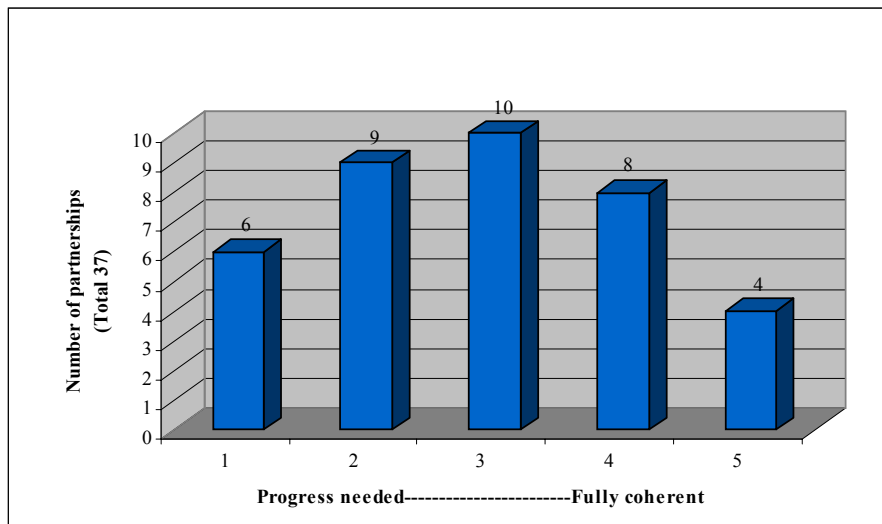
Survey respondents reported little progress in ensuring coherence between IAG services and **learndirect**. Only 15.7% of partnerships reported coherence, and as few as 2% reported full coherence. A significant majority of respondents (84.3%) reported the need for progress – and almost a quarter (23.4%) reported the need for significant progress – before IAG services are fully coherent with **learndirect**. Two partnerships noted that whilst they had established a protocol with **learndirect** they had received few or no referrals from the service.

Figure 4.4: Perceived coherence between IAG services and Learndirect
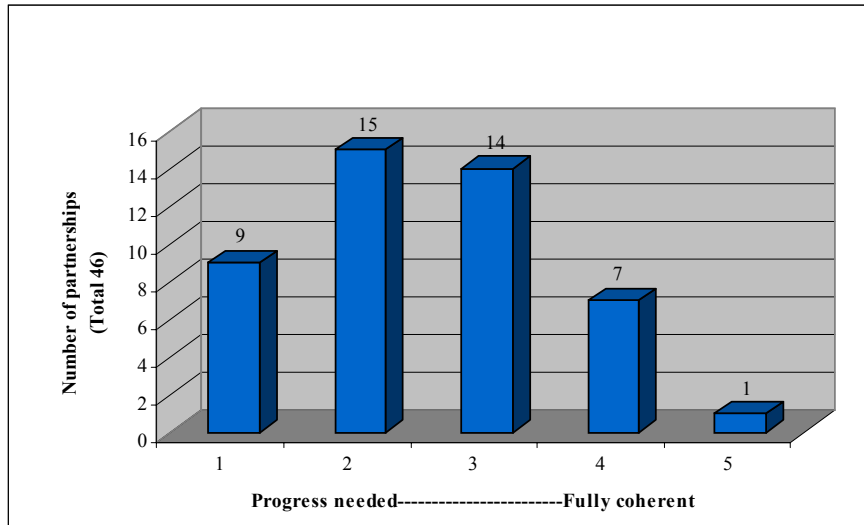
Although the survey sought to assess key achievements in ensuring coherence with services, some partnerships reported the difficulties they have experienced. One reported poor links with private-sector New Deal providers who do not refer clients to IAG. Another reported the need for more strategic support from the DfES to ensure coherence with **learndirect**.

4.4   Funding impacts

IAG providers often use a 'melting pot' of funding sources to resource their services. The survey asked partnerships to assess the balance of partnership and client impacts across funding sources, and in particular whether identified impacts were solely because of IAG funding. Of the 43 responding partnerships, 34.9% reported that these impacts were solely because of IAG funding, whereas 52.8% reported otherwise.

Partnerships were then asked to identify what other funding contributed to the identified impact and, where possible, to disaggregate the balance of this funding in terms of impact. The following sources were highlighted by 30 partnerships as having contributed to impact:

- nine partnerships used resources from the TEC/LSC, of which seven named the Local Initiative Fund;
- six used funding from the Employment Service, of which two specified New Deal as the source;
- six reported other statutory agencies such as the Local Education Authority, careers service and probation service as having contributed to overall funding;
- four reported use of ESF funding; and
- three reported use of SRB funding.

Other reported sources of funding included the National Lottery (two responses), the Further Education Funding Council (three responses), the Higher Education Funding Council (one response), and other local agencies (e.g. a local Learning Partnership). More general responses included the subsidy of IAG core funding and costs by provider organisations, although specific details were not provided.

The partnership survey also asked respondents to comment on the balance between funding sources used. The number of responses was relatively small, which questions their significance. However, the results received are outlined below:

- from a total of 29 respondents, 27 stated that IAG funding played a major role;
- from a total of 10 respondents, six stated that IAG funding played an equal role;
- from a total of seven respondents, five stated that IAG funding played a minor role; and
- from a total of 14 respondents, 10 were not able to disaggregate their funding sources.

Balance between service delivery and network development

Further detail on the funding profile was available through examining the proportion of IAG funding spent by partnerships on network development and service delivery. The 41 responses received to this question were inconsistent:

- some partnerships did not provide information for both areas of their work
- the sum of budget allocations associated with network development and service delivery does not always total 100%.

Analysis, however, shows some 70.5% of partnerships spending 60% or more of their IAG budget on service delivery and 41.5% spending 40% or more of their budget on network expansion (see Table 4.4 below).

Table 4.4: Proportions of IAG funding spent on network expansion and service delivery

% Budget allocation	Network expansion (No)	Service delivery
20% or less	9	2
21-39%	15	2
40%	8	4
41-59%	4	5
60%	4	13
61-80%	1	18
n=	41	44

Guidance for partnerships for 2001-2 stated that they use 60% of IAG funding to finance service delivery and 40% for network expansion. The partnership survey revealed that this profile for the use of IAG funding is not followed in all partnerships. Only 19.5% of partnerships reported the recommended 40% use of IAG funding on network expansion, and only 29.5% reported the recommended use of 60% of funding for service delivery.

The available data does not allow further examination of reasons for the lack of correspondence of these figures or further exploration of partnerships' funding profiles. However, the available data suggests that partnerships are generally spending a greater proportion of their IAG funding on service delivery. For example, 40.9% of responding partnerships reported spending between 61 and 80% on service delivery.

Partnership performance

The partnership survey sought to investigate partnerships' perceptions of their performance to date in terms of their position in relation to the schedule outlined in their 2001-2 delivery plan. In response, 24 partnerships reported that their performance was 'as expected,' two were 'ahead of schedule' and 23 were 'behind schedule.' The reasons given by partnerships for their current position are indicated below.

Performance 'as expected'

The 24 partnerships reporting their position to be 'as expected' provided the following positive and negative factors influencing their performance.

Positive factors:

- seven partnerships cited the commitment of core partners, in particular coherent collaborative working and the strength and consistency of the project team;
- four also reported the support of IAG delivery staff and the wider network at strategic level;
- two reported the availability of sufficient development staff to drive performance and progress the business plan objectives;
- one highlighted a wider understanding of the IAG aims and objectives among partners; and
- one reported the opportunity for networking and consultation.

Negative factors:

- in one partnership, performance was slowed down because of the reliance on coherence with the learning partnership network;
- the learning partnership in one case study area was also considered to be disorganised, with one partnership reporting the involvement of too many external consultants;
- one partnership noted the number of small community/voluntary groups that have worked exceptionally hard but are not set up to deliver;
- staffing issues were raised, including one partnership reporting a lack of qualified delivery staff and others reporting delays in getting staff in post and high staff turnover; and
- one partnership reported the Employment Service's transition phase as having a negative impact on performance.

Methods that have helped partnerships to remain on track were similar across the 24 responding partnerships. In particular, partnerships highlighted target setting, regular meetings with IAG staff and partners, and the management skills of IAG managers.

The partnerships also reported the following areas as being behind schedule:

- three partnerships – work with employers;
- four partnerships – delivery of information, particularly in terms of marketing, publicity and website development; and
- four partnerships – service delivery, with one partnership highlighting difficulties in beginning outreach work.

The factors affecting performance were numerous. However, four partnerships reported VAT problems and a further four noted issues over staff development and availability, often related to the VAT problems. One partnership reported lack of time as a factor affecting performance.

Performance 'ahead of schedule'

Only two partnerships reported being 'ahead of schedule'. One of them stated that the factor influencing their performance was the enthusiasm from partner organisations to develop the partnership and service delivery in the area. The same partnership also reported it has particularly stayed on track in the areas of regular network meetings, professional development and the number of advice interviews undertaken because of demand from clients. The same partnership also reported being behind schedule with quality standards.

Performance 'behind schedule'

Performance was reported to be 'behind schedule' by 23 partnerships. A range of factors have influenced their position:

- nine partnerships reported staffing issues, particularly levels of staffing affected by delays in recruitment or turnover, and changes in staffing affecting coherence of the team;
- eight reported VAT issues, which consequently affected and delayed development of business plans and forced cuts in planned development work, thus slowing progress; and
- other factors were specific to particular partnerships; for example, one newly formed partnership experienced delays due to its reformation. Sickness and other exceptional circumstances such as fire were also factors reported as affecting performance and consequently leading to partnerships being behind schedule.

Despite reporting being behind schedule, in a number of areas these partnerships appeared to have stayed on track. For example:

- five partnerships reported being on track with marketing and provision of information;
- five reported being on track in developing and delivering quality standards; and
- five reported being on track with widening and developing the network and bringing the main players on board.

Many partnerships referred to earlier responses concerning areas where they were behind, and factors affecting this performance. Just over half of the respondents (12 partnerships) reported being behind on various aspects (delivery, level of expenditure and meeting partnership

development milestones such as marketing). Nine of these partnerships reported the most important factor affecting this performance to be VAT related.

Key achievements of the partnership

The partnership survey invited respondents to highlight three key achievements for the partnership as a whole. A significant number and range of responses were received from 48 partnerships; however, not all of them offered three responses. A number of thematic categories were developed to group the responses. These categories are illustrated in Table 4.5, with the total number and percentage of responses for each. The responses are analysed in more detail below, examining the different responses given under the various themes.

Table 4.5: Key achievements

Key achievement	No. of responses (base 135) (%)
Partnership nature and achievements	56 (41%)
Good working practices	15 (11%)
Accreditation	18 (13%)
Training	12 (9%)
Local information resources	18 (13%)
Role of IAG	8 (6%)
General good progress	5 (4%)
Impact on clients/partners	2 (1.5%)

It is important to note the relationship between partnerships' responses to how they rated their performance, as outlined at the beginning of Section 4.5, and what they stated to be their key achievements. Just over half of the partnerships (51%) rated their performance as being as expected or ahead of schedule, but only 1.5% cited impact on clients/partners as a key achievement. Despite the 2001-2 funding recommendation for partnerships to increase resources, and hence their activities, for service delivery, the survey findings clearly reflect the level of time needed by partnership co-ordinators to ensure good partnership working and accreditation and training.

Partnership nature and achievements

Many respondents (41%) reported this area as being a key achievement. Responses included general partnership achievements and more specific comments concerning the nature of the partnership:

- 19 respondents reported the coherence and commitment of the partnership as a key achievement. Specific comments included the commitment and support of all partners, leading to strong partnership activity, and commitment to developing a co-ordinated approach to IAG delivery;
- 36 reported the nature of the partnership as a key achievement; 17 of these responses concerned the breadth and range of partners involved and the general level of inclusiveness achieved; and

- 10 noted the engagement and involvement of voluntary and community sector organisations in the partnership.

Good working practices

In all, 11% of respondents highlighted the development of good working practices as a key achievement:

- three respondents specifically noted the success of regular meetings, which allow partners to share good practice;
- three also highlighted the development of outreach models; and
- two believed the development of a local partnership brand to be a key achievement.

Accreditation

Accreditation and quality standards were highlighted as a key achievement by 13% of partnerships. Most comments were relatively generic and concerned the level and number of partners achieving GAB accreditation. Partnerships reported that all major providers have either achieved or are working towards GAB accreditation. One partnership reported the success of a number of small community groups in achieving accreditation. Three partnerships highlighted continuous quality improvement among partners as an achievement, while another reported the development of a common quality system.

Production of local information resources

The production and distribution of local information was highlighted by 13% of respondents:

- eight partnerships have widened access to information by developing an infrastructure of information points;
- three have found local events (e.g. road shows and consultation events) to be successful means of raising awareness of the partnership;
- four have provided local information through work/learning websites; and
- two have produced resource packs and adult information materials.

Central role of IAG

The central role of IAG was highlighted by 6% of respondents.

- four partnerships noted the networking role of IAG in the development of close working relationships between delivery organisations and strong provider networks; and
- one stated that IAG has been successful in the area of basic skills and in implementing the lifelong learning strategy.

Impact on clients/partners

Only 1.5% of partnerships highlighted the impact of the partnership's work on clients and partners:

- one partnership reported the increased numbers and range of clients seen; and
- one reported that member organisations now recognise the benefits of working in partnership to deliver IAG services.

Added value of the partnership

Respondents also reported a variety of unexpected outcomes resulting from the IAG partnership. The most significant are outlined below.

Better communication

Partnerships and partners recognised increased communication among partners as having led to a greater understanding of the role of partner organisations and the breaking down of access barriers for services users:

- six partnerships reported better communication among the wider network of service deliverers because of the IAG partnership;
- one reported increased co-operation and information sharing among partner organisations and regionally; and
- two reported greater coherence within the partnership, leading to improved working relationships among partners.

Opportunities for new links/synergies

Another significant unexpected outcome has been the opportunity to extend partnership working and develop new links and synergies, including involvement in learning partnerships. Two partnerships reported that their IAG management team had been invited to participate in lifelong learning partnership sub-groups.

IAG partners have also widened the availability of their provision. They reported increased collaboration and involvement with other sectors such as health, housing and the prison/probation service. Two partnerships in particular reported closer working relationships with local prisons and the involvement of a prisoner adviser within the IAG partnership.

One partnership has disseminated its training to other IAG partnerships. Several partnerships reported involvement in collaborative working on projects funded by other organisations; for example, one partnership reported increased involvement in a basic skills project. Another noted that it was working on joint projects, not necessarily linked to IAG, because of the experience of the IAG partnership. The IAG partnership has also had a positive impact on working relationships within partnerships. One reported that its members have progressed from a position of distrust to working positively and collaboratively with each other.

Raised awareness of IAG issues and work

Two partnerships reported increased awareness of IAG issues and work as a result of the IAG partnership. Another reported that organisations are now approaching the partnership to be involved, rather than the partnership actively recruiting them as new members.

Increased involvement of the voluntary sector

Three partnerships reported increased involvement of the voluntary sector in IAG delivery. One of them also reported greater awareness of the unique role of voluntary and community organisations as a result of the IAG partnership.

4.5   Summary

Internal coherence and meeting clients' needs

- Partnerships have effectively identified the needs of their local priority groups. Methods used include local needs analyses, local indices of deprivation, local authority or LSC research reports and partner consultation.
- Partnerships were confident that they had identified coherent priorities, either through the funding of their own IAG advisers to ensure a flexible and responsive service or by increasing the sectoral and geographical representation in their partnerships.
- There is inconsistency in the use of formal partnership-level referral systems; both across partnerships and in individual partnerships.
- Quality assurance remains a high priority for partnerships, with high levels of resources (both financial and time) being devoted to the attainment of Guidance Council standards and continuous improvement among GAB-accredited partners.
- Whilst partnerships suggest that they undertake client monitoring in line with GAB standards. In the vast majority of cases, partnerships are unable to evidence claims of the positive impact IAG provision has had on service users, as the follow-up work undertaken focuses on client satisfaction rather than their progression into learning and work.

External coherence of IAG provision

- Partnerships perceive there to be a high degree of external coherence with other related services in their area, most significantly with other careers and adult guidance provision but also to a notable degree with the Employment Service.

Funding impacts

- IAG services are resourced through a mixture of funding sources and partnerships are often unable to disaggregate the impact of IAG funding from funding from other sources.

Partnership performance

- Partnership performance is mixed across IAG partnerships. Whilst the progress of many partnerships is as they expected in their 2000-1 business plans, and even ahead of schedule in a couple of exceptional cases, there are many partnerships who are behind their intended schedule.
- The most commonly noted partnership achievement was the nature and progress the partnership had made in terms of partnership coherence, commitment, partner support, the range of partner providers and the engagement and involvement of the voluntary/community sector.
- The added value of the IAG partnerships was seen to be better communication across service providers and the opportunities the partnership provided for new links/synergies.

5.0 CLIENT FOLLOW-UP AND IMPACT

5.1 Introduction

This section considers the impact of IAG provision on different types of service users. Five pieces of analysis have been used: the case-study visits, analysis of the client follow-up survey, the first full partnership survey, the interim telephone survey to understand data availability, and the final partnership survey. The section examines:

- changes in the client priority groups;
- clients' reasons for seeking advice and guidance;
- the helpfulness and nature of the IAG support accessed by clients;
- any actions following support received; and
- progression following IAG, particularly wider participation in learning and impact on participation in the labour market.

A total of 1,175 questionnaires were sent to clients in all 10 case-study areas. IAG providers assisted with this process (for data protection purposes and to ensure the targeting of advice service users) by distributing questionnaires to their clients. A total of 190 questionnaires were returned. It should be noted that one or more partnerships are over-represented in the results included in this section. Also, because of the low response rate, it is not possible to disaggregate the responses by case-study area. Annex A provides further information on the client survey.

5.2 Client priority groups

Two sources have been used to assess how partnerships' priority groups have changed over time: the first partnership survey and the interim telephone survey. These questionnaires gained information about partnerships' priority groups in slightly different ways. The first survey asked partnerships to specify their priority client groups; the interim telephone survey asked them to outline the monitoring information collected for their various priority groups. So although information on priority client groups was gained from both surveys, it is necessary to note that partnerships might not be collecting monitoring information for all of them. In addition, partnerships may be collecting monitoring information for additional clients outside of their priority groups.

From a total of 51 respondents to the first partnership survey and 52 respondents to the interim telephone survey, 33 partnerships provided client priority group information in both surveys. The results showed that as part of partnerships' plans, a range of priority client groups has been added to the existing list of 11 pre-defined groups. The following list of new groups outlines those client groups referred to more than once; the figure in brackets indicates the number of partnerships to have added that client group:

- lone parents (11), refugees (9), homeless people (8), asylum seekers (6), ethnic minorities (5), people with mental health problems (4), employees with low qualifications (2), victims of large scale redundancies/economic restructuring (2) and women returners (2).

In total, 20 (60%), of the 33 partnerships who responded to both surveys, included 22 additional client groups:

- four added one group;
- six added two groups;
- three added three groups;
- three added four groups;
- three added five groups; and
- one added six groups.

Information from the interim telephone survey included the priority groups that partnerships were monitoring. This information also suggested changes to the number of priority groups. The results showed that:

- 15% (5) of all partnerships reported the identical number of priority groups in both surveys;
- 51% (17) of all partnerships reported raising their number of priority groups; and
- 33% (11) of all partnerships reported reducing their number of priority groups.

5.3 Reasons for seeking advice and information

Results from the client survey and case-study fieldwork highlighted that most clients sought information and advice about education, training and tools to assist them in entering the labour market.

The client survey asked respondents to indicate their reason(s) for seeking advice and information, using tick boxes. Table 5.1 illustrates clients' responses. As the results indicate, the majority of clients accessing services sought information and advice about education and training courses (58.5%) and job opportunities (52.7%).

Table 5.1: Why did you want information, advice and guidance?

IAG help sought	Actual numbers	%
Education and training courses	110	58.5
Job opportunities	99	52.7
Self-employment	11	5.9
Getting back into work	57	30.3
Qualifications and certificates	57	30.3
Ways to pay for courses and certificates	27	14.4
Preparing a CV	52	27.6
Completing application forms	20	10.6
Basic information	38	20.2
In-depth advice and guidance	34	18.1
Other reasons	16	8.5

Note: Clients could respond more than once.

This evident focus on job and career opportunities was reinforced by the qualitative information reported under 'other reasons'. Of the 14 respondents who provided additional information, nine reported using the advice service to get a job, for career progression or for career-change purposes.

IAG providers which target specific client groups stated that clients often accessed their services because they knew of the specialised help they would receive. One organisation working with people with disabilities reported that independent benefits advice was the initial reason for many clients accessing its service. This organisation found that these enquiries often led to discussions on employment and learning opportunities. While clients did not act immediately on the information they received (because of their particular circumstances), many returned to the service.

How clients found out about IAG provision

The client survey also sought to assess how clients found out about the service. The results are outlined in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Ways in which clients found out about IAG provision

How client found out about IAG provision	Actual numbers	%
Saw a poster or a leaflet	27	14.3
Told by a friend or member of family	46	24.3
Told by another organisation	49	25.9
Saw advert in a local paper	7	3.7
Saw it as I was passing and thought it might be helpful	20	10.6
Called the organisation to find out about services	24	12.6
Other	53	28.0

Note: Some respondents provided more than one response – 190 people responded to the client survey, giving 226 responses in this section.

Most service users found out about the service from another organisation; 49 respondents indicated that they were told about the IAG service by another organisation. Additional qualitative responses under 'other' provided information on particular organisations that told clients about IAG services. Some of these responses gave details for those who had already ticked 'told by another organisation'; others were supplementary. The responses included: Jobcentre (18), Benefits Agency/Department of Social Security (2), library (7), public directories/Internet (5). Eight clients had used IAG services in the past or were already aware of these services in their locality. Outreach activity was evident in five replies, including the use of mobile units, being approached in a shopping centre, and job fairs.

The client survey also highlighted the importance of word-of-mouth advertising, as 24.3% of respondents indicated that they heard of the IAG service they used from family or friends.

Partners in six partnership areas which use IAG-funded outreach workers to deliver advice services to clients from priority groups further supported this finding. They have found outreach to be a significant publicity tool for their IAG services. It appears that outreach work has attracted a large number of hard-to-reach clients to the service, and was seen as key to attracting more service users from priority groups.

Case-study information regarding the way clients found out about their IAG services includes the following:

- One partnership found that 50% of callers to its Connexions service were passing adults who 'dropped in' to the service. These individuals were referred on to the IAG service.
- Case-study partnerships discussed the methods and strategies they have used to market their provision. At partnership level, methods have included co-ordinated marketing strategies, the production of publicity materials, and referral systems.
- In one partnership, a voluntary-sector partner specialising in people with disabilities indicated that because of its reputation in the area, clients usually contacted the organisation after having tried to access other, mainstream services which were unable to meet their needs. This partner also stated that clients were happy to wait as long as necessary – sometimes a few weeks – for an available appointment.

Helpfulness and nature of support received

Clients were asked to rate the IAG service as a whole. The survey results were positive, with a significant majority, 85%, rating the service positively. The details were as follows:

- 55.6% rated the service as 'very good';
- 29.4% rated it as 'good';
- 12.8% rated it as 'neither good or bad';
- 1% rated it as 'bad'; and
- 1% rated it as very bad.

The client survey also asked individuals to indicate what help they received from the organisation they attended. Again, it is important to note that the survey was sent to individuals who had received advice services, and that participants were able to provide more than one response. In total, 496 responses were given from 190 individuals. This indicates that each IAG service user receives, on average, two to three different types of support. The results are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Help given to clients by IAG providers

Help received	Actual numbers	%
Received basic information	76	40.4
Used information library	31	16.5
Used computer	63	33.5
Had a brief chat with an adviser	81	43.1
Had detailed discussion with an adviser	100	53.2
In-depth support	42	22.3

Help received	Actual numbers	%
Agreed an action plan	67	35.6
Directed to another office for further help	23	12.2
Other	13	6.9

It appears from the survey responses that individuals required more substantial services and support than just signposting and use of the information library. Of note is that 43.1% of respondents had a brief chat with an adviser, 53.2% had a detailed discussion with an adviser, 40.4% received basic information, and 35.6% agreed an action plan with their adviser.

Clients were also asked to provide information on whether they found the IAG service helpful, if so to what extent and in what way, and if not, why not. Of the 190 respondents, a significantly high proportion – 89.3% – had found the information and advice helpful. Information on the helpfulness of the services was reinforced through another question, which asked clients to report the extent to which the information and advice had helped them. The responses were as follows:

- 46.4% had found that the information and advice helped a lot;
- 31.7% had found the information and advice quite helpful;
- 16.9% had found that the information and advice helped a little; and
- only 4.9% of clients did not find the information and advice at all helpful.

Interestingly, while 89.3% of clients reported that they had found the IAG services helpful, when asked to detail the level of helpfulness, a higher proportion (95%) stated that the services received had been helpful to some extent.

More detailed analysis examined the types of help that clients were seeking from IAG providers and the type of service they received with the relative helpfulness of this assistance. Table 5.4 illustrates the results of this analysis.

Table 5.4: The help that clients were seeking and the type of service received

Help Clients were Looking for	All Clients (b-188)	Helpful* (b-166)	Basic information		Information library		Computer		Brief chat with adviser		Detailed discussion		In-depth support		Agreed action plan		Directed to other office		Other help	
			A (b-188)	B (b-166)	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Education and training courses	110	95	50	44 (88%)	21	20 (95%)	37	36 (97%)	49	39 (79%)	61	59 (97%)	21	21 (100%)	44	43 (98%)	17	14 (82%)	7	6 (86%)
Job opportunities	99	88	51	46 (90%)	17	16 (94%)	41	39 (95%)	42	34 (81%)	58	56 (97%)	22	22 (100%)	42	41 (98%)	16	14 (87%)	7	6 (86%)
Self-employment	11	10	6	6 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	5	5 (100%)	6	5 (83%)	7	7 (100%)	6	6 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	1	1 (100%)
Getting back to work help	57	48	25	21 (84%)	9	8 (88%)	20	19 (95%)	27	20 (74%)	33	32 (97%)	21	21 (100%)	20	19 (95%)	10	8 (80%)	5	4 (80%
Qualifications and certificates	57	47	28	22 (78%)	12	12 (100%)	23	23 (100%)	27	20 (74%)	33	32 (97%)	11	11 (100%)	21	21 (100%)	7	5 (71%)	4	4 (100%)
Help to pay for courses and certificates	27	22	13	11 (85%)	5	5 (100%)	10	10 (100%)	16	11 (69%)	13	13 (100%)	6	6 (100%)	7	7 (100%)	5	3 (60%)	5	5 (100%)
CV preparation	52	51	18	18 (100%)	13	13 (100%)	19	19 (100%)	14	14 (100%)	39	38 (97%)	19	19 (100%)	24	24 (100%)	7	7 (100%)	3	3 (100%)

Help Clients were Looking for	All Clients (b-188)	Helpful* (b-166)	Basic information A (b-188)–	B (b-166)	Information library A	B	Computer A	B	Brief chat with adviser A	B	Detailed discussion A	B	In-depth support A	B	Agreed action plan A	B	Directed to other office A	B	Other help A	B
Application forms	20	18	6	6 (100%)	9	9 (100%)	8	8 (100%)	7	6 (86%)	16	15 (94%)	11	11 (100%)	13	13 (100%)	2	2 (100%)	1	1 (100%)
Interview preparation	24	24	10	10 (100%)	9	9 (100%)	11	11 (100%)	9	9 (100%)	18	18 (100%)	12	12 (100%)	17	17 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	0	0
Basic information	38	34	25	22 (88%)	6	5 (83%)	12	12 (100%)	23	19 (83%)	19	17 (89%)	10	10 (100%)	13	13 (100%)	7	6 (86%)	2	2 (100%)
In-depth advice and guidance	34	27	15	12 (80%)	6	5 (83%)	13	12 (92%)	12	7 (58%)	24	22 (92%)	12	12 (100%)	19	19 (100%)	6	6 (100%)	3	3 (100%)
Other reasons	16	15	7	7 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	8	8 (100%)	10	9 (90%)	8	8 (100%)	2	2 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	2	1 (50%)	3	3 (100%)

*Clients were asked a generic question about whether the information and advice they were given helped them.

Figures in Columns A show all clients who were looking for particular information and the methods in which this was help was received. Figures in Column B are based only on clients who thought the advice was helpful and identify the clients responding positively to this question who accessed the different IAG services identified. The percentages in Column B refer to the proportion of all clients looking for particular information and who received it through the particular form who found it helpful. For example of the 50 clients who were looking for information on education and training and who received basic

The type of service received by clients varied, depending on the nature of the help they were seeking and a corresponding difference in perceptions of the helpfulness of the service is also visible. Generally where the assistance received was more in-depth or detailed there was a higher degree of satisfaction. Looking at the percentage figure in Columns B it can be seen that occurrences of 100% satisfaction are generally recorded for types of assistance that were more in-depth and required a greater degree of contact between the client and adviser. For example clients who received in-depth support rated this service as extremely helpful regardless of the type of information they were looking for. Similarly where clients received help to agree an action plan, a service that would require significant input from an adviser on a one-to-one basis, clients again reported a high degree of satisfaction. In comparison where clients received a lower level of support, such as a brief chat with an adviser, there was a lower degree of satisfaction reported, although there is some variation with the nature of information clients were looking for.

As well as determining the degree of helpfulness of services, the survey also sought to investigate how the information and advice received had helped clients. Table 5.5 summarises the results of this analysis for all clients who stated that the assistance received was helpful.

Table 5.5: How the information and advice received had helped clients

How it helped	No. of clients reporting this impact (B-166)	% of clients reporting this impact
Found out where they could get more help	21	13%
Found out that they needed more help	70	42%
Found out about courses to get qualifications/ certificates	77	46%
Found out about qualifications/certificates needed to get desired job	55	33%
Found out about childcare	7	4%
Found out about setting up their own business	6	4%
Found out about financial help	34	20%
Learned that they had lots of options	50	30%
Confirmed things they had already thought about	53	32%
Gained action plan	42	25%
Received help to complete application forms	21	12%
Received help writing CV	56	34%
Received help preparing for interviews	29	17%
Helped to understand how to use skills and qualities	47	28%
Gave new ideas about what they could do	71	43%
Enabled them to plan next steps	73	44%
Other help	7	4%

Generic areas of information and advice generated the highest responses. This included clients finding out they needed more help, finding out about courses to get qualifications and certificates

and giving clients new ideas about what they could do and enabling them to plan their next steps. A small proportion of clients identified that they received more specialist assistance such as information about setting up their own business and help concerning childcare. Also reported by a relatively small proportion of clients as particularly helpful was more practical assistance such as help in completing application forms.

The large majority of other reasons cited related to soft outcomes from the information and advice intervention:

> *"Boosted my self-esteem – nothing is unachievable!"*
> *"It gave me more confidence in myself."*
> *"Gave me a more in-depth understanding of myself, and my personal qualities, and the confidence to apply them to the workplace."*
> *"After the interview, I felt back on track with my career."*

A small number of clients (22) had not found the IAG support helpful. The responses to the following possible reasons offered in the survey are outlined below:

- 'Only gave basic information, and wanted more in-depth support' (14);
- 'Could not give the information and advice I wanted' (8);
- 'Information contradicted other information received' (3);
- 'Information given was difficult to understand' (1); and
- 'Other reasons' (4).

'Other' reasons indicated by clients were that providers were unable to supply the specific information they required.

Monitoring clients' outcomes

In one partnership advisers collect a range of information from clients who have used advice and ESF funded guidance services. The IAG partnership follows up all clients through the following methods:
- A service satisfaction questionnaire sent out one month after their intervention
- A progression and outcome questionnaire sent out three to six months after their intervention.

The survey identified the following key findings:
- **Employment status:** 65% were in paid employment, 13% were in voluntary employment, 16% were in education/training, 26% were unemployed, 18% described their status as 'other'.
- **Certificates, qualifications, or units obtained** – clients reported achievement of a total 22 CLAIT basic IT courses and 6 return to learn/access courses
- **Skills achieved as a result of the support** - 18% of clients reported that they had improved their job search skills while 24% said that their employability had improved and 19% reported improved research skills
- **Attitude change as a result of the support** - some 36% of clients reported an increased confidence to return to education and 55% reported increased motivation

---

- **Understanding of skills and abilities** - half of the survey respondents reported that they had improved understanding of their skills and abilities
- **Barriers to actioning IAG support received** - a range of factors were reported as follows:
  - Financial problems 16%
  - Indecision 14%
  - health/disability 13%
  - confidence 13%
  - time/job constraints 11%
  - debt concern/award insufficient 10%
  - childcare 10%
- **Additional support that would have been helpful** – clients identified a range of responses such as work experience, financial assistance or additional help from an adviser.

Information from the client surveys is used as part of the quality and development processes for IAG funded advisers. Feedback from the client surveys are used to help advisers identify further ways they can help clients.

Actions following support

It appears from client survey returns that a significant majority of the respondents, 157 (86.3%), have acted on the information and advice they received. Clients were asked to provide further details of how they had used the services received. The results are outlined in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Clients' actions after receiving IAG

How services acted on	Nos.	%
Read the information received	88	56.1
Enquired about an education or training course	63	40.1
Had an interview for an education or training course	11	7.0
Enrolled on an education or training course	45	28.7
Completed an education/training course	11	7.0
Applied for the sorts of jobs found out about	36	22.9
Had any job interviews	36	22.9
Got a job	29	18.5
Changed jobs – to a better job	8	5.0
Gone back to the information and advice organisation	17	10.8
Visited another information and advice organisation for more help	13	8.3
Received more in-depth guidance	15	9.6
Changed mind and want to do something else	10	6.4
Done anything more about what you want to do	18	11.5
Other	11	7.0

Over half (56.1%) of the survey respondents had studied and assimilated the information they had received. Over a third (40.1%) had actively enquired about further education or training courses, and 28.7% had enrolled on an education or training course as a result of the information and advice they had received. A significant proportion of respondents (22.9%) had attended a job interview, with 18.5% reporting that they had secured employment following receipt of information and advice from the service.

The small proportion of respondents who had not acted on the IAG support were asked to provide information on the reasons for not doing so. The main reasons given were the need for more information and advice (eight respondents) and that the information and advice received were no longer relevant (nine respondents). Other reasons identified included the following:

- four respondents indicated that 'it did not answer all of my questions';
- one respondent said 'I could not remember it'; and
- eight respondents provided 'other reasons', including childcare commitments, making the decision to delay taking action on the information, unsuitable information, and deciding to remain in current employment.

The two case studies below illustrate the impact of information and advice on a service user in one of the case study areas visited.

Client one – How my new CV got me a job
Client one had suffered long periods of unemployment, which had resulted in low confidence. He had qualifications in leisure, tourism and marketing but not the experience required by job advertisements and little employment experience in the previous 11 years. Client one had been made redundant last year. *"I was in tears when it was announced,"* says client one, 34. Then an information and advice worker invited client one to the local Careers Centre and helped him re-structure his CV.

Client one said: *"I was all right at interviews but I just wasn't being invited to any."*
Within months, client one was interviewed and successful for a permanent administrative post with the civil service. He now has a job he enjoys and is being trained in IT and customer care. *"**** has given me back my confidence,"* he says.

Client two– from cleaning offices to operating computers
Client two, a 54 year old, was formerly an office cleaner until an accident in 1992 led to health problems which resulted in a loss of job, reliance on a home help to assist with raising her six children and dependence on an electric buggy. At a support group for lone parents, client two met one of the partnership's information and advice workers who encouraged client two to sign up for a City and Guilds computer course at her local community centre.

Fourteen weeks later client two achieved level one qualification in word processing, databases and spreadsheets. Now her daughter, aged 20, has signed up for the same course and client two has progressed on to level two. *"I really appreciated the fact I wasn't turned away just because I couldn't follow up the course by looking for work,"* said client two. *"I don't know whether I'm employable but at least my brain is active now."*

Need for further/additional support

In order to assist with determining the need for additional support and/or guidance, the survey asked clients to state whether they had returned to the IAG service for more information, advice and guidance. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents (50) answered this question. Those identifying that they did not use the information and advice were asked what information and advice would have helped them and whether they had returned for more help. The results indicated that despite requiring further support, only 16 people returned to the IAG service. Clients were also asked what information and advice would have helped them. Approximately one-third of respondents noted the need for additional time or more in-depth detail from the adviser. A small number required additional information and advice not related to training or employment.

All the providers interviewed during case-study visits stated the need for guidance provision by some or the majority of their clients, depending on their target group(s). In the majority of interviews, providers highlighted that clients, especially those from hard-to-reach priority groups, had multiple needs that could not be dealt with in one advice intervention alone.

Many of the providers offer guidance services resourced through competitive funding streams (e.g. SRB and ESF). However, these services are only available to individuals who meet the funding requirements, for example postcode address, ethnicity or personal status. Other clients are required to pay for guidance services, an uncomfortable reality for some providers.

In some instances, staff in one mainstream partner interviewed indicated that they found it difficult to turn clients away after their allotted 20-minute advice session, when it was evident that the individual required further assistance. The provider then had to decide where to draw the line between advice and more in-depth guidance. Quite often, the provider would continue serving the client and subsume the extra cost of an intervention of this type.

Progression and outcomes following IAG

The partnership survey sought to assess providers' understanding of the progression and outcomes achieved by IAG service users. Table 5.7 illustrates the number of responses received and the results in percentages.

Table 5.7: Partnership co-ordinators' impressions of client progression and outcomes

As a result of the partnership	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
There has been no change in the take-up of learning opportunities	0	6.1	44.9	40.8	8.2
Take-up of employment opportunities has increased	4.2	20.8	66.7	8.3	0
The partnership has helped those in work with low skills to improve their skills base	4.1	42.9	38.8	14.3	0
There has been no change in the numbers of socially disadvantaged people taking up learning opportunities	0	2.0	49	42.9	6.1
People with disabilities have been encouraged to become involved in learning	9.6	55.8	30.8	4.2	0
The range of clients participating in learning opportunities has increased.	27.5	60.8	9.8	2	0

The results suggest that the partners did not hold strong views on the progression and outcomes of their clients, except for the statement about an increased range of clients participating in learning opportunities. Of the 88.3% of respondents agreeing with this statement, 27.5% strongly agreed. Other significant responses included 65.4% of respondents agreeing that people with disabilities have been encouraged to become involved in learning, and 66.7% of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing that the partnership has resulted in an increase in take-up of employment opportunities.

Client outcome monitoring

In February 2001, a partnership undertook a client survey with 862 users of their information, advice and guidance services. The survey's main objective was to identify people who had made significant progress as a result of accessing IAG services. The short timescale for survey returns resulted in a response rate of only 12%. Some of the key results are as follows:

- 75% of respondents had found the service they received helpful
- 55.8% of respondents sought assistance with matters relating to learning or work
- 57 people (54.8% of respondents) acted upon the advice they received, of which:

  - 13 clients had enrolled on a course
  - 7 had undertaken further research/enquiries
  - 6 who made a career decision

- 36.5 % of respondents (38 people) did not act on the advice they received, mainly because of financial difficulties and personal problems. 14 respondents not acting on the advice they received, requested further advice.

Individual stories

Client A was looking to become self-employed and visited the IAG service for assistance. Whilst the client acknowledged that the adviser was unable to answer their his questions he valued the signposting information he received and was able to access the correct advice about establishing his own business at the local Business Link. Client A is now a sole trader in remedial massage and aromatherapy and claims the IAG service was " perfect for my situation".

Client B accessed the IAG service for information on applying for nursing courses. The adviser was able to provide him with suitable handouts and a NMAS handbook that contained information on applying for university nursing courses. Client B has successfully secured a place at King's College University to study nursing and is currently working at a nursing home until the course commences.

Client C found the IAG service she received helpful, as the adviser was able to spend a long time with her providing her with up to date literature and information on massage courses. She is currently enrolled on an I.T.E.C massage course and is undertaking training to become a massage therapist. She said, " I have recommended **** **** to family and friends. …. the staff were extremely helpful. A very friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Thanks to you all".

Individual partners within the case-study partnership areas have their own systems for determining clients' progression into learning and/or employment. Examples include:

- one provider with an agreement with the Jobcentre to share information on individuals who have stopped claiming benefit. This is used to determine the possible link with a recent IAG intervention; and

- another provider with anecdotal evidence about a client who had received assistance with CV and job-interview preparation. The client later returned to inform the provider that they had secured the job.

The case study below illustrates a community/voluntary-sector organisation that has more detailed monitoring systems and information on progression and outcomes.

Establishing partner level monitoring systems

One community/voluntary sector organisation has resourced its provision through a 'melting pot' of funding sources. It already collected similar client profile, satisfaction and progression information for its other funders. Therefore, the organisation agreed with the lead partner to continue with its existing collection systems and to collate and provide the information needed by the lead partner at regular intervals. The organisation delivers IAG services as part of a comprehensive package of training for women returners, and follows up clients through postal questionnaires. For a given quarter, the organisation was thus able to provide the following information on 22 positive client outcomes from a total of 64 clients on programmes:

- seven women moved into full-time employment;
- four moved into part-time employment;
- five took up voluntary work;
- one became self-employed; and
- five moved into further education

5.4 Summary

Client priority groups

- The number of partnerships that have increased their range of priority client groups demonstrates a trend towards developing IAG partnership priorities to respond to local needs.

Reasons for seeking advice and guidance

- Education, training and tools to assist with entering the labour market were the main reasons for the majority of clients to seek information and advice.
- Signposting by other organisations and personal recommendations from family and friends were the most common means by which clients found out about the IAG service they had used.

Helpfulness and nature of support received

- IAG provision is well received by service users, a significant majority of whom found it very helpful.

- The more in-depth the service received by clients, the greater the level of satisfaction. Examples of these types of services include: in-depth support, and the production of an agreed action plan.

Actions following support

- Clients most commonly accessed IAG services regarding education, training and employment. The helpfulness of the provision has resulted in a significant majority of users actively pursuing education/training courses and undertaking activities involved in applying/securing employment were most commonly undertaken.
- A change in personal circumstances, i.e. the information and advice was no longer relevant, and the need for additional support and/or information were the main reasons for not acting upon the information and advice received.

Progression and outcomes following IAG

- There is little evidence available on the client progression and outcomes at partnership level, evident through the lack of strong views in the partnership co-ordinators' responses to this set of survey questions.
- Effective monitoring of client progression is undertaken by some partner organisations, most notably those in the community/voluntary sector.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

IAG partnerships were launched with the aim of ensuring that free local information and advice services of consistent quality were available to all adults across England. The DfES allowed partnerships to adopt delivery models to suit local circumstances, but required them to comply with recognised quality standards.

Partnership priorities

Initially, activities such as network development and capacity building were scheduled to be 'completed' by March 2000. By this time, partnerships were expected to have a good understanding of clients' needs and to have put in place the quality-assured structures necessary to respond to those needs. What has happened in practice is that network development, capacity building (including quality assurance) and measures to better understand clients' needs have continued as IAG partnerships have expanded and developed. Two factors appear to have come into play to influence the relative importance of these development activities:

- the operational context within which partnerships operate; and
- partnerships' annual national priorities and localised strategic priorities.

In terms of partnerships' operational context, in some cases the geographic area they cover has changed to fit in with the boundaries for local Learning and Skills Councils/learning partnerships and Connexions partnerships. Where this has occurred, the impact of boundary changes has been minimal because IAG structures have remained largely unchanged.

Consistently since the IAG partnerships were established in 1999, key national priorities have concerned the following:

- service delivery (a co-ordinated local network);
- access to free information and advice services;
- ensuring that information and advice services meet relevant quality standards; and
- ensuring coherence between local information and advice services and other related services.

These priorities indicate a strong emphasis on the process of service delivery, in terms of ensuring the quality of provision and access to it, and synergies with other agencies offering complementary services within the local area. In providing quarterly feedback reports to the DfES, partnerships have concentrated their efforts on demonstrating progress concerning the national priorities. This focus has had implications for the nature of monitoring information collected by partnerships. They have collected monitoring data on the characteristics of their clients, but very little data on clients' actions following the information and/or advice intervention.

Most commonly, post-intervention monitoring has explored client satisfaction in relation to the process of information and advice giving, rather than the value of the 'content' of the service to

individuals in helping them to achieve their goals. In some instances, partners collect data about client progression and how support has helped them, but no attempt is made to collate it at partnership level. Indeed, many partnerships interviewed in the summer partnership survey identified that they had only really started to put monitoring systems in place since April 2001.

This piecemeal approach to monitoring by partnerships means that it has proved impossible to aggregate the total number of clients using IAG services, explore the characteristics of service users, or identify how information and advice services have helped clients to move into education, training or employment.

Provision of a co-ordinated local advice and guidance network

Through understanding clients' needs and using this information to develop coherent priorities, partnerships have put in place the necessary structures to provide flexible, responsive information and advice services for their identified client groups. This provision, however, is unproven from a client perspective. The case-study partnerships identified referral within partnerships as an issue that they were reviewing. Inconsistencies in approach were evident, and these partnerships were exploring how this issue could be addressed.

Given its emphasis in the national priorities, quality assurance has remained a high priority for partnerships. Considerable resources have been allocated to achieving the National Quality Standards for Learning and Work. However, in some cases the appropriateness of these standards for all partners has been questioned, and alternative quality standards, such as Open College Network, have been put in place particularly for voluntary and community groups.

Given also the role that partnerships have in complementing existing IAG delivery, coherence with other agencies is paramount. Partnerships identified a high degree of external coherence with other related services in their area, most significantly with other careers and adult guidance provision, but also to a notable degree with the Employment Service.

Funding is an important element in this coherence, in that many partnerships are unable to disaggregate the impact of IAG funding from other funding sources. While this can be interpreted as a high level of coherence, it means that attributing impacts to different funding streams is problematic. What is evidenced, however, is that those partnerships with European, i.e. ESF funding or SRB funding tend to have put in place better monitoring systems, even if the IAG impact cannot be disaggregated.

Clients' perspective on IAG support

The client survey, despite its limitations, provided the most coherent information source on clients' reasons for seeking information and advice, the nature of the services they received, and clients' actions and next steps following the information and advice intervention. The survey showed that clients' main reasons for seeking information and advice were to find out about education and training opportunities, job opportunities and how to go about getting back into work.

In general, most clients responding to the survey were satisfied with the service they had received. The detailed analysis of the types of support accessed, cross-referenced with the support that clients were looking for, showed that adviser intervention appears to have played a key role in clients being satisfied with the service they received.

The survey also showed that the majority of clients acted on the support they received in very practical ways. These actions, however, could vary enormously, as follows:

- simply reading the information they were provided with;
- planning next steps and broadening their horizons concerning the opportunities available to them;
- enrolling on or completing education or training courses; and
- attending interviews and/or getting a job (for those clients starting outside the labour market), or changing jobs.

What is reassuring, however, is the proportion of clients who have seen a tangible outcome from IAG support, in terms of qualifications or employment. More than one fifth of clients have entered employment or changes jobs since they received IAG support and a small proportion have secured qualifications (7%) although more than one quarter had enrolled on education or training courses.

The small number of clients who said that they were dissatisfied with the service they received identified that the level of support available to them was inadequate, and that they wanted more in-depth support than had been made available. There has been considerable debate among partners on whether the level of information and advice (without guidance) provided is adequate; certainly, from the very small number of clients reporting dissatisfaction, the adequacy appears to be confirmed. The small number of clients reporting that they were dissatisfied suggests that such additional support may only be necessary for a small proportion of clients.

Widening participation

In the final partnership survey when partnerships were asked about whether they have helped to encourage people from excluded groups, their responses showed some key differences:

- almost half of the partnerships identified that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that 'there has been no change in the number of disadvantaged people taking up learning opportunities';
- around two-thirds identified that they have encouraged people with disabilities to become involved in learning opportunities; and
- more than four-fifths identified that the range of clients participating in learning has widened.

Elsewhere in the same survey, more than four-fifths of partnerships identified that IAG support has helped clients to move towards their goals, and to move into education, training or employment (or change jobs if clients were already in work). This suggests that partnerships understand that they are helping people into education, training or employment, although the people helped are not necessarily from excluded groups. However, information was not

forthcoming from the partnerships participating in the survey to support their views on these issues. This means that the feedback from partnerships was largely impressionistic and unsubstantiated. On a more positive note, the case studies identified good practice concerning systems developed to capture information about client progression which should make gathering evidence on impact better for the future.

The emphasis on continued development activities means that partnerships have continued to review their client groups. In a number of cases, new target client groups have been added to those that partnerships already work with. Such groups include lone parents, refugees and asylum seekers, people who are homeless, and people from particular minority ethnic groups.

Overall, partnerships are widening the groups they are working with, but are unsure as to whether the support they provide helps clients to move into learning opportunities.

6.2   *Recommendations*

Fundamentally, the key recommendation emerging from this research concerns monitoring and data-collection requirements. The paucity of information available at partnership level means that there is only limited evidence to demonstrate the role of information and advice services in helping clients to move into education, training or employment.

For IAG services to continue, there is a real need for evidence to assist in constructing the case to demonstrate the value of such services – assuming of course that partnerships' perceptions of the value of their services are proved accurate. On the surface, gathering this evidence is a simple and straightforward process, although in practice a number of problems inhibit data collection:

- *What constitutes information or advice?* Information or advice intervention can range from a tangible and memorable in-depth discussion with an adviser to something much more ad hoc, such as a client picking up a leaflet about a course at a local college. Where monitoring systems have been established, they are more strongly oriented to collecting information from clients who receive advice, rather than those who simply drop into IAG services or are not supported by contact with an adviser.
- *When do clients act upon the information or advice?* Some clients do not act on the information and advice provided until long after the initial intervention.
- *How do clients act on the information and advice?* Not all clients systematically follow the information and advice received or use it to reconsider their options. In these cases, their initial view of the service may be negative or that the timing is not appropriate.

What the above suggests is that different types of information and advice should be monitored in different ways. These might range from simply counting the numbers of clients accessing information services from partner organisations, to more detailed information from clients using advice services (in terms of both clients' characteristics and their actions following support).

There is strong merit in the LSC developing a guide to monitoring and local evaluation, outlining why these activities are important, what should be monitored/evaluated, and how partnerships should approach these activities. The guide should be accompanied by common templates for

data collection. These templates should be used systematically across the IAG partnerships so that evidence about throughput and impact is available across all the partnerships. To ensure that new protocols are followed, additional support is required:

- partnerships need to set aside money for monitoring and local evaluation activities; and
- workshops to explain monitoring/evaluation should be established and attendance made compulsory.

Annex A

Responses to the Client Survey

CLIENT FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

A survey of IAG service users was conducted in the final phase of the evaluation to establish what impact the IAG partnership and the provision had made on advice service users. A total of 1175 questionnaires were sent to IAG partnerships in all 10 case-study areas, to be distributed to advice service users by IAG providers.

The research team procured the assistance of IAG providers in order to ensure the survey was distributed only to users of advice services and for data protection purposes. A total of 190 questionnaires were returned. The timing of the evaluation did not allow for any attempt at increasing the response rate through follow-up of IAG providers.

The questionnaires were distributed as follows:

Case study area	Number distributed
Southampton, Hampshire & Isle of Wight	300
Cornwall and Devon	100
Humberside	100
Wigan	100
Oldham	75
Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset	100
Greater Merseyside	100
South London	100
Sheffield	100
North London	100

The following numbers of questionnaires were returned:

Case Study area	Number returned	Percentage representation in survey
Southampton, Hampshire & Isle of Wight	28	14.7
Cornwall and Devon	28	14.7
Humberside	27	14.2
Wigan	25	13.2
Oldham	17	8.9
Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset	17	8.9
Greater Merseyside	17	8.9
South London	16	8.4
Sheffield	15	7.9
North London	0	0
Total	**190**	**99.8***

* The total percentage is less than 100 as figures have been rounded to one decimal place.