



# Asking further questions of the Learning Alliance entry to employment pilot

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## Introduction

Certain groups of children and young people face particular barriers to accessing learning, training and employment. Because young people who have offended constitute one such group, in 2003 the Learning Skills Council launched a pilot scheme which funded an alliance of learning providers (“the Learning Alliance”), to develop provision and methods of working which might best these young people be placed into schemes. The pilot was due to run for one year (August 2003 to July 2004), but due to the programme’s success it was funded for an additional 12 months.

### ***Learning and training providers***

The Learning Alliance consisted of a number of organisations, but for the pilot three learning and training providers agreed to develop provision aimed specifically at assisting young people who had offended into employment:

- Nacro
- Rathbone
- YMCA Training.

The work this entailed included the provision of

- general advice, support and encouragement,
- guidance on social skills
- information on how to fill in application forms and prepare for interviews
- preparatory work around what kinds of environment, culture and expectations exist in the worlds of learning and work.

### ***Target groups***

The pilot focused on young people whose offending had been serious or persistent. Accordingly, the following groups were targeted:

- young people in secure placements and prison department youth offender institutions
- young people subject to intensive supervision
- young people on ISSP provision.

### ***Pilot Learning Alliance areas***

The pilot operated in three different areas of England:

- Birmingham and the Black Country (where Nacro was the primary provider)
- Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham (where Rathbone was the primary provider)
- Leeds and Doncaster (where YMCA Training was the primary provider).

### ***Aims of the Learning Alliance***

The Learning Alliance aimed to produce the following outcomes.

- An increase in the number of young people who have offended first accessing and sustaining community-based entry to employment provision, and then moving on into appropriate further education, work-based learning or employment destinations.
- A seamless transition of learning from a custodial to a community-based provision.
- The identification and minimisation of barriers to learning, and more specifically to access onto entry to employment provision.
- Improvement in the achievement rates of young offenders accessing learning provision through this route.

### ***The Learning Alliance structure***

The pilot had a three-stage “inreach” model:

- stage one: referral, contact, assessment of need and appropriate response, and relationship building
- stage two (the most intensive stage): preparation for training or employment, via group or one-to-one work
- stage three: support to enable the young person to make a transition to external training or employment provision.

The distinctive element of this model is that relationships are formed between the service providers and the young person while he or she is still serving the custodial part of prison sentence. This has two advantages:

- work can begin before release, which can reduce the risk of early disengagement.
- the young person in most cases will have met the worker who will later help to provide support and links with provision in the community, meaning that support is continuous.

### ***Evaluating the Learning Alliance pilot***

The work of the pilot was evaluated by the Youth Justice Trust in the report *The Learning Alliance national entry to employment offender pilot* (available by contacting [research@youth-justice-trust.org.uk](mailto:research@youth-justice-trust.org.uk)).

This report follows directly on from that evaluation. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) was a key player in the development of the Learning Alliance. Encouraged by the findings of the Youth Justice Trust's report, they commissioned an extension of the original evaluation, to focus on the following specific questions about the work of the pilot.

- Is additional funding required to engage young people in custody into education?
- Do some learners need additional support before they can be engaged (for instance, in the form of higher staff:learner ratios, more opportunities for one-to-one work, small group work sessions, or more focus on development of personal and social skills)?
- Is a pre-entry to employment type of provision necessary before this group of young people can be effectively engaged with entry to employment proper?
- What are the systemic barriers that exist, and how can they be overcome?
- What additional value does the Learning Alliance provide?

Much of the information used here to answer these questions is from the original, Youth Justice Trust research, which contains comprehensive detail and more in-depth analysis about the work and scope of the pilot. A brief description of how the Learning Alliance operated and what was found in this original research follows.

## The work of the pilot

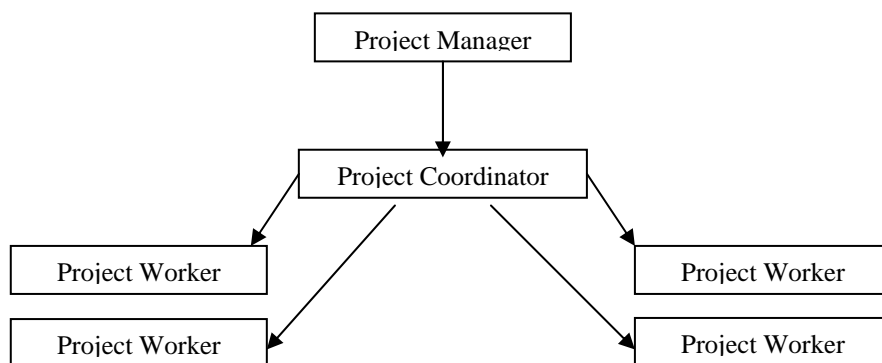
The entry to employment Learning Alliance pilot aimed:

- to match each young person to an appropriate and realistic learning provision, taking into account the variables arising from lifestyle, level of ability, and criminal (and civil) restrictions
- to support them through the process.

The alliance partners operated three variations of the same model, according to the restrictions or opportunities of the environment and their choice of working style. The following diagrams represent how each of the teams was structured.

### **Nacro**

Nacro operate the model through a team of six.



Referrals come from:

- the juvenile resettlement team, education department, probation and personal officers within the YOI
- YOTs and Connexions personal advisors in the community.

Recently, a process has been put in place to discuss all referrals with the education department before the young person starts entry to employment. Group work is carried out twice a day in the YOI by two project workers. The other two project workers carry out one-to-one work in the community. The breakdown of work is estimated as 80% group work, and 20% one-to-one work.

The group-work programme covers sessions on offending behaviour and consequences, budgeting, and time management and preparation for the employment programme “Getting into Work”, which focuses on areas such as:

- identifying barriers to getting a job

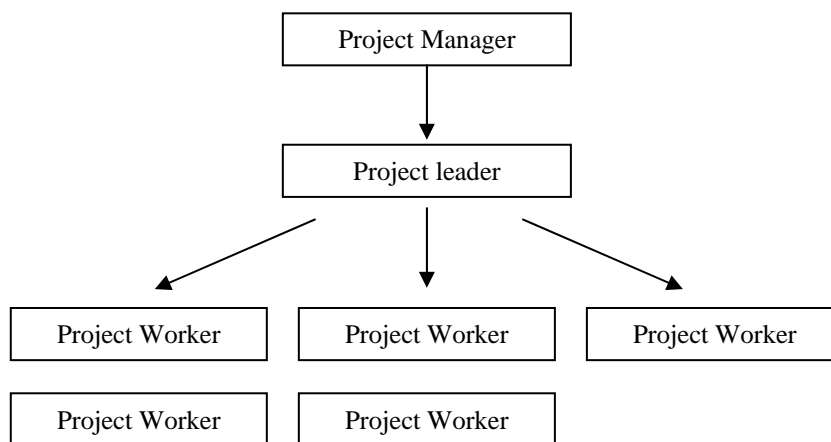
- working out the benefits of having a job
- outlining what employers want and the social skills needed at work
- the implications of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Teaching resources include handouts, flip charts, and illustrative materials such as magazines.

Evaluator group-work observation was not possible, as numbers were low due to unexpected release as well as other commitments within the YOI for the remaining young people. One-to-one work was observed for a short amount of time, and the young person participated and responded well.

### **Rathbone**

Rathbone's staffing structure is as follows.



Referrals come from:

- Connexions, SENCO/education and personal officers within the YOI
- mostly from the YOT in the community.

Group work is offered four mornings a week in the YOI by two project workers, with one-to-one work available on four afternoons. As well as the work carried out in Hindley YOI, the project leader spends two days in Lancaster Farms YOI. One-to-one work is delivered in the community by one project worker per young person. The project now covers all of the Greater Manchester local authorities. Work ratio is estimated to be 50% group work and 50% one-to-one work.

Group work includes sessions on:

- healthy living
- drugs and alcohol awareness
- self-esteem



- bullying
- budgeting
- offending behaviour and consequence
- preparation for employment.

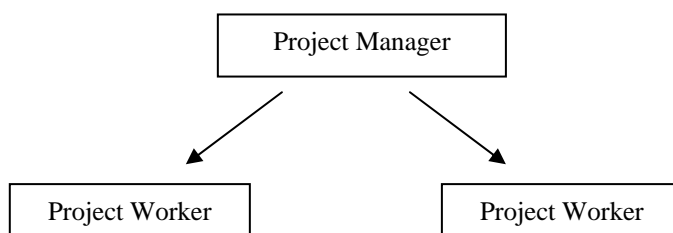
The preparation for employment sessions cover issues including:

- previous experience
- personal qualities
- barriers to employment
- where to look for work or training
- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, including how and when to disclose, and how to apply, prepare for, and behave at interview.

Teaching methods include group discussion and role-play, and the most used resources are flip charts and handouts. Evaluator observation noted effective group dynamics: the young people were involved and participating enthusiastically without disruption, and the teaching was focused and inclusive. A significant amount of information was communicated and discussed. Handouts were appropriate to the audience in style and language.

### **YMCA Training**

YMCA Training's structure reflects the size and scope of their contract. They receive only half the funding of the other two organisations, and therefore their staff team and outcomes are adjusted accordingly.



The two project workers take young people on an individual case basis, working with them both in the YOI and in the community. The work ratio is 50% group work and 50% one-to-one work. A new programme is being introduced in Wetherby YOI, with group work offered two mornings and two afternoons a week. This will rebalance the ratio to 80% group work and 20% in YOI. In the community, the ratio is 70% one-to-one and 30% group work. Community referrals come from Doncaster YOT and Connexions service, and (to a lesser degree) from Leeds YOT.

Group-work sessions centre on debate and discussion, and cover topics such as:

- communication skills
- health and safety
- applying for college
- applying for jobs.

The preparation for employment sessions include:

- application and interview skills
- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- employer's rights and responsibilities.

Resources include flip-charts and hand-outs, role-play and story boards, and arts-based and game activities.

## Original evaluation of the project

Evaluation of the first year of the Learning Alliance pilot took place between January 2004 and September 2004, through a process of quantitative measurement and qualitative exploration. Thirty-five representatives from external agencies, 58 young people and all internal staff members were interviewed. Findings were produced in three separate reports, the third of which was published in October 2004.

### ***Maintaining causes (barriers to engagement)***

The evaluation highlighted a number of what it terms “maintaining causes”: issues that result in both offending, and failure to access training opportunities. These types of causes cannot easily be eliminated by the young people themselves, and are often long term: but if they are not addressed, it is difficult for work or activities to have a positive impact. Because of this, work that involves a “helping” approach – giving practical help, fostering trust and building a relationship – is both appropriate and desirable. For many young offenders, their experience of “helping” agencies has often involved being let down, in terms of time, protocol and remit – and this has, indeed, become a barrier in itself. For this reason, staff values and their approach in terms of the way they deal with and interact with young people are fundamental.

The maintaining causes identified were:

- fear of failure, including a fear of engaging with formal processes
- previous negative experiences of education and training
- accommodation issues
- drug issues
- pro-criminal families and peers
- gang issues
- lack of confidence in own abilities
- issues around loss or rejection.

### ***Processes***

The pilot was established to look at which models worked better, for whom, and in what circumstances. Findings common to all schemes were as follows.

- Access was made easier and good working relationships developed when partners laid the groundwork early, and were aware of the complexities and structures of Prison Service routine.

- Communication with other agencies was a prerequisite for success, and in order to avoid duplication of work. Given high staff turnover and the general pace of change in the YOT and partner environments, as well as changes in young people themselves (which need tracking for each individual), this information exchange must be continuous, not a one-off activity.
- Young people valued the early contact in the YOI, and identified having knowledge of what is in store when they come out as an extremely helpful factor

A large number of people were interviewed for the purposes of the evaluation (see above). This included project and partner staff, and young people who had participated in the work of the projects. Emerging themes about what specific or kind of approaches work (with the test of ‘what works’ being what meets the aims and objectives of the pilot outlined above), were:

- an effective, supportive and committed team
- consistency and continuity – having the same worker on the inside and out
- having time to invest
- being treated respectfully (staff and young people)
- allowing young people to work at their own pace and in their own style
- involving young people in determining what is right for them, and allowing them to tailor their own level and type of support
- showing value for the young person by practical support

The evaluation concluded that the pilot had made considerable advances in developing the in-reach model and implementing entry to employment for young people who have committed offences. Even during the early stages of the pilot development, a significant impact could be seen on the participation, educational and personal achievement, and retention of this group of young people, who are widely considered to be the most difficult to reach and to engage.

## The extended evaluation

The following methods were used to produce data, evidence and analysis with which to discuss or answer the specific questions asked by the YJB.

- An email audit took place across YOT areas of England and Wales to gather views on the standard of custodial and community provision where no specific offender entry to employment was available.
- Eighteen professionals were interviewed for their views, including the heads of learning and skills and the resettlement governors in the three host YOIs (Hindley, Wetherby and Brinsford), and a representative from the Prison Service Juvenile Group. In total, 16 respondents were external to the project, and 2 were internal staff.
- A sample of young people (n=8) were interviewed, with a particular emphasis on re-joiners in order to gather feedback into why they had disengaged from the project the first time round.
- The quality of information accompanying the young person to their placement was reviewed with a sample of providers in each of the three areas.

This process generated a large amount of data. The results are detailed and documented in the sections that follow, but ultimately the data were analysed to answer the questions which are the subject of this extended evaluation. The answers are outlined in the summary and conclusion to this report.

### ***Geographical levels of service – the gaps that exist***

In order to better measure the gap the pilot aimed to fill, an email audit was conducted in those YOT areas of England and Wales where no specific provision matching that of the pilot was in place. Forty-three questionnaires were sent to the targeted YOTs, resulting in a 37% response rate. This level of response is high enough in terms of canvassing views of busy management professionals, and so reflects the importance they attribute to the topic; but equally, the percentage of views not received must be taken into account to some level when examining the overall results.

Using the completed questionnaires, the following table gives the percentage of young people under supervision who were placed in education, training and employment provision in the financial year 2004 and from April to December 2004 (YJB target 90%).

	<b>% of young people under supervision placed in education, training and employment provision in the financial year 2004 and April – December 2004</b>
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YOT	2003	2004
Bournemouth and Poole	82	86
Cambridgeshire	76	77
Cardiff	51	63
Hammersmith and Fulham	70	72
Hertfordshire	79	81
Islington	73	75
Lewisham	80	79
Luton	75	83
North Somerset	78	81
Nottingham	56	52
Peterborough	68	54
Plymouth	79	77
Somerset	62	76
South Gloucestershire	93	82
Swindon	84	89
Tower Hamlets	81	76
Wiltshire	81	93

As can be seen:

- one YOT area (Wiltshire) met and exceeded the target in 2004
- 10 increased the number of young people in their care accessing education, training and employment
- in around a third (6), the number has gone down decreased.

Reasons for these changes may be a variety of influences in the local environment, both internal and external to the YOT, including:

- the YOT caseload
- availability of external provision
- accessibility of other linked services (such as Connexions).

### ***Issues identified by questionnaire as affecting YOI education***

The following questionnaire responses from these YOTs are presented in their entirety here.

**How do you view the standard of education provided for young people within the YOIs most often used for your YOT?**

*I am aware that the YOI offers a motor vehicle course that provides young people with relevant vocational preparation for when they are released. Practical skills are what they desire most.*

*The educational provision for young people within the YOI most used by the YOT normally ranges from good to very good, dependant upon the following three factors: the level of disengagement prior to DTO commencing; the length of time spent in the relevant YOI to enable education to be seen as a positive step not a negative; and the access to vocational relevant training.*

*Improving.*

*The notion of YOIs providing education in the sense that schools do is a fallacy; a lie which is promoted and/or sustained by the YOI, the HO [Home Office], the YJB, and the Prisons Inspectorate (which contributes to the ease in which courts send young people to custody). The reality is that young people may be given 'activities' to do that are then described as 'education' by the various vested interests, but in terms of quality and quantity of those activities, they do not compare with mainstream education and that provided by most LASCHs [local authority secure children's homes]. If a school were to offer its pupils what was on offer in YOIs there would be a public outcry.*

*Improving – but not specific to individuals needs. We are working with education psychologists to have a more integrated approach to education in and out of custody.*

*I am reluctant to comment, as I have very limited experience of what is on offer as I deal with school-age young people and they tend to be placed in an STC [secure children's home] rather than YOI. On one visit to a YOI as part of my induction I did note frustration on the part of staff because they felt education programmes were more determined by length of sentence and availability of spaces on courses offered rather than the young person's educational needs. I do not know if that is typical.*

*No significant concerns. Previously they weren't able to be very flexible about more able students – who still got basic literacy/numeracy only – and we're not sure if this has changed? Our education worker plans to visit the education wing to gain a better understanding in future. The Connexions PA [personal advisor] is positive about the Level 1 vocational courses on offer, e.g. industrial cleaning.*

*Very inconsistent, it varies from different establishments.*

*Currently young people are not always receiving their full entitlement of hours as staff shortages make it difficult. Both courses and resources were being reviewed and were in a state of change. This made continuity difficult. There seemed to be some confusion about how courses were accredited. Access to GCSE workshops were excellent but access was limited to small numbers within Health and Safety guidelines.*

*We don't feel we have the information or the expertise to comment on this.*

*Good; improving; lack of staff to escort young people to lessons; lack of staff to supervise young people; long waiting lists for appropriate courses; difficulty of engaging disengaged young people.*

*Level of education is good.*

*Basic, but it does re-establish taking part in a learning environment for the young people, which is essential as a building block for changing patterns of disengagement with education and productive routine.*

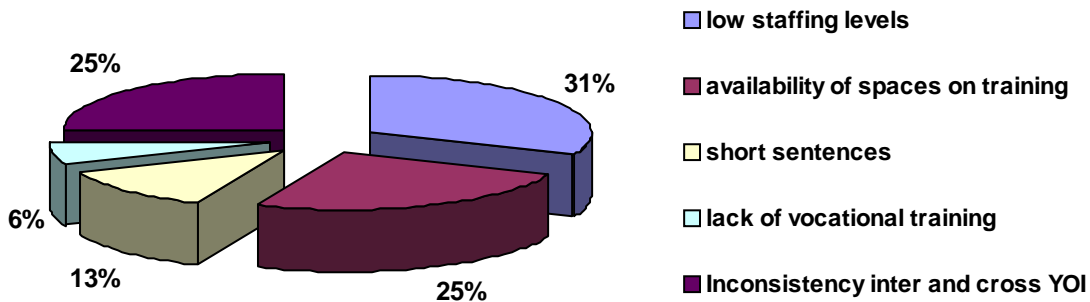
*Little actual evidence to validate a strong opinion since we have not made formal links with any of the YOIs. Anecdotally, an inconsistent service appears to be the pattern, with the general picture being that relatively poor service is provided.*

*This is a difficult one. On paper, they provide well. In fact, they often cannot cope because of short sentences, lack of staff, and no vacancies on useful vocational courses. In addition, security issues seem to dominate educational access, and problems of contacting the YOI often get in the way of clear provision.*

*It varies. The secure units are much better but the YOI never seems to have enough staff to run the groups and often the young people are not made to attend education. They have not always finished the programme that was agreed at the outset because they have had to cancel groups etc because of staffing.*

*We have so few numbers of young people receiving custodial sentences that we are unable to respond to this question*

#### Analysis





Some YOT staff did not feel they knew enough about the standard of education provided within the YOI to comment. Where they did, feedback was diverse, ranging from very good to very bad. Themes that were relatively common are presented in the chart above, the most often mentioned being the impact of low staffing levels in the YOI. Overall, the inability to address individual need (which includes offering vocational training and training at the appropriate level) runs through many responses, either as result of the staffing levels, other procedural pressures within the prison, or in some cases simply the lack of recognition of its value.

In general, responses tend to focus on physical issues and processes rather than the actual education delivered, again perhaps reflecting anecdotal evidence rather than known reality. Some responses do note that they do not have the information because/or they have not made links with the YOI.

**Currently, who is responsible for and how are the young people engaged with education and training when they get out?**

The majority of YOTs cited themselves and/or Connexions as responsible for linking young people to education and training provision on release from custody. On paper, there appear to be protocols and joint working between youth justice and education agencies. However, in practice the role is hindered by patchy and inappropriate provision and unclear response to disengagement.

**How do you view the standard of the resulting training provision in the community?**

*Training providers need to develop more construction, electrical engineering and plumbing courses that will prepare young people for work.*

*Young people on release from DTO/secure state provision are often met with poor-to-good education, training and employment. This will be dependent on the following: lack of education, training and employment provision caused on the grounds of continuity, i.e. post-16 courses not available within the local home area; rural isolation and inability to access appropriate type of education, training and employment provision; and lack of appropriately trained support staff to continue level of support required for young person's successful return/re-engagement to education, training and employment.*

*Variable, depends on availability of educational provision.*

*Variable, depending on the young person's need. If the young person has special educational needs often the placement on offer does not reflect that statement or special need (this is often the case before the young person is sent to YOI). The failure to provide a child/young person with appropriate education is a significant factor in the majority of young people who become persistent or prolific offenders.*

*It is patchy, some very good, and some less than satisfactory. The main issue is that there isn't enough provision. We have worked on an individual basis to keep young people on the school roll while in custody.*

*We have an increasing number of varied local education, training and employment providers, which is encouraging, and can usually slot young people into one or several of them. No formal assessment of the standard of education, training or employment they provide has been conducted.*

*Too often there are delays in obtaining an educational place upon release (the deserving/undeserving argument may apply?). Can also be insufficient hours available even when a place is available. Greater use could be made of the video link at this end by both our education worker and Connexions PA (currently it's out of service at the YOI) to plan for release. Within education, training and employment, a lack of choice is apparent at NVQ Level 1 and below (pre-entry to employment), and more personal development options are needed to help young people prepare meaningfully for employment opportunities.*

*It works well now that the YOT can ringfence the provisions.*

*It is unusual for a young person to be able to return to a mainstream school placement and would usually be inappropriate even if possible, given that GCSE courses are not readily available in all curriculum area in YOIs. Provision is therefore usually in a pupil referral unit and is sometimes less than full time, which is less than satisfactory. Some training courses at Nacro are available for those of school age but, again, are not 25 hours. Post-16 training is available through Nacro and a number of other training providers. The standard is variable, with some courses being externally accredited and some internally. Most qualifications are below GCSE or NVQ Level 2.*

*Patchy. Better provision tends to be oversubscribed. Most doesn't accommodate client group well.*

*Patchy; lack of choices to meet needs; limited range of provision; improving; external providers have difficulty providing what is needed; difficult to comment – we can only comment on the efforts of education workers/the LEA [local education authority] and Connexions to engage young people.*

*Poor. On sentencing, young people are taken off the school roll. On release the legal education minimum is 25 hours. Many young people get far less.*

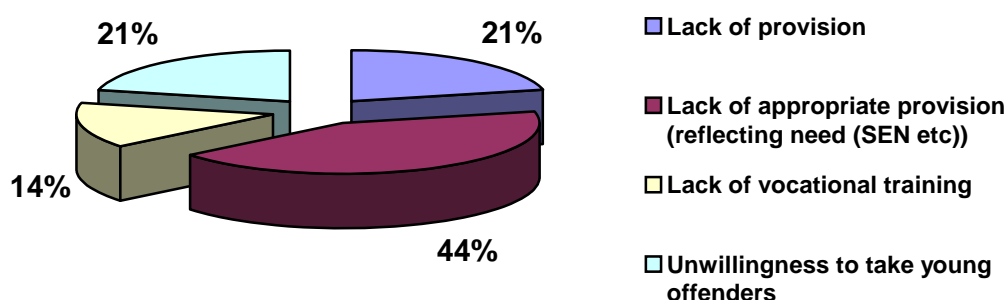
*Insufficient choice and flexibility of programme. Where young people return to the community, for 16 years and over (the majority of DTO sentences), the provision is patchy and short term, including entry to employment.*

*Use of appropriate provision needs to be more consistent. YOT case managers do not tie themselves to agreed protocols, since the absence of designated Connexions personal advisors in the YOI and an educational specialist allocated to the DTO team are hindering the strive for consistency.*

*The provision is improving for post-16s, but it's patchy and subject to short-term funding variations, which are the most important disincentive to everyone. Hands-on vocational training for those with severe literacy difficulties is still in short supply. For school-age young people, an education placement is always available: however, there are problems about its suitability in many cases. Either young people are not happy with the part-time initiation, or they want attractive practical activities that are not available. Vocational courses for post-16s are a particular problem due to funding issues. Co-ordinating exams is also an issue. However, this is part of a planning focus which is leading potential improvements. There is a protocol in place covering young people in the LEA of school age relating to this. A further protocol is in draft for relating to provision of full time hours. In addition, the entry to employment and other courses for the older cohort are still not widely tested and as already said, lack of funding is a problem for the more attractive courses to many of our cohort.*

*This varies. The standard is generally good as long as we can either find them a school place or they are engaged on an alternative programme which is also the responsibility of the Local Authority*

### **Issues identified by questionnaire surrounding education, training and employment/entry to employment provision**



Themes arising around the standard of training provision in the community are represented in the chart above. The main issue arising from the responses is a lack of sufficient provision. Where provision is available, it often appears to be inappropriate for young people who have offended. Another concern is that some training providers are unwilling to take young people who may display challenging behaviour. Some YOTs noted that they were unsure of the quality of what is offered. The overall view is that provision is patchy and inconsistent.

#### **What happens if they disengage?**

*During disengagement period young people are referred on YOT Connexions PAYP key workers recreational activities until they enrol back into training. Alternative support is provided depending on reason behind disengagement.*

*Should a young person becomes disengaged then the following steps should be taken: looking at a young person as an individual with individual needs; looking at a staged approach to re-engaging the young person, which may or may not be around education, training and employment needs; do not expect that one provision fits all; taking a joined up co-ordinated approach in re-engagement of the individual; and we keep trying.*

*There are a variety of panels, which meet to discuss children/young people with education/school issues, which have various degrees of success. They have least success with older young people involved with the YOT, who seem to receive the least service/resources – i.e. the most needy young people receive the least service either in education, training and employment, accommodation or child care support.*

*Further appointments with Connexions, direct support from Connexions personal advisors.*

*We work first to try and sort out the difficulties that have arisen and if insoluble try an alternative provider.*

*Within education, young people are placed on an ‘Alternative Register’ if they disengage, which equates to no provision unless the individual is motivated to return to what’s on offer. Education appear content to allow these situations to continue indefinitely and this group is clearly ‘expendable’. Within education, training and employment, benefits can be affected, which compounds the problem, and often underlying issues such as accommodation, mental health, substance misuse etc. has to be addressed before they can re-engage. More choice regarding basic skills and motivational courses is required to help young people re-engage, and this is a significant issue.*

*No two cases are the same. Disengagement will be looked at to suit the individual.*

*Case managers make strong attempts to keep young people engaged. This includes close liaison with parents and with the education provider. Once disengaged, Education Welfare are informed and their systems are put into place. In the case of young people on an ISSP programme, offending behaviour programmes are delivered by case managers.*

*Usually further alienates them from “the system” (back on the treadmill).*

*Parenting Orders for parents of statutory age children; education Supervision Orders.*

*YOT education, training and employment project – Connexions and education, training and employment worker.*

*Multi-agency working with young person; mentoring; diversionary work; J21.*

*Young person on Statutory Orders who disengage with YOT – breach and return to YOT.*

*A meeting between the LEA and parents/carers takes place with the young person. However, if the LEA do not have an education package pre-sentence to discharge, the risk of a young person not engaging is high. Therefore encouraging inclusion after discharge needs specialist input to help them reintegrate into the education system. For some young people their experience of the LEAs may deem as being inhospitable and not meeting their educational needs in the first place. If this is the case then this should be addressed by the YOT Resettlement Co-ordinator.*

*Followed up by Connexions personal advisors, responsible officers and now the RAP [resettlement and aftercare provision] scheme if they are eligible.*

*Often a delay in identifying next programme and establishing attendance at it.*

*Little upkeep of monitoring attendance. Virtually all classes will be referred to Connexions to ensure that the disengaged do not completely fall out of the system.*

*They are supported in the training provision if it seems that they are starting to disengage, as part of our relationship with the providers, and the problems are addressed both in the YOT and at the provision. Young people are made aware that if they have problems, they should let us know. If they do disengage, they are debriefed and their current needs are reassessed. However, it is quite likely that if they have disengaged, they will not re-engage prior to the end of their orders.*

*Obstacles here are: misunderstanding of what is expected at the placement; unwillingness to be clear in discussions prior to the placement; changing circumstances; and not enough money.*

*For young people in school, disengagement is monitored, and supported by education support worker and YOT encouragement. However, when it is quite wilful, there is little enforcement that is at present available. This is something that is being worked on.*

*If they disengage whilst on licence then we would try to look for alternatives within either the local authority or with private providers that can be funded by the local authority.*

Responses from the questionnaire around disengagement were varied. For young people of school age, more formal resource appears to be invested, but above that age there are few clear or consistent guidelines. Some YOT areas report a standard process, while others are vague. Overall respondents note consistent reasons for disengagement (again, often around inappropriateness of placement or withdrawal of close supervision), but no means to address this with any immediacy. Few (three or four) responses refer to looking more holistically into the individual reasons for disengagement.

**What are the barriers within the different systems (YOI, YOT, external providers) that present difficulties in terms of accessing education and training opportunities?**

*Not enough local training providers available to cater for young people's needs, three months' average waiting time before getting onto vocational courses.*

*The following barriers are felt to exist within YOI, YOT, and external: lack of co-ordinated approach; lack of appropriate education, training and employment provision; lack of trust by education, training and employment providers; discriminatory practice of both pre and post-16 providers; term times and starting mid-year; lack of investment in inclusion.*

*The placements are often inappropriate for the level of ability, readiness, experience etc of the young person.*

*Too high expectations of young people, distance from young person's home to the provider, providers enforce rules too strictly, little attempts by the providers to be proactive in engaging the young person.*

*I can't comment on barriers in YOIs. The fact that I have a generic caseload, albeit small, and am part time is a barrier in the YOT. The difficulties being experienced with pupil behaviour in our local high schools means they are reluctant to take our young people on to their rolls as they are frequently excluded, often permanently.*

*Barriers include: the distance to the YOI; prejudices within the system (the deserving vs undeserving argument); finances – the funding of training for pupils 'off roll', and a DTO equals coming off the roll; training courses fixed – fixed start dates do not coincide with release dates, resulting in delays and frustrations; no access locally to the 'Vulnerable Children's Fund'; and finally. the disruption caused by short, i.e., four-month, sentences.*

*Sharing of information, time scales, resources, support mechanisms, young person's willingness to engage, parental-carer responsibility of processes.*

*The curriculum with schools and pupil referral units is still predominantly academic, and the 'knowledge gaps' that our young people have limit their success with these courses.*

*The structure of out-of-school provision is still very much based on the school environment, which has already often been rejected by the young people.*

*The behaviour of the young people is often difficult to manage within this environment and so they are not always as welcome as they could be!*

*Vocational courses with external providers are often scattered around the city and so difficult to get to for young people who do not have easy access to public transport.*

*Education is often not seen as important by the young people and their families.*

*Client's own attitude is often the biggest barrier.*

*Things at home, peer group etc has not changed while they've been away.  
Slip back into old ways/relationships.*

*education, training and employment providers less than keen to take on  
clients who 'may not have a positive outcome'.*

*Providers not funded/equipped/staffed to deal with hardest to help/behaviour  
issues many of our clients with.*

*ASBOs restrict young people's movements and choices.*

*Pupils being taken off the roll.*

*Lack of appropriate provision.*

*Lack of intensive support.*

*Lack of effective planning that is based on good communication.*

*The view with the LEAs is thus. If the young person did not engage in  
education pre custody, the schools are of the view they will not engage  
following their release and therefore are somewhat reluctant to give some  
young people the benefit, or the opportunity, to re-engage with the education  
system that offers continuity that can engage young people with a mix of  
practical training and not academic opportunities. I am of the view that to  
engage young people requires specialist skills in communicating with this  
particular client group. Another solution would be to provide an education  
package for children and young people whilst in custody by the LEAs. This  
package of education or schoolwork could go with the young person to  
custody and then on their release the work undertaken would go back to the  
LEAs. In my view this would promote continuity in the young persons  
education, pre and post custody.*

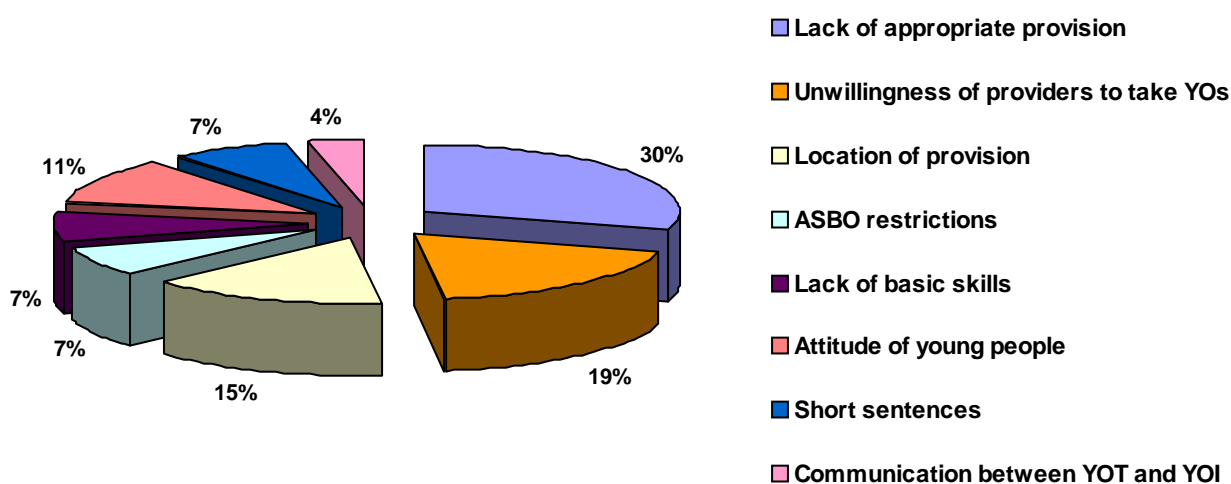
*In my experience the youth service are trained to work with young people.  
The workers may have specialist knowledge and skills to engage young  
people and could in my view fill the gap between formal and informal  
education, thus this could enable young people to reintegrate back into the  
education system and encourage inclusion with various education  
establishments and community links.*

*The lack of training and education opportunities suitable to meet the needs of  
the young people.*

*YOI: Problems with regime expectations (security, clarity); inability to provide sufficient support to the young person's surrounding difficulties; lack of opportunities that are suitable; starting times of courses and length of sentences not corresponding; insufficient staff resources; problems of communication between YOI and YOT, and unwillingness of YOI to take YOT plans seriously. YOT: Insufficient staff to be able to support young people in their placements when things are difficult; inability to translate agreements with young people in the YOT into practical engagement when they are at home; Inability to enforce agreements where there is learned disaffection. External providers: Distance of provider from home; lack of adequate support for literacy combined with effective practical vocational training; insufficient money (leading to young person wanting a job instead); unsupportive environment; lack of appropriate provision.*

*The greatest barriers on release are the lack of school places if the young people are statemented, also the alternative programmes get full very quickly so there are waiting lists. The funding is also quite often an issue.*

### **Systemic barriers to successful engagement with education, training and employment/entry to employment**



Barriers identified are wide-ranging, and while some are shared across the areas, some are specific to a YOT area and environment. There are also differences in the types of barrier identified. The more common group comprises barriers that are logistical:

- prison regime and security
- provision available
- type of sentence
- location restrictions
- current level of young person's ability.



However, the other group contains less immediately obvious barriers, such as:

- lack of, or poor communication between agencies
- labelling and subsequent reception of the young people
- young person's own response to formal education or training

These can be labelled as “external” and “internal” barriers, referring to the physicality of providing and accessing educational opportunities, and the mentality (on the part of both the young people and the agencies) that precludes it.

### ***Summary of issues arising from the YOT email audit***

- There are poor communication and information flows between the YOI and the YOT.
- There is a perceived inability for the YOI to address individual need (which includes offering vocational training and training at the appropriate level), either as a result of the staffing levels, other procedural pressures within the prison, or simply a lack of recognition of its value.
- While the majority of YOTs cited themselves and/or Connexions as responsible for linking young people into education and training provision on release from custody, in practice the role is hindered by patchy and inappropriate provision and lack of clarity over how to respond to disengagement.
- A lack of sufficient provision in the community, in terms of volume or type. Where provision is available it often appears to be inappropriate for young people who have offended, with the variety of issues that are frequently associated with them. Another concern is that some training providers are unwilling to take young people who may display challenging behaviour.
- There are few clear or consistent guidelines for action around disengagement. Some YOT areas report a standard process, while others are not clear. Overall, respondents noted consistent reasons for disengagement, but lacked the means to address these with any immediacy. Few responses refer to looking more holistically into the individual reasons for disengagement.

## The need to fill the educational gap

Research carried out by education workers in HMP YOI Hindley in March 2004<sup>1</sup> support the questionnaire responses discussed in the previous chapter, reporting the following findings from the sample of young people they studied pre and post-release.

- Many YOTs were not receiving pre-release information on the academic abilities of the young people, so could not provide learning providers with an accurate picture of what the young person was capable of, or what matched their need.
- The final DTO focuses on academic achievements gained and does not emphasise movements forward in the community.
- Some qualifications gained within the YOI are not widely available in the community and so have to be discontinued.
- A shortage of vocational courses in the YOI meant that young people may not be fully prepared to experience vocational placements in the community.
- For both pre and post 16s, the main reason for not accessing 25 hours education, training and employment was their reluctance to attend (either school or training provision)

Recommendations specific to over 16s arising from the report include the following.

- More vocational courses to be offered at the YOI, providing greater continuity on release.
- Colleges to be contacted earlier and a possible visit to be arranged with trainee and key worker (release on temporary licence to be considered) to ensure courses are appropriately matched.
- YOTs to be given educational information earlier than is happening at present, and especially notification of SEN and implications for extra support.
- Introduction of a specific exit strategy/assessment from education to support other resettlement work being undertaken.
- Education staff to be more closely involved in the education, training and employment aspects of sentence earlier in the custodial phase of the DTO.

<sup>1</sup> Corless, McCloed, Gallagher (2004) *Monitoring of Provision in the Community Phase of the DTO for trainees from HMP/YOI Hindley*

Clearly, there is both a block in information regarding educational ability, and so a need for different supports feeding through from the YOI into the community, and a failure to prepare young people for vocational placements. This appears to be partly due to each of the following problems:

- lack of appropriate learning provision in the YOI
- lack of matching provision in the community
- lack of timely and comprehensive communication between the YOT and the custodial education department.

The need for a mechanism or series of mechanisms to bridge this gap is very clear: and this is part of where the Learning Alliance has aimed to have an impact, by:

- providing high-quality vocational training, with which young people can engage
- complementing the skills training offered by the education departments
- facilitating the sharing of information between the YOI and the YOT
- working to access and support the young person through an appropriate placement.

Overarching this is the work to identify and break down the young person's personal barriers. It is this combination of aims that makes the work of the pilot a complete response.

## The need to use a holistic approach and personal support

The original evaluation of the pilot (YJT, 2004) included various findings around effectiveness in process, operation and outcomes. Perhaps the most central factor in this, however, was one which, although certainly acknowledged certainly by internal staff and external partners to a degree, was for the most part identified by the young people themselves. The evaluation termed it the “X” factor, an intangible and largely immeasurable element:

*This is not something tangible, such as the design of a programme or the location of a project base, but the essentially intangible and clearly very important components of service provision which invariably relate to the values and integrity which workers bring to the pilot. These ‘things’ are noted by young people as having someone to talk to, being treated respectfully, not having judgements made about them or being treated “like kids”.*

(YJT 2004: 77)

Recent research, rather than ignoring this factor as an awkward obstacle to searching for a verifiable “truth”, is highlighting more and more that it is the most important characteristic in successful approaches, and that operating a programme without it would be a one-sided and ultimately incomplete undertaking.

*The central message that comes across time and time again is that it is not the particular model or techniques used by the Social Worker or Counsellor which are significant but the quality and value of the experience... it is less the specific procedures and techniques and more the opportunity to engage in an active conversation about oneself that brings about understanding and change.*

(Parton and O’Byrne, 2000)<sup>2</sup>

When young people were interviewed for two large-scale pieces of research about which features of project/agency approach they found helpful, the vast majority suggested the following six key guidelines:

- Talk and listen to the young person
- Build a trusting and genuine relationship
- Encourage and praise rather than blame

<sup>2</sup> Parton, N. & O’Byrne, P. (2000) *Constructive Social Work*. London: Macmillan.

- Focus on the future rather than the past
- Take into account background problems
- Offer practical help with addressing problems such as homelessness, unemployment and drug abuse

(Barry 2005)<sup>3</sup>

The Social Exclusion Unit's interim reports on young adults' "transitions" noted that in their consultation exercise with relevant organisations:

*Service providers felt that most clients responded especially well when they had an ongoing relationship with an individual service provider. A good relationship with a service provider allowed people to develop a sense of being safe and with familiar people, providing an environment in which trust and confidence could be built – especially important for clients with self-esteem problems.<sup>4</sup>*

The Learning Alliance approach clearly has good empirical grounding, but it is still in the personal implementation of this, that its effectiveness (or otherwise) can be judged.

<sup>3</sup>Barry, M. (2005) 'A Curriculum by any other name...', *NYA Youth and Policy*, 86, 19-32.

<sup>4</sup> Graham, J. et al (2003) *Making an Impact?* London: National Centre for Social Research.

## The pilot and performance

The performance of Learning Alliance providers was covered in some detail in the original evaluation: here, figures have been updated and compared with those held by partner agencies – in particular, YOTs in the pilot areas.

The following table shows the percentage of young people under supervision on a DTO who were placed in education, training and employment provision in the financial year 2003/2004 and April – December 2004 (YJB target 90%).

LA partner	YOT area	2003	2004	%increase
Nacro	Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Wallsall and Wolverhampton	59%	68%	9
Rathbone	Greater Manchester	57%	63%	6
YMCA	Doncaster*	36%	61%	25

\*Figures used for YMCA training are for Doncaster YOT only. Work with Leeds YOT is on a much smaller scale and YOT education, training and employment figures would skew the true level of operation

As can be seen, in 2004, when the pilot was fully established, performance increased by 9% in the areas covered by Nacro, 6% in those by Rathbone, and 25% in those by YMCA Training. Many factors will have influenced these changes, not least the efforts of other agencies (YOT, Connexions etc) in accessing training: but the fact that the increase is consistent across the three partners suggests some validity in correlating project operation and this outcome. However, when a comparison sample of YOTs in areas of the country without any service of this type is examined, an increase is still apparent.

YOT	2003	2004%	% increase
Nottingham City	51%	57%	6%
Cambridgeshire	62%	64%	2%
Peterborough	44%	55%	11%

On average, these areas saw a 6% increase in the numbers of young people on a DTO going into education, training and employment. Although the increase is equal or higher in the project areas, it is therefore difficult to draw a definite conclusion as to whether increases in the project areas would have occurred without project influence, and it is inadvisable to declare anything more than a correlation based solely on these figures.

## Qualitatively assessing the pilot via partner agency and young people view

The pilot has been operating since August 2003, during which time changes have occurred both in staffing profile and, for some partners, operation. YMCA Training now have a more formal profile in the YOI, and are able to deliver training two mornings and two afternoons a week, while Rathbone have extended to cover all Greater Manchester YOT areas, and Lancaster Farms YOI.

### *Is there a clear need for the project?*

All interview respondents believed there was a definite need for the project.

#### **Young people**

Young people were keen to engage with the programme within custody, and this contact meant that they knew they were coming out to something structured and supportive. The route from training into a job made sense to them; the fact that they have selected the route and not had it chosen for them promotes ownership, and consequently greater engagement with the process. There is recognition that assistance into provision falls into the remit of other agencies, but that for various reasons these agencies weren't able to offer the same level of intense support.

#### **Prison and Community workers**

*Judging by the amount of lads that leave and go onto entry to employment, there is a need. Other agencies don't get them onto courses like this – Connexions has been almost withdrawn.*

*Definitely. Education and employment increases the chance of remaining in stable accommodation etc. It's good having someone to support me – YOT work is just a case management role now.*

*Yes because this sort of work takes a lot of time. We would take them to Connexions then have to leave them.*

#### **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers who gave feedback greatly valued the support for the young person. In many cases they are contacted and kept informed with the progress. Benefits they observed are:

- a better attitude
- more skills
- keeping them out of YOI
- doing something they would not have done on their own.

### ***Is there any extra value to be gained in their approach?***

The additional value of the project is that the focus is not solely on further training opportunities. Many young people who have offended are not immediately ready or able to take part in any form of learning. In acknowledgement of this there is a balance struck between personal support and practical help on the one hand, and education or training on the other. Partners positively accept the process as a continuum, with the end aim being to have resolved many personal and practical issues, developed motivation, and appropriately placed the young person with provision in which they can see the value.

#### **Prison worker**

*An opportunity to try different options. A chance to be successful at something.*

*An opportunity for praise. Individual support to assist them to access the necessary funding quickly. The opportunity to travel to and from college/job/training with an adult. The opportunity to form 'good' habits in relation to day-to-day routines esp. around leisure activities. The availability of one-to-one support/help/guidance in person and on the end of a phone. Regular contact especially in the first few weeks/months of release. The chance to continue the development of their basic skills discreetly.*

Because of this aim, there is a clear need for a particular style of and role for the workers. The fact that they are not from any of the formal agencies has a profound effect on the attitude the young people have towards them, and therefore on the level to which they will engage.

***Project worker:** Building the relationship especially makes such a difference. You're genuinely there to help. Because we don't work for the prison they seem to open up to us a lot more, because we're not forcing them to do anything. They learn to trust a professional – it's hard for them because they've always been forced. We can tap into other areas they need help with, family stuff etc.*

Many of the young people working with the projects have chaotic lives. Such personal circumstances are often indicative that they are also at risk of disengaging at any point. The project counters this by sustaining support for longer periods than many other provisions, and looking at all issues in order of presenting need, as is illustrated by the following quotes from prison and community workers:

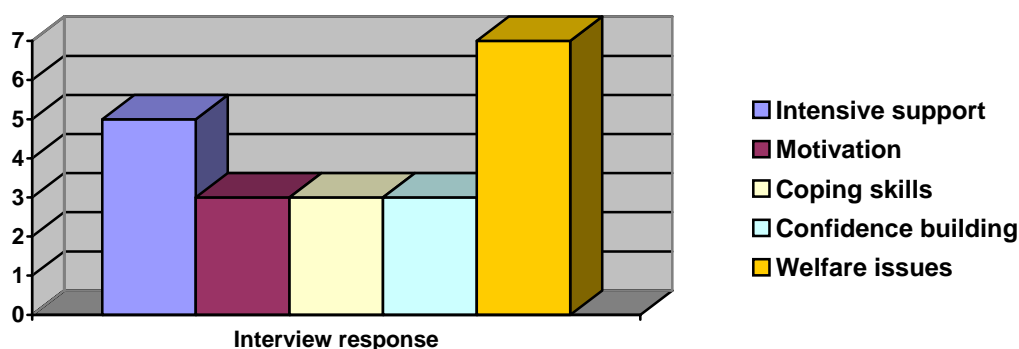
*The aim is to enhance entry to employment but it's got to occur for a longer time than the first day of release.*



*To do it properly it has to be a cohesive affair. YOTs are under-resourced to do it – caseloads are very high. There has to be flexibility – there’s no point pushing for entry to employment if they have no accommodation. They need intensive support when they get out – prioritising whatever comes up and managing the whole of their life. The transition between custody and community is very important. It’s not always appropriate for young people to go straight into entry to employment, some need to get other stuff sorted.*

*It’s not a mentoring relationship, more like a professional mate. We go the extra step – trying to break down barriers – go to the job centre with them etc, reminding other agencies of their responsibilities for them.*

### **What additional support do young people need in order to engage them?**



Most respondents noted the need for close one-to-one work, claiming it raised trust and showed value for the young person. The single individual rather than whole-agency profile appears to encourage engagement through de-formalising the relationship and focusing on individual need as it presents.

#### **Prison and Community workers**

*Intense one-to-one support. One person to work with who will support them when they get out. Mentoring and advocacy. Work on multiple and complex issues.*

*Intensive support is the way to work with young people – or the offer of it. Need to have a very close eye on them – the one-to-one approach. You have to show young people that you really care and listen to what they want and have responsibility to direct them as well. Consistency. Working with parents is good as well.*

*Coping and motivation skills. Teenagers need that and we’re dealing with the most troubled. Many of them haven’t engaged with anything for so long. We talk the language but don’t do “individual need” enough, i.e. we need to address getting them to make up with their family and get off drugs. Even if they’re not ready for entry to employment, it can show them that there’s stuff out there for them.*

## **What is the extra value in this approach?**

### **Prison and Community workers**

*The hand-holding. They have an interest in young people and a passion in it. It's what a good parent might do and is jigsawed into the delivery*

*They're very visible in the YOI – coming in a lot and doing group work. They do an accredited course in communication. Always positive and happy – it works well with the kids.*

*They pursue the young person and understand them. The young person sees someone from entry to employment and knows it's important. entry to employment can speak to the young person in a way that they can engage with.*

*Young offenders often don't know the range of options available to them or how to access education, training and employment. They frequently have low self-esteem and/or poor skills and require additional support to engage. Young offenders have, in the main, poor basic skills, limited key skills, in particular communication skills and a poor self-image.*

*Entry to employment gives our young people a choice, which they wouldn't necessarily have. They need to be able to try out a variety of options and know that when they do not like/enjoy/succeed it's OK and they won't be regarded as having failed.*

As well as the personal support and the particular way of working with and engaging the young person, respondents noted an additional benefit to them in the way the project shares information. Good communication and joint-working facilitates the delivery of work by all partners and therefore improves the service to the young person. Furthermore, disengagement is not accepted as final and inevitable. Young people are followed up if they disengage, and alternative packages are offered if the original option did not fit. Entry to employment is offered as a process rather than a one-off opportunity.

### **Learning styles**

The need for close working is also apparent in the learning provided by the project. All three project partners operate both one-to-one and small-group work within the prison (generally groups of eight or less). There are three reasons for this:

- practical concerns, in terms of prison security and regime
- optimum group size for learning
- the confidence levels of the young people and the need for them to feel secure.

## Young people

Within groups of boys and young men generally, there are issues of masculinity and bravado (Brown 1998):<sup>5</sup> and these can be substantially amplified within the custodial population. According to young people themselves, teaching in groups appears to be successful where it is done sensitively and with unobtrusive control.

### How do you find it easiest to learn?

### What would put you off?

One-to-one. When I'm in a group I get easily distracted	Nothing
Their class is alright – I prefer it to education. There's only a few people so you can chat to them and you don't mess around	Doing things I'm not interested in. Putting me in the top set – things I wasn't capable of
Group work	Nothing – everything's alright
Group work	The classroom set-up
It doesn't bother me	Being told what to do
I don't know. I hate sitting around other people. It feels weird in prison sitting with other people you're on the wing with	People laughing if you can't read or write
Practical stuff – woodwork and that	Sometimes I just can't be bothered
I used to be able to understand things myself but this time round (third time inside) it's not working the same	When there's blocks in my head and when I can't concentrate. If I can't understand I want things explaining to me straight away – not much patience. Waiting does my head in

Previous negative experience of education has often created barriers to learning. Alliance providers appear to be successful where they adopt significantly different styles (although not necessarily always different content) in order to counter this. Styles that work might be generally termed 'pro-social', in that they model the behaviours which they seek to encourage. For the young people involved, fear of exposure, of being ridiculed and of looking "stupid" often run parallel to this.

## Types of learning

Currently, prison education and entry to employment are physically and materially separate. Some of the skills covered by both are in the same areas, but by different means; other skills (vocational) are accessed by entry to employment only. Generally, the young people don't see themselves as being "taught" in entry to employment, but are aware that they have learned something. The average age of disengagement from school of the young people interviewed was 14, and the majority of this was via exclusion. Classroom settings and large groups can therefore be immediately alienating.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, S. (1998) *Understanding Youth and Crime: Listening to Youth?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

## Young People

*I thought this was going to be like school but this is better because they don't treat you like kids.*

*None of the entry to employment staff get on your nerves. Teachers shout, it doesn't happen here, they don't talk to you like teachers.*

*I thought (school) was s\*\*t – being told what to do and when to do it and if I didn't do it I'd get in trouble. I think this is alright now, helps you learn things. I'm not interested in college though.*

*I didn't know what I expected but it 's good here. I didn't like school but I like this – they don't tell you what to do – it's your own choice.*

*Yes, because on entry to employment it's more like working – they treat you more like work would treat you.*

## Prison and community workers

*In many cases it's about confidence – often young people compare it to a negative experience of education at school. It's a negotiated procedure between staff and trainee to assess the preferred learning style. There's a need for close, one-to-one work done through key workers*

*Young offenders are not traditional learners. They are wary of exposing themselves in a situation, hence the need for one-to-one.*

While all internal and external staff saw the importance of basic skills, the majority of respondents identified an immediate need to either offer alongside or prioritise practical and vocational training:

*[We need] Vocational training – the lads are asking for it. There's only a few choices they can make, none of the lads like education.*

*[We need] Better accommodation – there's no decent accommodation for vocational training. They could do eight hours a day instead of the hotchpotch, because you can only have four in the morning and four in the afternoon. They could bring in more outside people, i.e. tradesmen, and also bring in teachers who are trained in engaging and dealing with difficult behaviour and can do hands-on one-to-one all the time.*

*We're doing more on preparing someone to be in the community, as well as preparing them to be on a course. They have to learn how it's acceptable to behave. Education complement us in that we use their assessment. Education is very subject-focused – there are very few choices, and the popular ones are quickly gone. It doesn't work for the individual.*

*Many young people have been excluded or stopped attending, and we're pushing them back into education. There would be better links if more vocational elements were pushed.*

**Do you think entry to employment could usefully be subsumed into prison education, or are there gains in keeping it separate?**

*It needs to be plugged in. Because we're trying to hit the target for 30 hours a week we're using every room – entry to employment has to be done on the landing. entry to employment and education need to go hand-in-hand – they're very separate at the moment. There's not enough in the course to keep their attention. If it was integrated, methods of delivery could be changed and feedback gained on the quality of what's delivered. The link between education and work gives education a purpose*

*It's going to be – I can't see the point in having two routes to the same thing. The question is whether there is a need for a bolt-on contract*

*There are more benefits in keeping them separate. The employment strand should be kept separate so that it doesn't dilute the education side, and so that the right balance for both can be maintained*

*Absolutely. It would be better to be part of the system – but part of one that works. If young people do entry to employment in Hindley but don't go out to entry to employment, they've still benefited. It's quite flexible – budgeting, benefits, consequential thinking and job search.*

*It needs to be. We have to get them to at least read and write, and on the other side have much more vocational training. There should be a service level agreement.*

The predominant view is that there needs to be available one integrated system of delivering the necessary basic skills, including coping and behavioural skills as well as reading and writing, and practical vocational training. If this were delivered according to an agreed and co-ordinated system, overlap and duplication could be avoided and, equally, skills gaps filled. Much of the failure in information-sharing can be seen as the result of having two separate services providing separate input and using separate means, but trying to achieve a single end. Inevitably there are tensions and a reluctance to join up intervention, particularly when there are different performance targets to be met from the same client group, and when one intervention may appear to negate the other.

*It's absurd that there are so many organisations attempting to do the same thing with the same individuals. They're precious to their own needs and that creates barriers to communication and creates a hierarchy. There are internal politics and it's confusing to the lads.*

*Most of what we do is too targeted, everybody's after their points for targets. Prison targets v YOT targets. It isn't a seamless sentence in that respect.*

## Systemic blocks

**What are the barriers to engagement that exist as part of the system, both within and without the YOI?**

*Entry to employment providers making guidelines too narrow – don't want young offenders. Relevant activities not in place when they leave here – provision not available.*

*Practitioners are overstretched. Some young people get more attention than others. Sometimes young people are not in the right frame of mind – maybe they have mental health problems or learning difficulties.*

*Anti-social behaviour orders – they can't travel on public transport etc. Accommodation and accommodation services. Inter-agency working between YOT, Social Services and housing.*

*Specialist mental health care. Mental health services won't commit themselves because they're cautious of young people between 15 and 19 being at a mentally changeable age. Therefore mental health issues are not properly recognised and staff have to deal with this in a normal environment, which is also distressing and disruptive for other young people.*

*The entry to employment remit – they don't want young offenders.*

*Very poor basic skills and very bad view of education.*

The systemic barriers to entry to employment identified by those interviewed are apparent throughout the questionnaire, as well as from this specific question. The issues raised in the areas where the pilot is operating are similar to those identified by questionnaire in the YOT areas without the range of provision (see above).

However, in the pilot areas a resource is provided whereby time and intensive scrutiny of the issues can be invested, and joined-up action planned and implemented accordingly. This means many of the issues can be positively addressed rather than accepted without recourse.

A possible further barrier may be seen as both existing in, and resulting from the level of communication between the project and the provider, and the YOT as the judicatory supervisor and the provider. Blocks at this stage can often be less visible, as agencies are physically separate and workers are often difficult to contact. Breakdown of relationship between agencies can be a result of poor communication, and result in loss of contact with the young person without it being reported, and therefore without the possibility of remedial action.

## Interviews with staff who provide training for employment

The transition to external provision is a crucial point of the “learner journey”. It is therefore the stage at which the project aims to taper the level of support in order to encourage greater independence. It is also a point at which young people are at greater risk of disengagement unless project and provider communicate closely and regularly.

A sample of providers from each of the three areas were interviewed to gauge the level of understanding of the project, and the level of communication between project and provider.

### **Are you aware of what the entry to employment National Offender pilot is set up to do?**

*It's a seamless approach to young offenders transferring from YOI to the outside world. All being commenced at one point and carrying on.*

*They're released from custody and passed on to continue preparing for job-readiness.*

*Yes, I have experience of the young people coming through from them.*

*To get young people who come out from YOI into training.*

*To get provision for offenders when they come out.*

*To work with young people before they're released. To work as a link person and set up provision depending on how things have worked out on the inside.*

*To give a taste of entry to employment training. To carry on entry to employment training on release – should be seamless. Continuity.*

*To try to progress young offenders into training, college, or a job.*

*Yes, because we have close dealings with them. I know they support young people in custody and when they come out.*

### **Do you receive a copy of the passport before/when the young person comes?**

*No, we get standard paperwork.*

*Yes.*

*Yes.*

*Yes, as soon as they come out.*

*No.*

*At times referral forms will be provided before or during the induction.*

*Yes it comes with them.*

*Yes I saw the passport at the YOI (when I attended the review meeting).*

*Yes.*

*Yes, we see the passport before they start and then we interview.*

**Do you feel you get sufficient information about the young person's abilities?**

*Yes.*

*Not about the young person's abilities.*

*Yes, I probably get more information about young offenders than the general young people we take.*

*Yes.*

*Not really, we carry out our own assessments.*

*Yes.*

*Yes, I was in attendance at the review at Hindley's education block.*

*We carry out assessments ourselves. It's difficult to judge their abilities as it's an ongoing process as the young person progresses.*

*Yes, because they've had an initial assessment.*

**Do you feel you get sufficient information about the young person's personal circumstances?**

*Yes.*

*It's mixed – we find out things as they progress.*

*Yes, I have to say I've got a really good working relationship with the project.*

*Yes.*

*I get information over the telephone.*

*We've got a good working partnership, an honest transfer of information. We adhere to a good practice of information-sharing.*

*Yes.*

*No.*

*Yes, the only thing that has come up is some of the issues around why they were inside. In terms of risk we'd like to know information regarding the offence – only if it's relevant.*

*It's mixed – we find out things as they progress.*

*Not necessarily because they work on a one to one basis. The project workers don't necessarily know how the young people will behave in bigger groups. Often they behave differently.*

**Do you feel you get sufficient information about the young person's behaviour?**

*Not the full picture of the young person's behaviour, but perhaps their behaviour changes between the institution and outside training.*

*Yes. We've started getting information.*



*Yes, I can ring and ask if anything happens.*

*Yes, good information. The ones we've had have been well-behaved.*

*No.*

*Yes.*

*Yes.*

*Yes, what was available.*

**To what level does the worker keep in touch with you/the young person?**

*Good contact. They ring when necessary and get regular updates.*

*They keep in touch if issues arise. We work collaboratively if there are problems. They'll ring and ask if the lad is attending and chase him up.*

*It varies. If we've already worked through the issues with them and they know the level of support we can offer, they keep less contact.*

*They keep in touch quite well.*

*There's no contact.*

*There are formal reviews and informal links.*

*They're kept informed.*

*They visit and keep telephone contact after the referral.*

*If the young person is referred to mainstream entry to employment, there is an eight-week support from the pilot. They're very visible, and if they have placed a young person with us they attend our weekly team meetings to ask how they're getting on.*

**Do you see barriers to entry to employment for young people who have offended? What are they?**

*Young people face problems with confidence and self-esteem. Employers don't want to employ them. They don't perceive their prospects as very good, and this has a knock-on effect on motivation. There are accommodation issues or issues around family breakdown.*

*The YOT don't provide information or support. The support is withdrawn after the young person is passed over to entry to employment, although this project is better than other referrers.*

*Young people's social skills need to develop. There's a lot of bravado but inside they're feeling dreadful. There's no pastoral support – after the DTO they're on their own. The helping agencies are very disjointed.*

*The help and support is far greater for non-offenders. People are referred because they're told to – they're not motivated and disengage from training once the supervision has ended, we're a dumping ground.*

*The reputation of the young person follows them. They don't see it as a stepping stone for themselves and they see the trainers as part of the regime. We need to change the perception of education away from it being part of an authoritarian order and towards something that will benefit them.*

*In prison they're a captive audience, and once they're out they have freedom to decide how they participate.*

*Placement is a different environment and a big difference in discipline.*

*They're no different to any other young people on entry to employment who've dropped out of school.*

## **Summary**

The following points can be made.

- All providers had some idea of the aim of the project, but some had more understanding than others.
- Seven out of nine reported that they received the entry to employment passport either before the young person started, or that it came with them.
- Two providers felt they did not get sufficient information about the young person's abilities, and one believed they did not receive enough information about their personal circumstances.
- Three providers felt they were not given much information about the young person's behaviour, although in two of these cases this was thought to be largely because of the difficulty of knowing how the young person would translate to the setting and group training provided in the community.

In terms of follow-on contact from the pilot, only one respondent stated that there was none. Overall, a good relationship appears to exist, with information shared quickly and appropriately; but constant attention is needed to ensure that this remains so. All workers (project and provider) need feedback on both the short and long-term effectiveness of this approach in order to see the purpose and value of their input and remain motivated by what they are doing.

## Resource implications

Any programme that provides an intense amount of provision to a low number of users is unavoidably costly. Not only does the project have to operate now: it also has to store up provision for the young person to cope with future experience when it is absent.

***Prison Service representative:** What we need to figure out is that these projects are resource intensive – chaotic people and low attainment levels. We need ongoing training on coping skills, behaviour management, motivation etc. They're not always going to have one-to-one support, so back-up on coping skills is really important. Real intense engagement and support initially is very necessary.*

The project has two central “invest to save” advantages:

- it lifts the pressure on other public services (the YOT, and so on) in the short term
- by giving the young people the skills they need to work it may reduce levels of unemployment benefits paid and reduce a risk of recidivism.

The budget for the first year of project operation was set at £1,000,000. Rathbone and Nacro, as the two larger project partners, each received 40% of this, while YMCA Training received 20%.

In order to calculate a simple unit cost for the pilot, set-up costs have been deducted. These include:

- Learning and Skills Development Agency consultancy/training
- recruitment of staff teams
- launch event
- evaluation and executive summary
- local dissemination events
- local training/team-building
- lead-in period networking
- hosting and servicing contract and steering group meetings
- production and printing of promotional materials.

With these expenses deducted, the budget stood at £833,000.

The costs were then broken down by the three key periods of project activity:

- initial contact, where the young person is engaged with, assessed and introduced to the entry to employment project
- the period when the young person starts on entry to employment, within custody or the community
- continuation on the entry to employment project on release from custody.

In the first year of project operation, 639 young people were contacted. Of these, 335 started on entry to employment within custody or the community; and from these 335, 150 continued on the pilot on their release from custody. In order to work out the unit costs, an average number of hours spent in each period has been assigned. Clearly, depending on the specific needs of each individual these are not set and will vary. However, notionally:

- the contact period constitutes one hour of activity
- the start takes 5 hours of activity
- the continuation represents 30 hours of activity.

Therefore the following calculation can be made.

Activity	Hours taken	Budget (£833,000) divided by total hours used	Unit cost	Grand total (unit cost x number of young people)
Contact	639 x 1 = 639	833,000 / 6814 = hourly cost of £122.25	£122.25	£78,117
Start	335 x 5 = 1675		£611.25	£204,768
Continuation	150 x 30 = 4500		£3,667.50	£550,125
<b>Total</b>	<b>6814</b>		<b>£4,401</b>	<b>£833,010</b>

As the formula is calculated by hours, and the activities are cumulative, a young person who does not proceed from a contact will cost £122.25, a young person who moves onto a start will cost £733.50 and a young person moving successfully through the project to entry to employment will cost £4,401.

There are, however, costs after the continuation period, as the learner progresses from the pilot: to keep a mainstream entry to employment place open and filled for a year costs £9,878, and that place will serve two young people, equalling £4,939 each. In estimating an overall cost for the whole of the process for the pilot client group, these further costs have to be considered. As a crude measure therefore, it could be gauged that the successful completion process for the pilot client group costs in the region of £9,340 per capita (£4,401 + £4,939).

The percentage of those leaving the pilot in its first year to go to a positive destination was 48% (pilot statistics), whereas the proportion leaving mainstream entry to employment at the pathfinder stage (2002/03) to a positive destination was 29% (LSC statistics).<sup>6</sup> In short, the client group for the pilot are harder to reach and engage, more costly to provide an appropriate service for, but once engaged, are 65% more likely to stay the course and positively benefit to a higher degree. When taking into account the wider picture, pay-offs to investment in this area of work are seen to be great and wide-ranging.

The provision of suitable employment is the most significant single factor in young people's desistance from crime. Without desistance, and assuming a court appearance, the cost including case preparation is put at £8,712 *per appearance*. Where this results in a further prison sentence, this is costed at £102,810.<sup>7</sup> Leaving aside crime, the impact of not being in education or employment includes:

- higher unemployment
- lower earnings
- higher teenage pregnancy
- higher incidence of ill-health
- higher incidence of drug abuse.

The cost to the national economy of being not in employment, training and education is put, conservatively, at £97,000 over the lifetime of any such individual.

<sup>6</sup> LSDA (2004) *Evaluation of Entry to Employment pathfinders and Initial Phase of National Establishment*

<sup>7</sup> *Youth Justice 2004*, a review of the reformed youth justice system by the Audit Commission

## Summary and conclusion

This report sets out to answer specific questions around the role of inreach entry to employment for young people who have offended. It builds on an original evaluation concentrating on the nationally piloted provision of entry to employment to offenders by the Learning Alliance, which initially ran from August 2003 to August 2004. The activity was found to be valuable and was further funded by the Learning Skills Council and YJB to run until August 2005. This extension to the original evaluation is funded by the YJB and was undertaken between February and May 2005.

The aims of the Learning Alliance were to effect:

- an increase in the number of young offenders accessing and sustaining community-based entry to employment provision and going on into appropriate further education, work-based learning or employment destinations
- the provision of a seamless transition of learning from a custodial to a community-based provision
- the identification and minimisation of barriers to learning and, more specifically, to entry onto entry to employment provision
- an improvement in the achievement rates of young people who have offended accessing learning provision through this route.

Its success in each of these aims is now considered.

### **An increase in the number of young offenders accessing and sustaining community-based entry to employment provision and going on into appropriate further education, work-based learning or employment destinations**

The Learning Alliance has worked substantively (which here means covering the contact, start and continuation periods) with around 800 young people to date. It is not possible to know definitively if these young people would have received and sustained an education, training and employment or entry to employment service if they had not been on the pilot, but estimations of “uplift” from the baseline alongside retention rates (see ‘Resource Implications’ above) suggests that the increase resulting from their operation may be as much as 65% more than YOT entry to employment impact

### **The provision of a seamless transition of learning from a custodial to a community-based provision**

Qualitative evidence gathered through extensive interviews with all relevant partners and the young people receiving a service indicates that this has been successfully achieved. There is still a need to concentrate effort and multi-agency planning on ensuring that the custody and community provisions match more closely and follow logically for each individual, but overall the transition is timely and linear.

### **The identification and minimisation of barriers to learning, and more specifically to entry onto entry to employment provision**

Rigorous assessment and an ongoing close relationship with the young person have meant that barriers can be identified as and when they present themselves, and the wide-ranging support offered by project workers then works to minimise or remove the block. Advocacy, close networking and communication with the other partners to the process (prison staff, YOT, entry to employment providers, etc) provide further ways of tackling the issues without risking duplication or unintended damage.

### **An improvement in the achievement rates of young offenders accessing learning provision through this route**

Pilot statistics show that in the first full year of operation, 48% of young people leaving the pilot made a “positive leave” (going on to a positive destination), compared with 29% of young people on the mainstream entry to employment pathfinder.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Aim of the extension***

The key purpose of extending the evaluation was to find out more about the value and appropriateness of both pre-entry to employment support and provision, and entry to employment itself as an education and training route for young people moving from custody to the community.

Discussion and conclusions to the specific questions are below, drawing from a multi-faceted methodology and a wide range of respondents, including:

- YOT areas without the type of service developed by the pilot
- agencies involved in education and crime reduction in the areas where the project is operating
- young people receiving support from the project.

### ***Is additional funding required to engage young people in custody in education?***

The education provided in the YOI is largely seen as well-resourced in financial terms: but the majority view is that it is lacking in the type of learning it offers. While the basic skills taught are valued, vocational and trade training are overwhelmingly seen as an element that, although highly necessary and appropriate, is currently missing. This type of provision would necessitate different training materials, different and additional trainers and in some circumstances, different subjects.

<sup>8</sup> Both sets of statistics were taken from the first year of operation to allow for similar experiences and effects of set-up and operation. As the pilot works to “leave the door open” for young people who may not have been able to continue with E2E to re-join later, it is likely that the percentage of positive leaves is not static and will be higher in the longer term

The provision of vocational training within custody of the same level and quality as that provided in the community would require a substantial financial investment, affecting all facets of prison operation. However, a level may be reached whereby the theory, preparatory work and operational basics could be undertaken, with a view to continuing more workshop-based training on release. This model has been introduced and is currently being provided to a certain extent by the Learning Alliance through their practical training programmes, including job search and application training, social and coping skills, and planning and budgeting.

Further to this is the identification and timely link into appropriate provision on release. While the training in the YOI is largely generic, some young people are able to carry out written project work on an area of their own interest, thereby allowing those who wish to specialise early on to do so, and those who do not to “try out” the different specialisms on release without the feeling that they have signed up to and used their one chance. As the project develops it may, alongside the Prison Service, have the opportunity to consider how it can provide more mechanical training for those who are clear about their desired route, so as to lessen the risk of disengagement for this group of young people.

From the YOT audit and from responses to interview it appears that there is a need and a will for this type of work to be available. In order to sustain what is already in place and to develop it further additional funding is crucial: partly to tailor further the provision of practical training, partly to introduce and develop the more hands-on trade training, but predominantly to maintain the staffing levels required to provide as intense support as the project currently does. The first evaluation of this project found that the level and range of support the project workers were able to offer was a determining factor in the engagement and therefore the progression of the young people.

***Do some learners need additional support (high staffing ratios, more one-to-one, small group-work sessions, development of personal and social skills) before they can be engaged?***

The majority of interview respondents (including young people and external providers) noted one-to-one work and personal and practical support as key factors in engaging young people. Individual need appears to be best met with individual work. One-to-one and small group work in education is effective in decreasing or removing embarrassment or the fear of ridicule, which can be preclusive to participation, and personal and practical support on an individual basis shows value and removes barriers. Personal support and ‘pro-social’ styles are not a component of a package of intervention, but rather a way of working which threads through all project undertakings.



***Is a pre-entry to employment type of provision necessary before this group of young people can be effectively engaged with entry to employment proper?***

A pre-entry to employment type of provision is very necessary for the majority of young people in or leaving custody. Most of these young people not only lack basic educational skills but also have multiple deficits in other areas, the importance of which should not be underestimated. Managing themselves and their responsibilities through planning, budgeting, communicating and behaving appropriately and underpinning this with learned coping skills can facilitate the chances of progressing further. They need to be “entry to employment-ready” in order to have the best chance of being accepted onto a course, and keeping the place.

***What are the systemic barriers that exist? How can they be overcome?***

Logistical barriers identified by audit and interview included the following:

- provision available
- type of sentence
- location restrictions
- prison regime and security
- current level of ability.

Intangible barriers identified by audit and interview included:

- lack of, or poor communication between agencies
- labelling and subsequent reception of the young people
- young people’s own response to formal education or training.

The logistical barriers can be overcome or impacted upon by:

- a governmental undertaking to fund more entry to employment provision
- an established target set for entry to employment providers to ring fence and offer places for young offenders
- national guidelines around how Anti-Social Behaviour Order restrictions are framed and used, with an understanding that they need to complement rather than undermine opportunities for young people to access and sustain training opportunities
- a formalised prison/project protocol to agree and establish where and when entry to employment work takes place

- a centralised information filing system housed with the resettlement unit, which all agencies add to (an example of this currently operates in Hindley YOI).

The following factors may have an impact on the intangible barriers:

- the establishment of local resettlement steering groups, which work initially to develop an information-sharing protocol
- joint local training in working with young people with providers
- regular consultation and formative evaluation with young people taking part in the programme, with a view to gathering thoughts and ideas and developing the programme accordingly
- drop-in or ‘taster’ sessions being offered to young people who do not wish to take part in the programme, so they can see and participate in what is offered without feeling immediately committed

### **What additional value does the Learning Alliance provide?**

“Additional value” is defined here as something extra to what the project was designed to achieve. The success of the project is the subject of the original evaluation, and the pilot achieved a high level of success when measured against the aims and objectives.<sup>9</sup> Added value is discussed here under three further sub-headings.

### **What happens when this type of provision is not available?**

This extended evaluation has considered what is available to a wide range of YOTs who do not operate within the pilot geographical area, and do not benefit from similar kinds of assisted development of education, training and employment issues. There were replies from 17 YOTs, ranging from city teams in Cardiff and London to rural teams in Wiltshire and Somerset. The key gaps which emerge from areas without this type of provision, and which have been filled for partners who have worked with the national entry to employment pilot, include:

- the time gap between young people leaving prison and finding something constructive in the community
- the range of resource (largely a concern that there is not appropriate or sufficient work-based training)
- the ability to meet the needs of young people in terms of one-to-one support.

<sup>9</sup> *The Learning Alliance National E2E Offender Pilot Final Evaluation Report*, August 2004. Youth Justice Trust

### What are the cost benefits?

The costs of establishing pilot provision are generally higher than the costs of a routine delivery of service, as they involve one-off set-up costs such as recruitment, equipment and training costs. Measured against the first full year of operation, the pilot can be roughly said to have cost:

- £122.25 for an initial contact/assessment of each young person
- £733.50 for each young person who started entry to employment provision
- £4,401 for each young person who stayed the course and progressed positively.

This can be compared (again only notionally, because different economies of scale apply and the costs of an entry to employment placement are additional to this), to a cost of entry to employment in mainstream provision of £4,939. When the cost of a placement is added to the costs of the pilot, it can be seen that the pilot process costs more than mainstream entry to employment alone. However, this type of twofold service is crucial for the client group, who are:

- considerably more difficult to reach
- less likely to have finished formal education (the previous evaluation found that, where known, 91% of young people receiving help from the pilot were in this position)
- once engaged, more likely to stay engaged
- 65% more likely to finish entry to employment with a positive outcome.

More globally, it can be noted that the provision of suitable employment is the most significant single factor in young people's desistance from crime. Without desistance, and assuming a court appearance, the cost (including case preparation) is put at £8,712 *per appearance*. Where this results in a further prison sentence, this is costed at £102,810 per year.<sup>10</sup> Leaving aside crime, the cost to the national economy of being not in employment, training and education is put, conservatively, at £97,000 over the lifetime of any such individual.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Youth Justice 2004*, a review of the reformed youth justice system by the Audit Commission

<sup>11</sup> *Estimating the cost of being "Not in Education, Employment or Training" at age 16 to 18* by the Universities of York and Hull for the DfES in 2002. DfES Research Brief 346

**What does the Learning Alliance bring to this work that has helped the success of the pilot?**

Taking the evaluation and extended evaluation together, the key added value appears to be best understood as the programme culture. The original evaluation noted the close personal support and value of the relationships between staff and young people as providing a critical 'X factor'. As well as the personal support and the particular way of working with and engaging the young person, respondents noted the additional benefit to them of the way the project shares information. Good communication and joint-working facilitates the delivery of work by all partners, and therefore the service to the young person. Where the project invested time in inter-agency working and communication, the YOTs in particular note the extra support in managing the demands on them in terms of their high caseloads. Furthermore, disengagement is not accepted as final and inevitable. Young people are followed up if they disengage, and alternative packages are offered if the original option did not fit.

Entry to employment is offered as a process rather than a one-off chance opportunity, and young people do not immediately feel that they have been given up on. In short, it would appear that Learning Alliance partners understand and have an interest in the needs of young people who are also offenders. They go on to demonstrate this in their interactions with these young people in a way which produces results.

Overall, the project has developed since the original evaluation, and after some introductory difficulties is now operating in a way that is sensitive to its surroundings, particularly within the YOIs. As a model and a method of working it has been welcomed by all agencies in the resettlement process, and appears constructively to engage young people who are typically considered to be the most difficult to reach, and in ways that appear to have both short and long-term benefits.