Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Trials: Phase 1 Evaluation Final Report

Isos Partnership

Department for Education

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

1. The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training until at least 18 by 2015 and until the end of year in which young people turn 17 in 2013. Achieving full participation of young people in education or training until 18 will require all parts of the education system to play their part. Ultimately however, it will be Local Authorities (LAs) that will be responsible for ensuring that young people in their area participate and for providing the support young people need to overcome barriers to learning.

2. Many Local Authorities, with their 14-19 Partnerships, are already planning how they will achieve full participation by 2013/2015. To support preparations for the delivery of Raising the Participation Age (RPA) the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, now known as the Department for Education, or DfE) decided that it wanted to work with a small group of areas on how best to trial elements of RPA during 2009/10. Ten Local Authorities and one sub region were identified to take part in the first phase of the Trials from September 2009 to April 2010. A second phase will run from April 2010.

3. The RPA Phase 1 Trials seek to build on existing planning and enhance knowledge and good practice in some specific areas. The Trial areas selected were asked to focus on one of three specific areas during the Trial period:

    a)   How Local Authorities can work most effectively in securing a **full** IAG offer for young people to support the Raising of the Participation Age;

    b)   How Local Authorities can plan and deliver a system, building on the September Guarantee, that effectively picks up those 16 and 17 year olds that disengage with learning through the year and re-engages them in education or training

    c)   The development of an area wide strategy to enable full participation of all young people in education or training. This model will assess the overall challenges, barriers and implement solutions at a local level.

4. Trial areas began working on these themes from September 2009, although in some cases there were delays in starting the Trial for a variety of reasons. Phase 1 finished formally at the end of March 2010, although again in many Trial areas Phase 1 activity is planned to continue beyond the end of March 2010 and these areas will need to continue to monitor their impact. Phase 2, with an expanded number of areas, begins in April 2010 and runs until April 2011.

5. Isos Partnership were commissioned by the DCSF in December 2009 to undertake an evaluation of the Phase 1 Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Trials. The Isos evaluation team read the Trial area plans and held short telephone conversations with each of the Trial areas in early December to discuss their progress. We then undertook visits to each of the Trial areas in the period January to March 2010, before holding a workshop with Trial areas at the end of March 2010 to pull together final recommendations. This final report summarises the Isos evaluation team's main findings and recommendations for Trial areas, other Local Authorities and DCSF. It also reflects the Trial areas' own views about what is necessary to deliver RPA,

their advice to other Trial areas and Local Authorities and implications for national policy for DCSF.

Summary of key findings

Overall progress

- Overall progress during the Phase 1 Trial has been good and many important lessons have been learnt about what works and the challenges which still need to be overcome
- Trial areas have also generated some important recommendations for DCSF about the operation of the Trials for Phase 2, as well as lessons for national policy and other LAs
- Progress at an individual level has been more varied with some areas using the Trial as an opportunity to galvanise their local areas behind RPA whilst others have struggled to make as much progress particularly in engaging local providers and other partners
- A common issue faced by many areas at the start was the short timescales involved and the difficulty of finding dedicated resource to focus on RPA
- All areas in the end had nominated an RPA Trial lead and many appointed additional staff resource but this raised important questions about sustainability beyond the Trial
- The scale and level of proposed activity across the different Trial areas varied considerably, often according to the priorities each area had identified locally

The importance of local context, understanding the cohort and keeping a tight focus

- Trial areas started the Trial in very different places – both in terms of their current rates of participation and their current mix of provision. Understanding this local context has been critical for many areas in determining what the priorities for their Trial should be
- A key first step for many of the Trial areas has been better understanding of the data to understand the cohort they are dealing with. All areas need to undertake this analysis
- One of the challenges for Trial areas has been not just understanding where they start from, but being clear about what they can achieve during the Trial and the added value or uniqueness of the Trial activity as opposed to ongoing 14-19 plans and activity
- Keeping a tight focus on deliverables during the Trial has been critical to success

Governance Models and Engagement of Partners

- A number of different models of governance have been adopted by Trial areas. Some have developed dedicated RPA sub-groups, or RPA has become one of the central themes being monitored by the 14-19 Partnerships. Others have chosen to use existing sub-groups to manage the Trial – most commonly the Inclusion, IAG or NEET sub-group
- Whilst governance remains a local decision many of the Phase 1 Trial areas felt that making RPA a key part of their 14-19 governance structures had significant advantages
- All Trial areas have appointed additional dedicated resource for the Trial – this raises a question about the long term needs of delivering RPA and sustainability beyond the Trial
- The relationship between the LA and Connexions has been critical to success in all areas

- There is a spectrum of engagement with providers to date. Some areas have used the Trial to push the RPA message with all providers, but in many it has been more limited

Information Advice and Guidance
- Derby, Lambeth and Staffordshire were the three areas with a specific focus on IAG
- There has been a wide range of activity undertaken and planned through the Trials aimed at different cohorts of young people from Years 7-9, Years 10 and 11 and post 16
- The key lesson from work with Years 7-9 is the need to better join up and co-ordinate RPA activity with other IAG activity that is taking place with this cohort e.g. Aim Higher
- Trial areas wanted greater clarity about the DCSF's intentions for national materials and communications on RPA in order to plan their own activities and materials
- Trial areas are clear that the focus of communications should be on promoting understanding of the different pathways amongst young people and providers
- Many of the Trial areas are developing new approaches to judging the quality of IAG and progress being made by providers - building on the national IAG standards

Re-engagement
- Barnsley, Swindon and Wandsworth were the three areas with a specific focus on this theme, although other areas were also developing their own approaches
- All three of the Trial areas focused on this theme, and a number of others, had placed a significant emphasis on developing their tracking systems. An interesting development in a number of areas was to focus on the join between pre and post 16 tracking systems
- At least two Trial areas have developed a pre 16 'at risk' of NEET indicator and 'early leaver protocols'. One Trial area was exploring with their Post 16 providers the possibility of a Managed Moves Protocol. All have potential for use in other areas
- Publication of progression data for schools has been a powerful lever used by some but Trial areas wanted a national progression indicator to give added impetus to this push
- Development of more flexible provision was also seen as key. Some areas diversified their Foundation Learning(FL) provision, one was piloting delivery of FL with sixth forms
- Other areas focused on the wide range and mix of existing provision and had published Alternative Provision catalogues showing the fit with Foundation Learning

Local Solutions
- Cumbria, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Newcastle and Greater Manchester focused on this theme and there were some important and unique features to their approaches
- A number of these areas are large LAs or sub-regions and developed interesting models for managing the delivery of RPA across Local Authorities or Travel to Learn areas
- A number of these areas have already started to develop RPA plans and trajectories

- Two areas had developed new approaches to engaging employers, and were exploring approaches to the Jobs Without Training (JWT) cohort to further develop in Phase 2

Key recommendations from the evaluation

Overall Focus and Clarity
- Trial areas need to be absolutely clear about the value added and uniqueness of their Trial activities as opposed to ongoing day to day 14-19 activity
- Keeping a clear and tight focus on the specific Trial deliverables is key to successfully being able to use the Trial to determine what has and hasn't worked during the Trial and to use these lessons to be clear what it will take to achieve full participation levels
- Using the data at the start of the Trial to really understand the cohort has been a critical part of enabling Trial areas to determine where their focus should be – all areas need to undertake this analysis at the start of their Trials to determine their focus and priorities

Engaging the 14-19 partnership/providing senior leadership for the Trial
- Trial areas should think carefully about the governance of the Trial and how they will ensure that the 14-19 Partnership really starts to focus on the implications of RPA
- Trial areas that had embedded the Trial within existing sub-groups such as Inclusion or IAG groups were concerned about the focus and priority being given to RPA currently
- Areas that had established a clear focus and remit for the Trial to report direct to the 14-19 Partnership felt they had been more successful in focusing on the implications of RPA
- Having a senior lead for the Trial – either within the Local Authority or across the sub-region - and a close working relationship with Connexions have been key success factors

Understanding the cohort and developing leading indicators
- Using the data that Local Authorities and Connexions already have at their disposal is critical to properly understanding the current picture and challenges faced
- Getting beneath this headline picture is also important – Trial areas who have undertaken in-depth research with specific cohorts have a much deeper understanding of the specific challenges and issues faced by different groups of young people
- Developing early warning indicators of becoming NEET and joining up tracking systems pre and post 16 has been a key success in some areas that ought to be replicated by all

Providing local drive and impetus to create momentum and engage all providers
- Some Trial areas have been particularly successful in using the Trials to generate a sense of local momentum and getting people talking about RPA and what it means

- In other areas the focus has been on more detailed engagement with a more limited number of providers – in these cases there will be a need to roll out messages to others
- In all cases Trial areas need to think in Phase 2 how they can use the Trial as an opportunity to galvanise their local systems and effort behind the push to RPA

Top ten tips from Trial areas for Phase 2 and other Local Authorities

All areas should.....

1. Carry out detailed cohort analysis using data from Connexions and the Local Authority to better understand at risk young people and those who have dropped out (see p15)

2. On the basis of this analysis develop a clear set of priorities for action and focus on delivering these - determining how they fit within wider 14-19 plans (see p16)

3. Consider how best to embed RPA governance within existing 14-19 arrangements to ensure the 14-19 partnership is focused on what it will take to deliver RPA (see p16)

4. Nominate a senior lead for RPA as well as an RPA Trial manager to implement activity and think about the sustainability of this resource beyond the Trial period (see p18)

5. 'Galvanise the system' locally and get local stakeholders and providers talking about RPA – this means engaging all providers in RPA activity in some way (see p19)

6. Consider appointing local young people, parents and employer champions to spread the message (see p23)

7. Develop RPA plans and trajectories and consider the implications of these for wider 14-19 plans including commissioning priorities (see p30)

8. Make sure Connexions and other key partners locally both within and outside the LA are engaged fully in delivering RPA – use RPA as an opportunity to strengthen relationships (see p19)

9. Engage more regularly and informally with other local areas to learn from each other and be willing to share and engage in debate with other local areas (see p36)

10. Consider your own plans for evaluation especially if RPA activity is starting now but won't impact until 2013/15 – setting a baseline now will be important to determining success (see p33)

Trial Areas Recommendations for National Policy

Whilst the Phase 1 Trials have predominantly focused on local action needed to deliver RPA, Trial areas have identified some areas of national policy where they think further effort is required from the DCSF where greater clarification of policy and policy intent is needed. These messages from Trial areas from the final evaluation workshop are captured directly below, although the Isos evaluation team believes this should be a more explicit focus and question asked by both Trial areas and DCSF during Phase 2.

The DCSF should:

- Emphasise the priority that needs to be given to RPA in all of its communications to Local Authorities, Directors of Children's Services and elected Members
- Lead a national communications campaign to young people, parents and employers
- Do more to incentivise schools to focus on post 16 progression by developing a national post 16 progression indicator
- Continue nationally to join up policy and messages between 14-19 and Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS)
- Clarify future policy on financial support for young people/fit with the benefits system
- Continue to help local areas understand the opportunities presented by Foundation Learning to create a flexible offer that works for young people
- Help lead work with employers to understand how best to engage the Jobs Without Training cohort
- Better align post 16 funding to promote provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LLDD)

Introduction

1. Isos Partnership were commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in December 2009 to undertake an evaluation of the Phase 1 Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Trials. An interim report was produced in February 2010 and was shared with both the DCSF and participating Trial areas. This final report has been produced following further conversations with each of the Trial areas about their progress and after a workshop with Trial areas to help develop final recommendations. We are grateful to both the DCSF and participating Trial areas for their help and support throughout the evaluation period.

Background

2. The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training until at least 18 by 2015 and until the end of year in which young people turn 17 in 2013. Young people will be able to participate in a way that suits them: for instance in full time education at school or college; in work based learning such as an Apprenticeship; or part time if they are also working or volunteering full time.

3. Achieving full participation of young people in education or training until 18 will require all parts of the education system to play their part. Ultimately however, it will be Local Authorities that will be responsible for ensuring that young people in their area participate and for providing the support young people need to overcome any barriers to learning. Many Local Authorities, with their 14-19 Partnerships, are already planning how they will achieve full participation by 2013/2015. The RPA Phase 1 Trials seek to build on this planning and enhance knowledge and good practice in some specific areas.

4. The Government legislated for RPA five years in advance of enactment in order to:

    i.   Set expectations for the first cohort from the start of their secondary education;

    ii.   Fully prepare the education system for this change;

    iii.   Have time to develop approaches to inform national and local implementation and develop good practice.

5. To support delivery of these last two objectives, the DCSF decided that it wanted to work with a small group of areas on how best to Trial elements of RPA during 2009/10. Ten Local Authorities and one sub region were identified to take part in the first phase of the RPA Trials from September 2009 to April 2010.

Focus of the Trials

6. The Trial areas selected were asked to focus on one of three specific areas during the Trial period:

a) How Local Authorities can work most effectively in securing a **full** IAG offer for young people to support the Raising of the Participation Age;

b) How Local Authorities can plan and deliver a system, building on the September Guarantee, that effectively picks up those 16 and 17 year olds that disengage with learning through the year and re-engages them in education or training

c) The development of an area wide strategy to enable full participation of all young people in education or training. This model will assess the overall challenges, barriers and implement solutions at a local level.

7. The table below shows the areas involved in the Trial and the specific focus they have chosen, although due to the nature of RPA it has often been the case that Trial areas are testing issues which cut across these specific strands.

IAG	Re-engagement	Local Solutions
Derby	Barnsley	Cumbria
Lambeth	Swindon	East Sussex
Staffordshire	Wandsorth	Greater Manchester
		Hertfordshire
		Newcastle

Purpose and objectives of the Trials

8. The key purpose of the Trials is for the selected areas to develop approaches that can support national preparations for 2013/15. Therefore a key principle has been identifying and distilling learning, and then sharing approaches and learning across the country. The other principles for the Trials were to enable:

a.   Local flexibility alongside national applicability;

b.   A focus on clear processes and outcomes

c.   Building on current planning for RPA;

d.   Sustainability and ensuring good value for money;

e.   Quick progress.

9. DCSF intends through these Trials to inform national policy and guidance to Local Authorities. They have already published a good practice toolkit based on findings from some of the Trial areas and others, and intend to disseminate further learning from the Trials during Phase 2. Trial areas received a small amount of additional funding to support their work in Phase 1, as well as some support and advice from a national participation advisor, appointed by the DCSF and have been expected to support each other through the forming of informal networks. Further funding and support will be available to areas in Phase 2.

Evaluation Methodology

10. The nature of the Trials, their short term focus and desire to inform the immediate development of both national and local policy have had important implications for the design of the evaluation methodology. These were not pilots designed to determine immediate cause and effect. Rather the Trials have been established to help test Local Authorities readiness for RPA and the key requirement has been to capture emerging practice including both successes and barriers which can be shared with others. Whilst it has been important that Trial areas were clear about success criteria and how they can measure impact, in many cases this has not been demonstrated by quantitative evidence of impact but by capturing qualitative information about what has worked. The evaluation methodology below was designed to reflect this.

Setting the Baseline

11. Local Authorities were required to submit short plans at the start of the Trial period setting out their own objectives for the Trial and how they proposed to achieve them. They were also required to submit monthly updates to DCSF updating on the activities put in place and any issues or risks emerging as well as good practice identified.

12. The starting point for this evaluation was these plans and progress reports. The Isos evaluation team read the plans and reports in detail and held short telephone conversations with each of the Trial areas in early December to discuss their progress and ensure they were absolutely clear about what they were trying to achieve through the Trial. From this analysis of the plans and discussions with the Trial areas, the Isos team identified clear success criteria for each of the Trial areas and a common set of issues and challenges faced.

Understanding Successes and Barriers

13. On the basis of this analysis we were able to develop a clear question framework which during Stage 2 of the evaluation process we used in face to face discussions with each of the Trial areas. Ten out of eleven of these visits were completed in January and February. Visits to

the Greater Manchester sub region and a follow up visit to Lambeth took place in March. The visits included discussions with the RPA Trial lead, with other Local Authority staff and local stakeholders and in some areas, where appropriate to the focus of the Trial, with providers.

Completing the Evaluation

14. Towards the end of Phase 1 we had further conversations with each of the Trial areas to update on their progress. We also held a half day workshop at the end of the Trial to give local areas an opportunity to feed in their views to the final evaluation including pulling out the lessons they would want to share with other Local Authorities and the key implications for national policy. These key messages are captured in this report. It is worth noting that many Trial areas are planning to continue with Phase 1 activity beyond April, and will want to track the impact of what they are doing beyond this date. Many areas already have plans to do so.

Overview of Progress

15. Overall progress during the Phase 1 Trial has been good and many important lessons have been learnt about what works and the challenges which still need to be overcome. Trial areas have also generated some important recommendations for DCSF about the operation of the Trials for Phase 2, as well as lessons for both national policy and other LAs. Not surprisingly progress at an individual local level has been more varied with some areas using the Trial as an opportunity to really galvanise their local areas behind RPA whilst others have struggled to make as much progress particularly in engaging their local providers and other partners.

16. The Isos evaluation team made assessments of the progress being made by local areas throughout the Trial. We used a number of criteria to do this which included: the level of ambition being shown; the range and scale of activities completed and learning taken from them; and how well local areas were using the Trial as an opportunity to engage with providers and other local stakeholders to 'galvanise the local system' behind RPA. A summary of our assessments at the end of Phase 1 is shown below:

- 3 areas made excellent progress during Phase 1, deepening understanding of their cohorts and utilising the Trial as an opportunity to engage all providers/stakeholders
- 3 areas made very good progress during Phase 1 implementing a wide range of activities, reflecting on the lessons learnt and engaging some providers/stakeholders
- 4 areas made more mixed progress during Phase 1, with some good progress in implementing specific activity but often limited in ambition and scale and only engaging with a small number of providers/stakeholders.
- 1 area made very limited progress in Phase 1 in terms of the scale of their activity and engagement of providers, though the work they completed has been positively received

17. A common issue faced by many areas at the start of the Trial were the short timescales involved and the challenges of finding and appointing suitably qualified staff. All Trial areas had

nominated a dedicated RPA Trial lead by the end of the Trial and many appointed additional and dedicated staff resource specifically to focus on activity to be carried out under the Trial. This raises an important question about sustainability beyond the Trial and the priority given to implementation of RPA by the Local Authority which will need to be addressed further during Phase 2. For example in a number of cases the Local Authority had found additional resource to support the Trial by reprioritisation amongst existing staff. The other positive is that most areas will start Phase 2 much better prepared for implementation than they were in Phase 1.

18. The scale and level of activity across the different Trial areas varied considerably, according to the priorities each area identified locally. Whilst this is understandable given the different starting points of each Trial area greater emphasis should be given during Phase 2 by all areas to using their data in more detail early in the process to make sure they have identified the correct priorities. And all areas should be using the Trial as an opportunity to really drive forward the engagement of wider Local Authority staff, local stakeholders, providers, employers and young people and their parents and carers, making sure all understand the challenge of delivering RPA can only be met by working closely together.

The importance of local context

19. One of the key messages to emerge from the Trial is the importance of considering local context in determining priorities and actions for implementing RPA. We can see this when we consider the current levels of participation of young people in the Trial areas. The Chart below shows the participation levels of 16 and 17 year olds in Phase 1 Trial Areas on the basis of the latest nationally available data.

Participation of 16 and 17 year olds in Phase 1 Trial Areas 2007/08
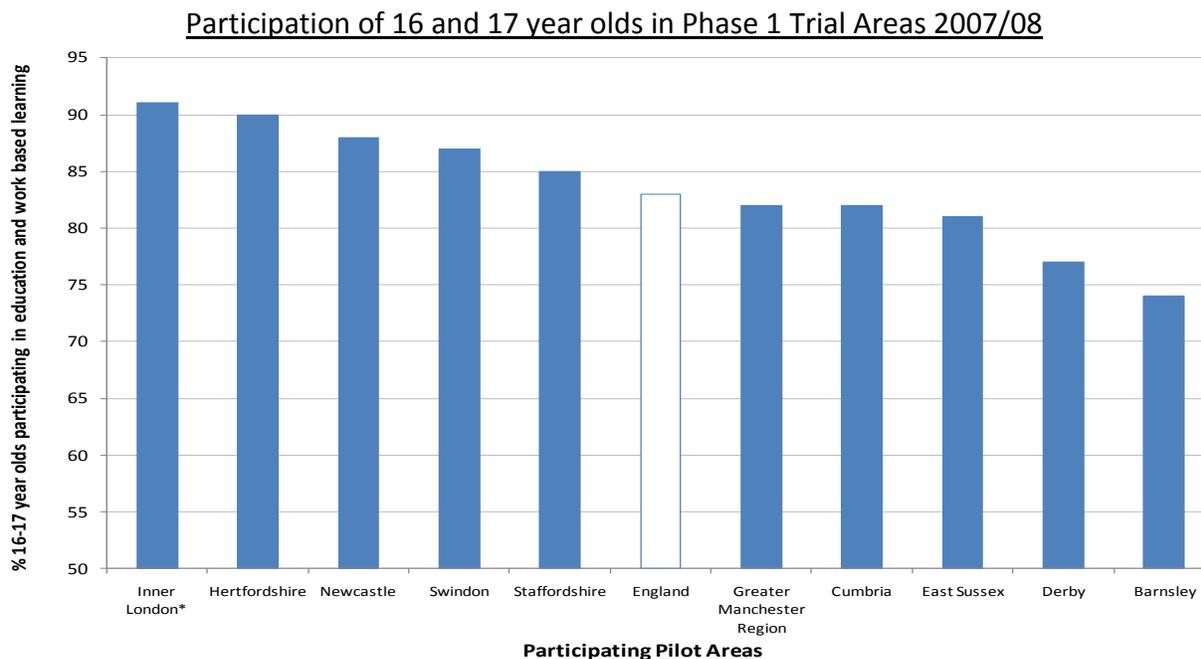
* Data unavailable for inner London Local Authorities

Source - SFR 13/2008; DCSF - Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England

20. As the Chart above shows Trial areas started from very different places. Wandsworth and Hertfordshire for example have very high levels of participation, and when translated into actual numbers terms are dealing with relatively small cohorts of non participating young people – in Wandsworth's case it is around 50 young people who fall into the persistent NEET category. By contrast an area like Barnsley with participation levels below 75% has a non participating cohort of nearly 500 young people. The challenges of achieving full participation in these different areas vary considerably and require very different solutions.

21. It is not just the current and projected levels of participation which determine the level of challenge faced and type of solutions required. The current mix of provision also has an important bearing on the approaches being taken by the Trial areas. For example a number of areas are operating in a post 16 system in which many of their schools have sixth form provision and a key part of the challenge faced is engaging all of their schools in a discussion about the type and level of provision being offered and their systems and processes for advising young people about appropriate course choice. In other areas post 16 provision is much more concentrated in a small number of providers and the focus of efforts to raise participation is therefore concentrated on work with the local college and E2E/Foundation Learning providers. We look in more detail at the Trial areas engagement of providers later in this report.

The importance of understanding the cohort

22. One of the key conclusions to emerge from Phase 1 is the need for local areas to understand the cohort they are dealing with, and in order to do this, to have really good data systems in place and to get beneath the headline data and unpick some of the key issues emerging. Many of the Trial areas have concentrated much of their efforts so far in doing just this, and as a result some of the findings emerging have re-shaped the priorities for their Trial. This will also help shape their priorities for Phase 2.

23. We will look in more detail later in this report at the different approaches Trial areas have taken to using the data to try and understand their cohorts, but a key message already emerging from the Trials for other Local Authorities to consider is the importance of data systems and the ability to be able to really get underneath some of the headline figures, to have a richer understanding of why some young people are not currently participating and what it would take to re-engage them, or stop them from disengaging in the first place.

24. Doing this more detailed analysis has also allowed a number of areas to dispel some of the common myths which often exist about the RPA cohort. Wandsworth for example undertook some detailed analysis of their 2009 Year 11 leaving cohort which showed that of the 70 young people categorised as either 'not settled-NEET' or 'not settled-other' 65.6% of the group had level 1 or level 2 at the end of KS4 and therefore needed level 2 or level 3 provision post-16. And moreover only 6 of these young people had a clear concrete barrier such as illness, caring responsibility or pregnancy. The data also showed which schools these young people came from and Wandsworth are now planning to discuss these findings further with all providers.

Clarity of Purpose

25. One of the challenges for the Trials has been not just understanding where they start from, but being clear about what they could reasonably expect to achieve during the Trial period and how they can be clear about the added value or uniqueness of the Trial activity, as opposed to activity that they would be undertaking as a matter of course through their 14-19 Partnerships. This is particularly challenging given the all encompassing nature of RPA which cuts across the vast majority of existing 14-19 work streams.

26. A key success of the Trials is that all areas ended Phase 1 clear about the focus of their activity and what they could realistically achieve. For some it was more difficult to reach this point than others, and it has required continued clarity of focus during the Trial period to ensure deliverables have been achieved. Some areas have already started to think about tracking impact beyond the end of the Trial period but others still need to give more thought to monitoring success beyond April. Getting this clarity of focus established at the start of Phase 2 will be an important step for all areas and the Department should work more closely with each area at the start of Phase 2 to ensure that the focus of each Trial is clear and they have identified challenging but achievable goals for the Trial.

Governance and leadership of the Trials/Engagement of Partners

Governance Models

27. A number of different models of governance have been developed by the Trial areas. Some areas have taken the opportunity to strengthen the focus of existing governance structures on RPA by asking the Trial to report directly to the 14-19 Strategic Partnership. Cumbria and Hertfordshire are examples of this approach. They see several advantages in this approach. It fits directly into existing structures including the way in which they engage with each of their different local areas and also has the advantage of more directly engaging with providers who are already represented on these structures thereby helping to 'galvanise the local system'

28. Other Trial areas have decided that the Trial would be better managed by a closer focus given to it through one of their existing sub-partnership groups. Where this approach has been taken it is often the NEET, IAG or Inclusion sub groups which seem the most natural fit and have the advantage of having many of the key players already round the table and are able to give the Trial dedicated time and focus. Wandsworth and Barnsley are examples of this approach. Although it was seen to have advantages, a number of areas operating it expressed concern that the implications of RPA weren't yet fully understood by the wider Partnership board and were giving it insufficient attention. At least one of these areas has decided to change its governance structures for Phase 2 of the Trial to ensure a greater focus is given to RPA by a dedicated group and by the wider 14-19 Partnership.

29. In a small number of Trial areas they have established a stand- alone dedicated RPA sub-group which has then become the natural place for the Trial to report. East Sussex is an example of this approach. This was combined with a themed approach at partnership level which meant that RPA was very much a part of the overarching partnership agenda as well. Derby and Newcastle have also established dedicated RPA Trial working groups to take forward the work and report to the overall Partnership board. Examples of these different approaches to governance are shown in the diagram below. Whilst governance must remain a local decision determined by local circumstances and existing structures most of the Phase 1 Trial areas were now clear that model 2 offered significant advantages over model 1 in raising the status and priority given to RPA implementation by their 14-19 Partnerships.

Trial areas have typically opted for one of two types of Governance models
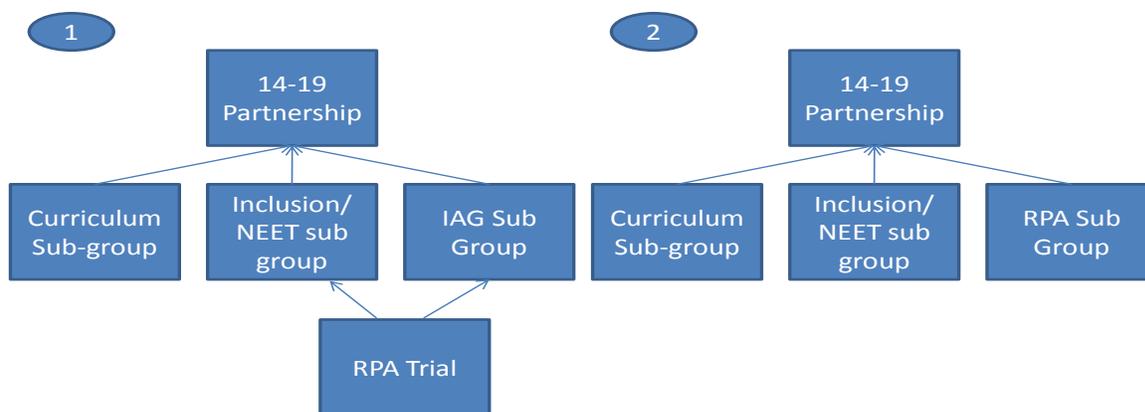
1. In these areas the RPA Trial is often reporting to the 14-19 Partnership through one of it's sub-groups – most often the Inclusion or NEET sub-group or the IAG sub-group.

2. In these areas RPA has been made one of the strategic themes of the 14-19 Partnership and there is an RPA sub-group through which the Trial – and other activity – is being managed.

30. Governance becomes even more complicated once you start to deliver RPA in the context of a sub-region as Greater Manchester have found. Their approach has been to pull together a small steering group to manage the Trial with different leads from Local Authorities leading particular themes under their Trial. This has helped them to focus on the added value to be gained by working as a sub-region and in some cases has had significant advantages e.g. they will have produced and disseminated a much greater range of IAG materials by working across all 10 Local Authorities than could have been achieved by any one Local Authority in the same time period. What has proved more challenging is ensuring senior stakeholders across the sub-region are engaged in the work of the Trial and see RPA as a priority. They are currently reviewing their governance arrangements for Phase 2 in order to better engage sub-regional groups in the work of the trial and secure more ongoing senior leadership and buy-in. In some ways this could be seen to be an attempt to replicate the advantages of model 2 above but at a sub-regional, rather than Local Authority level.

Leadership/Resourcing of the Trials

31. As we observed above all Trial areas had appointed a dedicated RPA lead for the Trial. In some areas this has been a totally new appointment. In others it has involved shifting responsibilities or giving additional responsibilities to existing staff. The RPA Trial leads come from a range of backgrounds; some are the existing 14-19 Partnership leads in the Local Authority, other's have a lead responsibility for IAG either within the Local Authority or from Connexions. In a number of Trial areas there are joint Trial leads from the Local Authority and Connexions. In one Trial area the RPA lead previously had responsibility within the Local Authority for the Alternative Provision strategy.

32. In a number of Trial areas additional staffing resource has been appointed below the Trial lead to take forward dedicated activity proposed during the Trial. Often this has involved an expansion of the Connexions resource dedicated to focus on the potential RPA cohort – this has normally been managed by re-prioritising existing PA resource, although some back filling has been necessary in some areas. There is a significant question for Trial areas about the sustainability of the resource needed to deliver RPA and how they will achieve this by re-prioritising existing resources even further.

33. Of course given this is a Trial it may be appropriate to appoint additional resource during the Trial period to enable the testing of new activities and there will be some economies of scale to be achieved e.g. making sure data systems are in place to give the information needed about the cohort requires heavy upfront investment but longer term the resource required should be reduced. Nonetheless the question of sustainability and longer term resourcing for RPA has not really been addressed by any of the areas during the Phase 1 Trial and will need much further exploration in Phase 2.

34. The approach to leadership and resourcing in a sub-region, as opposed to a single Local Authority has naturally had to be quite different. Greater Manchester already had a well established network of 14-19 co-ordinators across the 10 Local Authorities that make up the sub-region, and decided to draw on this network to manage the Trial and focus on RPA.

35. They appointed one of the 14-19 co-ordinators to lead and manage the Trial as well as being responsible for delivery of one strand. And then appointed other 14-19 co-ordinators to lead the other strands and manage the Local Authorities involved in each. They have learnt some important lessons from Phase 1 about operating this model. One is the difficulty but importance of meeting regularly at both a strand level and across the Trial. Another is the need to continue to engage senior leaders across the Local Authorities in the Trial, as discussed in the Governance section above. They are currently reviewing their approach for Phase 2 to build on these lessons.

36. The strongest examples of partnership working seen in many of the Trial areas are those between the Local Authority and the Connexions Service. This is true of both Local Authorities in which the Connexions Service is now managed in-house and in Local Authorities in which Connexions remains a contracted out service. For many Trial areas it has been a critical part of efforts to better understand what is going on with the cohort and to trial additional models of support using tailored Personal Adviser support. We will explore further the specific role of the Connexions Service in many Trial areas in the IAG section below.

37. In Swindon, which was already moving to a locality based Integrated Youth Support model, the Trial has enabled them to look at how the wider range of partners across the Local Authority can best support delivery of RPA. However even in this Trial area, the most critical relationship has proved to be that with the Connexions service and there has been a need to keep this paramount in the locality based operating model. East Sussex also felt they had been successful in getting RPA onto the agenda across the Local Authority – 'East Sussex is talking about it'.

38. In other Trial areas less progress has been made in engaging the wider set of partners and stakeholders across the Local Authority and levels of awareness amongst Local Authority staff are not expected to have shifted as a result. This will be a priority for Phase 2. Engagement with employers will be commented on when we look at local solutions later in this report, where some areas have developed innovative approaches. All areas felt communications with employers was a priority, both for themselves and for DCSF nationally.

39. There has also been less progress in a number of Trial areas in engaging providers with the work of the Trial than might have been expected. We comment further on the extent of this engagement with providers at the end of this report. Although it was not an explicit objective of the Phase 1 Trials, we have been surprised by the lack of engagement with providers in many areas and feel this is a major reason why many areas have not yet seen the 'galvanising the system' effect which is going to be needed to deliver RPA.

40. For some the lack of engagement with providers has been a deliberate choice – they wanted to be clearer about the focus of their Trial efforts and key messages before speaking to a wider range of providers. This does make sense although it raises the stakes in terms of the pace of engagement with providers in Phase 2. For others the nature of the Trial activity has meant that interaction with providers has been limited to a small number of schools, the local college and one or two work-based learning providers. Whatever the reasons during Phase 1, broadening the engagement of providers should be a key priority for all areas in Phase 2.

Understanding the cohort

41. We noted above the importance of understanding the local context and where areas were starting from in determining priorities for the Trial. For many Trial areas the first step in the Trial was to try to understand better their own local data and what it was telling them about the cohorts they were dealing with. This has been an easier exercise for some than others, and gives   some important lessons about the use of data which other local areas will want to consider.

42. Those Trial areas with the strongest understanding of their cohorts, and the ability to further analyse the data, were the ones with the strongest relationships with a Connexions Service which was highly effective at collecting information about young people pre and post 16 and which had strong systems in place for collecting data from providers. Derby was probably the strongest example of this amongst the Trial areas, but others also had good systems in place e.g. Barnsley, Newcastle, Hertfordshire. In some areas the Local Authority itself had led the analysis of the data and pulled out key messages for further conversations with providers – but it was still based on data collected by Connexions.

43. In areas without these existing relationships and systems efforts to understand the cohort and analyse the data had been much more difficult and required direct engagement with providers to try to collect data about students dropping out of the system between 16 and 17 for example. Good progress had been made in some areas in collecting the data but it had delayed the ability to really focus at the start of the Trial, and in a small number of areas there was still further work to do to ensure they had a complete and accurate picture of what the data were telling them about the cohorts they are dealing with. There are important lessons here for Phase 2 and we would recommend that all Trial areas in Phase 2 place a greater priority on undertaking more detailed cohort analysis at the start of the Trial.

Going beyond the high level data

44. For those areas which already had a good base level of understanding of their cohorts, the Trials have offered an opportunity to get beyond this high level information and really start to unpick what is going on with different groups and types of young people. This has given them a much richer understanding of the issues and challenges faced in engaging and re-engaging different cohorts of young people. There are lessons here for other Local Authorities, both in learning from the approaches that have been taken but also in the conclusions that can be drawn from this enhanced research.

45. Two specific examples of this approach from the Trial areas stand out. In Derby for example they have been able to identify from amongst both the 2008/09 cohort and 2009/10 cohort any learner that started a course post 16 but left early, including information on what school they came from, what provider they went to, what course they did and the reason given to the

Connexions PA in an exit interview for having dropped out. They undertook this exercise for 4 schools and 1 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) initially, but have now repeated it for all schools and PRUs across Derby.

46. The findings from this research have caused some surprises and have enabled the Local Authority and Connexions Service to refocus their efforts on distinct groups who need greater support or a different offer. For example the research revealed that learners who drop out of provision early give two key reasons why – 'unhappiness with course choice' and 'reason not given'. Much smaller numbers of young people cite wider factors such as pregnancy or financial support. Derby have followed up all learners citing 'reason not given' with a more detailed interview with a Connexions PA to understand better their reasons for dropping out. From this it is clear that unhappiness with course choice remains a key issue for a very large number of these young people and that this is true especially with learners starting Level 1 and Level 3 courses. This has enabled the Local Authority to start a conversation with providers about how learners are choosing courses and the nature and extent of Level 1 and 3 provision on offer.

47. The other key group which areas have tried to build a greater understanding of through the Trials is the Jobs Without Training (JWT) cohort. Newcastle for example identified a cohort of 10 young people in the JWT category from the east end of the city and have undertaken detailed interviews with each of them to understand the factors and reasons behind their decisions. At the same time they have interviewed employers about what it would take to engage these young people in some form of training. They have produced a specific report on the issues associated with JWT for discussion amongst local stakeholders, providers and employers.

Breaking down the cohort

48. Less use has been made by the Trial areas of segmentation of young people in the NEET and JWT groups. One approach to this was outlined in the DCSF document 'Raising the Participation Age: Supporting Local Areas to Deliver'. Figure 3 in Chapter 1 of that document utilises a segmentation of the NEET group which includes groups such as 'NEET – open to learning', 'NEET – undecided', 'NEET – sustained', 'JWT – at risk of NEET', 'JWT – sustained', 'JWT – transitional'.

49. We think this type of approach to more detailed segmentation would be useful to Local Authorities when considering RPA and would encourage Trial areas to consider using it at the start of Phase 2 to try and better understand the cohort which they are dealing with.

RPA Trial Focus Area 1 - IAG

50. Derby, Lambeth and Staffordshire were the three areas with a specific focus on IAG as a theme of their Trial, but many of the other areas also included elements which touched on key elements of IAG. In fact all Trial areas regarded IAG as a critical issue for successfully implementing RPA – even if they didn't have a specific focus on it in their Trial. There has been

a wide range of activity undertaken and planned through the Trials aimed at different cohorts of young people from Years 7-9, Years 10 and 11 and post 16.

Focus on Younger Cohorts

51. Lambeth and Staffordshire both focused through their Trials on activities aimed primarily at years 7 to 9 to pick up the first cohort of young people to be directly affected by the RPA legislation. Lambeth identified two secondary schools to work with and Staffordshire three secondary schools from different parts of the county with very different types of intakes. Other areas that developed activity for this cohort include Cumbria, Barnsley and East Sussex. Most Trial areas took part in Moving Up activity with this cohort as well.

52. One key lesson from this work to date is the need to better join up and co-ordinate RPA activity with other IAG activity that is taking place with this cohort. Many of the Trial areas have found similarity and commonality in the work of other partners like Aim Higher with this cohort. This is often promoting a similar message to RPA about raising aspirations, staying in education and achieving, and the different pathways that exist. Staffordshire have concluded that one of the key outputs from their Trials should therefore be a menu of activity cohort by cohort that captures both RPA work and work already underway by Aim Higher and more traditional careers type activity. Staffordshire were the only Trial area to have closely engaged with Aim Higher.

Developing Materials and Key Messages

53. Linked to the development of activities for this younger cohort has been the development of a number of materials and resource packs which can be used by schools and IAG professionals in working with young people to explain RPA. Although these materials and resources will have been developed and tailored for the local areas involved, much of the material within them will be able to be used by other Local Authorities, either directly or with small adaptations. Examples of these resources have been included in the RPA communications toolkit recently published by DCSF.

54. Greater Manchester demonstrated the value of working as a sub-region in developing their own set of IAG materials as each of the four Local Authorities involved took on one element of the overall offer which has now been shared across the sub-region with all their Local Authorities. East Sussex was another area that made substantial progress in developing materials e.g. a brochure that was being used to explain the different pathways to Year 9 young people and had developed some interesting ideas about the use of theatre groups to take the messages about RPA to younger cohorts. All of the Trial areas were clear as well that DCSF had an important role to play in communicating messages to young people and their parents. There was a strong demand therefore for greater clarity about the DCSF's intention for national materials and communications on RPA. Areas need to know this to plan their own activities and materials.

55. As part of their efforts to develop resources and materials for young people (and for parents and staff as we shall see below) a number of Trial areas have undertaken more detailed research about the level of understanding of RPA currently amongst young people and what messages need to be given to clarify misunderstandings and promote key messages.

56. The key conclusion drawn by the research undertaken in these areas is not to focus too heavily on RPA as a core part of the message. There is a need to clarify some of the basic facts about what the legislation will mean for young people e.g. that it means staying in some form of education and training and not staying on at school and that you can still go into employment at 16. But the core message which young people, parents and staff all need reminding of and explaining in more detail is about the different pathways which young people can take through post 14 education. In many areas they have already begun to develop this narrative around many pathways to success, which has in some cases involved a shift away from focusing heavily on any one route such as the Diplomas and putting a much greater emphasis on understanding all of the different pathways available. The Qualifications Strategy and focus on 4 clear pathways has helped here.

Developing staff training modules

57. Partly as a consequence of the research that has been undertaken a number of areas including Lambeth and Barnsley have decided they need a much stronger focus on developing training resources and materials for their own staff. This includes both Connexions PAs and staff within schools. Barnsley have piloted this initially with a small group of post 16 advisers and are planning to roll out training for other staff during Phase 2. Lambeth have developed their approach to try and reach a much greater number of staff. They are planning to invest in the development of a number of lead professionals who will then be capable of rolling out the training to other staff. Greater Manchester are planning on adopting a similar approach across all ten Local Authorities.

Engaging Parents

58. A number of Trial areas thought that engaging parents was a key priority for local areas and was likely to require new and innovative approaches. Lambeth for example had appointed and trained 10 parental ambassadors who were now being used to take messages out to other parents in the area. Staffordshire who had used this approach previously through Aim Higher to promote the benefits of Higher Education, were also looking to develop RPA ambassadors. East Sussex had developed a parent's focus group to test their RPA messages and materials.

Measuring the overall impact of IAG activity

59. One of the key challenges often identified by many 14-19 partnerships is how they should judge the quality of IAG in their local areas and measure the improvements that are being made by providers. Many of the Trial areas are developing approaches to this building on the publication of the national IAG standards.

60. Staffordshire, Lambeth and Derby had already developed Quality Marks to focus providers on the quality of the IAG they were providing and described the impact this had had with both schools and colleges. In some cases they were now trying to amend and adjust the Quality Mark so it could also be used with training providers.

61. But the most comprehensive system for measuring the impact of IAG activities was the IAG scorecard developed by Derby, which contained a number of different indicators and gave a simple traffic light rating against each. This is a potentially powerful tool for really focusing on the impact of IAG activity and having the means as a partnership to track whether improvements are being made.

Case Study: The IAG Improvement Framework for Derby City

Purpose

- To provide an agreed framework for the evaluation of IAG processes for the 14-19 Partnership using the 14-19 Progress Check RAG rating
- To bring together a number of measures and processes which contribute towards the effectiveness of IAG within an institution; establishing a baseline position from which to measure impact and distance travelled on an annual basis
- To provide evidence for institutions on the effectiveness of IAG
- To enable institutions to identify areas requiring further development

Elements to be used within the Framework
The Elements of the IAG Improvement Framework are outlined below. Each element is given a RAG rating according to criteria which have been set and agreed by partners.

Element	Notes
Post 16 Progression Measure	Data taken from national data set
Y11 Progression Data – into EET	This target to be set as part of the Partnership agreement with Connexions Derbyshire
CEG curriculum requirements	National requirements and guidance to be used
WRL Requirements	National requirements and guidance to be used
Adoption of Career Mark standards	East Midlands quality award to be used
Information for Young People	The information element of Career Mark

	to be used as the basis of this rating
Student Survey	The online survey tool, "Survey Monkey" will be used to collect and analysis the results
Parent Survey	The parent surveys will be done during parents' evenings / options evenings collecting data in hard copy and then transferring the information onto Survey Monkey.

RPA Trial Focus Area 2 - Re-engagement process

62. Barnsley, Swindon and Wandsworth were the three areas with a specific focus on this theme, although again other areas were developing their own approaches which also addressed this issue. In each case activity in the Trial was often building on significant work that had already taken place, for example: developing the Connexions tracking system for keeping track of the NEET cohort; the September and January Guarantee; the Activity Agreement pilots; the development of flexible start provision; work in diversifying and improving the quality of E2E/Foundation Learning provision and the development of pastoral care systems in providers.

Tracking systems, early identification and managed moves protocols

63. All three of the Trial areas focused on the re-engagement theme, and a number of others, had placed a significant emphasis on understanding the specific cohort they were dealing with. As we discussed earlier in this report a key source of that information was the Connexions CCIS tracking systems which had been used primarily in keeping track of the NEET cohort.

64. An interesting development now underway in a number of the Trial areas was to focus on the join up between pre and post 16 tracking systems. Many areas had already developed approaches to RAG rating the pre 16 cohort but were now looking in detail at how that information was shared for example with post 16 providers to ensure the maximum information was given about young people's history and background. In Barnsley for example this was being closely tied into the colleges' own pastoral care systems as we shall see below.

65. A number of areas are now planning to utilise the existing tracking systems as a means of collecting and sharing an even greater amount of data about the cohorts that were transferring from pre 16 to post 16. A number made the comparison about the level and focus of effort that currently went into managing the primary to secondary school transition and compared that, unfavourably, with the effort and resource currently devoted to managing the transition between pre, and post 16 institutions.

66. East Sussex had gone even further and had used the Trials as a means of pushing all providers to develop and use an 'at risk' of NEET indicator which was being directly linked to schools SIMs systems using indicators such as attendance data to feed directly through. They had also developed an 'early leaver protocol' whereby any leaver that dropped out of provision was immediately notified to Connexions along with any view from the provider about what provision and support they now needed. Derby were also entering into negotiations with their post 16 providers to develop the equivalent of a Managed Moves Protocol (which already exists pre-16) so that no student would be allowed to leave a course or provider until alternative suitable provision had been found. Both of these approaches have significant potential for further development in other areas.

Using data to challenge providers

67. In some Trial areas the focus on understanding the cohort and using data to understand the reasons for young people dropping out between 16 and 17 has helped clarify expectations on providers themselves in terms of the data they collect and has led them to use and share that data more freely and widely. In Swindon for example the focus of much of the Trial activity has been on understanding and gaining access to its college's data about drop out between 16 and 17.

68. Whilst on the whole providers are generally willing to engage with this work there has been some resistance from colleges who don't see these young people as their responsibility once they leave. The six week funding window at the start of academic year (if students drop out during this period colleges are not penalised in funding terms for non completion of courses) in some ways further incentivises colleges not to focus on what happens to these students, although in future under the RPA legislation they will be required to notify the local authority.

69. These issues with some post 16 providers are replicated by concerns in a number of Trial areas about the attitudes of pre 16 providers and in particular schools to the cohort of young people most at risk of dropping out. Again the incentives are seen to work against providers focusing on the group of young people most at risk of dropping out at 16, with an understandably strong focus on the 5A*-C indicator especially in National Challenge schools mitigating against a desire to focus on what happens to the whole cohort. The ongoing absence of a national post 16 progression indicator is seen as a significant barrier to doing more to challenge schools here. Trial areas were clear that this should be a priority for national policy going forward to support implementation of RPA.

70. Some Trial areas have developed their own measures to bring greater transparency to the post 16 progression data. Staffordshire for example publishes data about yr 11 destinations and numbers who subsequently enter HE. There is much greater potential for more areas to make greater use of this type of data to challenge providers and areas should be encouraged to focus on this in Phase 2. In areas which have published such data they've found a genuine interest from schools to understand what's happening to their cohorts once they leave the school.

Retention and pastoral systems

71. We identified above the link that some were starting to make between their tracking systems, their pre 16 data and the pastoral systems which post 16 providers already have. The best example of this is in the Barnsley Trial where the focus on sharing data has coincided with an increased focus within the college on their own pastoral care and retention and where the sharing of data between Connexions and the college about the 'at risk' cohort has led to deeper questions being asked about the support being provided to young people by both parties.

72. The focus on good retention practices was also evident in the Wandsworth Trial where they have captured the lessons and practice from one of their local schools which have proved especially successful at retaining a high proportion of a very challenging cohort in learning pre and post 16. They are now sharing and discussing these lessons with other providers. Derby are another Trial area aiming to capture best practice in post 16 support and guidance and will aim to produce guidance on effective retention practices across all their providers which will be a product available to other Trial areas and other Local Authorities during Phase 2.

Development of flexible provision

73. Another feature of the three Trial areas under this theme, as well as a number of the other Trial areas, was a focus on developing more flexible provision. This had different emphases in different areas, although in many a common focus was on supporting and developing further providers of E2E/Foundation Learning provision. East Sussex for example had collected evidence from young people that they felt too much of the current foundation offer was delivered by colleges and wanted provision delivered outside of mainstream providers. They were therefore looking to diversify their E2E/Foundation Learning provider base.

74. In other areas like Wandsworth and Newcastle they were looking at how best to build on the strengths of existing foundation level provision and address gaps in the provision across the borough – often there were pockets or areas with no or little foundation type provision and learners' inability or unwillingness to travel was preventing them from accessing the provision that did exist. East Sussex had developed a different approach and had worked with their sixth forms to develop Level 1 and Level 2 provision post 16 in conjunction with local WBL providers. The WBL provider was helping to develop school staff's ability to deliver elements of the courses, although they recognised that the WBL provider would continue to play a role in the future in these courses.

75. Other areas were focused heavily on developing their 'Alternative Provision' offer and making the links to Foundation Learning. Newcastle and Hertfordshire were the strongest examples of this approach. Newcastle had pulled together a catalogue of all existing provision and had shared it with Connexions PAs, which received very positive feedback. Their next stage is to map this provision against the Foundation Learning pathways. Hertfordshire had used their local prospectus as the means of collating information about all of the alternative provision on

offer – they had identified 39 clear programmes which were receiving positive feedback from the schools. And in addition they had had a big push on creating more Apprenticeship places and engaging schools in offering these to young people with some success. This will continue to be a priority they take forward in Phase 2 working with the National Apprenticeship Service.

76. Both areas identified a number of ongoing challenges in making this type of provision work. Building the capacity of the workforce to deliver alternative provision is seen as key – staff need a completely different skill set to traditional school or college based teaching and learning, especially for the most challenging young people – they need to be sharp on safeguarding, behaviour management and programme development/pathways, and to understand assessment and levels of risk. There was also a challenge around ensuring quality and standards and both were working together on models for commissioning and accrediting this type of provision to ensure high quality is delivered.

77. Questions continue to be raised about non-accredited provision, and if this is still needed in future how it will be funded. A number of areas raised the issue of the progression from this type of provision and foundation provision into college based Level 1 or Level 2 courses and the need for more flexible starts. Only two of the Trial areas had already made significant progress with this and were planning to do more through Phase 2. East Sussex felt they already had a good range of flexible start dates and roll- on and off programmes, and Wandsworth are planning to build on existing work with their local college to develop further examples of flexible starts. They will be able to share these examples with other Local Authorities but this is a priority others should also be looking to take forward during Phase 2.

Understanding the needs of this group

78. The tight focus on this group of young people in a number of areas has enabled them to ask further questions about the specific needs of these cohorts and to trial models of better meeting those needs. In Newcastle for example they chose to focus on a relatively small cohort of young people in order to be able to target additional PA support at both the cohort who are currently engaged in E2E/Foundation Learning provision and those who have dropped out. In Wandsworth they deliberately built on the success of the Activity Agreement pilots in targeting the specific needs of this group of young people.

79. One of the big issues to emerge with the most difficult to reach cohorts has been their ability and willingness to travel and leave their own areas. This is not only about transport costs - it is about cultural identities and lack of previous experience of leaving their own areas as well. Activity Agreements have helped here as they allow the initial support that is provided to be tailored to the young person's needs before they even access provision e.g. a number of examples were given of PAs travelling with young people to providers before they'd started their courses to help build their confidence . Other issues associated with supporting this cohort where Trial areas hope to develop new approaches are the high number with LLDD not previously identified at school and similarly numbers with total lack of literacy and numeracy who require 1:1 tuition. Further work is planned by a number of areas during Phase 2.

80. A number of Connexions services in the Trial areas were interested in exploring the greater use of students as peer ambassadors to tell fellow young people about the types of provision that they might be able to go on. We met a number of young people on our visits who had done just this and who made very powerful advocates for why young people should get re-engaged. There was potential in developing this model further but Connexions identified barriers to this such as the inability to pay young people for this work (due to benefit restrictions) nor being able to successfully accredit this type of activity towards a qualification for young people. This might be an area where national policy or national examples could really help.

RPA Trial Focus Area 3 - Local Solutions

81. Cumbria, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Newcastle and Greater Manchester were the Trial areas focused on this particular theme, although as we have seen already many of the approaches and activities which they have developed would fit under the previous two headings of IAG and Re-engagement processes and we have included examples from these areas under those headings where appropriate. There are though a number of important and unique features about the approaches which these areas developed which are captured below.

Delivering RPA across large areas or sub-regions

82. A feature of a number of these Trial areas is their size and the fact that they have a number of sub-local authority levels to manage. Greater Manchester is the most complex of these being a sub-region with 10 Local Authorities but Cumbria, although a single Local Authority, is also acting as a sub-region for the purposes of commissioning. In both these cases they are managing their 14-19 Partnership – and therefore efforts to implement RPA – through a number of travel to learn areas with their own governance and partnership arrangements. Hertfordshire have a similar approach, with seven sub-areas under its 14-19 Partnership.

83. The approach of these areas to the management of the RPA Trials has a number of interesting lessons for the potential approaches to implementing RPA in large and complex Local Authorities or sub-regions. In all three areas they have developed their RPA activities under the existing area based 14-19 structures to manage their work. In the case of the GM sub-region they are still trying to establish these new structures so have utilised the more informal networks which existed between 14-19 leads in Local Authorities to manage the Trial.

84. In Cumbria they then invited their travel to learn areas to identify what their own local priorities and approaches should be and how they would fit under the different themes and priorities already identified by their Cumbria wide 14-19 plan. This means for example in the case of Cumbria that a number of different approaches and activities have been planned across the different travel to learn areas, and this will give significantly more examples of practice at the end of the Trial than would otherwise have been the case. And both Cumbria and

Hertfordshire would argue there are clear benefits to engaging schools and colleges through these sub-level partnerships which would otherwise be much more difficult to achieve.

85. Greater Manchester did something similar inviting each of the ten Local Authorities in the sub-region to identify what the collective priorities for the Trial should be and then asking different Local Authorities to lead on different elements of the Trial. Four Local Authorities have worked collectively together on IAG to produce materials and guidance which can then be used across all ten Local Authorities - this was the clearest example of the potential gains to be made by working as a sub-region.

86. Nonetheless the Trials have shown there are undoubted additional challenges to delivering RPA working across large shire or rural areas or when operating as a sub-region. There is an even greater onus on having absolute clarity about roles and responsibility in Governance arrangements and in ensuring there are clear reporting lines all the way through including reporting to more senior levels within Local Authorities and across sub-regions. And focusing on the data at a county or sub-region wide level can help to ensure the right priorities have been identified by individual areas or Local Authorities.

Developing RPA plans and trajectories

87. Developing clear 14-19 or even RPA plans across regions or sub-regions is another way to mitigate the risks of working with such a large number of partners. A number of these Trial areas already had RPA implementation plans in place before the Trials began, and others have used the approaches described above to refresh their overall 14-19 plans to include additional activity that they think will be necessary to deliver. These plans will give examples of how other Local Authorities might either develop specific RPA delivery plans or adapt and amend their existing 14-19 plans to include a renewed focus on the activities needed to deliver RPA.

88. In addition to these plans, some of these areas are already thinking about their trajectories to the 2013 and 2015 implementation of RPA. Some such as Hertfordshire and East Sussex believe that they will be able to achieve full participation before this date, others are using the trajectories as a means of understanding where different sub-areas or Local Authorities within a sub-region are at and where the biggest challenges will be. Again this approach to thinking about trajectories to 2013 and 2015 will be important to other Local Authorities starting to think about the challenge of delivering RPA.

Engaging Employers and focusing on the JWT cohort

89. Two of these Trial areas have had a significant focus on engaging employers during the Trial and have developed interesting approaches. In Cumbria for example they have prioritised engagement with employers appointing an ex headteacher to lead work with the Chambers of Commerce. They have planned a series of events under the heading 'Raising our Game' which will be lead by the Chambers focusing on how Cumbria needs to improve its economy. They will then present RPA as part of that – the education system raising its game. The key lesson they

have learnt is it is more important who delivers the message to employers than what that message is – employer to employer works much better than trying to deliver the message yourselves.

90. In Hertfordshire the focus of efforts to engage employers has been on engaging them in offering more Apprenticeship places and working with WBL providers to strengthen employer involvement in foundation provision. The Chamber of Commerce is engaged with the WBL network and helping to broker relationships with employers but the local authority needs to do more still to maximise opportunities and plans to work much more closely with the National Apprenticeship Service during Phase 2.

91. A number of these areas had also decided to focus specifically on the Jobs Without Training cohort of young people and had undertaken in depth research with both the young people and their employers into their reasons for not participating in education or training and what it would take to encourage both them and their employer to allow them to undertake some training as part of their employment. Greater Manchester, Newcastle and Cumbria were there areas who had completed this initial research and were now planning on trialling further activities for this cohort in Phase 2.

Tackling issues of rural disengagement

92. One of the travel to learn areas within the Cumbria Trial has focused on specific barriers associated with rurality. They identified a significant issue with a cohort of young people from two rural schools who had a much higher drop-out rate than other post 16 cohorts. They believed – based on intelligence gathered by the Connexions service – that this is an issue about young people not being used to travelling the long distances required to access provision.

93. They have therefore identified a similar cohort from this year's Year 11 who have the same risk factors of dropping out due to the travel required to access post 16 provision. They have designed a programme of activities which will run over two days at the end of the summer term and will require these students to travel to the post 16 providers to get them used to travelling to new providers. They will then track this cohort of young people to see if the current rate of drop out from these two schools has been reduced.

Provider Views and Engagement

94. We have commented already that the engagement of providers in the Trials has been mixed and varies considerably across the Trial areas. There are many good examples of ways in which providers have been engaged positively in the Trials. This applies to all types of providers from schools and colleges to E2E/Foundation Learning and Work Based Learning (WBL) providers. The one potential gap is engagement with more voluntary sector or community based providers, although some of these have been picked up by the focus on Foundation Learning provision in many Trial areas.

95. Only one or two Trial areas had engaged providers in the work of the Trial in a comprehensive way - engaging with the full range of providers across the Local Authority or sub-region to such an extent that they started to significantly shift levels of understanding and commitment amongst all types of providers. This is what we mean by using the Trial to really 'galvanise the local system' behind efforts to implement RPA. Where this has occurred it is a result of not just engaging with those providers immediately involved in Trial activity but in taking out messages from that work to other providers locally. Some areas have plans to do more of this in Phase 2 but it should be a priority for all of the Phase 1 Trials during Phase 2.

96. There was some evidence in these Trial areas of the benefits of engaging with a much wider range of providers in promoting an understanding of the requirements of RPA and what it will mean for staff. A good example that was given by one school involved indirectly in a Trial was a previous lack of knowledge of the range of post 16 provision – they had never heard of E2E provision before the Trial but now had a much better understanding of the range of courses on offer in their local area, and it had made them think about their own post 16 offer.

97. There were other challenges in engaging providers. Amongst colleges there was some resistance – though this was by no means universal – to the idea that they should take greater responsibility for the cohort of students who start courses at their institutions but subsequently drop out. For E2E/Foundation Learning and WBL providers who are dealing on the whole with significantly smaller cohorts many see less immediate relevance to them of RPA because they are already dealing with these cohorts of young people and their opportunities for expanding provision are often limited so they are struggling to see how they can do more.

98. Schools were seen by many of the Trial areas overall to be the most challenging group to engage seriously in thinking about how to deliver RPA. For many 11-16 institutions what happens to young people between 16 and 18 has not historically been one of their top priorities. There was evidence from a number of trial areas of positive engagement with schools and interest in what happens to their own young people when they leave. Publicising the data had helped with this in Wandsworth and East Sussex for example, and in Lambeth the schools receiving the support during the Trial were very positive about it and wanted more.

99. Even in those Trial areas who had made the most progress with providers overall they felt much more work was needed to really engage schools and they would welcome stronger messages on RPA being given to schools by DCSF. One or two areas did feel they had had particular success engaging schools and this is an area where sharing practice amongst Trials might bring real benefit in Phase 2.

100. The other positive message from providers who we spoke to in the Trial areas is that knowledge and understanding of the principal requirements of RPA is good. This had not always been the case with the most common misunderstandings being about the requirements to stay in education or training rather than school, but these issues had now been clarified in the vast majority of cases through communications from the Local Authority and DCSF.

Conclusions

Summary of progress to date

101. Overall progress during the Phase 1 Trial has been good and many important lessons have been learnt about what works and the challenges which still need to be overcome. Not surprisingly progress at an individual local level has been more varied with some areas using the Trial as an opportunity to really galvanise their local areas behind RPA whilst others have struggled to make as much progress particularly in engaging local providers and other partners.

102. For all of the Trial areas, timescales have been challenging and the need to both appoint dedicated staff resource and undertake more detailed data analysis has slowed progress in some areas. For some Trial areas one of the most difficult questions has been to be clear about the value added of the particular Trial activities as opposed to plans and activity which would have been implemented as a matter of course through their 14-19 partnerships. There are important lessons here for both existing and new Trial areas at the start of Phase 2.

103. For those Phase 1 Trials still planning to implement significant activity in the summer term and beyond questions remain about how best they will track the impact of their activities. Some Trial areas have planned to undertake surveys with young people and parents before activity is implemented and after to measure the shift in knowledge and understanding. But this will not work for all activities and some of the tracking of cohorts will need to extend well beyond the end of the Trial period. Trial areas will need to give more thought to this at the start of Phase 2.

104. Moving into Phase 2, all of the Phase 1 Trial areas have a significant opportunity to really build on what they have delivered during Phase 1 and to up the ante in terms of using the Trial as an opportunity to get all providers and partners behind their efforts to deliver RPA.

Key recommendations for Phase 2 and other Local Authorities

105. Throughout this report we have pulled out implications for Phase 2 for both existing and new Trial areas, and attempted to draw out lessons that can be learnt by any local area thinking about how to implement RPA. We don't repeat all of those recommendations here. Instead we have focused on what we believe to be the four key themes which Trial areas going into Phase 2, as well as other local areas not yet involved in the trials, should be thinking about as they consider how best to deliver RPA.

106. In addition the Isos evaluation team have recommended to the Department that it should work more closely with each of the Trial areas at the start of Phase 2 to ensure these features are firmly in place before the Phase 2 Trial activity properly begins. Whilst it remains important that areas have maximum local flexibility about how best to approach delivery of RPA, the

Phase 1 Trials have demonstrated that without having each of these elements in place, the chances of successfully delivering full participation will be significantly reduced.

Overall Focus and Clarity

107. One of the challenges of delivering RPA successfully is that it brings together a wide range of 14-19 work currently underway in many local areas. We have seen in Phase 1 that some of the Trial areas struggled to bring coherence to their RPA activity and to clearly distinguish the value added and uniqueness of their Trial activities as opposed to ongoing day to day 14-19 activity. This is particularly important during a Trial when areas are trying to learn about what works and what doesn't, but it also applies to other local areas' thinking about how to deliver RPA as well.

108. One of the key lessons from Phase 1 has been that using data at the start of the Trial to really understand the cohort has been a critical part of enabling Trial areas to determine where their focus should be. We therefore recommend that all areas undertake this analysis at the start of their Trials to determine their focus and priorities, and that other local areas should be completing this cohort analysis as they start to think about delivering RPA.

109. Having used this analysis of the cohort to determine priorities for delivering RPA, the challenge facing local areas is keeping a clear and tight focus on the specific Trial deliverables. This is critical to being able to use the Trial to determine what has and hasn't worked and to use these lessons to determine what it will take to achieve full participation. Governance and leadership of the Trial then also has a key role to play in maintaining this discipline and focus.

Engaging the 14-19 Partnership/providing senior leadership for the Trial

110. We have seen a range of different models of governance from Trial areas during Phase 1 and it is clear that Trial areas should think carefully about the governance of their Trials. The key test to emerge from Phase 1 is how to ensure that the 14-19 Partnership really starts to focus on the implications of RPA. Trial areas that had embedded the Trial within existing sub-groups such as Inclusion or IAG groups were concerned about the lack of focus and priority being given to RPA currently. Whereas areas that had established a clear focus and remit for the Trial to report direct to the 14-19 Partnership felt they had been more successful in raising RPA up the agenda and focusing on the implications for their partnerships. Whilst Governance needs to remain a local decision determined in part by existing structures and circumstances, both the evaluation team and trial areas were clear by the end of Phase 1 that making RPA an explicit part of an areas' 14-19 governance structures has significant advantages.

111. Phase 1 has also demonstrated the importance of having a senior lead for the Trial – either within the Local Authority or across the sub-region - and a close working relationship with Connexions. This is something that should be in place for all areas during Phase 2. It is also clear from Phase 1 that greater thought needs to be given to questions about sustainability to

determine whether the additional resource that has often been put in to delivering Trial activities is going to be needed on an ongoing basis, and if so how Local Authorities and their partners may be able to re-prioritise to achieve this.

Understanding the cohort and developing leading indicators

112. We have already recommended that all Trial areas and other local areas should undertake a detailed cohort analysis at the start of the Trial or before beginning seriously to think about delivering RPA. A number of Trial areas have learnt a lot during Phase 1 about how to undertake this type of analysis and we would recommend this practice is shared more widely by these areas and DCSF with other Trial areas and Local Authorities.

113. It is clear from Phase 1 that a critical part of using the data that Local Authorities and Connexions already have at their disposal is getting beneath the headline picture – Trial areas who have undertaken in-depth research with specific cohorts have a much deeper understanding of the specific challenges and issues faced by different groups of young people.

114. A number of areas during Phase 1 developed early warning indicators of becoming NEET and joining up tracking systems pre and post 16. We believe this has been a key success in helping to focus on and understand better the young people who need to be targeted for additional support or to be re-engaged. Again we would recommend all areas should look to adopt these practices during Phase 2 and the Department should facilitate this by sharing the examples from Phase 1.

Providing local drive and impetus to create momentum and engage all providers

115. We have seen during Phase 1 how some Trial areas have been particularly successful in using the Trials to generate a sense of local momentum and getting people talking about RPA and what it means. In other areas the focus has been on more detailed engagement with a more limited number of providers. In the latter cases there will be a need to roll out messages to other providers and stakeholders.

116. In all cases we recommend that Trial areas need to think in Phase 2 how they can use the Trial as an opportunity to really galvanise their local systems and effort behind the push to RPA. At least one of the Phase 1 Trial areas commented to us that they couldn't see how it was possible to deliver RPA successfully if you didn't start doing this now. We strongly agree.

Feedback from the Trial areas

117. Overall feedback about involvement in the Trials has been positive. All areas are glad they have got involved although a number commented on the challenges of the timescales involved in delivery at least at the start. There has been some feedback that the reporting requirements

of a monthly update are excessive and DCSF has decided to move to a bi-monthly reporting cycle in Phase 2 as a result.

118. Trial areas have appreciated being left to drive forward the Trials on their own in the knowledge they can call on the support of the DCSF team and participation advisor if needed. Not all areas realised this support was available during Phase 1 and given the plans to increase the support from the Participation Advisor in Phase 2 it will be important Trial areas understand how to access that support. Trial areas would also appreciate more time being given for specific requests from DCSF for information or outputs from the Trials as it takes time to compile this information, and more importantly to clear it with the range of partners involved.

119. Most Trial areas have been happy to attend networking events although they would appreciate these not always being held in London. And although some areas have started to make links independently with each other the extent of this networking and informal sharing of practice has been limited so far. Trial areas themselves recognised they would want to do much more of this during Phase 2 and this should be encouraged and facilitated by DCSF. Trial areas have also been happy to share their experiences with other LAs, both nationally and in their own regions, and a number already have the potential to host really excellent learning visits for other Trial areas and Local Authorities interested in learning about their approaches.

Focus of Phase 2

120. We have raised and discussed with each of the Trial areas during the evaluation their own ideas for Phase 2 and on the basis of what we saw also formed our own views about what the focus of the Phase 2 Trials should be. It is clear that all Phase 1 areas should continue to deliver and expand their Phase 1 activity as part of Phase 2. And there are a number of themes and approaches from Phase 1 which all Trial areas might usefully learn from, not least the need to complete their data analysis early in the process to set a clear scope for their Trial and to seek to widen and deepen engagement with providers. But there were also a number of themes which Trial areas mentioned as needing further exploration during Phase 2 which we thought were particularly important. These included:

- Focus on KS3 engagement building on approaches to the 'at risk of NEET' cohort
- Focus on JWT cohort and employer engagement – this was mentioned by many areas
- Using new commissioning responsibilities to support the delivery of RPA
- Making the Common Assessment Framework work in the context of RPA
- Focusing on the NEET unknown cohort
- Getting even better at understanding the cohort/use of data/segmentation approaches.