#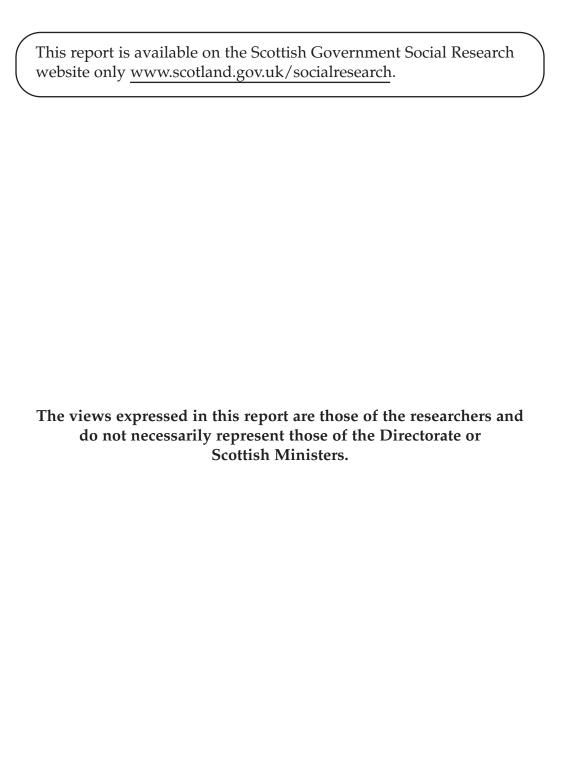 Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland (ILA Scotland) – Learning Providers and Intermediary Agencies Studies

Education and Training

social research

EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS SCOTLAND (ILA SCOTLAND) – LEARNING PROVIDERS AND INTERMEDIARY AGENCIES STUDIES

Professor Jim Gallacher/ Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)
Victoria Boyd/ GCU
Dr Robert Ingram/ GCU
Dr Beth Crossan/ GCU
Joanne Brodie/ GCU
Paula Cleary/ GCU
Nuala Toman/ GCU

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contextual overview

1. In 2004 the then Scottish Executive's Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD) commissioned an evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland (ILA Scotland).

2. The overall aim of this study was to gauge the impact of the ILA Scotland scheme in relation to the following aims, which were set out for the scheme prior to its launch:

- widening participation in adult learning by increasing interest and uptake;
- introducing new learners to adult learning and to provide an opportunity for those who have not recently participated in learning to do so;
- encouraging more learning progression;
- encouraging individuals to invest in their own learning (and take ownership);
- prioritising the learning needs of certain groups of learners (i.e. people on low incomes);
- supporting the development of a quality learning provider base in Scotland.

3. A key focus of the study was the gathering of views from a wide range of learning providers and intermediary agencies associated with the ILA Scotland scheme.

4. The purpose of the ILA Scotland scheme is to encourage individuals to take up learning opportunities and invest in their learning as they do so. The importance of measures designed to increase and widen participation in lifelong learning among members of the adult population has been recognised as an important priority of the policy agenda in Scotland in recent years. This focus has been reflected in a number of reports and policy documents.

5. Within these reports and policy documents there is recognition of the barriers to participation, in terms of financial support and access to flexible learning opportunities, and the ILA scheme is seen as an important response to such issues.

6. The original ILA Scotland scheme was launched in 2000 and was generally regarded as a success; however the scheme was suspended in 2001 as a result of some providers having been engaged in the mis-selling of ILAs. Plans were then made for the re-launch of an enhanced and more stable scheme.

7. The revised ILA Scotland scheme was launched in two phases. The first phase, ILA200 (previously named the 'Targeted Offer'), was launched in December 2004 and was aimed at those on low incomes (earned individual income of £15,000 or less and those on benefits) who are eighteen or over and normally resident in Scotland. ILA200 provides eligible learners with £200 funding which can be put towards a wide range of learning opportunities both accredited and non-accredited. The second phase, the ILA100 scheme (previously named the 'Universal Offer') was launched in August 2005. This offer is not income restricted. Initially, ILA100 eligible learners could access £100 of funding towards basic information and communication technology (ICT) learning, leading to a formal qualification/certification up to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 or equivalent.

8.   Changes were introduced in summer 2006 to both the ILA100 and ILA200 offers. The ILA100 offer was expanded to include a wide range of courses covering any subject, rather than restricted to ICT, up to SCQF Level 6 and still leading to a recognized qualification or certification. Changes were also made to the ILA200 offer. The restriction that ICT courses must lead to formal qualifications or recognised certification has also been removed. In addition, from June 1 2007, the £15,000 income threshold was raised to £18,000. The introduction of all these changes corresponds with ILA Scotland's objective of addressing financial barriers to learning and increasing participation of a more diverse or non-traditional group of learners.

9.   This final report details the findings of two research strands of the ILA Scotland evaluation[1] – the Learning Provider Study and the Intermediary Study and provides a detailed account of key themes and issues arising from the fieldwork, including views of the impact, if any, of the recent changes made in relation to the operation of the ILA Scotland scheme.

Methodology

11.   Interviews (both face-to-face but predominately via telephone) were conducted with learning providers across a range of sectors, including those from the private, higher education, college, community/voluntary and local authority sectors.

12.   Focus groups and telephone interviews formed the basis of the fieldwork in the intermediary strand of the study. Formal intermediary representatives from the careers and learning, local authority, employer, voluntary and trade union sectors either took part in focus group discussions or participated in telephone interviews. Informal intermediaries were also approached and interviews were carried out with them via telephone.

13.   Interviews took place in two phases. In the Learning Providers Study, 82 interviews were conducted in total. 26 with key representatives from Scotland's Colleges, 26 from the private sector, 10 from local authority, 10 from higher education institutions, 8 from the community/voluntary sector and 2 from sectors which did not fall into any of the other categories.

14.   Over the two phases of the study of formal Intermediaries 46 individuals participated, either through being part of a focus group or interviewed via telephone. Of the 46 who participated, 12 were from local authority, 10 from the voluntary sector, 10 from the trade union sector, 8 individuals who had attended 'Learning Uncovered' events, 5 from careers & learning and one from a sector which did not fall into any of the other categories.

15.   Eight informal Intermediaries participated over the two phases of the study. Two representatives came from community education and one each from the retail sector, a library, an adult resource centre, a community centre, a family support organisation and one face-to-face interview was carried out with a learning ambassador (a learner who encourages other learners).

---

[1] There is also a separate quantitative study, carried out by BMRB, which has been undertaken with learners and is expected to be completed early in 2008.

Perceptions of the ILA Scotland scheme

16.   Representatives from both learning providers and intermediary organisations agreed that the ILA Scotland scheme is, with respect to the provision of support for part time learners, widening access to education and training and the promotion of greater flexibility, a valuable addition to other forms of provision. While other forms of financial support, such as fee waivers, exist, ILAs are regarded as valuable in that they provided learners with a wider choice of possible providers and not just restricted to more formal educational settings, such as colleges and HEIs. For many client groups the opportunity to 'learn outside the system' was welcomed.

17.   The ILA200 offer in particular was recognised by learning providers from all sectors as being a useful source of encouragement and financial assistance for re-entry to learning, particularly for those on low incomes and/ or who are often not in employment. The value of recurrent funding was also recognised in that this provides learners with opportunities for progression.

18.   The issue of building confidence is key in encouraging learners to use new learning experiences and qualifications to improve skills and employability. Respondents from Trade Unions commented on the role of ILA Scotland in improving existing skills of the workforce, especially workers who may not normally be in a position where they can afford to pay for courses.

19.   Some intermediaries discussed work with learners who are coming to the end of their working life and/or facing redundancy, who view the ILA Scotland scheme as one route for individuals to think about when preparing 'for the next step of their lives'.

20.   Whilst respondents recognised the strengths of the ILA Scotland scheme, it is not seen as a stand alone initiative, but one which complements other initiatives. A number of respondents suggested that it is an interest in undertaking a course which is the initial impetus for learners uptaking opportunities, rather than the potential for financial support.

21.   The ILA Scotland scheme was described as supporting processes of re-engaging with learning most effectively by strengthening links with a wide range of different learning providers, many of whom may be community-based.

22.   While the value of ILAs in supporting learning is recognised, respondents also suggested that certain groups may face difficulties in accessing learning opportunities through the scheme. This includes learners with disabilities or mental health difficulties, who may experience confidence issues in both making contact with ILA Scotland and completing the application form unless they receive a considerable measure of support.

23.   In both phases of the research a gap in provision for those school leavers aged between 16 and 18 was identified. This group represents a considerable body of learners who may be able to benefit from ILA funding and try learning in a different environment in order to gain a vocational qualification to improve employability.

24.   Growing interest from people for whom English is a second language was also identified as an important issue for the ILA Scotland scheme. While ILA Scotland publicity

leaflets and application packs are available in a wide range of Asian and European languages, it was suggested by some respondents that more could be done to improve provision.

25.   Criticisms of the ILA100 scheme centred on a perceived limitation in opportunities, and the disparity in opportunities offered through the ILA100 and ILA200 offers.

26.   Representatives from both learning providers and intermediaries also commented that learners are often confused about the restrictions associated with the ILA100 offer and view these restrictions as a barrier to accessing the scheme. Respondents from intermediary agencies described difficulties in explaining the differences between those learning opportunities available under the ILA100 offer, and those which are not.

Information, marketing and awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme

27.   Learning providers and intermediaries in general suggested that the information provided by ILA Scotland is accessible, clear, informative and useful in understanding the scheme and responding to the needs and queries of learners. Information and marketing material targeted at learners was also described as very useful. Sources of support included ILA publicity such as leaflets and posters, the website, input of ILA representatives and email contact. While there was some limited criticism of the helpline in terms of the consistency of advice provided, respondents were in general very positive.

28.   The majority of providers are positive with respect to information and support by ILA Scotland staff and have described building strong, personal relationships with the staff. In this manner, staff accessibility and approachability is both commended and welcomed.

29.   The ILA Scotland website is used widely by learning providers to source information for both themselves and learners. It is generally agreed to have a wealth of helpful and relevant information and is easy to navigate. However some respondents referred to the difficulties in identifying the learning opportunities which learners wish to access. In some cases this can be due to non-standard search criteria.

30.   While many respondents commented favourably on the clarity and quality of the information, some participants, in both Phase One and Phase Two, described understanding and awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme amongst staff as mixed. In a number of cases, knowledge and information about the scheme was not getting through to the people who should be informed. Knowledge and understanding was noted as being better amongst staff who are actively involved with the scheme. Ensuring that an appropriate range of staff have the levels of knowledge and understanding of the ILA schemes which would be necessary for its effective operation is an area where further work can usefully be done.

31.   Awareness amongst client groups is described as mixed and often limited. Agencies working with learners with disabilities, mental health problems or substance misuse problems were particularly likely to comment on low levels of awareness. It was also suggested that people with literacy difficulties are often quite uncertain about the support which may be available through the scheme, and find it difficult to navigate the website.

32.   It was suggested by representatives from both learning providers and intermediary agencies that existing marketing approaches are likely to be most successful with those

individuals who were already interested in learning. While it was recognised that national TV advertising had helped to raise the profile of ILAs, a range of respondents raised doubts about the effectiveness of this form of advertising reaching the key target groups and actually recruiting learners onto programmes. There was strong argument that there is a need for greater co-operation between ILA Scotland and other locally based agencies in developing more effective marketing strategies.

33.   Respondents from learning providers and intermediary agencies reported that learners are most likely to have heard about the scheme through 'word of mouth'. This is considered particularly relevant in instances where client groups have limited access to computers.

34.   Some agencies viewed marketing and recruitment activities undertaken by ILA Scotland as "too slick" for their client groups. They also emphasised the value of 'thinking out of the box' with respect to advertising, and moving beyond obvious locations such as colleges and libraries to venues which are widely used in local communities such as pubs, supermarkets or community centres.

35.   In providing information about the ILA scheme, intermediaries in particular suggest that they play an important role in not only raising awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme but providing support and encouragement to their client groups to enable them to access the scheme. They suggest that they have used information provided by ILA Scotland staff to actively encourage participation among groups who would otherwise not be likely to have the confidence to participate.

36   Many respondents recognised the value of the links which they had with ILA Scotland staff in disseminating information about the ILA scheme, and suggested that if these links could be strengthened this could be an important means through which key target groups could be reached. The relationship which has been established between ILA Scotland and Trade Unions was noted as an example of good practice which could possibly be used as a model in developing links with other agencies.

37.   Associated with this perceived need for changes in the approach to marketing and advertising was the suggestion from respondents in both Phase One and Phase Two that the information available to intermediaries did not provide enough explicit detail about learning opportunities. Too much emphasis is seen to be placed on funding, and not enough on the range of learning opportunities which the ILA Scotland scheme opens up. It   was   suggested that for many potential learners the starting point is for them to become interested in taking a course, the availability of funding assistance is then an added incentive.

38.   The importance of avoiding terminology and acronyms which are confusing for potential learners, particularly those with limited recent experience of the educational system, was also raised. For example SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) is not a term which is immediately clear to many people unfamiliar with terminology associated with the Scottish education system.

39   It is recognized that the size of Trade Union agencies allows extensive collaboration with ILA Scotland. Logistical considerations for smaller agencies might mean that such a relationship could be difficult to sustain. It is also recognized that resource constraints would make it difficult for ILA Scotland to develop similar relationships with a wide range of agencies without additional resources.

Procedures associated with the ILA Scotland scheme

40.   The process of registering as a learning provider was generally viewed as a positive and straightforward experience. Those providers who had been involved in the previous ILA scheme, as well as those who worked closely with learndirect scotland, were particularly satisfied with the process.

41.   The valuable support provide by ILA Scotland staff was noted by a range of respondents. The rigour of the registration process for learning providers was accepted as appropriate by many respondents, in light of increased measures of security in the re-launched scheme.

42.   In Phase One of the research, learning providers commented on the additional workload that they experienced due to the administrative demands associated with course eligibility. However, in Phase Two, more learning providers stated that the administration involved in the scheme was subsumed into their roles as part of overall involvement in the scheme.

43   There were very mixed responses to use of the Provider Opportunity Management Tool (PROMT) tool. Some providers reported no difficulties and welcomed the increased automation of the registration process, though getting used to the PROMT tool presented a number of initial obstacles. Support from the ILA Scotland call centre and email contact with staff helped to alleviate these problems.

44.   In Phase One of the research the PROMT tool was described as cumbersome by many larger learning providers who report that the processes for entering and updating data were both lengthy and time consuming. However, by Phase Two of the research responses were generally more positive, and it appeared that learning providers felt they had greater competency regarding the use of the tool.

45.   An important change which has been widely welcomed by providers has been the introduction of flexible start dates (in May 2006). This enables learning providers to enter courses which do not have a designated start or end date in the PROMT tool without the need for the monthly updates which were previously required.

46.   The application process has been noted by a number of respondents as being bureaucratic and creating barriers to participation for learners with literacy or numeracy problems, older people, learners with disabilities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Intermediary agencies in particular described the process as time-consuming, and noted that this was one of the least successful aspects of the scheme.

47.   The application form itself was described as cumbersome and difficult to complete. Agencies suggested that it should be made more streamlined and user-friendly. Representatives whose client groups include learners with learning difficulties highlight that the application pack is inaccessible for these learners.

48.   Intermediaries were in general more critical than learning providers. This may reflect the different roles of these groups of respondents, with intermediaries dealing with a wider cross-section of potential learners, many of whom have not yet established firm involvement with learning providers.

49.   Some learning providers have also noted that on occasion, the time taken to complete the application process has meant that people have had difficulty accessing the learning opportunities for which they are eligible.

50.   In both phases of the research, learning providers and intermediaries have identified the telephone call that the potential learner has to make to request an application form as a barrier. It was suggested that some learners, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and those with mental health needs or learning difficulties, are often daunted by the prospect of phoning. Intermediaries and learning providers report their attempts to provide support for applicants, but suggest that the current arrangements make this difficult.

51.   There is a strong feeling amongst some intermediaries that they could provide an alternative to the initial telephone call through acting as a channel for the dissemination of application packs. It was highlighted that certain agencies, for example Trade Unions and local authority agencies, are fully accountable bodies and could provide a mechanism through which to supply application packs to members or employees. Voluntary groups also suggested that their distinctive roles in providing support could be more clearly recognised, and enhanced within the scheme.

52.   It was also noted that the facility to apply online has been described by learning providers as a sought after tool. learndirect scotland are currently piloting an online application tool for use by learners and this has been welcomed.

53.   Both learning providers and intermediaries in both phases of this research described income assessment procedures as often time consuming, cumbersome and complicated, and highlighted as a barrier to accessing ILA Scotland opportunities.

54.   The requirement to supply payslips was identified as presenting several different types of problematic issues. Many individuals have difficulty submitting wage slips due to loss, or not holding on to them. Respondents also suggested that learners may be reluctant to go to their employer's personnel department to get copies of wage slips as they are worried that their employer would realise that they were going on a course and that this may affect their job security.

55.   Overtime payments and their effect on an individual's overall income assessment was also noted as a potential issue. It was feared that this would cause certain types of workers, for example factory workers, to have their annual salary over-estimated due to additional and often inconsistent overtime payments. Additionally, some difficulties have been highlighted in relation to expenses added to salaries.

56.   For those who are self-employed, but on relatively low incomes, the requirement to provide audited accounts can act as a barrier.

57.   It was also suggested that there are people in a range of positions who have no regular income, e.g. women who are not in paid employment outside the home, but find it difficult to obtain proof of this position, and procedures involved in securing a National Insurance Statement can be complicated and drawn out.

58.   For those in receipt of benefits, including incapacity benefit, and tax credits, it is suggested that many are already uncertain about the rules and regulations regarding entitlements, and requiring evidence for eligibility for ILAs adds to this uncertainty.

59.   Respondents also commented on the additional burdens which are associated with having to provide this evidence on an annual basis if entitlement to the ILA200 is to be maintained. This led to the suggestion that a rolling system requiring annual confirmation or updating of information might be a way to minimise the burden associated with this requirement.

60.   The £15,000 income threshold had been identified as problematic by a number of respondents during Phase One and the earlier part of Phase Two. As a result the respondents in the later stages of Phase Two, who were aware of the raising of the income threshold to £18,000 in June 2007, welcomed this development. This is seen by learning providers as a significant step towards enabling those people whose salaries are marginally above this to access ILA approved learning opportunities.

61.   The learning token is the means through which learners pay providers for their course with their ILA funding. While some respondents, and particularly some providers, regard it as an accepted part of the administrative process, a considerable number of others, both learning providers and intermediaries, found the process cumbersome and problematic. Intermediary representatives were generally critical regarding the learning token system describing it as confusing, both for themselves and for the client groups.

62.   In particular, participants describe the terminology as confusing and that the term 'token' generates expectations that it is a plastic coin or a card similar to a bank card as opposed to paper documentation. In some cases, this misunderstanding has had a knock-on effect for learning providers in gaining access to ILA funding and the time taken to encourage learners to submit tokens.

63.   Suggested improvements to the learning token system centred around making the process more automated and keeping all parties informed (ILA Scotland as well as the learner and provider).

64.   All learners are required to make a payment of £10 towards their course to encourage an element of personal commitment. A number of respondents from both learning providers and intermediaries welcomed the contribution, feeling that it was a reasonable amount for the learner to pay in return for the financial assistance that the ILA Scotland scheme could offer. The contribution was also described as a way of encouraging learners to invest in their own learning.

65.   However, a number of intermediaries in both Phase One and Phase Two view the contribution level as too high, especially for the unemployed and other learners on very low incomes.   Some agencies have been reported as paying the £10 on behalf of their client groups. A further argument presented by some learning providers was that collecting the £10 contribution presented an additional administrative task.

Awareness and impact of recent changes to the ILA Scotland scheme

69. A mixed picture emerged amongst learning providers and intermediary agencies regarding awareness of the recent changes to the ILA100 and ILA200 offers. For those that were aware of the changes, more were knowledgeable of changes made to the ILA100 offer than ILA200.

70. The relationship between ILA Scotland and learning providers was identified as a key factor in determining the level of awareness of changes to the ILA scheme. Respondents who had a close and direct relationship with ILA Scotland noted that they had been kept informed of changes to the scheme through e-mail communication and newsletters. Organisations which did not have such direct links with ILA Scotland reported that their knowledge was often more limited and it depended on links with other organisations. Amongst respondents from intermediary organisations, trade union representatives had the greatest awareness of the changes, potentially as a result of the already mentioned strength of relationship that exists between this sector and ILA Scotland.

71. Some participants in Phase Two of the study remarked that awareness within their intermediary agency with regard to the recent changes to the scheme was very varied, and that there may be colleagues who knew considerably more or less than they did. Participants also indicated that knowledge of changes of this kind will depend on their 'need to know', which will be associated with the work which they are undertaking.

72. Levels of awareness of changes amongst learners was described as very low, with the vast majority of providers stating that their perception was that learners' knowledge of these changes was minimal. Thus learning providers and intermediaries provide a key role in disseminating information about changes to potential learners. Providers noted that for many learners, attaining the general knowledge and understanding of the ILA Scotland scheme, was more important and takes precedent over information about the changes.

73. While it was commented that awareness of the scheme, including the changes introduced, was quite low amongst learners, this reflected the extent to which they saw the scheme as being relevant to their needs. One provider suggested that if potential learners are not ready to take up a learning opportunity then they would probably not take much notice of the publicity material circulated that advertises the scheme.

74. The impact of the recent changes on widening the learning opportunities available to potential learners and introducing new learners to adult education was generally welcomed by respondents. The changes were noted as having an impact on increasing the range of opportunities available, widening participation, and providing new opportunities for progression.

75. From the limited number of learning providers who were able to pass comment on changes introduced to ILA200, the removal of the restriction that ICT courses must lead to a formal qualification or recognised certification generated a mixed response. On the positive side, it was stated that removing the restriction would encourage more learner progression, whilst other providers questioned this change and emphasised the value of the attainment of a recognised formal qualification which was seen to enhance a learner's career prospects.

76.   The change to ILA100 where courses would now be offered up to and including Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 was welcomed by providers in different sectors as extending the range of courses and opportunities which will be available at a local level. However while some learning providers welcomed the broadening of the range of courses on offer under ILA100, other providers thought that the extension did not go far enough in widening access to learning opportunities.

77.   From the limited number of interviewees that referred to the threshold increasing to £18,000 after June 2007, the general consensus was that it was a positive move which would result in more learners being attracted onto the scheme and have a positive impact on widening participation.

Summary and conclusions

Perceptions of the ILA Scotland scheme

- The ILA Scotland scheme has been generally welcomed by both learning providers and intermediaries. It is seen as a valuable form of support to be used in conjunction with other initiatives.
- Many people need encouragement to take steps into learning, and develop what has been described as a 'learning attitude'. This points to the importance of partnerships between agencies in developing the potential of the ILA Scotland scheme.
- There is also a need to ensure that the scheme fully addresses the needs of learners with disabilities, mental health needs or learning difficulties, as well as economic migrants for whom English is a second language.
- Provision for 16-18 year olds in an alternative environment could be a valuable form of support in assisting with re-engaging in learning.
- While the extension of the ILA100 scheme to cover a wider range of provision was welcomed, respondents continued to question why restrictions in the range of provision apply to this part of the scheme but do not apply to the ILA 200.

Information, marketing and awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme

- The information provided by ILA Scotland to learning providers and intermediaries was generally described as informative and useful. Respondents commented favourably on the material available through a range of sources, including the website, leaflets and posters, as well as support provided by ILA staff.
- Despite satisfaction with information, levels of knowledge and understanding of the ILA Scotland scheme of staff within learning providers and intermediaries was described as patchy. It was recognised that this was partly associated with internal dissemination strategies, and suggested that more could be done to address this.
- Many potential learners seemed to have little knowledge or understanding of the ILA scheme before they come into contact with learning providers or intermediaries. Staff from these organisations suggested that they had a key role in disseminating information about the scheme and that 'word of mouth' was a key means through which many learners and potential learners received information.

- Agencies working with learners with disabilities, mental health problems or substance misuse problems were particularly likely to comment on low levels of awareness. There was a strong argument that there is a need for different approaches to marketing the scheme to target learners in these groups, and greater cooperation between ILA Scotland and other locally based agencies. More could be made of the expertise of ILA staff and the range of marketing materials which they have in developing locally based strategies as a means of raising awareness.
- Respondents in both Phase One and Phase Two suggested that there was too much emphasis on the funding, and not enough on the range of learning opportunities which this opens up.

Procedures associated with the ILA Scotland scheme

- The process of registering as a learning provider was generally viewed as a straightforward experience for most learning providers. The rigour of the registration process for learning providers was understood and regarded as appropriate by many respondents.
- The processes for establishing courses as eligible for ILA funding through using the Provider Opportunity Management Tool (PROMT) developed by ILA Scotland were viewed as onerous by many respondents in Phase One, but were more generally accepted by respondents in Phase Two. This was partly associated with growing familiarity among learning providers, changes which they introduced to their own procedures, and changes introduced by ILA Scotland.
- The application process for learners has been noted by a number of respondents as being bureaucratic and creating barriers to participation for certain groups of learners, including those with literacy or numeracy problems, older people, learners with disabilities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- In both phases of the research both learning providers and intermediaries identified the telephone call that the learner has to make to request an application form as a potential barrier. This relates to issues surrounding the confidence and communication skills of the learner. It was suggested that the process could be made easier for the learner if the learning provider or intermediary were more involved.
- Learning providers and intermediaries reported various steps which they had taken to support applicants with this initial telephone call, including work with learners with a variety of disabilities. However it was suggested that the present arrangements made it difficult to provide support of this kind.
- There is a strong feeling amongst some intermediaries and learning providers that arrangements could be put in place which would make it easier to provide support for ILA applicants. One suggestion is that they could provide an alternative to the initial telephone call through acting as a channel for the dissemination of application packs.
- It was also noted that learndirect scotland are currently piloting an on-line application tool for use by learners and this has been welcomed.
- Learning providers and intermediaries in both phases of this research described income assessment procedures associated with qualifying for the ILA200 as often time consuming, cumbersome and complicated. They were highlighted as a barrier to accessing ILA Scotland opportunities.
- Problems with income assessment led to suggestions that there is a need to review the arrangements which are currently in place. While it is accepted that some form of assessment will be required for ILA200, it is suggested that existing arrangements are

unnecessarily onerous. One suggestion is that once an initial assessment has been made, learners could confirm annually that their circumstances have not changed, and provide information about any relevant changes.

- The £15,000 income threshold had been identified as problematic by a number of respondents during Phase One and the earlier part of Phase Two. As a result the respondents in the later stages of Phase Two, who were aware of the raising of the income threshold to £18,000 in June 2007, welcomed this development.

- A considerable number of learning providers and intermediaries found the processes associated with the Learning Token as cumbersome and problematic. Intermediary representatives were generally critical regarding the learning token system describing it as confusing, both for themselves and for the client groups.

- A number of respondents from both learning providers and intermediaries welcomed the £10 contribution which learners are required to make. The contribution was described as a way of encouraging learners to make a commitment to their own learning. However, other intermediaries in both Phase One and Phase Two view the contribution level as too high, especially for the unemployed and other learners on very low incomes.

Awareness and impact of recent changes to the ILA Scotland scheme

- Awareness of recent changes depended on level of contact with ILA Scotland and internal dissemination strategies. Many learner provider respondents who were in regular contact with ILA Scotland had a good level of awareness, respondents from intermediaries such as trade unions also had a good level of knowledge. Within these organisations level of knowledge among other staff depended on their internal arrangements for dissemination.

- Most respondents reported that knowledge of changes among learners and potential learners was very limited until they were informed by providers or intermediaries.

- The impact of the recent changes on widening the learning opportunities available to potential learners and introducing new learners to adult education was generally welcomed by respondents.

- While some learning providers welcomed the broadening of the range of courses on offer under ILA100, other providers thought that the extension did not go far enough in widening access to learning opportunities.

- From the limited number of interviewees that referred to the threshold increasing to £18,000, the general consensus was that it was a positive move which would result in more learners being attracted onto the scheme and have a positive impact on widening participation.

CHAPTER ONE   CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

1.1   In 2004 the then Scottish Executive's Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD) commissioned the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRLL) based at Glasgow Caledonian University to undertake an evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland (ILA Scotland).   This evaluation consists of interviews with learning providers and intermediary agencies associated with the ILA Scotland scheme[2].

1.2   Recent changes to the strategic objectives of the Scottish Government to make Scotland wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, smarter and greener[3] have clear implications for the ILA Scotland scheme. Within this context, the scheme has a key role to play in enabling learners and potential learners who may otherwise be unable to access learning opportunities to undertake study or training to leverage skills and increase their potential contribution to the knowledge economy.

1.3   The purpose of the ILA Scotland scheme is to encourage individuals to take up learning opportunities and invest in their learning as they do so. The importance of measures designed to increase and widen participation in lifelong learning among members of the adult population has been recognised as an important priority of the policy agenda in Scotland in recent years. This focus is reflected in a number of reports and policy documents including the Scottish Parliament's Final Report into Lifelong Learning (Scottish Parliament, 2002), the then Scottish Executive's Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland – Life Through Learning Through Life (Scottish Executive, 2003a), the Partnership Agreement (Scottish Executive, 2003b) and more recently the Scottish Government's Skills Strategy, Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy (Scottish Government, 2007). Within these documents, there is recognition of the barriers to participation, and the ILA scheme is seen as an important response to such issues.

1.4   Financial factors have been identified as one such potential barrier for learners and potential learners, in particular non-traditional learners (Scottish Funding Council, 2005). The Scottish Government has an ongoing commitment to enhancing student support through developing continued improvements to student finance models. Differences in financial support systems for tertiary education students were recently evaluated on an international level in the Funding for Learners Review (Scottish Executive, 2005a). Extensive information, advice and guidance (IAG) on student finance is provided through the Funding, Support and Grants section of the Education and Training area of the Scottish Government website, which offers detailed support for groups such as adult learners, disabled students and those undertaking part-time study (Scottish Executive, 2007a).

1.5   The ILA Scotland scheme has been a key tool in addressing ongoing policy-based dialogue about improving access to and flexibility of learning opportunities. The concept of a model of entitlement to learning which is flexible and not time-bound, equitable, guaranteed

---

[2] This study will be complemented by separate quantitative research being undertaken with learners which will be completed later in 2007 and published at a later stage.
[3] The Scottish Government, overview of strategic objectives, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/purposestratobjs

and non-bureaucratic[4] is supported as a method of encouraging entry or re-entry and engagement in learning in post-16 education. Entitlement to learning has been identified as a way of empowering learners, increasing participation amongst 'non-traditional' groups through more flexible learning opportunities and fostering a sense of 'parity of esteem' between different types of learning within one overarching framework (Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, 2002). The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee (ELLC) also recommended that part-time learners should be entitled to the same (or pro-rata) fee arrangements as full-time learners.

1.6   Increasing overall participation in Higher Education (HE) has meant an increase in the number of part-time students and learners who would benefit from such flexible learning pathways. In 2005-06, 40% of all students in HE in Scotland[5] and 89% of all students in Scotland's colleges[6] studied part-time. There is currently a clear differential in the financial support available for full-time and part-time students, with part-time students in further education (FE) being eligible for means tested bursary support (for travel and study costs) and in HE having entitlement to limited support with study costs (Scottish Executive, 2005). Unaffordable costs of study can act as a significant barrier to full participation of part-time students in education (Callender et al, 2006), and 'the view that support for part-time students should be enhanced is widely held'[7].

1.7   Along with the financial assistance offered through ILA Scotland and the government fee waiver scheme, the Open University (OU) has recently announced plans to offer financial help to part-time students who may otherwise be unable to access learning opportunities. This income based assistance (up to £200 for those earning between £15,700 and £30,000) has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Review of Funding of Learners (Scottish Executive, 2005c), as initially outlined in Life Through Learning Through Life, the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003a). This OU development aims to complement existing aid for those on low incomes, such as single parents, mature students and students with disabilities (Cubie et al, 1999) and encourage flexible and equitable access to learning opportunities. This funding is for one year only and will be for session 2007-08.

1.8   The Leitch Review of Skills suggests that the 50% target for participation in HE prioritises full-time undergraduate study over part-time opportunities. Leitch recommends increased employer engagement and routes to continued professional development as potential resolutions to this, in line with the development of the core objective of the increased acquisition of 'world class skills' (Leitch, 2006).The Department for Innovation Universities and Skills in July 2007 proposed to introduce new 'skills accounts' in England (though these would be different from ILAs in Scotland in a number of ways)

1.9   The ILA scheme also acts as a mechanism through which learners may access IAG regarding learning opportunities from a number of sources which include amongst others:

---

[4] Scottish Executive (2006) Entitlement to Learning Scoping Study, http://www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/29144834/0
[5]   Scottish   Executive,   Students   in   Higher   Education   at   Scottish   Institutions   2005-06, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/05/15103533/4
[6] Scottish Funding Council, Student enrolments in Scottish Further Education Colleges by mode of study, level and gender – 2005-06, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1046/0051448.xls
[7]   Scottish   Executive,   Final   Report   from   the   funding   of   learners   review, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20899/55184

ILA Scotland helpline and website; intermediary agencies; learning providers and other learners. As such, the ILA Scotland scheme contributes to the Executive's commitment to the provision of clear, straightforward, accessible and user friendly IAG which is delivered efficiently, effectively and coherently by delivery partners, intermediaries and IAG practitioners (Scottish Executive, 2005b).

Background

The ILA Scotland scheme

1.10   Plans for the ILA scheme were first outlined in the Government Green Paper The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain (Department for Education and Employment, 1998) in which paths for movement towards individualized, self-directed and market driven lifelong learning were discussed. In Scotland, the scheme was adopted as 'a key part of the then Scottish Executive's drive to build a learning nation where people of all backgrounds can invest in their own learning throughout their lifetime' (Scottish Executive, 2000). On its launch in 2000, the original scheme (which operated UK-wide) enjoyed national uptake that exceeded initial forecasts, with 80% of participants in the former Scottish Executive-commissioned research agreeing that participation in the scheme had increased their knowledge and skills and 60% agreeing that participation in the scheme would encourage them to undertake further learning (Scottish Executive, 2002). Though generally hailed as a success, the scheme was suspended in 2001 as a result of some providers having been engaged in the mis-selling of ILAs. In Scotland plans were then made for the re-launch of an enhanced and more stable scheme which would 'take the best from the first ILA programme and remedy its shortcomings' (Scottish Executive, 2001).

1.11   The ILA Scotland scheme was re-launched in December 2004, as a more robust and sustainable successor to the original scheme. Like the ILA Scotland scheme, ILAs were also re-launched in Wales with a new scheme being introduced in summer 2003[8].

1.12   An evaluation of the original ILA Scotland scheme has helped to shape the innovative nature of the re-launched scheme[9]. The revised ILA Scotland scheme was launched in two phases. The first phase, ILA200 (previously named targeted offer), was launched in December 2004 and was aimed at those on low incomes (earned individual income of £15,000 or less and those on benefits) who are eighteen or over and normally resident in Scotland. ILA200 provides eligible learners with £200 funding which can be put towards a wide range of learning opportunities both accredited and non-accredited. The second phase, the ILA100 offer (previously named universal offer) was launched in August 2005. This offer is not income restricted. Initially, ILA100 eligible learners could access £100 of funding towards basic information and communication technology (ICT) learning leading to a formal qualification/certification up to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 or equivalent. The ILA100 offer was expanded from summer 2006 to include a wide range of courses covering any subject, rather than restricted to ICT, up to SCQF Level 6 (although still limited to courses leading to qualifications/certification). The restriction that ICT courses for ILA200 must lead to formal qualifications or recognised certification has been removed.

---

[8] http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/enterprise/or-05/ec05-0102.htm
[9] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15482/11110

1.13   Once established, ILA Scotland accounts have no specified expiry date and the funding entitlement is refreshed on an annual basis although account holders for ILA200 have to re-confirm their income level (if not, they revert to an ILA100 account). To access funds provided through the ILA Scotland scheme, all ILA learners must make a minimum contribution of £10 per learning episode.

1.14   Courses which are eligible for ILA funding are referred to as "Eligible Learning" and are detailed on the ILA Scotland website[10].   Funding can be used towards a range of courses offered by approved learning providers from a variety of sectors which include voluntary or community providers, private training providers, colleges and universities.

1.15   However, certain types of courses are excluded from the ILA Scotland scheme.   Such exclusions are:

- full time higher education
- advanced professional qualifications;
- work related and statutory training which is a requirement of the individuals employment, examples offered by ILA Scotland include Health and Safety or learning which is associated with core work duties;
- adult literacy and numeracy courses;
- leisure or sports activities not leading to a recognised qualification;
- secondary education.
- ICT training which does not lead to a recognised qualification or certificate
- lessons towards attaining driving licence category A or B
- courses given as a reward or an inducement by an employer
- private flying lessons (including fixed wing, rotary and paragliding)
- diving lessons (scuba, deep sea and high board)
- outward bound type courses

1.16   As we have noted, ILA Scotland has been subject to major changes aimed at improving the scheme's impact and effectiveness (see Table 1.1).   The first widened the scope of the ILA100 offer to include ICT qualifications up to SCQF Level 6 or equivalent. The second amendment has broadened the offer to include access to a wide range of ILA approved learning.

---

10 http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/Course+Search/search.htm

Table 1.1: The ILA Scotland scheme[11]

Target Group	Funding	Minimum learner contribution	Requirement to provide evidence of income	Courses learner may access
ILA200 offer - Earned income of £15,000[12] or less per annum, individuals in receipt of benefits or tax credits	Up to £200 per learner per year	£10 per learning episode	Yes	Wide range of ILA Scotland approved courses, both certificated and non-certificated
ILA100 offer - Earned income of more than £15,000 per year (prior to changes introduced in August 2006)	Up to £100 per learner year	£10 per learning episode	No	ILA Scotland approved ICT courses up to SCQF level 5 or equivalent which must lead to qualification or certification
ILA100 offer - Earned income of more than £15,000 per year (post changes to the scheme introduced in August 2006)	Up to £100 per learner per year	£10 per learning episode	No	Wide range of ILA Scotland approved courses up to SCQF Level 6 or equivalent which must lead to qualification or certification

1.17   Changes have also been made to the ILA200 offer. The initial restriction that ICT courses must lead to formal qualifications or recognised certification has been removed. An additional change has recently been announced. On June 1st 2007, the £15,000 individual income threshold was raised to £18,000[13]. Recent research has noted that many agencies have felt that the current cut off point was too low and should be raised (Scottish Executive, 2007c).   This corresponds with ILA Scotland's objective of addressing financial barriers to learning and increasing participation of a more diverse or non-traditional group of learners.

The learner application process

1.18   The ILA Scotland scheme comprises of a helpline through which learners are encouraged to enquire about the scheme via a dedicated telephone number staffed by advisors from learndirect scotland. Through the helpline, learners can check whether they are eligible, enquire about approved courses, and request an ILA application form. It was the intention that channelling the application process via a single entry point would provide clarity and also contribute to greater security within the application process.

1.19   Once learners have contacted the helpline and registered with the ILA Scotland scheme, they receive an application pack which contains a form, guidance on completing the form, and freepost envelope through which it is to be returned.   This pack is also available in audio (CD) format, Braille and large print format, or in any of the following languages:

---

11 This table is adapted from information provided by ILA Scotland. See
http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EDD0AA0F-7B51-4DBD-830F-B9C5D6205A43/0/ILAScotlandeligibility.pdf
12 This increased to £18,000 on June 1st 2007
13 http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/Provider/News.htm

Chinese, Gaelic, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. The application form is partially completed on the basis of information the learner has already provided through their interaction with the helpline. The learner is responsible for completing the form although assistance through an intermediary or partner agency, for example an advice agency or community group, is encouraged.

1.20   After the form has been returned to ILA Scotland, and evidence of income assessed (where required), the learner receives a welcome pack confirming that they have registered with ILA Scotland. ILA Scotland states that the learner should receive this within two weeks of their application being received[14]. In the welcome pack, the learner is provided with a guide to choosing courses and a learner account card with a specific ILA account reference number. The account number is required to book an ILA approved course. Like the application outlined in paragraph 1.19 above, the welcome pack is also available in alternative formats and languages.

Income assessment

1.21 Applicants for the ILA200 offer are requested to provide evidence of individual income alongside their application for inclusion in the scheme. The nature of evidence required varies depending on the individual learner's circumstances (please see Table 1.2). All forms that are required to be completed in order to evidence income are found within the application pack. Evidence of income should be returned to ILA Scotland along with the completed application form.

Table 1.2: Evidence of income required as part of ILA200 Scotland application process [15]

Employed	In receipt of benefits/state pension	Of pensionable age but not in receipt of state pension	Self-employed	No income
3 most recent monthly pay slips	latest benefit entitlement letter	copy standard pension statement	ILA Scotland Certification of Self-Employed Income Form	National Insurance Contribution Records Statement from DWP
or	or	or		or
3 weekly pay slips in last 3 month period	most recent Tax Credit Assessment Notification	Letter form DWP confirming pension		Tax Credit Notification from Inland Revenue
or	or	or		
ILA Scotland Employer Certification of Income form	ILA Scotland Benefit Confirmation form	copy of inside cover or pension book showing payment made and to whom		

14 How learners register with ILA Scotland http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E983069D-F608-485D-975B-6297EC6E14AB/0/Howlearnersregister.pdf
15 This table was adapted from information provided by ILA Scotland see http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/54A31301-4182-483D-A8F5-5BC0370B3F99/0/IncomeAssessment.pdf

Booking ILA Scotland learning opportunities

1.22 Once a learner has selected a course from ILA approved courses or "eligible learning opportunities", the learner must then approach the provider and indicate their wish to access an ILA funded opportunity.   The learner must then give their learner account number (on their learner account card) to the provider in order to reserve ILA Scotland funds. Following this course booking process, the learner receives confirmation of the booked course from ILA Scotland along with a 'learning token' which the learner must then use to "pay" for their learning. This is a paper confirmation which includes an additional reference number unique to that learner, the selected course and the selected provider and is submitted to the provider to be dated and validated. It is also suggested that the learner's £10 personal contribution should be collected at this point[16].

Individual Learning Accounts and the role of learning providers and intermediary agencies

1.23   ILA Scotland has prioritised working with both learning providers and intermediary agencies (please see Annex 1 for a list of types of each). The important role that learning providers and intermediary agencies can play in disseminating information to learners and potential learners has been recognised by ILA Scotland. The ILA Scotland website has a dedicated 'Provider Zone' and 'Partner Zone', with tailored and bespoke information for each of these types of organisation. The Learning Provider Zone provides guidance on registration as a provider, quality assurance aspects of course delivery and operational aspects of the scheme, such as the Provider Opportunity Management Tool (PROMT), the dedicated information management software which enables providers to add, edit and remove course information and bookings. The Partner Zone offers guidance and information on how to provide support for learners and potential learners, including examples of the nature of support that learners may require. The ILA Scotland scheme proposes to build on relationships already established between intermediary agencies and their particular client groups[17].

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

Overall aims

1.24   The overall aim of this study is to gauge the impact of the ILA Scotland scheme in relation to the following aims, which were set out for the scheme prior to its launch:

- widening participation in adult learning by increasing interest and uptake
- introducing new learners to adult learning and to provide an opportunity for those who have not recently participated in learning to do so
- encouraging more learning progression
- encouraging individuals to invest in their own learning (and take ownership)

---

16 How Learners Book a Learning Episode http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/ED6C4C72-7FCC-4C2B-A1E8-E9BAD7FFF665/0/HowLearnersBooka.pdf
17 Welcome to ILA Scotland http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/4913D4E1-BF20-43D2-911C-46B68378E77F/0/welcometoILAScotland.pdf

- prioritising the learning needs of certain groups of learners (i.e. people on low incomes)
- supporting the development of a quality learning provider base in Scotland

1.25   This final report details the findings of both research strands of the ILA Scotland evaluation – the Learning Provider Study and the Intermediary Study. Firstly, we provide an outline of the methodological approaches adopted in relation to both strands of the research. We then provide a detailed account of key themes and issues arising from the fieldwork, including views of the impact, if any, of the recent changes made in relation to the operation of the ILA Scotland scheme. Latterly we go on to summarise the key emerging issues from the research and consider their potential role in the long term successes of the scheme in the conclusions section.

1.26   Given the changes which have been introduced to the ILA Scotland scheme, after discussions between CRLL staff and the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning Directorate (LLD) it was agreed that it would be more sensible to view both the Learning Provider and Intermediary Studies in two phases, where half of the fieldwork undertaken would be conducted prior to the introduction of these changes and the other half would be administered after the changes were introduced. This second wave of fieldwork would be able to assess the impact of the recent changes to the scheme. Interim Reports on the Learning Provider Study and the Intermediary Study submitted by CRLL to the Executive in October 2006 acted as a baseline through which the impact of the recent changes introduced to the ILA Scotland scheme can be compared. Research findings summarising the key points form the research are available online (Scottish Executive, 2007b, 2007c)[18].

---

[18] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169152/0047118.pdf, and
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169161/0047120.pdf

CHAPTER TWO   METHODOLOGY

Methodological overview

2.1   Both strands of the evaluation had differing but complementary research methodologies, in order to provide cross-cutting thematic data which would offer a rich contextual overview of the key issues faced amongst learning providers and intermediary agencies, whilst also providing a platform for commonality and comparison. Each strand consisted of a scoping study and two phases of research (Phase One and Phase Two).

Learning Provider Study

Scoping study

2.2   A scoping study of learning providers was undertaken in order to explore key issues emerging in relation to the ILA Scotland scheme. This approach proved useful because the ILA Scotland scheme was at an early stage in its implementation and the scoping interviews allowed an in-depth consideration of key issues emerging from the perspective of ILA approved learning providers. For more information on the scoping study please see Annex 1.

Phase One Learning Provider Interviews

2.3   Based on information gathered in the scoping study phase, a mixed method questionnaire was developed for use in Phase One interviews. Section 1 of the interview schedule consisted of a mix of closed and short answer questions aimed at generating useful quantitative data regarding the operation of the scheme. Section 2 contained questions which allowed more in-depth discussion of issues covered in Section 1 and pertinent issues arising from the scoping study. Please see Annexes 1 and 2 for more details.

Phase Two Learning Provider Interviews

2.4   The same questionnaire was also used in Phase Two of the Learning Provider Study, with sections 1 and 2 expanded to explore the impact and awareness, if any, of the recent changes to the ILA Scotland scheme. Please see Annexes 1 and 2 for more details.

Intermediary Study

Scoping study

2.5   The scoping study of intermediary and partner agencies comprised of two focus groups in central locations in Glasgow and Edinburgh. This approach proved useful in that it allowed an exploration of pertinent themes from the perspective of those agencies that act as intermediaries or partners in the scheme. Information gathered in these focus groups was used as the basis for devising the interview schedule and contact strategy for the in-depth telephone interviews with agencies of this kind. Please see Annex 3 for more details.

Phase One Intermediary Interviews

2.6   Interviews were carried out by telephone with a variety of both formal and informal intermediaries, and concentrated on the same areas discussed in the focus groups. Previous research has illustrated that adult learners often rely on informal networks such as family, friends, community centres and nurseries when sourcing information about learning opportunities (Whittaker et al, 2004).   As such, at the end of each formal intermediary interview participants were asked for suggestions of agencies or individuals based within their local area who may act as informal intermediaries. Please see Annexes 3 and 4 for more details.

Phase Two intermediary focus groups

2.7   The purpose of the two final focus groups was to have discussions with intermediary and partner agencies based around the findings from the research to date that CRLL has undertaken with similar agencies. The two groups discussed the possible impact of these findings for the client groups of the agencies involved, in particular the impact of the recent changes to the scheme. Please see Annexes 3 and 4 for more details.

Phase Two Intermediary Interviews

2.8   A second phase of telephone interviews were carried out with formal and informal intermediaries. These focussed on the same discussion topics as Phase One, with the addition of questions relating to participants' knowledge and awareness, as well as perceptions of the potential impact of recent changes to the ILA Scotland scheme. Please see Annexes 3 and 4 for more details.

Data Analysis

2.9   At the beginning of each interview (with representatives from learning providers and intermediary agencies) a series of short answer questions pertaining to role and experience/ satisfaction with a number of aspects of the ILA Scotland scheme provided a quantitative dataset. Details from this are available in Annex 2.

2.10   Key issues were identified through analysis of transcriptions and detailed notes by each member of the research team.   The interview schedule was used initially as a framework for analysis, which further developed throughout the analytic process dependent on participants' responses, and cross-cutting, thematic findings emerging from documentary analysis.

2.11   Quotations contained in this report from learning providers and intermediary agency representatives are marked with either [1] or [2] to specify whether they are from the first or second phase of research. In including quotations from the two phases it is possible to reflect on whether attitudes to a variety of aspects of the ILA Scotland scheme have changed as a result of the recent changes introduced.

CHAPTER THREE   PERCEPTIONS OF THE ILA SCOTLAND SCHEME

Perceptions of effectiveness of the ILA Scotland scheme

3.1   The ILA Scotland scheme was re-launched in 2004 to provide a new form of support for part time learners, help widen access to education and training, and promote greater flexibility. Many respondents, both from learning providers and intermediary organisations, agreed that the scheme was, with respect to these goals, a valuable addition to other forms of provision.

3.2   The contribution of ILA200 was particularly recognised by learning providers from all sectors as being a useful source of encouragement and financial assistance for initial re-entry to learning, particularly for those on low incomes who are often not in employment. This view was also echoed by many of the intermediaries, and it was recognised that while other forms of financial support, such as fee waivers, existed, the ILAs were valuable in that they provided learners with a wider choice of possible providers, and they were not restricted to colleges. For many client groups the opportunity to 'learn outside the system' was welcomed. The value of recurrent funding was also recognised in that this provides learners with opportunities for progression. The positive views of many respondents in these respects can be summed up in the following comment.

> *"… to be perfectly honest with you, a lot of people…if they were to take up these courses and pay that money out themselves I don't think you would have any take up at all or very little. I just think it's a fantastic offer to think that you can get £200 to put towards a course…." (Local authority 8, LP interview* [2]*)*

3.3   The issue of building confidence is also one which is frequently mentioned by learning providers, and one which is key in encouraging learners to use their new learning experiences and qualifications to improve their skills and employability. Respondents from the intermediary agencies emphasised the ways in which the scheme is of value in working with a range of people in marginal and vulnerable positions, who need support in moving forward in their lives. For example, the act of opening up an ILA Scotland account by recovering drug addicts or those with mental health needs represented a positive development, increased self-esteem and assisted with recovery.

> *"…it's not just accessing the area of education, but for our client base to actually do something positive, just open that account of £200 that's available, for self esteem for our clients, you know just going out and bragging to their family that the first positive move that they've made, that was a huge thing." (Voluntary 1, Intermediary focus group* [1]*)*

3.4   Respondents from Trade Unions also commented on the role of ILA Scotland in improving the skills of the workforce, especially workers who may not normally be in a position where they can afford to pay for courses. One group identified in this respect are retail workers, many of whom are low paid and as a result find it difficult to access courses. The financial assistance provided by ILAs is identified as being an important form of support for workers of this kind.

3.5   Some intermediaries also commented on their work with learners who are coming to the end of their working life and/or facing redundancy and view the ILA Scotland scheme as one route for individuals to think about when preparing 'for the next step of their lives'. This is a further way in which these respondents see the scheme as contributing to the lifelong learning agenda.

> *"...there are people who are in work, people who are under threat of losing their work and if there's a major redundancy in the area I would go in and help out in that respect, just to upgrade skills or do multi-skilling, so I believe that ILA can be used in terms of helping that individual diversify in their career as well." (Local authority 5, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

Complementarity and partnership

3.6   While the ILA Scotland scheme is recognised as a positive development in all of the ways outlined above, it is also recognised by many respondents that the scheme cannot be seen as a stand alone initiative, but must be seen as one which complements other initiatives. Whilst the importance of the financial support to undertake learning is recognised, a number of respondents suggested that it is an interest in undertaking a course which is the initial impetus.

> *"If people aren't interested in learning they're not going to take any notice of the funding, so it's really getting people interested in learning in the first place I suppose." (Private provider 19, LP interview [2])*

3.7   A number of intermediary agency representatives argued that many people do not have what can be described as a *'learning attitude'*. This can include a wide range of people, for example those who have had little engagement with the educational system since leaving school, people who lack confidence as a result of being out of the labour market for some time, such as mothers who have been looking after children, or people who have experienced accidents or ill health. For these learners what is required is 'steps to learning', and it is suggested that the ILA scheme should consider how it can most effectively support these initiatives.

3.8   It is suggested that the ILA scheme can support these processes of re-engaging with learning most effectively by strengthening links with a wide range of different learning providers, many of whom may be community-based .

> *"No I don't think it's (the ILA Scotland scheme) that is the first step, I think community-based adult learning is, but once they've got their foot in the door and they're kind of beginning to build their confidence and the time is right for them, then ILA may well be a great fund to help them to progress." (Local authority 4, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

3.9   A number of respondents, both learning providers, and particularly intermediaries, suggested that it is through engaging more effectively with this wider range of provision that ILAs will have most success in attracting key target groups among disadvantaged learners.

Limitations in ILA provision

3.10   While the value of ILAs in supporting learning is recognised, respondents also suggested that certain groups may face difficulties in accessing the scheme. Firstly a number of respondents have highlighted the issues faced by learners with a variety of disabilities. While it is recognised that ILA Scotland provide application information in a variety of alternative accessible formats (audio (CD) format, Braille, large print) and it was suggested that many learners with disabilities find it difficult to access the scheme, unless they receive a considerable measure of support (this issue will be discussed further in Chapter 5). A related issue which was identified was that some learners with mental health difficulties experience confidence issues in both making contact with ILA Scotland and completing the application form.   Though they may be keen on the idea of learning and improving their skills or qualifications, they may have particular problems accessing information and interpreting the requirements of the application information and making connections between the commitment to learning and the specific tasks of the application process.

> *"It's actually very, very scary for people who get, you know, information dropping through the door daily that they don't understand. It's like you say, 'oh, what do I do?' It's like you say 'oh, there's forms - I can't do that. I can't possibly go anywhere near it. It's too scary,' but even with the support workers who can be behind people saying 'no, that's not necessarily true'...."* (Learning Uncovered delegate 1, Intermediary focus group [(2)])

3.11   An issue identified in both Phases One and Two of this research by some learning providers is the gap in provision for those school leavers aged between 16 and 18. This group presents a considerable body of learners who may be able to benefit from ILA funding and try a different learning environment which would suit their preferences in order to gain a vocational qualification to improve their employability.

> *"...there's a gap I feel for 16-18 year olds. There's a lot of young people out there that have left the school and they've not got qualifications, or they've maybe got some qualifications but they can't access ILA funding because they're not 18 and I feel that if it had been brought down to 16, we could have had a lot more young people in doing the care taster course. Some people aged 16-18 might not like school but they might like the environment of a smaller class."* (Community/ voluntary 7, LP interview [(2)])

3.12   Another group which has been identified are learners for whom English is a second language. It has been suggested by a number of respondents that there has been growing interest from people in this category, partly associated with the growing number of economic migrants within Scotland. While ILA Scotland publicity leaflets are available in a wide range of Asian and European languages, and application packs are also available in Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu, as well as Gaelic and English, it was suggested by some respondents that more could be done to ensure that those for whom English is not their first language can access the scheme.

> *"We've noticed both people from Eastern Europe and West Africa increasingly. It's still numerically quite a small workforce but increasingly they are applying for work. Now, I don't know if they would be classed as non-traditional learners, but it does seem there are large numbers of people*

who may not understand, ...I would suspect that Polish or Romanian is going to be equally important for people to access stuff..." (Employer 2, Formal intermediary interview [2])

Perceptions of limitations in the ILA100 offer

3.13   Participants in Phase One of this research described the ILA100 offer (then the universal offer) as limited and not meeting the demands of potential learners. Much of this dissatisfaction centred around the focus of the offer on ICT courses and associated learning opportunities. With the introduction of the changes, however, which opened up the ILA100 funding to a broader range of courses, a number of respondents expressed more positive perceptions of the ILA100 offer. However, criticisms of the ILA100 scheme continued to centre on perceived limited opportunities, despite these changes, and the disparity in opportunities offered through the ILA100 and ILA200 offers. In this respect some learning providers commented that they were not entirely sure why there were limitations on the range of courses available for the ILA100 offer.

> *"... we feel that it (ILA100) should be the same as the 200 scheme as it's kind of discriminating against those students as to what they can do, or can't do." (Scotland's colleges 5, LP interview [2])*

3.14   Representatives also commented that learners are confused about the restrictions associated with the ILA100 offer and they often view these restrictions as a barrier to accessing the scheme.

> *"We do have a problem with the £100 scheme both in eligible courses and explaining why courses are not included and also in pacifying irate students who feel that they do not get the same opportunities because of their income." (Private provider 20, LP interview [2])*

3.15   Associated with this, intermediaries described difficulties in explaining the differences between learning opportunities available under the ILA100 offer, and those which are not.   For example, for some intermediaries it has been difficult to explain why European Computer Driving License (ECDL) courses are funded though Advanced ECDL courses are not[19].

3.16   Another limitation of the ILA100 offer raised was in relation to the scarcity of courses available at that price. With many courses costing over £100, this has had a detrimental impact on the number of learners being in a position to access this offer.

> *"... I can't see a future for the ILA 100 offer, because as I've mentioned it's very limiting with what they can do with the £100. Most courses are £150 and over nowadays." (Scotland's colleges 19, LP interview [2])*

---

[19] Advanced ECDL courses are now widely available to ILA learners.

CHAPTER FOUR   INFORMATION, MARKETING, AND AWARENESS OF THE ILA SCOTLAND SCHEME

ILA Scotland information and support for learning providers

4.1   An important focus of the research was to investigate learning providers' and intermediaries' perceptions of the marketing strategies which have been pursued by ILA Scotland, and the impact of these strategies on knowledge and understanding of the ILA Scotland scheme among learning providers, intermediaries, learners and potential learners. This also led to a number of suggestions about how this marketing activity could be improved.

4.2   Firstly it can be noted that learning providers and intermediaries in general suggested, in both phases of this research that the information provided by ILA Scotland is accessible, clear, informative and useful in understanding the scheme and responding to the needs and queries of learners. Information and marketing material targeted at learners was also generally described as very useful. Respondents referred to a range of sources and forms of support which included ILA publicity such as leaflets and posters, the website, input of ILA representatives and email contact. While there was some limited criticism of the helpline in terms of the consistency of advice provided, respondents were in general very positive.

4.3   The majority of providers are positive with respect to information and support provided to them by ILA Scotland staff and have described building strong, personal relationships with the staff. In this manner, staff accessibility and approachability is both commended and welcomed. This is a recurring theme throughout the study.

4.4   The ILA Scotland website is used widely by learning providers to source information for both themselves and learners. It is generally agreed to have a wealth of helpful and relevant information and is easy to navigate. However some respondents referred to the difficulties in identifying the learning opportunities which learners wish to access. In some cases this can be due to non-standard search criteria.

> *"...we get people who use the ILA website to search for courses, but the way in which they've entered their sequences can be quite misleading, you can have for example ECDL under ECDL, but then you could do another search under European Computing Driving Licence and come up with different providers." (Scotland's colleges 2, LP interview [2])*

Levels of awareness

4.5   While many respondents commented favourably on the clarity and quality of the information, it was also noted by a range of respondents that the understanding and awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme amongst staff could be described as mixed in both Phase One and Phase Two of the research. In a number of cases, knowledge and information about the scheme was not getting through to the people who should be informed. For example, it was noted that when promotional events were held it became clear that knowledge of the scheme among participants was often limited. Even in a sector like the trade unions, where there has been fairly close involvement with ILA Scotland it was noted that knowledge was limited among staff. However this was noted as being associated with

internal dissemination strategies as well as ILA marketing. Knowledge and understanding was noted as being better amongst staff who are actively involved with the scheme, and promotional events were recognised as increasing awareness. Nevertheless it would appear that the issue of ensuring that an appropriate range of staff have the levels of knowledge and understanding of the ILA schemes which would be necessary for its effective operation is an area where further work can usefully be done.

4.6   There was a view among learning providers and intermediaries that awareness amongst client groups is mixed, and often limited.   Some were of the opinion that a good proportion of their client group would have some awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme, whilst others described awareness and understanding amongst their client group as minimal. In this respect a number of participants expressed surprise about the level of awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme, considering the amount of expenditure that has been invested in the marketing of the scheme.

> *"I'm surprised by the level of knowledge of the ILA scheme. (We do) a lot of our marketing of the learning centre through the local papers…and a lot of people who have come to us to join the courses...a lot of them have never heard of the ILA scheme and that's quite worrying with the level of expenditure there's been on the marketing." (Trade Union 2, Intermediary focus group [1])*

4.7   This view was echoed by learning providers interviewed as part of the Phase Two research who felt that knowledge among learners continued to be limited in many cases.

> *"I know there's like TV advertising but it's still amazing how many people have never heard of it." (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])*

4.8   Agencies working with learners with disabilities, mental health problems or substance misuse problems were particularly likely to comment on low levels of awareness. It was suggested that additional measures are required if people in these categories are to be fully aware of the opportunities which may be available to them.

> *"I really don't feel its been well-publicised as far as people with disabilities are concerned, bearing in mind there are lots of places that…these people don't go and also because I don't think the information is accessible to them." (Local authority 2, Intermediary focus group [1])*

4.9   Similarly it was suggested that people with literacy difficulties are often quite uncertain about the support which may be available through this scheme, and will find it difficult to navigate the website. Concern about the adequacy of information sources for participants in these categories also persisted through the second phase of the research. This led to suggestions for more effective marketing strategies which will be discussed below.

4.10   A related concern was that in some cases, even after people with learning difficulties or other disabilities become involved in the scheme, information from ILA Scotland may be 'binned' by their carers because it is not distinctive enough, and it is mistaken for junk mail. This particular group have been highlighted as having a very low engagement with, and understanding of, the scheme.

"Well, what the problem is, some of our clients will have a range of carers coming in to support them in their own home and the client has saved a pile of mail up for them to go through and if the clients aren't expecting it coming in, they will just assume it's a flier that's been sent through and will chuck it away, so I'm continuously writing letters out to clients and carers saying 'look we've applied for this on your behalf, you will get this letter that looks like this, please don't throw it away, bring it in to us and we'll help you fill it out' which is all time consuming and still doesn't always work." (Local authority 3, Formal intermediary interview [1])

Perception of marketing activities and suggested improvements

4.11   There was a concern amongst a number of respondents, and particularly intermediaries, that current approaches in relation to marketing ILA Scotland were not being fully effective in reaching the key target groups who would have to be reached if the scheme is to be successful in widening access to learning. It was suggested that existing marketing approaches are likely to be most successful with those individuals who were already interested in learning. While it was recognised that national TV advertising had helped to raise the profile of ILAs, a range of respondents raised doubts about the effectiveness of this form of advertising reaching the key target groups and actually recruiting students onto programmes.

"I know they did a lot of TV and radio marketing, because obviously my ears pricked up the amount of times I heard ILA. But the amount of people I have spoken to that are not aware of it…., I just don't feel it's been marketed properly." (Private provider 9, LP interview [1])

4.12   This limited impact of existing marketing approaches continued to be noted by representatives in Phase Two, leading to suggestions regarding how it could be addressed.

4.13   First of all it is reported by a range of respondents that learners are most likely to have heard about the scheme through 'word of mouth'. Indeed word of mouth was consistently viewed as the most effective means of engaging learners and potential learners, and informing them of the ILA Scotland Scheme. This is considered particularly relevant in instances where client groups have limited access to computers. Some providers and intermediaries have reported spending a substantial amount of time explaining the scheme to learners. These activities emphasise the important role that learning providers play in the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) regarding ILAs to learners and potential learners.

"I think what we're finding certainly from our client group is that most of the information is word of mouth. Many of our clients don't actually have computers,   so they cannot get the information off the computer. So it's definitely as far as our clients are concerned it's word of mouth." (Local authority 1, LP interview [1])

4.14   Some agencies also viewed marketing and recruitment activities undertaken by ILA Scotland as "too slick" for their client groups, and indicated that often a coloured photocopied flier was enough to encourage their clients into education.   In this sense, glossy leaflets were referred to as "too professional" and not reflecting their clients needs. They also

emphasised the value of 'thinking out of the box' more with respect to advertising, and moving beyond obvious locations such as colleges and libraries to venues which are widely used in local communities such as pubs.

4.15   Associated with this, there was strong argument that there is a need for greater cooperation between ILA Scotland and other locally based agencies in developing more effective marketing strategies. In this respect, while the expertise of ILA staff and the valuable range of marketing materials was recognised, it was suggested that more could be made of these strengths if more locally based advertising and marketing strategies were developed as a means of raising awareness amongst client groups, learners and potential learners. A successful example of this approach was reported by one respondent

> *"...we've been able to get ILA to get (marketing) materials and specifically target it to work with our materials, and done that time and time again. I think that maybe where they miss a trick is where they do not take it to a local level. I mean I was in an event put on by learndirect where there were loads and loads of providers in the one building open to the public. It had been advertised to the press and local radio so it's a local event; ILA Scotland was there, learndirect were there, providers were there. And it got to the point where they almost had to close the door because the place was full. You know if they did four events a year and I think if they were to go down to that level on a more targeted, local area, I think that the benefit that they would get for uptake…they would get a bigger demand for what they're currently spending on their marketing campaign." (Trade Union 1, Edinburgh focus group [2])*

4.16   The importance of more locally based advertising campaigns was also emphasised by respondents from more rural locations, who suggested that national TV advertising often did not take sufficient account of the characteristics of their local communities and labour markets. This was stated clearly by this respondent from an island community.

> *"…I know you advertise on the telly, posters are wonderful, leaflets when we get them are OK, but there's just something missing in [our community] because people just don't know about it. We don't spend a lot of money on marketing because the best form of marketing on [the island] is word of mouth. So we don't spend a lot of money on it, so we don't go down the route of advertising specifically as ILA course. If people come in wanting to do a course we'll say it's eligible for ILA once they're in. In fact, I don't think I can recall somebody coming in and specifically asking 'I would like to do a course on ILA'. It's not hitting [the island], the advertising." (Private provider 5, LP interview[1])*

4.17   In developing a more locally based scheme it was noted by many respondents that learning providers and intermediaries already play an important role in providing information and encouraging participation in the ILA scheme. They have taken on the role of disseminating information about the ILA scheme, and through these activities increasing awareness and uptake. Intermediaries describe engaging in a wide range of awareness-raising activities regarding the ILA Scotland scheme amongst client groups. These activities vary in relation to the specific role and objective of individual agencies and their access to resources. Key activities include providing information about the scheme in their own advertising and information leaflets, the production of briefings and newsletters, working in partnership with

other agencies, outreach activities and 'Awareness Days'. These differing approaches are reflected in the two following quotations from a college and a trade union respondent.

> *"...whenever we put an advert in the paper stating that we've got courses coming up and start dates we always put a small bit in there saying that you may be eligible for ILA Scotland funding. And we also, whenever we send out, if somebody is looking for courses, in their acknowledgment letter we have a paragraph saying about how you may be eligible for ILA funding and we put the phone number on and we also send an ILA leaflet with that."* (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])

> *"We've actually got our own leaflet, with my phone number on it and all the things, you know are you wanting back into learning? Are you in a rut? Are you wanting to help the kids with their computing homework? Things like that go on ours and just to let them know the free phone numbers for ILA was on it, I did it in ILA colours along with the union logo and ILA actually sent that out with their leaflet to all our union members. Anywhere I go, divisional conferences, anywhere at all, we take these leaflets with us."* (Trade Union 1, Formal intermediary interview [1])

4.18   The importance of this role of learning providers and intermediaries as sources of information about ILAs can be seen in the following quotation.

> *"... out of 30 students who registered for ILA on our courses, only one had registered because of hearing about ILA before we told her. The other 29 learned about ILA through us."* (Community/ voluntary 2, LP interview [1])

4.19   In providing information about the ILA scheme, intermediaries in particular suggest that they play an important role in not only raising awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme but providing support and encouragement to their client groups to enable them to access the scheme. They suggest that they have used information provided by ILA Scotland staff to actively encourage participation among groups who would otherwise not be likely to have the courage to participate. This was true for a range of organisations including agencies working with individuals experiencing mental health problems or substance misuse problems:

> *"As far as we see because of their chaotic lifestyles you know they're not really out there looking for...education, so when we bring it (ILA Scotland scheme) up the first spark of interest comes in but I think marketing for ILAs is there, it's there for them to see, but they don't sort of realise it can apply to them. Not until we sort of bring it up and say you can do this."* (Voluntary 1, Intermediary focus group [1])

4.20   Associated with this perceived need for changes in the approach to marketing and advertising was the suggestion from respondents in both Phase One and Phase Two that the information available to intermediaries did not provide enough explicit detail about learning opportunities. They suggested that there was too much emphasis on the funding, and not enough on the range of learning opportunities which this opens up.

> *"I think you need to be turning it on your head a bit more and look at selling it via the learning opportunities...we'll invest two hundred quid in you; that will get you from A*

to B…so it's much more clear what's on offer there."(Local authority 1, Intermediary focus group [2])

4.21　It was suggested that for many potential learners the starting point is for them to become interested in taking a course, the availability of funding is then an added incentive. Advertising should therefore place more emphasis on the learning opportunities available.

"The thing about why should a learner take an interest in this, I think we've been talking quite a lot about the money side coming in, but I would think for a lot of people it's more the course side, you want to study something, you want to learn something, then you've got the issue of how do you pay for it, that can come in, but its really important to work on the course side of things in terms of getting information out because there is a limited amount of course provision that will attract the funding and people who are working in that area have the bonus then, they discover, of being able to get the funding." (Local authority 1, Intermediary focus group [1])

4.22　It was also suggested that, in this context of providing information about courses, it was important not to build unrealistic expectations.　Examples were highlighted of leaflets with images of plumbers, irrespective of the limited availability of plumbing courses under the ILA200 offer, and HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) driving opportunities which, whilst also available under the ILA200 offer, carry high associated costs.

4.23　A further issue which was raised was the importance of avoiding terminology and acronyms which were confusing for potential learners, particularly those with limited recent experience of the educational system. For example SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) is not a term which is immediately clear to many people unfamiliar with terminology associated with the Scottish education system.　Additionally, the abstract notion of levels of study may be of little relevance to many learners and potential learners.

"I mean I've got a background in education, but if a punter phones up and is told about up to level 6 SCQF, they don't know what that means, I mean that is just absolute jargon isn't it." (Learning Uncovered delegate 3, Formal intermediary interview [2])

4.24　This ambiguity also has relevance as regards the ILA100 and 200 offers in that many people will have little knowledge of the cost of gaining different qualifications, and in this context the relative value of £100 or £200 needs to be explained to them.

4.25　Finally a recurrent theme among a number of respondents from intermediary agencies was the concern expressed by some potential applicants that an application of this kind could have a detrimental impact on their benefits. This applied particularly to people on incapacity benefit. It was felt that more explicit information could be provided in order to clarify this situation and put people at ease.

"They're on this Incapacity Benefit, they're a bit scared about saying they're doing training and that because they might lose their Incapacity Benefit, they are quite wary about actually going and saying we are going to do training." (Local authority 2, Intermediary focus group [1])

Developing links between ILA Scotland and intermediaries: the case of Trade Unions (TUs)

4.26   Many respondents recognised the value of the links which they had with ILA Scotland staff in disseminating information about the ILA scheme, and suggested that if these links could be strengthened this could be an important means through which key target groups could be reached. In this respect the relationship which has been established between ILA Scotland and Trade Unions was noted as an example of good practice which could possibly be used a model in developing links with other agencies. This relationship between ILA Scotland and the TUs has given rise to a diversity of awareness-raising activities. For example, ILA Scotland has funded mail-drops regarding the scheme to union members, and attended road shows hosted by Trade Unions which offer the possibility of online registration.

> *"I think its quite good, although as I say any events that (union learner representative)… if she's going to any events she phones up in advance, and if they can get an advisor out with a laptop, that takes away the phone call the same as the form. They're there, they've got their marketing materials, they give out advice and one of the things that I really like about them is when someone phones or has this application pack, they actually ask them when they phone what kind of course... had they a course in mind? And they can send them out a list of courses in their area and I think that's a great idea."*
> *(Trade Union 1, Formal intermediary interview [1])*

4.27   TUs have a number of dedicated mechanisms in place to encourage maximized engagement with lifelong learning, key to which is promotion of learning opportunities available through the ILA Scotland scheme. Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) have a provide information, advice and guidance to learners and potential learners on courses available through the scheme, and attend dedicated training courses to enable them to do so. Staff notice boards, posters and awareness-raising sessions are all key methods of dissemination, though as has been noted above, 'word of mouth' is the most effective means of sharing knowledge about potential learning opportunities.

4.28   The work of ULRs underscores the commitment of Trade Unions to improving the skills and employability of the workforce, rather than existing merely to support workers with pay or grievance issues. From this point of view, engagement with the ILA Scotland scheme is seen as a positive aspect of the overall remit of TUs. Some TUs are in a position to integrate the provision of learning itself with advice about learning.

> *"We've got union learning reps that some people like to call 'education officers' under their particular branches, and they relay information on education and that is where a lot of ILAs are discussed, because when somebody says 'I'm not paying that for a course' and I'm saying 'well do you know there's money you can access there to help you'…that's how we've integrated it into the union and we've integrated learning branches, so when we integrate learning into the branches, ILAs are a part of it."*
> *(Trade Union 5, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

4.29   It is recognized that the size of Trade Union agencies allows extensive collaboration with ILA Scotland. Logistical considerations for smaller agencies might mean that such a

relationship could be difficult to sustain. It is also recognized that resource constraints would make it difficult for ILA Scotland to develop similar relationships with a wide range of agencies without additional resources. However it would appear that developments of this kind could be of considerable value in the development of this scheme.

CHAPTER FIVE   PROCEDURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ILA SCOTLAND SCHEME

ILA Scotland learning provider registration processes and eligibility

5.1   ILA Scotland has established a fairly rigorous set of administrative procedures associated with the operation of the scheme. This is partly associated with the problems which led to the suspension of the original ILA Scheme. The perceptions of these procedures and their impact on learning providers, learners and potential learners was an important focus for the research.

5.2   The initial step for learning providers who wish to participate in the ILA Scotland scheme is to register as a provider. The process of registering as a learning provider was generally viewed as a positive and straightforward experience for most. Participants from Scotland's Colleges and HEIs were particularly satisfied with this aspect of the scheme. Some private providers commented that previous involvement with the scheme and close working links with learndirect scotland had helped in ensuring a continuum of support and guidance. Respondents from the community/ voluntary sector, however, commented that the process had the potential to be time-consuming and bureaucratic.

> *"Yeah, our nominated person at ILA Scotland has been really helpful in setting up our status as a provider and getting our courses onto prompt because we were unable to do it ourselves and also sorted out any anomalies or problems that we have."*
> *(Higher Education 4, LP interview [1])*

5.3   Though some respondents from the community/ voluntary sector commented that the registration process had the potential to be time-consuming and bureaucratic, the rigour of the registration process was understood and regarded as appropriate by the majority respondents.

> *"I would just feel, you know it would have to be a high standard because it's government money that we're playing with I feel that it is important that we have a high criteria of people to deliver ILAs." (Private Provider 8, LP interview [1])*

ILA Scotland course eligibility processes

5.4   In Phase One of the research, learning providers commented on the additional workload that they experienced due to the administrative demands associated with course eligibility. However, in Phase Two, more learning providers stated that the administration involved in the scheme was subsumed into their roles as part of overall involvement in the scheme. The more positive attitudes towards ILA procedures were in some cases associated with changes which learning providers themselves had introduced as a result of their involvement in the ILA scheme.

5.5   The eligibility criteria for approving courses for inclusion in the ILA Scotland scheme were described as straightforward by the majority of learning providers. The changes made to the ILA100 and ILA200 offers were recognised by participant from all sectors as having improved the variety of courses and approved learning opportunities available to learners and potential learners, and cited by participants from the community/ voluntary sector as being

instrumental in encouraging learners to undertake vocationally directed learning to improve employability or professional development. There were some participants, however, in both phases of the research, who discussed the potential for ambiguity and lack of clarity in the process, through which a course was recognised as eligible.

> *"Well we never know exactly what courses are going to be approved and what's not going to be approved. We seem to think it would be approved and then perhaps if we put a word in the text that they don't like then its not approved…and secondly the time scale it takes for them to come back and say that the course is approved or not is an issue to us." (Scotland's colleges 10, LP interview* [2]*)*

PROMT tool

5.6   ILA Scotland have established the Provider Opportunity Management Tool (PROMT) to provide an on-line method for learning providers to register the learning opportunities which are available. Learners can then access them via the ILA website. There were very mixed responses to use of the PROMT tool. Some providers reported no difficulties and welcomed the increased automation of the registration process, though getting used to the PROMT tool presented a number of initial obstacles. Support from the ILA Scotland call centre and email contact with staff helped to alleviate these obstacles.

5.7   In Phase One of the research the PROMT system was described as cumbersome by many larger LPs who report that the processes for entering and updating data were both lengthy and time consuming. Data from other sources could not be imported into the PROMT system resulting in laborious manual data entry and the duplication of other work.

> *"You also have to re type everything in, its not as if you can send a disc or a data base, we actually have to put in each course one by one, now that's also very difficult when there's changing provision semester by semester. So there's no doubt about the fact that it is an onerous administrative task." (Higher Education 1, LP interview* [1]*)*

5.8   However, by Phase Two of the research responses were generally more positive, and it appeared that learning providers felt they had greater competency regarding the use of the tool. This also reflected changes which had been introduced. An important change which has been widely welcomed by providers has been the introduction of flexible start dates (in May 2006). This enables learning providers to enter courses which do not have a designated start or end date in the PROMT tool without the need for the monthly updates which were previously required. The very positive response to the alteration in procedures can be seen in the following comment.

> *"The flexible start date, my wee friend, the flexible start date! Yeah it's made a big difference to the time it takes me to keep it going." (Private provider 8, LP interview* [2]*)*

5.9   However although learning providers were increasingly more satisfied with the procedures associated with registering for the ILA Scotland scheme, some intermediaries suggested that there were continuing issues which had had an impact on potential learners. In some cases, it was suggested that the website was not up to date, and that this lack of current

information 'put learners off' applying to the scheme. It was suggested that this may be linked to difficulties providers face in using the PROMT tool. At times, intermediaries were aware of inconsistencies in how courses were described and that sometimes course searches on the website would not show all options available as different learning providers may describe the same opportunities slightly differently. It was felt that administrative procedures could be simplified for providers which would have a positive impact upon learners.

Learner application process

5.10   The application process has been noted by a number of respondents as being bureaucratic and creating barriers to participation. Intermediaries in particular described the process as time-consuming, and noted that this was one of the least successful aspects of the scheme. There was a general view that the application process was 'tedious' and ILA Scotland had 'tied themselves up with red tape'. This has resulted in some confusion amongst client groups.

> *"...and I think probably for workers and you know the client group it is sometimes quite confused with the procedures of how you apply; that you have to get the form sent off, get an application pack, you know complete the application and send it away and wait to get your student number and then to get a token, you know that can be quite confusing" (Learning Uncovered delegate 1, Formal intermediary interview [1])*

5.11   The application form itself was described as cumbersome and difficult to complete. Agencies suggested that it should be made more streamlined and user-friendly. Representatives whose client groups include learners with learning difficulties highlight that the application pack is inaccessible for these learners.

> *"I would just reiterate that point, we can see that it's inaccessible to some of our learners when they approach us so we would prefer it if it was more accessible." (Voluntary 2, Formal intermediary interview [1])*

5.12   Intermediaries were in general more critical than learning providers. This may reflect the different roles of these groups of respondents, with intermediaries dealing with a wider cross-section of potential learners, many of whom have not yet established firm involvement with learning providers.

5.13   While a number of learning providers describe the application process as straightforward, a number mention the complicated and demanding nature of the application process, and the dangers that this discourages learners from the key target groups. In this context they refer to the need to provide a supportive role in assisting learners with their applications. In particular learning providers in the community and voluntary sector commented on the need to provide support of this kind.

5.14   Some learning providers have also noted that on occasion, the time taken to complete the application process has meant that people have had difficulty accessing the learning opportunities for which they are eligible.

> *"...the difficulty for the learner of the scheme is simply the timing. For instance they may have seen an advert in the paper for some evening classes*

and it's said that you might be eligible for ILA funding. They would come into the college on the open evening as was advertised and of course it may start within a week and they've not registered yet so with the timing sometimes they don't get registered in time to be able to utilise the funding, because it's all centralised and they can't just register at the college with the funding that has often delayed it and some people couldn't access their ILA." (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])

5.16   Overall the application process has been described as putting barriers in place for certain groups of learners including those with literacy or numeracy problems, older people, learners with disabilities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Initial learner telephone call

5.17   In both phases of the research both learning providers and intermediaries have identified the telephone call that the learner is obliged to make to request an application form as a potential barrier. This relates to issues surrounding the confidence and communication skills of the learner, and it was suggested that learners are often daunted by the prospect of phoning. It was suggested that the process could be made easier for the learner if the learning provider was more involved.

> *"I feel first time round people would say 'how do I apply for it', and providers were allowed to sit down with them and fill in an application. This time we give them the leaflet, say there's the number to phone, you can use the phone in here, and we explain what's going to happen, even then, they find it quite daunting some of our customers,. Our confident ones they'll do it no bother, they'll have it done within the next day, but there are people that it's taken a lot of courage to come through the door and speak to us, and then they're told to go and phone this number before they do anything else, and they find it quite daunting. I just think if it was possible for us to sit down with them at the phone, but that's not the same because they're meant to be doing it themselves." (Private provider 5, LP interview [1])*

5.18   Difficulties associated with the initial learner telephone call continued to be discussed in Phase Two, and have been recognised as posing particular difficulties for certain types of learners and potential learners, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and those with mental health needs or learning disabilities.

5.19   Intermediaries and learning providers report their attempts to provide support for applicants, but suggest that the current arrangements make this difficult. Intermediaries who have tried to phone on behalf of clients have been told that this is not possible.

> *"...a lot of people we work with just don't like using the telephone, you know and I feel it would be easier if I was able to phone on their behalf. But I mean I did initially try that and they said no but I do understand that due to data protection and that they can't give me, you know any information sort of thing, but you see I was going to give them the information because I had the consent of the client." (Learning Uncovered Delegate 1, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

5.20   There was a particular concern that the scheme could discriminate against people with disabilities, and in response to this one respondent was able to recount how they had made use of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2005), which requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities. On this basis 'ad-hoc' arrangement had been made with ILA Scotland allowing someone else to apply for an ILA account on behalf of an applicant with disabilities.

> *"There's only an ad-hoc administrative system allowing applicants with disabilities which precludes them from applying themselves to allow someone else to apply on their behalf. In other words, I've arranged with one of the supervisors or one of the managers of ILA that I can email the applications into them in effect." (Local authority 3, Formal intermediary interview* [1]*)*

5.21   Another group who were identified as having particular problems in this respect are those serving prison sentences. They may wish to take up an ILA opportunity whilst serving their sentence or as a rehabilitative measure on their release. Not only does the phone call cause logistical problems in actually being made but also carries implications of declaration of personal details such as address and employer. One respondent was able to indicate that these problems had been addressed.

> *"…we did sit down and work through a structure because a prisoner with an application form is a requirement to state where they live and what their income is, etc. So their home at the time would be HMP and their employer, if you think about it, is the prison so there was a need to set that in process. And also if you wanted support from the learning contractor that works within the prison then it needed to go through a process that was agreed in advance, so we worked all that through and we did come up with a process." (Other 1, Intermediary focus group* [2]*)*

5.22   In response to these all of these problems, there is a strong feeling amongst some intermediaries that they could provide an alternative to the initial telephone call through acting as a channel for the dissemination of application packs. It was highlighted that certain agencies, for example Trade Unions and local authority agencies, are fully accountable bodies and could provide a mechanism through which to supply application packs to members or employees. Voluntary groups also suggested that their roles in providing the distinctive forms of support which they do provide could be more clearly recognised, and enhanced within the scheme.

5.23   It was also noted that the facility to apply online has been described by learning providers as a sought after tool. Learndirect scotland are currently piloting an online application tool for use by learners and this has been welcomed.

> *"The thing I gather now is that learners can now apply online for an information pack, an application pack so we're going to be making that part of the…we interview all of our access students so we're going to have a computer set up in the interview room and have them, you know, get online and request an application pack before they leave the interview room. So we've found that's a useful innovation." (Higher Education 6, LP interview* [2]*)*

5.24   Intermediaries stated that they felt that such a function would be highly valuable and would make the application processes more accessible. They have indicated their readiness to

collaborate with learndirect scotland in developing provision of this kind. It has also been noted that online registration may not be suitable for some learners with disabilities, and email registration was highlighted as an appropriate mechanism for some of this group, in particular those with visual impairments or who use alternative internet browsing techniques.

> *"I'd like to see an email process, I think it would suit a lot of our client groups... through email because online forms are not always accessible." (Voluntary 2, Intermediary focus group [1])*

Income assessment procedures

5.25   Learners wishing to access the ILA200 offer must provide proof of income. Both learning providers and intermediaries in Phase One of this research described income assessment procedures as often time consuming, cumbersome and complicated. They were highlighted as a barrier to accessing ILA Scotland opportunities. Problems associated with income assessment procedures were continued to be noted in Phase Two of the study.

> *"I do believe that they (ILA Scotland) should be looking at what they're doing and relaxing it because if they do relax it, the criteria, the evidence they're asking for, that would speed the process up and people would be more inclined to apply." (Trade Union 1, Intermediary focus group [2])*

5.26   Applicants in employment are required to provide three most recent payslips. It is suggested that this can create problems for low-paid workers, and discourage them from making an application to ILA Scotland. The requirement to supply payslips was identified as presenting several different types of problematic issues. Many individuals have difficulty submitting wage slips due to loss, or not holding on to them. In such cases applicants were advised to go through their employer's personnel department, whose speed in returning the required information was variable, and therefore had the potential to impact on the application process. Respondents also suggested that learners may be reluctant to go to their employer's personnel department to get copies of wage slips as they are worried that their employer would realise that they were going on a course and that this may affect their job security.

> *"I would say that the asking of the wage slips is certainly a barrier because, it's perhaps the wrong way to look at it, but they look at it as going to personnel to get wage slips, if they haven't kept them for the last 3 months then personnel know that they're going on a course…. and they're quite wary on going on courses in case they're going to have a reaction that 'oh well they're not getting any over time, they're going to leave the company anyway' and that has been said to me." (Trade Union 1, Formal intermediary interview [1])*

5.27   A second point raised was that of overtime payments and their effect on an individual's overall income assessment. It was feared that this would cause certain types of workers, for example factory workers, to have their annual salary over-estimated due to additional and often inconsistent overtime payments. It was suggested that overtime and bonuses should be considered outside of income assessment processes. Additionally, some difficulties have been highlighted in relation to expenses added to salaries.

"...a member of staff that we had sent in her things and she was only on about £12,000 a year, but because she has travel expenses and travel expenses are paid with your pay, but they are not part of your pay, she was told that she didn't qualify and we took it up and we didn't really get anywhere with it" (Trade Union 6, Formal intermediary interview [2])

5.28   For those who are self-employed, but on relatively low incomes, the requirement to provide audited accounts can act as a barrier. This was described as a costly extra burden resulting in this group applying only for ILA100, which does not require proof of income. For example, child minders who are self-employed have found it difficult to access ILA200 because of the problems and cost involved in accessing audited accounts.

"The £15,000 threshold [which was operational at the time of the interview] works against our client group because they are self employed and one of the criteria to access the £200 is you must have audited accounts for self employed people. Well we come under the threshold, most of our child minders are self employed and they earn less than £15,000, so they're not required to have audited accounts. The accounts they do themselves on an annual basis and they do self assessment and that's acceptable to the Inland Revenue and to the National Insurance and when applying for the £200 ILA they get knocked back, they cannot access it at all, even though they fit the criteria perfectly well." (Voluntary 2, Intermediary focus group [1])

5.29   It was also suggested that there are people in a range of positions who have no regular income, e.g. women who are not in paid employment outside the home, but find it difficult to obtain proof of this position, and procedures involved in securing a National Insurance Statement can be complicated and drawn out.

"...people who fall into the grey area of eligibility, for example who are at home, who are in positions where maybe they've had part time jobs so their National Insurance contribution statement is not at zero, but they're not registered unemployed and they don't have any pay slips and they're obviously eligible for the funding but they've got no way of proving it." (Private provider 1, LP interview [1])

5.30   For those in receipt of benefits, including incapacity benefit, and tax credits, it is suggested that many are already uncertain about the rules and regulations regarding entitlements, and requiring evidence for eligibility for ILAs adds to this uncertainty.

"I think there is a general confusion, I mean there are so many financial things… everything's different and I just think people are so confused by all the financial information they're dealing with, particularly with our client group where every benefit, every training opportunity has different criteria, but it's an absolute mine field. So its part of a general mine field I think." (Local authority 2, Intermediary focus group [1])

5.31   In many cases, intermediaries commented that, in situations where it was difficult for the learner to obtain proof of income, it often became a time consuming and expensive exercise, and led to the learner missing out on the course.

"...a lot of the clients I work with they don't keep stuff like that, you know saying you have been awarded so much that will be paid into your bank account sort of thing, so we have to take the form into a housing agency for it to get stamped. And the housing scheme's irrelevant, it's quite a long bus journey to get into the centre of town and when one woman wanted to do a course she was actually too late because of this sort of thing. She had four children, she then had to pay the bus fare into the town and back with these four children to get this form stamped. So if there's any other way of getting evidence of income. I mean I know other organisations have asked to see a bank statement with all the other bits blacked out saying income support, or invalidity or whatever paid into the bank account, you know." (Learning Uncovered delegate 1, Formal intermediary interview [1])

5.32   Respondents also commented on the additional burdens which are associated with having to update this evidence on an annual basis if entitlement to the ILA 200 is to be maintained.

"We have had a number of issues lately with students who have previously been eligible for the £200 scheme. When they try to book a course in the following year, they only have the £100 available and have to contact ILA Scotland to retrieve the extra funding. I understand it is because ILA Scotland are waiting on confirmation of their earnings but most do not realise that this will cause problems to their funding. If they were more aware of the importance of this it would save many of the problems we have." (Private provider 20, LP interview [2])

5.33   This led to the suggestion that rolling information might be a way to minimise the burden associated with this requirement.

"One problem that people face is if they've had to prove that they're earning less than the £15,000, that can be a bit of a hassle and it might be enough to put people off, actually. And another point that someone raised the other day with me actually is if they've been approved the first year for the £200, it would be good if there was like a box on the application form saying, my circumstances haven't changed, so they would just tick that box and it means they don't actually have to send proof of their earnings. That might be a better way but it depends on how the ILA are. For their audit purposes, they might need to see proof, I don't know." (Private provider 18, LP interview [2])

Income threshold

5.34   The £15,000 income threshold had been identified as problematic by a number of respondents during Phase One and the earlier part of Phase Two. In particular reference was made to a number of employees who had relatively low incomes which were just over £15,000, and who might also have family commitments. As a result the respondents in the later stages of Phase Two, who were aware of the raising of the income threshold to £18,000 in June 2007, welcomed this development. This is seen by learning providers as a significant step towards enabling those people whose salaries are marginally above this to access ILA approved learning opportunities.

"...people were quite surprised when I had said about the recent changes to the threshold. People hadn't known that and were welcoming it. We have quite a lot of people who are in that gap £16,000/£17,000 - a lot of part-time workers...so it was good - that wider sweep gave a lot of people the opportunity." (Employer 2, Formal intermediary interview [2])

Learning token system

5.35   The learning token is the means through which learners pay providers for their course with their ILA funding. While some respondents, and particularly some providers, regard it as an accepted part of the administrative process, a considerable number of others, both learning providers and intermediaries, found the process cumbersome and problematic. The token itself is sent to the learner, who is then required to ensure that the provider takes receipt of it before they registration on a course can take place. However a number of learning providers describe efforts made in having to 'chase' learners to return their token.

"...with students it's that problem of chasing up constantly and then chasing up the token constantly you know." (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])

5.36   Intermediary representatives were generally critical regarding the learning token system describing it as confusing, both for themselves and for the client groups. In particular, participants describe the terminology as confusing and that the term 'token' generates expectations that it is a plastic coin or a card similar to a bank card as opposed to paper documentation.

"Well I don't know if its just me or not, but I had this idea in my head that it would be a bank card and you could swipe it and it had £200 on it..." (Trade Union 1, Intermediary focus group [1])

5.37   It can be noted that even in Phase Two a participant expressed a lack of knowledge regarding the learning token as part of the ILA system.

"I don't know the term 'learning token', what does that mean? I don't know that expression, I mean I know what that means, but I don't know what that means in regard to ILA." (Learning Uncovered delegate 3, Formal intermediary interview [2])

5.38   This lack of clarity on the term 'learning token' on the part of intermediaries has resulted in many learners not understanding the significance of the learning token which has knock-on effects for learning providers in gaining access to ILA funding and the time taken to encourage learners to submit tokens.

5.39   Suggested improvements to the learning token system centred around making the process more automated and keeping all parties informed (ILA Scotland as well as the learner and provider).

"...we thought the system would be electronic that would go through the college; there seems to be a lot of admin involved in the whole procedures

with booking and getting the token to the student and actually getting the student to bring the token in. You know it's quite long winded. We would quite like to see the scheme where the learning token was electronic and again it was sent to the actual provider." (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])

£10 contribution

5.40   All learners are required to make a payment of £10 towards their course to encourage an element of personal commitment. The £10 contribution was viewed by participants in HEIs and Scotland's Colleges as an appropriate and reasonable investment on the part of the learner to access a learning opportunity. Representatives from these sectors thought the personal contribution increased personal investment in learning and the likelihood that learners would complete their chosen course.

> *"I think that people have to make the commitment, more commitment, or else they're going to go… Because the thing is if there's no real commitment in this then it's so easy to drop out, drop the course you know and not continue it and see things through so at least if you've put some commitment on it you're more motivated to you know achieve that and stay on board." (Learning Uncovered delegate 2, Formal intermediary interview [1])*

5.41   This potential for learners to make a personal investment in their learning was also highlighted by participants in Phase Two of the research.

5.42   However, representatives from Private providers, the community/ voluntary sector and various intermediaries described how £10 is a more significant financial investment for learners or potential learners on benefits or low incomes, and that funding for these learners may be problematic. Some agencies have been reported as paying the £10 on behalf of their client groups.

> *"It is a barrier, again for someone on minimum income it is a lot of money, I know I see it as a good it's great that people will commit that, you know it's a big chunk out of someone's income or it can be." (Learning Uncovered delegate 5, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

5.43   A further argument presented by some learning providers was that the £10 contribution presented an additional administrative task.

> *"…its time consuming, you've got to make out an invoice, you've got to put it through…for the sake of £10 is it worth it?... there's lot's of work involved for it. I'm not sure it's necessary." (Private provider 1, LP interview [2])*

CHAPTER SIX   AWARENESS AND IMPACT OF RECENT CHANGES TO THE ILA SCOTLAND SCHEME

Awareness of recent changes to ILA Scotland scheme among learning providers and intermediaries

6.1   A number of changes to the ILA scheme designed to create wider opportunities, and make it more responsive to the needs of learners and learning providers were introduced during the period of the research. Where possible, attempts were made to assess awareness of these changes and their impact during Phase Two of the research.

6.2   A mixed picture emerged amongst learning providers and intermediary regarding awareness of the recent changes to the ILA100 and ILA200 offers.For those that were aware of the changes, more were knowledgeable of changes made to the ILA100 offer than ILA200.

6.3   Across the different sectors no consistent pattern of awareness of the changes was identified amongst representatives who participated in the focus groups and interviews. And, within sectors, levels of awareness within organisations varied. The relationship between ILA Scotland and learning providers was identified as a key factor in determining the level of awareness of changes to the ILA scheme. Respondents who had a close and direct relationship with ILA Scotland noted that they had been kept informed of changes to the scheme through e-mail communication and newsletters.

> *"Well again anything that's been to me is by email and also there's an ILA Scotland newsletter that comes out by email, anything that's been communicated in that, those of us that are at the core of things are aware and a good many other people as well, most of the regular members of staff, even though they're not directly involved in learning have been a sort of mini briefing of the changes." (Local authority 5, LP interview [2])*

6.4   Organisations which did not have such direct links with ILA Scotland reported that their knowledge was often more limited and it depended on links with other organisations. As a result awareness of the recent changes varied considerably across different intermediary types, with a slight balance in favour of those who were not aware of the changes. Among respondents from intermediary organisations, trade union representatives had the greatest awareness of the changes, potentially as a result of the already mentioned strength of relationship that exists between this sector and ILA Scotland.

> *"We have had information produced by ILA specifically for (name of Trade Union) and all leaflets have gone out with the changes to ILAs, so the union learner reps do definitely know of the changes that have taken place." (Trade Union 3, Formal intermediary interview [2])*

6.5   In one of the Phase Two focus groups, out of five participants across a broad range of sectors, the only attendee who indicated that they were aware of the changes was a Trade Union representative. Amongst other representatives, knowledge was more limited and a number indicated that they had come across the information through indirect contacts.

> *"...any knowledge that we would have would be from the provider, from the college so, you know, although we would have up to date literature then*

unless any changes were highlighted then we basically wouldn't be aware at all." (Community centre 1, Informal intermediary interview [2])

6.6   An important factor which affected awareness of the changes was the extent to which organisations had strategies to disseminate information received from ILA Scotland to their own staff.

> *"Well I received an update of the changes so basically I assumed that all the college managers were aware of the changes so they should have communicated that down to their staff." (Scotland's colleges 20, LP interview [2])*

6.7   Some participants in Phase Two of the study remarked that awareness within their agency with regard to the recent changes to the scheme was very varied, and that there may be colleagues who knew considerably more or less than they did. This again reflects the point that information about changes may come into organisations through ILA Scotland, but dissemination depends on internal strategies. Participants also indicated that knowledge of changes of this kind will depend on their 'need to know', which will be associated with the work which they are undertaking.

> *"...with workloads we don't literally sit and read all of the information that comes in. We tend to respond to requests and I'll find that out especially if I don't know something, or I'll sit and read something with the client through the pamphlet and say oh yeah it says here." (Community centre 1, Informal intermediary interview [2])*

Awareness of recent changes amongst learners

6.8   Levels of awareness of changes amongst learners was described as very low, with the vast majority of providers stating that their perception was that learners' knowledge of these changes was minimal. As this level of awareness amongst learners was not high, learning providers and intermediaries provide a key role in disseminating information about changes to potential learners. Providers noted that for many learners, attaining the general knowledge and understanding of the ILA Scotland scheme, and whether they were eligible or not, was more important and takes precedent over information about the changes, however they do where appropriate indicate the nature and impact of the changes,

> *"...when I've had conversations with people calling about various courses, I have made them aware of the various changes to the £200 offer, again not about the £100 offer, but I've made them aware of the increase in the income level, which they didn't know about, but as I say a lot of them haven't known about ILA anyway." (Local authority 9, LP interview [2])*

6.9   While it was commented that awareness of the scheme, including the changes introduced, was quite low amongst learners, this reflected the extent to which they saw the scheme as being relevant to their needs. One provider suggested that if potential learners are not ready to take up a learning opportunity then they would probably not take much notice of the publicity material circulated that advertises the scheme.

"I think it's just the knowledge that people have of ILA. I don't think that's the fault for ILA, you know, I mean through their marketing. I just think that people in general, that if it doesn't really affect them at that moment in time, they're not going to pick it up. Do you know what I mean? It's not that ILA is not being advertised, it's just maybe that people in general are not ready for that." (Community/ voluntary 7, LP interview [2])

Impact of changes

6.10   The impact of the recent changes on widening the learning opportunities available to potential learners and introducing new learners to adult education was generally welcomed by respondents. The changes were noted as having an impact on increasing the range of opportunities available, widening participation, and providing new opportunities for progression.

6.11   From the limited number of learning providers who were able to pass comment on changes introduced to ILA200, the removal of the restriction that ICT courses must lead to a formal qualification or recognised certification generated a mixed response. On the positive side, it was stated that removing the restriction would encourage more learner progression. However other providers questioned this change and emphasised the value of the attainment of a recognised formal qualification which was seen to enhance a learner's career prospects.

"I actually think removing the recognised formal qualification is a mistake; I think it's important that people get a recognised qualification." (Scotland's colleges 11, LP interview [2])

6.12   The change to ILA100 where courses would now be offered up to and including Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 was welcomed by providers in different sectors as extending the range of courses and opportunities which will be available at a local level. However while some learning providers welcomed the broadening of the range of courses on offer under ILA100, other providers thought that the extension did not go far enough in widening access to learning opportunities. As noted earlier in the report, some providers would ideally like to see the same courses available under both offers. This was raised again when commenting on the expansion of ILA100.

"I would question why there has to be a difference at all. We have a £100 and a £200. If they earn more than £18,000 they get £100. Less than that, they get £200. The same courses should eligible for both." (Scotland's colleges 16, LP interview [2])

6.13   This view that there were still too many restrictions associated with the ILA100 was also echoed by intermediaries, with one participant suggesting that the same courses should be available through both offers.

6.14   The fieldwork for Phase Two of the study of Learning Providers (which commenced in December 2006) was under way before the announcement by ILA Scotland that the £15,000 threshold would be increasing to £18,000 in June of this year. Obviously, some of the interviews conducted by the research team were not able to gauge the views of providers in relation to this significant change, and those that did make passing comment were only in a

position to *anticipate* what the likely benefits might be for the scheme, in terms of both uptake of learning opportunities and the profile of learners who may participate in the ILA Scotland scheme. From the limited number of interviewees that referred to the threshold increasing to £18,000, the general consensus was that it was a positive move which would result in more learners being attracted onto the scheme and have a positive impact on widening participation.

> *"Well, we're anticipating with the rise to £18K that we may get more interest… I think, you know, raising it to £18K will certainly widen the net."*
> *(Higher Education 6, LP interview [2])*

CHAPTER SEVEN   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1   Perceptions of the ILA Scotland scheme

- The ILA Scotland scheme has been generally welcomed by both learning providers and intermediaries. It is seen as a valuable additional form of support, particularly for those on low incomes, lower skilled and unemployed. It can also be used by those working with vulnerable groups to provide support and encouragement when rebuilding their lives.
- However it cannot be seen as a stand alone initiative. ILAs in themselves will not provide the incentives for the key target groups to re-enter education or training. Many people need encouragement to take steps into learning, and develop what have been described as 'learning attitudes'. This points to the importance of partnerships with other agencies in developing the potential of the ILA Scotland scheme.
- There is also a need to ensure that the scheme fully addresses the needs of learners with disabilities, mental health needs or learning difficulties, and economic migrants for whom English is a second language.
- The issue of extending provision to 16-18 year olds for whom this could be a valuable form of support in assisting them with re-engaging with learning was also raised by several respondents.
- While the extension of the ILA100 scheme to cover a wider range of provision was welcomed, respondents continued to question why restrictions in the range of provision apply to this part of the scheme which do not apply to the ILA 200, and they reported difficulties in explaining this to potential learners.

7.2   Information, marketing and awareness of the ILA Scotland scheme

- The information provided by ILA Scotland to learning providers and intermediaries was generally described as informative and useful. Respondents commented favourably on the material available through a range of sources, including the website, leaflets and posters. The support provided by ILA staff was also commented on favourably, as was the range of marketing materials available for distribution to potential learners.
- However it was reported that levels of knowledge and understanding of the ILA scheme among staff within learning providers and intermediaries was patchy. While staff who worked most closely with ILA Scotland often had good levels of knowledge, this was not true more generally. While it was recognised that this was partly associated with internal dissemination strategies, it was also suggested that more could be done to address this.
- It was also noted that many potential learners seemed to have little knowledge or understanding of the ILA scheme before they came into contact with learning providers or intermediaries. Staff from these organisations suggested that TV advertising seemed to be having relatively little impact, and they suggested that they had a key role in disseminating information about the ILA scheme, and the opportunities which it provided. They suggested that word of mouth was a key means through which many learners and potential learners received information about the scheme.
- Agencies working with learners with disabilities, mental health problems or substance misuse problems, and literacy difficulties were particularly likely to comment on low levels of awareness. It was suggested that special measures will be required if people in these categories are to be fully aware of the opportunities which may be available to them.

- Associated with these concerns, there was strong argument that there is a need for different approaches to marketing the scheme and greater cooperation between ILA Scotland and other locally based agencies in developing more effective marketing strategies. In this respect while the expertise of ILA staff, and the valuable range of marketing materials which they have was recognised, it was suggested that more could be made of these strengths. The development of locally based advertising and marketing strategies were suggested as a means of raising awareness amongst client groups, learners and potential learners.

- Many learning providers and intermediaries reported that they were already active both in providing information about the ILA scheme to prospective learners and in encouraging participation among groups who needed this active encouragement if they were to take up these opportunities. However many felt that their role in this respect could be more positively developed through more effective co-operation with ILA staff.

- Respondents in both Phase One and Phase Two of the study also suggested that the advertising of the scheme did not provide enough explicit detail about learning opportunities available. They suggested that there was too much emphasis on the funding, and not enough on the range of learning opportunities which this opens up.

- A recurrent theme among a number of respondents from intermediary agencies was the concern expressed by some potential applicants that an application of this kind could have a detrimental impact on their benefits. This applied particularly to people on incapacity benefit. It was felt that more explicit information could be provided in order to clarify this situation and put people at ease.

7.3   Procedures associated with the ILA Scotland scheme

- The process of registering as a learning provider was generally viewed as a straightforward experience for most learning providers. The support provide by ILA Scotland staff was seen as valuable by a range of respondents. The rigour of the registration process for learning providers was understood and regarded as appropriate by many respondents.

- The processes for establishing courses as eligible for ILA funding through using the Provider Opportunity Management Tool (PROMT) developed by ILA Scotland were viewed as onerous by many respondents in Phase One, but were more generally accepted by respondents in Phase Two. This was partly associated with growing familiarity among learning providers, changes which they introduced to their own procedures, and changes introduced by ILA Scotland. In particular the introduction of flexible start dates, which enables learning providers to enter courses which do not have a designated start or end date in the PROMT tool without the need for the monthly updates which were previously required was warmly welcomed.

- The application process for learners has been noted by a number of respondents as being bureaucratic and creating barriers to participation for certain groups of learners, including those with literacy or numeracy problems, older people, those with disabilities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Intermediaries in particular described the process as time-consuming, and noted that this was one of the least successful aspects of the scheme. The view was expressed that ILA Scotland had 'tied themselves up with red tape'.

- In both phases of the research both learning providers and intermediaries identified the telephone call that the learner is obliged to make to request an application form as a potential barrier. This relates to issues surrounding the confidence and communication

skills of the learner, and it was suggested that learners are often daunted by the prospect of phoning. It was suggested that the process could be made easier for the learner if the learning provider was more involved.

- Learning providers and intermediaries reported various steps which they had taken to support applicants with this initial telephone call, including work with learners with a variety of disabilities. However it was suggested that the present arrangements made it difficult to provide support of this kind.

- In response to these all of these problems, there is a strong feeling amongst some intermediaries and learning providers that arrangements could be put in place which would make it easier to provide support for ILA applicants. One suggestion is that they could provide an alternative to the initial telephone call through acting as a channel for the dissemination of application packs. It was highlighted that certain agencies, for example trade unions and local authority agencies, are fully accountable bodies and could provide a mechanism through which to supply application packs to members or employees.

- It was also noted that learndirect scotland are currently piloting an on-line application tool for use by learners and this has been welcomed. Intermediaries stated that they felt that such a function would be highly valuable and would make the application processes more accessible.

- It has also been noted that on-line registration may not be suitable for some people with disabilities, and email registration was highlighted as an appropriate mechanism for some of this group, in particular those with visual impairments or who use alternative internet browsing techniques[20].

- Learning providers and intermediaries in both phases of this research described income assessment procedures associated with qualifying for the ILA200 as often time consuming, cumbersome and complicated. They were highlighted as a barrier to accessing ILA Scotland opportunities:

  o The requirement for people in employment to supply payslips was identified as being problematic due to loss, or not holding on to them. Learners may be reluctant to go to their employer's personnel department to get copies of wage slips. Wage slips may also overestimate income as a result of overtime or expenses payments.

  o For those who are self-employed, but on relatively low incomes the requirement to provide audited accounts was described as a costly extra burden resulting in this group applying only for ILA100.

  o It was also suggested that there are people in a range of positions who have no regular income, e.g. women who are not in paid employment outside the home, and procedures involved in securing proof of income can be complicated and drawn out.

- Respondents also commented on the additional burdens which are associated with having to update this evidence on an annual basis if entitlement to the ILA 200 is to be maintained.

- These problems with income assessment led to suggestions that there is a need to review the arrangements which are currently in place. While it is accepted that some form of assessment will be required for ILA200, it is suggested that existing arrangements are unnecessarily onerous. One suggestion is that once an initial assessment has been made,

---

[20] Since time of writing, ILA Scotland have been developing initiatives to improve flexibility of the application process through piloting an on-line application facility as well as permitting intermediary agencies representatives to apply on a client's behalf.

learners could confirm annually that their circumstances have not changed, and provide information about any relevant changes.

- The £15,000 income threshold had been identified as problematic by a number of respondents during Phase One and the earlier part of Phase Two. As a result the respondents in the later stages of Phase Two, who were aware of the raising of the income threshold to £18,000 in June 2007, welcomed this development. This is seen by learning providers as a significant step towards enabling those people whose salaries are marginally above this to access ILA approved learning opportunities.

- A considerable number of learning providers and intermediaries found the processes associated with the Learning Token as cumbersome and problematic. Intermediary representatives were generally critical regarding the learning token system describing it as confusing, both for themselves and for the client groups. In particular, participants describe the terminology as confusing and that the term 'token' generates expectations that it is a plastic coin or a card similar to a bank card as opposed to paper documentation. A number of learning providers describe efforts made in having to 'chase' learners to return their token. Suggested improvements to the learning token system centred around making the process more automated.

- A number of respondents from both learning providers and intermediaries welcomed the £10 contribution which learners are required to make. The contribution was described as a way of encouraging learners to make a commitment to their own learning. However, other intermediaries in both Phase One and Phase Two view the contribution level as too high, especially for the unemployed and other learners on very low incomes. It was also noted by some learning providers that collecting the £10 contribution presented an additional administrative task.

7.4   Awareness and impact of recent changes to the ILA Scotland scheme

- Awareness of recent changes depended on level of contact with ILA Scotland and internal dissemination strategies. Many learning provider respondents who were in regular contact with ILA Scotland had a good level of awareness. Respondents from intermediaries such as trade unions also had a good level of knowledge. Within these organisations level of knowledge among other staff depended on their internal arrangements for dissemination. For many other intermediaries knowledge depended on the relationship with learning providers, or hearing about changes by chance. As a result it appeared that knowledge among these groups was patchy and limited.

- Most respondents reported that knowledge of changes among learners and potential learners was very limited until they were informed by learning providers or intermediaries.

- The impact of the recent changes on widening the learning opportunities available to potential learners and introducing new learners to adult education was generally welcomed by respondents. The changes were noted as having an impact on increasing the range of opportunities available, widening participation, and providing new opportunities for progression.

- While some learning providers welcomed the broadening of the range of courses on offer under ILA100, other providers thought that the extension did not go far enough in widening access to learning opportunities. As noted earlier in the report, some providers would ideally like to see the same courses available under both offers.

- The fieldwork for Phase Two of the study of learning providers was under way before the announcement by ILA Scotland that the £15,000 threshold would be increasing to £18,000 in June of this year. From the limited number of interviewees that referred to the threshold

increasing to £18,000, the general consensus was that it was a positive move which would result in more learners being attracted onto the scheme and have a positive impact on widening participation.

REFERENCES

Callender, C., Wilkinson, D. and Mackinon, K. (2006), Part-time study in higher education in the UK: A survey of students' attitudes and experiences of part-time study and its costs 2005/06, Universities UK

Cubie et al (1999) Student Finance: Fairness for the Future

Department for Education and Employment (1998) The Learning Age: A renaissance for a new Britain, London: HMSO

Education and Skills Committee (2007) Education and Skills - Eighth Report

Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee (2002) Final Report on Lifelong Learning, SP Paper 679

Leitch, A (2006) Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills, Leitch Review of Skills final report, London: HMSO

Scottish Executive (2000) Scottish Executive News Release, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2000/05/7de4c72c-3491-428a-a649-66cb5496bf7e

Scottish Executive (2001) Scottish Executive News Release, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2001/12/842

Scottish Executive (2002) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts: Final Report, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15482/11110

Scottish Executive (2003a) Life Through Learning Through Life: The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland. Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.

Scottish Executive (2003b) A Partnership for a Better Scotland. Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.

Scottish Executive (2005a) Funding for Learners Review: Funding Available to Learners in Tertiary Education - An International Comparison, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh

Scottish Executive (2005b) Funding of Learners Review – Information, Advice & Guidance Workstream: Current provision of Information, Advice & Guidance Scottish Executive, Edinburgh

Scottish Executive (2005c) Final Report from the funding of learners review, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20899/55180

Scottish Executive (2006) Entitlement to Learning Scoping Study, http://www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/29144834/0

Scottish Executive (2007a) http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/publications2007-2008/Q/EditMode/on

Scottish Executive (2007b) Gallacher, J., Toman, N., Ingram, R., Brodie, J. & Cleary, P. (2007a) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland – Phase One Intermediary Study, Research Findings No. 52/2007, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169152/0047118.pdf

Scottish Executive (2007c) Gallacher, J., Toman, N., Ingram, R., Brodie, J. & Cleary, P. (2007b) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland – Phase One Learning Providers Study, Research Findings No. 54/2007, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169161/0047120.pdf

The Scottish Government (2007) Skills for Scotland: A lifelong learning skills strategy. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Also available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0

Scottish Funding Council (2005) Learning for All: The Report of the SFEFC/SHEFC Widening Participation Review Group. Scottish Funding Council, Edinburgh

Scottish Parliament (2002) Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee: 9th Report. Final report on Lifelong Learning. SP Paper 679. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh

Whittaker S, Gallacher J & Crossan B (2004) Learners' perceptions of information, advice and guidance: a review of research. Report prepared for Scottish Executive. Glasgow, Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, Glasgow Caledonian University.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1   LEARNING PROVIDER STUDY

Participants

Scoping study	No of organisations interviewed
Scotland's Colleges	3
Voluntary Organisation	1
Local Authority Provider	2
Higher Education Sector	1
Private Sector	2
Total	**9**
Phase One	
Private	14
Higher Education Institution	3
Scotland's Colleges	14
Community/Voluntary	4
Local Authority	3
Other	1
Total	**39**
Phase Two	
Private	10
Higher Education Institution	6
Scotland's Colleges (including HE in FE)	9
Community/Voluntary	3
Local Authority	5
Other	1
Total	**34**

Sampling strategy

Based on information regarding registered learning providers from learndirect scotland, 10 learning providers were selected for the scoping study, based on size, location and type of organisation (sectors are outlined in the table above). The aim was to have an appropriate geographical spread to allow the exploration of urban and rural issues, and to include a range of large, medium and small learning providers. Respondents were selected through an initial request to the learning provider seeking the identification of potential participants.

The same sampling strategy was used to recruit participants in both Phase One and Phase Two interviews. In keeping with the intention to collect as much information as possible about the impact, if any, that the August 2006 changes had to the scheme, 14 of the learning providers contacted in Phase Two had already taken part in interviews in Phase One. This would allow consideration of how perceptions or experience of using the ILA Scotland scheme had changed over this time, if at all. The remaining 20 learning providers interviewed were carefully balanced across the key participant areas.

Operational issues

Participants' anonymity was assured both prior to and at the point of interview. With their permission, discussions were recorded, and the recording transcribed. Discussions lasted approximately one hour. The majority of the interviews were carried out by telephone.

Those agreeing to participate in an interview were provided with the questionnaire one week prior to interview. Participants were made aware of issues regarding confidentiality and their anonymity was assured prior to interview. Responses to section 1 of the interview schedule were noted by the interviewer while responses to section 2 were recorded using a digital recorder in circumstances in which consent was given. Data from Section One were inputted into SPSS.

Key areas discussed

Scoping study
- The impact of ILA Scotland on the marketing, design, and pricing of courses
- The effectiveness of the ILA scheme information and marketing tools
- The impact of ILAs on the uptake of learning in organisation or institutions
- The impact of ILAs on organisational or institutional planning, processes and structures
- The views of learning providers on course eligibility criteria for the ILA Scotland scheme
- The robustness and effectiveness of ILA Scotland booking and payment arrangements, including the learning token.

Phases One and Two
- Procedures and systems related to the ILA Scotland scheme
- General administrative procedures associated with being an ILA account holder
- Accessibility of ILA Scotland information for both learning providers and learners/potential learners
- Impact of ILA Scotland marketing and recruitment
- ILA Scotland eligibility criteria for learning providers and learners
- ILA Scotland course eligibility criteria
- Impact of ILA Scotland on organisational planning and processes
- Operation of ILA Scotland including consideration of the most successful and least successful aspects of the scheme
- Impact and awareness of recent changes (Phase Two only).

ANNEX 2   LEARNING PROVIDER SATISFACTION BY SECTOR

Learner Provider Eligibility Criteria	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Don't Know/ Neither		Total No of respondents	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Private	13	8	0	0	1	2	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	3	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
Local Authority	3	5	0	0	0	0	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	12	8	1	1	1	0	14	9
HEI	3	2	0	1	0	3	3	6
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Procedures for registering as an ILA Scotland Learning Provider								
Private	13	7	0	0	1	3	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	1	3	0	0	3	0	4	3
Local Authority	1	2	0	0	2	3	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	12	6	2	1	0	2	14	9
HEI	2	3	1	2	0	1	3	6
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Course Eligibility Criteria								
Private	11	5	1	3	2	2	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	3	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
Local Authority	2	3	0	1	1	1	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	6	5	7	1	1	3	14	9
HEI	1	5	1	1	1	0	3	6
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Procedures for including courses in the ILA Scotland Scheme								
Private	11	7	1	0	2	3	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	4	3	0	0	0	0	4	3
Local Authority	2	5	0	0	1	0	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	7	7	7	0	0	2	14	9
HEI	1	3	2	2	0	1	3	6
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
PROMT System								
Private	11	6	2	0	1	4	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	3	3	1	0	0	0	4	3
Local Authority	3	3	0	0	0	2	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	6	5	8	3	0	1	14	9
HEI	1	4	1	1	1	1	3	6
Other	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Learning token system								
Private	12	8	0	0	2	2	14	10
Community/ Voluntary	3	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
Local Authority	3	5	0	0	0	0	3	5
Scotland's Colleges	7	5	6	2	1	2	14	9
HEI	2	2	1	3	0	1	3	6
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

The ILA200 offer *	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Don't Know/ Neither		Total No of respondents	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Private	*0*	8	*0*	0	*0*	2	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	3	*0*	1	*0*	1	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	7	*0*	1	*0*	1	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	3	*0*	2	*0*	1	*0*	*6*
Other	*0*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*1*
*The ILA100 offer ***								
Private	*0*	4	*0*	3	*0*	3	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	2	*0*	0	*0*	1	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	3	*0*	1	*0*	1	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	2	*0*	4	*0*	3	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	1	*0*	2	*0*	3	*0*	*6*
Other	*0*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*1*
Levels of uptake by learners of the ILA Scotland scheme								
Private	*8*	6	*4*	2	*2*	2	*14*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*1*	3	*1*	0	*2*	0	*4*	*3*
Local Authority	*3*	4	*0*	0	*0*	1	*3*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*5*	5	*1*	3	*8*	1	*14*	*9*
HEI	*2*	3	*1*	1	*0*	2	*3*	*6*
Other	*1*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*	*1*
Process of accessing the funding for ILA supported courses								
Private	*10*	7	*1*	0	*3*	3	*14*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*3*	3	*0*	0	*1*	0	*4*	*3*
Local Authority	*3*	4	*0*	0	*0*	1	*3*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*11*	8	*1*	0	*2*	1	*14*	*9*
HEI	*3*	3	*0*	1	*0*	2	*3*	*6*
Other	*1*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*	*1*
£15,000 income threshold for the £200 offer								
Private	*9*	5	*1*	2	*4*	3	*14*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*3*	3	*1*	0	*0*	0	*4*	*3*
Local Authority	*3*	2	*0*	2	*0*	1	*3*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*5*	5	*4*	2	*5*	2	*14*	*9*
HEI	*1*	3	*1*	1	*1*	2	*3*	*6*
Other	*1*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*	*1*
*£10 personal contribution ***								
Private	*0*	7	*0*	1	*0*	2	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	3	*0*	1	*0*	1	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	7	*0*	2	*0*	0	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	5	*0*	0	*0*	1	*0*	*6*
Other	0	*1*	0	*0*	0	0	0	*1*

ILA Scotland call centre/ helpline	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Don't Neither	Know/	Total respondents	No of
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Private	*11*	6	*2*	2	*1*	2	*14*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*3*	3	*1*	0	*0*	0	*4*	*3*
Local Authority	*2*	3	*0*	0	*1*	2	*3*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*6*	7	*6*	1	*2*	1	*14*	*9*
HEI	*2*	3	*1*	2	*0*	1	*3*	*6*
Other	*1*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*	*1*
ILA Scotland information and marketing								
Private	*10*	6	*1*	1	*3*	3	*14*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*4*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*4*	*3*
Local Authority	*3*	3	*0*	1	*0*	1	*3*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*7*	6	*2*	1	*5*	2	*14*	*9*
HEI	*0*	3	*1*	1	*2*	2	*3*	*6*
Other	*1*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*	*1*
***Recent changes to the ILA100 offer ***								
Private	*0*	3	*0*	4	*0*	3	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	1	*0*	1	*0*	3	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	5	*0*	1	*0*	3	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	0	*0*	3	*0*	3	*0*	*6*
Other	*0*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*1*
***The range of courses offered through ILA200 ***								
Private	*0*	8	*0*	0	*0*	2	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	2	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	9	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	3	*0*	1	*0*	2	*0*	*6*
Other	*0*	1	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*1*
***The range of courses offered through ILA100 ***								
Private	*0*	5	*0*	3	*0*	2	*0*	*10*
Community/ Voluntary	*0*	3	*0*	0	*0*	0	*0*	*3*
Local Authority	*0*	2	*0*	1	*0*	2	*0*	*5*
Scotland's Colleges	*0*	3	*0*	5	*0*	1	*0*	*9*
HEI	*0*	0	*0*	3	*0*	3	*0*	*6*
Other	0	*1*	0	*0*	0	*0*	0	*1*

P1 = Phase One

P2 = Phase Two

* Questions included in Phase Two only

ANNEX 3 INTERMEDIARY STUDY

Scoping study				
Edinburgh focus group				
			Nature of involvement with the scheme	
Local Authority	2	Works directly with learners.		1
		Cascade of information through network		1
Voluntary Sector	2	Works directly with learners		2
		Cascade of information through network		1
Total				**4**
Glasgow focus group				
Local Authority	2	Works directly with learners.		2
Trade Unions	2	Works directly with learners		2
Voluntary Sector	1	Works directly with learners and		1
		Cascade of information through network		
Total	5			**5**
Phase One				
Formal intermediaries				
Careers & Learning				1
Local Authority				3
Employers				0
Voluntary Sector				6
Learning Uncovered Delegates				2
Trade Union				2
Totals				**14**
Informal intermediaries				
Retail Representative				1
Library Representative				1
Community Education Representative				1
Learning Ambassador				2
Total				**5**
Phase Two				
Edinburgh focus group				
			Nature of involvement with the scheme	
Local Authority	1	Cascade of information through network		1
Trade Unions	1	Cascade of information through network		1
Careers & Learning	1	Cascade of information through network		1
Learning Uncovered Delegate	1			1
Other	1	Cascade of information through network and		1
		Can nominate staff who work with learners		
Total	5			**5**

Glasgow focus group				
		Nature of involvement with the scheme		
Local Authority	1	Works directly with learners		1
Trade Unions	1	Cascade of information through network and Can nominate staff who work with learners		1
Voluntary	1	Works directly with learners		1
Learning Uncovered Delegate	1			1
Total	*4*			4
Formal intermediaries				
Careers & Learning				3
Local Authority				3
Learning Uncovered Delegates				4
Trade Union				4
Totals				**14**
Informal intermediaries				
Adult Resource Centre representative				1
Community Centre representative				1
Family Support Organisation representative				1
Total				3

Sampling strategy

The research team were supplied with a database containing information detailing agencies acting as formal intermediaries and partners with the scheme, as well as outlining the nature of participants' involvement with the scheme. Information was also given on key issues emerging for such agencies. Participants were selected for 2 focus groups with the aim of providing an appropriate geographical spread across the east and west of Scotland. Participants for both the focus groups and formal intermediary interviews were and approached to participate in the study from the sectors outlined below:

- Careers and learning
- Local authority
- Trade union organisations
- Voluntary sector
- Employers
- 'Learning Uncovered' (LU) delegates (those agencies that attended one of learndirect scotland's seminars on learning opportunities)
- 'Other' (those who did not fall into any of the above categories)

For informal intermediaries, the main recruitment procedure employed was a "snowball" sampling strategy, based on suggestions made by formal intermediaries. Examples of these types of organisations are:

- Workplaces
- Pubs
- Supermarkets
- Doctor Surgeries

- Learning ambassadors (learners who encourage other learners)
- Family Centres
- Toddlers Groups
- Women's Groups
- Social Workers
- Youth Centres
- Sports clubs/Leisure Centres
- Libraries

The contact strategy for selection of participants to take part in the 2 final focus groups was broadly similar to the approach undertaken when organising the first two focus groups in the scoping study. However, as well as new agencies being approached to participate, some of the original participants from Phase One focus groups were also contacted again so as to attain an appropriate balance of old and new agencies.

Both the database and "snowball" sampling strategy based on the recommendations of formal intermediaries were used in identifying participants in interviews for both phases. Again a broad range of representatives from various sectors was sought.

Operational issues

Focus groups for both Phase One and Phase Two were held in central locations in Glasgow and Edinburgh with a broad range of formal intermediary representatives attending. In Phase Two, some Phase One participants were again invited to participate in order to allow reflection on the impact, if any, of changes to the scheme. With permission, the discussions were recorded and transcribed and detailed notes were taken alongside the recording. The discussions lasted approximately one and a half hours.

Interviews with formal intermediaries in Phases One and Two lasted approximately one hour and again, discussions were recorded and transcribed. The interview schedule for Phase two included additional questions about perceptions of the impact, if any, of the changes made to the scheme.

Contact with informal intermediaries progressed slowly in comparison with interviews undertaken with formal intermediaries, largely due to the 'hidden' nature of the population. Through time however, interviews with participants from a broad range of backgrounds were secured and conducted. Interviews were conducted by telephone and took approximately one hour, with the structure of the interviews similar to those conducted with formal intermediaries.

Key areas discussed

Formal intermediaries
- Levels of understanding and awareness of the ILA Scotland Scheme amongst intermediary and partner agencies
- Levels of understanding and awareness amongst client groups and learners or potential learners generally

- The accessibility of ILA Scotland information for intermediaries and partners
- The role of intermediaries and partners with respect to the ILA Scotland Scheme
- Key activities of intermediary and partner organisations with respect to the ILA Scotland Scheme
- The Learner eligibility criteria including the awareness and understanding of these criteria within intermediary and partner organisations, client groups and learners generally. This will include consideration of the eligibility criteria is perceived within your organisation.
- The impact of marketing and recruitment activities including the accessibility and usefulness of learner information.
- Perceptions of enrolment and course booking procedures associated with ILA Scotland and implications for patterns of uptake and types of courses
- The ILA Scotland application process including income assessment and personal contribution
- The Operation of ILA Scotland including consideration of the most successful and least successful aspects of the scheme.
- The overall effectiveness of the scheme, and ideas for improvement
- Any other key issues participants may like to raise in relation to ILA Scotland.

Informal intermediaries
- Levels of understanding and awareness of ILA Scotland
- The accessibility of ILA Scotland information
- Levels of support offered by the ILA Scotland Scheme
- Key activities of intermediary and partner organisations with respect to the ILA Scotland Scheme
- Learner eligibility criteria and application processes
- Operation of elements of the ILA Scotland Scheme including exploration of most and least successful aspects of the scheme
- ILA Scotland Information for Learners/Potential Learners
- ILA Scotland Marketing Activities and Levels of Uptake
- Overview of the ILA Scotland Scheme
- The overall effectiveness of the scheme, and ideas for improvement
- Any other issues participants may wish to raise as part of the interview process.

ANNEX 4   INTERMEDIARIES BY INVOLVEMENT

Formal Intermediary Type	Work directly with learners	Provide information to learners	Network with other agencies regarding ILA	Provide information to other agencies regarding ILA
Phase One				
Careers & Learning	0	0	0	0
Local Authority	3	3	1	2
Employers				
Voluntary Sector	5	5	3	1
Learning Uncovered Delegates	2	2	1	1
Trade Union	2	2	2	2
Totals	*12*	*12*	*7*	*6*
Phase Two				
Careers & Learning	1	1	0	0
Local Authority	2	2	2	2
Employers	1	1	0	0
Voluntary Sector				
Learning Uncovered Delegates	3	4	0	1
Trade Union	3	4	4	1
Totals	*10*	*12*	*6*	*4*

Informal Intermediary Representative type	Work directly with learners	Provide info about learning opps.	Provide support indiv'ls	Engage in outreach / awareness raising	Provide ILA info to learners	Network with other agencies	Provide info to other agencies
Phase One							
Retail	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Library	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Community Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Learning Ambassador	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	*3*	*4*	*4*	*3*	*4*	*3*	*1*
Phase Two							
Adult Resource Centre	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Community Centre	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Family Support Organisation	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Totals	*3*	*3*	*3*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*1*