

# Learning Agreement Pilots

## Evaluation of the 2008-2009 Extension

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Becci Newton, Institute for Employment Studies (IES)

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Linda Miller, Miranda Munro, and Thomas Usher (IES)



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## Summary

The Learning Agreement Pilots (LAP) were targeted at 16-17 year olds in 'jobs without training' (JWT) to increase access to learning options for this group and re-engage them in learning. The LAP was a joint initiative between Connexions and local Learning and Skills Councils. Within LAP, young people (and in some areas, their employers) were offered financial incentives including bonus payments and wage compensation. A Learning Agreement was also drawn up, which outlined the accredited training that the young person would undertake. Three variants of LAP were piloted from April 2006 for a two-year period, with a view to identifying the most successful model. In the 2007 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the LAP would be extended into 2008/9.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), the Centre for Education and Industry (CEI) to undertake the evaluation of the Learning Agreement Pilots.

This report concentrates on the implementation and delivery of LAP during their extension period from April 2008 to April 2009. The only significant difference between the two delivery phases was the withdrawal of wage compensation paid to employers in two pilot areas from April 2008. Two variants remained:

- **bonus payments**, which offered staged incentive payments to learners during their LAP experience and
- **agreement only**, where learners and employers were offered support and no financial incentives were available.

## Methodology

The research consisted of four elements:

- interpretation of Management Information (MI) and feedback from pilot project managers
- implementation studies which provided a more detailed, longitudinal and qualitative account of the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in the delivery of LAP
- a case study of LAP delivery which provided a detailed understanding of the operation of the pilot in one locality (within a pilot area) in order to build upon the strategic overview captured during the implementation studies, and
- an analysis of ILR (Individual Learner Records) data to examine the characteristics of LAP participants and to explore LAP outcomes.

## Management of LAP

The decision to extend the pilot for a further year from April 2008 was welcomed, in order to embed the implementation of the pilot, which had only really begun in the second year of delivery. The first two years of the pilot had been mainly dedicated to understanding the evolving policy and the characteristics and nature of the client groups, ie young people in JWT and their employers, as well as setting up delivery mechanisms. The extension year presented the opportunity to re-profile recruitment targets and to provide a better match between the number of staff and the size of the cohort. Since the pilot began in April 2006, a wage compensation payment had been available to employers in two pilot areas. From April 2008, the existing variants were retained, apart from in areas which had operated a

wage compensation model. At the early stages of the extension year, the withdrawal of wage compensation undermined the LAP 'offer' and the two pilot areas that were affected by the policy change, struggled to meet their recruitment targets. In particular, the decision to withdraw wage compensation from pre-existing LAP learners and their employers was a particular challenge, since many employers felt that part of an agreed contract had been terminated. Wage compensation was felt to have been particularly important to small and medium-sized businesses, where significant numbers of young people in JWT were located.

Pilot wind-down, which began halfway through the extension year, caused a great deal of frustration among LAP management and operational staff. Not unlike other pilot initiatives, sustaining staffing levels, while maintaining some momentum in terms of meeting target profiles was a major challenge in most pilot areas. There was concern, particularly going into the wind-down period, about the level of support that would be available to young people remaining on the programme.

While LAP had improved links between providers and Connexions staff, which had resulted in obtaining provision which was more flexible, in order to meet the needs of the JWT cohort, the LAP had only 'scratched the surface' in achieving a learner-led agenda. Most providers remained locked into mainstream delivery, which centred on group learning and off-the-job training. Some pilot areas did make significant progress in terms of establishing that private training providers could be more flexible than colleges in the delivery of provision because they tended to be smaller organisations, focused on work-based training delivery and were not working primarily within the confines of an academic year timetable for delivery.

LAP delivery exposed the need for a much greater degree of flexibility within provision, in terms of what is delivered, where it is delivered and how it is delivered. This included the requirement for more on-the-job training, as well as weekend and evening courses. There was also a demand for more short courses including on-line and distance learning courses. Shortage areas included Level 1 programmes, where it was felt that providers did not have sufficient incentive to deliver courses below Level 2 ie which falls below mainstream delivery. Demand for vocational areas such as construction skills remained, despite examples of pilot areas working with providers (mostly private/voluntary sector) to develop programmes which were more responsive to the needs of LAP learners.

The MI data showed that some momentum had built up across the first two years of the LAP which, to some extent, was carried forward into the early part of the extension year, at least in advance of the wind-down of LAP being confirmed. For instance, nine-tenths of the planned recruitment to LAP was achieved during the extension. Beneath this was considerable variation between pilot areas in their performance rates, which may be attributed to differing operational emphases on employer engagement and/or aspiration-led learning. These factors may have influenced not only sign-ups but also the rates of conversion into learning.

### **Delivery of LAP**

Direct contact with young people (rather than their employers) was the most effective route to securing participation in LAP. During the course of the pilot, delivery staff in many areas, introduced strategies to access young people *before* they entered JWT, as well as identifying and responding to the needs of the group who had already entered the labour market. Levels of understanding about young people in JWT and their employers had increased greatly as a direct result of LAP delivery. This understanding will have direct benefit to the RPA agenda in that LAP delivery had effectively 'taken the lid off' the issues and challenges of identifying and working with the JWT population and their employers.

A crucial lesson learnt from the implementation of LAP, was the need for continued support to be given to young people throughout their programme of learning, not only during the 'signing up' phase. The findings point to the significant role that LAP advisers had in both initiating and sustaining the participation of young people in training. Furthermore, the dialogue between the young person, the provider, the employer and the adviser was the key to keeping them on track and confident about their programmes of learning. It was recognised that young people who enter the labour market at 16/17 should be entitled to the same level of guidance and support, which is afforded to young people who remain in full-time learning, undertake Apprenticeships or become Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

A key success of LAP delivery was its ability to make Apprenticeships more accessible to young people, while at the same time, eliminating some of the associated 'risk' for some training providers and employers in recruiting young people from JWT. This was achieved by breaking down the Apprenticeship offer into smaller accessible parts, which made the learning more attractive and 'do-able' to young people, who very often lacked confidence in their abilities. It offered a progression route by delivering Level 1 qualifications as a taster, with the option of adding the building blocks to achieve a full framework qualification.

### **Feedback from stakeholders**

Employers and providers valued the offer of training below the Level 2 threshold, which was made available through LAP, as well as the opportunity to stage learning through a series of bite-sized courses, in order to develop confidence and enthusiasm for learning among young people in JWT. Both were concerned about the loss of LAP and were surprised by its withdrawal. This lessened its impact, particularly among employers, since the initiative became perceived as yet another short-term funding scheme. Providers tended to feel that more time, once the delivery model had been refined, would have delivered many more learners and much greater impact.

Young people were highly positive about the opportunity for development that they were offered through LAP. It was welcomed by young people who had tried formalised learning and found it was not for them, or those who had not achieved in school. Early evidence of hard outcomes included job security, pay rises, permanent contracts and increased hours of working. The development of confidence and self-esteem were perceived to be important outcomes from LAP.

### **Conclusions: the effectiveness of LAP and implications for the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)**

LAP did make a considerable contribution to our understanding of working with a group of young people who had received scant policy attention in recent years. Critically, it exposed:

- the problems surrounding the identification of the JWT group
- the dearth of expertise within Connexions to support the needs of young people in the labour market and their employers
- the lack of flexibility within the education and training system to respond to their needs.

LAP enabled considerable progress to be made in addressing these issues, and generated important lessons to support future policy development.



- A tension existed within the policy, in terms of defining what it was trying to achieve and for whom. Attempting to meet the needs of both young people and, as far as possible, their employers, within the parameters of the Section 96, which comprises the LSC's learning aims database, was a complex arrangement to deliver.
- The role of 'LAP adviser' was very different to that of the generic Personal Adviser (PA) operating within mainstream Connexions Services. The delivery of LAP required a different set of skills, which included 'selling' the concept of LAP to both young people and employers, and many areas had initially struggled to recruit staff who could effectively work with both client groups. While agencies such as Train to Gain and JobCentre Plus have a stronger profile in terms of employer engagement, Connexions Services were better placed in terms of meeting the guidance and support needs of young people under the age of 19 in JWT.
- LAP exposed the inflexibility which exists in the current education and training provision, in respect of meeting the needs of young people in JWT and their employers. While many providers tried to be more responsive to individual needs, this had not proved cost-effective or practical in many instances. The model adopted in most pilot areas evolved into young people being recruited into predominantly pre-determined training provision, most notably Key Skills and Technical Certificate programmes. LAP became a pre-Apprenticeship programme in most localities, in order to achieve throughput.
- LAP did successfully break down the Apprenticeship learning framework. Offering a part or parts of the Apprenticeship framework made learning more attractive to young people. It offered a progression route by delivering Level 1 qualifications as a taster, with the option of adding the building blocks to achieve a full framework qualification. Crucially, it also enabled training providers to recruit young people onto Apprenticeship training, since they had demonstrated the underpinning knowledge to complete an Apprenticeship. Therefore, LAP funding often removed any risk associated with recruiting young people from JWT. This was a significant achievement in some pilot areas.

### **Implications for the RPA**

- There is a need to re-think the relevance and applicability of the term JWT to describe this group. Evaluation of the LAP demonstrated that the JWT is not a homogeneous group and comprises young people who have access to varying degrees of training and opportunities for enhancement within the labour market.
- LAP was a reactive policy in that it was responsible for identifying and meeting the learning and training needs of young people *in* employment. While one-to-one engagement with a young person and, to a lesser extent, their employer, was the key to their participation in LAP, a much wider range of support needs to be made available for young people *before* they enter the labour market in order to support their transitions and to develop a greater understanding of their needs.
- Within RPA plans, consideration needs to be given to achieving a greater degree of flexibility within the qualification framework, in order to achieve a more attractive offer, as well as ensuring that providers, most notably colleges, are required to adapt their delivery arrangements to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse cohort of learners. Questions remain about the extent to which provision for the JWT group should be geared towards offering a pre-Apprenticeship programme, which LAP achieved.

- Some attention should be given to organisational management and delivery of the JWT agenda post-2013. While most local authorities had developed a NEET strategy as a prerequisite to meeting stringent Public Service Agreements (PSA) targets, the JWT agenda lacked the same profile. It was widely asserted that, without a requirement to do so, most local authorities would fail to take forward the momentum that had been established through LAP.
- Finally, LAP concentrated on meeting the learning and training needs of 16- and 17-year olds in JWT. Eighteen year olds in JWT have fallen through the policy net, despite comprising the largest proportion of the 16-18 year old JWT population. This necessitates an investigation of the composition of the group, in order to identify the extent to which the 18-year-old population is made up largely of recent entrants to the labour market, following time spent in post-16 education, young people who left education at the end of compulsory schooling and young people who have churned between education, training, employment and unemployment.

# 1 Introduction

The 2005 Budget announced the launch of the Learning Agreement Pilots (LAP), which was a two-year initiative targeted at 16-17 year olds in 'jobs with no training' (JWT) in order to increase access to learning options for this group and re-engage them in learning. The LAP was a joint initiative delivered by both Connexions and local Learning and Skills Councils. Within Pilot 1 of LAP, which ran from April 2006 for a two-year period, three variants were tested. In some pilot areas, young people received bonus payments in recognition of their achievements, while in other areas young people signed up to an 'agreement only' model. Financial incentives (bonus payments or wage compensation) were also paid to employers in some pilot areas. A Learning Agreement was also drawn up with young people in all areas, which outlined the accredited training that the young person would undertake.

The LAP was the first policy initiative in recent years, which was targeted at young people who were classified as being 'in jobs without training' (JWT). Young people were identified by Connexions Services when collating their CCIS (Client Caseload Information System) data, as being in a 'job without accredited training' at the point of contact.<sup>1</sup> This included young people in jobs with training that was not accredited, jobs without training, and self-employed young people. Priority was given to young people who were:

- below a standard equivalent to Level 2
- in full-time employment (for 16 hours a week or more).

## 1.1 Extension to the Learning Agreement Pilots

In the 2007 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the LAP would be extended into 2008/9. Table 1.1 sets out the pilot areas and the variants which were piloted between 2006 and 2008 (the original time-span of the pilot) and during 2008/9 (the extension year). During the first two years of LAP, three variants of incentive were trialled. In three areas, young people and their employers were eligible for a bonus payment of £250 (often paid in instalments against key milestones such as starting or completing learning) and in a further two areas, participating employers were additionally eligible for wage compensation for the time their employee spent learning. In the other three areas, no direct financial incentives were offered to either employer or employee, although training costs were met and young people and in some cases, their employer, signed an 'agreement only' LAP, which set out a commitment to participate in training or learning activity. The only significant difference between the two delivery phases was the withdrawal of wage compensation in two pilot areas from April 2008. Two variants remained:

- **bonus payments**, which offered staged incentive payments to learners and their employers during their LAP experience and
- **agreement only**, where learners and employers were offered support and no financial incentives were available.

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<sup>1</sup> *Learning Agreement Pilot: Eligibility, Funding and Claiming*. Learning and Skills Council Feb 2007

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**Table 1.1 - Pilot areas for the Learning Agreement extension evaluation**

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<b>AA area</b>	<b>LAP variant in first two years</b>	<b>LAP variant in extension year</b>
Cornwall and Devon	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer
Lancashire	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer
South Yorkshire	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer	Variant 1: Bonus payment to learner and employer
London East	Variant 2: Bonus payment to learner and wage compensation to employer	Variant 1 Newcomer: Bonus payment to learner and employer
Greater Manchester	Variant 2: Bonus payment to learner and wage compensation to employer	Variant 1 Newcomer: Bonus payment to learner and employer
West Yorkshire	Variant 3: Agreement only	Variant 3: Agreement only
Black Country	Variant 3: Agreement only	Variant 3: Agreement only
Essex, Southend and Thurrock	Variant 3: Agreement only	Variant 3: Agreement only

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*Source: IES/CEI research team*

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A further change in the extension year was an expectation that pilot areas would enter into a 'good referrals only' contract with their local Train to Gain contractor, which was designed to encourage referrals to LAP from Train to Gain operational staff.

This report concentrates on the implementation and delivery of LAP during their extension year from April 2008 to April 2009.

The objectives of the pilots in the extension year were:

- to test the effectiveness of brokerage and Learning Agreements as a tool for re-engaging young people now and within the context of a Raising the Participation Age (RPA), in particular in relation to those dropping out of learning
- to maximise the number of young people in JWT engaging with learning either with their employer or independently
- to monitor and understand how the extension was managed and implemented in different areas and to highlight good practice and any problems in the process with a view to inform the current NEET / JWT situation and RPA, and
- to understand what worked (or did not work) within the extension: to understand how young people responded to agreements and brokerage, and to understand for whom, in what circumstances, and in what respect the intervention has worked for the 'stock' of NEET and JWT and to inform how the approach would work under RPA.

## 1.2 The evaluation

The evaluation of the first two years of the piloting of LAP was concluded in 2009 and a number of research reports have been published:

- Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120
- Perry, J., Purdon, S., D'Souza, J. and Finch, S. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Quantitative Evaluation* DCSF-RR119
- Levesley, T., Fearn, H. and Oakley, J. (2009) *Activity and Learning Agreement Pilots Programme Theory Evaluation; Learning Agreement and Small Step Progression Working Paper 6* DCSF-RR122
- Page, R., Johnson, C. and Munro, M. (2009) *Activity and Learning Agreement Pilots Programme Theory Evaluation; Learning Agreement Provision Paper 4* DCSF-RR121
- Hillage, J., Johnson, C., Maguire, S., Perry, J., Purdon, S. and Finch, S. (2008) *Learning Agreement Pilots Synthesis Report* DCSF-RR071
- Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Hillage, J., Dewson, S., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P. and Page, R. (2008) *Evaluation of the Activity Agreement and Learning Pilots Process Evaluation: Year One Report* DCSF-RR027
- Johnson, C., Page, R. and Munro, M. (2008) *Activity and Learning Agreement Pilots: Agreements; Programme Theory Evaluation Working Paper 2: Signing up to a Learning Agreement* DCSF-RR029

## 1.3 Methodology

This report is based on an evaluation of the implementation and delivery of LAP during the extension period from April 2008 to April 2009. The research consisted of four elements:

### **Interpretation of Management Information and feedback from pilot project managers**

There were regular reports to DCSF and to the National Learning and Skills Council (LSC) based on aggregate data from the LAP Management Information System supplied by the LSC and monthly feedback telephone discussions with every pilot project manager. Feedback discussions involved a review of the area data return and a gathering of information from pilot project managers about their perceptions and understanding of the new delivery models and associated emerging issues. In total, six feedback reports were produced across the course of the evaluation.

### **Implementation studies**

The implementation studies provided a more detailed, longitudinal and qualitative account of the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in the delivery of LAP. Two roundtable discussions with Connexions advisers and managers, as well as local LSC staff in some areas, who were involved in the delivery of the LAP across the lifetime of the pilot were conducted. In addition, between three and six stakeholders (depending on the size and complexity of each pilot) were interviewed in each pilot area, using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. The stakeholders group varied in each area but typically included local education and training providers and employers. In total, 33 interviews were completed.

## Case study

The case study built on the strategic overview provided by the implementation studies and focused on the delivery of an 'agreement only' model of LAP in one pilot area. The case study approach provided a deeper level of understanding about the operation of the pilot in one locality (within a pilot area) in order to build upon the strategic overview captured during the implementation studies. The purpose of completing an intensive case study was to 'drill down' to local area level, which enabled the research team to capture evidence in much more detail.

As part of the case study, initial face-to-face interviews were conducted with 17 young people in Autumn/Winter 2008. Each young person was asked if they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview in order to track their progress and outcomes. In total, 12 follow-up interviews were achieved in Spring 2009.

The case studies also included six interviews with managers, providers and delivery staff and five interviews with local employers who had supported young people in their LAP learning. The sample of employers was boosted by undertaking a further 10 interviews in two other pilot areas.

## Individualised Learner Record (ILR) analysis

The LSC collates data about all learners within its range in a system known as the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). The system collects information in different subsets of the system about: the individual learner (including personal characteristics, educational needs and prior qualification levels), the courses undertaken and completion status of these, and the providers of these courses amongst other information.

Analysis of the ILR enabled the evaluation to examine the characteristics of LAP participants and their outcomes in some detail. The approach involved assessing a series of individual (demographic, socio-economic and educational background), and course (eg level of study, model of attendance), geographic, scheme characteristics and outcome variables (ie participation, take-up and completion rates). To conduct this analysis, data output from the ILR was reviewed and assessed at course and at individual (participant) level, in a consistent way across all pilots, and was analysed using standard statistical packages (eg Excel and SPSS).

## 1.4 Outputs from the evaluation

During the course of the evaluation period, the research team produced two working papers for DCSF. The purpose of the working papers was to provide rapid feedback on emerging issues from the evaluation. These were:

- *Working with the Learning Agreement Delivery Models*, which presented headline findings from the first roundtable discussions which were completed between September and November 2008.
- *Working with the Learning Agreement (LAP) Delivery Models*, which provided feedback from the follow-up roundtable discussions, which were conducted with LAP managers, Connexions managers and operational staff between March and May 2009.

## **1.5 Report structure**

The next section of this report describes the management of the LAP pilots. Chapter 3 then looks at the delivery of LAP. Chapter 4 provides the perspective from providers, employers and young people on LAP delivery. Chapter 5 examines the conclusions emerging from the research, specifically the effectiveness of LAP and the implications for RPA. The ILR analysis and case study evidence are presented as Appendices, although findings from the data are amalgamated into the main body of the report.

## 2 Management of LAP

This chapter sets out the context in which the Learning Agreement Pilots (LAP) were delivered, as well as establishing the ways in which the pilot areas set about managing the initiative, in particular with regard to any changes that were introduced during the extension year. It also reports on how pilot areas linked with local stakeholders and managed LAP provision. The chapter concludes with an analysis of LAP management information. During the extension year, the delivery model remained unchanged in most pilot areas. The extension year was widely viewed as an opportunity to extend the reach of LAP and to compensate for the slow start to pilot implementation, which had occurred during the first year of operation. In two pilot areas, the wage compensation model was withdrawn and during the early stages of the extension year, this had a significant impact on take-up rates and staff morale. Some disappointment was expressed that the extension year for LAP had not led to the introduction of mechanisms to engage with different sub-sections of the eligible population for example, young people in temporary work or young people working in specific occupational sectors.

### 2.1 Delivery in the extension year

The following outlines LAP delivery issues, which were highlighted during the extension year.

#### 2.1.1 Withdrawal of wage compensation

- Initially, withdrawing wage compensation was perceived to have undermined the LAP 'offer' and the two pilot areas that were affected by the policy change, struggled to meet their recruitment targets. In particular, the decision to withdraw wage compensation from pre-existing LAP learners and their employers had been a challenge. Advisers had some difficulties in explaining this change in light of the agreed learning contracts, which had offered wage compensation. To some degree, the reputation of the Connexions service was felt to have been damaged and staff reported that employers had stopped approaching the service for the placement of job vacancies and advice on training and Apprenticeships.
- Staff also stated that, during the early stages of the extension year, employers were uncertain about their continued ability to release young people for training due to the withdrawal of wage compensation and some employers had discussed making young people redundant. There was also a considerable strength of feeling that the withdrawal of wage compensation had stopped some employers engaging in LAP.
- Wage compensation was felt to have been particularly important to small and medium-sized businesses, where significant numbers of young people in JWT were located. It incentivised small businesses to participate in training and funded young people to be released during working hours. It was reported that a greater proportion of young people were expected to undertake their LAP training in their own time (despite young people's Level 2 entitlement to training).
- To some larger businesses, it was reported that the wage compensation 'offer' had been a hindrance in terms of its administration and its alignment to company accounting procedures.
- Some respondents argued that while wage compensation had increased the number of employers that participated in government supported training, it had acted as a reward to some companies who had refused to do so in the past. On the other hand, companies that had a strong record of participation in youth training, often did not qualify for wage compensation through LAP.



### **2.1.2 LAP with bonus payments**

- Pilot areas reported that Variant 1 (see Table 1.1) continued to operate well, although there were differing views as to when the first payment should be made to young people. This was linked to the time it could take to put provision in place.
- One pilot area stated that they were making initial payments when a young person signed their Learning Agreement, to keep learners motivated while provision was agreed. The risk with this strategy was that some young people received bonus payments and dropped out before their programme of learning had started.
- In another pilot area, the focus was placed on ensuring appropriate provision was in place in a shorter time and that the bonus was paid once learning had started.
- Staff reported that some young people were not necessarily aware when their training had formally started and confused this with the pre-learning assessments carried out by Connexions and providers. This meant that their expectation of being paid at the start of learning was not always met.
- There were also delays in providers informing Connexions about learner start dates and this could cause delays in making initial payments.
- Areas operating Variant 1 believed that making bonus payment to learners significantly enhanced retention in learning and qualification achievement. There were mixed views about the impact of changing employers' behaviour as a result of making £250 bonus payments to them. The offer of meeting training costs was considered to act as a bigger incentive.
- Financial incentives ie bonus payments were reported to make a difference in terms of securing initial engagement, especially among small firms. Most LAP sign-ups comprised young people working in small local business.
- Some respondents felt that a £250 bonus payment was an insignificant payment to most employers and that it was the ability to access 'free' training provision for their young employees that determined their interest.

### **2.1.3 Agreement only LAPs**

- Within 'agreement only' pilot areas, the inducement to participate in LAP was the offer of funded training and the on-going support to young people and employers that was available from LAP delivery staff and/or providers.
- Administration was considered to be simpler in 'agreement only' pilot areas. Time / resources were more focused on supporting learners and employers.
- Different emphases emerged across these pilot areas on whether to sign-up learners and then broker provision, or to sign-up learners once a range of provision was in place. However, both approaches were thought to lead to improved information, advice and guidance (IAG) for learners.

## 2.2 Management and staffing - lessons learnt

The LAP was managed locally by Connexions Partnerships and local LSCs. Joint delivery responsibility for the LAP demanded that Connexions and local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) staff work together to manage the implementation of the initiative. In some cases, this was a new venture. During the course of the pilot, stronger links were established between the two agencies. In addition, the LAP enabled Connexions Services to work more closely with training providers, since the implementation of the pilot has enabled Connexions staff to become more involved in the management and delivery of training provision.

LAP was perceived to have offered Connexions Partnerships / Services the incentive to become more involved with young people who had entered jobs without training (JWT) and who, in recent years, had not been a strategic priority. The LAP provided an invaluable opportunity to work with and to develop a greater understanding of the motivations and needs of young people in JWT. This intervention was timely, given subsequent proposals to extend the age at which young people will leave compulsory learning post 2013.

In its first year (2006-07), LAP had been slow to get off the ground and take-up rates, even with modified delivery targets, remained a challenge<sup>2</sup>. Delays in policy implementation and low take-up were attributed to the following reasons:

- the short lead-in time to deliver a policy targeted at a group of young people and a segment of the labour market, which had not been a policy priority for some time
- delays in staff recruitment within Connexions and local LSCs
- on-going changes to LAP regulations, which created confusion about the product, particularly among operational staff who were responsible for its promotion
- organisational change which had occurred within both LSC and Connexions
- difficulties in identifying and tracking young people in the JWT group, due to inaccuracies in management information (MI) data
- apprehension about wider publicity of LAP because of the delays by local LSCs in procuring relevant education and training provision
- operational staff in some Connexions Services lacking experience and confidence in working directly with employers
- a lack of flexibility in the content and delivery of provision.

Given the breadth and number of issues that pilot areas faced, the first year of the pilot was widely regarded as a set up year. Significant progress had been made during the second year of delivery (2007–08<sup>3</sup>), notably:

- LAP had made a substantial contribution to defining and understanding the needs of young people in JWT and their employers

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<sup>2</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Hillage, J., Dewson, S., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P. and Page, R. (2008) *Evaluation of the Activity Agreement and Learning Pilots Process Evaluation: Year One Report* DCSF-RR027

<sup>3</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

- while staff retention remained an issue throughout the pilot, the implementation of LAP had shown the need for, and in many cases, successfully developed, Connexions staff to have different skill sets, in order to work effectively with both young people and employers
- regulations surrounding LAP implementation had stabilised and operational staff were more confident about the LAP 'product', as well as its delivery
- the inaccuracies in CCIS data had exposed the need for regular follow-up of young people in JWT.

The decision to extend the pilot for a further year from April 2008 was welcomed, in order to embed the implementation of the pilot, which had only really begun in the second year of delivery. The first two years of the pilot had been mainly dedicated to understanding the evolving policy and the characteristics and nature of the client groups, ie young people in JWT and their employers, as well as setting up delivery mechanisms<sup>4</sup>. The extension year presented the opportunity to re-profile recruitment targets and to provide a better match between the number of staff and the size of the cohort. In addition, in some areas, the reduction in adviser numbers had been accompanied by the introduction of new staff roles, e.g. with some staff carrying a particular responsibility for employer engagement working across more than one local authority.

While some momentum to delivery had been achieved during the second year of implementation and was carried forward into the extension year, pilot wind-down began at the end of March 2009, which, in effect meant that the last six months of delivery was concentrated largely on LAP closure. The ending of the pilot severely undermined LAP delivery and caused a great deal of frustration among staff. Not unlike other pilot initiatives with fixed life spans, sustaining LAP staffing levels, while maintaining some momentum in terms of meeting target profiles was a major challenge in most pilot areas. There was concern, particularly going into the wind-down period, about the level of support that would be available to young people remaining on the programme.

Considerable effort was targeted at making transition arrangements for young people on courses which extended beyond the LAP closure date, to ensure that a minimum of support was available either through mainstream Connexions provision or directly from providers. Since many staff were employed on fixed-term contracts, most pilot areas lost staff through re-deployment or job moves. For staff remaining, caseloads consequently increased. Only one project manager left their post before pilot end. Related to this, was the impact on the skills base of the pilots. LAP had successfully developed Connexions staff to work with employers and young people in JWT and helped to gain a better understanding of their needs, as well as to broker training that would engage them. It was widely asserted that this knowledge and capacity would be lost with the demise of the pilot.

*'It's hard to offer any specific planned strategy because it's change, it's lots of change. Another challenge is that with fewer advisers, it is more difficult to get those on board to complete or to track them up to completion. As advisers move, young people have to be picked up by other advisers who do not know them.'*

LAP pilot manager

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<sup>4</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

There was a mixed picture about the future delivery of LAP within individual local authority control. This was influenced by the extent to which Connexions had made a transition into local authority control or was a separate organisation, which had been contracted by a local authority to deliver LAP. For example, in one pilot area, LAP staff were employed by a social enterprise organisation. Therefore, sustaining any future initiative targeted at JWT, beyond the LAP was highly dependent on the extent to which LAP managers were able to influence strategy within the relevant individual authorities. Crucially, while most local authorities had developed a NEET strategy as a prerequisite to meeting stringent PSA targets, the JWT agenda currently lacks the same profile. It was widely asserted that without a requirement to do so, most local authorities would fail to take forward the momentum that had been established through LAP. This would result in local intelligence, expertise and capacity being lost, while at the same time delivery staff were acutely aware that the needs of the JWT group would need to be addressed in the near future, due to the impending pressure to deliver the RPA agenda. The national decision to suspend LAP had also undermined the importance of the JWT agenda in some localities.

While most pilot areas reported on-going local discussions to sustain LAP beyond July 2009, only one pilot area had established firm plans to sustain the initiative.

### **2.3 Engagement with providers and other agencies**

Joint working with local LSCs continued to be welcomed, since it led to closer monitoring of provider performance, and was important in terms of gaining greater flexibility in the learning market. Local LSCs had set about contracting with local training providers in a number of different ways. In four pilot areas, provision was contracted through consortia arrangements, in which the local LSC devolved responsibility for the management and delivery of LAP provision to a group of training providers. Setting up consortia arrangements and subsequent delays in brokering provision had impeded LAP delivery during its first year of implementation. There were mixed views about the effectiveness of the consortia approach. Even within individual pilot areas, there were differences in performance and in levels of satisfaction with consortia arrangements between local authority areas. There were examples where LAP staff had learnt to effectively by-pass consortia arrangements and worked in direct contact with individual providers, since this was viewed as a quicker and more efficient means to access provision. Also, LAP delivery staff reported that they had developed greater confidence in brokering provision directly with providers and relied less on the need to go via a consortia lead to negotiate on their behalf.

The new contracting arrangements agreed for the extension year, which reduced the requirement for a full contract to be in place with providers, had further enabled the LAP to introduce small-scale tailored provision, which was often led by private training providers. In some areas, new systems had been introduced to facilitate improved working with individual providers and consortia delivery models. These systems took the form of case conferences or more regular meetings focused on discussing the needs and aspirations of learners; both of these were felt to have reaped benefits for LAP. In some pilot areas, a 'good referral' had been set up with providers via the local LSC, which involved providers receiving a payment if they referred a young person/employer to LAP. However, there were two problems with this arrangement. Firstly, while some providers signed up to this arrangement, there was a tendency for information not to travel down the line to frontline staff, which resulted in a limited number of referrals. Secondly, a conflict of interest sometimes existed, when a provider may have identified eligible LAP learners but may have directed young people to mainstream funding, in order to achieve their own delivery targets.

While LAP had improved links between providers and Connexions staff, which had resulted in obtaining provision which was more flexible, in order to meet the needs of the JWT cohort, the LAP had only 'scratched the surface' in achieving a learner-led agenda. Most providers remained locked into mainstream delivery, which centres on group learning and off-the-job training. While some progress was made, this was largely achieved through working with small private/voluntary providers that were willing to adapt their standard delivery contracts (see section 2.4). It was widely believed that the lower than expected number of LAP learners and the financial incentives attached to LAP delivery, did not act as a sufficient incentive to change most providers' behaviour. Moreover, the impending closure of LAP, led some providers who had engaged with the initiative to withdraw their support, which led to further problems in terms of accessing relevant and timely provision.

### **2.3.1 Other agencies**

A lower than expected number of referrals to LAP were received from Business Links, local Chambers of Commerce and Train to Gain, despite initial hopes that these agencies would offer a route into the local labour market and, more specifically, to employers which employ young people in JWT. In some areas, local referral systems included a fixed payment for each employer contact. All pilot areas were in contact with the Train to Gain service in their area, although this relationship failed to generate the anticipated quantity of LAP learners. This was attributed to many Train to Gain brokers not fully understanding the LAP offer and to the focus of their work being concentrated on adult training. A specific concern was the lack of attention given to the training needs of 18-year-old workers, who represent a significant proportion of the JWT population and yet they are ineligible for both LAP and Train to Gain intervention.

There was widespread concern that too many organisations focused on outreach work with employers, which could lead to confusion and disengagement among some employers. It was widely asserted that a more coordinated approach to employer engagement was needed. A central, shared employer database was suggested to overcome this problem, which could record the number of contacts made to individual employers.

## **2.4 Managing provision**

Accessing and delivering flexible, relevant and timely provision to LAP learners was one of the biggest challenges facing the implementation of the pilot. LAP was expected to deliver learning to a group of young people who for a variety of reasons were reluctant, unwilling or unable to participate. Prior to the launch of LAP, very little was known about the learning or training needs of the JWT group or their employers' training needs. One of the key lessons learnt was that the standard Apprenticeship framework, failed to meet their needs and that a more individualised and flexible approach was needed to secure engagement.

*'LSC buys qualifications, it doesn't buy units and sometimes those people in work want to have units bought, even though it's part of a portfolio building in QCF, you don't want to build them - you don't buy the whole qualification, you want to buy the unit to make up the qualification.'*

LAP Adviser

While many providers tried to be more responsive to individual needs, this had not proved cost-effective or practical in many instances. Furthermore, the low numbers entering the pilot meant that many providers were reluctant to invest large amounts of time and effort to develop tailored packages of learning for young people and, in some cases, to change their patterns of working when they had other large contracts to deliver - most notably Apprenticeships and Train to Gain. In essence, there was concern about the mismatch between how and where the pilot required learning to be delivered and the capacity of learning providers to meet those needs.

*'As long as they're paid on the basis of achieving retention and achievement targets, then it will be very hard for them to achieve that level of flexibility ... if my business was being paid on that basis, you'd want to play it safe, wouldn't you and only take the people who have almost a cast iron chance of getting through and staying on the programme. There's no getting away from it.'*

LAP pilot manager

Frustration was felt by delivery staff when they could not access a suitable programme of learning, despite having successfully recruited young people and their employers to the programme and having identified their training/learning needs. The reasons given for this were: specific courses not being available in the area; courses being unavailable at the time they were needed; and/or courses not being offered on an individual basis. Specific difficulties centred around September start dates for courses delivered by Further Education (FE) colleges and the lack of flexibility in the delivery of courses which were in high demand, such as construction skills programmes<sup>5</sup>.

While there were examples of provision which had an individualised approach to learning, the bulk of learning provision within LAP consisted of key skills, basic skills and Technical Certificate programmes, where there was an emphasis on establishing contracts and courses with providers prior to the recruitment of young people. This approach was highly successful, through breaking down the Apprenticeship offer into smaller parts, in order to induce engagement and was not available within existing mainstream provision. Key Skills and Technical Certificates provided young people with:

- A route, and a stepping stone, back into learning, either to Apprenticeship training, by enabling them to receive bite-sized chunks of a full framework agreement, or into full-time learning.
- Learning which could be delivered on-the-job. Some pilot areas found providers that were willing to offer Key Skills and Technical Certificate programmes within the work place, which some employers found attractive.
- Short programmes of learning. This also increased learning outputs from LAP.
- The opportunity to re-establish confidence in learning before making any commitment to participate in mainstream learning. Many areas reported that young people and their employers benefited from this approach.

*'We have got young people that we have now supported to be able to access it [Key Skills] because they were a Level 2 but weren't at their numeracy and communication skills ... College and private training providers have no access to fund just Key Skills or just a Technical Cert outside of a full framework and being able to deliver that in each successive LAP or two of them in one LAP, that facility has now, as of 31<sup>st</sup> March, disappeared.'*

LAP pilot manager

On the other hand, there was a weight of argument which suggested that Key Skills delivery was largely driven by its ability to be offered flexibly and within a short time frame, rather than meeting demand made by young people or their employers. The lack of any real appraisal of young people's needs or their employers, prior to the introduction of LAP made any true assessment of this approach difficult to measure.

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<sup>5</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

Pilot areas did make significant progress in terms of establishing that private training providers could be more flexible than colleges in the delivery of provision because they tended to be smaller organisations, focused on work-based training delivery and were not working primarily within the confines of an academic year timetable for delivery. Colleges which had appointed an LAP coordinator or had a Work-based Learning Coordinator who could work across college departments and different campus sites, were found to be more responsive to the needs of the programme. Some college co-ordinators had made joint visits to employers with LAP advisers.

LAP provision could include all qualifications that were listed under Section 96 of LSC's Learning Aims Database. This includes qualifications accredited at Level 1 and 2 or above but not standalone NVQs. While Section 96 includes a long list of eligible qualifications, there were mixed messages about their relevance and availability to JWT learners and their employers. There were demands for more flexibility to be introduced, especially for taster programmes and part NVQ qualifications. Some respondents wanted to access qualifications listed within Section 98, which is the database for adult learning. Also, while certain qualifications were listed within Section 96, they were not always available in each locality or at the time of year that the young person was recruited to the programme.

*'We exceeded our targets but that doesn't mean they met the needs of the JWT group. There were numerous young people and employers we were unable to help because of the constraints of being in the learning aims database and Section 96. If we'd been able to secure the kind of training that they needed to support their business needs and the development of those young people, we would have been able to help an awful lot more.'*

LAP pilot manager

The positive aspect of Section 96 qualifications was their transferability and that they offered access to Apprenticeship training, which was attractive to both learners and their employers.

*'The really important point is ... the list has been helpful to explain to young people the currency and how it can be transferred.'*

LAP pilot manager

LAP delivery exposed the need for a much greater degree of flexibility within provision, in terms of what is delivered, where it is delivered and how it is delivered. This included the requirement for more on-the-job training, as well as weekend and evening courses. There was also a demand for more short courses including on-line and distance learning courses. Shortage areas included Level 1 programmes, where it was felt that providers did not have sufficient incentive to deliver courses below Level 2 ie which falls below mainstream delivery. Demand for vocational areas such as construction skills remained, despite examples of pilot areas working with providers (mostly private/voluntary sector) to develop programmes which were more responsive to the needs of LAP learners. A major criticism of most college provision was that it largely centred round a September start with a one-cohort entry, which lacked the responsiveness to meet the needs of learners that join a programme throughout the year. Training which could not be delivered within LAP included short courses such as food hygiene, food safety and first aid and vocational courses such as carpet fitting, agriculture, horticulture and landscape gardening. There were reported shortages of provision to meet the needs of some young people with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD).

LAP provision remained essentially supply-led. While there was an overall consensus that demand-led LAP provision was the ideal, this had been difficult to achieve in practice. The wind down of the pilot witnessed a greater shift towards shorter course delivery. This impacted on the types of learning offered, as well as the range of young people that were

recruited ie only those that were able to complete a course within the remaining timeframe were recruited or that would not require significant support needs to complete programmes, which extended beyond the life of the pilot ie Apprenticeship completions. With LAP disbanding, there was widespread concern that the momentum and successes in terms of achieving greater flexibility within the availability and delivery of provision would be lost.

## **2.5 Management information**

The Management Information for the Learning Agreements (LAPMI) was collated by the LSC in an aggregated format by variant and by pilot area. The LAPMI provided details of the pilot area target profiles, rates of young people who were prepared to sign up to the Learning Agreement, rates of young people for whom learning was brokered, withdrawals from LAP learning, as well as course completions.

Two datasets were drawn on to provide the LAPMI. The sign-up assessment was based on Connexions (CCIS) data whereas the 'in learning' data were drawn from the LSC ILR. The former was real-time data, which included the number of young people that had signed up to start a Learning Agreement (and may not have started their programme of learning) while the latter included only young people who had actually started a programme of learning. The impact of this is that there is a difference between the numbers of sign-ups and the numbers recorded as 'in learning'. Due to the lag on the ILR, this difference appears greater than it was in actuality (LSC, 2009<sup>6</sup>).

Individualised participant data was not available to the evaluation throughout the course of the extension year, although an analysis of the LSC's Individual Learner Record was undertaken that explores the characteristics of LAP learners (see Appendix B). Similarly, data was not collated by the LSC/DCSF at local authority level within each pilot area, although LAP managers collected this data and reported considerable local variation. It should be noted that in the following analysis, those pilots that had operated Variant 2 originally, which offered wage compensation and learner and employer bonuses, transferred to Variant 1 (learner and employer bonuses) and are referred to as Variant 1 Newcomers.

### **2.5.1 Targets for the extension year**

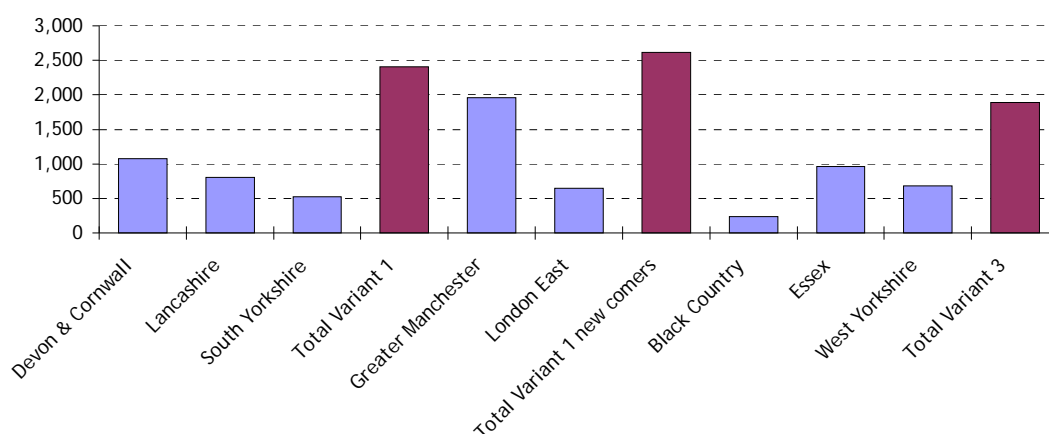
At the start of the extension year, managers were asked to set a month-by-month profile of the number of young people expected to be recruited onto LAP. The profile was created on the basis of estimates of the local eligible population, trends in recruitment established during the first two years of the pilot, and was contingent upon staff capacity. The profiles are shown in Figure 2.1. This illustrates that there was considerable variation between pilot areas and the different variants, which may be attributable to pilot areas determining their own target profiles.

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<sup>6</sup> LSC Quarter 12 Snapshot Report, April 2009



**Figure 2.1 - Profiles for LAP, by pilot and variant**



LAPMI, April 2009

### 2.5.2 Inflows to the LAP during the extension year

Overall, 6,326 young people agreed to sign up to a Learning Agreement<sup>7</sup> in the extension year, compared to a profile of 6,909. This equates to 92 per cent of the overall profile for sign-ups<sup>8</sup>. However, there were differences between variants and between pilot areas.

- The three pilot areas that had operated Variant 1 (bonus payments) since the inception of LAP achieved 114 per cent of their profile for the year. Performance by pilot varied from 86 per cent to 160 per cent.
- The newcomers to Variant 1 achieved 76 per cent of their profile for the extension year, with one pilot achieving 67 per cent of its profile and the other, 104 per cent.
- The pilot areas operating Variant 3 (agreement only) and which had done so since the commencement of LAP achieved 84 per cent of their profile. Beneath this, performance varied from 32 per cent of profile to 115 per cent.

While there was considerable variation in performance against profile between pilot areas, this did not appear to be an effect of over-estimating the numbers of young people who would be interested in learning (see Figure 2.1). Some managers reported being overly pessimistic when setting their profile, or setting different targets internally to those provided externally to the LSC/DCSF. In addition, there were differences between pilot areas, in the ways in which they implemented and operated the initiative. For instance, there were variations in the extent to which, employer support and engagement in learning was sought, and/or whether young people were encouraged to pursue learning to help towards some future job, rather than their current work (this was termed as aspiration-led training). It is likely that variations of this kind affected the performance shown by the data.

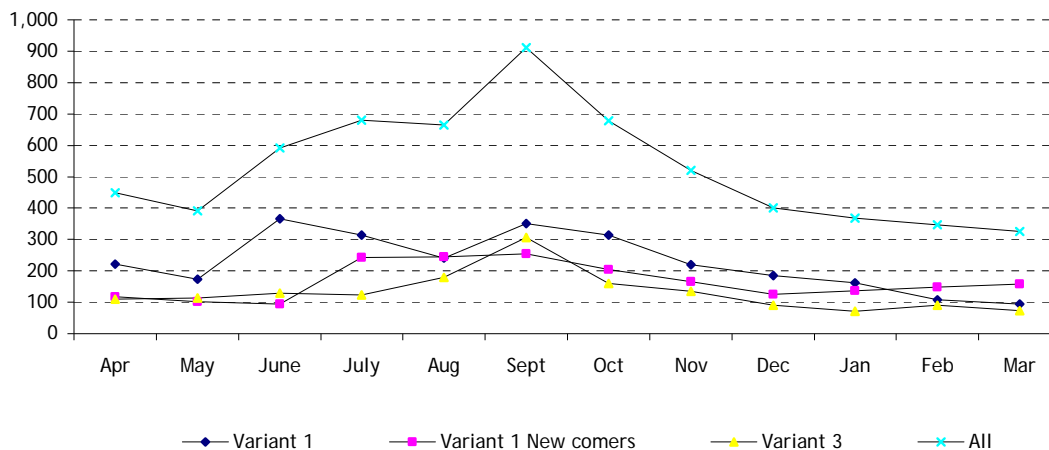
Figure 2.2 shows the rate of sign-up by variant, and for LAP as a whole, across the course of the extension year. This shows a considerable peak in recruitment in September, which points to a continued reliance on the start of the traditional academic year, to access training provision and also the effect of the wind-down period, which operated, in effect, from November/December 2008 to the end of March 2009 (although pilots continued to support young people until the end of July 2009). The wind-down is likely to have had impact on the achievement of profiles, since pilot staff had to consider whether young people could finish a

<sup>7</sup> Based on the data drawn from Connexions' sources

<sup>8</sup> In the first two years of LAP, 79 per cent of profile was achieved

course within the remaining period or could be transferred and achieve, through the mainstream support that would be available to them, once the LAP was withdrawn. Pilot managers also reported that during the wind-down, interest from employers and providers dwindled once they realised the LAP was ending.

**Figure 2.2 - Inflows to LAP across the extension year, by variant**



LAPMI, April 2009

### 2.5.3 Inflows to the LAP throughout its initial implementation and the extension year

At the outset of the extension year, the LSC/DCSF decided that LAPMI would include information on a cumulative basis across both phases of work (the original two years of the LAP and its extension year). Table 2.1 shows the sign-ups for each year of the pilot, by variant. It shows how sign-ups significantly increased during the second year of the original pilot phase and into the extension year. The effect of wind-down should not be underestimated when assessing the data for this latter year since the data also illustrate the negative direction in the rate of sign-ups between the second and third year of LAP despite a strong start to the extension year (see Table 2.1).

The data are also suggestive of the impact of the withdrawal of wage compensation from those pilots which had operated Variant 2, where the greatest decrease in sign-ups was in evidence (between Year 2 and Year 3).

**Table 2.1 - Sign-ups across the three years of LAP**

	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		Change		Total
	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total	Year 1-2	Year 2-3	
Variant 1	1,796	25%	2,502	35%	2,751	39%	+10ppt	+4ppt	7,049
Variant 1 Newcomers	401	8%	2,366	50%	1,994	42%	+42ppt	-8ppt	4,761
Variant 3	735	18%	1,700	42%	1,581	39%	+24ppt	-3ppt	4,016
Total	2,932	19%	6,568	42%	6,326	40%	+23ppt	-2ppt	15,826

LAPMI, April 2009

Over the course of the three years that LAP operated, 15,826 young people were contacted and, in principle, agreed to pursue a Learning Agreement. Not all young people who signed up actually started a programme of learning since pilot managers reported that it was not always possible to find a suitable course at a venue or time suitable to the young person, or that young people’s situations changed and they were no longer interested in LAP. In total, across the three years of LAP operation, 10,324 young people started learning which represented 65 per cent of those who had expressed some interest in doing so. These conversation rate data are shown by variant in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 - Rates of conversion from sign-up to learning, by variant**

	<b>Conversion rate</b>
Variant 1	72%
Variant 1 Newcomers	68%
Variant 3	51%
Total	65%

*LAPMI, April 2009*

Pilot managers questioned the validity of measuring their outcomes using this ‘conversion rate’ since different approaches were taken to recording interest: in some areas, the emphasis during extension year had shifted to recording ‘sign-ups to start’ rather than simply recording interest in undertaking some learning. Accordingly, there was considerable variation in the conversion rate between pilot areas: at its lowest the rate was 46 per cent and its highest it was 85 per cent.

**2.5.4 Outcomes from LAP learning**

Table 2.3 sets out LAP outcomes at the end of March 2009 (this data includes learners from across the three years during which LAP operated). The table also shows the comparative data which was available at the end of the first two years of LAP.

The data show considerable variation by variant in terms of completion and early leaving. The extension year data show that completion rates were highest in Variant 1 (57 per cent) where bonus payments were made and lowest in Variant 3 (37 per cent), where an ‘agreement only’ LAP operated. This built on the higher completion rate achieved by this variant in the first two years of the pilot. In contrast, the proportion of early leavers was highest in Variant 3 (43 per cent) and lowest in Variant 1 (26 per cent).

It should be noted that these outcome data do not reflect an end-state for the LAP, since some young people continued their LAP learning beyond the end of March 2009 and would therefore be expected to complete (or leave) at some future point. Also, the data do not take account of the differences between pilot areas in the types of qualification that young people were pursuing. For example, in some areas there was an emphasis on delivering short courses such as Key Skills and Technical Certificates, which could be completed in a relatively short space of time. In other areas, significant proportions of young people were completing full Apprenticeship frameworks, which may take up to two years to complete.

**Table 2.3 - LAP completion and early leaving rates**

	2008-2009		2006-2008		Change	
	Completion	Withdrawal	Completion	Withdrawal	Completion	Withdrawal
Variant 1	57%	26%	42%	22%	+15 ppt	+4 ppt
Variant 1 Newcomers	39%	29%	21%	23%	+18 ppt	+6 ppt
Variant 3	37%	43%	21%	31%	+16 ppt	+12 ppt
<b>All</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>+11 ppt</b>	<b>+16 ppt</b>

Note: Variant 1 Newcomers operated Variant 2 (wage compensation and bonuses) in the first two years of LAP implementation

LAPMI, April 2009

The overall rate of completion, by the end of March 2009, showed a considerable improvement over that in evidence by the end of the first two years of the LAP<sup>9</sup> (an 11 percentage point increase). The proportion of young people leaving their courses early also increased, and the scale of this change was slightly greater than that for completion rates (a 16 percentage point increase).

There was considerable variation in the rates of completion and early leaving between the pilot areas operating the different variants by the end of the extension year. This may, in part, be attributed to differing emphases on short courses, aspiration-led training and full framework provision across the pilot areas.

- In Variant 1, the completion rate ranged between 47 per cent and 65 per cent. In this variant, early leaving ranged between 21 per cent and 30 per cent.
- For the Variant 1 Newcomers, the rate of completion was at its highest at 52 per cent and lowest at 25 per cent; early leaving varied between 26 per cent and 32 per cent.
- In Variant 3, the completion rate ranged between 23 per cent and 43 per cent; the early leaving rate varied from 25 per cent to 49 per cent.

## 2.6 Conclusion

- The decision to extend the pilot for a further year from April 2008 was welcomed, in order to embed the implementation of the pilot, which had only really begun in the second year of delivery. The first year of the pilot had been mainly dedicated to understanding the evolving policy and the characteristics and nature of the client groups, ie young people in JWT and their employers, as well as setting up delivery mechanisms<sup>10</sup>. The extension year presented the opportunity to re-profile recruitment targets and to provide a better match between the number of staff and the size of the cohort.

<sup>9</sup> Note that the proportion of young people who had completed by the end of the extension year includes those who had completed by the end of the first phase of work; the first phase of LAP reflected two years of operation whereas the extension lasted only one year.

<sup>10</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

- At the early stages of the extension year, the withdrawal of wage compensation undermined the LAP 'offer' and the two pilot areas that were affected by the policy change, struggled to meet their recruitment targets. In particular, the decision to withdraw wage compensation from pre-existing LAP learners and their employers was a particular challenge.
- While LAP had improved links between providers and Connexions staff, which had resulted in obtaining provision which was more flexible, in order to meet the needs of the JWT cohort, the LAP had only 'scratched the surface' in achieving a learner-led agenda. Most providers remained locked into mainstream delivery, which centres on group learning and off-the-job training. The wind-down of the pilot witnessed a greater shift towards shorter course delivery.
- The MI data showed that some momentum had built up across the first two years of the LAP which, to some extent, was carried forward into the early part of the extension year, at least in advance of the wind-down of LAP being confirmed. For instance, nine-tenths of the planned recruitment to LAP was achieved during the extension year. Beneath this was considerable variation between pilot areas in their performance rates, which may be attributed to differing operational emphases on employer engagement and/or aspiration-led learning. These factors may have influenced not only sign-ups but also the rates of conversion into learning.

### 3 Delivery of LAP

This chapter examines the delivery of LAP and focuses, where possible, on the changes which occurred during the extension year and on the perceived impact of pilot closure. In particular, it examines engagement with young people and employers, the interaction of LAP with Apprenticeship delivery and progression routes from LAP. While each section draws on findings from the final process evaluation report of the first two years of LAP<sup>11</sup>, there is an emphasis on determining the lessons learnt from the implementation of LAP, both in terms of identifying good practice as well as what could have been improved.

#### 3.1 Engaging with young people and their employers

The delivery of LAP has shown that one-to-one engagement with a young person and, to a lesser extent, their employer, was the key to participation. Wider marketing and publicity activities and materials played a supplementary role. While the focus for LAP delivery was on meeting young people's needs, a tension sometimes existed about the extent to which employer engagement was the route to achieving this goal. When the training/learning requested by the young person was both occupationally relevant to their employer's needs and offered a progression route, it met both agendas. However, when young people were employed in areas of work where they could see no long-term future for themselves and wished to pursue 'independent learning', this was sometimes in conflict with the interests of employers. Although employer engagement was not a prerequisite to a young person's participation in LAP, those who lacked the backing of their employer were often expected to complete their training activity within their own time.

During the course of the pilot, expertise was developed in recognising the times in an annual cycle when marketing should be targeted at young people (ie over the Summer/Autumn months when school leavers are entering the labour market) and other periods of the year when more attention should be directed at the employer route.

##### 3.1.1 Direct contact with young people

The main tool used within Connexions services to identify the target population of young people was the Connexions Customer Information System (CCIS) database, which stored destinations data on young people. LAP delivery exposed severe problems with regard to the reliability and accuracy of CCIS data on the JWT group. Since young people in JWT had not previously been a priority group for Connexions, in terms of conducting regular follow-ups of their status following the completion of compulsory education, the data stored on the JWT group was often out of date when young people were contacted about joining LAP. The use of CCIS data to market LAP to young people exposed a need for regular tracking of the JWT group, in order that up-to-date data was maintained. This has led to the introduction of national guidance, which requests three monthly follow-ups by Connexions staff of young people in JWT.

However, despite the difficulties, direct contact with young people was the most effective route to securing participation in LAP and during the course of the pilot intelligence about the JWT group improved. Connexions personnel had developed a greater understanding about when, and where, young people could be contacted, in order to maximise their chances of securing sign-ups. This included making telephone contact with young people on evenings and weekends and using text messages, in order to enhance their chances of making contact with young people. Despite the introduction of more regular and improved follow-up

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<sup>11</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots: Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

strategies, it was widely believed that the JWT group was difficult to locate and track. It was found that a substantial number of young people who were reported to have been eligible for LAP had either changed their status, most frequently by becoming NEET, or were unable to be contacted.

During the course of the pilot, delivery staff in many areas, introduced strategies to access young people *before* they entered JWT, as well as identifying and responding to the needs of the group who had already entered the labour market. This enabled information about the LAP offer to be given to the young person before they entered work and in some cases to establish a programme of learning. There were examples of innovative practice, including:

- LAP advisers working with school based PAs, to identify young people who intended to enter the labour market at the end of Year 11
- LAP advisers being seconded to vacancy placement teams to identify and work with young people entering JWT
- establishing contact with training providers, in order to access E2E leavers who were moving into employment and to identify young people who had failed Apprenticeship testing and were looking for another route to support their training activity, and
- raising awareness about LAP with staff from pupil referral units who had young people on extended work placements as part of their Year 11 programmes.

In essence, their level of understanding about young people in JWT and their employers had increased greatly as a direct result of LAP delivery. This understanding will also have direct benefit to the RPA agenda in that LAP delivery had effectively ‘taken the lid off’ the issues and challenges of identifying and working with the JWT population and their employers. As the pilot developed, LAP advisers were also working to a much greater extent with school-based PAs, in order to promote LAP to young people before they completed Year 11, and with community- based PAs. An increasing number of referrals were secured from training providers, in particular Entry to Employment (E2E) providers, who had contact with young people who were leaving training programmes and moving directly into employment. A limited number of referrals were achieved through ‘word of mouth’ recommendations, and a payment/gift voucher was being offered in some areas to young people who had successfully referred a friend to the programme.

*‘We worked with a school where they’d had a set of young people who had gone on an extended work placement and basically these kids obviously had issues because they weren’t in school. They won’t even do the basics. ... but what we did was we went in to speak to the employers when these young people were due to leave ... Year 11 and because they’d had 12–18 months working with them and they knew the young people and they knew some of the barriers... they took them on the LAP.’*  
LAP pilot manager

The implementation of a ‘Refer a Friend’ scheme, which offered a financial reward of £50 to young people who had successfully referred a friend to the programme had limited success in most areas. Self-referral to LAP was also limited, despite media advertising and other promotional activities, such as flyers and leaflets being circulated to eligible young people. LAP wind-down, made some pilot areas reluctant to continue to market the initiative, since some project managers feared that they would create a demand from learners and employers, which could not be met.

### 3.1.2 Sustaining contact with young people

A crucial lesson learnt from the implementation of LAP, was the need for continued support to be given to young people throughout their programme of learning, not only during the 'signing up' phase. It was recognised that young people who enter the labour market at 16/17 should be entitled to the same level of guidance and support, which is afforded to young people who remain in full-time learning, undertake Apprenticeships or become NEET. The value of the on-going support role provided by LAP delivery staff was also recognised by young people and employers<sup>12</sup>.

*'It only takes for some young people a slight change in circumstances for them to suddenly refrain from commitment. So on the whole, we've got quite a few of them that have changed jobs and then decided they didn't want to continue the training. The percentage of our young people that are actually disengaged totally and go NEET and not into training is really small because we treat these young people that are in between work, we continue to support them, try to get them to finish their qualification.'*

LAP pilot manager

In one pilot area, a 'traffic light' system had been introduced, in order to identify young people who were dropping out, or not attending, or at risk of dropping out of their learning, to help target support more effectively.

A significant barrier to participation in LAP among young people was the associated participation in training activity with recent negative school experiences. Many 16 and 17 year olds were reported to have rejected LAP for this reason. Their recent move into the labour market made 'working for a living' a new experience and some young people failed to recognise any need for accredited training. Also, some young people were in receipt of company training provision, which they valued over and above the accredited provision available within LAP.

*'... they're now in a dead end job, part of our problem with young people is they haven't quite got there. It's very soon after they've left school, they've got all these hang ups about the education system and that's our barrier.'*

LAP adviser

There was widespread concern about the exclusion of 18 year olds from both LAP and Train to Gain. Eighteen year olds comprise the largest group in terms of numbers, within the 16-18 year old JWT population. Since many 18 year olds had been in the labour market and away from accredited learning for a considerably longer period, it was argued that this group might be more open to the offer.

*'I mean, 18-19 year olds form 65% of the JWT cohort in (area) ... There's loads and loads of people... I was absolutely gob-smacked when I went through two and a half thousand core records and saw just what the scope of it was. And often the older ones are more amenable to training, because they've been long enough out of school that they realise that if they want to get on and earn a decent wage, they're going to have to do something, and they are more receptive ... a few years down the line, a bit of maturity kicks in and they want to do it.'*

Connexions area manager

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson, C., Page, R. and Munro, M. (2008) *Activity and Learning Agreement Pilots: Programme Theory Evaluation Working Paper 2: Signing up to a Learning Agreement* DCSF-RR029



### 3.1.3 Contact with employers

During the course of the pilot, employer engagement strategies diversified. While referrals from business support agencies such as Business Links, Chambers of Commerce and Train to Gain and training providers were lower than anticipated (see section 2.3.1), LAP advisers had also developed strategies to work closely with employers and local LSCs, in order to secure other referral routes into LAP. These included:

- LAP advisers 'cold calling' employers to raise awareness of the initiative
- promotional events, including breakfast meetings
- commissioning telemarketing agencies to undertake a telephone recruitment exercise with local employers. There was evidence that the telemarketing approach had resulted in very few referrals
- celebration events were organised to recognise the achievements of young people on LAP. Employers and LAP advisers also received awards, in recognition of the support they had given to young people. In one pilot area, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills attended the event as guest speaker.

There was a mixed view about the value of offering employers financial incentives to participate in LAP. Some respondents felt that wage compensation and bonus payments were valuable engagement tools ie they acted as an initial hook. However, there was also a strength of feeling that a £250 bonus payment was an insignificant payment to most employers and that it was the ability to access 'free' training provision for their young employees that determined their interest. The issue of rewarding employers with wage compensation, many of who had failed to engage with other government-supported training programmes was a thorny issue. Some respondents argued that paying wage compensation was distorting the training market, since other employers in the local area who often had a significant track record of recruiting and training young people were expected to meet their own training costs. On the other hand, some respondents argued that it had helped to engage employers, who otherwise would not offer any form of accredited training to young people and sometimes led to a change in attitude towards training.

Financial incentives were reported to make a difference in terms of securing initial engagement, especially among small firms. Most LAP sign-ups comprised young people working in small local business. Difficulties existed with securing support from national employers in specific localities. Since LAP was a pilot initiative and operated in a small number of areas, there were on-going issues related to securing the inclusion of national employers, in particular, national retailers and fast food chains. While some areas had negotiated the cooperation of local managers of national companies in LAP delivery, many local managers would not engage with LAP, since agreement had not been secured at national level. While there were 'pockets of success' with national companies, secured through the creation of a LAP national employer adviser role, which was operational during the extension year, it was suggested that stronger links need to be established with the National Employer Service (NES). One pilot area appointed a National Employer Coordinator to develop a database and to develop closer links with large companies working in the local area, while other pilot areas had Connexions/LAP advisers with some responsibility for establishing links with the NES. They were reported to have had limited impact.

Where bonus payments to employers were paid, they were issued to firms which committed their support to the young person's training eg by agreeing to training being conducted on-the-job or allowing a young person time off to study. Employer support was not always conditional on training activity being linked to a young person's current work role. Some employers recognised that some young people were in 'dead end jobs' and should be given the opportunity for progression.

*'They've (employers) signed up young people that are doing morning cleaning, and they know it is a means to an end: it's just a job to get some money coming in. But they know that for the young person long term it's not the answer, it's not what they need, and that employer is often quite supportive to see them move on and get some educational skills.'*

LAP pilot manager

Staff in one pilot area harnessed the support of trade union learning representatives to promote LAP within the retail sector. A mail out to young workers was organised to promote the availability of LAP.

All pilot areas reported that their employer engagement rates had increased over three years.

### **3.2 Interaction of LAP with Apprenticeship delivery**

A key success from LAP delivery was its ability to make Apprenticeships more accessible to young people, while at the same time, eliminating some of the associated 'risk' in recruiting young people from JWT, away from some training providers and employers. This was achieved by:

- Breaking down the Apprenticeship offer into smaller accessible parts, which made the learning more attractive and 'do-able' to young people, who very often lacked confidence in their abilities. It offered a progression route by delivering Level 1 qualifications as a taster, with the option of adding the building blocks to achieve a full framework qualification.
- Using LAP as a pre-entry route into Apprenticeships, which encouraged training providers to consider recruiting and training young people when they may well not have done so. In some cases, it also offered a direct route into an Apprenticeship. In all areas, Apprenticeship entry was extremely competitive and in construction and engineering, required high pre-entry qualifications eg 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, as well as rigorous selection testing. Many young people in JWT would not be eligible to access Apprenticeship training through this traditional route because of their qualification and skill levels.
- Enabling young people to acquire Key Skills and Technical Certificates, which form part of the Apprenticeship framework, gave them the currency to progress. Crucially it also enabled training providers to recruit them onto Apprenticeship training, since they had demonstrated the underpinning knowledge to complete an Apprenticeship. Since training providers were awarded their standard training contracts and paid largely on the basis of achieving successful outcomes, LAP funding removed any risk associated with recruiting young people from JWT.

*'There's some young people who had aspirations to do an Apprenticeship, but lacked the entry requirements in terms of basic skills. We were able to work with them in that short time to get them all to that Apprenticeship within the same year, which wouldn't have happened ...'*

LAP pilot manager

However, there was significant disparity between pilot areas with regard to determining whether LAP had created a significant number of Apprenticeship training places or had largely supported, or in some instances replaced, existing mainstream contracts. In some pilot areas, notably those where wage compensation had been offered, concern was expressed by respondents from local LSCs and providers that LAP had displaced young

people from standard Apprenticeship contracts. It was also felt that efforts to encourage employers to assume responsibility for training costs under Apprenticeship agreements had been undermined.

Changes to guidance in LAP delivery had blurred the boundaries between the two programmes, in that Apprenticeships became part of LAP delivery, as well as including employers who had previously participated in Apprenticeship delivery. Apprenticeships were offered within LAP, either when the training provider had filled their quota of Apprenticeship numbers within their agreed standard contract with LSC, or if the employer had not previously engaged in government-supported training provision, ie they were a new lead. The rigidity applied to these rules appeared to vary between pilot areas. In some areas, LAP projects managers insisted that employers offering Apprenticeship training through LAP had not participated in government-supported training within two years. In other areas, LAP and standard Apprenticeship contracts were delivered simultaneously by some employers on the basis of offering 'additional Apprenticeship places' through the receipt of LAP funding.

*'Two hundred and fifty have gone into our mainstream programme that we probably would not have picked up if not for this programme, because we were very, very clear with providers that this has got to be new business.'*

LAP pilot manager

### 3.3 Progression from LAP

Data presented in Section 2.5.4 show that LAP completion rates improved significantly in the extension year. Evaluation evidence strongly suggests that the key to retaining young people on LAP was the continued support they received from LAP advisers, training providers and their employers<sup>13</sup>. The findings point to the significant role that LAP advisers had in both initiating and sustaining the participation of young people in training. Furthermore, the dialogue between the young person, the provider, the employer and the adviser was the key to keeping them on track and confident about their programmes of learning.

Disentangling progression rates from LAP is difficult, in the absence of robust destination data. Firstly, end of pilot completion figures could be misleading since they do not indicate the types of qualifications that young people were undertaking. For example, in areas which offered a high proportion of short courses, completion rates would expect to be much higher in comparison to areas that offered longer programmes of learning such as Apprenticeships. Secondly, non-completion rates may include young people that have achieved positive outcomes eg young people that have dropped out of employment/LAP, to start full-time education, which is largely determined by September start dates. Finally, the most common reason cited for young people dropping out of LAP was that young people lose or change jobs, which cannot be directly attributed to the quality of learning or support offered by LAP. Some pilot areas reported that they offered exit guidance to young people and issued exit questionnaires to employers to obtain feedback on LAP performance. A small proportion of young people embarked on a second LAP, which was estimated to be about 10 per cent of the population. There was no follow-up of young people beyond their completion of LAP, which made it difficult to determine the perceived impact of LAP on young people's propensity to continue with some form of learning or to measure soft outcomes.

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<sup>13</sup> Hillage, J., Johnson C., Maguire, S., Perry, J., Purdon, S. and Finch, S. (2008) *Learning Agreement Pilots Synthesis Report* DCSF-RR071

### 3.4 Conclusion

- Direct contact with young people was the most effective route to securing participation in LAP. During the course of the pilot, delivery staff in many areas, introduced strategies to access young people *before* they entered JWT, as well as identifying and responding to the needs of the group who had already entered the labour market.
- Levels of understanding about young people in JWT and their employers had increased greatly as a direct result of LAP delivery. This understanding will have direct benefit to the RPA agenda in that LAP delivery had effectively ‘taken the lid off’ the issues and challenges of identifying and working with the JWT population and their employers.
- A crucial lesson learnt from the implementation of LAP, was the need for continued support to be given to young people throughout their programme of learning, not only during the ‘signing up’ phase. It was recognised that young people who enter the labour market at 16/17 should be entitled to the same level of guidance and support, which is afforded to young people who remain in full-time learning, undertake Apprenticeships or become NEET.
- A key success from LAP delivery was its ability to make Apprenticeships more accessible to young people, while at the same time, eliminating some of the associated ‘risk’ in recruiting young people from JWT, away from some training providers and employers. This was achieved by breaking down the Apprenticeship offer into smaller accessible parts, which made the learning more attractive and ‘do-able’ to young people, who very often lacked confidence in their abilities. It offered a progression route by delivering Level 1 qualifications as a taster, with the option of adding the building blocks to achieve a full framework qualification.
- The findings point to the significant role that LAP advisers had in both initiating and sustaining the participation of young people in training. Furthermore, the dialogue between the young person, the provider, the employer and the adviser was the key to keeping them on track and confident about their programmes of learning.

## 4 Feedback from Stakeholders

This chapter reports on how pilot areas linked with local stakeholders, in order to manage and deliver LAP provision. The perspectives of education and training providers, employers and young people are covered. A range of stakeholders, including providers and employers were interviewed in each of the pilot areas. The young person perspective was drawn from the case study research, which was conducted in an 'agreement only' LAP pilot area.

### 4.1 Routes into LAP and reasons for involvement

The sample of providers ranged from those which had been involved since the outset of the pilot, to those which had joined a little later, although most had been involved for more than one year. Most of the provider staff who were interviewed were drawn from private or third sector-based training organisations, although three were from general further education colleges. Two of the private training providers were large, national organisations and in one case, worked in more than one pilot area for LAP. Beyond the LAP being seen as an additional funding stream, providers welcomed the opportunity to be able to extend their offer to include Level 1 qualifications through work-based learning, and other, bite-sized qualifications. For many providers, the LAP fitted well within the employer responsiveness element of Framework for Excellence<sup>14</sup>. Providers were aware of the withdrawal of wage compensation being the most significant change in the way in which the pilot operated in the extension year. Overall, the third year had been an opportunity to consolidate delivery.

Most of the employers that were interviewed were located in, or managed small-to-medium sized businesses (SME), although a small number of large companies were also represented. Most had had a young employee sign up to LAP during the extension year. In some instances, employers had been contacted by Connexions or training provider staff to find out whether they had employees eligible for LAP. More frequently, the young employee raised the possibility of training with the employer as a result of Connexions contact to offer the LAP. The third route, which was rare, was that employers had sought training for a young employee. Without exception, employers felt that training was important for young people. Most young people were not 'work-ready' when they were employed and needed support, and on-the-job training, to help develop their behaviours, attitudes and skills. In a small number of cases, employers had had some recent engagement in Apprenticeship delivery. However, most employers had no prior experience of being involved in adult, or young person-centred, government-supported accredited training programmes.

Young people who were interviewed had entered the LAP through a number of routes. The most common method was that a Connexions adviser had contacted the young person after they had started work. Contact usually took the form of a telephone call but in some cases letters had been received. Some young people had been engaged through other activities such as an outreach 'bus'. A couple of young people had found their jobs through Connexions and the LAP was set up immediately with their employer. Their main reason for joining the LAP was that it was a second chance to improve their qualifications and skills. Most had left school some while ago, since the majority by the time they were interviewed, were aged 17 or 18. Around two-thirds had progressed, or at least made an attempt to progress, from school to college or an Apprenticeship. Many young people had struggled to find work since leaving education and consequently, many now realised the importance of qualifications when looking for work.

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<sup>14</sup> The Framework for Excellence is the Government's performance assessment tool for further education colleges and post-16 education and training providers who receive funding from the Learning and Skills Council.

*'It gives kids like myself who didn't really do well at school, academically when they were younger, it gives them a chance to realise that obviously you need qualifications and it's like they've got a second chance. There's someone there that will support them again and help them through what they're trying to get.'*

Young person

Some young people had explored learning options before LAP and reported that they had been 'put off' by the cost. This perhaps illustrates their lack of awareness of the learning options available to young people, since the under 18s are not required to pay for courses. The LAP presented an opportunity to complete qualifications without incurring any course fees.

*'The flexibility and the fact it was free. Once you get past a certain age at college you have to pay. I didn't have to pay for that. That was a bonus.'*

Young person

A large majority of young people felt that it was the combination within the LAP offer ie access to personal support, qualifications and fee-free learning while remaining in work and in some cases, bonus payments that made it attractive.

#### **4.1.1 Benefits of involvement**

The LAP changed providers' perceptions about the needs of young people in JWT and this was particularly prevalent amongst the private and third sector providers. Prior to LAP, providers had no experience of this group of learners, and once delivery started, they found that LAP learners' needs could vary considerably. For some providers, this led to a reconfiguration of their offer, such as shifting from full framework Apprenticeship delivery, to Level 1 and bite-sized learning. Some providers noted that this was resource intensive, since lower level learning was not well funded. In the longer term, many providers saw the potential to develop progression pathways for young people into mainstream funded learning such as Apprenticeships.

*'So having the Learning Agreement and being able to start at Level 1 has been so useful to engage those young people who were lost, really.'*

Provider

In a number of instances, the LAP extended the training options that employers could offer. It enabled nationally accredited training rather than, or in addition to, on-the-job training that most offered. The driver for employers to get involved was underpinned by a sense of altruism, in that they wanted to ensure that young people, who had not got on well at school, got a second chance. Most did not perceive any direct business benefit from LAP involvement.

Young people identified a number of benefits arising from LAP. These tended to focus on both hard and soft outcomes of their training, and included changes in working circumstances, boosted confidence and esteem, and changes in long-term goals and career aims. Other, more immediate benefits identified were that the LAP gave them a chance to 'earn and learn'. Young people were often not aware that this was an option open to them. Some young people noted that they knew more about their options for skills development as a result of their participation in LAP, which had opened up different options for future development.

*'[The LAP] showed me a different path I can take, and the different things I could do.'*

Young person

One young person highlighted that through completing a qualification while working, that this had created a virtuous circle for him. He was motivated to learn because of the support that he had received from his employer, which in turn improved his competence and performance both in the work place and at college.

*'I'm learning new stuff at college and it's making me learn it at work and I'm doing stuff like that at work.'*

Young person

#### **4.1.2 The role of the financial incentives**

In areas where bonus payments were available, both providers and employers felt that they provided a strong incentive for young people to engage in learning and that payments helped to sustain them, in particular, during the early stages of their course(s). The need for an incentive dissipated after a while, once the young people gained self-confidence and recognised that they would be able to achieve qualification outcomes.

There were mixed views about the value attached to paying bonus payments to employers. Analysis of the employer interviews showed that payments were more important to SMEs. One large employer had chosen not to receive LAP bonus payments for their learners, since the amount was described as being insignificant and 'a drop in the ocean'.

The withdrawal of wage compensation from SMEs was a more contentious issue. Since wage compensation was withdrawn from firms part way through LAP delivery, as well as from new sign-ups, some employers felt that Connexions had been less than 'upfront' by not explaining that the incentive would not carry across the whole training period. This was despite the fact that the wage compensation was offered, prior to a decision being made nationally to withdraw it. Employers tended to think that the wage compensation was needed to support off-the-job training during working hours and enabled them to offer support to the young person during their training period.

*'Because it was giving me a little bit of leeway and also an incentive to actually train him properly as well, you know, and I could actually spend a bit more time because I was getting compensated, really.'*

Employer

However, the withdrawal of wage compensation did not result in employers suspending their support for training or their employment of young people on the programme. While providers had anticipated that employers would withdraw from LAP and their support of young people, as a result of the withdrawal of wage compensation, in reality they had found it to be less of a problem than they had initially feared.

#### **4.2 Links with Connexions**

Providers spoke very positively about their links with Connexions. PAs would provide personal and employment support to the young person, while training providers organised and delivered training. Where training took place in the workplace, providers had stronger links with employers. Many providers reported the benefit of greater involvement with Connexions through LAP delivery, in terms of supporting young people through the range of programmes offered. The LAP had opened up this new linkage and providers were keen to sustain it.

*'The best thing that's come out of the Learning Agreement is not just what's happened for young people, it's the relationship that's been fostered between the training providers and Connexions - we knew they were there before ... but we've had to work much more closely with them ... and that has been so positive.'*

Provider

Employers were less aware of the different organisations involved in the delivery of LAP. An individual employer's awareness of and relationship with a PA greatly depended upon the young person and their individual support needs, while they met providers on a regular basis to discuss training activity.

### **4.3 Marketing and publicity**

Most providers and employers reported little awareness of local marketing and publicity materials. Their involvement in, and understanding of, the LAP had most often resulted from direct contact with the Connexions Service, and in the case of some employers, training provider staff. Outreach to employers and young people, was considered the best approach to recruitment among the stakeholder group. There was a debate about how far the recession had impacted on recruitment, which took place via employers because of a downturn in demand for labour.

Some providers felt that LAPs would have benefited from being 'piggy-backed' onto brands that were already well known by employers and learners such as Train to Gain and E2E. Indeed one or two providers felt that LAP was a natural progression from E2E training for young people who found employment after completing the programme and should have been marketed as such.

### **4.4 Learning undertaken**

Providers had welcomed the opportunity to deliver Level 1, technical certificates and key skills courses as standalone provision, in order to help young people build up to full framework Apprenticeships. If vocationally relevant qualifications were not desirable to the young person, or were not available, providers reported that often a customer service course would be delivered as generic provision.

Most employers reported key skills, technical certificate and customer service courses at Level 1 and, in some cases, at Level 2, were delivered, in particular in pilot areas that focused on brokering young people into Apprenticeships. There were also instances where employers noted progression between levels (and up to Level 3) for their young employee. In one or two cases, employers were disappointed that vocationally relevant training was not available although in one instance, the employer noted this was an on-going problem for their sector in the area, since they had never been able to source relevant training for their adult workers.

Similarly, young people reported receipt of two types of training: qualifications that were job-specific and those that focused on more general employability skills. Young people who were completing job-specific qualifications tended to be more interested in their current job, seeing it as a stepping stone to a future career. Job-specific training was also more prevalent where work skills were important from an early stage such as joinery, floristry, gym instruction and health and social care. In some cases, young people had progressed into work-specific qualifications during a second Learning Agreement, after initially completing key skills qualifications.



Some young people were completing key skills and more generic qualifications such as IT, and customer service courses with a lesser focus on progression. These young people were often in jobs that they felt were temporary, or they needed to complete basic skills as a prior step to be able to gain access to work-specific qualifications in the future.

#### 4.4.1 Process of signing up

Few stakeholders mentioned any concerns about the signing up process for LAP. For the majority of providers, the paperwork was similar to that required for other funding streams and was therefore unproblematic. There was a suggestion that the paperwork could be streamlined. One provider noted that duplicate forms would be more efficient than completing a number of different forms that required similar information.

It was clear from the employer interviews, that Connexions and providers had been effective at managing the LAP sign-up process. Beyond the occasional comment, for instance about the need for clearer signposting about the withdrawal of wage compensation, the sign-up had worked very smoothly and there was consensus that it presented no difficulties. Young people were a little vague about the process of signing up. However, they did understand that they were agreeing to complete learning alongside their work and their employer was involved in the process (in most cases). Most young people were pleased that their PA had 'sorted it all out' for them.

#### 4.4.2 Employer engagement in training

The extent of employer engagement in training varied. At its simplest, employers saw their role as ensuring that young people were released for training on a regular day each week. Where the business operated a shift pattern, and young people worked part-time, then the employer organised the young person's shift pattern to accommodate their training. In some instances day-release for training had inconvenienced employers, particularly at busy times for the business. Work-place delivery was appreciated by those employers for whom it was made available.

Some employers offered support to their young employees. For instance, this might have included discussing the coverage of the training, and looking for examples of how it might be applied in the work place. Other employers had a more active engagement, for example through providing witness statements and assisting with coursework. Young people viewed support from their employer as essential. This was particularly true of those doing work-related qualifications. At its simplest, employer engagement meant that they would be paid for the day that they were in college. Beyond this, they also felt that if their employers were supportive then they might help with the acquisition of qualifications, by ensuring that work tasks complemented their training.

*'[Employer is] supportive. They've run through things I didn't quite know back then, what I do now. A better understanding of policies. They've gone through that with me, how it works in more detail.'*

Young person

Young people, in almost all cases, reported that their employer was supportive of their learning, including those completing more generalised learning. Even where employers were not directly involved in the training, the young person reported that they still asked about their progress.

*'I just didn't feel comfortable with my employer getting involved .... He [employer] speaks to me all the time about it though. He asks me how it's going.'*

Young person

#### 4.4.3 Outcomes from learning

Many providers noted the progression achieved by LAP learners from Level 1 to Level 2 training, and between technical certificates and key skills into full framework Apprenticeships. Breaking down learning in this way, had helped to build the confidence of young people, as well as staging their skill development in order to keep young people motivated.

Most employers noted positive outcomes for the young person from the training that they had received through LAP. The opportunity for young people to gain qualifications had been the key benefit in their view. In some cases, they had noticed increased levels of self-confidence in their young employee, as well as improved customer service/customer handling skills, higher levels of motivation, more positive attitude towards work and life generally. Young people felt a number of positive outcomes had been achieved from the LAP training. Hard, measurable, outcomes included promotion and a pay rise when the young person had qualified.

*'They're putting me in as a supervisor ... [The responsibilities are] opening and closing the shop. Looking after it whilst my manager has days off.'*

Young person

Other young people reported that they had been offered more hours which, in one or two cases, turned a part-time job into full-time work (30 or more hours). One young person reported that because of the LAP, her casual position had become permanent and now offered more hours and greater job security. Another also felt that their job was more secure after completing LAP: due to the recession a number of staff had been laid off however, because she was gaining skills and had become a valued member of the team, her job had not been under threat.

*'It's [the training on the LAP] made me a lot faster. There's a few people that's slower, which when people are losing their jobs, I know mine's quite safe.'*

Young person

Young people also highlighted soft outcomes from the LAP. Many felt that completing LAP had boosted their confidence enormously. They reported that they now felt capable of doing further qualifications. Others had altered their long-term career plans because they felt they were more able to meet the standards required for more highly skilled occupations. This group was no longer intimidated by the prospect of long periods of learning that might be necessary to meet these new career aims.

*'[I feel] a lot more confident. It builds your self-esteem. You think wait, I will have this qualification. They are not as hard as I thought they would be. You put your mind at rest. In the back of your mind you're always thinking, I need these qualifications, but now I've finally done it and got on with it, it's like lifting a weight off my shoulders.'*

Young person

Most of the young people in the sample were in stable employment, having sustained the same job since they had started LAP. They reported high levels of job satisfaction. Young people implied that LAP had impacted on how they viewed their work.

*'It makes me feel like you can do a good job and you're going into people's houses and making them feel good that they've had a good job.'*

Young person

Young people also reported other related softer outcomes. A number said the relationships with their parents had improved. The young people reported improved self-esteem and that their parents were also proud of them.

#### **4.4.4 Impact of LAP**

There was evidence among employers that LAP had encouraged them to offer accredited training to young people, which they would not have done otherwise. For a number of employers, the LAP had made them think more about the age composition of their workforce and to consider employing more young people to provide a greater age balance. However, some employers expressed doubts about the benefits of offering pilot schemes since they were often withdrawn. In their view, this did not provide any long-term benefit since it increased confusion about what they could offer when employing young people.

*'Because we get a number of people offering us things, training for this person and that person, this incentive and that incentive, and it all boils down to the same thing. They have a bit of a rush when the government has a new idea, pushed with a lot of enthusiasm, but there's no momentum to keep it up. There's money initially, but then there's nothing to keep the momentum and the enthusiasm going.'*

Employer

Providers were concerned that LAP had opened up the training options for young people and their employers but its closure would mean this provision would no longer be available. The LAP had led to changes in providers' offer, particularly in terms of introducing Level 1 qualifications and unitised training. In their view, this had made them more responsive to employers', and young people's needs. For a number of providers, it had increased their engagement with employers.

#### **4.5 Perceptions about the future role of LAP-type provision**

Both providers and employers felt there was a role for LAP-type provision now and for the Raising the Participation Age policy (RPA). Among providers, it had been the opportunity to offer qualifications below a full framework Apprenticeship to 16 and 17 year olds in JWT, which had been an important development. A number of providers had concerns that these qualifications would no longer be available as part of work-based learning delivery and that young people who needed staged steps to an Apprenticeship would be forced into full-time learning, in order to access suitable provision. Many providers felt that a gap in provision was again opening up, since it was felt that LAP had offered young people an opportunity to voluntarily undertake training, while still working. If they had a criticism of the LAP offer, it was that it had not funded 18 year olds. For this group, there was little to offer since Train to Gain was available only to individuals aged over 19.

The relationship between providers and Connexions tended to influence how providers felt LAP-type provision under RPA should operate. Where the LAP had not fostered significant collaboration between the two organisations, there was greater likelihood that providers felt that they should offer the provision, since they were key to delivery.

In general terms, employers were supportive of notions of lifelong learning and without knowing the detail of the policy, tended to think that encouraging young people to learn until the age of 18 was no bad thing. Some had greater awareness of policy development perhaps due to being parents themselves. They questioned the extent to which compelling young people into learning would serve the needs of those who had struggled at school, and who wanted to work.

*'I think there are a lot of kids leaving school that don't have much education. However if they don't want to stay on at school until they're 18 I don't really see the point in making them stay on and I do sometimes wonder if it's a way of fiddling the figures so that they're not [in the] unemployment figures. Although I do think it's a good idea for people to get education at whatever age. Very mixed feelings.'*

Employer

Both providers and employers had concerns about young people being forced into learning and training. Employers doubted that young people's engagement in training could be achieved 'with conscription' and similarly, providers felt that young people would not have a good attitude to learning if they were forced into it, and course delivery would consequently become more difficult.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

- LAP had created more tools with which providers could engage with employers and young people. Employers and providers valued the availability of courses below the Level 2 threshold, which were made available through LAP and the opportunity to stage learning through a series of bite-sized courses, in order for confidence and enthusiasm for learning to develop among young people in JWT.
- Employers and providers were concerned about the loss of LAP and were surprised by its withdrawal. This lessened its impact particularly among employers since it became perceived as yet another short-term funding scheme. Providers tended to feel that more time, once the delivery model had been refined, would have delivered many more learners and much greater impact.
- The young people interviewed were highly positive about the opportunity they were offered through LAP. It had been ideal for young people who had tried formalised learning and found it was not for them, or those who had not achieved in school. Early evidence of hard outcomes included job security, pay rises, permanent contracts and increased hours of working.
- The development of confidence and self-esteem were perceived to be important outcomes from LAP. All young people reported higher levels of confidence and motivation, job satisfaction and a greater sense of pride in their achievements.

## **5 Conclusions: The effectiveness of LAP and implications for RPA**

This chapter examines the effectiveness of LAP in terms of the relevance and capacity of the policy to engage young people in JWT in education and training activity. It examines what has been learnt from LAP, in particular with a view to developing a greater understanding of the JWT population and the learning and training needs of young people within this group. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the emerging issues from the implementation of LAP, which may help policy formulation to support delivery of the RPA.

### **5.1 What is the legacy from LAP?**

An examination of LAP take-up, throughput and completion rates, without exploring the context in which the policy was delivered, would suggest that the initiative failed to make any significant impact in terms of extending participation in learning among young people in JWT. However, LAP did make a considerable contribution to our understanding, by exploring the complexities of working with a group of young people who had received scant policy attention in recent years. Critically, it exposed: a) the problems surrounding the identification of the JWT group; b) the dearth of expertise within Connexions to support the needs of young people in the labour market and their employers; and c) the lack of flexibility within the education and training system to respond to their needs. LAP enabled considerable progress to be made in addressing these issues, and generated important lessons to support future policy development.

At the inception of LAP, the principle of working with young people in JWT and offering accredited packages of training to meet their needs was welcomed. It was acknowledged that the opportunity to work with and to develop a greater understanding of the motivations and needs of young people in JWT was needed. While LAP was launched prior to the decision to raise the learning age from 2013, it was believed the initiative would have an important role in defining the needs of the JWT group.

There was evidence to suggest that since there had previously been limited contact with the JWT population and their employers, the pilot had been launched hastily. As a result, considerably more time should have been spent on:

- developing systems which provided up-to-date destination data on young people, including those in the JWT group
- training Connexions staff to develop their capacity to work with employers
- developing intelligence on local employers who employ young people in JWT
- introducing strategies to strengthen partnership delivery arrangements for LAP between Connexions and local LSCs
- working with providers to ensure that provision needs were accurately assessed and widely available.

The first year of the pilot (2006–2007) had been dedicated largely to understanding the evolving policy and the characteristics and nature of the client groups, ie young people in JWT and their employers, as well as setting up delivery mechanisms. Consequently, the decision to extend the pilot for a further year, from April 2008, was perceived to be an opportunity to embed the implementation of the pilot, which had only really begun in the second year of delivery. However, half of the extension period was subsequently geared

towards policy wind-down. It was widely believed that the withdrawal of LAP severely undermined the JWT agenda within local areas, as a result of developing some momentum, which would be difficult to sustain. Also, links with providers to establish more flexible and responsive provision to meet the needs of the JWT cohort would be lost.

*'... this quite productive relationship with providers, just as it was getting strong, it's all taken away and it's because it's a major piece of social engineering, it's not going to work in three years. Because ideally you want to get to a point where learning is seen as routine, that when you leave school it doesn't mean you're going to stop learning, even if you get a job.'*

LAP pilot manager

Previous evaluation evidence has highlighted that while the implementation of LAP was initially surrounded by a number of delivery issues, the initiative provided an invaluable opportunity to appraise the requirements for working effectively with young people in JWT and their employers, which will be instrumental in supporting national policy formulation<sup>15</sup>.

The principles underpinning LAP were that the pilot would focus on encouraging young people who were working but not engaged in any accredited training, to do so. The training needs of their employers were also expected to be considered. This was to be achieved through offering young people personalised, flexible learning packages that included progression (if appropriate), to encourage their participation and retention in learning, as well as testing the principle of offering financial support (in some pilot areas), coupled with signed agreements, support and monitoring<sup>16</sup>. Many respondents from Connexions, local LSCs and providers felt that these objectives, which derived from a 'learner led' agenda, had largely been displaced in favour of an increasing focus on driving qualification attainment within LAP, including learning that prioritised on young people achieving a full Level 2 qualification or a contribution towards it ie an Apprenticeship outcome. LAP was described as being less creative and more prescriptive than was originally envisaged.

Attempting to meet the needs of both young people and, as far as possible, their employers, within the parameters of Section 96, which comprises the learning aims database operated by the LSC, was a challenging arrangement to deliver. The issue of how to reconcile these competing demands within LAP policy challenged its implementation. LAP was a cumbersome model to deliver, notably in respect of trying to find the eligible population, agreeing learning needs (sometimes in conjunction with employers) and sourcing relevant provision. The model adopted in most pilot areas evolved into young people being recruited into predominantly pre-determined training provision, most notably Key Skills and Technical Certificate programmes. LAP became a pre-Apprenticeship programme in most localities, in order to achieve throughput.

## 5.2 Challenges and lessons learnt

The implementation of LAP exposed a serious gap in knowledge and understanding about the characteristics, history, attitudes, barriers to learning, perceptions and ambitions of young people in JWT. It also highlighted that, prior to the launch of LAP, few pilot areas had strong links with employers who recruited young people into JWT, and had little understanding of their characteristics, experiences, attitudes and perceptions. Furthermore, most Connexions

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<sup>15</sup> Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Hillage, J., Dewson, S., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P. and Page, R. (2008) *Evaluation of the Activity Agreement and Learning Pilots Process Evaluation: Year One Report* DCSF-RR027

Maguire, S., Thompson, J., Wahlberg, M., Levesley, T., Miller, L., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Bates, P., Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2009) *Learning Agreement Pilots Process Evaluation* DCSF-RR120

<sup>16</sup> *Learning Agreement Pilot Delivery Specification*, December 2005.

services had no active role in, or influence over, employers' recruitment and training practices and limited expertise in working with employers. Some of the key challenges that LAP delivery faced are described below.

### **Defining and making contact with the JWT population**

The LAP was tasked with the responsibility of making contact with young people who were defined as being in a job without training (JWT). The main tool used within Connexions services to identify the target population of young people was the CCIS database, which stored destinations data on young people. The first year operation of the pilot exposed severe problems with regard to the reliability and accuracy of CCIS data on the JWT group. Since young people in JWT had not previously been a priority group for Connexions, in terms of conducting regular follow-ups of their status following the completion of compulsory education, the data stored on the JWT group was often out of date when young people were contacted about joining LAP. Hence, it proved a complex and labour-intensive task to identify the target population.

### **Developing a skill base to support delivery**

It was reported by some respondents interviewed as part of the evaluation of the extension year, that employer engagement was no longer part of the NVQ 4 guidance qualification, which is undertaken by many Connexions staff. Unsurprisingly, the launch of LAP presented a challenge in identifying staff with the necessary skills and confidence to work with young people and employers. The role of 'LAP adviser' was very different to that of the generic Personal Adviser (PA) operating within mainstream Connexions Services. PAs focused on working with young people and had received generic training to recognise and empathise with their personal needs. The delivery of LAP required a different set of skills, which included 'selling' the concept of LAP to both young people and employers, and many areas had initially struggled to recruit staff who could effectively work with both client groups. Staff recruitment had been more successful and sustained in areas where managers had employed staff from a wider range of backgrounds - in particular, staff with backgrounds in training and development and/or who had experience of promoting employment and training initiatives to employers and young people. As a result of LAP delivery, Connexions staff reported increased levels of competence and expertise in working with both employers and training providers.

### **Joint delivery, organisational change and pilot closure**

In many pilot areas, LAP was the first initiative which required Connexions services to work in partnerships with local LSCs. Identifying roles and responsibilities was more difficult to establish where no prior partnership working relationships existed, and this impeded LAP implementation. In all LAP areas, the focus of responsibility for local LSCs was to fund learning and training provision, to promote the initiative among local employers and to develop links between Train to Gain and LAP delivery. Connexions staff had concentrated on identifying and contacting eligible young people for LAP provision and, during the course of the pilot, established closer links with employers to raise awareness about the initiative. The implementation of LAP coincided with a programme of structural re-organisation for national and local LSCs and within Connexions Partnerships, leading to inconsistencies in delivery. Local LSC structures had initially shifted towards a regional agenda and subsequent scheduled closure of local offices, which had resulted in staff levels, roles and responsibilities being changed. Connexions Partnerships/Services were also faced with structural change over the course of the pilot, resulting in LAP being delivered, in some pilot areas, by a combination of local authority, private provider and social enterprise contractors.

The extension year of LAP delivery was severely hampered by the scheduled closure of the pilot. Pilot managers and operational staff had hoped that LAP would secure a further extension period. The final six months of the initiative were largely dedicated to winding down, which resulted in limited development and expansion of LAP taking place during the extension year. LAP closure was considered to have undermined the achievements which had taken place with regard to establishing the profile and importance of the JWT agenda within local areas.

*'A huge opportunity has been missed with this pilot because this is a group that will exist post 2013, but they are the kind of young people who will need to go into jobs with associated training and nothing has been done to look at the kinds of training that will be needed for those young people and how to get them into mainstream funding.'*

LAP pilot manager

*'Absolutely, we've increased participation at 16, 17 so it totally feeds into that. We've actually engaged young people that normally would not have stayed in learning. The only way that raising participation is going to work is if you target those people that traditionally don't go into learning .... Keep to the fundamental, which is why we have registered both disappointment and total surprise that it hasn't been 'clocked' at all, about its [LAP's] contribution to RPA.'*

LAP pilot manager

### **Finding provision to meet the needs of young people in JWT and their employers**

While, in most pilot areas, LAP started off trying to deliver a 'demand led' agenda, through engaging with young people, identifying their training needs and then finding suitable education and training provision to meet individual needs, the pressure to recruit young people onto the programme, together with the complexities of identifying and securing provision to meet individual needs, resulted in LAP switching its focus. Young people were predominantly recruited onto the programme and fitted into pre-determined provision. In some circumstances, they were undertaking 'independent' learning from their work responsibilities, either with or without the support of their employers, and, in other cases, were undertaking company-specific training. LAP was seen as a mechanism to offer young people a route out of their current employment, while in other instances, specific training was being delivered to sustain and progress them within their employment. Therefore, a tension existed within the policy, in terms of defining what it was trying to achieve and for whom. Some of the lessons learnt from the LAP are described below.

### **LAP was a reactive policy**

LAP was responsible for identifying and meeting the learning and training needs of young people, and, wherever possible, to engage with employers. Delivery staff made contact with young people *in* employment. While one-to-one engagement with a young person and, to a lesser extent, their employer, was the key to their participation in LAP, a much wider range of support needed to be made available for young people who choose early labour market entry. This would include advice and guidance on local labour market opportunities, job placement support and in-work advice on their future learning and training needs. There would also be the development of greater intelligence and knowledge about the structure and functioning of the local labour market, as well as employers' demands for, and use of, youth labour. Some LAP pilot areas introduced strategies to identify young people prior to their entry into the labour market, in order to engage with young people and their employers and to offer advice and support.



## **Young people in employment value continued support**

An important evaluation finding was the value that young people placed on the advice, guidance and support they received from LAP delivery staff, both in terms of identifying suitable learning provision and, perhaps more importantly, in sustaining their participation on the programme. It was recognised that young people who enter the labour market at 16/17 should be entitled to the same level of guidance and support which is afforded to those who remain in full-time learning, undertake Apprenticeships or become NEET.

*'The jobs without training group are a group which have always been missed ... they've been a group who have been deemed to be self-supporting. They're not high on anybody's agenda.'*

LAP pilot manager

## **The rigidity within education and training provision**

LAP exposed the inflexibility which exists in the current education and training provision, in respect of meeting the needs of young people in JWT and their employers. While many providers tried to be more responsive to individual needs, this had not proved cost-effective or practical in many instances. Pilot areas did make significant progress in establishing that many private training providers could be more flexible than colleges because they tended to be smaller organisations, they focused on work-based training delivery and were not working primarily within the confines of an academic year for delivery.

Among many education and training providers, Apprenticeship training represented the 'gold standard', in terms of their provision. Since access to these programmes was competitive and payment was achieved on results, many providers were reluctant to jeopardise their standard delivery contracts. LAP was a pilot programme, had fewer than expected recruits and, perhaps more importantly, comprised a cohort of learners which posed 'a risk' because of their potential qualification attainment. Therefore, many providers were reluctant to change their practices to accommodate LAP learners.

LAP did successfully break down the Apprenticeship learning framework. Offering a part or parts of the Apprenticeship framework made learning more attractive to young people, who very often lacked confidence in their abilities, due to negative school experiences. It offered a progression route by delivering Level 1 qualifications as a taster, with the option of adding the building blocks to achieve a full framework qualification. Enabling young people to acquire Key Skills and Technical Certificates, which form part of the Apprenticeship framework, gave them the currency to progress. Crucially, it also enabled training providers to recruit young people onto Apprenticeship training, since they had demonstrated the underpinning knowledge to complete an Apprenticeship. Therefore, LAP funding often removed any risk associated with recruiting young people from JWT. This was a significant achievement in some pilot areas.

### **5.3 Implications for RPA**

LAP 'tested the water' in identifying and meeting the learning and training needs of young people in JWT and its contribution to raising the profile of young people in employment should not be understated. It was the first policy intervention, for a number of years, which was targeted at young people in work and not actively engaged in any form of accredited training. The 'Right to time off for Study', which was one initiative that had previously been available, was widely viewed to have had limited impact, given the reliance placed within it on young people asserting their rights to access training.

*'... it has been the most successful employer engagement programme that we've worked on. The time off for study didn't make a huge difference. We've always found it difficult to work with employers; it's always been difficult to find Apprenticeships ... So I think we've got a lot better contact with training providers, employers and young people and it's devastating that we don't know what's happening next.'*

LAP pilot manager

LAP was launched with little prior knowledge of its target group and with limited time to establish either a skills base, as far as staffing or provision were concerned, to meet projected demand. Key lessons have been learnt about the JWT group, their employers and the infrastructure needed to engage them, and this should help with RPA policy formulation.

### **5.3.1 Defining terms**

- There is a need to re-think the relevance and applicability of the term JWT to describe this group. Evaluation of the LAP demonstrated that the JWT is not a homogeneous group and comprises young people who have access to varying degrees of training and opportunities for enhancement within the labour market. More attention needs to be focused on identifying and accrediting in-house and work-based training, which is often employer driven, as well as maintaining an offer of support to young people who have little or no access to training or development within their work role.
- Early labour market entry among 16 and 17 year olds and the term JWT have been strongly linked to the NEET trajectory and unsuccessful post-16 transitions. Young people do not recognise the term JWT, nor do many see their destination as problematic. There was a weight of evidence to suggest that many young people saw their transition into the labour market as a positive step, since it provided them with financial independence, as well as a sense of purpose and an opportunity to take control over their lives, despite the low-level work they are viewed as having entered. A common feature within this group as a whole was a negative school experience and a lack of confidence about future learning. After 2013, the term 'young people in employment' would better describe young people in work outside Apprenticeship delivery, without demeaning their status, in relation to other post-16 destinations.
- Given the policy focus on increasing participation in full-time post-16 learning and in reducing the NEET population, little attention has been focused on young people who choose to enter employment between the ages of 16 and 18, either in supporting their transitions into the labour market or in maintaining contact when they have entered work. The need to recognise and understand more about young people in the labour market should be of paramount importance to RPA planning.

### **5.3.2 Determining the offer**

LAP offered access to free provision, support to young people and employers, and, in some areas, financial incentives to encourage participation in learning among the JWT group.

#### **Provision**

LAP exposed the inflexibility which exists in the current education and training provision, as far as meeting the needs of young people in JWT and their employers is concerned. Increased throughput within the programme had, to a large extent, been achieved by slotting young people into existing provision, most notably Key Skills and Technical Certificate programmes. The extent to which this approach met the learning requirements of all young people in JWT and their employers' training needs is questionable. A 'one size fits all'

provision model will not meet the needs of such a diverse group of learners. Within RPA plans, consideration needs to be given to achieving a greater degree of flexibility within the qualification framework, in order to achieve a more attractive offer, as well as ensuring that providers, most notably colleges, are required to adapt their delivery arrangements to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse cohort of learners. Questions remain about the extent to which provision for the JWT group should be geared towards offering a pre-Apprenticeship programme, which LAP achieved, or whether more consideration should be given to accrediting a greater volume of in-house/employer training or both. LAP delivery showed that there was a shortage of both Level 1 provision and accreditation and delivery of on-the-job training. Will Foundation Learning accommodate these demands? Contracting arrangements with education and training providers also need to be reviewed, in order to incentivise organisations which are prepared to adapt their programmes and their delivery to meet the needs of the JWT group.

## **Support**

Young people benefited substantially from on-going support from LAP advisers and this is a key finding. In addition, where employers had supported young people with their Learning Agreement, this had helped to sustain and to increase retention and completion rates. The importance of offering continued support to young people in employment should not be underestimated.

## **Financial incentives**

While wage compensation and/or bonus payments proved to be an effective engagement tool and the 'agreement only' model was a more difficult concept to sell, there was a consensus of opinion about the need to challenge and change the behaviour of employers who fail to offer any accredited training to young people and /or who see no benefit in doing so. While bonus payments paid to young people acted as an incentive both to engage with LAP and to complete qualifications, it was questionable whether the payment of £250 was a persuasive factor for many employers to participate in the programme.

LAP engaged with a large number of SMEs, where a significant proportion of young people in JWT were reported to be employed. The offer of 'free' training, which is available to all young people under the age of 18 (not just those on LAP), proved an attractive incentive and due consideration should be given to market this facility more widely. It was also suggested by some respondents that employers should be offered a one-off signing up fee, in exchange for agreeing that young people can undertake their learning within working hours.

## **Deciding who will take charge**

There are two issues relating to ownership of the JWT education and training agenda. Firstly, LAP managed the dual responsibility of engaging with both young people and wherever possible, their employers. Due consideration needs to be given, within the RPA, to whether young people will be the focus of attention, in terms of meeting their education and training needs, or whether the needs of the labour market/employer will take priority. Secondly, LAP was jointly managed by Connexions and the LSC. Within RPA planning, some attention should be given to organisational management and delivery of the JWT agenda post-2013. LAP exposed severe weaknesses in the skill capacity, within most Connexions services, to deliver a work-based agenda and identified clear training needs. While agencies such as Train to Gain and JobCentre Plus had a stronger profile in terms of employer engagement, Connexions Services were better placed in terms of meeting the guidance and support needs of young people under the age of 19 in JWT.

Since most local authorities had developed a NEET strategy as a prerequisite to meeting stringent PSA targets, the JWT agenda lacked the same profile. It was widely asserted that, without a requirement to do so, most local authorities would fail to take forward the momentum that had been established through LAP.

Finally, LAP concentrated on meeting the learning and training needs of 16 and 17 year olds in JWT. Eighteen year olds in JWT have fallen through the policy net, despite comprising the largest proportion of the 16-18 year old JWT population. This necessitates an investigation of the composition of the group, in order to identify whether the 18-year-old population is made up largely of recent entrants to the labour market, following time spent in post-16 education, or of young people who left education at the end of compulsory schooling. This may help to determine their future learning and training needs and differences that may exist between groups of young workers within JWT.

## Appendices

### Appendix A - Local authority case study

The case study was conducted in a pilot area where LAP was offered on the 'agreement only' model.

#### Context for delivery

The local authority case study area has a population of 401,000 of which 248,000 are of working age. Eighty per cent of these are economically active, which is slightly higher than the national and regional averages. However, this is due in part to a higher proportion of people included in the unemployment category (at six per cent prior to the recession). The difficulty of obtaining employment is illustrated by the low jobs density. The labour market is characterised by an over-representation of manufacturing and of elementary occupations and an under-representation of finance, business administration and professional-level occupations, when compared with the nationwide profile. Twelve per cent of the working age population has no qualifications, which is higher than the national average, but overall the national qualifications profile is slightly better than the region as a whole.

LAP delivery in the pilot area was contracted to a strategic lead organisation created specifically for its management. LAP staff were employed directly by the five local authorities, with one council taking the lead role. At the outset, the Connexions Service was a partner in delivery, although it withdrew when transition arrangements were completed. Five provider consortia delivered LAP training. In the case study local authority, a large FE college had the provider consortium lead role. Strategic managers of the LAP placed a strong focus, throughout LAP implementation, on working with employers, and on achieving the signing of Learning Agreements that were consistent with employers' wishes (how this worked in practice is outlined below in some of the stakeholder experiences). For this, and other reasons, employer engagement was centralised during the course of the pilot to one team within the strategic lead organisation. When the wind-down of the LAP was confirmed, the Local Authorities within the pilot area, decided to find a way of maintaining a service to young people in jobs without training (see further discussion under the Local Authority subheading).

#### Perspective from key stakeholders

##### ■ Advisers and local managers

Although there was a major focus on employer engagement within this case study area, there was no blanket cold calling to market the LAP to them. Instead, the staff worked closely through links with other agencies. At one level, these links were established, through linking with consortium training providers, for example with Entry to Employment (E2E) contractors, where LAP-funded learning was viewed as a natural progression route for young people who were successfully entering employment after their E2E course. Referrals from Train to Gain (TtG) brokers, within the Local Authority, became a significant source of leads for potential LAP sign-ups. However, this was achieved only after a considerable amount of liaison, in order to demonstrate that LAP would not jeopardise the employer links that TtG brokers had worked to establish. LAP advisers also used 'Recruitline' to match young people with vacancies. By co-ordinating young people's job search with LAP, it was possible to ensure when a young person was recruited to a JWT, their employer could also be approached to discuss the possibility of introducing an element of training.

Working with employers was felt to have maximised the chances of young people completing and achieving their qualifications within LAP. It was felt drop-out could become a problem if young people had to be involved in learning solely within their own time and without the support of their employer. However, referrals to LAP via the employer route started to diminish with the recession and there was a return to recruitment by direct contact with young people.

## ■ Providers

Some providers felt that LAP worked well as a natural extension to their E2E activities. Employers were more familiar with E2E, while LAP was a lesser known brand to both young people and employers. It was felt that LAP was a useful re-engagement tool for the JWT group, especially in terms of funding bite-size, supported routes back into learning. More specifically, the flexibility to complete a qualification below a full framework Apprenticeship, to engage the JWT group with learning without forcing young people into a classroom and to provide adviser support were valued.

Providers had mixed experiences in practice of LAP delivery. Take-up rates were much lower than expected, which impacted on referral rates to providers. Many young people and employer leads did not materialise into LAP sign-ups, which providers attributed to the variable quality of employer outreach work. When leads did not result in learning uptake, this was often felt to be down to resistance or lack of interest from the employer, which was felt to illustrate a key risk of insisting on employer involvement.

However, once signed-up, the LAP experience was reported to be a positive one, in that most young people who received an offer were re-engaged into learning. Many young people also progressed from bite-size learning into full framework Apprenticeships.

## ■ Local Authority Staff

LAP was viewed to fill a gap in provision, ie for the JWT group. However, there was a recognition that the pilot had underperformed. There was felt to have been some poor decision-making at the outset, which had resulted in the LAP being over-staffed however with the wrong mix of skills. It was asserted that providers had also been given inaccurate expectations of LAP in terms of sign-ups. Thus, if starting again and taking this learning forward, staff reflected that it would be possible to achieve greater value for money. The lack of an incentive for young people was considered to have had an impact on their recruitment. While the local authority staff reported that the LAP had not performed so well in terms of numbers of young people starting, they said that outcomes for those who completed were very positive.

The five Local Authorities have identified monies that should enable them to continue some aspects of the LAP work for the JWT group beyond the pilot period. Discussions were underway with the careers company (who track young people following compulsory school leaving age) to explore ways to work within existing structures and provision, including strengthened links with Train to Gain. Within the case study Local Authority, a target has been set which aims to achieve the sign-up of 45 young people into training in the period up until April 2010. It is intended that this work will continue until the JWT gap is 'filled' by the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) policy implementation.

## ■ Employers

With the exception of Maths and English, most examples of training were job-related. Examples included an NVQ Level 1 course in retail delivered to a young person working in a shoe shop, and a gym instructor qualification for a young person working in a leisure centre.

Despite the focus on employers' inclusion within programme delivery, it was not clear that employers interviewed as part of the case study, were directly involved. The majority of employers interviewed provided a supporting role. Employers were generally enthusiastic about their young employee having access to training opportunities, which was free of charge to both the young person and to the employer.

## ■ Young People

Most of the YP interviewed had had their involvement in training kick-started by the intervention of the LAP adviser and several of them felt that they would not otherwise have thought of undertaking training.

Having a job and earning money, which gave them independence, remained the top priority for most young people. Several young people dropped out of training when they changed jobs, or changed their living arrangements. In these circumstances, it appeared that adviser support and follow-up was not sufficient to bridge these transitions.

Although young people felt that LAP offered a good range of course provision, it was apparent that choices were constrained to some extent because of their employers' wishes in terms of training activity, and also to geographical and travel restrictions (see Case Study of Harry). Thus, both the initial menu of choice and the chances of completing a course were influenced by the pilot's insistence on working in conjunction with meeting employers' demands.

Despite this, there were highly positive experiences of employer support which are demonstrated in the young people's case studies outlined below.

Once in training, many young people were positive about their learning, which they often contrasted with poor school experiences and became aware of other options available to them. It appeared that LAP had the effect of increasing their knowledge of career paths, and the qualifications necessary to progress. Consequently, LAP had raised their aspirations to engage in more training in the future.

## Examples of innovative practice

**Tom** left school at 16 with a few GCSEs at various grades but without any clear ideas regarding work or training. He contacted Connexions and was initially referred to a Princes Trust course which he completed. During that course he received Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). He then did Y-Start which prepared him for independent living. When he started his LAP training he was living at home with his parents. He subsequently found a flat and lived on his own.

He found a job as a production worker in an electronics company. Mainstream Connexions contacted him and sent out a broker who explained about LAP and the various training options open to him. He chose to follow a course that was directly relevant to his existing employment even though the provider who offered this was at some distance from his home or work place. He was impressed that his adviser handled all of the administrative aspects of enrolment in the course. He had been working with the company for about 12 months before the training started.

By the time of the follow-up interview, Tom had completed one year of the two-year course in electronics engineering and was attending college one day a week. His employer paid him while he attended college. Tom reported that his manager at work had offered to help him if he needed it but the degree of support he received varied over time:

*'At first they were supportive but now not that supportive as before. Seventy-five per cent of the time they are supportive.'*

The nature of support given included his manager ensuring that his work tasks complemented the modules he was studying at college. On completion of the diploma, Tom will be eligible for a promotion at work to the role of technician.

Tom was very positive about the benefits of the Learning Agreement and the assistance he had received:

*'They have helped me get the course. If they didn't help me I wouldn't have been able to find it [the training].'*

The training had altered Tom's attitudes to education and training and increased his awareness of courses that were available. He also felt that it had made his role more secure within the company since he was able to perform a wider range of tasks.

**Harry** left school at 16 with eight GCSEs ranging from B to E grades. He lived with his father. He found a job as a joiner immediately after leaving school. His employer encouraged him to go to college and to sign a Learning Agreement. A Connexions advisor helped with the process. Harry said that he might have undertaken the course without the Learning Agreement but because of his employer's support the whole procedure was fast-tracked.

Harry attended college one day a week and consulted with his employer as to which day would be the most convenient. The college was flexible about which day he attended. He had a long journey to college and a 10-hour day of training once he arrived. The long hours spent at college made training more difficult, which also tested his motivation at times.

By the time of the follow-up interview, Harry had completed one year of a two-year programme and his employer has been very supportive throughout:

*'Say if we're learning something, he will, I'll tell him what it's about and he'll show me more about that certain bit.'*

Harry was very positive about the benefits of the Learning Agreement and the importance of qualifications. It had made him more aware of other training opportunities and he may go on to do a third year at college if he is eligible for funding. He had gained a great deal of confidence through the course and improved his skills:

*'Before I couldn't really do anything. I wasn't really good at doing joinery.'*

He had stayed in contact with his adviser who chats with him about the course and helped him if he needs it:

*'It's good to know there's always someone there to help you.'*



## Appendix B - Analysis of the LAP ILR data

### Technical information

The LSC collated data about LAP learners on its Individual Learner Record (ILR) system. Data was stored on LAP learners who had started on a programme of accredited learning. ILR data did not take into account the total number of young people who had been recruited to the programme including young people who were waiting to start a programme of learning or those who dropped out of LAP before starting a programme of learning. The data was collated by academic year, by funding stream and by LSC category such as 'employer responsiveness' and was provided in the form of the 'learning aims' subset, which record the courses LAP learners registered. These data contain multiple entries for each learner reflecting multiple course take-up or, in some cases, changes in registration (such as withdrawing from one course and transferring to another).

A total of eight outputs from the learning aims subset were received, and these were merged into one file. The same course registration could appear more than once in the merged data, due to the passage of time (eg training continued across academic years). The data were therefore de-duplicated. Four sources were used to achieve this: the Learner ID number, the learner's date of birth, the course code, and the course level. This process produced 15,911 learning registrations and 6,564 course completions (41 per cent of the instances of learning). These data were used to assess the number and types of courses LAP learners had engaged with.

To enable an assessment of the demographic characteristics of LAP learners, the LSC provided three outputs from the 'learner subset' of the ILR, based on all, not simply only LAP learners for the period of pilot (2006-07, 2007-08 academic years, and the data available by April 2009, in the 2008-09 academic year). The learner subset contains information on gender, ethnicity and disability among other factors.

When using SPSS, data may only be merged where single, rather than multiple, records exist for individuals. The learning aims data was therefore aggregated so that one case existed for each LAP learner. This resulted in 8,945 learner cases onto which the learner subset data was merged. Following this merge, analysis showed 355 cases where no demographic data had been produced.

It was also possible to merge information about LAP providers, from the provider subset, onto the LAP learner subset and the learning aims subset. This was achieved with no loss of accuracy.

Processes to merge the datasets to arrive at a point at which they could be analysed, produced a different sized learner group from that outlined in the management information (MI) earlier (section 2.5). The difference in the number of learner cases cited by LSC in its collated MI, and the findings presented below, is 1,379 cases. Despite efforts to increase accuracy, it was not possible to achieve greater consistency with the MI.

### The characteristics of LAP learners

The **gender** split among LAP learners was balanced: 49.8 per cent of the group were male, and 50.2 per cent were female (N = 8,945 throughout this section).

Reviewing **ethnic** diversity showed that the majority were white (92.3 per cent), 3.7 per cent were Asian, 1.2 per cent were black. Those categorised as mixed heritage formed 1.1 per cent of the group, and 0.4 per cent were recorded as 'other' ethnic origin.

The analysis showed that slightly more LAP learners had started their training at the **age** of 16 (53.8 per cent), than had at the age of 17 (46.2 per cent).

Most of the LAP learners did not consider themselves to have a **disability** (84.4 per cent) although 13.8 per cent did, and 1.8 per cent did not provide information.

- Physical disabilities were recorded by 39.4 per cent of those with any disability. The most common of these were medical conditions such as asthma, epilepsy or diabetes (recorded by 48.9 per cent of those with a physical disability), second most common was a visual impairment (15.8 per cent of those with a physical disability).
- A learning difficulty or disability (LDD) was recorded by 60.6 per cent of those with a disability. Most frequently noted was a moderate learning difficulty (45.2 per cent of those with LDD), and second most common was dyslexia (40.2 per cent of those with LDD).

**Prior attainment** data was recorded and analysis of this showed that 48.4 per cent of LAP learners had previously achieved the equivalent of Level 1 qualifications, 16.3 per cent were qualified to Level 2, and 9 per cent had entry level or below Level 1 qualifications. Prior to starting LAP training, 15.1 per cent were recorded as having no qualifications. Ideally, these findings should be compared to a population to enable an understanding of the ‘reach’ of LAP. However, confounding such an analysis is the lack of any consistent intelligence or data on the JWT cohort (an issue constantly returned to by LAP managers and staff across the course of the evaluation).

**The training undertaken by LAP participants**

**Table A1 - Top 10 LAP courses**

Title	N	%	Cumulative %
Key Skills in Application of Number - Level 1	1,953	12.3	12.3
Key Skills in Communication - Level 1	1,682	10.6	22.8
Certificate in Customer Service	1,273	8.0	30.8
Main aim as part of an Apprenticeship programme	968	6.1	36.9
NVQ in Hairdressing	708	4.4	41.4
Certificate in Numeracy	665	4.2	45.6
Key Skills in Communication - Level 2	631	4.0	49.5
Certificate in Adult Literacy	598	3.8	53.3
Key Skills in Application of Number - Level 2	485	3.0	56.3
NVQ in Customer Service	430	2.7	59.0

Based on all learning registrations (N = 15,911)

*LSC ILR Data*

Table A1 shows the ‘top 10’ **most frequent course registrations** for LAP training across the course of the pilot (N = 15,911). In close alignment with the process evaluation findings, analysis of these top 10 courses shows that key and basic skills courses formed a substantial part of the learning undertaken (37.9 per cent), and to a lesser degree, the prevalence of customer service courses (10.7 per cent).

These 'top 10' courses covered three-fifths (59 per cent) of the learning registrations recorded for LAP. In total, the 15,911 learning registrations recorded in the learning aims subset, reflected 391 different learning aims drawn from Section 96, covering a wide range of subjects and sector specialisms.

Reviewing the **level of the courses** registered in the learning aims data (N = 15,911) showed that just under half of the LAP learners had registered for Level 2 courses (49.7 per cent) although nearly as many had registered for Level 1 (40.3 per cent). Only small proportions of other levels of learning were noted: Level 3 formed 2.9 per cent and Entry level learning 0.9 per cent of the course registrations.

The types of training for which LAP learners registered were explored. This showed that 34.3 per cent of the courses registered were Key Skills, 31.5 per cent were certificates (including BTEC), and 22.9 per cent were NVQs. Literacy and numeracy courses were taken by around 4 per cent of learners each; awards, diplomas, GCSEs and GCE AS Levels were far less common (around 1 per cent or fewer for each of the courses registered).

The data showed that 157 **providers** were involved in the delivery of this LAP training. Analysing this by the LAP learner data (N = 8,945) showed that more (56.7 per cent) of the training was delivered through independent, training providers (private providers led the 88.2 per cent of this training although charitable organisations and chambers of commerce/trade also featured); and less by public providers (43.3 per cent, of which 78 per cent of this was delivered by general FE colleges; sixth form and specialist colleges also featured here).

There were some differences in the training offered by independent and public providers:

- Independent providers offered more of the NVQ training (53.4 per cent), of the Key Skills training (62.9 per cent), and of the certificated courses (59.9 per cent).
- Public providers offered more of the literacy and numeracy courses (52.1 per cent respectively), and full Apprenticeship frameworks (54.9 per cent).
- The analysis showed that, consequently, independent providers delivered more of the Level 1 and 2 training, whereas public providers delivered more Entry level, and Level 3 training.

The fourth most frequently occurring learning aim in Table A1, relates to Apprenticeship training. This shows evidence of **multiple course uptake**. To review this further, analysis of the aggregated learning aims data (ie to individual learner level, N = 8,945) showed that 59.1 per cent of the LAP learners had registered to one course, 21.2 per cent had registered for two courses, and 8.5 per cent had registered to three courses. The remainder in the group were recorded as registered upward of four courses (although this includes course transfers and data entry errors). Most common among this latter group, were multiple registration for key skills and certificated courses.

The LSC had collated the learning aims data by **funding** stream (LAP or mainstream). Analysis of the proportion of course registration by the funding stream showed that 55.7 per cent of the training was funded through LAP and 44.3 per cent through mainstream sources. Reviewing the **completion status** of all course registrations (N = 15,911) showed that 41.3 per cent had been completed, 33.3 per cent of LAP learners were continuing (Table A2 below demonstrates that this continuing training most frequently was Apprenticeships), learners had withdrawn from 23.9 per cent of the courses, and learners had transferred out of 1.6 per cent of these courses. The next section explores the courses that learners had completed, or were continuing with beyond April 2009.

## Course completions and continuing learning

Table A2 shows the learning status on the most common course types of course registration. As would be expected completion rates are higher in shorter courses such as key skills, and lower in longer term training such as Apprenticeship frameworks.

**Table A2 - Completion and training continuation**

Course type	Completed %	Continuing %	N
Key skills	39.5	31.5	5,465
Certificates	55.2	21.3	5,019
NVQ	32.2	40.6	3,636
Apprenticeship framework	19.0	70.4	968
Numeracy	48.4	17.8	670
Literacy	53.2	17.2	605

Base: all courses completed or where training was continuing (N = 11,862)

*LSC ILR Learning aims data*

Reviewing completion by the level of course (N = 11,862) undertaken showed that:

- 44.2 per cent of the Level 2 courses had been completed and 31.2 per cent of this training was continuing (N = 7,905)
- 42.5 per cent of the Level 1 courses had been completed and 28.7 per cent of this training was continuing (N = 6,411)
- 26.7 per cent of the entry level courses had been completed and 26.7 per cent of this training was continuing, (N = 150), and
- 23.5 per cent of the Level 3 courses had been completed and 59.0 per cent of this training was continuing (N = 459).

Looking at the number of courses completed by those LAP learners who were identified as completing some/all aspects of their training (N = 4,482), showed that 70.8 per cent of the group had completed a training course, 19.1 per cent had completed two courses, and 5.5 per cent had completed three courses (most of the remainder had completed four courses, most of which were key skills).

## Conclusions

While the data was less than perfect in supporting a consistent and robust analysis, the findings did align with those of the process evaluation.

- Key skills and customer service qualifications were the most frequently noted course types, although full framework Apprenticeships were reasonably prevalent.
- Independent providers delivered a larger proportion of training, and the process evaluation showed this to be because they were more flexible and responsive.
- Multiple course uptake was fairly prevalent with 40 per cent of the LAP learners signing up for more than one course.

- More of the training was funded by LAP (56 per cent) than was brokered through mainstream sources (44 per cent).

The analysis also illustrated the heterogeneity of the JWT cohort engaged by LAP, particularly the levels of qualification held by the group. Only 15 per cent had no qualifications at all, and many had previously qualified to Level 1 (48.4 per cent) which showed their entitlement to training under existing funding streams (ie Level 2 entitlement). This would suggest that the combined approach available through LAP is necessary: firstly to ensure young people are aware of their entitlement to funded training and are supported to take this up, and secondly, that employers are also made aware and encouraged to support their young workers to learn.

A quarter of the LAP cohort (25 per cent) were qualified to Level 2 and 3 suggesting an ability to undertake Apprenticeship training. Again the dual aspect of LAP to engage with learners and employers would appear important to ensuring mainstream-funded provision can meet the needs of both.

A factor that the analysis cannot provide illustration of, however, is the level of support many of these young workers needed to be able to re-engage and to sustain their engagement. The process evaluation showed this to be a key element of the LAP offer.

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