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Welsh Assembly Government



The Learning Coaches of Wales

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University of Glamorgan
and Welsh Assembly Government
September 2008



Learning
Pathways

14–19

Learning
Coaches

The Learning Coaches of Wales

Audience	This will be of relevance to all those involved in the delivery of Education in the 14-19 age range.
Overview	This document presents detailed study of the first cohort of the Learning Coaches in Wales and the young people they help when choosing and following their Pathways
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INTRODUCTION

The Learning Coaches of Wales work with young people in schools, colleges, workplaces, careers centres and youth clubs. They have diverse backgrounds including teaching, youth-work, careers guidance, classroom support, and company training. Two key interests underpin their work. They help 14-19 year olds develop study skills which make their time in education and training more enjoyable and meaningful. They also facilitate choice between an array of options leading to employment and qualification pathways.

This is a study of the first cohort of Learning Coaches, and the young people they help when choosing and following their pathways. It traces a journey that began with a focus on the need for radical approaches to drastically reducing the number of young people in Wales outside of employment, education and training. Momentum gathered when education and youth strategies focused on the need to improve skills and qualifications statistics for young people, in order to prepare an advanced workforce of the 21st century.

The defining characteristic of the Learning Coach is “*anogaeth*” – encouragement - based on helping young people to make sense of learning worlds which extend beyond the classroom. It is not just about school and college, or qualifications and exams. The Learning Coach inspires young people with confidence and curiosity in order to recognise their challenges and achievements; things that can often go unnoticed in standard measures of attainment. Informal and non-formal learning are therefore key concerns which accompany formal education and qualifications.

Wales defines itself as a Learning Country containing pathways which young people follow in order to develop skill, understanding and employability. Pathways can be created as well as followed, and support is needed when young people are confronted by a forest of institutions and professions associated with education and training. The length of the journey becomes ever more complex as learning providers

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share resources and form network consortia in order to increase options, opportunities and choices for young people. Policy surrounding the Welsh Assembly Government's Learning County vision therefore stresses a need for improving learning and created the role of the Learning Coach as a crucial figure for helping young people to explore and discover the world they live within. The geographical metaphor for a nation dedicated to learning journeys is an interesting one. There has to be information and guidance about how to recognise a pathway, when to join it, where it goes, how it branches off, who is there to help along the way, and directions to take. More than this – the pathway should challenge and stretch interests and abilities, and it will even appeal to travellers who may not want to make the journey in the first place.

Policy comes to life when it has evidence based on action. This is what happened when one comprehensive school in Merthyr Tydfil experimented with the role of a “development coach”, drawing in a team of expert youth workers who helped educationally disengaged young people through an alternative curriculum. Pilot studies were completed throughout Wales before a formal training programme for Learning Coaches was designed by a consortium of universities entitled *First Campus*. A total of 210 Learning Coaches completed all of the training, drawn from the twenty-two Learning Network located in every local authority throughout Wales.

These important early experiences need to be documented. *The Learning Coaches of Wales* details the training programme, and the coaching activity based on a series of case studies and sketches involving young people. The first cohort experience provides an illustration of multi-agency working based on the ways that Learning Coaches can complement the work of other professionals and experts. What emerges is the importance of achieving flexibility when it comes to partnership working, so that local practices within the Learning Networks are recognised and individual organisations buy-in to Learning Coach support. National policy has therefore encouraged improved learning support at local levels, but there is also a necessary

variety in the ways that Learning Networks interpret, organise and deliver that support. A vital consideration involves recognising the Learning Coach role as something that can be a function achieved by a number of people working together, as well as by specialist individuals. This functional perspective increases ownership of Learning Coach support by various professions – including youth-work, teaching and careers guidance – who then engage in Learning Coach activity through team-based delivery.

This study includes illustrations of future career and qualification pathways open to the current and future Learning Coaches, based on the recognition that they are pioneers and enthusiasts about learning across the board – including their own. *The Learning Coaches of Wales* concludes with 67 recommendations. They include developing methods and strategies for clarifying the role of the Learning Coach, based on the use of an Approximations Matrix and Timeline Analysis which help local Learning Network partnerships share resources in order to develop their learning support responsibilities. The recommendations also address training improvements following the pilot year of operation, as well as the need for increasing coaching capacity so that the Learning Networks can meet the entitlement expectations emerging from the Welsh Assembly Government's Learning Pathways policy and legislation. The final set of recommendations turn to dissemination, and the need to demonstrate success and tell the world about all of the good practice developing within Learning Coach communities.

The research would not have been possible without the enthusiastic cooperation of the Learning Coaches who contributed to the case studies, but who for reasons of confidentiality cannot be named. The author is also indebted to the following for all of the information and support that was unfailingly provided during the course of the study: the YALO division within the Welsh Assembly; Careers Wales companies; the *First Campus* Learning Coach training team; Jacquie Turnbull, Aly Acreman and Kevern Kerswell alongside colleagues within the University of Glamorgan, the 14-19 Learning Network managers; mentoring and teacher training specialists from the universities of

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Cardiff, UWIC, Newport, Bangor, and Swansea Metropolitan; staff within Pen y Dre and St Cyres Schools, St Davids College; Caerphilly local education authority; OCN Wales, the LLUK sector skills council; and the People at Work Unit in Abergavenny.

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The Context for Learning Coach Developments in Wales

1.1 The policy context

Learning Pathways 14–19 policy reflected within *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* (Welsh Assembly Government 2006) emphasises the need for Wales to respond to the changing needs of its young people. It promotes the development of well-being, as well as skills and knowledge which prepare successful and adaptable young workforces of the future. The task is an urgent one given Cassen's (2007) observations regarding low educational achievement in England and Wales, where tens of thousands of young people leave school every year with few or no qualifications.

The seriousness of the situation is further underlined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's programme for international student assessment (PISA) report on achievement of 15-year-olds in Wales (Bradshaw et al 2007). The mean scores for learners in Wales for mathematics and reading were significantly below the OECD average.

The statistical release for key stage four attainments in 2006–7 (Welsh Assembly Government 2007) further reveals that:

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- 46% of pupils do not achieve five or more GCSE grade A*– C or vocational equivalent
- 14% of pupils do not achieve five or more GCSE grade A*– G or vocational equivalent
- 60% of pupils do not achieve a grade C or above in the core subjects of Maths, Science and English or Welsh.

These figures disguise improvements in attainment over the past ten years – for example an increase of eight percentage points since 1997 for the GCSE grade A*– C measure. Nonetheless, the on-going underachievement and wastage of talent amongst young people means that there is still much to do. The point is underlined within *Learning Country* as well as *Wales a Vibrant Economy* (Welsh Assembly Government 2005) the *Review of Further Education* (Welsh Assembly Government 2007), and the interim report of the *National Behaviour and Attendance Review* (Welsh Assembly Government 2007). All of these policies emphasise in particular the need to dramatically reduce the number of young people in Wales who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The reminder is that it is not all about educational achievement; indeed it is unlikely that the England style emphasis on the GCSE gold standard and retention in education until the age of 18 will have a significant impact on disengaged youth with NEET status. More flexible and diverse strategies for ensuring social inclusion and the well being of young people are required, including the recognition of more varied achievements and measures of success.

These are key interests pursued in Wales through 14-19 Learning Pathways policy. One major application has involved the provision of learning support outside the formal classroom by a new generation of Learning Coaches. Policy surrounding the role of the Learning Coach has evolved through four stages, reviewed in sections 1.1 – 1.4. First, there was a growing awareness of the importance and effectiveness of

support for learners who responded to a different kind of non-classroom based intervention. Second, there was a development phase which culminated in a consultation document for a variety of stakeholders. Third, an action plan listed the outcomes of the consultation. Finally, a formal set of guidance notes were published and then updated two years later.

1.1.1 Growing awareness

The origins for the provision of learning support outside of mainstream teaching professions involve a series of internationally renowned initiatives and projects associated with mentoring, based on the provision of additional help and advice for young people (Miller 1998, 2002; Colley 2003). In the United States and Canada examples include Big Brothers Big Sisters, GEARUP, and Campus Compact (Beiswinger 1985, Carr 2001, Freedman 1992,). In Israel the Perarch programme led by the Weizmann Institute of Science focuses on undergraduate students helping Jewish and Arabic children (Fresko and Carmeli 1990, Carmeli 2007). In Australia the STAR project (Elsegood 1995) based in Perth also promoted peer support through university based partnerships. These are all illustrations of what Withers and Batten (1995) call mass mentoring, based on the sheer scale and reach of the various programmes. In all cases the mentors are volunteers from industry, local communities, or colleges. They follow the guiding premise of Ernest K Coulter (who founded the first generation of Big Brothers in early twentieth century New York): showing a personal interest in helping individual young people to overcome disadvantage.

The United Kingdom also has success stories. The National Mentoring Network (Costigan 2000, Miller 2002) extends across business and education sectors, and the National Mentoring Pilot Programme (NMPP) involves over 20 universities throughout England. Over a five year period the NMPP demonstrated success via improvements in GCSE grades for core subjects following mentoring support (Centre for

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Education and Industry 2004). Published research on student tutoring and mentoring (Goodlad 1998; Saunders 1992, Saunders and Gibbon 1998, Saunders and Kingdom 1998; Topping 1995, 1988; Topping and Ehly 1997) further detailed the effectiveness of positive role modelling (after Bandura 1977) and one-to-one support between young people.

At government and policy levels within Wales, the key interest was in going beyond undergraduate and business mentoring in order to see how a wider group of professions and experts specialising in support for young people could enhance learning. Furthermore, this was to be accomplished through groupwork as well as one-to-one support. Projects and initiatives in higher education were only a part of the solution given the need for extending entitlement to all young people who require or request support.

A series of interviews with key individuals¹ involved in the emergence of the 14–19 Learning Pathways policy and the subsequent Learning Coach programme identified a series of influences. First, the identification of status zero individuals (Istance et al 1994, Rees et al 1996) prompted concern about social and economic disengagement coupled with very low competence levels in literacy and numeracy leading to unemployment and longer term unemployability. Second, the *Youth Access Initiative* – launched in 1996 – demonstrated the difference that personal support could make to year 10 and 11 learners who were disengaged and alienated from education. Third, the *Youth Work and School Partnership Programme* and the *Children and Youth Partnership* initiative allowed for government backed project work, leading to the piloting of new support methods within a small group of secondary schools throughout Wales. Some were encouraged to experiment with an alternative curriculum, targeting specific groups of young people such as looked after children, offenders, or those living in dramatically high unemployment areas following the close down of heavy industry in the South Wales valleys. Fourth, the 2001 legislation surrounding the Extending Entitlement initiative from the recently established National Assembly for Wales led to the establishment of the Youth Policy Team (see Williamson 2002, 2006) and the introduction of

¹ Elizabeth Williams, Mark Leighfield, Kenn Palmer from within the Welsh Assembly Government, Terry Wales (retired headteacher), John Williams (headteacher of Pen-y-Dre High School) and Professor Howard Williamson (University of Glamorgan).

Young People's Partnerships. Concurrently, there was the dissolution of the Wales Youth Agency – and the transfer of its function to the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006. The overall ambition was to promote multi-agency working in order to prevent young people from slipping through the net of support provision.

Through these experiences and circumstances teachers and youth workers recognised that the national curriculum was suffocating some young people who stood no chance of gaining the gold standard core indicator qualifications at key stage 4. Schools such as Pen y Dre in Merthyr Tydfil formed very close partnerships with youth service specialists in order to promote achievement and qualifications in such alternative curriculum areas as sport, music and outdoor education. The Pen y Dre experience was all about individualised support. As Howard Williamson observes:

“There would typically be what can be called “spirited resisters” and “slow to motivate” elements in the same group. With basic skills training for example the resisters do it quickly and get bored. The slow to motivate are different. Both need to be supported individually, but they also form their own culture and work together.”

Different learners therefore had different education agendas implying choice from options that were explored and facilitated by what were called for the first time development coaches. The dominant theme was personal development, and the term coach was preferred to mentor in order to get away from the top-down hierarchical associations with business and university.

These developments were set against the political backdrop of a new Labour government which, at a UK level, was determined to focus on disadvantaged youth through such national and European initiatives as SURESTART and YOUTHSTART. It was in part inspired by a series of media stories about individual young people who had not received the professional support that they deserved.

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Some of the results were very specific to England, such as the mentoring component within *Connexions* (Morris 2000) and *Excellence in Cities* (DfEE 1999), involving especially the careers advisory services. *Connexions* promoted a new post of Learning Mentor; a person employed by an inner city primary or secondary school who signposted young people to specialist services. Miller (2002) and Cruddas (2005) note that the Learning Mentor also diagnosed strengths and weaknesses, devised action plans, mediated, provided in-class support, coordinated links with external volunteer helpers, and engaged in monitoring and evaluation. The overall pre-occupation was in boosting young learners' attainment levels at key stage four, with particular reference to the ultimate goal of gaining five A*–C GCSE grades. This was an early example of mass mentoring within the UK, and by 2001 there were approximately 2400 Learning Mentors within England.

There was a need within Wales for something more flexible and relevant to the challenges facing many young people who might not so conveniently map on to the England priority of focusing on inner city youth populations. Wales especially was recognising and confronting the special challenges posed by a relatively large group of young people who were not in education, employment or training; and many were living in rural areas and the valleys as well as urban communities and cities. By way of illustration, a pre-occupation in England with raising the leaving school or college age to 18 was not going to be an effective solution when dealing with disengaged youth determined to exit from classrooms at the earliest opportunity. The *Connexions* programme was viewed as being less flexible, with employment contracts and job descriptions for mentors having an overly narrow focus. The preference from within Wales was for a more varied learning support programme which engaged directly with study skills and learning styles, and that could be adapted locally through involving numerous stakeholder professions working with a wider range of young people.

The result was the highlighting of learning support for 14-19 year olds within the first edition of *the Learning Country* (Welsh Assembly Government 2001). It is unclear as to when and why the verb “coaching” and the noun “coach” became favoured vocabulary. An undoubted influence was the confusion that had been created in England over the term “mentor” – the *Connexions* programme involved a complex interplay between the paid Learning Mentors and the unpaid volunteer mentors, of which a subset included peer mentors. Elizabeth Williams notes that the Pen y Dre experience with coaching as an alternative concept was a key influence:

“We had a lot of discussion of the actual title, and though there was some confusion in the original consultation, no-one could come up with a better word. The most interesting part was the translation into Welsh, since there is no direct equivalent of coach. The translator first used “hyfforddwr”, meaning trainer. This threw into relief the expectation of the role. We finally agreed on “annogwr”, literally “encourager” as being closest to the fundamental core of the role, capturing the essence”.

The Pen-y-Dre high school in Merthyr Tydfil was a key influence because it explored ways of providing extra and intensive encouragement for young people placed on an alternative curriculum. John Williams, the headteacher of that school, comments:

“The coach was someone who worked alongside young people in a day to day way as a practical fixer and a facilitator of confidence... we didn’t want someone parachuting in, what was important was establishing a relationship with our young people”

He then led an All-Wales external reference group which focused both on an exploration of coaching as an educational methodology, and as a support role. This work mapped onto the emerging policy framework for the 14–19 Learning Pathways, leading into a detailed consultation process with numerous stakeholders which included young people

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themselves. The result was the creation of a series of working groups tasked with contributing to an overall action plan, one of which was devoted to the development of the role of a Learning Coach.

At the same time two other key developments in schools and colleges were reinforcing interest in coaching. First, there were radical proposals for workforce reforms within schools, devoted to helping teachers concentrate more on teaching and assessment, involving other kinds of staff in administration and learning support. This meant an expansion of subsidiary staff who supported teachers in and outside of classrooms, including learning support assistants. As these new roles became embedded in secondary schools, there was a growing interest in helping a new generation of support professions – many of whom might not necessarily have a teaching background or teaching qualification – to understand more about how young people learn. Study skills and learning styles became core interests. It should also be noted at this point that during the working group phase a fundamental contribution to the definition of the Learning Coach role came from representatives of the teaching unions, who made a significant contribution to the drafting of a job description.

Second, the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (Institute of Welsh Affairs 1999) was being piloted by a small number of schools and colleges, with a view to developing a national roll-out programme. The Baccalaureate was designed and awarded by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (2004) and it embraced existing qualifications as well as incorporating key skills awards. The role of a Learning Coach was highlighted as one way to help young people develop their skills and provide evidence of achievements through the compilation of key skills portfolios, preparation of curriculum vitae documents, and writing of personal statements for use with university admissions and employment applications.

All of which meant that coaching was well placed to meet the needs of practitioners and policy makers. In the words of Terry Wales:

“it was the right idea at the right time that met a need”

And Kenn Palmer:

“it struck a balance between national policy and local creativity”

With hindsight, all of the key architects behind the 14–19 Learning Pathways observed that the emerging policy was strengthened greatly by the grassroots consultation process which involved numerous task and finish groups, and an all-Wales programme of workshops and seminars for stakeholders. They also commented on the importance of establishing a series of pilot projects (see section 2.2) during this period in order to test the ground and gather evidence about successful coaching practices. This experimental work was to inform policy, alongside the coaching applications that were emerging from those institutions engaging with the Welsh Baccalaureate.

The immediate observation from the pilot work was the popularity of coaching as an activity that practitioners wanted to explore further. Learning Pathways invited expressions of interest in all kind of personal support, but it was coaching that attracted the most project proposals. Once the pilots were underway (in schools, colleges, and youth services), it was clear that coaching was being used and adapted in ways that were appropriate for individual organisations. Elizabeth Williams states:

“there was no one model of Learning Coach. That was the lesson from these projects. It had to be varied and diverse to allow local take-up”.

This essential variety in coaching practice influenced subsequent policy for, and training of, the first cohort of Learning Coaches – as outlined in chapter three. It also resulted in confusion about the distinctive role of the Learning Coach as compared with other professional titles – a point that will be returned to in chapter 6.

1.1.2 The consultation document

The original consultation policy document for the 14-19 Learning Pathways (Welsh Assembly Government 2002) laid out the parameters and expectations about the role of the Learning Coach. It extended previous policy imperatives (see Egan 2005, Williamson 2007) set out by Welsh Assembly Government, including *Learning is for Everyone* (1998), *Future Skills Wales* (1999), *Education and Training Action Plan for Wales* (1999), *A Winning Wales* (2002), *Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales* (2002), *Reaching Higher* (2002), *Extending Entitlement* (2000), *Children and Young People* (2002) and the *National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales* (2001).

An original and imaginative component within this early consultation process involved providing a series of fictitious examples entitled *Ultimate Learners 2015*, illustrating how the proposals might affect a range of young people in the future. They all contained extensive references to support from a Learning Coach.

Table 1.1: Coaching extracts from *Ultimate Learners 2015*

Shazia

At Shazia's interview with her Learning Coach, which involved her parents, it was decided that Shazia would take science and performing arts subjects and sustain a balanced curriculum which would enable her to enter a wide range of career opportunities, therefore delaying final career choices until Advanced Baccalaureate level.

...in conjunction with Careers Wales, Shazia's Learning Coach had arranged a placement with a pharmaceutical research company for one day per week where she could study applied science at advanced level.

Michael

After his end of year 9 interview, which his parents attended, Michael knew that he wanted either to work in sports and leisure or enter the construction industry. Either way his learning coach emphasised the importance of gaining an intermediate level qualification in communication skills and numeracy – his learning coach advised him that through the leisure and recreation route he would be able to pick up applied science. Michael's new learning path was established.

Iwan

At Iwan's end of year 9 interviews his learning coach advised taking a balanced curriculum based on subjects he enjoyed and leaving a wide range of career paths open.

At his interview with his learning coach it was recognised that with his scouting background he would be an ideal candidate for the community summer school programme run by the local police force. Iwan recognised that because he would show leadership and organisation skills, solve problems, communicate, and work in a team - a large section of his intermediate essential skills portfolio would be completed. He completed the three-week course and really enjoyed working with the two police liaison officers who were responsible for the scheme. In fact when Iwan returned to school he decided to make an extra appointment with his learning coach, as he believed he would like to join the police force post graduation.

At the beginning of year 11 (aged 15-16) Iwan was pleased that his curriculum was appropriate for joining the police force and after consulting Careers Wales his learning coach arranged for him to spend two weeks work experience at the local police station.

Kelly

Her end of year 10 review with her learning coach showed that Kelly had made excellent progress with good interim grades in all subjects.

During November of year 11 (aged 15-16) Kelly found out about a work experience opportunity with a well-known holiday leisure company. After a consultation with her learning coach, who also helped her to complete the application forms,

Kelly spent her summer holidays on a six week planned work experience programme in Minehead.

Kelly made an appointment to see her learning coach and after a lengthy discussion she decided that although she did not want to be holiday rep, she still wanted to work within the travel and tourism industry. Kelly was particularly taken with the Air Cabin Crew course run by the local college; her learning coach quickly arranged an interview and Kelly was accepted.

Yara

She remained unmotivated and saw no point in working towards qualifications. Her learning coach arranged for Yara to attend self help groups, motivational classes and one-to-one support in some classroom lessons. In spite of this by the end of year nine (aged 14) Yara had achieved very little. When Yara was found fighting in the street the Police placed her on a compulsory anger management course. Her learning coach left Yara in no doubt that unless things improved the future looked bleak.

After two weeks of her catering course Yara walked out and refused to return. The learning coach stepped in and persuaded her to try again.

This time after extensive discussions with her learning coach, Yara took up a course in hairdressing.

Yara returned to her learning coach, and after much persuasion during the summer holidays began a carpentry course.

By Spring Yara was allowed to design and plant a small section of parkland and was really pleased when her learning coach arrived to see her achievement.

Yara's learning coach suggested that she organised a project through the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NACRO) to provide young offenders with basic horticultural skills.

Ryan

Ryan started to lose his sight at the age of 12. At 14 he was finding reading text difficult and academic study tiring. Ryan had several discussions with his learning coach, who also had a qualification in teaching the visually impaired. Ryan had always been interested in social work. With additional help and support from his learning coach, Ryan achieved level 6s in English, maths and science, and good grades in all other subjects. The large text books and CD ROMs which his learning coach had provided had helped a lot.

Ryan's learning pathway, negotiated with his learning coach at the start of year 10 consisted of English, Maths, Welsh, History and Health & Social care in school with two half days at the local college for Psychology and Sociology.

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The consultation document

The consultation document also made valuable reference to a limited amount of key academic research literature in support of helping learners to develop their own learning styles. As noted by Holtom and Bowen (2007) this pointed to a need for recognising perspectives on intelligence and emotional development as well as accelerated learning and the need for more flexibility in the measurement of confidence and soft skills (Balgobin et al 2004; Eldred et al 2005;; Goleman 1995; Hughes 2006; Jones 2005; Mayer 2005, Mayer and Salovey 1993; Stys and Brown 2004).

The consultation process was informed by young people and professionals representing a wide range of organisations and sectors covering:

Secondary schools

RNIB

Careers Wales

Further education

ELWa

Wales Youth Agency

Fforwm

Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for Wales (ACCAC)

Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS)

Universities

Local authorities

Welsh medium schools

Welsh Development Agency

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

National Training Federation

Welsh Assembly Government

It was also guided by an external reference group which involved the General Teaching Council; teaching unions (NASUWT, NUT, NAHT, NATFHE, SHA) the Princes Trust Cymru, Professional Association of Teachers (PAT), Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), Estyn, Careers Wales Association, Wales Local Government Association, and the Confederation of British Industry.

The consultation placed learners, parents and carers on centre-stage, with a say over the quality and standard of provision. It argued the case that all young people and their families are entitled to coaching - a

form of support involving one-to-one contact as well as groupwork - and there are times within a young person's learning journey when this kind of help and attention has to be far more intensive.

1.1.3 The first action plan

The consultation process led to the publication of an Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government 2003) which paved the way for the creation of the Learning Coaches role. The action plan moved away from some earlier priorities (such as mandatory Progress File developments) and was crucial in forming eight working groups drawing on stakeholder expertise:

- Overarching 14-19 Steering Group
- Learning Pathways Group
- Financial Modelling Group
- Learning Coach Group
- Community and Voluntary Experience Group
- Continuum of Learning Group
- Work Focussed Experience Group
- Personal Support Group

They were tasked with developing guidance recommendations for consideration by the Welsh Assembly. The Learning Coach group involved representation from the General Teaching Council for Wales, Careers Wales, the National Association of Headteachers, Young People's Partnerships, Estyn, the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services, Dysg, local authorities, Youth Officers, Fforwm, NASUWT, the

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The first action plan

Secondary Heads Association, the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association, ATL Cymru, and Community Consortia for Education and Training.

It gave the go-ahead for the creation of the 14-19 networks which - amongst numerous other responsibilities – analysed existing option choices for subjects and qualifications. Their next task was to develop new opportunities for learning, and produce an options menu for young people within the network locality. These networks were not designed to duplicate existing arrangements; instead they encouraged partnerships and operations already underway within the ill-fated Community Consortia for Education and Training (see Morgan et al 2005, Payne et al 2006, Saunders et al 2007). The main emphasis was in giving young people as much choice as possible, to expand practical and applied options as well as modern foreign languages, and to avoid duplication of provision between schools, colleges and private training providers. The crucial corollary of choice was the offering of guidance on how learners can access the choices to which they were entitled. There was recognition from the outset that:

“no single person – or profession – would have the full range of information necessary, or the knowledge available or the skills to undertake the full potential demands of this role (14-19 Pathways Action Plan p.26)”

A Learning Coach was to be the champion for a group of learners, and all learners were to have access to that champion. Furthermore, this was to be a multi-agency partnership where the coach was to be part of a team who already have contact with young people. Form tutors, subject teachers, careers advisers, youth workers, sports coaches, mentors, and community experience supervisors were all mentioned.

The policy guidelines also recognised that any of these professional people could adopt the role of a Learning Coach. It was therefore stated at the outset that it would be too simplistic to consider a Learning Coach as an individual who does nothing else; instead it

would be very likely that coaching is one of a series of hats that a variety of professionals wear when working with young people. The key challenge for the coaching function involves the coordination of all of the different forms of expertise and knowledge that surround a young person, and to give access to this resource at the most appropriate times in a young person's learning journey.

1.1.4 The formal guidance

The first and second editions of the formal policy for implementing the Learning Pathways 14-19 were then published (Welsh Assembly Government 2004, 2006). They responded to the earlier *Action Plan* as well as a raft of post 2002 Welsh Assembly publications such as the *Future Skills Wales* and *Generic Skills Surveys* (2003), the *Credit and Qualifications Framework For Wales* (2003), the *Personal and Social Education framework: Key Stages 1 to 4, Iaith Pawb* (2003), *A Framework for Work Related Education for 14-19 year olds in Wales* (2004), the *Skills and Employment Action Plan* (2005), the *14-19 Learning Pathways in Wales Deputy Minister's Report* (2005), *Wales: A Vibrant Economy* (2006), and most significantly *The Learning Country 2: Vision into Action* (2006).

The emergence of two editions for Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance within such a short time span reflects the declared open-leaf format for the policy: it was not to be regarded as definitive and closed; instead it was to be an evolving document to be continually modified following informed feedback from stakeholders. Furthermore, the very concept of a document entitled "Guidance" marks the recognition by central government of the need for flexibility and local interpretation with regard to how local Learning Networks interpret and implement policy.

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The guidance was divided into two broad sections: Learning Pathways, and Learner Support. The former referred especially to curriculum elements of individual pathways based on a wider choice of options plus a learning core with enhancements. The latter referred to elements surrounding coaching (as well as personal support and careers advice). Of crucial importance within the Annexes of the Guidance policy is the job description of a Learning Coach which is reproduced in table 1.2:

Table 1.2: The Learning Coach Job Description

"The Learning Coach will provide a support, guidance and mentoring service to designated learners. Dependent on individual needs, the service will be provided either by means of group work or on an individual basis. Impartial guidance that is learner centred is a crucial element of the role.

The Learning Coach will work as part of the team determined locally and within appropriate group support systems."
(Contract of employment arrangements and line management will reflect the particular circumstances of the post).

The key objectives of the role of the Learning Coach are:

- to establish good working relationships with the individual learners in order to guide them through the process of planning their own Learning Pathways and putting their learning needs first;*
- to support individual learners in identifying goals and making informed choices;*

- *to work in liaison with school/college/training staff, parents, Careers Wales and other relevant agencies to ensure that the chosen Learning Pathway is realistic and appropriate in meeting the needs of the individual learner;*
- *to identify and remove the barriers to learning by direct intervention, by developing support mechanisms and, when necessary, by referring through agreed procedures the individual learner to specialists for help;*
- *to guide individual learners towards an understanding of their learning styles and mentor and encourage the learners to learn more effectively;*
- *to monitor the progress of the individual learner in the school context and the work related environment and offer encouragement, guidance and support when appropriate;*
- *to help individual learners to set realistic and appropriate targets and support them in gauging their own performance;*
- *work with the Careers Wales staff to support the career decision-making processes of the individual learners by giving them the skills and opportunities to access relevant information regarding education, training and employment and increase their awareness of the world of work;*
- *to access pupil information from previous schools and within the school setting to ensure that transitions are managed effectively;*
- *to liaise with post 16 providers of education, training and employment in order to develop a sound understanding of the information and opportunities available to young people;*

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- *to be aware of Child Protection legislation and operate within the set guidelines;*
- *to ensure that all individual learners have equality of opportunity;*
- *to be aware of the additional needs of ethnic minority individual learners in relation to language and equal opportunities and those needing additional support;*
- *to help individual learners to identify where key skills may be accessed and achieved;*
- *to be aware of the need to avoid stereotyping; and*
- *to work with the learner to record their learning experiences, for example through their Progress File.*

ORGANISATION

The Learning Coach will:

- *record and manage the information resulting from his/her work with individual learners according to established procedures;*
- *prepare reports on the individual learners and hold regular meetings with those responsible for pastoral care within the lead learning setting;*
- *attend review meetings with his/her team leader and other colleagues, as appropriate; and*
- *be expected to participate in professional development courses and to undertake specific training designed for Learning Coaches in Wales".*

The job description was accompanied by the word “possible” as well as the phrase “for adaptation locally”. This once again illustrated the continual emphasis on the flexibility of the coaching role, allowing networks to make sense of learner support in ways that are appropriate to specific organisations and associated resources. There was also recognition of team based delivery of coaching by a number of support professions, as well as from others from outside education with relevant skills and knowledge.

Section 2.1 of the second edition of the guidance notes acknowledged the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) based accredited training programme for Coaches, in addition to the recognition of prior learning for those individuals who already had advanced experience in the field. The Learning Networks were identified as the key drivers for recruiting coaches for training, and were also required to offer induction programmes. The Learning Coaches themselves were to be given sufficient time and training in order to provide learners with quality support.

One particular concern within the Guidance notes addressed the issue of support for 14-19 year olds via university-based student tutoring and mentoring schemes. The recommendation was that these undergraduate volunteering initiatives can reinforce coaching through giving additional support. It was however emphasised that higher education students should not provide the main learning coach minimum entitlement for a group of learners.

The Guidance details three forms of learning: formal (approved qualifications), non-formal (organised or accredited programmes outside the National Qualifications Framework) and informal (wider experiences without formal recognition). Learning pathways should include all three, and furthermore these opportunities should be covered by a prospectus produced regularly by each 1-19 Learning Network. This document centres on an options menu detailing contributions from local learning and training providers.

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Learning Coaches therefore have the key task of helping 14-19 year olds to use a prospectus and choose from the menu in order to plan and follow their individual pathway. They help young people to make sense of their learning styles and aptitudes, to determine their longer term ambitions, and to choose options. This support is not confined to qualifications alone; it also makes sense of work experience, community placements, and leisure time pursuits. Throughout the Guidance there is a strong degree of fit with the premises and ideals of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification signalled so strongly in the overarching educational policy of *The Learning Country* (Welsh Assembly Government 2001, 2006). This policy stresses the right of all young people to high quality impartial information, advice and guidance in order to help make appropriate and achievable decisions by an individual as well as parents or other carers. There is a clear statement about a basic entitlement to Learning Coach support that is flexible in terms of meeting the needs of individual 14-19 year olds.

The policy includes an action plan with numerous targets and deadlines for the 14-19 networks throughout Wales. In terms of coaching, in 2008 the networks are tasked with developing strategies for extending the learning coach programme beyond the pilot phase of operation. A longer term objective is also provided in section five for all types of personal support:

“By 2010, all young people in the 14-19 age group will be entitled to high quality learning support designed to:

- support them in learning to learn, making best use of learning styles and progression;*
- provide access to personal support;*
- provide impartial advice on their learning and career choices.”*

There is also a note of caution regarding the future resourcing strategy for Learning Coach roll-out, a point to be returned to in chapter 8.

Evidence from 14-19 Networks will inform the development and refinement of aspects of the policy, for example, in developing further guidance, based on best practice and evidence of impact, on how the Learning Coach function can be implemented in a way which provides the optimum support for learners but which is also affordable and for which the capacity is available. Some of this capacity within the school and FE sector could be released from changing the balance between direct taught time and time devoted to learning support. (Section 5.0)

The commitment to coaching is then underlined by a publication in 2007 for young people themselves:

"Probably one of the biggest changes will be the introduction of Learning Coaches. These will work alongside your teachers and your careers adviser to help you plan your Learning Pathway. It is proposed that, just like a sports coach, a Learning Coach will meet with you regularly to offer advice and encouragement all through your learning Pathway. At the moment there are 230 Learning Coaches being trained as we plan to have many more across Wales in the near future" (Learning Pathways 14-19: what you need to know as a young person in Wales, WAG 2007, page 11).

Finally, the potential power of the role of the Learning Coach in terms of supporting other related initiatives has been recognised in the recommendations contained within the *Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales* (Webb et al 2007). Mentoring by undergraduate students and workplace volunteers is highlighted as general piecemeal activity which requires more coordination and strategic planning, and the Learning Coach is recognised as a potential resource which allows for the more effective management of mentoring within and between learning network organisations.

1.2 The coaching literature

Wales was therefore locating learning support within policies for all 14-19 year olds with a view to cementing entitlement through legislation and stakeholder involvement. Subsequent chapters will explore Learning Coach implementation, but before doing this it is perhaps appropriate to step back for a moment from all of the policy in order to recognise available research and practitioner commentary about coaching. Section 1.2 therefore identifies key concepts, highlights links with other roles, explores the popular appeal of coaching to a wider range of audiences, and summarises models of practice which point to the need for the specialised training of coaches.

It should also be noted at the outset that literature on coaching within educational and professional development contexts is characterised by very practical interests in helping people – mainly adults - to improve their performance in a variety of situations via intervention from a skilled expert. The very titles of published books and articles reflect these pragmatic concerns: words such as “handbook”, “pocketbook”, “manual”, “a practical guide”, “toolkit”, and “getting work done” abound.

This observation is not intended as a criticism, but rather a comment on how the coaching concept has developed an eclectic appeal which is not locked into any one subject area and which is not mystified by technical language or academic jargon. It should however be noted that there are also theoretical and discipline based roots for coaching, originating from humanistic psychology and organisational behaviour - thereby allowing links with mainstream research at more advanced levels.

1.2.1 Target populations

Business and management applications dominate the available literature on coaching applications (Argyris 1991, Boak and Thompson 1998, Dryden et al 1999, Evered and Selman 1989, Goldsmith et al 2000, Hudson 1999, O'Neill 2000, Senge et al 1999, Stephenson 2000, Walton 2001). As noted by Knights and Poppleton (2007) a distinction is frequently drawn between coaching that concentrates on middle management in order to improve quality and develop more varied styles of leadership, and more intensive coaching support that focuses on executives and senior managers.

Hill (2004) notes that the growth of coaching over the last two decades is attributed in part to the turbulent changes in commercial practices associated with the impact of information and communication technologies on work environments. Established traditions and routines have had to change, and survival and growth have required advanced and new forms of leadership within business organisations. One result is the development of coaching qualifications within UK universities which seem to target especially Masters in Business Administration styled management markets.

Thomas and Smith (2004) cite research claiming that coaching is an effective and valued methodology for initiating and supporting organisational change. The link between organisational behaviour and leadership training is reinforced by Senge's (1992) valuing of the team as being at the heart of what he called a successful learning organisation. It was this concept of team that led Senge to value especially a series of sporting metaphors (see section 1.2.4) which helped to explain successful and unsuccessful business performance through drawing parallels with other practices that may be more familiar and comprehensible. It is perhaps inevitable that once a team concept comes into play then the person behind the team will also figure in management thinking: enter the coach.

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The key question is whether the more extensively discussed management applications of coaching can be applied to educational organisations specialising in the provision of personal support for 14-19 year olds. The answer is a cautious yes. Rock (2002) notes improved basic skills test scores following a coaching programme in Chicago schools. Thomas and Smith (2004) cite one example of a coaching project at the South Bromsgrove Community High School, which improved confidence levels amongst 13 year olds. They also provide case studies of dialogues between form tutors who are coaching year 10 students using advanced listening and open questioning skills (see also Wragg and Brown 2001). Hook et al (2006) provide a valuable and detailed illustration of the kind of activity associated with coaching support:

A year 11 student, readmitted on appeal after permanent exclusion for arson. He experienced emotionally fraught home circumstances and abused drugs and alcohol. Steve, one of the coach/facilitators trained by Gillmans within an LEA project, explains.

“We met regularly, formally and informally, and I used a solution-focused approach. Exploring what had gone wrong in the past seemed both obvious and pointless. I focused on what he wanted to happen when life at school was more manageable. I used exception questions to uncover how he had kept his temper when things had gone better – they were glimpses of the preferred future. Understanding that he had been successful allowed me to coach him in these successful behaviours so that they became repeated more frequently.

I used scaling (0-10) to identify emotional state and happiness levels and to agree positive behaviours that would bring about improvement to the next step.

One particular strategy we found extremely useful was verbally coaching him on a ‘miracle walk’. ‘Imagine it’s summer and you’ve successfully completed your time here in a way that means teachers

can be pleased with you and you can be proud of yourself. Looking back, what did it take to achieve this?' This gave me the opportunities to help him identify steps and actions that he was going to take to reach the goals of completing school and accessing college with good qualifications.

The process was not easy. There were highs and lows and many colleagues made a valued contribution to the solutions we were creating.

The boy prepared for his GCSEs and sat them with a focus on achievement. He was extremely grateful and truly recognised that the coaching interventions I had put in place enabled him to reflect on and understand more of the personal resources and qualities that he had to call on which had, up to then, been unrecognised.

For me, too, it was a real achievement. I feel the outcome would not have been possible without the solution-focused coaching approach through which I had enhanced my skills and continue to develop.”
(Hook et al 2006 94-95)

These are however rare studies within the published literature on coaching; the vast majority of documented applications are with older workforces in the private and public sectors.

1.2.2 Key concepts

So what is coaching and what is its underlying philosophy? A variety of published perspectives emerge for these two simple queries, all of them refuting mechanistic assumptions about top-down expert action and favouring instead the importance of forming trusted and nurturing relationships (Knights and Poppleton 2007). Downey (1999, 2003) defines coaching as the skilful support for other people's performance through facilitating their learning and development. He views this support as dance-like activity that does not become pre-occupied with

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Overlaps with mentoring

analysis of detailed methods and techniques; instead both coach and coachee become fully engaged in holistic growth and change. Hill (2004) extends this fundamental notion of coaching as a form of artistic practice which enhances the performance of another person. Hook et al (2006) concentrate on the theme of change based on establishing conversations which empower people through challenging current thinking and practices.

Whitmore (1992) works on the assumption that everyone has potential and the coach is the person who finds and releases it. Zeus and Skiffington (2002) state simply that coaching is both a platform and a vehicle for learning, overcoming barriers and steering around obstacles along the way. Their interpretation of coaching identifies a continual learning process, supported by Parsloe and Wray's (2000) notion of an enabling process which gives learners a variety of:

"styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate in the context in which the coaching takes place" (page 42).

Technique is therefore a key interest, but optimistic values also dominate coaching discourses and conversations. Thomas and Smith (2004) have the last word on this matter:

"although coaching is about techniques, it is primarily about attitude. It is about challenging the popular culture that says 'things are terrible and we can only expect worse' and replacing it with a mindset that says 'anything is possible if what we believe in is worth it and we will find a way to achieve it" (p 25).

1.2.2.1 Overlaps with mentoring

Coaching literature also abounds with discussion about the differences between coaching and other activity, and the role of a coach as compared with other support professionals. Perhaps the most frequent confusion surrounds the differences and similarities between coaching

and mentoring. And within the broad category of mentoring, there are also further distinctions to be made (as noted in section 1.1.1 by the *Connexions* programme in England). Colley (2003) after Skinner and Fleming (1999) identifies a series of models for mentoring. Two of these are:

- Industrial (Golden and Sims 1997), where business workforces help young people to attain qualifications, especially at GCSE grade C and above
- Positive action, where community support targets oppressed minorities, providing positive role models that sometimes go against those school and college institutional cultures that may be perceived as prejudiced and discriminatory

A third model has much appeal for the Learning Coach community. This emerged from YOUTHSTART and is termed engagement mentoring, based on working with at-risk or already disengaged young people, and then seeking reengagement within labour markets through support from a wide range of sectors and organisations.

The mentor tends to be a trusted individual who has relatively more seniority, experience and professional status, and who imparts directive advice as appropriate (see Parsloe and Wray 2000 for more detailed discussion). The mentor gives one-to-one support for a very broad range of issues, but does not necessarily have the specific skills associated with empowering other people as they take action and move towards their destination.

The distinction between coaching and mentoring is undoubtedly problematic, not the least because some authors use the terms interchangeably (see Clutterbuck 1991, 1998, Conway 1997; Thomas and Smith 2004, Thomas 2005, and Brounstein 2000 for more detailed discussion). In practice mentoring involves a substantial amount of coaching activity, and coaches can acquire mentor status as they establish their reputation through getting results and becoming trusted confidants. Li and Chan (2007) make this distinction:

"...there are no commonly agreed definitions of coaching. In contrast to mentoring, whereby a more experienced individual shares his knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust coaching is construed by Whitmore (1995) as unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance."

1.2.2.2 Overlaps with counselling

Coaching can also be closely allied with counselling. The underlying interests in empowerment, maximising potential, and unlocking of talent have profound implications for personal growth and the development of well-being. It is therefore easy to align coaching philosophy with humanistic psychology and human development, especially in relation to adopting non-directive and client-centred perspectives (Rogers 1961, 1969; Dryden et al 1999, Fransella and Dalton 2000).

The key to making a successful distinction between coaching and counselling perhaps involves a more pragmatic and short-term focus of coaching on specific issues. This compares with counselling interests that address more serious forms of conflict. Clients choose their direction and counsellors often support them holistically throughout what is likely to be a longer timeframe. Again, the distinction from coaching can become easily confounded, especially when successful coaching leads to the formation of a trusted and confidential relationship. There may be an increased likelihood of disclosure and the coach may have insight into more deep-seated feelings and motives within the individual.

In short, it has to be stated that coaching as a concept is surrounded by a degree of semantic confusion, although when it comes to practical applications the work of the coach and the mentor and the counsellor have hall-marks which set these roles apart. It is also worth noting that few authors discuss potential overlaps between coaching and careers guidance – a point that will be returned to in chapter 6.

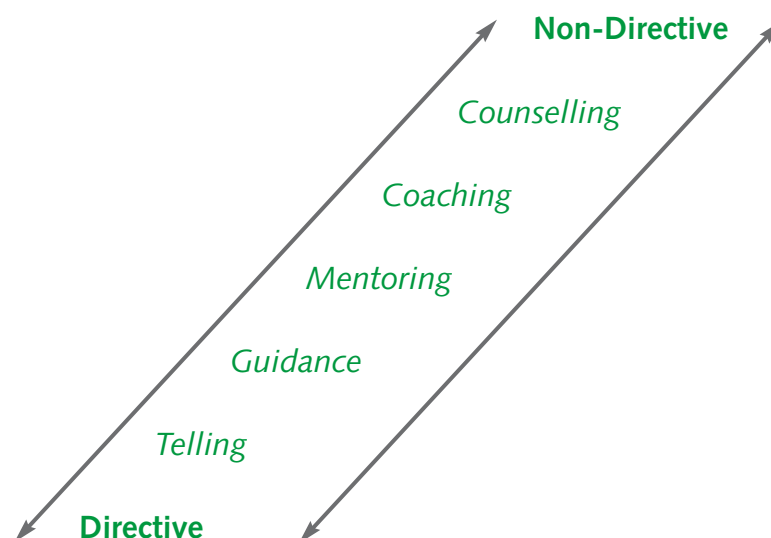
1.2.3 Popular appeal via a sporting metaphor

It is also important to consider the perceptions and views of those people and organisations which benefit from coaching support as regards their view of the role and the value of coaching. One argument – drawing on Senge (1991) – involves the appeal of the sporting metaphor for explaining coaching roles. This metaphor is inspired in part by such authors as Gallwey (1974, 1981) and Whitmore (1997) who have demonstrated transference from sporting contexts (for example tennis, golf, and motor racing) to other situations (most notably, management practice within companies). With 14-19 Learning Pathways interests, the Learning Coach may therefore be more easily defined as the specialist who makes a difference in school or college, in the same way as a sports coach helps an athlete to overcome physical or psychological difficulties on the track or the field.

The sporting metaphor may be useful at a popular level, but as Parsloe and Wray (2000) note it may also be limiting and non-productive on two counts. First, sports coaching refers to very applied and situation-specific sets of skills that may not be so easily generalised to other people and places. Second, most sport is characterised by assumptions about physical ability and fitness linked to winning, competition, and recreation. Many learning situations are characterised by cooperation rather than competition, and may not be viewed as leisure or past-time activity. Flaherty (2005) adds a further warning: the sports coach also offers a negative image of someone who may be ruthless and uncaring on occasions, and as an authority figure who gives harsh feedback – even substituting one player for another when performance is unsatisfactory.

1.2.4 Principles underlying a coaching continuum

With these reservations being noted, coaching activity can be classified in ways which begin with traditional intervention – as Hill (2004) notes, the coach “has got all the answers”. More advanced support then concentrates on encouraging the learner to explore alternative methods and ways of seeing a particular situation, building up a repertoire of skills and strategies alongside a growing confidence in trying out new things out and evaluating the results. The coach therefore facilitates movement from narrow problem-solving towards empowered transformation that adapts easily and successfully to new and very different challenges. Thomas and Smith (2004) emphasise the value of a directive – non-directive continuum for coaching:



This kind of continuum is reinforced by a set of principles which rely on non-judgemental respect, a positive outlook, and a need to challenge so that people move beyond their comfort zones. Flaherty (2005) outlines five key concerns that should underlie all coaching applications:

- A trusted and confidential relationship within which there is freedom of expression

- A pragmatic concern with problem solving through challenge
- Developing “two track” consciousness, where coaches concentrate on the positive growth of their clients, and also on their own development as coaches
- Being respectful of the perceptions and established practices of the individual, as well as resistance to trying out new things
- Avoiding a technique mentality for coaching, where there is a preoccupation with giving hints and tips whilst missing the ultimate ontological goal of autonomy and empowerment.

For Flaherty the characteristic of successful coaching involves three key outcomes. First is long term excellence of performance. Second, there will be self-correction that is independent of the coach. Third, self generation emerges where independent action and a deeper desire to experiment emanate from within the individual.

The coach therefore helps along the way by establishing the relationship, researching into the various situations and perceptions which are dominating the learner’s thoughts and actions, and then helping to interpret and discover solutions. The art of the coach is to encourage questioning but to not answer all of the time.

This questioning skill perhaps constitutes the biggest challenge for coaches who work with some young people who have a very limited time-frame or attention span when it comes to engaging with adults. The coach has to help them to overcome difficulties and develop new learning strategies whilst also immediately demonstrating an ability to help with these longer term goals. The above continuum may therefore be sensibly viewed as strategically building up the relationship; the coach quickly proves expertise and usefulness by way of directive support. As the dialogue between learner and coach develops, more advanced but less directive action come to characterise the relationship.

Turnbull (2007) and Hughes (2006) add a further controversial warning when it comes to the performance of the coaching role. Some professions may have practices, attitudes and expectations that get in the way. Teaching is singled out as an example:

“although a great many teachers have considerable experience of mentoring, few have extensive experience of coaching. Coaching requires a very different range of skills and techniques, and therefore, for many teachers, represents a significant shift in mindset ... after many years of making judgements, having opinions and giving advice, the first instinct of many people is to tell. Moving into coaching involves, for many teachers, breaking the habit of a lifetime” (Hughes, 2006 p 61)

1.2.5 Implications

There are a variety of models for the actual applications of coaching based on movement along the directive-non-directive continuum. As noted by Ashley (2007), Cheun's (2000) five distinct and chronological stages prove useful in tracing movement within the coaching relationship:

- setting up
- building rapport
- assessing the situation
- providing feedback
- making changes.

Flaherty (2005) elaborates on this sequence but prefers instead to discuss a flow of coaching which begins with opening up the relationship, observing the learner in action and then assessing the

scale of challenge, enrolling both parties within a plan of action which includes timescales and deadlines, and then moving into what he calls the conversation of coaching (within which the fine detail is achieved over a longer time period). He emphasises this theme of conversation, saying how important it is for the coach to understand the language that is being used by learners in order to define their own worlds. The coach then develops a new language which reframes problems or obstacles and opens up new possibilities and opportunities through application to learners' everyday repertoires.

These themes of communication and rapport, plus the identification of obstacles and difficulties, require much skill. The coach does not only build relationships and explore personalised learning agendas; expertise is also needed in terms of having a detailed knowledge of assessment and diagnostic methods and procedures. Coaching demands advanced ability in being able to provide continual and concurrent constructive feedback which is both meaningful and motivating. The synthesising agent is the action plan which has to be continually reviewed. It is for all of these reasons that the role of the coach requires staff development which helps to develop such expertise within support and teaching professions in order to help young people with their personal and academic development. Chapter 2 details the emergence of such a national training programme for the Learning Coaches of Wales.

1.3 Headline conclusions

- Coaching is located firmly within Welsh Assembly Government policy surrounding young people. Learning coach initiatives and subsequent roll-out have evolved through grassroots consultation with a variety of stakeholders, and the Learning Coach is now a key component within 14-19 Pathways.

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Headline conclusions

- In Wales the role of the Learning Coach is defined in a more flexible way as compared with the role of the Learning Mentor within such initiatives as the *Connexions* programme in England. There is a desire to move away from overly narrow mentoring priorities based on attaining qualifications, career planning, business induction, or support from undergraduate students in higher education.
- Student and business mentoring initiatives are not to be substituted for Learning Coach support, but it has been suggested by the Review of Further Education that Learning Coaches are well placed to coordinate and manage such activity within individual learning networks.
- The Learning Coach in Wales has a key interest in helping young people to make sense of informal and non-formal learning opportunities, as well as strengthening formal learning which leads to qualifications. At the same time the role of the Learning Coach includes supporting well-being and demonstrating success amongst young people. There is no exclusive preoccupation with boosting educational attainment at key stage four; instead there is a fundamental concern with planning appropriate vocational and academic pathways based on the use of options menus.
- Learning coach activity is defined in a flexible way in order to allow for local interpretation and the sharing of available resources. The coaching function can be achieved via teamwork or by individuals, but in all cases it is likely to involve multi-agency working and partnership between a variety of professions and agencies dedicated to providing support for young people.
- The professional development of Learning Coaches is informed through existing research and case study literature in order to establish deeper theoretical and methodological underpinnings for the role of the Learning Coach. This knowledge and good practice can be incorporated within training programmes.

Designing the National Training Programme for Learning Coaches

Policy developments outlined in Section 1.1 created the Role of the Learning Coach in Wales. There was now a need for a national training programme.

In 2005 the *First Campus* higher education partnership worked with Welsh Assembly Government in order to design accredited training for the first cohort of Learning Coaches. The task involved generating sets of core units at levels 3 and 4 within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), with each unit having defined outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

First Campus is a HEFCW funded Reaching Wider consortium of higher education institutions in South East Wales, based at the University of Glamorgan. The partnership targets under-achieving Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 learners with significant educational disadvantages – those who live in Communities First wards, those who have some kind of disability, and those who come from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. *First*

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Campus therefore seeks to enhance education experiences and to facilitate and improve progression pathways into further and higher education.

The four *First Campus* institutions involved in the design stage of the Learning Coach training project were the University of Glamorgan, the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC), University of Wales Newport and Cardiff University. An important feature of this partnership is the implementation of the largest undergraduate mentoring programme in Wales, based on Cardiff University's leadership via Alan Evans of the HEFCE National Mentoring Pilot Project. The partnership took an immediate interest in the concept and role of the Learning Coach, as proposed in the emergent 14-19 Learning Pathways policy. The coaching function complemented other *First Campus* work with schools and colleges, involving on-campus events where learners aged 10-16 visited universities and met undergraduate students. *First Campus* valued alternative ways of communicating with young people in order to build up their confidence and capabilities. In addition, the considerable range of academic expertise available in the universities – ranging from mentoring and study skills development through to teacher and youth worker training – allowed for the subsequent validation of a dedicated training curriculum for Learning Coaches.

The project was led by the CQFW team, linked with the Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities (YALO) division within the Welsh Assembly Government, as a pilot study (Saunders and Turnbull 2006). The time frame for design and multiple sector stakeholder consultation spanned eight months and involved over 110 individuals drawn from secondary schools, Careers Wales, Youth agencies, WAG, teaching unions, and higher education. The brief was to devise and agree a set of learning units that fully and accurately reflected the Learning Coach model within the 14-19 Learning Pathways document.

Four stages were identified for the design and consultation process:

- Content analysis of source materials
- Peer referencing
- Curriculum design
- Stakeholder consultation

2.1 Stage one: content analysis

Three information sources were used in order to define key curriculum areas:

- the specification document had outlined the requirements of the contract to develop the Learning Coach accreditation framework. The framework was to include a set of learning units that fully and accurately reflected the Learning Coach model in the 14-19 Learning Pathways Guidance Document. The credit-based qualification should also integrate into progression opportunities in vocational, FE and HE sectors.
- the 14-19 Learning Pathways Guidance Document was consulted for the key elements of the work of the Learning Coach, together with a possible Job Description.
- the 14-19 Learning Pathway Overarching Steering Group had tasked a Working Group, chaired by Frank Cicotti (also the chair of NAHT Cymru) to consider the potential role of the Learning Coach. The notes from meetings of the Group throughout a two year period were coded via content analysis for themes relating to coaching.

The emerging themes (99 in total) were subsequently clustered into elements which then led to the identification of broad and dominant curriculum areas for the design of subsequent units.

2.2 Stage two: peer referencing

Consultation with practitioners assessed whether the clusters and elements incorporated all aspects of the Learning Coach role. The creation of a Reference Group allowed feedback via workshop activity. This was supplemented by telephone and email communications with further individuals from eight pilot projects funded by Welsh Assembly Government during the 2004-5 period in order to gather views about what curriculum content would be appropriate. The pilot studies were a key influence on initial planning, and are summarised in more detail in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The Eight 2004-5 Pilot Studies

- 1. Bridgend: a learning coach in each of the County's nine secondary schools, plus establishing a network of support via partnership with Careers Wales (Mid Glamorgan), Bridgend's Advisory Service (ESIS), Bridgend YPP and Bridgend CCET – see Ashley (2007) for further information.*
- 2. Denbighshire: a team of 12 part time learning coaches across the Dee Valley Partnership, building on good practice and partnerships already in place.*
- 3. Gwynedd and Anglesey: secondment of two persons working full time to develop the role of learning coach.*
- 4. Merthyr: training a group of professionals (school and college staff, youth workers, careers service staff and others) identified as being potential learning coaches.*
- 5. Port Talbot: providing one learning coach for 3 days a week at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School, working with Y9, Y10 and Y11 pupils.*

6. *Powys: enhancing the motivation and opportunities of students by providing them with the support of a full time learning coach.*
7. *Rhondda Cynon Taff: training a group of professionals in aspects of the role of learning coach via partnership with three secondary schools, Coleg Morgannwg, RCT Youth Service and Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan.*
8. *Wrexham: enabling one day of learning coach support in each of 4 selected secondary schools, working with a cohort of year nine learners identified as underachievers in the middle to upper range of ability.*

Reference Group discussions generated useful curriculum outcomes guided by the use of a series of potential dilemmas (see table 2.2) that Learning Coaches might encounter during the course of their work.

Table 2.2: Coaching Dilemmas based on fictitious scenarios

- *You are faced with a sullen uncommunicative student who only moments earlier you saw in the corridor as a vivacious talkative individual*
- *Wayne looks up at you and says 'This is a waste of time; I don't want to be here. Why do you want to see me?'*
- *Samantha's science notes are very thin in terms of written content but there is an abundance of carefully drawn and colourful diagrams.*

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Stage two: peer referencing

- *Luke has written an English Literature essay which simply describes what happened in one of the chapters. Occasionally he has written 'I don't agree with the author's opinion' but he doesn't give any further detail.*
- *Liz comes to the coaching session with her English Literature essay. She wants you to read through it, check it and make corrections.*
- *Jake has produced a 'compare and contrast' essay which does not compare and contrast. Rather, it is an essay of two halves.*
- *You are walking down a corridor in school and find two pupils fighting.*
- *Gemma has become increasingly morose and the standard of her work has fallen. She hasn't said anything to you, but from what others have said, you suspect bullying may be an issue for her.*
- *In conversation with Nadine you discover she is the main carer for her disabled mother.*

Workshops with stakeholders allowed for the follow-through of dilemmas with a series of solutions. This proved to be a useful strategy for testing out the validity of the potential range of skills and attributes of the Learning Coach. Feedback throughout the exercise modified the clustered elements so that they became a more accurate representation of the role.

2.3 Stage three: writing the units

The clustered elements were allocated to individual *First Campus* universities according to areas of institutional expertise within a validated curriculum. Although each element had a designated higher education leader, further and secondary education colleagues were also involved as appropriate in order to make maximum use of cross-sector expertise.

The aims for the writers at this early stage were to:

- produce a flexible series of units which would lead to a Level 4 Higher Education qualification (for example the Certificate of Higher Education at 120 credits within the CQFW) and at Level 3 an Open College Network (OCN) styled qualification using the CQFW template.
- produce 5-10 learning outcomes per element (equivalent to approximately 70 hours of learning and assessment time) building up to 15-30 outcomes per unit once the elements are put together.
- use the published information available on the role of the Learning Coach, and the feedback from the Reference Group.

Key reminders were used in order to assist curriculum designers with their preparation of units. Of crucial importance was a summary of the CQFW level descriptors (drawn in turn from the Northern Ireland Credit and Accumulation Transfer Scheme) for level 4 outcomes, along with a very brief summary of outcomes above and below this threshold:

Table 2.3: The CQFW level 4 descriptors with reminders about levels 3 and 5

CQFW Level 4 Descriptor:

Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs"

In the guidelines to the project team this broad descriptor for level 4 was then broken down into the three CQFW component areas covering intellectual skills, processes, and accountability

Intellectual Skills and Attributes:

Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base. Employ a range of specialised skills. Determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems. Generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined but often unfamiliar problems. Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies.

(and at level 3: more emphasis on application and comprehension, less emphasis on rigour or innovation or investigative strategies)

(and at level 5: more emphasis on abstract thinking, specialised skills)

Processes:

Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities. Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources

(and at level 3: more emphasis on operation within routines, giving presentations to audiences but without too much planning or selection)

(and at level 5: more emphasis on creativity, an awareness of differences between technical vs management vs professional functions, more emphasis on judgement and appropriateness of activities etc)

Accountability:

Undertake self-directed and a limited amount of directive activity. Operate within broad general guidelines and functions. Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of outputs. Meet specified quality standards.

(and at level 3: more emphasis on guidance and directed activity, less emphasis on meeting specific quality standards)

(and at level 5: more emphasis on responsibility and accountability for determining personal and group outcomes)

The team was also warned not to take accreditation beyond the brief of the role of the Learning Coach. The most significant reminder was that the Learning Coach function should not stray into other professional territories associated with the work of a counsellor or teacher or careers officer; the coach would however need to know about such roles in order to refer to such specialists.

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Stage four: consultation

This exercise was testing out not just the clarity of Learning Coach role definitions, but also the efficacy of CQFW descriptors as used by academics from a range of institutions. It is worth noting that in general the emergent learning outcomes were formulated in clear, precise and unambiguous ways. The assessment criteria were, however, far more variable – especially in terms of being overly detailed and verbose. This was perhaps an inevitable outcome for a project team which involved four universities that were used to curriculum development vocabularies and validation processes specific to their own institutions.

A detailed edit of the first drafts was therefore necessary to produce documentation for the next round of consultation workshops. This iterative process included standardising individual units with consistent use of terminology and a set number of learning outcomes plus assessment criteria.

2.4 Stage four: consultation

Amended drafts were presented to consultation groups in North and South Wales involving a minimum of 71² participants from the following sectors and organisations:

<i>Schools</i>	<i>Further education colleges</i>
<i>Higher education institutions</i>	<i>14-19 Learning Networks</i>
<i>British Dyslexic Association</i>	<i>Careers Wales</i>
<i>WAG /ELWA³</i>	<i>CQFW</i>
<i>Young Peoples Partnerships</i>	<i>BDA Cymru</i>
<i>Private training providers</i>	<i>NAS/UWT</i>
<i>WJEC/CBAC</i>	<i>NASUWT Cymru</i>
<i>Learning coach pilot projects</i>	<i>Cynnal/Gyfra Cymru</i>
<i>Community Consortia for Education and Training</i>	
<i>Local authority education departments</i>	
<i>Local authority youth service departments</i>	

² Based on workshop attendance sheets, although an estimated twelve further individuals attended for some or all of the sessions without signing their names.

³ At the time of completing the project ELWA was designated as an organisation with semi-independence from Welsh Assembly Government, responsible for all post 16 education and training with the exception of higher education. Since then it has been subsumed within the Welsh Assembly's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS).

Although substantial feedback was obtained the value of the sessions was mixed in terms of contributions from different groups of representatives. The team observed occasional antipathy and resistance to the Learning Coach concept and role. When this was noted within the workshop discussions it stemmed especially from senior managers within secondary schools. Their objections were based mostly on resourcing arguments which could not be addressed within the accreditation brief, and discussion was therefore deferred to Welsh Assembly Government officials at a later point in time.

In other situations, a small number of organisations appeared to send representatives at short notice, but without prior briefing. These last-minute nominees were relatively new to Learning Coach policy and terminology and therefore preferred to refresh their understanding of the original brief and role of the coach as opposed to the more advanced task of concentrating on the content of the proposed training units. The key observation was that planned representation from a particular sector within stakeholder consultations might not always be consistent or reliable when different individuals are asked to contribute to an ongoing series of discussions.

The majority of workshop participants had much more to offer in terms of feeding back on the proposed training content, based on their practical experience of providing academic and personal support for young people, or their previous engagement with pilot Learning Coach project work. Both workshops also generated invaluable perspectives and advice from those participants outside the formal secondary education sector – most notably within Youth and Careers services. Indeed, representatives from the schools sector sometimes had to be reminded that the coaching role had a much wider brief.

The workshop style of the sessions proved a productive process, particularly the use of 'traffic lights' as a method of focusing on those learning outcomes that needed most discussion. Participants were asked to apply Green to those learning outcomes they considered satisfactory, Amber to those that needed amendment, and Red to those

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that were thought to be surplus to requirements. They were also asked to headline the more peripheral options as well as the mainstream priorities within each curriculum area under consideration.

Several consensus points appeared from the workshop discussions:

- the wording of the units should recognise that the Learning Coach may be operating in non-school contexts
- terminology should be simplified so that units can be more easily understood by less expert audiences
- level 4 was the most appropriate level for the accreditation
- some units were emerging as central to the Coaching role whilst others were more peripheral and may have optional status

The project team debated the issue of academic language and argued forcefully that advanced and specific vocabulary was desirable for moving the units through initial accreditation and subsequent validation systems within the universities. The academic content of the CQFW units therefore guided curriculum designers in higher education, who then prepared more detailed level 4 documentation for their respective quality assurance panels inside their own institutions.

First Campus was therefore making a distinction between (i) meeting standards at designated levels and gaining approval from expert others and (ii) appealing to practitioners who are concerned first and foremost with everyday application rather than the backroom design of the curriculum per se. An interesting communication challenge emerged for such a CQFW curriculum design project: on the one hand technical language has to be used with educational and quality assurance communities, but on the other hand plain English and Welsh has to be applied when publicising the curriculum and qualification outcomes to end users.

The fundamental end-product for the consultation workshop was a shortlist of core training units. Five curriculum areas were now designated as core units each carrying 10 credits based on 100 hours of learning time. These units were viewed as mandatory for training:

- The Mentoring Process
- Coaching for Learning
- Study Strategies
- Legislation
- Referral Methods and Systems

Table 2.4 shows three clusters of remaining units within optional streams that could be accessed at a later point in time, depending on the interest of the particular Learning Coaches and their learning organisations.

Table 2.4: clusters of potential optional units following core training:

Cluster A: *“Referral and Tracking”, with units covering:*

- *Sources*
- *Tracking*
- *Accessing organisations*
- *Personal support*

Cluster B: *“Professional Development”, with units covering:*

- *New initiatives and developments*
- *Qualifications*
- *Quality and monitoring*
- *Professional development*

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Cluster C: “Specialisms”, with units covering:

- Groupwork
- Conflict management
- Cultural issues
- On-line resources and technology

Following reiteration of content by authors, a further Reference Group workshop was convened in order to focus on specific problematic areas. A major debate involved terminology and the need to clarify key concepts through the provision of working definitions of terms within the accredited units. The following statement was produced by Jacquie Turnbull for all of the stakeholders:

Table 2.5: terminology briefing statement for use in training:

Descriptions of the many roles that involve work with Young People use a range of terms, many of which can be interchangeable, e.g. mentoring, counselling, tutoring, support, guidance, advice.

In relation to the work of the Learning Coach, it is important to understand specifically how such terms are used. In fact, the units for accreditation of the Learning Coach use these terms in a particular way:

The Mentoring Process:

This refers to the relationship between the Learning Coach and Young People. The Learning Coach will be able to establish rapport, and demonstrate unconditional positive regard for Young People. The Learning Coach will need to gain the trust of

Young People, and establish an open and constructive relationship as a foundation for effective coaching for learning.

Coaching for Learning:

The Learning Coach will have knowledge of learning styles and a range of theories that describe different approaches to learning. The Learning Coach will be able to use this knowledge to engage Young People in understanding their own progression as learners. The Learning Coach will be able to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that impact upon Young People's learning development, and tailor strategies that will engage Young People in defining realistic learning goals.

Learner Study Strategies:

The Learning Coach will be able to draw upon a range of materials and techniques to enable Young People to develop their study skills. The Learning Coach will assist Young People to recognise and evaluate their study methods, and encourage Young People to develop the study skills appropriate to their specific needs as learners. The Learning Coach will enable Young People to understand how knowledge acquisition and skills development relate to the requirements of formal academic, vocational and other learning contexts.

While the Learning Coach will also have knowledge of relevant legislation and understand when referral is appropriate, the essential skill set for the Learning Coach can be summarised as:

- *able to create a trusting relationship with Young People*
- *able to use knowledge of learning styles to engage Young People in learning development*
- *able to draw on materials and techniques to enable Young People to improve their study skills*



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Lessons learned from the CQFW pilot project

The final stage of consultation involved the presentation of five core training units to representatives from a range of level 3 and 4 awarding bodies who could then recognise and include them within their accreditation portfolios in future academic sessions. This meeting was attended by representatives from the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), OCN, City and Guilds, Edexcel, the Open University, UWIC and the University of Glamorgan.

2.5 Lessons learned from the CQFW pilot project

The writing of the units was a unique exercise for a variety of reasons:

- the requirement was to construct a credit qualification for a new role that was largely untested – beyond a possible job description and a handful of pilot projects. It therefore provided a significant opportunity to focus on the process of constructing a transparent accreditation scheme and to identify the vital elements for the future stakeholders.
- it involved use of the CQFW level descriptors but because CQFW has just been born there were few exemplary models of units which helped to guide the process.
- it involved advanced teamwork which crossed educational sector boundaries: the *First Campus* unit authors came from four universities, two schools and one college – thereby demonstrating the power of collaboration when faced with a consultation process spanning the whole of Wales.

Three major issues were recognised as being of crucial importance in writing an accreditation scheme for CQFW as well as a professional development programme for the Learning Coaches themselves:

Functional role analysis:

As evidenced through the stakeholder consultation workshops, input from practitioners was a vital component when constructing units that represented the lived reality of the role of the Learning Coach. Even when writing some of the units, the 'visioning' of activities was useful when compiling realistic learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The use of coaching dilemmas and scenarios was found to be a key method for identifying the likely functions of the Learning Coach.

Writing for academic accreditation:

The majority of the Project Team were academics, and therefore had experience of writing units and using terminology likely to be acceptable for academic accreditation. This sometimes caused differences of opinion with end-user practitioners, who found some of the language obtuse.

Writing for practitioner comprehension:

Units had to be in a form likely to be acceptable for academic accreditation. At the same time it was essential that units were accessible to practitioners to be easily translated into activities in the workplace. The project in part resolved this difficulty through the generation of units at levels 3 and 4 so that practitioners had a choice in terms of advanced outcomes and more simplified language. The *First Campus* team also noted that once units had been generated at one particular level – be it more or less advanced – the production of the unit at the other level was a relatively fast and natural process. The use of CQFW level descriptors proved to be invaluable in this respect.

These three factors - ability to generate a functional role analysis, writing for academic accreditation and writing for practitioner comprehension - require different skills and abilities. They are all deemed to be essential components in constructing an accreditation scheme, especially when faced with a novel context such as defining the role of a Learning Coach. All three are also relevant to a potential future development regarding the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

for coaches who have already gained sufficient experience and/or training. The units have to be clear in terms of the outcomes listed, and if they are practitioner focussed then they also become relevant and appealing for RPL candidates. A significant advantage of CQFW functional analysis therefore involves outcomes and assessment criteria which allow for the mapping of retrospective evidence and the construction of portfolios.

2.6 Headline conclusions

- The design of the Learning Coach training programme involved a detailed consultation process with numerous stakeholders throughout Wales. A series of workshops elaborated on the original job description and role profile developed within the early drafts of the 14-19 Learning Pathways policy and within the Guidance notes. This exercise provided a means of authenticating and checking the accuracy of curriculum content prior to designing CQFW units.
- An iterative design process resulted in five core training modules set at levels 3 and 4, plus a further three clusters of options that could be used for further training (see chapter 7). Adherence to a learning outcomes philosophy, alongside the use of CQFW level descriptors, also allowed for the subsequent consortium based validation of the core training modules by the four universities (see chapter 3).
- Curriculum designers within the *First Campus* higher education partnership had difficulty in not using academic and technical quality assurance vocabularies when producing documentation for stakeholders outside of universities.
- Whilst there was generally strong support for the role of the Learning Coach and for the proposed training outcomes, some resistance was noted from senior managers in the schools sector, based mainly on resourcing objections.
- The use of clear and agreed learning outcomes helped to prepare for future RPL possibilities.

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The stage was set for the launch of an all-Wales national training programme for Learning Coaches. Policy had been developed following an extensive consultation phase, as had the design of a core training programme embedded within the CQFW. The Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh European Funding Office allocated funding to the training programme and following a competitive tendering exercise they awarded the training contract to the *First Campus* partnership of higher education institutions. *First Campus* was well positioned for this task given their leadership of the curriculum design and stakeholder consultation project outlined in chapter 2. Experiences and observations of the first full training year for 299 Learning Coaches are now outlined, based on feedback from:

- advisory and reference groups
- the *First Campus* training team
- external evaluation from the People at Work Unit
- GfK NOP market research commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.

3.1 The training programme

The accredited programme covered five core 10 credit modules set at level 4 within the CQFW. Table 3.1 depicts the lead University for each curriculum area:

Table 3.1: Lead universities for each core module

Module Title	Lead University
The Learning Coach: The Mentoring Process	Cardiff University
The Learning Coach: Coaching for Learning	The University of Glamorgan
Legislation	UWIC
The Learning Coach: Study Strategies	The University of Glamorgan
Referral Methods and Systems	University of Wales Newport

The project began in 2006, with the objective of recruiting and training Learning Coaches throughout Wales. An action plan was devised for the first cohort:

- Agreement of project management framework
- Appointment of the core project team
- Validation of respective core modules by each lead university
- Learning and teaching assumptions
- Recruitment and enrolment of participants
- Training delivery
- Identification of training and accreditation outcomes
- Evaluation

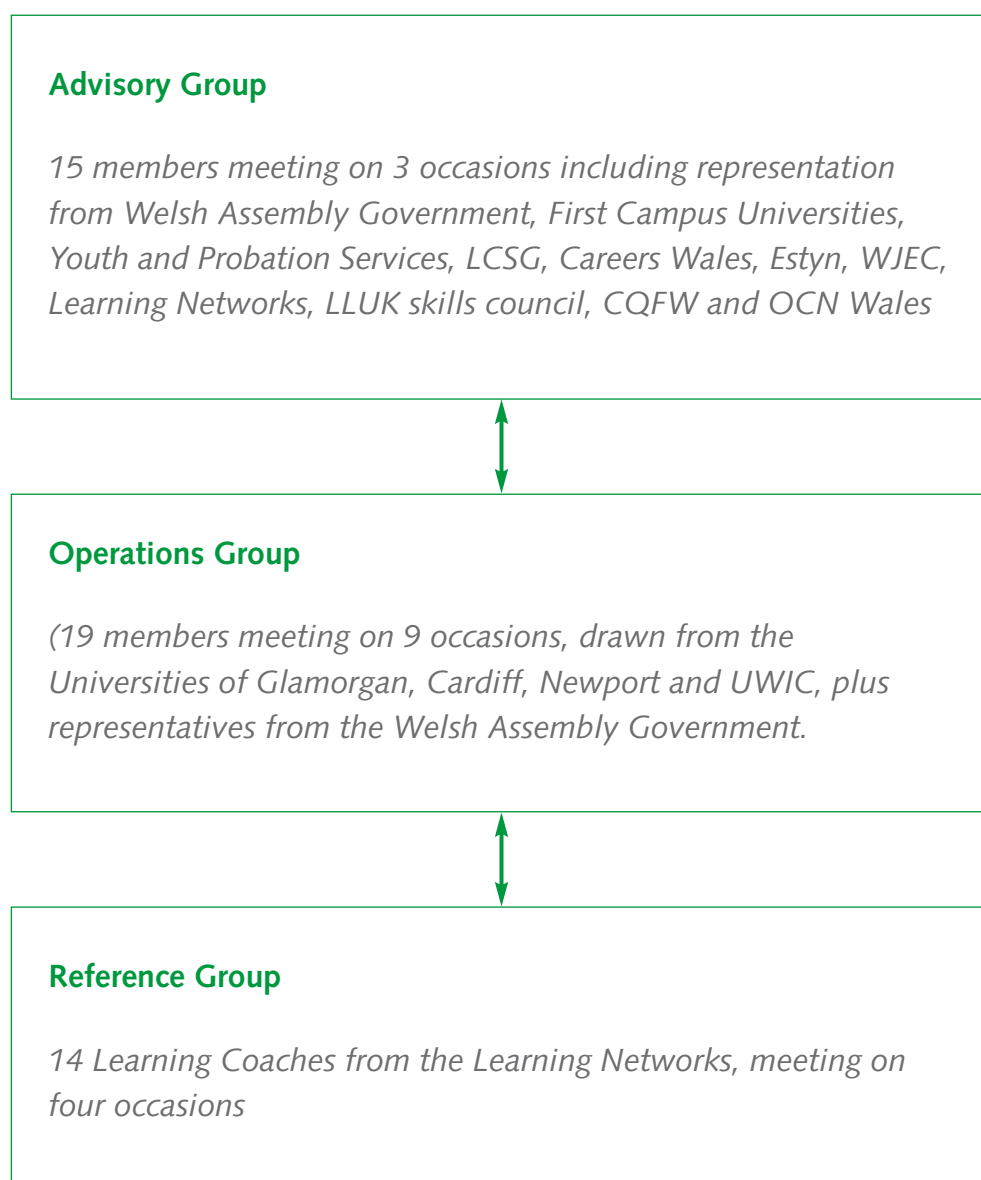
Fifteen tutors led 140 training workshops involving a total of 299 coaches over a 19 month period. The original target number of 220 (based on 10 coaches from each of the 22 learning networks) was exceeded because of the anticipated high drop-out rate associated with part-time mature students. By the end of the first year a total of 210 coaches completed all of the core training, with 89 gaining accredited status (see section 3.1.3 for a definition of terms).

3.1.1 Management strategy

Leadership of the entire Learning Coach initiative was provided via the Head of the Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities division within the Welsh Assembly Government, and the 14-19 Learning Pathways Manager for Wales. Direction of the *First Campus* training delivery was achieved via the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Glamorgan, within which a core team of four full-time Learning Coach project staff were responsible for detailed operations involving partner universities and 14-19 Learning Networks.

Table 3.2 provides details of stakeholder involvement within the management and feedback process for the entire programme. Three key groups provided guidance throughout the life of the project. First, a Learning Coach Advisory Group monitored progress and discussed the overall issues emerging from the first cohort. Second, an Operations Group identified key delivery issues, then fine-tuned the training through monitoring and feedback. Third, a Learning Coach Reference Group offered perspectives on the coaching role, the effectiveness of the training, and further training needs.

Table 3.2 The Management Framework



The management strategy also entailed a detailed evaluation and overview exercise, drawing on information collected throughout the entire first cohort experience as well as previous consultation exercises and policy publications relevant to the coaching role. Half way through the exercise the Head of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Glamorgan was partially seconded into the Welsh

Assembly in order to document the development of the entire Learning Coach initiative, and to provide recommendations about future implementation within Wales.

3.1.2 Appointment of the core project team

Four full-time posts were dedicated to the training programme. This included the key secondment of a senior Careers Wales manager to the position of Learning Coach Training Project Manager, followed six months later by a second key secondment from Careers Wales to the post of North and West Wales Regional Coordinator. The team was further strengthened through the appointment of a sub-editor (who developed information guides, newsletters and populated the website) and an Administrator (who maintained records, processed enrolments, as well as booking workshop venues and responding to enquiries).

3.1.3 Validation and accreditation

The first phase of *First Campus* involvement had prepared the way for the subsequent validation of the curriculum associated with the Learning Coach training programme. Individuals within the four universities had already engaged in stakeholder consultation and designed sets of learning outcomes and assessment strategies which were then integrated within the CQFW portfolio as Learning Coach units.

This experience provided the foundation for writing higher education modules which mapped directly on to the unit content that had been defined at national level. Individual universities therefore processed modules through their own quality assurance systems in order to validate and approve an accredited curriculum which had a national profile from Welsh Assembly Government. The quality assurance

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Validation and accreditation

process was unusually quick: within two months of the start of the contract, each of the core modules had been validated by a lead university from within the *First Campus* partnership.

The result was a 50 credit level 4 training programme involving five 10 credit modules offered by four universities. On successful completion of each module, credit transcripts could now be provided by the university in question. A longer-term qualification pathway emerged; the Learning Coach training was therefore the first component of a 120 credit Certificate of Higher Education award.

At the same time OCN Wales negotiated level 3 units and outcomes with Lifelong Learning UK, the sector skills council responsible for workforce developments in education and training. This led to a nationally approved OCN qualification for Learning Coaches, available in 2008.

Early on within the delivery programme it was evident that a substantial number of Coaches did not want to complete assessment. Three key reasons were given:

- no incentive from a 50 credit level 4 programme for those with existing higher education qualifications
- fear of the formal assessment process
- lack of time to prepare coursework

The Learning Coach Advisory Group discussed this issue in depth before deciding on three distinct levels of status following the completion of training:

- *Recognised Learning Coach* - for those who had engaged in all of the training workshops but who did not submit coursework for assessment

- *Accredited Learning Coach* – for those who had engaged with all of the training and who had passed all 5 modules after submitting coursework assignments, or who had satisfied criteria for the recognition of prior learning.
- *Qualified Learning Coach* – a longer term future outcome following on from the pilot phase based on the completion of an additional 70 credits leading to the award of a Certificate of Higher Education.

The recognised and accredited categories would be accompanied by certification from Welsh Assembly Government based on the level of training achieved. In the case of accredited status, such certification would also be accompanied by a set of credit transcripts for the five core modules.

3.1.4 Learning and teaching assumptions

The task of all-Wales delivery within a short period implied a need for flexibility, as well as contingency planning by the training providers. Each module leader led a team of tutors developing materials, agreeing teaching and assessment strategies, and attending training-the-trainers workshops prior to the commencement of live training. A total of 15 specialist tutors contributed to the entire Learning Coach programme. A variation on this model operated in North West Wales via a partnership between *First Campus* and Bangor University, where four tutors covered all five modules. One key reason for this development was the provision of Welsh Medium delivery for Learning Coaches who spoke Welsh as their first language: such expertise was not present within the *First Campus* team.

First Campus and the Welsh Assembly Government also recognised at the outset that this was a brand new programme and it therefore had pilot status: a point that had to be emphasised to all of the participants as well as the 14-19 network convenors. A strategy was agreed whereby South East Wales would be the first region to engage with

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Learning and teaching assumptions

each of the five modules; following feedback from tutors and learners modifications could then be made prior to roll-out to the rest of Wales two months later. At the same time, during each of the five South East Wales module pilots, Welsh translation of coaching materials was prepared for use in the later North Wales workshops.

Teaching and learning assumptions were also influenced heavily by recognition from the Assembly, the 14-19 Network Convenors, and the *First Campus* team about the likelihood of Learning Coaches having very wide ranging professional and occupational backgrounds. The consequences are differing levels of confidence and ability in terms of level 4 study, and various degrees of motivation in terms of whether they are interested in gaining an accredited outcome from the training.

The demands of their everyday employment and the varied locations for coaching made it impossible for the Coaches to attend regular weekly training sessions at a University campus. All of which implied that the Coaching programme was essentially an exercise in work based learning delivery which necessitated the use of intensive one or two day workshops and learner centred methods.

Traditional didactic delivery was unlikely to prove appropriate or popular within this context, given (i) the fundamental heterogeneity of such a part-time student population, and (ii) the Coaches' deep commitment to exploring different learning styles and academic support methods with the 14-19 year olds that they coach. Recurring themes of experiential student-centred learning and reflecting on practice were noticeable, drawing on theoretical frameworks developed by Rogers (1961, 1969), Kelly (1955), Kolb (1974), Schon (1971) and Moon (1999). There was also a recognition of the need for using assessment which was most appropriate to work based learners (see Gray 2001) who collect evidence drawn from their everyday practices.

A range of innovative assessment strategies emerged. Examples included:

- 30% guided discussion and 70% reflective account
- 30% presentation and 70% portfolio of evidence
- a case study.
- a portfolio of resources

3.1.5 Recruitment, attrition and attainment

Each of the 14-19 Learning Networks were invited to nominate 10 participants for the learning coach programme. Twenty-one networks took up this option and therefore benefited from European funding in support of the training. The remaining network participated in the training at a later date for administrative reasons, but had to fund their engagement from other sources. In practice this later participation by one geographical area proved to be beneficial for coaches from other neighbouring networks who were also latecomers – they had to travel a little further to the workshops but nonetheless participated in the training without having to wait for the start of the next cohort.

Fifty one of the 299 Coaches withdrew formally before completion of all workshops. This represents an attrition rate of 17.05%. The distribution of network participation is provided in Table 3.3.

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Recruitment, attrition and attainment

Table 3.3: Network participation in training

Network	Number of Participants (total)
Anglesey	13
Blaenau – Gwent	18
Bridgend	6
Caerphilly	23
Cardiff	14
Carmarthenshire	13
Ceredigion	12
Conwy	13
Denbighshire	9
Flintshire	16
Gwynedd	11
Merthyr	11
Monmouthshire	13
Neath Port Talbot	15
Newport	12
Pembrokeshire	20
Powys	15
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	13
Swansea	11
Torfaen	16
Vale of Glamorgan	13
Wrexham	12
Total	299

The reasons for drop-out were not clearly defined, mainly because it is notoriously difficult to follow-up on individuals who have left a course. A mixture of informal peer and tutor feedback plus Reference Group discussion identified five possibilities for frustration: (i) lack of motivation and commitment to the project (ii) changing employment circumstances which distance participants from learning support activity during the course of training (iii) additional work pressures associated with very large coaching caseloads (iv) poor health (v) dissatisfaction with training content and/or delivery. It should be noted however that the fifth possibility was not reflected within the evaluation data gathered at the end of the workshops for the very large number of Learning Coaches who completed the training.

Drop out was expected, as traditionally withdrawal rates are high for part-time higher education courses involving work-based learners. In order to ensure non-wastage of available training places, networks were therefore allowed to nominate additional participants who would then be given the opportunity of catching up on earlier training at a future date.

By the end of the entire training programme 210 Learning Coaches successfully completed all of the workshop training, and 89 of those (42.4%) gained accreditation status (see also section 3.2.3). There were 38 Learning Coaches who attended some but not all workshops – giving an overall non-completion rate of 15.3% after withdrawals.

3.1.6 Training delivery

The training programme involved 140 one day workshops over 19 months, covering 18 venues throughout Wales.

Table 3.4: Training venues and workshops across regions

Region	Number of venues	Number of workshops
South East Wales	7	58
North Wales	4	34
Mid and West Wales	7	48
Total	18	140

A key objective within the project team was to give top priority to learners' needs, comments, complaints and suggestions. In order to facilitate this, it was agreed that a member of the management team would attend every delivery day (136 out of 140 days were attended). Where appropriate, the team visited individual learning coaches at their place of work, where issues were discussed, and actions agreed.


Although summer school was not initially included in the delivery schedule, it was recommended as an additional activity by the Learning Coach Advisory Group. The summer school recruited 39 new learning coaches, as well as latecomers to the current programme who had missed out on earlier workshops. It spanned 10 working days at two days per module, and ran concurrently with the larger Glamorgan Summer School 2007 for adult learners. A series of additional workshops concentrated on the preparation of coursework and assessment for other coaches who were aiming for accreditation.

The training programme included provision for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Initially it was agreed that RPL would be offered to a small group of learning coaches, based on previously achieved qualifications that would then be mapped onto the accredited programme learning outcomes. There were four difficulties arising from this assumption:

- An administrative challenge in isolating individual learning outcomes within a previous qualification, and then mapping these outcomes onto the validated Learning Coach training programme.
- It was not always possible to identify the actual evidence specific to each individual outcome.
- There were question marks surrounding the longevity and relevance of earlier qualifications (for example teacher education certificates and careers guidance diplomas) in terms of the applicability of learning outcomes achieved then and now. One example concerned legislation and the need to be up to date on contemporary legal requirements and policies relevant to the protection of young people within institutions.
- There was a need to pilot a complete and coherent training programme in support of a new proposed role that no-one fully comprehended. RPL candidates who take short cuts and opt out of training would interfere with the entire ethos of the cohort and the quality of the workshop experience.

These four points were extensively discussed by the Learning Coach Advisory Group, with a decision to abandon RPL altogether for those who wanted straight exemption from training and/or assessment. The key message was that workshops were mandatory for all, and if accreditation is desired then there should be no waiving of assessment.

There was however more sympathy for those coaches who already had extensive coaching experience rather than strings of qualifications. If they could include the necessary workplace evidence within their portfolios then an application for the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) was feasible. The APEL process required advice and support, and so a team of three part time APEL mentors was formed. They used university APEL regulations and frameworks and devised the underpinning principles and guidelines for APEL as applied to coaching. The team then provided individual support to coaches and worked with



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The needs of the coaches

all of the module leaders to ensure their interpretation of what could be submitted. A series of three regional workshops attracted 20 participants leading to five learning coaches successfully submitting portfolios for three modules, with a further four portfolios being prepared over a larger time frame by candidates.

3.2 Evaluation

The first year of training was evaluated by the People at Work Unit, an independent evaluation and consultancy company based in Abergavenny, South Wales. This team were also evaluating the overall 14-19 Learning Pathways programme for Welsh Assembly Government. Methodology entailed telephone interviews with a purposive sample of 16 Learning Coaches, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews by two members of *First Campus* of fifteen of the 14-19 Learning Network managers, course evaluation sheets from all of the training workshops and interrogation of the entire Learning Coach database. In addition, the case study evidence outlined in chapter 4 was made available to the evaluators. The People At Work Unit therefore developed quantitative perspectives on the entire cohort as well as qualitative insights based on in-depth discussions with smaller samples, and they then triangulated evidence in order to provide a series of observations and conclusions (Holtom and Bowen 2007).

3.2.1 The needs of the coaches

The evaluation identified three reasons voiced by interviewees for becoming a coach: to complement existing work, because employers asked them to, and continuing professional development ambitions. The survey revealed that coaches particularly valued the following skills when working with young people:

- Building rapport
- Listening
- Communication
- Non-judgemental ability
- Empathising
- Working with other professions and agencies

Interestingly, none of the interviewees showed awareness of a need for increasing any further their learning style or study skills expertise – the core components for learning support. The People at Work Unit also mapped what coaches consider to be the key characteristics of their work on to the original role and objectives of a Learning Coach as outlined within the original 14-19 Learning Pathways Guidance Notes:

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Table 3.5: Role, objectives and characteristics of a coach

Role of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Objectives of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Characteristics identified by Learning Coaches themselves
Helps the learner to identify goals and develop a Learning Pathway to meet them	To establish good working relationships with the individual learners in order to guide them through the process of planning their own Learning Pathways and putting their learning needs first	Able to connect to and build rapport with children and young people
		Good Communicator/ listener
		An adviser
		Able to empathise with young people
	To monitor the progress of the individual learner in the school context and the work related environment and offer encouragement, guidance and support when appropriate.	Able to motivate and to get the best out of people
		A mentor
	To help individual learners to set realistic and appropriate targets and support them in gauging their own performance	Prepared to challenge as well as support young people
	To work with the learner to record their learning experiences, for example through their Progress File.	Good record keeping

Role of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Objectives of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Characteristics identified by Learning Coaches themselves
Puts learners learning needs first.	To support individual learners in identifying goals and making informed choices	Providing support
Understands young people and their needs	to identify and remove the barriers to learning by direct intervention, by developing support mechanisms and, when necessary, by referring through agreed procedures the individual learner to specialists for help	
Understands access routes to personal support		
Values formal, non-formal and informal learning		
Aware of options available in local options menu	To liaise with post 16 providers of education, training and employment in order to develop a sound understanding of the information and opportunities	Able to link with and work with other people and agencies
Understands all aspects of Learning Pathways	To work in liaison with school/college/training staff, parents, Careers Wales and other relevant agencies to ensure that the chosen Learning Pathway is realistic and appropriate in meeting the needs of the individual learner	


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The needs of the coaches

Role of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Objectives of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Characteristics identified by Learning Coaches themselves
Understands the role and value of professional careers advice to inform the Learning Pathway	To work with the Careers Wales staff to support the career decision-making processes of the individual learners by giving them the skills and opportunities to access relevant information regarding education, training and employment and increase their awareness of the world of work.	
Understands learning styles and implications for programme choice.	To guide individual learners towards an understanding of their learning styles and mentor and encourage the learners to learn more effectively	
Helps the learner to develop the skill of how to learn		
	To access pupil information from previous schools and within the school setting to ensure that transitions are managed effectively	
	To be aware of Child Protection legislation and operate within the set guidelines.	
	To ensure that all individual learners have equality of opportunity	

Role of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Objectives of the Coach (Based on Guidance Notes)	Characteristics identified by Learning Coaches themselves
	To be aware of the additional needs of ethnic minority individual learners in relation to language and equal opportunities and those needing additional support.	
	To be aware of the need to avoid stereotyping.	Non-judgmental toward young people
		Respects young people
		Offers young people someone different to traditional "authority" figures such as teachers

Analysis of the *First Campus* training database points to the diversity of formal background employment titles for the cohort, prior to taking on the Learning Coach Role.



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The needs of the coaches

Table 3.6: Occupational backgrounds of the Coaches

Job description	Number of Coaches for which data was available
Careers Adviser	13
Teacher	34
Learning Support Assistant (LSA)/Teaching Assistant	30
College Lecturer	18
Youth Worker/Youth Access Worker/Youth Gateway	35
Support worker/Classroom assistant	8
Other	99
Total	237

On the basis of this spread of experience and expertise, Holtom and Bowen (2007) note that the cohort might reasonably be expected to differ in the skills and knowledge they bring to the coaching role on joining the course, a point that was also emphasised by two of the Learning Network managers.

Table 3.7: Occupational backgrounds of the Coaches

Knowledge & skills	Careers Wales	Teachers	College Lecturers	Learning and Teaching Support Assistants	The Youth Service
Learning styles & how to develop the skill of learning		*	*		
Developing individual learning plans, setting goals	*	*	*		
Careers advice and guidance	*				
Formal education and provision	*	*	*	*	
Informal education and provision					*
Option menus	*	*	*		
Legislation	*	*	*	*	*
Partnership working					*
Strong social and emotional skills	*	*	*	*	*
Understanding complex needs					*

Coaches and network managers also commented on the importance of recognising relevant previous experience within the training programme, especially in relation to the assessment and accreditation of training. Paradoxically, even though there was a desire for RPL, the workshop evaluation sheets further revealed in over 70 per cent of

cases a marked desire for further training. This observation was supplemented by feedback from the Learning Network managers, in relation to the need for some networks to organise additional training backup which addressed local priorities. The most urgent of these additional needs appeared for learning support within the Heads of the Valleys area of South Wales for young people within the NEET category.

3.2.2 The training

In terms of the training delivery, high levels of satisfaction were recorded via feedback forms, based on three snapshots at the end of workshops for modules 2, 4 and 5.

Table 3.8: Levels of satisfaction with training based on feedback sheets at the end of day two for a sample of modules 2, 4 and 5

Statement	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Relevant content	259	30	9
Useful materials	246	33	19
Objectives were achieved	243	43	13
Understanding of the coaching role has improved	167	133	17
Confidence about coaching has improved	153	130	13
Helped to be more effective as a coach	207	83	7

It is worth drawing attention to the higher percentage of undecided scores for “understanding” and “confidence”, especially because the confidence measure improved over time (as judged by a comparison of module 2 and 5 scores) whereas role clarity did not. It may well be the case that coaches learn about the complexity and variety of their work - as well as the work of other support professions - as they move through their day-to-day activity and the training programme itself. This would lead to increased realisation of blurred role boundaries over time. It may also be the case that the definition of the role and the distinction of coaching from other support roles requires more detailed investigation – a point that will be returned to in chapters 6 and 8.

The network managers were also very complimentary of the training programme, with 11 of the 15 interviewees pointing to the quality of delivery, the use of practical activity, group work, communications with the core training team, and the exciting ways by which coaches were using training materials and gaining insights in their workplaces.

More specific negative comments were recorded via the interviews with the coaches and network managers. These included:

- repetition of some content across modules
- an excessive focus on disengaged youth, and the need to also address more able and talented populations
- inconsistencies between universities in relation to assessment requirements and training styles
- too much emphasis on schools and colleges
- the use of mixed ability groups within the workshops, leading to either too slow or too fast a pace for the training delivery
- delay and uncertainty with the Recognition of Prior Learning



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- concern about the inclusion of the term “mentoring” in module one, causing early confusion amongst participants enrolled on a coaching programme.

The evaluators comment on a general issue involving the empathetic abilities of coaches when it comes to providing emotional and social support for young people. They refer to the concept of emotional intelligence (Gardner 1983, Goleman 1995 Bar-On and Parker 2000) as well as later criticisms (Stys and Brown 2004, Simpson 2006, Balgobin et al 2004). The People at Work Unit note that whereas the knowledge component of emotional intelligence and well being can be successfully introduced through training workshops, the development of skills associated with empathy may be far more challenging for participants and trainers alike.

The evaluation provides important insights on Learning Network contexts for coaching. Interviews with managers suggested that the rapid start-up for the training resulted in haphazard recruitment of participants on occasions, and variability across regions and local authorities regarding support networks and induction procedures. The consequence was that some coaches did not know what to expect from the training, and some networks also provided parallel staff development programmes which focused on local rather than nationally prescribed priorities. Some of the networks simply had too much on their plates because of other initiatives and pilots – one example being the management and monitoring of the new *Geographical Pathfinder* consortia operations in some parts of Wales. Network managers also reflected on their reliance on other organisations to contribute support for coaching; in many instances decisions to participate and fund learning support were being made by individual schools or colleges, as opposed to the generic area network.

3.2.3 Recognised versus accredited status

The decision to introduce both “recognised” and “accredited” coaching status provoked a lively debate in interviews with coaches and managers as well as the focus group meetings. Holtom and Bowen report on concern about a two-tier structure that could jeopardise the prospects of Coaching as a recognised learning support profession of the future. They cite one Coach as saying:

...[it's] really important to have training and accreditation, to be a success, [it] needs to be shown to be a professional qualification, otherwise teachers and heads will not take us seriously.

Five network managers suggested that accreditation should be reflected through incentives such as higher salaries – whilst at the other end of the spectrum three were doubtful about whether a qualifications pathway for coaches has any practical implications or made any difference to their competence in providing learning support for young people. The networks generally recognised the need for flexibility especially in relation to accreditation for full time Learning Coaches but recognised status for staff completing only some of the functions of a Learning Coach. Overall only two of the managers were explicitly opposed to the two-tier system.

There was also some anxiety about the use of the Coaching label for people who had not gone through the training at all, with one school simply calling all of its Form Tutors “Learning Coaches”, and having no intention to provide specialist training or staff development.

The People at Work Unit notes that at the beginning of the training programme, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced the recognised status because it was suspected that this would be more appropriate for those prospective Coaches who already had higher level qualifications. They would therefore be expected to complete the training, but would not be required to submit assignments. It was

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assumed that the remainder of Coaches would both complete the training and submit assignments, and if successful, would give them “accredited” status.

In practice however, at least 30 Coaches with qualifications below level 4 intended to apply for accredited status and at least 81 Coaches with qualifications at or above level 4 intended to apply for accredited status.

Table 3.8: Accredited and recognised intentions of coaches with different levels of qualifications

CQFW Level of highest qualification	Number of Coaches	Number intending to become accredited	Number intending to become recognised	Intention unknown
Unknown	93	–	–	–
2	16	9	4	3
3	33	21	4	8
4-6	114	61	25	28
7	41	19	9	13
8	2	1	0	1
Total	299	111	42	53

These measures refer only to intention. It is also worth noting that by the end of training the following data in Table 3.9 reveal lower numbers for the actual achievement of accreditation for all of the core modules. Furthermore, those coaches with level 3 qualifications are more likely to see through their intentions for gaining credits.

Table 3.9: End of training accredited and recognition outcomes mapped onto the qualifications base of the Learning Coaches:

Highest Level of Previous Qualification	% gaining accredited status
Entry - 2	29.4
3	51.5
4-6	31.6
7-8	32.3

One of the questions in the course evaluation sheets asked Learning Coaches to respond to the statement “I think accreditation of training is important”. Over three quarters of the participants on mainstream modules agreed, although clearly not all took advantage of the accreditation opportunity. The evaluators note that one confounding factor with the entire programme may have been the initial confusion about awarding credit through RPL. Some coaches may have been waiting for a different kind of accreditation process which did not then materialise.

3.2.4 Impact

The ultimate test question asked of the network managers was whether, in their opinion, coaching was actually making a difference. All fifteen gave positive replies, identifying impact through coaches' working with borderline C/D GCSE grade pupils and introducing the concepts of learning styles and study strategies. Three other respondents referred to the availability of empirical tracking data showing positive effects on attendance and behaviour.

A key recurring theme throughout the entire coaching programme involved the distinctiveness of the coaching role as compared with the work of other support professions. It is worth detailing the workshop feedback data for the question “No one else in my organisation performs a similar role”. This question produced the widest spread of responses from the coaches, as revealed by the raw scores from both days of workshop feedback for three of the modules plus the summer school:

Table 3.10: Percentage responses to the statement “no-one else in my organisation performs a similar role”

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Summer School Day 1	23	10	26	10	26	7
Summer School Day 2	18	18	24	12	24	3
Module 2 Day 1	19	9	27	14	31	0
Module 2 Day 2	15	12	15	24	33	0
Module 4 Day 1	19	9	27	14	31	0
Module 4 Day 2	15	12	15	24	33	0
Module 5 Day 1	26	24	17	19	11	3
Module 5 Day 2	31	24	15	17	10	4

The People at Work Unit note that it may be too soon to ask Learning Coaches to make judgements about such a new role and note that overlaps are to be expected when their positions and contributions within various organisations are still being negotiated. They also linked this query with a general and fundamental consideration about whether coaching was making a difference. All of the Network co-ordinators were positive in their replies, especially in relation to working with borderline key stage four learners through actively promoting the concepts of learning styles and study strategies. There was also evidence from the school-based case studies that coaching is “most likely to work” when there is strong support from senior management and teachers, and where Learning Coaches have high visibility afforded in part by their use of an informal and dedicated physical space for learning support.

On a less optimistic front, there was some evidence from the interviews and focus group discussions about the limitations of coaching. The evaluation noted:

- a potential conflict between what Coaches might consider to be in the best interest of a young person, and what might be considered to be in the best interests of the host institution. The most commonly cited example was reluctance on the part of Learning Coaches’ host institutions to approve or encourage the transfer of individual students to another provider.
- ignorance on the part of senior managers within some host institutions about the entire Learning Coach role and how it could most effectively be deployed.
- professional hostility from a minority of teachers towards the Learning Coach Role, based especially on the opinion that the resources allocated to coaching would be better invested elsewhere. The same observation was made from the earlier stakeholder consultation workshops (see section 2.4).

3.2.5 The coaches' futures

The final part of the evaluation addressed the prospects of the coaches in terms of their own career pathways. The interviews and focus group discussions reinforced the need for job security, especially in relation to longer term funding for posts. Some coaches stressed the importance of defining a permanent role for learning support, linked to a nationally agreed employment contract and salary scale. Others referred to the need for host organisations to be more aware of learning support policies and initiatives, in order to reinforce the role of the coach alongside other more established functions allied to teaching and guidance. There was also strong interest amongst coaches in pursuing longer term career pathways.

The network managers identified a variety of ways to take forwards the role and function of the learning coach. These included:

- Securing EU Convergence funding to extend provision into key stage three.
- Managing and employing coaches via the learning networks themselves, rather than leaving it to individual organisations and institutions.
- Promoting the role of a "Super Coach" who has the task of auditing activities and to then bridge any gaps and identify developments.
- Developing specialist NEET coaches
- Establishing a Learning Coach support network
- Designing an Intermediate Learning Coach OCN level 2 training programme leading into national accreditation at more advanced levels. The level 2 route should cover four modules: mentoring; information, advice and guidance; communicating with young people; the learning core.

- Embedding coaching within the Welsh Baccalaureate in order to formalise the Learning Coach role, especially in relation to support for key skills development.
- Reinforcing coaching support through education advisory and inspection services

The evaluation offers powerful evidence drawn from the interviews with the fifteen network managers regarding their plans for Learning Coach activity. The results suggest that the future expansion of learning coach support is envisaged via diverse strategies which include the creation of supercoaches, the clustering of resources and expertise, the deployment of coaches to a group of schools and colleges, and the allocation of specific coaching grants and project monies. Future target groups of young people include borderline achievers, NEETs, travellers, and excluded learners. On a less positive note there is also a worrying concern within the networks about current and future entitlement to coaching not being met through limited capacity and resourcing.

Table 3.11: Overview of how 15 of the 22 networks are taking coaching forward

Network	Coverage (in Autumn 2007)	Developing work with specific target groups?	Is it likely that entitlement to Coaching is being met?	Looking to expand?
1	Mixed picture, as learning settings are deciding how best to utilise their Coaches.	Yes in some schools (e.g. D to C grade pupils).	No: Some concerns about the way learning settings taking to forward (e.g. some Coaches don't have ring dedicated time).	Yes, possibly using Convergence to extend to KS3 & NEETs.
2	Mixed picture, as learning settings are deciding how best to utilise their Coaches.	Not known – likely to depend upon individual settings	No: Some concerns about the way learning settings taking Coaching forward and unmet demand for training.	Yes, increase in demand but concerns about availability of training,
3	Coaches based within different settings, but employed by local authority.	Not known	Probably: well developed network of Coaches.	Already secured additional funding.
4	Schools have been divided into cluster areas. Each cluster has a 'Super Learning Coach' who has the task of auditing activities in each school and to then bridge any gaps and identify developments.	Yes, focus upon NEETs and travellers. Coach as the keyworker.	Maybe: Well developed structure but lack of time is a concern.	Maybe: lack of time/capacity is a concern

Network	Coverage (in Autumn 2007)	Developing work with specific target groups?	Is it likely that entitlement to Coaching is being met?	Looking to expand?
5	Mixed picture, as learning settings are deciding how best to utilise their Coaches.	Maybe in future: Suggest a two tier model, approach with low level and high level coaching available, might be required. Looking too focus upon NEETs	No: Suggest a two tier model, approach with low level and high level coaching available, might be required to ensure access to Coaches for all.	Yes: Need to explore how to engage with NEETS clients and will be bidding for a WAG contract to achieve this.
6	All learning coaches have agreement from their employers that they can be deployed for temporary periods into other institutions (gives more flexibility).	Yes: Particular strength has been work with excluded young people.	Not known	Not known, suggest legislation is needed to take it forward.
7	Every school and college has a coach, and training providers are quickly coming on board.	Not known	No: Time is a barrier especially in school. Suggest what about using 6th formers as coaches at an introductory level?	Maybe: lack of time/capacity is a concern.

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Network	Coverage (in Autumn 2007)	Developing work with specific target groups?	Is it likely that entitlement to Coaching is being met?	Looking to expand?
8	Mixed picture depending on individual settings. There is a vision of the LC as a 'one stop shop' but no systems to support this and some confusion about the role. Special school not involved.	Yes: 20 LCs have been allocated to the post-16 vocational and combined programmes running within the Network. Each student will be seen by their LC once every half term, either individually or in a group.	No: confusion over roles and lack of support to deliver the vision.	Not known.
9	Strategic plan being taken forward by providers. Prime responsibility for Coaching rests with provider, drawing on specialist support where needed.	Yes: Basic entitlement + specialist support for some (e.g. NEETS, home tuition and vulnerable children).	Partly: strategic plan being developed but demand for training is greater than supply.	Yes: There is a demand for the LC training, but now there is an impasse, as training is not currently available. Longer term concerns about sustainability.
10	Slow start, but developing well, 11 schools each receiving £15k for deployment, training etc. Work based learning needs more work, and the network is exploring how the youth service can become more involved.	Not known.	No: more developed in schools than in WBL.	Yes: need to develop for WBL and engage with youth service. Suggest that legislation is needed to take it forward.

Network	Coverage (in Autumn 2007)	Developing work with specific target groups?	Is it likely that entitlement to Coaching is being met?	Looking to expand?
11	Each Learning Coach is linked to a 14-18 school, with one being placed in a FE college. Budget to support settings in taking forward coaching and each is tackling this differently based on their specific needs.	Yes, by default: Learning Coach support is being provided where it is needed and consequently not nearly as widely accessed in more academic schools.	Yes, albeit with a focus upon schools with lower levels of attainment as greater need.	Yes, but legislation needed to raise profile of Coaching and increase accountability through inspection. Looking at developing a team of peripatetic Learning Coaches.
12	It is a big selling job to get schools and training providers to see the value of coaching, and to move them beyond the "its already happening" argument. Funding has helped as each school has been allocated £4.5k to cover additional costs	Yes: Trying to engage NEETS clients through youth workers, who visit schools as part of their job, but not simply targeting non achievers, e.g. also targeting students with potential to progress to HE.	Maybe: working hard to deliver entitlement.	Yes, need to further develop the role.
13	All schools (and only schools), have received funding from the 14 – 19 Network to develop their own strategies.	Not clear: Concerns may be missing NEETs as up to individual settings to take it forward.	Unlikely: Only available in schools	Not known

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Network	Coverage (in Autumn 2007)	Developing work with specific target groups?	Is it likely that entitlement to Coaching is being met?	Looking to expand?
14	Progression is down to individual organisations within The Vale, and how committed they are to the LC concept.	Not known – likely to depend upon how individual settings are taking the role forward.	Unlikely: Currently only one full time Coach, plus LSAs using training to develop their role.	In the 2007/08 academic years, half of the schools will be following the Welsh Baccalaureate. This may have positive implications for expanding the LC role, but remains dependent upon interest of settings and there are concerns over sustainability (e.g. long term funding of Coaches).
15	Every school bar one is covered with a learning coach.	Not known: commitment to work with all young people.	No: aiming for two coaches per institution, but feel that more are required.	Yes: aiming to increase for at least two coaches per institution. Need legislation to help take it forward.

3.2.6 Evaluation conclusions

The evaluation is limited on a number of counts. It focuses on training rather than front-line delivery of learning support. The interview-based sample sizes are small. Only three of the five modules were included in the snapshots for end-of-training workshops. One third of the network managers were not interviewed. It has to also be recognised that these network manager interviews were conducted by members of the core

training team working alongside the People at Work unit, and more critical replies concerning training quality and effectiveness may therefore have been muted due to social facilitation effects. Finally, it should be remembered that interviews were completed before the end of the training programme. Despite these criticisms powerful observations are made based on the triangulation of viewpoints and evidence from a range of stakeholders linked to coaching. Holtom and Bowen (2007) offer six persuasive conclusions and these are cited verbatim although the names of specific networks have been deleted:

What do prospective Coaches need?

Coaches need a core set of social and emotional skills, to enable them to work with young people, other professionals, and in some cases, young people's families. They also need a range of knowledge to enable them to support young people effectively and where necessary, to work in partnership with other professionals and agencies. Depending on how the learning setting they work within, and the network that supports them is developing Coaching, they may also need specialised skills and knowledge to enable them to work with particularly groups of young people. These include those who are at risk of becoming NEET, and potentially high achievers who are judged to be under-performing. Many Coaches will already have some, but not all of these skills from their previous work.

Given the debate over the possibility of 'teaching' social and emotional skills (see section four) it is tempting to conclude that the recruitment process should focus upon prospective Coaches who already have strong social and emotional skills, but who lack the knowledge required, rather than those who might, for example, have the knowledge, but lack the social and emotional skills. The profile of Coaches (see section two) suggests this may already be happening, as the bulk of those coming forward are drawn from areas of work such as teaching (and teaching support, such as Learning and Support Assistants), Youth Service and Careers Wales, which (in principle) demand social and emotional skills. In a similar vein, when interviewed, some of the 14-19 Networks suggested that some jobs or host

organisations, such as Youth Services, more naturally lend themselves to the Learning Coach role than others. However, one of the Networks suggested that Coaches drawn from outside a formal educational background, such as a Youth Worker, might struggle to operate effectively.

Is the training effective?

The quantitative feedback generated by course evaluation sheets, and the qualitative data generated by focus groups, the telephone survey and the case studies, all suggest that Coaches value the training; some are already using it in their work. Network Co-coordinators also value the training. However, both Coaches and Network Co-coordinators have identified teething troubles, most notably differences in content and delivery by different institutions and in the process of the recognition and accreditation of prior experiential learning.

What impact are Networks having on training for Learning Coaches?

The impact of Networks upon Coaches depends upon a number of factors, including their interest and capacity. Some have established systematic systems of recruitment, induction and support, which in principle should complement the training of Coaches, whilst others appear to have more haphazard systems, which may not have such a positive impact.

Should recognition be withdrawn?

Recognised status has proven popular, although the expectation, that those with higher level qualifications would be those who would opt for recognised status, whilst those with lower level qualifications would be those who would opt for accredited status, has not always been borne out. Nevertheless, there is little support for phasing out recognised status, although, a number of Coaches and Networks have forcefully argued that in order to establish Coaching as a profession and to ensure that young people receive effective support, it is important that Coaches undertake the training, even if they decide not to opt for accreditation.

Does Coaching work?

The evidence on the effectiveness of Coaching is encouraging, but patchy and incomplete. Coaches and Networks both believe it does and can provide largely anecdotal evidence to support their beliefs, but at this stage there is little systematic evidence of effectiveness.

Where do Learning Coaches go from here?

The future of Coaching in Wales will depend upon the decisions of Networks and learning settings, who have considerable autonomy in shaping developments and on the interests and aspirations of Coaches themselves which vary considerably. It is therefore difficult to generalise about where Coaches go from here.

The evaluation therefore stresses the need for more evidence about the impact of coaching based on the use of rigorous before and after measures, where appropriate. Issues of role confusion need addressing, as well as promoting specialised learning support methods more widely in a variety of sectors with reference to priority groups of young people.

3.3 Advanced case studies

During the course of the evaluation of the first year of Learning Coach support four examples of advanced development were identified. They typically went beyond the action of any one individual and reflected instead a more strategic expansion of learning support for an entire organisation, institution, or geographical region. Further details are provided in the Appendix for the following case studies:

1. *St Davids College* – based on their development of pastoral support linked to learning, as evidence by ESTYN inspection feedback.
2. *Caerphilly local authority* – where a large team of Learning Coaches have been employed by a Learning Network in order to work across schools and colleges using 14-19 Network options menus.

3. *St Cyres School* – involving the integration of the Learning Coach role by teachers within the advanced WEWC Baccalaureate qualification, concentrating especially on key skills development and assessment.
4. *Careers Wales North East* – where a range of Career Wales staff have established strong links with Youth services, schools and colleges in order to provide important learning support and optional guidance

It should be noted that the four case studies were associated either with the roll-out of earlier Learning Coach pilot project or a pro-active interest in 14-19 Pathway policy and autonomous strategic action by senior managers using a variety of resources. The case studies were not linked directly to the training programme for Learning Coaches although some individuals participated in workshops or completed training.

3.4 Market research

During the first year of Learning Coach training the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned more wide-ranging market research (GfK NOP 2007) for the entire 14-19 Learning Pathways programme, and this included the coaching element of learner support. The purpose was to investigate levels of awareness of the key features of Pathways amongst young people themselves, their parents, and their providers. The research involved qualitative analysis via focus groups and interviews, as well as quantitative data collection via telephone surveys of 1750 young people aged 14-19 years, and parents. It also included email questionnaire responses from a sample of 100 learning providers and network representatives throughout Wales. This research took place between April – June 2007 and contained queries about the role and the perceived value of the Learning Coach, plus potential obstacles to its success as viewed by the provider sample.

Given that the Learning Coach initiative had only just begun, and the training had not yet been completed, questions to families about their valuing of the Learning Coach role were very ambitious. Only 17 per cent of young people and 15 per cent of parents recognised immediately the title of a Learning Coach, but when the interviewers then defined what was meant by the actual activity of coaching then awareness increased dramatically to 66 per cent (young people) and 43 per cent (parents). It has to be noted at this point that a key flaw in the methodology was the inclusion within the explanatory definition of the following statement:

"It is sometimes called a personal tutor" (GfK NOP 2007 35)

The data were therefore confusing stakeholder reactions to the more nebulous and established use of pastoral care and personal tutoring systems in schools and colleges. The market research also marginalised substantial numbers of "don't know" responses from parents and young people, which in themselves point to the need for more awareness raising. Nevertheless, where information was provided then the findings were very positive regarding the help that coaching gives in relation to increasing options awareness, confidence building, making informed choices, and developing the best study methods. The overwhelming majority of parents (85 per cent) and young people (90 per cent) were satisfied with Learning Coach support.

The survey data also revealed two serious challenges for future learning support. First, approximately one quarter of young people and parents reported on having little knowledge of the range of qualifications on offer. Second, a third of young people were unable to cite examples of learning which took place outside the classroom and helped to develop the skills of 14-19 year olds.

Table 3.12: Awareness amongst 14-19 year olds of learning opportunities outside the classroom

Opportunities	Percentage (weighted sample size = 1000)
Work experience	18
Community and voluntary work	18
On the job training	14
Independent study and research projects	11
Sports	6
After school clubs	2
Other education/home learning	2
Don't know	34
No answer	12

These are important observations for the future work of Learning Coaches in terms of helping young people to make more sense of their informal and non-formal learning activities and opportunities.

With reference to feedback from providers, the Welsh Assembly Government provided details of all organisations providing education to 14-19 year olds in Wales. GfK NOP telephoned each organisation in order to find the email address for the person who has the main responsibility for coordinating 14-19 education. Following a pilot study a survey questionnaire was then emailed to contacts. Forty eight (just under 50 per cent) of the respondents had detailed knowledge of Learning Coach pilot work and training, and of these, half had said it was relatively easy to introduce such learning support in their organisations. Table 3 provides the full range of responses:

Table 3.13: providers' perceived effects of the introduction of Learning Coaches

Providers who took part in the trial to offer Learning Coaches (N=48 out of 100)	% agreement
Those with a Learning Coach took more interest in their studies	58
Disaffected learners were more engaged at school/college	50
Learning Coaches deliver support in a more structured way	46
Attendance improved amongst those who had a Learning Coach	40
Learners became more confident about independent study	38
Learners became more willing to access a Learning Coach than their previous support	35
Those with a Learning Coach improved dramatically	35
Learning Coaches offer better support to learners than was offered before	31
Learning Coach more effective as not a member of teaching staff	23
Learning Coach offers the same support to learners as before	15
Learners did not want to access a Learning Coach	6
Learners did not do the work set for them by the Learning Coach	4
Learners felt they would not benefit from Learning Coach	4
Learners wary/scared of Learning Coaches	4
Learning Coach sessions took place in lesson time	4
Learning Coaches offer less support to learners than what was offered before	4
Learning Coach seen as having negative associations	2

The market research concludes:

The beneficial aspects of the Learning Coach were evident, with over three quarters of respondents claiming that the effect had been positive. Of great significance was the fact that over half (58 %) believed that students with Learning Coaches tended to take more interest in their studies. Only slightly smaller proportions contended that there had been an effect on disaffected learners, who took greater interest in their studies and that the support they provided for students was delivered in a more structured way (GfK NOP 2007 82).

Three fifths of the providers particularly valued the support that Learning Coaches give to young people through introducing and explaining the range of options available and choosing the best learning methods. There was also an expectation about future impact on disengaged youth and building up confidence about choosing options (60 per cent of respondents) as well as general improvements in academic attainment and attendance (50 per cent of respondents).

Nonetheless it should also be noted that problems had been experienced on occasions. A third of the respondents identified limited resourcing, excessive time commitments for training, difficulty in recruiting suitable staff, uncertainty about the status of the Learning Coach, and lack of capacity given the sheer volume of work entailed with making coaching an entitlement for all young people in Wales. Other additional verbatim comments from individual providers are worth noting:

"I think there is still, however, confusion as to how this role links with personal support, personal tutorial activity, and advice and guidance" (GfK NOP 69)

"Learning Coaches have been parachuted into learning organisations without any thought at all as to what those organisations already do and this has caused great resentment" (GfK NOP 72)

“all good teachers are already learning coaches” (GfK NOP 72)

“I want to provide learning coaches for all pupils and I cannot. Tutors act as coaches but it is not the same as another person who takes an interest in you and is not a teacher so is a real person! (GfK NOP 104)

“as a national, voluntary, Welsh medium youth services body, we didn't have the opportunity to offer learnig champions' training to our staff and volunteers” (GfK NOP 103)

“the experience of the voluntary sector is not currently being engaged as fully as it can be” (GfK NOP 101)

The feedback from the providers is especially valuable because it goes beyond stakeholder awareness raising and generates a need for further strategic planning within 14-19 Learning Pathways policy and resource allocation. As GfK NOP conclude:

The Learning Coach, who has the capacity to provide on-going support to young people in their decision making is widely welcomed by providers, and recognised as being able to make a significant contribution to a more effective system, However, questions remain about the feasibility of providing the number of coaches to deliver the level of support required, It is not merely a case of allocating responsibility to existing members of staff. Firstly, there are considerable resource implications, if a sufficient level of support is to be maintained. Secondly, it needs to be recognised that particular expertise associated with careers advice and guidance, and a breadth of knowledge of the trajectories which young people might take, and the employment and learning opportunities which they might access, are required. The implications, in terms of the training of Learning Coaches, therefore need to be assessed (GfK NOP 2007 86)


This observation about careers advice and guidance prompted further research reported in chapter six, and general conclusions regarding capacity and resourcing – in addition to the role of the voluntary sector – are returned to within the final recommendations in chapter eight.

3.5 Headline conclusions

- The first full year of Learning Coach support has been evaluated locally and nationally involving feedback from a variety of stakeholders including learners, parents, coaches, trainers and network managers. Feedback about training has generally been very positive, as are perceptions about the value of such learning support. There is however a need for more research evidence demonstrating impact in terms of outcomes on learners. There is also a need for more general raising of awareness amongst young people and parents about options and informal and non-formal learning opportunities.
- The national training programme included a successful devolved regional delivery model for Welsh medium delivery. Given that evaluation comments from network managers expressed concern about limited current resourcing and capacity for the training of future Learning Coaches, this possibility of devolved and local training involvement should be explored further.
- The flexibility afforded by the recognised and accredited status of Learning Coaches who have successfully completed training has proved to be popular although more incentives should be offered for a qualification pathway for the professional status of the Learning Coach. The current level 4 credit transcript does not at present offer such a qualification and is 70 credits short of a higher education award. The OCN level 3 qualification has now been approved by OCN Wales and LLUK, but it is not yet operational. The qualification closure for training is therefore incomplete at present and Learning Coaches should be provided with more detailed information about future accreditation pathways.
- The Learning Coach training programme is a powerful example of work based learning within a variety of workforces throughout Wales, but non-completion rates are relatively high at 24%. This is to some extent a reflection of general patterns for part-time work

based learning engagement. It may also indicate a need for more varied pedagogic strategies used by higher education providers in order to make participation more relevant and appealing to Learning Coaches.

- Learning Coaches value further training in such areas as relationship building and communication, and providers and network managers perceive coaching effectiveness in terms of improving young people's study skills and learning strategies.
- A recurring comment from a range of stakeholders involves the need to clarify the role of the Learning Coach and to articulate the links with other relevant professions – most notably teachers, personal tutors and careers advisers. This concern should be borne in mind when networks are recruiting coaches, based on observations of inconsistency and confusion about criteria to be used during the first year of operation.
- There is general disappointment about the eligibility and provision of RPL by higher education providers.
- The occupational backgrounds of Learning Coaches are varied, with – for example – Learning Support Assistants having fewer professional qualifications. There is also a need to more fully involve the voluntary sector in Learning Coach activity.
- The Learning Coach's impartiality in supporting option choices has been questioned should that person be employed by any one particular organisation, based on the competitive basis of funding methodologies and the possibility of a school or college losing income if learners move to other providers. Furthermore, considerable variety is noted between provider organisations that employ Learning Coaches, based on differences in their employment contracts, occupational titles, job security, and salary scales. Possible solutions involve the overall employment of Learning Coaches by the networks themselves, the creation of a Head Coach role for



The First Year

Headline conclusions

coordination and audit functions, and the issuing of standardised employment contracts. There is however a warning about a network's team of peripatetic Learning Coaches not then having the necessary familiarity with individual schools or colleges.

- The importance of addressing NEET targets and priorities in networks justifies the creation of sub-specialisms for some of Learning Coaches, requiring further training support.
- In addition to positive incentives (such as European funding grants) being offered to networks for the provision of Learning Coach support, longer term developments could embed coaching within inspection frameworks as well as the roll-out of the Welsh Bac qualification.
- There are examples of advanced coaching applications in some organisations, extending well beyond the Learning Coach training programme

About the Coaches

The training experience as outlined in chapters 2 and 3 is only a part of the Learning Coach story. It is important to glimpse more detail about the people who are performing the coaching role, and in this chapter a profile is provided for the first cohort before moving into an analysis of case studies for individuals. Key interests include their backgrounds, their reasons for working with young people and their day to day work as Learning Coaches.

4.1 Cohort profile

The *First Campus* training database provided more detailed demographic and employment profiles for the first cohort of trainees. It should be noted that the database included coaches who left the training programme as well as latecomers, and that some responses to specific questions were missing. Nevertheless tables 4.1- 4.9 reveal the following profiles for the Learning Coaches:

- two thirds are female
- the majority are aged 30-50 years
- the majority are qualified to level 4 and above (with less than five per cent qualified at level two or below)
- one quarter is from teaching professions, a further quarter is linked with teaching support

About the Coaches

Cohort profile

- one fifth is from youth work
- half of the coaches define themselves as Welsh
- one quarter live in Mid and North Wales
- one fifth have a working knowledge of the Welsh language
- the major location for providing coaching support is the school or college.

Table 4.1: Employment Profile

Job title analysis	%
Teacher/lecturer/tutor	26
Youth access worker/youth development officer, youth support worker etc.	18
Learning support assistant, special needs assistant, behaviour support assistant, cover supervisor, pupil support worker etc	26
Coach, mentor, student adviser	9
Careers adviser, advice and guidance career officer, Gateway officer	7
Administrator, coordinator, secretary	4
Senior management (deputy/assistant head, head of year etc)	2
Private training provider, leisure centre manager, basic skills training company etc	4
Education welfare officer, education coordinator, conduct manager	1
Voluntary organisation, Interlink	1
Total	100% (allowing for rounding)

Table 4.2: Age profile

Age	Percentage
Age 20-29	10.3
Age 30-39	24.2
Age 40-49	29.0
Age 50-59	18.4
Age 60-69	0.6
Age unknown	17.5

Table 4.3: Gender profile

Gender	Percentage
Female	70.6
Male	22.6
Unknown	6.8

Table 4.4: Qualifications profile

Level of top qualification	Percentage
CQFW Entry-Level 2 (up to GCSE, NVQ 2)	5.5
CQFW Level 3 (up to A Level, NVQ 3)	10.6
CQFW Level 4-6 (up to Bachelor's Degree)	36.8
CQFW Level 7 (Masters, PG Certs/Diplomas)	13.2
CQFW Level 8 (Doctorate, specialist awards)	0.6
Unknown	33.5

Table 4.5: Welsh language proficiency

Ability to speak Welsh	Percentage
Fluent Welsh speaker	11.9
Non Welsh speaker	49.7
Welsh speaker (not fluent)	8.4
Unknown	30.0

Table 4.6: Declared disabilities

Disability	Percentage
No	78.1
Unknown	18.7
Deaf/hearing impairment	1.0
Deaf/hearing impairment and Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	0.3
Dyslexia	0.6
Unseen disability, e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma	1.0
Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	0.3

Table 4.7: Declared Country of origin and current area of residence

Declared Country of origin:	Percentage
Britain/GB	2.6
England	13.5
Wales	51.6
Scotland	1.0
UK/United Kingdom	8.7
Other	1.9
Unknown	0.0
Current Residence:	
Mid Wales	3.5
North East	11.3
North West	10.0
South East	39.4
South West	18.7
Unknown	17.1

Table 4.8: Base location for providing Learning Coach support

Base location	Percentage
Community youth/Gateway/leisure centres	10
Schools	55
Colleges	14
Careers centres	7
Local authority offices	7
Prison	0
Voluntary organisations	2
Private training centres	4
Total	100 (allowing for rounding)

4.2 Case studies

4.2.1 Methodology

Semi structured face-to-face interviews⁴ were completed within 17 schools, colleges, and youth centres over a seven month period. Where coaches were working in teams and expressed an interest in including others within the case study, they were asked to contribute additional information. Four of the case studies therefore included more than one participant based on the pooling of relevant information, leading to a total sample size of 22 individuals.

It should be noted at the outset that the case study sample was skewed towards those coaches who were prominent within the training programme; they had been identified via the Learning Coach reference

⁴ Acknowledgements go to Kevern Kerswell for completing five interviews in North Wales; remaining interviews completed by the author. Acknowledgements also go to Alison Acreman and Marian Long for acting as independent readers for the content analysis themes.

group as well as the core training team. Caution therefore has to be expressed about generalising observations to the entire Learning Coach cohort.

In all but two cases interviews were held within the offices and workshop areas used by the coaches themselves. Confidential commentary was recorded in writing and information from the interviews was then categorised via content analysis. This procedure involved three independent readers as well as the author. Three sample case studies were analysed and readers were asked to identify headline themes for content. The pooled themes led to nine broad categories:

Schooldays	Transition
Experiences	Caseloads
Environments	Activities
Management	Special issues
Aspirations	

4.2.2 Profile of sample

Over two thirds of interviewees are female; of those eight experienced significant career breaks because of child care responsibilities. Nine coaches are based in South East Wales, seven in West and mid Wales, and six in North Wales. Only one is a fluent Welsh speaker.

Eleven of the coaches are defined as “local” in terms of having childhood roots with the area that they now work in. Table 4.4 gives further details of awards and certificates obtained by coaches through full and part-time study as well as continuing professional development and extra-mural pursuits. None of those interviewed have a zero qualifications base, seven have graduate status, and a further eight have vocational diplomas and certificates at levels four and five.



About the Coaches

Profile of sample

A key issue with coaching involves supporting young people to progress through their studies and to move from one sector or learning organisation to another. It is therefore relevant to profile coaches in terms of their own experiences of progression. In table 4.9 qualifications data from the case studies have been placed into two learning pathway categories:

- Qualifications gained through staying in the system from a relatively young age and completing a traditional through-route of full-time study: leaving school and going to college or university.
- Qualifications gained through less conventional pathways associated with part-time study, becoming a mature student, or completing some continuing professional development within the workplace.

Table 4.9: Qualification profile for the coaching case study sample based on two pathway patterns

Qualifications obtained	Coaches that have pursued traditional full-time through-route	Coaches that have pursued less conventional through-routes
Nil	0	0
CSE/GCSEs below 5 A-C grade		
GCSE 5 or more		
A-C grades	19	0
A levels at level 3	10	1
Vocational awards at levels 3 and 4	2 (secretarial) 1 (technician) 1 (Welfare Studies) 1 (hair and beauty) 1 (engineering)	4 (sports coaching) 2 (outdoor leadership) 1 (Braille) 1 (basic skills) 1 (counselling) 1 (engineering)
Level 5 and 6 Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees	8 (subject specific and BEd degrees)	10 (including teaching in secondary and further education, counselling, youth work)
Postgraduate level 7 certificates and diplomas	4 (PGCEs)	8 (youth work, careers and counselling)



About the Coaches

Their own schooldays

The majority of coaches have some experience of later entry to more advanced learning and qualifications, and have themselves followed vocational pathways. It should also be noted that none of the coaches have qualification backgrounds resembling the zero base of the most dramatic under-achieving group of young people, those that are often labelled as NEET.

Of most significance for a part of the case study analysis is the organisational context for the coaches, based on the importance of understanding the variety of communications and issues associated with learning support for young people inside and outside of formal learning establishments. Three broad categories were identified for the case studies:

- Coaches located within a single secondary school (coded S1-S7)
- Coaches operating within a single further educational college (coded F1-F5)
- Coaches using a variety of settings associated with youth service and careers advisory support (coded Y1-Y6)

4.2.3 Their own schooldays

The coaches' memories and impressions of their own time in compulsory education were considered important in terms of identifying possible underlying interests in helping young people to learn, based on a potential empathy with experiences of success and failure, and in trying to overcome difficulties. As might be expected from such a general enquiry, feedback identified a mixture of positive and negative recollection.

Fifteen of the coaches generally commented on happy times whilst at school. This included engagement with the curriculum and a fundamental enjoyment of learning:

...has positive memories of her own school days, where she especially enjoyed studying the arts as well as anything to do with animals and plants and nature. (S1)

...developed a wide range of friends which included her teachers, and had few dislikes when it came to the subjects she studied. (S2a)

...has good memories of her time at school. She enjoyed country dancing, nature walks, fetes, and learning. (S3)

...describes her time at grammar school as a happy experience and she was sad to leave. (S6)

... there were no particular dislikes of learning, indeed quite the opposite in that she loved doing mathematics. She describes this passion as coming from within her rather than down to a particular teacher. (F3)

...enjoyed those subjects that she was good at (especially Art and English) and appreciated the teachers who she felt valued her efforts. On the other hand she "hated being dictated to, especially in maths" (Y3b)

...made every effort to succeed and could relate to various teachers as role models". (F5)

Some coaches also emphasised their loyalty and commitment to school as a place for friendship, support, extra-mural activity and identity:

...moved from an idyllic small rural primary school to a traditional grammar school where the teachers wore gowns but are described as inspirational in the classrooms. (S1)

...liked the safe environment and the structure of such an institution. (F3)

...enjoyed the academic and sporting side of secondary education (becoming a county level [badminton and netball] player). (Y2A)

About the Coaches

Their own schooldays

...passed his 11+ and went to a regional grammar school where he appreciated making new friends who were drawn from various towns and villages as compared with the very local flavour of his primary school.

...he "never missed a day" at secondary school and enjoyed especially the rugby and cross country running. (Y2b)

Not everything was so positive and optimistic. More pointed and critical remarks were also recorded for peer group relationships:

...there were also more turbulent times, for example when she experienced a few bouts of bullying from her peer group. (S2b)

...It was a lonely place where she was bullied. (S4)

Overall she did not like her school experience; she found it insecure, and whilst at primary school she was bullied for a while. All of this changed when she went to tertiary college at 16; she made friends and enjoyed a more flexible and adult atmosphere for learning. (Y3a)

She attended Welsh medium primary and secondary schools, which entailed a lot of travel as well as having friends who lived miles away due to the geographical spread of a Welsh medium cohort of learners living in villages and towns from three county boroughs. (Y4)

Coaches also recalled difficulties caused by their own motivation and commitment to studying:

...underachieved at A level due to what she describes as laziness at revision. (S3)

...was unsettled in his own time as a pupil at a large comprehensive school, and did not like the way he was taught by his teachers. He started to lose his concentration in lessons and skipped homework, resulting in a gradual drift downwards in terms of the grades he was getting. (S5)

...describes himself as "a failed grammar school boy" caused in part by his sporting flare for soccer and table tennis – indeed he was continually told by his teachers that he was destined to become a professional footballer and therefore there was no need for academic study or formal qualifications. (Y1)

...but on looking back she considered it complacent in that there was not enough challenge for the students – many of them just coasted along. (F3)

Comments were also offered about an underlying dislike of authority, targeted especially at teachers who were seen as critical or in some way disapproving:

...she describes school as an authoritarian place where pupils were not allowed to express themselves as individuals. Teachers talked at their students rather than with them. (S4)

...On one occasion when she asked a question of the Maths teacher regarding algebra, she was told: "when, or in your case, if, you get into the 6th form you'll learn the answer there." S6 had particularly bad handwriting and sometimes teachers would tear up her homework in front of the whole class. She was determined to improve in order not to be shown up again. (S6)

...grew up in a mining community where his father was a cabinet maker. When he started secondary education after passing the 11 plus he was in the top set, but lost interest quickly in some of the subjects: "Latin and German were thrown at me and I reacted badly to any rote learning activity that I had to do". (Y1).

...describes her time at secondary school as "the worst of my life". She was told continually that she would amount to "no more than stacking shelves in supermarkets", and cannot recall any positive praise at all from any of the teachers. This is in contrast to very positive experiences outside of school as a member of an international sports squad...school just filled a gap, but family

About the Coaches

Their own schooldays

pressure meant that she had to stay on until she finished her A levels. She received little careers guidance and in her last year of sixth form she skipped many of her classes. (F1)

Two interviewees who came from families in the armed services pointed to the difficulties caused through continually moving to new schools and settling in:

...enjoyed learning but the major difficulty was in catching up with a new curriculum each time she moved to a new school. (F2)

...she had much experience of either being ahead or behind her classmates based on the changes in the curriculum and the attainment standards for the particular school she was in at any particular point in time. (Y3a)

The case studies also revealed reservations about assessment and the recognition of achievements:

...went to a secondary modern school, only to transfer to grammar school a year later because her teachers recognised her academic ability. She has bitter memories of the 11+ exam: "I was so frightened and nervous on the day. I'm not good at doing exams. I still am, I would still go to pieces. For all my courses later on my first question was 'is there any exam'". (Y2a)

...also reflects on his academic achievement: "I was never outstanding, more of an invisible one, an average that no-one ever noticed". (Y2b)

...she found herself to be seriously disadvantaged through being taught and assessed through the medium of English. When looking back she comments that "although I went to school every day I did not have a good time, and it made a huge impact on me as a person and shaped what I became today". (Y4)

4.2.4 Transition experiences

Coaches have the task of helping individual young people to consider options and prepare for the experience of moving from one institution to another, often reflecting a shift across sectors of formal educational provision. The most obvious examples are transition at the age of 16 from school to college, or school to work based training. For many young people a further transition at the age of 18 is also evident based on leaving a school sixth form or further education college and going to university or entering into full-time employment.

In some instances transition can be far more complex and anomic, based on leaving a place of formal learning and dropping into an educational void of unemployment or low paid work which entails no training or career options. It is therefore important to document the coaches' own experiences of transition, based on tracing potential empathy and understanding of the experiences of young people who negotiate and cope with movement between institutions.

The classic and conventional transition involved moving from year 11 to year 12 and 13 study followed by higher education. This smooth pattern was noted for five of the case studies, although in two of the following extracts some difficulties were experienced in terms of choice of courses:

Went to university after doing very well at A levels... (S1a)

On leaving school she went straight into higher education... (S3)

After achieving three A levels (at grades A, B and D) she went to college and gained a BEd and went straight into teaching. (S6)

...achieved very strong GCSE grades before gaining three A levels and going to university and acquiring a degree". (F5)

About the Coaches

Transition experiences

...remembers with astonishment an interview with a sixth form careers adviser who said that he should make a choice between joining the armed forces, or working as an unskilled labourer on building sites. This clearly had an impact on him, because he then applied to the RAF but failed an eyesight test. After that his options were either to go into the family business, or become a teacher. He chose teaching, and completed his Certificate in Education. (S5)

She passed seven A-C GCSEs and three A levels (grade C, D, D) whilst deciding in her upper sixth form that she wanted to be an estate agent. F2 enrolled on a Property management degree at University but after only two weeks of lectures realised that the course was not appropriate; switching to an HND in Maths and Computing. (F2)

In five cases a key change at the age of 16 involved leaving school and going to the local further education college rather than staying on in sixth form:

When she finished her CSEs (including Pitman Script) and Maths CEE she completed a secretarial course at the local further education college. (S1b)

...went on to the local further education college to secure the BTEC Health Science national diploma... (S2a)

When she was 16 she gained six O levels and stayed on in education in Germany to complete an RSA certificate in secretarial and office skills at the technical college, which included Accounts and Commerce, before returning to Wales at the age of 18 to become a tax officer. (F2)

gained 10 O level and CSE passes and went to college in order to study for A levels. (Y3b)

After sitting all nine of her GCSEs (none of which was above a D grade) she went to a further education college and secured five grades in the A-C range and enrolled on the Certificate in Welfare Studies. This was a far more positive experience and she continued successfully to the Diploma level qualification. (Y4)

The general experience of leaving formal education altogether at the age of 16 and following a vocational route into full-time employment was recorded for seven coaches:

She completed a mixture of O levels, CSEs, and then GCSEs (five in one year, this being the very first GCSE cohort in the county). She then worked in the family business... (S1c)

...when she left the lower sixth form to work in London as a nanny. (S2b)

She gained six GCSEs and 3 A levels but did not want to go to university; she defines this part of her life as "in limbo". She worked in retailing. (S4)

In the end she did not bother to sit her A level exams and immediately left home in order to travel around the world. Her journey lasted a year, and included a succession of temporary jobs... (F1)

He worked as a factory cleaner before completing some careers aptitude tests which pointed to a strong interest in engineering. The result was employment as an apprentice by the National Coal Board, where he completed a series of work experience posts at the coal face as well as in electrician and blacksmith teams. After one year the NCB sent him to day-release ONC classes in mechanical engineering at the nearby further education college, lasting for a period of three years. (Y1)

She left school with five O levels, qualified as a hairdresser, and ran her own shop before starting a family. (Y2a)

About the Coaches

Transition experiences

He left school at 16 with five O levels and became an apprentice electrical engineer because of his interest in radio and television. He studied part-time at college and gained a City and Guilds National Diploma. (Y2b)

The transition from school or college to work was in some instances more complex, involving disappointment or a reverse of direction. Three cases provide illustrations:

He moved to London at 16 to become a professional football apprentice, and lived in a bed and breakfast. His training was over by lunchtime of each day, after which he was left to his own devices. After less than one year he was told that he was not going to make it at the professional level, and devastated with this news he returned to South Wales. By then his friends were at college doing their A levels, and he realised that he "had no plan B" as backup for coping with what he saw as failure and disappointment. (Y1)

After finishing her A levels she could not afford to go to university, although she wanted to apply for a BEd and become a teacher. Instead she went out to work as a wages clerk. (Y3a)

...went to college in order to study for A levels. She then decided to leave in the first year and get a job; her parents were moving to another area and this time she decided to stay behind because she had established a strong relationship with her future husband. (Y3b)

Although the key interest within the case study analysis revolves around the Learning Coaches' own experiences of transition when they themselves were aged 14-19, it is also worth noting that in subsequent years there were only five cases of continuous and conventional career advancement within a relatively narrow professional context (teaching in schools or colleges). The remaining cases were associated with various career changes and employment positions, based in part on child care responsibilities, redundancies, and employment frustrations. Table 4.10 provides further details:

Table 4.10: Predominant employment positions of Coaches immediately prior to current employment

Position	Sector	Number of cases
Teaching	Schools	4
Lecturing	Further education	1
Administration	Higher education, schools	2
Youth work	Youth and social services	5
Finance, retailing, manufacturing, manual	Private	5
Classroom and advisory support	Schools, colleges, careers, workplaces	5

4.2.5 Reasons for early involvement and coaching catalysts

All of the interviewees were asked about their reasons for wanting to engage with young people and provide support. In some instances there was a strong vocational calling from the very start:

...defines her ambition in a very clear way: "to help as many children as possible to reach their goal in life and be happy, because I work with a lot of children who are unhappy – just to make them smile". (S1b)

... "she just likes working with teenagers" and also that she has a conviction that "every person is intelligent" and this simply "has to be enhanced". (S4)

About the Coaches

Reasons for early involvement and coaching catalysts

...works with many young people who come from tough backgrounds in an inner city area. She says that she "can see it in their eyes, the lack of any positive feedback, the self fulfilling prophesy that they think they are all rubbish". She notes that she has been there herself, with a limiting vision of the future which is in part fuelled by teachers and parents but also by themselves. (F1)

...took an immediate interest in coaching because she had seen how various kinds of personal difficulties could be traced back to specific learning needs, a lack of confidence in learning ability, or problems within peer groups. (F2)

...just likes working with teenagers. (F3)

...although not personally affected, a close friend was severely bullied, and it was following this that she began to aspire towards an occupation that involved supporting young people. (F5)

...notes that his interest in coaching "has always been there". (Y1)

...has always enjoyed communicating and working with young people, especially in terms of motivating them through giving them attractive goals which often revolve around getting a job that they think they would enjoy. (Y3a)

In other cases the Coaches drew parallels with their own early experiences and with later parenting and employment insights – and the subsequent transfer of experience and knowledge to working professionally with young people:

...her own experience as a parent encouraged her interest in coaching, plus her own experience of year 11: she thinks that she would have failed were it not for the help of her teachers and friends. (S2b)

She enjoyed talking to the students, and as her own children progressed through comprehensive school she took more and more of an interest in not just what they were studying, but how they

learned. She is a great believer in intuition and the use of practical common sense and the need for speaking directly to people without jargon or waffle. "I'm a mum. If Joe Bloggs isn't in History I wanted to know why and where was he and I had to go and find out right there and then". (S2a)

...describes her reasons for becoming a coach as inspired by her own children following the family's move to Wales. Her daughter went to a large comprehensive school where she experienced emotional problems associated with settling in and making new friends. She also notes that her son, transferring from a small comprehensive school in England, would have "got lost" if left to his own devices – he would not have achieved his potential. S3 simply "used to sit down with them at home" and help them to learn. Her daughter in particular could not see the relevance of the curriculum. S3 generalised this observation to some other students she saw when visiting various secondary schools – they too were lost, and the system was in her opinion not providing the pathways and the options that were suited to their learning needs. As a result it was "unfair" because they were not getting the results they deserved and no-one seemed to listen to them or help them to learn how to learn. (S3)

...was very disappointed when in his second year he had to leave the top class; he realised that now he was in a class that was being dominated by a group of lads who held everyone back and who he simply did not respect. He set his own target of getting back to the top set by the time he was 14 – which he achieved. He considers this key decision of taking responsibility for his own actions and having a clear goal to be a vital part of his development as a learner. (S5)

At the age of 16 everything changed very suddenly because she broke her back whilst training for a competition, thereby ending overnight her ambition to be an international athlete. Her task was based on her own experience in sport: to make sure that these

About the Coaches

Reasons for early involvement and coaching catalysts

young people had something to fall back on should injury unexpectedly destroy their sporting hopes... therefore helped them to plan their careers and to have reserve options as a way of helping them to prepare for the unexpected. (F1)

Partly as a result of her interest in her own daughters' schooling, she helped on a part-time unpaid and voluntary basis in a primary school before gaining paid part-time employment in pupil support within a local comprehensive school. (F2)

It was her own experience of coasting at school without being stretched, and later on the EBP mentoring, that encouraged her move into the learning coach role. (F3)

Her own background, and her volunteering work, led to a realisation that many young people simply make the wrong choices. She comments "young people, however bad/sad/strange or off-track they are, can always change and I think too many educational establishments want targets and success but go about it the wrong way, especially with rebellious youth". (Y3a)

...completed a large amount of volunteering activity with visually and hearing impaired adults and then got a job within the college working with students with disabilities. In the summer holidays she then helped with Welsh language play schemes... This involved working with young children, but it also led to teaching their parents to speak Welsh. The work was enjoyable. (Y4)

There were also observations pointing to frustrations with existing employment or initiatives:

...interest in coaching was linked with her growing disillusionment with paper-dominated management, and her emerging enjoyment of working with educational psychologists. (S1a)

...confessed her growing boredom with her job and asked a teacher's opinion as to whether she might be suitable for something a little more closely linked to helping sixth formers with their studies. (S2a)

warns that the reasons for becoming a coach may not be completely positive or altruistic. There is also an element of insecurity within schools based on budget cutbacks which threaten redundancies should staff not have full timetables and workloads. (S5)

A significant factor which attracted her to coaching involved her growing disillusionment with the New Deal 25 programme. (Y3a)

Discussions then moved on to the identification of coaching catalysts, involving the influences that led to entry into coaching as a specific activity. Responses included organisational tasks and initiatives which laid the foundations for later coaching:

...then took on the task of establishing the school's sixth form centre. Her initial work involved compiling resources on careers and universities as well as extra-mural opportunities for 16-18 year olds. She also built up a computing facility for use by the students, as well as systems and procedures for registering and monitoring student attendance. (S2a)

...and soon after engaged in voluntary work in primary and secondary schools, where she realised that she had a natural interest and some expertise in working with young people. (S4)

she comments on experiencing "a steep learning curve" when she was asked to carry out a pilot role in addition to her teaching and management commitments. She completed a lot of research, visiting colleagues in other organisations and attending staff development workshops. (S6)

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She was also involved in the World of Work programme, and running an extensive series of mock job interviews with year 10 and 11 students. This experience especially revealed just how little confidence some young people had, whilst she saw that others had high expectations which were however unrealistic because they were only going to get average grades. (F3)

There then followed a series of social services and local authority posts which included working with violent children, teenagers with challenging behaviours, and special needs. Some of this included working in residential homes set in affluent suburbs; when some of his teenagers got into trouble Y1 had to become an expert in public relations and community liaison: "instead of breaking into a Ford Escort our kids now did Volvos". (Y1)

...has pursued two dominant hobbies throughout his life. The first is photography and the second outdoor pursuits. He has gained qualifications in caving, kayaking, mountain leadership and orienteering – all of which have prepared him well for Duke of Edinburgh programme support via the youth services. But it was photography that first led to his involvement with young people, caused through an initial request from a friend to run some photography classes in a youth club. He recalls that "one Sunday a month became four nights a week", and he then decided to change career and become a full-time qualified youth worker. (Y2b)

*...her revamping of the **Skillbuild** programme so that it was more appealing and effective to learners. The chief executive of her company then asked her if she would be interested in completing the coach training, and developed a resourcing plan which then made links between careers guidance and coaching within the region. She thinks that this request was made because her previous work had demonstrated autonomy and initiative. She says that "the learning coach is very much about you making things happen. You have to be motivated". (Y3a)*

...became increasingly interested in working post 16 and was seconded to a large employer as an Education Business Manager. Through this secondment he joined on a part-time basis a private vocational work based learning provider, specialising in NVQ2 as well as key skills. (Y6)

Some coaches commented on significant sporting and extra-mural influences:

He sees a strong connection between his extensive sporting experience and transference into the work of a Learning Coach in school. (S5)

The sporting metaphor for coaching is very appealing because it is all about discipline, organisation, direction, training, giving encouragement, and showing improvement day by day. (F1)

...continued her long standing involvement with the Air Training Corps, an organisation which specialised in helping young people to prepare for the RAF. Over the years she has moved from cadet to officer status, and describes this background as a fundamental influence on the way that she works: "the ATC take a very direct approach with young people through using structured activity with lots of goal setting and achievements along the way". She also adds: "goals motivate young people, it is a difficult time for them, and setting targets helps them to notice their strengths". (Y4)

Key people were also recognised as gatekeepers within organisations. These important figures provided positive feedback, alerted the coaches to issues and training opportunities and also arranged for resources to be available in support of the role and the training. Line managers were frequently mentioned, including senior staff in schools and colleges and Careers Wales, youth leaders, 14-19 network coordinators, and friends.

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She enjoyed this work and received very positive feedback from everyone around her, especially the assistant headteacher: "Everyone says I work well with the pupils, that I have the right manner.". (S1b)

The crucial catalyst who raised awareness of this kind of career was a senior manager in Youth Cymru, and the key gatekeeper who provided resource and direction for the training programme was the headteacher... (S3)

A friend from the youth services recognised her strong interest in working with young people, and asked her "to do a few hours" in a youth centre. (Y2a)

There were also key events and incidents which inspired the coaches' need for getting involved in intensive support for young people. Many of these are documented in chapter 5, but some coaches referred to early examples concerning themselves or others which steered their philosophy about working with young people:

It was the short experience of ESOL support that encouraged her to think further about specialising in coaching: "It showed me that I had more to offer than a support role; I especially liked working one-to-one with children". (S1c)

*One training session she particularly valued: "it was called **Stop Mentoring and Start Coaching**". I was impressed by the enthusiasm and expertise of the a trainer, and she gave me the idea of not just coaching but also helping my colleagues to become coaches". (S6)*

He comments on one case in particular which "stuck in my mind and helped me decide that I wanted to do some proper training". It involved an academically advanced 15 year old who had been cautioned repeatedly for a variety of criminal and anti-social incidents both inside and outside school. His father said that various police, social workers and teaching authorities had become involved, but no-one was pulling it all together and making sense of

his son's situation. In the coach's words "everything seemed fragmented, there needed to be a way of pulling this support and guidance together, a go between for all the agencies, a single person who would help this lad". (F1)

...learned more about learning support policies and opportunities through her time in higher education, stating "there was a lot of debate about who would take on the pathways role. I thought it would be the youth services and so I wanted to become a coach. It came along at just the right time". (Y4)

4.2.6 Coaching caseloads

The volume and organisation of caseloads varies across sectors and individual organisations, and much depends on whether coaches operate individually or in teams. Table 4.11 uses case study data - where available – in order to provide further detail for the 2006/7 academic session about the numbers of learners that were formally targeted and supported, along with associated age ranges. It should be noted that many coaches also commented on one-off informal provision achieved through drop-in support, reaching a much larger group of learners – but with precise numbers going unrecorded.

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Table 4.11: Caseload information from 15 of the case study interviews

Sector	Numbers of Specifically Targeted Learners 2006/07	Target Age Group	Voluntary (V) and Referral (R) Systems in Operation
Coaches based in Schools	27	15	V+R
	30	11 and 12	R
	30	13 and 14	R
	70	16 and 17	V+R
	16	14	R
	28	15	V+R
	46	12	V+R
	12	14	R
	4	16	V+R
Coaches based in Colleges	17	16-19	R
	8	14-16	R
	106	16-19	V + R
Coaches based in Youth and Careers Services	30	14-15	R
	49	11-19	V
	15	16 and 17	V

The caseloads were also matched with the employment contracts of coaches in terms of whether their roles are designated as full or part-time. A total of six individuals have coaching as a full-time responsibility, compared with 12 who combine such support with a

variety of other responsibilities. By way of illustration, S4 is formally defined as the school's Learning Coach although her current full-time employment extends beyond coaching to include a small amount of tutoring within the Welsh Baccalaureate.

It is interesting to note that coaching support on occasions extended below the minimum age of 14 for Learning Pathways entitlement. Where younger learners have been supported through coaching, schools have employed individual staff via separate channels outside of Welsh Assembly Government support for the 14-19 Learning Pathways. The caseload analysis reveals a strategic interest within the coaches' organisations in those groups that are about to make key decisions regarding their options and their future pathways. Learners in year 9 are choosing for the first time which subjects to drop, those in year 11 are choosing which subjects or vocations to specialise within, and those in years 12 and 13 may be deciding on their further and higher education options. The caseloads therefore deal with learning styles and methods which map on to subjects as well as assessments, and on helping young people to make decisions when faced with learning choices.

Where teamwork is involved in schools, the coaching caseloads were divided typically into specific responsibilities for year groups. In case studies S1 and S2, for example, the coaching teams have specific responsibilities for lower, middle or upper school learners (with one coach being assigned to a particular age range). The predominant concern is with improving low exam results based on under-achievement, and working with disengaged young people. This includes children in need, young carers, looked after children, gifted and talented, underachievers, and able pupils with behaviour problems. Students requiring special support due to prolonged absence from school through illness are also targeted. The coaches commented on the relatively large number of learners within their caseloads coming from areas associated with very high levels of deprivation – what are referred to in Wales as Communities First wards.

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In other instances coaching support involves one individual working to very specific targets – for example year 10 and 11 students who are predicted to get D-G grades, those who are C/D borderlines, and specific individuals with severe emotional difficulties. A strong pattern emerges regarding the need to work with young people who have very low expectations about their academic and skill attainment, as with case study S5:

...he notes that there appears to be little or no history of educational success within the families of the learners, and little ambition to do well at school. He comments: “I have just seen one young man who could get 13 GCSEs, but his target is to get three”.

The caseloads also varied in terms of whether significant amounts of group work took place as compared with individual one-to-one support at more intensive levels. There was also variety about whether a smaller number of students are supported on a number of occasions (in cases S5 and F2 extending to over thirty support sessions throughout the year) as compared with a larger number receiving support through one-off meetings. It is clear that the coaching relationship can build up expectations amongst learners which eat into the allocated caseload time for the coaches. Coach F1 commented on having just completed 42 intensive sessions over a four month period, mostly on a one-to-one basis, and with an official timetable of one day a week – a significant under-estimate given the kind of intensive activity which was needed.

Some Learning Coaches on fractional contracts have other duties and responsibilities associated with their employment within a particular organisation. In these instances there is an urgent need to balance workloads and set priorities. In many cases this is completed successfully because competing work complements the coaching role. Take case F2 for example, a coach who has responsibility for all of the initial interviewing of students on the college's youth access programmes, and for the agreement of subsequent options and pathways. This provided her with an ideal opportunity for identifying

14-16 year olds who might experience future challenges on their courses, and allowed her to plan for some kind of intervention before there are serious crises.

The complexity of caseloads emerges especially for those coaches who cross organisational boundaries and work in a variety of initiatives and networks, as in case F3 who is based in a University. She works with year 10 pupils from a nearby comprehensive school within a widening access compact scheme. This involved support for three learners a term at six sessions per student with each session lasting between 1-2 hours. Added to this was coaching via the Education and Business Partnership's World of Work programme in 10 schools at 10 days per annum with seven learners per day. She also volunteered for the *Home Office Time Together* programme, where she supported one asylum seeker via a two hour coaching session every month in order to improve English Language skills. Finally, she arranged one-week supervised work experience (SWE) placements for 25 year 12 students throughout the university's faculties and departments. This included briefing visiting young people on SWE guidelines, discussing their longer term plans regarding applying to universities and enrolling on particular courses, and generally introducing them to university life. She noted that much of her coaching work spills over to the other side of her employment: helping undergraduates to engage in mentoring and student tutoring in schools.

Within the youth and careers service contexts coaching caseloads included a vast amount of multi-agency working behind the scenes, in addition to managing or coordinating teams of colleagues who fulfil coaching as well as other functions between them. Case Y1 provides an illustration:

He now leads a team of three coaches, two having specialist study skills and one having specialist counselling backgrounds. The annual caseload involves approximately 30 year ten and eleven students who spend three days a week at further education college, one day at school (where they develop key skills) , and one day in work

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experience settings. Most are working towards highly vocational OCN qualifications in motor vehicle studies, social care, engineering, travel and tourism, construction, and outdoor education. Their learners are unusual in that they attend the local further education college whilst aged under 16. They are selected on the basis of using serious educational disengagement measures (especially linked to truancy, child welfare and specific learning needs). Selection decisions are made by a local authority coaching panel which includes the coach and representatives from Inclusion Services, educational psychology, and secondary education.

With reference to this kind of caseload complexity it is worth highlighting one specific issue which emerged for case Y2. These two interviewees found it very difficult to definitively outline their coaching caseloads. At the most general level they estimated that over the past year their youth service team worked with 15000 young people within the local authority, giving informal and non-formal learning opportunities which involve what might be loosely labelled coaching support. They emphasised that this was happening anyway and it cannot be attributed to anything new with coaching per se. The youth services therefore see major overlaps between learning support and advice giving, and in their words “a youth worker has to constantly change hats without disrupting the relationship they have established with their clients”. This raises a crucial query about the distinctiveness of the coaching role – something that will be returned to in chapter 6.

4.2.7 Coaching environments

The case study interviews recorded details about coaching locations and the design of the coaches' working environment. Interviewees were also asked about future plans regarding premises and equipment as well as their ideal place for providing learning support for young people. It is stressed at the outset for any observations regarding the places and spaces for coaching that the coaching role is being piloted

within institutions and networks. The coaches may therefore still be finding their feet and negotiating resources as their own needs and the demands of learners become apparent. In several cases interviewees emphasised that whilst no dedicated coaching space is currently available plans are being made for such a facility over the coming year.

In seven of the case studies there were dedicated and clearly labelled coaching rooms or centres within specific institutions. These spaces contained learning resources, computer access, filing cabinets, seating, and storage space. The rooms could also be used at scheduled times for private interviews with individual learners. All but two had sufficient space for working with small groups. Table 4.12 provides further detail about coaching locations for all of the case studies:

Table 4.12: Predominant coaching locations within the case studies

Location	Number of cases
Dedicated coaching room or centre	7
Learning resources, sixth form, or careers centres	4
Youth clubs and centres	5
Classrooms	1
Cannot Say	1

The location of dedicated coaching rooms or centres varied enormously, from quiet and confidential areas of a school or college to being at the very heart of the institution:

This is a busy place with students dropping in all of the time outside of lesson time. During classes more confidential and scheduled meetings take place on a 1:1 basis in the Coaching Room. (S4)

...has her own clearly labelled coaching room which is adjacent to the reception area: it is therefore very central and convenient in terms of drop-in potential. (F1)

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In another instance a different strategy was evident:

...there was a dedicated Coaching room which whilst being accessible for all learners was also in a part of the school where meetings were undisturbed and learners could wait without being observed by "passing traffic". (S6)

Some coaches also emphasised the importance of using open areas within an institution – such as a learning resources centre and a sixth form room – because they are visible to all; thereby publicising the work to students and staff alike:

...also likes to work with students in the canteens and libraries of schools, where "you can have a private conversation but you are not alone". (F3)

One advantage of the open location is that the high visibility of coaching leads to other colleagues being drawn in at very short notice, leading to an enjoyable and spontaneous atmosphere for coaching. Coaches reported on the difficult dilemma of creating a central facility where young people can drop in easily and spontaneously, but a place which also has to have privacy so that students do not feel embarrassed about being seen or overheard by their peers or teachers.

It should be noted that in cases where there was no dedicated coaching space, separate specialist rooms within the institution were in all cases available for more confidential support. A very different picture emerges for coaches associated with youth and careers services, where a variety of locations are used throughout a geographical area:

The team use workshops and learning resource centres, school classrooms, and workplaces. The coaches also use community youth centres as appropriate and often this kind of arrangement means that "the boot of my car becomes my office". (Y1)

A total of 14 venues are used, including two community schools following invitations from teachers who value the independent status of a coach who comes from outside their organisation. It also includes CANLLAW digilabs, community learning centres, cookery workshops in Community First wards. (Y2)

In the youth centres there are catering facilities, digi-labs, pool tables, and sofas – in addition to a private office for more confidential conversations...the team have mobile communication support, and they can store and share files via internet systems – an important administrative feature when a number of coaches might be working with the same individuals in a variety of locations. (Y3)

At times this kind of distributed work means having to engage with time consuming administration in order to ensure that facilities are available for coaching support at appropriate times:

They also comment that it is difficult to design and use a comfortable and appropriate facility for more private one-to-one advisory and support sessions; sometimes they have to either book a room for a future interview, or fetch a key from a caretaker of centre manager. (Y2)

All of these locations depend on multi-agency partnerships and the sharing of facilities; the downside of such an arrangement is that it becomes very difficult to establish an advanced coaching resource centre. The youth service coaches have offices in more remote locations; sometimes these can be used for private interviews and in all cases they involve the storage of confidential files and access to computer-based information.

A universal theme emerging from the case study discussions concerned the importance of creating an atmosphere which is relaxed and informal:

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The coaches consider it important for their study skills environments to be informal and comfortable with lots of daylight and colour. They note the ambivalence of having to relax students through using conversation and music and activities, whilst also helping other learners who want to study quietly without interruption. For these reasons the coaching should be distributed in a number of locations depending on the needs of the learners. (S2)

The area is full of colour and posters, with displayed coursework on the walls, and some comfortable furniture. (S5)

The coaches also meet young people in local coffee shops, where "the non-educational setting allows them to drop a lot of baggage which adults stir up in them in a more formal environment". (Y3)

In terms of ideal surroundings for coaching the theme of informality was taken one stage further:

...describes her ideal coaching environment as appealing to all the senses: "I would like bright colours, fresh flowers, music, drift wood, play dough, photographs, pebbles, pictures, rocks and ornaments". (S3)

...full of light and warmth, including "a warm fire which is cosy, glows, and brings out emotions". The room would be a place of comfort and relaxation, with a water dispenser and lots of things to stimulate the senses including music, colours and gadgets or objects to touch. (S4)

Above all it should have images of safety and trust and it should also have a creative element with equipment and materials that use sight and sound and that can also be touched and played with. There would also be lots of daylight and plant life in order to encourage themes of growth and development. (F1)

would be a dedicated room within a learning resources centre that would be informal and comfortable, with glass walls that would give a feeling of openness whilst offering privacy at the same time. (F3)

4.2.8 Coaching activity

Coaching activities outlined by interviewees fall into five broad categories: administration, relationship building, study skills support, facilitating choice within learning pathways, and management and networking.

4.2.8.1 Administration

The coaching role was new to most interviewees, and before commencing their activities and joining the training programme some background information gathering took place:

She completed a lot of research, visiting colleagues in other organisations and attending staff development workshops. (S6)

Administration and tracking systems and procedures posed problems on occasions, especially when learners cross organisational and sector boundaries. All coaches reported on the importance of gathering and cataloguing learning resources, and then making these available to young people. This task was very significant for those coaches that had responsibility for a dedicated coaching facility. They also kept detailed records, and in many cases this included the completion of research into attainment prior to meetings with each individual or group that they worked with. Administrative tasks involved listing the previous core subject scores and grade predictions of learners – in some instances tracing attainment since primary school. Significant activity was also evident for the design of worksheets and off-the shelf materials, with one coach commenting:

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"I like to give them something they can take away with them and think about". (F2)

Coaches reported on keeping a confidential journal for all meetings, including details about judgements of first impressions, body language, and the mood and emotional state of their learners. This qualitative analysis was inspired by the training programme, which encouraged coaches to gather evidence in support of their reflection on coaching practice. It led to the combination of direct learning support with detailed administrative backup:

...combined study skills support with very clear administration based on the rigorous development and use of procedures and systems which can then demonstrate impact via tangible improvement in learning performance over time. (F1)

Administrative activity also dominated coaching time for those individuals with responsibilities linked to organising work placements, including the design of guidelines, the production of placement directories, and briefing learners about what to expect and what information they should gather whilst working with an employer.

4.2.8.2 Building relationships

The coaches describe their learners as young people who are in need of emotional support because they are lacking confidence and want to know where they are going:

They ask what their grades are likely to be and often under-rate themselves. (S4)

There is an emphasis on the importance of giving social and emotional support and building up self esteem, as is illustrated by this dramatic comment from coach S5:

"failure is a friend to them, they know how to cope with that, they don't know how to cope with success". (S5)

The central tenet for coaching is developing belief about what can be achieved and showing improvement at every opportunity, no matter how slight it may seem. This building of optimism and ambition inevitably means forming a relationship:

...there should be an unspoken trust and respect, with success and disappointment being felt equally by both because you're on the journey together. (F1)

The development of the relationship between coach and learner is linked especially with informality as well as challenge:

The coaches note that they "have to be firm but friendly", and that "first names should be used – it's important". (S2)

Students say that "Mrs...is safe;" she "does crazy things;" "has time", and is "someone who listens." The coach sometimes describes herself to people as "the grit in the oyster producing pearls". (S3)

If coaching is successful, empathy develops which helps the coach to understand the learner's situation and the possible competing or conflicting demands on their time, motivation and commitment:

The coaches help each student to draw up a timetable of a typical week so that they "can see life from that person's perspective and see just how much time they spend studying". A key concern is with demands placed upon students by family commitments and part-time paid employment. One of the most frequent coaching observations is how little time young people seem to have to actually study. This exercise also helps the coaches to ask questions in an easy way about home life, relationships with teachers, the favourite and least favourite subjects. (S2)

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She likes to get her students to talk about "their interests and plans, their likes and dislikes, and their hopes and fears - finding out their comfort zones, what they find easy and what they find difficult". She says this phase is vital for forming a trusting relationship and establishing a dialogue and encouraging a longer term view about pathways and options which span at least two years at college. (F2)

In order to support relationship building there is much attention to the content and format of early meetings, and the establishment of ground rules and expectations of both parties:

"...for example that it is voluntary but if they want my help then they should turn up every week and let me know if they cannot make it". (F2)

The importance of having a positive and trusted but informal relationship with young people was stressed especially by the youth service interviewees. As one coach states:

"a lot of people think we just play table tennis and pool all night. Sometimes it looks like we do, but this allows us to listen to what young people say and helps us decide what we are going to do to help them". (Y2)

The support they give includes advice about drugs and alcohol, preventing self-harm, assessing and promoting sexual health, confidence building, developing key skills, managing money, coping with debt, finding accommodation for those who have either left home or been left homeless, providing information about welfare support, getting work, preparing for job interviews, and producing CVs.

4.2.8.3 Study skills support

Study skills emerged inevitably as a key component of coaching activity. Learners helped their coach to establish starting baselines. On occasions this meant providing qualifications and attainment grades (such information can easily be lost during transition from one organisation or sector to another), giving permission under data protection regulations, agreeing learning contracts, listing non-formal and non-accredited learning achievements, and short and longer term goal setting.

At the most obvious level study skills support involved working intensively with individuals:

Much of her time is spent on a one-to-one basis with underachievers, including withdrawal sessions located in the library to catch up on missed coursework and lessons. (S1)

Most of the coaches allowed time for induction and the establishment of ground rules before gradually moving into study skills support, sometimes involving groupwork. This involved movement from an early position of providing initial practical advice towards a later position of facilitation leading to more independent action by the learner:

...often she "gives them a nudge, giving them helpful hints and tips" but towards the end of the six sessions she then "lets them go and breaks the dependency". (S2)

Early study skills support often revolved around time management, setting targets, developing skills, and demonstrating learning techniques. This included completing off-the-shelf learning style inventories, and it also extended to support with literacy and numeracy:

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Individuals attend a two week induction period in June where they attend workshops in their chosen vocational areas; they also complete basic skills assessments. (Y1)

In addition to using existing materials and activities, coaches may also exercise considerable creativity in designing their own instruments:

She has devised original learning exercises for students (especially through the use of visual graphics and drawing tasks). Examples include Stepping Stones (where students draw diagrams or pictures showing critical moments in their lives), and an icebreaker card sorting game where adjectives are grouped into three piles labelled "this is me", "this is me sometimes" and "this is not me". The result is a list of descriptors about that individual which help to shape target setting; these lists can be returned to and revised at future coaching sessions before leading into the writing of personal statements for use with future job or university applications. (F1)

It should also be noted that at the most extreme level of support, coaches can on occasions accompany learners within mainstream classes:

The coaching depends on working with subject tutors and lecturers who lead the vocational training and teaching, but with the coaches sitting alongside learners and giving additional support and help. (Y1)

When there are serious behaviour problems, a time out system can be used where one-to-one support is provided and individuals are therefore removed from the rest of the group.

4.2.8.4 Facilitating choice within pathway planning

A key component for coaching support involves helping learners to identify and use options menus at different stages in their studies, leading to pathways planning. The coach would typically discuss with individual learners their most favourite subjects, and explore the reasons for their enjoyment of learning within those contexts:

This kind of positive enquiry helps learners to make contrasts with things that they do not enjoy, and to then articulate the reasons for these differences. (S4)

Coaching in schools and colleges extends to the identification of higher education pathways, with coaches explaining aspects of university life in partnership with careers advisers who provide specific information about courses and future employment. Throughout the support process coaches noted that at the heart of their work there is an interest in helping young people to use learning methods which are in line with their preferred ways of doing things, and to choose subjects that they will not only enjoy but also do well at when it comes to assessment.

By contrast the youth services were more concerned about the unrealistic and short-term approach to employment and careers that many young people have when they are outside the formal education system:

The coaches note "we think there's a vast swathe of young people out there with no idea of training or what employers want. They say "I want to be a plasterer, but I don't need to get qualifications or training. I'll just get a job as a plasterer'". (F2)

Coaching also extended to the development of choices and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning activities that many young people engage in at unrecognised levels:

...interest in using the Millennium Volunteers Award, which offered a certificated route for volunteering activity and a goal for coaching outcomes. A key development in the first year of operation involved linking the volunteering with not only the Millennium Award, but also with an accredited pathway leading to an OCN in Youth Work at level 2, awarded by the YMCA in partnership with the local authority's youth services. With this route the coach supports participants to develop portfolios of evidence which reflect a minimum of 12 hours of youth work experience. (Y4)

4.2.8.5 Management and networking

Some of the coaches have significant management responsibilities which involve leading a team of colleagues in order to spread out the coaching functions amongst a larger group of experts:

...also manages ten other coaches..., and this responsibility includes helping them with any difficulties, planning and monitoring delivery, and running support sessions with them on such topics as groupwork, and study skills. (Y3)

Interviewees also reported on the high visibility of their work in terms of talks at assemblies, walking along corridors, writing letters to parents, and meeting family members:

...visited various classrooms and workshops, asking for volunteers who might be interested in some extra study support, and she also asked tutors and lecturers for those referrals they thought might be suitable. (F2)

The coaches – especially those who are in the youth and careers services – also network extensively through crossing numerous sector and organisational boundaries during the course of their work:

The coaches also escort learners to the work environment and act as the go-between with employers, and this includes helping to arrange the work experience placements. (Y1)

The coaching team then meets up with a variety of teachers within the schools following the induction programme in order to discuss an action plan for the next school year for each individual student. (Y1)

As a team they also complete significant groupwork activity in youth clubs and schools. (Y3)

would visit the three youth centres and other venues used by Mentor Bro in order to observe activities and provide immediate feedback and support. (Y4)

One key aspect of management was however absent in most of the case studies, and this revolved around evaluation. Most of the Learning Coaches did not appear to have proof and detailed evidence about the extent of their impact on learners. It should be noted that this was not a universal criticism; there were two instances where case studies referred to baseline data and produced quantified “before and after” measures of improved learner performance over the period involving coaching support.

One example involves case Y1 who provided the following evidence for one learner:

...an A level student I worked with who was a visual learner. She found difficulty with one of her subjects which was mainly delivered via hand-outs. I worked with her and the teacher involved, first to find out her learning style, and then helping her with techniques to aid her study. Also, advising the teacher as to ways she could help by using more discussion in class and experimenting with a different kind of layout. Her AS element grades before coaching support were U, U and C. In year 13 she improved dramatically, gaining A, C and E Grades.

About the Coaches

Management and networking

Another example is case S3, where the Learning Coach analysed the predicted and actual GCSE A*-C performance for all the borderline year 11 students that she supported, thereby achieving a “before and after” comparison.

A total of 37 year 11 learners were supported by the Learning Coach, and at the start of the year the predicted average number of A-C grades was 5.55. The actual attainment of grades at the end of the year increased to an average of 7.10, an overall average increase of 1.65 A*-C results. Table 4.13 provides further detail:*

Table 4.13: Case Study S3 data analysis for year 11 learners

Improvement in academic attainment based on the total number of actual GCSE A*-C grades minus the predicted number at the start of the year	Number of students
- 0.00 – 1.0 or more (i.e no improvement)	6
+ 0.5 – 1.00 improvement	9
+ 1.5 – 2.00 improvement	12
+ 2.5 – 3.00 improvement	7
+ 3.5 or more improvement	3
Total:	37

The Learning Coach further noted that there were six cases of progression to sixth form or further education college, contrary to their own and their school's expectations at the start of the year.

4.2.9 Organisation and management features

The institutional context for coaching can best be described through grouping the case studies into the school, further education, and youth and careers service categories.

a) Schools

The case studies for the schools note the emergence of coaching from more established systems and procedures. Case study S1 depicts support for coaching via strong and proactive commitment from senior management within the school, especially an assistant headteacher with a whole-school pastoral brief. This individual created teams of support specialists, with much support and help from the Special Educational Needs coordinator. The school notes that all year tutors and form teachers should in an ideal world be performing the duties of coaches but that competing pressures mean there is not enough time.

This school has a formalised system where teachers complete progress reviews for all students, and referrals are then made to a variety of specialists - the Progress Centre for students with personal problems; a separate centre for difficult students with behaviour problems; a Pastoral Support team for dealing with truancy, monitoring, and parental communications; and an Alternative Curriculum group for off-site learners.

They all have clear boundaries as regards what they should and should not do. When it comes to coaching, the coaches must not deal with specific behaviour problems or be called on to do other “non-academic” things. The first coach was appointed three years ago, when the term “mentor” was used (although recent national 14-19 Pathways policy has resulted in a change to the use of the title of coach within the school). Since then two more full-time coaching posts have been created.

About the Coaches

Organisation and management features

As personal support has grown within the school the coaches have been encouraged to attend strategic planning sessions with the rest of the staff and annual coaching targets have been set within the School Plan. Furthermore, INSET programmes for teachers have included elements of study skills and learning styles emerging from coaching experiences. The school notes that “coaching is a philosophy rather than just establishing a job”, but nevertheless values the role of the coach as a new kind of professional.

Resourcing for the team has come from S1’s core school funds, as well as 14-19 network support from the convenor who secured grants from the RAISE initiative (the school has two communities first catchment wards). Other initiatives included tapping into the regional alternative curriculum provision for disengaged youth via partnership with the local further education college, and support for gifted and talented learners in years 7 and 8. There are now plans to experiment with older learners coaching younger learners within the school.

Similar stories about the emergence and growth of coaching were provided for the other school-based case studies. Common patterns involved the sharing of the coaching function by a small team of specialist staff, leadership and target setting by senior management, the inclusion of coaching within institutional plans, and staff development which included by definition at least one coach completing the national training programme.

b) Colleges

Case study F1 details the testing out of coaching as a pilot study within a further education college. The college’s vice principal asked one of the lecturers to experiment and develop the role of coach, based on her passion and reputation for personal tutoring as well as her experience in having been a student and then becoming a member of staff at the same college. Senior management then made sure that she was successfully supported whilst going through the training phase and setting up the coaching programme. This matched the institution’s

pastoral plan regarding the need to establish top quality and consistent support in order to provide entitlements within the Learning Pathways guidance for all students at the college aged 16-19. The institution established a cross-departmental working group in order to ensure that opportunities and services were provided for enhancing study skills, supporting option choices, engaging in the fine detail of career planning, preparing employment applications, responding to counselling needs, devising CVs, and applying for a place in higher education via UCAS. Coaching was therefore being embedded within this whole-organisation strategy, although it is emphasised by interviewees that many other faculty tutors and student services staff are also engaging within a detailed matrix of personal support.

A similar pattern regarding the use of a pilot project to test out coaching is noted for study F2, where the coach was asked to apply for the coach training programme by a careers adviser within the college. This followed a request from senior management for a nomination in order to develop accredited coaching expertise within the institution. The coaching is in its early stages, and operates alongside careers, welfare, and educational guidance specialists, thereby complementing support for individual learners. Where more intensive and expert counselling is required, specialist agencies become involved through an outsourcing policy developed by senior management two year ago.

F3 reveals a very different management strategy for coaching, based on its location within higher education and a strategic aim of involving undergraduate mentors and student tutors as an additional layer of support for learners in schools and colleges. This led to the design of accredited mentoring and tutoring modules which allowed students to engage in such support as a part of their undergraduate studies. Placements in schools and colleges are arranged and monitored by a full-time Tutoring and Placements Coordinator, who also completed the national training programme. It is worth noting that a similar “two step” management strategy for coaching has been developed in case



About the Coaches

Organisation and management features

study Y4 for Welsh language support through increasing capacity via the involvement of sixth formers who then support other young people.

c) Youth and careers services

When it comes to the organisation and management of coaching within youth and careers service context, a far more complex picture appears as compared with the relative simplicity of developing coaching within a single institution. This is partly because youth and careers services often have to operate at area and regional level, networking with a wide range of organisations and institutions. It also involves multi-agency teamwork through fulfilling a variety of support roles for young people who value a more flexible informal relationship with support workers. Furthermore, there may be no single physical base for coaching; instead it is organised around existing resources in a number of institutions, and dependent on clear communications and agreements with other agencies and professions.

Hence in case studies Y1, Y3 and Y4 the coaches devote a proportion of their time to direct coaching activity, but they also have many other responsibilities associated with more general youth support. The coaching team of youth workers meet up with a variety of teachers within the schools in order to discuss an action plan for the next school year for individual students, and agree their release from the traditional key stage four school timetable. These coaches share a private and secure office away from schools or college campuses, and this is where confidential information is kept and private meetings take place. Much of the coaching takes place in and around the local further education college and a series of community centres, digi-labs and youth clubs.

Case study Y2 reveals how a team of youth service professionals strategically organised their work around Welsh Assembly Government policies surrounding community schools and entitlement. The coaches noted that in earlier days there would often be a youth worker on a school site, but with changes to the service youth clubs have either

relocated or closed down completely. There is now a strong interest in supporting new community schools throughout the county, returning to the theme of out-of-school hours support for young people. At the same time the youth services are concerned about the 14-19 Pathways pre-occupation with personal support programmes that operate entirely through schools and further education colleges. The reminder is that many 16-19 year olds have left formal education, and the coaches emphasise:

“we are not anti-school, it’s just that there’s more to it than this”.

For this reason the coaches have worked with the Welsh Assembly and Youth Gateways programme on an extended entitlement project which has experimented with ways of involving more young people in making decisions about the Learning Pathway entitlements. This detailed exercise has included a secondment from the Youth Services in order to develop a computerised interactive system where workshops involving approximately 30 14-19 year olds at a time have included a series of voting options via the use of electronic handsets. The workshops have been convened in community schools, youth clubs, and adult learning centres. The reach of the project has been achieved through partnerships with youth organisations, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, Job Centres, cadets, and schools and colleges. The values and opinions of young people have then been analysed and used by Careers Wales, the education service, the regional Regeneration programme, and the information and advice strategy unit within the Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities division within the Welsh Assembly.

The coaches commented on a key communication issue arising from the entire exercise:

“we took the entitlement policy to youth workers and young people who ripped it apart because of the technospeak that no-one could understand”.

The entitlement project is not a result of coaching; rather it convinced the youth services of the case for strengthening personal support for young people. It was considered important to communicate and advise on options in ways that are different but that complement existing traditional provision.

4.2.10 Special issues

During the course of the case study interviews some of the coaches discussed issues or difficulties which appeared to be especially difficult to resolve. A key concern was child protection and the possibility of false allegations of abuse that coaches would not be able to defend themselves against. They therefore designed the coaching environment and organised coaching support in ways that allowed for confidentiality and privacy via one-to-one meetings, whilst at the same time ensuring that others were nearby and proceedings were publicly visible.

Another related issue emerged whenever confidentiality was declared as a ground rule for coaching discussions. This was based on the occasional identification of disclosure during discussions of serious incidents which demanded follow-up by other authorities:

One incident in particular has highlighted the need to warn everyone about policies and procedures for informing students, parents and teachers before coaching begins. It is very easy for the coach to declare confidentiality at the start of discussion, and very hard to then break this promise should an alarming disclosure appear and one that simply cannot be ignored. The result is lack of trust – and this can spread very easily to the rest of a peer group. (S4)

Interviewees commented that the training of the coaches has to therefore take on board issues such as the exploitation of young people, domestic abuse and child protection:

There have, for example, been a small number of instances where coaches have had to report the disclosures made by 13 and 14 year old girls about sexual relationships with adult males. The consequent dilemmas surrounding trust and confidentiality can be very difficult to fathom. (Y3)

In other cases coaches noted that they often have meetings with family members, and sometimes these can become awkward. Some interviewees commented that on occasions discussions with parents became very heated and there have been instances of assault. Security precautions are therefore needed:

...include a door with a glass panel in order to ensure that the coach is visible to colleagues when engaged in interviews. (S5)

Learning support depends in many instances on multi-agency working and partnerships across sectors and organisations, but this can also cause unexpected difficulties. Two examples involved record keeping, and the detection of basic skills deficiencies:

...the high level of staff turnover and change-round within the social services had led to records being misplaced prior to a major court hearing. The coach's own year tutor notes and records were substituted and used by the courts in order to secure the successful prosecution of an adult who had been abusing one of the year 11 students. (S5)

...they also complete basic skills assessments. The coach notes that this process reveals a surprising number of serious deficiencies in literacy and numeracy skills although the learners had not been statemented when they were at school. (Y1)

The importance of clear communication with colleagues, and the need to highlight a new role within an organisation, was emphasised as core activity. This was especially linked to the need for clarifying expectations about what coaching involves, the status of a trainee coach, and who does what:

About the Coaches

Special issues

She notes that "at the moment a lot of people don't know that I am the coach" and she is planning a major marketing exercise at the start of the new academic year in order to advertise resourcing that is available to students. (F2)

She notes that when it comes to the training programme, then this should be completed successfully before declaring to the outside world that "you are a Learning Coach." (S3)

At a more extreme level two coaches located within the youth and careers services, who visit schools in order to provide learning support, comment:

Another aspect of coaching which requires careful consideration involves dealing with what appear to be an aggressive attitude from some teaching professionals towards the role of the coach. The coaches note that "some teachers just don't like us". (Y3)

These interviewees identified at least two possible explanations. First, a Learning Coach can sometimes be seen as someone who confirms an unfavourable criticism of a school through working with excluded students or following up on special measures recommendations from Estyn inspections. This perception applies especially to coaches who have a regional or local authority role rather than a specific affiliation with a single school or college. Second, the Learning Coach can implicitly threaten the established and traditional classroom practices used by teachers based on the promotion of learning styles and study skills methodologies. The coaches emphasised that this is not a general observation of the teaching profession, instead they suspect it applies to a minority of more experienced teachers who are prone to criticising new initiatives.

4.2.11 Aspirations

A final consideration within the case study interviews involved identifying the coaches' future hopes and ambitions regarding their own career pathways. Feedback was unanimous: they all wanted to continue with some kind of continuing professional development. It should, however, be noted that because the case study interviewers were from the *First Campus* team, a "halo effect" may have influenced the replies of coaches. Nonetheless, the case studies revealed a general vocational calling about working with young people:

She defines her ambition in a very clear way: "to help as many children as possible to reach their goal in life and be happy, because I work with a lot of children who are unhappy – just to make them smile". (S1b)

She has a fierce loyalty for work which involves contact with disengaged youth in the city area "in order to make a difference in some way". (F1)

This vocational dedication of working exclusively with young people was not however unanimous. In two cases coaches commented simply that they did not have any career ambitions at present, and in a further instance one individual wanted to move into technology:

She considers the training and the caseloads to have helped her with groupwork facilitation, and with generally managing a wide variety of learners. She does not however have a long-term aim to become a formally designated coaching professional; instead she is more interested in applying her interests in computing and new technologies to various kinds of learner support, and this would include coaching. (F3)

In others cases, there was a more specific focus on going beyond academic credit alone, and gaining a complete qualification – especially at graduate level:

The Context for Learning Coach Developments in Wales Aspirations

One coach has enjoyed the formal training programme and would like to continue with her accredited studies in order to get an honours degree. (S2a)

She has a strong interest in Psychology and Counselling, and is interested in gaining graduate qualifications. (S4)

In terms of his own personal development, he would now like to gain more depth and breadth in counselling experience and expertise. He would also like to build on the accredited learning coach training programme and gain an honours degree. (S5)

In the longer term she would like to study for a degree in Coaching – if one becomes available. (Y3b)

The qualification base for coaching extended in two instances to establishing higher professional status, securing better remuneration and having a nationally agreed employment contract for all of those people who are qualified within support professions:

The coach would welcome a formally recognised professional pathway, and suggests that there should be a transparent overarching salary scale which rewards the advanced skills and expertise of those people working alongside teachers and careers advisers: coaches, teaching assistants, and youth counsellors. (S3)

Three interviewees commented on their interest in helping other colleagues to engage with coaching, including the possibility of mentoring or training future coaches that join the accredited training programme:

She is very interested in a longer term involvement in consultancy where she might work with a number of organisations, even supporting future coaches who go through their training programmes. (S2a)

would like the opportunity to work with other coaches and to help them develop. (S4)

The coach sees her own career progression as leading new projects and initiatives, managing teams and giving support for colleagues who work with young people. She would also like to develop detailed training programmes on child protection because it has become such an important issue confronting a wide range of professionals who work with 14-19 year olds. (Y3a)

The theme of working with future cohorts extended to the recognition of career pathways involving the management of teams of people engaging in teaching and support, as well as more strategic work involving quality assurance and the provision of staff training and development.

A final observation involved a profound awareness amongst some of the coaches of the need for information which demonstrates the impact and effectiveness of their work. This was in part fuelled by the accredited training programme, which demands evidence based reflection about professional practice. One coach in particular expressed a strong interest in pursuing research pathways:

She also describes herself as a “left-brained” individual who enjoys research, based on her enjoyment of her Masters level studies, and would like to document the achievements and outcomes of her work. (Y1)

4.3 Headline conclusions

- The case studies illustrate a variety of activities associated with the core function of providing learning support for young people. These include relationship building, facilitating choice, developing study skills and learning strategies, networking and teamwork, and administration. Some difficulties were noted with administration,

The Context for Learning Coach Developments in Wales

Headline conclusions

especially with the tracking of learners as they moved from one part of an institution to another, or across education or employment sectors.

- There is much evidence for the strategic use of Learning Coach support and resourcing, linked to the targeting of specific groups of learners. These include those at risk of acquiring NEET status, children in care, children who care, those with specific educational needs, excluded youth on an alternative curriculum, and talented and more able students who are under-achieving. Strategic support is often linked with referral and target setting procedures, at times extending to learners below the age of 14. Where Learning Coach support was noted for younger people outside of the 14-19 Learning Pathways legislation, it was associated with funding from alternative non-Pathways resources in schools.
- There is – with some notable exceptions – limited evidence of any detailed evaluation activity by Learning Coaches. There is a need for the more widespread collation and analysis of performance data and outcomes in order to show impact through value added improvements linked to the provision of learning support.
- Employment and qualifications profiles reveal considerable variety and diversity in experiences acquired, and pathways followed, by the Learning Coaches themselves. This may offer a distinct advantage in terms of their empathy and credibility with young people, and should be considered carefully when developing criteria for use in the recruitment of future Learning Coach cohorts.
- Pathways into coaching include volunteering activity leading to paid employment in support roles, and subsequent involvement in the coaching role. The involvement of voluntary organisations and networks is therefore important when considering ways of recruiting and training Learning Coaches.

- Many coaches provided evidence of critical incidents and “coaching catalysts” which motivated and inspired their involvement with young people. A more detailed consideration of critical incident analysis may therefore be of value within the core training programme for future Learning Coach cohorts.
- Particularly effective Learning Coach activity was linked to support from senior management within host organisations, including the creation of units and specialist groups which aid referral, the clear definition of various kinds of learner support within institutional plans, and inclusion of detail within staff development and continuing professional development programmes for other colleagues. Learning Coaches also identified the significant role of the Learning Network managers and convenors in raising awareness and acting as gatekeepers to training and resources.
- Some coaches are coping with complex job descriptions and fractional contracts; this sometimes makes it difficult to clarify the distinctive role of the Learning Coach.
- One case study revealed an interesting articulation of coaching and mentoring, where the Learning Coach has developed and organised additional learning support for young people through the involvement of undergraduates and sixth formers in mentoring programmes. This strategy for increasing the reach and capacity of learning support should be explored further.
- Learning Coaches expressed a strong interest in receiving further training. This extended to pursuing qualifications, receiving specialised staff development in child care and health and safety issues, and acquiring a coordinating and training role for coaching teams.
- The case studies reveal powerful examples of the work of Learning Coaches linked to the youth services, offering intervention and support which reaches out to young people who would otherwise be

The Context for Learning Coach Developments in Wales

Headline conclusions

lost within Learning Pathways policy because they are located outside traditional institutional boundaries. This is a vital consideration when targeting young people with NEET status, or who lie within the at-risk category. The detached or distributed delivery of support by youth services, their engagement with multi-agency partnerships, and the difficulties that they have in terms of establishing resource centres for learning support, present some key challenges as well as advantages. It is especially difficult at times to define the distinctive role of the Learning Coach as compared with the more generic role of the youth worker, and to gauge subsequent impact.

Coaching the Learners: cases and sketches

The case study interviews included a request for any information about particular instances where the work of the Learning Coaches has made a difference to individual learners. A total of 41 descriptions was generated; divided into more detailed “cases” and less detailed “sketches.” The cases include backgrounds about individual 14-19 year olds and depend on sustained learning support by the coach over time periods that typically spanned more than four weeks. The sketches refer to brief descriptions about the difficulties experienced by students during the course of their studies, and the particular coaching actions that took place in order to give support.

It should be emphasised that these cases and sketches have been chosen by the coaches themselves and they reflect examples of success; they do not represent a random and independent sample of intervention and support across the board. Furthermore, because all of the coaches were going through the training programme at the time of the interviews, and because anonymity was respected at all times, the longer term attainment of learners at the end of the year in question could not always be tracked. The information is therefore limited in most instances to more qualitative and impressionistic outcomes as judged by the coaches themselves. Nonetheless, the interviews provided valuable illustrations of the work of the Learning Coach and the young people they interact with on a day-to-day basis.

Coaching the Learners: cases and sketches

School based learners

Cases have been anonymised and coded according to which lead institution or organisation the Coach operated within. Three categories are presented:

- school based learners (coded S)
- further education based students (coded F)
- young people based in youth centres and workplaces (coded Y).

Some of the cases are presented in their entirety based on the full context for learning support; in other instances extracts are offered as illustrations of particular challenges and intervention. All of the sketches have been given fictional names in order to protect the identity of the individual learners.

Analysis of the cases and sketches revealed five broad themes for learning support for each of the three categories. These are listed as:

- Specific learning difficulties
- Catch-up
- Disruption
- Study skills support
- Pathway planning

5.1 School based learners

Interviews generated 14 cases (one involving two students who were coached together) and a further eight sketches for learners who were enrolled in comprehensive schools. Table 5.1 provides a profile of the 22 individuals cited by the coaches:

Table 5.1: School-based learner profile for 22 individuals

Category	Frequency	Number of cases and sketches where relevant information was not provided or not known	% of eligible total (maximum = 22)
Year 9	2	0	9.1
Year 10	4	0	18.2
Year 11	11	0	49.9
Year 12	5	0	22.7
Year 13	0	0	–
Teacher referral	18	0	86.3
Self referral	4	0	18.2
Under-achievement specifically mentioned	15	5	88.2
Discipline problems	10	0	45.4
Specific learning difficulties	8	8	57.0

It can be seen that the majority of instances for learning support were linked to year 11 and 12 students who were either completing their key stage four assessments or who were embarking on their first year of sixth form. A significant number of students were referred to the coach by teachers, although there was also evidence of voluntary drop-in support. A noticeable proportion of cases and sketches referred to underlying discipline problems as well as specific learning difficulties. Perhaps of most importance is the theme of learner under-achievement as judged by teachers and coaches.

5.1.1 Specific learning difficulties

Case SH is in year 11 and joined the school a year ago. He is 16 years old, and from a single parent family. When he was 15 he tried moving away to England in order to live with his father but this did not work out. He then returned to Wales and now lives with his grandparents. SH has Asperger's Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). His attainment levels for year 10 are low with predicted GCSE grades within the E-G band across the board. He has a history of truanting which led to the verge of permanent exclusion from his former school.

SH was referred to the coach in year 10, who then engaged in detailed background discussions and planning involving the head of middle school, the Education Welfare Officer, subject teachers and family. It was agreed that the coach would provide 10 hours intensive support per week following a statement in lieu from Pupil Support Services. An hour of this was spent on a 1:1 basis with the remainder involving sitting alongside SH in class and helping him with his activities and note taking. The coach considers this classroom experience to be vital in understanding the perceived learning situation and challenges experienced by SH, but also in providing detailed experience of classroom difficulties that may stand a Learning Coach in good stead with future consultations involving other students.

No previous known intensive attempts had been made to help SH in his previous comprehensive school other than defining his special learning needs. When the coach became involved she started the relationship through keeping him company in the classroom "and keeping him on task". She encouraged him in one-to-one meetings to talk about his family, his likes and his dislikes – she also monitored his ADHD medication. She noticed that he reacted very badly to raised voices and angry tones. He responded well to clear, unambiguous instructions that were preferably written down. His sensitive and emotional manner attracted criticism and abuse from a small minority of boys; this would make him very agitated to the point of wanting to walk out of the

school immediately. The focal point for this anger was in physical education lessons, and it was agreed that a different kind of school timetable would be implemented in order to complete curriculum objectives.

Discussions between coach and learner included SH's description of the effects of the medicines he has to take, his love of music ("he can play by ear"), and his passion for cookery. The coach introduced a variety of exercises which included raising awareness of different learning styles, appealing to multiple intelligences, using multi-sensory activity, filling in the school planner, trying out new revision methods, and study skills techniques. Between them they devised a homework schedule, goal setting, milestones and deadlines. Time management was a key objective throughout because SH would "sometimes just drift off" in class and was easily distracted when bored. Setting targets gave a structure for SH and this reduced his levels of stress and anxiety.

The Learning Coach states that

"we are now great friends but we can't show this in the classroom because he gets embarrassed to the point of now not wanting a coach to sit alongside him".

He has achieved a level of responsibility where he independently copies up any work he might have missed, and where he has the confidence to approach individual teachers for help. This growing maturity is interrupted occasionally by bouts of profound agitation or impatience which require monitoring by the coach via gathering feedback from SH's teachers and grandparents.

The coaching sessions are now focusing on 1:1 contact and preparing revision guides and timetable schedules leading up to year 11 exams. SH is thinking seriously and for the first time about staying on at school after he finishes year 11 – in earlier meetings he was looking forward to leaving. He has expressed recently a desire to go to medical school, and he has arranged his own appointment with a careers adviser. The coach

Coaching the Learners: cases and sketches

Specific learning difficulties

notes that given some of the learning difficulties he faces it would be too early to discourage any ambition he has, but that in year 12 there will “have to be a reality check”.

Table 5.2: Quantitative data about SH's attainment reveals improvement during the year on coursework:

	Assignment 1 (year 10)	Assignment 2 (year 10)	Assignment 3 (year 11)	GCSE grade (predicted)
GCSE1	F	B	B	A
GCSE2	D	D	C	C
GCSE3	C	C	A	A
GCSE4 (short)	F	A	A*	B
GCSE5	E	C	C	B
GCSE6	E	E	C	C
GCSE7	E	A	B	B
GCSE8 (double)	D	C	C	C

Follow-up communications with the coach after the interview tracked SH's progress for the remainder of the year. SH's GCSE results reflected a vast and continuing improvement in attainment: A and B grades throughout including one A*. The coach comments:

“everyone is delighted and he has started in Year 12”.

Aspergers is again referred to in one of the shorter sketches. The coach describes “Andrew” as having a different kind of intelligence which can cause difficulties for any organisation or social group associated with him:

He responds very badly when people talk to him in the wrong way, often resulting in him stone-walling the teachers and withdrawing from situations for long periods of time if he sensed that people were angry, or talked down to him.

The Learning Coach concentrated on helping Andrew develop more appropriate communication skills, and this included finding ways of substituting less offensive words for some of the more colourful vocabulary that he liked to use in public – something that was getting him into trouble with teachers and his peers in the classroom.

Two other cases are cited as illustration for individuals who have some kind of underlying learning disorder. The first involves SN, a year 11 pupil given target grades of C/D. She was referred to the coach on the basis of being an able underachiever, having also been diagnosed as having a vision disorder which makes it difficult to discriminate between particular kinds of black and white textual information. The coach noticed that one of her greatest concerns was note taking in class – she simply found it difficult to keep up. Prior to the coach's intervention there had been no previous attempt to provide SN with any additional support. He suspected that the underlying difficulty was mild dyslexia, and found that no assessments had thus far been made.

The coach referred SN to the manager of the school's dyslexia centre and accompanied her on the first visit. His suspicions were verified and it was determined that SN was indeed struggling with mild dyslexia. Since receiving support from both the centre and the coach SN has improved greatly in terms of self perception, positive self attitudes and beliefs. The coach provides evidence based on his use of an impact assessment questionnaire on well-being, emotional intelligence, and learning attainment – an instrument developed by the local 14-19 Learning Network. It was completed at the beginning of coaching and recently as an interim measure to assess her progress. He believes that coaching has certainly given SN greater confidence in her own abilities, so much so that she is now talking with great enthusiasm and determination about securing 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C in order to go to the local further education college.

This possibility of detecting specific learning difficulties extends to food allergy and it does not always have a happy ending. Case SG is an A level student in year 12 with a history of disruptive behaviour in lessons. The coach noted that he found it very hard to concentrate, and recalls him saying:

“I don’t know what it is but I get all excited sometimes and just switch off”.

He preferred to complete tasks that were immediate and practical, and the coach also suspected that he might have some kind of food allergy because his disruptive behaviour tended to increase after lunchtime. SG had two close friends in school, who were also difficult to manage within the classroom. The difference was that whilst they were genuinely struggling academically with their A levels, he found the work easy but boring. The coach spent six sessions with him, concentrating especially on kinaesthetic learning styles and strategies. There was also an attempt to regulate his diet, and a detailed re-timetabling exercise in order to try and separate SG from his two friends. He sat his year 12 exams but immediately afterwards set off the school’s fire alarms, leading to an immediate fixed term exclusion. The school has been informed recently that SG does not plan to return to complete his A2 studies.

5.1.2 Catch-up

Coaching support was also evident for learners who have missed significant amounts of classroom contact with teachers. Case SC is described as quiet and shy, lacking confidence in new situations, conscientious in his attitude to work and of average ability. SC was referred to the coach in the spring term of year 11 as he had missed a considerable amount of time over the last five terms due to illness. He was very reserved to begin with and gradually asked the coach to help him to collect revision papers and resources from teachers; however he

avoided opportunities to actually do some revision with the coach. He is more advanced in English where he is sitting the higher GCSE papers. The coach was very pleased when SC asked, a few days before the examination and during his study leave, for direct help with revision. He said that he had done badly in the English language 'mock' papers, but quite well in the English literature. He felt that this was because he had missed a number of English language lessons due to illness.

On the morning of the examination the two of them worked on a strategy to compare answers from a past paper. He had to read two articles by different authors and compare and contrast the different ways in which they approached the same subject. The coach encouraged him to identify and highlight relevant points in each article, and reminded SC that each point scored marks on the exam paper. He used different coloured highlighter pens for different aspects in the articles and then the coach lent the pens to him for use in the actual exam. Other students had been encouraged to do this by the English teacher but SC missed this advice due to his absences. The coach also explained that he should avoid quoting large chunks of text in his answer; rather he needed to explain points in his own words, selecting short quotations to illustrate his points. He practised this for the two articles.

After his examination SC went back to the coach to return the pens; he said that the strategy had helped him to tackle a similar question much more thoroughly and confidently than in the mock examination. The following week he asked for some help in revising for his Physics examination. At the end of his GCSEs he thanked the coach for the support and said that he had found both sessions particularly valuable. He admitted that he had been sceptical to begin with about how helpful the coach's support would be, but was glad now that he had taken advantage of what was on offer.

Case SD provides a further illustration based on prolonged absence from school. She is in year 11 and is described as a bright, lively, 'outgoing' and confident learner who is underperforming. She lives

with her father after the recent separation of her parents. SD was referred to the coach for help with completing overdue GCSE coursework as she had missed a lot of school due to illness, including a stay in hospital. Her teacher asked the coach to help SD with an assignment about a national supermarket chain which has local branches. SD needed to present a balanced argument about the 'pros' and 'cons' of the effect of this store on the local community and then conclude by giving her opinion. She found this difficult, as she had missed so many lessons. The coach showed her how to write an essay plan using bullet points which summarised contrary points of view, so that she could present a balanced argument. When she had finished this task the coach then explained that she needed to write a conclusion and make her 'position' clear. With this advice she was able to write the assignment and was given a 'B' grade. She also asked the coach to check the spelling and grammar in her coursework for Health and Social Care. The coach explained that this was not possible but she would help her to practise on other non-assessed examples, and she was then confident enough to complete the real coursework without the coach's help. Again she gained a 'B' grade.

One case in particular stands out as an example where young people have to cope with enormous domestic workloads which cause absence from school. SA is in year 12 with two younger brothers in years 9 and 11. They are all living with their father following family break-up. Her mother has a history of mental health difficulties, and her father has had very serious physical health problems because of his need for intensive dialysis, leading to a transplant that was only partially successful. SA is therefore defined as a young carer, receiving support from the Education Welfare Officer. She is viewed as an average but struggling student, who is very conscientious and motivated and secures outcomes through hard work. Because of her recent caring responsibilities she has missed coursework deadlines as well as some of the classes. Counselling support had been provided by the school, but despite good relationships with relevant staff she requires more direct help with study skills.

SA was referred to the coach by senior teaching staff following progress review reports. The coach established early contact through meeting her in registration periods, leading to weekly meetings where an agenda was set for the next seven days to include appointments with the coach.

Examples of support included making sense of the ethics part of the religious education syllabus, as well as some of the Health and Social care curriculum she was studying. SA had lots of copious notes, but did not seem to understand the underlying concepts and issues. SA and the coach went through the notes together, reading some of them aloud, and the coach would then help SA to give an example for each paragraph that was not understood. They would go to the dictionaries in order to look up difficult words, and use different colours to traffic-light different kinds of arguments that were either clearly grasped (green), difficult to fathom (red), or just about understood (amber).

SA responded especially to the use of diagrams, pictures, concrete examples and mind maps. Initial outcomes were dramatic, with SA catching up with all missed classes and coursework and securing C and B grades. She also approached the coach during study leave to ask for some help in revising religious education. Later communications with the interviewee noted that SA is on-line to progress to her year 13 studies and hopes to go to University. She has not however been able to plan in a definite way because of the on-going uncertainty about her father's health. Indeed, the coach notes that planning ahead is something that SA guards against because of her brief experience "at having her life back" when her father first received the transplant, only to then be disappointed by his subsequent return to depending on her support.

5.1.3 Disruption

Ten of the Learning Coaches' descriptions of learners included reference to discipline difficulties, one being SF, a year 12 student who joined the school when she was 15 years old when her parents moved to Wales from abroad. She gained 10 GCSEs (mostly at grades A and B) and is now completing four A levels. Her projected grades are three Cs and a D. She was referred to the coach by the head of the sixth form and her form tutor because:

"she was missing lessons, had a "negative attitude", and when in class she was described as "drifting off and looking out of the window all the time."

The coach recalls that her first impression of SF was of someone who was in their own little world, and when assessing the urgency of the need for personal support noted that she had seven overdue pieces of coursework. She had fallen into the habit of sitting in the common room during all her free periods, including the ones where she was scheduled for private study in the sixth form centre. When she did not turn up for these study sessions, the coach went off to find her:

"If they don't show I go and get them...from the gym, refectory, anywhere they are hiding"

Preliminary discussions with the coach centred on her background and family life. The coach noted that during these first sessions:

"it is vital that "you don't pre-judge, you take everything at face value".

This approach seems to have worked – within the second meeting SF suddenly became very tearful and talked about a range of difficulties which included homesickness for the country she grew up in, and her unhappiness at having to live in a new place and make new friends. The coach also focused on SF's perception that her parents were not

interested in her; instead she thought they were pre-occupied with their new lives and careers. SF had started to visit her brother who was at university and she had started to drink alcohol very heavily on these occasions. During the weeknights back at home she would go out and walk around town with “a bad crowd that were experimenting with drugs.” The coach had been in touch with her family, who were concerned about her poor school reports. They were, however, unaware of the details of her social life, and were confident that she would improve her grades in the following year.

The Learning Coach adopted a very pragmatic stance, focusing on the urgent tasks and the need to catch up on missed work. She encouraged SF to complete a timetable of her typical week, to list the deadlines for coursework that was imminent, and the assignments that had to be completed. This proved to be a success, because SF was:

really overwhelmed by how everything had piled up and “seemed to be working with a big mess”.

Each day began with a plan for the next 24 hours, involving the completion of small chunks of coursework, a little at a time. The next morning the completed work was shown to the coach, and the next plan was drawn up. The coach noted that:

“sometimes she let me down a couple of times, did not produce plans by the deadline – when this happened we abandoned the interview and re-scheduled for the next day”.

At the end of each week the full list of achievements was drawn up, and a new schedule for the next week was drafted. This had the effect of motivating SF through reminding her frequently of little bits of progress and “just chipping away at things”. Behind the scenes, the coach also discussed the situation with the teachers, who agreed to back away from SF whilst she was catching up with missed work.

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The Learning Coach also helped SF to explore her preferred learning style, and to plot her future career path. She noted that SF's parents had very high expectations of her next year, with a view to going into one of the top professions. The difficulty and sensitivity lay with SF's academic ability – despite the recent improvements, her projected grades were unlikely to stretch to excellence and this would lead to her being rejected from the universities of her parents' choice. SF was therefore introduced to the idea of applying for a place on one of the less competitive professional courses.

During this turn-around period SF had become less of a loner within the school, and had gained more respect from her peers. The Learning Coach sees a pattern of ambivalence with students like SF, and disagrees with the popular view that students who drop out of learning gain the respect and admiration of others around them. Much depends on whether there are deeper aspirations within the individual, reflecting an ambition to be successful in their studies and to be a part of the academic community. When this is the case, the loner still wants to be a part of the school, despite the fact that classes are skipped and replaced by sitting in the common room or the canteen. Many of the other students then view such an individual as different and as a curiosity that they do not fully understand, but this behaviour has now become a part of that isolates' role; this in turn contributes further to alienation and isolation.

SF broke out of this spiral and now appears to be an active member of a large social scene, and somewhat paradoxically has detached herself from the coach who comments:

“the relationship is different now, she doesn't need me anymore and I am redundant...but she knows that if she steps over the line I'll be back”.

Improvements in her attitude and attainment were slow but positive; for the first time the form tutor provided positive feedback about SF's behaviour in class, and coursework grades in two subjects improved from E/ Ds to Cs (although there was no discernable change in performance for her other subjects). Her overall end of term report at Easter shifted from "being a cause for concern" to "will achieve full potential with a little more effort".

The sketches also provide some very practical examples of coaching support for students who are causing difficulties in classrooms:

"Anna" is in year 10 and part of a group of students viewed by their teachers as being generally rude with a very negative attitude towards authority. A particular difficulty with Anna involves "being chatty" in class, and taking a long time to settle into each lesson – much to the frustration of her teachers and many of the other students around her. The coach worked on Anna's ambition to go into the sixth form and become a senior student in the school, and highlighted on repeated occasions the fact that if she continues to get the current D and E grades she will not be able to progress. Anna and the coach developed a very clear and simple behavioural strategy: she had to give each lesson a try right from the very start, to leave the conversation until the end of the lesson, and to start taking notes and working quietly within the first five minutes. Reports from teachers noted an improvement in her attitude, as well as in attainment levels.

Or for students who are engaging in spontaneous short-term truancy:

"Bibi" is a year 9 student who came from a broken home – she missed her father who had moved away from the area, remarried, and started a new family. He promised to visit her each Saturday, but rarely turned up. One Monday in the Christmas term she decided not to go to school, but to hitchhike along the motorway in order to visit him at his new home. She was picked up by a driver who took her back to the school and explained with concern to the

head teacher what she had been trying to do. The coach completed a series of discussions with Bibi (and on some occasions her mother) and recognised that there were deep seated feelings of rejection and self-blame. The aim was to get Bibi to understand and accept that the break-up of her parents was not her fault and that her father's apparent lack of interest is more his problem than hers. The coach also returned repeatedly to the need for Bibi to behave in a safe way and to avoid further actions which made her vulnerable to others. No further instances of truancy or self-harm were noted over the remainder of the academic year.

Case SB offers a further illustration of coaching which follows up on one learner who returned to earlier problematic behaviour. He is in year 11 and is described as quiet and detached from others in school but without being unpopular. Internal truanting had become a recent problem, and he was only going to classes that he enjoyed. His relationship with his form tutor had deteriorated, leading to missed registration periods, but then arriving for his second lesson. His previous performance suggested he is an A and B grade performer, but when the assistant headteacher looked at his work during detention she realised that he was more likely to get Cs and Ds. She personally escorted SB to the coach at that point in time.

SB did not fit into any clear category for support; tracking records were incomplete, and staff feedback was mixed (based on which teachers he liked or disliked). The coach notes that this was a student who easily remained in the background. The coach recalls that

"it took ages to even get him to smile at me", and she found that he had tremendous flare for drawing and creating pictures.

She acted as the go-between for SB and the form tutor in order to improve communications. They completed a SWOT analysis together, which he seemed to enjoy, leading into action plans being drawn up for all subjects where coursework and notes were missing. As deadlines

were met more general conversations developed between coach and learner, centring especially on next year's choice of A levels and SB's clear desire to go to university.

There was a step backwards in the second term of year 11 because SB then became very friendly with a few students who were also missing classes and not doing any work. He had fallen behind in Maths, and this time following advice from the assistant head teacher the coach took him off-timetable so that he could receive intensive support with missed coursework. She remembers him being very dejected

“he just did not know where to start with his Maths catch-up.”

Again, recovery was good, and once Maths had been sorted out the coach moved on to his catch-up in another subject. The coach found this more demanding because she had less familiarity with the subject matter. SB sat all of his exams, although the coach confesses that she was prepared to go straight to his house and fetch him back to school if he had not turned up for each morning or afternoon of his GCSE papers. SB came to see the coach after the exams had finished; he said that he felt they had gone well and that the revision support he had received in school had helped a lot, although he also recognised that he had not completed enough revision homework.

5.1.4 Study skills support

Many of the cases and sketches thus far reviewed reveal the use of learning support methods in order to help young people enjoy their studies and complete coursework. The theme of detailed study skills support dominated most of the interviews, although it was emphasised by interviewees that often this emerged gradually as relationships between coaches and learners developed. It should be noted however that sometimes the effectiveness of coaching was revealed through operating very practical and emergency based drop-in support for

students who were experiencing crisis in their completion of assignments or with their preparation for examinations. These sketches show a very practical coaching orientation:

"Cerys" is in year 12 and tended to file her notes in loose-leaf folders, without any form of organisation whatsoever. Subjects and dates and pages were mixed up, and because she was losing information she always had to photocopy material borrowed from other students. The coach noticed her frequent use of the copier, and helped her to use ring binders for each subject, with added partition markers as well as extensive use of highlighting and subheadings for different parts of lessons. Cerys then had to go abroad with her family just before the exam period started, and was worried about whether she would have time to revise for her English literature exam. Between them they worked out a system based on Cerys's preferred auditory learning style: they would digitally record some of the key points from notes and transfer this information to her iPod; she would then listen to these files on the flight, and then write out the key points that she could remember after she arrived.

"Ben" is in year 10 and does not do any homework. His current performance is at grade D with projected grades of C at the start of the year. Although he would write in coursework tasks and deadlines in his planner, he would not look at this once he got out of school. The coach noted that he had lots of motivation and enthusiasm whenever talking about his studies; but other interests seemed to get in the way and he seemed to forget about priorities. The coach noted his keen use of the mobile phone, and they worked out a system for using timed text messages which were sent to him in the evenings and at weekends in order to remind Ben to complete specific small coursework tasks.

Just before his end of year 11 Geography exam "Chris" came to see the coach in a state of panic, saying that he had lost all of his year 10 notes and had nothing to help him with revision. She liaised

with the Head of Geography and obtained most of the handout notes and curriculum sheets for the entire year 10 part of the syllabus. Chris and the coach then put together a skeleton folder and filled in the worksheet questions as a complete file. He said afterwards "Miss, you're a legend".

"Delyth" turned up to the coaching room prior to one of her exams with files of notes that were totally disorganised – she could not see the connections between different parts of the course, or see where the notes and the underlying knowledge followed any kind of sequence or narrative. The coach discussed the difficulty with the subject teacher, obtained papers 1 and 2 of the syllabus and went through the different areas with Delyth, allocating the notes to each part of a new revision file which was clearly marked out into sections.

"Evelyn" revealed her lack of confidence when it comes to revising her copious notes from lessons. She said that she was drowning in words and could not remember anything. The coach demonstrated how she could use different coloured highlighter pens to select important phrases or facts, as well as writing out some key words in the margins.

Much coaching goes beyond such practical sticking plaster support, and focuses on background research and tracking of data by the coach as well as the longer term development of learning strategies by students. Case SI provides a detailed illustration, expanding on a published article in Briefing Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2007).

When SI went to his comprehensive school in year 7 the Learning Coach noted that his teachers predicted scores at level 5 for core subjects. Predicted grades in other subjects were all within the C and B bands. He was described as very capable and bright by his teachers but with a tendency to be easily distracted. In year 8 he began to be disruptive in class for a small number of subjects; he talked

continuously to other students whilst they were all supposed to be doing coursework or projects during lessons. During years 9 and 10 this extended to most subjects and escalated into a regular initiation of parallel discussion whilst the teacher was speaking to the entire class. A number of teachers removed him from lessons after repeated warnings and requests for cooperation, with a series of meetings then taking place with parents, the form tutor and head of lower school. It was hoped that GCSE targets and the dropping of some subjects in year 10 would help to motivate SI, but the difficulties persisted. He then started to truant and there was also a series of three fixed term exclusions.

He started to drop-in to the coaching room with some of his friends, but usually a different one on each occasion. The coach recalls:

SI would “flit in and out” or “hover” for a while without seeming to have a real purpose for his visit. I then started to schedule formal meetings with him, supported by teachers who released him from class. I noted how observant, curious, but critical he was about everything and everyone around him. Furthermore, you could see that he was very popular with the other students in his year, and was a leader in terms of directing activity and giving opinions about friends, teachers and the school generally.

The Learning Coach tracked his test scores and read through past end of term reports to parents. The focus of the early coaching sessions was finding out why there was such a decline for achieved and predicted grades over a four year period, and what steps could be taken to help improve the situation. The coach asked SI to complete a profile for learning styles, and realised his kinaesthetic score was the highest ever achieved in the school. This helped the coach to understand SI's “need for doing things”. He liked to engage in practical and applied activities where he felt he saw a purpose and “had something to show” at the end of a lesson or exercise. The coach also found that the Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic framework – derived from the coaches training programme - made sense to SI, and it helped her to explain to him that other students around him may have very different styles and needs –

such as listening and taking notes or quietly working on their own. In this way SI realised that his behaviour was actually frustrating his friends rather than just simply annoying his teachers.

As the coaching relationship developed SI talked about his interest in getting a job and his ambition to learn to drive and have a car. He could not wait for the day when he would leave school and have a full-time job. SI was also showing a growing impatience with his year 11 studies, and warned the coach repeatedly that he was going to find some work and drop-out of school before the end of the year. The coaching support over the next three sessions was geared towards trying to get him to complete the GCSEs and plan for full-time employment that might be suitable, whilst also raising awareness about how useful more advanced qualifications would be when it comes to earning more money. The coach convened meetings with SI's teachers and family in order to ensure full support.

SI left school early in the second term of year 11 and went to work for a flooring company. The coach still maintained contact and one morning SI visited the school to say that the shop manager has offered him a permanent position and an apprenticeship on the guarantee that the school was happy with this arrangement. The coach and deputy head used this request to full advantage by setting up a meeting with SI and his parents in order to try and get him to complete his GCSEs so that he had some qualifications to fall back on. It was agreed that the coach would support him through weekly visits to his workplace, where he also received encouragement from the staff in the shop. She would give him coursework assignments and handouts for four GCSE subjects: Maths, Design and Technology, Science and English. He found the first two particularly important because he had to design floor layouts and give prices to customers based on square metre coverage. The coach spent approximately an hour per session at his workplace explaining what has to be done over the next week, and what deadlines have to be met. She has also encouraged him to use the BBC bite sized learning GCSE website for revision. Her plan was to escort him to

school on the days of his exams to make sure that he attempts his GCSEs and comes away from school with some qualifications.

When the time came for SI's GCSEs the coach spent more time with him; on the days of his exams he came into school early to complete his final preparation and go through what he had revised. He sat all his core subjects and the coach even stayed in the hall for the duration of the exam to show her support for to him. At the end of the GCSE's he thanked the coach for all the help. He ended up with a grade E profile; and the coach is positive about this outcome:

"at least he secured a qualification after so many years of compulsory education, If I hadn't of supported him he would have left school with nothing".

The coach has now passed his details on to *Youth Gateway* for follow up.

5.1.5 Pathway planning

Case SI introduces the theme of pathway planning, and in some interviews it was clear that the recognition and choice of options at critical times within learners' lives becomes a key aspect of coaching support. In a rare example of group coaching, case SK provides further detail. The coach has been working with two year 11 students "who are best friends", with very similar family backgrounds. Both appear to have very low self esteem when it comes to their intellectual abilities and life skills. There is a long history of unemployment within their families stretching back over three generations, and both describe themselves during conversations with the coach as "thick". The Learning Coach observes that they seemed to be steeped in welfare culture where typically:

"mum and dad teach them how to claim and when to claim".

Both come from large families living in council accommodation; their older siblings had previously attended the school, and there was a pattern of very low attainment; in the coach's view the children had "been brainwashed" into being non-achievers from the very start of their schooling.

Both were described by staff as uninterested in studying with a negative attitude towards school and a rebellious manner – particularly in relation to the wearing of uniform, make-up and jewellery. Their end of year 10 results predicted two GCSE passes at A-C grades. Because they were such good friends the coach decided to support them together in shared sessions. Following initial learning style assessments they all agreed that visual learning preferences were very dominant and important, and that they were bored with auditory learning themes that seemed to dominate most of their lessons. The coach therefore introduced activities and strategies which extended the visual mode, and between them they devised daily and weekly action plans for note taking, coursework and revision. In order to supplement auditory learning, the coach used mnemonic strategies, and also encouraged the girls to visualise scenes which had some auditory connection with facts that had to be mastered. He recalls one session where:

"we exaggerated everything. With their maths '8 times 8' equalled 'sick on the floor' and the girls then drew a picture of this with great amusement".

The next step involved working behind the scenes to encourage some of the other teachers in the school to experiment with visual techniques as a way of targeting more involvement of these two learners in the classroom.

The Learning Coach elaborated on the interest that both girls expressed in hairdressing, with one in particular having a dream of eventually owning a chain of salons. They invented a 10 year plan using mind maps for setting up their own hairdressing business, and they went to see a separate careers adviser to find out about start-up grants for

young people who have entrepreneurial ideas. As their motivation picked up in the second term of year 11, one of the girls began to wear her uniform in more acceptable ways and to be more polite and positive towards her teachers. Her friend followed suit, and both learners improved their coursework grades in three subject areas. They both sat the full set of GCSEs. On leaving year 11 one secured an apprenticeship as a hairdresser in a local salon, whilst her friend wants to go to further education college next year in order to gain a business studies qualification with a longer term view to setting up her own shop. The coach comments with caution:

"I'm fearful. The jump from school to college is massive and she could drop out. I know the coach at the college and will be discussing this with her with a view to continuing the support".

In another case the Learning Coach reaches out beyond the school gate to provide support. SL is 17 years old and left school with seven GCSEs at grade C and above. His mother had left the area and SL was left on his own in the family home - the father having left many years previously, there being a history of domestic violence.

He chose not to stay on in full-time education but instead embarked on a course in construction with a local work based training provider. He soon realised that this was not for him and walked out.

The Learning Coach was introduced to SL via a local training provider and they arranged a meeting with SL in a local café. He was very receptive to the idea of being coached and was most co-operative. The possibility of attending a local college to study A levels was explored. Practical considerations such as transport and financial support were looked into as well as the possibility of a visit to the Careers Wales office. The outcome was successful with SL embarking on three AS courses at the local further education college.

Another case provides insight into ways by which a coach can establish rapport with hard to reach communities traditionally associated with educational disengagement. SM is 17 years old from a traveller community; she is a member of a large family and lives on a settlement on the outskirts of town. Although classified as a Traveller, she has lived there for most of her life. School attendance has been very sporadic. She has been educated in a small unit attached to the school and has benefited from learning Life Skills - especially cookery. Her basic skills are described as requiring improvement and the coach suspects that her speaking skills would hold her back in most work environments. Her older sisters have all married at an early age, they have several children, and do not work. SM was determined not to follow this route. After referral by her key worker, she and the Learning Coach discussed the possibility of studying at the local college (very close to her home) even though SM knew that her community would not approve of her decision. SM felt so strongly about the importance of starting a college course that she then talked to other Traveller girls about the possibility of them joining her course. The coach comments:

“even if she does not continue with her education she has started to question whether she should always give up on learning , and underneath all of this is the important fact that she is talking about education with her friends and family”.

5.2 Learners in further education

Interviews generated eight cases and a further three sketches for learners who entered college. Table 5.2 provides a profile of the 11 individuals cited by the coaches:

Table 5.3: College-based learner profile for 11 individuals

Category	Frequency	Number of cases and sketches where relevant information was not provided or not known	% of eligible total (maximum = 11)
Age 14 – 15 years	1	0	9.1
Age 16 – 19 years	9	0	81.9
Age 19+ years	1	0	9.1
Referral	7	0	63.7
Self referral	4	0	36.7
Under-achievement specifically mentioned	9	0	81.9
Discipline problems	5	0	45.4
Specific learning difficulties	3	0	27.3

As would be expected from the further education sector the majority of instances for learning support were linked to 16-19 year old students who had transferred from school to college. The majority of learners were referred to the coach by lecturers, although there were also four cases where young people had taken the initiative and sought out the coach on their own. Despite the voluntary basis for participating in post 16 education and the choice of a new institution rather than school, there were still underlying discipline problems with five students. Under-achievement emerges as the most powerful reason for providing learning support.

The age profile reveals two cases where individuals fall outside of the expected 16-19 range for coaching support within a college. There is one very young learner who entered further education through the creation of a special “gateway” for learners who are ill-suited to remaining with a school establishment. An adult aged 25 is also included as a case study, based on an extension of coaching support once the role becomes known in wider circles.

The same five themes identified in section 5.1 apply to the analysis of cases and sketches for learners in colleges.

5.2.1 Specific learning difficulties

Case FG involves a self-referral by a learner with a history of possible learning difficulties linked to ADHD, although he never received medication. FG spelt phonetically and appeared to be disorganised with poor concentration. The Learning Coach suspected that there may be some dyslexia-related difficulties and contacted FG’s family in order to find out whether any previous diagnostic intervention had taken place prior to his entry into college. There was none, and the coach therefore arranged for an assessment which indicated no serious clinical condition although there was a need to help FG with literacy skills. FG completed a learning styles assessment and scored highly on the kinaesthetic category. His subject tutor was very interested in the coaching support and helpful in following through some of the learning strategies that were being introduced in coaching sessions. FG also attended sessions with an Additional Support Tutor specialising in dyslexia and literacy. The coach encouraged group work through asking FG to engage in his preparation of coursework with a friend; after a few coaching sessions his work improved dramatically.

Another case reveals more serious problems with less optimistic outcomes despite extensive coaching support. FF is a student with a history of mental health issues, bullying and ADHD. He moved from

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high school into a local specialist unit attached to the college, and during this time he discontinued his Ritalin medication. Although initially positive about his course he was feeling bogged down by work. The Learning Coach commented that he also had difficulties travelling the short distance to college because “it meant meeting people”. Despite this anxiety about being in the company of others the coach observed that FF was a popular individual but paradoxically his attitude towards both tutors and peers was very negative. The coach was convinced that in the right environment FF had a lot to offer. His history of learning difficulties, and special needs statement, entitled him to additional support tutorials and an interview was arranged with specialist professionals.

This was unproductive because FF took a dislike to the additional support tutor and refused help. During one of the coaching sessions he discussed his past counselling and also made it clear he would not consider this kind of option. With the help of the subject tutors the coach facilitated working from home on a number of occasions. He identified poor organisational skills and memory as being the main problems and weekly coaching sessions attempted to address these issues. Initially FF was very positive and started to catch up with his work. He found the use of time-lines especially useful. At one parents' evening he asked the coach to meet with his mother and discussions were very positive. The good progress made in one of his subjects encouraged him to consider a pathway into studying English Literature at a more advanced level. Unfortunately an incident one weekend with some local youths completely unsettled FF and he began a downward spiral. Towards the end of term his attendance waned; a few weeks later the college was contacted by FF's family, stating that he had withdrawn and was receiving treatment for a suspected serious psychiatric condition.

5.2.2 Catch-up

Case FD illustrates coaching support for an overseas learner who had moved to Wales. He self-referred for coaching in order to achieve the merits he needed to access a National Diploma in Media Studies. The Learning Coach notes that he lacked confidence in his written English and asked FD to complete a diagnostic test to ascertain his level of communications and literacy. He was introduced to staff in the skills unit of the college, where he arranged tutorials targeting grammar and punctuation. FD was also experiencing difficulties in adjusting to living within a new country and culture, especially in relation to freedom from some of the former restrictions affecting his personal life and the responsibility that he needed to exhibit in terms of arranging his own study time. Coaching sessions concentrated on setting targets to meet deadlines and he responded well to the use of lists. At the end of term he used a time-line successfully to organise his revision.

The sketch of “Dafydd” provides an example of very practical support:

“Dafydd” is at a further education college, but has been missing a large number of classes. The coach uses the mobile phone in order to establish frequent communications: “if he was late I would call him to find out where he was, and if I finished early I would ask him to come in early so we could do more numeracy work together”. At one point Dafydd was so unreliable with his timekeeping that the coach established a strategy involving his family: his mother would simply ring the coach to say that he had now left home and was on his way to college. If he had not arrived at college by a certain time the coach would ring him to find out where he was, on one occasion then going out to fetch him from a nearby café. After a few such instances Dafydd’s punctuality and attendance improved dramatically.

5.2.3 Disruption

Discipline difficulties continue into further education rather than just being confined to compulsory schooling. Three examples were provided by interviewees. Case FA is an 18 year old student with parents who have offender and drug user backgrounds. He has not lived with his mother or father since the age of 11 and prior to joining the college he was permanently excluded from school during year 11 because of verbal abuse and physical assault. His peer group at that time were involved in joy-riding and drug taking. Despite his exclusion he was allowed back into school to sit his exams, and he succeeded in getting seven GCSEs at grades C and B plus one GCSE at grade D.

He enrolled on a two-year level 3 vocational programme at the college but continued to respond aggressively to figures of authority. After completing the first year he was refused entry to the second year by his course tutor because of outbursts of anger which some of his fellow students and college staff found very threatening. The curriculum manager for the college referred FA to the Learning Coach, and in the first few meetings a series of options were discussed, ranging from leaving college and becoming unemployed, getting an unskilled manual job, trying to enter into a trade, or changing his studies and trying to continue towards some kind of qualification. He completed over nine coaching sessions involving a series of activities which revealed reasons for the underlying feelings of distrust and anger with adult authority figures, as well as a fundamental desire to stay at college and get a qualification.

The Learning Coach negotiated with the college in order to allow him to enrol on an intensive one year A level programme, on condition that strict behavioural criteria had to be met throughout his studies. These included punctuality, reliability, helping other students, submitting coursework on time, good attendance, positive feedback from lecturers, and no incidences of disruption or reported aggression.

The Learning Coach also built on FA's passion for sport, and his ambition to become an outstanding player. This sporting theme dominated their early discussions, leading into analysis of strengths and weaknesses and the setting of weekly targets and deadlines for the achievement of positive academic as well as extra-mural outcomes. There was also much support for revision methods, exam technique, time management, and the recognition of favourite ways to learn material.

Feedback from lecturers since the start of FA's support programme and his engagement with his new A level course was very supportive. The coach summarises the change in him:

"he has stopped yawning and is switched on".

FA's forecast at A level is for a C grade and staff have also commented on the marked improvement in his behaviour. He now plans to resume his second year of the original vocational programme that he started, and on completion plans to go to a local university in order to study sport and enter into a career linked to sports management:

"he's enjoyed being with somebody on the journey. A year ago it looked very bleak for him".

Another example of disruption is provided in case FE, this time for a female student who was referred for coaching support by her personal tutor because she was in danger of being asked to leave the course. In addition to being poorly motivated and behind with her work she was disruptive in all her classes and frequently stormed out. Despite having a similar school history she had achieved 8 GCSEs at grades C and D. She agreed she had problems keeping on task and felt unsupported by staff. FE agreed to attend small group tutorials and on the learning front her task was to improve sentence structure and spelling. During sessions she revealed a marked difficulty with settling into class and displayed noticeable lack of self-esteem. She enjoyed mind – mapping and using priority lists to achieve her targets, and worked well on a 1-1

basis. FE also responded particularly successfully to “informal chats” when meeting staff around the college campus. Her tutors reported that FE had become less sullen and rude, with improvements in coursework for a short period of time before the pressure of completing assignments at the end of term caused some regression. The coach comments that:

“she was bored and did not wish to finish the course”.

After some detailed discussions with her coach FE concluded that she had chosen the wrong pathway and wanted instead to focus on travel and tourism. She agreed that finishing her course was a sensible option and has since re-enrolled at the college for a more suitable qualification.

FH provides a different kind of illustration, based more on a case of serious referral to other authorities. The Learning Coach describes her work with this learner as “my biggest challenge so far”. FH was referred for coaching by her tutor who was concerned about her attitude and motivation, and early in the coaching meetings she made a disclosure about being sexually abused. The coach’s first priority was to discuss what would happen as a result of her disclosure and the steps that would now be taken. The coach attended a subsequent police interview with FH and followed up with further discussions that were made possible through building a trusting relationship as well as arranging specialist counselling support.

One of FH’s core concerns was what people thought of her – including the coach. As a part of their dialogue they therefore established a ground rule where the coach would:

“inform her exactly what I was thinking even if I thought she might not like it”.

The on-going rapport between coach and learner has led to two additional child protection referrals based on the worrying revelation of suicide attempts, and the coach also checked on FH’s attendance of the

weekly counselling sessions. The coach comments that her work involves giving hope and optimism through planning pathways for the future, rather than dwelling for much of the time on a disturbing past. She comments:

"I met with her every day and she will still come in to see me everyday. I have taken steps to ensure that she doesn't become dependent upon me and that she remains in control. We also look at her behaviour in class and her work from the course. As she has little motivation we wrote a detailed list of what she needed to do to catch up and what she needs to do to complete the course. Once a task is done we cross it off the list. In our sessions she discussed all sorts of things including coping strategies, suicide and studying. As well as being a source of support I feel that I challenge my learner about her behaviour and attitude. I think for me this became apparent when I was very honest about her attention seeking one day. She had told her classmate that she had taken some paracetamol, she had been on the phone with that friend over the weekend saying that she was going to commit suicide. Her friend came straight in and told me what had happened. When she came in to my room I asked her what was happening and what had she done. She calmly explained that she had taken two last night and two this morning. We had a frank discussion about the implications of how she had described it to her friend and the difference to how she had described it to me and what would happen. I have been able to move this learner forward in many ways with a variety of tools such as referral, 1:1 work, challenging, target setting and listening. Having time to spend with her is also key. I don't know what would happen if she didn't have the support she receives here".

5.2.4 Study skills support

Two sketches were recorded for coaching within colleges, concentrating especially on building up confidence levels and support. “Emrys” was shaken in his belief about his English language ability following his school GCSE results, and coaching support focused instead on re-establishing self esteem through reframing his perceptions based on his current performance and success:

This student had concerns regarding the D grade he got in English at school. However he was coping well and really enjoying college. His written media assignments were getting good feedback and he was up to date with his work. Emrys felt he had improved and further discussion revealed although presently focussed on media he was unsure of his career route. It was agreed he would continue to aim for the grades he needed for the Diploma; the coach would contact him at the beginning of the new academic year to arrange a meeting to touch base.

“Floyd” failed two of his three AS levels whilst at college, and he was now trying out a new course. He self referred for coaching because he wanted some feedback about his assignments. The coach observes:

He had previously followed three AS levels and after failing two of these decided to do a BTEC media course rather than drop out of college. He had a hearing problem and was receiving regular support from specialist tutors. Floyd had a very mature attitude and had come to enquire about coaching help. He had two pieces of work to complete but his tutor had no concerns regarding him progressing onto the Diploma course. A further session was arranged when the work was completed and it was then agreed to discontinue as he was coping very well and had just needed some reassurance.

One final case provides a unique and unexpected example of coaching support, based on spill-over of coaching expertise to a different kind of situation for an older individual. This concerns case FC, an asylum

seeker with a professional background who desperately missed her family. She wanted to return home but could not, due to threats from the military and individuals; because of this situation she was granted leave to remain within the UK. She had to take English exams so that she can practice her profession in this country.

FC is in her 20s and has two part-time jobs which include nursing and care home assistance. She was enrolled on English proficiency courses at the local further education college and through the Home Office Time Together programme she was identified as someone who would benefit from additional support for the practice of her reading, speaking and writing skills. The Learning Coach volunteered to fulfil this support role after receiving a Time Together leaflet from her line manager.

The coaching began with meetings in a local café, which was regarded as a safe and public environment whilst also being informal and allowing for general conversation and relationship building. As trust developed, meetings shifted to FC's home because there was a need to work through workshop exercises, written notes, and speech routines for developing English Language expertise. The coach notes:

At first I had to help FC recognise that there was no need to continually thank me for the coaching support – she started to prepare special meals as a way of showing her appreciation for all of the help.

The coaching reminder was that this was a formal initiative which benefited both individuals because it dovetailed with the coach training programme's need for evidence. Once such reciprocity was understood, meetings were described as very focused and task driven whilst also being relaxed and enjoyable.

The coach used comprehension tests, spelling and grammar checks and conversation role plays. She also helped FC to revise and understand material supplied by the college. The coach notes that there has been a

marked improvement in the use of all kinds of communication – especially written English - and FC's coursework grades confirm this. The coaching support continued for a four month period leading up to LC's English proficiency test.

5.2.5 Pathway planning

One case describes sustained support for one learner who is characterised by high academic ability coupled with difficulties in establishing peer group relations at school, leading to early transfer to college. FB is 15 years old and joined further education via the youth access programme when he was 14. He is described as a loner who did not mix easily with other young students at his local comprehensive, having few friends and being vulnerable to bullying. He expressed a strong dislike of his former classmates because of what he saw as their extreme levels of immature and offensive behaviour. The out-of-school context for these relationships resulted in FB going to school by taxi rather than catching the bus with fellow students, and in the end he was placed on a home tuition programme which led to the youth access application to further education at such a young age. The coach comments:

“coming to college helped him to be an adult, which is what he wanted to do all along, he loves working and studying, and he just gets on with it”.

The college placed FB on an accelerated programme where he completed 5 GCSEs a year early, gaining A*-C grades with information technology as his forte. He then received formal coaching support and following a learning styles activity FB and the coach concentrated on his strong preference for auditory modes and associated study skills. They moved on to option choices, which were explored in detail before a BTEC Information Technology Diploma plus an A level English Literature was agreed as an appropriate two year pathway.

The coach also worked on FB's profound lack of confidence in other people, and facilitated his desire to form a more successful rapport with other students following his negative previous experiences. They agreed that FB should try out some public speaking through giving presentations within the Council and Youth Parliament schemes running within the college. FB developed his use of PowerPoint technology in support of his communication challenges, and spent several sessions with the coach perfecting the style and content of his presentations. The coach comments:

"one day he brought in all of these motivational quotes made by famous people and we spent ages going through them and choosing the right ones".

FB enjoyed the presentations and the attention he received from other people within the college. He asked the coach about the kind of jobs that might involve more communicating in public, and took a great interest in Law. The coach then explained what would be needed in terms of how to enter such a profession, the need for a degree, and the various sub-specialisms that could include becoming a barrister. Because FB comes from a financially poor background the coach has also been liaising with colleagues in order to find out more about what grants or bursaries or scholarships might be available. FB and the coach are also discussing next steps in terms of what he should do between the age of 17 and his university entry age of 18.

5.3 Youth centres and workplaces

Interviews generated seven cases and a single sketch for a total of 11 learners, depicting learning support which primarily uses youth centres or workplaces as the dominant environment of the coaches. One of the cases provides an example of coaching which helps a group of four individuals rather than relying exclusively on the more usual one-to-one support.

Table 5.4: Youth centre and workplace-based learner profile for 11 individuals

Category	Frequency	Number of cases and sketches where relevant information was not provided or not known	% of eligible total (maximum = 11)
Age 14-15 years	4	0	36.4
Age 16 – 19 years	7	0	68.7
Referral	8	0	72.8
Self referral	3	0	27.3
Under-achievement specifically mentioned	7	0	63.7
Discipline problems	5	0	45.4
Specific learning difficulties	4	0	36.3

This overall category of individuals involves learners who are visiting on a voluntary basis a range of youth centres or community based venues. With the exception of the workplace instance, the defining characteristics are leisure and informality. Sometimes this involves sport and recreation, but at other times non-formal learning emerges through structured pathways that lead to certificated awards, although these are not necessarily accredited and contained within conventional qualifications frameworks for 14-19 year old attainment.

The cases and sketches cover four of the five themes that have been highlighted in sections 5.1 and 5.2 for school and college based coaching support. The exception is 'specific learning difficulties', perhaps explained through noting that such a category reflects professional interest in labelling learners within institutional settings.

Youth centres have the advantage of providing more informality as an alternative to conventional educational support – and this therefore leads to a movement away from using formal labels or diagnostic titles. A variety of professionals who use youth centres are also more likely to work with young people who are either within or close to the official not-in-employment-education-or-training (NEET) category. The youth centres therefore become pivotal places for establishing and maintaining contact with young people who leave formal educational organisations.

5.3.1 Catch-up

Comprehensive learning support within youth centres and workplaces depends on close connections with schools or colleges in order to help learners catch up with their studies. Case YD illustrates this point through reference to a 15 year old with sporadic health problems caused by a serious food allergy. She was achieving D grades at GCSE level but the school has in the past predicted outcomes at grade B. YD is very nervous about attending school and went through a phase of fainting at the gate each morning due to anxiety. She lacked confidence despite being a talented athlete, at one point achieving county standard.

The school began a programme of support following an interview between YD and the head of year prompted by her non-submission of coursework. This led to a referral to a Learning Coach who was linked to Careers Wales, using a variety of youth centres. Early sessions involved relaxation training, positive visualisation, and discussion of health problems and relationships with friends. It was during these sessions that her celiac condition was revealed; something that the school had been unaware of because YD had wanted to keep it a secret. The coach arranged a special diet, and also met up with YD's mother – who was very keen to help with the coaching support – so that discussions sometimes involved the three of them in addition to the 1:1 sessions.

The Learning Coach noted:

despite being very attractive YD was convinced that she was “very plain” and “ordinary looking”, and she thought that other students did not like her because of this.

The coaching relationship worked on a more optimistic view of the world, recognising all of the options that were available, as well as arranging a work experience placement within a hairdressing salon – playing on YD’s interest in appearances. The coach concentrated support sessions on catch-up coursework, and grades climbed back into the B and C bands. At this point her mother rang the school to say:

“how nice it is to have her at home these days”.

YD is about to sit her GCSE exams and she wants to go to college and complete a Diploma in beauty therapy with a view to eventually running her own business and having her own shop.

5.3.2 Disruption

Youth centres also offer opportunities to work with young people who have histories of disruption within secondary schools, offering opportunities for a fresh start with different kinds of support professionals. Case YC involves a group of four friends aged 16 who all went to the same comprehensive school. Two have learning disorders and all have been described as very low achievers who would most likely leave school with nothing.

The group has a history of repeated offences in school, including violence and damage to property. This resulted in a series of fixed term exclusions, with one individual also getting into simultaneous trouble with the police and a criminal gang based on his theft of drugs from a

dealer. Three of the boys have now been permanently excluded from school because of their aggression, disruption and in some instances drug taking.

The group was referred for coaching support by the Deputy Headteacher prior to the exclusions. The coaching team from Careers Wales subsequently came to an agreement with the school whereby the learners were to be allowed to attend some special physical education coursework revision sessions and to sit their exams but otherwise they had to be escorted on and off the school premises by the Learning Coaches. They met the boys outside of school in a youth centre and drew up a contract based on expectations of all parties, definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and targets. Because they escalated their problematic conduct when in the company of one another the coaching sessions worked with individuals rather than the group. Furthermore, the history of violence and confrontation meant that another Learning Coach always had to be nearby during any consultation.

The coaches focused on immediate employment opportunities as well as longer term career plans. They liked to use games as a popular medium for learning – for example “hangman” for English Language revision. They also monitored the ADHD conditions, including the use of medication and possible side-effects. One of the boys showed a strong interest in joining the armed forces, and so the coaches arranged for a military representative to meet him and talk about his experiences and life story. He explained the possible options that were available, after which the coaches helped the 16 year old with his application as well as providing additional literacy and numeracy support in preparation for eventual selection tests. They also chased up medical records and reports in support of the application.

The group sat every one of their GCSE exams with results for three individuals averaging at the D grade whilst the fourth averaged at grade C. All four members of this group entered into employment: one as an apprentice, one in a warehouse, one on a building site whilst also

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completing an NVQ, and the final one succeeded with his armed services application. The Learning Coach notes that the coaching relationship is not over – they still keep in touch with the team and it is the young men who initiate such contact, often by using text messages to update a coach on what has been happening at work.

Case YE is described as being very capable in terms of underlying academic ability. Her predicted year 11 grades were of a high standard, but she then refused to go to school following the break-up of her parents' marriage. The coach notes that YE was expected to live with her father but after a short period of time this did not work:

“he refused to speak to her or see her, and then dumped her and her stuff outside the Mother's home just after Christmas with all her returned cards and presents”.

The family had been referred by the special educational needs coordinating officer to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS). The school had provided support via attention from the Head of Year and a counsellor, but once YE stopped going to school this became impossible. The Learning Coach met her in a local café on a number of occasions, and comments:

“she eventually thawed - and I discovered that she likes Hair and Beauty”. The coach arranged a work experience placement for YE at a local salon and a day at the local further education college.

She also visited YE at home and reinforced and monitored the home tuition that YE was receiving via CAHMS in her core subjects. Coaching activity centred on relaxation techniques and in so doing established an on-going trust and dialogue; there was much active listening as well as discussion of the impact of decisions being made at present on future life styles and career employment. The coach discussed details of adolescent development and emotional difficulties with YE's mother, who wanted to help but needed encouragement and support for knowing the best action to take. The mother was very positive about

YE's attendance at college, and noted that her daughter's confidence and self esteem had improved over the last few months. This was boosted still further when the salon then offered YE an apprenticeship.

A final illustration covers teenage pregnancy. In case YA the Learning Coach reports that three generations of YA's family were young mothers, and YA herself is aged 14 with a 10 month old baby. She had not attended school since the age of 12, and following visits from the Education Welfare Officer her mother came very close to having to pay a large fine for YA's non-attendance. Because she had no money this could have meant a custodial sentence – the coach emphasises that this would have disrupted family life even further.

An attempt at providing YA with home tuition was unsuccessful because a chaotic and very busy home environment made private or sustained study sessions impossible. YA was then referred for coaching support via the Young Mums project in the local authority. The coach completed a series of visits to the family home and established positive relationships with both mother and daughter, and noted that despite the parenting demands there was a supportive attitude towards learning and the achievement of qualifications. The coach then hosted visits by YA and her family to the local further education college where the coaching programme was based.

Career pathways and subject choices were discussed before a City and Guilds level one NVQ was selected as the best option. This experience proved to be a great success, with the college awarding an achievement prize to YA at the end of year 10 for her attainment of the full qualification. During the summer the coach maintained contact with the family, and recalls that YA repeatedly complained of being bored, showing a strong impatience about her desire to return to college and go further with her learning. The coach facilitated YA's entry to a level two modern apprenticeship, even though she was a year younger than the usual cohort. Furthermore, the coach facilitated family learning sessions through discussing possible learning pathways with YA's mother, who is now planning to return to education as a mature student.

5.3.3 Study skills support

The skills of combining youth leadership with learning support is demonstrated through case YG, who speaks Welsh as her first language, and has a family background in teaching. Her parents and grandparents would like YG to continue this tradition, although she herself is undecided between youth work, teaching, and paramedicine (which she could apply for when she reaches the age of aged 21). Following discussions with the Learning Coach she decided to go to university and study for a degree linked to Education as a safe strategy whilst she considers her career options.

YG is also a volunteer within a local Welsh language organisation, working with people of all ages in order to help them learn Welsh. Her coach offers this description of YG:

“very quiet, very shy, with lots of skills – she is organised, good at building relationships with young people, she can tell when someone is upset and their mood has changed and always wants to help”.

The key coaching task during YG’s last year in sixth form was “to overcome these quiet spells” so that she can more rapidly and confidently move into a youth leadership role rather than remaining at the general level of youth support. The coach had already established a good working relationship with YG over a number of years, based on her participation in youth club activities. YG volunteered to join the Millennium Award programme, and the coach then worked with her in order to plan out a series of tasks associated with designing and leading activities which involved helping children and parents to speak Welsh. The coach encouraged YG to appeal to a range of senses when engaging in youth work, illustrated by the comment:

“whatever music you put on you can change the environment – it really does work.”

The coach used the Rickter Scale method (see Stead 2001) to encourage YG to rate her feelings and anxiety about a range of situations, leading to the identification of an underlying lack of confidence about situations where YG would have to engage more with outward going and extravert behaviour. After each task she would return to the Rickter evaluation in order to reassess feelings and attitudes about leadership. The coach notes:

“YG liked me to lead on the activities and give me help. I decided to stand back when we were trying out a circle game, in order to force her to take the lead and step up”.

The strategy worked and gradually YG looked forward to having more control of the activities – eventually gaining employment as a part-time youth leader. During all this time YG was also studying for her A levels, and discussed her studies with the coach. They would go through some of the textbooks and discuss study plans and revision strategies. The coach still maintains contact with YG now that she is in the first year of university, noting that within the last few weeks she had been in touch to talk about one of her courses.

5.3.4. Pathway planning

Pathway planning and career choice dominate much of the workplace learning support as is noted in a sketch provided by a Learning Coach linked to a private training organisation:

“Glan” completed a 26 week NVQ programme and coaching involved:

- *Helping to plan his learning and formulate strategy.*
- *Helping with job applications including mock interviews.*
- *Providing advice.*

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- *Coaching in aptitude test preparation.*
- *Helping identify informal learning opportunities and related hobbies e.g football = team player.*
- *On successful job application helping Glan prepare for spending significant time away from home.*

The coach was extremely pleased to have made such a positive impact which resulted ultimately in Glan gaining sustainable employment in a large utilities company.

Workplace coaching is not well documented within the first cohort, simply because so few of the trainee coaches are located within private training provider organisations. This contrasts with a larger number of coaches engaged in youth leadership support, including GATEWAY type initiatives involving Careers Wales. These Learning Coaches recognise numerous informal and non-formal activities outwith formal education establishments.

Passions, interests and hobbies emerge as important considerations when recognising the everyday interests of young people. In case YB the coach is employed by the youth services, and can detail YB's background with ease:

"he has one sister, his mum is a nurse and his dad is a bus driver. He is good at kayaking, and enjoys the D of E (Duke of Edinburgh). At the end of his fifth year at school he got six GCSE passes which he was disappointed with because the grades were not good enough for going into the sixth form which is what he wanted to do. So within a few weeks he got a full-time job in the warehouse of a local department store. As a youth worker I know this kind of thing about the young people I work with – but other professionals tend not to have this information to hand once a young person leaves school."

The coach realised that YB had given up on any further study:

“he saw the bar at four grade Bs at GCSE, and he had ended up with three.”

When YB was in the local youth centre they talked about possible options and looked through the prospectus of the further education college working especially on YB's interest in water sport. He picked out the NVQ3 in Outdoor Activities, but said there was no point in applying because of his low grades. The coach was more optimistic, noting that he was very close to having the entry qualifications, and promised to enquire about possible flexibility in admissions.

This he did, and acting as a go-between with the college they managed to enrol YB on the course. Over the last year he has continued with the NVQ and also completed a level 3 award in kayaking, and a bronze swimming award via the Duke of Edinburgh programme. This qualification helped him to get a part-time job as a swimming instructor, and he also gained holiday employment at an outdoor pursuits centre in Scotland.

The coach comments that YB is a good example of the kind of young person who then typically gives something back to the youth service system, moving from just using the facilities towards showing an interest in helping others to use them. He volunteered to help out in the same local youth centre that he attended for several years, and is now interested in a career which involves working with other young people. The coach notes an ironic pattern emerging for a small number of young people that he works with:

“we are coaching some young people to in turn become coaches”.

Looking back on this case, the Learning Coach emphasises the importance of maintaining contact with young people once they leave formal education. YB had given up because he thought his grades were not good enough, and he closed down his own potential and ambition. He did not realise that he could talk to admissions tutors and negotiate

alternatives. He required encouragement and confidence, and a go-between to help him. But it was only possible to do this because there was a place to go for help with a more experienced person being available. The coach concludes:

"his mum rang me and said thanks for the advice. I said ' I didn't give you any advice. I gave you an option'. [YB] could have been one of the invisible. The vast group in the middle who don't cause anyone any problems. They are not high achievers, they conform and go through life without causing problems. But no-one remembers them and with a little more support they could have done so much more".

Pathway planning is also important for young people who have to contend with transition to other institutions following exclusion, and who nonetheless have strong career ambitions. Case YF comes from a farming family, with her older brothers having a history of truanting from school and subsequent zero educational attainment. She is described as academically very capable but with no stable social circle outside of school - in part caused by the remote rural location of her home.

The Learning coach notes that in year seven YF was severely bullied and because of this missed a lot of time from school. In year 8 she found a peer group which encouraged difficult behaviour, and this situation escalated into three fixed term exclusions in years 9 and 10. The school had tried to give personal support via the year tutors, in addition to some mentoring and the use of report cards for monitoring attendance and punctuality and behaviour.

One of the school governors knew about the coach's reputation in youth work, and rang the coach to ask if there was any more support that could be offered outside of school in order "to socialise" YF more effectively. The coach visited her in school, and during the periods of exclusion they met regularly in a youth centre to discuss various

options as well as longer term ambitions. The coach focused especially on YF's hopes of one day becoming a solicitor and getting away from farm life.

Despite this support YF was then permanently excluded from the school, and the coach then supported her during the appeal process - even attending the appeal hearing in front of the governors. The appeal went right up to County level where the decision was upheld. YF then attended another school after a brief spell of home tuition. The coach liaised with the personal support specialists at the new school in order to ensure some continuity and also highlight the possibility of a career pathway into Law. YF completed all of her year 11 course work and sat all of her GCSEs, and now has a place at the local further education college where she hopes to gain the necessary A level grades that will allow her to gain a place on a degree at university.

5.4 Headline conclusions

- The cases and sketches depict a wide variety of support provided by Learning Coaches for young people. There is evidence of targeted and strategic intervention for particular populations, as well more general open-to-all drop-in support.
- Broad categories for coaching support are dominated by themes of underachievement, specific learning needs, discipline difficulties involving disruption within classrooms and institutions, peer group problems, internal and external truanting, and catching up on missed classes and coursework. Less prominent is the provision of support for those learners who may go unnoticed despite being in the category of more able and talented learners.
- Coaching activity in schools and colleges is linked to practical help with study skills, the exploration of preferred learning styles, supporting emotional well-being, and facilitating choice of options linked to pathways planning. The visual-auditory-kinaesthetic

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Headline conclusions

typology appears to be popular with learners although there may be a danger of such categorisation for learning style being taken too literally on occasions.

- Coaches demonstrate a balance in the support they provide in terms of offering very practical “hints and tips” whilst also developing a longer term empowerment of young people through building up their confidence and learning insight.
- Coaches are supporting learners who otherwise slip through the net once they leave a particular college or school. This includes visiting the home or workplace, helping students who have been excluded or who are on an alternative curriculum, or keeping in touch with young people trapped in employment which frustrates them.
- Whilst there are some case studies involving groupwork, the majority of coaching relationships involve one-to-one support.
- Coaches occasionally have to cope with serious disclosures about abuse and safety, these situations demand sensitive referral skills alongside the careful definition of ground rules.
- Youth work entails more varied and diverse activity which appears to be less focussed on learning support and more concerned with helping young people to resolve relationship difficulties and to identify and choose options.
- It should be noted that the case study research is limited on at least three fronts. First, it does not involve interviews with learners themselves; only their coaches have been involved. Second, these learner case studies and sketches have been chosen by the Learning coaches and are therefore more likely to reflect instances of success; they do not represent a random and independent sample of intervention and support across the board. Third because all of the coaches were going through the training programme at the time of the interviews, with their anonymity respected at all times, the longer term attainment of learners at the end of the year in question

could not always be tracked. Further quantitative and qualitative work is needed in order to gauge the true impact and effectiveness of coaching support over time.

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

6.1 Inevitable overlaps

In chapter one a literature review relevant to coaching revealed that the terms 'mentor' and 'coach' are frequently used synonymously and interchangeably. The evaluation of training (chapter 3) and case study information (chapters 4 and 5) underlined this confusion amongst professionals who also support young people and surround the coach in a specific organisation or institution. These observations prompted discussion within the Learning Coach operational and references groups of the overlaps between coaching and mentoring. The debate noted that both concepts have much value for practitioners, and it is important to identify the inter-relationships between coaching and mentoring at all times. On the other hand novice Learning Coaches may be deterred by such semantic details at the start of the programme. Whilst not a unanimous view within the *First Campus* team it was concluded that changes should be made to the first core training module, entitled The Mentoring Process, in order to reduce confusion and clarify terminology.

It is worth remembering some of the comments made especially by the youth service coaches, who emphasised that their work involves playing a wide variety of roles, and that this does not necessarily confuse the young people who get the support they need. It is more a matter of accepting the inevitability of overlaps, and trying to clarify each role to practitioners (and their colleagues) within more local organisations. In this way flexibility of support activity can be more easily and confidently recognised, and criticisms about wasteful duplication of resources minimised. If this clarification can be achieved then teachers, youth workers, careers advisers, and learning support assistants can comfortably slip into coaching mode as appropriate. Where learning support becomes a dominant part of their everyday work then the use of an employment title of “Learning Coach” becomes more practicable. The name of the game appears to be in achieving enough flexibility so that organisations can adapt and accommodate coaching in ways that fit into their own operations and terminologies.

The *First Campus* operational and Learning Coach advisory groups analysed the distinctiveness of the coaching role, with two broad conclusions being reached. First, the specification for the Learning Coach role contained within the guidance notes for the 14-19 Learning Pathways held water in terms of defining and encouraging the breadth of activity relevant to learning support for young people. This can in part be attributed to the detailed grassroots consultation exercise with stakeholders during the CQFW core training phase of the Learning Coach project (Saunders and Turnbull 2006). Second, it would be helpful to also provide guidelines about the various other roles linked to coaching, and suggest notional boundaries which make sense to all concerned. With this aim in mind the two groups were then asked to identify the key roles associated with the provision of support for young people. Their short list was:

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

In the coaches' own words

- Learning Coach
- Mentor
- Careers Adviser
- Teacher
- Counsellor
- Learning Support Assistant
- Youth Worker

This role-list fed into the case study interviews with coaches, where individuals were asked to define in their own words each of the above roles through completing in as spontaneous a way as possible the end part of a sentence fired at them by the interviewer. The purpose of this exercise was to gain an understanding of how coaches view the distinctiveness of their activity.

6.2 In the coaches' own words

The following tables contain responses to role questions reflecting the perceptions of the coaches themselves. They are presented as verbatim lists and it should be noted that some interviewees provided more than one reply to a particular question. Responses have been combined wherever different interviewees repeated the same information.

Table 6.1: "A Learning Coach is someone who:

"

- listens*
- helps a young person to achieve more than they have ever achieved before*
- makes young people feel better about themselves*
- has time*
- motivates and encourages success*
- unlocks true potential*
- tells people how good they are*
- specialises in study skills and learning styles*
- advocates discovery of the right pathway*
- gives support about work experience*
- provides holistic impartial guidance*
- has knowledge and expertise at fingertips*
- fills the gaps*
- breaks down barriers that prevent learning*
- helps you to achieve in a particular subject*
- makes you do what you don't want to do*
- helps you to get to where you want to be*
- enables young people to use their strengths*
- works on areas that need development*
- helps young people to manage all the subjects they have to learn*
- focuses on learning styles*
- can get the best out of a pupil*
- is specially there for the learner to learn*
- guides and gently nudges students back on to the right course of action*
- supports teaches and encourages with enthusiasm and energy*
- is genuine, cares and listens, giving specific feedback*
- knows about what method is best suited to each individual,*
- wins the heart spirit and confidence of the person*
- you don't have to like, but you do have to respect*

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

In the coaches' own words

encourages you to stay on track, and do your best and stay on
helps out with a problem and gives ideas about how to solve it,
gives a number of answers
helps to choose
facilitates options
supports young people to achieve their potential
helps young people to improve over a long time
helps you learn better
"

Table 6.2: "A mentor is someone who:

"

guides and makes suggestions
offers advice
listens
acts as a sounding board
is an impartial supporter
has no necessary knowledge or expertise in that area
gives you the skills to achieve across the board generally
is more general and holistic,
gets involved in all the issues
puts the child on the right path
motivates
very very different from a coach, asking direct questions
tries to go deeper into the student's current situation
you can trust
has your well being in mind
guides you in a compassionate way
takes the bigger picture
deals with personal things
listens advises and understands

*a friend, someone to talk to
is on the social side of things
is a substitute parent
quite senior
counsels
young people bounce off
you go to for support no matter whether it is personal, academic
or social
gives someone one-to-one help
has more knowledge skills and expertise than the learner
tells the learner about the best course of action
"*

Table 6.3: "A careers adviser is someone who:

*"
gives options on job pathways and has expertise
shows employment pathways
helps young people choose a university course
gives information about jobs
gives options about best career routes and selects one of them
has knowledge and expertise of employment
knows about training opportunities in a vast number of industries
helps plan careers paths in a direction that is right for you
knows about the right subject combinations
opens doors to training and careers
offers support at an early age to offer a pathway
gives practical advice within set parameters
offers all the options of career choice without telling what to do
talks about future plans and shows options
is a realistic goal setter, aware of a variety of avenues,
involves employers and parents and connects them together
guides you towards your future role
a director who sets realistic targets
"*

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

In the coaches' own words

matches employment possibilities with academic chances of success
provides pathways
tailors advice on employment and careers to individual needs
develops a career plan
gives advice about careers
opens learners eyes to employment possibilities
liaises closely with the world of work
"

Table 6.4: "A teacher is someone who:

"
imparts knowledge
helps young people to pass their exams
has absolute knowledge about a subject
assesses - and the assessments count
works with very large groups
facilitates information
works with different students in different ways
is an expert in a discipline
looks after you for the year as a pastoral form tutor
specialises in one or more subjects
leads from the front of the class and the pupils respect them
delivers the curriculum
helps you learn
is privileged to impart knowledge but also coaches and mentors
unravels the mysteries of a given topic, enabling you to share and access its secrets
all of these things
a professional who is interested in learning in the correct way

projects and shares their enjoyment of a particular subject
educates
imparts knowledge to young people to the level they require
is a subject specialist
has a passion about their subject
is a highly skilled authority
"

Table 6.5: "A learning support assistant is someone who:

"
don't know – same as a teaching assistant?
is there to give a teacher extra support in the classroom
works with special needs in the classroom
gives support to pupils
supports a student and the teacher in the classroom
works 1:1 with students who have specific learning needs
gives additional help with the teacher to assist with personal
needs
is very similar to a mentor
shows you how to learn
is a specialist in specific learning needs
is a mentor
does admin
gives extra help in classrooms
helps with all kinds of needs including physical needs
has more of an impact on certain young people
works closely with the teacher
"

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In the coaches' own words

Table 6.6: "A youth worker is someone who:

"
gives guidance on welfare, shelter, leisure,
works on the bottom level of Maslow's needs
provides support and direction
is a role model attached to youth clubs and drop-in centres
outside school
concerned about personal, social and emotional development
improves self esteem
helps young people to find their way in society
you have fun with
works with children from all backgrounds
is there for support alongside other agencies
participates in social activities with the young
works in various different environments
is a buddy outside the formal organisation
is a bridge or link between where you are and the adult world
is not the enemy
is different from school
a new face
is less formal
understands where young people are coming from
is an informal educator around life skills
uses youth centres or the streets as the place of contact
is a generic person who covers all the support roles
helps outside of school
gives extra curricular support around fun activity
does everything all rolled into one
"

Table 6.7: "A counsellor is someone who:

"
is qualified to tackle personal trauma
empowers others
works through serious issues
unpacks things where we have not got the skill
is interested in the past as a way of giving clues to the present
and then moving on to the future
improves emotional health and well being
someone you can speak to confidentially
works with children of all backgrounds
is there for support alongside other agencies
unravels a specific problem in a students life
offers support, guidance and refers to organisations that can help
you can share your experiences with
deals with danger,
a real expert
has a track record who can easily influence people to go in
different directions
works on specific emotional problems, relooking at scenarios
is a good listener
gives support for personal problems but does not give advice
"

6.3 An Approximations Matrix

A few words of caution should be added about the methodology used in generating the definitions provided in section 6.2. The above data contains multiple responses from some coaches, whilst others gave very brief replies to some of the questions. The coaching and mentoring definitions came first in the interview schedule and encouraged more detailed comments, but interviewees tended to become more confused and drained as the questioning continued because they were becoming

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

An Approximations Matrix

aware of the overlaps in their replies based on what had been said previously. The questions were phrased in a way which encouraged consideration of a stereotype or a set employment position for individuals within an institution or organisation, rather than emphasising that they could refer to roles that could be adopted by the same person. The responses were spontaneous and reflexive in order to gather immediate impressions and opinions; time for further deliberation would most probably have produced more detailed and thoughtful replies. These comments are only from coaches, and therefore represent a specific perspective based on coaching and training experiences. And finally, no formally defined occupational standards statements have been included for such professions as “teacher” or “careers adviser.” The information has not therefore been triangulated with the perspectives of other relevant professionals and specialists.

Despite these reservations, the comments from the Learning Coaches are helpful in providing a grounded view of roles and functions associated with the provision of various kinds of support to young people. At times fundamental contradictions are noted within the perception lists for the same role. Mentoring is one example, where there is a view of such an individual either having lots of knowledge and expertise – or none. At other times all of the roles appear to be linked with the same properties and attributes – such as listening, understanding, and building up relationships. Bearing in mind these criticisms, some general traits for the various roles are summarised in table 6.8:

The response lists inspired the construction of a prototype “approximations matrix” detailing the properties and functions of key roles. The matrix extended previously published work (Parsloe and Wray 2000) comparing the roles of coach, mentor and therapist.

This prototype was expanded so that it covered the entire role list outlined in section 6.1. The full matrix was then circulated to over 50 individuals drawn from:

- the Learning Coach advisory group
- the Learning Coach training operations group
- 14-19 network convenors
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Careers Wales companies
- Swansea Metropolitan University⁵

The validity of the matrix was therefore tested via gathering feedback from professionals within education, local authorities, government, work based training, careers guidance, youth services, and probation sectors. There were six iterations before the final version was produced, with the new role of “work based trainer” being added to the list of key roles based on the need to recognise the potential of training and apprenticeship support for young people entering full-time employment at the age of 16. The final version of the matrix is presented in table 6.9.

⁵ Acknowledgments to Prof Ken Jones and Ann Birch, from Swansea Metropolitan University for invaluable feedback on the role of Learning Support Assistants

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Table 6.8: key perceived features for roles as perceived by Learning Coaches

Role	Key features
Learning Coach	Study skills, learning styles, breaking down barriers to learning, facilitating choice between options, solving problems
Mentor	Guiding and advising, motivating, having knowledge, asking direct questions, more senior, trusted adviser
Careers adviser	Employment specialist, planning careers pathways, developing plans, liaising with the world of work
Teacher	Educator, a subject specialist with advanced skills, working with large groups as well as individuals, assessing, a leading authority figure
Learning support assistant	Working with a teacher, helping and giving extra support in the classroom, involved with special needs, administration
Youth worker	Improving confidence and self esteem, communicating in different ways, a friend, engaging in social activity, informal, working outside school, an all-rounder
Counsellor	Expert listener, unravelling problems, dealing with serious issues, improving health and emotional well being, confidential

Table 6.9: An “Approximations Matrix” for dominant characteristics of roles associated with the provision of support for young people

1. Purpose of the Role	
Coach	<p>Problem-solving, task focused and results driven leading to improved performance.</p> <p>Applied action in specific areas.</p> <p>Practice-based for the development of skills and techniques – evoking excellence.</p> <p>Attainment of short-term targets that lead to long term goals.</p>
Mentor	<p>Broad holistic growth going beyond individual tasks, clarifying understanding, empowerment.</p> <p>Reflection following exchange of knowledge and wisdom.</p> <p>Critical friend.</p> <p>Personal, spiritual and professional development.</p>
Careers Adviser	<p>Provision of impartial information, advice and guidance about learning and employment options.</p> <p>Transition to further learning and employment.</p> <p>Development of skills to manage career pathways through life.</p>
Counsellor	<p>Crisis centred.</p> <p>Healing after analysis.</p> <p>Well being, longer term growth guided by awareness of self and others. Offering theory and philosophy backup.</p>
Teacher	<p>Longer term.</p> <p>Attainment based on understanding of curriculum outcomes.</p> <p>Instructional status.</p>
Youth Worker	<p>Identify learning needs, provide an alternative to institutional and authority based support.</p> <p>Encourage informal learning for personal and social development.</p> <p>Critical friend aiming for empowerment, making sense of the here and now.</p>

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Work Based Trainer	Skills training and development. Applied action in specific employment areas. Problem-solving, task focused and results driven leading to (a) operational competence, (b) improved performance.
Learning Support Assistant	Supporting children's learning – usually in a small group context, sometimes as a whole class. Supporting individual/groups of children with additional needs. Supporting the teacher.
2. Term for “The Other”	
Coach	Client, employee, co-worker, learner, student, coachee
Mentor	Protégé, mentee, mentoree, peer learner.
Careers Adviser	Client, young people
Counsellor	Client, patient.
Teacher	Student, pupil, learner.
Youth Worker	Young people, learners.
Work Based Trainer	Trainee, employee.
Learning Support Assistant	Pupil, learner – range of ages and phases.
3. Type of Relationship	
Coach	Directive as well as facilitating. A positive role model. Client initiated as well as referral. Sometimes has an entitlement basis. Financial incentives often involved. Short and long-term. Outcome rather than relationship based. Instructional capacity. CRB checked.

Mentor	Non-directive. Voluntary on both sides Tend not to have financial incentives Trust and confidentiality are pre-requisite. Advisory capacity. Not automatically CRB checked.
Careers Adviser	Statutory entitlement. Impartial and non-directive, aimed at empowerment. Referral by others as well as self referral. Contract agreed with individual client. Financial incentives via salaried position. CRB checked.
Counsellor	Non-directive. Referral and voluntary base. Financial incentives. Confidentiality essential. Not automatically CRB checked.
Teacher	Directive with a statutory base. Entitlement financial incentives via salaried position. Regulation of disclosure. Institutionalised, authority status. CRB checked.
Youth Worker	Directive and non-directive. Referral by agencies as well as by young people themselves. Support and guidance but no advisory status. Positive role model. Facilitation with confidentiality. Starting from the present and not the past. CRB checked.
Work Based Trainer	Directive. Specific goals determined by organisational priority and end qualification or other attainment specification.
Learning Support Assistant	Directive but under supervision of teacher. Facilitative. Pastorally supportive. CRB checked. Financial incentive via salaried position.

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4. Type of Contact	
Coach	<p>On an as-needed basis, as identified by client/organisation.</p> <p>Formalised as part of work-support.</p> <p>Predominantly short-term but renewed if successful.</p> <p>1:1 as well as group based.</p> <p>Reporting to stakeholders on occasions.</p> <p>Very varied communication.</p> <p>Has a specified environment/territory and also visits other learning spaces and institutions.</p>
Mentor	<p>Longer-term relationship based with formal and informal meetings, as well as communication.</p> <p>Can be regulated via a contract.</p> <p>One-to-one with limited formal reporting.</p> <p>Flexible and varied contact environments.</p>
Careers Adviser	<p>Regulated one-to-one interviews followed up with written reports to the client.</p> <p>Groupwork can also be used.</p> <p>Meetings can be one off annual events or there can be follow up interviews.</p> <p>Specific locations for meetings in a variety of institutions linked with use of specialist resources.</p>
Counsellor	<p>Can be mandatory.</p> <p>Communications restricted.</p> <p>One-to-one or one-to-group</p> <p>Short or long-term.</p> <p>No formal reporting.</p> <p>Has a very specific and confidential environment/territory.</p>
Teacher	<p>Regulated, group and individual-based, curriculum determined, formal and extensive reporting, diversity of communication to include parents and employers/universities.</p> <p>Formalised and wide ranging environments within a single institution.</p>

Youth Worker	Referral basis in school and out-of-hours through drop-in sessions at youth centres and youth service projects. Peer group contact. Informal meetings which are often spontaneous. One-to-one and group support. Flexible time frames. Relatively little reporting of meetings, targets or outcomes.
Work Based Trainer	Dependent upon context – subject area, size of organisation, level of risk associated with tasks.
Learning Support Assistant	Range, dependant on context: On an “as needed” basis within one base (classroom) as identified by teacher. Continuous – supporting individuals with additional needs. Curriculum based – supporting children in specific area e.g. literacy Department based supporting children within one department within a secondary school.
5. Background Experience	
Coach	Wide ranging background but shared interests. Openness about life stories. Charismatic and inspirational qualities based on talent, skill and passion.
Mentor	Diverse and extensive background from another organisation or a different part of the same organisation. Skills in transference. Status and influence dominate. Maturity and wisdom are key characteristics.
Careers Adviser	Varied backgrounds usually involving contact with young people. Experience defined at professional levels. Little life story sharing by adviser.
Counsellor	Varied but unrelated background and this is private and undisclosed. Academic follow through with theory and philosophy. Little or no life story sharing.

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Teacher	Curriculum and professional background based on subject expertise. Experience confined to educational institutions which is shared with learner.
Youth Worker	A very wide range of disciplines and organisations. Relatively little specialism whilst crossing many boundaries. Awareness of education and training curricula in order to ensure complementary support. Expertise with self disclosure.
Work Based Trainer	High level of skills, contextual knowledge and practical experience in the working environment. Professional background based on subject expertise.
Learning Support Assistant	Often mature adults with extensive life experiences, particularly experience of raising children, but the profile is changing as the workforce expands. Often living within the community in which they work.
6. Training Background	
Coach	Skill and talent driven. Some qualifications and certification at levels 1-3. High level of autonomy and individuality. Track-record of results. CDP updating engaged in as needed.
Mentor	Little or no formal training. No certification or qualification, high level of autonomy and individuality. No CPD.
Careers Adviser	Formally defined with a tendency towards recruiting advisers with graduate status and certificated careers training at NVQ level 4 or above. In-service CPD at formal levels.
Counsellor	Formal training including wide-ranging certification by diverse regulated and unregulated bodies at levels 3-8. Relatively little CPD.

Teacher	Formally defined with graduate status and certificated training at level 7. Frequent CPD at formal levels.
Youth Worker	Professionally qualified following diverse experiential pathways into working with young people. Some CPD support.
Work Based Trainer	Teaching/training/assessment development e.g. D32-33 etc. and or academic development. CPD updating engaged in as needed.
Learning Support Assistant	No formal qualifications required on entry but many experienced have NNEB qualification. Work-based training such as induction, NVQs and Foundation Degrees are increasingly seen as imperative to developing effectiveness within the role.

7. Evaluation of Role and Function

Coach	Little formal evaluation of impact but extensive anecdotal and intuitive feedback gathering from clients based on results and attainment. Feedback gathered spontaneously and immediately
Mentor	Limited evaluation of impact. Feedback sought from both parties at interim periods after determined by a contract. Relationship driven on the basis of perceived growth.
Careers Adviser	Formal via Estyn and the common inspection framework, plus formal and informal at careers company level. Survey and focus group activity gathers client feedback. National performance indicators used to gauge impact.
Counsellor	Little formal evaluation or feedback. An exclusive focus on client or patient. Conclusions about well-being determine judgements of effectiveness.

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Teacher	Formal evaluation with regulated feedback as well as periodic inspection by ESTYN. Results and attainment driven.
Youth Worker	Informal and formal evaluation generated periodically, annual reports regarding contacts against targets. ESTYN inspected.
Work Based Trainer	Formal via Estyn and the common inspection framework if in receipt of public funding, internal in-house evaluations via feedback from trainees as well as subsequent observation of workplace performance.
Learning Support Assistant	No formal/statutory procedures in place but sometimes included in evaluation and appraisal systems within a school.

6.4 Investigating overlaps between coaching and careers guidance

The matrix helped to clarify expectations about coaching and the assorted responsibilities of the Learning Coach as compared with other professionals and specialists who also have a commitment to supporting young people via the 14-19 Learning Pathways policy and guidelines.

One area of overlap has already been highlighted by the market research exercise reviewed in section 3.3 of chapter 3 (GfK NOP 2007), as well as the role analysis in section 6.3. This concerned the work of careers advisers, and links with coaching activity. It is perhaps worth remembering at this point the significant contributions of Careers Wales to the development of Learning Coach and 14-19 Learning Pathways policies via involvement in the Learning Coach pilot project programme of 2004-5 (as outlined in section 2.2 of chapter 2). Careers Wales also supported the management of the core training programme

of the Learning Coaches through the secondment of two members of its staff. Furthermore, the *Connexions* programme in England (see chapter 1) involved a very close interplay between regional careers services and a small army of Learning Mentors. It is not therefore surprising that Careers Wales and Welsh Assembly participants within the Approximations Matrix exercise pointed to the need to explore in more detail the links between coaching and careers advice.

With this aim in mind senior Careers Wales managers⁶ and chief executives analysed the matrix further, using a range of formally defined occupational standards for Careers Advisers as well as Estyn common inspection reports on the work of Careers Wales in a range of areas and institutions. This analysis involved generating a series of learning outcomes for careers guidance, mapping these on to 14-19 entitlements, and amending details within the Careers Adviser approximations column.

6.4.1 What does Careers Wales do?

There is sometimes a lack of understanding of careers 'guidance' and how it differs from the giving of 'information' and 'advice'. Guidance is a more sophisticated process which seeks to move beyond a young person's 'presenting wants' (such as initial requests for specific information and advice) in order to achieve a more holistic and in-depth understanding of personal and social circumstances that may influence choice.

The changes that have taken place in both education and employment in the UK over the last thirty years have already shifted the focus of careers guidance for many young people away from occupational choice per se. This has been replaced by helping to understand the implications of learning choices for future employment in a world where the relationship between learning and career progression is more complex and less predictable than in the past.

⁶ Grateful thanks to Joyce M'Caw, Wayne Feldon, and Margaret Noakes for networking with managers and staff within Careers Wales and then providing some of the text within section 6.4.1, information about specialist roles in section 6.4.2, as well as timeline contributions in section 6.4.3.

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What does Careers Wales do?

At the same time, developments in careers guidance practice have challenged the notion that guidance and decision making are straight forward 'rational' processes involving the logical appraisal of information in the light of set criteria in order to select the best option. There is greater recognition of different and more subjective decision-making as well as 'community' influences (such as parents, peers, and teachers). Motivation and resilience are key issues, particularly for those disengaged with learning/work; so too is 'chance' in terms of shaping pathways through life.

Careers services and companies have responded to these changes in employment, skills, and careers planning through identifying an array of functions linked to performance criteria and target setting for careers advisers. Careers Wales lists five such categories for their work with young people:

- Careers Information, Advice and Guidance: a universal, independent and impartial careers guidance service available to all young people 14-19, with additional targeted support which includes Gateway initiatives
- Work-based learning placement opportunities: a service to young people who have left full-time education and are seeking work or work-based learning, with referral to advisers for careers guidance and additional support.
- Education Business Links: opportunities for work focussed learning for young people in education, and for their teachers to learn more about the world of work. These activities are often organised and/or delivered by specialist personnel within Careers Wales companies, other than careers advisers.
- Curriculum Support ('Careers and the World of Work'): including the training of teachers/tutors and associated staff, and advisory work with schools/colleges on delivering this aspect of the curriculum

- 'Careers Wales On Line' and 'CLIC' web sites: managed centrally by Careers Wales and available for use by young people, careers advisers and any other professionals/partner agencies.

6.4.2 Specialist roles linked to learning coach support

The five categories of activity underline the diversity of careers guidance support for young people, especially when located outside of the mainstream school and college institutions. Table 6.10 gives further detail for specialist adviser roles linked to the characteristics within the Approximations Matrix.

Table 6.10: Six specialist careers adviser roles linked to Learning Coach support

Specialist adviser roles	Key characteristics over and above generic careers support	Of particular relevance to Learning Coach support
Special needs	As with Careers Adviser column in Approximations matrix but unique statutory requirements based on SEN registers and formal statementing. Expertise about specialist provision and funding, production of reports for review meetings, longer term on-going relationships with clients and their families. Close multi-agency working with social services, health and psychology experts. Varied locations for adviser support.	Assessment of learning and training needs

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Specialist roles linked to learning coach support

Specialist adviser roles	Key characteristics over and above generic careers support	Of particular relevance to Learning Coach support
Education Youth Gateway Adviser	As with Careers Adviser column in Approximations matrix, although contact is more frequent and relationship is more on-going sometimes up to the age of 25. Targeting disengaged young people who are at-risk of acquiring NEET status post 16, referral basis for contact. Usually working in learning provider premises or careers centres, plus home visits for students excluded from school	Motivational support, focus on overcoming barriers to success in learning Using coaching and mentoring skills involving one-to-one and small group sessions
Post Education Gateway Adviser	As with Careers Adviser column in Approximations matrix, but with more of a focus on basic skills assessment, dedicated to formally defined NEET clients most of which are aged 16+. Voluntary participation. Varied locations for support	As with education youth gateway. More of a holistic approach addressing personal and social barriers to successful transition to work and learning. Multi-agency working includes mental health, housing, substance abuse, youth offending, counselling, sexual health. Coaching with self presentation and information search skills Substantial programme of small group sessions

Specialist adviser roles	Key characteristics over and above generic careers support	Of particular relevance to Learning Coach support
Generic Post Education Adviser	As with Careers Adviser column in Approximations matrix but with a focus on helping 16-18 year olds who volunteer contact to move into employment and work based learning. Providing information about financial support (for example Job Seekers Allowance, Child Benefit). Often visiting workplaces.	Follow ups with young people in a variety of workplaces who are undergoing training. Some advocacy work with employers and private training providers. Groupwork via job search clinics Skill Build reviews
Careers Centre front-line staff	Qualified to NVQ3, providing basic information and advice. Voluntary contact from clients. Arranging interviews for vacancies, linking with Job Centre Plus. Advise on benefits but less in-depth as compared with generic post education adviser	Referral to other adviser specialists in Careers Wales. Some advocacy work with employers and private training providers. Use of varied communications and technologies to keep in touch Assisting with applications

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Specialist roles linked to learning coach support

Specialist adviser roles	Key characteristics over and above generic careers support	Of particular relevance to Learning Coach support
Education Business/Work Focussed Support	Purpose broadly reflects the objectives of Careers and Work curriculum framework and relevant aspects of the Learning Core. This is outside of the Learner Support element of 14-19 Pathways. Implementation of enterprise and entrepreneurship initiatives and projects.	Acting as a broker between schools or colleges and employers to create opportunities for work focus Crossing school and further education and employment boundaries Employer mentoring and employer led mock interviewing Using business simulations, games and role plays Organising work experience placements Key interest in science, technology engineering, and maths pathways

In all of these careers applications themes of impartiality and empowerment dominate. Clients are offered opportunities to explore relevant concerns and to develop decision making and careers planning skills. This entails an exploration of underlying needs, motivation and drivers as well as personal and social circumstances that may influence choices. The ultimate goal involves young people making and implementing their own decisions. Another key relevance for anyone engaging in learning support involves the use of specialist information resources by careers advisers, including Careers Wales On-Line.

Careers Wales identify two related aims for the Learning Coach role:

- to support young people to learn more effectively and improve their performance in their current learning pathway
- to support young people to make decisions about future learning pathways and make a successful transition from one pathway to another.

Careers guidance contributes to the first of these by motivating young people to learn, through linking learning achievement to successful entry and progress within employment. However, it is the overlap between the second part of the Learning Coach role and that of the Careers Adviser which is most evident. Quality, impartial careers information, advice and guidance contribute to the Learning Coach role by enabling young people to:

- know the whole range of 14-19 learning pathways available, including vocational options
- understand the relationship between learning (formal, informal and non-formal) and future employment prospects
- identify and relate specific skills learnt through individual learning pathways to future career and employment choices
- make learning pathway decisions in the full understanding of the implications of choices on future learning/employment avenues
- make a successful transition from one learning pathway to another, and to eventual employment, by providing support at key transition points, particularly entry to work/work-based learning
- develop career planning skills which empower young people to make their own successful journey through lifelong learning and work.

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Specialist roles linked to learning coach support

The key strengths that Careers Advisers can offer to the Learning Coach role are:

- extensive knowledge and in-depth understanding of the whole range of learning pathways open to young people locally and beyond, and how these link to future learning and employment progression (a complex issue)
- ability to provide totally impartial and independent advice and guidance free from the pressures of vested interest
- guidance skills which have some similarities with coaching skills
- experience of working as an 'external agent' with the whole range of learning providers, and an understanding of both the benefits (impartiality) and difficulties (gaining trust and confidence of the learning provider) of this role
- continuity of service provision and contact with young people 14-19.

It is therefore clear that careers advisers are well placed to perform the coaching role. Furthermore, evaluation feedback (see section 3.2.4 within chapter 3) should be remembered: coaching should be impartial, without serving the interests of any one host organisation employing an individual Learning Coach. Careers Wales specialises in maintaining such impartiality, and may be well placed to either advise or directly manage and coordinate Learning Coach support across providers.

If the workloads and specialisms of the advisers lead toward more concentrated learning support for young people then it may well be appropriate to redefine their titles as Learning Coaches – a matter for the Careers Wales companies, and the Learning Networks they operate within. What is more likely is the coordination and sharing of coaching support by a team of careers advisers - as well as other support professions - so that young people have entitlement to the coaching support they deserve, although this might not always come from one

individual. Once again flexibility in the definition and operation of the coaching role, rather than the creation of a rigid occupational post filled by an individual, is of paramount importance.

The overlaps between Learning Coach support and *Youth Gateway* advisory work are of particular interest. In order to illustrate this point three case studies are provided by Careers Wales. These have been anonymised and coded YH, YI and YJ; they constitute an extension of the Youth Centres and Workplaces category of evidence presented within section 5.3 of chapter 5:

Case YH

YH was referred to the *Youth Gateway* team when in year 10, being at risk of exclusion due to his behaviour and attendance. The priority for the *Youth Gateway* adviser was to identify a long term plan for this client, who lacked motivation to move forward and to maximise potential in the learning environment. The *Youth Gateway* adviser spent several weeks completing an assessment of learning style, and an impact measurement assessment. The assessment was offered at the pace suited to the young person, aiming to encourage his sense of ownership of his learning plan. The predominant issues preventing YH from progressing were a reluctance to test out academic ability and a lack of regard for authority in school.

The *Youth Gateway* adviser devised a plan to intensively spend two weeks on a one-to-one basis building up a relationship. During this time YH was encouraged to explore the assessment results in order to identify reasons for reacting so negatively when in school. Slowly YH began to engage and contribute to sessions, realising that improvement and participation were more likely when in an environment away from large peer groups. The adviser visited school on a daily basis and YH welcomed the fact that someone was paying attention to him. The *Youth Gateway* adviser also worked closely with the teachers, having established a ground-rule of openness with YH where information on performance in school was to be shared. Behaviour and attendance at school improved drastically as did relationships with teachers. The

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Specialist roles linked to learning coach support

adviser also drew upon their knowledge of local provision available for pre 16 clients in order to devise a day release scheme to an alternative provider, in this case the Amelia Trust. The *Youth Gateway* team refer to the trust due to its individual approach to learning and there range of vocational and informal learning activities. The referral was part of a range of options given as part of YH's careers guidance interview. Following his start at the Trust, YH became involved in art projects and carpentry workshops on a part time basis. Following the placement, the adviser then liaised with the school careers adviser to offer support in school and reduce dependence on the gateway key worker.

Case YI

YI is 16 years old with a history of being in care as well as coping with disability. YI was referred to the *Youth Gateway* team for assessment whilst on a youth offending order, with the social worker commenting that there was little self belief or motivation. YI stays at home most of the time and is described as very bored with no interest in opportunities. After an initial assessment undertaken by the *Youth Gateway* adviser, there was an evident need to provide learning support with literacy. YI met the *Youth Gateway* adviser on a regular basis and undertook a Rickter scale assessment to identify barriers to engaging in meaningful work, training or education. The *Youth Gateway* adviser targeted those challenges that they could work on together and those that would require additional referral.

Over the following weeks the *Youth Gateway* adviser worked intensively on a one-to-one basis to increase confidence and make YI more aware of local opportunities. They met in informal settings to help establish a positive and constructive relationship; this included visiting the local Careers centre, training providers, and colleges. After assessment YH expressed a keen interest in doing mechanics, preferably at a college, but also in getting a part time job. His adviser proceeded to assist him search for jobs. YH's motivation to look for work was outstanding and the *Youth Gateway* adviser was in contact every two days to check up on progress; advising especially that employment in retailing was a realistic target. After several interviews

and attending many open days YH enrolled at a further education college to follow the NVQ 1 mechanics route. Careers guidance support gave details on a range of options including a back up plan should the course be problematic. In order to increase the chances of successfully completing the course, YH's *Youth Gateway* adviser also offered practical support with bus fare and timetables and was able to sign-post YI to a range of part time vacancies.

Case YJ

YJ is in year 10, participating in the *Youth Gateway* programme. This involved private “mentoring” interviews and more intensive block group activities. The one-to-one sessions noted three concerns and worries. The first one focused on difficulties with Maths; YJ found this subject much harder than last year, with more pupils in the class, and the teacher not having enough time to move around and help individual learners. They agreed that the *Youth Gateway* adviser would talk to YJ's Maths teacher to try to arrange some additional support in lunchtime sessions.

The second issue involved YJ's desire to not be dragged into “messing about in class” by other students. The *Youth Gateway* team used the block group activity to observe what happens when YI is in the company of other young people. They noted the client's very reserved initial involvement along with a lack of motivation. The initial apprehension about carrying out some of the group-work exercises was replaced gradually by interest and enthusiasm. During subsequent meetings YJ reported more participation and less disruption in classrooms, and reported on improved motivation and confidence. The adviser comments that YJ now volunteers in classes to answer questions asked by the teacher, and enjoys taking part in team activities.

The third issue involved YJ's family plans to move abroad. This had lead to tension and arguments between the parents – alongside YJ's own anxiety about going somewhere new and leaving friends and the school behind. The parents went to counselling sessions and eventually

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Timeline analysis

decided not to move away, and this gave YJ more confidence and motivation which was reflected in more commitment to learning and working harder in school.

During subsequent interviews the adviser focused on YJ's hopes and plans to return to school after finishing year 11 in order to study A levels. The adviser also noted that YJ is considering some longer term career options: working in a nursery, being a primary school teacher or pursuing a career in information technology.

All three of these case studies offer invaluable insights into the specialist *Youth Gateway* advisory role within Careers Wales, with functions that extend to learning support and advising young people about various options that are open to them. These are the same functions that most Learning Coaches have, and there is now a need to ally more closely these two job titles. Such an exercise will complement earlier comments about the need for more specialist Learning Coach support for young people who are especially linked with the not-in-education-employment or training category.

6.4.3 Timeline analysis

The final task within this analysis involves making sense of the amount and style of learning support and careers advice that is needed at different times within young people's 14-19 Learning Pathways. The Approximations Matrix and subsequent analysis of functions depicted in table 6.2 led to the design and implementation of a workshop involving six careers advisers with knowledge and experience of Learning Coach support, as well as four members of the Learning Coach training team and the chief executive of Mid Glamorgan and Powys Careers Wales. The task involved drawing a central "timeline" which included on the one side careers advice and on the other coaching support. It also generated a series of unresolved issues which feed into later recommendations in chapter 8.

The workshop information was then categorised chronologically into age groups, key stages of attainment in school or college, and post education activity for those young people who move straight into employment or who fall within the non-in-education-employment or training category. Participants preferred to analyse a broader age range than 14-19 years, extending to early secondary school experiences and support.

Table 6.11: Timeline analysis and issues for consideration regarding Learning Coach and Careers support during 14-19 pathways

YEAR	COACHING SUPPORT	CAREERS SUPPORT
All Years	Coach to act as an advocate, helping young people overcome barriers and develop/refine learning strategies. Focus on supporting the individual's learning	Focus on impartial, accurate Careers Advice, Information & Guidance
7 & 8	Informing young people of their entitlement to Learning Coach & Careers Guidance support. To begin to help the learner consider their personal approach to learning i.e. develop strategy. Introducing the learner to factors including learning styles, aspirations, key skills – and in some cases to begin to break the cycle (i.e. 2nd/3rd generation unemployed)	Some introductory group sessions focusing on: Gender Stereotyping Labour Market – jobs of the future Lifelong learning & transferable skills The concept of Careers and work Introduction to CWOL as a resource tool

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YEAR	COACHING SUPPORT	CAREERS SUPPORT
<p>Issues for consideration: Delivering entitlement including reaching children outside the system. Children in care, Travellers etc.</p> <p>Will schools only target under achievers?</p> <p>Careers Wales to develop information packs and introduce young people to CareersWales.com?</p>		
9	<p>To help the young person understand the learning implications for them regarding any chosen learning pathway. For example, how their learning style may impact on the subject.</p> <p>Ensure through an impartial approach that the young person accesses what they need – not what the school prefers.</p>	<p>Exploring work issues that may result from options – Labour Market.</p> <p>Consider factors such as progression including work based learning/FE etc</p> <p>Help with subject choice information i.e. how choices relate to careers opportunities</p>
10	<p>Work experience briefing including setting learning goals and debrief – [further discussion needed as mixed opinions as to whether this was a coach or careers role]</p> <p>Reviewing progress related to learning pathway including issues the young person may be experiencing</p> <p>Supporting and encouraging through the learning process</p>	<p>Work experience briefing including setting learning goals and debrief - [further discussion needed as mixed opinions as to whether this was a coach or careers role]</p> <p>Available to see young people on a needs basis</p> <p>Some work with 'disaffected' clients i.e. motivation, teamwork. Ongoing contact</p> <p>Managing work experience placements, health and safety etc</p>

YEAR	COACHING SUPPORT	CAREERS SUPPORT
11	<p>Establishing learning goals and reviewing</p> <p>Preparing them for specific programmes such as NVQs and work based learning approaches</p> <p>Helping with transition issues</p>	<p>Establishing progression goals and reviewing</p> <p>Introduction to interview skills, CV writing etc (including Education and Business Partnerships)</p> <p>Delivering statutory Careers Guidance interviews and group talks e.g. post 16 options.</p> <p>Helping the young person make decisions regarding FE, WBL, MAs etc. based on their needs – impartial</p> <p>Linking school (or similar), to the world of work</p> <p>Building employability through effective decision making.</p> <p>Registering young people with regional careers centres.</p> <p>Linking with employers, modern apprenticeships, etc</p> <p>Focussing on the big picture – not just school/college.</p>
12 & beyond	<p>Continuing to agree learning goals and review.</p> <p>Advocate on behalf of young person</p> <p>Assisting with UCAS applications and personal statement</p> <p>University choice – sounding board</p> <p>Work placement preparation</p>	<p>Continuing to agree progression goals and review</p> <p>Working with non academic young people, focusing on employment and training options</p> <p>Working with academic young people to focus on academic choices, gap year etc</p> <p>Delivering impartial advice, information and guidance as required, via interviews, talks arranging guest speakers etc</p> <p>Work placement – management, arranging & debrief.</p>

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Timeline analysis

YEAR	COACHING SUPPORT	CAREERS SUPPORT
Work Based Learning	Setting learning goals and reviewing Keeping in touch Transition management Learning styles – understanding and helping the learner learn.	Needs to be informed of young people leaving WBL programmes, or in danger of leaving. Giving additional support where necessary. Informing about alternative options e.g. employment, MAs 12 week skillbuild support (gateway) Support in skillbuild i.e. from level 1 to level 2
Work Based Learning Issues Who will resource learning coach support? Will the WBL Contract holder be obliged as part of the contract to provide learning coach support? Currently they are not – contracts have been agreed up to 2010 that do not include any reference to learning coach support. Concerns about the NVQ roundabout i.e. completing an NVQ level 1 and being placed onto another NVQ 1 programme. The Learning Coach will need to help the learner progress but opportunities are limited.		
General Issues Making collaboration work including all other organisations that go into schools. Joining up provision including EBP initiatives, guest speakers etc. NEETS & Post 16 support for NEETS – how? Non traditional curriculum Careers are very target driven – will learning coaches also be target driven? Strong feeling that coaches should not be as target driven and be more flexible to the diverse needs they will encounter. Should the Careers Adviser be part of the Learning Coach team – but not exclusively the Learning Coach? How to address the information gap that exists between year 11 and Work Based Learning. Information sharing protocols are needed.		

6.5 Headline conclusions

- The original role specification for the Learning Coach contained within the 14-19 Guidance notes is helpful and recognises the breadth of activity associated with the provision of learning support for young people.
- Feedback from the Learning Coaches within the case study sample generated interesting data about perceptions of other professions and occupational groups. This information has not however been triangulated in terms of also asking those other groups and professions about their perceptions of Learning Coaches. Such a triangulation exercise would provide more empirical and grounded views of support roles and possible overlaps.
- Within the current study there are numerous overlaps between coaching and other professions and occupations associated with the provision of support for young people. It is important for networks and organisations to identify the distinctiveness of various roles in order to help Learning Coaches establish identity and clarity of purpose as perceived by their colleagues as well as young people and their families.
- The use of an Approximations Matrix for the key roles of coach, mentor, teacher, careers adviser, learning support assistant, youth worker, counsellor and work based trainer has generated discussion within occupational groups, and the use of this matrix within individual Learning Networks may therefore aid articulation of support roles at more local levels. The involvement of Careers Wales in testing out an Approximations Matrix has proved to be very helpful in terms of listing the interests and expertise of Learning Coaches and Careers Advisers.

The Distinctiveness of the Coaching Role

Headline conclusions

- Some of the overlap is excessively confusing, especially in relation to links between Learning Coach support and mentoring. This issue should be addressed during the core training programme for the Coaches, including better clarification of the module entitled “The Mentoring Process”.
- The role of the work based trainer, and potential links with Learning Coach activity, have only been explored at superficial levels. More detailed investigation of roles associated with work based training support – for example through modern and foundation apprenticeships – is required.
- The impartiality of the coaching role has been highlighted within evaluation data presented in chapter three, and information derived from Careers Wales via the use of the Approximation Matrix has highlighted the experience and expertise of Careers Wales advisers in developing and maintaining impartial perspectives across organisations in order to protect the interests of young people. It may therefore be appropriate for Careers Wales to advise further on the coordination and management of Learning Coach teams within Learning Networks.
- Timeline analysis has helped to identify precise stages and activities for supporting young people at various stages during their learning pathways. The timeline technique has been tried out successfully with Careers Wales staff, revealing areas of activity where Learning Coaches and careers advisers can complement one another in order to enhance support – the work experience placement being one major example. The timeline analysis could be extended to other occupational and professional groups.
- There is a need for further investigation into the respective roles of careers advisers and Learning Coaches when it comes to Youth Gateway support, as well as briefing and debriefing exercises for work based learning experience.

Coaching Pathways

7.1 Feedback from the case studies and the reference group

Every single coach interviewed within the case study research, in addition to Learning Coach discussions within the reference group, expressed an interest in further training and continuing professional development. In some instances this was because they wanted to hone and perfect specific coaching skills, in others there was more of a desire to move towards professional status in work allied to coaching. For these individuals coaching experiences have acted either as a catalyst or a stepping stone for further career progression.

Recurrent themes for additional staff development were as follows:

Learning styles

The core training programme included two modules on learning styles, embracing study skills and strategies. The coaches repeatedly referred – sometimes uncritically – to the appeal and the usefulness of visual, kinaesthetic and auditory modes for a range of learners as well as themselves. Some coaches wanted to take this further through exploring such areas as neuro-linguistic programming, cognitive psychology, and alternative ways of categorising the preferences and aptitudes of learners.

Coaching Pathways

Feedback from the case studies and the reference group

Emotional intelligence

Coaches were aware of the need to recognise more frequently and forcefully the abilities and talents of learners when it comes to (i) building relationships and confidence, and (ii) confronted with a variety of challenges outside of school and the classroom. This sometimes contrasted with what was described as a preoccupation with academic performance or a dominance of qualification outputs as measured by teachers and employers. The coaches appeared to value emotional intelligence concepts and frameworks, but required more knowledge in order to gather evidence and argue the case for students who achieve in different ways.

Child and adolescent development

A detailed interest emerged for lifespan psychology linked in particular to stages of intellectual and social development in childhood and adolescence. Learning Coaches detected patterns in the way that 14-19 year olds mature and make sense of their world in distinctive ways, and expressed curiosity about the underlying theories and causes of human development.

Using information technology

Learning Coaches recognised that there was a need for competence and proficiency in the use of information and communication technology, particularly in relation to the use of databases, searching for information on the internet, and the preparation of professional looking learning materials and documents. The use of internet and mobile communications technology was highlighted as an advanced skill which is rapidly developing amongst 14-19 year olds, and coaching contact can therefore be strengthened further through an understanding and use of such hardware and software. There was however a mixed reaction amongst those interviewed as regards whether advanced ICT skills are needed for effective coaching, as compared with simply being familiar with the basics of multimedia applications and technology mediated communication.

Child protection, domestic abuse, exploitation, bullying, safe environments

Many of the coaching experiences, and the subsequent reflection encouraged within the training programme, led to increased awareness of the need for professionals working with young people to have a more detailed understanding of the issues, dilemmas and protocols associated with the vulnerability of young people within society. Coaches noted that they have to consider carefully the design and location of their coaching environments, and this necessitates the planning of safety linked to risk assessments and child protection. An added dimension involved consideration of the Learning Coaches' own safety based on anticipating potential volatile situations, especially in relation to anger management with individual learners as well as - on occasions – their relatives.

Legislation

The legislation module within the core training programme underlined a need for some coaches to be particularly expert in some areas of legal and statutory policies and guidelines, based on their particular caseloads and individual circumstances. A more advanced knowledge of law and policy was therefore considered important.

Groupwork, group facilitation

Learners often required the same kind of coaching support at a level which is not personal or confidential and that does not therefore demand one-to-one attention. The Learning Coaches therefore recognised the potential of groupwork as a way of increasing capacity as well as offering an appealing and sociable setting for learning support. This was viewed as especially useful for workshop activity which introduced study skill methods and techniques. Coaches were also aware of the skills required in facilitating group based learning, particularly when there may be very dominant or submissive individuals within the groups.

Specific learning needs

The case studies revealed that in some situations the coaches worked alongside learners who had specific needs. In most cases this involved disability, although issues linked to supporting the more able and talented should also be noted. The recognition of specific learning needs inspired interest in exploring further the array of disorders documented within educational psychology, associated causes and prognoses, and methods that can be used to help individuals learn more effectively. Asperger, dyspraxia and dyslexia labels appear to be frequently used in this respect.

Counselling

Coaches also detected more deep seated and difficult issues which extend well beyond learning support. The referral module in particular highlighted the need for expert counselling by qualified practitioners, and some coaches were developing interests in exploring those skills in order to have more flexibility and expertise when offering support to a small minority of learners who require counselling support.

Teaching

Most of the coaches have had to work in a variety of ways with teachers whilst providing coaching support, even when this is located outside of school. Some of the coaches have already got teaching qualification and have extensive classroom experience. Other coaches come from non-teaching backgrounds but then moved into teacher-dominated environments; this has provided a unique insight into the teaching profession on a day-to-day basis. In some instances an interest in teaching as a career has developed, with a curiosity about the qualifications and training that is needed.

7.2 A proposed qualifications hierarchy for the Learning Coaches curriculum

The coaching feedback suggests that there is a need for Learning Coaches not just to be familiar with the options available to their 14-19 year old learners , but for them to also be aware of the training options that are available to themselves as coaches. Such training can be linked to accreditation and qualifications, based on the use of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The basic principles of CQFW can be listed as follows:

- One credit involves a notional ten hours of learning time, including teaching, guided study and assessment.
- Credits can be awarded for learning set at a range of levels, starting with the introductory Entry level and extending right through to level 8 (doctoral level)
- Within the CQFW, each level has a set of descriptors (see table 2.3 in chapter 2 for level four examples)
- On completion of a set number of credits, awards can be obtained according to the following framework:

Coaching Pathways

A proposed qualifications hierarchy for the Learning Coaches curriculum

Table 7.1: The CQFW Level and Qualifications Matrix

Credit Level		Framework	Framework
8	Doctoral (D)	Qualification Framework for Higher Education	National Qualification Framework Levels 4 and 5
7	Masters (M)	Qualification Framework for Higher Education	
6	Honours (H)	Qualification Framework for Higher Education	
5	Intermediate (I)	Qualification Framework for Higher Education	
4	Certificate (C)	Qualification Framework for Higher Education	
3			National Qualification Framework
2			National Qualification Framework
1			National Qualification Framework
Entry			National Qualification Framework

On the basis of the above coaching interests in further training, and the recognition of a mixed cohort of coaches with varying background qualifications, there is a strong argument for developing a credit and qualifications pathway which spans levels 3-7 within CQFW.

A hierarchy of accreditation is therefore proposed for supporting the further professional development of coaches:

Level 3	OCN for core training (50 credits)
Level 4	Transcript for core training (50 credits)
Level 4	Certificate in Higher Education (120 credits)
Level 5	Foundation Degree (240 credits, of which 120 credits are set at level 5)
Level 7	Masters Degree in Professional Practice

7.2.1 The OCN and the transcript

The level 4 transcript is already operational within the core training programme. In 2007 the Welsh Assembly Government requested via the Learning Coach Advisory Group the design and validation of a Learning Coach OCN Wales level 3 award, using the same five core training modules and learning outcomes (see section 2.4; chapter 2) within the CQFW unit database. This OCN has now been approved by the sector skills council LLUK. The OCN qualification will therefore be available in 2008 although further work is needed in order to identify suitable providers with responsibility for enrolments, quality assurance, and the issuing of final award certificates following the completion of OCN level 3 credits.

7.2.2 The Certificate of Higher Education

The Certificate of Higher Education (CHE) at level 4 necessitates an additional 70 credits, effectively “topping up” on the Learning Coach core training transcript via completion of more modules offered by higher education partners. In the early design phase of the Learning Coaches training programme, outlined in chapter 2 (table 2.4), three clusters of optional modules were listed. They were based on the

stakeholder advisory workshops with a range of providers, but they were flawed in that they did not involve the Learning Coaches themselves. As noted in section 7.1, feedback 18 months later from the actual people at the heart of the training suggests that there is much interest in three of the original options: personal support, groupwork, and technology. By contrast there is little further interest in the others, covering the broad areas of administration and tracking, quality assurance procedures, and cultural issues.

On the basis of the above feedback (from Learning Coaches, the 14-19 network convenors and the *First Campus* training team), a short-list for further level 4 training has emerged for progression to the full CHE. These modules are:

- Emotional intelligence
- Groupwork
- Using databases, including Careers Wales on-line
- Designing and managing safe environments
- An introduction to counselling and guidance methods
- An introduction to specific learning needs
- Child and adolescent development

7.2.3 The Foundation Degree

The *First Campus* Training Team emailed and telephoned all Learning coaches within their database who held higher education entry qualifications. A total of 102 were asked whether they would be interested in a Foundation Degree for Learning Coaches. Twenty did not respond, leaving a core sample of 80 of whom 71 % said “yes”

and a further 7.5% said “maybe”. Further analysis noted organisational or company support for such professional development within the Learning Coach workplaces, and where the responses were “maybe” the key concern was time constraints.

A new Foundation Degree award is therefore proposed, set at levels 4 and 5 within the CQFW. It would have to be designed and validated by one or more higher education institutions, recognising credits imported from the *First Campus* consortium via the level four core training programme. It is suggested that the degree award is entitled Coaching for Learning and indicative content has been generated by the University of Glamorgan in order to illustrate possibilities.

Table 7.2 provides examples of curriculum areas, accreditation at levels 4 and 5, and exit and final qualifications.

Table 7.2: A Foundation Degree in Coaching for Learning

Constituent Models	Level	Credits	Summative Credits
Certificate of Higher Education in Coaching for Learning			
5 Established Coaching Modules at 10 credits each:			
– The Coaching Relationship ⁷	4	10	10
– Coaching for Learning	4	10	20
– Study Strategies	4	10	30
– Referral Methods & Processes	4	10	40
– Legislation & Policy	4	10	50
– Careers Planning (ITF) module	4	10	60
– Issues in Education I	4	20	80
– Independent Workplace Study	4	10	90
– Group Facilitation	4	10	100
– Tutoring in Schools & Colleges	5	20	120
Total Credits for the Certificate of Higher Education	–	–	120
The Foundation Degree in Coaching for Learning:			
– Mentoring	5	10	10
– Issues in Education II	5	20	30
– Work-based Learning Project	5	20	50
– Teaching Careers Planning	5	20	70
– Emotional Bases of Learning	5	10	80
– Supporting Unusual Learners	5	20	100
– Advanced Tutoring in Schools	5	20	120
Total Credits for the Foundation Degree	–	–	240

⁷ Revised content and title, based on feedback about confusion within the first training cohort between coaching and mentoring terminology and concepts – see section 6.1, Chapter 6.

7.2.4 The Masters Award

The Masters award is only appropriate for those coaches who have graduate status, including teachers and careers advisers who may also hold postgraduate certificates. Masters awards in professional development operate in a number of universities throughout Wales, as detailed in table 7. 3.

Table 7.3: Examples of Masters awards relevant to Coaching for Learning interests

University	Masters Award
University of Glamorgan	Masters in Educational Practice and Masters in Professional Development
NEWI	MA Youth and Community Education
Trinity College, Carmarthen	MA Education & Society: Youth & Community
UWIC	MA Education
University of Wales College, Newport	MA Post Compulsory Education and Training
Swansea University	MA Lifelong Learning
Open University in Wales	MA in Online and Distance Education
Swansea Metropolitan University	MA in Professional Development

By way of illustration, Table 7.4 details the MA in Professional Development award at the University of Glamorgan.

Table 7.4: Aims and outcomes for an MA in Professional Development
(University of Glamorgan)

Aims:

- * Develop and enhance understanding of the concept and nature of professional development and how this can be successfully managed both individually and organisationally
- * Develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for effective practice
- * Develop the conceptual base and skills necessary to improve practice
- * Develop a critical awareness and sensitivity to the professional practice of self and others
- * Develop the necessary diagnostic and research skills which will facilitate improved performance
- * Promote individual professional development through providing the opportunity for tailored programmes of study
- * Engender a spirit of enquiry and a belief in the importance of lifelong learning.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to develop the following knowledge, understanding and skills to HE Level 7 during the programme:

A: Knowledge and understanding

1. An understanding of theoretical and conceptual bases of professional development, and of the emerging themes which are impacting on

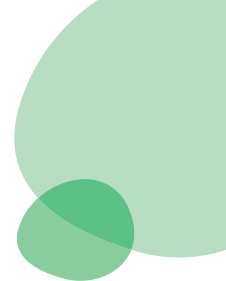
2. A knowledge of the drivers of organisational change and an understanding of its impact on personal and organisational professional development
3. An understanding of the role of research in professional development, and a knowledge of the key methodological approaches
4. A knowledge of key contributors to and influences upon effective current and future personal professional practice
5. A critical awareness of the complex relationships between academic study and professional practice, including appreciation of the boundaries of knowledge and the processes of change.

B: Intellectual (thinking) skills

1. Analytical skills, based on a thorough and systematic approach to the handling of primary and secondary data
2. The ability to evaluate, appraise and critique new ideas, models and concepts, and to identify any biases and assumptions inherent in these
3. The skills of unravelling complex ideas and problems, interpreting and synthesising these effectively.

C: Professional/Vocational skills

1. Problem solving abilities, including the processes of planning, decision-making and understanding implementation and control mechanisms
2. Based on a detailed theoretical knowledge, the ability to undertake, commission or appraise tactical programmes of personal or organisational professional development
3. An appreciation of the critical importance of lifelong learning and continuing professional development.



D: Personal and Interpersonal skills

- D1. Think critically and be creative: manage the creative processes in self and others; organise thoughts, analyse, synthesise and critically appraise. This includes the capability to identify assumptions, evaluate statements in terms of evidence, detect false logic or reasoning, identify implicit values, define terms adequately and generalise appropriately
- D2. Solve complex problems and make decisions: establish criteria, using appropriate decision-making techniques including identifying, formulating and solving business problems; and the ability to create, identify and evaluate options; the ability to implement and review decisions
- D3. The ability to conduct research into business and management issues either individually or as part of a team through research design, data collection, analysis, synthesis and reporting
- D4. Using information and knowledge effectively: scanning and organising data, synthesising and analysing in order to extract meaning from information and to share knowledge
- D5. Numeracy and quantitative skills including the development and use of relevant business models
- D6. Effective use of ICT
- D7. Effective two-way communication: listening, effective oral and written communication of complex ideas and arguments, using a range of media, including the preparation of business reports
- D8. High personal effectiveness: critical self-awareness, self-reflection and self-management; time management, sensitivity to diversity in people and different situations and the ability to continue to learn through the reflection on practice and experience

- D9. Effective performance within team environments and the ability to recognise and utilise individuals' contributions in group processes and to negotiate and persuade or influence others; team selection, delegation, development and management
- D10. Leadership and performance management: selecting appropriate leadership style for different situations; setting targets, motivating, monitoring performance, coaching and mentoring
- D11. Ability to recognise and address ethical dilemmas and corporate social responsibility issues, applying ethical and organisational values to situations and choices.

7.3 Formal progression to other existing awards and qualifications allied to coaching

The coaching continuum outlined in section 7.2 assumes that Learning Coaches may be motivated to pursue a narrow pathway in Coaching for Learning, and that qualifications and courses will be easily available throughout Wales.

The coaching feedback also emphasised that individuals are prepared to be more flexible and diverse, and they would consider a range of alternative routes in terms of their on-going professional development. One illustration of potential progression is provided based on the provision of Foundation Degrees for learning support and teaching assistants by such higher education providers as the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC), Swansea Metropolitan, Trinity College Carmarthen, the University of Wales Newport, and the North East Wales Institute (NEWI). The Swansea Metropolitan Foundation Degree award provides an example of content and accreditation:

Coaching Pathways

Formal progression to other existing awards and qualifications allied to coaching

Table 7.5: The Foundation Degree in Learning Support, Swansea Metropolitan University

Work based component?	Module themes	Number of credits
	Study skills	20 (level 4)
Yes	How children learn; behaviour management	30 (level 4)
	Investigating learning cycles	30 (level 4)
Yes	Language acquisition	30 (level 4)
Yes	ICT	30 (level 4 and 5)
	Numeracy, science and technology	20 (level 5)
Yes	Research methods	30 (level 5)
	Psychology	20 (level 5)
Yes	Inclusion and diversity	30 (level 5)
		240 credits

With this illustration it becomes possible to plan progression from the Learning Coach core training to the Swansea Metropolitan Foundation Degree programme, including exemption from some level 4 modules or admission with advanced standing for Learning Coaches.

It is therefore important to construct learning pathways for coaches who move into other roles and areas of responsibility allied to supporting young people and adults. Examples of key qualification and training pathways are outlined in sections 7.3.(1-5) as routes for progression:

7.3.1 Teaching in Schools

Table 7.6: Examples of undergraduate courses related to teaching and learning support in schools

University	Course
Cardiff University	BA Secondary Drama Education, BA Secondary Music, BA Secondary Welsh, BA Secondary Modern Foreign Languages
NEWI	BA Educational Studies
Trinity College, Carmarthen	BA Welsh, Foundation Degree in Learning Support
UWIC	BA Secondary Drama Education, BA Secondary Music, BA Secondary Welsh, BA Secondary Modern Foreign Languages
University of Wales College, Newport	BA Education, BA Drama in Education & Community
Swansea University	BA Educational Studies
Open University in Wales	Certificate for Supporting Learning in Primary Schools, Certificate and Foundation Degree in Working with Young People, Diploma and Foundation Degree in Childhood and Youth Studies
Swansea Metropolitan University	BA Education Studies, BEds in various subjects, Foundation Degree in Learning Support

Table 7.7: Examples of postgraduate Teacher Training Courses

University	Course
Cardiff University	PGCE – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Physical Education, Art, English, History, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Welsh
NEWI	PGCE part time (various subjects)
Trinity College, Carmarthen	PGCE – Religious Education
UWIC	PGCE – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Physical Education, Art, English, History, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Welsh
Bangor University	PGCE – Art, Biology, Chemistry, English, French, German, Information Technology, Mathematics, Music, Outdoor Activities, Physical Education, Physics, Religious Education, Welsh
Aberystwyth University	PGCE – English, Welsh, Languages, History, Geography, Drama, Science
Swansea Metropolitan University	PGCE – Art, Business, Science, Welsh, English, History, Geography, Design, Technology, Mathematics, Languages
University of Wales College, Newport	PGCE – ICT, Design & technology
Swansea University	PGCE – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Science, Mathematics, Mathematics with Information Technology, Design and Technology, Information Technology, Modern Foreign Languages, Welsh, English, History, Geography, Art and Design, Business Studies
Open University in Wales	PGCE (Distance Learning) – Design & Technology, Geography, Mathematics, Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish), Music and Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) MA in Education, Online and Distance Education Advanced Diplomas: Professional Studies in Education, Special Needs in Education, Child Development

7.3.2 Teaching and supporting in further education and lifelong learning

Table 7.8: Examples of lifelong learning qualifications in the post 16 education and training sector

University	Course
Cardiff University	PGCE (FE)
NEWI	PGCE (PCET)
UWIC	Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory Education & Postgraduate Certificate in Education)
University of Wales College, Newport	Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory Education); PCET
Swansea University	BA Educational Studies Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory Education); PCET
Pembrokeshire College	PGCE/Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory Education and Training)
University of Lampeter	Certificate in Interpersonal Skills for Volunteers (based on eLearning delivery)

7.3.3. Careers guidance, counselling and youth work

Table 7.9: Examples of careers guidance and youth work qualifications relevant to Learning Coach interests

University	Course
University of Glamorgan	Diploma in Careers Guidance BA Voluntary and Community Services
Cardiff University	BA Community Education
NEWI	Diploma in Youth Studies MA Youth and Community Education
Trinity College, Carmarthen	BA Youth & Community Work
UWIC	BA Community Education
University of Wales College, Newport	BA Youth & Community Studies BA Counselling Studies and Society BA Psychology with Counselling Studies
Open University in Wales	Certificate in Youth: perspectives and practice and Working with Young People, Diploma in Childhood and Youth Studies, Foundation Degree in Working with Young People
Swansea Metropolitan University	BA Counselling & Education BA Counselling & Psychology

7.3.4 Union learning representative training

The Union Learning Representative (ULR) role is backed by employers, the TUC as well as Welsh Assembly Government. The work of the ULRs has a number of similarities with Learning Coaches, based on their support for training and learning within a variety of workforces. This includes the design of learning drop-in centres, identifying basic skills needs, the provision of information and guidance, and explaining options to colleagues who want to develop their skills and career plans.

In most instances their work involves working with older workforces, although ULRs do work with 16-19 year olds whenever employers promote modern apprenticeships and recruit young people.

The training programme for ULRs covers such areas as:

- Learning needs surveys and audits
- Negotiating a learning agreement
- Organising learning
- Designing a learning environment
- Equal opportunities and inclusivity
- Questioning and listening skills
- Interviewing and giving presentations
- Understanding and recognising basic skills deficiencies and needs
- Developing and using a learning toolkit
- Giving guidance and advice
- Portfolio building

The training can also lead to OCN qualifications at levels 2 and 3.

7.3.5 Specialist UK-wide and International mentoring and coaching awards

The experience of being a Learning Coach working with 14-19 year olds may inspire a more diverse interest in supporting a variety of workforces. In this context – and as noted in chapter one's literature review (see section 1.2) - the term mentoring is often used, alongside coaching. Mentoring and coaching programmes have proved to be popular within the broad area of management development, especially in relation to providing middle and senior managers with support during their day-to-day activities. The training of mentors and coaches is often therefore directed towards working with older workforces and recognising unique organisational features and opportunities within large companies and corporate organisations.

As such, the training programmes tend not to focus on young people and academic or personal support systems. Nevertheless, a variety of Mentoring and Coaching awards may therefore be of relevance. Two examples are cited.

7.3.5.1 The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring programme (OSCM)

The OSCM offers Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma awards which are fully-costed and therefore involve relatively substantial fees. The school has over 40 faculty members including such internationally renowned consultants and authors as David Clutterbuck (*Everybody Needs a Mentor*), Eric Parsloe (*Coaching and Mentoring*), Julie Starr (*The Coaching Manual*), Mary Connor and Julia Pokora (*Coaching and Mentoring at Work*).

The Certificate and Diploma programmes are likely to have more appeal to Learning Coaches because they embrace a range of background interests and organisational contexts as compared with the Advanced Diploma's more exclusive focus on the coaching of executives and managers within corporate settings.

The awards involve between six and 10 months of part-time study at three levels. The Certificate (estimated at 10-15 hours per month) leads to an EMCC Foundation award (equivalent to NVQ4). The Diploma is set at EMCC Intermediate level 5 with a notional 30-35 hours study per month, and has a 20 CATS point credit rating from Oxford Brookes University. The Advanced Diploma (estimated at 45-50 hours per month) is set at EMCC Practitioner level 7 and leads to 40 CAT postgraduate points.

The OSCM approach involves the use of one-to-one coaching sessions, master classes, workshops and seminars, support from action learning sets, practice sessions with volunteer learners, internet based self-assessments of competences, the application of an on-line toolkit, guided reading, and written reflection.

7.3.5.2 The ILM Coaching Award

The Institute of Leadership and Management is a large awarding body which offers Coaching and Mentoring qualifications linked to management. In Wales there are ILM centres within further and higher education institutions (NEWI and the University of Glamorgan) further education colleges (for example Neath Port Talbot and Yale), as well as private training providers based in such locations as Porthcawl, Ruthin, Caldicot, Newport, Cardiff, Pentyrch, Llangefni and Ruabon. The level 5 Certificate has three mandatory units which cover:

- characteristics of effective coaches and mentors
- present a business case for using coaching or mentoring in their organisation

Coaching Pathways

Formal progression to new nationally recognised awards by LLUK

- review their own ability as a management coach or mentor
- ethical and moral views
- communication skills
- planning and delivering a short coaching or mentoring programme in line with their organisational, divisional or team goals.

The level 5 Diploma for Professional Coaches and Mentors in Management can be by direct entry (ie the Certificate is not a prerequisite) and includes an additional 100 hour practical unit entitled 'Undertaking an extended period of management coaching or mentoring in the workplace'. It develops and improves performance as management coaches or mentors; involving the planning, organisation and evaluation of an extended period of coaching or mentoring.

The ILM also offers level 7 awards in Coaching and Mentoring, although these are especially linked with executive support.

7.4 Formal progression to new nationally recognised awards by LLUK

At the time of completing this study further qualification developments are being planned on a UK wide basis. The applicability of these awards is uncertain in Wales, but the potential in providing additional options for Learning Coaches is noted.

The sector skills council for the lifelong learning sector – *Lifelong Learning UK* – is developing standards for the teacher workforce in further education, adult and community learning, personal and community development, offender learning, and work based learning. It therefore has relevance to those Learning Coaches who may be interested in working outside of secondary schools and who want to support or train learners over the age of 16.

Lifelong Learning UK identifies standards for two teaching roles which are labelled “associate” and “full”. Each is to be linked to a set of standards and ensuing qualification, leading to a license to practice within the lifelong learning sector. The qualifications are based on the accumulation of credits on successful completion of core and optional units, based on the overall formula of one credit equalling a notional 10 hours of learning time.

At present it is stressed that the Lifelong Learning UK recommendations only apply to England, and have interim status during a consultation period with the lifelong learning sector; they are not therefore finalised. Wales will however be interested in developing any framework agreement which is reached with the entire UK wide sector, based on the need to offer seamless training provision for organisations that operate across the UK (for example, the Ministry of Defence and the training of military personnel). Nevertheless it is probable that there will be some key differences in standards and criteria based especially on bilingualism, Welsh culture, and regional skills priorities.

For these reasons further details are provided on the current standards and proposals associated with the consultation process within England.

7.4.1 The Associate Teaching Role (ATR)

This role has less responsibility than the full teacher status, although the quality of any teaching is expected to meet the same standards. The ATR is appropriate when activity and responsibility is linked predominantly to any or all of the following:

- use of pre-prepared materials and teaching packages, implying less involvement with the detail of curriculum design
- one-to-one learning



Coaching Pathways

The Full Teaching Role (FTR)

- a relatively narrow subject area at fewer levels and with less varied learner populations
- short course delivery

The ATR will be expected to carry out initial assessments of learners; this could include interviews and the use of inventories or questionnaires. ATR activity would be accompanied by a knowledge of teaching and learning which informs and guides the planning of teaching sessions and the recognition of learners' needs. There will also be competence in the establishment of an appropriate learning environment alongside ground rules which encourage appropriate behaviour, codes of practice, and inclusiveness.

Materials would be selected from a larger range of available options before there is engagement with actual teaching activity, followed by the provision of assessment feedback. Record-keeping is an integral part of monitoring, signposting, and the referral of learners to other specialists.

Finally, the ATR will evaluation practice and engage in continuing professional development.

7.4.2 The Full Teaching Role (FTR)

The full teaching role has more diverse and wide-ranging responsibilities and would develop from associate status should the learning coach want to go one step further into teaching as a career.

7.4.3 Qualifications

LLUK have developed a three-tier initial teaching qualification framework operating at each of levels 3 and 4. This therefore recognises that some people will want to train at more advanced levels than others, depending on their previous experiences, aptitudes, and current qualifications. Level 3 will be more suitable for those who thus far have not gained certification above level 2.

1. Award comprising of one 6 credit unit called “Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)”. The award confers threshold status to teach and covers the following learning outcomes:
 - role and boundaries in relation to teaching
 - appropriate learning and teaching approaches in a specialist area
 - session planning skills
 - inclusivity and motivation
 - assessment methods and record keeping

Once secured, further progression is possible to:

2. *Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. This is offered at levels 3 or 4. It leads to associate teacher status and in addition to the six credit PTLLS it involves a further two compulsory units:
 - a) Planning and enabling learning (9 credits) with learning outcomes covering:
 - goal setting
 - planning inclusive learning environments and delivery methods

- teaching and learning strategies that map onto curriculum requirements
- communication skills and methods
- knowledge of the minimum core
- reflection, evaluation and feedback to improve own practice

b) Principles and Practice of Assessment (3 credits) with these learning outcomes:

- principles of assessment
- types of assessment
- assessment methods including technology applications
- feedback and questioning
- monitoring, recording and reporting learner progress
- evaluation of own practice

There will also be optional units carrying a total of 6 credits at levels 3 and 4, although these have not yet been finalised by LLUK.

3. *Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector*

The Diploma is offered at level 5 and depends on achieving a mixture of level 4 and 5 credits over a longer time scale. It is therefore more suited to advanced higher education study and leads to the full teaching status. The first part of the Diploma draws on the Award and Certificate programmes through offering the aforementioned Preparing to Teach and Planning and Enabling units along with a 15 credit unit called Enabling Learning and Assessment and a 15 credit unit called Theories and Principles for Planning and Enabling Learning. The Diploma then moves into optional units with a maximum 15 credit value.

Part two of the programme is pitched at level 5 and involves three compulsory units:

- continuing personal and professional development (15 credits)
- curriculum design for inclusive practice (15 credits)
- wider professional practice (15 credits)

This core curriculum is followed by another set of options, again with a maximum value of 15 credits.

LLUK have therefore designed standards and initial qualifications beginning with an introductory award, and extending to Certificate level for the Associate Teacher role. There is then a more advanced route to Full Teacher status through gaining further accredited units at levels 4 and 5, with this Diploma qualification totalling 120 credits.

7.5 Byte-sized and informal progression

Thus far the progression pathways for Learning Coaches have assumed a rational model where specific awards and qualifications are the interim or end point in a journey which has some kind of curriculum coherence.

In some instances life may not be that simple, and Learning Coaches for a variety of reasons will not be able to define or guarantee sustained training involvement within a longer term programme. In true lifelong learning fashion, Learning Coaches may either want to - or have to - accept shorter term solutions based on what further training is possible and available within their organisation and their locality. This is where a range of providers can use CQFW in order to offer smaller byte sized learning opportunities which can then lead to the accumulation of credit that feeds in to more flexible and general awards. Three examples are provided:

7.5.1 Open College Network Level 3 Units

All of the OCN units are linked to qualifications, but it should be noted that they can also be completed in their own right and they can result in a smaller number of credits being achieved. Reference to the OCN Wales on-line unit database, based on relevance to Learning Coach interests and activities, reveals examples drawn from level 3 awards:

Table 7.10: Examples of level 3 units taken from awards within the OCN Wales on-line database

- Mentoring
- Employment mentoring for volunteers
- Groupwork skills for substance misuse practitioners
- Academic study skills
- Womens Studies and study skills
- Community education – communication and study skills for informal teaching
- Study, communication and investigative skills
- The use of ICT and telematics to support open and distance learning
- Skills and methodologies to support children's learning
- Guidance, induction, preparation and job seeking skills
- Counselling skills for educational practitioners
- Bereavement counselling
- Counselling – understanding addiction and substance abuse
- Youth work, groupwork, network and outreach
- Identifying and meeting informal learning needs
- Learning and personal development, and learning to learn independently
- Specific learning difficulties

It should be noted that similar lists can be devised for other UK regions based on the activity of each local open college network.

7.5.2 Local authority, further education, and university adult education courses

Local lifelong learning delivery allows adult learners from a wide variety of backgrounds to enrol on a range of stand-alone courses, most of which are accredited at levels 2, 3 and 4. In most cases provision is on a regular weekly basis throughout term-times, although more intensive learning opportunities are offered via weekend workshops and summer schools. The prospectuses are usually published just before the beginning of each academic session (in September and October) as well as being located on websites, and some organisations also circulate details via local newspapers and magazines.

As an illustration based on information available during 2007 the following selection of courses provide a glimpse of the vast number of Lifelong Learning opportunities available within local areas:

Table 7.11: Examples of adult education courses relevant to Learning Coach

University	Course
Cardiff University	Basic counselling skills
University of Glamorgan	Skills for community learning
Coleg Llysfasi Denbigshire	Coaching and Mentoring Award Level 3 / Level 4 / Level 5 (ILM)
Pembrokeshire College	Learning Mentoring and Assessing Diploma Module
Youth Cymru	Child Protection for Youth Workers (OCN)

7.5.3 Distance learning

Many of the Learning Coaches distributed throughout all of the Learning Networks will consider open and distance learning opportunities. This is an assumption based on the recognition that travel to a college campus, and the operation of inflexible timetables, make participation in further training by part-time work-based learners difficult.

Open and distance learning which leads to higher level qualifications includes a partnership between universities and *learn direct* entitled *Learning Through Work* (see <http://www.learn-direct-business.co.uk/qualifications/ltw/>). When it comes to accredited delivery the leading player is however the Open University based on the size of the portfolio, the quality of material, and the coherence of open learning pathways leading to awards. Details are provided in table 7.12 for examples of potentially relevant curriculum content for OU modules. It should be noted that some of these courses require pre-requisites and they may not therefore be available to all of the Learning Coaches given the mixture of backgrounds and qualifications.

Table 7.12: Examples of individual modules offered by the Open University

Title of module	Level:
U = undergraduate	
P = postgraduate	
CPD = continuing professional development	
Introduction to working with young people	U
Leading work with young people, plus an in-practice component as an additional option	U
Understanding health and social care	U
Introduction to social sciences parts 1 and 2	U
Introduction to humanities	U
Supporting learning in primary schools	U

Title of module	Level:
Supporting children learning in the early years	U
Working with children in the early years	U
Child development	U
Inclusive education: learning from each other	U
Research with children and young people	U
Exploring psychology	U
Cognitive Psychology	U
Social Psychology	U
Biological Psychology	U
Starting with Psychology	U
Understanding children	U
Youth: perspectives and practice	U
Social care, social work and the law	U
Death and dying	U
Social work with children and families	U
Communication in health and social care	U
Making social worlds	U
Welfare crime and society	U
Sociology and society	U
Understanding society	U
Managing behaviour in schools	P
Researching inclusive education: values into practice	P
Difficulties in literacy development	P
Networked living: exploring information and communication technologies	P
Exploring the English Language	P

Title of module	Level:
Supporting lifelong learning	P
Language and literacy in a changing world	P
Learning and teaching	P
Self evaluation	P
Working together	P
Child development in families, schools and society	P
Youth justice, penalty and social control	P
Community safety, crime prevention and social control	P
Identity in question	P
Effective leadership skills	CPD
Advancing your personal leadership	CPD
Using Virtual Learning Environments	CPD
Mentoring at work	CPD

7.6 Headline conclusions

- There is demand for further training and continuing professional development after the core modules have been completed.
- A complete level 3 Learning Coach award has now been designed by OCN Wales and agreed by LLUK, but its operation and delivery will depend on the detailed involvement of one or more further or private training providers.
- Additional level 4 module options in Emotional intelligence, Groupwork, Databases, Safe Environments, Counselling and guidance, Specific Learning Needs, and Child and Adolescent

Development can lead to the award of a Certificate of Higher Education. These now require validation by higher education providers.

- A Foundation Degree in Coaching for Learning will offer a valuable education and training pathway for Learning Coaches without graduate status, and this requires validation by the higher education sector.
- Learning Coaches with graduate status can gain further qualifications through embedding their work within the independent study project and dissertation elements of Professional Development or Professional Practice level 7 Masters degree and diploma and certificate awards.
- Once validation has been completed, the full suite of Learning Coach awards and qualifications should be explained and marketed to Learning Networks
- Coaches may have more diverse education and training interest leading into other subject areas and professional development. There are numerous possible pathways that they could follow, and these should be made more explicit and coherent via a further training and qualifications prospectus for Learning Coaches.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The headline conclusions from chapters 1-7 have generated a series of recommendations for the further development of Learning Coach support in Wales. The overall picture emerging from the case studies and evaluation feedback is positive and optimistic: Learning Coaches are welcomed by young people and parents, and they make a difference to young people in ways envisaged by Learning Pathways policy. As the Assembly introduces legislation for entitlement to learning support for all young people there are however inevitable challenges and difficulties which demand more detailed strategic planning and resource management. A total of 67 recommendations about ways to move forward are divided into four clusters based on the identification of potential responses and solutions to headline conclusions:

- Role definition (recommendations 1 – 13)
- Training improvements (recommendations 14 – 29)
- Increasing capacity (recommendations 30 – 44)
- Demonstrating success (recommendations 45 – 67)

8.1 Role definition

Three key areas are identified for development: clarifying the role of the Learning Coach, recruitment of future Learning Coaches, and identification of specialist functions.

8.1.1 Role clarity

1. Networks and institutions reveal much variety in their use of employment titles for people who perform the role of the Learning Coach. This has proved to be beneficial; it allows for local ownership of coaching through addressing agendas that give learner support in ways that are relevant to a wide range of providers and professions. Such variety in the use of the Learning Coach as a key resource should therefore be encouraged. There is however a need for individual 14-19 networks to clarify occasional confusions between four categories of role overlap, using as a starting point the Approximation Matrix outlined in section 6.3 of chapter 6. The first involves the coach and the mentor, the second is the coach and the careers adviser, the third is the coach and the personal or year tutor, and the fourth is the learning support assistant.

Mentoring

When it comes to interacting and communicating with young people and their families, there is confusion between the concepts of mentoring and coaching - something noted in the available literature and research as well as from feedback from the evaluators of the training programme and the coaches themselves. The training programme for Learning Coaches should simplify its introduction through abandoning the title of "The Mentoring Process" within its first module. Furthermore, the Learning Networks should define more carefully the full range of support initiatives for all concerned, including business mentoring, student tutoring by undergraduates, and peer mentoring by sixth formers.

Careers advice

There are numerous overlaps between coaching and careers support based in part on the recognition that a significant number of coaches have Careers Wales backgrounds. One example concerns the provision of support for work experience placements arranged by careers advisers. The Learning Coach may be well placed to brief and debrief young people before and after their visits to employment workplaces. It is also recommended that the Approximation Matrix and timeline analysis (see section 6.3 and 6.4 of chapter 6) as agreed with Careers Wales is used within the training programme for Learning Coaches, and that it should be modified and updated locally by networks as appropriate. A particular interest involves *Youth Gateway* as Post Education advisers in relation to specialist Learning Coaches support for young people associated with the category of being outside education, training or employment.

Personal tutoring

More clarity is also needed for the role of the personal or year tutor as compared with the Learning Coach. This is most applicable to school contexts. It is a particularly difficult task because personal and year tutor responsibilities vary so much between institutions. At times this appears to be an administrative function (for example, taking registration), in other instances it is linked to statutory provision (for example, organising collective worship), and at other times it includes detailed learning support (as outlined in the St Davids College case study within Appendix 1). Promotion of the Learning Coach title is advised for personal tutoring which is dominated by study skills and learning style interests. Training and staff development workshops should also trial the timeline analysis outlined in chapter 6 in order to distinguish more clearly between coaching and personal support roles at various stages in young peoples' pathway planning.

Teaching support

The fourth involves the Learning Coach and the learning support assistant; an individual usually supervised by teachers in order to provide learning and administration support. This role is again specific to school contexts. The professional duties and skills associated with the assistant role is gradually being defined more rigorously through the design of a specialist curriculum feeding into foundation degree qualifications (for example by Swansea Metropolitan University as noted in chapter 7). The use by networks of the timeline analysis for types of learner support at different stages in 14-19 Pathways is advised within the training programme for Learning Coaches, as well as within staff development workshops convened by individual institutions and local 14-19 networks.

2. Further role clarification may be linked with emerging work from the LLUK sector skills councils and the Higher Education Academy in terms of mapping the competences of Learning Coaches on to professional standards frameworks currently being defined for various kinds of lifelong learning practitioners.

8.1.2 Recruitment for Learning Coach training

3. The training programme for the first cohort of coaches began at short notice, leading to hasty recruitment of participants within some Learning Networks. Feedback from the training team, the advisory groups, the case studies, and evaluation data noted occasional cause for concern for three categories of trainee. First, those who had small or vaguely defined caseloads and were nominees rather than volunteers. Second, people who were unclear about their coaching function and had interests which went well beyond learning support per se. Third, relatively senior managers who were joining the programme in order to find out

Recommendations and Conclusions

Recruitment for Learning Coach training

more about coaching in order to develop a suitable resource within their home organisations. All three categories pose problems for training and delivery. The deployment of reluctant coaches for learner support is counter-productive in the long run, the confused participants withdraw early, and the senior managers can be more successfully involved through dedicated briefing sessions about coaching. It is therefore recommended that the training programme follows a four-step procedure:

- convenes a pre-induction workshop for all interested parties in order to outline the role and the training
 - defines minimum admissions criteria which are also introduced during the pre-induction events
 - develops selection procedures for entry into training, in partnership with the 14-19 network managers.
 - Runs an induction event prior to the start of module 1.
4. Learning Coaches who had not yet completed the training programme commented on the high expectations of others within their school, college, youth centre or workplace. Coaching skills and methods may not have been perfected by individuals, but there may be an assumption that success can be achieved overnight. The status of the coach as a trainee or probationer can therefore be overlooked on occasions, and it is important that the probationer or trainee title be used in communications with other professionals as well as learners themselves.
 5. The vast majority of coaches are linked to school and college environments, even though they may not always be employed by those particular institutions. Important groups of young people – especially those who are outside education, training and employment - may be excluded from these dominant locations. A quota system for training should be devised in order to ensure that more coaches are recruited through:

- voluntary sector organisations and community partnerships
 - private training providers specialising in workplace support for young people
 - youth worker specialists who give learning support to young people who are defined as homeless, mentally ill, and/or drug dependent.
 - prison and probation services working with offender and ex-offender populations
 - special educational needs coordinators who work with disabled learners after leaving school or college
6. Drop-out rates are estimated at one out of every six enrolments. Where drop-out does occur, it tends to be inevitably associated with the very first assessment point within the student experience. In order not to waste valuable training places, it is advised that the networks over-recruit by a margin of 15%.
7. The training programme accepted a small number of late-comers (often replacing other network nominees who had withdrawn) as well as coaches who fell behind with their workshop attendance or submission of coursework for accreditation. The operation of an intensive summer school for Learning Coach training allowed for catch-up and the completion of remaining assignments. The summer school operation should continue, with the possibility of an additional Easter session, based on the flexibility that it affords to a sustained year-long programme.

8.1.3 Specialist coaching

8. National policies and strategies target specific groups of vulnerable young people who are at risk of dropping out from education and training, or who consistently under-achieve whilst within provider institutions. Examples include travellers, ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, speakers of Welsh as a first language, looked after children, and children who care. It is therefore appropriate to encourage coaching communities to develop specialisms in order to ensure that advanced and appropriate learning support can be provided. The 14-19 Learning Networks should identify specialist coaching targets as well as individuals who have the ability and interest in working with specific disadvantaged groups of young people. At the same time the national training programme should be tasked with the design and validation of additional module options over and above the core curriculum which develop and reinforce such advanced expertise amongst Learning Coaches.
9. The first cohort of Learning Coaches included very few representatives from the probation services. There is a general need to increase learning support for young people within offender and ex-offender populations, drawing on CQFW exemplar material.
10. The roll out of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification is leading to a specialist role for Learning Coaches within some schools and colleges (see Appendix for an example from St. Cyres School), based on a dominant interest in developing the key skills of learners. The provision of general learning support may benefit from more structured applications around such key skills areas as problem solving, the management of learning, and communication. The function and role of the Learning Coach within the context of the Welsh Baccalaureate demands further case study exploration.

11. There are interesting overlaps between Learning Coach and Union Learning Representative roles and functions. Both groups design support environments and advise on pathways and options, although the Union Learning Representatives cover all workforce age groups. These representatives have the potential for offering an additional dimension of support for 16-19 year old apprentices or trainees within a variety of workplaces who still have entitlement to Learning Pathways opportunities. The inclusion of Union Learning Representatives within future Learning Coach cohorts is advised, in partnership with the 14-19 networks and the TUC.
12. The pending military training expansion at St Athan within the Vale of Glamorgan will place significant demands on professionals who provide learning support for a very large number of young people within the armed services. Applications of coaching within military training environments should be explored through inclusion of Ministry of Defence staff within future Learning Coach training cohorts.
13. The connections between basic skills and more general learning support may be strengthened within some organisations and networks via specialist coaching roles that concentrate on literacy and numeracy diagnosis and attainment. This may be especially appealing to further education contexts where coaches can get involved in basic skills testing and who then follow-up individual cases with additional training and support for young people.

8.2 The training

Recommendations surrounding training include the content of the workshops and modules, measures and inventories used by Learning Coaches, the recognition of prior learning, and qualification pathways.

8.2.1 Content of modules

14. There is broad agreement about the applicability and relevance of the core curriculum covered by the five modules, thereby reinforcing the value of the stakeholder consultation exercise outlined in section 2.2 and 2.4 of chapter 2. Modifications are advised as follows:
 - The training programme currently begins immediately with module 1, and some networks have developed pre-training workshops for their coaches. There is a need for a formal induction programme which introduces participants to the coaching role, the core curriculum, the training schedule, accreditation requirements, and key issues.
 - Module 1 should be retitled as The Coaching Relationship, in order to minimise confusion between mentoring and coaching.
 - Module 3 offers essential legislative detail about child protection and safety, which Learning Coaches require at the very outset of training. At the same time there is an immediate need for coaches to explore relationship building with young people, as outlined in module1. Some of the legislation content can be drip-fed to those Learning Coaches who need urgent information about legal frameworks from day one of induction, and these materials can be reinforced subsequently by open and distance learning resources and case studies. In this way flexibility is provided for Learning Coaches who require immediate access to legislation training content, rather than having to wait for a formal start to the legislation module.
15. The *First Campus* universities have validated the core modules and in so doing have used the necessary technical vocabulary associated with quality assurance processes and procedures favoured by higher education registries. The same vocabulary is used within some of the training handbooks for the coaches, and

this can mystify and obscure understanding on occasions. A jargon-free outcomes and assessment guide is required for future training cohorts.

16. Learning Coaches are work-based learners who engage in training and then explore applications within their work environments. The assessment of learning outcomes by the providers of accreditation should recognise this process more fully and devise assessment tasks which are more appropriate and relevant to coaches' needs, but which also respect the confidentiality of the young people that coaches work with. This should include the assessment of live or simulated performance, rather than relying excessively on the repeated use of portfolios, essays and case studies.
17. Optional modules will appeal to Learning Coaches, based on demand for top-up credit allowing for the completion of a Certificate of Higher Education award, and the specialist interests of Learning Coaches. It is proposed that the national training programme works with the Learning Coach Reference Group and the 14-19 Network managers in order to revisit the set of level 3 and 4 options developed in the original design phase, and revise and agree a final list of learning outcomes for those options which are considered to be particularly relevant and appealing. Case study comments and feedback from coaches and *First Campus* trainers suggests that the front-runners are:
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Groupwork
 - Designing and managing safe environments
 - Using on-line resources
 - Counselling and guidance

- Specific Learning needs
 - Child and adolescent development
18. A training model is required for the provision of additional modules which will involve fewer enrolments based on their appeal to the specialist interests of Learning Coaches who have completed the core training programme. The funding streams for the payment of fees for additional modules will then depend on local organisations, networks or individuals. The variability in resourcing additional training will favour local delivery based on the time and travel constraints of coaches. The national training programme should therefore liaise with local higher and further education providers in order to encourage the regional delivery of specialist modules based on what might already be available within their curriculum portfolios, or on the validation of new modules.
19. In addition to the local delivery of options, two further training delivery strategies should be explored. The first refers to eLearning and blended learning support, and in order to make full use of available expertise the involvement of the Open University in Wales and *learndirect* is considered beneficial. The second is based on the recognition that where local delivery is not possible or appealing, and where there is sufficient demand, then intensive national workshops – perhaps via summer school – within a single location should be advertised to all networks.

8.2.2 Measures and inventories

20. Advanced coaching practices (see Appendix) in such authorities as Caerphilly and schools such as St Cyres reveal that the Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) rating scale (Williams et al 2003) is an effective and tested measure of learners' attitudes towards themselves, their peers, and their base educational

institution. It targets disengagement, low self regard, attendance and educational performance and therefore has direct relevance to the 14-19 pathways interests. PASS – or suitable alternatives - should therefore be promoted more widely to networks, with support for staff development in terms of building expertise in its usage being provided by those networks and organisations which have already implemented PASS measurement. The vocabulary used within the scale's questions and statements is however skewed towards school contexts; it therefore requires revision in order to make it more applicable as a universal rating scale which crosses youth and work-based training sector boundaries.

21. The use of the Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic (VAK) learning style framework is a popular and effective application. This observation is based especially on feedback from coaches indicating that VAK concepts simply make sense to the young people that they work with. Coaches and trainers should however be more aware of research which questions the validity and reliability of such measures (see McGuinness 1999 Coffield et al 2004), and a more rigorous critique should be offered within the core training module "Learning Strategies".
22. Terminology used within some off-the-shelf inventories on study skills and learning styles is not always appropriate for use with 14-19 year olds, especially in terms of supporting educationally disengaged populations. There is a unique opportunity for developing a national bilingual 14-19 Pathways inventory for learning styles measurement in Wales. This would be characterised by user-friendly applications which adapt available instruments, with easy access via national databases and websites – including Careers Wales on-line.

8.2.3 The recognition of prior learning

23. The training programme piloted a scheme for recognising prior experience, but with a very small number of completions based on the complexity of the task and the difficulty in gathering evidence. It is advised that the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) continues to be offered to future candidates, but that it moves towards a series of live assessment tasks based on the observation of performance, rather than relying on portfolio building.
24. The Learning Coach Advisory Group also ruled out the possibility of exempting those coaches who had qualifications in related areas. This decision was based on issues associated with the variability and limited longevity of the curriculum content within those other qualifications, and the difficulty in mapping their outcomes on to the core curriculum as embedded within CQFW via the stakeholder consultation exercise. It is recommended that this policy continues for the current range of qualifications in order to ensure standardisation and consistency of the Learning Coach training experience.
25. It is also recommended that links should be made between the Learning Coach training programme and those higher education departments which offer new or re-validated awards and qualifications that might in future include Learning Coach options. The curriculum design process would then allow for a more rigorous mapping of outcomes that makes the future recognition of qualifications allied to coaching more probable. Examples might include teacher training, careers guidance, counselling, youth leadership and learning support awards.

8.2.4 Status and qualification pathways

26. At present three categories for Learning Coaches who have successfully completed core training have been defined by Welsh Assembly Government: recognised, accredited, and qualified. The “recognised” category has been successful in providing flexibility for those individuals who for a variety of reasons do not want to engage in assessment, but who want to complete the training. It is recommended that this status continues for a limited time period in order to increase coaching capacity within Wales. The “accredited” category involves 50 level 4 credits carrying transcripts from the awarding *First Campus* universities. This accreditation stops short of a qualification because the minimum award possible within the higher education framework is the Certificate of Higher Education based on 120 level four credits. Achievement of the 50 credit accredited status should therefore be supported through employment incentives in order to make the accredited pathway more appealing to Coaches.

The “qualified” category requires more attention in terms of lining up awards which may be appropriate and appealing to Learning Coaches should they want to continue with their own professional development. This is reinforced by the coaches’ expression of interest in completing further training at a variety of levels. Guidance information about future pathways and options - building on content outlined in chapter 7 – should therefore be prepared and circulated more widely to Learning Coach cohorts. This information should include signposting to other existing qualifications (see section 7.3) as well as to a dedicated suite of Learning Coach awards. This involves the need to:

- Launch the recently LLUK approved OCN Wales level 3 qualification, in partnership with one or more further education providers, based on the recognition that some coaches have few or no qualifications and may be daunted by the prospect of level 4 accreditation by the higher education sector. It is

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advised that the OCN route will be especially applicable for Learning Coaches without qualifications who are working with level 2 or below learners.

- Promote the Certificate in Higher Education as a level 4 qualification available to coaches, requiring 70 additional credits after completion of the accredited core training programme.
 - Design and validate a full foundation degree, to be offered by higher education providers in order to allow progression to level 5 study.
 - Map a postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters coaching route through specific professional development programmes in Education and Management that are currently offered by universities.
27. Successful completion of the accredited core training pathways results in a set of credit transcripts from the *First Campus* universities. They are posted to individual coaches following award boards within the higher education institutions, and this typically spans a three month period. Higher education consortia linked to the accreditation of a national training programme should develop a more coherent and unified method for rewarding achievement through the production of a combined credit transcript. The *First Campus* team is urged to explore this possibility with the CQFW, the Higher Education Academy, the Quality Assurance Agency, and the Universities Vocational Awards Consortium.
28. The Certificate of Higher Education is the minimum award that can be provided by universities within their national qualifications framework. It is based on the successful completion of outcomes following a notional 1200 hours of learning and assessment time. It is argued that a “short award” is needed for Learning Coaches

successfully completing 500-600 hours of learning which nonetheless reflect a substantial amount of training. A higher education short award for work-based learners should be explored, using the Learning Coach national training programme as an example.

29. LLUK have assisted with the mapping of the level 3 OCN Learning Coach core units on to a suite of approved national standards and qualifications and guidelines. The Learning Coach training programme and its associated learning outcomes should continue to be linked and where possible embedded within the LLUK sector skills council framework for professionals who provide support to post 16 learners. This task requires close monitoring based on the current LLUK consultation exercise in Wales, linked to the specific needs of lifelong learning professionals in Wales (especially in relation to Welsh Language contexts, rural contexts for learning support, and working with disengaged youth) as compared with England.

8.3 Increasing capacity

Recommendations cover two broad areas linked to stepping up the amount of coaching support for young people via Learning Pathways: entitlement, and the management of training and delivery.

8.3.1 Entitlement

30. The creation of legislation surrounding entitlement means a closing of loopholes caused through agencies and sectors having differing viewpoints about their responsibilities in providing learning support. It has previously been argued that increased ownership of coaching support is a distinct advantage of local flexibility for learning support roles and function. But at the same

time there is a danger of diffused responsibility leading to inaction, based on the variability of coaching practices within and between organisations, and experimentation with the coaching role in a range of sectors. Learning networks may benefit from the agreement of a matrix for coaching as well as other support functions; the starting point being use of the timeline analysis and Approximation Matrix outlined in chapter 6. It will thus be important to regularly define and monitor the “who does what where and when” learning support elements for the different age groups within 14-19 pathways, including:

- Advice on key stage four options at the ages of 14 and 15
- Advice on options at the age of 16, using Learning Network options menus
- Choice and organisation of supervised work experience placements
- Support for learners as they move across and between sectors and institutions
- Identification of informal and non-formal interests
- Recording of formal, non-formal and informal achievements
- Monitoring of options

31. The matrix mapping within recommendation 30 would not just be a single application for all young people within a Learning Network. There would also be a need for completing specific matrices for sub-populations of young people who are most in need of support based on association, with their location outside of education, employment or training:

- Disabled

- Welsh as a first language
 - Travellers
 - More able and talented
 - Black and ethnic minorities
 - Migrant labour
 - Communities First residents
 - Looked after children
 - Children with caring responsibilities
32. Within each Learning Network the entitlement agenda should be linked to a project management framework based on accountability in the provision of learning support. This would include targets and quotas for individual organisations and partnerships, with associated deadlines and milestones. Such accountability should also be reinforced through monitoring by public sector resource providers as well as Young Peoples Partnerships and ESTYN inspection teams.
33. The majority of Learning Coach activity involves one-to-one support for young people. In order to raise capacity for an entitlement agenda, whilst at the same time recognising the importance of peer group relations in learning, more engagement by Learning Coaches in groupwork should be encouraged. Learning Coaches should therefore focus more intensively on groupwork and facilitation skills.
34. Entitlement will be further supported through the creation of more drop-in coaching centres and study skills surgeries. In this way Learning Coaches extend their reach beyond the more dominant referral systems currently being deployed in schools and

colleges. Further support is required for youth workers in particular, who may not have the necessary resources needed for creating dedicated drop-in Learning Coach centres.

8.3.2 Management of training and delivery

35. The *First Campus* consortium of universities within South East Wales has been successful in designing and delivering a national training programme within a short timeframe. This has included the production of learning materials and the validation of a set of level 4 modules. The involvement of a group of universities adds weight and credibility to the training programme, and higher education consortium based validation, accreditation and quality assurance involvement should therefore continue.
35. Positive feedback has been documented from evaluators, coaches, learning network managers and tutors regarding the national training programme. The logistical challenge of delivering the core training throughout Wales by a central team of trainers has been considerable, and this situation will be exacerbated by further expansion of the Learning Coach programme. At the same time the learning networks have commented on their need for a more local agenda for training, as well as the need for increasing training capacity in order to accommodate more coaches in the future. This challenge will become even more urgent once access to a Learning Coach becomes a legal entitlement for young people. It is proposed that a new training model be implemented which retains national accreditation and quality assurance via higher education consortia in partnership with Welsh Assembly Government, but introduces local training delivery by the 22 Learning Networks.

This devolved model implies direct recruitment of trainers by the networks, using nationally defined selection criteria developed by the universities. These trainers would then complete a training-the-trainers programme facilitated by those universities that have validated the level 4 curriculum and that provide credits. The programme will introduce the learning resources for the five modules, develop training techniques and activities for use with Learning Coaches, and operate standardisation workshops which ensure consistency amongst trainers in their use and understanding of assessment criteria and learning outcomes. In so doing such a devolved model will increase training capacity and flexibility for future Learning Coach cohorts.

37. The devolved training and delivery model outlined in recommendation 36 will increase ownership at local levels, but there is also the danger of collapse in training provision should there be unexpected difficulties with individual trainers or network managers. It is advised that a contingency plan be devised, allowing for trainer substitution at short notice by neighbouring learning networks or from the validating universities themselves.
38. Training delivery should be enhanced through the provision of accessible blended learning resources which support workplace learning by coaches throughout Wales, regardless of which Learning Network they are located within. All local training teams would then have access to standardised learning resources. The priority curriculum area for blended learning should be module 3: Legislation. This is based on the recognition that Learning Coaches require fast, repeated and continual access to case studies and factual detail about a range of legal issues surrounding support for young people.
39. Training should be reinforced through the recognition of expertise and advanced experience amongst earlier cohorts of coaches that have successfully completed the training programme with

achievement of “accredited” or “qualified” status. This is the point at which sophisticated articulation emerges for mentoring support for the Learning Coaches themselves. It is proposed that a mentoring network be established in order to develop an additional tier of support for trainee coaches based on informal one-to-one networking as well as the formation of action learning sets facilitated by mentors who have acquired accredited Learning Coach status via completion of the national training programme.

40. Networks may require a substantial increase in Learning Coach support, based on their action plans and local needs and priorities. Where resources prevent additional coaches being formally trained, a cascade model should be piloted within Learning Networks in order to gauge the effectiveness and impact of trainee coaches who share their training materials and workshop experiences with colleagues who are also contributing to the coaching function and who plan to join the training programme at some point in the future.
41. The case studies revealed instances where Learning Coaches have increased learning support capacity through initiating and coordinating undergraduate and sixth form mentoring and student tutoring programmes. As suggested in the independent Review of Further Education in Wales (Webb et al 2007) there is a need to review mentoring initiatives and to recognise the Learning Coach as a key figure for the overall management of mentoring and student tutoring within Learning Networks.
42. Recommendations about devolved training, mentoring networks, website editing, consortium based accreditation, and the provision of core open and distance learning materials, underline the need for a core Learning Coach support team that services all of the Learning Networks

43. Considerable variability has been noted in the use of employment contracts and diverse salary scales for Learning Coaches within and between networks and organisations. Welsh Assembly Government support for the use of standardised human resources job descriptions for Learning Coaches, as well as consistent contracts and salary scales, is advised.
44. The creation of an OCN level 3 award for Learning Coaches necessitates the involvement of one or more providers. Consultation with colleges, learning networks and private training providers, including networking with Fforwm, will identify appropriate regional partners for level 3 training accreditation.

8.4 Demonstrating success

Recommendations address the need to provide evidence of improved outcomes and successful pathway planning and progression by young people. Relevant themes include quality assurance and enhancement, research and evaluation, dissemination and the building of a coaching culture within Wales.

8.4.1 Quality and impartiality

45. There is the possibility of tension for Learning Coaches who are employed by one organisation, but with a brief to offer advice on the use of the options menu within an entire Learning Network. Put bluntly, given the current funding system for providers, it may be more profitable for individual organisations to retain young people rather than encourage them to choose options which involve other rival providers. The brokerage role of the coach has to be reinforced through impartiality and a code of practice which all providers sign up to. One solution would be the Caerphilly model for advanced coaching practice (see Appendix), whereby

Learning Coaches are employed by the networks themselves rather than individual schools or colleges. Another model would involve the management of Learning Coaches by Careers Wales, an organisation which declares impartiality as one of its defining features.

46. The brokerage role for choice of options is a key part of the coaching role, but on the evidence gathered thus far this does not figure currently as a prominent part of everyday learner support. This is because most of the Learning Networks have still not published menus containing full sets of options which are underpinned by a common timetable and transport infrastructures. It is therefore crucial that options menus be developed quickly by the Learning Networks.
47. As the Welsh Assembly Government moves towards a position of entitlement and the provision of statutory legislation for 14-19 Pathways, there is a need for quality assurance in order to ensure that all young people have the learning support that they require and deserve.

The criteria used by ESTYN in recognising and assessing good coaching practice should be defined through a series of stakeholder consultation workshops that mirror the grassroots methodology used within the training design phase (as reported in sections 2 and 4 of chapter 2). Furthermore, aspects of Learning Coach support relevant to inspection and quality assurance exercises should be incorporated within the training programme as well as continuing professional development for other teaching and support professions.

48. The quality of the consortium based national Learning Coach training programme as provided by higher education institutions should also be periodically evaluated via the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

8.4.2 Research and evaluation

49. In order to demonstrate what might become “a world class act”, higher education institutions should be encouraged to independently and empirically evaluate learning coach policy and practice. This will lead to detailed tracking analysis of pathway progression by young people, with a view to compiling evidence and a critique of impact on learner support. Resourcing for such activity should be secured via bids to such funding bodies as the European Union Convergence Programme, the Economic and Social Science Research Council, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Rowntree Foundation.
50. The current evaluation of Learning Coaches, the case studies, and the advisory and operational group feedback only indirectly provide insights into the actual experiences of young people in receipt of coaching support. There is a need to engage more closely with the Young People Partnerships and *Funky Dragon* in order to gather more information about coaching as perceived and experienced by young people themselves – rather than just relying on feedback from the Learning Coaches and the Learning Network managers. The GfK NOP 2007 market research survey (see section 3.3 in chapter 3) commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government succeeded in contacting a random sample of young people and parents – but at a time when Learning Coach applications were still in their very early stages. A repeat study is advised for 2009-10 in order to gauge impact of Learning Coach roll-out once further cohorts have been trained and are active in the field.
51. The Learning Coaches should focus more rigorously on the collection of evidence which demonstrates improvement over time within a variety of measures of young peoples’ attainment and well-being. This requires closer attention to the definition of baselines for individual learners as well as cohorts, and the identification of salient variables outwith coaching support which

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may affect measurement. Furthermore, there is a need for designing – subject to ethical clearance - experimental studies which include control group conditions. This would allow comparison of outcomes for samples of learners who receive coaching support with samples of learners who do not. These considerations should also be more closely integrated within the national training programme in order to encourage coaches' reflection on their own professional practice and effectiveness.

52. The first cohort of Learning Coaches has provided a valuable research baseline. As they enter into their second year of providing learning support, their progress and professional development should be tracked and monitored via longitudinal informational gathering in order to provide a comparative research perspective which enhances the current case studies.
53. Research and evaluation outcomes should be presented to national and international conference communities (such as ESCALATE, BERA and IPTA) in order to highlight the Learning Coaches of Wales as a national resource relevant to wider research communities. Evaluation of Learning Coach effectiveness and impact should also be linked with other national initiatives aimed at improving attainment and progression amongst young people; examples including RAISE and the HEFCW funded Reaching Wider programmes.
54. The longer term and indirect consequences of coaching support on achievements of 14-19 year olds should also be considered through recognising potential impact in areas of well-being outside of the immediate education environment – examples including improved health, welfare, and relationships. The expertise of Welsh Assembly Government teams investigating young peoples' well-being, as well as researchers within the *Wider Benefits of Learning* Centre at the Institute of Education should be accessed for future evaluation exercises. The

conclusions of such research should feed into a cost-benefits analysis for the Learning Coach initiatives within the 14-19 Pathways.

8.4.3 Dissemination and building a coaching culture

55. The Learning Coach Reference Group has proved to be an invaluable forum for building morale, identifying good practice, and listing key priorities relevant to the occupational role of the Learning Coach. This peer group has been informally defined by the *First campus* team; it should now be more formally constituted with links being made to the Learning Coach Advisory Group.
56. Examples of successful coaching practice should be documented and shared across learning networks via the creation of a national coaching newsletter, and these illustrations should also be included within the training programme.
57. Despite the extent and volume of Learning Coach activity within the first full year of application, there is a need to raise awareness about the role of the Learning Coach within senior management tiers of organisations. Target groups for dissemination should include senior gatekeepers and opinion leaders within colleges and schools, to include representatives of Fforwm and the General Teaching Council for Wales.
58. Case study data, and feedback from the coaching reference Group, suggest that some individuals within the 14-19 networks are establishing reputations within their local areas as effective champions or opinion leaders who encourage others around them to consider further the coaching role. Learning Networks and Welsh Assembly Government should raise the profile of such individuals through creating a Head Coach championing network

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which publicises learning support as well as the provision of mentoring. The Head Coach roles could be supported via a competitive national bursary scheme which rewards dissemination of good practice as well as mentoring support.

59. The national Learning Coach website should be maintained and regularly updated in order to ensure access to training materials and best practice exemplars. This coaching facility should be closely linked with Careers Wales on-Line, and the Welsh Assembly Government should consider the creation of an overarching 14-19 Learning Pathways website which embraces all of the six elements, including the Learning Coach.
60. Learning Coach case studies should be published by the Welsh Assembly Government in order to document the backgrounds and work of the Coaches, to be incorporated within future training packs as well as Learning Network information guides.
61. Broadcasters and journalists should be encouraged to incorporate Learning Coach success stories within their coverage of education stories, linked to general coverage of social justice and inclusion agendas. The Welsh Assembly Government should in particular explore links with BBC Wales Education, and the education supplements within national newspapers.
62. The achievement of recognised and accredited status on successful completion of the core training programme should be celebrated and publicised via a national annual certification ceremony and conference, convened by Welsh Assembly Government.
63. The national training programme and the Learning Network managers should nominate coaches and trainers for the Adult Learner and the Adult Tutor of the Year awards organised by Niace Dysgu Cymru.

64. The Welsh Assembly Government should consider the suitability of the training programme, and its next phase of devolution to networks, as a candidate for the National Training Awards 2009.
65. The case study data has demonstrated that informal learning support is being achieved via coaches linked primarily with a variety of youth services. Furthermore, young people who would otherwise disappear from the educational map can be supported effectively by youth workers once they leave school or college. The Learning Networks are however dominated by school and college contexts, and more involvement of youth services is needed in order to highlight and disseminate more effectively the kinds of effective coaching support which is taking place outside formal learning establishments.
66. Learning Coach pilot work should explore the feasibility of extending the coaching role to other age groups outside of the 14-19 Pathways applications.
67. Wales is developing considerable expertise in not only training large numbers of Learning Coaches, but also organising a unique devolved training-the-trainers programme for Learning Coach development. This continuing growth of coaching and the need for centralised as well as devolved operations could be reinforced through the creation of an all-Wales Centre of Excellence for Learning Support.

These 67 recommendations finish a study of the first cohort of Learning Coaches throughout Wales. They reflect a journey that started with the making of ambitious policy and ended up with applied practice. It took three years from the first pilot studies to the completion of accredited training throughout the 22 Learning Networks. And because of the declared evolutionary status of the Learning Pathways Guidance Notes, the recommendations have drawn on available evidence which supports change and progress linked to future entitlement and legislative developments surrounding support for young people.



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Raymond Williams noted that “to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.” The Learning Coaches give hope during a time when education and training statistics alongside national skills audits might otherwise cause despair. The case studies give examples where young people are recognised as learners outside the classroom, and provide some welcome colour for what would otherwise be a stark black-and-white photograph of attainment. The coaches also identify learners who may be experiencing difficulties and who have been referred for special help. But they can also work with those young people who are more invisible, as one coach commented “a part of the wallpaper” of an educational institution. These learners may not cause any problems but they are not stretching out and achieving their potential. In order to engage with all these functions the Learning Coach cohort has a very diverse and interesting profile including youth-work, careers guidance, teaching and classroom support.

The entire Learning Coach initiative might also be viewed as radical, based on the real and perceived overlaps between coaches and the work of other established professions. Some teachers might say that this kind of learning support is already provided by, for example, personal tutors. Careers advisers might point to their traditional guidance duties when it comes to helping young people choose options. Youth workers might comment on their informal encouragement of confidence and self esteem in peer groups outside school and college. This research has noted that these pessimistic objections are rare; instead there is dominant and constructive agreement about the need for sharing resources and forming partnerships and finding ways to provide more high quality learning support for young people.

It should however be noted that the research presented within the Learning Coaches of Wales is based on a sample of enthusiasts who were pioneering a new role and engaging very positively with the training programme. There is a need for further investigation of future cohorts using random samples and blind interviewing methods.

Furthermore, the case studies only indirectly view the young people themselves, based on Learning Coaches' descriptions of individuals and their respective circumstances. There is now a need for conducting research into the views and experiences of the learners' own reported stories and experiences, perhaps using as a starting point the Young Peoples' Partnerships.

This has not just been a study about Learning Coaches. It has also been an exercise in the design and delivery of a substantial work-based learning programme at a national level, using the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. A group of universities has combined forces in order to validate and accredit a set of core modules following detailed stakeholder consultation which then guided the design of the training curriculum and the definition of learning outcomes. The consortium crossed numerous educational boundaries and worked with schools, colleges, Careers Wales, youth services and private training providers. This is the kind of partnership working that shares expertise and resources across institutions for the benefit of the learners rather than the providers. It has also revealed a need for examining in more depth the teaching and learning and assessment strategies used by diverse practitioners, and the design of new pedagogic methods. The Learning Coaches of Wales therefore has broad relevance to educational development and practitioner communities.

Lifelong learning stretches from childhood to old age; thus far Learning Coach applications have concerned themselves only with young people. As future coaches move through training and prove their worth in various ways, it may well be the case that their learning support and expertise can be generalised and transferred to adult learners in a variety of workforces.

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Appendix: Four Advanced Case Studies

During the course of the research four case studies were identified as examples of advanced practice for the provision of learning support. They are characterised as advanced because they go beyond any one individual specialist working with young people. The defining features appear to be linked with strategic planning and the dedication of substantial resources by an entire organisation in order to achieve critical mass which increases capacity for helping 14-19 year olds to choose options and develop study strategies appropriate to their unique learning styles.

The case studies were chosen for varied reasons. *Saint David's College* was inspected by ESTYN and received outstanding assessments for the quality of care and support for its learners. Its principal, Mark Leighfield, is currently seconded to the Welsh Assembly Government in order to lead Learning Pathways policy developments. *St Cyres* was one of the first schools in Wales to pilot the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (WBQ), and it wanted to explore ways by which the role of a Learning Coach could reinforce portfolio developments surrounding key skills within the WBQ curriculum. Senior staff from the school contributed to the stakeholder consultation exercise for the design of the core training programme, and the author of this study is currently a member of the school's governing body. *Caerphilly Local Authority* was selected because it linked Learning Coach developments with its planning of school improvement and partnership working

between educational providers. The authority has developed prospectuses for young people and their families, giving details of shared options offered by colleges and schools throughout the county borough. *Careers Wales North East* provides a final example of advanced practice, based on its detailed exploration of the Learning Coach role as applied to the work of careers advisers supporting with young people in a variety of locations around the Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire areas.

It is emphasised that these case studies are illustrations, and they do not constitute a definitive list of best practice. They have been highlighted during the course of the research study through the author's use of existing contacts, networking and interviewing of individuals.

Case Study 1: Saint David's Sixth Form College

A sixth form college was selected as an institutional example of advanced and established practice in the provision of learner support, based on its reputation as one of the leading providers in Wales of outstanding pastoral care as evidenced publicly by two ESTYN inspections in 2003 and 2006. As a consequence the college's Principal was seconded in 2007 to the Welsh Assembly Government in order to oversee the implementation of the entire 14-19 Learning Pathways programme. The following case study is based on interviews with the seconded Principal, the Acting Principal, and the Associate Principal⁸. Further information has been gathered from inspection reports and internal college documentation.

Context

Saint David's is a sixth form Catholic college in Cardiff. It also opens its doors to learners from other faith backgrounds with 44 per cent of its students coming from non-Catholic denominations. The college has

⁸ Mark Leighfield (Principal), Daveth Frost (Acting Principal) and Terry Kane (Associate Principal)

charitable trust as well as further education status, and has a commitment to working with ethnic minorities (15 per cent of the 2006/7 cohort) and with disadvantaged learners from deprived communities. Its underlying philosophy concerning the importance of developing the whole person led to the College being one of the first thirteen institutions to pilot the Welsh Baccalaureate WJEC Level Three Diploma Award in 2003.

The college has tripled in size since its foundation in 1987 and now has over 1200 students, including 105 level 2 and 15 level 1 learners. The level 2 provision covers vocational and re-sit GCSE subjects and provides a second chance for students who have under-achieved whilst at school. In recent years the college has introduced level 2 and 3 work based learning programmes, enhanced by collaboration with a construction workshop and the creation of a hair and beauty salon. It also has an honours programme for students who strive for top grades and entry to the most competitive universities.

The Pastoral System

Saint David's moved away from a conventional "form-tutor" model following its critical review of student support which revealed variable quality of provision. Some form tutors provided top quality care and attention to students, whilst others were limiting this kind of work to the more mundane aspects of student administration.

Two key factors influenced the introduction of a new way of supporting students within the college. The first involved "identification of good practice visits" by senior staff to other sixth form establishments associated with advanced pastoral support, one of the most prominent being the Beacon and Queens Prize winning Greenhead Sixth Form College in Huddersfield. The second involved participation within a WJEC working group which was designing and piloting the new Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, within which coaching and personal support figured strongly.

The senior management team consulted with staff and agreed that the longer term benefits of increased well-being and decreased attrition amongst learners warranted radical action. Management was restructured with one of the college's two associate principals having specific responsibility for leading what is called the pastoral system, and with an assistant principal having the title of "Support for Learners". They then "put all of their eggs in one basket" and tried out a system where a smaller group of staff – those most noted for their enthusiasm and ability in providing pastoral support – were asked to specialise exclusively in the provision of pastoral care. One corollary of this decision was that other staff focused exclusively on their teaching. This step change was described as extremely difficult because of subsequent implications for resourcing strategies: funding had to be re-organised, contracts and employment specifications changed, and priorities had to be set. The result was that a strengthened pastoral system impacted on some of the more peripheral budgets or operations within the college.

The new pastoral system has been operating for 7 years, and interviewees commented on how vital it is to engage with personal tutors who have diverse experience as compared with "the more traditional teacher drift into student support jobs". Some of the college's personal tutors, for example, have SENCO and careers guidance backgrounds. Such diversity has led to more specialist and expert knowledge within the pastoral system, as well as "an increased non-teacher appeal" provided by some individuals. The new system has been singled out as an example of outstanding practice in the college's 2006 inspection report by ESTYN:

The college's 'Tracker' system has outstanding features. It allows staff and learners to bring together many aspects of learners' performance in one system. Learners receive target grades based on prior attainment in GCSEs as well as aspirational targets. The system also includes information on punctuality and attendance, successful completion of assignments, including key skills, and indications of the effort that learners are putting into their studies.

Tutors and learners monitor these indicators on a regular basis through individual interviews. There is very close monitoring of learners' progress against these targets and measures by pastoral, academic, support staff and parents. The 'Tracker' system provides the detail to support discussion at well-planned pastoral sessions.

The 'Tracker' system encourages learners to meet their personal targets and to improve their performance. Key skills support and development and completion of Welsh Baccalaureate components are also important features of the 'Tracker' sessions. Specific tutorial sessions help learners to become expert in the 'Tracker' process and they received detailed training in how to assess their own performance, often by reflecting on the 'Tracker' history of previous learners at the college. The 'Tracker' system underpins effectively the improved learner outcomes across the college.

Policy Mapping

The system has also been reinforced by the publication of the Learning Pathways guidance notes, underlining the need for impartial and objective learner support through partnerships with a variety of key external organisations. Most notable for the college is its close liaison with Careers Wales.

The college has mapped its pastoral programme on to the Learning Pathways Guidance II policy, including the following Learning Coach element:

Learning Pathways element	Learning Pathways II references	Pastoral programme	Detail
Learning Coach	Opportunity to discuss learning and progress on a regular basis	Tracker Target setting Action planning Learning styles Study skills Study support Key skills Basic skills SLDD Peer mentoring Liaison programme Course choice advice Admissions interviews Tracker sessions Enrolment interviews Progression interviews Parents evenings Reports Parents information evening UCAS information evening	Curriculum Core Wider Welsh Bac Workshops Liaison Admission and enrolment Taster sessions Honours programme Course team Preferred learning style ISLA Tracker Referral

Similar mapping has been completed for careers advice and guidance, the personal support elements (especially in relation to referral to specialists within such areas as specific learning needs, involving 86 students in 2006/7), counselling, the use of Careers Wales experts, and help with financial and healthy lifestyle.

Support for Learners

It was decided not to use the title of “coach” due to the suspicion that parents and teachers would prefer the traditional terminology of personal tutor during a time of change. The pastoral team do however

consider the kind of support and underlying activity of personal tutoring to be synonymous with the Assembly's definition of the coaching role. In one of the college's internal papers it is emphasised that "the Learning Coach function is critical to its performance and to the success of its students." In another document reference is made to the college's participation within the Learning Coach sub-group of the Cardiff and Vale 14-19 Network. One member of the pastoral team participated within the 2007 national accredited coach training programme; interviewees also emphasised that more staff would have participated within training had resourcing allowed for more time release. The college has also gathered feedback from two other teachers from its partner school network who participated in the national training programme. One key issue emerging from these experiences involves the need for more flexibility with the accreditation of personal tutors who have gained considerable coaching experience over a number of years.

Senior management at Saint David's have reservations about an area-based coaching model which entails "peripatetic supermen dropping into a school, solving problems, and disappearing." They emphasise that the key to success involves establishing an on-going relationship with learners, in addition to continual and intensive access to learning support. This does not however mean that external specialists are to be ignored; the importance of referral to experts who cover a variety of institutions and organisations is paramount. Interviewees picked out Careers Wales and educational psychology services as two examples of successful partnerships.

Caseloads and activity

Each of the nine largely full-time personal tutors has an average caseload of 165 students, divided into 8-10 groups each year. The college would ideally like to reduce this to 120 per tutor. Administrative functions have been lightened through the introduction of electronic registration of students at the start of each day and within individual

lessons. The pastoral system involves one hour twice per week contact time for every learner, entailing significant amounts of workshop activity and groupwork.

There is also a drop-in system plus additional pre-arranged one-to-one support meetings arranged on an individual basis throughout the week both in and outside the college timetable. Students are also entitled in emergencies to contact the pastoral team over weekends and during vacations. The college recognises the value of peer support and student ownership of the principles and values surrounding their education. One example includes commenting in public on the poor attendance rates of individuals in order to increase peer awareness and encourage peer support for isolated class-mates.

At two points in the year (in November and March) the entire pastoral system shifts to “tracker” mode. These are intensive three week periods involving one-to-one interviews with personal tutors, meetings with specialist advisers, and assessments of specific needs. Students prepare evidence for these meetings based on mapping their successes and on-going difficulties on to action plans agreed at the beginning of the session.

The workshops and activities – all of which are supported by materials and resources – illustrate the extent and the content of coaching support throughout the college:

Applications – filling in forms	Model – introduction
Applications – letter writing	Moral dilemmas
Behaviour – what is acceptable?	Motivation
Behaviour – positive and negative within groups	Note taking
Building confidence	Personal statements
Careers carousel	Presentation skills and public speaking

Applications – filling in forms	Model - introduction
Career search programme RN	Puzzles – Einstein's
Critical reading	Puzzles – logic
CVs	Reasons for learning
Exam techniques	Research and study skills (general)
Finance – student Finance – salaries tax and national insurance	Research (internet based) GIGO
GIGO	Research (paper based)
Goal setting	Revision skills
HE preparation	Stress busters
Induction – EMA and FCF	Time management
Induction expectations	Tracker action plans and reviews
Induction icebreakers	Tracker follow up
Induction key skills	Tracker interviews
Interview techniques and role play	Tracker – preparation
Induction help and support in college	UCAS – decision making and final choices
Learning styles – POLS and VARK	UCAS course and university research
Memory skills	UCAS on-line applications
Writing skills (document and report writing)	

Outcomes to date

Evidence of successful outcomes linked to the college's pastoral system includes a current retention rate of 90 per cent, which is well above the sector norm, and in two ESTYN inspections the college achieved Grade 1 outcomes for Key Question 4: caring for, guiding and supporting

learners. It is worth noting that even though the college achieved top grades on both occasions, the comments from inspectors reveal continuing improvements:

The induction programme is generally effective, but not all student groups receive the same level and type of information at induction. Personal tutors and the chaplaincy team provide a high level of support to students. Students indicate that they are receiving better support in tutorials in the restructured pastoral programme. Systems for tracking students are good. Target-setting is generally effective, but in a few instances, projected grades are not challenging enough. There are appropriate policies, but it is not always clear when these are approved by the governing body and ready for implementation. Overall, there is a lack of support for mainstream students from basic skills specialists. The quality of careers education is good. (ESTYN Inspection Report 2003)

The quality of care, support and guidance is outstanding. The college commits a significant amount of resources to provide learners with three hours of support and guidance in pastoral and general religious education sessions each week. Learners also have two further hours each week in tutor groups to receive sessions on the Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

A specialist pastoral team with either no or very few teaching commitments supports the needs of learners very well. This team works in a close partnership with all class teachers and learning-support staff. This partnership has underpinned the overall trend of improvement in examination results, the good progress learners make from their starting points, their progression to higher education and employment, and in their overall personal, social and moral development. (ESTYN Inspection Report 2006)

Appendix

The Caerphilly 14-19 Network

In 2005 the college received the All Wales Quality Award for Careers, Education and Guidance, and destination statistics for leavers in 2004/5 noted high progression rates for higher and further education as well as employment and training:

Destination	Number
University	219
Employment and training	92
Further education	40
Unemployed	8
Unknown (including gap year?)	66
Other	13

Interviewees also comment on improvement at a more qualitative and impressionistic level: “there is not so much drifting, problems are being nipped in the bud, and there is less bad behaviour.”

Case Study 2: The Caerphilly 14-19 Network

The Caerphilly 14-19 network has been selected as a specialised example of Learning Coach support based on its publication of a full options prospectus, and a keynote presentation to over 300 delegates at the national 14-19 Learning Pathways consultation conferences in November 2007. In compiling this case study interviews were conducted with the Head of the 14-19 Unit, the manager of the Learning Coach team, and the schools improvement specialist⁹.

Context

Caerphilly County Borough is a mixed rural and urban area which has two colleges of further education, 14 secondary schools (of which nine have sixth forms and one is Welsh medium), one special school, four

⁹ David Eynon (Head of the 14–19 Unit), Dot Powell (Manager of Learning Coaches) and Teresa Winiarski (teacher and schools improvement specialist)

SLEs – plus support from two Careers Wales companies. In 2006-7 the total cohort of 14-19 year olds was approximately 10,000. The county borough has responded to the need for improving attainment and progression at the age of 16, as well as the need to reduce the number of young people with NEET status. A key driver has been the creation of a central 14-19 unit funded by the council and the introduction of a resourcing strategy which has allowed schools and colleges to share resources and offer more opportunities to young people through a rationalisation of provision. The creation of the unit is set against a back-drop of local authority developments over the past six years which includes this chronology:

- A crisis with surplus places in schools in 2001
- Sixth form rationalisation in 2002
- The formation of three local partnerships (Rhymney Valley, Caerphilly Basin, and Islwyn) in 2003
- The alignment of the school day and timetable in 2004
- Experimentation with some common timetable blocks across schools in 2005
- The roll out of cross partnership blocks in 2006
- The operation of a full common timetable in 2007

Curriculum development and timetabling

A key step forward involved the creation of a county wide network of curriculum managers entitled DEPNET, leading to the identification of gaps and duplication amongst subject areas and the recognition of the need to sort out administrative infrastructures in order to boost partnership working. The authority recognised travel limitations in terms of cost and time, based on distances and public transport practicalities, and then prioritised the creation of a workable blocked timetable.

Appendix

The Caerphilly 14-19 Network

As a result in 2007 Caerphilly was the first local authority in Wales to publish coherent options prospectuses for all learners within two of its areas (the remaining one – Islwyn – operating a full tertiary system with no school sixth forms), offering choices to learners from over 40 subjects located within nearby schools and colleges. This compares to earlier scenarios in some schools where choice was limited to a maximum of 12 subjects at AS level. The current full options menu also allows pursuit of more vocational pathways, and approximately 14% of all young people who are defined as learners are now enrolled on qualifications which span more than one provider. It should be noted however that this percentage drops when NEET populations are considered.

“People said at the start of all this that students would not want to move. Wrong. They love it. We are now seeing a coeducation sixth form in two schools but without any organisational change”

The head of the 14-19 unit values the partnership model outlined by Tribal Consultants, identifying movement within the authority's institutions over time along the following nine-stage continuum:

- Conflict (everybody hates each other)
- Competition (the best get better and the worst get worse)
- Compliance (pay lip service to partnership, but nothing really happens)
- Coexistence (you stay on your turf and I'll stay on mine)
- Cooperation (we need to adjust what we do to avoid overlap and confusion)
- Collaboration (let's work on this together)
- Co-ownership (we feel totally responsible)
- Confederation (partners cede individual mission to confederation)

Recognising Learning Support

The 14-19 Unit recognised the value of a European Social Fund pilot project entitled Promoting Independence at the authority's Trinity Fields special school, which amongst other things experimented with additional learning support methods. It also calculated the very high invisible costs to society for not providing help for young people. In 2006, the authority funded further pilot work exploring amongst a wider range of young people the use of OCR accreditation for a national skills profile. This was reinforced by the use of the Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) measurement scale, leading into a traffic light indicator for individual learners where "red" signalled cause for concern and the need for specialist intervention.

Interviewees emphasised that the emergence of genuine partnerships between schools and colleges demanded the role of someone who could guide on an impartial basis. In this sense "coaching became an easy concept." The 14-19 Unit was however mindful of the importance of synthesising the work of the different specialists providing learning and personal support:

"We haven't simply gone from zero support to coaching support. We've got to have coherence for all the different specialisms. It needs managing".

The authority decided to create a team of 14 full-time (term-time only) Learning Coaches via a competitive selection process. They all have the same job description, and they are paid on the same salary scale. Successful applicants came from Careers Wales, inclusion and entitlement teams, youth work, and teaching. Two of the coaches had already completed the national training programme, and the overall profile for the team reflected the valuing of different backgrounds by the 14-19 Unit:

We find that personal and learning support can sometimes be difficult to distinguish. We suspected that coaches with youth backgrounds might be better at the personal and those with teaching backgrounds might be better at the learning side of things.

Management and coordination

Each Learning Coach has been sited in either one or two host institutions - schools, colleges or youth centres. They are however independent of those organisations in terms of their terms of reference, accountability and line management. All report to the Learning Coach Manager within the 14-19 Unit, who is supported by two coordinators. The entire team focuses especially on young people who are in danger of dropping out of education and training due to their disaffection, disability or learning difficulties. A particular interest involves level one and two key skills (especially Managing Own Learning and Performance) and developing new learning pathways aimed at providing access to existing NVQ courses in retail, catering, horticulture, care, and manufacturing. The work of the coaches feeds into a variety of initiatives and projects which include FASTFORWARD (Islwyn), SYDIC (Caerphilly Basin), GYGABITE (Bargoed) and GATEWAY (Careers Wales).

During the course of each week the Learning Coaches provide learning and personal support for individual 14-19 year olds as well as through groupwork. They also organise and accompany learners as they travel between providers, and they handle administrative tasks associated with tracking individual performance and collating information from different providers. All of the coaches completed a local authority induction programme (covering such topics as the background work of different partner organisations, child protection, data management, and public presentations). They write a weekly report and meet as a team with their manager every Monday morning for a three hour brief and debrief session. During these discussions detailed analysis and evaluation of existing and new learning materials and resources takes place. So too does the identification of key issues associated with disengagement – such as bullying and low self esteem. The manager and coordinators visit partner institutions on a regular basis and discuss issues with individual coaches and their colleagues in their everyday workplaces.

Evaluation

The authority is now requesting evaluative information which relies on demonstrating success indicators that show impact through these 14-19 Learning Network operations, including the work of the Learning Coach team. There are two key interests that have been prompted by work commissioned through Welsh Assembly Government.

The first involves indicators of emotional intelligence as devised by AlphaPlus consultants (2006), including the use of a 40 item self-assessment inventory, self and peer assessment tests for use in groupwork sessions, and independent observer rating scales based on groupwork and relationships.

The second involves using a set of 38 demonstrating success indicators as produced by ARAD consultants (2007) in order to measure intervention based on individual, organisational, area and authority effectiveness.

A key overall interest is in the evaluation of the value added dimension of Learning Coach support, and this therefore demands the definition of benchmarks and the establishment of baselines for learners prior to receiving coaching support. The 14-19 Unit has completed the benchmarking task and are now engaging in quantitative and qualitative data collection shaped by the above indicator indicators. The final stage of the evaluation research will be completed in mid 2008, involving the summative assessment of progress by learners following various kinds of learning and personal support and intervention. This will be accomplished via the repeat use of measures applied during the initial benchmark and baseline phase.

Case Study 3: St Cyres School Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan

St Cyres is a split-site foundation school in the Vale of Glamorgan. It enrolls approximately 1,500 11-19 year old students per annum, with increasing numbers in the sixth form (256 in 2006-7). It is a designated

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St Cyres School Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan

centre for children with an exceptionally wide range of specific educational needs including moderate learning difficulties, physical disabilities and hearing impairment. Thirteen per cent of its learners receive free school meals, which is below the national average of 16.6 per cent.

The school was also one of the first in Wales to pilot the new advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) for 16-18 year olds; an award validated and offered by the Welsh Joint Education Committee. WBQ students complete traditional A level and vocational qualifications, but they also engage in community volunteering, modern languages, work placements, and key skills development. Successful completion of a portfolio of evidence leads to an additional 120 point award which is recognised by university admissions tutors in most universities throughout the UK. In 2007 89 per cent of the 104 year 13 students successfully completed the advanced WBQ award.

Case study information is based on discussions and presentations involving the lead learning coach at St Cyres, Emma Laidlaw, as well as governors and members of the staff and school's senior management team¹⁰. The school has also produced a briefing paper for teachers and governors entitled The Role of the Learning Coach – a Guide to Best Practice. It is this publication alongside the author's membership of the governing body which has especially informed the advanced case study, based on the operation of a Learning Coach programme over the past three years.

Learning support within the school sixth form is strategically linked to one of the requirements of the WBQ: students must have a 25-30 minute one-to-one tutorial with their personal tutor at least once every half term. St Cyres wanted to separate out personal tutoring for younger age groups from learning support for sixth formers and therefore preferred the term Learning Coach. The school highlights and values the following key coaching qualities: being able to motivate,

¹⁰Brian Lightman (headteacher), Jonathen Hicks (acting headteacher), Hilary Jones and Hilary Thomas (deputy headteachers), Ross Thomas (head of sixth form until 2007, now based within the WBQ team at WJEC), Audrey Males, Colin Turner and Steve Smith (Board of Governors)

being approachable, not making judgements, listening well, having a sense of humour, patience, having a caring and warm outlook, and respecting learners.

The role of the Learning Coach is therefore crucial to the success of the Welsh Baccalaureate. A Learning Coach encourages questioning and the independent searching out by learners of solutions to problems. St Cyres School was inspected by ESTYN in 2007 and gained a top grade of 1 for the measure of caring, guiding and supporting learners. The report states:

Students studying for the WBQ receive very good support. Initial guidance about subject choice and induction into the sixth form are both good. The learning coaches monitor progress by regular tutorials and provide support to keep students on track. Regular reports keep parents well informed about progress (ESTYN inspection report April 2007, Welsh Assembly Government, statement 184)

As noted by ESTYN inspectors and the school's strategic plan, the ultimate goals involve helping students to achieve three core objectives:

- Promoting a lifelong enjoyment of learning
- Recognising achievements of all kinds
- Preparing all pupils for life in the 21st century with the learning skills they will require at work, as citizens and at leisure

General responsibilities for Learning Coach support cover all of the support actions listed within 14-19 pathways policies, but the difference with St Cyres involves the exclusive use of teachers – especially those who were formerly designated as sixth form tutors – as Learning Coaches in order to help more advanced students work towards a specific qualification. Support focuses on formal target setting, progress reviews, specialist support where necessary, and individual action plans. All of this feeds into developing and acquiring a portfolio of evidence for the key skills component of the WBQ.

The learning support provided by the Learning Coach involves a combination of formally scheduled individual meetings as well as group tutorials. One-to-one sessions are reinforced through shifting registration to lessons, thereby allowing more time at the start of each session for meetings. Group tutorials are formally timetabled twice a week, covering especially key skills development. The school also operates a carousel system for project groups in order to encourage inter-disciplinary working that concentrates on themes such as capital punishment, democracy, and sexual health. Each project is linked with at least one key skill activity (such as preparing statistical data within a spreadsheet, making a presentation through PowerPoint, or designing an information briefing sheet) that feeds into folios of evidence.

The entire coaching programme is accompanied by written guidelines which stress the need for establishing ground-rules and an atmosphere of trust, reviewing and setting individual targets, picking up on cues that might suggest learners are experiencing difficulties, and operating an open door policy where further support can be provided outside of formally scheduled meetings. This is when the Learning Coaches rely heavily on the use of the school's sixth form centre, within which all of the students' individual folios are filed and within which ICT support is available.

Groupwork is encouraged at appropriate times based on the recognition that individuals may find this more motivating and less intense in terms of communicating with teachers as authority figures. Group tutorials are especially linked to five key support areas:•
Standards of conduct and attendance

- Study skills and learning styles
- Time management
- Revision methods
- Examination techniques

St Cyres maps Learning Coach support on to a “key skill/folio” in order to clarify 11 applications:

The entire Learning Coach programme is therefore highly structured with a clear end product being identified through the WBQ folio of evidence. Learning support is provided by a team of 15 qualified teachers who have such activity incorporated into their annual objectives and timetables as well as their staff development plans. The Learning Coaches do not appear to be so specifically involved in the promotion of learning styles, study skills, or the use of options menus.

Key Skill/Folio	How could the learning coach help
Personal and social education (PSE) and Wales Europe and the World (WEW)	Discuss a range of opportunities enabling the students to meet the requirements of the specification. Advise the student to keep a diary record of their engagement with a relevant PSE/WEW issue.
Community participation	Discuss the areas of interest the students have and what is available as a possible project. Advise the students in the possible timescale for the project and contact details.
Individual investigation	Discuss possible topic areas with students, phrasing of questions, identify sources of information and discuss structure e.g. use of internet, texts, specialist advice/support, how to evaluate and reach a conclusion.
Language model	Discuss with students how they can improve their language skills, the requirements of the module and the need to keep a diary record.
Communication	Help the students identify subject areas that will help them fulfil the requirements of the folio and the types of evidence they will require e.g. discussion, presentation from a subject, synthesis of documents and extended writing.

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Key Skill/Folio	How could the learning coach help
Problem solving	Highlight subject areas that will help the students fulfil this skill. Discuss the problem with the students and the options available to them. It may be necessary to guide the students to think about the possible strengths and weaknesses of these options and agree with them the final option. Students may need assistance in structuring their main plan and identifying appropriate evidence.
ICT	Help the students identify the ICT task and discuss the processes/stages involved and the evidence needed for this skill e.g. a PowerPoint presentation and Excel charts.
Improve Own Learning and Performance	Help the students identify areas for development and decide targets for improvement e.g. research skills, presentation skills, data handling, PowerPoint etc. The students should be guided to areas of support such as: internet, texts, specialist advice etc. Give the students advice on the types of evidence required for the folio e.g. handouts from workshops attended and notes from websites visited.
Working with others	Encourage the students to get together with others and choose a suitable group project/task. Set realistic targets for the students in planning, doing and evaluating the project/task. Give the students advice on the types of evidence they will require e.g. minutes of meetings, emails, letters, posters, photos etc.
Application of number	Help the students identify an application of number task and discuss the process/stages involved and evidence required for the folio e.g. advise students on need for a scale drawing and reading information from graph.
Work-related education	Discuss with students the possible options for work experience and the enterprise activity.

They operate a different kind of model which embeds such activity throughout the WBQ programme, with the key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance having crucial relevance.

It should also be noted that whilst St Cyres contributed to the curriculum design workshops for the national training programme for Learning Coaches (see chapter 2) they did not actually participate within the national training programme for Learning Coaches. The school pursued an alternative staff development strategy which was in part supported through WBQ funding streams, using staff INSET workshops in order to advance Learning Coach skills within its workforce. In this case study more advanced learners are therefore targeted within a school environment, the vast majority continuing to higher education after leaving school (in 2007 the progression rate for year 13 was 94 per cent). The school is now piloting intermediate and foundation WBQ awards, with associated Learning Coach support.

Case Study 4: Careers Wales North East

Careers Wales has been selected based on its wide ranging contribution to Learning Coaching across Wales. Careers Wales is referenced within 14-19 Learning Pathways guidance clustered with Learning Coaching and Personal support. It is through this natural link that Careers Wales has sought to enhance the quality of Learning Coaching in all regions of Wales. This particular case study, prepared by Kevern Kerswell from within the *First Campus* training team, draws on interview and documentary information illustrating the ways that Careers Wales in the North East have enhanced coaching in three 14-19 Learning Networks.

Context

As noted in chapter 6, Careers Wales is an all-Wales service that gives people of all ages free careers information, advice and guidance. Funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, Careers Wales was set up in 2001 bringing together six careers companies across Wales under one name. The entire sector contributes to the Welsh Assembly

Government's lifelong learning agenda, encouraging people to engage in learning, skills, and career development, leading to economic prosperity for individuals and the nation as a whole.

Careers Wales companies work closely with their local communities to provide a full range of careers information, advice and guidance to people of all ages as they seek to move between education, employment and training. The companies work extensively with clients across the 14-19 spectrum, including school based careers advice and guidance; mentoring; Learning Coaches; young people associated with being outside employment, education and training; and education business links.

Adding Value to the Coaching Agenda

Careers Wales recognised very early on the need to collaborate and make coaching in Wales work. In the north east, they established strong working relationships with three networks (Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire). It was important to build relationships both at management and operational level to develop shared working practices, enabling coaching and careers guidance to co-exist through effective referral, and shared understanding of daily activities.

Building Partnerships to Develop Coaching

In the north east, Careers Wales has seconded staff directly into the networks to support coaching and also to influence relationship building between networks and Careers Guidance practitioners. The company has provided all three networks with a number of learning coaches including a coordinator for Denbighshire. It has also seconded a member of staff directly to the *First Campus* training team, to help deliver the national training programme.

There has been a significant contribution to local Learning Coach training, and to preparing coaches for the more challenging national accredited programme. Examples of this support include a training professional advising the networks on training and induction issues, the delivery of localised workshops including interview skills, a generic

coaching workshop, and induction. In addition, other partners including the youth service have also delivered local training relevant to their areas of expertise.

Although, the Learning Coach role is still new, the results of this collaboration are beginning to snowball. There is an evolving understanding between the coaching community and Careers Wales of roles and responsibilities. Like the other 5 Careers Wales companies, Careers Wales North East is working towards successful implementation of Learning Pathways elements 4-6. It has recently completed some local research into how effectively Learning Coaches and Careers Wales Advisers are working together. The paper focussed on examples of referral and how young people have benefited. Referral is functioning well in both directions with Careers Wales staff across Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham referring clients to Learning Coaches and vice versa. The nature of these referrals is wide ranging due to the diverse nature of 14-19 learners:

Examples of Referral in Action

Careers Wales to Learning Coaches	Learning Coach to Careers Wales
Polish speaking pupil requiring additional support to achieve grades	Young person required assistance with their interview techniques
Young person in a pupil referral unit in danger of being made homeless	Young person with limited career ideas referred for a guidance interview
A year 11 pupil referred to a coach to develop confidence	Young person lacked motivation and was referred to develop a career goal
A young person required help to implement a moving forward plan as agreed with a Careers Adviser	Pupils referred to explore options, qualification routes and linked occupations to enable more fully informed decision making
Pupil referred to discuss low aspirations and bullying	Pupil referred for assistance with a college application form
Students missing lessons they found too hard, and required coaching	To identify relevant work experience

During the period of April to December 2007 there were some 106 referrals between Careers Wales and Learning Coaches, throughout Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire. There are also many practical examples of both roles complimenting each other with Learning Coaches helping young people develop their planning skills, ensuring that they get maximum value from Careers Advice and Guidance. This support can include help with revision, post 16 options research, accompanying the pupil on visits to colleges, helping young people become more aware of their ability and potential.

Benefits are being felt outside of education, training and employment through innovative approaches to tackling issues associated with not-in-education-employment-or-training categories. Of particular note is an example in Denbighshire where Careers Wales staff from two companies are proactively identifying young people not in education employment or training. They then literally knock on doors, tracking them down and offering support. This results in referrals to Learning Coaches to help tackle underlying issues of low confidence, self esteem as well as more complex personal support issues. The youth service is also playing a key role in taking on many of the personal support issues.

Next Steps

All six Careers Wales companies work closely together, sharing best practice and ensuring consistency of service delivery. This extends to learning coach provision and the organisation plans to continue to work alongside local networks, ensuring that young people in Wales have every chance of fulfilling their potential. In the north east strong relationships have been formed between Denbighshire, Wrexham, and Flintshire 14-19 networks. This regional collaboration between the networks, Career Wales, and other partner organisations has been the bedrock of effective Learning Coach provision. Careers Wales has identified various additional steps that will enhance the learner experience further and agreed an initial action plan including:

- Implementing a standardised referral form / procedure for all Coaches and Careers Wales advisers.
- Careers Wales to include in any partnership agreement the need for Lead Careers Advisers to report referral to and from Learning Coaches.
- Careers Wales advisers to share contact details with Learning Coaches.
- Increase referrals through improved understanding of role boundaries. Careers Wales North East to offer and host workshops between Learning Coaches and careers advisers

Impact

"Partnership working is most effective when partners have a clear understanding of each others roles and responsibilities and are able to genuinely respect and value the contribution each partner can make. This commitment at both Management and operational levels in the north east has contributed to the support given to develop and progress the Learning Coach entitlement in the Networks"

– Joyce M'Caw, Chief Executive: Careers Wales North East

All three networks have recognised the integral role that Careers Wales is playing as they strive to deliver Learning Coach entitlement. With staff seconded into various settings, such as Learning Coaching, barriers have been removed and healthy working relationships have flourished. Senior management has also contributed to Learning Coach strategy ensuring a joined up approach across North East Wales.

"Having a senior member of the Careers Wales management team on the network has had a major impact on learning coach development across all settings"

– Janice Wingett, Wrexham 14-19 Coordinator

"The Network has worked well with Careers Wales North East from the very beginning with the Chief Executive being a central figure in the LC Steering Group, The Network has accessed quality training from CWNE specialist staff and referral systems have been installed on the back of experience of the Network's own staff, in particular Sharron Smith, as secondee from CWNE and the Denbighshire Network Learning Coach Coordinator. Her previous experience with Careers Wales and its scope of operations has been invaluable in building the Networks' own systems, and in developing good working practice with Careers Wales, especially around the Keeping in Touch (KIT) workers and with providers of personal support. The Learning Coach team have also benefited from training on Careers Wales on Line."

– John Gambles, Denbighshire 14-19 Coordinator

Careers Wales has therefore played a significant part in embedding Learning Coaching throughout 14-19 networks in Wales. Outcomes vary dependent on the individuals concerned, but young people are benefiting from collaboration between Careers Wales and 14-19 networks as coaching evolves and makes a difference. The case of “Liza” provides a final illustration:

“Liza has been on the Learning Coach programme for 2 years. It took a while for Liza to overcome her initial barriers and for her to decide on a pathway. Since she made that decision she has made tremendous progress in her life, attending a skillbuild course in an environment like school that at the beginning she was adamant she wouldn’t do. She won an achievement award and received a certificate at a ceremony in Llandrindod Wells. She went onto college but unfortunately on the death of her mother got into financial difficulty and felt that she could no longer afford to study as she was left with the bills of running a home. After more coaching and study skills sessions on a 1:1 basis, Liza has started employment at a local supermarket where she is working approximately 30 hours per week on the checkout. She is thrilled to be working, meeting new people and socialising with work colleagues. During her spare time she is working in the Heart Foundation Store on a voluntary basis.”

– Kerry Urquhart, Flintshire Learning Coach