



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

BIS RESEARCH PAPER NUMBER 125

Evaluation of National Careers Service
Partnership Delivery

AUGUST 2013

RESEARCH

A report by CFE (Research and Consulting Ltd)
for the Department for Business, Innovation
and Skills (BIS)



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The views expressed in this report are the authors own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Acknowledgements

The authors are immensely grateful to the National Careers Service contractor and sub-contractor staff and their partners who were kind enough to give up their time to participate in the in-depth interviews and provide access to National Careers Service customers.

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Research paper number 125

August 2013

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1. Executive summary

1.1. Background

The National Careers Service was launched in April 2012 and aims to provide authoritative information on learning and work along with professional impartial advice to young people and adults. The Service is comprised of three channels: face-to-face, telephone and web. The Service is delivered in the community by 11 prime contractors in 12 geographical areas. There are also two prime contractors for the helpline.

In recent years career-related information, advice and guidance (IAG) has increasingly been delivered through partnership arrangements. Work to align employment and skills policies has been a key driver of this change and has led to increased collaboration between IAG providers and a range of other organisations, including colleges and training providers, Jobcentre Plus and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

1.2. Evaluation aims and method

The overarching aims of this evaluation were to establish the effectiveness of delivering the National Careers Service in partnership with other organisations and the added value of delivering the Service in venues other than National Careers Service premises. The research incorporated an evaluation of the Deepened Co-location Trials with Jobcentres¹ and Community Walk-in Pathfinders.

Telephone interviews were carried out with representatives of all 11 prime contractors. The evaluation team visited 8 Jobcentres and 24 community venues/organisations where the National Careers Service was being delivered in partnership. 116 members of staff working for the National Careers Service and partner organisations were interviewed along with 140 customers.

1.3. Key findings

National Careers Service contractors' key reason for undertaking partnership working is to help meet or exceed service delivery targets. Partnership working is being used effectively to facilitate access to key target groups, extend the geographical reach of the Service and provide suitable premises for service delivery.

There is some evidence that prime contractors are aligning their plans with wider strategic objectives and are engaged in local strategic partnerships and fora. However, the majority of partnership work remains focused on outputs rather than broader outcomes for customers.

Five distinct models of partnership working were observed: nationally specified, local strategic, organisation focussed, bottom-up, and progression routes. A range of models operate within each prime contractor area.

All contractors undertake nationally specified partnership working. This model enables the service to be planned and evaluated in partnership with other government departments or agencies, thereby providing opportunities for synergy. However, the more partnership work is nationally specified the less scope exists for prime contractors to plan the service on a regional and local basis.

There is some evidence of partnership working being planned strategically with business groups, local authorities and LEAs. This approach allows the National Careers Service to make a direct contribution to developing employment and skills plans. It also allows the Service to develop important links to regeneration and other economic development activities. However, it requires prime contractors to devote necessary time and leadership to developing partnerships, and it is far from clear that encouragements and incentives are in place for this at present.

Most partnership working appears to be focused on bilateral partnerships with key organisations or arrangements developed locally by frontline staff, often with the voluntary and community sector. These models of partnership working build on natural links between services and can ensure that access to the service is provided to disengaged groups. These models are principally developed in response to the need to generate customer referrals to help meet contractual targets rather than as part of more strategic plans.

Some examples of the National Careers Service being integrated with short courses and preparation activities which are linked to local employment opportunities in order to provide clear progression routes for customers were found. While not currently widespread, this approach is focused on labour market needs and contributes to the policy objective of supporting customers to achieve learning and employment outcomes.

Customers rate the National Careers Service highly, however awareness of the Service is low. There are opportunities to improve the awareness and use of the online and telephone channels in particular. Perceptions about the cost of the telephone helpline and a lack of skills and confidence in using the internet are particular barriers that can be addressed.

There is extensive monitoring of outputs and customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service, however there is scope for enhanced evaluation of the unique contribution that the Service makes to the outcomes achieved through partnership working. This will be particularly important as the Service develops a greater focus on customer outcomes.

The Community Walk-in Pathfinders were successful in improving the accessibility of the Service through awareness raising and capacity building. The most effective models of delivery were those which provided dedicated National Careers Service staff that could be deployed flexibly. A key factor in this success was that the funding could be deployed flexibly at a local level and was not subject to specific output targets. However, the extent to which the service itself has been enhanced through the programme is limited. The timescales for developing the Pathfinders meant that aspects of the resulting proposals were opportunistic and lacked innovation. Some planned partnerships and activities did not materialise and/or prove feasible.

The requirement for the Pathfinders to target young people, and specifically those that were NEET, does not appear to have been effectively achieved. Greater incentives are needed for prime contractors to target these customer groups. Partnership working needs to be developed with youth focused organisations.

1.4. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings we offer the following recommendations to BIS and the Skills Funding Agency.

1.4.1. Department for Business Innovation and Skills

- Consider the contribution that the National Careers Service can make to developing and delivering a more integrated employment and skills system and make this clear to other government departments and agencies.
- Develop a shared vision and joint guidance with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding future working arrangements between the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus.
- Provide clear guidance to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) regarding how they can work with the National Careers Service to achieve shared outcomes.
- Ensure that the evaluation strategy for the National Careers Service considers the way that the Service is operating in partnership with others, how outcomes are being achieved and the distinct contribution the Service makes.
- Local partnership approaches to marketing the National Careers Service should be supplemented by national marketing of the Service.

1.4.2. Skills Funding Agency

- Prime Contractors should be required to set out their approach to partnership working in strategic terms, including how it will support broader Government objectives such as growth and localism.
- In order to create an outcomes focused service, prime contractors should be encouraged to develop more strategic (model two) partnerships that provide clear progression routes for customers (model five).
- The funding model needs to be adjusted so that it enables prime contractors to:
 - devote sufficient resources to initiating and sustaining partnership working, taking into account the new responsibilities set out in the Skills Strategy to work with schools and other bodies;

- continue to fund National Careers Service staff with information, advice and guidance experience to provide a triage service to customers; and
 - develop innovative approaches by allowing for the opportunity costs and commercial risks involved.
- Encourage and support the National Careers Service to form strategic partnerships with LEPs and other relevant bodies so that they can engage in the planning and delivery of effective employment and skills plans within their areas.
- If additional funding is available to support service development and innovation, ensure sufficient lead-in time is given to enable prime contractors to provide well-developed proposals with clear outcomes.
- Identify key national voluntary and community sector organisations (for example, The Prince's Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau) that share priority customers and/or broad objectives with the National Careers Service and explore the potential to develop relationships at the national level to help unlock local level partnerships.
- Review existing monitoring and evaluation systems and modify them to ensure they capture outcomes as well as outputs. Produce management information that is used and shared to inform policy and practice at the local and national levels. Ensure systems are capable of demonstrating the distinctive contribution that the National Careers Service makes. Ensure good practice and lessons learned are shared between prime contractors.
- In assessing potential prime contractors' ability to deliver the Service, consider their capability and capacity to set up and maintain successful partnerships, particularly at a strategic level, in order to ensure service delivery is coordinated and contributes to locally-defined priorities for employment and skills.
- Uncertainties about the cost of calls to the telephone helpline from mobile phones should be ended and awareness raised so that as many customers as need to can access it.

2. Background and introduction

2.1. Introduction

This research report has been written by CFE for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It contains the findings from research to examine the effectiveness of delivering the National Careers Service in partnership with other organisations and the added value of delivering the National Careers Service in venues other than National Careers Service premises.

2.2. Policy background

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) policy in England has been subject to radical reform in recent years. The Coalition Government has enacted policies and funding decisions which have reframed the way in which careers work is delivered to young people and adults in England. Key reforms include the withdrawal of support and funding to local authorities for Connexions, with the responsibility for careers guidance for young people passing to schools² and the transformation of the adult Next Step service into a new service providing careers information, advice and guidance to adults and young people aged 13 and over drawing in telephone and online services previously provided by Connexions Direct.

In recent years career-related IAG services have increasingly been delivered through partnership arrangements, including the co-location of service provision³. Work to align employment and skills policies has been a key driver of this change and has led to increased collaboration between IAG providers and a range of other organisations, including colleges and training providers, Jobcentre Plus and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)^{4,5}.

Research has shown that partnership-based delivery of IAG services is helpful in widening access and service availability, enhancing inter-agency referral, and improving the coherence of wider employment and skills offers⁶. However, there are a wide range of challenges that need to be addressed in seeking to optimise operational arrangements⁷. Evidence suggests that partnership works best when relevant organisations employ staff whose role is dedicated to building and maintaining relationships, communication processes such as regular meetings and information sharing are in place, including shared IT systems and databases, and there is a shared vision and a mutual understanding of each organisation's role and capabilities⁸.

2.3. The National Careers Service

The vision for the National Careers Service is set out in Right Advice at the Right Time⁹. The Service's role is to provide "authoritative information on learning and work" and "professional impartial advice" through a nationally branded careers and skills advice service. The service started in April 2012 and supports customers to:

- Develop their career.

- Improve their skills.
- Get ready for work.
- Find out about the types of support available to them.
- Find out about funding to support their learning.

The Service is delivered via three channels (face-to-face, telephone and web) which are designed to operate as a single integrated service. Customers can be referred or signposted between the channels in order to access the support they require in a way that best suits their needs. Young people and adults can access the telephone and web channels as many times as they require. All adult customers can access one funded face-to-face session. Contractors are paid for two further funded sessions for customers in specific priority groups¹⁰. However, these customers may receive more than these two sessions at the contractor's discretion. The face-to-face service is available free to adults in England aged 19 and over (and Jobcentre Plus customers aged 18 and over), whatever their prior skills, qualifications and employment status.

The commissioning, contracting and performance management of the National Careers Service is the responsibility of the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency). The face-to-face service is delivered by 11 prime contractors covering the nine English regions. Recent data provided by the Agency indicates that the National Careers Service is located in 538 job centres and a further 2,429 venues, including dedicated National Careers Service premises, further education colleges, community centres, housing associations, libraries and local authority offices¹¹.

In addition, in order to ensure a seamless careers service offer to support adults in custody, offenders and ex-offenders in the community, the Service was made available in more than 100 prisons across England from August 2012. Current guidance highlights that to deliver this service *National Careers Service contractors will work closely with key partners such as the Prison Service, Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme Providers, NOMS, European Social Fund (ESF) Providers, LEPs, employers and OLASS providers*¹².

At the time of its launch it was indicated that the Service would be able to give 700,000 people face-to-face advice each year and had the capacity to handle one million helpline calls from adults¹³. Service user statistics for the first year from April 2012 to March 2013 show that 667,000 new adult customers received face-to-face advice through over 1.15 million sessions, and there were more than 276,000 telephone calls with adults. There were also over 7 million hits on the website. These data suggest that the balance of service delivery continues to evolve as the on-line provision develops.

Research conducted with National Careers Service customers indicated high levels of customer satisfaction with their adviser's professionalism, helpfulness, knowledge and understanding of their needs, irrespective of the channel used, with around 90 per cent satisfied with each aspect¹⁴.

In terms of service impact, around half of the customers who progressed into employment said the adviser had played a big part (17 per cent) or some part (36 per cent) in helping them to achieve progression. Similarly, of the nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) who had

progressed into learning, three-fifths said that the adviser had played a big part (26 per cent) or some part (35 per cent) in helping them to achieve this goal¹⁵.

In April 2013 the Government launched its latest skills strategy, *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*¹⁶, which highlights the steps it believes are necessary to further strengthen the skills system and the role of the National Careers Service within it.

The skills strategy sets out a number of significant developments in future information, advice and guidance provision for young people and adults, including that:

- *An approach to skills screening and assessment, jointly provided by DWP and BIS through Jobcentre Plus, National Careers Service and colleges, will identify claimants' training needs at the earliest opportunity and ensure they are directed towards the training they need*¹⁷.
- *National Careers Service will play a proactive role in connecting employers, education institutions and local partners...the service will identify and promote opportunities for young people through direct work with employers, schools and colleges, including encouraging business leaders to visit schools and colleges and work with the National Apprenticeship Service and Local Authorities to contact unsuccessful Apprenticeship applicants, or individuals who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), to provide help and support with next steps*¹⁸.
- *Strong joint working between National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus should continue, reflecting the principles of the framework for skills and unemployed learners, so that adults get the support that they need*¹⁹.

In support of this, the Skills Funding Agency's statement indicates that:

*The ambitious agenda for the National Careers Service will require contractors who can provide the highest quality service: one which is strongly focused on outcomes; provided by highly skilled careers professionals working to improve continuously; and delivered in partnership with local organisations and business*²⁰.

A key challenge is going to be to consider how resources available to the National Careers Service can best be deployed to meet this expanding brief and, in particular, to explore what role partnership delivery can play in ensuring its continued effectiveness.

2.4. Aims and objectives of the evaluation

It is within this context that BIS commissioned CFE to undertake an evaluation of National Careers Service partnership delivery. The overarching aims of the evaluation were to establish the effectiveness of delivering the National Careers Service in partnership with other organisations and the added value of delivering the Service in venues other than National Careers Service premises. Partnership delivery in this context is defined as both having a physical presence in sites other than National Careers Service premises and the use of enablers such as technology and processes designed to facilitate joint working between partners.

In order to meet these aims a number of objectives were set. They were to assess the impact of partnership delivery on the number and type of people accessing the National Careers Service and the customer experience. From the provider perspective, the evaluation sought to capture their experiences of co-located and partnership delivery in order to understand the benefits and limitations of partnership working in addition to the impact on local communities. In addressing these objectives, the ways in which partnerships between the National Careers Service and other organisations have been developed and sustained at both a strategic and operational level were examined. The implications that different models might have for service delivery, outputs and outcomes were also explored.

2.5. Methodology

This research to examine National Careers Service partnership delivery was conducted in two distinct stages over a 12 month period. Stage 1 was concerned with an evaluation of the Deepened Co-location Trials with Jobcentres. Stage 2 focussed on the Community Walk-in Pathfinders and other approaches to partnership delivery. Each stage was conducted in a series of inter-related phases which involved both desk research and primary consultation with a range of stakeholders. The primary research was qualitative in nature and was designed to explore the perceptions and experiences of managers, front line staff and customers of partnership working and co-located service delivery.

2.5.1. Stage 1: Deepening co-location trials

The Deepening Co-location Trials were launched in summer 2011 and were funded until June 2012. Twenty-two Jobcentres were involved, and these were selected in order to provide full geographic coverage. The Trials were designed to build on existing working arrangements in all cases in order to achieve:

- a streamlined customer journey and improved customer experience;
- savings from more efficient use of delivery locations by inward location of the Service in Jobcentres;
- enhanced attendance rates; and
- improved outputs and outcomes.

Prior to the trials, the National Careers Service (named Next Step at the time) was co-located in approximately 85 per cent of Jobcentres. However the service was often only available on a part-time basis, and not all aspects of the service were available. In consultation with contractors and DWP, the Skills Funding Agency identified the scope to increase the level of service to Jobcentre Plus customers in up to 95 per cent of Jobcentre Plus offices in England.

Briefing for the trials set out five minimum requirements as follows:

- to provide a discretely branded National Careers Service area within a Jobcentre;

- to provide full-time access to National Careers Service via all channels within the Jobcentre;
- to provide National Careers Service with access to broadband and IT systems;
- to provide National Careers Service with access to private interview facilities; and
- to develop closer working between Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Service advisers.

Participating locations were invited to make innovative suggestions which would provide them “with the capability to enhance co-location arrangements within the nationally-defined minimum model and to provide customers with a deepened employment and skills advice offer”²¹.

Stage 1 of the project examined the co-location arrangements with Jobcentre Plus during case study visits to eight of the 22 Jobcentres that took part in the Deepening Co-location Trials with Next Step. Prior to the visits, Jobcentre Plus leads were invited to complete a specially devised checklist. Interviews were conducted with staff responsible for leading the implementation of the Trials on behalf of Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service, frontline staff from both services, and customers. A total of 39 staff and 40 customers were consulted during this stage. An interim report based on the findings from Stage 1 was published by BIS in December 2012.²²

2.5.2. Stage 2: Other approaches to partnership working

Stage 2 of the evaluation sought to explore partnership development and delivery, including the Community Walk-in Pathfinders, through a consideration of Prime Contractors strategies and delivery models. Telephone interviews were carried out with representatives of all 11 prime contractors. Case study visits were conducted in 13 Community Walk-in Pathfinders and 11 non-Pathfinders operating throughout England. Prior to the case study visits the Community Walk-in Pathfinder Implementation Plans were analysed in order to identify the venue types/locations and level of service being delivered by each of the prime contractors. A matrix of partnership delivery was then formulated which mapped the various forms of partnership working and National Careers Service delivery models. This underpinned the sampling strategy used to identify the regions and individual sites for the fieldwork visits. During the visits 78 staff members were consulted in order to capture the views of those working at both a strategic and operational level within the prime and/or sub contractor and partner organisations. 100 customers who had accessed the National Careers Service through a community venue were also surveyed, either face-to-face or by telephone. Customers were recruited to take part in the survey by frontline staff from the case study sites.

The Community Walk-in Pathfinders began in March 2012 and were funded until April 2013 with the aims of broadening access to careers advice and embedding the National Careers Service within the community. Pathfinders were delivered alongside, and sometimes built on, a range of existing partnership arrangements which were established in all areas in order to enhance the reach of the Service.

Prime contractors were asked to submit plans on how and where the pathfinders would be delivered against a set of minimum requirements, which are shown as follows:

- **to deliver a triage approach to accessing the service** - customers needs are assessed and the customer is directed to the appropriate element of the service based upon their need;
- **to work in partnership to enhance the service offered to customers** – recognise the importance of establishing effective partner working to enhance the service to customers and establish mutually supportive advice networks;
- **to provide access to other channels delivering the service** – provide access to technology to enable customers to access the service through their preferred channel and to provide a point of access to the service to those customers who are not eligible for the face to face community offer;
- **to provide access to the service to young people** – to ensure that there are effective methods of signposting to face-to-face careers advice and other support, to provide access to alternative channels of delivery and promote apprenticeships; and
- **to provide access to the service to young people aged 16 and above who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)** – to ensure that there are effective methods of referral to face-to-face careers advice and other support in place for this customer group, to promote apprenticeships and to provide access to alternative channels of delivery that may be more appropriate.

2.6. Structure of the report

Following this introduction, the report is presented in four further chapters: **Chapter 3** explores approaches to partnership working. Five main types of approach, driven both from the top down as well as from the bottom-up, have been identified through the research. These models are summarised and illustrated with examples taken from the case study evidence, and an assessment made of their effectiveness and appropriate use. **Chapter 4** focuses on the customer experience of the National Careers Service and how this can be enhanced through partnership working. **Chapter 5** offers an evaluation of the Community Walk-in Pathfinders, including an assessment of the extent to which those sites visited have met the minimum requirements and a discussion of the benefits and key lessons learned from the programme. **Chapter 6** draws together the conclusions of the research and provides a series of evidence-based recommendations for the policy-makers responsible for setting the strategic direction for the National Careers Service as it develops in the future.

3. Approaches to partnership working

This chapter considers the different approaches that have been adopted by National Careers Service prime contractors and their sub-contractors to working in partnership with other organisations. We first consider prime contractors' overall aims and strategies in relation to partnership working. We then set out a typology of the different approaches to partnership working observed and the strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches. The chapter concludes by exploring some of the challenges of partnership working and makes suggestions as to the requirements and conditions needed for successful partnerships.

The key findings from this chapter are:

- There is a large degree of similarity in what prime contractors hope to achieve through partnership working. The main driver for partnership working is to increase customer numbers in order to meet or exceed targets. The majority of partnership work is focused on outputs rather than broader outcomes for customers.
- This focus on outputs influences prime contractors' approach to partnership development. While there is evidence that prime contractors in some instances are aligning their plans with wider strategic objectives and are engaged in local strategic partnerships and fora, partnership development is often shaped by a range of practical considerations and the desire to extend the service to reach new customers and geographic areas.
- Five distinct models of partnership delivery were observed: nationally specified, local strategic, organisation focussed, bottom-up, and progression routes. A range of models operate within each prime contractor area, however the less strategic organisation focussed and bottom-up approaches predominate.
- There are a number of inherent challenges in developing effective partnerships, and the success of the arrangement will depend on engaging the right partners and achieving their buy-in to the process, resourcing the partnership, overcoming operational issues, implementing effective channels of communication and developing a shared goal and vision.

3.1. Prime Contractors strategies for partnership working

The National Careers Service is administered nationally by the Skills Funding Agency, managed regionally through prime contractors, and delivered locally by them and sub-contractors. Sub-contractors are used to a varying degree. Direct delivery by prime contractors ranges from under a quarter (23 per cent) of provision to well over three-quarters (85 per cent) in some regions. This can impact on the extent to which partnership working is planned centrally as opposed to being devolved to sub-contractors along with delivery responsibilities. We interviewed a representative from each prime contractor as

part of stage 2 of the research and asked them about their aims and priorities for partnership work.

At a general level there is a large degree of similarity in what prime contractors said they were aiming to achieve through partnership working. All but one of the prime contractors described their objectives for partnership working in terms that related to a need to increase customer numbers and meet targets. Partnership working was described as an effective way to widen the reach of the service in terms of its geographical coverage and/or the range of customers engaged.

*Our strategy is to exceed the contract targets we have. So it's very much about delivery, reaching out to a broader range of customers. The aim is to actually see more people than we're contracted to deliver in any one year. **Manager, Prime Contractor***

Four of the 11 prime contractors explained that partners provide a valuable way to market the service in the absence of a specific marketing budget. Three indicated that a desire to reach specific target or priority groups was an important driver, and that this also informed the selection of partner organisations and venues. Not all prime contractor organisations have suitable premises from which to deliver the National Careers Service. The opportunity to utilise partners' premises in order to deliver the service was a further important reason why they worked in partnership.

Partnership working therefore offers an effective and efficient solution to a number of the practical constraints on contractors, thereby enabling them to not only meet their targets but also to ensure they serve a wide range of customers. The range of approaches to identifying and managing partnerships reflects these pragmatic concerns. Strategies for partnership working tend to involve identifying suitable partners (or sub-contractors) to fill identified gaps in service provision, whether these are related to widening geographic coverage or providing additional/specialist services to meet the needs of priority groups. A common model described was for potential partners to be identified at the local level by sub-contractor staff, including advisers or engagement workers. The partnership was then developed and maintained centrally (or at a sub-regional level) by managers responsible for monitoring delivery to ensure the provision is filling gaps rather than duplicating or overlapping with existing provision and that partners and venues are generating sufficient referrals to remain viable.

Four of the prime contractors described their aim for partnership working in terms of creating a "coherent" and "consistent" service. Of these, two outlined strategies that were explicitly aligned with wider strategic objectives for the region. While retaining a focus on their own targets and priority groups, these prime contractors considered how the National Careers Service could contribute to broader strategic objectives and how they could work with a range of different partners to better meet the needs of local people and the economy. These contractors were represented on key strategic partnerships and fora and used their involvement to develop a fuller understanding of local needs and where their input could be most effective. One contractor reported that their involvement in these groups had also resulted in them being approached by partners to work together rather than the other way around.

Although there is some evidence that prime contractors are engaged in projects and partnerships that are clearly strategic in their aim and outlook (see sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.5 below), it is notable that few prime contractors described strategic objectives that focused on customer *outcomes* rather than outputs as a key driver for partnership work. This reflects the current levers and drivers exerted through the contractual arrangements. However, it does mean that opportunities to enhance the National Careers Service through partnership working could be further maximised, and this will be essential if the Service is to develop to become more outcome focused.

The overall approaches to partnership working adopted by prime contractors are effective in ensuring that the service is accessible to many people and makes good use of limited resources. Beyond this, approaches do not appear to be particularly strategic, and little consideration is given to how the service might contribute to wider national or regional objectives for economic development and growth. If the Service is to become more aligned with wider policy aims it must be made clear to prime contractors that they should consider how the Service fits with local and national strategies when planning service delivery and partnership working. Sufficient flexibility must be maintained in order to enable prime contractors to select the most appropriate partnerships and ways of working to meet local needs. A review of how the Service is funded is also required if attention is to be redirected towards achieving outcomes rather than simply outputs. It will be important that any new funding model recognises that the National Careers Service may just be one of a number of partners that work together to secure a positive outcome for customers. Therefore, resources are required to establish and maintain appropriate partnerships and to develop shared systems and processes capable of tracking and monitoring customers throughout their journey.

3.2. Models of partnership working

Our analysis of the different forms of partnerships operating in the context of National Careers Service delivery would suggest that they can be broadly categorised within five main models:

- One: Nationally specified
- Two: Local strategic
- Three: Organisation focussed
- Four: Bottom up
- Five: Progression routes

Each is described below in terms of their distinguishing *characteristics* and their *strengths and weaknesses*. This is followed by an assessment of the contexts in which they are most appropriate and effective.

The models relate to individual partnerships or projects. Prime and sub-contractors appear to deploy a number of different approaches with different partners and for different purposes. One particular approach might be dominant, but they are not mutually exclusive.

The proposed models are not discrete. Some of the partnership projects examined involved elements of more than one model. There is no one partnership model which is 'best' and all are effective to some extent. Different models are appropriate for achieving different objectives in different contexts. However, the models provide a starting point for distinguishing the very different approaches that are taken, including whether these are essentially being driven 'top down' or 'bottom-up'.

3.2.1. Model One: Nationally specified

Characteristics

The key characteristic of *nationally specified* partnership working is that it is specified within operational guidance for prime contractors on delivery. Prime contractors have been advised to support particular priority customer groups in national guidance (see section 2.3).

Partnership work with Jobcentres has become particularly important in supporting those on out of work benefits. Stage 1 of this research explored this model in operation through fieldwork visits to Deepened Co-Location Trial areas. As indicated in an earlier report²³, a number of prime contractors deliver the National Careers Service in between 80 to 100 per cent of Jobcentres in their area. Prime contractors report that they receive from 50 per cent to over 80 per cent of their face-to-face customers through referrals from the Jobcentre.

Current guidance²⁴ highlights that there is a strong need to develop effective partnership working to support offenders into employment. Prime contractors are advised that to deliver this service they "...will work closely with key partners such as the Prison Service, Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme Providers, NOMS, European Social Fund (ESF) Providers, Local Enterprise Partnerships, (LEPs), employers and OLASS providers". It was not part of the research brief to consider partnership work with offenders in prisons. It might be useful to consider this in future evaluations.

Strengths

The key strengths of partnership working that is nationally specified are that it:

- raises the awareness of the National Careers Service within other government departments and supports the delivery of wider policy initiatives;
- gives the National Careers Service contribution *status* - as part of a national initiative - and *value* in respect to the recognition of the particular expertise that the National Careers Service can bring;
- provides a clear and agreed way in which the Service can be delivered in partnership which can be supported through joint guidance issued by the relevant departments;
- creates the opportunity for increased coherence in the delivery of integrated employment and skills strategies; and

- creates the opportunity for national benchmarks and performance measures to be developed, against which the role and impact of the National Careers Service can be assessed, including its contribution to wider policy objectives.

Weaknesses

The main weaknesses of this model that need to be taken into account in planning partnership delivery in this way are that:

- national specifications could reduce the scope that prime contractors have to plan delivery with local and regional partners;
- practical and logistical constraints may mean that nationally specified services cannot always be delivered as envisaged and may require longer lead in times to implement;
- guidance issued by different departments for joint delivery needs to be clear and complementary and any tensions between the goals and/or targets of different partners resolved; and
- it must be possible to deliver what is specified within available resources, particularly if it is additional to original service specifications.

The nationally specified model is most appropriate when central government has a clear vision for a service to be delivered to a clearly defined customer type. The model's key strength is that it ensures a consistent service is delivered across the country to specific customer group/s. The weakness is that it reduces the flexibility that contractors have to determine with whom they work. The use of this model could be extended where there is a need for greater direction of prime contractors to work with specific priority customers, partner organisations or to fill clearly defined gaps in service delivery, for example, working with NEET young people. Where priority groups are more generic and there is less need for service levels to be directed, then other models provide greater local flexibility for approaches to be tailored to meet local needs within varying contexts.

Example of model one: Deepened Co-location Trials

The Deepened Co-location trials operated from September 2011 until March 2012 in 22 locations. The guidance for the trials included a set of minimum requirements. However, scope existed for National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus managers to discuss and agree what provision that they thought would be particularly effective in selected offices.

In the best provision customers were able to access all three channels of the National Careers Service. For example, in one Jobcentre there was a discretely branded area in the entrance, including a dedicated desk from which the face-to-face support was delivered, a National Careers Service PC and printer and a bank of customer telephones.

To support the use of these resources, managers and advisers from the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus worked together to agree referral procedures and processes. An information adviser helped facilitate arrangements and dealt with ad-hoc queries and referrals. They said of the arrangements that:

A lot of the advisers have a lot more knowledge of the service than they did before. Often Next Step was seen as a CV referral...we don't have that issue anymore as they know there's a computer there to refer to for CV support. The actual careers advice is being used more appropriately.

Our research suggested that the Deepened Co-location Trials successfully extended the reach of the National Careers Service and provided additional capacity to deliver interventions to Jobcentre Plus customers. Co-located service delivery brought a range of benefits, including improved awareness of the National Careers Service, increased referrals and a reduced failure to attend rate.

Example 1: Deepened Co-location Trials

3.2.2. Model Two: Local strategic

Characteristics

As noted in section 3.1, prime contractors' overall approach to partnership working does not generally appear to be planned to support a particular strategy beyond increasing service use. However, we did uncover examples of partnership initiatives that support local economic development strategies. Local strategic partnership working is characterised by several key partners (most notably local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), chambers of commerce) coming together to plan delivery in order to address agreed objectives within a wider local employment and skills agenda.

A quarter of the case study visits featured involvement with local authorities. This was mainly in regard to service planning but was also frequently linked with joint delivery. A few prime contractors with strong links at the local authority level were engaged in strategic

planning meetings and wider area network groups where there was local authority representation. In other areas strategic planning was undertaken in connection with services that are operated by local authorities and other partners, such as jobs shops. These services were in turn connected with wider area strategies such as developing employment and resilience in communities.

Alongside work with local authorities there was evidence of some work with business-focused groups such as chambers of commerce, although this was not widespread. Little evidence was also found of work with Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), although it is clear from other research²⁵ that this is occurring in some areas (for example, in regard to the collection of labour market information (LMI)). As the key local strategic bodies for economic development and growth, LEPs are important partners for the National Careers Service. Prime contractors should seek out opportunities to engage with LEPs in order to gain a mutual understanding of each others' objectives and priorities and to explore how the National Careers Service can contribute to these. BIS can support this at a national level by providing a clear message to LEPs on how the National Careers Service can help them to achieve shared outcomes.

As noted above, much of the more local strategic work has focused on the provision of one-stop shops or similar provision, where a number of services are housed under one roof. These appear to be most successful where the model goes beyond co-location and ensures all partners subscribe to a common aim and are carefully selected to provide an integrated, holistic and seamless service for customers. Location is also an important consideration in making such a centre work. The evidence indicates that customers like related services under one roof, but also for them to be local and accessible. Having a single, large, central service hub does not always work if many of the target customers are unwilling or unable to travel to access it. There is clearly a role for hyper-local or peripatetic provision for more dispersed communities, both urban and rural. While this type of provision appears to be generally provided through models three and four below, there is no reason why it could not form part of a more strategically planned approach.

Strengths

The key strengths of local strategic partnership working are that:

- It enables the National Careers Service and partners to develop a shared vision and goals while working collaboratively to achieve individual organisational targets.
- Consideration can be given to which organisations are best placed to take different areas of work forward.
- Resources can be combined to enhance local service provision, especially for mutual priority groups (for example, young people aged 18 to 24), thereby helping to provide a more seamless, tailored service which is driven by the needs of the customer rather than the restrictions on funding;
- It can help in creating useful synergies, including leveraging in funding from different sources, thus increasing potential outcomes.

- Work with LEPs and Chambers of Commerce has the potential to help identify current and future labour market needs and thus enable the National Careers Service to help prepare individuals to take advantage of local opportunities.

Weaknesses

The main weaknesses that need to be taken into account in developing partnership working in this way are:

- Strategic planning requires prime contractors to develop a clear engagement strategy and to resource this adequately, including devoting the necessary levels of senior manager time to the activity.
- It requires prime contractors to have the confidence and ability to win the 'hearts and minds' of the necessary partners and to be able to deliver agreed plans over time.
- Frontline staff may be required to work in different ways and in different environments, and they may require training and/or support to make this transition.
- Greater levels of strategically planned work may mean less resource is available for locally/organisationally responsive delivery (as in models three and four).
- The wider the range of services available the better the triage has to be in order to ensure that individuals get the support that best meets their needs.

Depending on the distance of the customer from the labour market, it is likely that a range of services offered by different partners will be required to address their needs. The local strategic model ensures that the different partners develop shared objectives and that resources are deployed effectively, thus providing a comprehensive and streamlined package of services to enable customers, including those with complex needs, to achieve their goals. This model is therefore effective in focussing attention on the ultimate *outcomes* for customers rather than on counting *outputs*. If the aim is to focus the National Careers Service more on the achievement of outcomes in the future, a greater use of strategic models of partnership working will be required with a shift in emphasis away from approaches that simply seek partners that increase the number of target customers that appear to dominate at present.

Example of model two: Coventry Job Shop

The Job Shop in Coventry was officially opened in February 2013 as a result of a partnership between the City Council, CSWP (prime contractor) and Jobcentre Plus. The Job Shop builds on and extends the success of a previous initiative in order to locate all aspects of employment support under one roof. These include careers advice (face-to-face, by phone and online), vacancies, funding support, and training. A unique and dedicated Youth Zone has also been created within the Job Shop to support an additional 250 NEETs into positive destinations. A further 200 vulnerable people will also be supported through the initiative, many of whom would not be eligible for employment support through Jobcentre Plus.

The Chief Executive of CSWP and the Employment Team Manager at the City Council initially developed the vision for the Job Shop. They subsequently brought together senior managers and operational staff from all of the key partner organisations to form a strategic group with the responsibility for driving the implementation. A partnership manager was appointed by the City Council to oversee the development and implementation of the Job Shop. They have worked closely with the dedicated Job Shop Manager who has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the facility. CSWP advisers now work seamlessly with city council employment advisers as one team to support customers into work and training.

The shop location, environment and integrated team approach has proved particularly successful at engaging customers who may have otherwise been reluctant to access support and is delivering a seamless service capable of progressing customers into positive outcomes.

This shop is as important to all the different providers as it is to the people using it...It is a joint vision...It's also because there is such a level of investment from each partner. It's not like someone has invested everything and we've all come onboard. It's the sum of the parts. It doesn't work without all those parts being here, and I think everyone recognised that quite early on. **Frontline staff member**

The Job Shop is a fantastic example of how a range of partners can commit to support local people to get the best employment and learning advice. The shop provides what the customer wants in a way the customer wants it, in a place the customer likes and values. **Steve Stewart, Chief Executive, CSWP**

Example 2: Coventry Job Shop

3.2.3. Model Three: Organisation focused

Characteristics

An *organisation focused* partnership delivery model involves prime- and/or sub-contractors working in partnership on a bi-lateral basis with a single organisation (or sometimes with a network of organisations) to achieve specific goals or service synergies.

The organisations that the National Careers Service is working with in this way most commonly include colleges, training providers, libraries, children's centres, housing associations and a variety of community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations.

The Skills Funding Agency has indicated that the National Careers Service has a presence at some 186 further education college sites in England, of which 48 were sub-contractual arrangements. There are clear synergies to be gained from locating the National Careers Service within colleges, particularly in terms of targeting young people, however many colleges employ their own careers advisers. Along with local authority provision for vulnerable young people and NEETs there is a danger that the different providers do not work together, and that as a result provision is unconnected and opportunities for adding value missed.

Our research found examples of the National Careers Service working with colleges to fill gaps in provision for adults. However, the best examples went beyond the provision of a parallel service for specific target groups to become more integrated in the core offer. One prime contractor reported that advisers had "embedded themselves as part of their [college] staff" and worked with them on specific projects. For example, the expertise of National Careers Service advisers was drawn on as part of a course to improve employability and help students progress into specific careers. In these examples the partnership exhibited elements of model 5 'progression routes'.

Experience of partnership working with the same type of organisation is variable across contractors. While one prime contractor described how they had had limited success with housing associations and children's centres, another stressed that one of their strongest emerging partnerships was with local housing associations because of the opportunities to work with tenants in the light of the Welfare Reform Act. Even within contractor areas, similar organisations do not respond in a uniform way to the suggestion of partnership. This highlights the importance of understanding local and organisational contexts, pressures and ways of working and tailoring approaches and expectations accordingly (see section 3.3 on challenges and conditions for success). This model of partnership working can be constrained by the organisations operating locally, their willingness and ability to collaborate and the extent to which their current priorities fit with those of the National Careers Service. As priorities and context change the appropriateness of partnerships should be reviewed.

Half of the case study visits fitted within this delivery model. Within these, four case studies also demonstrated elements of other models. For example, a partnership with a local job shop was developing progression routes in learning and work (model five), while work with a mobile library service provided a valuable mechanism to carry out further local networking (model four). This illustrates the way in which engagement with a carefully selected partner can be a springboard to bigger and better things.

Organisation focused partnership working can help prime contractors meet their targets as it provides a good way of accessing customers, and the likely footfall in partner venues was often a key consideration in the selection of partners. However, there is a risk with this model that the focus is on the volume of customers reached rather than on reaching the customers with the greatest need. Where contractors have selected partners in order to reach priority groups it is not always clear that those partners are the most appropriate or effective way of achieving this aim.

Strengths

The key strengths of this model of partnership working are that:

- Services (both those provided as part of the National Careers Service, and those provided by the partner organisation) can be planned to meet the needs of agreed groups and/or localities.
- Partnerships can harness and be developed on the basis of the specific strengths or raison d'être of the partner organisation.
- Having fewer partners may mean that the work is more tightly focused, more closely managed, and easier to monitor and evaluate.
- Service reach can be potentially expanded by developing a range of partnerships which are managed by sub-contractors as well as prime contractors.

Weaknesses

The main weaknesses are that:

- work has to be planned and undertaken within organisational constraints;
- work may be biased by the partner organisation's ways of working and/or become too focused on helping them achieve their objectives/targets;
- there is a risk that partnerships may be shaped by meeting volume targets at the expense of extending the service to the hardest to reach customers;
- opportunities for adding value, working strategically and integrating services may be missed if the focus is on co-location or referral routes; and
- wider area considerations may not be taken into account in planning the provision.

This model is the obvious route for extending the reach of the National Careers Service, both geographically and to priority customers, and it is widely used by prime contractors for these purposes. Appropriately selected and supported bi-partite partnerships are successful in generating referrals, providing opportunities to market the service, and sites from which the service can be delivered to local communities. We found some examples of this model being developed further, but in many cases opportunities to do so might be limited. This is a reasonably effective way of working, but as each partnership is developed and maintained on a one-to-one basis it can be relatively resource intensive. This does not appear to be a problem where the partnership is generating good numbers of referrals, however the emphasis is again placed on outputs, and opportunities for a more strategic or value-added approach may also be limited.

Example of model three: Boston Citizens Advice Bureau

As part of their Pathfinder programme, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures approached Citizens Advice Bureau across the East Midlands. CABs handle a significant number of enquiries relating to employment and education. Many more people approach the CAB for help with debt, which may be exacerbated as a result of being unemployed or in low paid work. It was felt that the National Careers Service could provide a service that would help many CAB customers. Each CAB is autonomous and the manager of each can make their own decisions about working practice and partnership links. It was therefore necessary for Futures to approach each CAB in the region on an individual basis and tailor expectations according to the differing levels of capacity.

The relationship with Boston CAB has proved to be particularly fruitful. Boston CAB responded enthusiastically to the approach from Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures. An important lesson here is that there is a high demand for CAB services, and the prospect of additional referrals from the National Careers Service was not an appealing offer. Instead, Boston CAB recognised the ways in which the National Careers Service could help them to provide a better, more holistic service to their clients by offering a way to address their underlying issues. The CAB were able to refer clients to the National Careers Service because it is independent and impartial – an important consideration of CABs. It was suggested that engagement at a strategic level with the national membership body might help to facilitate partnerships with CABs in other regions.

With limited resources and staff and volunteers already under pressure, a simple system for referrals and monitoring was set up that fitted seamlessly with the existing practices at the CAB. Training on what the National Careers Service could offer were provided to volunteer advisers on several occasions to ensure that all volunteers knew about the service and that awareness remained high; and this proved to be important in getting the buy-in of volunteers. Partners have regular informal meetings and continue to look for opportunities to build on the partnership and encourage other CABs to take up the National Careers Service offer. Boston CAB now regularly refers their clients onto the National Careers Service.

I thought this is something else we can offer our clients because we're putting the fires out but if the embers are still glowing then it gets us nowhere and next year, they'll be back as clients again. So we're looking for ways in which we can make a more substantial difference to them and this has proved, I think, a very successful extra string to our bow. **Yvonne Robinson, Advice Centre Manager, Boston CAB**

Example 3: Boston CAB

3.2.4. Model Four: Bottom-up

Characteristics

Alongside strategic planning a 'bottom up' partnership development model was found, whereby frontline workers (including advisers) forge links with smaller (often community-based) organisations.

This work is based on active local networking by proactive advisers, triage workers and project co-ordinators. It includes exploring links with potential partners at meetings or events and - where resources allow - visiting potential local partners.

These approaches can complement wider strategic planning. For example, in one prime contractor area with a strong regional emphasis on partnership development there is simultaneously pro-active development work by advisers, which is encouraged and then formalised. It was said that advisers are "very good at forging local links" by "getting their foot in the door". Team Managers follow-up adviser contacts and come to agreements with new partners. The managers subsequently monitor arrangements, both in terms of quality and volume of referrals.

Just under a third of case study visits undertaken were involved in or came about through 'bottom-up' developments of this kind. Indeed, as indicated later in this report it was the focus of much of the effective work observed in the Community Walk-In Pathfinders. Much of this pro-active partnership development is on a suck it and see basis, with arrangements only being formalised and extended if they fulfil key requirements regarding generating demand from priority customer groups.

Strengths

The key strengths of this model of partnership working are:

- It enables the National Careers Service to identify and engage with smaller voluntary and community sector organisations whose role government is increasingly recognising in respect to the learning and skills sector²⁶.
- It can be responsive to changing customer needs. A theme in later visits was the impact of the introduction of the Department of Work and Pension's (DWP) new online job matching service Universal Jobmatch²⁷. This has led some advisers to seek to develop new partnerships and/or to develop job club activities in order to provide customers with support to create CVs and apply for jobs online.
- Arrangements are flexible and pragmatic and can be changed quickly if they are not seen to be effective.

Weaknesses

The main weaknesses are:

- This approach relies on having pro-active staff with good local knowledge and the time available to explore arrangements with potential partners.
- The focus can be on quick wins to increase the number of referrals in order to meet targets rather than forming part of a more coherent strategy.
- In order to evidence impact and outcomes of working in this approach, formalised processes to gather the necessary information are needed.
- The voluntary and community sector landscape is changing, and funding reductions mean that the type and nature of support is changing or has been withdrawn.

The model is particularly effective in generating very local, accessible and responsive provision. However it is opportunistic, almost accidental in some instances, rather than strategic and relies heavily on the drive of individual staff members. The tenacity, knowledge and enthusiasm of local front-line staff represent a valuable asset. This could be harnessed and used by a greater connection between the front-line and strategic level, meaning a greater integration of models two and four. Some contractors engage front-line staff in the partnership development process, and this approach was expanded by the Pathfinder programme. Deploying front-line staff with a clearly defined remit along with dedicated time for partnership development should continue, but with clear links into wider strategic planning and aims. There must be clear routes and mechanisms for frontline staff to report partnership development upwards in order to avoid partnerships being developed in isolation. Frontline staff need to be supported in their efforts, and those working at a more strategic level should seek opportunities to connect provision and develop partnerships beyond simple two-way referral/co-location agreements.

Example of model four: Health in Mind, Colchester

Health in Mind is a service to help people with common mental health problems gain quick access to evidence based talking therapy. It is part of a government initiative to improve access to psychological therapies and is commissioned by the local primary care trust.

They have existing links with Jobcentre Plus, whose advisers refer customers with low levels of anxiety or depression to Support, Time and promoting Recovery (STaR) workers who undertake a mental health assessment and (among other things) support customers with access to education and employment.

When a customer was referred by Jobcentre Plus to see a National Careers Service adviser (co-located in the Jobcentre), the customer asked their STaR worker to accompany them to the meeting for moral support. After this intervention the Health in Mind representatives and the National Careers Service Adviser met to explain each other's services, then agreed to co-ordinate future referrals.

The partnership has proved to be a successful one. The National Careers Service adviser is based in Health in Mind on a specific day each month, with Health in Mind co-ordinating the appointments. This has led to good levels of customer referrals and low failure to attend rates. The model works because the service is client focused. Because of the complex needs of the clients, through local discretion a customer's first appointment is scheduled for one hour in order to develop a shared understanding of the customer's needs and the support the National Careers Service can provide.

This is a good example of a successful partnership being driven from the bottom up. The Health in Mind support worker has an employment remit and drove the organisation's commitment to the partnership in order to provide clients with information, advice and guidance. She had previous knowledge and awareness of the National Careers Service through a previous role and endorsed the service to not only her colleagues but also her clients. The proactive work of the National Career Service adviser was supported by his line manager to trial, run and develop a mutually beneficial partnership. The relationship was given time to mature and there was an appreciation that although it would not be a large volume engagement it diversified the National Career Service customer base beyond their Jobcentre Plus commitment. The offices of both services are only a five minute walk apart, therefore ensuring easy access for customers.

(Jobcentre Plus continues to refer customers to Health in Mind, but apart from being the trigger for the initial meeting between Health in Mind and the National Careers Service advice they are not involved in this partnership.)

Example 4: Health in Mind

3.2.5. Model Five: Progression routes

Characteristics

This model differed from the others in that the primary focus was developing clear progression routes into employment, often with pre-entry training and support. The model goes beyond the enhanced joint-working between prime contractors and Jobcentre Plus developed through co-location activities, in as much as it often involves other partners (for example, Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce and learning providers). A particular feature is that it often includes the design of bespoke programmes for employers in support of significant recruitment exercises (for example, linked to regeneration programmes).

Four of the case study organisations visited had strong features of this model. They include a job shop where support for employers with recruitment was a feature of the provision and where pre-employment training was delivered with local partners. In addition, there was some evidence of joint-working with Jobcentre Plus to support progression. This was especially the case where Jobcentre staff had been seconded to or worked particularly closely with the case study organisations.

The approach is similar to that adopted in Sector-Based Work Academies. Once established these have been assessed as being “an effective mechanism for both building close links between Jobcentre Plus, providers and employers and for getting claimants into jobs” (3, p68).

Alongside these formalised approaches, most prime contractors indicated that they worked in partnership with employers. This appears to be mainly providing redundancy counselling, although some work is taking place to support recruitment. One prime contractor felt that a key selling point of their work with employers was that they recognised the impartiality of the National Careers Service and that they were not using it as an opportunity “to sell a range of other services once they’ve got a foot in door”. A key part of the prime contractor’s strategy has been to organise larger recruitment events, including with wider employer network partners. They have also worked with training providers to plan ‘route ways’ into certain areas of work, including opportunities created through regeneration activities.

Strengths

The key strengths of this model of partnership working are:

- National Careers Service input is planned with partners in order to meet particular employer and/or labour market needs.
- The focus is on each individual’s journey into sustainable work. This involves ensuring that the necessary steps are in place to assess the individual’s aspirations and skill levels, identify barriers to them securing work, and plan immediate steps to make them a viable candidate for specific vacancies.
- It provides a clear basis on which the services provided can be evaluated and their impact evidenced.

Weaknesses

This model typically involves a greater number of partners than the other approaches and therefore may be more complex and time consuming to establish. Furthermore, bespoke programmes for individual employers are also more resource-intensive to develop and are only likely to be viable if the employer is undertaking a significant recruitment campaign. Care needs to be taken to avoid duplicating arrangements that have been developed through other employer engagement work, including the Work Programme. In addition there are a number of key considerations that need to be taken into account when adopting this model of partnership working in order to ensure it is effective:

- employers' needs and requirements need to be fully explored and understood by those guiding and supporting individuals applying for opportunities;
- effective provision needs to be developed in co-operation with employers, and their support enlisted in terms of both 'mock interviewing' and de-briefing unsuccessful candidates;
- the guidance given to individuals needs to be impartial and compliant with standards expected by the Career Development Institute (CDI); and
- work should be undertaken with a wide range of individuals, and not just those who are most 'work-ready'. This consideration is more important where outcome-related funding models are applied.

This model provides a particular type of strategic partnership working that is effective in providing a clear and vital role for the National Careers Service within a wider framework that is focused on achieving outcomes for customers rather than just outputs. The service provided by the National Careers Service is enhanced, not just through the connection of related services but by providing a clear route into the service and then clear next steps for which the National Careers Service prepares customers. Advisers and other National Careers Staff interviewed often expressed frustration about the limit of three funded face-to-face sessions for priority customers. Even with the additional support available through the web and telephone channels, this was perceived to be insufficient to be able to provide the support that customers wanted and needed in order to achieve their goals. One of the most effective progression routes we visited used the three face-to-face sessions in a highly structured way in order to explore and develop suitable action plans. Customers were then passed to a partner organisation which had the remit and capacity to take the plans and work with customers to put them into action. This kind of partnership, while apparently effective, does not appear to be widespread.

Example of model five: Starting Point

Starting Point (www.thestartingpoint.org) is St Helens Chamber of Commerce's employment and guidance service. It aims to make a major contribution to the Borough's economic development and regeneration. It was established in 2001 and provides a range of information, advice, guidance and assessment services to help clients make informed choices about employment and training opportunities and to assist local businesses to recruit staff. It operates through two main offices and more than 80 community venues.

The service is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), St Helens Council and the Skills Funding Agency. It delivers the National Careers Service through its role as a sub-contractor to the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership. It works with over 1,500 service users each month, and last year it helped over 1,000 unemployed people find jobs and more than 100 take-up education and training.

St Helen's Chamber runs a wide range of training and development courses. They work with employers to design appropriate routes for them to recruit staff. The Chamber's business advocates initially discuss employers' needs and requirements. They then arrange through National Careers Service advisers to provide potential candidates with appropriate training and pre-employment support. They negotiate guaranteed interviews with employers and provide training to enable candidates to perform to the best of their ability at interview. They consider this to be a very effective way of helping local people to find work. Recent successful work includes work in co-operation with large retail organisations and local care homes and restaurants.

Example 5: Starting Point

3.3. Challenges and conditions for success

This section draws on the case study evidence to examine some of the challenges for the National Careers Service when working in partnership and seeks to identify the key factors that ensure a successful partnership. The challenges confronted by the National Careers Service are in many ways similar to those that any organisation faces in developing successful partnerships. Much of the effective practice uncovered mirrors established ideas on how to make partnerships work.

3.3.1. Engaging partners

National Careers Service interviewees highlighted challenges in engaging prospective partners. Some Service contacts felt that they needed to prove themselves and the service to partners first. Partners need to know that the National Careers Service is impartial, high quality and fits with their own ethos (see Example 3: Boston CAB). There were sometimes tensions where the service is delivered by a sub or prime contractor that is well known in an area for providing other services such as training, and therefore does not have the same impartial status as the National Careers Service. The use of the National Careers Service brand is essential in this regard.

In some cases National Careers Service staff experienced difficulties getting a foot in the door and making contact with 'the right person'. In larger organisations in particular, identifying and maintaining a contact with the power and desire to drive forward partnership working is a challenge. The provision of careers information, advice and guidance may be just one of a number of issues that managers have to consider, or may not even feature on their list of priorities at all. National Careers Service contractors reported that some potential partners were unwilling to engage in partnership work because of the pressures of their core work. In these instances partnership work is sometimes seen as a distraction from the 'day job'.

This underlines the need for the National Careers Service to think carefully about the partners it wants to engage and clearly articulate how the service can help potential partners to provide an enhanced service to their customers and enable them to achieve desired outcomes. Interviewees reported that making initial approaches to potential new partners by letter or email rarely, if ever, worked. Personal contact by telephone or face-to-face was much more effective. Greater use could be made of brokered introductions through existing partners, for example through membership bodies or networking events. Raising awareness of the National Careers Service and what it can offer at a national level with parent and umbrella bodies may also help to open doors locally.

Interviewees felt that the current climate of austerity and funding cuts has affected the willingness of some organisations to consider partnership working, but views differed on whether the effect was positive or negative. Some felt that the scarcity of funding and the increased need to offer value for money meant that organisations were more likely to seek out partners, especially if this was a requirement of funders. Others felt that organisations were more wary of partnership working, fearing that it might result in a loss of work or customers to potential competitors. The National Careers Service needs to allay fears that they are encroaching on others' territory. There is certainly evidence that the effects of cuts in terms of restructuring, services closing and increased workloads for remaining services has disrupted partnership working in some instances.

3.3.2. Resources

Given the current economic context, the availability or otherwise of resources is a factor in successful partnership working. Prime contractors highlighted that an important benefit of working in partnership is the non-financial resources that partners often provide, be they access to premises or marketing opportunities. The resources that the National Careers Service brings to partnerships (such as the time and expertise of staff, the provision of training, or in the case of Pathfinders, iPads and careers libraries) are an attractive benefit which was shown to incentivise and facilitate partner engagement, particularly in the case of small voluntary organisations. For example, a small voluntary run job club described how, before the National Careers Service came on board, they were struggling with a single worker with limited expertise and little IT equipment. A common partnership 'trade-off' is that space is provided without charge by host partners in order to enable National Careers Service adviser/s to provide services to customers at agreed times. Identifying such mutual benefits has been a key element in unlocking partnership working for many of the organisational focused (model three) and bottom-up (model four) partnerships.

In some instances there is a need for more than this kind of quid pro quo arrangement. There is evidence that some organisations hosting the National Careers Service increasingly require a contribution to their income targets as well as wider service objectives, despite previously offering the use of space free of charge in some cases. One interviewee highlighted that some potential partners were sceptical of proposed partnership arrangements:

A certain amount of 'This is the big society'. 'This is the government trying to get us to do something for nothing'. So there was a little bit of that. **Frontline staff member, Sub-contractor**

As pressures on public sector funding continue to increase, it remains to be seen how sustainable hosting arrangements on the basis of general mutual benefit will be. Partnership models that are more strategic in their focus and working towards shared goals or achieving and improving outcomes may be more sustainable.

3.3.3. Operational challenges

Two or more organisations working together create opportunities for problems to be generated by conflicting systems and cultures. There are limits to the extent to which systems and cultures can be harmonised, however more strategic and integrated approaches offer opportunities to develop bespoke working arrangements. Written agreements can help to make clear roles and responsibilities, but these must be balanced with the need for a pragmatic, flexible approach where partners feel like part of the same team and are willing and able to adjust the way they work in order to achieve wider objectives. For example, a one-stop shop we visited brings together National Careers Service staff, local authority employment advisers, Jobcentre Plus advisers and local training providers to offer a seamless service to customers of all ages. Although each member of staff is line-managed by their employing organisations, a manager has been appointed to oversee and co-ordinate day-to-day operations in the shop. All the staff work in an integrated way, facilitated by an open plan office environment and the decision not to wear a uniform or identity badges that distinguish the staff working for different organisations.

3.3.4. A shared goal or vision

One of the most important requirements for effective partnership working that was described by interviewees was the need for a shared goal or vision. Where partner organisations were united by a common objective, operational challenges were said to be easier to overcome.

In the case of strategic partnership projects the shared vision was developed collaboratively, and identifying where the organisations' aims, objectives and targets overlapped helped to provide the necessary 'glue'. This was not always immediately obvious, and the most effective partnerships were the ones where all parties understood the ways in which each other's offer could add value. The evidence collected also appears to suggest that having a shared goal that is customer focussed engenders greater cooperation and flexibility. Where the National Careers Service is being merely hosted by another partner there is often less flexibility and the service often has to work within more tightly defined constraints imposed by the partner. This is particularly the case where

partner objectives are much wider, differently focused and/or the core business is very distinct from the National Careers Service.

*I think it is different priorities and seeing things differently. [...] We have to work within the parameters of what they allow us to do. Sometimes, it's like any host venue actually, you have a poster up on the wall and it's there one week and then you go the next week and it might have disappeared. **Manager, Prime Contractor***

In contrast, partnerships that are more collaborative and have shared objectives that are tightly defined around supporting customers to progress in learning and work appear to experience fewer of these operational barriers and frustrations. Again, this suggests that greatest added value can be achieved by strategic partnerships providing integrated services rather than simply hosting arrangements.

Interviewees often attributed an effective partnership to the drive and attitude of key individuals. Interviewees spoke of the importance of getting staff at all levels to 'buy-in' to partnership arrangements, especially if the partnership involves a change in the way they work. Mechanisms used to achieve this included early engagement in developing the vision, training, regular meetings and opportunities to raise concerns and suggest changes in a safe and inclusive way.

I think that would be a very important thing for me, would be to involve the staff and ensure that they are all aware of what this will mean for them [...] during that training it was a case of 'well this is our vision, this is what we are hoping to deliver, this is what we want it to look like and you are part of that and it is going to mean something very different.'

Manager, Partner organisation

If frontline staff and volunteers in partner organisations are expected to signpost customers and make effective referrals to the National Careers Service, ensuring they understand the National Careers Service is paramount. Contractors facilitate this through the provision of training and briefings – either in person or virtually. Some interviewees reported that getting frontline staff from partner organisations to fully engage in the partnership takes time, and they were not sure this had been fully achieved in all instances. While it appears that staff are often open to the idea and can see the benefits for customers, they may be uncertain about the impact of additional responsibilities or lack confidence in their own ability to engage customers and signpost them to the service. Again, ongoing support from the National Careers Service helps to nurture and sustain the engagement of frontline partner staff.

3.3.5. Open communication

A final factor which was widely cited by interviewees as an important facilitator of partnership working is the need for open channels of communication. Various initial concerns and misunderstandings about what the National Careers Service wanted of partners and what might be involved in partnership working were identified by contractors and partner organisations. However, where partnerships were successfully developed these issues had been addressed through open and ongoing dialogue. One respondent emphasised the importance of continually checking that all partners involved are getting what they need from the collaboration.

Different mechanisms to ensure effective communication were described, and to an extent what works will be down to the individual partnerships and individuals involved. Some partnerships held regular formal meetings to discuss priorities, funding and alignment of services etc. In other instances more informal arrangements were made, with opportunities for regular communication generated by the operational needs of the project. This latter approach relies on the individuals involved being proactive and comfortable with contacting partners to raise and address issues. Staff funded by the Pathfinders programme (see section 5.2.4) such as champions and partnership facilitators have played a valuable role in this regard by maintaining regular but informal contact with partners in order to keep the National Careers Service on the agenda.

3.4. Chapter conclusions

The National Careers Service is specified nationally, but the diversity of partnership delivery models illustrates the varied ways in which it is currently being planned and delivered both regionally and locally in practice.

Our analysis would suggest that three key questions need to be considered when looking at the effectiveness and applicability of the identified models. These are:

- a) To what extent should the National Careers Service be planned and specified nationally (top-down) as opposed to on a regional/local basis (bottom-up)?
- b) What is the role of the National Careers Service, and with which individuals/groups should it be working?
- c) To what extent should the National Service Careers be seen as providing a discrete information, advice and guidance 'offer' as opposed to being more fully integrated into a wider employment and skills offer for all or specified groups?

The level of National Careers Service provision to certain groups is specified nationally (Model one). As indicated, this has potential strengths, not least in emphasising that the Service is a *national* service, not just one that is being delivered nationally. As such, it can be planned and evaluated in partnership with other government departments and/or agencies and offers real opportunities for synergy. There are two major considerations that need to be taken into account in this model. The first is that the more the work is specified nationally the less scope exists for prime contractors to plan the Service on a regional and local basis. Secondly, where work is jointly-planned with other bodies (e.g. Jobcentre Plus and NOMS, HM Prisons, probation trusts and related bodies), the service 'entitlements' specified by partner bodies need to be deliverable and sustainable in the context of the funding model under which the National Careers Service is delivered. Evidence was found, particularly in the first stage of the research, of partnership working that would have benefitted from clearer and more consistent guidance from the departments/agencies involved in respect to National Careers Service delivery.

Depending on what is required contractually for 'model one' delivery, prime contractors will have varying levels of resources available to deliver services in partnership through the other models. The research was not tasked with, nor has it sought to, determine what these levels might be, but it would provide an interesting area for future enquiry.

Some prime contractors have sought to plan aspects of their provision strategically in connection with other groups such as business groups, local authorities and LEPs (model two). It is clear that this has been more prevalent in areas where there are well-established partnership bodies/groups and in larger urban and metropolitan areas. For this work to be successful, prime contractors need to give it high priority and the necessary time and leadership, and it is far from clear that encouragements and/or incentives have been provided to them to undertake this to date. Where model two has been in place it has given prime contractors a 'place at the table' and allowed the National Careers Service to make a direct contribution to developing employment and skills plans and to help answer the question of who can the National Careers Service best work with locally in order to complement other provision? Crucially, this has the potential to help determine the *added-value* of the Service as it is being planned coherently along with other provision.

The research found that organisation focussed and bottom-up models (models three and four) are the predominant models being deployed at present. The former can form part of a more strategic approach – for example, where services are being planned on a bi-partite basis with major service providers such as FE colleges. The latter can help identify community-based organisations and agencies and ensure that access is being provided to disengaged groups, particularly at a time when reductions in public expenditure are leading to cuts in services and/or potential referral routes. A number of the Pathfinders focussed on this activity, although it is uncertain how much of it will be sustained now that the additional funding has ended. A weakness of model four provision going forward is that it has principally been developed in response to the need to generate 'outputs' in the form of customer volumes to meet contractual requirements rather than for wider purposes.

The lack of evidence of model five delivery would suggest that the National Careers Service is largely being planned and delivered as a discrete offer (either on a face-to-face or a remote basis) as opposed to being linked to progression opportunities. However, the research would suggest that the approach is particularly helpful in the context of the policy objective for the Service to both support and better evidence its outcomes. It is clearly important that career guidance provided by the National Careers Service is impartial and leads to individuals making fully-informed choices. However, delivery models such as Work Choice²⁸ provide examples of how a more integrated approach to service delivery can be provided to key target groups and a structure within which this can be planned in co-operation with other providers. The re-procurement of the National Careers Service offers the opportunity to encourage prime contractors to actively seek to explore and develop the potential of this model in encouraging and monitoring progression.

4. The customer experience of the National Careers Service in partnership

This chapter explores how delivering the National Careers Service in partnership affects the customer's experience. We begin by exploring how working in partnership can improve customer awareness of the service. We then go on to look at the ways partnership working can improve access to the service through the use of community venues and alternative channels (website and telephone service). The chapter concludes with customer perceptions of the service and a consideration of how the impact of the service on customers is monitored and evaluated by contractors and their partners.

As well as the data gathered from the prime contractor interviews and site visits, the chapter draws on the results of the survey carried out with 100 customers who had accessed the National Careers Service through partnership projects.

The key findings from this chapter are:

- Awareness of the National Careers Service is low amongst potential customers, but partnership working provides opportunities to address this.
- Customers like to access services at local venues that they are comfortable and familiar with. Again, partnership working is key in enabling this to happen.
- There are opportunities to improve the awareness and use of the online and telephone channels. Perceptions about the cost of the telephone helpline and lack of skills and confidence in using the internet are particular barriers that can be addressed.
- Customers rate the National Careers Service highly. There is extensive monitoring of outputs and customer satisfaction. However, there is scope for enhanced evaluation of the unique contribution that the Service makes to the outcomes achieved by partnership working.

4.1. Improving customer awareness through partnership working

4.1.1. Awareness raising

There are a limited number of larger-scale studies in respect to adults demand for and perceptions of advice and guidance services. Available research²⁹ suggests that as many as one in four adults cannot spontaneously think of any organisation that provides information, advice and guidance about work, training or learning, and many are unclear about what services the organisations they are aware of actually provide. Although it is to be hoped that this situation has improved in recent years, it is perhaps unlikely given the limited availability of budgets to market and publicise available services.

We asked customers responding to our survey where people can go to get information, advice and guidance (IAG) on learning, training and work. A large proportion of customers surveyed had been referred to the National Careers Service from Jobcentre Plus, and so it is perhaps not surprising that just under three-quarters said that they could access IAG through Jobcentre Plus. The internet (42 per cent) was the second most common source suggested. The local library was another frequently mentioned source, and was suggested by one quarter of respondents. Customers also cited the specific project where they had accessed the service, but these locations are not shown in the chart below. It was clear from the comments made by customers that many of them equated sources of IAG with places to find job opportunities. Over 60 per cent of respondents to our survey were unemployed and seeking work, and a similar proportion had sought help from the National Careers Service to find a job. This suggests that co-locating or linking the National Careers Service with those organisations and locations that are natural places for people to look for job opportunities is a good way to access key groups of customers.

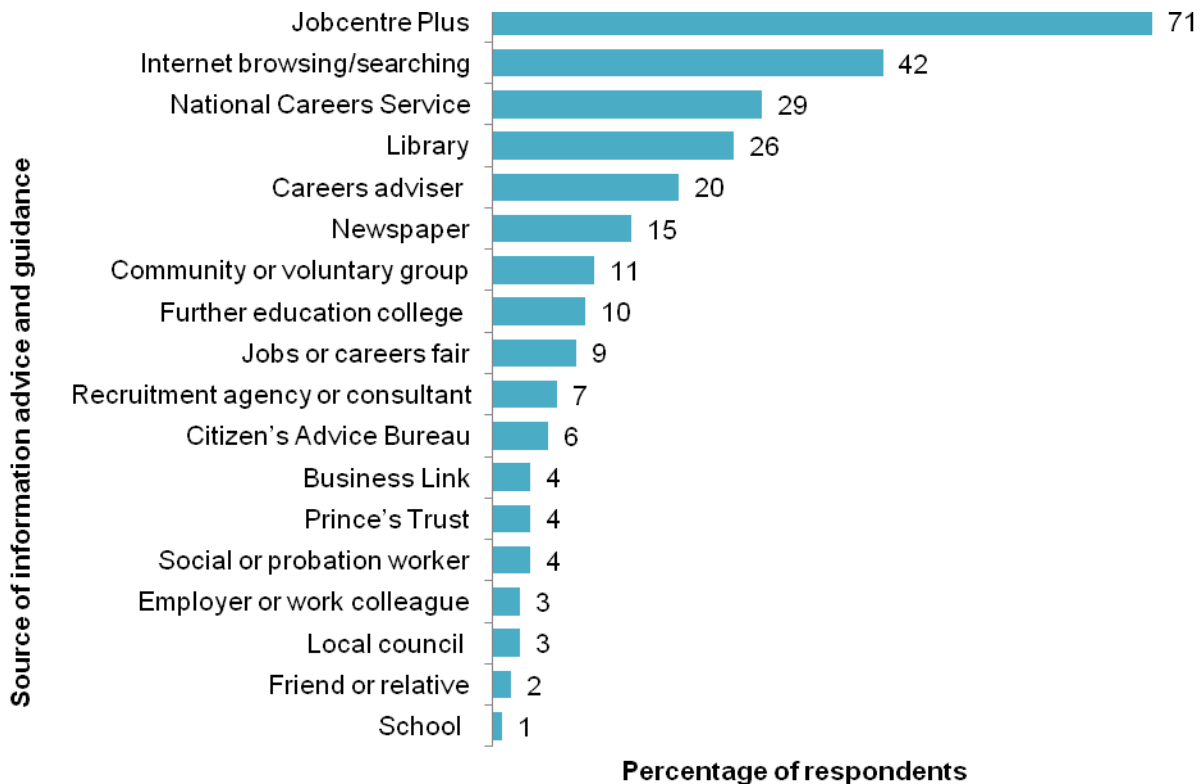


Figure 1: ‘Where can people go to get information, advice and guidance with learning, training and work?’ (Base= 100)

Most customers admitted that they had little or no awareness of the National Careers Service before using it, with a majority (58 per cent) having no knowledge at all beforehand. The clear message is that there is an opportunity to improve awareness of the Service.

The added value of marketing the National Careers Service offer in a partnership setting is potentially threefold:

- It helps in raising awareness of the National Careers Service and its wider promotion and acceptance, particularly if the partner is a known and trusted source of help and advice.
- It provides additional resources to help individuals understand the nature and availability of the National Careers Service offer.
- It links National Careers Service and partner services together, thus creating the potential for a synergy between them. This synergy makes it easier to market both services and provides referral and/or progression opportunities.
- But where a partner has a more visible or recognised brand, there is scope for confusion about who is responsible for the service being offered.

Delivering the National Careers Service in partnership with other organisations provides opportunities to reach a wide and diverse audience through partners' networks, venues and communication channels. Interviews with Careers Service staff reveal that they perceive awareness of the service is increasing as a result of their efforts.

...the word is getting out there. [...] there are less people saying, 'I've never heard of you' than there was at the beginning. I would say that 80 per cent of the people that I spoke to didn't understand or know about the National Careers Service, and that's probably now about 8 per cent... **Frontline staff member, Prime contractor**

National Careers Staff interviewed were generally positive about the change in branding from Next Step to the National Careers Service and felt that this has helped them to market the service. Partnership working was widely felt to be an effective way of marketing the service in the absence of a dedicated local marketing budget, however, partnership working alone is not enough. Greater impact for local partnerships could be achieved through a national campaign to raise awareness of the Service and how it can be accessed.

We also uncovered challenges for marketing the Service in a partnership setting. Ensuring neutrality within public buildings was an issue in some venues. Centre managers may be wary of being seen to endorse one form of provision over another. Some were said to be concerned about shifting the focus away from the core business of the venue. There were also examples, particularly in libraries, where temporary marketing was permitted when an adviser was on site but more permanent materials were not. Marketing materials in a few of the sites visited needed to align with the partner's own branding, and this impacts on the National Careers Services' own branding guidelines.

4.1.2. Signposting and referral

The simplest models of partnership delivery provide access from a partner venue to one or more resources (telephone, web, literature) with little or no mediation from National Careers Service or partner staff. In more extended models of partnership delivery, partner organisation staff receive briefings and/or training about the National Careers Service channels in order to enable them to better promote the service and signpost customers. In some locations there are community walk in coordinators, facilitators and triage staff to proactively engage customers.

Signposting customers can either be reactive, that is directing customers in response to queries, or more proactive, for example a Citizens Advice Bureau adviser referring someone with debt problems linked to unemployment to the National Careers Service for support with finding a job. 'Soft' referrals are those where it was suggested that customers access the service, and this may form part of an action plan. 'Hard' referrals are when an appointment is made for the customer. In some instances customers are personally introduced where services are co-located, such as in a Jobcentre or one-stop shop. These were sometimes referred to as 'warm handovers'. This is a natural extension of the customer journey and is felt to increase the chances that customers will attend appointments.

More sophisticated forms of delivery incorporate all National Careers Service channels (face-to-face alongside facilitated use of the telephone and web services), as seen in some centralised 'hubs' or as part of a wider range of partner services (for example, such as in 'one-stop' shops). There are examples where National Careers Service advisers and advisers from other organisations (for example, housing associations, local authorities and charities) deliver advice sessions from community venues at the same time. There were clear benefits associated with this approach. There is generally a healthy flow of customers, and different agencies offer different but complementary forms of advice so are not competing for customers, and this allows 'warm handovers' as described above.

The issue of how best to develop signposting and referral systems has been explored in a number of contexts³⁰. Our analysis is that in a guidance context the five key attributes of an effective referral system are:

1. That customers are aware why the referral is being made and how it will be of benefit to them.
2. They are aware of what the service will consist of.
3. They are clear about who will deliver the service and where and when it can be accessed.
4. They are clear about how the referral will be followed-up (including what the penalties for not attending are in the case of skills conditionality).
5. There is a clear system for transmitting this information and responsibilities for reminders etc and for the exchange of information.

Increasing the effectiveness of referral measures can impact on the reduction of 'failure to attend' (FTA) rates for appointments. Not all examples of referral processes examined were working effectively.

Sometimes they don't know why they've come. They turn up with a letter, which has given them an appointment time, and they don't even know who we are, what we are, why they've come. You know, it can be very annoying to have people- for them, as well as for us. **Frontline staff member, Sub-contractor**

In order for referrals to be effective, staff in partner organisations need a good understanding of the National Careers Service. They need to be confident and sufficiently well-briefed to prepare customers on what to expect. See section 3.3.4 on the importance of supporting frontline staff in partner organisations.

4.2. Improving accessibility through partnership working

4.2.1. Use of partner venues

Partnership working is critical to ensure the National Careers Service is accessible. A large proportion of face-to-face services are delivered from partner venues as prime contractors have limited premises from which to provide the service. The evidence indicates that where the service is located is important, both in terms of physical access and in terms of how the service is viewed by customers.

A number of factors inform how partner venues are selected and used by prime and sub-contractors, including the likely footfall and the ability to secure necessary appointments from this.

If a venue does not generate the required number of appointments, and/or people don't attend, the decision is taken to withdraw provision because we can't afford to stay there.

Manager, Prime Contractor

There can be tension between providing an accessible service to priority customers and ensuring the service is commercially viable.

Although the footfall there isn't fantastic, at least we're supporting them and they're not having to say 'Sorry, you've got to travel all the way to [town name] from here.'

Manager, Prime Contractor

Prime contractors work with their sub-contractors as the local experts in order to identify venues. Good local knowledge is valuable in sourcing appropriate venues. Understanding local affiliations, transport links and services can help in identifying suitable locations. As pointed out in section 3.2.2, large central venues are not always effective in reaching potential customers who are unable or unwilling to leave their immediate environs. Providing the service at a neighbourhood level rather than at a single town/city centre location may help to improve accessibility. For example, one interviewee spoke of the need to target provision at a very local level in order to best meet the diverse needs of an area.

...you cannot take a homogenous mass and say, 'This is it,' because it's not. It's lots of little communities. If we were taking the project forward, then one of the things I would want to do is a lot more small events in little communities, rather than doing big careers fairs...

Frontline staff member, Prime contractor

Using community venues such as housing association offices and children's centres can help to target specific customer groups. However, there is also a risk that regular patrons are engaged and other potential customers are missed. Venues with very specific customer groups may not be ideal if the objective is to reach a wider audience. For example, where services are located in a housing association office, it has taken time to get the message across that the service is available to the whole community and not just tenants:

We have just people in the community who are walking past, pop in and say, 'Can I come in? I thought it was just for the tenants,' 'No, it is for the community come in.'

Frontline staff member, Prime contractor

Customers were asked for their thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages of locating the National Careers Service in local venues. Almost all those who responded were positive about co-location and saw this as an advantage. The most common responses related to the accessibility of the location were it being close to home, within walking distance, on local transport routes or at a venue respondents would be visiting anyway. The only negative comments were clearly from those who were visiting the venue from further afield, as they related to the distance they had travelled. Several comments were made contrasting the atmosphere and approach of National Careers Service based in community locations with that in Jobcentres. Community settings were felt to be more comfortable, familiar, relaxed and supportive, therefore making it easier for customers to explain their needs and get the help they want. This agrees with staff perceptions that customers prefer familiar, relaxed and informal environments, and that this in turn means that they are more open and receptive to advice and help provided. Some customers also highlighted the benefits of having a number of different services under one roof. Where respondents had received a more specialist, targeted service (notably offenders) they highlighted the benefits of a service that understood and could respond to their particular needs.

4.2.2. Service channel use and preferences

Improving access to the National Careers Service also means improving access to alternatives to face-to-face support. The National Careers Service is comprised of three main service channels, and the partnership arrangements explored incorporated the three channels to varying degrees. Customers taking part in our survey had clear views about how they would prefer to access information and guidance on learning, training and work. A majority (58 per cent) said they would prefer to access *information* by talking face-to-face with someone. An even greater proportion (81 per cent) said they would prefer to access *advice and guidance* by talking face-to-face. However, it is important to note that all except one of the customers surveyed said they had received some kind of face-to-face support, be it a formal interview, informal help or participation in a group session. 38 per cent had also made use of the website. Only 9 per cent had used the telephone helpline. Different channel preferences might be found in a survey of those who had made greater or sole use of the telephone and/or web service.

Customers responding to our survey were also asked about their likely future use of the National Careers Service website and telephone helpline. Customers rated likelihood on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely). On average, customers appear more likely to use the website (mean score = 3.9) than the telephone helpline (mean score = 2.8) in the future. See Figure 2 below.

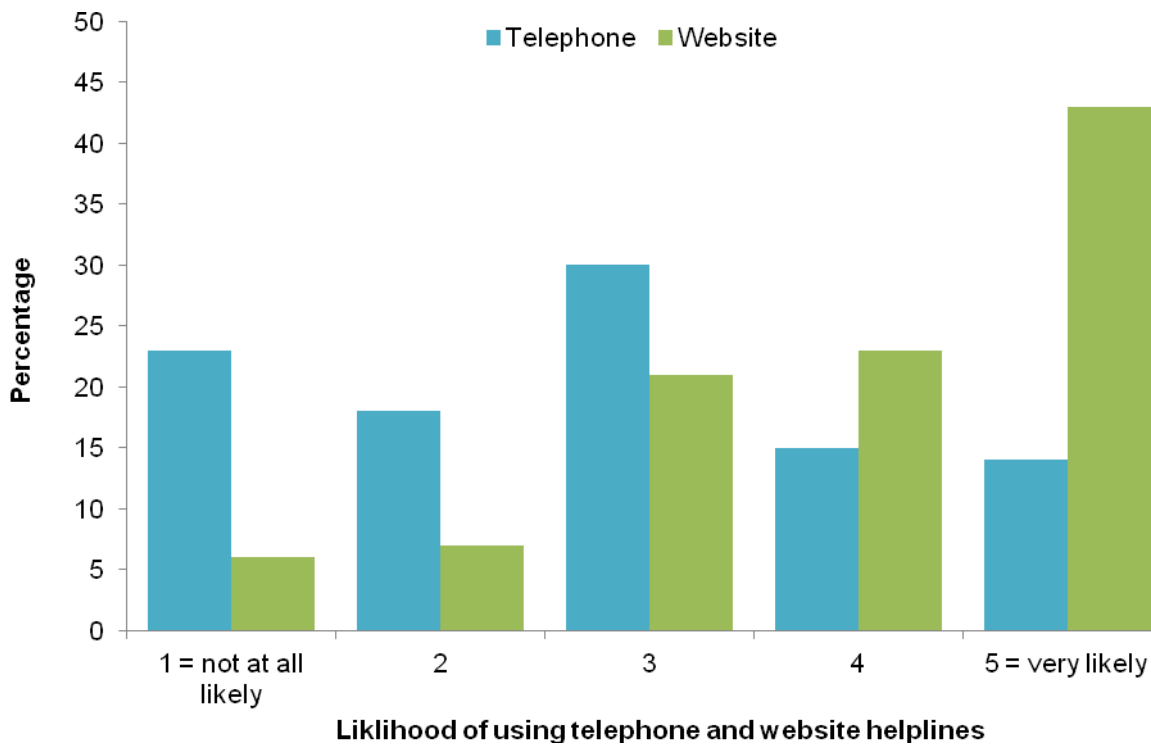


Figure 2: Likelihood of customers using the National Careers Service telephone helpline and website in the future.

We asked customers what would increase the likelihood of them using the telephone helpline or website in future. Many of the respondents gave no detailed answer, either because they said nothing would increase their likelihood of using these channels or they were already receptive to them. One of the most common responses beyond this was that they were simply unaware of the remote channels and might well use them if they knew more about them. Given that many customers appear to be receptive to the idea of using the remote channels, and the website in particular, there is clear scope to increase the use of these channels through greater promotion and awareness raising.

The most frequently mentioned barrier to greater use of the website was a lack of IT skills. This issue is not unique to the National Careers Service; there is a general shift towards the online delivery of a range of key services including benefits such as universal credit, and there is an increasing need to address customers' IT skills and access issues as a result. The majority of the Deepened Co-location Trial sites visited had installed or were in the process of installing internet-enabled, open-access computers for customers through which they could access the National Careers Service as well as work and benefit-related services. Many of the pathfinder and other venues visited also provided internet access.

However, addressing customers' low level IT skills is a more significant challenge. Our visits uncovered examples of good practice where advisers effectively used the website with customers as part of one-to-one sessions. This enhanced the advice session and gave customers confidence to return to the website on their own later. Our review of Pathfinders (see section 5.2.2) found that the provision of IT equipment for customers to use was most effective when supported by National Careers Staff. One of the 'one stop shop' projects visited provided IT training as part of the suite of services available. Not only did this improve customers' skills and confidence, the training was clearly linked to supporting the use of IT to find work and included use of the National Careers Service CV

templates. This is a good example of how a partnership approach is enhancing the service customers receive and breaking down barriers to them accessing more of what the National Careers Service has to offer. Contractors should look to replicate this approach in similar settings.

The two reasons most frequently mentioned for not using the telephone service (after lack of awareness) were a general dislike of using the telephone to get information and advice and perceptions of the cost. Customers assumed that calling the service from a mobile phone would not be free. Ofcom³¹ has recently published a consultation paper on simplifying charges to non-geographic numbers. The reasons given by customers for not using the telephone service would suggest the issue here is *both* a general lack of awareness of the telephone service and a lack of clarity about the cost. The National Careers Service website³² currently states that: 'with our call back service, mobile users get free calls too', which suggests that it is *not* a free service for callers using a mobile. This is misleading and may still be a barrier, as most of the respondents to our survey raising this issue said they often had no mobile credit. Uncertainties about the current cost could be ended by providing a clear statement about this in all National Careers Service publicity and at the start of any call to the telephone service.

Encouraging customers who expressed a dislike of talking over the telephone to use the service is more challenging. There may be some who are unlikely to ever use the telephone service. However, advisers could play role in encouraging their customers to use the service by building their confidence and promoting the value of the channel, including the benefits to customers in terms of convenience and continuity of service.

With some notable exceptions we found a generally a low level of awareness and use of the telephone channel amongst advisers. Some advisers reported that they had never telephoned the service, and only a minority seemed to be clear about how it could complement and extend the face-to-face provision. Some interviewees felt that the telephone channel would not be popular or appropriate to many of their customers.

*I think the biggest thing was, and this was from I would say, a company point of view or from an adviser point of view is there's some element of, 'You can't [give] careers advice on a telephone can you? That's not a proper service. It needs to be face to face.' I think a lot of people still carry that around which I don't think is right. **Manager, Sub-contractor***

However, there were some good examples of the telephone being used to assist non-English speaking customers and of the promotion of the telephone channel as a flexible and accessible option, particularly in remote areas. Improving the understanding of frontline staff of what the telephone channel has to offer and how it is delivered might go a long way to improving referrals to this channel. The interviewee above goes on to explain:

*I went on a training course and there was a lot of people, the majority of people were from the telephone line and I got speaking to them. They told me the types of things, they actually showed me how they were doing it and it was fabulous. [...] I think ever since then, I've promoted the telephone service so much more than I ever did do before because it was my belief that was stopping me... **Manager, Sub-contractor***

This is supported by the evaluation of the Deepened Co-location Trials, where we found that a visit to the call centre improved the awareness of Jobcentre Plus advisers. Training in what the telephone helpline has to offer, how customers can be supported to use it, and ideally a visit to a call centre should be a key part of adviser development.

In contrast, there appears to be much better awareness and use amongst advisers of the National Careers Service website. The majority were very positive about the service it provides and recent improvements to the functionality. There were lots of examples of advisers using the website as part of their face-to-face sessions and of it being used as a promotional tool by Pathfinder projects. Promoting access to the website was seen as a good alternative where partner venues were unsuitable for face to face delivery.

4.3. Impact of partnership working on customer experience

4.3.1. Customer perceptions

Customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service generally is high³³. Our survey focused on customers who had accessed the service through a partnership initiative, and we also found that customers were very positive about the usefulness of the service they had received. Figure 3 shows the pattern of responses from customers, who rated usefulness on a scale from 1 (not at all useful) to 5 (very useful). The average (mean) rating across all respondents is 4.5. This shows that the support received was generally felt to be very useful.

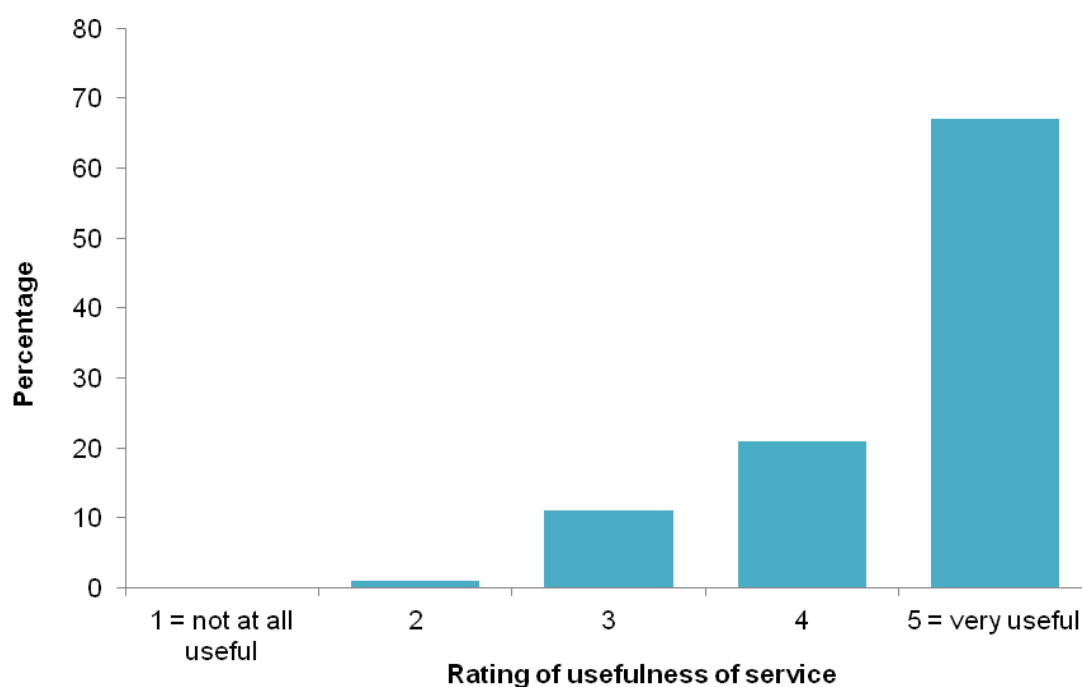


Figure 3: Customer ratings of the usefulness of the information, advice and guidance received from the National Careers Service (Base = 99)

We asked customers to explain why they gave the rating they did. Many said that they had been very happy with the support they received and commented that the staff had been particularly approachable and knowledgeable. For many customers, getting help with writing or updating their CV was what had brought them to the venue. Their satisfaction in achieving this result with the assistance of local staff and National Careers Service advisers meant that they were likely to rate the usefulness of the service highly. A significant proportion of customers were satisfied with the service because it had allowed them to access computers to search for jobs and contact employers. It was the IT support and guidance in using computers that was perceived to be most helpful for some

customers, as this removed one of the main barriers to findings work. This indicates that co-location and integration of the National Careers Service with partner organisations that provide this kind of support is appealing to customers and is a good way of enhancing the service they receive.

As a further indicator of satisfaction with the service, participants were also asked to rate the likelihood of them recommending the service to someone else. On a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely), the average (mean) rating across all respondents was 4.7. 77 per cent of respondents provided a rating of 5, indicating that customers were highly likely to recommend the service to others, and many people reported that they had already done so.

4.3.2. Monitoring and evaluation

The above survey results indicate that customers appear to be very happy with the support received from the National Careers Service and particularly benefit when they are able to access the service in local and familiar settings where there are additional complementary services and support available. National Careers Service and partner staff interviewees were generally very positive about the impact they felt their activities were having and were often convinced of the benefits, but evidence to back-up these statements was often lacking.

When asked about how the success of partnership delivery was measured, case study interviewees most commonly referred to the monitoring of customer interactions and service delivery required as part of the National Careers Service contracts. Information is collected on the number of referrals, customer demographics, nature of enquiry and service provided. Information is regularly reviewed in order to assess which locations and venues are successfully attracting customers. As has been outlined earlier, generating customer referrals is a key measure of success. Interviewees had data to indicate which partnerships and venues were helping to boost referrals and appointments. Beyond this there was little evidence of the monitoring data collected being used to inform decisions about the service delivery and development.

Most projects visited collected some kind of customer satisfaction data or provided opportunities for customers to give feedback on the service they had received. Where results were shared with us they appear to mirror the high levels of satisfaction indicated by our survey of customers. Protocols and systems to collect information on outcomes and impact at intervals after interventions were described by some interviewees. However, even here it is unclear how this information is analysed and used, as interviewees were unable to point to concrete evidence of impacts. Several highlighted the difficulties in tracking customers and measuring outcomes that are not immediately apparent. If the National Careers Service is to focus more on the achievement of outcomes, then robust systems for collecting the evidence of outcomes need to be developed and implemented.

Evaluating the impact of partnership working presents particular challenges, especially with regard to 'one-stop' or integrated services. Part of the difficulty can be with establishing the contribution that the National Careers Service makes to outcomes that partners have supported. For example, in one of the 'one stop shops' that was visited the National Careers Service operated with other agencies under the local brand. Although the individual adviser's contribution was highly valued, a recent evaluation of the service did not seek to identify the specific contribution that partners were making, and as a

consequence the Service's contribution to what was considered a successful service was not known.

There were also sensitivities around the collection of monitoring information where services were co-located and/or partner organisations were providing signposting or triage services and were asked to record customer interactions and soft referrals. Contractor interviewees reported that asking partners to collect different or additional monitoring data could be a barrier to forging partnerships. Such data collection by partners was most effective where it was integrated with existing systems or was 'light touch' and easy for frontline staff to carry out. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that data collected is appropriate and will be used. For example, it may be sufficient to simply record the number of customers signposted or soft referred to the service from partner locations where there is no National Careers Service presence. How different customers found out about the service and accessed it can be explored in more detail post-intervention if necessary.

Partnership agreements should be drawn up between the National Careers Service and bodies with whom they are planning service delivery. These agreements should specify how services are to be monitored and evaluated so that the contribution that the National Careers Service is making to outcomes can be assessed.

4.4. Chapter conclusions

Many customers have low awareness of the National Careers Service. However, working in partnership provides additional resources and opportunities to market the service, and value can be added by marketing the service as part of a wider package of services available. Extending the network of partner organisations that signpost and refer customers to the National Careers Service helps to improve awareness and widen the reach of the service. Effective referral systems are those that help customers to understand what to expect from the service. Such systems can help to reduce non-attendance at appointments. Co-location or close working relationships between frontline staff facilitates 'warm-handovers' of customers, and this was also seen to improve the likelihood of customers following up on referrals.

Partnership working ensures that the National Careers Service is accessible to customers. Customers like having services under one roof and in local and familiar settings. A balance needs to be struck between providing the service in popular locations and providing the service in locations that are less well used but bring the service to priority customers who are unlikely to access the service otherwise. Contractors need good local knowledge in order to effectively plan where to locate services and at what level. This includes understanding psychological as well as practical barriers for some communities travelling to other areas. This knowledge is perhaps best gleaned from frontline staff and community partners.

There are clear opportunities to increase the awareness and use of alternative channels, in particular the telephone helpline. Some people in the National Careers Service may perceive that customers don't want this service, when many may be receptive to it if only they understood how to access it and how it can help them better. Building in visits to call centres for advisers and other frontline staff (including from key partner organisations) as part of training and development can help to improve awareness and increase the

likelihood of referral to this channel. Clarification about the cost of contacting the helpline is needed, and awareness should be raised so that as many customers as need to can access it.

Overall, customers show high levels of satisfaction with the service, find it useful and would recommend it to others. Those partnership projects where customers can also gain help with and access to IT are particularly welcomed, and these can improve skills as well as breaking down barriers to using the National Careers Service website and online resources. Contractors and their partners should look to incorporate IT support as part of one-stop shop and integrated service offers.

Contractors are able to monitor service take up and referrals and use this to plan and adjust work with different partners and in different locations. Evaluation of the impact of the service on customers is patchy, and greater focus is needed on this aspect. Clear agreements and robust plans to evaluate the distinct contribution that partners make to the achievement of customers outcomes is needed where services are integrated or form part of a progression route.

5. Review of Community Walk-In Pathfinders

This chapter provides a short review of the Community Walk-in Pathfinder programme. It assesses the extent to which the Pathfinders met the minimum requirements for the programme. The chapter also identifies the outcomes from and benefits of the Pathfinder programme and approaches.

The key findings include:

- A key factor in the success of the Community Walk-In Pathfinder programme is that the funding could be deployed flexibly at a local level and was not subject to specific outputs.
- Pathfinder models that provided dedicated National Careers Service staff that could be deployed flexibly (models 2b and 3) appear to be the most effective in improving the accessibility of the service and in engaging and supporting potential customers.
- The programme enabled contractors to extend their reach through the new and enhanced partnerships and provided an opportunity to deliver activities that would not have been possible otherwise.
- The accessibility of the National Careers Service has improved through awareness raising and capacity building made possible by the Pathfinder; however there is more limited evidence that the service has been enhanced.
- The requirements to provide access to the other service channels and use a triage approach was interpreted differently by different prime contractors and implemented with varying degrees of success, while the requirement to target young people, and specifically those that were NEET, does not appear to have been effectively achieved.
- The timescales for developing the Pathfinders meant that aspects of the resulting proposals were opportunistic and lacked innovation. The extent to which Prime contractors delivered against their original plans varied, and some planned partnerships and activities did not materialise and/or prove feasible.
- Dedicated resources are needed on a permanent basis in order to maintain and capitalise on the partnerships initiated under the Pathfinder scheme.

5.1. Overview of the Pathfinders

This section provides an overview of the different partners engaged and the delivery models adopted as part of the Community Walk-in Pathfinders programme.

A wide range of partner organisations were engaged in the Pathfinder programme overall. However, there was a large degree of variation in the number of different partners and venues engaged in each prime contractor area, ranging from four to over 80. Table 1 illustrates the main partner types that the prime contractors worked with and how these were represented across the 11 contractor regions.

Region	Citizens Advice Bureau	Community centre	Connexions	Housing association	Library	School/ College	Youth/ Children's Centre
1	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
8	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
9	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
10	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
11	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Pathfinder projects working with this partner type
 Pathfinder projects **not** working with this partner type

Table 1: Pathfinder partner types

Analysis of the Community Walk-In Pathfinder implementation plans and updates provided by prime contractors revealed that funding from the programme was used to support a range of delivery models which were configured differently across the prime contractor regions. These ranged from placing literature on the National Careers Service within partner venues, through a triage service with access to the remote channels, to full service delivery by careers advisers including access to the web and telephone channels. We identified four operating models which are summarised in Table 2 below.

Model	Description
1a – Basic	Service literature: Only literature about the National Careers Service is available at this venue.
1b – Basic	Remote channels: Literature plus access to remote channels only (web – including self-service kiosks and/or telephone). Partner organisation staff have limited role in signposting to the National Careers Service. No National Careers Service staff presence.
2a – Expanded	Remote channels with partner staff providing triage: Customers can access the remote service channels at this location. Trained staff from the partner organisation provide a triage service to customers. No National Careers Service staff presence.
2b – Expanded	Remote channels with National Careers Service staff providing triage: Customers can access remote service channels at this location. National Careers Service staff (Information officer or Triage worker) provide a triage service. No qualified National Careers Service adviser presence.
3 – Enhanced	Access to all service channels including part-time National Careers Service adviser: Customers can access face-to-face and remote service channels at this location. The venue receives timetabled and regular visits on a part-time basis by qualified National Careers Service adviser.
4 – Full service	Access to all service channels including full-time National Careers Service adviser: Customers can access face-to-face and remote service channels at this location. There is a full-time qualified National Careers Service adviser presence.

Table 2: Pathfinder models

Table 3 shows how the different models of delivery were deployed in each of the 11 prime contractor regions. It clearly demonstrates that some prime contractors predominantly used just one or two models, while others adopted the full range. A range of factors influenced the overall approach adopted by the prime contractors. In some cases the main driver appears to be the ability and willingness of different partners to embrace co-location, while in others the approach is more strategic. For example, one prime contractor area developed a hub and spoke design. Leaflets about the service were placed in a large number of community venues in order to raise awareness and signpost people to a smaller

number of community venues where a triage service was provided. At the centre of the network was a single, central venue offering the full service.

Region	Pathfinder delivery model					
	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4
1	●	●	●	●	○	○
2	○	○	●	○	●	○
3	○	●	●	●	●	○
4	●	●	●	●	●	●
5	○	○	●	○	●	●
6	○	○	○	●	●	○
7	○	○	○	●	●	○
8	○	○	○	●	●	●
9	○	○	●	○	○	●
10	○	○	●	●	○	○
11	○	○	●	○	○	○

● Pathfinder projects working with this partner type / delivery model
 ○ Pathfinder projects **not** working with this partner type / delivery model

Table 3: Mapping Pathfinder projects across various delivery models.

The lack of consistent and comparable monitoring data on the programme makes it difficult to assess which of these models is most effective, particularly for those models that provide remote access or information about the service without staff support. The evidence collected suggests that those models where there is some dedicated but flexible National Careers Service staff input (models 2b and 3) are the most effective at engaging and supporting potential customers to access the service. These models allow limited resources to be flexibly deployed in a range of locations and to bring the service to community venues, although there is still a complementary role for raising awareness of the service amongst likely referral organisations and full service provision in some strategically placed sites.

5.2. Meeting the minimum requirements

Prime contractors were required to demonstrate how they planned to address a series of minimum requirements in their implementation plans. These are outlined below along with a discussion of the ways in which they have been addressed.

5.2.1. Delivering a triage approach

A key requirement of the Pathfinders was that they employed a triage approach. This was intended to assess customer needs so that they could be directed to the most appropriate element of the service. The concept of a 'triage' system comes from the medical profession, where trained nurses determine the severity of a patient's condition and the order in which they should be seen.

The way in which this role was interpreted and delivered by contractors varied greatly, ranging from being a basic administrative and signposting role to an enhanced 'triage-plus'

function, whereby triage workers engaged in a variety of value-added activities including outreach, awareness-raising and partnership development.

The background, skills and experience of triage workers and their remit all shaped the nature of the triage service performed. One of the sites visited appointed a triage apprentice who provided additional capacity to handle enquiries, make and confirm appointments and undertake some pro-active floor walking. In other Pathfinders, the expectation was that partner staff and/or volunteers would deliver the triage role. However, these staff typically did not have a background in guidance and so the role was principally confined to signposting with limited, if any, robust assessment of customer need. While clearly fulfilling a useful role in promoting and signposting potential clients to the service, it is arguable whether these approaches are really carrying out 'triage' in the true sense.

Furthermore, National Careers Service staff indicated variations in the level of buy-in from venue staff to signposting potential customers to the service on their behalf. Some were concerned that venue staff did not fully understand the extent and nature of the services on offer, and there was potential for inconsistent messages about the National Careers Service and how it could support customers as a result. This underlines the need for comprehensive initial briefings and ongoing training and support in order to ensure staff remain bought-in to the process and in possession of up-to-date knowledge.

In contrast, where triage was carried out by National Careers Service staff who had a thorough understanding of the service and in many cases a background in information, advice and guidance, the role functioned in a way that was much closer to the medical model. The principal benefit of this approach is that the triage workers can effectively assess the needs of the customers and direct them to the appropriate service, which may not be what the customer themselves perceived they needed:

Some people come, for example, and say they are looking for a job, but in actual fact they are nowhere near job ready. That is part of the triaging and is where it does work really well. **Frontline staff member, Sub-contractor**

Skilled triage workers also provided 'soft' careers advice, including pre-advice and CV support which encouraged the customer to take ownership of the process and to think about their existing skills and career aspirations in advance of the meeting with a careers adviser. This ensured that the customers were better prepared to get the most out of the face-to-face intervention and other services, including the remote channels. In one instance, the part-time triage worker also worked as a part-time careers adviser and was able to move seamlessly between the two roles in order to provide the most appropriate service to customers when they needed it. In this model there was arguably a degree of crossover between the triage and careers adviser roles, however far from being problematic this served to ensure that limited resources were utilised effectively and the customer experience was enhanced. The extent and nature of the role of the triage worker mirrored that of the role of the Information Adviser appointed in some of the areas that participated in the Deepened Co-location Trials with Jobcentre Plus. As with the triage workers, the role and remit of the Information Adviser varied considerably according to both the needs of the Trial area and, most importantly, the post-holders' background and experience. There was clear evidence that the role of the Information Adviser was limited

to basic administrative functions in some sites, while in others they were able to offer a more enhanced and integrated service which added considerable value to the work of the careers adviser.

The 'triage-plus' model was observed in a number of the pathfinders and co-location trials visited. In these instances the triage workers/information advisers were given an enhanced role and additional freedoms to add value to service provision overall. For example, triage workers identified potential community partners, scouted out suitable venues, promoted the service, and carried out outreach "to engage the disengaged" in addition to the core triage tasks as set out above. Furthermore, the triage workers relieved pressure on existing services by developing new flows of referrals, again ensuring effective use of limited resources. This work is regarded by contractors as important but difficult to resource under the core funding model.

Community Triage Facilitators ('Bumble Bees')

Four Community Triage Facilitators, colloquially known as Bumble Bees, were appointed by Tribal Education to engage with new community venues and identify where the National Career Service could be promoted and embedded.

The initial brief was to target locations such as children's centres, doctors' surgeries and libraries. Each Bumble Bee was directed to identify new venues within a specific geographic area (for example, city or rural locations) using their local knowledge and proactively engaging venues where the National Careers Service was not present.

Various methods were adopted by the Bumble Bees to engage with community groups, and their reflections suggest that approaching venues directly face-to-face was far more successful than approaching them by letter or email correspondence.

The Bumble Bees were responsible for assessing the suitability of the venue based on key considerations such as flow and type of customers into the venue, an appraisal of how far or near customers were from the labour market, and venue amenities. When a decision was made not to establish a presence, the Bumble Bees would still promote the National Careers Service channels to venue staff in an effort to maximise the awareness of the service. Where co-location arrangements were agreed the Bumble Bees would co-ordinate a schedule of times for National Careers Service representatives to visit, demonstrate the National Careers Service website to venue staff, and provide an overview of the telephone channel. Overall, the decision to allocate resources to 'roving' Community Triage Facilitators was felt to be an innovative and co-ordinated way to promote the service, identify new venues and generate new referrals.

Example 6: Community Triage Facilitators ('Bumble Bees')

The requirement to use a triage approach was interpreted in different ways and implemented successfully by pathfinders to varying degrees. The evidence from both

stage one and stage two of the research indicates that the provision of a triage service adds considerable value for both the prime contractor and the customer. However, it is most effective when it is delivered by National Careers Service staff who are either trained advisers or have skills and experience in the field of information, advice and guidance, who have a detailed understanding of the full range of services offered by the National Careers Service, and who have a remit and the time to carry out this role. In the absence of this, the role is limited to an administrative or signposting function. A key benefit of deepened co-location with Jobcentre Plus and the Community-Walk-in Pathfinders is that the programmes provided the necessary resources for the triage function which were not subject to the same funding constraints as the core contract. In the future, should this role continue to be funded in this way it could be usefully expanded to become more integrated within the role of the careers adviser and with outreach, marketing and local partnership development roles.

5.2.2. Providing access to other channels delivering the service

The aim of this requirement was to use technology to enable customers who were not eligible for the face-to-face service or who preferred to use the telephone and/or web channels to access the National Careers Service.

Many of the prime contractors used the funding available through the Pathfinder programme to purchase IT equipment such as laptops, iPads and kiosks (IT terminals providing web channel access) in order to facilitate access to the web and/or telephone channels, mirroring the practice in some of the Deepened Co-location Trails with Jobcentre Plus. There were examples of technology being used effectively to attract and engage customers, particularly young people, and as an aid to providing face-to-face assistance.

Although technology can act as an enabler, it is also recognised as a potential barrier for some customers with low level or no IT skills. Indeed, the interviews with customers confirmed that some lack the skills and/or confidence to use technology to access the National Careers Service provision online. Providing IT training as part of a partnership package of services is an effective way of addressing this (see section 4.2.2), but there were also many good examples of frontline staff helping to demystify and gently introduce customers to the website and the different tools.

I think access to the web will help no end. [...] I know some of the staff have actually, physically, got the information up on screen for them when they can and shown them what the website looks like. It's a bit less scary that way. I think that [sometimes] people think, 'Oh, that's going to be really wordy. I'm not going to be able to understand that.'

Manager, Partner organisation

The evidence therefore suggests that providing the means to access the remote channels alone is not sufficient, and the full power of technology will only be harnessed if customers are supported to use it.

Furthermore, in the stage one report we noted that National Careers Service and partner staff have a key role in promoting the remote channels, including by integrating online services (such as the skills health check or CV builder) and/or telephone services (such as

the language service) with face-to-face interventions for those who are eligible. However, awareness and understanding of these channels amongst staff was shown to be limited in some areas. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this, including that the current funding model which reimburses contractors on the basis of face-to-face delivery does not incentivise advisers to promote and support the use of the other channels. Access to and the use of the web and telephone channels would be increased if it was planned and integrated as part of a more holistic offer and not just as an add-on or as a substitute for a face-to-face service in venues where the presence of National Careers Service staff is not felt to be justified.

Overall, the Pathfinders (along with the Deepened Co-location Trials) met the requirement to provide access to other service channels, but the extent to which this has encouraged increased and/or wider use of the channels varies. The most effective practice was observed in those sites where trained staff who were fully aware of the range and benefits of the services available through the telephone and web channels were available to offer help and support to customers seeking to access the services in this way and/or where advisers were present and drew on the online and telephone resources to support them in their face-to-face interventions.

5.2.3. Providing access to young people and specifically NEET young people

A third requirement of the Pathfinders was to provide access to the service for young people, and to specifically target those not in employment, education or training (NEET). Prime contractors and the staff from the case study organisations were asked what the aims of the Pathfinder were and the rationale for their programme design. Although a couple of the contractors indicated an initial desire to target young people, this was not the case across the board. There may be a number of reasons for this, however funding appears to be a key factor. One prime contractor explicitly reported that the targeting of specific groups, including NEET young people, was not a main consideration when designing their Pathfinder, and instead they were principally concerned with generating referrals in order to meet targets and funding requirements.

Prime contractors set out how they intended to provide a service to young people in their implementation plans, but often they did not provide clear plans for reaching out to and pro-actively engaging with this group. There was little evidence of strategic or innovative activities to target young people, and NEETs in particular, as part of the plans. With the exception of a small number of activities such as attendance at festivals, the majority of the partner organisations (see Table 1: Pathfinder partner types) and sites visited as part of the case studies did not appear to be ones where large numbers of young people would be likely to go (for example, libraries, children's centres that cater for pre-schoolers), and there is little evidence that services have been developed with young people in mind. Much of the observed work was therefore with adults, and any engagement with young people was largely serendipitous.

Young people, parents, redundancy, ethnic minorities and learning difficulties, but it's not, 'Go out and concentrate on those five groups.' It's, 'Go out and do what you do, and if you can engage with those, then all the better.' **Frontline staff member, Prime contractor**

As a result the requirement to target and provide access to the service for young people, and NEETs specifically, does not appear to have been achieved effectively in those case study projects that were explored in detail as part of this research. There are a number of reasons why this appears to have been the case. Related to the funding driver identified above, the evidence suggests that some contractors have used the funding to help them meet needs or fill gaps in service provisions that they had previously identified but had not been able to resource. The short timescales for planning may have also been a contributing factor, as contractors focussed on activities and/or partners that they had already identified and/or begun to engage.

If the development of a tailored service for specific groups is a key requirement for programmes such as this in the future, stronger incentives for prime contractors are likely to be needed, particularly if they fall outside the core client groups for which they are funded. These include clear guidance and a requirement to set measurable targets which are monitored centrally coupled with financial incentives. In addition, prime and sub-contractors need to be encouraged to engage with those organisations and venues that the target customers visit regularly and are comfortable with and to ensure that any marketing and outreach activity is tailored appropriately to the specific needs and interests of the customer group. In the case of young people, partners could include organisations such as Rathbone, The Prince's Trust and Catch 22. There is also scope for some work at a national level with organisations such as the National Youth Agency in order to raise awareness of the National Careers Service and how it can contribute to programmes such as the National Citizenship Service.

5.2.4. Working in partnership to enhance the service offered to customers

The intention of the fourth requirement was to establish effective partnerships in order to develop mutually supportive advice networks and thus enhance the service to customers.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, prime contractors engaged with a range of partner organisations in the delivery of the Pathfinders. The key considerations when selecting both the locations and partners included the potential for generating referrals, improving accessibility, developing opportunities to promote the National Careers Service, and building on service synergies (locating the service in 'natural' places to go for information or advice). However, given the short timescale for preparing implementation plans a range of pragmatic factors also influenced the choice of partners. Prime contractors were more likely to partner with organisations that they had existing links with and those that were most willing and enthusiastic. That being said, there is evidence that the Pathfinder programme has enabled National Careers Service contractors to effectively engage with a diverse range of organisations. This includes establishing new partnerships as well as developing the services provided through existing links.

The Pathfinder helped to facilitate this process by providing dedicated resources for partnership development. Triage workers (see section 5.2.1), Pathfinder Champions and other staff were funded through the programme with the remit, and importantly time, to identify potential new partners and nurture relationships. Although most prime contractors already employed staff with responsibility for overseeing partnerships, the Pathfinder initiative appears to have enabled this work to be extended across a larger number of partners at a neighbourhood level and in a much more proactive and directed way (see Example 6 above).

However, staff consulted as part of this research were also clear that as well as taking time and effort to set up partnerships require ongoing investment in order to sustain them. The Pathfinders have helped to put some of the necessary infrastructure in place, but the funding has now ceased. While there is evidence that some of the co-located provision will continue there are real concerns that the aspects of the Pathfinders that have supported effective partnership delivery will be lost, and that over time some partnerships will fade. There was a strong message that resources for ongoing outreach, promotion, and support for partners, including briefings and training of staff and volunteers, are needed to keep partnerships alive and strong (see chapter 4)

We've sown a lot of seeds, and some extra funding, some extra support, would allow us to sort of, cultivate those, and make the flowers grow. **Frontline worker, Sub-contractor**

There is evidence that the Pathfinder partnerships have helped to disseminate information about the National Careers Service across a wider area and to groups who may not have previously engaged with the Service. Although some contractors used the Pathfinder funding to provide additional face-to-face services in existing partner venues, there is also evidence that the programme has enabled contractors to engage with new customers in areas that were previously poorly served. These customers value the opportunity to access services in community venues that are easy to reach and familiar to them, and this is perceived to be a key benefit of co-location (see section 4.2.1).

It is therefore clear that the Pathfinders have improved *awareness* of and *access* to the National Careers Service for customers by enabling service delivery in local and familiar venues and increasing capacity through the provision of outreach, triage and additional face-to-face support. This is all important and worthwhile work, however in most of the Pathfinder case studies visited there is limited evidence that the actual service itself has been 'enhanced' by the partnerships. With a few notable exceptions, most of the Pathfinder projects visited were examples of co-located rather than integrated models of service delivery driven from the 'bottom-up' by front line staff to facilitate access to premises, referrals, and target customers and communities. There is little evidence that the National Careers Service provision has been enhanced through integration with the services provided by the partner organisations or the development of progression routes. Evidence from the implementation plans and discussions with prime contractors suggests that this is likely to be the case beyond the case study projects.

In summary, new partnerships have been developed, existing partnerships have been enhanced, and the reach of the National Careers Service has been widened as a result of the Pathfinder programme. This has been facilitated by additional and dedicated funding and a degree of freedom to spend this on developing partnerships without the pressure to ensure results in the form of a target number of referrals. However, few Pathfinder partnerships appear to have been developed that go beyond simple referral routes and co-location to provide integrated services and clear pathways for progression. This may be, at least in part, a reflection of the dominant models of partnership that appear to be operating which are more delivery-focussed than strategically-planned. While organisation focussed and local/bottom-up partnership models offer a range of benefits (see sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4), and maintaining an environment in which front-line staff have the flexibility to respond to local needs is important, further value could be added if these activities were

located with a more robust strategic framework. In order to facilitate this, contractors need to be provided with clear direction, including evidence of the benefits of working more strategically, and procurement processes and contracts also need to allow the necessary space, time and resources for contractors to foster and develop partnership in this way.

5.3. Delivery of implementation plans

The planning for the Community Walk-In Pathfinders was undertaken within a challenging timetable, and many prime contractors reported that this impacted on the extent and nature of their plans. This is also perceived to have influenced what was ultimately achieved through the Pathfinders and the extent to which this mirrors the original plans. Some prime contractors acknowledged that their plans lacked detail, and a number of the proposed partners had not been fully engaged or, in some instances, not directly approached before the plans were submitted. As a result, once approved, some projects took time to develop. Some of the delivery plans proved unworkable in their original form. Many of the planned partnerships changed because the proposed partners were unwilling or unable to engage or because venues proved to be unsuited to the needs of the National Careers Service.

The timescales may also have meant that the Pathfinder proposals were less innovative and/or strategic than they might have been. Several prime contractors had drawn heavily on suggestions from frontline staff as to possible partners and venues to work with. Although frontline staff have a good insight into the needs of local communities and potential gaps in service reach, partnerships developed in this way tend to be more opportunistic and reactive. The evidence suggests that a longer lead in time and the opportunity to engage potential partners in the planning, design and development of activities could result in improved outputs and outcomes for the area as a whole as well as for individual target groups.

Despite the challenging timescales for developing proposals evidence of good practice and some innovation was found, particularly in regard to the development of community-embedded service provision and outreach/engagement activities. The development of dedicated National Careers Service spaces within community settings echoed good practice seen in the Deepened Co-location Trials, and the more innovative approaches to outreach involved pro-actively engaging customers with the National Careers Service rather than just responding to enquiries. However, it is unclear the extent to which good practice developed within individual Pathfinders and the lessons learned have been shared within and between prime contractor areas, and there appears to be scope to improve dissemination.

Although some of the original objectives set out in the implementation plans have not been met for the reasons outlined above, there is a widespread perception that the Pathfinders have resulted in a greater awareness of the National Careers Service and increased access and referrals more generally. The collection of quantifiable and consistent monitoring data on customer interactions and referrals would provide a useful additional source of evidence to substantiate the perceptions of those involved. Future programmes should ensure that monitoring systems are set up to collect this type of information. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring that the data collected is appropriate,

and that methods for recording information are accessible to partners outside of the National Careers Service and do not create unnecessary burdens on those frontline staff tasked with collecting the data. See section 4.3.2 for more on monitoring and evaluating partnerships.

5.4. Chapter conclusions

The Community Walk-In Pathfinder programme was successful in enabling contractors to extend their reach through the new and enhanced partnerships. The additional funding provided an opportunity to try new and different approaches with the freedom to make mistakes and the ability to carry out community engagement and local partnership development on a level that would have not been possible otherwise.

The accessibility of the service has been improved through greater awareness raising and capacity building, including through the provision of services in a larger number of community-based venues and the appointment of dedicated staff such as triage workers. Those delivery models that deployed flexible but dedicated National Careers Service staff in a range of community venues appear to be the most effective way to reach and support customers. The programme was effective because the funding was deployed flexibly at a local level and was not subject to specific outputs. Dedicated resources are needed on a permanent basis in order to maintain and capitalise on the partnerships initiated under the Pathfinder scheme. The requirement to use a triage approach was interpreted in different ways and was implemented successfully by Pathfinders to varying degrees. The role was most effectively used when undertaken by National Careers Service staff with a thorough understanding of the services available, and ideally with a background in providing information, advice and guidance.

The Pathfinders met the requirement to provide access to other service channels to varying degrees. The most effective use of the remote channels (online and telephone) was where it was accompanied by trained staff who could provide face-to-face assistance to customers with low levels of skills and/or confidence with IT.

The requirement to target young people, and specifically those that were NEET, did not appear to be effectively achieved. Contractors need to develop partnerships with youth-focused organisations and provide targeted marketing and outreach in order to successfully engage this group. Clear incentives and guidance are needed for contractors. The extent to which targeted campaigns and services are effective should be assessed through the collection and analysis of more robust monitoring data.

The timescales for developing the Pathfinders meant that the resulting proposals were opportunistic rather than strategic and lacked innovation. It also meant that some planned partnerships did not materialise, and the time available for delivery was reduced because additional planning and set up time was needed after the Pathfinder funding was awarded. The resulting partnerships, while offering a number of benefits, were limited in their ability to work with partners strategically and in an integrated way in order to provide an enhanced service for customers.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

In this final section we draw conclusions based on both stages of the research and make recommendations in the light of the re-procurement of the Service from 1 April 2014.

6.1 Conclusions

The National Careers Service has been in operation for a year. Over that time the National Careers Service Position Statement indicates that it provided advice and guidance to 800,000 people, and that 76 per cent of those completing a survey reported progress in learning and work within 6 months³⁴.

This evaluation aimed to look at the approaches to partnership working that National Careers Service Prime Contractors adopt, the effectiveness of those approaches, and the added value of delivering the Service in venues other than National Careers Service premises. Delivering the National Careers Service in partnership with other organisations is effective in increasing the capacity of contractors and maximising the resources they can call upon to deliver the service. Partnerships provide clear benefits in terms of raising awareness of the Service, extending its reach and increasing referrals. Partnership working also has the potential to enhance the service customers receive and add further value to the contributions of individual partners. However, currently this potential is not being fully realised due to an over-riding focus on outputs.

The pattern of delivery adopted by National Careers Service prime contractors to deliver the Service varies considerably, both in terms of how they work with sub-contractors and the extent to which they use the partnership models outlined. The strategic focus for partnership working for most prime contractors is reaching new customers and moving into new geographic areas in order to achieve service delivery targets. Very few prime contractors articulated strategies that were aligned with wider strategic objectives for their region. While the current approach is effective in improving the accessibility of the service, the focus is on outputs and not outcomes or how these might contribute to economic development goals more generally. This is a lost opportunity, and prime contractors should consider how the Service can complement and add value to local, regional and national strategies and plan partnership working accordingly.

We identified a number of models of partnership working. By definition, all prime contractors undertake model one: nationally specified partnership working. All indicated that they deliver services in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Previous research³⁵ has emphasised that around 70 per cent of referrals nationally to the face-to-face channel come through Jobcentres.

Partnership working has been extended through the Deepened Co-Location Trials with Jobcentre Plus, which built on existing practice. Plans for these were developed within a challenging timescale, and a range of operational issues were encountered. As indicated in the evaluation report³⁶, whilst some innovation and good practice was found, “overall,

working arrangements were sub-optimal and further development is required if the potential of co-locating staff is to be fully realised”.

Other model one delivery in respect to working with offenders in prison was outside the scope of this research, and so we are unable to comment on partnership delivery in this context.

A key benefit of nationally specified partnership work is that it can add to the coherence of service provision and reinforce how the National Careers Service is contributing directly to national policy objectives.

Beyond model one there are significant variations in the extent to which prime contractors engage with and support local strategies (model two). Much of the work with local authorities was to be found in larger metropolitan and urban areas, and was often linked to local initiatives to stimulate growth. In these contexts, the National Careers Service was engaged in discussions of how they could contribute to developing employment and skills agendas, including delivering services in ‘job shops’. Other engagement with local authorities was more general in nature (for example, liaison, networking), or was related to supporting particular customer groups (for example, 18-24 NEET). A key benefit of model two partnership work is that it gives the National Careers Service a ‘place at the table’ and enables them to contribute to local and sub-regional development and the delivery of employment and skills plans, including developing important links to regeneration and other economic development activities.

A major focus of current partnership delivery is on that planned with specific organisations (model three) or developed locally by frontline staff, often with the community and voluntary sector (model four).

Model three frequently has an operational focus and is concerned with how the National Careers Service can work with a partner in providing guidance services to priority groups in particular areas/communities. However, work with larger organisations (and/or networks) can have a strategic dimension insofar as the organisations concerned have a wide reach themselves. An example here is further education colleges. They are sometimes engaged by the National Careers Service as sub-contractors as well as being partners in this context. A key benefit of model three partnership delivery is that it can build on natural links (for example, between career guidance and the library service) and can create synergies where there is a match between the National Careers Service and the partner organisation’s goals and priorities.

A key characteristic of model four partnership work is that it has been developed ‘bottom-up’ through the National Careers Service engaging with local community organisations as venues and/or access/referral points. This enables the Service to access customer groups they could not otherwise reach and/or provide services in a way that the customers find more acceptable (for example, as an alternative to being interviewed by Service advisers at a Jobcentre).

Some of the most successful work undertaken through Community Walk-In Pathfinders operated within this model. This work included extending awareness of provision through the use of access networks, developing links with new community partners, and undertaking triage work in community venues. As with the Deepened Co-location Trials,

Pathfinders were developed to a challenging timescale and this limited the ability of contractors to develop more strategic or innovative uses of the funding. The key benefit of model four is that it raises awareness of the Service and increases access, thereby generating demand for interventions from priority group customers.

There is limited evidence from the fieldwork undertaken of partnership working within model five (primarily focused on developing progression routes/pathways). However, it can sometimes be seen linked to other models.

In model five the National Careers Service input is integrated with short courses and preparation activities linked to local employment opportunities. The model goes beyond the enhanced joint-working between prime contractors and Jobcentre Plus in as much as it often involves other partners. It is also apparent where the National Careers Service input is provided as a value added activity to an existing programme. If used by partners to increase funded outcomes, there is a risk that National Careers Service input might be construed as double funding. The key benefit of model five partnership working is that it is focused on labour market needs and links provision in order to help individuals achieve learning and employment outcomes.

Overall, it is evident from the research that effective partnership working has clear benefits in areas such as widening access and improving referral mechanisms, developing coherence of service provision, and enabling cost savings through co-location and joint delivery.

However, such benefits can be jeopardised if partnerships are not developed and maintained effectively. It is important to recognise that this takes time and resources. In the absence of dedicated funding for this activity, many partnerships are currently heavily reliant on goodwill and might therefore not be sustainable given increasing financial pressures on services. The research has re-emphasised that partnership works best when relevant organisations employ staff whose role is dedicated to building and maintaining relationships, communication processes such as regular meetings and information sharing are in place, including shared IT systems and databases, and there is a shared vision and a mutual understanding of each organisation's role and capabilities. It also indicates that even in some of the better performing partnership arrangements there are consistent weaknesses in regard to the systems and processes that support them.

It was clear from the research that the over-riding concern of National Careers Service prime contractors is that partnership delivery should enable them to generate necessary volumes of priority group customers to meet contractual targets. The impact of this is a focus on less strategic models of partnership working, which in turn mean few opportunities to maximise the added-value of partnership working and enhance the service that customers receive. This may also account for the reason why the Pathfinders did not effectively target young people who are ineligible to receive face-to-face support.

The National Careers Service has shown its capacity to develop effective partnership working practice which, when conducted effectively, has achieved many of the goals set to this point. However, it could be argued that their work has been necessarily focused on delivering quality-assured outputs rather than sustainable outcomes. The move to an outcome based funding model will require contractors to change the emphasis of their partnership working towards models two (strategic) and five (progression routes).

The “ambitious agenda” set out in the National Careers Service Position Statement³⁷ indicates that the National Careers Service will require contractors who can provide a high quality service “which is focused on outcomes, provided by highly skilled careers professionals to improve continuously, and delivered in partnership with local organisations and businesses”. In addition, it is indicated that the Agency “wishes to encourage more flexible and innovative approaches to delivering careers advice by working collaboratively with partners, reflecting the drive towards localism and growth and exploring opportunities for making greater use of digital services”.

Model two and model five seem to offer the greatest potential to meet the emerging priorities for the National Careers Service. The former model links with the requirement for the Service to be planned in the context of a developing partnership with LEPs and local authorities in responding to the localism agenda. The latter model fits with the requirement for the Service to work closely with businesses connecting people with opportunities. Both provide a focus for partnership work and the opportunity for improved coherence in local provision. As indicated, a key focus in models three and four has been on increasing interventions and maximising access. In developing partnership work in the future these benefits should not be overlooked, however what is now required is a clear rationale for all forms of partnership working in terms of how they contribute to Service effectiveness, including the outcomes it is tasked with delivering.

To be fully effective the National Careers Service has to be part of a more integrated employment and skills system. It is necessary to be clear about the distinct contribution the Service can make. Without such clarity and methods of tracking individuals through the system it will not be possible to clearly establish the unique contributions of respective partners and what input each could, and should, be making.

It is important that in the next stage of the development of the National Careers Service that there is a shared vision about what it can and what it cannot deliver on its own in terms of outcomes for individuals and those areas where it needs to operate in partnership with other bodies.

If partnership work is to be a key feature of the Service, dedicated resources need to be allocated to the development and maintenance of partnerships. Contractor staff need to have the skills and capabilities to develop links at a strategic level with key partners (in particular Local Authorities and LEPs), and with local opportunity providers, especially employers. Frontline staff have valuable knowledge about local communities’ needs, barriers and partnership opportunities. Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure they can feed into strategic decision making and planning.

It is clear that funding drives behaviours. It is crucial that the new outcomes funding model is designed, applied and tested so that it builds on the best of what has already been achieved through partnerships and delivers a sustainable service which can achieve the ambitious agenda outlined.

6.2 Recommendations

In light of these findings, CFE would like to make the following recommendations to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and the Skills Funding Agency:

6.2.1. Department for Business Innovation and Skills

- Consider the contribution that the National Careers Service can make to developing and delivering a more integrated employment and skills system and make this clear to other government departments and agencies.
- Develop a shared vision and joint guidance with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding future working arrangements between the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus.
- Provide clear messages to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) regarding how they can work with the National Careers Service to achieve shared outcomes.
- Ensure that the evaluation strategy for the National Careers Service considers the way that the Service is operating in partnership with others, how outcomes are being achieved, and the distinct contribution the Service makes.
- Local partnership approaches to marketing the National Careers Service should be supplemented by the national marketing of the Service.

6.2.2 Skills Funding Agency

- Prime Contractors should be required to set out their approach to partnership working in strategic terms, including how it will support broader Government objectives such as growth and localism.
- In order to create an outcomes focused service prime contractors should be encouraged to develop more strategic (model two) partnerships that provide clear progression routes for customers (model five).
- The funding model needs to be adjusted so that it enables prime contractors to:
 - devote sufficient resources to initiating and sustaining partnership working while taking into account the new responsibilities set out in the Skills Strategy to work with schools and other bodies;
 - continue to fund National Careers Service staff with information, advice and guidance experience in order to provide a triage service to customers; and
 - develop innovative approaches by allowing for the opportunity costs and commercial risks involved.
- Encourage and support the National Careers Service to form strategic partnerships with LEPs and other relevant bodies so that they can engage in the planning and delivery of effective employment and skills plans within their areas.

- If additional funding is available to support service development and innovation, ensure sufficient lead-in time is given to enable prime contractors to provide well-developed proposals with clear outcomes.
- Identify key national voluntary and community sector organisations (for example, The Prince's Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau) that share priority customers and/or broad objectives with the National Careers Service and explore the potential to develop relationships at the national level to help unlock local level partnerships.
- Review existing monitoring and evaluation systems and modify them to ensure they capture outcomes as well as outputs. Produce management information that is used and shared to inform policy and practice at a local and national level. Ensure systems are capable of demonstrating the distinctive contribution that the National Careers Service makes. Ensure good practice and lessons learned are shared between prime contractors.
- In assessing potential prime contractors' ability to deliver the Service, consider their capability and capacity to set up and maintain successful partnerships, particularly at a strategic level, in order to ensure service delivery is coordinated and contributes to locally-defined priorities for employment and skills. Uncertainties about the cost of calls to the telephone helpline from mobile phones should be ended and awareness raised so that as many customers as need to can access it.

7. Notes and references

¹ Detailed findings from the evaluation of the Deepened Co-location Trials can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-deepened-co-location-trials>

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³ Ofsted (2010) *Moving through the system - information, advice and guidance* Manchester: Ofsted <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/moving-through-system-information-advice-and-guidance>

⁴ BIS (2013) *Employment, Partnership and Skills* Research Report: 107 London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-partnership-and-skills-rr830>

⁵ Ofsted (2012) *Skills for Employment: The impact of skills programmes for adults on achieving sustained employment* Manchester: Ofsted <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/skills-for-employment>

⁶ BIS (2013) *Employment, Partnership and Skills* Research Report: 107 London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-partnership-and-skills-rr830>

⁷ BIS (2012) *Evaluation of the Deepened Co-Location Trials* Research Report: 98 London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-deepened-co-location-trials>

⁸ BIS (2013) *Employment, Partnership and Skills* Research Report: 107 London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-partnership-and-skills-rr830>

⁹ BIS (2012) *National Careers Service: The Right Advice at the Right Time. New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan*. London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-careers-service-the-right-advice-at-the-right-time>

¹⁰ Those with low skills (without a Level 2 or Level 3). Those aged 18-24 not in education, employment or training. Those facing redundancy, newly redundant or distant from the labour market. Those on out of work benefits. People with learning difficulties or disabilities. Offenders in custody and in the community under the supervision of probation services and ex-offenders.

¹¹ Skills Funding Agency (2013) Unpublished monitoring data for March 2013

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- ¹² Skills Funding Agency (2012) *Funding Rules and Guidance 2012/13 for the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service*
[http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_and_Guidance_201213_for_the_Offenders_Learning_and_Skills_Service_phase_4_\(OLASS_4\).pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_and_Guidance_201213_for_the_Offenders_Learning_and_Skills_Service_phase_4_(OLASS_4).pdf)
- ¹³ BIS (2012) *National Careers Service: The Right Advice at the Right Time. New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan*. London: BIS
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- ¹⁴ BIS (2012) *Next Step Satisfaction and Progression Surveys: Annual Report (September 2011-March Fieldwork)* London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-step-satisfaction-and-progression-surveys-annual-report-september-2011-march-2012-fieldwork>
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ BIS (2013) *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* London: BIS
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills>
- ¹⁷ Ibid. p23
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p39
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Skills Funding Agency (2013) *National Careers Service Position Statement*
- ²¹ Skills Funding Agency (2011) *Next Step Co-location with Jobcentre Plus: Implementing the trials* Skills Funding Agency Briefing Note p3
- ²² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-deepened-co-location-trials>
- ²³ BIS (2012) *Evaluation of the Deepened Co-Location Trials* Research Report: 98 London: BIS
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- ²⁴ Skills Funding Agency (2012) *Funding Rules and Guidance 2012/13 for the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service*
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- ²⁵ UKCES (2012) *Using and Sharing Career Related Labour Market Information – Research Report*
- ²⁶ BIS (2013) *Third Sector Engagement and Participation in the Learning and Skills Sector: Executive Summary* London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-sector-engagement-and-participation-in-the-learning-and-skills-sector-report>

²⁷ See: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/updates/universal-jobmatch/>

²⁸ Work Choice is a voluntary programme of support to help disabled people find, keep and get on in work. Support available includes training, confidence building and interview coaching. <https://www.gov.uk/work-choice/overview>

²⁹ Guidance Council (2005) *Demand for, and perceptions of, information, advice and guidance A research study for the Guidance Council by MORI* Leicester: Guidance Council

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³² See: <http://nationalcareersservice.phoneme.net/>

³³ BIS (2012) *Next Step Satisfaction and Progression Surveys: Annual Report (September 2011-March Fieldwork)* London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-step-satisfaction-and-progression-surveys-annual-report-september-2011-march-2012-fieldwork>

³⁴ Skills Funding Agency (2013) *National Careers Service Position Statement*

³⁵ BIS (2012) *Evaluation of the Deepened Co-Location Trials* Research Report: 98 London: BIS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-deepened-co-location-trials>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Skills Funding Agency (2013) *National Careers Service Position Statement*

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URN BIS/13/1136