

Developing the employer and trades union agenda

Research report

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Working with employers, unions and other intermediaries requires an understanding of, and receptiveness towards, different agendas and priorities.

The diversity of employer and union organisations means that a single 'one size fits all' agenda may be less effective than approaches that have a higher degree of market segmentation or differentiation.

Summary

Developing the employer/trade union agenda is a report of a project undertaken for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). This is one of a series of reports on the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Quality Development Fund (QDF) projects.

The project had the following objectives:

- > to raise the profile of information, advice and guidance as an integral part of learning;
- > to raise the profile of Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships (IAGPs) and their work; and
- > to influence the policies and practice of unions and employing organisations in relation to the workplace-led provision of IAG.

Recommendations

Recommendations are made focusing on these areas.

The project research established that despite examples of effective collaboration and good practice, the profile of individual-focused IAG is not high among employers. Although more visible among union learning representatives, some Union Learning Fund projects remain unaware of IAGPs and their work. The diversity of employer and union organisations means that a single 'one size fits all' agenda may be less effective than approaches that have a higher degree of market segmentation or differentiation.

The research also concluded that engaging with employers and unions will require IAGPs to deal with a different range of intermediaries than has commonly been the case. Despite examples of close and effective links, there is little consistency in the nature and extent of current levels of engagement across IAGPs. Working with employers, unions and other intermediaries requires an understanding of, and receptiveness towards, different agendas and priorities.

The skills of networking and collaboration will remain crucial as IAGPs start to make more active interventions in workplace-led learning. In addition, there may be a need for local LSCs and IAGPs to consider the extent to which their own staffing and internal structures ensure that individual information and advice work with employers and unions is given appropriate visibility and support.

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Section 1: Project aim

- 1 In order to stimulate more workforce development opportunities and to raise levels of participation in learning, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) commissioned a project to assist it in establishing a closer dialogue with employers and unions on issues concerning the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) to adults. It wished to:
 - > raise the profile of IAG as an integral part of learning;
 - > raise the profile of IAG Partnerships and their work; and
 - > influence the policies and practice of unions and employing organisations in relation to the workplace-led provision of IAG.
- 2 The stated aim of the project, which ran between summer 2002 and spring 2003, was 'to help the LSC move towards a model for working through other agencies with employers and trade unions'. The purpose of this aim was described as being in order that they may 'be brought into the IAG loop by working closely with, and joining, IAG Partnerships'. In pursuit of the overall aim, the LSC gave the project three objectives:
 - > to explore practical ways in which trade unions and employers can engage with IAG Partnerships, including identifying staff development needs, practical and logistical issues, and ongoing support needs;
 - > to develop materials to support greater coherence and continued co-operation between IAG Partnerships, employers and trade unions; and
 - > to suggest ways in which the LSC can work with and influence key organisations.
- 3 In order to achieve these objectives, the project would:
 - > research into existing initiatives and identify good practice examples amongst IAG Partnerships, employers and trade unions;
 - > research local Quality Development Fund (QDF) projects that include employer and trade union engagement;
 - > research employer and trade union pilots of the **matrix** standard for IAG;
 - > develop awareness-raising events; and
 - > research into what might be the most appropriate and beneficial tools for inclusion in a comprehensive support pack for IAG Partnerships, employers and trade unions.
- 4 Outputs specified include:
 - > a catalogue of good practice examples;
 - > recommendations on ways in which the LSC at national and local level can influence appropriate organisations to participate in the IAG initiative;
 - > strategies for engagement with, for example, the Small Business Service (SBS), Business Link and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), the union movement and employer representatives and the LSC's national workforce development division;
 - > production of support materials, good practice case studies, information packs and marketing materials;
 - > production of a dissemination strategy and draft programmes for awareness-raising events with key organisations; and
 - > implementation of the strategy.

Government concern to raise skill levels and widen participation by increasing demand for post-compulsory learning has highlighted the importance of effective IAG in helping adults and those who employ them to make effective decisions about learning and work.

Section 2: Context

- 5 Government concern to raise skill levels and widen participation by increasing demand for post-compulsory learning has highlighted the importance of effective IAG in helping adults and those who employ them to make effective decisions about learning and work.
- 6 One feature of IAG provision for learning and work at national (English) level is the number of stakeholders with an interest. These include the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Trade and Industry. There are also several public agencies involved. The most important of these is the LSC, but Jobcentre Plus, Ufi/**learn**direct, Worktrain and Business Link each have significant interests. Further services are supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Single Regeneration Budget, while more general guidance is offered through Citizens' Advice Bureaux. Although outside the adult IAG framework, the role of the Connexions service for young people exerts an influence, not least because local agencies delivering Connexions are often the same organisations contracted to deliver adult IAG.
- 7 The period during which the project ran coincided with a number of significant strategic developments affecting how the policy debate at national level is framed. These included:
 - > the development by central Government of delivery plans to realise the amended Public Service Agreements for basic skills and for qualifications at Level 2;
 - > the introduction by regional development agencies of the first Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESAs);
 - > the publication of the Strategy Unit paper on workforce development (In Demand – Part 2) and the LSC's Workforce Development Strategy;
 - > the DfES review of the funding of adult learning (including LSC monies, such as the funding for adult IAG);
 - > early work on a national skills strategy, published as a White Paper in July 2003;
 - > planning for the piloting of pool-funding arrangements for adult learning between LSCs and regional development agencies in four regions from April 2003;
 - > the commencement of six employer training pilots; and
 - > planning for the introduction of statutory union learning representatives following the passage of the Employment Act 2002.
- 8 Many employer and union bodies were factoring these into their thinking even as they were being introduced and, perhaps as a consequence, IAG rose up the skills policy agenda during the project's lifetime.

Section 3: Method

- 9 The project was carried out for the LSC by a team of NIACE staff comprising Alastair Thomson, Ann Selby and Rachel Pierce, drawing also upon the work contacts of other colleagues. The work involved:
 - > monitoring of literature and policy activity at national level (including the Skills Strategy Critical Friends Group; Success for All Joint Stakeholders' Group; the Skills Strategy Stakeholders' Group);
 - > interviews with 15 employers or representatives of employer interests (a list of those contacted is in Annex A);
 - > a review of all live Union Learning Fund (ULF) projects and interviews with 18 trade unionists at national and local levels (details in Annex B);
 - > a desk analysis of all LSC IAG QDF projects and telephone interviews with 17 of these which appeared to have a union or employer focus (details in Annex C);
 - > a telephone survey which resulted in data from 27 IAG Partnerships (details in Annex D);
 - > other discussions including those with: Pat McDermott and John Smith (Merlin Minds); Gerry Glennister (LSC); Heather Jackson (Heather Jackson Associates); Margaret Darbyshire (County of Oxford Minority People's Advice Support Service/the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) Advice and Guidance); Joan O'Hagan and Ann Parkinson (Guidance Council); Rosemary Schofield (Lifetime Careers, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham); Lyn Barham (NICEC Fellow); Steve Murphy (Oldham Education, Business and Guidance Services); Professor Lorna Unwin (Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester); Dr Jim Sutherland (Warwick University);
 - > development of pilot materials (Strategies for Engagement booklet and a suite of five tools to encourage good practice); and
 - > presentations to national IAG conference (Blackpool); IAG Partnership West London conference (Ealing); IAG Partnership Cambridgeshire and Peterborough conference (Huntingdon), Compass Guidance Project conference (IAG Partnership Milton Keynes, Oxon and Bucks).
- 10 The work was supported by a steering group comprising June Shimmin (LSC Bedfordshire and Luton); Susan Cheetham (LSC Milton Keynes, Oxon and Bucks); Richard Barge (LSC Norfolk); Kathryn Knight (LSC Tees Valley); Teresa Logan (LSC Suffolk); Gill Forth (LSC Tyne and Wear); Sue Claydon (IAG Partnership Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) and Mary Davies (LSC national office).

Engaging with employers and unions will require IAG Partnerships to deal with a different range of intermediaries than has commonly been the case. Despite examples of close and effective links, there is little consistency and no immediately discernible pattern in the nature and extent of current levels of engagement across partnerships.

Section 4: Findings

11 The six main findings are as follows:

- a despite examples of effective collaboration and good practice, the profile of individual-focused IAG is not high among employers. Although more visible among union learning representatives, some ULF projects remain unaware of IAG Partnerships and their work;
- b the diversity of employer and union organisations means that a single 'one size fits all' agenda may be of lesser effectiveness than approaches which have a higher degree of market segmentation or differentiation;
- c engaging with employers and unions will require IAG Partnerships to deal with a different range of intermediaries than has commonly been the case. Despite examples of close and effective links, there is little consistency and no immediately discernible pattern in the nature and extent of current levels of engagement across partnerships;
- d working with employers, unions and other intermediaries requires an understanding of, and receptiveness towards, different agendas and priorities;
- e the skills of networking and collaboration will remain crucial as IAG Partnerships start to make more active interventions in workplace-led learning; and
- f there may be a need for local LSCs and IAG Partnerships to consider the extent to which their own staffing and internal structures ensure that individual information and advice work with employers and unions is given appropriate visibility and support.

Profile of Information Advice and Guidance among employers

- 12 The idea of employees requiring IAG to help them consider pathways for their individual learning and development is a concept which is unfamiliar to many employers. A Director of one public limited company, whose business is in executive selection and coaching, suggested that employers were, in general, more likely to recognise and be comfortable with notions of mentoring, coaching and appraisal as tools for promoting learning and development. An interesting example of how a large commercial financial organisation approaches the promotion of self-development among its staff can be found on the website of Barclays corporate university (www.barclays-university.com/buinfo/). This includes electronic tools for voluntary 360 degree appraisal and other self-assessment tests.
- 13 Given that the model for most workplace-led learning is that of an employer requiring an employee to undergo specific training or an employee asking for support to undertake a specific learning or developmental opportunity, there is widespread lack of interest in an abstract notion of IAG – it has to be linked to something more concrete. Union learning representatives report that locating the topic within a framework of 'encouraging employees to take greater responsibility for their own development' is often helpful, as is combining it with needs analysis as part of a feasibility exercise for the possible establishment of learning centres or the offer of specific courses.

- 14 Many but not all union learning representatives are aware of IAG Partnerships and welcome the support and assistance they provide. Among national officers of individual unions, awareness of IAG Partnerships and their services is patchier. Service delivery is seen as something that is done by an undifferentiated group of 'providers'. This suggests that a nationally branded initiative (as suggested by Ivan Lewis MP in February 2003) might increase the visibility and perception of the value of IAG as a distinctive service. Certainly a number of IAG Partnership and local LSC staff gave strong support to the branding notion, although concerns were voiced about the danger of an additional brand simply adding an extra layer of confusion for learners.
- 15 The words 'information, advice and guidance' are often interpreted in workplaces in ways that differ from those understood in the professional discourse of many IAG Partnership staff. In particular, the belief that IAG is about business development rather than the skills development of people in the business appeared not to be uncommon. This suggests that any branding might consider stressing that services are concerned to help individuals make choices about learning for work.

Market segmentation approaches

- 16 Throughout the fieldwork and literature monitoring, respondents and academic commentators felt that the terms 'employers' and 'trade unions' are terms that cover organisations characterised by enormous diversity in terms of size, sector, structure and culture made the point repeatedly. Solutions and materials that work in one setting are often inappropriate in others. Messages and actions tend to be most effective when tailored for specific audiences.
- 17 There are many ways in which the market may be segmented or differentiated and little hard evidence exists about which methods are most effective for which purposes and with which audiences. The LSC may wish to review evidence from Ufi/**learn**direct, from Investors in People (IIP) and from its own dissemination strategies for initiatives such as Modern Apprenticeships to identify what has worked best in such contexts.

- 18 One particular segmentation approach that is proving popular among a number of Business Links in seven regions (including the whole of the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside) is a proprietary tool known as the 'Formula 21 model'. This is based on frameworks that see businesses in terms of:
- > industrial classification (in terms of how they create and maintain competitive advantage – described as labour intensive, material intensive, machine intensive or knowledge intensive);
 - > entrepreneurial type (the motivation of entrepreneurs and senior managers);
 - > stage of business growth (ranging from start-up to maturity and, along with this, particular dispositions); and
 - > practice and performance parameters.
- 19 This model contains more detailed frameworks that then help advisors in identifying whether businesses are likely to benefit from particular types of intervention.
- 20 The extent to which a business development model such as this can be translated into something useful to promote skills development is presently under consideration in the DfES, although the absence of any learner-centred dimension appears something of a drawback.
- 21 A model which may be of greater value in recognising the human dimensions of workplace development is that of Unwin and Fuller (see Table 1), which is based upon a notion of 'expansive' and 'constricting' learning environments and the identification of elements of different organisational practice which may be located at different points along a spectrum or continuum. Although this model is still a number of steps away from the dominant 'client-centred' approach of much IAG literature – and was not designed with IAG specifically in mind – it represents a potential bridge between organisationally focused business development and individually focused personal development. In short, it invites businesses to look at how individuals learn and acquire skills.

Table 1: Unwin and Fuller's continuum.

Expansive	Restrictive
Technical skills valued	Technical skills taken for granted
Knowledge and skills of whole workforce developed and valued	Knowledge and skills of key workers or groups developed and valued
Team work valued	Rigid specialist roles
Cross-disciplinary groups: communication encouraged	Bounded communication and work
Manager or supervisor as enabler	Manager as controller
Chances to learn new jobs or skills	Lack of workplace mobility
Expanded job design	Restricted job design
Bottom-up approach to innovation	Top-down approach to innovation
Formative approach to evaluation	Summative approach to evaluation
Individual progression encouraged – strong internal labour market to meet skill needs	Weak internal labour market – recruitment usually from outside

22 Grounded in rigorous academic research, it also has the potential to interest human resources (HR) professionals in blue-chip companies, whilst remaining relevant to small enterprises. More details of how this model might be developed into a tool to encourage reflection on management practices by organisations of all sizes and from all sectors are covered in Section 6 of this report. (The model is elaborated in The Workplace as a Site for Learning, one of five projects which form the research network Improving Incentives to Learning in the Workplace, funded under Phase 1 of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme. Professor Unwin is based at the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester.)

23 The way in which IAG Partnerships and local LSCs themselves segment the market already (by virtue of their geographical boundaries) may become a barrier to development in the future. While this approach has not been a significant problem to date, consideration may need to be given to supporting activities that cut across boundaries as workplace-focused IAG develops. This might be through regionally organised activities, sectoral activities or initiatives based on travel-to-work areas.

The words 'information, advice and guidance' are often interpreted in workplaces in ways that differ from those understood in the professional discourse of many IAG Partnership staff.

Information Advice and Guidance Partnership links with intermediaries

- 24 A telephone survey of 27 IAG Partnerships revealed widely different experiences with a range of intermediaries. This is illustrated in Table 2 below, using reported comments. It must be stressed that the quality or existence of a link is not something that is wholly under a partnership’s control. More importantly, the absence of a reported link may simply mean that the respondent is unaware of it, not that it does not exist. (In the case of one IAG Partnership, responses were made by two staff and each reported a different pattern of engagement.) For these reasons, the evidence here must be interpreted as illustrative rather than scientific.
- 25 Of the 27 IAG Partnerships responding, 20 reported links with the union movement (19 respondents mentioned links with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and in the case of four, contact with the TUC was the only form of linkage). Only one IAG Partnership that was working with an individual union appeared not to have links with the TUC. In the case of individual unions, Unison was mentioned by eight IAG Partnerships, the GMB by seven. Other unions mentioned specifically were Amicus; the shopworkers’ union (USDAW); the TGWU; and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Table 2: Trade unions

Close links	Weaker links
'Strong links with TUC and some links with TGWU.'	'Have been in contact with TUC rep for the area but nothing has happened as of yet.'
'TUC is on executive group.'	'Have links with the TUC on work based learning but have not got very far.'
'Work with lots of unions – target was one but we now support four.'	'Spoke to the [union] learning rep about 18 months ago but have had no response.'
'Members include TUC National Education Centre.'	'Have made contact with TUC person but they are too busy. Tried to set up training courses for learning reps but there was poor attendance.'
'Network of 65 learning reps.'	'Don't receive any information from the TUC.'

I cannot praise them enough. The Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership have been helpful and very useful – networking meetings, informal help and advice and funding for books.

- 26 The interviews with trade union representatives provide clear evidence that individual union initiatives place high value on their links with IAG Partnerships where these exist. A respondent from a specialist professional union stated, with reference to a specific project: 'I cannot praise them enough. The Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership have been helpful and very useful – networking meetings, informal help and advice and funding for books.' No union working with an IAG Partnership had significant criticism of it.
- 27 There is, however, evidence that there is still work to be done to seek out unions in a more proactive way. A national officer of a large general union said: 'It depends on individuals and seems to depend on Union Learning Fund projects reaching out and making contact rather than Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships reaching in.' This opinion appeared to be supported by evidence from a local branch official, seconded to run a ULF project in the North-west for the same union who, in 18 months' full-time work on the project, had no link with the IAG Partnership and was unaware of its existence or remit. In the same region, a branch official of a specialist union who also serves on its national executive has been associated with two ULF projects run by consortia of four unions – one managed by his own union, another by the TGWU. Again, neither project was in contact with the local IAG Partnership but instead dealt directly with two further education colleges to run provision in a learning centre.
- 28 All the above evidence suggests that there may be a need for further work to ensure that IAG Partnerships can learn about 'live' ULF projects in their localities and that union learning representatives (despite useful material on the TUC Learning Services website and TUC publications such as the 20-page handbook on IAG) are given a clearer understanding of how to contact IAG Partnerships and what benefits they can expect from having made contact. The LSC may wish to consider how to encourage a more proactive role among TUC staff at regional level to broker relationships.

Regional activities

- 29 The majority of IAG activity is rightly focused within the geographical area of each partnership. There was, however, a small amount of evidence of IAG Partnerships looking beyond their borders. Most commonly this was in the form of regional events (for example, an Eastern regional conference for Union Learning representatives organised by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough IAG Partnership). Other partnerships are also conscious of how local economies often cut across administrative boundaries and are developing links to reflect travel-to-work and travel-to-learn boundaries.
- 30 In the case of regional development agencies (RDAs), 18 out of 27 respondents reported some contact, while nine had no contact (although some expressed a desire to establish closer contact). In some cases effective day-to-day working with elements of RDA activity was reported: 'Have worked with Yorkshire Forward, who have put a lot of money into basic skills'; 'No direct link but we are involved with work in [area] Regeneration Zone'; 'We have good links through some rural development projects they fund'; 'We sit on one of their steering groups for a region-wide project'. The role of partnerships other than IAG Partnerships also appeared to be significant in addition to the linkage through local LSCs which might be expected: in three cases learning partnerships and local strategic partnerships were the route through which IAG Partnerships maintained contact. The fact that in many locations the RDA link appeared sporadic and reactive ('Some contact, more through workforce development than information, advice and guidance'; 'Small amount of contact through the Learning and Skills Council'; 'Go to occasional meetings') is not unexpected. In general, discussions about IAG matters at regional level would tend to be conducted by local LSCs rather than IAG Partnerships directly. In the Northern region,

for example, the LSC consulted with IAG Partnerships on a regional basis over the development of a specific element of the FRESA.

- 31 Because of the importance of FRESAs in shaping activities intended to develop coordinated and collaborative regional approaches to identifying and meeting key labour market and skills needs and using a wide range of supply organisations in the region, there may be a case for some awareness-raising among IAG Partnerships. They may then become more sensitised to regional skill agendas and strengthen their engagement with RDAs and thus assist local LSCs in raising the profile of the benefits of IAG.

Business Links

- 32 The most noticeable feature of IAG Partnership relations with Business Links is their patchiness. In the case of at least three IAG Partnerships (Northumberland, Dudley, and Coventry and Warwickshire), Business Link managers were on IAG Partnership steering groups (in the case of Northumberland, on a workforce development steering group too). In other cases, links were so close that a respondent described the relationship as 'working in partnership'. A further example of co-operation is in Berkshire, where the Business Link promotes the IAG Partnership on its website. In local LSC areas with employer training pilots, close links tended to be reported.
- 33 At the opposite end of the spectrum, seven partnerships did not report any links, four mentioned aspirations for future collaboration, and comments in other cases ranged from: 'Tenuous links. There has been tension and some confusion about one consultant's work'; 'They are an associate member'; and 'They did a presentation to a recent meeting' (two reports), to 'Informal links'; and 'They are in our directory.'

- 34 A Business Link operations director was interviewed from a locality where relationships appear strong and identified the value that this brings: 'Providers of learning and information, advice and guidance generally talk to people outside their workplace and employers talk to Business Link advisors who are not generally specialists in learning. We need to change that.' Steps taken to bring about such a change included the training of Business Link advisors as basic skills brokers and regular cross-attendance at meetings.
- 35 A re-orientation of IAG was, however, suggested and this highlights the different perspectives that IAG Partnerships and Business Links have: 'information, advice and guidance needs to be seen more in terms of economic competitiveness. It's often about what's available, not what's needed.'

Ufi/learnirect

- 36 Partnerships' relations with local Ufi hubs are often strong and effective. Comments included: 'Good relationship – mutual promotion'; 'We work closely with two hubs'; 'Hub manager is on the steering group. Good relationship'; and 'Good links. Local Learning Partnership has a team on which sit most agencies to discuss common projects and issues.' These show evidence of close links. In a minority of cases, however, relationships with the helpline appear weak 'They have been to a presentation', and on occasion verge on hostile: 'Real problems – they just don't seem to want to know unless it's got a **learnirect** brand on it'; 'Not referring into Partnership'; 'Protocol is not worth the paper it's written on. They never refer anything to the Partnership'; 'Database is out of date – it would be useful if they told people who called in that local advice could be obtained from the partnership.'

Others

- 37 There are also instances of individual partnerships working effectively with other intermediary organisations. While numbers are fewer, this illustrates the potential which might exist for collaboration with trade union study centres, chambers of commerce, trade and professional bodies and others. An illustrative example concerns the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Four out of 27 partnerships reported links and their comments were: 'There are local networks and ad hoc meetings'; 'We are waiting for the go-ahead from the local Learning and Skills Council'; 'I wrote a piece for the local branch newsletter'; and 'One of the partnership's private training provider members is a very active member of Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development networks which promote [specific ESF-funded career coaching programme] in their publications and meetings.'
- 38 There is an emerging appreciation that the intermediaries which have greatest impact on and influence over smaller businesses are their accountants, banks and solicitors. While no initiatives focused specifically upon sensitising these agencies to an IAG agenda were reported, a small number of IAG Partnerships (for example Berkshire) have explored linkages. This parallels early exploration, at national level, with the representative bodies for accountants, banks and solicitors about the feasibility of introducing continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for their members, which will help them explain the business benefits of greater investment in skills. Such a move might, of course, build upon the engagement of three major clearing banks in the career development loan (CDL) initiative. The dissemination of materials about IAG to such audiences should be considered.
- 39 Overall, the impression is of considerable untapped potential in developing links with intermediary organisations – possibly because many partnerships are only now adopting clearly focused strategies for engagement with workplace-led learning.

Communications

- 40 More than one union official with a national overview made the point that 'In the workplace there are always lots of things going on under the surface. Outsiders coming in need time to properly understand what may be going on.' On several occasions this point prefaced a statement of concern that external advisors needed to consult widely on the consequences and implications of seemingly straightforward actions and to use agreed channels of communication between employers and their workforces. In workplaces where there are fears of redundancies, reorganisations or closure, the importance of maintaining the trust of all parties is essential.
- 41 In the same way that providers of IAG need to understand the cultures and undercurrents of businesses, so too do they need to take time to appreciate the same things in trade unions. In a number of cases there appear to be some misunderstandings about the nature of unions as autonomous democratic organisations owned by and regularly accountable to their members. There was a widespread misconception that the TUC is a union and that it can coordinate its affiliated unions by instruction. Other misunderstandings concerned the role and relationships between unions and trade union study centres and unemployed workers' centres. Also the observation that 'The GMB are just coming into [county] and the partnership are establishing links' – in fact, the GMB has been organising in the county rather longer than the IAG Partnership.
- 42 Similarly, the distinctive and different forms of union organisation (for example, the relative autonomy of branches, the strength of regional and sectoral groupings and so on) and the existence of inter-union tensions may be under-appreciated.

Networking and collaboration

- 43 As services based on principles of partnership, IAG Partnerships are potentially well placed to work effectively in developing open, inclusive and transparent partnerships with other bodies. They have an established track record of encouraging collaborative activities, although a Business Link manager interviewed suggested that sometimes partnerships appeared over-selective about who they would work with and might not be sufficiently inclusive: 'The important thing should be to get people involved and bring them on, not worry too much about criteria needed.' This suggests that the current criteria for full membership of partnerships might be reviewed to ensure that the benefits continue to outweigh the costs. Enterprising IAG Partnerships demonstrate that unhelpful rules need not be an obstacle where there is a will for inclusion. 'We know of about 65 learning reps. As individual reps can't be full Information, Advice and Guidance members, [a lead organisation] has established a new "group" so reps can get access to referral systems and careers materials.'
- 44 The same Business Link respondent cited above made the point (echoed by another business-focused agency) that 'people who are good at outreach in the community don't always find it easy to adapt to other workplace cultures. You can't work on a deficit model. You have to present change as an opportunity.' Both respondents acknowledged that the reverse was also true. 'Business advisors sometimes find it hard to explain their recommendations to individual employees.'

IAG Partnerships' internal structures

- 45 At local LSC level, responsibility for IAG is located within a number of different teams. Examples include Adult and Community Learning; Workforce Development; Policy and Strategy; and Inclusion and Widening Participation. This appears sometimes to give IAG work a subtle range of 'flavours'. Although it cannot be said that one particular way of organising responsibilities for IAG work is necessarily 'better' than another (and it is a matter for local LSCs to determine their internal structures), each local LSC will wish to consider how best to ensure that both community – and employment – focused IAG can develop effectively in the future and contribute to

strategic goals for engagement with businesses and unions. At present there appear to be some gaps. An example of this is the IAG Partnership which reported 'the only employer link we have is with [named company]', where its local LSC had a QDF project with a particular focus on this topic.

46 At national and regional level, there is seldom a coordinated and dedicated voice for IAG interests on wider consultative groups around workforce development and lifelong learning. This means that IAG experience and expertise does not always contribute fully to strategic debates and is not systematically informed by them.

In the workplace there are always lots of things going on under the surface. Outsiders coming in need time to properly understand what may be going on.

Section 5: Moving forward: models for future development

47 Two models are proposed. The first, for taking forward an IAG agenda with unions, is based upon increasing individual demand. The second, for taking the agenda forward with employers, is about increasing business demand.

Working with unions

48 This model segments the broad category of 'trade unions' and identifies six centres of influence within the union movement that the LSC may wish to target. These are shown in Table 3.

49 These six centres of influence work with each other in the ways summarised in Table 4.

Table 3: The six centres of influence.

Centre of influence	Comments
TUC	Made up of 70 affiliated unions covering 6.7 million workers
Individual national trade unions and registered staff associations	199 trade unions and 94 associations registered with the Government Registrar (2002)
TUC regional offices	Six in England (therefore not coterminous with Government Office regions)
Union internal structures	Depending on the union, these may be regional and/or sub-regional and/or sectoral and/or other (race, gender and so on)
ULF projects	215 have been supported – from 55 unions – not all local
Union learning representatives	Currently estimated at 4,500 in number

Table 4: How the six centres work together.

Centre of influence	Method
TUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provides leadership, delivers agreed policies > Communicates with national affiliates on education, training and other matters > Coordinates regional TUC staff > Informs ULF projects and learning reps through Learning Services website and briefings
Individual national trade unions and registered staff associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Determine TUC policy (if affiliated) > Are accountable to members through internal structures > Inform and are accountable to union internal structures > Sponsor ULF projects > Develop their own networks of learning representatives
TUC regional offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Represent the TUC at regional level, supporting campaigns and objectives > Act as a communication channel between individual affiliated unions and their ULF projects and learning reps
Union internal structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Determine union policy in different ways > Sponsor and support ULF projects in different ways > Provide structure and support for own learning reps in different ways > Use TUC services as required
ULF projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Are accountable through union to the ULF > May be managed or coordinated at national, regional or local level > Are supported by their own union and/or TUC regional offices > Are informed by TUC Learning Services
Union learning representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Are members of their union and integrated into internal structures in different ways > Are trained and developed by various training providers > Are supported by unions' internal structures > May be part of ULF projects > May be supported by regional and national TUC

Modelling how the LSC might best work with employers and their intermediaries to influence policies and practice in relation to workplace-led provision of IAG is a complex matter.

While the most effective intermediaries are likely to include organisations and institutions directly funded by the LSC... there are others that may be used to promote workplace-focused IAG.

- 50 On the basis of these relationships, the strategy in Table 5 is suggested for the LSC in order that it might best advance its IAG agenda.
- 51 Using this model should help all parties map their existing links, identify priorities for engagement and develop new collaborations.

Working with employers and intermediaries

- 52 Modelling how the LSC might best work with employers and their intermediaries to influence policies and practice in relation to the workplace-led provision of IAG is a complex matter. One reason for this is the sheer number of publicly funded initiatives and agencies competing for the attention of employers. Within the LSC itself, workplace-focused IAG is one message among many. A second reason for the difficulty is the complex and overlapping mix of private and publicly sponsored business organisations operating at national, regional, local and sectoral levels. Some of these focus entirely on learning, training and skills issues while others do so in part.
- 53 The approach proposed starts from the understanding that there will be occasions when the LSC at local and national level will wish to seek to influence employers directly. The model does not consider this at all. There are other occasions when it may seek to influence intermediary bodies to make its case.

Table5: IAG strategic actions

Centre of excellence	Strategic actions
TUC	LSC national office to work with senior staff at Congress House on strategic issues
Individual national trade unions and registered staff associations	LSC national office to work through TUC or directly in certain cases on strategic issues at national and regional level Local LSCs to work strategically at regional level with individual unions on IAG as part of the regional education and skills strategy (especially where individual local LSCs take a lead on work in different sectors)
TUC regional offices	Local LSCs to agree a lead LSC link point for communication. Focus of engagement on regional and sub-regional matters
Union internal structures	LSC national office approaches to be routed initially through unions' national offices (primarily on sectoral issues) Local LSCs as appropriate on sub-regional matters but reflecting individual unions' structures and preferences
ULF projects	IAG Partnerships and local LSCs working directly on matters of practice but respecting union's internal preferences (that approaches should be made to the branch rather than the project, for example) Possible role for local LSCs to stimulate local networks (for example, initiatives in Norfolk and Cambridge and Peterborough) extending beyond IAG to include colleges and higher education institutions to provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources
Union learning representatives	Primary link through IAG Partnerships and local LSCs with the agreement of individual unions and their employers

Table 6: Intermediaries

Message focus	Undifferentiated	Size-related	Sector or occupation related
Sub-regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Chambers of Commerce > CIPD branches > JobCentre Plus > Enterprise Agencies > Local Authority > Economic Development departments > liP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Business Links > Federation of Small Businesses branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sectoral alliances and branches of national sectoral organisations (for example, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders).
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > RDAs > Regional CBI 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > RDA sector working groups > Regional employer associations > NHS workforce development confederations
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > CBI > Institute of Directors > British Chambers of Commerce > liP UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Federation of Small Businesses > SBS > learnirect > Small Firms' Enterprise Development Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sector Skills Development Agency > Sector Skills Councils and national training bodies > Professional associations (for example, the British Bankers' Association) > National sectoral bodies (for example, Engineering Employers' Federation; the NHS University; Countryside Agency).

54 While the most effective intermediaries are likely to include organisations and institutions directly funded by the LSC (such as colleges, local authorities, voluntary and commercial learning providers and IAG Partnerships), there are others that may be used to promote workplace-focused IAG. Exactly which will depend upon the level and nature of the message, which may be:

- > sub-regional (highly specific local information content);
- > regional (less specific local information content);

or

- > national (little or no local information content).

Cutting across these are issues about the specificity of content relating to:

- > size of organisation targeted; and
- > industrial sector of organisation targeted.

55 It is well understood that this approach is limited in modelling the complexity of employer organisations which appear, overall, to be under-mapped.

56 The model in Table 6 may assist in helping to identify the kind of intermediary to use to promote IAG in different ways. It is likely that such activities will (primarily) be led by local LSCs rather than IAG Partnerships.

57 Examples shown are illustrative, not comprehensive.

58 The particular role of accountants, banks and solicitors as potential intermediaries with particular influence over small businesses might be a priority for further exploration. This could be done both at local level (to establish relationships; as a channel of dissemination for promotional materials and so on) and at national level (to support CPD initiatives encouraging such professionals to highlight the business benefits of investment in learning and skills and the contribution IAG can make to this).

To raise the profile of IAG as an integral part of learning amongst employers and trade unions, the LSC should...

To influence the policies and practice of unions and employers in relation to the workplace-led IAG provision, the LSC should...

Section 6: Recommendations

- 59 To raise the profile of IAG as an integral part of learning among employers and trade unions, the LSC should:
- > take an increasingly proactive approach to such work and produce a range of targeted resource materials that locate IAG within the context of the priorities of the Government's skills strategy and the LSC's own workforce development strategy. It is suggested that these materials might be designed in such a way that disseminating agents such as IAG Partnerships, trade unions or other intermediaries could 'co-badge' them by overprinting;
 - > in the context of the skills strategy, promote the benefits of individual-oriented IAG to union and employer intermediary organisations. This will need to be done in close alignment with other LSC communication initiatives, especially those seeking to influence the same groups. Such a strategy might include the establishment of 'stakeholder groups' of unions and employers' bodies, with whom the LSC could consult on improving and developing proposals, taking into account any plans in the future for national branding of adult IAG services; and
 - > review in detail the findings and outcomes of Unwin and Fuller's ESRC research project The Workplace as a Site for Learning to see if the authors might be commissioned to extend its development to include a diagnostic tool suitable for use by businesses of all sizes and in all sectors to address issues of workplace skills.
- 60 To raise the profile of IAG Partnerships and their work the LSC should:
- > consider the development of a strategic planning framework, involving LSC staff responsible for IAG and for workforce development, in order to better realise the potential contribution of individual adult IAG to workplace-led learning of all kinds at national, regional and local levels;
 - > encourage the development of closer engagement and collaboration, at all levels, between staff responsible for the LSC's workplace-led and skills-focused individual IAG activities and the staff of agencies and intermediaries (especially Business Link) concerned with organisationally focused business development and guidance;
 - > invite local LSCs to review where responsibility for adult IAG is most effectively located within local structures (internally and externally) if it is to adopt a more focused orientation towards the workplace; and
 - > encourage local LSCs to work collaboratively with:
 - i TUC regions, to support enhanced and larger networks of Union Learning representatives and discuss with the TUC and employers' organisations, at national and regional level, the potential for agreeing memoranda of understanding; and
 - ii local Business Link services and other local enterprise agencies and initiatives, and discuss with the SBS the potential for agreeing a national memorandum of understanding with Business Link services on individually focused IAG in the workplace in order to develop a 'no wrong door' service to individual and corporate clients.
- 61 To influence the policies and practice of unions and employing organisations in relation to the workplace-led provision of IAG, the LSC should:
- > at national level, continue to integrate work with employers and unions with sectoral-led initiatives around IAG (for example, the recent pilot work at national level focused upon the retailing sector), and to identify further priorities for sectoral engagement and development. A national lead may be appropriate for work with major national employers such as the NHS, the armed forces (in preparing for civilian resettlement), the civil service and local government;
 - > at local level, consult and adopt for the purposes of promoting adult IAG a sectoral segmentation of the labour market, based upon, or aligned towards:
 - i regional and sub-regional labour market priorities (drawn perhaps from those identified in each FRESA); plus
 - ii other priorities for workforce development, social inclusion and equality of opportunity arising from LSC strategic plans and strategic area reviews;
- 62 At local level, through contractual review and support, local LSCs should encourage IAG Partnerships to collaborate with Business Links and IIP advisors while exploring, at national level, the feasibility of formal memoranda of understanding with these services around the provision of workplace-focused IAG. At national and local levels, the LSC should seek to engage with the professional advisors to smaller businesses.
- > from this, identify those business sectors (for example, automotive industries or land-based industries) which should be prioritised for targeted development and engagement;
 - > demonstrate its proactive intent by organising or sponsoring a series of regional seminars, each targeting by sector or employer cluster, employers, Union Learning representatives and individual unions' regional education officers together with SSC or national training organisation (NTO) interests. Such seminars would be grounded in regional economic strategies and LSC strategic plans and would consider how to provide IAG to people in employment and promote sectoral skills development; and
 - > invite local LSCs to consider how their internal communications join up intelligence and action on employment-focused IAG with other activities so that IAG can more effectively influence broader policies and practice and also ensure that messages from businesses and unions are shared throughout each local LSC's work;

Annex:

Annex A: Employers

- > Birmingham City Council
- > British Chambers of Commerce (Catherine Fogg)
- > Business Link Coventry and Warwickshire (Dianne Williams)
- > Centre for Enterprise (John Ventham)
- > Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Victoria Gill)
- > Federation of Small Businesses
- > Ford Motor Company (Dr Rob Brittle)
- > Investors in People (Alan Shore)
- > Kesslers International (George Kessler)
- > Land Rover (Sian Hewkins)
- > MC Consultants (Mark Corney)
- > NHSU Learning Strategy and Standards (Gifford Batstone)
- > Rosemary Conley Diet and Fitness Clubs (Claire Tamblin)
- > Shropshire Primary Care Trust
- > Whitehead Mann plc (Peninah Thompson)

Annex B: Unions

- > Richard Blakeley (UNIFI national)
- > Mick Bond (TGWU local)
- > Dave Eva (TUC regional)
- > John Howard (SCP local)
- > Sarah Howard and Hannah Wood (Amicus-MSF national)
- > Dave Jeffrey (GMPU local)
- > Pam Johnson (Unison national)
- > Linda King (NUJ national)
- > Rose Matley, Joe Fernehough and Bert Clough (TUC national)
- > Liz McCarten (Connect local)
- > Geoff Price (CSEU)
- > Ton Scalon (TGWU local)
- > Dan Taubman (NATFHE national)
- > Joe Thornberry (AUT local)
- > James Rees (USDW national)
- > Keith Waterhouse (Unison local)
- > Jenny Webber (GMB local)

Annex C: Learning and Skills Council Quality Development Fund projects

- > A number of local LSCs referred enquiries to the IAGP
- > Berkshire:
 - 'Information and Advice on Learning and Work for Employers' (Jon Thompson)
- > Bournemouth and Poole:
 - 'Improving Employer Links' (Sue Farrell)
- > Coventry and Warwickshire:
 - 'The Sampson Model' (Rachel Lewis-Bell and Ken Marshall)
- > Derbyshire:
 - 'Evaluate IAG Impact' (Alan Lygo)
- > Devon and Cornwall:
 - 'IAG in the Workplace' (Clive Ansell)
- > Gloucestershire:
 - 'Enhancing Work with Employers' (Wendy Gilbert)
- > Hereford and Worcestershire:
 - 'Chance Would be a Fine Thing' (Alex Heath)
- > Hertfordshire:
 - 'Working with Employers' (Sally Creedy)
- > Leicestershire:
 - 'Training for Front-line Staff of Other Agencies' (Bernie Henson)
- > London West:
 - 'Routes into Skills Development' (Teresa Sarmiento)
- > London Central:
 - 'Developing Links with Health Service Organisations' (Scott Donaldson)
- > North Yorkshire:
 - 'Mapping Competence-based Training Programmes' (Sue Maggott)
- > Shropshire:
 - 'Integrated Model for IAG in the Public Sector' (Sue Marston)
- > South Yorkshire:
 - 'Improving the Quality of IAG for Adults' (Maggie Hoyland)
- > Staffordshire:
 - 'IAG Mapping Exercise' (Brenda Jackson)
- > Tyne and Wear:
 - 'IAG with Employers and Unions' (Dave Ord)
- > West of England:
 - 'IAG and Employers' (Bob Carroll)

Annex D: Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships

- > Discussions took place with 27 IAGPs
- > Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham (Rosemary Schofield)
- > Berkshire (Lesley Reilly)
- > Birmingham and Solihull (Suzanne Morley)
- > Cambridgeshire (Sue Claydon)
- > Coventry and Warwickshire (Lesley Jeavons)
- > Derbyshire (Phil Bradley)
- > Dudley (Carl Jordan)
- > Durham (David Hodgson)
- > East Sussex (Lynne Varney)
- > East Thames (Steve Lockwood)
- > Gloucestershire (Simon Cusworth)
- > Humberside (Pauline Hardy/Tonya Ward)
- > Lancashire (Bronwyn Nelson)
- > Leicestershire (Mark Williamson)
- > Lincolnshire and Rutland (Julia Beard)
- > London Cross-river (David Sangster)
- > London North (John Pawsey)
- > London West (Kanta Ghudial)
- > Northumberland (Jeffrey Warren)
- > Oldham (Steve Murphy)
- > Oxfordshire (Carole Rees and Carol Bishop)
- > Rochdale (Jerry Knox)
- > Suffolk (Martin Peel)
- > Teesside (Eddie Costello)
- > West Sussex (Ivan Shutak)
- > Wigan (Suzanne Jones)
- > York and North Yorkshire (Christine Harper)

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