

Individual Learning Accounts: A Consultation Exercise on a New ILA Style Scheme

Final Report to the Department for Education and Skills

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Executive summary

Introduction

1. SQW Limited and NOP World were appointed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to conduct a consultation exercise with key stakeholder groups about a possible replacement for the Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) programme. The consultation process included:
 - a telephone survey of 405 learning providers
 - a postal survey of all ILA registered learning providers – from which over 2,600 were returned, including a small number completed on-line
 - a telephone survey of 1,000 ILA holders
 - 31 in-depth interviews with key agencies engaged in the skills and learning infrastructure
 - a series of six workshops with learning providers and others.
2. The report pulls together the findings on a series of key issues based on the three sources: learning providers, key organisations and account holders.
3. Given that the consultation exercise was undertaken alongside other factors feeding into the development of a new ILA-style programme, the report does not offer a detailed design for a new scheme, nor does it suggest preferred options for particular elements. Rather, it seeks to detail the consensus of views that came through from a range of stakeholders and highlights where there were differences.

Summary of Findings

Overall principles

4. There was a strong feeling across almost all of those consulted that **a new ILA-style programme should be put in place**, recognising that much had been achieved through the previous programme. Almost four-fifths of the account holders

interviewed thought that a similar programme would encourage them to invest more in their learning in the future

5. All stakeholder groups were keen that the **strengths of the old programme, in particular its openness to learners and providers, should not be lost**, although they also **acknowledged that the system would need to be ‘tighter’** to prevent the problems which had arisen previously.
6. The key organisations interviewed were strongly of the view that the **new programme should be clearly focussed on empowering the learner**. This was not to say that further development of the supply side should be discouraged, indeed it would be welcomed, but that this should be very much a secondary priority. The providers also appeared to embrace this view.

Key elements of a new ILA-style scheme

7. These broad principles feed into a number of issues relating to the delivery of the programme.
8. There was a strong view that **the programme should be open to all**. However, if it is to be targeted, there was a slight preference for a focus on important skill areas (e.g. IT, other vocational skills), which was also seen as being easier to deliver, than a process of distinguishing between different learner priority groups (e.g. those with low levels of qualifications or the unemployed).
9. **Improved quality assurance was seen as a vital step in developing the new programme**. Most of those participating **favoured the use of existing quality assurance systems**, rather than a new, purpose-built system, but were keen that these should include, not only those currently linked to government programmes, but those which had currency within the private sector.
10. It was thought important that **learner feedback should be included within the quality assurance system**, with strong support for a systematic follow-up of learners and tracking of learning completion rates amongst providers. Both means would help to highlight where problems may be arising and so trigger further investigations.
11. There was also a strong view that **learners should be fully informed of the availability of information, advice and guidance**, and signposted towards it, probably through a more comprehensive application pack. However, there was general agreement that there should not be any compulsion to access information, advice and guidance, as this would create a barrier to people entering learning. Moreover, many of the account holders interviewed appeared confident that they already knew their own needs.

12. There was general support for learners continuing to contribute financially towards their own learning, although the view was also that the minimum amount should remain low.
13. The majority of learning providers (60%) favoured a payment system where at least part of the sum paid to providers was held back until learning has been completed, compared to 34% that wanted all payments made on registration as under the previous scheme.
14. There was no clear consensus amongst learning providers as to the form of government contribution in a new scheme. However, there was a slight preference for fixed amount discounts rather than percentage discounts.
15. It was suggested that **ILAs could be used to encourage on-going learning** through providing a further subsidy at a later point (perhaps for progression or on completion of the first piece of learning); information about available courses; and assurances about the quality of provision.
16. Given that ILAs are meant to focus on the learner, it was seen as **crucial that responsibility for registering learners should rest with individuals themselves**. Sending materials to their home address could reinforce this. There was widespread **support for people being able to register through a range of means**, as each brought different barriers to particular population groups.
17. The majority of learners (68%) indicated that they would not be put off signing up for a new programme if the registration procedures were more rigorous than in the ILA scheme.
18. The stakeholders generally felt that a **new ILA-style programme should remain essentially national**. However, there was seen to be scope for some more local implementation, probably at the level of the LSCs. This was most often suggested in respect of the operation of quality assurance systems, drawing on local knowledge to identify problems and offering targeted marketing to meet local priorities.
19. There was a broadly even split amongst all the stakeholder groups between those who believed that the ILA brand name should be retained, building on the positive views of the previous programme, and those who thought it should be replaced due to the recent negative publicity. Around 50% of each group favoured retention, 40% wanted a new name and 10% were undecided.

Key quantitative findings

Provider postal survey

- The scheme's universality and the government contribution to learning were identified as key **strengths** of the original ILA scheme by four fifths of learning providers in the postal survey (79% and 80% respectively).
- The two principal **weaknesses** of the original ILA scheme were identified as the ease with which rogue providers could get involved (83%) and the scheme's openness to mis-selling (75%).
- 68% of learning providers thought that a new scheme should have more rigorous quality assurance of providers. Just 21% felt that a new quality assurance system should be developed as part of a new scheme.
- 61% of learning providers felt that learners should be encouraged to seek independent advice and guidance before embarking on learning.
- 60% of learning providers supported the suggestion that a proportion of the payments should be held back until the training has been completed. Only 35% of learning providers thought that all payment should be made on registration.

ILA holder telephone survey

- 79% of learners thought that something like an ILA would encourage them to invest more of their own money in learning/training.
- Three quarters (77%) of learners reported that a financial contribution would definitely encourage them to undertake learning in the future.
- 85% of those that has used their ILA had not received any independent advice and guidance before embarking on learning or training. However, over three

quarters (76%) were confident that they knew how to access advice and guidance if they needed it.

- Nearly three quarters (73%) of learners did not consider more than one provider before embarking on learning or training.
- 68% of learners said that they would not be put off by the introduction of more rigorous learner registration procedures.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 SQW Limited and NOP World were appointed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to conduct a consultation exercise with key stakeholder groups about a possible replacement for the Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) programme, which was closed in late 2001.
- 1.2 The consultation process included:
- a telephone survey of 405 learning providers
 - a postal survey of all ILA registered learning providers – from which over 2,600 were returned, including a small number completed on-line (the response rate was 30%)
 - a telephone survey of 1,000 ILA holders
 - 31 in-depth interviews with key organisations engaged in the skills and learning infrastructure
 - a series of six workshops with learning providers and others.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was carried out between 24 January and 27 March 2002.
- 1.4 Concurrently, DfES commissioned a website through which providers and others were able to feed in comments less formally. DfES also ran a small number of workshops with specific interest groups. The results of these exercises are not included in this report.

Report structure

- 1.5 The appendices of this report contain detailed write-ups of each of the research elements. The main body of the report concentrates on cutting across these elements to pull together emerging findings on a series of key issues based on the three sources: providers, key organisations and account holders.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the data referring to the learning provider postal survey in the Key Findings section of this report does not correspond to the data found in Appendix A. The data

used in Key Findings represents an amalgamation of responses from a survey of providers. The providers were given the option of completing a paper copy of the survey (2,500 replies were received through this route) or completing the survey via DfES ILA views website (131). The surveys that were returned via the website have been merged with the postal responses because of the low completion rate and issues of representation.

- 1.7 The figures quoted for providers relate to the self-completion survey, but not the telephone survey. The latter was conducted at an early stage to provide important, quick feedback on a number of issues. It was also used to inform the design of the other research elements. The results from the two surveys were broadly similar and therefore the presentation of the results is clearer if just one figure is quoted, based on the much larger sample size. However, the findings from the provider telephone survey are reported in Annex E.

2. Key findings

Introduction

2.1 This chapter draws on the survey findings and workshops, which are reported in more detail in the appendices, to present the views of the three stakeholder groups (providers, learners and other key organisations) on a series of issues:

- strengths of the previous programme
- weaknesses of the previous programme
- the need for a new programme
- the main elements of a new programme
 - should it be universal, offering the same to all learners, or should it be targeted
 - how might quality assurance work
 - how could information, advice and guidance be provided and encouraged
 - payments within a new ILA-style scheme
 - how could ILAs be used to stimulate and sustain learning
 - what are the best ways to register learners
 - the allocation of roles and responsibilities between national and local agencies
 - how a new programme should be branded.

2.2 These issues are discussed in turn below.

The strengths of the previous programme

- 2.3 From the view point of the training providers and the other key organisations, the main strengths of ILAs were agreed to be that they:
- were open to all (mentioned by 79% of provider survey respondents)
 - brought a government contribution to training (80%)
 - focussed on the individual (48%).
- 2.4 The additional government money injected into training was also recognised to have helped stimulate the provider market, with new providers setting up and many beginning to receive government funding who had not previously been involved in government funded training (45% of providers). However, a number of agencies that we interviewed, while welcoming the newcomers, were concerned that the emphasis had shifted too much from empowering the learner to stimulating the supplier market.
- 2.5 The vast majority (89%) of account holders thought that ILAs were fairly simple to understand. The providers were less convinced that learners had fully understood ILAs with just 39% reporting that learners had understood most of the scheme.

Weaknesses of the previous programme

- 2.6 There was broad agreement between the providers and the other key organisations on the weaknesses of the programme. In the main, their concerns centred around:
- it being too easy for rogue providers to become involved (mentioned by 83% of survey respondents)
 - the programme being too open to mis-selling (75%)
 - the lack of quality assurance of providers (61%)
 - the lack of quality assurance of courses (50%).

- 2.7 It is apparent that many of the perceived strengths of the programme, for example its openness and ease of access, are at the same time perceived as weaknesses. The general view from stakeholders was therefore that a new ILA-style programme should try to ensure that as much openness as possible remains, while introducing sufficient checks to stop bad practice.
- 2.8 A number of such tensions were evident through the consultation exercise and learning providers identified and acknowledged the difficulties in getting the balance right between these elements, e.g. ensuring a new scheme is easily accessible to new providers while at the same time ensuring rigorous quality assurance systems.
- 2.9 The account holders were not asked directly about weaknesses, but rather their views were sought on how the programme could be improved. These opinions are reported later in this chapter.

The need for a new programme

- 2.10 Following on from their positive views about the previous programme, the vast majority of providers and other organisations consulted thought that a similar programme should be brought forward as a replacement. Just two of the other organisations that we consulted thought that there was no need for a replacement programme.
- 2.11 The providers who attended the workshops were all of a view that there should be a new ILA-style programme. Indeed, for many their concern was how quickly a new scheme should start, rather than to question the need for it. Several expressed their concerns that if a new programme was not at least announced shortly then a number of providers would close. The other organisations and a minority of the providers saw less need for urgency, believing that time should be taken to 'get it right' and that it was providers' commercial risk to rely so heavily on ILA funding.
- 2.12 The survey of learners provided a slightly mixed message. Whilst two thirds of the learners questioned felt that being able to access free training from an approved list would be the best motivator, 79% said that something like an ILA would encourage them to invest more in their own training. This may reflect the fact that many peoples' main experience of learning is of it being free at the point of delivery.

The main elements of a new programme

Should it be universal, offering the same to all learners, or should it be targeted¹?

- 2.13 We described above the strong general view that the openness of the previous programme was a strength, and most wanted this to continue: 59% of the providers thought that there should be no specific focus or targeting of the new scheme. That said, a number of the other organisations linked the lack of targeting of the previous scheme to a high element of deadweight spending.
- 2.14 Most providers were not generally concerned about targeting for social or economic need – even when questioned about it in the workshops. In general their concern was how many learners would come to their business. Among providers who thought that there should be targeting, there was a general preference for this to be done by course type, rather than population group. Based on discussions in the workshops this preference would seem to reflect:
- a consideration of the practicalities – it would be easier to control entry to courses than to in effect undertake a ‘means test’ of individuals
 - a perceived need to target expenditure to tackle skill shortages.
- 2.15 Those attending the workshops recognised that all targeting methods could be difficult to implement. Limiting the level of courses eligible was thought to be the simplest method. However, it was suggested by some that this should apply only to an individual’s ‘second bite’ at learning supported by an ILA. It was suggested that through focussed marketing, key groups could be targeted whilst retaining the open status of the overall ILA.

How might quality assurance work?

- 2.16 There was broad agreement across key organisations and providers that there should be increased quality assurance in a new scheme (68% of postal respondents agreed that there should be more rigorous quality assurance of providers). A slightly smaller number, 62%, thought that there should also be more rigorous quality assurance of provision.

¹ Given the policy focus of this question it was not asked of account holders.

- 2.17 Improved quality assurance of courses was the second most frequently suggested improvement that learners would like to have seen in the previous ILA programme (16% of those interviewed)
- 2.18 When learners were given a list of factors that might encourage them to take part in learning in the future, having a “list of training providers that are guaranteed to offer good quality courses” was the second most likely factor (64% said this would “definitely” encourage them).
- 2.19 The workshop discussions broadly followed this line of thinking, and indeed developed it further. The attendees accepted the need for more quality assurance and while most thought this should cover both providers and courses, there was often agreement that the initial focus should be on providers. This was largely based around the practicalities involved in having to quality assure a large number of courses, especially as the providers would want their courses accredited quickly if this was to be a condition of them being able to draw down ILA monies. There was also a fear that if only accredited courses were eligible for support, this would limit many of the worthwhile and new/innovative courses developed to tap into the previous ILA scheme.
- 2.20 The strong feeling running through the workshops, where these issues were discussed in detail, was that existing quality assurance mechanisms should be used where possible. The providers did not feel that this should be limited to those linked to existing government funded training (such as those operated by the Adult Learning Inspectorate and LSC), but should also include those covering reputable private sector courses (those relating to the IT sector were mentioned most often, possibly reflecting the background of many of those attending, e.g. ECDL or CLAIT).
- 2.21 One other view, which came through strongly in many of the workshops, was that the quality assurance process should include feedback from learners. This could operate at two levels:
- surveying learners – either through a standard form issued through providers or by an independent survey soon after the end of their course
 - tracking course completion rates – with high dropout being a signal to investigate more closely.
- 2.22 Some providers at the workshops thought that to push up completion rates an element of the funding should be held back until the end of a course. Similar views were also expressed in the surveys: 26% of providers suggested an even split of funding at the start and end of the

training; and 17% favoured all payments being made on completion. Thirty-four percent favoured all payments on registration, as had happened under the previous programme. Almost three quarters (72%) of learners said that they would have more confidence if they knew that at least some element of a provider's payment was dependent upon them confirming that the learning had taken place.

- 2.23 There was also support in several workshops for a rating exercise, based on a range of factors, such as written references, track record, time in operation, teaching qualifications/experience, health and safety etc. This would provide the minimum, entry-level requirements, with those only just achieving these being subject to heavier learner follow-up until confidence in them reaches a sufficient level.
- 2.24 The situation is even more complicated for new providers: while some thought that they should have to gain one of the existing forms of accreditation; others suggested that they be given a probationary period during which they would be closely tracked.

How could information, advice and guidance be provided and encouraged?

- 2.25 We reported above that most account holders found the operation of their ILA easy to understand. However, 85% of those interviewed had not received any information, advice or guidance (IAG) to help them with their choice of learning and 73% had not considered more than one provider before embarking on learning. On the one hand this might show a high degree of self-assurance, but on the other it raises questions about how appropriate peoples' choice of learning was. While 76% reported that they were confident about where to seek information about courses (when probed most said their local college), 34% had been helped by their provider to understand their ILA and 25% had had their ILA opened for them by a provider. The improvement to the previous programme most commonly suggested by learners was the need for more information about the scheme and courses (20%).
- 2.26 Most providers thought that account holders should be encouraged to access IAG before embarking on learning (61%), as did the other key organisations who saw it as crucial to the concept of learner empowerment. The other organisations also saw this element as important, as a way of ensuring that the concept of the empowered learner becomes a reality.
- 2.27 The three main sources favoured to deliver information, advice and guidance were:
- IAG partnerships (46%)

- designated learning providers (39%)
- learndirect (35%)

2.28 All three options suggest working through existing mechanisms, although discussion in the workshops clearly indicated that none was seen to be ideal. The concerns centred around the issue of providers not knowing how to access independent advice and guidance locally and the perceived lack of independence of providers and learndirect. That said, the service that they actually wanted was very similar to that which learndirect in collaboration with IAG partnerships is intended to provide.

2.29 It was widely felt that IAG should not be compulsory, with many seeing compulsion as a potential barrier to new learners entering the system. Rather, the most common view was that account holders should be given the option of accessing IAG and that efforts should be made to raise their levels of awareness of how this could be done. It was suggested that this could be achieved through the development of a more comprehensive registration pack which would include:

- details of IAG available
- IAG phone numbers
- a booklet of courses available in the local area
- the address of a website holding similar information.

2.30 Some of the workshop groups took this suggestion a stage further with the idea that learners could be provided with a series of questions to ask of their provider and/or of themselves to ensure that they were pursuing the correct sort of learning.

Payments within a new ILA-style scheme

2.31 The provider survey showed a slight preference for a lump sum payment from DfES (as opposed to a percentage discount), which would be the same for all learning. However, the overall differences between the options of fixed payments or variables percentages were relatively small (around 10%) and therefore it is probably best to conclude that there is no single, strongly held view.

2.32 There was slightly more consensus in terms of the learner's contribution, with a preference for this to be related to costs:

- set as a proportion of costs - 43 %
- set as a fixed amount of money – 30%
- a combination of both – 19%.

2.33 The providers and a number of the other key organisations were keen that whatever mechanism was used, learners should be made fully aware of the true costs of their learning. A common view was that this should be seen as part of learner empowerment and would help encourage learners to take their activities more seriously. While a few providers at the workshops followed this latter thought through to ask for the learner contribution to be raised, the general view of the surveys was that the minimum contribution should stay low, with over half suggesting £25 and over two thirds favouring a minimum contribution under £50.

2.34 The majority of learning providers (60%) surveyed, favoured at least part of their payment being held back until learning has been completed. Only 34% favoured all payments being made on registration.

How could ILAs be used to stimulate and sustain learning?

2.35 A number of the other key organisations interviewed were keen to stress that the ILA should be seen as contributing to an on-going process of learning. The providers tended to view the main issue as being a continuation of public subsidies for learning. Most felt that money should be available to people when they complete a course and could demonstrate progression. Other providers took an even wider view that all learning was good and should be encouraged.

2.36 The other key organisations while mentioning finance also put forward further suggestions on how ILAs could stimulate learning by:

- using the database of ILA holders for targeted marketing about learning
- providing learners with a smart card on which they could build credit and record their achievements.

2.37 From the learner's viewpoint the key requirements to sustain this learning appear to be:

- a financial contribution/subsidy
- improved information about courses
- assurance about the quality of provision.

What are the best ways to register learners?

2.38 The other key organisations and those providers attending the workshops recognised that different groups of people would prefer a range of registration routes, for example:

- for some using the telephone would be a barrier
- many would not have access to the internet, or confidence in using it – indeed many of the learners may wish to register for introductory IT courses
- face to face contact may be important for some, but inconvenient for others.

2.39 For the majority of respondents this was a fairly low key issue, with the general view being that people should be able to register in whatever way they thought was most appropriate. Moreover, over two-thirds (68%) of account holders said that the introduction of more rigorous ILA registration procedures would not put them off applying for an ILA.

2.40 Building on this, a number of the consultees believed that the registration route was less important than the elements of control. Most of the providers at the workshops and the key organisations interviewed believed that it should be learners, not learning providers, who opened and so controlled ILAs. It is interesting to note from the learner survey that while 92% of those who opened their own ILA had undertaken some form of learning in the last 18 months, this fell to 79% where the provider had opened the ILA for them.

2.41 These figures might suggest that proactive learners who opened an ILA themselves were already motivated to learn, had already decided upon the learning they wanted to undertake using their ILA and were ready to begin this almost immediately. In contrast it may be the case that providers who marketed ILAs to learners did so on the basis that an account could be used at some time in the future. Furthermore, the latter group of people may not have

actually identified what learning, if any, that they wanted to take part in at the time of opening the account.

- 2.42 This concept of putting the learner in control could be reinforced by sending all information to the learner at home and directing learner contributions to a central resource from which providers could draw down their payments. In the workshops a number of providers said that they wanted to be able to access learner accounts on their behalf as the learner is often not able to understand the procedures or deal with the ILA Centre. The providers who advocated this said that they would be willing to sign data protection forms for this purpose.

The allocation of roles and responsibilities between national and local agencies²

- 2.43 The previous programme was developed after a series of TEC based pilots into a national (England wide) scheme, which was administered and largely promoted centrally. Some local promotion took place, although in the main this was by individual providers. Providers generally thought that DfES should continue to take the lead in promoting the programme: a national system for signing up learners was the most favoured option (35%).
- 2.44 Most of those attending the workshops shared this view – with many supporting the concept of a nationally administered scheme. However, some providers did raise a number of concerns about the service they received via the ILA Centre. A nationally administered scheme was also thought to be the easiest arrangement for large providers who covered several areas and for those offering distance learning courses. Only a small number favoured returning most aspects to local agencies. That said, there was wide support for the development of local infrastructure, in particular around:
- the policing of quality assurance, based on a national scheme - many of the providers would like to see a mechanism for them to meet locally (some suggested attendance be mandatory) in a way which would allow them to report on bad practice, which could subsequently be investigated
 - targeted local promotion to supplement a national campaign - this would allow for targeting to meet local needs, even if the programme was a single offer to all people.
- 2.45 Throughout these discussions, the geographical areas covered by local LSCs were viewed as most appropriate.

² This topic area was not covered in the provider survey.

How should a new programme be branded?

2.46 There was a clear division across all the groups consulted about whether or not the current ILA name should be retained. The key organisations were broadly split while:

- 54% of providers responding to the postal survey thought that the name should be retained
- 50% of account holders thought that the name should be retained.

2.47 In all cases there were around 40% of respondents who did not want to retain the name, the balance being unsure.

2.48 This split was also apparent in the workshops, with those attending arguing either that the previous name had:

- been so badly damaged that it could not stay
- received considerable investment which could be built on.

Concluding comment

2.49 The overall view of those consulted was that a new ILA-style programme should be brought forward, this recognising that much had been achieved through the previous programme. Moreover, almost four-fifths of the account holders interviewed thought that a similar programme would encourage them to invest more in their learning in the future.

2.50 The stakeholders were also keen that the strengths of the old programme, in particular its openness to learners and providers, should not be lost, although they also acknowledged that the system would need to be 'tighter' to prevent the problems which had arisen.

2.51 There was also widespread support for the new programme being clearly focussed on the learner. A number of workshop groups expanded this concept further to suggest that learners should be able to provide on-line feedback about learning providers so that future learners could use this to inform their choice of learning provider.

A. POSTAL SURVEY OF PROVIDERS

A.1 The findings in this report are drawn from a postal survey sent to all 8,823 ILA registered learning providers. Learning providers were given the option of completing and returning the questionnaire by post or via the DfES website. The findings in this report are based on the 2,500 questionnaires that were returned by post before the deadline. This represents a response rate of 28%. Whilst all ILA registered providers were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire not all did, therefore, the sample may not be fully representative of the ILA registered provider base.

Report structure

A.2 The next section of this report details the survey findings. The key points arising are summarised in Key Issues.

Survey Results

Sample characteristics

A.3 Two-thirds (67%) of respondents were private sector learning providers. Further and Higher education institutions accounted for 10% of respondents, whilst 12% were voluntary or charitable learning providers.

Table 1: Type of organisation

	Number	% (n=2500)
Private sector training provider	1674	67
Voluntary/charitable learning provider	288	12
Further education institution	213	9
Higher education institution	35	1
Other	252	10
Not stated	38	2

A.4 Over four-fifths (83%) of those surveyed had provided learning at least partly paid for by ILAs. The further education sector was the most likely to have provided ILA funded learning (94%), while voluntary and charitable learning providers were least likely to have provided ILA funded learning (75%).

A.5 Respondents were asked to indicate whether their organisations targeted their learning provision at any particular groups. Responses were as follows:

- 28% target employers/businesses purchasing training for their workforce
- 22% target priority groups such as unemployed or those with low qualification levels
- 33% have no specific target group
- 14% target their provision in some other way.

A.6 Private sector and higher education institutions were the most likely to target employers with figures of 36% and 23% respectively. Voluntary and charitable learning providers were the most likely to target priority groups of the population (38%).

A.7 Nearly two-thirds (65%) of organisations taking part in the survey have been operating for over 5 years. Private sector learning providers were the least likely to have been operating for more than 5 years (56%), with 43% of private sector learning providers operating for less than 5 years. As might be expected further education institutions were the most likely to have been operating for over 5 years (96%)

Table 2: Length of time organisation has been operating		
	Number	% (n=2500)
Less than 6 months	29	1
6 months – 1 year	125	5
1-2 years	232	9
2-5 years	466	19
More than 5 years	1627	65
Not stated	21	1

A.8 A little over one-third (34%) of respondents currently had less than 50 learners on their courses. A further 24% had between 50 and 200 learners on their courses and 19% had between 201-1,000 learners. There were a further 13% of respondents with more than 1,000 learners on their courses.

- A.9 For 39% of the providers surveyed, ILA holders made up less than 10% of all their learners in 2001. However, 7% of providers estimated that over 90% of their learners had used ILAs in the same year. The private sector learning providers were most likely to have had more than 90% of their learners using ILAs (9%), compared to 3% of voluntary/charitable providers and 1% of further education institutions.

Table 3: Involvement with other publicly funded programmes

	Number	% (n=1070)
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	627	59
Employment Service/New Deal	506	47
learnirect/University for Industry	246	23
UK On-line Centre	189	18
Computers within reach	16	1
Other	362	34

*respondents were asked to identify all other publicly funded programmes they were involved with therefore does not equal 100

- A.10 Over half (52%) of those that had provided ILA funded courses were also involved in the delivery of other publicly funded programmes, most commonly through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (59%) and Employment Service/New Deal provision (47%). Private sector learning providers are the least likely to be involved in any other publicly funded programmes (53%). Furthermore, newer organisations were also less likely to be involved in publicly funded programmes; 29% of those in operation for between 1 and 2 years, compared to 61% of those operating for more than 5 years.
- A.11 Within the provider groupings the likelihood of being involved with a particular publicly funded programme varied. The private sector learning providers were most likely to be involved in the delivery of Employment Service/New Deal provision (48%). Voluntary/charitable and further education institutions were most likely to be involved in LSC provision, with figures of 62% and 87% respectively.

Main areas of training provision

- A.12 IT was the main training areas purchased using ILAs for half (50%) of the learning providers. After this, the most frequent type of learning purchased by ILA holders was reported as ‘vocational skills – linked to vocational qualifications’ (39%) and ‘vocational skills – not linked to vocational qualifications’ (17%).

Table 4: Key training areas purchased by ILA holders

	Number	% (n=2063)
IT	1036	50
Vocational skills – linked to vocational qualifications	814	39
Vocational skills – not linked to vocational qualifications	347	17
Other – non accredited training	312	15
Other – accredited training	285	14
Non vocational courses, e.g. GCSE/A-level	178	9
Pre-vocational courses	98	5
Basic skills – numeracy	72	3
Basic skills – literacy	60	3

* respondents were asked to identify all key areas of training purchased by account holders there does not equal 100%

- A.13 Nearly three-fifths (58%) of learning providers noticed an increase in demand for courses which they believe was a result of the ILA scheme. This was highest amongst private sector learning providers, where 62% reported an increase in demand. This was also high within the group of providers that had been operating for less than one year (86%) and those operating for less than two years (82%), compared to a figure of 51% for organisations operating for over 5 years. This suggests that many new providers sought to market and make use of ILAs, or at least saw an opportunity.
- A.14 The availability of ILAs led to 30% of respondents increasing the number of IT courses they provided. This is not surprising given the 80% discount given to ILA holders against IT training. IT was by far the largest area of training that respondents reported had increased, followed by vocational training – leading to vocational qualifications, which was increased by 13% of providers.

Learners attracted

- A.15 A large increase in demand was reported across a wide range of population groups, especially: the unemployed (17%) and women returners-to-work (16%). Young people and minority ethnic groups were the least affected with only 8% of providers noticing a large increase in the numbers of these groups.

Table 5: Changes in learner groups as a result of ILAs (n=2063)

	% no change	% small increase	% large increase
Unemployed	22	24	17
Women returners-to-work	19	25	16
Part-time workers	19	27	15
Full-time workers	21	28	13
Retired	22	17	13
Minority ethnic groups	26	12	8
Young people	26	18	8

* respondents were asked to identify all learner groups that had increased since the introduction of ILAs there does not equal 100%

Understanding ILAs

- A.16 Over half (53%) of the respondents found it either easy or very easy to understand what learning/training activities were covered by ILAs. In contrast, 22% of providers found it difficult to understand, with 6% finding them very difficult to understand. Interestingly, the private sector providers were the most likely to find it very easy to understand what was covered (21%), compared to figures of 12% for voluntary/charitable organisations and 4% for further education colleges. This may reflect the higher used of the programme by private sector providers.

Table 6: Ease of understanding of ILAs for providers

	Number	% (n=2500)
Very easy	421	17
Fairly easy	912	36
Neither easy nor difficult	424	17
Fairly difficult	546	22
Very difficult	147	6

- A.17 Providers were divided as to how far learners understood the aims and workings of ILAs. Nearly half (48%) of learning providers thought that learners understood **some** of the aims and workings of the ILA scheme, whilst 5% thought they had not understood the scheme at all.

Table 7: Ease of understanding of ILAs by learners

	Number	% (n=2500)
Fully understood	433	17
Understood most of it	555	22
Understood some of it	1202	48
Understood none of it	114	5

Strengths

- A.18 Respondents were given a list of options and asked to indicate which they thought were the key strengths of the previous ILA scheme. The universality of the scheme and the fact the government made a contribution to an individual's learning were both identified by 80% of providers. Almost half (48%) identified the focus on individuals as a strength.

Table 8: Providers perceptions of the main strength of ILA programme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Open to all	1988	80
Contribution by government to an individual's training	2009	80
Focus on individuals	1194	48
Choice of courses/learning covered by the scheme	969	38
National approach	950	38
Simple process for individuals to register	855	34
System used to register individual learners	449	18
It encouraged more providers to become demand-led	462	18
System used to register learning providers	449	18
Easy to understand	323	13
Administrative systems	190	8

Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%

Weaknesses

- A.19 Similarly, respondents were given a list of options and asked which they thought were weaknesses of the previous scheme. The most popular answers were that it was: 'too easy for rogue providers to get involved' and 'too open to mis-selling' with figures of 83% and 75% respectively. This probably reflects the recent bad publicity focussing on this issue. This concern is also apparent in a number of the other responses.

Table 9: Providers perceptions of the main weaknesses of ILA programme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Too easy for 'rogue providers' to get involved	2077	83
Too open to mis-selling	1876	75
No quality assurance of providers	1522	61
No quality assurance of courses	1251	50
Administrative systems	935	37
System used to register providers	628	34
System used to register individual learners	449	18
It encouraged more providers to become demand-led	462	18
System used to register learning providers	449	18
Easy to understand	323	13
Administrative systems	190	8
Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%		

Developing a new scheme

Focus

- A.20 When questioned about the focus of a new scheme the majority of respondents (60%) felt that the scheme should be completely open, in other words, available to all and covering a wide range of learning provision – as with the previous scheme. The second most popular option was to focus a new scheme on specific learning courses, e.g. IT or Basic Skills (37%).

Table 10: Focus of a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
No specific focus – completely open	1507	60
Specific types of learning courses (eg. IT or Basic Skills)	913	37
Specific groups of the population (eg. young people or unemployed)	407	16
Focussed in some other way	409	16
Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%		

- A.21 Nearly three-quarters (72%) of learning providers thought that if the new scheme were to target employers then they should make a contribution towards the cost of training for their employees. However, the majority (61%) of this group also felt that this should only be the case if learning was work related. A further 23% of providers felt that employers should not be expected to contribute towards an employee's learning whether it is work related or not.

Priority groups

A.22 When asked which groups of the population should be specifically targeted, if a new scheme were to give priority to particular individuals, the most popular option was those holding either, low or no qualifications (48%). This response was highest amongst further education institutions (59%) reflecting their market and lowest amongst private learning providers (46%). The second most popular target group identified was the unemployed which was chosen by 38% of respondents. Overall results suggest a focus on disadvantaged groups.

Table 11: Priority groups for a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Those holding either low or no qualifications	1016	48
Unemployed	796	38
Those below a certain income threshold	645	31
None – should not be targeted in this way	469	22
Part-time employed	369	17
Full-time employed	286	14
People with disabilities	173	8
Retired people	124	6
Other	127	6
Minority ethnic groups	116	5
Refugees/asylum seekers	44	2
Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%		

Priority training

A.23 When asked which types of training should be prioritised by a new scheme, 34% felt that it should not be restricted in this way. A quarter (25%) of providers felt that the scheme should be prioritised by courses that lead to NVQ or another recognised qualification. This priority was more common amongst further education institutions (35%) than private learning providers (24%), again reflecting their target market.

Table 12: Priority learning areas for a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
None – should not be restricted in this way	848	35
Only cover courses leading to an NVQ or other recognised qualification	631	25
Subject area	564	23
Should only include training in areas where there are skills shortages	541	22
NVQ levels (or equivalent)	478	19
Other	291	12
Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does no equal 100%		

A.24 Respondents were asked to indicate what level was most suitable if future learning were to be prioritised broadly equating to NVQ levels. Again, the most popular answer was that a new scheme should not be restricted in such a manner (49%). However, 30% thought that any level should be included as long as learning was to a higher level the already held by an individual.

Table 13: Priority learning levels for a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Any, so long as learning is at a higher level than already held by an individual	742	30
Entry level only	54	2
Up to level 1 or equivalent	31	1
Up to level 2 or equivalent	122	5
Up to level 3 of equivalent	134	5
Up to level 4 of equivalent	82	3
Only level 1 and above	13	1
Only level 2 and above	14	1
Only level 3 and above	6	-
Only level 4 and above	3	-
None – should not be restricted in this way	1214	49

Open and distance learning

A.25 Respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought that distance or open learning courses should be covered under a new scheme: 61% indicated that it should, while 22% said it should not and 15% did not know.

Length of training

A.26 Over half (58%) of respondents thought that learning under a new scheme should be expected to last for a minimum number of hours. This view was consistent across types of learning provider. A further 32% did not think that learning should be expected to last a minimum number of hours under a new scheme, in effect making any training eligible. The remaining 10% either did not know or did not answer the question.

A.27 Of those that favoured a minimum length of learning, nearly a quarter (23%) thought this should be at least 8 hours. This was the most popular length of learning identified by private providers (25%). Interestingly, further education providers were most likely to favour at least 20 hours as a minimum (25%). Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the providers thought that learning should last at least 30 hours.

Table 14: Minimum length of training under a new scheme

	Number	% (n=1448)
At least 4 hours	222	15
At least 8 hours	328	23
At least 12 hours	193	13
At least 16 hours	143	10
At least 20 hours	221	15
At least 30 hours	275	19

Quality assurance

- A.28 Sixty-eight percent of providers thought that within a new scheme there should be more rigorous quality assurance procedures in terms of learning providers. Nearly one-fifth (19%) thought a new scheme should have the same quality assurance procedures as the previous scheme. The demand for more rigorous systems was highest amongst further education providers (78%) and lowest amongst voluntary/charitable learning providers (62%), with a figure of 67% for private learning providers. A small percentage (3%) thought that formal quality assurance systems were not needed.
- A.29 Respondents were asked a similar question in terms of quality assurance of training/learning provision. Again, the majority (61%), slightly less than for providers, would like to see more rigorous a quality assurance than was in place as part of the previous scheme. Twenty-two per cent favoured the same systems as used in the previous schemes. A minority (4%) thought that no formal quality assurance systems were needed.
- A.30 Providers were given a series of options as to how a new quality assurance system for providers might be developed. The most popular option was to use an existing quality assurance system (32%). This option was favoured most by further education providers (46%) and higher education providers (49%), compared to 28% of private providers and 35% of voluntary/charitable learning providers. Other options for ensuring quality assurance were broadly divided with the following responses recorded:
- evidence of length of time a provider has been operating (23%)
 - development of a new quality assurance system (21%)
 - by written reference on quality of provider (19%)

- A.31 Again, in terms of ensuring quality of learning and training provision the most popular option – cited by 32% of respondents – was to use an existing system.
- A.32 Respondents were asked whether they thought there were any existing quality assurance systems that could be used as part of a new scheme. The most popular response was Learning and Skills Council (39%), followed by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (25%). Not surprisingly, these options were mentioned most frequently by further education providers with figures of 76% and 50% respectively.

Table 15: Quality assurance scheme for a new programme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Learning and Skills Council	967	39
Adult Learning Inspectorate	629	25
Investors in People	535	21
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority	496	20
Training Standards Council	421	17
Other awarding body	433	17
New Deal/Employment Service	347	14
Ufi/learndirect	334	13
Basic Skills Agency	252	10
Guidance Standards Council	176	6
Respondents able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%		

- A.33 Providers were asked how often they thought that quality assurance should be monitored. Nearly half (48%) thought that it should be done once a year, with 15% suggesting every 6 months and 22% believing that monitoring should happen every 2 years. There was an even split across the provider types on this issue.

Learner advice and guidance

- A.34 Sixty-three percent of respondents thought that learners should either ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ be encouraged to access independent advice and guidance when registering with a new scheme and before embarking on training. This was highest amongst further education providers (74%) and lowest amongst private providers (60%). A minority (2%) thought that learners should ‘definitely not’ be encouraged to access independent advice and guidance.
- A.35 Those providers who favoured some kind of access to advice and guidance for learners were asked who should provide this. The most popular option was Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships (47%) followed by designated learning providers (39%), and learndirect (31%)

Table 16: Advice and guidance provision in a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2084)
Information Advice and Guidance Partnerships	973	47
Designated learning providers eg. colleges	822	39
learndirect	739	35
Other	356	17
Don't know	22	11
Respondents were able to give more than one answer therefore does not equal 100%		

Contribution

- A.36 Opinions were split regarding the form the Government funding of a new scheme should take. The most popular option was for a lump sum, which can be put towards any eligible learning (36%). There was no obvious difference in the way that different types of learning provider thought that the Government contribution should be made.

Table 17: Government contribution to a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
A lump sum which can be put towards any eligible learning	896	36
A percentage discount towards eligible learning	708	28
Variable percentage discount based upon the type of learning undertaken	392	16
Contribution of fixed amounts, based upon the type of learning undertaken.	366	15
Don't know/no response	124	5
In some other form	20	1
Respondents were able to give more than one response therefore does not equal 100%		

- A.37 With respect to the way individuals should make a contribution, the most popular option was for them to pay a proportion of the cost of their learning (43%). Again, there was no obvious difference in the way that different types of learning provider thought individuals should contribute.

Table 18: Individual contribution to a new scheme

	Number	% (n=2500)
Set as a proportion of costs	1078	43
Set as an amount of money	751	30
Both of these	471	19
Other	60	2
Don't know/no response	140	6

- A.38 Most providers favoured individuals making a relatively modest contribution towards their learning. Over half (57%) thought that the minimum contribution made by an individual should be £25; whilst 14% thought the minimum contribution should be fixed at £50.

	Number	% (n=2500)
£25	1422	57
£50	356	14
£75	44	2
£100	105	4
A different amount	100	4
Don't know	134	5
Not stated	281	11

- A.39 Similarly if the individual contribution was set as a percentage of course costs, 48% thought that the minimum contribution should be less than 10%. A further 29% of providers thought that the individual contribution should be somewhere between 20-25%. A small percentage (8%) thought that individuals should pay at least half the cost of their own training.

Payment of providers

- A.40 Over one-third (35%) of providers thought that all money should be paid on registration. This was significantly higher amongst further education providers (54%), than for private learning providers (33%). However, this was the most popular payment method across all provider types. The second most popular payment method was an even split at start and completion (28%). However, 19% of private providers favoured being paid all funding on completion compared to 4% of the further education providers.

	Number	% (n=2500)
All money paid on registration	867	35
An even split at start and completion	688	28
All on completion	415	17
Most of the money on registration	273	11
Most of the money on completion	128	5
Other	69	3
Don't know/not stated	60	2

Promotion and branding

- A.41 There was no clear consensus on who should carry out the initial signing up of learners under a new scheme. Over one-third (35%) thought this should be done by a national body; 25% by approved local intermediaries; and 21% by a regional body.
- A.42 Respondents were asked whether the ILA brand name should be retained. Over half (54%) of providers thought that the name should ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ be retained. Private sector and voluntary/charitable providers were most likely to think this with figures of 59% and 53% respectively. Only 38% of further education providers favoured keeping the name. Over one-third (39%) of all providers thought the brand name should be not be retained, with 17% believing that it should definitely not be kept.

Key Issues

- A.43 This final section highlights the key points that have been drawn out through the provider postal survey. It pulls together the key results under two distinct strands:
- specific areas where there is broad agreement amongst learning providers
 - topics where there is less consensus

Consensus from the postal questionnaire

- A.44 The following issues evoked broad agreement amongst learning providers who responded to the postal questionnaires:
- understanding of the original ILA scheme was high amongst learning providers – with only 28% claiming to have found it difficult or very difficult to understand
 - understanding of the original ILA scheme was low amongst learners – only 17% of providers felt that learners has fully understood the aims and workings of the scheme
 - 80% of providers identified the following as the main strengths of the previous scheme - ‘Open to all’ and ‘Contribution by Government to an individual’s learning’

- conversely, the most readily identified weaknesses of the ILA programme was that it was ‘too easy for rogue providers to get involved’ (83%) and ‘Too open to mis-selling’ (75%)
- the majority (60%) of learning providers thought that a new scheme should be completely open and should not be prioritised, either by type of training or by specific groups of the population
- whilst nearly half (49%) thought that learning should not be targeted by the equivalent of NVQ levels, 30% felt that if it was done in this way that it should be targeted at any level as long as it is higher than the one already held by the individual.
- the majority (58%) of learning providers supported the idea of imposing a minimum length of training under a new scheme. Furthermore, 34% felt that learning should last for at least 20 hours or more
- quality assurance was identified as a crucial element of a new scheme, with 68% of learning providers suggesting that a new scheme needed to ‘have more rigorous quality assurance procedures for learning providers’ than the previous ILA scheme
- similarly, the majority (61%) thought that a new scheme needed to ‘have more rigorous quality assurance procedures for learning/training provision’
- access to independent advice and guidance for learners before embarking on learning was viewed by 63% of providers as something that should ‘definitely’, or ‘probably’ be encouraged
- there was strong support amongst learning providers (57%) to retain the minimum contribution by individual learners towards their learning at £25.

Areas where there is no consensus from the postal questionnaire

A.45 There were a number of issues emerging from the postal survey where there is no clear consensus. These issues included:

- there was no clear guide as to how Quality Assurance could be introduced as part of a new scheme: Respondents were broadly split between:
 - wanting to use an existing quality assurance scheme (32%)

- wanting to develop a new quality assurance scheme (21%)
 - using evidence of length of time a learning provider has been in operation as a measure of quality assurance (23%)
 - using a written reference on quality of a learning provider (19%)
- learning providers were broadly split as to what form any Government contribution to learning should be in. The favourite options were a lump sum (36%) and percentage discount (28%)
 - a third (35%) of learning providers did not think that a new scheme should be prioritised by learning areas. Of those that did, there was no clear steer as to how this should be done: 'only courses leading to NVQs or other qualifications' (25%); 'subject area' (23%); 'training in areas with skills shortages' (22%) and 'based on NVQ level' (19%)
 - there was no clear consensus on the way that providers should be paid. 35% favoured all being paid on registration of learners; 45% favoured either all payment on completion or an even split at the start and end of training
 - on the issue of retaining the ILA brand name, opinion was also divided with 54% suggesting that it should either be 'definitely' or 'probably' retained and 38% agreed that it 'probably' or 'definitely' should not be kept.
 - further clarification also needs to be sought on the subject of signing up learners to a new programme, with 35% suggesting this should be done by a national body; 25% by approved local intermediaries and 21% by a regional body.

B. TELEPHONE SURVEY OF ACCOUNT HOLDERS

Introduction

- B.1 The sample of account holders was drawn from the ILA Centre database, it was controlled to be representative of age, gender, ethnicity and whether or not the account holder had used the account. A total of 1,000 interviews were achieved.

Report structure

- B.2 The next section of the report details the survey findings. The key point arising are summarised in Key Issues.

Sample Characteristics

- B.3 Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents were female and just under one third (31%) were male. This reflects the dominance of female account holders overall.
- B.4 Almost two-fifths (38%) of the respondents were aged 31-40, 36% were over 40 and 27% were aged 19-30.

Table 1: Age of ILA account holders

	Number	% (n=1000)
19-20	28	3
21-30	237	24
31-40	378	38
41-50	206	21
51-60	106	11
60+	45	5

- B.5 Almost one fifth (19%) of account holders cited their highest qualifications to be below NVQ level 2 with a further
- 22% holding NVQ level 2

- 20% holding NVQ level 3

- 27% holding NVQ level 4 and above.

B.6 This suggests that ILA account holders are relatively well qualified.

Table 2: Highest level qualifications held by ILA account holders

	Number	% (n=1000)
Non NVQ (RSA Word Power)	47	5
NVQ Level 0 (RSA Word Power/ CLAIT)	28	3
NVQ Level 1 (GCSE/ SCE/ O-level grades below C/ CSE grades below 1)	109	11
NVQ Level 2 (GCSE/ SCE/ O-Level grade A-C/ CSE grade 1)	220	22
NVQ Level 3 (A Level passes/ AS Levels)	196	20
NVQ Level 4 (Teaching qualifications including PGCE/ first degree)	135	14
NVQ Level 5 (Higher degree/ Graduate membership of other professional institute)	129	13
Other	136	14

B.7 Almost one in ten (86%) account holders were white, 11% of account holders were from black and ethnic minorities.

Table 3: Ethnic origin of account holders

	Number	% (n=1000)
White	863	86
Black – Caribbean	27	3
Black – African	19	2
Black – other	10	1
Indian	34	3
Pakistani	15	2
Bangladeshi	3	-
Chinese	3	-
Other	19	2
Refused	7	1

B.8 Four-fifths (79%) of account holders are employed with half (50%) employed full-time. Unemployed (registered and non registered but seeking work) made up 5% of account holders and those at home/looking after the family and not seeking work represent 7% of account holders.

Table 4: Current activities of ILA account holders

	Number	% (n=1000)
Full-time work (30 hours a week or more)	501	50
Part-time work (8-29) hours a week)	266	27
Working but under 8 hours a week	15	2
New Deal/ Government training programme	1	-
Long term sick/disabled	27	3
Registered unemployed	25	3
Not registered unemployed, but seeking work	18	2
At home/ looking after family and not seeking work	70	7
Fully retired	41	4
Full-time student	28	3
Other	8	1

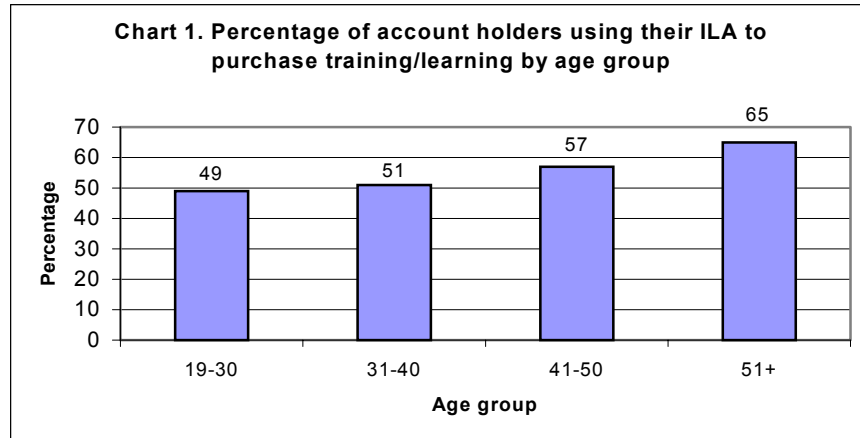
- B.9 Of those account holders who are not employed almost two-thirds (63%) have been unemployed for at least 1 year with just over half (52%) of those having been unemployed for over five years. Just over one third (34%) of those account holder who are currently not employed have been out of work for less than a year whilst 3% have never worked.

Table 5: Length of time unemployed

	Number	% (n=218)
Less than 6 months	52	24
6 months up to 1 year	22	10
1 up to 2 years	16	7
2 up to 5 years	50	23
Over 5 years	71	33
Never worked	7	3

Awareness and use of ILAs

- B.10 Almost all respondents (96%) knew that they had opened an ILA account, 3% said that they had not opened an ILA and 1% were not sure if they had opened an ILA. Over half (54%) had used their account to purchase learning or training courses, 46% of account holders had not used their account. The likelihood of a person using their account to purchase learning decreases down through the age groups. Account holders aged 51 and over were most likely to use their account, with 65% using their account to purchase learning or training, whilst 49% of account holder's aged 19-30 using their account to purchase learning or training.



B.11 Of those who had used their ILA to purchase learning or training, the most common ways that people reported finding out about ILAs were

- from a learning/training provider or college
- from friends and family
- and from newspaper or radio adverts.

B.12 The fact that so many account holders found out about ILAs from learning/training providers and colleges suggests that the national ILA marketing was not particularly successful and that many learners were being introduced to ILAs once they had already decided to look into learning.

Table 6: Ways in which ILA account users heard about ILAs

	Number	% (n=515)
Learning/ training provider/ college	190	37
Friends/ family	121	24
Newspaper/ radio advert	65	13
Leaflet	51	10
Employer	40	8
Work colleagues	29	6
Advice/ guidance service	24	5
TV/ teletext	21	4
TEC (Training and Enterprise Council) or LSC (Learning Skills Council)	15	3
Somebody already taking a course	15	3
Internet	10	2
Trade Union	5	1

*respondents were asked to identify all of the ways in which they found out about ILAs therefore does not equal 100%

- B.13 Of those who used their ILA three-quarters (74%) said that they had opened the account themselves whilst 25% said that the learning provider had opened the account for them.

Understanding of ILAs

- B.14 Just under nine out of ten (87%) of those who had used their ILA reported that it was easy to understand what an ILA could be used for, with 50% finding them very easy to understand. Seven percent (7%) of people who used their ILA found it difficult to understand what an ILA could be used for with 2% finding them very difficult to understand. The remaining 5% thought that it was neither easy nor difficult to understand ILAs.
- B.15 One third (34%) of those who used their ILA received help from someone to understand ILAs and what they could be used for.
- B.16 Those who opened their account through a learning provider were more likely to receive help from someone to understand ILAs and what they could be used for. Forty-three percent (43%) of those who opened their account through a learning provider received help compared to 31% of those who opened their account themselves. In addition, account users aged 51 and over were least likely to receive help to understand their ILA with 28% receiving help compared to 44% of 41-50 year olds, 33% of 31-40 year olds and 31% of 19-30 year olds.
- B.17 Those account users who were working were also more likely to have received help from someone to understand their ILA, than those account users who were not working. Thirty-six percent (36%) of those who were working received help compared to 26% of those who were not working.
- B.18 Training providers/colleges were the most common sources of help in understanding an ILA (56%). Thirteen percent received help from a guidance/ advice worker and a further 11% received help from the Individual Learning Account Centre (CAPITA).

Table 7: Source of advice and guidance given to ILA users

	Number	% (n=176)
Training provider / college	98	56
Guidance/ advice worker	22	13
Individual Learning Account Centre (CAPITA)	20	11
Employer/ work colleague	15	9
Friend/ family member	14	8
Learndirect	8	5
Other	7	4
*respondents were asked to identify all of the people who provided help therefore does not equal 100%		

Advice and guidance

- B.19 Eighty-five percent (85%) of those account holders who had used their ILA did not receive any independent advice to help them find the most suitable learning/training course for them.
- B.20 Almost three-quarters (73%) of account holders did not consider more than one training/learning provider before deciding upon their final choice of course, the remaining 27% did consider more than one provider.
- B.21 Over two-thirds (76%) of account holders were confident that they knew how to find out about training courses in their local area. The main method (58%) cited for finding this information was to visit the local college. Other sources of advice had low levels of awareness.
- B.22 Those account holders who had used their ILA to purchase training/learning were more likely to report knowing about how to find out about training courses in their local area than those who had not used their ILA. Eighty percent (80%) of those who had used their ILA were confident that they knew how to find out about training compared to 73% of those who had not used their ILA. Similarly those account users who had opened their account themselves were more likely to know how to find out about training courses than those account users who had opened their account through a training provider, 82% and 75% respectively. However, these differences do not suggest that a lack of awareness is a major cause of people not using their ILA.

- B.23 Those in the 19-30 age group are also in need of more information concerning the availability of training/learning courses with 33% stating that they do not know how to find out about training courses in the local area compared to 16% of 41-50 year olds, 19% of account holders aged 51 and over and 23% of 31-40 year olds. This is slightly surprising since the recent contact many young people would have had with the further education system.

Table 8: Sources of information

	Number	% (n=764)
Visit college	440	58
Get leaflets/ college prospectus	242	32
Use the internet	143	19
Visit the careers centre	130	17
Ring learndirect	45	6
Other	233	31

*respondents were asked to identify all of the methods they would use to find out about training in their area therefore does not equal 100%

Recent training undertaken

- B.24 Of all of the account holders surveyed almost half (47%) had taken part in formal training or learning courses in the last 6 months, a further 21% had undertaken learning in the last 6-12 months whilst 14% had last undertaken learning more than 3 years ago.
- B.25 Over half (55%) of those account holders who had not used their ILA accounts had undertaken some sort of formal training or learning courses in the last 12 months compared to 81% of those who had used their ILA account to purchase learning or training.
- B.26 Account users who had opened their ILA account themselves were more likely to have undertaken training in the last 12 months than those who opened their ILA through a training provider. Eighty-five percent of those account users who opened their account themselves had undertaken training or learning in the last 12 months compared to 68% of account users who opened their account through a training provider. This suggests a higher degree of motivation amongst those who open their own account. On the other hand we are aware of providers encouraging people to open an account, which they could use in the future.

Table 9: Most recent participation in formal training/ learning including training undertaken using ILA

	Number	% (n=1000)
Last 6 months	466	47
Last 6-12 months	208	21
Last 12-18 months	85	9
Last 18 months to 3 years	87	9
More than 3 years ago	144	14
No answer	10	1

B.27 Two-fifths (40%) of training undertaken most recently by account holders was IT training, this rose to 57% of account holders aged 51 and over. Vocational skills training linked to a vocational qualification accounted for 20%, whilst other accredited training accounted for 13% of the most recent training undertaken by account holders. Basic skills numeracy and literacy accounted for only 4% of the most recent training/learning courses undertaken, probably reflecting that much of this provision is already free.

Table 10: Most recent type of training/learning undertaken

	Number	% (n=990)
IT	391	40
Vocational skills – linked to vocational qualifications	201	20
Other accredited training	127	13
Non vocational course e.g. GCSE/ A-Level	75	8
Other non accredited training (i.e. does not lead to a qualification)	66	7
Basic Skills – Numeracy/ maths	22	2
Basic Skills – Literacy	21	2
Pre-vocational course	10	1
Don't know	21	2

Future training participation

B.28 Two-thirds (65%) of account holders intend to take part in more learning/training in the next 12 months. There is little difference between those who did (63%) and those who did not (67%) use their ILA.

B.29 The main reasons cited by account holders who do not intend to participate in further learning in the next 12 months were that:

- they have not got the time (39%)
- there is no other training that they are interested in (21%)
- they have childcare/carer responsibilities (11%)
- they cannot afford it (10%).

B.30 The constraint of time was dominant for both those account holders who used their account to purchase training/learning and those who did not use their account (36% and 45% respectively). However, a further quarter (26%) of those who had used their account reported that the main reason they do not intend to participate in further learning in the next 12 months was that there is no other training that they are interested in, compared to 14% of those who did not use their account to purchase training. This suggests that the ILA has, for some, enabled them to satisfy their need for their one “short” of learning.

Table 11: Reasons cited by account holders who do not intend to take part in more learning/training in the next 12 months

	Number	% (n=354)
I have not got the time	139	39
No other training that I am interested in	75	21
Have childcare/ carer responsibilities	39	11
Can't afford it	36	10
The last training or learning I did had put me off doing any more	12	3
The course I want to do is not available in my local area	7	2
Problem with travel	3	1
Other	72	20

*respondents were asked to identify all of the reasons that they did not intend to undertake further learning/ training in the next 12 months therefore does not equal 100%

Encouraging people to take part in learning/training in the future

B.31 Over three-quarters (77%) of account holders said that the provision of a financial contribution towards training would definitely encourage them to take part in learning or training in the future. The following four provisions were cited by over half of the account holders surveyed as being things which would definitely encourage them to take part in learning or training in the future:

- having a list of training providers that are guaranteed to offer good quality courses
- your employer helping you with training that would help you with your job
- training/learning provided within your local community e.g. at a school
- someone to support you while taking part in training/learning.

Table 12: Provisions which would encourage people to take part in learning/training in the future

	Definitely	Maybe	Would make no difference
A financial contribution towards your training	77	16	7
Having a list of training providers that are guaranteed to offer good quality courses	64	22	14
Your employer helping you with training that would help you with your job	57	13	30
Training/learning provided within your local community e.g. at a school	57	24	19
Someone to support you while taking part in training/learning	52	22	26
Training/learning provided in the workplace	46	20	34
Trying a taster course first	43	31	26
Benefits advice/financial advice	42	25	34
Help with building your confidence	36	22	42
Somebody to help you choose what course to take	36	28	36
Distance learning/training provided over the internet	24	30	46
Help with childcare	22	8	70

B.32 Those with lower level (NVQ Level 0-2) qualifications tended to place more importance on the following 6 issues:

- training/learning provided within your local community e.g. at a school
- somebody to help you choose what course to take
- someone to support you while taking part in training/ learning
- trying a taster course first
- benefits advice/financial advice
- help with building your confidence.

B.33 The two issues which were of particular importance to account holders with NVQ qualification Levels 4 and 5 were:

- training/learning in the workplace
- their employer helping you with training that would help you with your job.

Table 13: Provisions which would definitely encourage people to take part in learning/training in the future by educational qualification

	NVQ Level 0-2	NVQ Level 3	NVQ Level 4-5
A financial contribution towards your training	76	80	78
Having a list of training providers that are guaranteed to offer good quality courses	64	64	64
Your employer helping you with training that would help you with your job	56	59	61
Training/learning provided within your local community e.g. at a school	60	59	51
Someone to support you while taking part in training/learning	55	52	47
Training/learning provided in the workplace	43	45	52
Trying a taster course first	50	44	34
Benefits advice/financial advice	46	45	33
Help with building your confidence	43	33	25
Somebody to help you choose what course to take	41	40	25
Distance learning/ training provided over the internet	24	27	23
Help with childcare	27	21	16

- B.34 Overall childcare was not a big issue however, assistance with childcare was more important to those who did not use their ILA to purchase training (27%) than those who did use their ILA (18%). This suggests that access to childcare has been a barrier preventing account holders from using their account.
- B.35 Four-fifths (79%) of account holders said that having something like an ILA would encourage them to invest more of their own money into learning and training. Thirteen percent said that having an ILA would not encourage them to invest more of their own money into learning and training whilst 8% said that they didn't understand ILAs and so could not comment.

Development of a new ILA-style scheme

- B.36 Account holders were given two options and were asked to state which would be the best way for them to access training or learning. Two-thirds (67%) of account holders said that the best way for them to access training or learning would be "to be given a list of courses which are free of charge and allowed to turn up at training providers to register for these if I am interested". However, 33% of account holders said that the best way for them to access training or learning would be "to be able to open my own learning account so I could decide what learning or training I would like to buy".
- B.37 Those account holders who had used their ILA to purchase learning/training were more likely (40%) to favour the learning account system than those account holders who had not used their ILA (25%). Those account holders qualified to NVQ Level 3 and above were also more likely (39%) to favour the learning account system than account holders with lower level qualifications (28%).
- B.38 One-fifth (20%) of account holders said that they were happy with the existing ILA scheme and did not think any changes needed to be made for a new scheme. A further 20% of suggestions related to the need for more information to be made easily available about courses and providers. The need for increased quality assurance was also raised by 16% of respondents.

Table 14: Changes to previous ILA system

	Number	% (n=1000)
No changes needed am happy with the way it worked	202	20
More information on scheme and eligible courses	199	20
More quality assurance	155	16
More support advice and guidance	76	8
More financial assistance	67	7
More courses/ providers eligible	70	7
Others	326	33
Don't know	210	21
No answer	21	2

*respondents were asked to identify all of the changes that they thought should be made in a new scheme therefore does not equal 100%

- B.39 Over two-thirds (68%) of account holders said that the introduction of more rigorous ILA registration procedures would not put them off applying for an ILA, 20% felt that it would put them off, while 11% said that it would depend how much more rigorous the registration procedures introduced were.
- B.40 Just under three-quarters (72%) of account holders said that they would feel more confident about buying training/learning if a proportion of the money was not paid to learning providers until the learner has confirmed that the training has taken place. One fifth of account holders said that this method would not make them feel more confident, while 7% said that they did not know.
- B.41 Half (50%) of the account holders thought that the ILA brand name should be retained if a new scheme is introduced, 37% thought that a new scheme should be given a new name and 13% said they didn't know what name should be used.

Key Points

- B.42 This final chapter highlights the key points that have been drawn out through the account holder telephone survey.

Understanding of ILAs

- B.43 Almost nine out of ten (87%) account users reported that it was easy to understand what an ILA could be used for.
- B.44 One third (34%) of those who used their ILA to purchase learning received help from someone to understand ILAs and what they could be used for. Those who opened their account through a learning provider were more likely to have received help from someone to understand what ILAs could be used for.
- B.45 Training providers/colleges were the most common sources of help in understanding an ILA (56%). Thirteen percent received help from a guidance/ advice worker and a further 11% received help from the Individual Learning Account Centre.

Advice and guidance

- B.46 Eighty-five percent (85%) of those account holders who had used their ILA did not receive any independent advice to help them find the most suitable learning/training course for them.
- B.47 However:
- 73% of account holders did not consider more than one training/learning provider before deciding upon their final choice of course
 - 76% of account holders were confident that they knew how to find out about training courses in their local area, most often through the local college (58%).

Recent training undertaken

- B.48 Almost half (47%) of the account holders surveyed had taken part in formal training or learning courses in the last 6 months, one fifth (21%) had undertaken learning in the last 6-12 months.
- B.49 Account holders who had opened their ILA account themselves were more likely to have undertaken training in the last 12 months than those who opened their ILA through a training provider.

Future training participation

- B.50 Two-thirds (65%) of account holders intend to take part in more learning/training in the next 12 months.
- B.51 The most frequently mentioned encouragement to train were:
- a financial contribution towards training
 - having a list of training providers that are guaranteed to offer good quality courses
 - your employer helping you with training that would help you with your job
 - training/learning provided within your local community e.g. at a school
 - someone to support you while taking part in training/learning.

Development of a new ILA-style scheme

- B.52 Two-thirds (67%) of account holders said that the best way for them to access training or learning would be “to be given a list of courses which are free of charge and allowed to turn up at training providers to register for these if I am interested”. However, 33% of account holders said that the best way for them to access training or learning would be “to be able to open my own learning account so I could decide what learning or training I would like to buy”.
- B.53 One-fifth (20%) of account holders said that they were happy with the existing ILA scheme and did not think any changes needed to be made for a new scheme. A further 20% of suggestions related to the need for more information to be made easily available about courses and providers. The need for increased quality assurance was also raised by 16% of respondents.
- B.54 Over two-thirds (68%) of account holders said that the introduction of more rigorous ILA registration procedures would not put them off applying for an ILA.

- B.55 Just under three-quarters (72%) of account holders said that they would feel more confident about buying training/learning if a proportion of the money was not paid to learning providers until the learner has confirmed that the training has taken place.
- B.56 Half (50%) of the account holders thought that the ILA brand name should be retained if a new scheme is introduced, 37% thought that a new scheme should be given a new name and

C. INTERVIEWS WITH OTHER KEY ORGANISATIONS

Introduction

- C.1 The report is based on a series of 31 interviews with the main stakeholder bodies involved in post 16 adult learning and workforce development in England. The consultations took place during February and March 2002.
- C.2 Given the very different perspectives of those we interviewed, it was thought important that the conversation should be relatively lightly structured, with a few broad topics to be covered. Points of interest or concern to the interview were explored in more depth. Reflecting this approach the findings below summarise the conversations and highlight key issues raised, or suggestions made, rather than seeking to quantify views across the range of subjects.
- C.3 The results from the consultation process are outlined in the next section under the following headings:
- Strengths and weaknesses of the previous ILA programme
 - The need for a new programme
 - The key elements a new programme might cover.
- C.4 The next section also discusses the views of the consultees on the speed with which they think a new system might be brought forward.

Findings

- C.5 This chapter details the views of the consultees about the key elements a new programme might cover:
- should it be universal, offering the same to all learners, or should it be targeted
 - how might quality assurance work

- how could information, advice and guidance be provided and encouraged
- how could learners use of an ILA be sustained
- what are the best ways to register learners
- how to engage employers
- the allocation of roles and responsibilities between national and local agencies
- how it could be branded
- how quickly it needs to be introduced.

C.6 These are discussed in turn below, but first we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the previous scheme and the need for a replacement.

Strengths and weaknesses of previous ILA programme

C.7 There was broad support across the consultees for many elements of the previous programme and the concept behind it, in particular:

- the idea of empowering learners, and so seeking to put them in control
- that it was easy for learners and providers to get involved.

C.8 There was significant praise for the government for having taken a bold decision to introduce an account based system, which was seen to be leading many other countries (some of which have since sought to introduce their own system).

C.9 This praise for the concept was often tempered by some concerns about some of the operational details. It was noticeable that many of the concerns raised were the ‘flip-side’ of the positives, for example there was concern that:

- it was too easy for providers to register – despite people generally welcoming the ease of access

- the programme was not targeted – despite the consultees welcoming it being open to all.

C.10 More general concerns focussed around the lack of:

- quality assurance of providers
- information, advice and guidance offered to learners
- a perceived confusion of objectives with the prime driver of engaging new learners being diluted by a desire to draw in new providers.

Is there a need for new programme?

C.11 Given their positive views about the previous programme, it was not surprising that the vast majority of those consulted thought that a similar programme should be brought forward as a replacement.

C.12 Just two of those we consulted thought that there was no need for a replacement programme because:

- learners do not really want to be empowered so why try
- money routed through providers is easier to follow in an audit trail.

C.13 There was a larger number of those we consulted who thought that any new programme should differentiate its offer to employers/employees and individuals (in some cases to the extent of having two similar but different programmes running in parallel), with a small number, who spoke from a business background, believing that the former group should take priority.

Principles of a new programme

C.14 Based on this widespread presumption that a new scheme should be brought forward, we proceeded to ask people what principles they thought that it should follow. These are discussed below in detail below. The general thrust running across all of the comments was that any new programme should seek to be more strategic by adding value to existing initiatives.

Universality v targeting

- C.15 While many of those consulted were keen that ILAs remained open to all, they also recognised that resources were limited and that deadweight had been an issue with the previous programme. However, they were concerned that excluding any groups, in particular a focus on disadvantage would stigmatise the programme and so reduce effectiveness even amongst those it was intended to help. Therefore, the favoured view was for a differentiated product – with a core offered to all and then a series of options.
- C.16 There was however, little consensus around how the options might be structured, with suggestions including offering more for:
- people with lower existing levels qualifications, often those working in part time or seasonal posts (although a few others were concerned that higher level skills should not be excluded as they generated wealth)
 - skill shortage occupations or sectors
 - providing people with a larger entitlement until they attained either a Level 2 or 3 qualification
 - having a standard system, with targeting achieved by the focus of any marketing activity
 - people in disadvantaged communities
 - standard rate tax payers.
- C.17 Across these areas the first two listed above were most widely favoured. Interestingly, when asked about implementation those favouring skill area thought this relatively simple to do, while those favouring disadvantaged groups had more difficulty describing a simple but robust mechanism.
- C.18 Regardless of which focus is chosen, there was widespread agreement that the actual number of categories had to be kept fairly small so that the system was easy to understand.

Quality assurance

C.19 All those we consulted thought that the level of quality assurance had to be raised. Most favoured an emphasis on the provider rather than each course, believing that this would be more straightforward to administer. Where providers are already recognised for another Government programme, it was thought that this accreditation should copy over, so removing any additional burden on this group.

C.20 More problematic was how new providers, or those not currently covered by a recognised quality assurance scheme might be included. This is particularly important as it was recognised that ILAs had attracted many new providers and there was a general view that they should not be excluded from a new programme. Thoughts on how to include them ranged from:

- develop a new system and accredit them through it
- ask them to attain one of the existing systems
- give them the option of seeking an umbrella, sub-contracting agreement with a larger, already recognised provider
- operate a system of checks based on trainee follow-up, with a bias towards new providers. In effect new providers would have to establish a ‘credit rating’ in terms of learners who complete courses, attain qualifications or report good levels of satisfaction.

Information, advice and guidance

C.21 There was some concern across many of those interviewed that, while they welcomed the principle of learner empowerment, they did not think that learners were able to make fully informed choices. Therefore, the consultees generally believed that there required to be increased use of information, advice and guidance, although the overall level of need would decline if all provision was quality assured (as the choice would then not be between good and poor courses, but rather finding an appropriate course). However, despite this view being widely held, few of those we spoke to were able to provide any significant details about how this might work. A range of options were put forward, although in many cases people were concerned about conflicts of interest amongst those who might be involved:

- using learndirect/ local guidance networks as gatekeepers through which people had to go to open an ILA
- signposting people to learndirect/ local guidance networks when they opened their account – in essence telling/reminding people that these services existed and could be used
- ensuring providers were able to offer such services, as part of the quality assurance system.

C.22 The middle road, of signposting, was generally preferred on the grounds that:

- for many potential ILA holders, compulsion would be a significant barrier
- providers are not sufficiently independent to provide such a service.

C.23 A small number of people also thought that learners choice could be improved by the issuing of a range of guide prices for different courses, although others believed this would restrict efforts to develop a true market.

What are the best ways to register learners

C.24 The consultees recognised that different groups of people would prefer a variety of routes, for example:

- for some using the telephone would be a barrier
- many would not have access to the internet, or confidence in using it
- face to face contact may be important for some, but inconvenient for others.

C.25 For the majority of respondents this was a fairly low key issue, with the general view being that people should be able to register in whatever way they thought was most appropriate. Building on this a number of the consultees believed that the route was less important than the elements of control: they believed that it should be learner, not training providers who opened and so controlled ILAs.

How could learners use of an ILA be sustained?

C.26 A number of those consulted raised the issue of whether the previous ILA scheme was really an account in the true sense, i.e. something that people would put money in to at various times and so continue to use. Rather, especially with the £150 contribution, there was a view that the programme was really a one-off grant. If, having received this grant, learners went on to pursue other learning then this was not seen as a particular problem. However, it was thought that the ILA could be used to incentivise people to keep coming back. This could be done through:

- offering continued financial support, for example on an annual basis or where there was progression
- using the database of ILA holders for targeted marketing about learning
- providing learners with a smart card on which they could build credit and record their achievements.

Programme scope

C.27 There was general agreement that a replacement programme should focus on work-related courses. A handful of consultees thought that it should be widened to include non-vocation, leisure type courses, usually on the grounds that any learning was good and that once it started it would continue. However, this view was very much in the minority.

How to engage employers

C.28 There was considerable interest in ILAs being used in the workplace, with a number of very positive comments about the contribution of trade union learning representatives. The latter were seen as a good way of:

- boosting employers commitment to learning, including attracting additional funding
- encouraging non-traditional learners to engage in learning
- offering independent advice and guidance to potential learners.

C.29 While there was encouragement that this role should be allowed to continue, there was also recognition that many workplaces (especially SMEs) are non-unionised and that they should not be excluded. Suggestions for involving this latter group included:

- encouraging them to appoint learning representatives
- offering the benefits of the national administration and government contribution to their training
- giving tax relief on employers contributions (which was seen as complicated, although less so than the previous similar offer to individuals).

C.30 Against this however, a small number of consultees were concerned that promotion of ILAs to employers would take them away from being an individually focussed account. While this led a few consultees to argue that the programme should not cover employers, most thought that employers should not be targeted, but rather that there may be a need for a separate brand name, different promotional activity and probably different rules.

How should a new programme be branded

C.31 There was a roughly even split between those consultees who wanted to retain the name and those who wished to change it. Interestingly, those who wished to change it tended, although not exclusively, to have a business/employer background. This dominance may well relate to the need for a separate employer brand, which we discussed above.

C.32 Several felt unable to comment as they saw a need for:

- research on the views of the public and the providers (with a general thought that providers would be more in favour of a change of name)
- more thought on whether the scheme really was an account. As discussed above, if it is really a one off payment then people favoured retaining “Individual Learning”, but changing the final (“Account”) word.

Allocation of roles and responsibilities between national and local agencies

C.33 The previous ILA programme was seen as being heavily centralised, despite having developed from locally, TEC-based pilots. The broad consensus of the consultees was that a replacement programme should continue to be mainly national: in particular the core offer and administration system should be consistent across the country. However, there was some thought that:

- quality assurance may be more easily monitoring at a local (LSC) level, as this would allow the assessor to build a closer view of local providers and have more of an ‘ear to the ground’
- some locally targeting may be useful, for example to reflect differing needs across the country or the use of locally based marketing to reach key groups (many of whom may not pick up on a national marketing campaign).

How quickly should a new programme be introduced

C.34 Only a handful of those consulted thought that there was a pressing need for a new programme to be brought forward quickly, and indeed even fewer expected this to happen. Rather, the consensus was that:

- it needed to be ‘got right next time’
- a new programme was unlikely to start until early 2003, with some even commenting that a launch later in 2003 to fit in with the academic year would be preferable
- an early announcement of plans, even if the detail was to follow, would help people develop their own ideas for next year.

D. CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS SUMMARY

Introduction

D.1 A series of six small workshops were held across England during March 2002 to discuss the issues surrounding the development of a new ILA style scheme. These were attended by 93 representatives of learning providers and other key organisations. The main aim of the workshops was to draw out some of the issues highlighted by the learner and provider surveys and to discuss any other issues that had not been explored through the surveys. The workshops were held in the following locations:

- Newcastle
- Sheffield
- Manchester
- Birmingham
- London
- Bristol

D.2 Workshops were run on an informal basis with two focussed discussions followed by a wider discussion. The usual format was to split the workshop attendees into two groups and give them the opportunity to discuss a number of key areas:

- quality assurance
- independent information advice and guidance (IAG)
- sustainability
- national Vs local framework
- targeting

- learner registration
- learner contribution
- branding

D.3 The feedback from the workshop groups is summarised below. There was a broad degree of similarity in the views expressed, but where differences emerged these are highlighted.

Workshop Feedback

Quality assurance

- D.4 There was agreement that quality assurance was an imperative component of any new scheme and that it needed to be more rigorous than the previous ILA scheme. The priority was to ensure that all learning providers operating under a new scheme are subject to some kind of quality assurance. There was also general support for ensuring that courses are subject to quality assurance, however, participants identified that in reality this was unlikely to be practical given the large number of courses that would be involved.
- D.5 There was broad consensus that the quality assurance scheme should be simple and could ‘piggy back’ other existing schemes. In other words, learning providers that were already accredited under another quality assurance scheme could automatically be accredited to deliver learning under a new scheme. Concerns were raised that a new scheme should not exclude small or new providers that were not part of an existing quality assurance scheme. It was suggested that these providers could be asked to meet minimum standards before they are allowed to deliver learning under a new scheme and then be subject to inspections/checks for a minimum period, and would only be allowed to deliver a certain number of subsidised learning episodes before they are fully accredited.
- D.6 Several groups suggested that regular inspection was a vital part of a new quality assurance scheme and that the costs of funding this could be met by asking learning providers to pay a registration fee. Learner feedback was also noted as an important part of the quality assurance process. A variety of different means were suggested, and included the use of feedback questionnaires following learning, independent telephone surveys of learners and ensuring that learners had a point of contact if they had any concerns or complaints about a provider. A system whereby learners could rate learning providers was mentioned by a number of

groups. High numbers of learners failing to complete courses was also viewed by many as indicating that training might be of a poor quality or inappropriate and that further checks were required.

- D.7 There was a desire that any new scheme should have clearer guidelines with respect to what learning was covered, as well as clarity around the rules and expectations of the scheme. Some groups suggested formal contracts between DfES and learning providers with regular contact and feedback on performance. Nearly all the workshop groups suggested regular local meetings of learning providers so they can share best practice and keep up-to-date with new developments.

Independent information, advice and guidance

- D.8 There was general agreement that the provision of information was different to the provision of advice and guidance. All groups thought that learners should receive basic information when they registered under a new scheme and that they should be able to access information on the availability and costs of particular training. The most common suggestion was for there to be a central database of all providers accredited under a new scheme and the provision they offer. The learndirect model was highlighted as a means of providing this information but there was concern regarding learndirect's ability to provide this.
- D.9 Views on the provision of advice and guidance were mixed. There was consensus that advice and guidance should not be made a compulsory part of a new scheme. Many believed that the added layer of bureaucracy would act as a barrier and make them less likely to engage in learning.
- D.10 Whilst all groups agreed that advice and guidance should be readily accessible for all learners there was no clear consensus about who should deliver this and whether it could be independent. The majority of workshop groups indicated that they thought it unlikely that learning providers could offer truly independent advice and guidance because there was a conflict of interest. Furthermore, learning providers do not have in-depth knowledge of all the learning options available within their local area, or in many cases knowledge of how to access such information. However, there were few suggestions as to who might be able to provide independent advice and guidance other than IAG partnerships.
- D.11 The majority of learning providers wanted to play a role in providing information to learners. A couple of suggestions were made to help ensure that the information provided was as fair and independent as possible. Firstly, learning providers might be asked to sign a declaration

to say that they have made learners aware of the training they can provide and whether this might be also be available elsewhere. Secondly, the learner registration pack should include a list of a number of key questions that learners should ask learning providers before they embark on any training, e.g. is this training available elsewhere, or will I get a qualification at the end of my training?

- D.12 A number of workshop groups indicated that ensuring the provision of fair and independent advice and guidance could be linked to the quality assurance system. Low numbers of learners completing courses might suggest that they have been given poor information on the most suitable learning option for their needs. Such situations should be identified and providers subject to an inspection visit.

Sustainability

- D.13 Sustainability was highlighted as a key issue by the workshop groups with the need for a learning pathway to be created which funded more than one piece of learning per person. Many providers cited examples of learners who had been engaged in one learning activity and had been so motivated by this that they wanted to move on to further learning, however, lack of funding had prevented this. There was general view that a new scheme should fit closely with the ethos of 'lifelong learning'. A number of groups thought that linking people into advice and guidance on completion of courses would increase sustainability.
- D.14 Workshop groups suggested a number of models for improving sustainability. The key suggestions were to allow everybody to have one subsidised learning episode but to only give further discounts to those with lower level skills wishing to undertake further learning, or to give everybody an entitlement to further funding for 3-5 years following their first learning episode. The consensus was that funding would need to be capped in some way.

National Vs local framework

- D.15 There was broad agreement that a new scheme should be delivered and administered on a national basis. However, some providers did raise a number of concerns about the service they received via the ILA Centre.
- D.16 There was also support for regional structures as part of the scheme. This primarily concerned the quality assurance and inspection aspect of a new scheme. The argument being that local agents would have a much clearer picture of local issues and the provider base in the area. Opinion was split broadly evenly as to who might take on this role with some

participants suggesting that Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) could play a part whilst others thought that the scheme should be completely separate from LSCs.

- D.17 As previously mentioned the workshop groups also advocated the introduction of regional workshops or meetings for providers involved in the new scheme. Strong support was also given for regional marketing to boost any national marketing campaign.

Targeting

- D.18 Across the workshop groups there was a desire for a new scheme to be as open as possible as within the new programme. Targeting a new scheme at skill levels was not a popular option as it was argued that learners might not necessarily be seeking higher level skills, rather they may be seeking additional skills such as computer literacy or perhaps seeking a career change.
- D.19 Whilst participants wished the scheme to remain open to all, there was some support for offering different levels of subsidies. Most commonly, this was related to targeting skills shortage areas by offering higher amounts of subsidy.

Learner registration

- D.20 All workshop groups thought that learners should be able to register in as many ways as possible whether this was by phone, internet, in person or by post. It was deemed important that registration be made as easy and accessible as possible. A small number of participants were concerned with the idea of allowing providers to register learners as learners may feel under pressure to undertake the first learning they are offered and may not have the opportunity to think about all the options open to them. It was suggested that this might be overcome by allowing providers to register learners but then ensuring that learners are given a short 'cooling off' period before they commence training.

Learner contribution

- D.21 The general consensus was that the principle of the learner contribution should be retained as part of a new scheme. This was deemed as an important element in ensuring that value is attached to learning, meaning people are more likely to complete training. The general view was that the learner contribution should be set at a low level whether this be a fixed amount or a percentage of training costs.

- D.22 A number of workshops groups suggested that the learner contribution should be paid by the provider or the learner into a central pot administered by DfES and that until this has been received the training could not be delivered. This was supported as another means of tackling the issue of ‘rogue providers’ and ensuring quality assurance.

Branding

- D.23 There was no clear consensus on the issue of branding for a new scheme. Opinion was roughly evenly split with half the participants favouring a new name because they believed the old brand now had a stigma attached to it. Conversely, about half of the participants thought that the recent publicity had increased the awareness of ILAs and that this should be utilised or that the cost of re-branding the scheme would not be money well spent.

E. TELEPHONE SURVEY OF PROVIDERS

Introduction

E.1 The findings in this report are drawn from a survey of 405 training providers. The interviews were carried out by the NOP Research Group between 25 January and 1 February 2002. The sample comprised two groups:

- 145 interviews were completed with providers who had previously volunteered to assist the Department with the development of ILAs
- 260 interviews were conducted with training providers selected at random from the database of recognised ILA providers.

E.2 The response rate after removal of invalid sample was 52%, although this would have been rather higher as some of the sample was not required after the target of 400 interviews had been completed.

Report structure

E.3 The next section of this report details the survey findings. The key points arising are summarised in Key Issues.

Survey Results

Sample Characteristics

E.4 Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents were private sector training providers. Further and Higher education institutions accounted for 13% of respondents whilst 10% were voluntary or charitable training providers.

Table 1: Type of organisation

	Number	% (n=405)
Private sector training provider	299	74
Further and higher Education	54	13
Voluntary sector or charitable training provider	42	10
Other	10	3

- E.5 Over four-fifths (83%) of those surveyed had provided learning paid (partly) for by ILAs. In other words, a number of providers registered to deliver ILA funded learning but never actually made any claims. Nine out of ten (91%) of providers in the voluntary sample actually provided ILA funded training compared to 79% of the non-volunteers.
- E.6 For more than half of the providers surveyed, ILA account holders made up less than 10% of all their learners in 2001. However, 13% of providers drew heavily on ILAs with over 90% of their learners using accounts.
- E.7 Of those who had provided training paid for by ILAs, a third (32%) had also provided training under other publicly funded training programmes. Of those who had provided training under other publicly funded programmes two-fifths (40%) had provided training for the Learning and Skills Council, just under a third (31%) had provided training for learndirect, one fifth (19%) for UK Online and 14% under the European Social Fund.

Table 2: Involvement with other publicly funded programmes

	Number	% (n=108)
Learning and Skills Council training provision	43	40
learndirect	33	31
UK Online	21	19
European Social Fund (ESF)	15	14
Computers within Reach	1	1
Employment Service/ New Deal	9	8
Other	35	32

*respondents were asked to identify all of the other publicly funded learning they had provided therefore does not equal 100%

- E.8 Four-fifths (80%) of training providers who were registered ILA providers actively encouraged learners who approached their organisation to open an ILA. Once again those providers who volunteered to participate in the survey were more proactive, with 83% of those providers encouraging people to open ILAs compared to 79% of the non-volunteer survey group.
- E.9 Almost two thirds (65%) of those providers who were registered for ILAs reported that ILAs had resulted in an increase in demand for courses. IT courses and non-certified vocational skills courses felt this increase in demand most strongly with 54% and 42% (respectively) of providers noting an increase in demand for these courses as a result of ILAs. Again the

volunteer survey group were more likely to experience an increase in demand for courses than the non-volunteer group, with 82% and 54% reporting an increase in demand respectively.

Main areas of ILA training

- E.10 IT training was one of the key training areas purchased using ILAs for two-thirds (66%) of training providers. Vocational skills training which was linked to vocational qualifications and non-certified vocational skills training were highlighted by 40% and 21% of training providers respectively as being among the key training areas purchased using ILAs.

Table 3: Key training areas purchased by ILA holders

	Number	% (n=337)
IT Courses	221	66
Vocational Skills – linked to vocational qualifications	135	40
Non-certified vocational skills (vocational training that does not lead to a qualification)	70	21
Pre-vocational course	29	9
Numeracy/Maths	25	7
Literacy	19	6
Other	53	16
Don't know	1	0.3
*respondents were asked to identify all of the key training areas purchased by ILA holders therefore does not equal 100%		

Funding used

- E.11 Eight out of ten (82%) training providers reported that learners used the £150 discount offered to the first one million account users. Three-fifths (62%) of training providers said that learners had used the 80% discount to pay for training, whilst 56% of training providers said that learners had used the 20% discount offered by the ILA to pay for training.
- E.12 The £150 discount was reported by 48% of providers to be the incentive that was used most often to pay for learning. A third (33%) of providers said that the 80% discount was the most used incentive to pay for learning whilst one in ten (10%) training providers found that the 29% discount was the most used incentive to pay for learning. A further 7% reported that none of the three types of incentive were dominant.

- E.13 The dominance of the £150 discount and the lower usage of the 80% and 20% discounts can be linked to the early closure of the scheme as the percentage discounts came into effect after the first one million £150 discounts had been used up.

Table 4: Financial incentives used most often to pay for training

	Number	% (n=334)
£150 discount	160	48
80% discount	111	33
20% discount	34	10
A variety of all three	22	7
Don't know	7	2

- E.14 The vast majority of providers (88%) reported no change in their charging policies as a result of ILAs. Ten percent of training providers reported decreasing the cost of training as a result of ILAs whilst 1% of training providers reported increasing their prices.

Learners attracted

- E.15 Increase in demand was reported across a wide range of population groups, especially: women returners-to work (25%), the unemployed (23%) and the retired (21%).

Table 5: Changes in learner groups as a result of ILAs

	% No Change*	% Small Increase*	% Large Increase*
Women returners-to-work	39	28	25
Unemployed	48	25	23
Retired	52	23	21
Full-time employed	35	40	20
Part-time workers	42	30	18
Young people	54	24	17
Minority ethnic groups	60	20	14
* n= 337			

Understanding ILAs

- E.16 Three-fifths (60%) of training providers found it easy to understand what learning/training activities were covered by ILAs, with 22% of providers finding them very easy to understand. In contrast almost a third (30%) of training providers found the ILAs difficult to understand with 9% finding them very difficult to understand.

Table 6: Ease of understanding of ILAs for providers

	Number	% (n=405)
Very easy	87	22
Fairly easy	157	39
Neither easy or difficult	40	10
Fairly difficult	83	21
Very difficult	38	9

- E.17 Providers were divided as to how far learners understood the aims and working of ILAs. Over half (53%) of training providers thought that learners understood only **some or none** of the aims and workings of the ILA scheme whilst 45% of training providers thought that learners **had** understood the aims and workings of the ILA.

Table 7: Level of understanding of ILAs by learners

	Number	% (n=405)
Fully understood	65	16
Understood most of it	118	29
Some of it	170	42
Or none of it	44	11
Don't know	8	2

Strengths

- E.18 The universality of the ILA programme was felt by almost half (46%) of the training providers questioned to be one of the main strengths of the programme. Thirty percent of training providers felt that the Government contribution to training was one of the main strengths whilst a further quarter (26%) felt that the strength of the ILA programme lay in the ease of access offered to individual learners.

Table 8: Providers perceptions of main strengths of ILA programme

	Number	%(n=405)*
Open invitation to all to be involved	187	46
Government contribution to training	120	30
Ease of access for individual learners	107	26
Easy for providers to get involved in the programme	42	10
Broad nature of the training covered	35	9
Focus on individuals	34	8
National approach	21	5
No strengths	20	5
Other	87	22
Don't know	10	3

*respondents were asked to identify all of the main strengths that applied therefore does not equal 100%

Weaknesses

- E.19 Two-fifths (41%) of training providers thought that the main weakness of the ILA programme was that it was too easy for “rogue providers” to get involved. A fifth (19%) of training providers felt that one of the main weaknesses of the programme was the lack of quality assurance of training providers, whilst a further 16% thought that the main weaknesses of the ILA programme lay in the fact that it was too open for mis-selling. In essence many of the weaknesses centres on quality assurance and doubtless this reflects the recent publicity about the programme.

Table 9: Providers perceptions of main weaknesses of ILA programme

	Number	% (n=405)*
Too easy for “rogue providers” to get involved	165	41
No quality assurance of providers	77	19
Too open for mis-selling	64	16
No quality assurance of courses	37	9
ILAs distorted the training market	16	4
National approach	16	4
No weaknesses	13	3
Open invitation to all to become involved	10	3
Broad nature of the training covered	8	2
Government contribution to training	5	1
Focus on individuals	2	1
Other	218	54
Don't know	6	2

*respondents were asked to identify all of the main weaknesses that applied therefore does not equal 100%

Developing a new scheme

Targeting

- E.20 Almost two-thirds (62%) of training providers felt that a new ILA scheme should not be restricted to specific groups of the population or types of training but rather should be completely open. This reflects their identification of the openness of the current ILA scheme as being a strength.
- E.21 Twenty-three percent of providers felt that a new scheme should be prioritised by specific types of training course whilst one in ten training providers thought that a new scheme should be prioritised by specific groups of the population.
- E.22 Over three-quarters of training providers thought that if the new scheme were to target employers then they should make a contribution towards the cost of training for their employees. Almost half (48%) of providers felt that this should only be the case if the training undertaken by employees was work related. A further 18% of training providers felt that employers should not make a contribution to the training of their employees.

Priority groups

E.23 When asked which groups should be specifically targeted, if a new scheme were to give priority to particular individuals, the following groups were identified by over three-quarters of training providers: those with either low or no existing qualifications, people with disabilities, women returners-to work, those below a certain income threshold, part-time employed, and the unemployed. The high numbers in each category reflects the desire for an inclusive programme.

Table 10: Priority groups for new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)*
Those holding either low or no existing qualifications	360	89
People with disabilities	350	86
Women returners-to-work	349	86
Those below a certain income threshold	344	85
Part-time employed	322	80
Unemployed	321	79
Minority ethnic groups	248	61
Retired people	246	61
Full-time employed	240	59
Refugees/Asylum seekers	216	53
Other	40	10
Don't know	1	0
No answer	17	4

*respondents were asked to identify all of the priority individuals therefore does not equal 100%

E.24 When asked which two of the above groups were most important almost half (49%) of providers identified the unemployed whilst around 30% each identified women returners-to-work, those holding low or no existing qualifications and those below a certain income threshold. It is noticeable that the providers appear to favour a programme for disadvantaged groups/ non-traditional learners.

Table 11: Most important priority groups for new scheme

	Number	% (n=374)*
Unemployed	183	49
Women returners-to-work	114	31
Those with either low or no existing qualifications	112	30
Those below a certain income threshold	106	28
Part-time employed	42	11
People with disabilities	40	11
Full-time employed	36	10
Minority ethnic groups	32	9
Retired people	22	6
Refugees/ Asylum seekers	7	2
Others	24	4
Don't know	20	5

*respondents were asked to identify all of the most important priority individuals therefore does not equal 100%

Priority training

- E.25 When asked which types of training should be prioritised by a new scheme, 62% of training providers thought that the scheme should be based on subject areas. In addition, over a third of providers each felt that prioritisation of training should: only include training where there are skills shortages, only cover courses that lead to an NVQ or other recognised qualification or be based on NVQ levels.
- E.26 Seventeen percent of providers felt that if funding were to be prioritised by training broadly equating to NVQ levels then the programme should be aimed at up to Level 2. A further 13% favoured up to Level 3. It is noticeable that preference is for training up to NVQ levels rather than above a level, thus meaning that the scheme would be open to low-level learners. Twelve percent of providers thought that a new scheme should be aimed at any level of training so long as it is to a higher level than that already held by the individual.

Table 12: Priority training levels for new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)
Any, as long as training is to a higher level than already held by the individual	47	12
Entry level only	42	10
Up to level 1 or equivalent	34	8.4
Up to level 2 or equivalent	70	17
Up to level 3 or equivalent	54	13
Up to level 4 or equivalent	12	3
Only level 1 and above	15	4
Only level 2 and above	21	5
Only level 3 and above	11	3
Only level 4 and above	2	-
Other	3	-
Don't know	79	20
No answer	15	4

E.27 When considering the training coverage of a new scheme 85% of providers said that training should cover areas with identified skills gaps, 77% said that training should cover courses which promote personal development, 72% said that training should cover all vocational courses and a further 70% said that training should cover any courses which are approved by the DfES. Again this would suggest an inclusive programme.

Table 13: Priority training coverage of new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)*
Areas with identified skills gaps	346	85
Courses which promote personal development	313	77
All vocational courses	293	72
Any courses approved by the DfES	282	70
All training/learning should be included	155	38
Only training which leads to an NVQ or other qualification	134	33
Other	10	3

*respondents were asked to identify all areas of priority training therefore does not equal 100%

E.28 Almost three-quarters (71%) of training providers thought that distance or open learning courses should be eligible for funding under the new scheme.

Length of training

E.29 Two-thirds (65%) of providers thought that under a new scheme training should be expected to last a minimum length of hours. The remaining 33% of providers did not think that training should be expected to last a minimum length of hours under the new scheme, in effect making any training eligible. Providers wishing to see a minimum imposed, all favoured relatively long courses: 48% wanted courses to last at least 20 hours.

Table 14: Minimum length of training under new scheme

	Number	% (n=263)
At least 4 hours	26	10
At least 8 hours	48	18
At least 12 hours	27	10
At least 16 hours	17	7
At least 20 hours	57	22
At least 30 hours	69	26
Don't know	19	7

Quality assurance

E.30 Eighty-five percent of providers felt that within a new scheme there should be more rigorous Quality Assurance procedures than for the previous programme. Twelve percent of providers felt that a new scheme should have the same Quality Assurance as the previous scheme.

E.31 Of those providers who felt that a more rigorous quality assurance scheme was required only one third (33%) felt that this could be best achieved by developing a new quality assurance scheme. One quarter (25%) thought that written references on the quality of the provider would be the best method of improving quality assurance whilst 22% favoured the use of other existing quality assurance schemes. A further 19% thought that evidence of the length of time a provider has been operating would be the best method of improving quality assurance.

E.32 Of those providers who favoured the use of an existing quality assurance scheme 19% thought that the Learning Skills Council (LSC) scheme would be most appropriate and a further 19% favoured the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

- E.33 The relatively low level of support for existing schemes may simply reflect a lack of knowledge (as two-thirds of respondents are not engaged in any other publicly funded training).

Table 15: Quality assurance schemes for new programme

	Number	% (n=74)
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	14	19
Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)	14	19
University for Industry (Ufi) / learndirect	3	4
Training Standards Council (TSC)	2	3
Guidance Standards Council (GSC)	2	3
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)	2	3
ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence)	2	3
Basic Skills Agency	1	1
Other awarding body	9	12
Other	49	66

*respondents were asked to identify all existing quality assurance schemes which would be appropriate therefore does not equal 100%

- E.34 Of those providers who felt that within a new scheme quality assurance should be more rigorous 42% thought that it should be monitored every six months after registration and a further 42% felt that it should be monitored once a year after initial registration. Six percent of providers felt that monitoring should be conducted every 2 years and 10% thought that it should be conducted at some other frequency.

Learner advice and training

- E.35 Almost eight out of ten (79%) providers thought that learners should be encouraged to access independent advice and guidance before embarking on training. Three-fifths of providers felt that learners should definitely be encouraged to access advice and guidance, whilst just 6% thought that learners should not be encouraged to access independent advice and guidance prior to embarking on training.

Table 16: Learner need of advice and guidance

	Number	% (n=405)
Definitely	239	59
Probably	81	20
Possibly	61	15
Preferably not	13	3
Definitely not	10	3
Don't know	1	-

- E.36 Those providers who thought that learners should or possibly should be encouraged to access independent advice and guidance prior to embarking on training were asked who they thought should provide this advice and guidance service. The Information and Guidance Networks, learndirect and designated training providers were all popular receiving nominations from 65%, 63% and 61% of providers respectively.
- E.37 A variety of methods to deliver this advice and guidance service were also popular, 86% of providers favoured a face-to-face service, 85% favoured a telephone service and 79% favoured an internet service. This suggests that advice and guidance would be most beneficial if available through a variety of routes.

Contribution

- E.38 Opinions regarding the form the Government funding of a new scheme were relatively evenly split with no clear preference. Twenty-six percent of providers thought that the contribution should be a variable percentage based on the type of training undertaken, 24% favoured a contribution of fixed amounts based on the types of training undertaken, a further 24% support the provision of a lump sum that can be put towards any eligible training and 20% favour a percentage discount towards eligible training.

Table 17: Government contribution to new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)
A variable percentage based upon the type of training undertaken	107	26
A contribution of fixed amounts, based upon the type of training undertaken	99	24
A lump sum that can be put towards any eligible training	97	24
A percentage discount towards eligible training	81	20
In some other form	13	3
Don't know	8	2

- E.39 With regard to the contributions made by individuals 45% of providers thought that they should contribute a set proportion of the costs of training, 19% thought that individuals should contribute a set amount of money and a further 33% thought that both of these methods should be used. It is noticeable that a vast majority thought that individuals should contribute.

Table 18: Individual contribution to new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)
Set as a proportion of the costs	181	45
Set as an amount of money	77	19
Both of these	134	33
Don't know	13	3

- E.40 Most providers favoured a relatively modest contribution 65% of providers felt that the minimum contribution should be £25; whilst 18% thought that the minimum contribution should be £50.

Table 19: If individual contribution is a set amount minimum contribution under new scheme

	Number	% (n=405)
£25	263	65
£50	72	18
£75	4	1
£100	11	3
£200	3	1
A higher amount	6	2
Don't know	40	10
No answer	6	2

- E.41 Similarly if the contribution was set as a percentage: two-fifths (39%) of providers thought that the minimum contribution should be 10% or less of the course costs; and a further 47% of providers thought that the minimum contribution should be between 20-25%.

Payment of providers

- E.42 Forty-four percent of providers thought that payments to the provider for training delivered should be paid in an even split at the start and completion of training. Over one-third of providers thought that all or most of the money should be paid on registration whilst 19% thought that all or most of the money should be paid upon completion of training.

Table 20: Payment of providers

	Number	% (n=405)
All money paid on registration	101	25
Most of money on registration	46	11
Most of money paid on completion	15	4
All on completion	62	15
An even split at start and completion	180	44
Don't know	1	-

Promotion

- E.43 Almost two-thirds (62%) of providers thought that the Government should take the lead in promoting the replacement ILA programme to learners. Eighteen percent of providers thought that local partnerships should take the lead in promotion and 17% thought that local providers should take the lead. The remaining 3% said that some other body should take the lead.
- E.44 Providers were divided on the continuing use of the ILA brand name. Over half (53%) of providers thought that the ILA brand name should be retained with one third saying that it should definitely be retained. Forty-five percent of providers did not think that the ILA brand name should be retained with 30% saying that it should definitely not be retained.

Table 21: Retention of the ILA brand name

	Number	% (n=405)
Yes, definitely	135	33
Yes, probably	80	20
Probably not	59	15
Definitely not	122	30
Don't know	9	2

- E.45 Fifty-seven percent of providers thought that the initial signing up of learners for the new programme should be carried out by a regional body or local intermediaries whilst 35% thought that it should be carried out by a national body. The remaining 8% thought that the signing up of learners should be conducted in some other way or did not know.

Key Points

- E.46 This final chapter highlights the key points that have been drawn out through the provider telephone survey. It pulls together the key results under two distinct strands:
- specific areas where there is broad agreement amongst learning providers
 - topics where there is less consensus at this stage in the consultation process.

Consensus across telephone survey respondents

E.47 The following issues evoked **broad agreement** at this stage in the consultation process amongst learning providers taking part in the telephone survey:

- **understanding of the original ILA scheme** amongst learning providers was **high** with only 30% claiming to have found it difficult or very difficult to understand
- **understanding of the aim and workings** of the original ILA scheme was **low amongst learners** – only 16% of learning providers felt that learners had fully understood ILAs.
- **nearly half** (46%) of the learning providers identified an ‘**open invitation to all to be involved**’ as one of the **main strengths** of the ILA programme – the most frequently identified strength
- conversely, the most readily **identified weakness** of the ILA programme was that it was ‘**too easy for “rogue providers” to get involved**’, mentioned by **41% of respondents**. This probably reflects the recent publicity about the programme
- the **majority of learning providers** (62%) felt that a new programme **should be completely open** and should not be prioritised either by type of training or by specific groups of the population
- if a new scheme were to be **prioritised by specific groups** of the population, the most **important target groups** were deemed to be: **the unemployed** (49%); **women returners-to-work** (31%); **those with either low or no existing qualifications** (30%); and **those below a certain income threshold** (28%).
- if a new scheme were to be **prioritised by type of learning**, **62%** of respondents felt this should be done **by subject area**
- the majority (**65%**) of learning providers **supported** the idea of **imposing a minimum length of training** under a new scheme. Furthermore, **48%** felt that that learning should last for **at least 20 hours** or more
- **quality assurance** was identified as a crucial element of a new scheme with **85%** of all learning providers identifying that a **new scheme** needed to ‘**have more rigorous quality assurance procedures**’ than the ILA programme.

- **access to independent advice and guidance for learners** before embarking on learning was viewed by **79% of learning providers** as something that should **definitely or probably be encouraged**
- there was **strong support** amongst learning providers (**65%**) to **retain the minimum contribution** by **individual learners** towards their learning at **£25**
- **59%** of learning providers identified that their **preferred payment method** would be either, **all money on completion** or an **even split between payment at the start with the remainder on completion of courses**
- general consensus (**62%**) that the **Government** should take the **lead on promoting a new programme to learners.**

Areas where there is no consensus

E.48 There were a number issues emerging from the telephone survey where there is no clear consensus. These issues included:

- there was also no clear guide as to how **Quality Assurance** could be introduced as part of a new scheme. Respondents were broadly split between:
 - wanting to use an **existing** Quality Assurance scheme (22%)
 - wanting to develop a **new** Quality Assurance scheme (33%)
 - using evidence of **length of time** a learning provider has been in operation as a measure of Quality Assurance (19%)
 - using **written references** on the quality of training providers as a measure of Quality Assurance (26%)
- learning providers were **broadly split** as to **what form any Government contribution to learning should be in**. There was no clear favourite in terms of a lump sum, percentage discount, variable discounts, or fixed amounts depending upon the type of training undertaken

- on the issue of **retaining the ILA brand name**, **opinion was also divided** with 55% suggesting that the brand name should definitely or probably be kept, with the remainder believing that it should definitely or probably be dropped
- **further clarification** also needs to be sought on the subject of **signing up learners to a new programme**, with 35% of respondent believing this should be done by a national body while 38% supported the idea of approved local intermediaries delivering this function.