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Government

Education and Lifelong Learning

National Evaluation of the
Recognising Achievement
Collaborative Enquiry Projects



NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT COLLABORATIVE ENQUIRY PROJECTS

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This report is dedicated to Angela Jackson, good friend and colleague, who died 18th November 2009.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter One Introduction

- 1 For at least 30 years, initiatives in Scotland and the UK have sought to encourage and recognise learning beyond the outcomes of the formal curriculum. It has been a theme of such policies as Assessment is for Learning, Determined to Succeed and More Choices, More Chances. It is now being taken forward through *Curriculum for Excellence* and, as such, is relevant to all ages and stages from 3 to 18.
- 2 A series of stakeholder consultations held by the Scottish Government in 2007 identified seven principles that should govern recognising achievement:
 - achievements should be as valuable as qualifications;
 - the focus must be on learning and reflection, not activities;
 - learners must have ownership of their achievements and what they choose to include;
 - recognition of achievement must involve talking with and supporting young people;
 - any approach must support young people at risk of disengagement and in need of more choices, more chances and must not widen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged;
 - there is a need to develop common understandings and language across wider learning communities;
 - the implications and practicalities of recognising achievement for schools and learning communities need to be explored more fully.
- 3 Following these consultation events, the Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) set up Collaborative Enquiry Projects (CEPs) in 12 local authorities to investigate and pilot different approaches over the 2008-09 academic year and to address 4 key questions:
 - what should recognition of achievement look like?
 - what should it cover?
 - who should be involved and how?
 - how do we give it currency?
- 4 The national evaluation of the work done by CEPs in developing approaches to recognition of young people's achievement was conducted between January and November 2009.
- 5 The aim of the national evaluation was to investigate and report on the experiences of the projects in order to inform the development of guidance and support for authorities, schools and other education providers in providing opportunities for achievements of all kinds and helping young people to gain recognition for them.
- 6 The national evaluation adopted a qualitative methodology. This included:
 - a literature review and model building (reported in a separate Research Findings http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/research_findings_54/2010);
 - mapping of projects via review of documentation and interviews (16) with project managers;
 - main fieldwork in the projects involving a range of activities and groups:
 - 34 groups (179 pupils P3-S6:151 questionnaires); 4 pupil interviews;
 - interviews and group work with school staff (63 interviewed and 65 in groups); a further 16 interviews with local authority managers;

- parents: interviews (2); questionnaires (24); parents' evening (1);
- interviews with stakeholders: College (2); Training Providers (3); Community Learning and Development (2); Mentors (4); Employers (4); Careers Advisers (2);
- review of further project documentation.
- fieldwork with end-users on the process of recognising achievement and on the value they might give to any tangible record that might be produced. A total of 37 interviews were carried out involving 48 individuals:
 - seven employers in a number of sectors;
 - 13 Training Providers offering Life Skills; Get Ready for Work; Skillseekers; and Modern Apprenticeships programmes over a broad range of sectors;
 - 10 FE staff across sport and health, social care; engineering and hairdressing;
 - senior admissions staff in seven Scottish Universities and one Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff member involved in UCAS Clearing;
 - eight members of SDS staff (Careers Scotland) and two Jobcentre Plus staff.

Chapter Two The Collaborative Enquiry Projects

- 7 The Collaborative Enquiry Projects were located in 12 local authorities (some had more than one discrete project, adding up to 16 different approaches).*
- 8 The 12 Collaborative Enquiry Projects (CEPs) differed considerably including:
- the emphasis given to providing additional experiences for pupils versus using pupils' existing activities;
 - the extent to which they focused on developing a record/end certificate compared with concentrating on the process of recognition;
 - the extent to which only pupils' achievements in school were used compared with the extent to which achievements in their personal social and community life were included as well;
 - the extent to which they used electronic or audio-visual facilities;
 - whether formal recognition of experiences was being sought;
 - the age/stage of pupils (P3 to S6);
 - whether whole year groups or smaller groups (either volunteer or selected on certain criteria) took part.

Chapter Three Management and Delivery

- 9 The term 'the project' or 'managers' or 'members of staff' refers to school staff; pupils are identified separately; and other stakeholders (parents, Community Learning and Development staff, colleges etc) are specifically identified.
- 10 Schools had a variety of reasons for participating in a CEP: these differences tended to impact on how the project developed and on its focus. Common reasons for getting involved were: it would help the school to address a pre-existing challenge; it built on existing strengths in the school or community; or it fitted well with school priorities and the needs of the school and its community.
- 11 The projects varied on a number of dimensions. These included: the extent of initial consultation; whether all staff or only some were involved; the extent of engagement

* The local authorities involved were Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Fife, Highland, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Stirling, and West Dunbartonshire.

of other stakeholders; the extent to which leadership roles were dispersed; and how pupils were identified for the project.

- 12 Other stakeholders proved difficult to engage, particularly employers.
- 13 While parents were generally informed of the school's intention to develop approaches to recognising achievement they were only directly involved in helping their children to review and record achievement in a very small number of projects; this was seen as an essential next step.
- 14 The local authority's role in setting a clear and supportive context for recognising achievement was recognised by all projects. The Headteacher's positive support was extremely important, but leadership was commonly dispersed to a Depute Headteacher and from there to staff and/or pupils. This could include: a Wider Achievement Group of staff; temporary appointment of a Principal Teacher (Achievement); the identification of pupils to lead the development of recognition of achievement in their own year group.
- 15 Some projects worked with a cohort of pupils. Those which did not varied in the way they identified pupils: balancing gender and attainment; seeking volunteers; or targeting those most likely to be co-operative or to be able to benefit.
- 16 Schools were considering ways of embedding recognition of achievement. Possible ways of doing this included: extending registration and reflection time; and reducing the number of exam subjects.

Chapter Four The Fundamentals (1) Defining Achievement

- 17 A fundamental issue for the all those involved – pupils, staff and stakeholders – was to consider what they meant by 'achievement' and how widely they defined it. This was a live issue: gaining a shared definition and understanding of these terms was vital to projects' subsequent decisions, for example in relation to what 'recognition' might mean, and how achievement might be recorded.
- 18 Even where projects formally employed a single written definition none of them in practice made use of a single definition.
- 19 Definitions tended to vary depending on which student or groups of students were being considered:
 - 'achieving' or 'achieved' had a sense of meeting a target, of the completion of something intended, perhaps linked to personal learning planning within the school context;
 - 'achievement' was similar, linking to academic targets and meeting certain standards of performance but also incorporating a sense of satisfaction;
 - 'an achievement' was likely to have a degree of challenge or effort in it, often with a clearly measured end product such as a medal or award and was often broader than the school context;
 - a 'real achievement' was seen as a personal challenge which had really stretched the individual, regardless of how it compared with the achievements of others or of how easily the individual found success in other fields.

- 20 These different emphases influenced projects' decisions about what to record and affected the value that students placed on the process. Some staff and students thought that everything 'achieved' should be recorded and recognised; others thought the emphasis should be much more towards recognising 'achievements' or 'real achievements'.
- 21 There were also different definitions of what a 'wider' context for achievement might mean. These ranged from: the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence and core skills demonstrated in the classroom; through positive results from rich tasks in school or school-generated 'extra-curricular' experiences and achievements generated in structured youth settings; to those achievements demonstrated in the individual's personal use of time including success in meeting personal or family challenges both known and unknown to the school.

Chapter Five The Fundamentals (2) The Recognition of Achievement

- 22 All the projects had taken steps to recognise the achievements of their students. These ranged from informal to formal including recording achievements on plasma screens or on achievement boards, positive referrals or praise from staff, a section for parents in the school report, certificates of achievement, or SQA awards.
- 23 But for most projects, helping learners to go through a process of reflection leading to an understanding of the achievement was the essential issue rather than recognition itself.
- 24 Those projects which focused on young people needing more choices, more chances found that learners who lacked confidence and had low self-esteem were likely to need extra help in recognising the skills they had demonstrated and the value of their experiences. However, similar challenges were faced by more academic and engaged young people: they found it easy to say what they had done but not so easy to say how it had been done and what had been learned.
- 25 Records of achievement could include pre-existing systems of merits for effort and behaviour, homework diaries or an extra section in the school report to parents. Students commonly kept records of achievements in paper form in logs or folders, with reflections structured around the four capacities and completed in personal and social education (PSE) or registration time.
- 26 A number of challenges arose from the projects' experience. These included:
- balancing the importance of immediacy of reflection (while any event demonstrating achievement was fresh in the mind) with over-frequent reflection (making the process mechanical for young people);
 - finding ways of making the record attractive and interesting to young people and harnessing different learning styles in order to engage young people in reflection and recording;
 - comprehensive tracking of achievement across a whole year group, and at the level of the individual in the year group, particularly if the range of contexts for achievement was very broad.
- 27 The model of recognising achievement developed from the literature review identifies three processes or elements by which achievement can be recognised (Understanding, Explaining and Proving) against a background of opportunities to achieve; the three elements are linked through a personal store or portfolio of

achievements. All projects and stakeholders found that this model reflected aspects of their approach and was a helpful way of thinking through the process of recognising achievement.

- 28 Projects were clear that there could be no recognition of achievement without the opportunity to achieve through some experience or activity; this is the essential pre-condition, and a number of projects put resources into setting up rich experiences from which pupils might demonstrate achievement. However, there could be a danger of over-emphasising the experience to the detriment of the learning and reflection.
- 29 In the Understanding element learners are supported to review their activities and experiences and to identify and understand the learning which has resulted from these, and to consider how learning could transfer to a different context. The process brings out the intrinsic value of the learning, ie the direct value to the learner.
- 30 All projects were clear that the Understanding element was central to the process of recognising achievement for all learners no matter their age or school stage. Reflection and the resulting understanding was seen by staff as key to contributing to young people becoming 'successful learners'. For personal development and learning to occur, achievement needed to be understood and recognised by the achiever and also by those individuals whose opinion was valued by the achiever.
- 31 In the Explaining element learners are supported to understand the value that their achievements may have to others and to be able to communicate their skills and achievements effectively taking account of the other person's requirements and concerns. It thus relates to the utility value of the achievement.
- 32 The Explaining element was seen by projects as the second most important aspect of recognising achievement; it was most likely to be of greatest importance at transition points. Pupils and staff alike spoke of the challenges young people faced in explaining their skills and achievements to others, whether within the school or outwith the school to employers, training providers, colleges and universities. (Section 9 of this report notes that for end-users, this was the most important element and the most in need of development).
- 33 In the Proving element, the emphasis is on gathering evidence to enable the achievement to be accredited. The process brings out the exchange value of the learning and achievement ie the value that the outcomes of learning from one context can have in another.
- 34 A number of projects had considered possible certification mechanisms as part of the Proving element including ASDAN, SCQF levels, Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh Award etc. However, for some learners, proving did not have to mean a certificate; for some young people, having evidence to show family, friends and peers could be equally important to providing proof of achievement to employers.
- 35 Staff and learners in the projects had no difficulty in agreeing the importance of understanding and explaining elements of recognising achievement but the proving element was more problematic. A concern for many was that proving raised issues about the strength of evidence, how it would be assessed and validated and how the formal processes of certification would impact on the young person's experience.

36 The concept of the personal store evolved in discussion with staff and pupils. It could be a physical repository, but was more likely to be envisaged as an 'electronic shoebox' or portfolio; 'owned' by the young person; accessible from home as well as school; and include evidence produced using different media. The young person and others might draw on this for different purposes, supported by teachers, friends, family and youth workers.

Chapter Six Recognition of Achievement: Who Is It For and Who Owns It?

37 All projects acknowledged that pupils needed to be centrally involved in the recognition of achievement but in practice there were different approaches. Many agreed the principle but felt that teachers needed to drive the process, perhaps initially during the pilot stage or while pupils were younger but more commonly to ensure that the most disadvantaged groups did not opt out or end up with a poor record of achievement.

38 On the other hand, some projects specifically said that unless pupils actively chose to opt into the process and were engaged in it, the key elements of understanding and explaining would be ineffective: the process would instead be something imposed on pupils.

39 It can be seen that there could be some tension between ensuring disadvantage was not compounded on the one hand and pupil ownership principles in projects' thinking on the other.

40 All projects agreed that there was value in recognising achievement, and all pupils should do it. There were different views on priorities, and responses raise difficult questions about the voluntary or compulsory nature of recognising achievement, the extent to which projects should adopt a compensatory approach and where it leaves the 'ordinary pupil'. There were four categories of views. Recognition of achievement:

- is for all, and should be compulsory;
- should be available for all, but voluntary whether pupils take part;
- should be available for all, should be compulsory for younger pupils but voluntary for older ones;
- should be available for all but certain groups need it more. A variety of groups were suggested as key priorities:
 - young people needing more choices, more chances;
 - young people with additional support needs;
 - those unlikely to achieve much in the way of academic qualifications;
 - young people who were shy or needed to move out of their comfort zone;
 - young people who, while not actively disengaged, found adjustment to school difficult;
 - some S6 pupils, to help them make effective use of the year;
 - the 'grey' group of ordinary young people who could often be overlooked.

41 The projects illustrated three main ways in which pupil ownership could be envisaged, quite different in scope:

- some pupils should have responsibility for certain tasks relating to recognition of achievement in the school;
- the pupil body, or representatives of the pupil body, should have certain responsibilities or a say in decision-making or a consultation role on the recognition of achievement or a say on whose achievement is recognised;

- the individual pupil should have ownership of the process of understanding, explaining and recording his/her own achievements.

42 Members of school staff were divided on the ownership of any certificate of achievement, and local authority staff were particularly concerned about this.

Chapter Seven The Reported Benefits

43 A number of benefits for young people were reported by school staff and pupils arising from the development work they had undertaken to recognise achievements. These included:

- improvements in confidence and self-esteem;
- better team work and communication skills;
- greater understanding of themselves and their achievements.

44 Where projects had had a significant focus on the process of understanding and explaining achievement (rather than on the activity or experience that had generated the achievement) then pupils were also able to use the language of achievement, ie to talk without much prompting about what they had achieved, how they had reflected on it and what it might mean to them.

45 Only a small number of parents were sufficiently involved to comment, but they noted similar benefits: improvements in confidence, team work, communication, planning and self-knowledge.

46 Teachers and school managers also noticed a positive impact on pupil/teacher relationships and an improvement in teaching resulting from increased dialogue, for example, on the four capacities. They also noted improved collaboration with other colleagues and subject areas within their own school.

Chapter Eight Advice from the Pilot Projects

47 Project staff and pupils were asked what advice they would give to another school starting to develop recognition of achievement:

- recognition of achievement should be a broad rather than a narrow process, involving others and agreeing shared definitions;
- the process of getting started takes time, needs to be flexible and adaptable and to build on the strengths and needs of the school and its community;
- leadership should be dispersed and devolved to staff and pupils where possible;
- a key task is identifying and monitoring achievement, including at an individual level and with respect to both pupils and to staff involvement;
- it is worth considering structural change of timetable and options to embed a new development such as recognising achievement;
- reflection needs to be carried out while the experience is relatively fresh and both reflection and recording need to be youth-friendly and imaginative; purposes need to be clear to young people and reflections should be able to be shared/kept private when desired;
- at transition points throughout a school career from P1 to S6 it is important to consider what the different end-users need and to focus recording on this. An electronic format is the way forward but needs to be creative and imaginative to match what young people are familiar with and expect; but IT should follow and build on a secure process of reflection and review rather than lead it.

- 48 There are a number of support and development needs to be met if recognition of achievement is to be taken forward:
- support for teachers on how to: draw out young people' achievements and the skills and qualities demonstrated; help young people to pull out and frame elements of their achievements and explain them to end-users; help young people assess the contents of their achievement portfolio for proof of achievement if the young person wished it;
 - development by pupils, teachers and parents of the skills needed to work with an e-portfolio;
 - familiarisation and training on recognising achievement for careers advisers from Skills Development Scotland and youth workers from Community Learning and Development.

Chapter Nine End-users' Responses to Recognition of Achievement

- 49 End-users (employers, training providers, colleges and universities) did not use the term 'achievement' or 'recognising achievement', they generally prefaced 'achievement' with 'wider' or 'broader'. When describing end-users' views, the convention '(wider) achievement' is used to reflect this perspective.
- 50 End-users' current practice was to obtain information on young people's (wider) achievements from application forms/CVs, presentations, Record of Achievement folders, school references and interviews.
- 51 Overall, the end-users that gave a considerable amount of weight to young people's (wider) achievements in selection were largely the vocational/professional/creative/performance courses at university; colleges selecting for courses above preparatory or introductory level; larger employers with more structured selection and training mechanisms; and training providers where they were recruiting to Modern Apprenticeships.
- 52 For all end-users, other than universities, (wider) achievement information in application forms or CVs was not used as a filter to eliminate applicants at the first stage of selection. Instead it was used to inform interview questions and to prompt young people to speak about their achievements and interests: the absence of evidence of wider achievements did not eliminate applicants at the first stage of selection.
- 53 Selection interviews were the most important way in which most end-users found out about young people's (wider) achievements. Such achievements were expected to help young people illustrate their answers to competence based questions; however, young people were generally considered to be poor at handling such questions at interview.
- 54 Small employers and those without an elaborate selection mechanism did value a broader picture of young people's (wider) achievements but tended to rely more on their judgement and 'gut feeling' in interview.
- 55 There was strong support from end-users for the development of approaches in schools to the recognition of (wider) achievement. They were supportive of processes that would help young people to reflect on and record their achievements and that

would support them in the three elements of the recognising achievement process (ie understanding, explaining and proving).

- 56 Virtually all end-users considered that helping young people to develop their capacity to understand and explain their (wider) achievements was the most important and valuable aspects of the process; the proving element was generally considered a less critical part of the process.
- 57 Nevertheless, they did think that a tangible record that summarised or pulled together the outcomes of a process that young people had gone through would be useful both for young people and themselves.
- 58 While a tangible statement might be useful, it was not in itself sufficient. It was secondary to young people being able to present their skills, attitudes and achievements; young people **must** be able to speak to the contents of any document.
- 59 Intermediary users (careers advisers and Jobcentre Plus staff) also welcomed development work on recognising (wider) achievement. Careers advisers thought their effectiveness would be improved if young people were more able to recognise their own achievements and if careers advisers had some form of information or access to achievement information to help them give better guidance to their young clients. Personal advisers in Jobcentre Plus also needed to know more about their clients' soft skills which could be used to help with job-matching.
- 60 There were a number of features that would make any tangible record or statement of (wider) achievement acceptable to employers, training providers and colleges. (University selectors had different issues as undergraduate selection is tightly tied to UCAS procedures and any (wider) achievement information on those applying for standard undergraduate programmes would need to be formally integrated into UCAS systems). These were:
- quality not quantity of experience needs to be illustrated;
 - any activity included needs to include details of the skills and qualities;
 - any statement of (wider) achievement needs to make its status clear: who produced it; are achievements confirmed by the school or by the young person?
 - statements should be specific and personal, and not use standard phrases;
 - statements should be sufficiently flexible to be produced to match the specific needs of the selector;
 - it should be succinct and easy to read, a maximum of two pages; a combined document of SQA and national certificates plus one page of broad achievements would be most useful;
 - it would need to be ready in January of the year of leaving due to selection dates;
 - some end-users wished any record of (wider) achievement to include a statement on attendance, motivation etc.
- 61 The vast majority of end-users favoured an electronic portfolio.
- 62 Some end-users did have concerns about their own level of skills and those of young people in the use of an e-portfolio. They also noted factors to be overcome in the development of an e-portfolio: young people would need to be supported in reflection and to be taught portfolio management skills; the need for some central government support; expense; and possible equity issues, for example if young men were likely to make less use than young women.

- 63 There were examples of end-users, across all sectors, using e-portfolios and/or websites as part of their standard selection, development and management practice, and most others were actively considering such use. If young people came to them with experience of reflecting and recording online, and with portfolio design and management skills, they would be well equipped to use such approaches to continuous professional development in their organisations. This would require any school e-portfolio to remain active or accessible in some way post-school.

Chapter Ten Conclusions, Issues and Questions

- 64 The final section draws the key issues and questions emerging from the national evaluation of the collaborative enquiry projects together under a number of themes.
- 65 There was strong support from local authority and school staff, pupils, parents and end-users for the policy initiative to recognise pupils' achievements; a more rounded picture of young people's achievements beyond academic attainment was valued; and the process of recognising achievement could help develop young people's understanding and ability to explain their achievements to others.
- 66 All those consulted on the model of recognising achievement produced and trialled as part of this research could relate to its representation of the key elements of Understanding, Explaining and Proving and the central role of the personal store. This model can, therefore, provide a policy framework for the development of recognition of achievement.
- 67 Across all stakeholders there was a positive response to the concept of an electronic portfolio or store of the achievement record from which the young person and others might draw for different purposes, and a hope that this might be taken forward. Some central policy and resource support from the Scottish Government would be important to make this effective. This would include providing the lead in linking and co-ordinating key players, not least because of the potential for an e-portfolio to be used beyond school.
- 68 While the Understanding and Explaining elements of the process of Recognising Achievement were universally accepted and seen as key, the third element, that of Proving, was more controversial. There was concern that the need for evidence might drive the whole process to the detriment of the learning and personal development of young people; and that end-users were more likely to make use of any end certificate as an indicator and a guide at interview than to give weight to it as formal confirmation of a young person's skills. Given the differences in end-users' use of information on young people's achievements it is unlikely that a single format for the provision of any information would be appropriate. The conclusions of the research suggest, therefore, that development work on an e-portfolio might be a more useful initiative to take forward than a national certificate.
- 69 The interplay among the key principles required for Recognition of Achievement, (in particular those on pupil ownership, on the focus on learning and reflection rather than activities and on ensuring the gap is not widened between the advantaged and disadvantaged), has raised complex and sometimes contradictory issues for the projects in practice. There is the need for clear guidance on these key principles.

- 70 There were indications that the policy decision to remove the word 'wider' from 'recognition of achievement' may limit recognition of achievements to those within the ambit of the school and may cause confusion to school staff; and end-users across all sectors did not relate to the term 'achievement' on its own. There is a need to consider how the continuing commitment to breadth in achievement may be reinforced to schools and a range of partners.
- 71 All the Collaborative Enquiry Projects felt there should be no single approach to how the process of recognising achievement should operate in practice. There may well be some tensions between this flexibility and variation in approach and the need to ensure equitable outcomes for young people across Scotland.
- 72 Most of the approaches in evidence across the projects could, in principle, be transferable. Where projects had focused on pupils' existing activities and experiences; or on what was provided in schools; or on a strong pre-existing system of pupil support and reflection; or on services already allocated to the school (such as a youth worker) then the resource issues might not be such a barrier; however, some projects were very dependent on investment by their local authority or other source. It would be easiest to replicate those projects which had used pupils' existing experiences and achievements to which they added a level of reflection and recording; however, there was concern whether this would further disadvantage certain young people who were 'experience poor', a situation which goes against one of the key principles for recognising achievement.
- 73 It is important that staff, pupils and other stakeholders understand and agree concepts of achievement and recognition and about the focus of the work; otherwise they could have different expectations of what would happen and of each others' roles.
- 74 The contexts in which achievement can be recognised need to be broadened. Enterprise activities in schools, pupils' part-time employment and young people's achievements within their personal or family context have the capacity to demonstrate achievement and could be drawn more into the process of recognising achievement.
- 75 For a majority of projects, any end product was not an immediate key priority, but most looked ahead to this as a possibility. End-users would welcome almost any information on young people's achievements to compensate for young people's difficulties in understanding and explaining their own achievements; but any certificate would be useful to end-users primarily as a prompt for discussion, and the process the young person had gone through to create an end certificate would help them to present themselves more clearly at interview. There was also value in the presentation of such a certificate in praising and encouraging young people and sending them off with a sense of achievement. Some felt that any certificate would need to be a single Scottish one for credibility beyond the locality; most felt that this was not a priority compared with the young person's ability to understand and explain achievements.
- 76 There were many possible awards being considered by projects to certificate achievements. There are indications that the wide variety of awards and the different contexts and requirements for each is creating some confusion; as is the multiplicity of organisations claiming a lead role on developments in recognising achievement.
- 77 The issues of a final summary statement or certificate of achievement, particularly if intended for an audience external to the school, raised some challenging issues for

projects on what should be recorded, who 'owned' the certificate, whether pupils' information about their own achievements could be trusted, what level of validation is required for a school or authority to put its own stamp upon it. Most end-users were not as concerned as schools expected about the authenticity of the wider achievements in a certificate, believing they could use relevant questions to get a sense of how genuine the achievements were.

- 78 Identifying the 'richness' of a young person's experience to see if compensatory achievement opportunities; tracking achievements; agreeing what form of 'achievement' and 'recognition' is important for each young person all require individual discussion and negotiation. While some aspects of reflecting and recording can be included within PSE there is also the need for students to reflect and record when it is important for them. Projects recognised the challenges involved for a school (particularly a secondary school) in designing provision at the level of an individual.
- 79 While the support role of teachers is critical, there is a need to consider both ownership and responsibility for the process of recognising achievement; it may well be a role that pupils wish to be largely theirs, but shared with teachers, with pupils' own 'significant others' and with those who work with young people in less formal education settings such as youth workers. Such an approach would also make the process less resource-intensive for schools.
- 80 From the evidence of end-users there are clearly some challenges facing schools and careers/employability advisers in their role of helping young people to prepare for application and selection procedures. Some end-users thought young people were poor at explaining their achievements and that schools and advisers could do more to help. Others felt that the result of the preparation already being provided was to produce standard phrases and approaches that lost the authentic voice of young people.
- 81 The development of recognising achievement proved to demand new or enhanced skills on the part of pupils, teachers, careers advisers and youth workers; there were also suggestions for support materials to be produced. Such training, development and support needs will entail some investment of resource but such provision could also contribute to *Curriculum for Excellence* more generally.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The national evaluation of the work done by Collaborative Enquiry Projects (CEPs) in developing approaches to recognition of young people's achievement was conducted between January and November 2009. This introductory section describes the policy context, outlines the scope and nature of the evaluation and provides an overview of the report as a whole. It should be noted that this report was written before the publication of *Building the Curriculum 5*¹ on Assessment.

Policy context

- 1.2 In Scotland the idea of recognising young people's learning beyond that formally accredited through national certification is not new: initiatives such as the Pupils in Profile project date back to the 1970s (SCRE 1977); the National Record of Achievement (NRA) was introduced across the UK in 1991 (later to become Progress File in 2002), and the extended Tariff was developed by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the 1990s. But interest in this area has increased in recent years both in Scotland and internationally, for example, both the European Union (EU) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recognise the value of non-formal and informal learning in developing key competences relevant to the labour market and to the fostering of active citizenship (OECD 2004, EU 2006). In Scotland, a number of recent policy initiatives such as Determined to Succeed, *Curriculum for Excellence*, More Choices More Chances, Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life and Skills for Scotland all recognise that education needs to move beyond a simple focus on the acquisition of formal qualifications to a system which recognises students' broader achievement in a range of contexts and activities (Scottish Executive (SE) 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, Scottish Government (SG) 2007, 2008a, 2008b). This shift in focus is also evident in recent changes to the approach to inspection of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of education (HMIE) which gives scope for consideration of wider aspects of achievement (HMIE 2007, 2008).
- 1.3 *Curriculum for Excellence* is perhaps the key policy driving current efforts to move towards giving greater recognition to young people's achievements. *Building the Curriculum 3* states that, '... young people in Scotland are already involved in a range of activities, both in and out of school and college, and have developed skills and capacities for which they are not currently gaining recognition'. (SG 2008 p45). The document goes on to spell out the value of according recognition: "Gaining recognition for their achievements, and the skills for life and skills for work that are developed through them, can benefit all young people. It can increase their confidence, raise their aspirations, improve their motivation for learning and keep them engaged in education. In addition the process of planning, recording and recognising achievements can help young people to reflect on their learning and development and can be valuable starting points when it comes to articulating themselves in applications to and interviews with employers, colleges or universities' (SG 2008 p45).
- 1.4 Another aspect of the policy context relevant to recognising achievement is the Assessment for Learning programme (AifL SE 2001 etc). AifL has sought to develop a coherent and effective system of assessment of pupils' achievements with the aim of promoting learning and progress (SE 2001 etc). It distinguishes three strands of activity within assessment: assessment for learning; assessment as

¹ www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/buildingthecurriculum/guidance/btc5

learning; and assessment of learning. Among the activities of the initial AifL pilot projects was work to develop a unified system of recording and reporting - the personal learning plan (PLP) – bringing together Progress File, transition records and individualised educational programmes. From 2004 schools were encouraged to work together as associated schools groups (ASGs) to carry out action research projects on one or more of the three strands of AifL and involvement in AifL has underpinned a number of the Recognition of Achievement Collaborative Enquiry Projects.

Recognising Achievement: pilot projects

- 1.5 While there is a strong commitment to promoting and recognising young people's achievements beyond formal qualifications, *Curriculum for Excellence* does not prescribe what kind of recognition is intended or a model of how it should be done. Following a series of focus groups across Scotland with a wide range of stakeholders organised by the Scottish Government, seven principles that should govern recognising achievement were identified:
- achievements should be as valuable as qualifications;
 - the focus must be on learning and reflection, not activities;
 - learners must have ownership of their achievements and what they choose to include;
 - recognition of achievement must involve talking with and supporting young people;
 - any approach must support young people at risk of disengagement and in need of more choices, more chances and must not widen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged;
 - there is a need to develop common understandings and language across wider learning communities;
 - the implications and practicalities of recognising achievement for schools and learning communities need to be explored more fully.
- 1.6 In the context of this report, it is also relevant to note that a strong message from the focus groups was that the preferred approach was for guidance on the key principles behind recognising achievement and exemplification to help local authorities and other stakeholders rather than a nationally imposed model/template.
- 1.7 To take forward the aim of recognising achievement, the Scottish Government initiated work in partnership with a number of local authorities to investigate and pilot different approaches: Collaborative Enquiry Projects were set up in 12 authorities to run over the 2008-09 academic year, reporting in May 2009. While exploring a variety of approaches, all the projects were expected to address 4 key questions:
1) What should Recognition of Achievement look like? 2) What should it cover?
3) Who should be involved and how? 4) How do we give it currency?
- 1.8 The intention is that the experiences of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects (CEPs) will be used to inform the development of guidance and support for local authorities, schools and other education providers responsible for promoting and recognising achievement. The intention of the CEP initiative was to provide insights on the issues and challenges that authorities and schools which were relatively new to the process might encounter in order to inform the development of national guidelines appropriate to the generality of schools. A number of authorities that had already invested time and resources into developing Recognition of Achievement were therefore not included in these CEPs. The basis and focus of the evaluation does not, therefore, include experience across Scotland.

The national evaluation: research aims and objectives

1.9 The Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh was commissioned to carry out an independent cross-site evaluation of the Recognition of Achievement Collaborative Enquiry Projects which were taking place across 12 local authorities.² The aim of the national evaluation is to investigate and report on the experiences of the projects in order to inform the development of guidance and support for authorities, schools and other education providers in providing opportunities for achievements of all kinds and helping young people to gain recognition for them. Specifically the evaluation addresses the following questions:

- what is each project's rationale for seeking recognition for the learning associated with the activity(ies) they have selected, who do they see as benefiting, and what are the foreseen benefits?
- is the approach being taken by the project fully inclusive or would any young people, or groups of young people, be disadvantaged by it?
- what have they identified as the contribution of the approach(es) to students' learning and to what extent does this contribution transfer to different aspects of students' learning?
- how desirable are the approach(es) developed by the projects from the perspective of the young people involved?
- have the projects considered, and are they monitoring, the impact of recognition on the activities in question?
- what are the arrangements to enable young people to identify, record and access information about their achievements and to present their achievements clearly to others?
- have the projects been able to develop practicable but meaningful arrangements for reporting and recognition that avoid undue bureaucracy?
- to what extent do the approaches adopted have value and currency with stakeholders and end-users?
- what are implications for staff, staff support and development of the approaches adopted?
- what are the implications for partnership working?
- how do the approaches relate to other developments in CfE?
- could these approaches be used in different parts of Scotland and be 'mainstreamed' into the normal provision of the school?
- where the projects are using a system of formal recognition of achievement, have they considered how that relates to National Qualifications and/or to the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF)?

1.10 A challenge in designing the national evaluation was to develop a methodology that would take account of the variety of approaches being pursued by the 12 projects while at the same time enabling a degree of comparability across the projects and the drawing out of lessons that might be applied nationally. A further issue was that the projects had been in operation for a relatively short time and were developing as the national evaluation proceeded: as we anticipated we found that some projects had proceeded at a faster rate than others. We noted above that as part of AifL schools have been encouraged to engage in collaborative action research and a number of

² The local authorities involved were Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Fife, Highland, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Stirling, and West Dunbartonshire.

the Recognition of Achievement projects had grown out of involvement in Associated Schools Groups which had been working on different aspects of assessment. In these cases, the Collaborative Enquiry Projects tended initially to focus more on developing the process of collaborative working so that product or processes directly relating to the recognition of achievement were less obviously in evidence. Equally, where projects were aiming to develop more sophisticated end products such as e-portfolios which required substantial development time, they had not been able to complete the work in the limited time scale of the projects.

1.11 A typical part of an evaluation is normally to measure outcomes against aims; in this case, given that the broad aim of each project was to pilot approaches to recognising achievement, all could be said to have succeeded. However, projects had to be flexible and to deal with issues as they arose; inevitably specific objectives and timescales had to adjust and in that sense, aims were not met. Given that the main intention of the research was to learn from the experiences of the projects and to identify lessons learned which might inform national guidance, this research report focuses on issues and lessons.

1.12 The national evaluation adopted a qualitative methodology.

1. **Literature review and model building** (reported in a separate Research Findings). This informed the next stages of the evaluation, in particular, providing a model of the recognising achievement process which was then used in discussions with the projects.
2. **Initial review and mapping of projects** via review of documentation and telephone interviews (16) with project managers to gain an understanding of the main features of the projects, progress to date and the emerging issues. This stage enabled the research team to be well briefed before the main fieldwork stage and thus to maximise the time spent with projects to concentrate on aspects that can only be approached by this means.
3. **Main fieldwork in the projects.** The fieldwork involved a range of activities with different individuals and groups:
 - group work with students (34 groups; 179 students from P3-S6);
 - interviews with students in one CEP (4);
 - questionnaires completed by students (151 P6-S6);
 - interviews and group work with school staff (128 in total: 63 interviewed and 65 in small groups (22 groups));
 - interviews with local authority managers (16) (these are in addition to the initial review and mapping interviews);
 - parent interviews (2); parent questionnaires (24) and attendance at parents' event on achievement;
 - interviews with stakeholders: Community Learning and Development (2); Colleges (2); Mentors (4); Training Providers (3); Employers (4); Careers Advisers (2);
 - collection and review of additional materials and data not covered in stage 2;
 - exemplification work – review and discussion with CEPs to identify materials or approaches that might be useful for other local authorities and schools intending to develop approaches to recognising achievement.

We had anticipated contact with more parents, but their involvement in practice in the pilots was limited. Similarly, fewer non-school stakeholders than expected had any direct involvement in the work. The great majority of the data from the main fieldwork, therefore, come from school managers, teachers and pupils and local authority staff.

4. **Additional fieldwork with potential 'end-users'.** Towards the end of the national evaluation, the research team was asked to carry out some additional research: this grew out of the intended or current work in some of the CEPs to produce some sort of tangible record of achievement (eg a statement, certificate or profile) for students leaving school and their concern as to whether such a record would be valued by potential 'end-users.' The end-users included employers, training providers, colleges and Skills Development Scotland (Careers) and Jobcentre Plus staff in three localities in Scotland, and a range of 'recruiter' and 'selector' universities throughout Scotland. A total of 37 interviews were carried out involving 48 individuals:
- interviews with 7 employers (2 large and 5 SMEs across a number of sectors: care; financial services; facilities management, construction; electronic engineering; motor vehicle engineering and shipbuilding);
 - eight interviews were carried out with training providers (TPs) involving 13 staff. The programmes offered were: Life Skills (3); Get Ready for Work (5); Skillseekers (5); and Modern Apprenticeships (4). The TPs covered a very broad range of sectors;
 - seven interviews were conducted with 10 members of staff in 3 colleges. Disciplines included sport; health and social care; engineering (motor vehicle and mechanical); and hairdressing;
 - seven interviews conducted with senior admissions staff in 7 Scottish universities and 1 interview with a member of SDS staff involved in Clearing: 3 universities were 'selectors' (ie over-subscribed in applications); 4 were recruiters (ie under-subscribed in applications);
 - five interviews were conducted with 8 members of SDS staff (careers advisers or staff responsible for development) and 2 with Jobcentre Plus staff responsible for employer partnership work.

The nature and structure of the report

- 1.13 This report covers the evaluative research with the 12 Collaborative Enquiry Projects ie phases two, three and four. The work of phase one is reported separately in the document Literature Review and Model for Managing Recognition Processes (Hart with Howieson and Semple 2009) which is available as a separate document from the Scottish Government website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/research/findings54/2010>. We draw on this as appropriate in the present report.
- 1.14 This report does not present detailed findings of the research on the 12 Collaborative Enquiry Projects – the emphasis is rather on issues and themes that will contribute to the Scottish Government's intention to develop guidelines on recognising achievement for local authorities, schools and other stakeholders. Thus the report is structured around the key themes that have emerged from the research and the development work that the research team have carried out. Within a number of these themes, there are links to practical examples of how the schools and local authorities involved approached recognising achievement.³ With one exception these materials relate to secondary schools; however, one authority has provided its resource pack for early years and primary stage recognition of achievement [[Exemplification 1](#)]. It should be noted that the schools and local authorities have agreed that these examples may be made available to others, not in the sense that they are necessarily 'best practice' but that they may be helpful to other

³ [Exemplification 1](#), [Exemplification 2](#), [Exemplification 3](#), [Exemplification 4](#), [Exemplification 5](#), [Exemplification 6](#), [Exemplification 7](#).

schools and authorities as they develop their own approaches to recognising achievement. We are grateful to all those involved for their willingness to share their experiences and practices – the successful and less successful – in this way which is in keeping with the collaborative spirit of the work.

- 1.15 The report begins with an overview of the variety of models and focuses of the projects to provide the context for the thematic chapters that follow. As part of this overview a 'pen picture' is given of each of the 12 Collaborative Enquiry Projects.

2 THE COLLABORATIVE ENQUIRY PROJECTS

2.1 This chapter begins with an overview of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects (CEPs) and then provides a brief account of each with the aim of conveying a 'feel' for what each is like. We have not adopted a standardised structure to do so since the projects differed so much in approach, focus and stage.

Overview of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects

2.2 The projects took different approaches to developing recognition of achievement as will be evident from the following pen portraits. The majority focused on pupils in late primary and early secondary schooling. They did so for two reasons, firstly that the P7/S1 transition and the first year of settling into secondary schooling provided a good opportunity to reflect on achievement and was potentially a time when summative evidence might be relevant. Secondly, it allowed the secondary school to start a project with its new intake and continue to build on that experience as pupils moved through the school and new intakes arrived. Several projects developed work with S3 pupils, a group not yet at the point of transition from school and where the time pressures of examinations might be less: others chose to focus on S4 and S6, stages at which a tangible form of recognition of achievement might be useful for young people leaving school.

2.3 Projects made different decisions about who would be involved. Some chose to engage a whole year group; others identified as few as 12 pupils to be involved.

2.4 At the time of the main research field work (May and June 2009) some projects which had had particular difficulties, for example, to do with staffing, were still at early stages of their work but a few were close to having an end product of some kind available. Most, however, had undertaken some work with groups of pupils, and all considered the Collaborative Enquiry Project to be a pilot for a much longer term commitment. Projects acknowledged that the 'fully-fledged' version would be cross-curricular and that recognising achievement was something that every teacher must do, but at the stage, it seemed more manageable to focus on certain subject areas that would be responsible for the reflection activities with pupils. These areas were commonly English/language, Maths, or Personal and Social Development. It is evident that these examples are secondary school focused – this reflects the nature of the projects.

2.5 As will be evident from the pen portraits, several of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects had sub-projects where different approaches were used and so in some respects it may be more appropriate to think in terms of 16 rather than 12 pilot projects. The task of recognition of young people's achievement can be looked at in different ways, as we will see in later sections, and projects varied in how they approached this task:

- three projects focused on ensuring a rich experience through a programme or event, following which reflection, recording and recognition would follow;
- four projects had a clear aim to develop a portfolio of achievement;
- five had planned the end product of a certificate or summary statement of achievement;
- eight focused on achievements in school, while 6 others broadened their approach to recognition of achievements in the personal social and community life of young people;

- three were seeking formal recognition of existing or new experiences (against the SCQF or Youth Achievement Awards);
 - eight made, or planned, extensive use of electronic or AV facilities in producing evidence of achievement or raising awareness of what recognising achievement might mean.
- 2.6 Collaborative Enquiry Projects typically listed a range of anticipated partners in the work of recognising achievement in their proposed plans. These included parents, employers, training providers, colleges, Community Learning and Development (CLD), other schools, local councillors, the local authority, community organisations and Careers Scotland.
- 2.7 In practice, for most Collaborative Enquiry Projects what might be called ‘internal collaboration’ within the school or its cluster was the key to initial development work. Internal partners were colleagues from learning support or pupil support, or from other departments (for example in taking part in a school working group on recognising achievement); or they were the associated primary schools and (in one case) the school for young people with learning difficulties within the cluster. In a small number of Collaborative Enquiry Projects a member of staff from CLD or from Careers Scotland (now Skills Development Scotland) or from the local college was central to the work; in other Collaborative Enquiry Projects such staff were referred to as potential partners who had not yet been fully involved.
- 2.8 As noted earlier, apart from pupils by far the majority of those involved in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects were school and local authority staff. Only a handful of parents were actively involved, and hardly any employers.
- 2.9 We now go on to describe the main features of each of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects.

Angus

- 2.10 The secondary school involved in this Collaborative Enquiry Project is located in an area of high deprivation and had been a School of Ambition: involvement in a Recognising Achievement project seemed an obvious next step. Its initial aim was to use young people’s existing experiences to create a folio or record of achievement and the project targeted the S3 group moving into S4, partly because some would leave in the following year and would need some statement of achievement. However, the start of the project was delayed due to staffing changes and in this interim period the project took soundings on the value of a final certificate of achievement from long-serving teachers who could remember the difficulties faced in ensuring the credibility and value of the National Record. This resulted in a change of direction towards a greater focus on the *process* of recognising achievement rather than any output.
- 2.11 Sixteen S3 pupils were chosen by guidance teachers to be involved; criteria were that the young people should be volunteers and, while not disengaged with school, were nevertheless identified as being at risk of not achieving their potential. A key aim was to encourage these young people to take responsibility for shaping the school’s approach to achievement, identifying ways in which their year group (the new S4) would wish to have achievements recognised. Their task was to: explore with their peers what achievement is; how it is recognised in the school; how recognition of achievement might be improved; what recognition of achievement might be important

for employers and for the community. Other consultations were taking place with parents on the school council and with school staff.

- 2.12 The intention is that the pupils involved in the project will work in session 2009/10 with the newly appointed Achievement Prefects.

Argyll and Bute

- 2.13 This Collaborative Enquiry Project focused on providing a high quality, rich experience which offered young people the opportunity to develop and demonstrate research, team and presentation skills. The secondary school is located in a relatively affluent small town within commuting distance of large urban area and with a broad geographical catchment across a wide rural area within which are pockets of deprivation. 80 P6 children across the 11 associated primary schools were selected by their teachers and invited to join 80 selected S3 pupils in the secondary school in an enterprise event based on local history and linked to the Scottish Government's Homecoming initiative. The P6 and S3 pupils worked in small groups to investigate an allocated topic. Both primary and secondary learners did preparatory research, and some were able to make useful contacts with the others in their group ahead of the one day event. Equal numbers of primary and secondary pupils worked in small groups, each of which was supported by a local community mentor (from a business or local history background) in researching their topic. Young people presented their findings orally and visually to an audience of their teachers, parents and members of the community. A DVD was produced showing what pupils had achieved, and pupils completed a questionnaire about their learning.

- 2.14 In addition to giving groups of young people a challenge through which they could show their achievements, there were several other reasons why this project chose its particular approach. Firstly, the project would help to build links between the secondary school and the local communities, some of them very rural, in which its associated primary schools were located. Secondly, P6 pupils would have the chance to be welcomed into the secondary school, thus preparing them for their transition in the following year. And thirdly, the enterprise event would strengthen school links with local businesses and organisations through using the skills and expertise of mentors.

Dundee

- 2.15 This Collaborative Enquiry Project is located in an inner city area with high levels of deprivation. It builds on an existing programme established in the previous year (2007) set up following concerns raised by the local authority's economic development department about economic and entrepreneurial growth and the education department's concerns about inclusion and More Choices More Chances for young people in the city. A private training organisation was contracted for a three year period to deliver an entrepreneurial confidence-building programme on a half day each week during the autumn term of S5 to the most challenged young people in a selected number of schools. Each year participants were chosen from those who intended to be winter leavers.

- 2.16 The particular contribution of the Collaborative Enquiry Project in Dundee was to build increased levels of reflection and recording into the experience of young people in two of the schools involved. These young people met weekly on an individual basis with a Depute Headteacher in their own school to reflect on the activities of the previous week's session on the off-site programme. The purpose was to help young people to

understand the skills they had gained and to link their experiences on the programme to their experiences, challenges and achievements back in school.

- 2.17 These pupils' achievements on the programme were featured on the schools' plasma screen, noted in assemblies, and rewarded by a certificate presented by the Lord Provost at an award ceremony at which young people made a presentation on their achievements to those present, including their teachers. Their achievement on the programme also allowed them to be awarded the SQA Intermediate 2 unit Work Effectively with Others.

East Ayrshire

- 2.18 The secondary school involved in East Ayrshire's Collaborative Enquiry Project is located in an isolated relatively rural area which suffers from a high level of deprivation and faces a number of social challenges. Prior to the start of the Collaborative Enquiry Project the school had been running Leadership Academies based on the Columba 1400 experience for groups of S3 pupils. However, young people needing More Choices More Chances largely excluded themselves from participation in the Leadership Academy because the standard model, incorporating a residential experience, seemed to be too challenging. The contribution of the Collaborative Enquiry Project was to develop a one week non-residential Leadership Academy that these young people would be able to participate in, thus ensuring that the experience was an inclusive one available to all pupils.

- 2.19 Staff of the local college delivered the Leadership Academy in the college premises (ie off-site, but non – residential) and involved community organisations in designing and delivering a range of activities including orienteering, music and dance to develop team working and confidence: reflection on learning was an integral part of the process. Young people who completed the Academy received a Leadership t-shirt and a certificate together with a DVD of the experience. On return to school the students are expected to take on a Leadership role, and to complete the final element of the experience, that of 'service' eg working with younger pupils. The experience is being referenced by college staff against SCQF levels to provide further recognition.

Edinburgh

- 2.20 Examining the process of formal recognition and presentation of achievement across the cluster was the aim of this Collaborative Enquiry Project based on one school cluster ie the secondary school, the associated primaries and the local school for young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties. The school is located on the edges of the city with a mixed catchment. Stakeholders were consulted on what 'achievement' means, what should be recognised, how it was currently done and how this might be improved. Following an initial small scale exercise the project team broadened the consultation to seek the views of pupils, all teachers and parents across the cluster and of a sample of key stakeholders such as employers, work experience providers, a local university and Skills Development Scotland (Careers Scotland). This large-scale consultation meant that the development work on the project took longer than had been originally planned, but the project team saw discussion as seen as the key to the development of ideas by the people who need to carry these out.
- 2.21 The consultation identified very many ideas for development of which three areas of action were agreed as being priority: a Pupil Choice Award System (from pupil

suggestion); a system for tracking achievement through primary and into secondary leading to a Record of Achievement (idea from a parent); and a more formal approach to training and certificating buddying and peer support (suggested by staff). Development continues into session 2009/10 with materials being piloted and adapted for all schools in the cluster, for example, on buddying in primary and the school for young people with learning difficulties as well as in the secondary school.

Fife

- 2.22 This project is located in a secondary school which has a community college attached. There are significant levels of deprivation in the area which is an ex-mining community. There were 3 elements to the project, each of which is focused at a transition point. In the first, 6 sixth year pupils discussed their achievements with a mentor (from school or the community college) and linked these achievements to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 2.23 In the second element a small group of S4 pupils were chosen by a guidance teacher to talk about their achievements to a DVD camera in order to prepare them to explain their achievements on leaving school. The original plan had been for employers/training providers to give feedback to pupils while both watched the DVD, however, it proved in practice difficult to get employers and training providers involved. Sometime later pupils were able to view their DVD with the guidance teacher.
- 2.24 The third element involved 12 pupils chosen from one P7 class: while the whole class worked on recognising achievement more intensive work was done with these 12. A similar approach was taken with S1 where a full class of 20 pupils were chosen and supported by a Principal Teacher of Guidance during class teaching. It was intended that both P7 and S1 pupils would keep their folio of evidence of achievement on pen drives, with P7 taking these with them on transition to the secondary school.

Highland

- 2.25 The Collaborative Enquiry Project in Highland operates as two sub-projects, based in two separate localities.

School A

- 2.26 The project is located in a small rural secondary school. All young people from S1 to S4 were offered the chance to gather evidence for a Dynamic Youth Award (those aged 10-14) or a Youth Achievement Award (those 14+). These awards are externally accredited by ASDAN and are flexible and peer assessed in nature. Take-up has been in excess of 50%. The project is led by the youth worker allocated to the catchment by the local authority. In the initial stages the Headteacher and Depute Headteacher undertook training to support this development but other school staff have not been directly involved.
- 2.27 Key drivers for the school's participation as a Collaborative Enquiry Project included the need to increase confidence and communication skills in pupils (identified as a target by HMIE) and the importance of off-setting the attainment-related exam pressures on pupils ('to be sure we do not become an exam-factory').

School B

- 2.28 This project is delivered jointly by the secondary school and its associated primaries. Focusing on the transition from primary to secondary school, the project aims to involve all P7 pupils and uses a P7 transition diary to reflect on achievements. This approach will be continued in secondary through the integration of the achievement diary with the homework diary. The second element of the project has been for P7 pupils to speak on DVD about themselves and their achievement so that this can be used to introduce them into the secondary school to staff and classmates.
- 2.29 The school is in a rural area, but one which has had significant oil-related industries in its locality. It has an unusually large number of young people with very challenging and resource-intensive needs for such a location, so that providing high quality opportunities for achievement (and resulting recognition) for all pupils has been of central importance to the project. Existing school policy is that every pupil should have a minimum of 5 in-depth guidance contacts each year and this has provided the opportunity to make available regular support to pupils in respect of target-setting and understanding of achievement. An electronic version of Progress File has been in use for a number of years in the school, and part of the Collaborative Enquiry Project's work has been to investigate possible e-portfolios to be introduced in the future.

Perth and Kinross

- 2.30 The focus of this Collaborative Enquiry Project was on the recognition of personal, social and community achievements of young people in S1/2 rather than achievements demonstrated within the school. The secondary school involved has very mixed catchment including areas of both rural and urban deprivation and very affluent areas in both town and country. The school received a huge number of volunteers from pupils following assemblies explaining the project, and a total of 34 S1/S2 pupils were chosen from across the ability range including those with additional support needs and the most academically successful. Young people used a personal audit designed by the school and kept a diary which parents were encouraged to discuss with their children. Seven teachers acted as mentors and met with their allocated pupils every two weeks to talk about their achievements and through this to help pupils develop the vocabulary and concepts of personal qualities, achievements and the four CfE capacities. Where their discussions identified a capacity not evidenced, this would be agreed as a target and ways of meeting it found. Parents were also asked to identify capacities not evidenced and to work with their children to find such evidence.
- 2.31 At the end of the school year summative Personal Statements were produced in A5 form, drawing on the pupils' diary. The original hope had been to use electronic recording but technical issues meant that, at this stage, it was only possible to produce paper versions of the Personal Statement.
- 2.32 The project was able to start some development work on materials to help S3/4 reflect on their qualities and achievements, and the project plans in session 2009/10 to extend into primary schools with the aim of having a system to recognise achievement from age 3-16 by March 2010. Subsequent work is likely to seek to take more account of qualities and achievements developed in subjects and school activities as well as out of school achievements.

Renfrewshire

- 2.33 This local authority has a mixture of high and low socio-economic areas, is in the travel to work area of a major city and also has a history of recognising achievement across all its schools. Each school in the local authority had already developed its own approach to recognising achievement and the Collaborative Enquiry Project focused on finding a way to draw these different approaches together into a local authority Certificate of Achievement. The project has investigated ways of linking FileMakerPro to the SEEMIS system in order to produce a profile and validated record of achievement for S5/S6 leavers.
- 2.34 An adapted form of this profile is due to be introduced to four secondary schools in the next session, and will be trialled with the full range of pupil groups in the senior school, covering those working towards an ASDAN award through to the most academic student planning to develop a UCAS personal statement.

Scottish Borders

- 2.35 There were two sub-projects in the project in this rural local authority, located in two separate localities.

School A

- 2.36 In School A, the Collaborative Enquiry Project was centred around two elements. One was the preparation of a VoxPop 'Achievement' DVD by P7 pupils in the nine primary schools in the area assisted by S6 media studies students from the secondary school. The DVD is intended to be used with staff and parents to encourage discussion of what is meant by 'achievement'.
- 2.37 The second element was e-portfolio. It was recognised that while the primaries were good at celebrating pupils' achievements there was little systematic tracking of individual achievement. This, taken together with the results of a survey of parents which showed that parents wanted greater involvement and to see what work was being done in the schools, led to the investigation of the use of an e-portfolio from P7 to the end of S1. The intention is that the e-portfolio will hold details of Personal Learning Planning and other aspects of the pupils' achievement (as decided by pupils) and will be accessible outwith school and by parents. Technical issues had delayed implementation but the e-portfolio was ready for trial from August 2009 over a two-year period.

School B

- 2.38 This project, separate from that of School A, built on two strands of existing work. Firstly, this secondary school had already recognised pupil achievement through ceremonies and hard copy portfolios for all pupils and this information was shared with employers and local colleges. Secondly, the school had experience of using the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) Programme with young people who were underachieving. The two aspects were combined for the Collaborative Enquiry Project with the intention of expanding involvement in FIE to all young people in S1 and to develop the existing portfolio into one recognising achievement from 3-18 linked to CfE.

- 2.39 In practice not all S1 students were able to take part in the Collaborative Enquiry Project due to a lack of teachers trained in FIE. Instead the project has involved a group of S1 pupils (20+) whose timetable meant that they were being taught by the teachers with FIE training (these were in the Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies, English and Maths departments in the school). The aim of FIE is to ensure pupils develop a common language for learning and long-term the intention is to incorporate the language of meta-cognition into PLPs. The focus is on enhancing learning opportunities for young people to become successful learners.
- 2.40 The project's own evaluation has involved pupil feedback via video reports and pupil self-perception scale of themselves as learners before, during and after intervention.
- 2.41 A further element of the work in Scottish Borders was that led by three primary schools in different localities. Here the focus was on producing a portfolio for recognising achievement. One teacher at each school became part of a local authority working party, supported by the Quality Improvement Officer, developing a portfolio for recognising achievement covering the 3-18 age range, available for use across the authority.

Stirling

- 2.42 The Collaborative Enquiry Project involves a secondary school and one of its associated primary schools. Both are located in affluent areas within commuting distance of a large urban area.
- 2.43 The key focus of this Collaborative Enquiry Project is on improving understanding of transferable skills. Pupils, it was suggested, find it difficult to understand how skills gained in the classroom can be used elsewhere in different contexts outwith school and might be used in the future post-school; and staff were also thought to need some support in understanding this.
- 2.44 In the primary school the context for work on recognising achievements was an Ancient Egypt project. Around 40 P3/4 pupils took part, with P7 pupils now beginning to get involved in helping P3/4 to assess learning interactions in a group. An education blog was set up where pupils recorded work done, received comments on it and interacted with people on the internet (monitored by teachers). Parents and peers added comments and comments were also received from 22 individuals from different countries. Pupils reflected on group work, cooperative learning and on their awareness of 'roles', and links were made to AifL through a mixture of peer and self assessment.
- 2.45 A pilot S1 group in the secondary school were encouraged to reflect on their learning during PSE. Initially there was a paper record but this has developed into an achievement record for pupils, which they create themselves and use to enhance learning and recognition of transferable skills which could eventually be used to contribute to UCAS. The plan is to roll it out to all S1 pupils next year. The school had already worked on pupils' thinking about achievement but this intervention was to be more focused, identifying the skills that had been developed in addition to the more obvious boost that came to confidence with achievement.

West Dunbartonshire

- 2.46 This project involved two secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire which were working towards merger in the coming session (2009/2010). Part of the rationale for involvement in the Collaborative Enquiry Project on Recognition of Achievement was to encourage staff of the two schools to work simultaneously on a new development which would have a purpose and use in the combined school. The aim was to produce, by the end of the school year, a certificate of achievement for school leavers which listed achievements under the headings of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. The project built on previous staff training in co-operative learning techniques and its aim was to include all pupils in S1 including those with additional support needs.
- 2.47 Development work started with the English and Computing departments to help pupils become familiar with the language of Curriculum for Excellence and to develop a log to record achievements under the four capacities. Parents were asked to help their children to complete the logs on a regular basis. Pupil Support staff and the Principal Teacher Achievement were involved in supporting teachers to encourage awareness and recording of achievement by pupils. Potential developments being considered include the use of pupils' self-report of their achievements to measure 'distance travelled' by the individual pupil, a celebration event to involve community partners; and achievement awareness days to engage employers.

3 MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

- 3.1 This section of the report covers what prompted schools' involvement in the Collaborative Enquiry Project, what factors contributed to the form the pilot took, how staff and young people were engaged in the project and what emerged as the key management and delivery issues.
- 3.2 Local authority members of staff are identified as such, and other stakeholders (parents, Community Learning and Development staff, college staff etc) are specifically identified, as are young people. Therefore, when we use the term 'the project' or 'managers' or 'members of staff' we are referring to school staff.

A tool for school development

- 3.3 Discussions with managers in the pilot project identified a number of reasons for schools' interest in participating in a recognising achievement pilot. Sometimes it was because the school had faced a challenge that needed to be addressed which working on recognising achievement might help; others did so because recognising achievement would build on existing strengths in the school or community; and others again considered that recognising achievement fitted well with the school priorities and the needs of the school and its community. Most could demonstrate a rationale that included several different reasons, for example:

'Recognising achievement is a good handle to hang some things on – for example, it's a good way to look at literacy and numeracy outcomes from P6 onwards, linking science departments with primaries, ticking council boxes re transition and achievement'. (Depute Headteacher)

'The formation of a new Learning Community, and this would be a way of drawing the members together and providing a focus; a review of the four capacities within the secondary school plus a realisation that an essential element of becoming a successful learner is recognising achievement; the fact that PLP is far advanced in the secondary school and there has been the opportunity already for pupils to add their own reflections; that there was a nightmare of a paper trail for the recording system for merits; that there was plenty of evidence of celebration of achievement but it was not recorded or captured at an individual level... all those taken together have driven the project in the particular direction it has gone'. (Depute Headteacher)

- 3.4 As can be seen from this latter quote the rationale for deciding to get involved in the project built on the needs of the school and had an impact on how the project developed, for example, if improving links with primary schools in a cluster was key then the target stage for recognising achievement might be P7/S1.
- 3.5 Specific reasons which influenced decisions to get involved in a pilot on Recognising Achievement included:
- HMIE reports which recommended closer links with the community or with associated primary schools, or noted the fact that pupils lacked confidence or were too shy and ought to be able to present themselves more positively;
 - concern to give a particular department in the school the chance to lead and develop a school initiative (for example, English for reflection, Computing for the IT required for an electronic portfolio);

- parent surveys showing that parents did not feel fully involved and wanted to know more about the work done by their children;
- a sense that, once strategies to improve academic attainment had succeeded, there was a need to ensure balance: ‘we don’t want to turn into an exam factory’;
- one factor that typically encouraged a school to get involved in the pilot project was that involvement would build on existing strengths or experience:
 - previous staff experience (eg a Depute Headteacher coming from a school with more experience of recognising achievement; a teacher who had served on an authority working group);
 - previous developments in the local authority (eg Leadership Academies, extensive teacher CPD on collaborative learning) which were seen as able to offer a good vehicle for recognising achievement;
 - pre-existing attempts at certificating achievements, whether at school or authority level;
 - various existing systems, such as buddying, merits/achievement awards;
 - having been a School of Ambition;
 - having a strong guidance and pupil support focus in the school.

3.6 In conclusion, recognising achievement seems to have been viewed as a flexible tool, one which schools could use to build on existing strengths but also that could enable them to meet different challenges and objectives.

Getting started

3.7 All the projects had submitted plans to the Scottish Government outlining their intended focus, aims and rationale. When the projects were funded, the first challenge for project managers was to develop the outline plan and work out how to engage staff, pupils and stakeholders in the definition, purpose and process of recognising achievement. Projects approached this in different ways.

3.8 At one end of the scale was a small number of projects which started by consulting broadly across all staff, involving them in defining recognition of achievement and in decisions on approaches to delivery, taking the view that, since it was intended that this should be a ‘whole school’ development, the whole community of the school should be involved. This could also include office, catering and janitorial staff.

3.9 At the other end of the scale, a number of projects confined their development and pilot work to specific members of school staff. For example, where Depute Headteachers took on most of the responsibility for the school element of the pilot, or where individual members of the pupil support team took forward different elements of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects. In this situation, while members of school staff who were not directly involved might know that ‘something was happening’ about recognising achievement, they often lacked clarity about what was meant by recognising achievement and about their possible future involvement. There were different reasons for projects deciding to limit the involvement of the wider staff group. In a very small number of projects this was because most of the development work for recognising achievement was being undertaken by someone who was not formally a member of the school staff or outwith school premises (for example, a youth worker or the staff of a training organisation): only those teachers directly linked with the development work had a clear involvement in these initial stages. Other projects wished to protect already over-stretched staff from the pressure of what might be seen as ‘yet another initiative’. A third reason was the desire to sort out any difficulties during

the pilot period prior to extending recognition of achievement more broadly: the intention was that the experience of the small number of staff in the pilot – which it was hoped would have been positive – could then be used to convince and engage their colleagues. Some examples of an approach to engaging and informing staff are available at [Exemplification 2](#).

- 3.10 Most projects were somewhere in the middle: that is they informed all staff to some extent, but only a limited number were closely involved either because they taught the particular groups of pupils selected to participate or because they were in departments eg English or IT/computing that were seen as most relevant to the project.
- 3.11 In retrospect, some projects which had opted to limit the involvement of staff would now recommend a broader involvement of staff at an earlier stage. They had found that staff's lack of earlier involvement gave rise to confusion or that when the pilot was being extended it became apparent that the members of staff had not done some of the earlier necessary thinking about the issue of recognising achievement. However, the projects who had taken this approach in order not to panic staff generally felt it had been an appropriate decision.
- 3.12 The most difficult groups to engage were employers and training providers. Projects suggested that one reason for this was because Careers Scotland staff no longer had their traditional links with local employers and could not support the projects by providing contacts. Nevertheless, the engagement of employers in education is known in general to be a challenge.
- 3.13 Almost all Collaborative Enquiry Projects recognised that involving parents more significantly than they had been able to do so far was an essential next step. In most cases, parents had been informed of the school's intention to develop approaches to recognising achievement through, for example, the Parent Council or by sending a letter or bulletin home without otherwise involving them. In a small number of cases parents were formally consulted on definitions of achievement and recognition, on how well they thought the school currently recognised achievement and on how this might be done better. These extended consultations with parents were usually done through Parent Councils or at parents' nights, though in one project a more extended consultation took place with the parent group. Some examples of a consultation questionnaire and a letter to parents are attached at [Exemplification 3](#).
- 3.14 Parents were directly involved in helping their children to review and record achievement in only a very small number of projects although schools did recognise the importance of this happening in the future. Where parents were directly involved this was generally by commenting on their child's blog or achievement record. One of the suggestions made by pupils in the national evaluation questionnaires they completed was that there should be a section in a record of achievement where parents could contribute information on their children's achievements; this came especially from pupils in the early stages of secondary school.

Leadership roles in the projects

- 3.15 The locus of the leadership role in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects varied. All projects noted the importance in principle of the local authority role in setting a clear and supportive context for recognition of achievement and in the majority of cases such direction was provided in practice. This might be done through the authority's

own development and reporting plans, through the active involvement of Quality Improvement Officers with schools and/or through requiring recognition of achievement to be part of all school improvement plans. The involvement at an early stage of the local authority's IT development team was recognised as essential by those projects which had focused on the use of the intranet and/or an electronic portfolio which might lead to a certificate. The implications of not doing so were that electronic systems might not talk to each other, and the individual school might be moving in a direction different from the authority (not a problem of standardisation so much as meaning that the local authority staff could not provide the practical support needed).

- 3.16 At a school level, the positive support of Headteachers had proved extremely important:

'The role of the Headteacher is absolutely critical, not just the traditional one of ensuring the quality of traditional learning and teaching in the classroom but to ensure there is a curriculum that includes opportunities for every young person to say they are good at something and to demonstrate their capabilities.'
(Headteacher)

- 3.17 While the Headteacher's support was important, this did not necessarily mean that the Headteacher had to lead the work: projects commonly referred to a process of 'dispersed leadership'. This could mean simply that one Depute Headteacher (rather than the Headteacher) had overall responsibility but it was more likely to mean that different elements were delegated to particular members of staff or in some cases to pupils. There were different ways of doing this: some schools had a 'Wider Achievement Group' which drew largely on volunteers or on those encouraged to get involved in school level development as part of their personal development plan; some appointed a 'Principal Teacher (Achievement)', perhaps for a temporary period; one project appointed 'Achievement Prefects' and identified a group of S4 pupils charged with the responsibility of consulting their peers on ways to recognise the achievements of S4 pupils.

- 3.18 Dispersed leadership did not necessarily mean that school managers were not actively involved: in one project, for example, the Headteacher was part of the development group but was deliberately only a member of the group, not the leader. In addition, however, Senior Management Team members, while *'giving the vision then trusting colleagues'* were likely to retain overall responsibility for evaluation, using this role to monitor and support the work. Some projects emphasised the personal involvement of Senior Management Team members with pupils and staff:

'It's key that the SMT's directly involved with young people, it's what the school is all about, achievement, we push participation... staff need a good understanding so that they can ensure that pupils in classes have opportunities to let teachers know that what they are doing both in schools and out... there's some evidence of this happening well in some registration time... and the SMT are all regularly in and out of classes, keeping the system for communication tight' (Headteacher)

Identifying pupils for the pilot

- 3.19 In the three projects which had a central focus on providing opportunities for achievement through events or programmes of experiences, it was critical that managers ensured that the right pupils were identified. Getting the right pupils involved depended on schools really knowing the circumstances of their pupils. This was not such a difficulty when the targeted pupils were those most disadvantaged, the

More Choices, More Chances group, as their circumstances were likely to be known in considerable detail to at least some members of staff. But project managers were beginning to question the extent to which staff, especially subject teachers in secondary schools, did know about the personality, experiences, skills and interests of their pupils outwith their own classroom:

'We've realised we've vastly over-estimated the amount class teachers know about their pupils.' (Depute Headteacher)

- 3.20 If an important role of schools is to assess the richness of the pupil's wider experiences and provide opportunities to achieve, then knowledge of pupils is a pre-requisite.
- 3.21 Where Collaborative Enquiry Projects chose to work with a whole cohort, identifying individual pupils to be involved was not an issue. For other projects who did not work with the full cohort, however, the way in which pupils were identified varied: some chose to involve what they felt was a representative sample (eg by gender and attainment); others targeted pupils they would expect to be co-operative or to be particularly likely to benefit (for example, those at risk of disengaging); others again asked for volunteers from a year group.

Embedding the process in the school

- 3.22 A small number of schools were considering how they might embed recognition of achievement more securely in their curriculum. Ways to do this might include changing the timetable to include extended registration/reflection periods or by sending a clear message of its importance by reducing by one the number of students' exam subjects to allow them time to work for other, more broadly focused, awards:

'I'm a great believer in the importance of creating structural change to support a change of priority, we need to be as creative as possible in the design of the curriculum... if we want to get a better balance, we have to change the priorities very clearly' (Headteacher)

4 THE FUNDAMENTALS (1) DEFINING ACHIEVEMENT

- 4.1 A fundamental issue for the projects – students, staff and stakeholders – was to consider what they meant by ‘achievement’ and how widely they defined it. This was a live issue: gaining a shared definition and understanding of these terms was vital to projects’ subsequent decisions, for example, in relation to what ‘recognition’ might mean, and how achievement might be recorded. This was a key management challenge and in the next section we outline the Collaborative Enquiry Projects developing understanding of the meaning of achievement as they engaged with the task of definition.
- 4.2 All of the projects engaged in discussions around how they might define achievement. Most adopted a relatively low key approach to this but, as noted above, two projects had begun by engaging in structured consultation exercises on the meaning of achievement, for example working with pupil councils, pupils, teachers, parents, and/or employers.
- 4.3 Consultation approaches used include: a DVD of pupils interviewing other pupils and teachers on what ‘achievement means; the youth worker consulting pupils in primary and secondary schools on what achievement meant, with this approach taken to be more likely to encourage a wider, non-school based definition; focus group discussions with different stakeholders; and consultation questionnaires to those involved. Examples of such questionnaires and focus groups, and of the results of consultations, are attached at [Exemplification 4](#).
- 4.4 As projects thought about and tried to define ‘achievement’, this led to various insights as the following quotes illustrate:
- achievement could differ at an individual level: *‘Different things have personal meaning to individuals, almost anything that matters is an achievement when you get it done.’* (S6 pupil) *‘Where an individual makes progress at their own level in a number of areas’* (Teacher)
 - it could also be different at a group level, for example, if you are in the ‘More Choices More Chances group’: *‘If you’re one of this very challenged group, just getting to school every day is an achievement... or staying in the class to the end of the period... or getting on with people from different areas of the city.’* (Teacher)
 - achievement requires effort: *‘Has to be something with effort, won’t mean as much to them if it’s easy even though others recognise it.’* (S6 pupil) *‘Something you’ve put a lot of work into and have had to work your own way out of problems’* (S4 pupil)
 - achievement can be realised when it results in positive feelings: *‘Something that makes you feel good, that you are proud of.’* (S4 pupils)
 - it could be demonstrated in the classroom: *‘Understanding a maths problem and being able to help your friend understand it’* (S1 pupil)
 - achievement could also be broader: *‘Achievement needs to be not just in classes but sport, outdoor physical challenges, art, music, singing and dancing. But it should also be moral achievement – integrity, honesty and service.’* (Teacher)
- 4.5 Analysis of the responses from the students, staff and stakeholders shows the complexity and nuanced nature of the task of definition. All the project staff interviewed were asked the same question: *‘What do you think ‘achievement’ means?’* but what was striking is that staff and students varied in their terminology when they responded: the terms ‘Achieving’, ‘Achievement’, ‘An Achievement’ and ‘A

Real Achievement' were all used. None of the projects employed a single definition in practice although there might be a single written definition in existence. Definitions tended to vary depending on which student or groups of students were being discussed.

- 4.6 The word '**achieving**' or 'achieved' had a sense of meeting a target, of the completion of something (anything) intended. Where the staff used this phrase they tended to link 'achieving' to personal learning planning and to the negotiation and meeting of subject or academic targets or of behavioural targets. The context of 'achieving' was likely to be the school and the classroom; it was often used in relation to passing or completing a unit or project satisfactorily; and in practice it could lead to 'ticking boxes' as a form of recording. 'Achieving' had a lot to do with the process of planning and had little sense of effort, challenge or quality. Thus 'achieving' or 'achieved' was related to a relatively narrow and possibly unchallenging school focused view.
- 4.7 '**Achievement**' was similar to this: both staff and students linked it to academic targets, but it also could incorporate a sense of satisfaction. 'Achievement' was likely to be used in a normative rather than an ipsative way, in other words to be measured externally in a relatively structured way according to set criteria: 'achievement' meant something which met certain standards of performance.
- 4.8 '**An achievement**' was often linked by staff and students to an experience or activity, or a particular event or example of demonstrated behaviour. It was likely to have a degree of challenge or effort in it and often had a clearly measured end product, for example, '*got an award*'; '*got a medal*'; '*scored a goal*'. 'An achievement' might well have a degree of competition associated with it and its contexts could be very broad including school, community, family and personal experiences.
- 4.9 Many students and staff spoke of a '**real achievement**', which was seen as a personal challenge which had really stretched the individual, regardless of how it compared with the achievements of others or of how easily the individual found success in other fields. '*It was nothing if you weren't scared of heights, but for her it was a real achievement*' and '*I can get good marks in maths easily, don't need to try, but improving my English was a real achievement*'. A 'real achievement' was likely to have a powerful effect on the individual's self-esteem and to be valued by those who were close to the achiever eg '*I never thought I could do it, I'm really proud of myself*'. 'A real achievement' could also be demonstrated in the fullest range of contexts.
- 4.10 These different emphases influenced projects' decisions about what to record and affected the value that students placed on the process. Some staff and students thought that everything 'achieved' should be recorded and recognised; others thought the emphasis should be much more towards recognising 'achievements' or 'real achievements'. Different views on what constituted achievement or an achievement could impact on how useful recognition was thought to be: in some cases learners could not see the value of '*recording everything, even wee silly things*' and were dismissive and bored by the work involved. However, in other cases learners realised that '*when you put all the stuff down you realise it IS an achievement, that you've done something and stuff you thought was just ordinary was good.*' The key point is that an open discussion of what 'achieving' and 'achievement' means to learners, staff and stakeholders is an important part of developing recognition of achievement. Such discussion can lead to a change of focus: this was the case for one of the projects:

'In consultations with pupils, parents and teachers, we moved from being first in a test or playing for the first team to all kinds of success, for example through being effective in the hairdressing salon in the school.' (Depute Headteacher)

- 4.11 Most projects had little difficulty subsuming attainment under the over-arching heading of achievement, acknowledging the importance within Curriculum for Excellence of the breadth of achievement and the development of the four capacities. However, this relationship between achievement and attainment was not unproblematic: in a situation where great strides had recently been made to raise attainment, there was concern amongst some staff that focusing too much on achievement might undermine the hard-won improvement in attainment standards. On the other hand a focus on achievement was viewed by staff as a productive way to offset the danger of a narrowing of students' school experience to successful examination performance.
- 4.12 There were different definitions of what a 'wider' context for achievement might mean. 'Wider' achievement was described in various ways by school staff and pupils (there was no pattern to responses):
- the four capacities;
 - the core skills demonstrated in the classroom and supported by cooperative or enterprising teaching and learning;
 - positive results arising from rich tasks in the school or from activities which were school-generated 'extra-curricular' experiences;
 - those achievements generated in structured youth settings;
 - those achievements demonstrated in the individual's personal use of their time;
 - stories of personal success in meeting personal or family challenges known to the school, for example having a care role within the family, recovering from cancer;
 - stories of personal success in meeting personal or family challenges not known to the school, for example managing to attend a funeral, earning enough money to buy Christmas presents for the family.

5 THE FUNDAMENTALS (2) THE RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT

5.1 We begin this section by giving a flavour of how the Collaborative Enquiry Projects had approached recognition of achievement. We then go on to present and discuss the model that the evaluation team developed which emerged from the team's literature review of theory and practice and which was used with projects in the research as a way of pulling together the key elements of the process of recognising achievement.

The projects' experience: practical examples of recognising achievement

5.2 All the projects had taken steps to recognise the achievements of their pupils. These ranged on a scale from formal to informal. In addition to academic certificates, examples of how achievement was recognised included:

- recording on plasma screens in the school entrance hall and on other visual displays such as achievement walls and boards;
- praising through positive referrals from staff leading to merit awards, praise postcards to learners, phone calls home;
- assemblies and award ceremonies (some schools had specialist achievement assemblies) and achievement ties/T-shirts;
- nomination for achievement award by other pupils;
- tea with the headteacher;
- a word of praise in the corridor;
- an added section on achievement in the school report to parents;
- certificates of achievement, commonly under *Curriculum for Excellence* four capacities. Three examples of certificates are attached in the [Exemplification 5](#);
- SQA awards such as Intermediate 2 unit Working with Others; Youth Achievement Awards; Duke of Edinburgh award etc;
- public award ceremonies with certificates presented by the local authority.

The projects' experience: reflection as a key process, and related challenges

5.3 But for most of the projects, helping learners to go through a process of reflection leading to an understanding of the achievement was the essential issue rather than recognition in itself. Three projects felt they had focused most on ensuring that quality opportunities for achievement were available, but even then two emphasised the reflection which was part of the events. Several projects had 'started at the qualification end' but the process of discussion and thinking at early stages had the effect of changing the emphasis to a greater extent to reflection and recording and away from an 'end product' which recognised achievement.

5.4 Thus, most projects emphasised reflection and understanding of the learning as the following quotes illustrate:

'It's not the capturing of activities that's the key, it's so that the young person recognises what they've done and understands it's good.' (Teacher)

'Pupils need to think and talk about achievement to recognise it.' (Teacher)

'The main achievement was I spoke more, it's most important you realise it yourself, also good if others do!' (S5 student)

5.5 The task of reflection was perceived as difficult and many learners and staff in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects felt that students need help to reflect on and fully understand what they had achieved:

'Some children might switch off when asked to be reflective... this happens in PSE – 'what am I supposed to write?' – too much inspecting navels...' (Teacher)

'Sometimes you really need to tease it out, what skills did you show there, what was good about that, what did you learn – sometimes they just don't see it unless you point it out really clearly.' (Teacher)

5.6 Projects, especially those that had focused on young people needing More Choices, More Chances, considered that learners who lacked confidence and had low self-esteem were likely to need extra help in recognising the skills they had demonstrated and the value of their experiences and actions. Staff, especially those who knew pupils well, played a crucial role in helping learners to identify and reflect on achievements (particularly those undertaken in the school environment):

'You go 'I've not done anything' and she [pupil support teacher] says 'of course you have, I saw you in the school musical', and I hadn't thought I'd been able to learn things and she said I'd been good at remembering the dance and had looked really confident. So I thought 'maybe I was good.' (S1 pupil)

5.7 However, it was not just those who were least academic and engaged who found difficulty in reflecting on achievements. It was noticeable in the focus groups that even pupils who could list a range of activities and experiences still found it a challenge to reflect on what they had learned and to understand what the achievements said about them. They found it easy to say what they had done but not so easy to say how it had been done and what had been learned. One school manager noted that this was not confined to learners:

'It's difficult enough for some staff going for promotion to reflect on their achievements, even worse for pupils!' (Depute Headteacher)

5.8 Students, more than staff, were more likely to recognise the potential importance of friends and family in picking up on achievements and acknowledging them:

'Difficult to explain what you've done,, you don't want to show you're arrogant, talking about your achievements... but I explained to Mum each day, how I got on, it's OK explaining it to someone you know...' (S3 pupil)

'Even if teachers don't spot you, pupils can... when we were at [an outdoor centre] my friend did a real achievement because she was frightened of heights but she did it so I told her it was good and I put her forward and she got a certificate'. (P7 pupil)

The projects' experience: recording of achievements

5.9 In terms of the recording of achievements, the projects took different approaches. Several already had a method of recording merits for effort and behaviour, for example on management information systems. Records of achievement could also be kept in a homework diary or added to an extra section in the school report to parents.

5.10 It was common for students to keep records of achievements in paper form in logs, loose-leaf folders and achievement books. These achievements could be in the form of personal reflections, perhaps with recording of achievement structured around the four capacities. Records might be completed at regular intervals perhaps during PSE or in enhanced registration time, or from time to time following involvement in events or opportunities to achieve. For younger children an achievement book might be a

form of scrapbook where photos of events or copies of work of which the child was proud might be kept. Sometimes logs were electronic. Examples of materials used to help with reflecting and recording can be found at [Exemplification 6](#).

- 5.11 Members of staff in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects were very aware of the issues concerning the frequency and immediacy of reflection and recording. On the one hand, it was important to reflect on the learning from the experience while it was still fresh in the young person's mind and when skill development could be remembered and understood; on the other hand too frequent reflection on experiences and achievements made the process mechanical for learners. Another issue, one which we discuss as a later theme, is that of pupil ownership and control. The most common approach to helping pupils with reflection was to use Personal and Social Education time or tutorial time and/or to encourage a degree of reflection within other subjects. This was most likely to happen where substantial numbers of young people were involved. Where there were small numbers, individual members of staff (from volunteer teachers to Depute Headteachers) or individuals external to the school were likely to act as mentors. Some projects gave an initial boost to reflection on achievement by developing a set of introductory lessons focused over one or two weeks. Some examples of such materials are attached at [Exemplification 7](#).

The projects' experience: engaging young people in reflection and recording

- 5.12 Finding a way to engage young people in recording their own achievements was an important issue for the projects. Students who were less comfortable with writing might find the processes of recording and reflection difficult if it was too paper-focused:

'A lot of young people, particularly the MCMC group, don't like writing, so we use vox pop and post-it notes and put them into a log book to help them keep a record and reflect' (College Lecturer)

- 5.13 Staff and learners were keen to find ways of making the record attractive and interesting to young people and to harness different learning styles in creating a record; if recording became a routine form-filling/box-ticking exercise it would not keep pupils' interest and keep them engaged. Some projects were examining the possibility of a record of achievement being a virtual scrapbook with music, photos, vox pop and electronic text.

The projects' experiences: tracking achievement

- 5.14 A number of the projects looked for ways to track achievement. As noted earlier, there had been prior experience of using management information systems to record merits, often leading to recognition of the accumulated successes through some form of reward. However, comprehensive tracking of achievement across the whole year group was a more difficult task, particularly if the range of contexts in which achievement could be demonstrated was very broad. Drilling down to the level of the individual's achievement could be a real challenge:

'We've had too much celebration of achievement and not enough tracking of it in individuals.' (Depute Headteacher)

'Recording is a key issue, capturing the achievements at an individual level rather than celebrating at public events... it's key to link to PLPs and target-setting' (Depute Headteacher)

5.15 Some Collaborative Enquiry Projects were more closely linked to pupil support/guidance systems than others. One of the project schools, for example, had a commitment that each student would have five individual progress discussions each year; in this situation, tracking of achievement at an individual level would be more straightforward.

A model for recognising achievement

5.16 As part of the literature review carried out in the first phase of the evaluation, we developed a model for recognising achievement http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/recognising_achievement_literature_review. We then used this model as a basis for discussion with the projects, testing it with all of them to see if it matched their experience. All projects found that it reflected aspects of their approach and judged it to be a helpful way of thinking through what needs to be done to recognise achievement. In the rest of this section we use the model to pull together the key elements of the process of recognising achievement and the issues arising from the evaluation of the projects' practice. We begin by explaining the model, a fuller explanation of which is given in the document *Literature Review and Model for Managing Recognition Processes* (Hart with Howieson and Semple 2010).

5.17 The model is represented in figure 1 and is a simplified version of that in the literature review. While originally adapted for ease of use with young people it proved to capture the key principles clearly for adults also and has been used with all those participating in the field work. It identifies three processes or elements by which achievement can be recognised: 'understanding, 'explaining' and 'proving'. These three elements to recognising achievement are located within a background context of 'opportunities for achievement': clearly there can be no recognition of achievement without the opportunity to achieve through some experience or activity, this is the essential pre-condition. The model can be used with students at all the stages of Curriculum for Excellence. The three elements are related to different purposes but they are not mutually exclusive: they are meant to be iterative and linked through the personal portfolio.

Figure 1: Model for Recognising Achievement



5.18 The model is centred on a **personal portfolio** or 'personal store' of materials associated with activities of all kinds and their outcomes: this can be thought of as the recording aspect of recognising achievement. The idea is that a student gathers materials associated with all kinds of achievement and learning in a personal portfolio and can use this material in different ways depending on their age and circumstances. While it appears similar in some respects to systems such as the National Record of Achievement (NRA) it is different: in particular, unlike the NRA it is not in itself the record of the achievement but rather the store from which young people selectively draw material as appropriate for a particular purpose. Equally it is different from the creation of a portfolio which is structured to match to specific criteria for an award (as is the portfolio currently being developed for the Duke of Edinburgh award) rather it is the creation of a portfolio from which evidence may be drawn to match to specific criteria for a range of possible awards if the learner decides this is appropriate and desirable.

- 5.19 We now describe each element in turn.
- 5.20 In the **Understanding** element learners are supported to review their activities and experiences and to identify and understand the learning which has resulted from these, and to consider whether and how learning could transfer to a different context. The process brings out the intrinsic value of the learning, ie the direct value to the learner. The approach involves using a learning portfolio in which individuals manage, reflect on and develop records of their achievements. The outcomes of this approach should be improved self-esteem and motivation, personal development and enhanced further learning through personal learning planning.
- 5.21 In the **Explaining** element learners are supported to understand the value that their achievements may have to others and to be able to communicate their skills and achievements effectively taking account of the other person's requirements and concerns. It thus relates to the utility value of the achievement. The ability to understand, select and explain achievements will be useful not only in making applications and in selection processes with gatekeepers in education, employment and the voluntary sector but also within the school, for example in interviews with pastoral care staff or careers advisers.
- 5.22 In the **Proving** element the emphasis is on gathering evidence to enable the achievement to be accredited. The process brings out the exchange value of the learning and achievement ie the value that the outcomes of learning from one context can have in another. In this approach learners are supported to understand the value which their achievements may have to bodies which can accredit the learning. Accreditation may take the form of an award of credit, or the award of a qualification or part of a qualification (most likely a unit). The approach involves the development of an assessment portfolio for which learners select or generate information which can serve as evidence for the assessment of prior learning against specified standards.
- 5.23 We now go on to discuss the model in the light of the practice and views of the projects.

Opportunities for achievement

- 5.24 The essential pre-condition for recognising achievement is what we have termed 'opportunities for achievement' in the model. This was at the forefront of many of the projects' thinking and one of the most important elements for a number of projects was to ensure that young people had the chance of rich and challenging opportunities to develop skills and qualities which might contribute to achievement, for example:
- 'If you get the experience right, you've got the achievement and the recognition.'*
(Depute Headteacher)
- 5.25 This quote shows an awareness that without a quality experience there is a limited basis for achievement and recognition. On the other hand, projects could be in danger of over-emphasising the experience to the detriment of the reflection and learning. Related to this was the tendency among many projects to view it as their responsibility to ensure that participants had good opportunities for achievement rather than – where appropriate - drawing on students' own experiences out of school. The managers of two projects, however, were quite clear that it was not their role to provide new or additional experiences for pupils, rather their role was to support pupils in undertaking a process that would help them get the most value out of the experiences and activities in which they were already engaged. Arguably the first task

in recognising achievement is an assessment of whether each individual learner has the pre-conditions in place in terms of opportunities for achievement while remembering that the activity is not the ultimate purpose of the exercise and that the project itself may not need to provide it.

- 5.26 Thinking about the extent and quality of students' experiences raised issues for projects: some young people have richer life experiences both in and outside school than do others. The question arose for the projects as to whether they should intervene and provide quality opportunities perhaps targeted at particular groups such as young people needing More Choices, More Chances:

'Wider achievement is what the pupil does in their home life (ie rich tasks and experiences are personal and social) and the task of the school is to identify those who don't have these rich experiences and make up the deficit' (Headteacher)

'Need to enrich the whole curriculum for all and provide wider experiences organised by the school or through the school and that will help everybody' (Depute Headteacher)

'These children never get recognised for anything – other than bad behaviour – and we gave them this chance and here they were, getting the chance to achieve... and able to wear an achievement tie!' (Depute Headteacher)

- 5.27 We consider the issue of whether or not participation should be voluntary and the extent to which recognition of achievement should have a compensatory function further in chapter 6.

Understanding

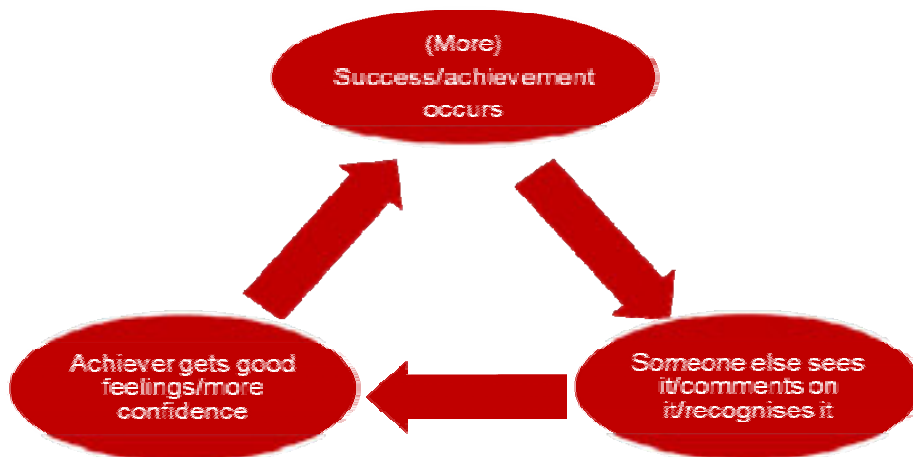
- 5.28 All of the projects thought that the understanding element is central to the process of recognising achievement': learners need to understand their achievement, the skills involved and how these skills can be used and transferred to other contexts:

'It's not the capturing of activities that is the key, it's so that the young person recognises themselves that they can do this and that they have all the bits under the four capacities.' (Teacher)

- 5.29 The understanding element was viewed by all of the projects as relevant at all stages of pupils' school career no matter their age. From what we learned in the projects and especially in discussions with the students, it became apparent to us that from understanding came the potential for a virtuous circle whereby reflection leads to understanding the value of the achievement, and feeling good about it is likely to lead to further achievement; this is represented in Figure 2. Reflection and the resulting understanding were seen by staff as key to contributing to young people becoming 'successful learners':

'It's the reflection that puts the progression in the achievement' (Local authority representative)

Figure 2: Understanding achievement – the virtuous circle



- 5.30 It became evident from discussions with project staff and students that where there was a personal development and learning purpose, achievement needed to be understood and recognised by the achiever and also by those individuals whose opinion was valued by the achiever (eg friends, family, a respected teacher, others undertaking the same activity). Recognition by individuals or organisations not respected or valued by the young person could mean there was little or no impact on personal development. This also applied if the student did not rate what had happened as ‘an achievement’ perhaps because it had not stretched him/her or because it was devalued since everyone achieved the standard, for example:
- ‘I didn’t want to put that Food Hygiene certificate in the [Achievement] folder, everyone in the class got it, you just had to tick some boxes, anyone could do it, it was easy, not much of an achievement, that!’ (S3 student)*

- 5.31 In terms of the understanding element, recognition could be simple and need not be tangible or public. It could be: praise from a teacher in the classroom or from the Depute Headteacher in the corridor; a card saying ‘well done!’ from a family member; or ‘Mum saying ‘I’m really proud of you!’ Tangible forms of recognition could be at a group level – ‘here’s a DVD that shows us on our leadership challenge’.

Explaining

- 5.32 The explaining element of the model was seen by the projects as the second most important aspect of recognising achievement for young people.
- 5.33 Many members of project staff spoke of the challenges young people face in explaining their skills and achievements to others, whether within the school or outwith the school to employers, colleges and universities. Young people in the focus groups acknowledged that they found it difficult to make the link between their own achievements and what others expected of them and project staff and careers advisers expressed similar views. This was compounded by a ‘Scottish reluctance’ to be boastful and tell others about success. Once young people had come to understand their own achievements, the next great challenge was to get them to explain them to others, whether in writing, speaking or presenting:
- ‘Explaining is the hardest bit.’ (S5 pupil)*

- 5.34 The projects perceived the 'explaining' element of the model - helping the learner to make their achievement explicit to others - as relevant throughout learners' schooling but especially at transition points. A number of the projects focused on the P7/S1 transition and pupils moving from the primary to the secondary school worked on descriptions of themselves and their achievements, whether on a DVD or in some paper format. They used this to compile their achievements in the primary school into a form that would enable them to introduce themselves in some way to their new school and its teachers and pupils. Our observation, based on the evidence of the projects, is that a utility purpose seems to be most associated with transition points, for example in moving through different stages of schooling (from one teacher to another; from P7 to S1; or by end-users such as employers, colleges and universities). In this situation it seemed that more tangible and more formally structured and patterned forms of recognition are valuable and that it is more useful to provide this at the level of the individual rather than the group – '*here's a DVD of me leading a challenge*'. For recognition of achievement to be most effective in utility terms it needs to be considered in the light of pupil career and academic development and progression and the perceptions and requirements of these end users. Section 9 of this report confirms that end-users considered this element of the process of recognising achievement to be most important for their purposes, but to be most in need of improvement.

Proving

- 5.35 Staff and learners in the projects had no difficulty in agreeing the importance of understanding and explaining elements of recognising achievement but the proving element was more problematic. While some staff felt it was a lower priority perhaps because the young people involved in the particular Collaborative Enquiry Projects were not of an age and stage where getting evidence of achievement was particularly important, a more serious concern was that proving raised issues about the strength of evidence, how it would be assessed and validated and how the formal processes of certification would impact on the young person's experience:

'Has to be monitored by staff in some way otherwise you would question its integrity – not that I'm saying we don't trust young people, but trying to build it in as part of their learning experience. But when young people use this information to apply for jobs, college, university, this leads to questions about ensuring it is robust and that they can accept the information on it. People obviously want to ensure they can rely on it. Unfortunately it's the popular press response – if it's not moderated by anyone they'll say it's not got any value – unfair, but needs to be considered' – (Local authority representative)

'Recognition has to start from the viewpoint of trusting and believing what young people say, not validating the record of achievement.' (Local authority representative)

'Some people are very opposed to the SQA getting involved because it would make a move towards a certificate inevitable... would take away from the child and move achievement to attainment, it would have to be done very carefully. But if it was a national certificate and had the SQA stamp as well, in some circles it would be seen as having more credibility.' (Local authority representative)

- 5.36 It is probably no coincidence that it is local authority representatives who were most concerned about this issue as a number of local authorities have been considering the possibility of issuing their own record of achievement for school leavers.

5.37 There were also concerns that focusing on an end-product which provides proof of achievement would lead to the same problems as those which caused the National Record of Achievement (NRA) to fall into disuse:

'There's a big danger of this disappearing like the NRA if they kill the experience/achievement by over-loading with paper work, a big danger destroying what the kids are learning and losing the value of the exercise. In a lot of cases the experience itself is valuable.' (Teacher)

'The problem is, would anyone value it? I remember the NRA where they took it to employers and nobody looked at it, what was the point?' (Teacher)

5.38 In the context of these concerns we refer back to the earlier description of the personal store (para 5.45) and the way in which it differs from the NRA.

5.39 As can be seen in section 9 of this report, end-users did strongly support the process of understanding and explaining involved in recognising the achievements of young people but their views on the nature and value of a certificate of achievement as evidence of achievement (proving) were more negative.

5.40 However, for others the proving element was the main value of the whole process:

'This is what it's all about, letting leavers show all the things they've achieved, so that it's not just academic certificates, everything they do is valuable, they've got evidence they've got the four capacities and it's not just in the academic subjects, it's the full rounded young person.' (Depute Headteacher)

5.41 But it was also clear from some of the projects that proving did not have to mean a certificate, nor were employers or colleges necessarily the main focus. For young people, particularly those in need of More Choices, More Chances, having evidence to show family, friends and peers could be equally important to providing proof of achievement to employers:

'You'd tell someone about it, they'd say 'Aye, so ye did! [in a sceptical tone] and you can point to your certificate, or your tee-shirt and they'd have to believe you.' (S3 pupil)

5.42 A number of projects had considered different ways of certificating achievement, and some staff involved in the projects were involved in new developments, such as a Certificate of Achievement within religious and moral education linked to the Catholic Education Commission or SQA Employability Award or the ASDAN Cope award. There was considerable interest in using the Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) as a vehicle for capturing achievement, particularly wider achievements in personal or community contexts:

'YAA should be one of the national vehicles for a national award for achievement because it uses what young people are already doing, is peer assessed, open to all pupils, not standardised, pupils can opt in and out with no time limit and finance is needed only at the point of submission.' (Headteacher)

'These awards [Dynamic Youth Award and Youth Achievement Award] are particularly good for those who are not sporty or don't have the lifestyle to commit to big achievements. The YAA can be interrupted if there are problems and then re-started – other awards are tied to the school year and will disrupt the timetable if they spill over to the next session... and youth workers are around in evenings and weekends and summers to keep the momentum going.' (Youth worker)

- 5.43 The range of possible awards that might provide evidence of achievement is very wide, but these two lengthy quotes about one award are included because they demonstrate some of the criteria that might need to be in place for achievement to be evidenced in this way.
- 5.44 In considering the balance or focus in respect of the three elements of recognising achievement – understanding, explaining, and proving – this is likely to be determined by the purpose behind the recognition of achievement and this will vary. Each young person will have different needs at different stages in their school career with respect to recognising achievement. Key questions to consider are ‘*What is the purpose of recognition? What should be recognised? Who should recognise it?*’ The answers are likely to differ depending on whether the questions relate to a P4, P7, S3 or S5 learner. Further questions then arise about the effectiveness of the process: ‘*How do we know if the learner recognises/values the achievement? And how do we know if anyone else does so? How can we ensure that understanding occurs so that the impact of recognising achievement can be maximised?*’

The personal store

- 5.45 The idea of the personal store in the model developed and evolved in the course of the evaluation team’s discussions with staff and students and with a very small number of parents in the projects. The personal store could be a physical repository but it is more likely to be an ‘electronic shoebox’ or portfolio (AlphaPlus Consultancy, 2007).
- 5.46 An essential aspect of the thinking about the electronic personal store was that it should be ‘owned’ by the young person. It would be accessible from home as well as school and include written reflections, scanned copies of work and certificates, photographs, art work, DVDs, music etc. It might have four different sections to it:
1. An **archive section** where achievements of the past are placed rather than being deleted. This possibility emerged from discussions with primary age pupils in the projects who felt that the achievements of childhood would not necessarily be something they would want to have prominent in an adolescent portfolio, but might not want to delete either. This made sense to staff and parents also. Some staff thought of the personal store as a memory box for young people, and it was clear that parents (especially mothers) were already keeping ‘archives’ of their children’s past achievements, sometimes literally in shoeboxes.
 2. A **private section** where the young person might wish to keep personal achievements or records. This would not be accessible by anyone else.
 3. A **live interactive section** to which the young person gave ‘read only’ access to teachers, mentors, family members, significant others. This would be the most fluid and most frequently accessed section of the store into which achievements and experiences might be entered.
 4. A **public section** where the young person could display achievements for others to see, for example, in addition to completing the ‘any other information’ section in an application form for a job or course, it might say ‘*click on this weblink to see me talking about my achievements.*’
- 5.47 Pupil support staff or other staff with a tutor role might view the **live interactive section** in tutorials or PSE classes, help the pupil develop understanding of the skills and qualities demonstrated, use it as a basis for developing the pupil’s capacity to explain their achievements (perhaps in PSE role play) and assess the content to see

if there was sufficient evidence to get proof of achievement if the young person wished it. An example of this latter activity might be *'you're working with the public in a part-time job and you're helping out at a day-care centre. And you've had work experience in a restaurant and you look after your Gran at weekends. You could maybe get SCQF Level 4 Working with Others with all that'*. To assist the learner in this way requires considerable expertise from staff and an issue we raise here and return to in the final section is the extent to which members of staff currently have the expertise and/or confidence to choose which accreditation vehicle to use depending on the strength of the evidence.

- 5.48 Discussions with peers could also help to aid understanding and explaining. Thus help with understanding and explaining does not have to be solely the job of the teacher but as pupils noted, is a shared responsibility, with friends, family and youth workers all involved. Among other benefits this approach reduces the workload on teachers many of whom, while endorsing the model, wondered how they would find the necessary time to engage with pupils for maximum effectiveness.
- 5.49 This is the most developed picture of the personal store. Most projects assumed that GLOW might be the host for any such electronic portfolio but this network is still developing and such a model did not appear to be available to CEP staff at the time of the research. Project staff and learners saw the potential of such an approach, but realised that there were a number of practical issues to be sorted out with respect to the technology; their view was that to make full and effective use of such a system would require a considerable amount of support to learners, training for staff and system development.

6 RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT: WHO IS IT FOR AND WHO OWNS IT?

Introduction

- 6.1 Two of the seven principles expected to underpin the recognition of achievement are that (para 1.5 of this report):
- learners must have ownership of their achievements and what they choose to include;
 - any approach must support young people at risk of disengagement and in need of more choices, more chances and must not widen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged.
- 6.2 How projects interpreted and applied these two principles in practice, and how the principles related to each other within the project objectives, showed a degree of variation, and created a challenge for projects.
- 6.3 All projects acknowledged that pupils needed to be centrally involved in the recognition of achievement but in practice there were a number of different approaches and interpretations of this. Many agreed the principle but felt that teachers needed to drive the process. Some school staff noted that pupil ownership of a single process such as recognition of achievement was difficult to apply in a school context in which, largely, pupils do not have control and where young people's ownership is not a guiding principle (compared with, for example, youth work). Others worried what would happen if teachers were not leading the process. These staff felt responsible for pupil outcomes (quite reasonably to some extent, since they and their institution are measured in this way); and to allow young people to fail to take part in recognition of achievement could have negative effects for young people themselves.
- 6.4 The extent to which teachers might drive the process could relate to a stage in the process (for example, teachers perceiving a need to keep the process moving while the work was in pilot stage or thinking that younger pupils needed more support until they were mature enough to make decisions about whether to record achievement and what to put in). But it could also be because of concerns that, if it was left to pupils to volunteer to take part or to decide what to include within the process put in, then the most disadvantaged groups in the school would be likely to opt out or to end up with a poor record of achievement:
- 'If you're already discouraged, and you think that you've got no achievements, then you're not going to get involved, you'll think, 'It's not for me'. So you have to intervene to make sure they understand they have achieved things, and if they really haven't then to make sure they do...'* (Principal Teacher Pupil Support)
- 6.5 It can be seen that there could be some tension between ensuring disadvantage was not compounded and pupil ownership in projects' thinking. This dilemma was most stark where the project provided additional opportunities for achievement around which the recognition process was centred.
- 6.6 Some projects quite specifically said that unless pupils actively chose to opt into the process and were engaged in it (and therefore took responsibility and owned it), the key elements of Understanding and Explaining (para 5.19 of this report) would be ineffective: the process would instead be something imposed on pupils. In this case the task of teachers would be to encourage but not force reluctant pupils. Such projects expressed their views quite passionately and with commitment and were able

to describe practical ways in which pupils could have ownership. The quote below illustrates what lies behind such an approach:

'Pupils will always find ways of opting out, they can be physically present in a guidance interview or in a PSE class, or indeed in a class training them to put achievements on record, but they can be actually disengaged. It's much better to be honest about this, at least you can see who isn't getting involved and you've got the chance to deal with real issues. Otherwise, you're just 'ticking the boxes' to say 'Oh, we involve all our pupils!' (Principal Teacher Pupil Support)

6.7 Some such projects also further involved young people in consultation and design of the pilot work or of any certificate.

6.8 Another approach was where a school had traditionally given high priority to pupil support and to regular individual discussions in order to know pupils well as individuals (around five contacts per year per pupil); in this situation recognition of achievement was a natural topic for discussion and fitted well into a comprehensive programme already in place:

'If you're not recognising and encouraging achievement in these [guidance and pupil support] interviews, what are you doing?' (Principal Teacher Pupil Support)

6.9 Having raised briefly some of the issues around principles, we now consider how the projects dealt with these issues beginning with the question: *'who is recognition of achievement for?'* and then considering how the projects approached the matter of pupil ownership.

Who is recognition of achievement for?

6.10 When the research team asked teachers and managers in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects *'who is recognition of achievement for?'* they all agreed there was value in recognising achievement and that **all** pupils should do it.

6.11 However when asked *'who is recognition of achievement most useful for?'* or *'who should be the priority for recognition of achievement?'* there were different responses not only across the projects but also among staff and others within the same project. Their responses raise a number of difficult questions about the voluntary or compulsory nature of recognising achievement, the extent to which projects should adopt a compensatory approach and where it leaves the 'ordinary pupil'.

6.12 The responses from staff and other stakeholders, fell into four categories:

1. Recognition of Achievement is for all, and should be compulsory

6.13 In this perspective, recognising achievement is seen as valuable for all pupils and viewed as linking in with personal learning plans and with the work of Pupil Support staff with whole cohorts of pupils. The school ought to value the wider achievements of all pupils and to balance the value given to academic achievements by recognising the whole young person, not just one aspect of the individual. Staff who took this view therefore thought that involvement in recording and recognising achievement should not be voluntary, although they also emphasised that it would be up to the pupils to decide on the extent of their engagement and the personal achievements that they would want to disclose.

- 6.14 A corollary for these staff who thought that recognising achievement should be for all pupils seemed to be that projects had a responsibility to make sure that all young people had sufficient opportunities for achievement and should provide opportunities to those in need so that outcomes for all were as equal as possible. This would enrich education for all and would have the added benefit of ensuring that all pupils were known to staff and giving a mechanism to help pupil support staff to track pupils.
- 6.15 Where projects were planning a school or authority level certificate of achievement for school leavers then they took a similar stance: if this is 'in the gift' of the authority or school, then fairness demands that all pupils receive a certificate. But there were issues about this, too: some certificates might, it was suggested, 'damn with faint praise' if the school didn't know the pupil or if the pupil did not want to disclose personal or other achievements to the school.
- 6.16 Some pupils agreed that every pupil should be involved in recognising achievement and that it should be compulsory:
'Everyone should do it in the future to help them achieve more stuff, they shouldn't be allowed not to' (S1 pupil)

2. Recognition of Achievement should be available for all, but voluntary whether pupils take part

- 6.17 Analysis of pupil questionnaires and responses in group discussions indicate that this is the most commonly held view by the pupils with whom we were in contact, for example:
'You need to ask children if they want to do this, and why' (S4)
'It should be up to you to decide if it's any use to you.' (S1)
- 6.18 It is important not to over-emphasise these responses as the majority of pupils were responding from a perspective that they had not had a real choice about whether or not they should be involved and may have been reacting accordingly. The project staff who took this view felt that in order to genuinely develop young people's understanding of their achievements and to help them explain their achievements to others it was necessary that young people were open and engaged, otherwise there would be no real ownership of the process or any certificate by young people: this, therefore, required pupils to be volunteers. Alongside this, however, went a determination to do everything possible to encourage the reluctant pupil, especially those most vulnerable, to take part.

3. Recognition of Achievement should be available for all, should be compulsory for younger pupils but voluntary for older ones

- 6.19 Some Collaborative Enquiry Project staff were beginning to think that the age and stage of pupils was a critical factor in deciding who should be involved and whether this should be on a voluntary basis or not. If both the reflection on achievement and the recording started from Primary 1 (or earlier), then the process would be automatic and an older pupil would be able to judge the value of continuing to reflect and record achievements, based on their own practical experience. Evidence of a record of achievement being valued by end-users might make older pupils take responsibility for continuing with recording achievement. The views of end-users on such a certificate are recorded in section 9 of this report.

4. Recognition of Achievement should be available for all but certain groups need it more

6.20 Where staff took this view the main reason was that recognising achievement could be a compensatory mechanism for those who might not gain much in the way of academic qualifications. A related issue was therefore that where pupils lacked opportunities the projects should ensure that they had sufficient experiences on which to draw. Among the groups of young people identified were:

- Those who came into the More Choices More Chances target group, the most disadvantaged group:
- Young people with Additional Support Needs. It was seen as particularly important to ensure young people in this situation had rich experiences, and to support recognition of achievement in imaginative ways:
- Young people in localities where academic achievement was normally limited and young people underachieved. This would give balance to the lack of academic success and provide a certificate or other compensatory evidence for end-users. Pupils themselves realised the potential: *'I won't get any good exam results so I can adleist [sic] have something to show'*. (S3 pupil):
- To encourage improvement of behaviour, self-esteem and well-being amongst difficult teenagers:
- To help pupils who are too quiet and shy to come out of their comfort zone:
- With certain S6 pupils at the beginning of the session, to encourage them to make effective use of the year:
- To bring into focus the 'grey' group of ordinary young people, the mass of youngsters in the middle.

6.21 It is worth spending some time considering this last category of young people – the 'ordinary' pupil. This group emerged as a priority as our research progressed. While a number of projects started out thinking about more obviously disadvantaged young people, there was a growing realisation that it could be very important for young people who were in the middle of the spread of achievement. The more they reflected on the situation of such young people, the more they came to view recognition of achievement as a key priority for the *'kids who just get missed'*. This response came from teachers, managers, parents and pupils.

'It's the grey mass, like my son, that's the ones that would benefit from someone looking at what they've done and praising them.... And recognising that they have achievements, too! Too much time is spent on the ones who are difficult, but the ones that keep their heads down and their noses clean but don't shine, they're not really known, they don't surface and they often can't explain their qualities and don't value them... THAT'S where it's most important!' (Parent of S3 pupil)

'If you are REALLY trying to be inclusive, then it's the middle group that need focus, the ones that with a wee bit help could really achieve something and contribute to the school and make a better life for themselves.' (Teacher)

'It would bring the pupil alive to the school - that sounds a terrible thing to say, but in a big secondary school there's a lot of pupils you just don't know.' (Teacher)

6.22 This issue also surfaced with pupils, although it was expressed most clearly with respect to the type of pupil who generally got the chance of interesting and valued experiences and opportunities:

'You [ie the research team] should tell teachers how good people aren't getting recognised!' (S4 pupil)

'There should be more rewards for people who behave...' (S4 pupil)

'Make sure good people are recognised and bad people isn't going on trips not learning them anything...' (S4 pupil)

- 6.23 The pupils from whom these quotes come could be considered to be in the category of 'ordinary' pupil, part of the 'grey masses'.

Pupil ownership in the projects

Overview

- 6.24 Projects were asked how each had dealt with issues of pupil ownership. As noted earlier in this report, a minority of pupils in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects had been involved in development work and in deciding the format of recognition of achievement from an early stage through, for example, being consulted through pupil councils or helping to create materials which would generate discussion on achievement with parents and teachers. In some schools a small number of pupils had responsibility for elements of recognition, perhaps through managing and loading information on to the 'recognition' plasma screen or being responsible for achievement notice-boards or assemblies. One project involved pupils at a deeper level. Following an extensive consultation across stakeholders, a system of 'Pupil Choice Awards' was developed in response to pupil suggestions: all pupils were involved in nominating their peers for specific awards and pupil representatives were responsible for deciding which pupils should be given an award under each category.
- 6.25 Some schools were very clear that pupils should take the lead role in the overall process:
'This is all about pupils and for them, it should be theirs, not the school's'
(Principal Teacher)
- 6.26 Others focused on concerns about the school's responsibility for the process of recording:
'We have to keep control of the process, because pupils are always losing things.'
(Teacher)
- 'We don't get to take the folders home in case we lose them so you can't show it to your Mum'* (S1 pupil)
- 6.27 Where a youth worker was centrally involved, issues of ownership were quite clear from the beginning:
'As a youth worker I have to make sure involvement is voluntary and that young people have ownership (it's part of the code). I really need to make sure I don't compromise this as it would affect work in the community if I was seen as part of the school and telling young people what to do.... The Youth Achievement Award involves planning, doing, reviewing and personal observations; it's peer assessed (they present the challenge, and peers sign off) and they may ask the award worker by invitation to assess... Minimal writing is necessary (the portfolio can be from the most basic to incredible)... I've designed simple cover sheets for the

evidence for those who don't want to do the writing... but it is the young person's responsibility to keep everything and decide what happens.'(Youth worker)

- 6.28 This approach to ownership was clearly recognised by young people concerned:
'She gives you the sheets and gets you to do it yourself... you have to arrange meetings with her, have to write the letters yourself for fundraising, have to arrange meetings with the depute to get consent.' (S3 pupil)
- 6.29 We would note that in this situation, pupil ownership was supported not only by the roles adopted by the adults but also by the system used which required that the challenge undertaken by the pupil to demonstrate achievement and his/her reflection in the portfolio had to be controlled by the pupil.
- 6.30 Is pupil ownership something that teachers generally would have difficulty with? Pupils felt that some teachers could deliver the process of recognising achievement while maintaining pupil ownership while others could not; school managers recognised that it might need enthusiastic staff able to have an appropriate relationship with pupils. Another suggestion was that effective, pupil-centred recognition of achievement might require the school to have a strong commitment to knowing pupils well to ensure that reflection could be centred on the pupil and that the pupil would be willing to talk openly about achievements and challenges. One secondary school which had focused much of its work on new entrants to the school felt that recognition of achievement necessarily built on the growing relationship with S1:
'By the end of the first week we will know all S1 by name and have the pupil tracking system up and running... it's important that in a new big world, they are called by name.' (Depute Headteacher)
- 6.31 Finally, involving pupils more centrally had a pragmatic as well as a philosophical purpose:
'Things get done much more quickly if pupils lead them rather than if staff lead them!' (Depute Headteacher)

Ownership of the process of recognition

- 6.32 We now consider the experiences of the projects with respect to pupil ownership in relation to the different elements of the process (Understanding, Explaining and Proving, para 5.19 of this report) and to the task of recording achievement. The principle of ownership was more or less problematic depending on the element of the process of recognising achievement as we now consider.

Ownership of the Understanding and Explaining elements

- 6.33 Since the purpose of recognising achievement is to increase pupils' *understanding* and their capacity to *explain* their own achievements, then it followed that letting or (more positively) requiring that they controlled and owned these elements of the process was the appropriate approach. In one school, for example, both teachers and pupils agreed who was responsible:
'Pupils and staff share entering of achievement on logs... but if I wanted to put something in and they didn't, they'd have the final decision... or the other way around' (Teacher)

'Yeah, it's ours, it belongs to us [general agreement in the group], if they [teachers] want to put something in they've got to discuss it, it's up to us...your parents help you, too, they can help decide what should go in and they can say, 'what about that? You've forgotten you did that!'...it's easy to do because it's about you and what you've already done and you can decide about the things you do outside of school, do they go in, and it lets teachers see the other side of you, your personality, your interests. It's about you.' (S1 group)

- 6.34 It was not uncommon for teachers to think that pupils had more ownership of the process than did pupils. From comments made by pupils it may be that teachers, intending to be encouraging and supportive, pushed hard to make sure that achievements valued by the school were included, even if they were not valued by the young person; or conversely, dismissed those achievements suggested by the young person as irrelevant. A clearer, shared, focus on the meaning and purpose of recognition of achievement is required in such a situation.

Ownership of Recording tasks

- 6.35 Pupils liked the idea of a 'personal store' as a potential way of providing a greater sense of ownership (in contrast to other records kept about them by the school):
'The teachers have it, your guidance file, but you can't see it, the personal store'd be yours.' (S4 pupil)

- 6.36 Teachers, too, were aware that the way in which recording of achievement was set up could ensure pupil ownership:

'The electronic Progress File is very much a development of old guidance folders, and ownership is not too clear, but [e-portfolio programme] is clearly the young person's, accessible outwith school hours and independently of school.' (Principal Teacher)

'Pupils will decide what they include in the e-portfolio, whether just to include things relating to schooling or more generally. They will control it, hold passwords, decide individual content and decide what to share, and they have the responsibility to learn sufficient IT skills to use it effectively... a high level of tasks previously done by staff are now done by pupils in this school and this [ie recognising achievement] should be just the same, even more so.' (Depute Headteacher)

Ownership of the Proving element

- 6.37 As we noted in the section The Fundamentals 2 The Recognition of Achievement, the question of ownership and the role of school staff was more contentious in respect to the 'proving' element of recognising achievement. Members of school staff were divided on who owned any certificate, and local authority staff were particularly concerned:

'If this is a certificate endorsed by the school or the authority, surely those reading it are going to expect that the content is accurate? But that's really difficult for a school to do, especially if the achievements being recognised are truly 'wider' and outwith the school. How easy is it to trust what you are told?' (Quality Improvement Officer, local authority)

- 6.38 This was a view shared by a number of other local authority representatives and was a particular issue when any certificate would bear the mark of the school or the local authority on it. It was also thought to be important for the school to have a central

responsibility for presenting evidence of the young person's achievements for an award to any awarding body (part of the 'proving' element).

- 6.39 Our research with end-users (section 9) shows that end-users' views about the importance of a certificate and whether and how it might be authenticated are more complex and nuanced than school and local authority staff expected. As we note later, it would be helpful for schools and end-users to have a clearer understanding of each others' perspective.

Definitions of pupil ownership

- 6.40 Project staff described 3 main ways in which pupil ownership could be envisaged. These were not exclusive and each could be identified to some level in one or more projects either in their intentions or in their practice:
- some pupils should have responsibility for certain tasks relating to recognition of achievement in the school;
 - the pupil body, or representatives of the pupil body, should have certain responsibilities or a say in decision-making or a consultation role on the recognition of achievement or a say on whose achievement is recognised;
 - the individual pupil should have ownership of the *process* of understanding, explaining and recording his/her own achievements (ie deciding when, how often, how and what to reflect on and record).
- 6.41 These are quite different in scope and the question arises as to what was meant by 'ownership' in the original principles for governing recognition of achievement in the Scottish stakeholder consultations? We suggest that a reading of the various documents produced as part of the lead up to the establishment of the pilot projects and of the literature review undertaken as part of this research would indicate that the principle of pupil ownership should be defined in terms of the final bullet point above ie the individual pupil should have ownership of the *process* of understanding, explaining and recording his/her own achievements. We return to the issue of what is meant by 'ownership' in the final section of the report.
- 6.42 As can be seen from the sections above the questions of 'who is recognition of achievement for' and pupil ownership raised an inter-connected series of issues for projects. We suggest that in any development of recognition of achievement systems and processes, these issues need to be considered further and that this should happen not just at the level of the implementing schools and their stakeholders, but also at the level of policy.

7 THE REPORTED BENEFITS

Introduction

7.1 As we noted earlier in this report, while projects had initial aims, the process of collaboration and discussion during the project meant that these initial aims changed and priorities and timescales shifted. For many projects, the most valuable aspect was the experience of reflecting, reviewing and being adaptive in development. It is therefore not appropriate to measure the projects against original aims as part of this evaluation; instead we have focused on the reported benefits as described by teachers, pupils and their parents. The content of this section is drawn from interviews and group work with pupils and teachers and from questionnaires completed by pupils and parents.

Background

7.2 It should be noted that at the time of the research, a very small number of projects had not yet engaged directly with pupils or with certain groups of pupils. These were projects that had decided to drive developments via the production of an end certificate of achievement harnessed to an electronic portfolio. In this situation technical issues had tended to absorb most energy and resources with the result that the process of recognising achievement with young people had not started, for example:

'Since our Certificate of Achievement has not actually happened, [and the process leading up to its production had not been in place either] there's no evidence of benefits... and any potential benefits will be highly dependent on the value given by end-users to the certificate.' (Local Authority Representative)

7.3 In these projects, any results of the development work were identifiable largely in terms of staff development:

'Although we've not got it to the level of pupils yet, we've got ourselves sorted out and have worked through a lot of the issues, and we all agree what we're trying to do.' (Principal Teacher)

Overview of the range of positive benefits

7.4 All other projects reported a range of positive benefits arising from the development work they had undertaken. Young people, their parents and school staff shared the view that key benefits had been: improvements in confidence and self-esteem; better team work and communication skills; and greater understanding of themselves and their achievements.

7.5 Three projects involved the provision of a rich experience, whether a single enterprise event, a week's programme at a college or a half-day a week off-site experience over 10 weeks, which made a strong impact on many young people. In analysing the data on benefits for young people it proved impossible for either the research team or the projects to say what exactly was the balance of contribution to the benefits noted in and by the young people in these three projects between the effect of the actual rich experience that they had encountered and the effect of the process of reflecting on and recognising achievement.

7.6 As can be seen later in this section, however, there was a key difference in that although certain benefits (such as increased pupil confidence) were noted across

almost all projects, where the project had much more of a focus on recognising achievement and had spent more time on this process, pupils were also able to use the language of achievement, ie talk without much prompting about what they had achieved, how they had reflected on it and what it might mean to them.

The views of pupils

- 7.7 Almost all responses from pupil groups and questionnaires in the three projects which had focused on providing additional rich experiences for pupils reported the development of a range of core skills, such as confidence and team work. The following examples are from S3 and S5 pupils:

'I'm more confident in myself with people I don't know'

'My teacher saw that I've become more confident and I do stuff more'

'I thought it might help, that's why I said I'd do it, I was really shy and nervous, everyone noticed a change in confidence in me, I can speak to anyone now, speak properly.'

Would you take that certificate to a job? 'Aye, shows you can work in a team, you'd be more confident because of it.'

'Working in a team alongside new people, I can do it now'.

- 7.8 Pupils in these three projects thought their communication skills were improved, and that this could help them be more tolerant of others and might spill over into school and social situations:

'Communicate with people better, get on with them better, trying things I wouldn't maybe try, learn no tae judge folk cos you're stuck with them and you've got to get on with it.'

'gave me confidence in speaking in English, in other classes and in clubs outside school'.

- 7.9 The experience might lead to increased commitment to learning:

'I'm stickin in at school, at classes now'

'The skills you get, like being confident and not giving up, they're good, but you need qualifications, too, for employers to want you... so it's made me get back to school and try a bit more.'

- 7.10 Perhaps the other most commonly reported benefit was an improvement in self-esteem as pupils recognised the importance of their own achievements and saw that others, too, valued them:

'I had to do a presentation to people from Dundee, I would never have been able to do it before, I did pretty well and I felt quite proud of myself'

'My year head and my guidance teacher, they asked how I got on, they were really proud I'd stuck at it, I was proud of myself.'

- 7.11 Other projects had a clear focus on the process of 'recognising achievement' rather than on the provision of a rich experience and in this situation children and young people reported similar benefits to those just outlined but were, in addition, able to use

some of the language of achievement and recognition and to report a number of gains:

- better understanding of themselves and an ability to express this:
'I can confidently say what I've done'; 'helps us pick out the positive things about ourselves, not just the negatives'; 'I can get my words out and be some proof of what I've done'; 'more confidence to express my achievements'. (S1 pupils)
- a broader understanding of what 'achievement' might mean:
'things you do on a daily basis and do without thinking are stuff that arctuarly (sic) you achieved from'; 'realise not all my achievements have to be in school to go up on the achievers' board' (S1 pupils)
- a perception that achievement can lead to more achievement:
'it can give me more confidence to take part in other activities to grow my achievements.' (S3 pupil)
- it might be useful in the future:
'It may be that someone's achievement could be an attractive quality to an employer and that they wouldn't know this otherwise'; 'in proof to my future employer that I did well'. (S2 pupil)

7.12 One senior student had already benefited from the project:

'I have been able to account all my achievements and use them for college and work interviews'. (S6 pupil)

7.13 The perception of the possible value of recognising achievement in the future was not confined to secondary school pupils:

'I will be more likely to talk more about myself in a job interview.' (P7).

7.14 While older pupils expected to use their experience of recognising achievement in creating a CV or personal statement for university, there was also some scepticism about the value of a record of achievement for entry to higher education:

'I don't think they'd be that useful because when you leave school universities are more interested in your exams than what you are achieving'. (S6 pupil)

7.15 And for young people in projects that were more focused on immediate learning, there could be less of a long-term perspective:

'will use these skills at school but not when I leave.' (S4 pupil)

7.16 It could be a way of letting children and young people tell others in their lives about what they were doing:

'Will help me because the teachers will get to know me better'; 'so the teachers could know what you are like outside school'. (P7 and S1)

'it has been useful to me because my teachers and friends know what I am like out of school and my parents and friends know what I am like in school.'
(S2 pupil)

The views of parents

7.17 Only a small number of parents, in two projects, were sufficiently involved and knowledgeable to comment, but they also noted similar results: by far the most common gain reported was in self-confidence, but other benefits such as improved team work, ability to communicate, planning and self-knowledge were also observed by parents in their children:

'She's more able to communicate the meaning of achievement and what it says about her as a person.'

'She's got confidence she can achieve things, particularly in things outwith the academic.'

'Other achievements outside academic learning teach him how to live, enjoy life and be a good person.'

The views of teachers and school managers

7.18 As well as the gains they noted for the pupils themselves, teachers and school managers also pointed to a positive impact on relationships between staff and pupils:

'The school report now includes a bit about achievement, it means as guidance teachers we've got something more to talk about, it's encouraged good dialogue, it's good to know what kind of things they think they've achieved.' (Principal Teacher Pupil Support)

7.19 Some schools reported a change of mind-set among some staff who were now able to take a more positive view of pupils who had previously been seen as difficult or uninterested. There was also a suggestion that the overall atmosphere in one school had lifted:

'a feeling of fun as the positive is focused on instead of the negative'.

7.20 Teaching was also thought to be more effective because of increased dialogue between teachers and pupils, for example on the four capacities:

'The first years are really familiar with the 4 capacities now and what they mean, and teachers are drawing this out in lessons – HMIE noticed how confidently pupils could talk about the capacities and illustrate when they were learning them.' (Headteacher)

7.21 A final benefit for school staff of involvement in the projects resulted from the collaborative element of the development work:

'I've been working with people I've just said 'hello' to in the staff room, and finding out about what pupils are learning in other subjects, not just my own.' (Teacher)

8 ADVICE FROM THE PILOT PROJECTS

- 8.1 Towards the end of the research interviews and group discussions in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects, staff were asked what advice they would give to another school starting to develop recognition of achievement. Pupils were asked the same question and, in addition, to describe what, for them, would make the process of reflection and recording effective and specifically '*what was done well?*' and '*what could have been done better?*'. Finally projects were asked '*what needs to be in place to take recognition of achievement forward? what support and development is needed?*'
- 8.2 The section summarises staff and pupil responses: it does not aim to present 'good practice' but rather to report what the projects (staff and pupils) themselves thought they had learned based on their own particular experience of the process of developing recognition of achievement. Some of this reinforces points made in earlier sections of this report.

A broad rather than a narrow process

- It is worth taking the time to bring others on board, particularly other members of school staff, discussing and agreeing a shared definition and purpose. In retrospect most projects would have liked to have done more work that would have actually involved parents rather than merely informed them.
- Employers, too, are key to the process if one of the key aims is to give proof of achievement that school leavers might use as part of the selection process. Attempts in the projects to engage with employers had largely failed. Project staff thought they needed to be brought on board at an early stage. (Data on the views of employers and end-users can be found in the next section.)
- Recognising achievement should be seen as a process that lots of different people get involved in: not just pastoral care staff, but all staff; not just in PSE, but in all subjects; not just pupil/teacher reflections but pupil/peer, pupil/parent, pupil/family, pupil/best friend, pupil/buddy reflection and recording of achievement.
- Recognising achievement should not just be teacher-led: '*when you give students responsibility, you'll really get things happening.*'
- Ensure pupil ownership. This was a principle that projects accepted but had had difficulty in implementing in practice.

Getting started

- Identify the strengths and needs of the school and its community: build on existing approaches to recognising achievement and link into other work such as Personal Learning Planning, Assessment is for Learning, co-operative learning, enterprise in education etc.
- Tailor the development of recognition of achievement in ways that will help to meet other development needs of the school. Make sure recognising achievement is one of the three priority areas under the School Quality Improvement Plan and that it is in the implementation plan for pastoral care/pupil support and built into PSE time.
- Be prepared to adapt (almost no project did exactly what it had planned).
- '*It takes longer than you think to get it going.*' Recognising achievement needs developed over a sustained period of time. It may need a year's lead in – but it is important that something concrete is actually happening in that time so that pupils can be positive and convince other pupils, their parents and their teachers.

- Keep the initial development small and manageable: *'a big project is not do-able in the current climate with Curriculum for Excellence making lots of demands'*.
- Start at the beginning of the school year and have an actual timetable with milestones. Support through CPD in August for the new session and provide support materials if required.

Leadership

- Devolve support and leadership (including to pupils, for example, S6 buddies).
- Devolve/disperse/delegate management tasks as much as possible but use quality measures to keep an overview, for example, review of records and getting feedback from staff and pupils.

Identifying and monitoring achievement

- Measure the richness of pupils' experiences at an individual level and ensure appropriate opportunities for achievement exist for all.
- Develop monitoring systems for pupils (tracking their achievements) and staff (tracking their involvement in supporting and recognising the wider achievements of pupils).

Embedding the process

- While one project can't drive the whole school, it is worth considering structural change to really embed new developments into the school (for example, in secondary school altering the timetable to create space for recognising achievement).

Reflection and recording

- Pupils need to reflect while the experience is relatively fresh; in fact, reflection on achievement should be built into the 'rich experiences' or the 'opportunities for achievement' as they happen.
- Reflection needs to be youth-friendly and imaginative, and recording should not degenerate into a paper exercise.
- **For pupils**, effective reflection and recording of achievement would have the following features:
 - knowing why you were doing it: *'mostly we didn't know what it was about'*; they should *'let us know right at the beginning, but we did find out by the end'*;
 - start early: *'starting part way through S6 was too late for most of us, we'd filled in our forms... but it would be better to start much earlier'*; *'from the beginning of primary, and we could be able to look back at all our achievements from then until we left the Academy'*;
 - it should be regular: *'we only had a few sessions until it was completely forgotten'*;
 - but not too often: *'it got boring, every week you had to do it'*; *the worst bit was 'filling in the diary every day' or 'keeping up with the booklets all the time'*;
 - or too detailed: *'filling in EVERYTHING'*;
 - it should be current: *'Every 4 months is too long, should be every month or else you forget'*; the worst bit was *'trying to think what you had done weeks ago'*;
 - there should be different ways of recording: *'too much writing'*; *'less boxes'*; *'some of the stuff filling in boxes tested my patients [sic]'*; *'you could speak to your friends and they could write it down for you and help you and you could do the same for them.'*; *'boxes are confusing, easier just to talk to people and bullet point your achievements'*; *'more pictures'*. There were mixed views on the use of a DVD

camera: *'really liked making the cool videos about ourselves'*; worst bit was *'getting imbarressed [sic] and turning red in front of the camera'*;

- the end product could be different: *'there could be an achievement room which you could visit to see yourself and what others have done'*; *'having a book of all your own achievements that you can write in any time and take home'*; *'on computer'*; and, more pointedly, *'if this is for the future, why is it on paper?'*;
- doing it with others: *'your friends can really help you see things you can't see about what you've done'*; *'if you hear other people saying what they've done and you understand and think of other things yourself'*;
- but making sure it could be disclosed only to people you wanted to see it: the worst bit was *'other people seeing what you'd written and laughing'*.

Certificates and portfolios

- At transition points throughout a school career from P1 to S6 it is important to consider what the different end-users need and to focus recording on this, that is, to consider what others will value seeing as well as the value to the individual.
- The electronic format is the way forward but needs to be creative and imaginative and match the type of technology that young people are familiar with and expecting.
- Where IT was central to recognising achievement processes it was important to involve specialist IT staff at very early stages.
- But it was also important not to let 'what IT can and can't do' be the driver but to hold on to the key purposes and outcomes of recognising achievement (ie IT should follow and build on a secure process of reflection and review and not lead it).
- If a certificate is to be produced then it would be of little or no value if end-users do not accept it, and this should be clarified before major work is undertaken on producing a record of achievement.
- There were mixed views about whether there should be a national model for recording achievement (we discuss this in the final section of the report).

Taking recognition of achievement forward: support and development needs

8.3 Staff identified a range of areas that they thought required further training and support. These included:

- training for teachers in how to draw out young people's achievements and identify the skills and qualities demonstrated in different experiences;
- guidance for teachers and others on how to support and train young people to pull out and frame elements of their achievements and explain them to possible employers, training providers, colleges or universities (perhaps through the use of role play);
- training for teachers on how to help young people assess the contents of their achievement portfolio to see if there was sufficient evidence to get proof of achievement if the young person wished it. Assessing a portfolio of evidence against different forms of accreditation was a task that staff expected to find difficult, given that they were used to assessing against one set of criteria and did not currently have the expertise to choose which accreditation vehicle to use depending on the strength of the evidence;
- development by pupils, teachers and parents of the skills needed to work with an electronic portfolio ie building, structuring, recording, accessing, uploading and downloading;

- pupil and staff development materials and strategies to support understanding of the transferability of skills across different contexts;
- although careers advisers in their individual and group work with young people often focus on identifying the wider achievements of young people, familiarisation and training for them on the use of achievement information would be helpful;
- while the involvement of Community Learning and Development staff in recognising achievement processes was thought to be a valuable addition to school based work, they, too, might need familiarisation with the purposes and processes of recognising achievement.

9 END-USERS' RESPONSES TO RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Aims of the field work with potential end-users

- 9.1 The first stages of the evaluation of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects found that around half of projects were, or were envisaging, developing certificates or statements of achievement for students intending to leave school. They were concerned, however, whether such documents would have credibility with possible end-users and if they would use them in their recruitment and selection of young people. The Scottish Government therefore commissioned an additional element as part of the national evaluation to investigate the value of some sort of record of achievement to potential end-users. This additional research involved employers, training providers, and colleges in three localities in Scotland, universities across Scotland, and careers advisers and Jobcentre Plus staff as intermediary users. A total of 48 individuals were interviewed; details of those consulted can be found in the methodology section of this report (section 1.12 para 4). This research should not be considered as a large scale consultation: the findings reflect the responses of those who contributed to the research and while the data are likely to be indicative of current practice, they are not drawn from a representative sample.
- 9.2 We use the term 'end-users' to mean the training providers, employers, college and university staff interviewed; it does not include careers advisers and Jobcentre Plus staff whose views are reported separately.
- 9.3 Potential end-users were asked about:
- how they select school leavers, if they considered young people's achievements and how (and what) achievement information was gathered or received;
 - their reaction to certificates or profiles of achievement, using as specific examples three approaches trialled as part of work of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects;
 - their response to the model of the Recognising Achievement process;
 - their reaction to the idea of an e-portfolio of young people's achievements;
 - how they recognised the achievement of their young trainees/workers/ students and whether such approaches could build on the process of recognising achievement undertaken in schools.
- 9.4 Intermediate users (careers advisers and Jobcentre Plus staff) were asked to comment from their experience on:
- how training providers, employers, colleges and universities might respond to the questions above;
 - the possible contribution of recognition of achievement, certificates of achievement and an e- portfolio of achievement to their own guidance and job-matching roles.
- 9.5 It quickly became apparent in the interviews that end-users did not use the term 'achievement' or 'recognising achievement' and it did not appear meaningful to them. They generally prefaced 'achievement' with another word such as 'wider', 'broader' or 'other' or talked about the need to 'recognise achievements more broadly'. In this section, therefore, we have adopted the convention to (*wider*) *achievement* to reflect more accurately how the end-users thought and talked about recognising achievement.

The current selection processes of end-users

- 9.6 There were both similarities and differences in how the different end-users (training providers, employers, colleges and universities) conducted their selection processes.

Paper based processes: application forms and CVs

- 9.7 All end-users involved in this research used some type of paper format, usually an application form; for some small employers, the 'application form' was expected to be a CV or letter. The forms asked for information on educational qualifications but applicants also had opportunities to include details of their (wider) achievements; These ranged from a section on achievements in the Individual Learning Plan completed by careers advisers (in discussion with young people), and provided to training providers running work preparation programmes (Life Skills and Get Ready for Work), through standard employer and college application forms including a section on 'hobbies and interests' and/or 'any other information in support of your application', to the personal statement section of the UCAS form for university undergraduate courses.

Interviews

- 9.8 Interviewing was not part of the selection process of all end-users and where it was an element in selection, not all applicants would be offered an interview. The research focused particularly on the interviewing aspect of the selection process since this was the point where records of (wider) achievement were more likely to be used.
- 9.9 Training providers interviewed all applicants for Life Skills, Get Ready For Work and most applicants for training courses. For jobs at craft and technical level, employers' offer of an interview depended on applicants having the specified academic qualifications. Employers sometimes also required them to perform satisfactorily in a trade or aptitude test or a group assessment and/or delivering a presentation and/or having satisfactory references; these might be used as a filtering device to select applicants for interview or as additional to interviews. Employers recruiting outwith these levels generally interviewed unless very many more applications were received than there were posts available.
- 9.10 Practice in colleges varied, with some interviewing at all levels of courses while others conducted interviews at only the lower levels. In some cases applicants were invited to the college department and given an informal interview; this was not a compulsory part of the selection process but attendance at such an event was used as one measure of motivation. Depending on the subject, selection processes in colleges might involve some kind of group assessment and/or giving a presentation or performing a task relevant to the course.
- 9.11 The use of interviews by universities was limited. Generally, interviews or other face-to-face contact were used only in relation to vocational or professional courses (sometimes because this was a condition of the professional body) or courses in the creative industries or courses which have a strong performance element. Interviews might be also be used in exceptional cases where there was something unclear about an individual application.

References

9.12 Students' references from their school played a part in all undergraduate selection and for most college courses (although for some courses this was *after* interview rather than *before*), Colleges selecting for preparatory level courses might seek references, but this was not generally for selection but to identify potential support needs and issues. Employers and training providers recruiting at craft or technician level and above generally wanted references. Employers not seeking references – the smaller companies – did so either because they preferred to judge young people through a work trial or because they would not put a great deal of weight on a school reference, believing that performance and commitment in school did not greatly relate to what might be demonstrated in the workplace. For training providers selecting for work preparation courses such as Life Skills and Get Ready for Work programmes; the Individual Learning Plan provided useful background information on the barriers and challenges that applicants faced which they used to help them tailor training appropriately.

Obtaining information on young people's achievements

9.13 End-users obtained information on young people's (wider) achievements in a number of ways including application forms or CVs, presentations, Record of Achievement folders, school references and interviews. Some also gathered information on young people's achievements via the presentations or tasks which applicants to some jobs and to vocational or professional or creative or performance courses were asked to carry out.

9.14 Some college courses noted that schools in their locality were encouraging their pupils to come to interview with a folder of (wider) achievements:

'The vast majority come with some Record of Achievement, anything from a folder to the full Personal Learning Plan.'

'Most applicants to the sport course bring in a sort of record of achievement to the interview, it includes details of sports, voluntary work, work experience, and they could include photos of them in sports. It's useful if they can bring in an actual report from a [work experience] employer.'

9.15 A physical example of (wider) achievement was the request of one employer:

'We hope that young people bring in any certificates they've got with them to interview... we ask them to bring in information about a project they've done, preferably a craft or technology project, but science is also OK.' (Employer)

9.16 School references sometimes included details of pupils' (wider) achievements but end-users noted that this was very variable, depending on the school and on the extent to which the teacher completing the report knew the pupil.

9.17 Selection interviews were the most important way in which most end-users found out about young people's (wider) achievements. Sometimes a direct question was used:

'Tell me about something you're proud of, something you've achieved'

9.18 More commonly, information on (wider) achievement was sought through competence based questions:

'We ask things like 'tell me about a time when you had to deal with difficult people' or 'give me an example of when you had to organise or plan something' or 'tell me about how you react to working with people you don't know.' (Employer)

'How do you think you would deal with an old person in a residential home who was sitting crying?'; 'What would you do if you thought someone had been treated unfairly?' That's the kind of things we ask, we hope they'll illustrate from their own experience when they answer.' (College)

Use made of young people's (wider) achievements in selection

9.19 For all end-users in this research, other than universities, (wider) achievement information in application forms or CVs was used to inform interview questions and to prompt young people to speak about their achievements and interests: it was not used as a filter to eliminate applicants. In terms of references, evidence of general motivation, commitment, work disciplines (such as attendance and timekeeping) and attitudes to learning or training were the key aspects looked for; in addition, any indication of experience or commitment that was particularly relevant for the job or course was seen as helpful.

9.20 In the case of universities, (wider) achievements reported in personal statements did play a part in selection but did so in different ways depending on the type of course and the profile of the university.

9.21 In a number of undergraduate professional/vocational courses, the personal statements were screened by central admissions staff and those not demonstrating relevant experience (according to criteria laid down by academic selectors) would be rejected at this stage.

9.22 The use of (wider) achievement and other information in the personal statement of applicants for academic courses varied across universities. At one end were some universities (commonly 'recruiting' universities) with centralised admissions systems where personal statements were read thoroughly against criteria such as *'writing ability, work experience, reasons for choosing the programme, enthusiasm for the course, do they look as if they've done any research, can the personal statement confirm a real interest?'* If the personal statement was found wanting, it was referred to academic selectors for further consideration; if it was acceptable then the applicant would be made an immediate offer if academic qualifications were in order. At the other end were 'selector' universities which largely made decisions based on academic qualifications:

'We're less and less looking at applications beyond checking required academic grades and only glance at personal statements, at least for academic courses. Basically, so long as something is written there that's all we're interested in.'

9.23 Overall, the end-users that gave a considerable amount of weight to young people's (wider) achievements were largely the vocational or professional or creative or performance courses at university; college courses at higher levels; larger employers with more structured selection and training mechanisms and training providers where they were recruiting to Modern Apprenticeships:

'Professional courses are interested in outside experience to get an indication of the applicant's motivation, realism and experience – we assess that from the personal statement and references.' (University)

'We like to consider youth organisation involvement, or anything that shows commitment from a young age or group activities with formal structures and some recognition.' (College)

'We take account of wider achievements at the interview stage, we're keen to choose those who are trying to improve their life experience, are volunteers, helping others, broadening their life, not playing computer games all night... though we wouldn't completely discount them, but it would go against them, be seen as a lack of motivation. They need to be seen to be proactive in developing themselves in anything. We're interested in how they approached their learning at school, in what they do in clubs, community projects. Mind you, need to take it with a pinch of salt, everybody can't be the captain of the football team!' (Employer)

- 9.24 However it must be emphasised that (wider) achievements were only considered by universities and by college courses and employers recruiting at a higher level, if the essential academic requirements had been met:

Wider achievement information is 'a good addition, but only an addition, it says what additional skills the applicant will bring but it is only after academic criteria are met, and probably only in borderline cases.' (University)

'We don't even consider other information, don't even get details of those who apply unless they pass the online screening for academic qualifications and the aptitude test... so wider achievement information is really important, but only after the other things have been met.' (Employer)

- 9.25 Where a university was a 'selector' (wider) achievements carried less weight:
'There's very little interest from academic subject areas in anything other than academic grades.' (University)

- 9.26 Another factor that made it difficult for university admissions staff giving much weight to (wider) achievements was the speed of turnaround required for application decisions. Most universities (particularly 'recruiters' which were under pressure to secure enough good applicants) were aiming for a decision on applications within a week. In such a situation, taking into account apparently more subjective information that is difficult to weigh up would make demands of staff time that were just not viable. This is not to say that the potential contribution of (wider) achievement information was not recognised by admissions staff but rather that the practical context in which they operated would not allow it.

- 9.27 Small employers and those without an elaborate selection mechanism did value a broader picture of young people's achievements but tended to rely more on their judgment and 'gut feeling' in interview. Like the larger ones, they were most keen to get young people with the right attitudes and work discipline, and valued (wider) achievements particularly as evidence of motivation and commitment. Also given a small workforce, it was critical that a new entrant had the social and personal skills to fit in, so considerable time might be taken to get to know the young person more fully.
'I'd look at all certificates or sources of evidence. I'd ask what interested the youngster, what turned them on, you've got to find a connection, a way into how the youngster's thinking, a link to them, a shared interest, if they're going to fit in. It's a big investment for a small company, so we need to invest wisely. I'd take time to check out a new piece of equipment and recruiting is a huge commitment so invest in that, too....' (Employer)

- 9.28 Academic qualifications were less important than (wider) achievements for these employers, and so, too, were school references. Instead, an interview with a young person who demonstrated the right attitudes and work discipline could well be

followed by a work trial during which the young person could really be assessed. Jobcentre Plus staff also noted the importance of job trials for small employers.

Relevance and use of (wider) achievement in selection

- 9.29 End-users were asked about the relevance and value of (wider) achievement in their recruitment and selection of young people and about a tangible record of the achievement process.
- 9.30 There was strong support from end-users for the development of approaches in schools to the recognition of (wider) achievement:
'Wider achievement could make a difference to young people, it suggests opening up of the boundaries, more challenging, lifts everything up a level.' (Training provider)
- 'Anything that helps school pupils reflect on their achievements, feel good about themselves and get ready for success in the next stage of their lives has to be good.'* (College)
- 9.31 They were supportive of processes that would help young people to reflect on and record their (wider) achievements and that would support them in the three elements of the recognising achievement process (ie understanding, explaining and proving, (para 5.19 in this report). Virtually all end-users considered that helping young people to develop their capacity to understand and explain their (wider) achievements were the most important and valuable aspects of the recognising achievement process; the proving element was generally considered a less critical part of the process. Nevertheless they did think that a tangible record that summarised or pulled together the outcomes of a process that young people had gone through would be useful both for young people and themselves.
- 9.32 Some of the issues that arose under these headings are now described.

Understanding

- 9.33 End-users generally thought that many young people seemed to be unsure what constituted (wider) achievement, to lack understanding of how widely that could be defined and therefore to fail to recognise their achievements and/or to lack sufficient confidence to believe they could achieve:
'It's particularly important they recognise other achievements beyond the classroom. But they also need to understand the value of less visible things like babysitting, walking the dog, not just the tangible outcomes like the Duke of Edinburgh award.' (Training provider)
- '95% of young people don't see any of the non-formal things as achievements – maybe that's a particularly Scottish thing. On the one hand you don't get loud mouths, so maybe that's good... but they don't put themselves forward because they don't use or value their ability.'* (Employer)
- 9.34 Nevertheless, three respondents – university admissions, an employer and a Training Provider (Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships) – did note the need to ensure that encouraging students to recognise their (wider) achievements should include developing the ability to be realistic and balanced in their estimation of their (wider) achievements and aspirations.

- 9.35 A related perspective was the view expressed by some employers and most college staff in this research that school references should include information about students' weaknesses as well as their strengths. Similarly, Training Providers and college staff recruiting to work preparation programmes wanted information on young people's potential barriers to learning or gaining employment as well as on their (wider) achievements so that they could design appropriate provision.

Explaining

- 9.36 End-users across the different sectors thought that a key benefit of the recognising (wider) achievement process would be if it improved young people's ability to explain their achievements, both in person and on paper:
- 'Young people straight from school find it very difficult to explain their achievements.'* (Employer)
- 'They're useless at explaining, ill prepared, haven't thought about questions or that they might have to pick up on what they've put in an application form... but on the other hand, for a lot of kids this is their first interview and some of them are third generation unemployed...'* (College)
- 9.37 The use of competency based questions in interviews, a common approach across all sectors, seemed to be particularly challenging for young people. The ability to answer these seemed to depend on both *understanding* and *explaining*: young people had to understand their own (wider) achievements, what skills these demonstrated and how they could be transferred to another context; and then to be able to articulate this in ways that related to the specific context of the job, course or training programme:
- 'Young people struggle to answer these questions, like 'tell me about something you're motivated to do... how do you or would you work with someone with a different point of view... what changes might you have to make in yourself to be successful?'* (Training provider)
- 'It's really hard, they've got to trawl through their own achievements and really think under the surface... they don't seem to have had much practice at looking beyond the things they've done to the skills and approaches these demonstrate, or to be able to say what they learned from it and link it to the questions. A question that starts 'tell me about a time when...' has to be quite specific for youngsters and you often have to give examples because they get stuck.'* (Employer)
- 9.38 But end-users also identified the need for 'authenticity' in any explanation. Any support provided by schools should be done in a way that retained the individual's 'personal voice':
- 'The section in the application form where wider achievements could be added is often done poorly. And even if schools do help to suggest interesting things to put in, it can be counter-productive if the youngster can't explain or speak to them; because they didn't fill it in themselves, they can't tell you about it. And teachers tend to encourage the use of buzz words – you know the kid didn't write that!'* (Employer)
- 9.39 It seems that this is an area where schools are likely to find themselves in a difficult position. On the one hand there was criticism from end-users that schools were not doing enough:

'Schools need to give more or better teaching about applying for jobs – applicants from Get Ready for Work programmes are better prepared. If schools are already doing this then they need to review how they are teaching it since it's obviously not going in.' (Employer)

'Schools don't teach CVs enough... and teachers don't know what questions to ask young people about their lives to find out what they've achieved.' (Employer)

'A large number of applicants are not prepared for interview.' (College)

- 9.40 But on the other hand, schools were also criticised in respect of losing 'authenticity':
'What I hate is, loads of pupils send in standard letters for jobs, CVs with all the same phrases, schools are doing too good a job, doing too much for them. Doesn't catch my interest. I always reply, but I don't really consider any of them.' (Employer)

'There's a real issue about them making stock statements or 'parroting' answers about achievement' (Training provider)

- 9.41 We return to this issue of how schools might support young people in explaining and presenting their (wider) achievements to potential recruiters in the final chapter of this report.

Proving

- 9.42 The proving aspect of the model of recognising achievement was the one element where the Collaborative Enquiry Projects differed in the importance they attached to it. It also raised concerns for them about the strength of evidence that would be required, how this might be assessed and validated and the possible negative impact on the young person's experience (para 3.35 of this report). But as we have noted, end-users placed less importance on this aspect of recognising (wider) achievement than on the other aspects of understanding and explaining. Equally they were not overly concerned about the assessment of evidence, which is explicable in terms of the main uses they saw for recognition of achievement. For most end-users, the best form of proof would be that young people could explain their (wider) achievements in a way that demonstrated real understanding of what had been involved, the skills and capacities they had gained and how they could apply them in different contexts:

'I'd want them to be able to talk about any certificates they have, I'm not interested in a collection or set of certificates but what has it actually done for them. They need to be able to reflect on it.' (University)

- 9.43 End-users did want schools to confirm applicants' academic qualifications (not simply in terms of proof but because young people sometimes could not remember what awards they had) and also welcomed the inclusion of awards such as Duke of Edinburgh, Prince's Trust and ASDAN as part of a record of achievement. But when asked specifically about the importance of any record of achievement being officially attested to or 'signed off' their main response was that it should be done by someone who knew the young person well and not, for example, the headteacher of their school or someone at the local authority level. Knowing who had signed it and the school it came from, and being able to trust their judgement, was important in deciding how much credibility to give to it. End-users were also likely to give weight to their own ability in interview to establish the truthfulness of the content of a record of achievement:

'Teacher endorsement is important to a certain extent, but I'd be inclined to take a young person's word for it and would know through the answers to the questions I asked whether they were exaggerating.' (Employer)

9.44 With few exceptions, formal processes of assessment of those (wider) achievements listed in any certificate were not an issue.

9.45 A specific point which was raised by training providers was how evidence of young people's (wider) achievements in soft skills might be provided; this reflected dissatisfaction with the core skills profile:

'The certification of core skills as part of Standard Grades and Highers... they're very over-estimated in formal certification, especially communication skills. Standard Grades don't give a good picture of the level of the young person in the subject area and in the core skills.' (Training provider)

Relevance and use of (wider) achievement in career guidance and job-matching

9.46 This section considers the views of careers advisers from Skills Development Scotland and staff from Jobcentre Plus on the relevance and use of (wider) achievement information in career guidance and job-matching. Given that careers advisers no longer have a direct role in matching young people to jobs with employers, the careers advisers interviewed focused on how recognition of achievement might contribute to their guidance role. In the case of Jobcentre Plus who only give targeted help to 16-19 year olds in receipt of hardship payments, their views generally related to over 18s.

Careers advisers

9.47 Careers advisers saw it as their role and part of their skills as guidance professionals, to draw out from young people positive information about (wider) achievements and to highlight skills and abilities. Recognising (wider) achievement could be seen, therefore, as having a very close link to careers advisers' aims and practice. They saw the recognition of achievement as important for a range of young people:

'Wider achievements are a particularly important part of our job with young people who need More Choices More Chances.'

'Schools should give more attention to the ones who 'toe the line' and would particularly benefit from a greater focus on recognising their achievements, they can be overlooked in school.'

'In my experience, young people with lower academic qualifications but with a lot going on in their lives like hobbies, interests, voluntary work, are easier to help find an opportunity than those who have much more going for them academically, but have not much else. Recognition of achievement might encourage able young people like this to get a better balance, get more involved, become more employable, and help them to realise they need to build up their achievements throughout university, it's not just about getting a good degree.'

9.48 The careers advisers interviewed typically had little information on young people's achievements prior to interview: pre-interview questionnaires were not used, and school reports or access to guidance information were only available in exceptional cases. The extent to which careers advisers were able to identify and incorporate information on (wider) achievements into their career guidance role was, therefore, heavily dependent on the time they had available, on the extent to which the young

person understood and could explain their achievements and on the skills of the individual adviser in drawing the information out.

- 9.49 Careers advisers thought their effectiveness would be improved if young people were more able to recognise their own (wider) achievements and if careers advisers had some form of information or access to (wider) achievement information on individual clients. If this happened, achievement information could be used to help them get a better understanding of the young person, leading to better guidance and helping them to develop their young clients' confidence:

'It would help to build up a relationship, you could start by talking about something positive like their achievements and you could use it to help with the contracting element of the Career Planning Journey [ie the point at which the client and adviser agree the purpose and aim of the interview and assess where the client is in career planning].'

'If you could see a portfolio of achievements, you could look for building blocks to match into appropriate jobs and to check if they've got the right things for the jobs and courses they are aiming for... it would be useful to put the client into perspective, recording life history, maybe the client is just having a bad year and you could point to what they had achieved earlier and give them encouragement for their future plans.'

- 9.50 Three current developments in Skills Development Scotland clearly relate to developments in recognising achievement:
- policy in the organisation is moving toward a 'strengths based' approach to skill development and this will apply also to approaches to career guidance and employability development;
 - careers advisers have recently completed the pilot of a Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) profiling tool and an SCQF Mapping Guide. Careers advisers have trialled this tool by working with a small number of school pupils (generally those in the More Choices More Chances group) to identify their wider achievements and to make a notional benchmark against SCQF level 4 core skills;
 - development work is at an early stage in SDS on an e-portfolio, My Learning Space, designed for post-school young people and adults.

Jobcentre Plus staff

- 9.51 Personal advisers in Jobcentre Plus, like careers advisers, needed to know more about their clients – not only formal qualifications but also soft skills and job aspirations. This information helped with appropriate job-matching. While new advisers could use a customer assessment tool developed to support them which includes guidance on how to access information about skills and achievements demonstrated in a non-formal setting, it would be useful if young clients had been through a process of recognising their (wider) achievements and so to be more able to articulate them; a tangible record of achievement would also be welcomed.
- 9.52 Jobcentre Plus staff thought that the perspective of employers would be highly variable, dependent on size, sector and the views of the individual selector. Some would ask for relevant formal qualifications, most for evidence of softer skills and experience that showed applicants had an interest in the job area.

- 9.53 Information on applicants' (wider) achievements would be most helpful to employers if it combined academic or vocational qualifications with information on the applicant's social and personal achievements.

Recognition of achievement in post-school training, work and learning

- 9.54 End-users were asked whether and how they recognised the (wider) achievements of their young trainees, workers and learners and whether recognition of achievement in school might link into their practices. There were a number of similarities between how Collaborative Enquiry Projects recognised achievement and how end-users did so, and some of the issues they had to consider were common.

Most end-users had some system of review and development:

- training providers held regular reviews of a young person's Training Plan against agreed objectives; in the case of Life Skills and Get Ready for Work programmes this was linked to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence;
- colleges used Personal Development Plans or Personal Learning Plans based on a personal profile and aims and objectives; they were also moving towards a link to the four CfE capacities;
- larger employers with training departments had 12-weekly reviews;
- smaller employers kept a regular paper record of tasks and skills achieved;
- universities were working with Personal Development Plans in different ways, depending on the department, (one university was recording and recognising achievement using IT, with students adding information on achievements in work placements as they were undertaken).

- 9.55 The majority of end-users who took part in this research were actively considering recording (wider) achievements and progress towards outcomes electronically – we discuss this further below.

- 9.56 There was very little evidence that (wider) achievements arising from a young person's personal or social life were drawn into these reviews and records of achievement, in this respect end-users practice differed from that of some CEPs. Instead, reflection and review was based around the learning, training and work being undertaken within the organisation.

- 9.57 Most end-users were developing a variety of approaches to providing certificates or rewards for (wider) achievement:

'We're developing our own tools with Skills Development Scotland to measure soft outcomes and we'll issue our own certificate.' (Training provider)

'Trainees' achievements are measure by the creation of a portfolio of evidence for a City and Guilds Employability Award.' (Training provider)

'Apprentices run the monthly forum, edit the newsletter which includes the activities they've been doing like sports, voluntary work, charity events. It's to help apprentices develop the ability to recognise their own successes and relate them to, and communicate them to, the business.' (Employer)

'At the end [of the programme] they'll have: a portfolio of evidence from the professional area; a PLP with met aims and objectives; and any additional college certificates, for example, for employability or citizenship. And once they've reached level 3 they tend to use photographic evidence within the portfolio. For

SVQ3 and above we have an awards ceremony, in-house competitions, prizes, they get certificates and rewards.' (College)

Challenges in recognising achievement

9.58 End-users shared the concerns of the CEPs about the value and credibility of recognition of (wider) achievement:

'We do a lot to develop them, and we give them a certificate for absolutely everything, one for each of the modules they do on the programme, for example, on anger management. We want to give them as much evidence of achievement as possible. But it's a big challenge, they achieve on Life Skills, but that needs to be recognised by society and marketed to employers and colleges.' (Training provider, Life Skills programme)

9.59 One college was doing a lot to encourage (wider) achievement but realised a need to capture the learning and recognise it:

'The Duke of Edinburgh Award is strongly promoted to students here in order to develop wider achievements and core skills. But we have no way of harnessing wider achievements at present... we know that the Personal Learning Plan is too focused on core skills in the college environment.' (College)

9.60 Another training provider echoed the concerns of CEPs and of other end-users regarding the challenge of helping young people to tackle successfully the process of identifying and recognising (wider) achievement:

'We try to get them in the mindset to recognise the value of 'ordinary' achievements right from the beginning in the organisation, recognising achievement is about broadening horizons... we do a lot of team-building on course, but it is very, very difficult to get youngsters to go beyond saying they've done teamwork, to be able to explain what was involved, what they gained from it, the skills it helped develop or the attributes that it demonstrates. It's a constant battle to get youngsters to go below the basic description of the activity.' (Training provider)

9.61 It can be seen that many end-users are struggling with similar issues to those facing CEPs in trying to recognise the (wider) achievements of young people in their organisations.

Examples of statements or records of young people's (wider) achievement

9.62 End-users noted that some form of tangible statement would be useful although, as we have previously discussed, they were most interested in young people being able to explain their (wider) achievements. This next section considers what sort of statements would be of value to end-users. Three examples that the Collaborative Enquiry Projects had used or had been considering were shown to end-users for comment. These examples were:

- Achievement Profile – a summary single A4 sheet listing achievements in each of four boxes to match with the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This Achievement Profile listed academic, school, social and personal information. It was printed against the background of the school crest and signed as accurate by a Principal Teacher of Support for Pupils. Contexts in which achievements were listed were class work, home and family, part-time employment, work experience, youth organisations, voluntary and community work, being with friends and taking part in extra-curricular school activities. Examples of achievements listed included:

- I passed my driving test first time (Successful Learner);
- I received a merit award for my enthusiasm in chemistry (Successful Learner);
- I have demonstrated self-awareness by completing my self-evaluation at the end of my report and by completing this record (Confident Individual);
- I help out at home and at my gran's with the cleaning and with the cooking (Responsible Citizen);
- I have led a group discussion in English and I also lead other, younger pupils as a Peer Supporter (Effective Contributor);
- I have passed 7 Standard Grades (Successful Learners).
- Certificate of Completion – a single sheet with the pupil name, the school crest and the logo of the employer sponsoring a one-off school-based event. This noted satisfactory completion of the tasks involved;
- a compilation of three sheets listing achievements with dates with a fourth sheet containing a personal statement. The achievements pages covered: results within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; other national accredited and locally recognised awards, for example Duke of Edinburgh Awards or First Aid Certificate; and personal achievements such as music, swimming and school responsibilities.

9.63 At this point it is necessary to separate the responses of university selectors from those of other end-users as their responses differed because undergraduate selection is tightly tied to UCAS procedures. A tangible record of (wider) achievement would be difficult to link into the UCAS system: paper attachments would need to go directly to universities and might not easily be matched with application forms; attempts to link these would be resource intensive and delay selection decisions. If tangible records were to be made directly available to universities, admissions staff thought this would have to be integrated into the UCAS application, for example, a box on the application form that applicants could tick to indicate they had additional information (held within their UCAS record) that the university could access via a web-link. Clearly such approach involving the embedding of records of (wider) achievements into the UCAS procedures would need full negotiation with UCAS. Overall, universities thought that the main use of tangible records of achievement was to help the young person with the process of producing a good quality personal statement and with preparing, if needed, for interview.

9.64 The comments of the other end-users (training providers, employers and colleges) on the three examples noted above provide indications of the key features that would make any tangible record or statement of (wider) achievement acceptable:

- quality not quantity of experience is what needs to be illustrated in such statements;
- A Certificate of Completion without any further information on the nature of the activity, the quality of the performance, the skills and qualities demonstrated and the learning achieved would carry no weight with end-users;
- end-users would need clarity on the status of any such statement. Are achievements confirmed by the school? Were the statements produced by young people themselves, with the help of someone, or by the teacher about the pupil? End-users were sceptical of any certificate which purported to be by the pupil (ie, in the first person), that did not, however, speak with the authentic voice of the young person but instead in 'teacher-speak'. Some also raised the question about school staff signing off on personal and social achievements which the school could not possible authenticate;

- such certificates should be specific and personal to the individual: an end-user receiving a number of records of achievement which used the same standard phrases would find these of limited value;
- the examples of records of (wider) achievement on which end-users commented were generic, not focused on the information needed by a selector for a particular opportunity. While most end-users valued the broader picture they got of young people, they also wanted such statements to be flexible enough to be adaptable to include information specific to the particular needs as a selector and focused on the selection criteria which they were applying;
- such a tangible record of (wider) achievement would need to be succinct and easy to read – a maximum of two pages. Of the examples viewed by end-users, a combined document with one page of SQA and national certificates plus one page of broad achievements would be most useful;
- in practical terms, the record of (wider) achievement would need to be ready in the January of the year of leaving due to the timing of selection processes for college and work;
- a number of end-users would like any record of (wider) achievement to include those aspects which might be included in a school reference such as an honest statement of attendance, timekeeping, motivation and attitude to learning.

The personal store and e-portfolios

End-users' attitudes to electronic recording

9.65 Tangible statements of achievement would, in the model of the process of recognising achievement used in this research, be drawn at relevant points from the personal store, the repository of achievement information. When we consulted young people who took part in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects about the use of such a personal store, an IT rather than a paper approach seemed the absolutely obvious way ahead from their perspective. Given the key principle of young people's ownership of the process of recognising achievement we, therefore, followed their lead and have consulted end-users on the value and possible uses of an e-portfolio rather than any paper version. Many end-users volunteered comments on whether a portfolio should be electronic or paper. The vast majority were very clear that the best approach was electronic:

'We would use it, employers would use it, this is the way forward, the culture for young people, technology. Young people would probably put more into an e-portfolio than into paper form' (Training provider)

'Prefer an e-portfolio to certificates, it's something to go in and look at rather than a fixed thing like a hard copy profile.' (College)

'Employers must have the ability to use and make sense of the information young people give them in the form they give them it. You have to recognise changing ways of communication, whether you agree or not, it's how modern young people communicate, and if we want to get the best out of them we have to take steps towards them, it's a youngster's social life, adults have to understand their responsibility to open and maintain communication.' (Employer)

9.66 Some end-users expressed concerns about an electronic portfolio: these were usually a result of their lack of confidence in their own IT skills. This applied to both employers and college staff. Even here, though, there was acknowledgement that change was inevitable:

'I'm nervous about my capacity to use IT as I'd need to in order to work well on this with young people. But my lack of confidence shouldn't hinder this being developed, the more you move along with new developments, the easier it gets.' (Employer)

- 9.67 Some were worried that young people's IT skills, also, were not as sophisticated as both adults and young people themselves assumed. This is an issue identified in other research (Howieson et al 2009). But again, end-users saw it as something to be overcome rather than to hold back developments:

'I can see from how some youngsters really struggle with on-line tests that some school leavers are just not computer literate.' (College)

'A possible disadvantage is the extent of young people's IT skills, and also the extent of tutor and employer IT skills, but that should not stop the development because of this, we just need to improve IT skills.' (College)

- 9.68 End-users' reflections on issues that schools and others would need to consider in the development of an e-portfolio produced the following:

- the need for young people to be supported in reflection;
- the importance of portfolio management skills, otherwise it could end up with a clutter of disparate items and become unmanageable, and, therefore, not used;
- the expense;
- differential use, for example, young males might make less use than young females, and the implications for equity;
- the need for some central government support for a development such as this.

- 9.69 Again, it is important to emphasise that end-users considered these were issues to be overcome rather than factors which should block development.

End-users' current or potential use of e-portfolios

- 9.70 There were examples of end-users, across all sectors, using e-portfolios and/or websites as part of their standard selection, development and management practice; and most of those not doing so were actively considering such use:

'We're just about to develop a policy on social networking with trainees... we use BEBO to keep in touch with young people since they always seem to get the use of a computer whether at a friend's house or not. And we use it to track destinations.' (Training provider)

'Duke of Edinburgh Award recording is now all online' (Training provider)

'E-portfolios fit with the VQ style of learning.' (College)

'We're very keen on the system [ie portfolio being developed by a Scottish college], just technical problems delaying the start. Students will create an e-portfolio where they build up evidence of competencies, fitting in with Curriculum for Excellence. Guidance staff are involved, and all students. It's currently a paper model.' (College)

'Staff can use a [commercially produced] e-portfolio to record all their personal development stuff – academic qualifications, the training they've been on, their hobbies and interests and how these relate to their work. There's a bit about soft skills, they can assess the level they feel they're at.' (Employer)

'We're moving to e-portfolio systems across our courses.' (University)

- 9.71 The extent of end-users' current or potential usage of e-portfolios at least partly explains their general enthusiasm for school pupils' use of e-portfolios: if young people came to them with experience of reflecting and recording online, and with portfolio design and management skills, they would be well equipped to use such approaches to continuous professional development in their organisations.

Potential use of e-portfolios/websites in end-users' selection practice

- 9.72 Accessing a full e-portfolio as part of the selection process was unlikely to be appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it is the young person's personal store, for their own use, and for them to control access. Secondly, it would be likely to be extensive and contain a mixture of content – some relevant, some not – and the experience of the National Records of Achievement (NRA) was that end-users had no time to access such a detailed document and so NRAs largely disappeared. Therefore we focused in our discussions with end-users on an approach which is being increasingly used within graduate recruitment, that is, preparing a section of the e-portfolio (specifically designed for that purpose) for an external viewer such as a selector for courses, programmes and jobs.
- 9.73 This public section might be a short collage (perhaps two minutes) consisting, for example, of relevant evidence of the young person: speaking to camera about his/her skills; leading a group challenge as seen in a DVD excerpt; designing, producing and marketing a piece of art work in stages recorded in photos; scanned certificates etc. The content would be entirely flexible, drawn from the full e-portfolio and geared to the specific course, programme or job applied for. It would be accessed by clicking on a URL. Young people would add the URL to a letter, CV, or applications form – *'if you want to know more about me, click on this link'*. Our question to end-users was, 'Is this useful? Would you use it?'
- 9.74 Most end-users spoke positively about such a URL link. Their responses suggest that this extra information about young people would be an *additional* tool in selection rather than any replacement. End-users could variously see it being used in their organisations:
- by training providers and colleges when selecting young people who had few educational qualifications and/or found difficulty in describing their achievements;
 - in universities by some professional or vocational or creative or performing courses and by 'recruiting' universities where applicants for standard undergraduate courses were borderline or where mitigating circumstances were being considered;
 - by those with high numbers of applicants (employers, training providers and colleges) when preparing a short list for interview, before or after interview and/or when considering decisions on borderline candidates;
 - advantages of its use were that: young people might be able to present themselves better in a more relaxed atmosphere than at interview; it enabled young people to use different media to present themselves rather than just in written form that some might be less good at; it would give credible information on young people's achievements (ie selectors would actually see the young person performing); it would balance the view that a selector might get at interview. Some were concerned whether they would be able to access the IT and whether all

young people would have the skills to do this. The main criteria for it being useful were that it was: informative; kept up to date; and easy to access.

- 9.75 Data protection issues might be addressed by ensuring that the weblink access was password controlled and time-limited.
- 9.76 One respondent suggested that, from a university perspective, a good time to pilot the use of such a weblink would be when the UCAS clearing system was operating. At this point universities were using clearing as a way for individuals to sell themselves and an e-portfolio link would make admissions staff's job easier since it is difficult for applicants to convey non-tangible elements to selectors. Practically, an advantage of a pilot at this time would be that it would give a relatively small cohort and a tight timescale.
- 9.77 School leavers might not, of course, seek to use their e-portfolio in selection prior to leaving or immediately after they left school. Most end-users assumed that young people would have continued access to their school e-portfolio after school, either on-line or by storing it on a memory stick.
- 9.78 While the discussions with end-users centred on the use of a public sub-section of the portfolio, a small number took the opportunity to comment on the possible value of a full e-portfolio during selection if the young person was willing to allow this access. For careers advisers, training providers and colleges selecting young people for preparatory training/courses it would be useful to have an overall view of the young person's life that might put a 'bad year' into perspective. Practically, given the chaotic life styles of some of the young people, their paper certificates or other examples of (wider) achievements might be lost and having other access to this information via an e-portfolio would be helpful. Access to the full e-portfolio might also be valuable for young people applying for creative and performance courses of higher education if earlier evidence was marginal.

End-users' potential use of an e-portfolio for young people's subsequent development in the organisation

- 9.79 If continued access to the e-portfolio which the young person had produced at school was available post-school, most end-users could see a use for it in the continuing development of young people in their organisation.
- 9.80 Training providers suggested:
- 'I could see them updating it while they were on the scheme in the same way that we help them to update their CVs.'*
- 'It could be used as an access point to trainees' earlier achievements, could link the units we offer into other assessed work in the e-portfolio and evidence a lot more by linking to another certificate eg our anger management unit linked to evidence in the e-portfolio and maybe get SCQF4 in problem-solving.'*
- 'We get young people to complete daily task sheets, at the end of the month could update the achievement portfolio.'*
- 'We would take it further, we could use an e-portfolio to link to the City and Guilds Employability Award to provide evidence through Recognition of Prior Learning of part time work and work experience they had while at school. And our trainers could support young people in creating a public face or a CV from the personal store to use when sending information to employers when we're looking to place candidates for work experience as part of Get Ready for Work.'*
- 9.81 Employers could see their young employees' e-portfolios being built on:
- 'If something is in the historical personal store that's not been already assessed it could be mapped against one of the core skills we are trying to evidence like 'working with others.'*
- 'There are many advantages, it does away with paper, assessments could be done by video and downloaded and the external verifier can actually see activity taking place and assess remotely.'*
- 9.82 Colleges, too, could see that a pre-existing e-portfolio might be valuable during a student's course:
- 'We would use it if it was easily accessed. We've created a new part of the lower preparatory courses – employability and citizenship – and will be looking at achievement to build confidence. But there's no record of this or of what they've learned, and they'll probably have done something at school we could build on.'*
- 'We could use the practice units in the care setting to add to and update the personal store for the NC level courses.'*

10 CONCLUSIONS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

10.1 Throughout this report we have noted a number of key issues and questions that emerge from the national evaluation of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects on recognising achievement in young people, and in this section we draw these together thematically. We begin by noting the main conclusions of the evaluation including some issues that the research suggests need clarification at a policy level. We then move on to describing key issues, and some questions, arising from the experience of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects in trying to put the principles of recognition of achievement into practice.

Recognition of achievement welcomed by all stakeholders

10.2 There was strong support from local authority and school staff, pupils, parents and end-users for the policy initiative to recognise pupils' achievements. This was welcomed for two main reasons. Firstly, they valued the chance to get a more rounded picture of young people's achievements beyond academic attainment; and secondly, they saw the potential of recognition of achievement to help develop young people's understanding of their own achievements, their ability to articulate these achievements and their understanding of the transferability of their skills to new contexts. Staff, pupils and parents had already seen that recognition of achievement could bring important personal benefits for young people, such as confidence, self-esteem and a commitment to their own ongoing personal development. For end-users, such an initiative had the potential to help young people to present themselves more effectively in a selection situation.

Common agreement on the conceptual model for recognising achievement

10.3 The model of recognising achievement produced as part of the research, and trialled with a range of stakeholders in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects and with end-users, seemed to provide a way forward towards a common understanding of purpose and process. Everyone, without exception, could relate to its diagrammatic representation of the key elements of Understanding, Explaining and Proving and the central role of the personal store. In addition, the model fitted well with other developments happening concurrently on the national scene, such as that being undertaken by Skills Development Scotland. It is the conclusion of the research that this model can provide a policy framework for the development of recognition of achievement.

A positive response to the idea of an e-portfolio

10.4 Across all stakeholders there was a positive response to the concept of an electronic portfolio or store of the achievement record from which the young person and others might draw for different purposes. Respondents expressed a hope that this might be taken forward. School staff perceived the GLOW intranet as the obvious host for an e-portfolio, but recognised that some central policy and resource support would be important to make this effective. Local flexibility to develop an e-portfolio within a national host was seen by them as the ideal. End-users were largely positive about the availability of a presentation section of an e-portfolio that might allow the young person to present achievement information in a range of media to end-users, although this did vary across sectors. In addition, there are currently a number of separate developments in relation to e-portfolios within different sectors and organisations in Scotland, and these are operating largely independently of each other. The evidence of the research leads to the conclusion that the Scottish Government should consider

providing the lead in ensuring some central policy and resource support and in linking and coordinating key players.

- 10.5 Potentially young people could take their e-portfolio with them after they leave school and use it as part of their development in work, training and post-school education. In our work with end-users we have identified considerable interest in this and, indeed, in how an e-portfolio developed in school might relate or link to e-portfolios being used by colleges, universities and employers. (One college, for example, suggested a project in which the college and local schools would trial the use of a common e-portfolio.) This potential for an e-portfolio to be used beyond school is another reason to pursue a dialogue on a coordinated approach to this form of recording.

Little support for a Scottish-wide Certificate of Achievement

- 10.6 While the Understanding and Explaining elements of the process of Recognising Achievement were universally accepted and seen as key, the third element, that of Proving, was more controversial. Formal certificates of achievement were being trialled in a number of projects at authority and school level, but there was concern from some of those involved in the process that 'the tail might wag the dog': care needed to be taken to ensure that the need for evidence did not drive the whole process to the detriment of the learning and personal development of young people.
- 10.7 The end-users consulted as part of the research showed little appetite for a national certificate: instead, they were more focused on young people being able to understand their skills, to explain and market their achievements in a selection setting and to realise how they could be transferred to another context. It also appears from the research with end-users is that they are more likely to make use of any end certificate (whether produced nationally, by a local authority or a school) as an indicator of the wider interests and skills/personality of an applicant and as a guide at interview than to give weight to it as formal confirmation of a young person's skills.
- 10.8 An explanation of the status and possible uses of any certificate of achievement would also be helpful in clarifying certain confusions. Some end-users saw a certificate of achievement as fulfilling the function of a reference ie giving a balanced view and confirming issues such as timekeeping and attendance, but as developed in the Collaborative Enquiry Projects it instead has more of the function of a personal statement, with a focus on providing an overall picture of strengths. Critically, those producing a certificate of achievement need to decide whether it is to be more like a personal statement or more similar to a reference. Otherwise there is a danger of it falling between two stools.
- 10.9 End-users' use of information on young people's wider achievements varied depending on their sector, the level of opportunity for which they were recruiting and their pre-existing selection processes. Given these differences, it is unlikely that a single format for the provision of any information would be appropriate.
- 10.10 This research, particularly that element conducted with end-users, was small in scale and the results should be seen as only indicative of responses. However, the conclusions suggest that development work on an e-portfolio might be a more useful initiative to take forward than a national certificate.

Clear guidance on key principles required

- 10.11 Part of the rationale for recognition of achievement is that, as stated in Building the Curriculum 3, '*... young people in Scotland are already involved in a range of activities, both in and out of school and college, and have developed skills and capacities for which they are not currently gaining recognition*' (SG 2008 p45).
- 10.12 Also, as we have noted, a number of principles that should govern the recognition of achievement have been set out (para 1.5 of this report); these include:
- the focus must be on learning and reflection, not on activities;
 - learners must have ownership of their achievements and what they choose to include;
 - any approach must support young people at risk of disengagement and in need of more choices, more chances and must not widen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged.
- 10.13 These principles have raised complex and sometimes contradictory issues for the projects as they have sought to develop provision. The projects' experience suggests that these issues would benefit from further consideration and clarification at a national level and in national guidelines.
- 10.14 If we take at face value the statement that young people already have wider achievements that are not being recognised then the task of recognition of achievement is to work with existing achievements rather than to set up specific opportunities/activities that might be recognised. However, the experience of the projects showed that this can be at odds with the principle that disadvantaged young people should not be further disadvantaged by the process of recognising achievement. Projects were uncertain about how much priority to give to developing a comprehensive approach involving all pupils compared with providing additional rich experiences to disadvantaged pupils to enable them to benefit from the process on an equal footing with other pupils. There was also tension with the principle of pupil ownership if disadvantaged pupils did not want to take part.
- 10.15 Furthermore, while there is a strong policy thrust towards supporting the most disadvantaged, both young people and staff raised a general issue of equity, noting that recognition of achievement might be as or even more valuable for the middle group of young people, sometimes referred to as the 'grey mass of ordinary pupils'. This is a group, it was suggested, largely given less attention in schools.
- 10.16 Issues of equity were also raised by some end-users, concerned that those without a record of achievement might be disadvantaged compared with those with such a record.
- 10.17 The interplay in policy and practice between comprehensive provision, compensatory provision and pupil ownership needs to be clarified in national guidelines. Key questions include:
- what might be the recommended balance between recognition of achievement being for all pupils and it being primarily a compensatory activity for those unlikely to achieve academic qualifications?
 - is it to be a standard process for everyone but with schools providing compensatory rich experiences to those needing them to 'provide a level playing field'?

- if young people have the right to 'opt out' of the process, does this ensure pupil ownership of it? What happens to the principle of not widening the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged if the most disadvantaged choose not to be involved? If pupils do not have the right to opt out, then how, if at all, can pupils 'own' the process?

10.18 SQA, LTS, Skills Development Scotland, HMIE, local authorities, the Scottish Colleges are all working on developments in recognising achievement. The multi-faceted policy context and perceived inconsistencies are already causing confusion in some schools: it is important that this is co-ordinated.

Recognising (wider) achievements

10.19 Shortly before the start of the national evaluation of the Collaborative Enquiry Projects on Recognising Achievement the word 'wider' was being removed from policy documents. The rationale behind this was to try to ensure that all young people's achievements, no matter in which part of their lives they took place, should be drawn into the process. This was an attempt to avoid a split between 'attainment' and something called 'wider achievements' that might be given less value. However there were some indications that this change was confusing to staff and that the result might be to limit recognition of achievements to those within the ambit of the school. End-users across all sectors did not use the term 'achievement' or 'recognising achievement' and it did not appear meaningful to them. They generally prefaced 'achievement' with another word such as 'wider', 'broader' or 'other'. The research suggests there is a real issue in how this is communicated: it may be helpful for the Scottish Government to consider how best to reinforce to schools and all relevant partners its continuing commitment to the whole range of a young person's achievement.

A variety of models and approaches

10.20 All the Collaborative Enquiry Projects involved in this research felt that there should be no single approach to how the process of recognising achievement should operate in practice. They had been prompted to get involved in the piloting of recognising achievement for different reason and they had developed their particular approach by building on the strengths and needs of each school in its locality. There may well be some tensions between this flexibility and variation in approach and the need to ensure equitable outcomes for young people across Scotland. This again points to the need for further consideration and clarification of the key principles which stakeholders agreed in earlier consultations (para 1.5 of this report) should underpin the recognition of achievement.

The transferability of approaches taken by the Collaborative Enquiry Projects

10.21 Most of the approaches in evidence across the projects could, in principle, be used elsewhere or, if targeted on a minority of pupils, be mainstreamed. But the crucial question is how much resource this might require. Where projects had focused on pupils' existing activities and experiences or where they had based their approach on the schools' expertise/areas of good practice, then it is easier to see how transfer might be possible. Where additional activities, processes or staff were introduced then the question of resourcing becomes more critical.

- 10.22 Several Collaborative Enquiry Projects were dependent on investment by their local authority to resource specific activities or elements of the process (eg residentials, special provision outwith school) and while the projects were looking at ways of adapting their approach to make it financially sustainable, it was not clear how feasible this was in reality. Where projects had focused intensive help on particular groups of young people, this had only been possible because of significant levels of funding from different departments of the local authority. It is difficult, especially in the present context of reduced public spending, to see how this level of funding could be continued and indeed increased if the process was to be extended to include more pupils or indeed the whole cohort.
- 10.23 The approach taken by projects with a strong involvement of Community Learning and Development is replicable where local authorities place (or will place) importance on the role of CLD and where this is supported by resourcing, eg a youth worker attached to each school/cluster/community.
- 10.24 Where the project had based its approach on existing systems in school, for example, building the recognising achievement process into the well developed and systematic pupil support system, then the additional cost was minimal and so the approach was sustainable. It would be possible to transfer this model to other schools but only if the necessary pre-condition of an effective and extensive pupil support system was in place.
- 10.25 Some projects had made a clear decision that they would use pupils' existing experiences and achievements to which they added a level of reflection and recording. This approach would be the easiest to replicate. Nevertheless, the question then arises whether the approach of focusing on pupils' own activities would disadvantage certain young people who are 'experience poor' and be at odds with one of the principles governing recognising achievement. We raised this and related issues earlier (pp.52-3) and would reiterate that these are key questions that need to be clarified.

The need for shared understanding and purposes

- 10.26 While it was clear across the projects that there were different ways of approaching the recognition of young people's achievements, it was also clear that there were differences within projects. It is important that staff, pupils and other stakeholders understand and are clear about the focus and intention of the work in specific localities; otherwise they could have different expectations of what would happen and of each others' roles. In particular, the concepts of achievement, recognition and the extent to which the focus was on all pupils or on specific groups needed worked through. Similarly, there was the need for a shared understanding of what pupils and staff might include in achievement.

Challenges in recognising achievements in different contexts

- 10.27 Some achievements are more difficult than others to draw into a model largely based on the school. For example, achievements outwith the school are easier to identify and record if they are within a formal structure of youth work or a community based award than if they are entirely within the individual's personal or family context. It is a feature of a particular stage of adolescence that involvement in structured youth activities is seen as 'not cool'; withdrawal from formal youth work settings into a highly unstructured set of activities (some of which may provide evidence of real

achievement for the individual) is very common. This does present challenges for schools in representing fairly the achievements of all young people.

- 10.28 Schools were also aware that some young people needed to be provided with opportunities and rich learning experiences within which achievement might be demonstrated. Some of the projects harnessed activities already being provided by the school to reflect on and record achievements; others had missed the opportunity to make more structured use of pre-existing provision. This was most noticeable with respect to enterprise activities which in some projects were well developed but had not yet been used as a basis for structured reflection and recording.
- 10.29 Another possible achievement opportunity that could have been recognised was pupils' part-time employment. This was very rarely mentioned by pupils and staff as a possible source of skill development and achievement on which to draw despite research evidence which shows that the majority of school pupils from S3 onwards engage in part-time work and that that pupils, parents, employers and to some extent teachers recognise the richness of the experience that it can provide (Howieson et al 2006). In contrast, school organised work experience was much more commonly drawn on to find examples of achievement.
- 10.30 Lastly, while many projects made use of the four capacities as a means of capturing achievement, many pupils and some teachers found the headings quite difficult to use, and there was a general view that employers were not particularly aware of what they meant. This view was supported in the end-user research: employers did not recognise them and training providers, although they used them to review the progress of trainees found it difficult to know under which heading achievements (such as 'improving my timekeeping') should be recorded. There could be an argument that the use of expanded statements on the four capacities might be more clearly understood by all stakeholders.

Forms of evidence, proof and/or certificates

- 10.31 For a majority of projects, any end product was not an immediate key priority. Instead, the process of reflection and recording in order to improve pupils' understanding of their achievements and their ability to explain them to others was more important. However, many were looking ahead to a point where an end product might become appropriate.
- 10.32 There were a number of reasons for producing an end-certificate of achievement, the most obvious being for young people to take to end-users such as employers, training providers, colleges or universities. End-users would welcome almost any information on young people's achievements since their experience has shown that many young people have great difficulty in understanding and explaining their achievements. Such a certificate would be used as a prompt for discussion rather than an end in itself but end-users expected that the existence of a certificate (and more importantly, the process behind it) would help young people present themselves more clearly at interview. From the perspective of young people themselves, seeing their achievements produced in a formal certificate could be very positive in the development of confidence; it gave an opportunity for those who support young people (teachers, parents and peers) to give praise and encouragement and acknowledge young people's achievements. School managers and local authorities were keen to reinforce and praise achievement and to send young people off with a sense of achievement through the award of a certificate.

- 10.33 There were a variety of approaches to producing a summary of pupils' achievements. This could be a school based certificate or one produced by the local authority for all leavers in its area. An important question not yet answered was whether there was likely to be any move towards a single Scottish certificate of achievement: some thought that this would be essential if the certificate was to have any credibility beyond the immediate locality. However, most felt that if priorities had to be set then a young person's ability to understand and explain achievements was more important than the creation of an end-certificate.
- 10.34 There were many different forms of achievement awards being used or considered by the projects. These included ASDAN, Duke of Edinburgh, Dynamic Youth or Youth Achievement Awards, SCQF levels etc. The award landscape is a very cluttered one, and this creates challenges for schools which wish to make formal certification for achievement available to pupils (especially to those less likely to achieve academic qualifications). There are indications that the wide variety of awards and the different contexts and requirements for each is creating some confusion.

Ownership of statement or certificate of achievement

- 10.35 The issue of a final summary statement or certificate of achievement, particularly if intended for an audience external to the school, raised some challenging issues for projects. Who owns the certificate? Who makes decisions on what should be recorded and on what should be included in a certificate? Can pupils be trusted to be honest in what they include? What level of validation is required for a school or an authority to put its own stamp on a statement of achievement? Some schools and authorities were very concerned that anything contained on a formal certificate which they had issued should have been checked as accurate. However, achievements outwith the school, particularly those in a more informal setting such as the family, could not reasonably be confirmed by the school without inappropriate intrusion into the young person's personal life. This required schools to think more deeply about their relationships with pupils and the extent to which they could give responsibility and trust to them and the extent to which it was the young person's certificate or the school's.
- 10.36 Most end-users were not as concerned as schools might have expected about the authenticity of the wider achievements listed in a certificate, believing that they could get a sense of whether a young person was telling the truth by asking relevant questions. A compromise suggested by some end-users was that such a certificate should be signed by both the teacher and the young person and be clearly the result of discussion. Those examples of achievement that were within the capacity of the school to confirm might perhaps be highlighted, but it would be the young person who was attesting to the honesty of the full certificate of achievement.

Tracking and supporting individual achievement

- 10.37 Our model of the process of recognising achievement assumes as a pre-condition that young people will have, or be enabled to have, sufficient opportunities to achieve and to demonstrate their achievements. This requires assessing the 'richness' of a young person's life and school experience combined with efficient tracking and monitoring of achievement. Critically these require sufficient knowledge of individual young people, and our research suggests that this may be a considerable challenge for some schools; it may be a challenge for most schools in knowing the situation of

the 'ordinary' pupil. Equally we have pointed out that young people are likely to have different views of what 'achievement' and 'recognition' means for them personally (and indeed that this may well differ at different stages of the individual's school career). Thus individual discussion and negotiation is required. For recognition of achievement to have its greatest impact on learning and personal development, it needs, therefore, to be supported by formal systems of pastoral care and informal learner/staff relationships in the school and/or by support from those in close relationships with young people.

10.38 Reflecting and recording in order to increase pupils' understanding and ability to explain their achievements to others can appropriately be included as part of the PSE provision in the school, although even here there are some issues. In some ways the easiest approach to reflecting and recording for a school to manage may be to have set times, perhaps within the PSE or pupil support timetable, when teachers would encourage students to reflect on and record their achievements. However, this may not allow students to reflect and record at points when it is significant for them or to allow sufficient individually supported reflection and review.

10.39 It has to be acknowledged that designing provision at the level of an individual is a real challenge for schools, particularly secondary schools.

Who provides support to pupils in recognising achievement?

10.40 If teachers are required to work individually with pupils to reflect and record achievement this would be very resource-intensive, and teachers and school managers were somewhat alarmed at how these demands might be met. The research team observed that teachers were inclined to accept the full weight of responsibility for the process. However, the burden of providing support in recognising achievement does not need to fall solely on teachers' shoulders. Pupils would generally welcome support in reflection and recording of achievement from peers, buddies, friends, girl/boyfriends, family, parents, leaders in youth organisations and others (such as employer or college mentors). There is also a resource from within the Education Authority, that of local youth workers from Community Learning and Development: the experience of a number of projects suggests that youth workers' involvement in recognition of achievement could well be useful to young people and their schools. There is a need to consider both ownership and responsibility for the process of recognising achievement; it may well be a role that pupils wish to be largely theirs, but shared with teachers, with pupils' own 'significant others' and with those who work with young people in less formal education settings.

Challenges in helping young people prepare for application and selection procedures

10.41 From the evidence of end-users there are clearly some challenges facing schools and careers/employability advisers in their role of helping young people to prepare for application and selection procedures. On the one hand end-users thought young people were poor at explaining their achievements both in writing and in person and that schools and advisers could do more to help them. On the other hand, schools and careers advisers were sometimes criticised for helping too much, with the result that all application forms used stock phrases and were produced to the same format so that all young people began to sound the same and any authentic voice of the young applicant was lost. Young people were thought to have particular difficulties in answering competency based questions which require an understanding of the skills and qualities demonstrated through past achievements and experiences.

10.42 Perhaps there is a two stage process in providing support to young people. First, they are taught how to go through standard application procedures and practice these in a class group; second, they develop a personal version with individual help from a tutor, mentor, guidance teacher or employability/careers adviser and have the chance to practise their individual presentation of achievements and possible responses to competency based questions. Some of the difficulties end-users describe may have been because the first and not the second had been done. While such help is resource-intensive, it can be made more cost-effective (eg working with small pupil groups encouraging peer support). However it is done, more work is required to help young people to personalise their presentation of their achievements.

Training, development and support needs

10.43 The experience of the pilot projects highlighted a number of training, development and support needs; these largely reflected the fact that the process of recognising young people's achievement demanded new or enhanced skills on the part of pupils, teachers and other staff such as careers advisers and youth workers (para 8.3 in this report). Recognising achievement made new demands in respect of:

- the ability to identify skills and qualities demonstrated in different experiences or activities;
- the articulation of achievements to a variety of audiences;
- understanding of the transferability of skills across different contexts;
- the use of e-portfolios;
- the assessment of evidence to put forward to gain formal accreditation.

10.44 End-users, too, recognised that working with an e-portfolio might require additional IT skills. A number of specific suggestions for national guidance, support materials or other provision were made by project staff including:

- a set of reflective questions that might be used as a guide to help identify skills and qualities;
- the creation of a unit of work for lower secondary school, perhaps called 'ICT skills for e-portfolios';
- pupil and staff development materials and strategies about the transferability of skills.

10.45 If the process of recognition of achievement is to reach its potential, a range of training, development and support needs require to be addressed. These, of course, will entail some investment of resource but arguably such provision would contribute not only to the recognition of achievement but to *Curriculum for Excellence* more generally.

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