

Research Report DCSF-RW002

Effective Alternative Provision

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Caroline Gulliver, Jennie Harland, Kerry Martin
and Richard White*

National Foundation for Educational Research

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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1 Introduction

From September 2007, all secondary schools will be working in partnerships to manage pupil behaviour and attendance. Schools in a number of pathfinder authorities have been working in this way from January 2006, with a further tranche commencing in September 2006. As part of their remit, school partnerships will be expected to identify and commission relevant alternative provision for pupils who need it. In light of this requirement, this study focused on providing exemplars of good practice in alternative provision. It aimed to provide practical advice for schools and local authorities seeking to commission and evaluate alternative provision for young people.

The overarching aim of the research was to answer three key questions:

1. What are the ingredients for successful delivery of alternative provision?
2. How can the conditions for effective delivery of alternative provision be created?
3. What lessons can be shared and transferred with other stakeholders?

The focus of the study was alternative provision in eight LAs identified as providing examples of good practice in this area from the LA survey of AP conducted for the DfES during November and December 2005. Case-study visits took place during March 2006. Each case-study LA was visited for two days in order to conduct a range of interviews with practitioners and strategic-level staff, as well as young people and their parents/carers. A total of 138 interviews were conducted. A more detailed breakdown of the interviews conducted in each LA is included in Annex 1.

Interviews focused on three broad themes:

- the commissioning of alternative provision
- details of the provision offered
- the effectiveness of such provision.

The report has been broken down into a number of key themes, which were identified by interviewees across the eight LAs as key ingredients contributing to the provision of effective AP. The ingredients identified were grouped into the following themes:

- Strategic-level overview, planning and coordination
- Referral systems
- Supporting pupils in AP
- Components of provision
- Monitoring and evaluation techniques.

A summary of each theme is provided, along with exemplification of these themes from individual LAs. The summaries are a distillation of interviewees' views and accounts of good practice. Section 2 provides a summary overview of the findings. Sections 3 to 7 provide more detailed discussions of the themes identified.

2 Ingredients of effective AP provision: a summary

Strategic-level overview, planning and coordination

- **The integration and status of AP within the LA's overall approach**
AP needs to be seen as an integral part of the LA's core offer, linked in to other LA strategies and policies. In this way, a clear message is given about its equal status with other types of learning opportunity within the authority.
- **Regular review of AP within the LA**
LAs should regularly review the AP available within their authority and act on the results of that review process. AP is likely to be more comprehensive, cohesive and cost-effective if the process of review (and challenge where appropriate) is coordinated at a strategic level: decision making and planning can then utilise this overview of the full range of provision.
- **Identifying gaps in provision**
LAs' reviews should identify gaps in the provision available. Appropriate steps to meet the needs of the young people affected by those gaps can be planned accordingly.
- **Partnerships with providers**
Encouraging the formation of networks of providers and agencies provides a forum for stipulating standards and sharing information about AP providers. Drawing providers in as partners facilitates a more cohesive approach to AP and encourages the exchange of good practice.
- **The existence of a strategic manager for AP**
A dedicated senior member of staff with responsibility for education other than at school (EOTAS) leads to a more coordinated approach to AP across the LA.
- **Clear and formal contracting arrangements**
Written contracts, protocols, and partnership agreements between LAs and external providers need to be drawn up to ensure that minimum standards are met, and the safety and welfare of the young people attending AP are assured. The process of contracting, and the terms used in written contracts and service-level agreements with providers, should be clearly defined and easily understood by all those involved.

Effective referral systems

- **Collaborative decision making**
Collaborative decision making on AP placements through multi-agency panels/forums can improve the accuracy of assessments and simplify the referral pathway for young people.
- **Clear systems for information exchange**
Clear systems for referral and information sharing improve the decision-making process. A shared assessment tool can avoid duplication and promote early identification of need.

- **Procedures for identifying and selecting AP**
Identifying and selecting from the range of AP provision and providers operating within the LA can be based on a variety of procedures, including review of previous performance, recommendations, first-hand visits to provision, presentations by providers, and listening to the views of young people.

Supporting pupils in AP effectively

- **Links between schools and mainstream schools**
Close links between AP and mainstream schools form a major element of effective provision, including that with a preventative focus. Promoting schools' ownership of the young person and their achievements in AP is also important for improved attendance, behaviour and reintegration.
- **Parental involvement**
Parents are recognised as having a key role to play in children's learning and, within AP, should be involved at all stages. However, this can be particularly challenging for AP providers due to a lack of contact with, or support from, parents.
- **The contribution from other services**
At AP, pupils should have regular access to a range of services and other agencies, such as Connexions, CAMHS, and counselling support.
- **High quality staff working with young people**
High quality staffing is key to effective provision. The young people attending AP often have complex needs that demand specialist skills and attributes. Ensuring appropriate opportunities for AP providers' professional development and for the sharing of good practice is beneficial.
- **The ethos of respect**
The term 'respect' repeatedly recurs when young people and providers describe effective provision. Pupils clearly respond better to AP when they feel providers treat them with respect. Those commissioning AP should ensure that potential providers exemplify this fundamental principle that underpins all staff-pupil relations.

Components of effective provision

- **Positive links between providers**
Liaison and communication between providers widens opportunities for young people.
- **Involving pupils in their learning experience**
Pupils' contribution to the content of the learning they undertake at their AP placement leads to improved placement outcomes.
- **Access to a range of vocational opportunities**
Access to a variety of vocational opportunities, for example, via college, training providers and work-based learning, can help to re-engage young people in education and increase their retention in learning after the age of 16.

- **A range of accreditation**
Pupils need to have a range of accreditation available to them, including GCSE-equivalent options.
- **Personalised learning**
It is important that placements in AP are tailored to meet young people's needs, abilities and interests.

Monitoring and evaluation techniques

- **Using key measures to demonstrate outcomes**
LAs need to agree key measures by which they assess the effectiveness of AP and then ensure that relevant data are collected, analysed and acted on.
- **Systems for ongoing monitoring**
Regular monitoring by (or on behalf of) commissioners, ensures that provision meets the minimum standard required and is consistent across AP providers. Findings from such monitoring can then be used to inform practice.
- **Stakeholder feedback**
The views of key stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of AP are important. In addition, they should also be used to inform the future development of AP. Using client opinion to inform practice can also help increase stakeholders' engagement with – and commitment to – AP.
- **Cost-effectiveness**
To ensure value for money, commissioners need to consider the quality of AP provided, the outcomes achieved, and the efficient use of resources.

3 Strategic-level overview, planning and coordination

This section focuses on planning and coordination at a strategic level. Key messages relate to:

- The status of AP and its integration within LAs' overall approach to learning
- Regular review of AP within the LA
- Identifying gaps in provision
- Encouraging partnerships with providers
- The existence of a strategic manager with overall responsibility for AP
- The value of clear, formal contracting arrangements.

Integration and status:

AP needs to be seen as an integral part of the LA's core offer, linked in to other LA strategies and policies. In this way, a clear message is given about its equal status with other types of learning opportunity within the authority.

Integrating AP with the LA's core offer ensures that provision covers a continuum of relevant programmes and provides clarity about how AP links to the LA's overall approach to learning, for example, its 14–19 strategy and personalised learning agenda. It opens up wider opportunities, for example vocational options, to young people within a more coherent framework of provision. Unless AP is integrated with the LA's core mainstream offer, there is a danger of inadequate or ad hoc provision. Without this integration and the message of equivalence this conveys, there is a danger that AP remains marginalised and perceived by parents, pupils and employers as being of lower status than other learning opportunities. References to AP in a range of key LA policy and planning outputs can be an important indicator of this integration and status.

An example of integration: Knowsley's Work-Based Learning Programme

In Knowsley, key stage AP is fully integrated into the authority's core 14-19 curriculum offer via the Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate. The Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate is a partnership made up of secondary and specialist schools in the LA, the FE colleges, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and a range of work-based learning providers. A range of academic, vocational and work-based learning is available from different providers. Key stage 4 AP is delivered mainly through the Key Stage 4 Work Based Learning Programmes (WBLP). Students can access diverse and flexible learning pathways and progression routes in a variety of settings and contexts, including their base/home school, college, learning centres, vocational skills centres and work-based training providers. Organising the key stage 4 LA provision within this broad framework ensures that young people in AP have access to a wide range of educational experiences.

Regular review:

LAs should regularly review the AP available within their authority and act on the results of that review process. AP is likely to be more comprehensive, cohesive and cost-effective if the process of review (and challenge where appropriate) is coordinated at a strategic LA level: decision making and planning can then utilise this overview of the full range of provision.

Ongoing review of AP, which brings together all the key stakeholders to reconsider current practice, allows LAs to build on what is working well and to make revisions to what is not. Challenge is an important element of review because it requires action to be taken and contributes to improved practice. Regular review and action results in more efficient structuring of AP and the development of new provision where gaps have been identified.

When the process of review involves monitoring of current AP, this also helps LAs to better understand the demand for AP, the reasons young people access it, and any patterns or trends in demand (for example, if particular groups of young people are under- or over-represented). This means that strategic planning and decisions on placement can be based on an up-to-date audit of local needs. LAs can use the review process to ensure that AP is cost-effective and provides value for money. Information on the costs and quality of provision, as well as feedback on customer satisfaction, are important aspects of the review process. Such reviews can be conducted as part of existing LA planning practices, or by using external consultants to evaluate cost-effectiveness. Comparing costs across, as well as within LAs, can also be part of the review process.

An example of ongoing review and action: Bolton's BESD and AP Review

Bolton LA recently conducted a review of the support for young people with BESD, those who are disaffected or disengaged from education, and those at risk of exclusion, which brought all the major stakeholders together with elected members. This review included an examination of the AP available within the borough, to see how all the different parts fitted together as a cohesive package of support, and to assess whether, as a whole, it was working effectively.

In terms of the 12 PRUs that make up Bolton's AP, the review found that, although working well individually, the PRUs were operating as separate units which caused them difficulties when staffing problems occurred. For example, in a small PRU, it can be difficult to operate effectively when key members of staff move on, or if two members of staff are off sick at the same time. The decision was made to restructure the 12 PRUs by grouping them together into four categories within one Pupil Referral Service: key stage 4 provision; provision for pupils with medical and/or psychological needs, and young mothers; short-term provision for key stage 3 and 4 pupils; and key stage 2 provision. This has enabled the PRUs to continue to function as small units targeted to individual needs, but has also brought them together under a single management structure in order to promote consistency and the sharing of good practice. The restructuring has created the capacity for moving staff between units when staffing issues occur, as well as enabling the development of a better career structure for staff.

An example of ongoing review and action: Stoke-on-Trent's external consultant

Stoke-on-Trent employs an external consultant to conduct an annual assessment of the quality of all full-time AP within the LA. From September 2006, the assessment will also cover part-time AP within the LA. The employment of the consultant to assess the quality of the LA's AP began in the academic year 2004/2005 (following a pilot assessment conducted by the same consultant in 2003/2004). Previously, the Education Officer for Social Inclusion evaluated the providers on a monthly basis and produced an annual report for the LA. Monthly internal evaluations are still conducted by the LA.

The consultant visits each provider every year as part of the evaluation process and produces a 'recommendation report', which is made available to all providers. Individual recommendations for providers are also made within the report. The LA and providers feel that the role of the consultant is particularly useful in offering providers ideas and solutions to queries they might have, in sharing information on good practice across the authority, and in giving providers an opportunity to raise any concerns. The consultant examines the organisation of commissioning AP within the LA and makes recommendations for improvement, for example in relation to the commissioning process, the time taken to place young people in AP and the appropriateness of placements. The consultant also compares the quality and effectiveness of AP against its cost. The criteria used to assess the quality of the AP provided include an assessment of whether it is meeting young people's needs, the appropriateness of placements, and also whether there are any gaps in provision, for example in relation to the availability of part-time AP placements within the LA.

Identifying gaps in provision:

LAs' reviews should identify gaps in the provision available. Appropriate steps to meet the needs of the young people affected by those gaps can be planned accordingly.

Noted gaps in provision identified by LAs included: young people with BESD (girls and the end of key stage 2/the beginning of key stage 3 in particular); short-term provision (in key stage 3); part-time provision; primary provision; young offenders in key stage 4; school age NEET/missing children; and post-16 provision/support for vulnerable young people, such as young mothers, young offenders, asylum seekers and refugees and those with special educational needs. Strategies used by LAs to meet the needs of the young people affected by those gaps included: accessing out of authority placements for young people with BESD (although not viewed as ideal, where no such provision was available within the LA this was the only alternative); providing post-16 support for vulnerable young people within the LA; and focusing on implementing preventative interventions (at a primary level also).

An example of identifying gaps in provision: Bolton's BESD and AP review

Bolton's BESD and AP review was used to identify gaps in AP within the LA by looking at individual AP to see how it fitted together as a cohesive package of support. Research on young people's views on PRU provision (and where there were unaddressed needs) within the LA was also included in the review. An action plan was produced and implemented to 'fill the gaps' and move the LA into a more preventative mode of working. There are still gaps in short-term key stage 3 AP and in primary provision. The LA is addressing these gaps by providing nurture group training in key stage 1 to train teachers in preventative work within the classroom. It was felt that by training mainstream primary school staff in this preventative work, the need for AP for older children will be reduced. The LA has provided funding to roll the training out to all primary schools that want it. In key stage 2, the LA is working with the National Children's Home (NCH) to provide focused nurture group training. This involves six-week interventions, with a NCH employee working with a group of six children and a teacher working alongside the NCH employee.

Similarly, the review identified a need for more tailored provision for young people with complex needs who were not attending school. This group included young people with complex needs who were also permanently excluded, looked after, or returning from custody. 'Premier Training' (a key stage 4 provision) was established to work with the most disengaged and socially excluded young people, most of whom have significant other agency involvement, such as social care, YOT, and drug and alcohol misuse services, and require additional specialist support.

The LA noted that when a need or gap was identified they would try to find the most appropriate provision to meet that need, but if they could not find suitable provision they would establish their own. For example, the pupil referral service established a girls group in response to the increasing numbers of girls permanently excluded within the authority.

An example of identifying gaps in provision: Bromley LA

The need for additional AP at key stage 1 has been identified as a priority within the LA. Since September 2005, over 50 per cent of requests from schools for additional support have focused on this age group. The Behaviour Service has responded by appointing a play therapist and an early years specialist, and by providing additional key stage 1 AP in the form of nurture group provision. Ensuring that the LA has access to the right data to identify gaps in provision was seen as key, as the LA uses that data to identify trends and highlight where provision is needed.

Partnerships with providers:

Encouraging the formation of networks of providers and agencies provides a forum for stipulating standards and sharing information about AP providers. Drawing providers in as partners facilitates a more cohesive approach to AP and encourages the exchange of good practice.

As groups of schools take an increasing role in the commissioning of AP themselves, these types of networks are likely to have an increasingly important role to play, and could be further utilised, and their function enhanced, by the participation of school representatives. Commissioners need easy access to up-to-date information on what AP is available locally, for example through directories or databases. The maintenance of accurate and up to date information is essential. Having this overview of AP provision and availability, together with a sense of links to local needs and/or markets, is important for those commissioning AP and will enable them to make informed choices.

An example of forum of AP providers: Rochdale's Alternative Providers Forum

In Rochdale, the need to coordinate AP within the LA, to share and develop a framework and standards for good practice, and to build relationships amongst providers and commissioners, led to the creation of an 'Alternative Providers Forum'. All AP providers in the LA are invited to join the termly forum. The forum allows key parties to discuss and identify what is good practice in AP and this has led to the production of a set of 'Protocols' which stipulate the standards for provision and monitoring, and provide benchmarks of quality assurance. The forum also enables providers to promote the service they offer and the LA to review the offer available. In addition, the forum also provides an overview of authority-wide provision; this minimises the risk of unwanted duplication and maximises the provision of popular AP. One of the benefits of the way the forum is organised is that it is responsive to current and future needs. It allows the LA to communicate its requirements for AP to providers, which ensures that the provision available within the authority is appropriate to meet the needs identified.

An example of a LA AP directory: Rochdale's District Directory

The District Directory in Rochdale has been produced to ensure schools are aware of the types of alternative provision available in the LA. The directory includes details of 17 alternative providers based within the authority. It provides contact details, information on what the provision offers young people (including the learning programme offered), entry requirements, assessment methods, progression opportunities, costs, the number of places offered, the length of the course and the qualifications offered. The majority of the providers in the Directory are signed up to the 'Rochdale Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships' which offer commissioners some quality assurance of the provision on offer. The Directory aims to support headteachers and curriculum deputies in planning a broader range of learning activities and curricula for pupils and provides them with information about the range of wider learning opportunities available within the LA. The Directory has been produced for the first time this year. The LA intends to update the Directory on an annual basis in order to include new providers and review existing provision.

Coordination:

A dedicated senior member of staff with responsibility for education other than at school (EOTAS) leads to a more coordinated approach to AP across the LA.

Having a named officer with responsibility for AP facilitates liaison with, and communication between, mainstream schools, local providers and agencies. Improved coordination ensures that provision can be better matched to need, so that placements are appropriate and arranged within the agreed frameworks developed by the LA. In order for this role to be effective, the officer's remit should relate to outcomes, for example reintegration, attainment and progression. Linking responsibility for outcomes to an identifiable member of staff promotes the effective monitoring and reporting of AP.

An example of a dedicated senior officer with responsibility for EOTAS: Stoke-on-Trent's Social Inclusion Officer

In Stoke-on-Trent, the Social Inclusion Officer coordinates and has an overview of all young people who are on EOTAS within the LA. The Social Inclusion Officer is a key member of the Managed Transfer Forum which identifies young people requiring alternative provision within the LA and, through their awareness of individual pupils' circumstances and needs, plays a crucial role in the decision-making process that underlies the placement of a pupil in appropriate alternative provision. The Social Inclusion Officer has overall responsibility for overseeing AP placements and has a key role in liaising with providers and schools to monitor and ensure the placements continue to be appropriate. The Officer also chairs an AP provider forum which provides feedback on young people's progress in AP.

Contracting arrangements:

Written contracts, protocols, and partnership agreements between LAs and external providers need to be drawn up to ensure that minimum standards are met, and the safety and welfare of the young people attending AP are assured. The process of contracting, and the terms used in written contracts and service-level agreements with providers, should be clearly defined and easily understood by all those involved.

Written documentation, through contracts, service-level agreements, partnership agreements or protocols, provides a clear framework of expectations on all sides (namely, the LA, the provider, and ultimately the young person). All parties in the commissioning process need to understand the processes of contracting and commissioning and the terms used, to prevent differences in interpretation, and to avoid unrealistic expectations or statutory requirements not being met.

Contracts and service-level agreements can be used by LAs to compare and contrast the cost-effectiveness of AP providers. Open tendering for contracts also facilitates this comparison and raises standards. The use of these formal tendering processes can benefit from making any continuation of funding dependent on meeting clearly laid out success criteria.

An example of a protocol: Rochdale's Wider Learning Opportunity Partnership Protocols

All AP providers commissioned by the LA are required to sign up to the Rochdale 'Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships'. Schools are advised to commission only AP providers who have signed, or are willing to sign, up to these protocols. The protocols have been developed in partnership with the LA and providers and are based on the DfES guidance on monitoring, standards and quality of AP. The protocols play an essential role in establishing accountability and expectations between the commissioner and the provider. They provide schools and other commissioners with guidelines on how to ensure quality standards in AP, as well as outlining the responsibilities of all partners. The protocols are intended to form the basis of partnership agreements between commissioners (including schools) and providers.

An example of contracting arrangements: North Lincolnshire

In North Lincolnshire, competitive tendering for full-time alternative provision is used to ensure that alternative providers are working to meet the needs of young people in AP. The LA stipulates the standards required, in terms of levels of attendance and accreditation. Through the tendering and contractual process, the local authority sets out aims and objectives for providers of full-time alternative provision. There are also service-level agreements with those providers offering part-time placements. The establishment of monitoring requirements prior to accessing AP ensures that all parties know what is expected of them.

An example of a partnership agreement: Bromley's Key Stage 4 Flexible Learning Programme

The purpose of the partnership agreement is to clarify the responsibilities of all parties involved in delivery of the programme. The partnership agreement is signed by providers, schools, the LA and the project manager of Bromley 14-19. The partnership agreement details:

1. The obligations of the provider. For example, the provider will:
 - Nominate a senior manager with responsibility for the overall programme
 - Nominate an appropriately qualified person to take responsibility for the coordination of the programme and its delivery and for the operational management and day to day issues/emergencies
 - Have appropriate liability insurance cover in place throughout the period of the agreement for pupils participating in the programme and representatives of the LA, school or other associated agencies
 - Ensure that appropriate representatives attend the half-termly planning meetings arranged by Bromley 14-19
 - Maintain daily attendance records and notify schools within one hour of the course start time on any day when pupils are absent.
2. The obligations of the school. For example, the school will:
 - Nominate a senior manager with responsibility for the overall programme
 - Provide details and data to enable monitoring and evaluation of student progress
 - Work with the provider to ensure that appropriate systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
3. The obligations of Bromley LA. For example, the LA will:
 - Ensure that appropriate education service manager(s) liaise with partners to ensure that the partnership agreement is implemented according to the statutory responsibilities placed upon the LA
 - Liaise with the school and the provider to support the implementation, financial management and monitoring of the programme.
4. The obligations of Bromley 14-19. For example, Bromley 14-19 will:
 - Disseminate the outcomes of the programme
 - Liaise with the colleges involved to produce a brochure of 14-16 courses
 - Work closely with all partners to cost the courses taking into account any subsidies that may become available
 - Manage the process of student choices and applications to courses to ensure that, through the colleges and work-based training providers, students are interviewed and inducted onto the course.

The agreement sets out the costs of courses and when the payments should be made. It also highlights what is not covered in the cost of the courses, for example the provision of support or special facilities and arrangements for students accessing free school meals.

4 Referral systems

This section focuses on referral systems. Key messages relate to:

- The importance of collaborative decision making
- The value of clear systems for information exchange
- Procedures for identifying and selecting AP.

Decision making:

Collaborative decision making on AP placements through multi-agency panels/forums can improve the accuracy of assessments and simplify the referral pathway for young people.

Collaborative decision making, involving all the relevant parties, provides a single referral pathway for young people, with appropriate and ongoing assessment of their needs. A single referral pathway has benefits for all parties (commissioners and providers): referrers do not have to approach a range of agencies or providers and the latter are not inundated with referrals. A single referral pathway prevents certain referrers from overloading or only approaching particular AP, ensuring that provision is appropriately matched to all pupils.

Collaborative decision making through multi-agency forums or panels represents a more structured approach to referral, especially when informed by analysis and diagnosis of information, including listening to the views of parents and pupils. Taking into account previous school-based interventions and assessments can also allow for the early identification of young people likely to require AP. This, in turn, better informs planning.

An example of a simplified referral pathway for young people: Stoke-on-Trent's Managed Transfer Forum (MTF)

Stoke-on-Trent has established a Managed Transfer Forum (MTF), a high-level strategic forum attended by all headteachers, LA representatives and other agencies. Decisions are made at this forum on appropriate AP placements or new school places for those pupils referred. Mainstream schools use the LA's 'behavioural toolkit' to identify pupils who might require AP. The behavioural toolkit provides a strategy for targeted behaviour support and alternative provision and was developed as part of the LA's Behaviour Support Plan. The overall purpose of the toolkit is to provide a 'route' for schools and other partners to work through, in relation to supporting pupils presenting challenging behaviour. This involves the following stages:

- Schools' own in-house, whole-school behaviour policies and curricular approaches
- External support from partner agencies to complement the Education Psychology Service (EPS), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Youth Offending Service (YOS) (at this point pupils are placed on 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus')
- External support from the LA's Behaviour Support Service
- A managed transfer to an alternative school; or
- A managed transfer into alternative provision at key stage 4 (alternatively, where appropriate, pupils undergo a statutory assessment of their SEN at this point if they meet the SEN threshold criteria).

school's

In this way, a managed transfer into alternative provision at key stage 4 is the final stage in the behaviour support strategy. It can only be accessed by schools for those key stage 4 pupils for whom all of the previous strategies have proved to be ineffective, and is therefore only used for the most intractable cases. The approach ensures that schools have exhausted all preventative measures prior to the referral of a pupil for a managed transfer to key stage 4 alternative provision, and thus supports the principle that school remains the most appropriate provision for the vast majority of students. In addition, the process enables schools to plan a pupil's placement as part of their individual programme, so that the majority of pupils begin their placement at the beginning of the academic year (usually Year 11). This, in turn, maximises pupils' chances of achieving a satisfactory outcome from the AP.

Schools use the behavioural toolkit to identify and record the level of intervention that has been actioned prior to referring a pupil for an AP placement (e.g. 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus' interventions). Where school-level interventions are unsuccessful, pupils are then referred to the MTF, where a decision is made regarding an appropriate alternative placement. Schools are required to provide a package of background information for each pupil referred to the forum. This includes details of previous interventions and assessments, as well as information on any other external factors which should be taken into account (e.g. violent incidents, family circumstances). Placements are identified through a collective decision-making process taking into account previous placements, pupils' academic abilities, interests and other relevant factors, such as their ability to work in groups, and the level of support required. All AP is accessed via the MTF.

Information exchange:

Clear systems for referral and information sharing improve the decision-making process. A shared assessment tool can avoid duplication and promote early identification of need.

Having clear systems for referral and information sharing ensures that referrals to AP are appropriate. This avoids referral to AP being used as a means of passing on responsibility for more challenging pupils, because the criteria for referral are accepted and understood by all those involved. Information exchange improves the

quality of decision making. For example, limits can be imposed on the number of pupils attending specific provision/courses from particular areas, schools or year groups in order to ensure the most appropriate mix of students and thus, ultimately, increase the success of the provision.

An example of clear systems of referral and information sharing: Stoke-on-Trent's assessment procedures

Referrals to AP are made to a multi-agency, strategic-level forum, supported by a package of background information on the young person, including details of previous interventions and assessments. When young people arrive at the AP, providers complete a further assessment of each pupil. Provider assessments include a basic review of academic ability, risk assessments, and/or behavioural assessments where appropriate. Several providers also conduct pupil interviews at this point in order to obtain more detailed background information about the pupil. Both the interview and assessment data is then used to match the AP to the young person's ability, needs and interests. For example, the FE colleges do not have specific under-16 programmes so pupils are placed on the main college programme alongside post-16 students according to their academic ability (as identified through the initial assessment). In one college, additional support in the form of learning mentors is provided in order to help pupils manage the course and to deal immediately with any issues or difficulties that might arise.

It is important that referral forms are clear and easy to complete, yet request information from a range of agencies and across a range of different measures. Using standard referral forms is a crucial component of information exchange; it also ensures the consistency of the information passed on. Comprehensive referral forms should make available appropriate and sufficient information on young people's backgrounds or social circumstances, experiences, needs, education records and difficulties. In this way, they reduce the risk of an inappropriate placement by fully informing initial and ongoing assessment. This can be useful in deciding the composition of groups at certain provisions (for example, where gang rivalry might be an issue, or where more vulnerable pupils are concerned).

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people, a shared assessment tool aimed at avoiding duplication and promoting early identification of need, is potentially a useful way forward in terms of information sharing.

Involving pupils themselves in providing information to support their referral to AP, for example, through the completion of application forms, attending interviews and induction activities, is also important in ensuring an appropriate placement.

An example of clear systems of referral and information sharing: Knowsley's comprehensive referral form

In Knowsley, staff on the key stage 4 Work-Based Learning Programme (WBLP) have developed a comprehensive referral form in order to ensure that the most appropriate decisions can be made regarding students' pathways and progression routes through the programme.

The information supporting a referral includes personal information relating to the student (medical conditions), attendance and exclusion information, as well as a detailed description of the young person. This involves assessments (on a four-point scale) of their general attitude (confidence, adherence to school rules, punctuality), attitude to the teacher, classroom behaviour (following instructions, cooperation, degree of independent working, enjoyment of tasks), attitude to peers (communication, sociability, popularity), and conduct in the workshop/practical environment. The referring mainstream school is also requested to provide details of any other agency involvement, whether the young person is statemented or the stage they have reached on the Code of Practice, as well as previous strategies and interventions that have been tried. The referral form allows for pupils' areas of interest or particular talents to be included, as well as suggestions as to the most appropriate placement or support, and named contacts for the young person including the nominated School Key Worker, Connexions PA or learning mentor, and the person responsible for receiving attendance data from the WBLP and transferring it on to the referring school's attendance system.

An example of the use of standard referral forms: Lincolnshire's 'Interagency notification of a child in need' form and information profile

In Lincolnshire, a standard referral form, entitled the 'interagency notification of a child in need' form, is used by all services and agencies to identify any young people in need. The form ensures consistency in the information passed between services. It is completed by the agency identifying the young person in need and is then passed to the appropriate agency or service for action. Additional information is put onto the form as another agency or service becomes involved, in order to develop an information profile on each young person. The information profile supports each referral to AP and includes background pupil information, details from the mainstream school file (for example, records of behaviour and attendance) and any other information available at the point of referral, such as the involvement of other agencies. When each referral is received, a letter with a further data collection form is then issued to all agencies to develop the profile further.

Procedures for identifying and selecting AP:

Identifying and selecting from the range of AP provision and providers operating within the LA can be based on a variety of procedures, including review of previous performance, recommendations, first-hand visits to provision, presentations by providers, and listening to the views of young people.

A variety of ways of identifying and selecting suitable provision may be open to commissioners, including review of previous performance and recommendations obtained from professional networks or interagency meetings. Senior LA staff might also meet with AP providers to discuss the provision they offer. Another selection strategy may be commissioners visiting interventions to carry out their own quality assurance checks, observe the provision and evaluate its potential suitability for students. Young people might themselves be involved in the selection process by accessing and evaluating taster sessions prior to the LA committing to commissioning the provision. Other strategies could include audits of AP provision where providers collectively make presentations on the work that they do. As well as informing

commissioners of their areas of expertise, these types of activity can also provide useful networking opportunities for AP providers themselves. LAs and other commissioners can use all of these identification strategies to inform the content of AP directories.

An example of identifying and selecting AP within a LA: Mansfield Alternative to Exclusion (MATE), Nottinghamshire

MATE is a pupil placement panel working with disaffected learners, those at risk of permanent exclusion and pupils who have been permanently excluded. MATE was established in April 2004 and has representation from all the secondary schools in the Mansfield area, the local Learning Centre (PRU), the LA and other relevant agencies, such as the YOT, the EWS, the Education Psychology Service, Social Services and Connexions. It is actively involved in the provision of AP delivered in schools and off-site by external providers. In terms of identifying suitable AP, schools have recommended providers to MATE and providers now also approach MATE directly to inform them of the work they do (half of all approaches are made in this way). Providers are asked to make presentations on their provision to the panel and to provide other relevant information, such as their costs, insurance cover and the length of their programmes. Schools also select AP identified by MATE for pupils who have not been referred to the panel (if the provision is seen as appropriate in meeting their needs). The University of Nottingham was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of MATE and reported positively on its impact. MATE has reduced the number of permanent exclusions in Mansfield from 34 in 2003/04 to 14 in 2004/05, and has also helped change attitudes towards young people at risk.

An example of identifying and selecting AP within a LA: Knowsley

In Knowsley, three central features underpin the processes of identification and selection of providers offering courses and activities within the key stage 4 Work Based Learning Programme (WBLP).

- Personal knowledge and experience of the training providers in the area
- Commercial tendering
- Flexibility of programme managers to select the most appropriate form of provision.

The evolution of the WBLP over the previous six to seven years has involved the development of close working relationships between the programme management and the training providers in the area. The management team has forged good links with providers in the area, and has accumulated knowledge and understanding of the provision available in terms of the activities and courses on offer, as well as the suitability of different provision for different types of young people.

The expansion of the programme led to the formal invitation for training providers in the area to bid for contracts to offer provision in the educational and vocational areas covered by the WBLP. This resulted in 24 providers being awarded contract frameworks to deliver courses as part of the Knowsley Provider Network. This has enabled the WBLP Team to select appropriate providers to deliver the courses required, reinforced by considerable flexibility to use providers as and when needed. If a new provider becomes available that could offer a different service, then a report explaining the need for this extra provision is considered. A contract is then awarded if the provision is deemed appropriate by the management team. The WBLP evaluation forms distributed to schools and young people also invite suggestions regarding any other providers that could be considered to offer courses in the future.

5 Supporting pupils in AP

This section focuses on the contribution of those supporting young people in AP. Key messages relate to:

- The links between AP and mainstream schools
- The role that parents can play in AP
- The contribution from other services
- The qualities of those staff who work with the young people
- The ethos of respect.

Links with schools:

Close links between AP and mainstream schools form a major element of effective provision, including that with a preventative focus. Promoting schools' ownership of the young person and their achievements in AP is also important for improved attendance, behaviour and reintegration.

Links between AP and mainstream provision can prevent exclusion by offering outreach support for pupils still in mainstream who are experiencing difficulties. AP staff may go into schools to provide additional (outreach) support for pupils and staff, for example extra input and specialist expertise to address young people's behavioural or learning needs. The provision of this support often focuses on providing mainstream school staff with additional skills to manage pupils' behaviour or learning needs, which means that mainstream school staff are then better equipped to handle early intervention themselves. These opportunities for AP and mainstream staff to share good practice can lead to better support for students. In addition, a preventative focus means that AP providers can offer support to a greater number of students because the level of input required is less.

Forging closer links between AP and mainstream provision can reduce pupil isolation and improve their access to school facilities such as mainstream school's specialist resources. The promotion of close working partnerships between AP and mainstream staff has the potential to reduce the isolation of staff working within AP and provide them with opportunities for professional development. Overall, such links can help raise the profile of AP at school level because of the increasing seamlessness of the provision available to both AP and school students.

Closer links can influence outcomes for AP students. For example, because attendance data from the AP is fed back into the mainstream school's figures, its importance is reinforced. Improved rates of reintegration occur when PRUs and schools work together to ensure that a young person in AP can also access a mainstream school place. GCSEs or equivalent being published as part of a mainstream school's performance tables also can affect school's commitment to a student's achievement at AP. Where schools contribute to the funding of the AP place through the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)¹, links are also maintained, making it

¹ the amount of money a school receives per pupil per year

easier to request curriculum-related support from the school and for schools to have input into AP programmes (where young people are attending school part-time or are still on the school roll).

A designated person per school can help sustain effective links with AP. Such staff attend review meetings, visit pupils at AP sites regularly and feed back information on pupils to other school staff.

Example of links with schools: Bolton

Close working relationships are believed to exist between the schools and the AP within the borough. In a number of cases (for example, short-stay provision, provision for those with psychological and/or emotional difficulties or for young mothers) young people are dual registered and thus, close links are maintained in terms of accessing coursework and accreditation. Outreach support provides early intervention and transfers skills to mainstream schools which are then better equipped to provide support for young people with whom they have struggled. There is a great deal of interest from schools in the vocational academy at Youth Challenge, which a number of young people access on an outreach basis as a preventative measure to avoid exclusion. In exchange, schools are willing to provide facilities for the young people at Youth Challenge, for example, making food technology labs available, while one school supplies the provision's 'pupil of the year' prizes. It is described as a very collaborative relationship and one which is improving over time.

Example of links with schools: North Lincolnshire

In North Lincolnshire there are strong links between AP and mainstream schools and this is mostly due to pupils remaining on the roll of their mainstream school. All pupils (with the exception of approximately five long-term permanently excluded pupils) are now on a school roll. The LA and schools are working together to reduce the need for permanent exclusions, and no pupils have been permanently excluded since June 2004. Schools have adopted a system of 'managed transfers' and therefore maintain overall responsibility for pupils accessing AP.

Links are further maintained, as schools are required to contribute to the funding of the AP place. Referrals for AP are made to a Headteacher Panel, and the provision is funded through a budget made up from AWPU contributions from secondary schools (on a formula basis), LA central funds, and any statement funding. This makes the AP a viable financial alternative to permanent exclusion. Moreover, GCSE (or equivalent) results gained by young people whilst attending the AP are published as part of the mainstream schools' league tables. Links are further sustained through protocols which have been established to share information and transfer pupils' work between schools and AP providers. Contact is also fostered by 'designated teachers' or 'school links' who attend pupil review meetings and disseminate information concerning pupils' progress to other school staff. The LA also employs a learning mentor who visits young people at their placement on a weekly basis and provides feedback to their school.

Involving parents:

Parents are recognised as having a key role to play in children's learning and, within AP, should be involved at all stages. However, this can be particularly challenging for AP providers due to a lack of contact with, or support from, parents.

In order to ensure parents' involvement in their children's learning, providers should include parents in discussions about AP from the earliest referral stage and provide them with appropriate information about the provision (including their responsibilities

in terms of attendance). This contributes to the success of the young person's placement.

AP should provide regular feedback regarding what is going well, as well as any problems, to encourage parental involvement and reduce any sense of isolation or stigma that they may be experiencing as a result of their child being out of school. Providers highlight the isolation and stigma felt by some parents, particularly those whose children have very complex needs.

For providers, the effective involvement of parents can often be one of the most challenging aspects of their provision, due to lack of contact with, and support from, parents. When parents are involved, or issues at home are addressed, pupils' needs can also be met more effectively. The provision of parenting classes or programmes and the use of family support workers are useful approaches to parental involvement.

Example of involving parents: Bromley

In Bromley, the value of involving parents in their child's alternative educational provision has been recognised and is facilitated by the role of Family Support Officers (FSOs). FSOs perform a vital function in supporting young people and their families in the process of placement in AP and reintegration back into mainstream education, as well as through the duration of their placement, to ensure the effectiveness of the provision is maximised. FSOs are assigned as part of a multi-agency approach to advocate the needs of the young person entering AP and their families, to support them through issues (for example they may be a family in crisis), and help them access other avenues of support in addition to education. FSOs work in a range of AP interventions in the LA, including provision for school refusers and key stage 2 respite programmes (a full-time, dedicated FSO is attached to the key stage 2 respite programme). The post of FSO was seen as particularly innovative because of the role FSOs played in addressing issues children and families may be facing away from school. The role of the FSO in Bromley is part of a philosophy to provide a holistic approach to addressing young people's needs, reducing potential barriers to learning and promoting social inclusion. FSOs are also valuable in supporting and encouraging parents to become more involved with their child's learning, and to facilitate more positive experiences of education for both the parent and the young person themselves.

The contribution from other services:

At AP, pupils should have regular access to a range of services and other agencies, such as Connexions, CAMHS, and counselling support.

Access to a range of other agencies and services ensures that young people's needs can be met more quickly and hence effectively (for example, health needs being addressed on-site). This, in turn, reduces the level of disruption to young people's learning.

Direct access to key agencies, and especially having dedicated workers such as Connexions PAs linked to each site, also supports positive post-16 progression.

Example of multi-agency support: Nottinghamshire's Bassetlaw Learning Centre dedicated Connexions PA

At the Bassetlaw Learning Centre, effective multi-agency support has been engaged by establishing a clear line of contact with the Connexions information, advice and guidance service by identifying a dedicated PA to work at the centre. The Connexions PA is funded to visit the centre to work with permanent excludees and pupils referred for managed moves. The PA supports young people through the transition process (from mainstream to AP), identifies appropriate AP for students and supports and advises them in their reintegration into mainstream school or post-16 destinations. The Connexions PA is well informed about local AP and post-16 opportunities and so is well placed to provide information, advice and guidance about appropriate AP on an individual basis. The benefits of having this dedicated support are: that the learning centre has been able to establish strong working relationships with the Connexions service; the PA has become attuned to the needs of the particular client group at the centre; and the young people are given ease of access to external expertise and guidance from a member of staff with whom they have established a positive relationship.

Example of multi-agency support: North Lincolnshire's Young People's Education Centre

The centre provides education for mainly pre- and postnatal students up to the age of 19, although the centre has recently expanded its remit (in line with North Lincolnshire's 14-19 Strategy for Learning) so that other groups of young learners can receive tutoring. One of the identified strengths of the centre is its links with other agencies. Staff access a wide range of professionals and specialist support services for young people attending the centre, who often have complex needs. This includes health visitors, nurse/midwife, the Youth Service, Health Promotions, an educational psychologist, Connexions and education advisors. All agencies work to support and enhance young people's learning, to develop their social skills and widen the support networks available for students. Furthermore, strong links with young people's mainstream schools are also retained: young people remain on the roll of their mainstream school and schools sign up to protocols to provide work and share information.

Staffing of AP:

High quality staffing is key to effective provision. The young people attending AP often have complex needs that demand specialist skills and attributes. Ensuring appropriate opportunities for AP providers' professional development and for the sharing of good practice is beneficial.

High quality staffing at AP draws from a variety of different backgrounds (youth work, social care, health) and different personalities. This diversity is recognised as a strength as staff bring with them a different set of skills and ways of engaging young people. The emphasis on effective communication, empathy and establishing trust are very much a feature of the relationships to be established with young people.

Where LA training is available to AP providers alongside mainstream staff, this allows good practice to be shared, and relationships to be strengthened.

Example of staffing of AP: Knowsley

Huyton Education Learning Partnership (HELP) is a private business offering learning and training opportunities for young people within the Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate framework. It offers vocational skills training in the areas of construction, hair and beauty, and motor mechanics. Operating the provision along the lines of real-world workplaces, course tutors act as employers and aim to instil in students the importance of attendance, punctuality, adherence to health and safety guidelines, respect for tools/equipment, and the need to communicate and cooperate effectively with others. In order to support this approach, the provision requires high quality staff who are proven in their vocational field and also able to communicate with, and educate the young people. As a consequence, in 2003 the provision management instigated a 'grow your own' programme of tutor/staff development so that quality practitioners could themselves become adequately trained and qualified to teach the students. Three of the young people who attended the provision have been taken on as employees. These were individuals who had previously been excluded from school for aggressive and disruptive behaviour. Their employment as tutors provides a positive role model for other students.

The ethos of respect:

The term 'respect' repeatedly recurs when young people and providers describe effective provision. Pupils clearly respond better to AP when they feel providers treat them with respect. Those commissioning AP should ensure that potential providers exemplify this fundamental principle that underpins all staff-pupil relations.

The quality of the relationships that staff can build with the young people, based on mutual respect, leads to improved interaction with peers and with adults, improvements in attendance and behaviour, and re-engagement with learning. Pupils particularly identify this ethos of respect as central to their re-engagement with education and learning.

Those AP providers singled out as good practitioners invariably highlight the need to recognise pupils' difficulties and use the terminology of respect. Although this may seem to be self-evident, it is the value system which underpins all examples of AP provision that were highlighted as good practice. Such values are also advocated in the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce. Therefore, evidence of the presence of this ethos in AP should be a requirement at the commissioning stage.

Example of the ethos of respect: Bolton

In response to an identified need, the LA established 'Youth Challenge', which is a key stage 4 PRU, with a vocational centre coordinated by a qualified bricklayer. The approach adopted by the coordinator is to treat young people as adults. The young people have responded to this approach, showing mutual respect and working hard for the coordinator. Being treated as adults has also enabled the young people to interact positively with their peers and other adults. The coordinator is flexible, approachable and accommodating to the needs of the pupils; they are on first name terms and eat lunch together as a group. Nevertheless, the coordinator operates a 'tough love' approach in that he is firm with the young people so that they are aware that there are boundaries and rules that have to be adhered to.

6 Components of provision

This section focuses on the components of effective AP. Key messages relate to:

- The benefits of positive links between providers
- The value of involving pupils in their learning experience
- Access to a range of vocational opportunities
- The importance of providing a range of accreditation
- The benefits provided through personalised learning.

Links between providers:

Liaison and communication between providers widens opportunities for young people.

Positive links between providers can facilitate young people's progression to FE, training and employment. For example, links with local colleges can enable young people in AP to participate in 'taster' courses which raise their awareness of post-16 opportunities available to them. Links with work experience providers allow young people to consider different career options.

The opportunity to participate in further 'taster' courses, enrichment activities and work experience placements enables young people to become more familiar with adult environments, which increases their confidence and social skills. This impacts positively on aspirations for the future and facilitates progression.

An example of links between providers: Lincolnshire's work with the Shaw Trust

Lincolnshire works in partnership with the Shaw Trust to provide work experience opportunities for pupils enrolled on the LA's key stage 4 alternative curriculum programme (Solutions 4), which involves 11 private training providers. The Shaw Trust is a national charity that provides training and work opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market due to disability, ill health or other social circumstances. As part of that work, it provides a specialist service for young people aged 14–25 which supports them to prepare for the working environment. The Trust has developed a good working relationship with each of the providers involved in the Solutions 4 programme. As a result, referral criteria are clearly understood by all providers. A key element of the partnership between the LA and the Trust is the employment of three Trust Development Officers who liaise between Solutions 4 providers and local businesses in order to arrange opportunities for pupils to gain experience of the workplace in chosen professions.

Involving pupils in their learning experience:

Pupils' contribution to the content of the learning they undertake at their AP placement leads to improved placement outcomes.

Wherever possible, it is valuable to encourage pupils to contribute to the content of the learning they experience in AP, for example, by seeking their views on the activities and courses they feel would be most appropriate for them, and providing them with opportunities to access taster courses (although it is acknowledged that this

will not be possible for those LAs which need to identify AP for excludees within a limited time cycle). Where young people are able to be involved in shaping their learning experience, this ensures that their learning is of direct relevance to them personally, which increases motivation and equips them with valuable life skills. Learning opportunities that have current and personal significance for the young person, and offer ownership, also improve motivation.

Involving pupils in target setting, where this is linked to an individual work programme tailored to their needs, also increases motivation. Pupil review of their placement, through questionnaires and/or interviews, contributes to improvements in the quality of provision (see Section 7 on monitoring and evaluation).

An example of pupils' contribution to their learning experience: Bolton's Youth Challenge PRU vocational academy

In response to young people identifying that existing AP provision was not meeting their needs, the Youth Challenge PRU was established. The young people attending Youth Challenge's vocational academy are involved in building provision on a new site, with several of them so committed to it that they have given up their free time at weekends to come in and labour. The work is coordinated on a daily basis by a qualified bricklayer who runs the provision like a building site, with similar expectations, in order to introduce a work ethic. The vocational academy has been able to tap into the strengths and interests of the young people, investing them with a sense of ownership through their involvement in the building work, and enhancing both their work-related and social skills.

Access to a range of vocational opportunities:

Access to a variety of vocational opportunities, for example, via college, training providers and work-based learning, can help to re-engage young people in education and increase their retention in learning after the age of 16.

Providing a range of vocational opportunities is often fundamental to effective AP: it can encourage participation rates, particularly for those young people who have become disengaged from learning. Such opportunities lead to increased attendance rates and improvements in achievement and accreditation, which help raise the profile of this type of learning and, therefore, also the status of the young people accessing it. Young people's practical skills and knowledge are enhanced, as well as their personal and social development, thus increasing their opportunities within FE or the labour market and enabling them to interact better within the adult community. Vocational opportunities allow young people to recognise the relevance of the skills they are acquiring to possible post-16 options, which in turn facilitates progression, as pathways to post-16 opportunities are already established.

An example of access to vocational opportunities: Lincolnshire's 'Solutions 4' vocational education programme

Lincolnshire's key stage 4 alternative curriculum initiative, Solutions 4, provides a vocational education programme for those pupils in key stage 4 who have been permanently excluded or for whom a mainstream school place is not appropriate. The programme offers pupils a range of vocational training within a work-related environment. It is delivered in partnership with 11 private training providers across the authority that offer experiences in a range of areas, including: animal care; hairdressing and beauty; bricklaying; childcare; carpentry; conservation; forestry; horticulture; light engineering; mechanics; office and reception work.

Vocational qualifications for pupils enrolled on the programme include BTEC 'Skills for working life', and NVQ qualifications and accreditation through the LA's Employability Graduation Award (an award for successful completion of specific elements of the work-related curriculum). In addition, pupils work towards key skills qualifications and entry level certificates in literacy, numeracy and ICT, which is delivered by work-based support mentors within the workplace. The vocational programme has brought about significant positive outcomes for the pupils enrolled, for example, increased attendance, improvements in achievement and post-16 progression, as well as enhanced personal and social skills.

Local authorities will need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of offering discrete under-16 FE provision, or whether to integrate under-16s into existing post-16 programmes. The former provides the opportunity for programmes to be created according to the needs of the young people, rather than trying to fit them into existing programmes which might not be appropriate. The latter can provide greater opportunities for personal and social development, through interacting with older students and the status associated with attending a post-16 course. It is important with this approach to ensure that the necessary support structures are in place for under-16 pupils (for example, learning mentors), as well as making sure that college staff have the appropriate skills to be able to work with them.

A range of accreditation:

Pupils need to have a range of accreditation available to them, including GCSE-equivalent options.

The provision of a range of different forms of accreditation (including GCSE-equivalent options) gives young people more opportunities to achieve. Their confidence is increased which enables them to be stretched and achieve more academically. Pupils can then see that AP results in learning outcomes in the same way as mainstream learning, but in an environment that is better suited to their individual needs. They can gain the appropriate qualifications, skills and aspirations to enable them to move forward successfully into post-16 provision or employment.

The forms of accreditation provided should be regularly reviewed to ensure that all the work the young people complete can be accredited, or can contribute towards accreditation, for example, by completing individual unit awards which can be combined as part of a wider qualification. It should be recognised that GCSE courses may not always be the most appropriate option, particularly for those pupils with less academic aptitudes, or who have been out of mainstream school for some time because of issues relating to engagement with school and/or maintaining regular attendance.

An example of the provision of a range of accreditation: Stoke-on-Trent's Project Management

Project Management in Stoke-on-Trent is a national training provider which offers a comprehensive range of training programmes delivered by qualified and experienced staff. Programmes for the key stage 4 pupils attending are structured to meet individual needs and consequently a wide range of accreditation is provided, from Entry Level (1-3) up to Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The programme's aim is for young people to achieve Level 1 on the qualifications framework to enable them to progress on to a post-16 vocational course or an apprenticeship.

An example of the provision of a range of accreditation: Nottinghamshire's Broxtowe College

Broxtowe College in Nottinghamshire provides a discrete full-time, two-year course for key stage 4 pupils. The programme is part of the college's 'school of vocational preparation' which aims to address and challenge behaviour that would prevent young people from progressing on to FE or into employment. Focusing on key skills and vocational programmes, the college offers the following accreditation: AQA entry level in English, maths and ICT; AQA unit awards in PSHE, RE, geography, history and science; and GCSE in design and technology. The programme includes a work experience element for which pupils can also gain accreditation. The college is currently considering GCSE-equivalent options in order to increase its accreditation offer.

Personalised learning:

It is important that placements in AP are tailored to meet young people's needs, abilities and interests.

AP should be tailored to the young person's needs, abilities and interests or aspirations. This is particularly significant when providing for young people with complex difficulties, and for young people who have become disengaged from learning, or have had problems maintaining regular attendance in mainstream school, and so have significant gaps in their learning.

Personalised learning, which shapes the learning experience to match the needs of the young person, ensures that every young person is able to reach their potential. In AP, this means offering pupils a range of educational opportunities (including vocational options). Personalised learning also involves ensuring that all pupils' other needs can be met quickly and effectively, for example, by providing regular access to multi-agency support, and providing a safe and secure environment in which young people can learn and achieve. Personalised learning allows for ongoing individual planning for each pupil, for example, through Individual Education/Learning Plans. The information this provides can then support positive progression by supporting job applications, or entry to post-16 training or education.

An example of personalised learning: Nottinghamshire's Tailor Made Programmes Team (TMPT) and Special Individual Programmes Team (SIPs)

Nottinghamshire's TMPT works with young people with the most complex needs (including brain damage, autism, foetal alcohol dependency, selective mutism and severe mental health issues) who, usually, would have been placed out of county. The team constructs programmes around the individual young person to enable them to move forward and develop core skills, particularly social skills. There are only seven young people on roll at any one time, all statemented, and pupils' needs are carefully matched with the expertise of staff. The young people have an entitlement to everything that is available in mainstream school, if they are able to access it (for example, sex and relationships education, Connexions input). A strength of TMPT is that it only takes such a small number of students, but that left a further group of students within the LA requiring individualised programmes. The SIPs team was set up to fill that gap.

The SIPs team uses the same needs-led approach as the TMPT (with a particular focus on nurturing) but caters for a wider range of young people (30 across the county) who have been 'lost' from education and will not access mainstream school or PRU provision. The majority are statemented. The team aims to re-engage young people in learning and ultimately link them back into education, training or employment. Its strength lies in the fact that the education and multi-agency support is specifically tailored and adapted to meet their individual needs. Each young person also has a key worker who liaises closely with families, which is seen as particularly important where wider, non-educational issues need to be addressed.

7 Monitoring and evaluation techniques

This section focuses on the range of monitoring and evaluation techniques used by LAs to assess and maintain the quality of AP provision. Key messages relate to:

- Using key measures to demonstrate outcomes
- Systems and processes for ongoing monitoring
- The use of stakeholder feedback
- Strategies to ensure cost-effectiveness.

Using key measures to demonstrate outcomes:

LAs need to agree key measures by which they assess the effectiveness of AP and then ensure that relevant data are collected, analysed and acted on.

Regular review of a range of monitoring measures, both quantitative and qualitative, provides insights and an overview of the impact of AP at an individual, provider and LA level. The use of a centralised database to monitor key outcomes provides a coordinated and consistent approach to data collection. It is important that all relevant partners (for example, the LA, mainstream schools and AP providers) can access relevant data to monitor progress and identify trends.

An example of using key measures to demonstrate outcomes: Stoke-on-Trent

The LA monitors outcomes for all young people in alternative provision via a centralised database. Areas of impact measured include: retention rates; increases in levels of attainment and attendance; post-16 progression; and modification of behaviour. On an annual basis, AP providers are required to feed back information on these key indicators for all the students they have supported during the course of the year. These data are then compared with baseline data held by the LA. Regular updates on the information held on the LA's central database allow young people's progress, and AP provider's performance, to be tracked. The LA's use of a centralised database has also resulted in a more consistent approach to monitoring outcomes, for example, in relation to attendance.

Ongoing monitoring:

Regular monitoring by (or on behalf of) commissioners, ensures that provision meets the minimum standard required and is consistent across AP providers. Findings from such monitoring can then be used to inform practice.

Pupil-level monitoring of progress and outcomes, for example by key workers or AP coordinators, on a regular (e.g. daily or weekly) basis ensures emerging problems are addressed and students are retained within AP. Monitoring outcomes at a provider level allows LAs to assess whether AP is meeting young people's needs, and to compare the performance of different providers. Quality assurance mechanisms signed up to by all providers also lead to a more consistent approach across the LA and ensure standards are met. The use of monitoring checklists, detailing all stakeholders' responsibilities and expectations, ensures that monitoring processes are consistent and robust across providers.

An example of ongoing monitoring: Knowsley's use of student progress files and key workers

Individual 'Student Progress' files are used to monitor young people's progression and attainment whilst participating in the LA's key stage 4 Work-Based Learning Programme (WBLP). The file contains baseline data on academic ability, learning and/or medical needs, results of diagnostic screening assessments and attendance levels whilst at school. These baseline data are used to measure students' progress whilst attending AP. The file is also used to record details of the courses and activities undertaken by the young people, such as CV writing and interview skills, as well as accredited courses. Similarly, providers complete detailed accounts of students' attendance and conduct whilst attending the provision, including their ability and willingness to cooperate with others, communication skills, conformity to health and safety guidelines, and attendance/punctuality. This file is portable and is intended to provide future employers with the necessary information to support the young person's job application, or entry into additional training/education opportunities. Key workers are instrumental in guiding the young people through the compilation of these files.

Key workers visit young people accessing AP through the WBLP on a daily basis. Key workers monitor students' progress and can address issues as they arise. They provide a crucial link between all the stakeholders involved and can swiftly identify those students who require additional support or alternative placements. Those students requiring additional support have a nominated key worker who is responsible for liaising with other agencies, such as Social Services or the YOT, who are working with the young person. Students' progress is discussed and reviewed at weekly team meetings and at half-termly meetings with pupils' mainstream schools.

Stakeholder feedback:

The views of key stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of AP are important. In addition, they should also be used to inform the future development of AP. Using client opinion to inform practice can also help increase stakeholders' engagement with – and commitment to – AP.

Canvassing the opinion of young people, parents, mainstream schools, agencies and external providers through interviews and surveys, is an important monitoring tool. Holding frequent review meetings with young people is a fundamental component of the evaluation process and ensures that the provision continues to meet young people's needs. Course evaluation questionnaires can be used to assess opinion regarding young people's satisfaction with the content and quality of the provision, as well as the extent to which it has impacted on them, educationally and socially. In turn, the active involvement of AP commissioners in monitoring and evaluating the quality of AP leads to the development of programmes which meet students' needs more effectively.

An example of involving stakeholders: Rochdale

Pupil and parent feedback is sought and one-to-one pupil review meetings take place termly with all the young people attending AP in the LA to request their views on their placement. Parents are given regular opportunities to evaluate the provision, for example, via frequent telephone contact with providers, and in surveys. Criteria such as engagement, motivation, retention, attendance, confidence, participation, behaviour, achievement and happiness, provide data on the appropriateness and success of the placement. Parental feedback is also sought as to whether they feel the provision is appropriate for their child and whether they are aware of progress that their child may have made.

An example of involving stakeholders: Knowsley

Students are asked to comment on the usefulness of the programme in relation to the help it offers them in preparation for employment or further training. The degree of satisfaction with the level of choice and range of options on offer, and comments on individual elements of provision – college courses or education provider-based activities – are also invited. Students are asked to suggest ways in which they think the programme has actually impacted on them, including the attainment of qualifications, providing them with insights into working life, and offering information and guidance for future pathways and progression routes. Thoughts on the programme's impact on their attendance and relationships/behaviour are also sought.

Parents are invited to comment on issues surrounding the decision-making process leading to a placement being arranged, including whether they felt that they received sufficient information and opportunities for discussing the options available. In addition to process issues, parents are asked to comment on possible changes exhibited by the student, including confidence levels, willingness to attend, actual attendance levels, behaviour, attainment and thoughts about future progression. Similarly, schools are asked to comment on the referral process (for example, whether or not they had sufficient time to complete the forms) and the degree to which they felt informed about the process itself and the options available to the students. School representatives are asked to comment on the quality of provision offered by the various providers, including the level of resources, the depth of curriculum and the standard to which it was delivered. All questionnaires provide respondents with the opportunity to make suggestions as to how the provision could be improved.

Cost-effectiveness:

To ensure value for money, commissioners need to consider the quality of AP provided, the outcomes achieved, and the efficient use of resources.

As already highlighted in Section 3, LAs can use their review processes to ensure that AP is cost-effective and provides value for money, for example by comparing the costs of college placements across the LA or by comparing the costs of internal and external provision. To ensure that provision is truly cost-effective there is also a need to compare the costs of AP with the outcomes achieved and to take account of 'value added'. LAs should carry out 'value for money' audits of provision by measuring the costs of AP against the cost of other alternatives for pupils requiring education other than at school.

As also noted in Section 3, commercial tendering for the commissioning of AP helps ensure that it is cost-effective and can assist LAs in monitoring the quality of provision and guarantee that contractual obligations are met. In addition, commercial tendering can provide LAs with information to compare and contrast the cost-effectiveness of AP.

Collaborating by pooling budgets allows school partnerships to obtain economies of scale in purchasing AP. This means that pupils can access a wider range of AP (college/vocational courses) and provision can be made in a more cost-effective way. Where schools do not collaborate in this way the costs of AP may be prohibitive.

An example of ensuring cost-effectiveness: Rochdale

The LA has assessed the cost-effectiveness of AP by trying to ascertain whether there was any latent capacity within the AP and comparing provision in the borough to that of other LAs. AP has been evaluated in terms of whether it is over-staffed, under-used or could have greater impact and therefore is not optimally cost-effective. All of the AP in the borough is utilised extensively by both the LA and schools directly and this level of usage has been judged to be a measure of providing value for money. The LA also feels that making training available to AP providers (e.g. in behaviour management techniques) will make the provision more cost-effective: enhancing the behaviour management techniques of AP staff will improve the quality and hence effectiveness of the provision.

Annex 1 Interviews conducted in each LA

LA	No. of interviewees	Type of Interviewee	LA	No. of interviewees	Type of Interviewee
North Lincolnshire	2	Deputy Head and Head of Inclusion (mainstream school)	Lincolnshire	1	Head of Emotional and Behavioural Support Service
	1	Teacher in Charge, PRU		1	Development Officer Shaw Trust (Other agency)
	1	Private Provider (part-time provision)		2	Youth Workers
	1	Work Based Training Provider		1	Connexions PA
	1	Head of Education, Learning and Achievement		1	Home Tuition Coordinator
	1	Head of Inclusion		1	Headteacher, PRU
	1	Learning Mentor/Monitoring Officer, LA		1	Pupil Services (Education Out of School Coordinator)
	1	AP Coordinator, LA		1	Manager and Site Manager of Training Provider
	9	Pupils (5: group of pupils from training provider, 1 pupil from mainstream school, 1 pupil from PRU, 2 pupils from external provider)		1	Director of Training Provider
	2	Parents (of pupils from external provider)		3	Pupils (2 from training providers, 1 from vocational training centre)
Knowsley	1	Headteacher, PRU	Bromley	1	Strategic Manager (Head of Behaviour Service)
	2	WBLP Management Team		1	Key stage 4 AP Coordinator
	1	Manager Knowsley HELP		1	Family Support Officer
	1	Owner of Work Based Training Provider		1	Teacher in Charge, Young Mothers' Project
	1	College Manager		1	Headteacher, PRU
	2	College representatives		1	Key Stage 4 PRU, Officer responsible for strategy and planning
	1	14-19 Collegiate Manager		1	Director 14-19 Collaborative
	1	Assistant Director Children's Services		1	Assistant Director of Education
	2	Parents/carer (of pupil on Work Based Learning Programme)		1	Manager Education Business Partnership
	11	Pupils (All from Work Based Learning Programmes; discussion with group of 8; discussion with 2 and interview with 1)		1	Leader Support to Schools
	4 (discussions)	Tutors (2 Knowsley START, 2 Knowsley HELP)		1	Pastoral Manager

	2 (discussions)	Key Workers (Work based training provider – hair and beauty)		4	Pupils (2 work-based programme, 2 school refusers' project) and group discussion with young women at young mothers' unit.
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LA	No. of interviewees	Type of Interviewee	LA	No. of interviewees	Type of Interviewee
Nottinghamshire	1	Community Provider (Notts County FC)	Stoke-on-Trent	1	Social Inclusion Officer
	1	FE College Provider		3	Pupils (1 from FE college, Work-based Training provider, 1 from FE college)
	1	Key Stage 4 Coordinator, PRU		1	Key Stage 4 Coordinator, FE college
	1	Head of EOTAS		1	Assistant Principal, FE college
	2	Headteacher, PRU		1	College representative
	1	Representative from Pupil Placement Panel		1	EWO (YOT based)
	1	Special Individual Programmes Coordinator		2	Director and Coordinator of Training Centre
	1	Coordinator of Tailor Made Programme Team		1	Director of Children's Services
	1	Assistant Director, Inclusion Services		1	Head of Positive Behaviour
	1	Connexions PA		1	Connexions PA
	1	Social Services representative		1	Education Officer
	4	Pupils (2 voluntary provider, 1 PRU, 1 TMPT)		1	External Consultant
	Bolton	1		Director Children's Services	Rochdale
2		Assistant Director Children's Services and Head of Inclusion	1	Head of Inclusion	
2		YOT manager and ESW with YOT	1	Headteacher, PRU	
1		Teacher in charge, Young Mums Unit	3	External Providers	
2		Parent (1 of young person attending young mums unit, 1 of young person attending PRU)	1	Connexions representative	
1		Midwife (Sure Start)	1	Parent/carer (of pupil attending PRU)	
5		Pupils (2 from young mothers' unit, 2 from PRU, 1 Youth Challenge PRU)	4	Young people (3 from external provider, 1 from PRU)	
1		Headteacher, PRU	1	Key Stage 4 Coordinator, PRU	
1		Teacher in Charge (Youth Challenge, PRU)			

Annex 2 Good practice - Bolton

1. Monitoring: reviewing the effectiveness of AP

Description of practice

Bolton LA recently conducted a borough-wide review of AP and BESD provision in order to agree what support and provision was required, and to assess whether, as a whole, it was working effectively. The review constituted a two-year process of discussion, consultation, research and development, as well as initial implementation of some of the ideas that emerged during the process.

Consultation was wide ranging and involved all the relevant stakeholders, including young people and their parents or carers. The review highlighted a commitment to build on existing good practice, but equally, to work together to improve less well-developed practice.

The recommendations from the review were broad, requiring subsequent action by various groups or partnerships. In terms of AP, the recommendations included:

- the development of two linked pupil placement panels, one for young people requiring mid-term admissions to mainstream schools, and the other for admissions to out-of-school provision, including the PRUs
- the development of an overall Pupil Referral Service (PRS) bringing together all the PRUs under a single management structure in order to provide consistency and enable them to attract high quality staff through attractive salary and career structures and professional development opportunities.

Why identified as good practice

Bolton's borough-wide review of provision provided an opportunity for the LA to reflect on current practice, to build on what was working effectively and make revisions where it was felt necessary. Some key components of good practice within such an approach were identified.

There is a need to create a **sense of common purpose**, and achieve consensus about the issues that affect AP provision, and about wanting to tackle these issues together and keep them high on the agenda of policy makers, funders and stakeholders.

It is considered important to make sure this consensus **involves the perspectives and views of a wide range of stakeholders**, including schools, parents and young people, and to learn from these perspectives by using the views to factor in what works and factor out what does not.

Being ready to make changes to existing practice to make sure the provisions are best suited to the needs of the young people, and not done for the convenience of local authority staff, is highlighted as key.

Also important is committing to **ongoing review** of all provision in order to create a continuum of support. This involves constantly examining the impact of the provision and support; checking against the outcomes for the young people; continuing to deliver, build on and strengthen those things that make a difference; and being willing to change those things that do not.

The need to **see the whole picture** by joining things up is considered essential to ensure added value for the young people. This approach was implemented as part of the LA's review process and now forms a central part of the Every Child Matters agenda within the LA.

The LA considers **celebrating the successes** of the young people and the staff in the provisions to be key in terms of recognising and building on what works.

The LA believes in exploring opportunities and not becoming too entrenched in existing structures. Once a gap in provision has been identified it sets about finding the most appropriate provision to meet that need. If that provision does not exist, then the LA would set it up.

Impact

In terms of the 12 PRUs which make up the LA's AP, the review found that, although working well individually, they were operating as separate units which caused them difficulties when staffing problems occurred. The decision was subsequently made to group them together into four categories within one Pupil Referral Service (PRS) as follows:

- Key stage 4 provision
- Provision for pupils with medical and/or psychological needs, and young mums
- Short-term provision for key stage 3 and 4 pupils
- Key stage 2 provision.

An addition to the above categories is a provision set up in 2005 to cater for 'international arrivals' across all key stages, in order to provide them with a more stable introduction to the British education system.

The above structure is believed to create the capacity for moving staff between units when staffing issues occur, as well as enabling the development of a better career structure. Regular meetings between the PRS manager and staff in each of the PRUs facilitate greater information sharing and increased understanding of each other's context. The LA is currently working towards the development of cluster-based PRUs so that, within the short-stay provision category, instead of the four present PRUs, there will be three PRUs serving particular areas of the borough.

Good practice - Bolton

2. Delivery of alternative provision: Park School

Description of practice

Park School is a PRU designed to offer AP to young people in key stages 3 and 4 who have been unable to cope in a mainstream school because of psychological and/or emotional difficulties. The young people attending may be school phobic, anxious or depressed, have experienced bullying or abuse, or may be suffering from other more serious mental health problems such as, for example, Autistic Spectrum Disorders or schizophrenia. Usually, the young people have severe social anxieties and find the mainstream environment is not able to meet their needs. Thus, the majority of them will have either stopped attending a mainstream school altogether, or their attendance will have been spasmodic. As a result, many of the young people have significant gaps in their learning. One thing all the young people who attend Park School have in common is very low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. Unlike most PRUs, this provision very rarely offers places to excluded pupils. The rationale for this is because such pupils very often display quite challenging behaviour which, it is believed, many of the more vulnerable pupils attending the unit would find threatening.

The provision currently has 20 places available for young people. The norm is for pupils to be dual registered with their mainstream school. Occasionally, pupils may not be on the roll of a mainstream school (for example, they may have come from a private school, or have just moved into the authority). In these circumstances, the pupil would begin their placement at Park School and then be enrolled at a mainstream school. Pupils usually attend the unit on a full-time basis, but most often will begin by attending part time and then build up to full-time attendance. The average length of time that pupils spend at Park School is about 18 months, but depends very much on the nature and complexity of the pupils' difficulties, as well as on the point during their school career at which they are referred. Some pupils in key stage 3 are able to return to mainstream, or at least have a part-time placement where they continue to attend their mainstream school as well. Pupils referred in Years 10 and 11 tend to remain at Park School until the end of Year 11.

Young people are referred to a multi-agency panel meeting via their mainstream school, usually through the Education Social Work Service (ESWS) as they tend to be non- or poor attenders experiencing difficulties in school. Places at the unit are then allocated, with priority given to those felt to be the most vulnerable. If needs that have not been identified previously emerge later and cannot be met within the PRU, additional agency support would be sought.

Park School offers a wide range of curriculum options. Most emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy, ICT and PHSE, but art, science, religious

studies, PE, cookery, citizenship and childcare are also on offer. A range of accreditation is available so that young people of all abilities can be stretched and can achieve. The provision has good links with other agencies such as CAMHS, school nurse, school counsellor, Connexions, the Parent Partnership Service (a voluntary agency providing information, advice and support for parents of young people with special educational needs). Together, these agencies are successful in helping pupils overcome their problems. The unit has also forged good links with other providers. For example, half a day a week is spent at a local college as part of an ongoing programme, where young people can participate in taster courses over a number of weeks. This raises their awareness of the opportunities available to them, and provides an opportunity to meet people and become more familiar with the environment in order to facilitate that transition. A work experience programme is also available which provides opportunities for pupils to consider different careers.

During the past year, in addition to accessing the college and work experience, young people have had the opportunity to experience enrichment activities such as horse riding, climbing, abseiling and canoeing, as well as working with a local voluntary arts organisation to write and perform both a song and a film.

Why identified as good practice

Park School was identified as an example of good practice because of its significant success with young people suffering from psychological and emotional difficulties. A number of factors are believed to contribute to its effectiveness.

The teacher in charge noted that the **small size** of the unit, in terms of both the numbers of young people attending and the staff, allows everyone to be treated as an individual. This sort of **personalised approach** makes the young people feel valued, enabling staff to better identify their needs and then be flexible about the way in which they subsequently meet those needs. Young people and parents appreciate the smallness of the unit. Pupils find it more relaxing and, if they are experiencing difficulties, support is always available. Staff at the unit are more aware of the young people's difficulties than is possible in a mainstream school, given the number of different teachers (including supply teachers) that pupils encounter there.

Good **agency and provider links** have been established so that ongoing support can be provided for the young people's needs, as well as offering them enrichment opportunities and preparing them for the future. For parents, the fact that the young people's needs are being met in a safe environment is reassuring and is felt to create a climate for learning.

The **individualised learning** available to the young people is seen as a key feature of effective practice. Where young people have more complicated difficulties and have been out of school for significant periods of time, it can often take a long time to enable them to catch up. Regular assessments of basic skills are conducted and reading, maths and spelling ages are assessed

three times a year. The young people are made aware of the results of these tests and staff have found that this motivates them to move towards their next target. Staff need to be aware of the young people's circumstances and what, potentially, they are capable of achieving.

Pupils' individual targets are identified from initial assessment results, as well as from discussion with pupils. Targets are written into each pupil's individual education plan (IEP) and included in their 'Target Books' (exercise books in which they complete work related to the targets). Most of the targets are also displayed in the classrooms as a reminder for pupils. At the same time, all staff are aware of the targets and can address them in lessons as appropriate.

On four mornings each week the pupils work from 9:15am until 10:00 am on their targets. They work independently (rather than as a group) with staff support. This provides a good balance between independent work and group teaching (the latter taking place during the rest of the day). Staff believe it also creates a stress-free atmosphere at the beginning of the day and prepares pupils to go into more structured lessons later on. Also, because pupils have some choice as to which targets they work on, they tend to be more motivated. Records are then kept of everything the pupils do, through computerised tracking sheets and in each pupil's individual file.

Staff highlight the **positive relationships** between staff and pupils as an influential factor in the unit's success, which are seen as being at the core of everything. Pupils recognise that staff are working hard to help them make progress whilst at the provision, and in preparing them for life afterwards.

Impact

The main impact of attending Park School is on the young people's personal and social development, in particular their confidence, self-esteem and mental attitude, which, in turn, has a positive effect on their learning. Rates of achievement at the unit are high. For example, in the 2004-2005 academic year, of the 13 pupils in the Year 11 group, eight achieved Level 1 or 2 in On Demand AEB literacy, five achieved Level 1, 2 or 3 in On Demand AEB numeracy, while four pupils achieved nine GCSEs between them in art, English, maths and RE. In addition, two pupils completed three OCR New Clait ICT units, and pupils together achieved 75 AQA Unit Awards in a range of subjects, including maths, English and ICT.

The majority of pupils at Park School had a poor attendance record in their previous school, usually between 0% and 3% in the term prior to referral. Most pupils improve significantly on this whilst at Park School with about 40% of pupils attending for between 90% and 100% of the time. Average attendance rates for the previous three academic years are:

2003 – 2004 73%
2004 – 2005 74%
2005 – 2006 78%.

Young people spoke of feeling much less nervous about learning because help was always available, as well as being more independent. Parents particularly noted that young people were much happier since attending the provision and, in several cases, the provision had impacted positively on pupils' aspirations for the future. During the 2004-2005 academic year, two pupils were retained in mainstream school on a part-time basis as a result of the support received whilst attending Park School, while one pupil successfully reintegrated into mainstream school full time. The majority of school leavers are motivated to continue in education. For example, of those who left Park School at the end of the summer term 2006, ten out of 12 (83 per cent) have taken up a place at college or with a training provider.

Annex 3 Good practice - Bromley

1. Delivery of alternative provision: Key stage 1 nurture group and key stage 2 respite programmes

Description of practice

Primary school pupils with behavioural and other needs are supported through a nurture group at key stage 1 and respite programmes at key stage 2, to which schools contribute a proportion of AWPU. The LA's preventative focus aims to ensure that all support mechanisms/interventions are accessed by pupils prior to transition to their secondary school.

Key stage 1 provision

The key stage 1 nurture group is for young people without a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The provision offers a preventative approach for those who require intense support, and is delivered through play therapy and parent support work, in addition to teaching and learning. Children attend for a term whilst remaining on the roll of their school, after which they return to their mainstream school with additional teaching assistant (TA) support. Eight children can attend the provision at any one time.

The LA has identified additional provision at key stage 1 as a priority. Between September 2005 and March 2006, the Core Panel received 350 referrals from schools for additional support, over 50% of which were at key stage 1. The LA behaviour service has responded by appointing a play therapist and an early years specialist, and by providing additional key stage 1 provision. Access to relevant data is key in enabling the LA to identify trends and highlight where provision is needed.

Key stage 2 provision

The LA provides AP in the form of respite programmes at key stage 2. This is full-time provision which children attend for a term. Pupils are dual registered at their mainstream school and the provision. The core offer for young people attending is: Educational Psychologist (EP) support; assessment; Family Support Officer (FSO) involvement; teaching and learning in a small nurture group environment; and input from relevant partner services such as health and social services as required. There are three TAs and a teacher for a group of eight children. The provision is located next to a mainstream school so the children can access the school's facilities and socialise with pupils at break time. Placements are reviewed half-way through the term. If at the end of term, pupils have not made sufficient progress they can stay for an extended period of three to four weeks. Children are reintegrated with targeted resources, for example, a TA who has developed a relationship with the child whilst s/he has been at the provision. The child will receive full-time TA support for half a term which is then gradually removed. By the end of the term the aim is to have successfully reintegrated the child back into the mainstream setting.

Why identified as good practice

The overall aim of the service's work at the primary level is to develop its preventative strategies at key stage 1 and 2, and to provide targeted support in order to prevent exclusions at key stage 3 and 4.

Having a full-time, dedicated FSO attached to the key stage 2 provision is seen as particularly effective because of the issues children and families may be facing away from school. For example, they may be a family in crisis which, in turn, is affecting children's attendance and behaviour at school. The FSO plays a key role in 'unpacking' family issues and tensions, and resolving them as a precursor to reengaging children in learning.

An essential element of the provision is the multi-agency, 'joined up', and targeted assessment of the child's needs upon referral to the provision, and the input of support from agencies such as the Education Welfare Service, Education Psychology Service, Social Services, CAMHS, Family Support and Counselling Service.

The high levels of support provided in small group sizes in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 interventions is seen as key to their success.

Another key aspect of effective delivery is the managed reintegration of pupils back into their mainstream schools with targeted resources. Pupils are only reintegrated if they are ready to return to school, and they and their school are supported with additional TA resources for the period of reintegration.

Impact.

Key aspects of the provision's impact are its preventative nature and the successful reintegration of pupils back into mainstream provision. Over the last six years, of the ten young people who, on average, attend the key stage 2 provision each year, all but one (per year) have been successfully reintegrated back into mainstream (either to their existing school or a new school). For those not returning to their existing schools, the success of the reintegration process was linked to the reintegration officer ensuring that pupils went to the most supportive schools.

Annex 4 Good practice - Knowsley

1. Delivery of alternative provision: The Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate

Description of practice

The Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate framework is a partnership approach to delivery involving the secondary and specialist schools in the borough. Partners include Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC), Knowsley City Learning Centres, Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council, Knowsley Community College, a range of work-based learning providers (Knowsley Providers' Network), Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, local employers (including Jaguar) and Edge Hill University Campus.

All young people aged 14-19 in Knowsley are members of the Collegiate, the objectives of which are to:

- Offer an increased range of curriculum pathways underpinning increased opportunities for progression to further and higher education, training and employment
- Promote the role of innovation within education, including developing and enhancing links and relationships with local employers
- Offer individual-centred provision based on effective identification of need and the consequent delivery of appropriate provision
- Provide high quality vocational learning experiences in workplace-like settings in preparation for employment. (This strand consists of the key stage 4 Work Based Learning Programme)
- Offer, and promote the status of, high quality vocationally-orientated qualifications (chiefly through college and work-based learning opportunities)
- Promote enterprise and enterprise education through linking the Collegiate with the school enterprise Pathfinder bids and through Knowsley Community College Enterprise Department, (including plans for a youth Enterprise Academy).

These objectives combine to underpin the Knowsley Student Entitlement for all students aged 14-19, ensuring access to the core and enhanced curriculum (primarily through the students' home/base schools), a range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) choices (through Knowsley Community College and other FE providers in the region), and the offer of between one and five days a week attendance at a range of training providers (through the key stage 4 Work Based Learning Programme). Hence, students can access diverse and flexible learning pathways and progression routes in a variety of settings and contexts, including their base/home school, college, learning centres, vocational skills centre and work-based training providers.

Why identified as good practice

Several key features were identified as underpinning the success of the Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate approach:

- **The overall remit of meeting the needs of every learner** (14-19) in the borough – providing the seamless link by removing the post-16 distinction and possible interruption in education. Consistency and continuity of provision is provided through the Collegiate's coherent and flexible single phase of 14-19 education.
- **The underlying holistic approach of the 14-19 Collegiate** – the diverse and multiple needs of the young people can be catered for through this framework. Although education is the focus, the provision available through the framework strives to ensure that young people are supported and equipped to maximise their learning potential by addressing the barriers and challenges to their learning. As such, this will contribute to raising attainment, achievement and employability, so making a positive contribution to the borough's future development.
- The Collegiate operates a **student/young person-centred approach to provision** so that the particular needs of individuals are identified and provision is matched to them accordingly. Young people are provided with a range of opportunities that will enable them to learn in the curriculum and vocational areas that suit them best, in environments and contexts that are most appropriate to them.
- The 14-19 Collegiate is successful because of the **partnership approach to delivery**. Ensuring that young people maximise their learning potential is the joint responsibility of all those in the borough, not just a single institution. This partnership ensures that individual students have access to the broadest possible range of provision and opportunities, rather than being limited to that on offer in one particular institution. Monitoring and quality assurance is the responsibility of the entire partnership.
- The Collegiate offers **educational/learning opportunities of particular relevance to the local population and its labour market requirements**, developed through close liaison between partners. For example, information and profiles of local companies, such as Jaguar and Halewood Leisure Centre, are accessible as on-line resources. Students attending a work-based learning provider receive training in computer-aided machine manufacturing systems and CNC design, and the work pieces completed by students conform to industry standards so that the skills/competences acquired are of direct relevance to a number of local manufacturers (such as those manufacturing flat-pack furniture).

Impact

The 14-19 Collegiate has brought about significant improvements in the educational opportunities available and the approaches to, and systems of, delivery and implementation of education and learning in the locality. Through the Collegiate:

- The curriculum has been broadened to include, for example, Level 1 NVQ vocational courses for 14-16 year old students, as well as BTEC and applied GCSE courses
- Students can pursue learning in an increased range of contexts – school, college, Vocational Skills Centre, City Learning Centres, Specialist Schools, and through the e-learning infrastructure that exists in Knowsley schools and Knowsley Community College
- The quality and profile/status of work-related and vocational education/training opportunities and progression routes have been raised through the Work Based Learning Programme
- The Collegiate has forged an effective implementation and management approach and structure, encompassing a range of organisations, institutions and interests within the LA, thereby consolidating the role of education, training and learning in the locality's regeneration.

Good practice - Knowsley

2. Delivery of alternative provision: The Knowsley Provider Network

Description of practice

The Knowsley Provider Network exists within the Knowsley 14-19 Collegiate structure which is a partnership approach to delivering education in the borough. This flexible approach to meeting the needs of individual learners offers the full range of learning opportunities available in the area as a whole, rather than being restricted to any one school or college. Within this structure alternative provision is delivered chiefly through the key stage 4 Work Based Learning Programme (WBLP). The WBLP offers students opportunities to access training provision in a wide range of vocational areas through attendance at one of the 24 Education Providers used by the programme that form the Knowsley Provider Network. Providers offer education and training in 25 subject areas, including:

- Land-based skills, such as animal husbandry, game keeping, hard-landscaping, horticulture and floristry
- Construction and allied trades, such as brickwork, metalwork, electronics, joinery, painting and decorating, plastering, plumbing and stone masonry
- Motor mechanics
- Beauty therapy and hairdressing/barbering
- Catering
- Upholstery
- ICT
- Life skills/key skills
- Outdoor education
- Music, DJ skills, art, performance arts, physical education/sports (including coaching/management).

Venues for training include private business premises (such as hairdressing salons/barbers shops and a riding stable), a leisure centre, a church, a community college, a city farm and a land-based college, as well as the premises of training providers. These premises replicate 'real world' workplace environments where students gain hands-on practical experience of the particular vocational activities they have chosen. For example, a training provider offering health and beauty is currently refurbishing part of its existing premises to accommodate an improved hairdressing salon, complete with suspended ceiling (in an old industrial building), new lighting and a reception area, as a means of making the students' experiences as life-like as possible. Other students following construction-related courses are chiefly responsible for undertaking these works as part of their training.

The WBLP Management Team is responsible for selecting the Education Providers to be used by the programme, and contracts are awarded to the team by Knowsley MBC, through the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for Education and Lifelong Learning. The contracts run for one year, but there is the possibility of continuation for a further two academic years subject to the provision being deemed satisfactory (by the WBLP team), the contractors meeting their statutory obligations, and funding streams continuing. In addition to health and safety requirements, the provider is contracted to deliver a training programme set at the appropriate level to meet learners' needs as set out in their specific Learning Plan.

Why identified as good practice

Good practice underpinning the Knowsley Provider Network stems from the roles, responsibilities and expectations that providers commit to in order to ensure the delivery of high quality learning opportunities and environments for young people:

- Providers offer an accredited curriculum and the necessary facilities to support students' access to this. NVQ, BTEC and CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) form the main accredited pathways. Literacy, numeracy and ICT tuition is incorporated into these courses, accredited by OCR and RSA.
- Providers agree to ensure that they are dynamic and responsive so that the curriculum and activities they offer are demand, rather than institution, led. This student feedback is facilitated via questionnaires and regular dialogue and interaction between provision staff, WBLP staff, and key workers/mentors. Through the collegiate framework, the skills needs of local employers are also considered in curriculum planning.
- Providers commit to adequately resourcing the collegiate options they offer to ensure students receive effective and rewarding learning experiences.
- Providers are required to ensure that staff engaged in delivering education and support to young people have access to professional development opportunities. One provider, for example, noted that staff had already completed, or were currently pursuing City and Guilds teaching certificates or diplomas. This provided a means of increasing the skills of instructors/tutors who had proven abilities in their trade/occupation areas as well as the ability to engage effectively with young people, but who may have previously lacked formally recognised teaching qualifications.
- As a means of monitoring and assessment, providers are responsible for collecting information regarding the progress of their students whilst attending the provision. This includes keeping daily attendance registers which are sent weekly to schools and the WBLP office. Students' achievements, including behaviour and attainment, are recorded via Student Progress Reports which are compiled and sent to schools and the WBLP management team on a termly basis. Students are also involved in

recording their achievements through completing their Progress File, which documents the courses and activities undertaken.

Although specified via formal contract agreements, much good and effective practice stems from the **partnership approach** and the shared commitment of the providers. One provider representative noted that the overall driving factor underlying provision is the desire to offer the best possible opportunities for the young people. WBLP staff and several providers commented that a spirit of cooperation exists between the providers, even though they operate in a commercial environment. For example, if it becomes evident that a particular placement is not appropriate, then an alternative is sought: providers do not try to retain students on financial/business grounds. Relationships between providers and the LA (through the WBLP) are key to the monitoring and management of this.

Very close links between providers and the WBLP underpin the successful delivery of education through the network of providers. Over a period of six to seven years, the programme has grown, and WBLP staff have developed good insights into, and nurtured strong relationships with, the providers, based on understandings of (i) what the WBLP demands of them and (ii) mutual trust and commitment to meeting the needs of young people. These informally evolved expectations and responsibilities are reinforced through the commercial tendering process. Contracts specify conditions that providers must meet, such as attending network meetings and ensuring ease of access to key workers to visit the students and observe the delivery of the programme. However, these are actions and conditions that staff and providers themselves see as being central to their partnership approach/ethos.

Duplication and flexibility of provision (stemming from the availability of numerous providers within the Network offering the same vocational courses and learning experiences), contributes to the effectiveness of provision. There is considerable overlap in the activities offered by different providers, and many providers deliver multiple courses, affording the WBLP management team enhanced possibilities for the effective matching of individual students to the most appropriate provision. The ethos, approach and nature of some providers may mean that they are more suited to meeting different types of needs exhibited by young people.

Access to provision within the Network is facilitated through the development of good links/relationships with a not-for-profit community transport organisation. Through this close partnership approach, the WBLP management team can identify the most appropriate provision for meeting individual students' needs and is not constrained by the physical distances involved (providers are spread over a distance of 15 miles from the schools). Students are offered the chance of attending the provision most suited to their needs, rather than the easiest and cheapest to access. Furthermore, efficient transport underpins the effectiveness of the provision: it ensures that students are given a consistent means of accessing the provision, so facilitating regular and punctual attendance.

Impact

Through the Knowsley Provider Network's involvement in the 14-19 Collegiate, students in the borough have access to all the provision that is available in the area as a whole. This includes GCSE courses (through the schools and colleges) and accredited vocational pathways, NVQ and BTEC. The presence of the provider network has enabled those managing and commissioning alternative education opportunities, the WBLP management team, to offer placements that are specifically identified to meet particular needs and circumstances. Students participating in the courses on offer receive positive and relevant learning experiences designed to increase their awareness of, and preparation for, future employment or training opportunities. Achievements, in terms of an increase in confidence, team-working, communication skills, behaviour management, alongside the development of practical vocational abilities, are the key areas of impact. Through the pathways available through the Knowsley Provider Network, 78% of those participating in the WBLP progressed on to employment with further training on completion of the programme last year.

Annex 5 Good practice - Lincolnshire

1. Delivery of alternative provision: Mary Knox Centre

Description of practice

The Mary Knox Centre is a key stage 3 PRU which offers a timed intervention for young people requiring AP (on either a part-time or full-time basis). In 2003, the 'Early Intervention and Effective Prevention' programme was introduced at the centre. As part of the programme, a range of provision has been developed to support schools within the authority with the aim of reducing fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

Within the project, the Mary Knox centre offers a range of alternative provision programmes for the 26 local secondary schools. The interventions offered fall along a continuum of support ranging from preventative outreach work in schools, to part-time and full-time placements at the PRU. In addition, the PRU is also involved in brokering off-site provision for schools.

The **in-school support programme** has been developed by PRU staff who deliver it to groups of pupils experiencing behavioural or emotional difficulties. This outreach support is available to schools in the form of two courses for key stage 3 pupils: Weak and Vulnerable Education Syllabus (WAVES) and Focus on Behaviour (FOB), both of which focus on pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Each course involves a series of one and a half hour sessions over a period of six weeks. The courses involve group work, looking at any issue identified by the school, such as behavioural or vulnerability issues, and aim to provide pupils with the strategies to address these issues (through anger management and/or circle time sessions, for example). Pupils are assessed at the beginning and end of the course to monitor their developments and review whether or not any further intervention is required. In addition, PRU staff offer training to schools to enable them to develop their own focus group sessions, and training to support schools to develop their own positive behaviour programmes. The training available is based on the resources used by the PRU to support its own pupils. Other staff development services offered by the PRU include training on de-escalation, risk-assessment and reducing conflict. INSET days at the PRU are also used to raise awareness of the facilities and activities available, and are open to schools within the local area.

Additional **short-term interventions** are also available 'on-site' at the PRU. Here, the PRU offers targeted focus group interventions for pupils from a particular year group in a specific school, who have been identified by school staff as requiring intervention to address a certain issue, such as behaviour. Pupils attend the PRU for one afternoon each week over a six week period, following which they return to full-time mainstream education. Alternatively, the PRU offers School Support Groups through which individual pupils who have been identified by schools can be dual-registered with the PRU and

attend the unit for one day per week for an initial period of six weeks. Again, pupils follow a behaviour programme to address the issues identified by the school. Similarly, the PRU supports individual placements for vulnerable pupils to develop their self-esteem and build team working and cooperation skills. This programme is delivered through group activities for a number of pupils from different schools. Again, pupils attend the PRU for one day each week over a six week period and return to full-time mainstream education at the end of the intervention.

The PRU's **'RESTART' programme** offers provision for key stage 3 pupils aged 11-14 who are experiencing difficulties in mainstream education. The aim of the programme is to reduce fixed-term and permanent exclusions by offering a six week part-time programme for pupils identified by schools as being at risk of exclusion. Pupils are dual-registered and therefore remain on the school roll and attend the PRU for up to three days per week. At the end of the six week placement, pupils return to their parent school or, in partnership with the LA, an alternative school placement is found. A partnership agreement exists between the schools and the PRU which ensures that, once the pupil has completed the RESTART programme, they will be reintegrated back into school. A planned package of support is developed between the PRU and the school to assist with the pupils' reintegration. In some cases, pupils will remain dual-registered and can still attend the PRU on a reduced part-time basis until they are fully reintegrated into mainstream school.

During pupils' placements, teachers at the PRU work with them in groups to address their needs (as identified by PRU staff, schools and the pupils). These groups may be based on behaviour, vulnerability, or other issues such as substance misuse. Pupils then follow a scheme of work which aims to provide them with the strategies to address their issues and return to mainstream or other appropriate education. PRU staff work with pupils in small groups and focus on areas such as: social behaviour, social integration, emotional well-being, anger management and drug addiction. Pupils also follow an accelerated learning programme to prepare them for their return to school. In addition, the PRU works in close partnership with a range of external agencies including the Fire Service, Connexions, High Ropes (an outdoor activities organisation) and the Youth Service which provide a programme of enrichment activities and offer further support to pupils during the six week period. Activities organised by the external providers include: 'you and the law' (Youth Service), team-building, self-esteem and cooperation exercises (High Ropes), and Health and Safety (Fire Service).

Full-time provision is provided at the PRU for permanently excluded pupils. Pupils are registered at the PRU, with the aim of finding another mainstream school placement as soon as possible. Meanwhile, they follow a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the core subjects of the national curriculum, as well as humanities, modern foreign languages, art, citizenship, cookery and P.E. In addition, curriculum enrichment activities are organised which focus on healthy eating, sexual health and child care. The PRU also accesses multi-agency support for pupils, including Connexions, counselling

services and Social Services support as appropriate. Managed transfers are negotiated between the PRU and the local schools to support the reintegration of pupils back into mainstream. A small percentage of these pupils are transferred onto the key stage 4 alternative provision programme, Solutions 4, at the end of the academic year.

In addition, the PRU brokers **low-level off-site provision** for schools. This involves a one day a week placement with either the Youth Service or the Fire Service for pupils identified as experiencing difficulties in school, or at risk of exclusion. Again, this is a six week programme, following which pupils return to full-time education in mainstream school.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the Early Intervention and Effective Prevention project were felt to illustrate key features of good practice in terms of the delivery of AP. **Dual registration** of pupils was highlighted as a particularly useful feature of the arrangements, as it enabled pupils to continue to access the school curriculum, whilst at the same time engage in other activities to support their social and personal development (such as circle time, team-building, social skills building, and anger management sessions).

The **multi-agency approach** of the project was also identified as a key feature in its successful delivery. The close working relationships between the PRU and other agencies enabled the unit not only to broaden the curriculum available to pupils, but also to introduce the pupils to agencies and services within the local community, and enable them to achieve additional qualifications in areas such as Health and Safety and First Aid. In addition, the strong **partnership working** between the PRU and the local schools was highlighted as a key feature of good practice. The arrangement facilitated benefits for both parties as it assisted the PRU in accessing school places for the reintegration of pupils and also ensured that the schools would be supported by the PRU at this time. Underpinning both the multi-agency approach and partnership working with schools was the importance of **clear working protocols and practices**. Here, a sound understanding of the programme was highlighted as a key feature of the success of the project, particularly in terms of gaining schools' and other agencies' commitment to the new way of working.

Impact

One of the main outcomes of the successful delivery of AP within the authority is evident in the **reduction in the rate of permanent exclusions**. Prior to the development of the key stage 3 and key stage 4 alternative education programmes, exclusion rates within the authority were particularly high (well above the national average). In both 2003/04 and 2004/05, 182 pupils (from a pupil population of 102,000) were permanently excluded from schools within the LA (although a shift in the point at which pupils were being excluded was noted i.e. the number of pupils excluded at key stage 3 compared with key stage 4 increased between the two years). As of March 2006, 20 fewer exclusions have taken place. This is particularly evident at key stage 3 as a result of the preventative work developing within the PRUs.

The extent to which the LA has been able to **increase the capacity of AP** at key stage 3 is a particular advantage of the programme. The Early Intervention and Effective Prevention project enabled the PRU to work with a 'rolling population' and therefore target support to a greater number of pupils. For example, under the previous arrangements (where the PRU was offering provision for fixed-term and permanently excluded pupils) the centre was able to support 50-60 pupils per year. In comparison, under the new programme, almost 200 pupils are supported by the PRU on a weekly basis. The outreach support offered by the PRU further increases the number of pupils who are able to benefit from the support. The programme has facilitated the **reintegration of pupils back into mainstream schools** which had been an area of difficulty experienced in the LA prior to the introduction of the project. Here, the partnership agreement developed between the PRU and the local schools ensures that pupils who have completed the RESTART programme are able to access a place in mainstream schools, therefore increasing the rates of reintegration within the LA.

Good practice - Lincolnshire

2. Delivery of alternative provision: Solutions 4 key stage 4 AP programme

Description of practice

In response to the requirement to meet the full-time education targets (25 hours) for pupils in alternative education provision, in 1999 Lincolnshire developed an innovative approach to delivering full-time alternative education provision for key stage 4 pupils. The key stage 4 alternative curriculum initiative, Solutions 4, provides an alternative vocational education package for key stage 4 pupils who have been permanently excluded or are unable to find a school place (for example, pupils arriving from other authorities for whom a school place is not appropriate). The programme offers pupils access to a range of vocational training within a work-related learning environment. The programme is delivered in partnership with a network of 11 private training providers across the authority that offer vocational training and experience in the following areas: animal care, blacksmithing, hairdressing and beauty, bricklaying, childcare, carpentry, computing, conservation, construction, forestry, recycling, horticulture, light engineering, manufacturing, mechanics, office and reception work, and sports leadership.

The Solutions 4 project is coordinated and supported by a small education team within the LA which consists of a curriculum coordinator, three curriculum advisers (for numeracy, literacy and vocational studies), an attendance officer and placement officer. As such, operations are inter-linked through the working practices and protocols devised by the LA.

The vocational training is delivered by the providers at independent training sites within the authority. There are currently 73 trainers working across the 11 sites which include:

- **Build-A-Future:** a construction training centre
- **Hill Holt Wood:** a social enterprise which hosts a variety of social and educational activities
- **First Steps:** a vocational training centre offering a range of courses
- **Carl Smith Coaching:** football coaching
- **Chop Shop Customs:** motor vehicle mechanics
- **Girl Zone:** hair and beauty
- **NK Youth Workshop:** a dance performance company
- **Opportune Engineers:** vehicle mechanics and construction
- **Renew:** recycling
- **Seagull Recycling:** an environmental education, recycling and resource centre
- **Sealand Training Centre:** light engineering

The vocational qualifications for pupils enrolled on the Solutions 4 programme

include: BTEC 'Skills for working life', NVQ qualifications, Junior/Community Sport Leader Award, and accreditation through the LA's Employability Graduation Award (an award for successful completion of specific elements of the work-related curriculum). The vocational curriculum is delivered by individual trainers at each of the sites and, in addition, each student receives education in literacy, numeracy and ICT delivered by work-based support mentors within the workplace. Qualifications range from Basic Skills Entry Level, to Key Skills Levels 1 and 2. Students are also able to follow courses in basic health and safety, preparation for employment and careers planning. The aim of the Solutions 4 programme is for all students to gain a qualification in each core subject, as well as accreditation in a unit of vocational education.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the Solutions 4 AP programme were identified as features of good practice. In particular, the rationale behind the development of the programme was felt to be key to its success. Here, the ability to support a group of young people in a **creative and alternative way**, in order to meet their diverse needs was noted. In particular, the vocational focus of the programme was highlighted as a key feature of its success. Alongside the **vocational and academic outcomes** for pupils, the providers also focus on developing pupils' social skills, independent learning skills, re-engagement with learning, and preparation for the world of work which was felt to be a particular strength of the programme.

The development of a **vocational education plan (VEP)** for each pupil enabled the pupils, parents, providers and the LA to monitor pupil progress during their enrolment on the provision and was also felt to be good practice in relation to the delivery of AP.

The **skills, experience and commitment of the trainers** delivering the provision across the providers has also been highlighted as a key feature of the success of the programme. In particular, the benefit of employing individual trainers with the skills to empathise with the pupils and develop positive relationships, underpinned by mutual respect and trust was felt to be a key factor in the success of the provision.

The Solutions 4 programme was also considered to be **cost-effective** in that it enabled pupils to access alternative education provision in the authority and avoid out of authority placements for some pupils. Additionally, by establishing access to local providers, pupils were able to re-engage with, and become **part of their community**. Moreover, given the issues associated with seasonal unemployment, and low skilled jobs within the authority, developing links with local businesses enabled the young people on the Solutions 4 programme to gain valuable vocational skills and thus increase their future employability.

Multi-agency working was also identified as a key feature of good practice in relation to the Solutions 4 programme. For example, strong links with the Youth Service and Connexions ensured that pupils accessing the Solutions 4

programme were fully supported throughout their placement, and could be further supported and tracked post-16. Moreover, through the development of an established network of providers, and with the support from other services, the future sustainability and growth of the programme was assured.

Impact

The Solutions 4 programme has seen significant and positive impacts for the pupils enrolled. Measurable impacts include pupil attendance, achievements and accreditation, and post-16 progression. In 2003, the 14-19 Area Learning Inspection reported that the Solutions 4 initiative had increased attendance and raised achievement in key skills. Indeed, the **accreditation** available through the programme was highlighted as a main outcome for pupils by the LA. In particular, the opportunity to work toward both **academic and vocational qualifications**, as well as opportunities for pupils to complete a variety of short courses, such as Health and Safety and First Aid, and thus develop a portfolio of achievements, was noted. Moreover, the impact of the provision on **pupils' confidence, self-esteem, and social and interpersonal skills** was highlighted. Pupils also gained the opportunity to experience a work environment and thus develop a positive work ethic.

The benefit of this in terms of **positive progression at 16** was also noted, particularly in terms of pupils' access to post-16 provision, apprenticeship opportunities and future employability. The impact of the Solutions 4 programme on pupils' progression rates was acknowledged in the authority's 14-19 Area Learning Inspection (ALI, OFSTED, 2003) which highlighted that upon graduation from the Solutions 4 programme, 23% of pupils had moved on to FE, 23% had progressed into work-based learning, 6% had enrolled with the armed forces, 36% had entered employment and 10% had moved on to E2E provision. Here, **work experience placements** were felt to be a key feature of this success as they provided pupils with a link with the local community and entry to employment, from which positive relationships could be established and developed.

Good practice - Lincolnshire

3. Delivery of alternative provision: First Steps Vocational Training Centre

Description of practice

First Steps Vocational Training Centre is a private provider offering work-related vocational training which delivers vocational skills and qualifications to 13-16 year old students. The centre is commissioned by the LA to provide 48 pupil places a year. A range of subjects and skill development opportunities are available to students including horticulture, construction, carpentry, animal care, hairdressing, beauty therapy and health and safety. Students can achieve BTEC Skills for Working Life qualifications in: small animal care, growing plants, media, food hygiene, preparing food, introduction to brickwork, introduction to joinery, introduction to hair care, assist the hairstylist, introduction to beauty therapy, assist the beauty therapist, health emergencies, caring for small children, and health and safety. As well as vocational skills, the students work towards Key Skills qualifications and Entry Level certificates in numeracy and literacy. The centre encourages students to focus on work ethics, the work environment, self-respect and motivation. The trainers work with small groups of young people, providing intensive one-to-one support. Students are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the local community and are involved in various activities and projects such as growing pumpkins for local guides, brownies and charity social clubs, and designing and landscaping a 'sensory garden' for a local respite centre.

All pupils attending First Steps under the Solutions 4 programme are permanently excluded. Pupils attend each day and follow a set timetable based around four sessions (of 1.25 hours) each day. The pupils rotate through the four sessions as per their timetable. The fifth and final session each day is allocated for recreation when pupils are given the opportunity to socialise and develop their personal and social skills (with board games, football and pool, for example). The provider operates a points system whereby points are deducted from students for poor behaviour during the day. The loss of four points during any one day results in the loss of recreation time which is replaced by an additional academic or vocational session.

The provider is also starting to offer placements to schools for pupils at risk of exclusion and non-attenders. Pupils remain dual-registered with the school and the provider, and attend the provision on a part-time basis.

Why identified as good practice

One of the key features of good practice at First Steps Vocational Training Centre was the **range of courses** available for pupils. This also enabled the provider to offer mixed-site provision which worked well for some pupils in AP

(by broadening pupil peer groups). Within the broad range of subjects studied by pupils attending the provision, each pupil's programme is structured to fit individual needs (for example, pupils can study individual courses at different levels). Students are required to attend five days a week and each day they follow a set timetable of activities. The work-based environment, and the **structured timetable** followed by pupils was also highlighted as an area of good practice in the successful delivery of AP.

In addition, **close working relationships** have been developed between the providers and various other agencies within the authority, in order to support pupils during their placement and to provide positive opportunities post-16. Post-16 progression has been targeted as a key focus of the support offered to pupils during Year 11, at which time the close links with services such as Connexions and the local college have been of particular importance.

The **focus on accreditation** for pupils enrolled at the First Steps provision was also highlighted as particularly good practice. This was further reflected in the achievements of pupils graduating from the training centre (see impact section below), and the benefit in relation to pupils' post-16 progression opportunities was noted.

Impact

The main impact of the provision for pupils attending First Steps Training centre was evident in the **vocational and academic outcomes** for pupils.

In 2004/05, the 24 students who graduated from the provision achieved a total of 67 passes within the BTEC Skills for Working Life qualification. Passes covered a range of subjects from the core units of ICT, Health and Safety and Interview Skills to specific vocational units including beauty therapy, hair care, small animal care, growing plants and brickwork. The 2004/05 cohort of pupils (24) also achieved a total of 56 passes across Key Skills, Entry Level Certificate and CIEH Basic Health and Safety qualifications.

In 2005/06, 230 passes across a range of subjects within the BTEC Skills for Working Life qualification were predicted for the cohort of 28 Year 11 pupils. The increase in the predicted number of passes was due to the introduction of additional subjects that enabled each pupil to study a broader range of units. Likewise, a greater number of academic outcomes were predicted for the 2005/06 cohort following the introduction of accreditation opportunities in OCR Job Seeking Skills Entry Level 3 and the Junior Sports Leaders Award. Here, a total of 104 passes were predicted across the Key Skills, Entry Level certificate, CIEH Basic Health and Safety, Job Seeking Skills Entry Level 3 and the Junior Sports Leaders Award.

In addition, the community involvement and work experience opportunities arranged for pupils whilst at the provision led to increased confidence and self-esteem, and also enabled pupils to make positive links with local businesses and engage with the local community.

Annex 6 Good practice - North Lincolnshire

1. Delivery of alternative provision: Links between AP and mainstream

Description of practice

In 2002, North Lincolnshire was described by OFSTED as a 'very good education authority with many strengths and no major weaknesses'. The proportion of permanent exclusions was broadly in line with the averages for similar LAs and the country as a whole. However, the rate of fixed-term exclusions was high (OFSTED, 2002). Since the 2002 inspection, fixed term exclusions have reduced year on year. The LA and schools are working together to reduce the need for permanent exclusions, and no pupils have been permanently excluded since June 2004. Strategies used by the authority to reduce levels of exclusions included:

- The Widening Educational Opportunities (WEO) programme: a project which aims to raise educational achievement by tackling disaffection in its early stages. Pupils who are identified by schools as being at risk of truancy and exclusion are offered 'out of school' placements with a number of external providers. The experiences and skills gained on such placements are either accredited back in school or by the external provider themselves.
- The use of 'managed transfers' whereby pupils access personalised education programmes in a variety of different settings or, in a smaller number of cases, are offered a place at a new school.

There are strong links between AP and mainstream schools and this is mostly due to pupils remaining on the roll of their mainstream school. Schools have adopted a system of 'managed transfers' and therefore maintain overall responsibility for pupils accessing AP. The LA is currently developing provision for fixed-term exclusions, so that vulnerable pupils will remain on an educational site whilst excluded from their peer group.

Links are further maintained, as schools are required to contribute to the funding of the AP place. Referrals for AP are made to a Headteacher Panel, and the provision is funded through a budget made up from AWPU contributions from secondary schools (on a formula basis), LA central funds, and any statement funding. This makes the AP a viable financial alternative to permanent exclusion. Moreover, GCSE (or equivalent) results gained by young people whilst attending the AP are published as part of the mainstream schools' performance tables.

Links are further sustained through protocols which have been established to share information and transfer pupils' work between mainstream schools and

AP providers. Contact is also fostered by 'designated teachers' or 'school links' who attend pupil review meetings and disseminate information concerning the pupils' progress to other school staff. The authority also employs a learning mentor (as part of the Widening Educational Opportunities Project) who visits the young people at their placement on a weekly basis and provides feedback to their school.

The LA no longer considers AP to be appropriate for pupils under 10 years of age and no longer has a key stage 1/2 PRU: instead, staff are now employed as peripatetic teachers supporting pupils in the mainstream. This is seen as good practice as pupils are able to remain in mainstream school whilst receiving specialist support from the peripatetic teaches. Many young people in the authority in key stage 3 and 4 access AP on a part-time basis. This involves attending AP for one or two days, possibly a day or half a day at college with the remainder of the week spent in the mainstream school where pupils study the core subjects of maths, English and science. A collaborative group of schools in the authority works together to agree certain days of the week to be set aside for AP so that AP is an integrated part of the timetable.

Why identified as good practice

- The part time WEO programme enables pupils at risk of truancy and exclusion to maintain links with their mainstream peer group, whilst accessing a wider curriculum.
- AP is a viable financial alternative to permanent exclusion as it is funded through a budget made up from contributions from all secondary schools in the LA.
- Key contacts, including designated teachers and learning mentors, facilitate effective links between providers, mainstream schools, pupils and parents.

Impact

- The use of 'managed transfers' means that all pupils (with the exception of approximately five long-term permanently excluded pupils) now remain on a school roll.

Good practice - North Lincolnshire

2. Delivery of alternative provision: Young People's Education Centre (PRU)

Description of practice

The Young People's Education Centre provides tutoring mainly for pre- and postnatal students up to the age of 19. The centre has recently expanded its remit (in line with North Lincolnshire's 14-19 Strategy for Learning) so that other groups of young learners can receive tutoring.

Students are referred to the provision by a variety of sources: headteachers or pastoral staff in schools, education welfare officers, social work personnel, medical staff, parent/carers and self-referral. Babies and toddlers are cared for in the OFSTED-approved on-site crèche.

The centre is staffed by two full-time teachers, one of whom is head of service, a support assistant and four nursery nurses. An administration officer supports the staff. A management panel, comprising school representatives, councillors and staff, acts as 'a critical friend' for the centre's management.

Students engage in education and personal development programmes tailored to their individual needs. The curriculum on offer includes a full range of GCSE examination subjects, GNVQ, ASDAN, basic skills, literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2, as well as work based learning opportunities. The unit is a registered examinations centre. The centre offers an ASDAN Foundation for Work Award in Childcare (entry level).

As part of the ASDAN Foundation for Work Award, students are required to complete a series of activity-based challenges and produce a portfolio of evidence to support this. Centre staff maintain pupil profiles on each of the students covering their educational attainment and progress in their wider learning and attitudes. Centre staff believe that self-review is important and ASDAN qualifications in particular are useful in helping all students attending the centre to reflect on their own learning and record their own experiences.

The on-site crèche is also used as a form of 'out of school' placement with external providers for pupils identified by schools as being at risk of truancy and exclusion. Students attend the placement for one day a week where they spend time working in the crèche.

The centre recognises that travelling to a place of education can be a daunting prospect for pre- and postnatal students, and has a policy for transport in place to combat this. Taxis are provided for pre-16 students to and from the centre with the cost covered by the LA. Post-16 students can be issued with a bus pass to support and encourage their attendance.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the centre's provision resulted in it being highlighted as an example of good practice in AP within the LA. Such aspects included:

- **Flexible curriculum/approaches to learning:** young people attending the centre have varying needs and ability levels. To support this, the unit operates a flexible curriculum focusing on personalised learning and the use of individual learning plans. In addition to a full range of GCSE examination subjects, young people are able to participate in work-based learning and work placements. The centre also offers specialist activities (such as art and photography) facilitated by outside agencies.
- **Links with mainstream:** all pupils attending the centre remain on the roll of their mainstream school. The centre has developed protocols with schools to ensure all stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities to share information and provide work for pupils. This is further supported by a 'named person' or 'student liaison' from the mainstream school who attends meetings at the centre involving the young person and disseminates relevant information to other mainstream school staff. Centre staff work proactively to maintain good links with schools and, where possible, link their practice with that of the pupil's mainstream school.
- **Good network of outside agencies:** staff are able to access a wide range of professionals and specialist support services for young people attending the centre who often have complex needs, including health visitors, nurse/midwife, youth service, health promotions, education psychologist, Connexions and education advisors. All agencies work to support and enhance learning, to develop young people's social skills and widen the support network available for students.
- **High quality staff:** as well as providing a good standard of educational provision, centre staff work well together as a team. They show sensitivity, patience and understanding, and work proactively to raise pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff are aware of individual pupils' needs and have in-depth knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds. Where necessary, staff refer to specialist support services in order to address pupil difficulties that are outside of their remit/area of expertise (including housing issues, for example). Staff communicate with parents/carers so that all decisions made about a student's future has their full approval and support.
- **High expectations:** there are high aspirations and expectations of both staff and pupils.
- **Peer relationships:** staff identified that vulnerable pupils attending the centre support and confide in each other. They treat their peers and the centre staff with respect.

- **On-site crèche:** young women are able to learn on-site, with their children in close proximity. The OFSTED-approved crèche is staffed by fully qualified nursery nurses and provides full day care in a safe, friendly, caring environment. Parents are able to spend time in the crèche during break times. At lunchtime, mothers who are on-site take responsibility for the care and welfare of their children. The crèche and the babies are incorporated into programmes of learning for the centre students and for students on 'out of school' placements. For example, courses offered by the centre include child development and the crèche is also used as part of the ASDAN Foundation for Work Award in Childcare offered by the centre.
- **The environment:** the Young People's Education Centre has a calm, supportive and caring ambience and ethos. This is a key factor, as many of the young people who attend the unit come from challenging backgrounds: indeed, for some, spending quiet time at the centre is their only opportunity to take 'time out'.

Impact

Impact was identified in three main areas: attendance, attainment and personal development.

- **Good levels of attendance:** attendance rates at the centre are high and pupils make significant improvements in this regard during their time at the unit, often achieving higher records of attendance at the centre than at their mainstream school. Centre staff believe that attendance is a measure of pupil progression, (put simply if the young people did not value the provision they would not participate).
- **Good levels of attainment:** pupils' levels of educational attainment are wide ranging when they first attend the centre. However, they go on to make very good progress in achieving individual targets in line with their personal education plan. All pupils attending the centre gain results in externally accredited examinations, including GCSEs. OFSTED 2005 reported that, although it is not statistically valid to make generalised comparisons with the national data, (because of the small numbers of pupils attending the centre), more than half the pupils achieve better examinations results than they were expected to do at the outset.
- **Personal development:** centre staff have high expectations of the pupils and are fully committed to supporting them. Pupils are respected and valued, a factor underpinning the progress made in their personal development. They gain in self-confidence and self-esteem during their time at the centre. The happy and secure environment for both the pupils and their babies fosters respect amongst the young people. Staff noted that pupils show consideration for the young children in the building, moderating their behaviour accordingly, such as by making particular efforts to refrain from shouting and using expletives.

Annex 7 Good practice - Nottinghamshire

1. Delivery of alternative provision: The Special Individual Programmes (SIPs)

Description of practice

The Special Individual Programmes (SIPs) team makes up one of the five Tailor Made Education Teams which exist in the LA to provide AP for young people with severe and complex needs. They provide discrete and specialised provision, based around individual student programmes.

SIPs provide medium-term provision for children who are out of school, lasting beyond one school year, but who may have the potential to move on to mainstream education, employment or training. It provides AP for 30 students across the county. SIPs employ 3.5 teachers on contract and approximately 22 teachers who provide session work and 16 teaching assistants and youth workers. In terms of risk assessment, some of the young people require a staffing ratio of two staff to one student. SIPs is effectively for those young people who have been 'lost' from education and will not access school or PRU provision. Approximately 90 per cent of students are statemented. The team works with a broad range of young people, from those with special educational needs, to those who are not engaging with the educational system but are capable of academic achievement. For example, the team is currently working with a young person who had been out of school for three years and was unable to read. However, within six months of accessing SIPs, this pupil was progressing and accessing education and left school with a qualification in horticulture and a job placement.

The fundamental aim of the SIPs team is to reengage young people. This may focus on reengaging them at a social level, by trying to get them out of the home, to eventually linking them back into mainstream education, training or employment. The SIPs team uses a range of centres across the county (staffed by teachers and teaching assistants), as well as other providers.

Young people are referred to the SIPs team via the 'Complex Needs Panel', which is a multi-agency panel (including education, health and social services) chaired by the Head of EOTAS. The Head of Tailor Made Education and the Headteacher of the Nottinghamshire Learning Centre also sit on the panel. Due to the diverse nature of the young people the team works with, the gate-keeping of referrals has to be tight. The team has to ensure that they are working with the most vulnerable young people and that all other possible avenues of support have been explored prior to a referral to them.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the team's work were highlighted as an example of good

practice in AP within the LA. A particular strength is the **individualised nature** of the curriculum constructed for students. The team offers **needs-led** provision, devising programmes around the student and their particular needs, rather than making them fit into pre-existing programmes. Education plus multi-agency support is specifically tailored and adapted to meet their individual needs. Each young person has a **key worker** who also works with families to achieve outcomes. This was seen as particularly important as the young people all have a range of non-educational issues which need to be addressed. Staff felt that the team's strengths lie in their ability to be sensitive to individual need and rebuild young people's self-esteem, confidence and trust, which can be a long-term process. Treating students with respect was seen as key.

Students' needs are carefully matched with the expertise of staff. The **quality of staffing** and their **nurturing** capabilities were felt to be key factors. Staff/student relationships were seen as key in successfully reengaging young people. Staff have **high expectations** of students, and that they will succeed, whether it is academically or emotionally. Using expertise within the team, the SIPs team has established a nurture group for key stage 3 students to help them integrate into group working. The isolation of young people prior to their referral is often an issue. The SIPs team has a strong focus on **providing group opportunities** for students and is involved in commissioning external AP to ensure that young people access a diverse curriculum.

The quality of external providers used is closely monitored via site visits, regular reviews of provision and clear expectations regarding students' outcomes. Staff have the time to identify students' skills, encourage them and find an appropriate way to record evidence of their skills and achievement. The example was provided of a school phobic with a talent for photography, who is now on work experience for the local council on a photography heritage project. The knock-on effect, in terms of an increase in confidence, was said to be immense and has impacted on his progress in other curriculum areas. He is now accessing a college-based course to support his interest in photography.

Positive links with parents were seen as a further strength of the programme. Staff work to provide opportunities for parents to come together to discuss issues. It was recognised that parents in this situation often feel isolated and lack opportunities to network with other parents. Communication with parents was seen as extremely important and staff regularly phone parents to inform them of positive developments and successes. It was noted that, for some families, this was the first time they have been contacted by 'school' for a positive reason, and parents felt valued.

One of the main priorities for this group of young people was **risk assessment** because of their type of need. Staff operate a common risk assessment across teams within the county-wide Nottinghamshire Learning Centre, thereby enabling transferability between locations.

Impact

The team conducts regular reviews with young people, parents and other agencies and uses an outcomes framework to monitor students' progress based on the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: be healthy, make a positive contribution, enjoy and achieve, stay safe and achieve economic well being. Each outcome has a number of targets which are reviewed on a termly basis, or more frequently, if appropriate. For example, for the most vulnerable young people this is likely to be on a half-termly basis. Details of externally accredited courses followed by students, along with unit awards achieved, are also included on the monitoring document.

The team has had a great deal of success in re-engaging those young people who have been 'lost' from the education system back onto examination tracks. In the 2004-2005 school year, students gained GCSEs (in English, English literature, ICT, science and maths) and key skills qualifications, and moved on to college placements and E2E. The 2005 to 2006 Year 11 cohort has taken GCSEs in maths, English, physics and science, and OCN awards in horticulture. They also have college and E2E placements arranged. A key indicator for the provision's success was considered to be the high rates of student attendance on the programme (see table below).

SIPs pupil attendance rates by key stage

Year	KS 2				KS 3			
	Under 50%	70%+	80%+	90%+	Under 50%	70%+	80%+	90%+
2004-5				2		1	1	6
2005-6 as at Mar 06				2		1	4	4

Year	KS 4			
	Under 50%	70%+	80%+	90%+
2004-5	1	2	1	2
2005-6 as at Mar 06	1	1	2	6

These outcomes need to be taken in the context that these pupils were effectively lost to learning; prior to their referral they were not attending any educational provision and were not expected to take examinations.

External providers have responded by developing their skills and policies and practices to accommodate the needs of these young people. Providers are now putting packages in place which the LA itself cannot provide, such as outdoor education. The work conducted by SIPs staff with external providers to ensure that provision was suitable for their students was felt to have developed the skills of these external providers in working with vulnerable young people.

Annex 8 Good practice - Rochdale

1. Delivery of alternative provision: The Headways Programme

Description of practice

Headways was initially set up by a group of schools collaborating together using New Deal for Communities funding to provide more appropriate provision for individuals disengaged from mainstream education. Subsequently, the LA evaluated and then extended the project and it is now available for all secondary schools in the borough to buy into. The provision is funded by schools and the LA: schools' funding is equivalent to a pupil's AWPU and the LA subsidises the Headways staff salaries. The Headways Programme is now managed by a seconded lead behaviour professional who both coordinates the project and delivers the core academic curriculum to a maximum of 30 key stage 4 pupils. The assistant manager's background includes work in a Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) school as a learning mentor, as an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and a key stage coordinator. Young people on the Headways programme remain on the school roll but receive full-time AP delivered on site at the Hopwood Hall College. They have a core curriculum of English, maths GCSE and ICT GNVQ, as well as the opportunity to complete Level 1 and 2 Communication and Numeracy. In addition, the young people can choose to participate in a two year vocational course delivered by Hopwood Hall College leading to GNVQs, NVQs, or BTEC qualifications. The pupils can also access work-experience placements related to their area of vocational interest, provided by a network of providers and employers, including Rochdale Training Association. Pupils also receive further input from health agencies on first aid training, from Connexions' PAs who support them in the transition to post-16 destinations, and from YOT workers where appropriate. The provision caters for young people disaffected or de-motivated from mainstream education. It cannot meet the needs of permanently excluded pupils, persistent truants or those pupils with statements or with medical needs.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the programme's provision resulted in it being highlighted as an example of good practice of AP in the LA. These were:

- Assessment of individual needs
- The location and environment
- Accreditation
- Links with mainstream
- Communication and engaging parents
- Multi-agency approach
- Flexibility

The Headways Programme offers **assessment of individuals' needs** via thorough diagnosis of pupils' abilities and aspirations prior to their entry to the programme to ensure that the provision is well matched and appropriate to meet their needs. Details of the programme are disseminated to all schools in the authority and, in some schools, the Headways Programme is integrated into the Year 9 options process. Headways staff conduct detailed interviews with pupils and parents and gather background information on their attendance, exclusion and attainment as part of a selection day, where the young people are also assessed on how they perform in a number of team activities. In order to be recruited to the programme, all parties – schools, pupils and parents – must think that the pupil will benefit from a more vocational curriculum, and that the provision will meet their needs. Once on the programme, the manager and assistant manager visit the pupils regularly at their vocational and work-based placements and use this as an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the continued appropriateness of the provision.

The Headways Programme provides an effective alternative environment and experience for those young people who are disengaged or demotivated by mainstream provision by offering access to more **practical and work environments**. The **location** of the provision at an FE college is a key factor in pupil re-engagement, offering learning at a site independent from school, where a less restrictive, adult and autonomous ambience is offered. However, because the provision is based at an FE college and in work placements, the programme cannot cater for pupils with extreme behavioural difficulties or who are persistent truants: the FE college requires a minimum 80 per cent attendance.

The Headways Programme offers **accreditation** opportunities that facilitate post-16 learning and training opportunities. The programme begins with a certified short course in first aid. This allows the young people (and their parents) to see achievements being rewarded early on, prepares the young people for working responsibly in their respective practical environments, and provides an opportunity to gain credits towards subsequent NVQs. The young people then progress to NVQ, GNVQ and BTEC qualifications. Rewarding achievements provides the pupils with positive experiences of education and learning that begin to address previous, often negative, encounters.

Effective **links between the programme, the LA and mainstream schools** are a key feature of the success of the programme. The Headways manager and assistant manager liaise with the LA 14-19 coordinator who has oversight of the alternative provision commissioned by schools in the authority. Pupils on the Headways Programme remain on the mainstream school roll and are integrated with the post-16 mainstream students at the FE college. The manager of the programme felt that the success of Headways was largely due to the strong emphasis on partnership working, from the initial commissioning stages onwards. Headways staff enter into a partnership with the schools, with parents and with the students, ensuring

everyone is committed and informed. The Headways Programme is not allowed to exclude pupils from the programme - this remains the responsibility of the school - so instances of severe behavioural issues increases liaison with the schools.

The Headways manager insists that **communication** arrangements, including some form of immediate contact with parents and schools, are established from the initial stages of the partnership. The Headways staff report regularly to the schools on pupils' progress, achievements and attendance. There is an identified member of staff in each of the feeder schools who is the main contact for that school. Close contact is maintained with the **parents**, in order to engage them in providing support for their child's learning. Headways staff phone and write to parents at least once a week, and provide positive feedback where possible. The Headways staff respond immediately to behavioural incidents by contacting parents (which is often an effective management strategy in itself) and schools, where necessary. Parents are also encouraged to contact the Headways staff, and, at the end of each year, they are invited to partnership celebration events of the young people's achievements.

The Headways Programme engages the support of other agencies in order to meet students' additional needs through a **multi-agency** approach. The first aid course is delivered by health agencies, for example, and Connexions' PAs are available at the provision on a regular basis for pupils to access. This relationship with Connexions has contributed significantly to supporting the young people in applying for further vocational training and apprenticeships. The programme also has close links with YOTs (there are three young offenders currently on the programme), reporting back to them on progress, attendance, achievement and behaviour.

The Headways Programme has discovered that offering young people a programme with some **flexibility** to be tailored to their individual and changing needs is key to successful alternative provision. The current provision offers a two-year course in a specific vocational area but was found to be tying young people too soon into an area that they had no real experience of, or foundation on which to have based their choice, resulting in a number of drop outs. The provider therefore proposed that from 2006/7 the Year 10 programme will offer a series of short taster courses in various vocational areas with focused learning outcomes, allowing a more informed decision to be made in Year 11 regarding a vocational area of specialism. The capacity for the Headways Programme to review and adapt to the needs of the client group has contributed to it being identified as an example of good practice in alternative provision.

Impact

The impact of the Headways Programme was identified in the following areas:

- Reengagement, progression and achievement
- Social and personal development

- Enhanced capacity of the parent school
- Retention, attendance and offending behaviour

The Headways Programme is successful at reintegrating and **re-engaging** young people into mainstream education and learning. All but one of the cohort of Year 11 students on the programme have applied for college places, training or modern apprenticeships. All of the current Year 10s have re-applied to continue with the programme and enter the second year of their vocational course. The Headways Programme has impacted on pupils' **achievement**. The majority of the young people achieved Level 1 awards (various equivalents) and a GNVQ intermediate award in ICT (equivalent to four GCSEs grade A–C). Three of the young people achieved a Level 1 NVQ in catering in Year 10 (making them the youngest people to achieve such a level) and went on to achieve Level 2 in Year 11; several pupils have achieved Level 3. A number of young people have left the Headways programme with the equivalent of eight GCSEs (A–Cs), although they had not been expected to achieve in mainstream provision.

The key stage 4 students on the Headways programme are integrated with the mainstream post-16 students at the FE college. This environment motivates the young people, who 'raise their game plan' to correspond with the behaviour displayed by the post-16 students. This environment has a positive impact on the key stage 4 pupils' **social and personal development**, enhancing their maturity and ability to behave responsibly in a more adult and working environment.

The programme has an impact on the mainstream schools that the young people come from by **enhancing the capacity of teachers** to teach the remaining pupils in their class. By removing the disengaged and demotivated members of the class, the teachers are able to focus their attention on the whole class rather than on the one or two particular pupils who were disengaged, and this has a positive impact on the young people remaining. The improved attainment level of pupils that participate in the Headways programme is included in the mainstream schools' **performance table results**. In one school, the improved performance by Headways students was estimated to have increased the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-C GCSEs for the school overall by 6 per cent.

Only one pupil has dropped out of the two year programme, and only four of the 29 young people have been excluded by their mainstream school whilst on the provision. This marks a significant reduction in exclusion rates generally among the cohort of the young people on the programme, demonstrating **improved retention**. There has also been a **reduction in offending** amongst the young people attending the Headways Programme. Of the three young offenders who attended Headways in 2005/06, one of them was recorded as having not offended while on the programme.

Good practice - Rochdale

2. Commissioning and monitoring:

- The Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships
- The Alternative Providers Forum
- The District Directory

Description of practice

AP providers commissioned by the LA are required to sign up to the **Rochdale Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships** and schools are advised to commission only those AP providers that have signed, or are willing to sign up to, these protocols. The protocols have been developed in partnership with the LA and providers, and are based on the DfES statutory guidance on monitoring, standards and quality of AP. The protocols play an essential role in establishing accountability and expectations between the commissioner and the provider. An **Alternative Providers Forum** has also been established in the LA with the intention of aiding schools and providers in signing up to the protocols of good practice, building relationships and networking.

The LA has produced a **District Directory**, which has been distributed to all headteachers. The Directory identifies a selection of AP providers available within the LA. These are AP providers who are known to the LA and have signed up to the protocols (or are expected to in the near future) stipulated by the LA as meeting quality assurance standards. The Directory has been compiled following a recent LA audit of AP, where AP providers known to the LA were invited to present their provision in the Directory. The LA cannot guarantee all AP providers are documented in the Directory, but it is their intention that, via networking, they will become increasingly aware of all AP providers in the borough. The Directory identifies who to contact, and summarises the type of provision available and the costs involved. The Directory supports schools in the process of identifying and commissioning AP and sets out quality assurance standards that the schools can expect from the providers who have signed up to the protocol agreements.

The LA stipulates a number of standards for quality monitoring which are outlined in the Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships Protocols and shared at the Alternative Providers Forum: the aim is for them to be comparable with the monitoring regulations in mainstream provision.

Why identified as good practice

A: The Rochdale Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships
The Protocols provide schools and other commissioners with guidelines on how to ensure quality standards in alternative provision and outline the

responsibilities of all partners. The protocols are intended to form the basis of partnership agreements between schools and providers who work collaboratively to provide students with a wider range of learning opportunities within the 14-19 agenda. The quality standards seek to: 1) Ensure appropriate delivery and review of programmes, 2) Ensure equality of access for all young people; 3) Focus upon improving standards of achievement; 4) Improve both careers education and career opportunities for young people. The protocols reflect an authority-wide ethos that all young people are entitled to fulfil their potential and have their needs met with appropriate provision.

The protocols are outlined in a pack of materials which includes:

- 1) A checklist of Quality Standards
- 2) Provider, School Joint Operational Guidelines
- 3) Partnership agreement incorporating Parental Consent
- 4) Student Application Form
- 5) Student Profile (a range of information collected about the pupil)
- 6) Student Learning Plan

1) The checklist of Quality Standards outlines the processes and procedures that need to be identified between the partners, including: 1) management and coordination; 2) implementation; 3) diversity, inclusion, equality, and health and safety; and 4) evaluation.

Management and Coordination

For example:

- There must be a designated senior member of staff within each institution with responsibility for managing the programme.
- Responsibilities are clearly defined and in place, for the coordination and delivery of the programme.
- Effective lines of communication exist within and between organisations.
- Resources for staff development are sufficient and appropriate.
- All activities undertaken are consistent with the 14-19 strategy.

Implementation

For example:

- Targets and learning outcomes have been established and strategies developed to meet them.
- There is a formal written agreement between partners.
- There is sufficient and appropriate information available for students and parents.
- Partners have established how students would benefit from the programme and this is reflected in the learner's individual action plan.
- Partners are proactive in working with the Connexions service to help the students complete their individual learning/career action plan.
- Partners work closely together to prepare students for transition to these activities and later progression.
- A senior member of staff is responsible for auditing activities within each

provider's institution and reporting the results to the Quality Forum.

- Progression routes are clear.
- Assessment procedures are in place and implemented and effective processes for recording students achievements are in place.
- Procedures are in place to keep parents fully informed on the progress of their child.
- The partnership systematically collects and disseminates information on best practice.

Diversity, Inclusion, Equality and Health and Safety

For example:

- Each partner makes provision for insurance, health and safety and for any off site visits. All of which should meet local and national guidelines.
- Child protection – Safeguarding Children – procedures and designated staff in place.
- Issues of diversity and inclusion have been addressed and a range of provision to meet all learners' needs is available.
- Issues of equal opportunities and special learning needs have been addressed strategically and operationally.
- The activities aim to reflect the cultural diversity of the local area.
- Students are satisfied that they have been treated as individuals.

Evaluation

For example:

- There must be a clear strategy for evaluation, with evidence collected that demonstrates that the programme improves attendance, attainment, and post-16 progression and that reviews all stakeholder perceptions.
- Appropriate targets are established at the outset of the programme. The targets promote year on year improvements.
- Partners have identified and agreed when and how activities are monitored, reviewed and how the results will be used.
- Each partner will ensure effective monitoring, self review and assessment procedures are in place and this information should be shared with the Quality Forum.
- The partners have identified how students, parents, staff and partners are to be involved in the review of provision.

2) Provider, School Joint Operational Guidelines

This outlines the responsibilities of schools and providers.

Schools:

- School to provide a named member of SMT
- School to appoint coordinator
- Students' opportunities (students made aware of opportunities, provided with appropriate guidance and support and are appropriately placed).
- Schools to establish a regular review process.
- School and college to provide staff development opportunities.

- Student support process to be established (including, for example, a school liaison person to be on site to support students' needs. In the event that students from more than one school are on the same site, schools may wish to pool resources and share this responsibility).

Providers:

- Provider to expect high levels of attendance and punctuality from staff and students.
- Provider to employ staff who are competent and know their subject and are well prepared for lessons.
- Provider to ensure there are effective cover arrangements for staff absences.
- Provider to ensure sessions are well planned and at an appropriate pace and level.
- Provider to employ members of staff who understand and address the learning needs of students of 14-16.
- Provider to ensure staff provide prompt, reliable and constructive feedback both on work completed and general pupil progress.
- Ensure appropriate information is shared with providers (e.g. student profile).
- Ensure learners have access to impartial advice and guidance on course choice.
- Ensure learners are aware of the expected standards of behaviour.

Joint Operational Guidelines:

- Communication procedures should be agreed between the partners for eventualities such as non-attendance, behavioural incidences, health and safety incidences, child protection disclosure and feedback on provision. Joint curriculum planning between the partners to ensure needs are met and appropriate objectives and learning outcomes identified.
- Agreed procedures for homework.
- Agreed procedure for staff absence.
- Criteria for assessment and grading of work.
- Quality Assurance of the 14-16 standards. (Joint responsibility to ensure no interruptions to the programme of provision, to offer positive and appropriate provision and to conduct review and evaluation meetings which all parties should attend).

3) Partnership Agreement

Both the provider, the student (with parental consent) and the school sign a document which stipulates each party's roles and responsibilities (see Appendix 1).

4) Student application form

The student application form has been developed to ensure a consistency of approach. It is intended that each student should submit the application form to the provider outlining relevant personal and background information and stating their reasons for wanting to join the provision. This forms the beginning of the contract with the young person and the behaviours that will be expected of them.

5) Student profile

The student profile is compiled by the school and is submitted with the application form. It details the pupil's abilities, aptitudes and needs, and enables the provider to make an appropriate assessment of the young person.

6) Student learning plan

This document enables all partners to keep individual student records up to date and to record information about achievements (certificates and qualifications achieved).

B: The Alternative Providers Forum

This forum is attended by the 14-19 LA coordinator, the Head of Inclusion, plus a wide range of alternative providers in the borough. The meetings are now held termly (following initial more frequent meetings in order to establish the protocols). The Forum allows the LA to tell the providers what they want, and in turn, for the providers to express their expectations and difficulties. The initial meetings involved consultation on establishing and drawing up the protocols. More recent meetings have focused on how to implement the protocols. All the providers welcomed the protocols and are in the process of establishing what systems need to be in place to ensure they are being met. A checklist is currently being prepared for schools to enable them to determine which aspects of the protocols have been implemented. The Forum is also currently working on making the 'Fast Tomato' online careers advice and guidance for 14-19 year olds package freely available to all organisations, so that the providers will be linked into the site according to pupil enquiries. The Fast Tomato site will then be available free in all schools for pupils to search for the range of options available to them both pre-16 and post-16. Finally, the Forum provides an opportunity for alternative providers to identify any training needs they may have within their organisation and the LA can make arrangements to address these. Although the Alternative Providers Forum has been set up specifically to bring alternative providers together, there is a great deal of overlap with other forums in the authority and several of these organisations access other forums which focus on 14-19 development. Other forums that support wider learning provision in Rochdale, and which AP providers have access to, include:

- The Increased Flexibility Forum which reviews the Employer Based Curriculum Offer.
- The Quality Forum that has been responsible for writing the 14-19 Strategy, Self Assessment Report, and revising and reviewing the Protocols and the quality of provision in the borough.
- Curriculum Deputies which is a forum for discussing curriculum development and sharing good practice in terms of Work Related Learning and vocational education.
- The Inclusion Forum that explores the range of provision and identifies gaps according to the Inclusion Agenda.
- Curriculum Networks which share good practice in delivery, developing

materials and assessment, share training and organise key events to support particular careers sectors.

These forums involve Hopwood Hall College, the LA, the Work Based Learning Providers, Connexions and school representatives.

C: The District Directory – Wider Learning Opportunities in Rochdale for 14–16 year olds

The District Directory includes 17 alternative providers who can be accessed in the authority, most of which are local providers. The Directory contains details on the learning programmes offered, what the provision offers young people, entry requirements, assessment methods, progression opportunities, cost of the provision, its availability, the qualifications offered and who to contact. The Provision is divided into three subcategories:

- 1) Hopwood Hall College vocational links programme. The college offers a range of vocational courses that can be commissioned by schools as well as other AP providers in the area.
- 2) Work-based learning which offers pre-apprenticeship training, involving extended work placements, training on the job and assessment.
- 3) Alternative providers such as small charity or government-sponsored organisations offering a range of courses from short-term to two-year provision.

The majority of the providers in the Directory are signed up to the Rochdale Protocols for Wider Learning Opportunity Partnerships and the remaining are likely to sign up in the near future (as the Alternative Providers' Forum develops). The Directory aims to support headteachers and curriculum deputies in planning broader ranges of learning activities and curricula for their pupils, and to provide them with information about the range of wider learning opportunities available within the borough. The providers in the Directory have been invited to stipulate the type of provision they offer and it is in their interests to offer this information to schools.

Impact

The Protocols, the Forum and the Directory have been identified as examples of good practice because they exemplify several of the features noted as key in the effective commissioning and monitoring of alternative provision.

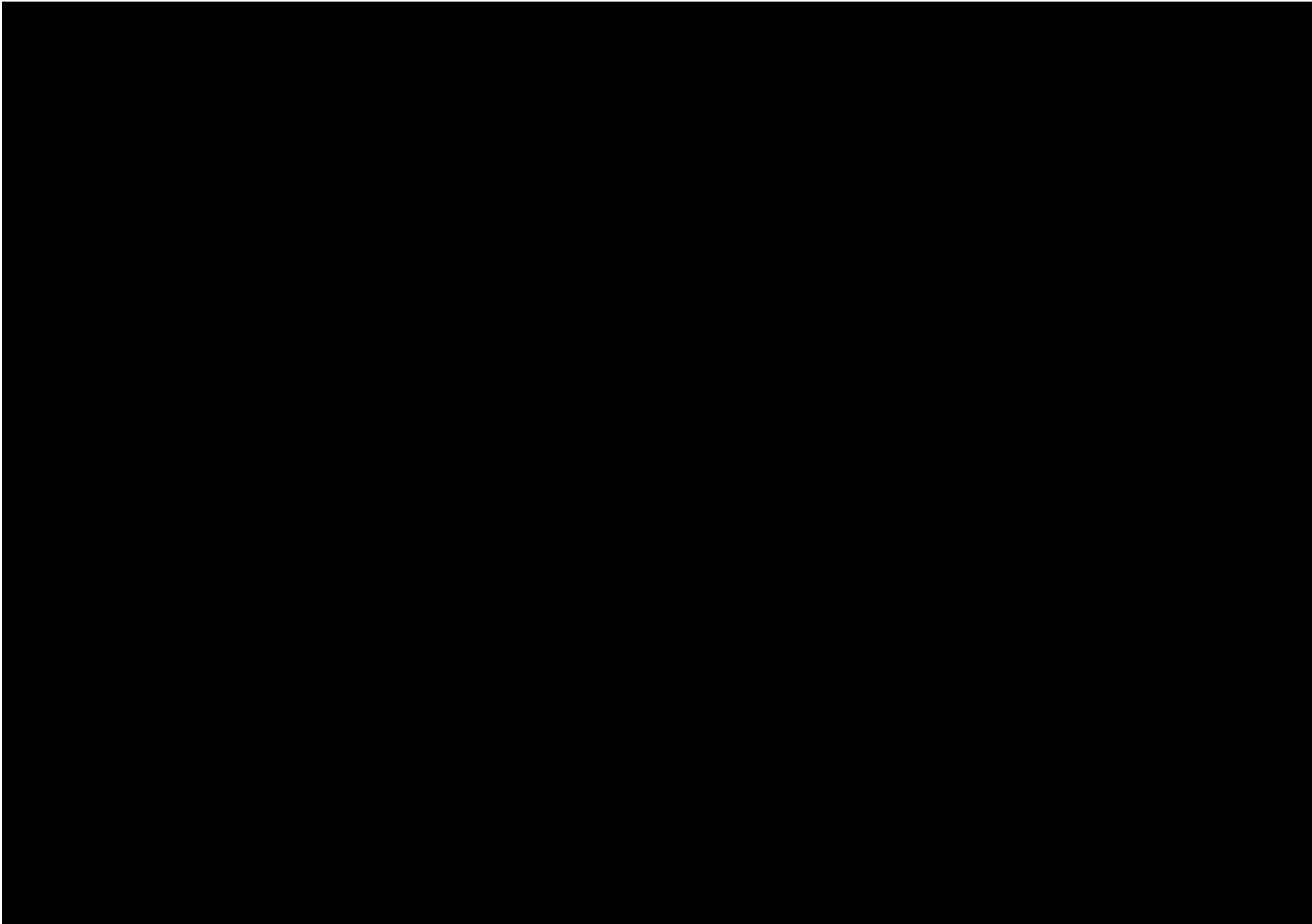
The Directory provides initial guidance to commissioners on what AP is available and whether it has the capacity to meet the needs of the young people. The Directory supports schools in accessing transparent and realistic costings of provision.

The Protocols support commissioners in the development of contracts and in outlining clear objectives, expectations, targets and accountabilities. The Protocols stipulate useful and practical aspects to monitoring covering: what to monitor; frequency and timing; and methods for ensuring consistency

across partnerships with different AP providers.

The Alternative Providers' Forum offers an opportunity for the LA and alternative provision providers to work in partnership to share good practice and ensure quality standards are negotiated and defined for the effective delivery, commissioning and monitoring of alternative provision.

Appendix 1: Rochdale good practice - partnership agreement form



Good practice - Rochdale

3. Delivery of alternative provision: Work-based learning

Description of practice

A range of work-based learning opportunities are available within the LA that can be accessed directly by the LA, schools or by AP providers to form a package of provision. A number of organisations deliver vocational training and offer vocational accreditation, as well as link with local employers to coordinate work-based learning opportunities. Such organisations include: Rochdale Borough Training Services, Rochdale Training Association, BEST (Business and Education Succeed Together), and Chamber Training Solutions. These organisations also offer work placements and apprenticeships arranged directly with local employers. The programmes offered by these different organisations are documented in the LA's District Directory, which aims to promote awareness of such types of AP.

Rochdale Borough Training Services

Rochdale Borough Training Services offer employer recognised qualifications and pre-apprenticeship training programmes which are supported by links with a variety of local employers. These include Young Apprenticeships (NVQ, Technical certificate, Key Skills in Administration or Customer Service and Customer Care), NVQs at Level 1 and 2 in Office Based Skills, Level 2 Certificate in Administration or Customer Service and Practical Sampling, Woodwork and Painting and Decorating. In order to enrol on the programme students must express a keen interest in their respective chosen area. Assessments include observation of practical performance in a real work setting, assignments, projects and national tests, including numeracy and literacy.

Rochdale Training Association

Rochdale Training Association offers employer recognised pre-apprenticeship training to pre-16 pupils. This includes Business Admin (Level 1), ITQ (Level 1), Customer Service (Level 1) and Performing Engineering Operations (Level 1 and 2). Entry requirements include the expression of an interest in the work area, and in some cases an interview is required to explore this commitment further. Assessment is based on the quality of the work produced.

BEST LTD

Business and Education Succeed Together (BEST) offers a number of programmes for young people to learn in the workplace, coordinating support for young people and schools with individually tailored work-placements and accreditation. M Power is a two year work-based pre-16 apprenticeship

programme managed by BEST on behalf of Manchester Enterprises. Young people go out into the workplace one day a week to gain NVQ Levels 1 and 2 in a chosen occupational area. There are also Extended Work Experience placements which are long-term placements with an employer for key stage 4 students for one to three days a week. The scheme is flexible and pupils can access the placements at any point during key stage 4. Pupils accessing the scheme are identified as young people who would benefit from a more vocational curriculum. Entry requirements stipulate that the young person must express an interest in vocational training and will be interviewed to explore and confirm this commitment.

Chamber Training Solutions

Chamber Training Solutions offer pre-apprenticeship training for pre-16 pupils to gain employer recognised qualifications (NVQs Level 1 and 2) in the workplace. The programme offered is Business and Administration for Year 10 learners and pupils work towards either Level 1 or 2 depending on an initial assessment. The NVQ units include responsibilities at work, health and safety, dealing with visitors, word processing, databases and spreadsheets, using the telephone and working with others. Entry requirements include an expressed interest and commitment to achieving the qualification and working in the area, good timekeeping and appearance. Learners will be placed with an employer for a half or full day per week. They will be assigned an assessor and will be visited regularly at the workplace. The assessor will assess them in the workplace.

Why identified as good practice

All the work-based learning providers offer accreditation and post-16 progression opportunities into further training or employer recognised qualifications. The work-based environment provides students with an alternative to the classroom environment of mainstream provision that was failing to engage them.

Impact

The effectiveness of providing work, adult and vocational environments for young people requiring alternative provision was reiterated by all the users of the work-based learning providers. Being in an adult environment where high expectations are placed on the young people to behave responsibly and to achieve, and where trust is shown in the young people by adults who believe they are capable of such achievements, are regarded by the providers as key factors in re-engaging the young people in learning.

Annex 9 Good practice - Stoke-on-Trent

1. Commissioning: The Managed Transfer Forum (MTF)

Description of practice

The LA has established a **Managed Transfer Forum (MTF)**, set up to address the high rates of permanent exclusion within the authority. This is a high-level, strategic forum, previously attended by all headteachers, but recently streamlined so that two headteacher representatives attend on a rota basis. LA representatives and other agency personnel also attend the forum. Decisions are made at the forum to identify AP placements or a new school place for pupils referred to the forum (for example, pupils who are disaffected or de-motivated and/or are at risk of exclusion). All PRU and other AP provision is accessed via the MTF.

Identification of need is based on a continuum using the LA's 'behavioural toolkit' (described further below) which is used by schools to identify any pupil who might require AP. Schools use the behavioural toolkit to identify the level of intervention that has been actioned prior to referring a pupil for an AP placement (including school action or school action plus interventions). This ensures that the details of all previous interventions are recorded and can be considered upon referral to the MTF. Following consultations with the young person and their parents, the Head of Positive Behaviour and the head of the pupil's school will decide whether the school-level interventions have been successful. If not, pupils are then referred to the MTF, where a collective decision can be made regarding an appropriate alternative placement. The MTF verifies whether all possible interventions have been tried prior to referral. Schools are required to provide a package of background information for each pupil referred to the forum. This should include the details of previous interventions and assessments, as well as information on any other external factors which should be taken into account (including violent incidents and family circumstances). Key stage 4 pupils arriving in the authority mid-term who cannot access a school place, or who require AP, are automatically placed in the key stage 4 PRU by the LA admissions department. Reasons for key stage 4 pupils being unable to access a school place include:

- those who have recently returned from custody and have no identified school place (this is generally only the case for Year 11 pupils who have missed too much coursework to be entered for GCSEs and who would be more appropriately placed in AP where they would have more chance of achieving);
- those who have moved into the LA too late to be entered for GCSEs and therefore would achieve more in AP
- those who may have moved into the area from other LAs and been out of school for a number of years.

Year 10 students arriving in the authority mid-term are likely to be placed in mainstream, unless they had already been unsuccessful in two or more secondary schools.

Through the MTF, the LA thus employs a **structured approach** to responding to individual pupils' needs for alternative provision. Placements are identified through a collective decision-making process, taking into consideration previous interventions and assessments and a pupil's academic ability, interests and any other relevant factors, such as ability to work in groups, pregnancy, and the level of support required. A wide range of vocational and academic courses are available through the provision.

The Behavioural Toolkit

The behavioural toolkit provides a strategy for targeting behaviour support for pupils presenting challenging behaviour. The toolkit forms an integral part of the authority's Behaviour Support Plan and is centred upon the five key objectives in the Education Development Plan that relate to meeting behavioural needs. The toolkit outlines the full and progressive spectrum of support available to pupils and details the various stages of intervention and support that can be worked through by schools and partners in order to address identified needs and overcome barriers to learning. The initial stages of the process focus on schools' own in-house interventions, for example, examination of whole-school behaviour policies, curricular approaches, monitoring and assessment, mentoring and flexible grouping. Subsequent stages may draw more on external support and outreach interventions. At the latter stages of this process, referral to alternative provision may be considered appropriate.

The approach ensures that schools have exhausted all preventative measures prior to referral of a pupil for a managed transfer, and thus supports the principle that mainstream school remains the most appropriate provision for the vast majority of students. The toolkit reflects, and is rooted in, a number of other local and national strategies, such as the Every Child Matters agenda and the Inclusion agenda. The strategy also recognises the multi-disciplinary issues often symptomatic of challenging behaviour, and thus highlights the various sources of multi-agency support. In this regard the toolkit supports schools in identifying and exploring the causes and nature of behavioural issues.

Why identified as good practice

The managed transfer of pupils between schools or into alternative provision was considered to be best practice in avoiding permanent exclusion wherever possible.

Several elements of the Managed Transfer forum were felt to be key features of effective practice. The system allows for pupils to be assessed at different stages through the referral process (for example using the Behaviour Toolkit in schools and then again through the MTF). This ensures a rounded assessment can be made, such that pupils are matched to the most

appropriate provision against a background of information including pupils' academic ability, interests and any other external factors which may present barriers to learning.

The MTF was also felt to support a collaborative approach to commissioning alternative provision: it provides a structured, transparent process for all providers, headteachers and the LA to come together to discuss referral issues and share good practice.

Impact

As a result of the MTF, there has been a significant reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools in the city. Prior to the introduction of the MTF, there were approximately 70 permanent exclusions per academic year. This figure now rests at between eight and ten permanent exclusions per academic year. All AP is commissioned and monitored by the MTF, ensuring that all pupils are thoroughly assessed and matched to appropriate provision. In addition, the LA is able to track the progress of individual pupils in relation to their attendance, behaviour, attainment and progression. This information is then updated onto the LA's central database, including information about all alternative providers, work experience placements and any other circumstances where a pupil is 'out of school'. This ensures that all pupils not in school are identified, monitored and tracked.

As a result of the MTF, the LA is also able to identify early in the financial year pupils who are likely to require AP during the course of the year. This enables AP to be planned, should it be required by the following September, and the type and extent of AP that will be required.

Good practice - Stoke-on-Trent

2. Delivery of alternative provision: FE college

Description of practice

Alternative provision commissioned under contract with one of the LA's FE colleges was identified as an example of good practice by the LA. The college offers a range of full-time courses, and part-time provision is also being developed. The courses available include: BTEC 'skills for working life'; 'access to FE'; ASDAN-accredited courses (gold, silver and bronze awards); the Youth Achievement Award; OCN accreditation including key skills and basic skills; GCSEs; and a full range of vocational courses, including hairdressing, catering, animal care, motor vehicles, and construction. Courses are not adapted specifically for under-16s and pupils attend the same classes as their post-16 peers, following the same course content. However, additional staff (such as learning mentors) are allocated to support pupils throughout their course. The cost of a pupil placement can be charged on a pro-rata weekly basis according to the duration of the placement.

Other facilities available at the college include a programme for young mothers and an on-site crèche. This support was identified by OFSTED as leading to significant improvements in young mothers' attendance and attainment.

Why identified as good practice

Several aspects of the college's provision resulted in it being highlighted as an example of good practice in AP within the LA. The relationships between staff at the college and in the LA were seen as key. The college has a close working relationship with the LA and **support is available at a senior level** for staff within the college. The key strategic contact between the LA and the college is the assistant principal, and this is seen as particularly useful in terms of future development and change.

The **ethos of the college** was also highlighted as a key feature of good practice. The college has changed its outlook, from regarding itself as a post-16 provision, to establishing itself more as an organisation with a remit for 14-19 education, within which provision for under-16 pupils is considered to be an integral part. There is no detrimental impact of this change on post-16 students. Post-16 students are integrated into the same courses as any other students and there is an additional staffing team employed to provide extra advice and support to under-16s, including a KS4 coordinator. All under-16s are assigned a key worker from the LA social inclusion team to provide intensive support around education and other issues. The college also offers outreach support to new providers of alternative provision (such as the YMCA and the key stage 4 PRU) within the LA.

The **flexibility** of the college was considered to be a key feature of its success in delivering AP. In order to meet the needs of individual students, the college offers both a structured and flexible timetable. In this way, provision can be closely matched to each individual pupil. Under the flexible timetable, a programme is developed for each student outlining the number of timetabled hours in each subject to be completed each week. Using this information, the student then has the flexibility to move between subjects to complete the required amount of teaching at any time which suits their needs/circumstances. For example, a particular timetabled lesson could be missed, and completed at a later point in the week.

The **supportive** nature of the college was highlighted as a feature of good practice. The 14-19 coordinator at the college is the **key operational contact** for the LA, parents, pupils, staff and outside agencies, and this role is seen as invaluable. The relatively small size of the college was viewed as a positive aspect, enabling it to create the supportive environment which is particularly important for some pupils requiring AP. Crèche facilities are also available on-site to facilitate and support the attendance of teenage parents. The college operates an '**open door**' policy for all students, for example, students can access the key stage 4 coordinator at any time to discuss needs or issues that might arise. The college also provides learning support assistants to support students in alternative provision.

The college operates a 'time-out' system. Time-out passes are issued to students at the beginning of each day which allow them to leave a session for up to 15 minutes. During this time, the student reports to the key stage 4 coordinator, and then is able to take some 'time out'. The system has proved to be very useful as it provides students with a coping strategy and avoids the potential for disruption in lessons. Students are fully aware that they are entitled to a time-out period if they need it, and therefore were felt to be more relaxed and at ease in class. College tutors understand and adhere to the time-out system and the key stage 4 coordinator ensures s/he is always available for students to report to should they require a time-out period.

The strong lines of **communication** within the college were highlighted as a key feature of success in this alternative provision. Regular team meetings take place between staff with responsibility for under-16 (alternative) provision and other tutors throughout the college. In addition, the 14-19 coordinator is designated as a key contact for all tutors in the college regarding issues relating to under-16 provision. Regular communication between the pupils and staff was also felt to be a feature of good practice.

Parental Involvement was also highlighted as key to the successful delivery of alternative provision. The college works closely with parents and offers them support where appropriate.

Impact

The college has good rates of student **retention**, and **achievement** is high. Results from the 04/05 academic year showed that 94% of under-16 students

who attended the college had achieved a qualification on leaving (key skills passes). In addition, the assistant principal of the college reported that under-16 students supported by the college have good rates of **progression** with 71% progressing into post-16 provision.

The impact of the provision on pupils' **aspirations** was also highlighted as a positive aspect of attending the college. For example, one pupil described the impact of AP as having encouraged him to focus on his aspirations to become an architect, through providing him with the advice and guidance required to take steps towards achieving this goal. This included advice on the subjects to be studied and the grades to be achieved to follow this career path.

Personal development was also highlighted as an impact of the provision. One pupil described how his confidence and self-esteem had improved since attending the college, such that he was now becoming involved in various college activities which he would not have participated in had he been in school. Similarly, the impact of college provision on pupils' **social development** was acknowledged where positive relationships had been formed with staff and other pupils at the college.

Another main outcome identified was the impact of college provision on **re-engaging pupils with education**. The flexible nature of the college and the supportive ethos were highlighted in this respect. In addition, communication with students, giving them a sense of involvement in, and responsibility for, all areas of their education was felt to be key.

Annex 10 LA contact details

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