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Evaluation of the Advancement Network Prototypes

First Interim Report

March 2010

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Executive Summary

This report documents the findings from the first phase of the evaluation of the Advancement Network Prototypes which form part of the development work leading up to the implementation of the adult advancement and careers service (aacs) in autumn 2010. The prototypes are managed by the Learning and Skills Council and are testing a broad range of approaches to delivering services, offered through a range of channels centring on face-to-face services enhanced in some cases by web resources and planned telephone lines.

The research for this phase of work took place in March and April 2009 and reflects the development of the prototypes at that time. The research, which was qualitative in approach, comprised:

- interviews with ten national and regional stakeholders which involved representatives of organisations involved in or affected by the prototypes' implementation

- a two-day scoping visit to each prototypes during which between six and eight local stakeholders were interviewed.

The concept of advancement

In its simplest terms, advancement is defined as moving towards, into or upwards in work and more broadly, as having links to self-improvement and life satisfaction. In practice the meaning of this for the groups that the prototypes will work with will vary since these concepts mean different things to different people.

Consensus is growing around careers, jobs and skills as the core focus for advancement. However, the concept encompasses broader issues of health and well-being, social justice/rights and entitlements and inclusion, to deliver the idea of life improvement. These facets are seen as the enablers of advancement although it is recognised that others may yet be required.

It will be important that a working definition of advancement (and the boundaries of delivery) is agreed prior to the roll out of the aacs: this will provide the impetus and direction to the creation of the national and local partnerships that will be required.

The prototypes' aims

Most of the prototypes' aims relate to capacity building in one sense or another: staff development, establishing or formalising partnerships, and developing resources/tools eg, service directories. For this reason, there is less emphasis on the harder outcomes of guidance interventions for instance, progression in work and learning.

The focus of the prototypes is (largely) on groups that are considered the hardest-to-help, and the delivery plans of many prototypes have elements of pre-engagement support. The approach the prototypes are taking to targeting users and resources varies, with some targeting geographically and others on a needs basis. Few prototypes are attempting to draw together all aspects of the potential network needed for the range of individuals who will access aacs.

While a more 'universal' aspect of their work may develop with time, the initial research suggested it is not a strong focus and is limited by the level of funding available.

The aims of the prototypes are more firmly fixed upon developing 'no wrong door access' and creating a 'seamless user journey'. The practice of the prototypes will give definition to these concepts, though an assessment of the benefits of the different approaches that are being developed (eg coaches and network models) is needed.

Delivery arrangements

The prototypes are testing one or more of the following approaches: making better use of existing services; engaging people that mainstream careers, learning and employment services typically do not, through 'trusted' services; and delivering support to individuals before they are ready to engage with mainstream advice and employment and skills services. Each has developed local delivery arrangements, and delivery models differ across (and even within) the ten prototypes.

The majority of the prototypes were expecting to launch delivery from April 2009. During the early stages of implementation and partnership forming, significant local level support has built up. The make-up of steering and operational groups varies between areas, but most involve a combination of Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Local Authorities, Primary Care Trust and organisations from the voluntary and community sector. However, some prototypes have found it harder to engage the range of partners than others. Despite this, all prototypes were working on ways to share information across partners.

There appeared to be opportunities for the prototypes to strengthen their links in some cases with some national services namely, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service. One benefit to doing so, may be the provision of an offer that is better adapted to the needs of a universal service.

Planned impacts

The prototypes, and stakeholders, are placing greater emphasis on soft outcomes such as distance travelled, rather than hard outcomes (entry to work or learning) as the key measures of success for users. In terms of measuring their own performance, prototypes identify that success is likely to surround the improved capacity to deliver and improved ways of working.

Significant goodwill has been established among the partners in each of the prototypes. If a key outcome, and lasting measure of success, is the improved ways of working in partnership, then safeguarding this, as the aacs is developed and implemented, is important.

Early lessons and emerging issues for developing the adult advancement and careers service (aacs)

Once a definition of advancement has been agreed it will need to be communicated to the range of government departments and agencies, as their cooperation will be needed to provide the aacs. This will ease the process of bringing together the necessary partners locally and nationally.

There are some interesting issues that surround the boundaries of advancement for instance, which agencies need to be involved and the implications of their involvement (and level of involvement) in terms of funding. Careful targeting may be required to ensure that aacs does not take on aspects of delivery that are best left to other agencies' current remits.

Early conclusions

While at the time of the research, delivery had yet to start in most prototypes, their plans suggest that there is something to be learned from each about the delivery of locally-based advancement networks.

Learning about some policy objectives from the prototypes may be limited since the prototypes are not operating a fully universal model. For instance, there is limited engagement with young people's services which will limit the learning for an all-age careers and guidance strategy; only a small number prototypes are engaging with employers currently and there is a limited focus overall on in-work individuals.

Nevertheless, some interesting models have evolved which will provide learning about how partnerships can best be leveraged and how those distant from the labour market and mainstream agencies can be engaged. The prototypes will also provide evidence about the breadth and depth with which local partners can be engaged with on the advancement agenda and raise interesting questions about the possible shape and structure of the aacs.

Next steps for the evaluation

A second visit to each area is planned to take place between July-September 2009. This visit will focus more on delivery, include interviews with advisory staff and will also aim to include some interviews with service users.

Introduction

Guidance policy developments

In recent years there have been several key developments for guidance policy that have led to the formation of a number of initiatives including the Advancement Network Prototypes.

In 2004 Lord Leitch was tasked with conducting a review of skills. The aim of the review was to 'identify the UK's optimal skills mix in 2020 to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, and to consider the policy implications of achieving the level of change required'. One of his main recommendations, taken forward by the government in World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England (2006), was the aim to create a new integrated employment and skills service, in order to promote career development and sustainable employment.

At a similar time (also in 2004), John Denham mooted the idea of Advancement Agency Networks in a lecture to the Fabian Society[1]. This set out a vision of individuals in work receiving wide ranging advice to support their needs and to enable them to develop their working life in ways that would lead to greater personal satisfaction and productivity. A group identified for this support was low-skilled employees, attracting the work tax credit, who can often experience limited job satisfaction and career development. Similar to the Leitch review, employers' needs were also considered and Denham set out that they should also receive advice about how training could increase productivity and how staff release for training could be managed (something which is particularly important for small employers).

A review of IAG services was commissioned in 2005 to assess the capacity of the system to deliver. Part of this IAG review was a trial extension of the telephone guidance offered by learndirect. Subsequently this trial has been expanded and now forms an essential part of the guidance offer in England, currently under the brand of Careers Advice Service. Management of the service has moved from the University for Industry (UfI) to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which also manages the **nextstep** service which delivers 'in person' guidance. The services now share space on the Direct Gov website.

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[1]   'Making work work: creating chances across the labour market' Downloaded, 26 April 2009 from: www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/UsersDoc/MakingWorkWork.pdf

The review itself[2], joined together key government departments and agencies including Department for Education and Skills, and the LSC, The Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Trade and Industry, Jobcentre Plus, Ufi and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Its findings suggested that the guidance 'market' was confusing for users who do not know their entitlement; that those most in need of help are often those who are least likely to seek it out; and that services tend to focus on progression in learning rather than work and careers outcomes. The focus on referral to link organisations was found to vary between agencies. Key recommendations included a single user-facing service available in person, by telephone or over the internet, with strong partnership links, entitlement to a 'skills MOT' and continuing support to assist progression. Employers' needs were recognised with particular note made of integration with the Train to Gain service and Business Link.

Central to these developments, is the notion of an individual being able to progress, or 'advance' in work and learning through a process that enables them to overcome barriers and to seek opportunities that will deliver greater life satisfaction. A means to the achievement of this aim, will be the implementation of the universal adult advancement and careers service (aacs) which will operate from autumn 2010. The intention to establish this service was set out in the 2007 White Paper 'Opportunity, Employment and Progression'. Although a key focus of this paper, as a joint publication between DIUS and DWP, was necessarily the relationship between welfare and skills reform rather than all elements of a universal service, it suggested a shift in emphasis from work to *sustainable* work with salary levels and opportunities for personal advancement as considerations.

A second white paper, 'Work Skills' in June 2008, moved the agenda forward with its proposals for mainstreaming Skills Accounts and introducing an entitlement for funding for a first Level 3 qualification. However the key message arising from the paper was the need for close partnership working and local flexibilities, to enable the system to be driven by the needs of 'people on the ground'.

Trials towards the adult advancement and careers service

The adult advancement and careers service (aacs) will be a single service, available to everyone and shaped by local partnerships. The intention for aacs is that the service will be holistic and combine the provision of careers advice with advice about other barriers that people can face to work and learning, such as suitable and affordable childcare, transport, housing, debt, and health. It will also link in initiatives such as Train to Gain, Skills Accounts, and the Integrated Employment and Skills trials. Network aspects of the aacs will draw upon Local Area Agreements and/or Multi-Area Agreements. These agreements are existing local partnerships that have identified the most important local priorities with regards to employment and skills and are working together to achieve the desired outcomes.

The development of the aacs has started with the trialling of two key components:

- the co-location of careers advisers in Jobcentre Plus through the implementation of 'Integrated Employment and Skills Trials' which includes a 'Skills Health Check' (which are the subject of other evaluations), and

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[2]   Downloaded 26 April 2009 from: http://www.iagreview.org.uk/

- ten advancement network prototypes which started in November 2008 and are the subject of this evaluation.

These ten prototypes are spread across four regions in England and operating in the North West (Greater Manchester and Great Merseyside), South East (Brighton and Hove, South Hampshire, Slough), London (Brent and Ealing, Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth, Islington, Camden and Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea) and West Midlands (Stoke on Trent and North Staffs, Black Country). Between them the prototypes are testing a broad range of approaches, offered through a range of channels centring on face-to-face services enhanced in some cases by web resources and planned telephone lines. Their delivery includes a range of leadership models such as local authority-led, voluntary sector led and housing association–led. They are testing hub and spoke models, multi-agency models, using targeted networks and testing outreach driven approaches. Through a partnership approach the prototypes will aim to deliver personalised and tailored packages of support.

A variety of practice has been developed, for instance, some prototypes are using 'advancement advisers' who work in communities to provide an outreach service, to engage users who might not ordinarily be involved with mainstream advice and support services. Others are more focused on 'no wrong door' access and improving the links between existing services.

Aims for evaluating the prototypes

The key purpose of the evaluation is to provide the LSC with information about:

- the ways in which the prototypes enable people to advance and what advancement means, and how it can be measured, for different groups

- implications for the concept and operation of the advancement networks associated with the economic downturn

- effective joint working including in planning and setting targets, managing information and referrals, communication between partners, and joint marketing

- the lessons arising from the prototypes' work with particular groups

- the opportunities and barriers to the employer involvement in the 'advancement' agenda

- the extent, and ways in which, the capacity of advisers has been supported and developed to deal with a greater volume and diversity of clients

- how 'seamless user journeys' are developed and 'no wrong door access' is implemented. This theme will include prototypes' interaction with other initiatives such as Skills Accounts, Train to Gain, the Skills Health Check and the IES trials

- the perceived cost-effectiveness of the prototypes' models

- the perceived impacts of the prototypes including the outcomes for individuals

- how the local prototypes work with young people's services to best support transitions to adulthood to inform the development of the planned all-age strategy.

Phase 1 evaluation methodology

Phase 1: Initial scoping visits, desk research and national stakeholder research

The evaluation commenced with a scoping visit to each of the prototypes to confirm the critical issues for the research, refine the evaluation framework and the research methods. The phase comprised:

- Review of key documents covering prototypes' proposals, operational/business plans and other relevant material.

- Interviews with between six and eight key representatives from all of the ten operating prototypes. This included strategic and operational managers as well as interviews with managers with responsibility for data capture.

  - Themes for these interviews included: the aims of the prototype and their progress to date; the precise nature of the delivery model, leadership and partnerships; key issues that have affected their delivery plans; the funding model including plans to leverage other sources of funding; (plans for) case-loading, staff development and training; and quality assurance.

- Interviews with ten representatives from relevant national government departments, agencies and other interested parties which were recommended to us by the policy leads. These included DIUS and National LSC, **nextstep** prime contractors and regional LSC staff.

  - The interviews covered the nature of stakeholders' involvement; their views on the prototype concept and views on the remit, priorities, implementation of prototypes; progress to date; and potential impacts.

Structure of this report

This report presents an analysis of the findings from the first, scoping stage of research. The information gathered particularly about the concept of the advancement and how this is reflected down into early operation, is at a very early stage and will no doubt change and grow with the prototypes. This first interim report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 explores the concept of advancement and how it is understood by national, regional stakeholders and local prototype staff.

- Chapter 3 then turns to the aims of the prototypes providing a map between the aims of the national stakeholders and the local aims of each of the prototypes.

- Chapter 4 delves into the delivery of the prototypes exploring partnership formation, delivery models, branding, quality assurance and information sharing.

- In Chapter 5 we explore the planned impacts of the prototypes from national, regional and local perspectives.

- Finally, we provide some early conclusions and identify some emerging issues for aacs, in Chapter 6.

The Concept of Advancement

Key points

- In its simplest terms, stakeholders define advancement as moving towards, into or upwards in work and more broadly, as having links to self-improvement and life satisfaction. What this means in practice for the groups that the prototypes will work with will vary as these concepts mean different things to different people.

- Consensus is growing around careers, jobs and skills as the core focus for advancement, however, the concept will encompass broader issues of health and well-being, social justice and inclusion if it is to deliver the idea of life improvement – these are seen as the enablers of advancement although others may yet be required.

- It will be important that a working definition of advancement (and the boundaries of delivery) is agreed prior to the roll out of the aacs: this will provide the impetus and direction to the creation of the national and local partnerships that will be required.

The advancement concept

'The paths to self-improvement... are likely to be complex and different for each individual. People are starting from very different types of employment; different levels of skills; and different senses of what they can achieve... In short, it is a challenging task for anyone to undertake, let alone someone who lacks the confidence and self-belief to think they can move forward.'

'*Making work work: creating chances across the labour market*', John Denham Lecture to The Fabian Society, 2004

The term advancement has gained prevalence as a result of John Denham's lecture to the Fabian Society in 2004. While it draws upon similar themes to the Leitch review, specifically the integration of employment and skills policies, its definition appears broader and its application closer to the 'universal' part of aacs. Considering the content of the lecture, self-improvement is the key dimension and Denham makes clear that this will encompass all aspects of life although there is an emphasis on improving working lives through addressing under-employment, improving work conditions, enabling people to attract better pay and to enter more sustainable employment. A linkage is also created to the policy agenda for children and young people. He argues that until adults can see the potential to improve their own lives, it

is unlikely that the wealth of policies to address child poverty, community deprivation and cohesion, and low aspirations, will fully succeed until the adults in those communities see hope of change.

The speech was made at a time of high employment and the change in the economic climate is one issue that national stakeholders felt was affecting the understanding of the advancement concept, *'Due to economy there is a shift from advancement in life to sharper focus on employment and skills'*. In this chapter we discuss the understanding of the advancement concept peeling down through the stakeholder levels, from national through regional to local, to help consider the implications and lessons that may arise from each of the prototypes implementations.

It was apparent from the interviews that the understanding of the concept of advancement is a work in progress, evolving as aspects of the trials bed into practice. Essentially, the national stakeholders understood advancement to mean helping people to *'move forward'*. While one equated it simply to progression, it was clear that the term progression was being used in a wider context than it is within, for instance, the key performance indicators, for the Careers Advice Service and **nextstep**. As one stakeholder admitted, *'we are still wrestling with the term advancement'* and what it means.

There is consensus however that advancement will mean different things to different people, depending on their situations and aspirations.

A notion of a core part of the service with enablers surrounding it was proposed by one of the national level stakeholders and was a view with which others concurred:

> *'At its core is careers, jobs and skills but it has to include health as well as change and it has to be able to help anyone… it's hard to define. It's about getting in and on in work, about moving up, changing jobs if that's right for them and about life improvement. It's a broad offer and the target is everyone – those who feel they have a need and those who are ok but want the service when they find out it's available.'*

> National Stakeholder

A number of stakeholders stated or implied a *'social justice and well-being'* element to advancement whereby individuals would gain greater life satisfaction perhaps from simply being able to undertake learning for its own sake rather than linking it to careers development. A priority for the national stakeholders is to gain information from the prototypes about the different types of need implied by the advancement concept and what that means for the implementation of aacs.

A regional stakeholder was concerned that the concept has yet to become part of the language: *'the term advancement is not meaningful to most people'*. Until it is an accepted concept, the stakeholder was concerned that services and agencies would struggle to get behind its aims. Demonstrating this, another regional contact expressed a view that advancement is not about career change while, in contrast, others felt the concept embraced this. There was a view that the term advancement needs an operational definition in advance of aacs implementation to ensure its aims can be met.

There was greater consensus around the need for an holistic service which has the potential to address the barriers faced by individuals, but also a view that the concept of barriers, in itself needs to change to an achievement model.

The regional stakeholders placed a stronger emphasis on advancement as universal and open to everyone. There was considerable concern that the prototypes be available to the highly skilled and those in work, as much as they provide service to the low-skilled and those out of work.

An emphasis on soft outcomes was also discussed. In addition, some regional stakeholders felt that the concept should recognise that individuals might undertake multiple career routes in their lifetime and any definition of advancement should not limit them to improving their situation with regard to one career.

> *'It's [advancement] about movement from the status quo - the individual's current default position. It's about increasing confidence and motivation.'*

> Regional Stakeholder

As with national stakeholders, the regional contacts suggested that it would be difficult to address under-employment in the current economic climate although felt it was an implicit part of the advancement concept.

At a local level, the view of advancement as the introduction of individualised, holistic advice has taken a strong hold. Many prototype staff emphasised the need for an advancement service to provide 'no wrong door' access and support a range of user journeys.

The prototypes were more able to talk about what it might mean for different groups. For instance, East Staffordshire and Slough have projects to focus on ex-offenders. For these individuals, in the view of an ANP partner, advancement was likely to mean re-assimilation into the community. For the Islington, Camden, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea the concept included 'moving forward' for individuals *and* the community. This idea of social inclusion links to the national stakeholders' views of social justice, and is also reflected in the Black Country implementation where it was felt that for those most distant from the labour market advancement would equate to engagement.

What is clear from this brief analysis is that, as yet, no one notion of what advancement means has taken hold. As a local staff member reported *'it is simply too soon to fully define it'*. Despite this, there is consensus about the need to be able to provide a holistic service that can link together the different types of advice that individuals need. There is understanding that advancement will mean different things for different user groups. Underpinning this is a growing consensus, particularly among prototypes, that a priority for advancement is movement towards, into or upwards in the labour market.

Aims of the Prototypes

Key points

- The focus of the prototypes is largely on groups considered hardest-to-help and with elements of pre-engagement. While a more 'universal' aspect of their work may develop with time, at present it is not a strong focus and is limited by the level of funding available. There is less established knowledge about helping those in work and the highly skilled and it is this combination of activity that will be novel in the implementation of aacs.

- The aims of the prototypes are more firmly fixed upon developing 'no wrong door access' and creating a 'seamless user journey'. The practice of the prototypes will give definition to these concepts, though an assessment of the benefits of the different approaches that are being developed (eg coaches and network models) is needed.

- Most of the prototypes' aims relate to capacity building in one sense or another: staff development, establishing or formalising partnerships, and developing resources/tools eg, service directories.

- There is less emphasis on the harder outcomes of interventions for instance, work and learning outcomes, even where this was included in bids.

- The approach the prototypes are taking to targeting users/resources varies, with some targeting geographically and others on a needs basis.

National, regional and local aims

The national prospectus, *Shaping the Future*, drew out five areas which could be barriers to advancement. These were around housing, health, understanding employment rights, money worries and childcare needs; though it was acknowledged that there may also be other wider/different barriers as well. The aim of the prototypes was therefore to test some of these areas, and to see if there were potentially others, where an advancement service could make a significant difference.

For national stakeholders, moving from a careers to an advancement service raises the question of where the boundary lies in terms of the list of potential enablers. This question will be only partially addressed by learning arising from each of the prototypes since none is implementing a model that encompasses the full range of

needs. Nonetheless, some of the boundaries of the service are being tested and defined, and the prototypes will help assess some of the combinations needed to support individuals by exploring what works best for different groups, and how advice needs can be best joined-up.

National stakeholders want the prototypes to be innovative in how they approach their development work, and are seeking transferable good practice. A central element of this evaluation will therefore be exploring, and learning from these approaches, and looking, from a user perspective, at the extent to which advice and services are joined-up.

> *'The aim of the prototypes is to test out innovative approaches to how advice can be joined-up at the local level from the users' perspective, and it's not careers information advice necessarily but it's other sorts of advice, so advice on how to overcome their barriers.'*

> National Stakeholder

Regional stakeholders similarly stressed the importance of trying different and innovative approaches. They emphasised the significance of developing new working models of systems and processes which could bring together key local services to help address wider barriers, and with 'no wrong door' access. They were also very keen to see more tangible development of infrastructure, such as referral systems and monitoring. They too emphasised the potential learning arising from the prototypes although one felt a stronger national steer might be beneficial where the stakeholder considered there was overlap in prototype aims.

Inevitably, the local aims of the prototypes were more grounded and more likely to emphasise local progress over learning towards aacs. Such progress takes various forms, as detailed in chapter 4, but relates to different forms of capacity-building to deliver effectively. The over-arching aim (and service delivery model) of most of the prototypes was a combination of:

- **joining up and making better use of existing services**: a focus on the better co-ordination of existing services through networks, and developing the tools to support *how* organisations work in partnership, as well as building capacity in information, advice and guidance delivery

- **outreach through 'trusted' organisations:** reaching people that mainstream careers, learning and employment services typically do not, by engaging them through other 'trusted' services and organisations

- **support prior to engaging with mainstream services**: an in-depth service to support individuals before they are ready to engage with mainstream advice and employment and skills services.

We explore these in terms of the prototypes' current delivery in Chapter 4 (see section 4.3). As we also show in that chapter, a huge amount of effort has gone into developing partnership structures in many of the areas, and this has been a key feature of the early life of the prototypes.

All the prototypes have put certain outcome and output targets in their bids, however at present these appear to be viewed as somewhat secondary to their more immediate aims around capacity-building. The scale and scope of these output and

outcome aims differ markedly between the prototypes. For example, Greater Manchester has prioritised training advisors and increasing referrals to **nextstep**; many others include job entry or training entry targets, the scope of which again varies between prototype area (by area size and target group/s); Brighton and Hove includes an element of co-location in its targets; and Slough has set a minimum number of partners to be involved.

There is some evidence of a distinction in the way prototypes view the funding they are receiving. Some see it as project funding: either a chance to fund services they would want to fund anyway or as a short-term project pot. Others see it more as part of the process of building towards the aacs locally. Such a distinction can of course shift over the life of a prototype since flexibility to adapt is built into the policy.

The scope of prototype aims

As noted earlier, national and regional stakeholders reported that while the original goal was advancement in life, the recession may be driving a sharper focus on skills and employment, the *'getting in and getting on in work'*. That said, national stakeholders felt there remains scope for the prototypes to develop and cater for a broader definition of advancement.

There is considerable diversity of the scope of both the geographical coverage of the prototype models, and the potential population they will engage with. Some of the prototypes are also multiple prototype models, for example:

- Islington, Camden, Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea operates differently in each borough

- this situation also exists in Brent and Ealing

- Slough is operating four Test Beds under its umbrella prototype

- East Staffordshire is testing different focuses in different parts of the region

- Greater Manchester is allowing each Local Authority to tailor the approach to local needs.

While in a positive sense this develops different partnerships and tests alternative approaches, one national stakeholder noted that some of the aims might be too narrow for effective learning to arise, and may risk creating silos rather than networks.

While the prototypes often had relatively narrow target groups, they linked these to feeding into much broader aims which span a number of government departments. These include reducing crime on deprived estates, helping address child poverty, or reducing inter-generational worklessness.

Universality

The policy vision for the adult advancement and careers service is that it should be universal. That is to say that anyone, regardless of their qualification level and working status, should be able to access advice and guidance about work, learning and careers.

Nevertheless the prototypes have been able to develop their models based on local priorities and therefore the extent of universality varies as the limited funding has been prioritised on the basis of need. Some prototypes have limited the user groups they are likely to reach based on their access points and partners. For example, people with mental health issues, ex-offenders and people in social housing are the target groups in East Staffordshire. In Brighton and Hove, Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth, and South Hampshire deprived areas are being targeted.

The universality of the service is an issue. One national stakeholder felt that as long as the prototypes have, or refer to a telephone service and web service, that this could form the universal offer *'In a rather bureaucratic sense, it is universal… that's a very narrow definition'*. This links into the issues around use of resources and how to most effectively target face-to-face and intensive help. There is a growing understanding that the universal aacs will be delivered through a range of channels and is likely to involve web-based services, telephone services and face-to-face support. The cost of reaching individuals varies according to the medium, with self-service through use of internet-based advice the cheapest to provide. The expectation is that those most able to help themselves will access the aacs through this channel as a priority. The most expensive interventions are face-to-face and could be targeted in the aacs based on the priority groups identified in the Local Area Agreements. There is a risk in this vision that adviser-led advice and guidance does not become available to the highly skilled as they are viewed as more able to help themselves. Should this be the case, it would remove some of the novelty of the aacs.

A good deal of what the prototypes are currently aiming to offer relates to services which can be considered 'pre-engagement'. That is, services which facilitate the tackling of barriers to entering mainstream, or core, employment of skills provision. However some felt a more universal offer might develop later down the line.

> *'Adults with multiple barriers to work including those on Incapacity Benefit, Lone Parents, longer term JSA claimants, offenders and ex-offenders, residents with mental health issues. We envisaged that in year one these would be the main groups but in year two we will ensure that the network provides more universal access to residents across the city.'*

> ANP Lead

The network-based approach, for example in Greater Manchester, involves a wider range of organisations potentially coming into contact with a wider range of users. The TUC is also a partner in this prototype, and there are plans to work the Union Learning Representatives within employers to engage employees with advancement services. In Greater Merseyside, a large employer is part of the project steering group and has plans for its staff to access the services. Overall, based on their initial plans for delivery, it is likely that prototypes will focus their efforts on more lower-qualified and workless adults, and less on engaging with adults in work and those who are more highly qualified.

Target groups

In general terms the prototypes have a clear focus on the hardest to help groups and national stakeholders noted that, as yet, most of the efforts have been on providing

the infrastructure for advancement of workless groups, with much less progress made on helping the low-skilled in-work. It was felt by most contacts that this was inevitable, as those with (multiple) barriers, are disproportionately more likely to be out of work.

> *'The whole point of an advancement service is that you're reaching out to a new client group who are miles away from employment and from Level 2 or Level 3.'*

> National Stakeholder

However it should be noted that until recently, the priority for the **nextstep** service has traditionally been individuals in this situation, leading one national stakeholder to feel there needed to be a greater focus on under-employment, and on those who have greater (potential) skills than their current employment affords them to use. The stakeholder felt greater emphasis was required to understand the means through which they would increase their earning power and career progression.

Regional contacts also discussed the need for a more universal service in light of the focus that has developed on the hardest-to-help. In their view, supporting other groups, for example those in-work and graduates should also be a consideration.

While the target groups identified by the prototypes tend to be those who are hardest-to-help there is considerable diversity within this. Targets range from tightly defined, relatively small groups, eg ex-offenders, through to working with *'those least likely to access advisory services'* in Greater Merseyside, both those out of, and in-work, in Greater Manchester and South Hampshire; and parents on low-incomes as well as those out of work, in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth. While the focus on the hardest-to-help is understandable, it may prove to be a higher risk strategy during, and in the period after, a recession when progression into employment will be more difficult for these groups.

Newly unemployed clients may also require the network of support and it is encouraging, for example, that the South Hampshire 'PUSH' prototype has been able to respond to local redundancies in the dairy industry by establishing a job club.

How local aims feed into the core and enabling aspects of the service

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is growing consensus that the core of advancement surrounds careers, jobs and skills. Complementing this core, a set of enablers (services linking housing, health, employment rights, childcare and well-being for instance) is needed to support individuals to advance. In this section we explore how the local aims are framed within this core and enablers model.

The target groups adopted by each of the prototypes are significant in terms of the potential learning that may arise; information should be gained about which enablers different groups need. For example,

- the Black Country, East Staffordshire, and Brent and Ealing are all concerned with **housing**

- North Staffordshire and part of Slough with **health**; these two areas also have projects aimed at addressing problems specific to **ex-offenders**

- Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth will work with **parents**

- while others aim to tackle broader sets of barriers associated with **worklessness** and **deprivation**, such as in Greater Merseyside, Islington, Camden, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Brighton and Hove.

Within these broad categories there is further targeting, for example several of the prototypes in London boroughs are aimed at helping refugees, new migrant communities, single parents, those undergoing drug rehabilitation, people with mental health issues, people living with long-term health conditions, and those with few or no qualifications.

Two prototypes, Greater Manchester and South Hampshire, while still aiming to address barriers to learning or work, do not appear to be so explicitly focused on those furthest from the labour market. These two models also have a greater (though as yet not hugely pronounced) focus on those in employment than the other models, with Greater Manchester for example developing links with local TUC learning representatives.

> *'We've always said it's a universal service and we're not focussing on our most deprived.'*

> ANP Lead

Nature of targeted approaches

There are, broadly speaking, three types of targeting which feature among the prototypes. Some have an explicit geographical target, for example the targeting of residents on specific estates in Islington and Camden; others are targeted as a result of where the resources and services are located, for example the focus on the Children's Centres in the most deprived areas of Southwark and Wandsworth; and the location of the community hubs in the most deprived areas of Brighton and Hove. Others are geographically broader and target on a needs basis, for example the work with people with muscular-skeletal problems in Slough, or targeting of broader groups of need seen in Merseyside and Manchester.

In the examples of geographical targeting two overlapping rationales are identified. Firstly, the need to reach out to individuals in deprived communities and to draw in workless groups who are not in touch with statutory agencies. The second reason is to provide resources where they are likely to be in the greatest demand.

This raises a question about how equitably needs are met with this geographic targeting. Both examples produce the possibility of excluding groups with equal need by virtue of their place of residence. Those living in more localised pockets of deprivation, may miss out. On the other hand, where resources are scarce, concentrated geographical targeting of services may be more cost-effective, and as one national stakeholder discussed, there is the possibility of parts of the advancement service being localised or *'even super-local'* within an estate.

For the outreach rationale of geographic targeting, it may be important in the longer-term to consider recent and ongoing reforms to the public welfare system. As the age of the youngest child at which lone parents must seek work is reduced to seven by October 2010, and as Incapacity Benefit claimants are migrated to Employment Support Allowance, in the future there may be fewer workless groups who do not engage with at least one statutory agency and/or provider. This may erode some of the validity of the argument for the outreach model of engagement beyond very

specific groups (for example lone parents with very young children). However, this must be balanced against the need for outreach to people, in or out of work, who do not claim any statutory benefits, and who need assistance with career planning and development.

No wrong door access

Many of the local prototypes discussed 'no wrong door access' but there is clearly some way to go in effectively implementing this. The key partners were either confident, or were building capacity, in referral processes but more will be needed among the broader network of providers to ensure that they too are able to better signpost and/or refer. Some prototypes were primarily targeting and recruiting clients and then helping them navigate the system. In such cases the no-wrong door approach is less salient.

Linking the different enablers

Producing a no-wrong door service, and having effective linking of a suite of enablers, is a huge challenge for the prototypes and will require intensive local effort. While most prototypes will address more than one barrier or enabler, there is less evidence of systematic linking of a network of services to tackle multiple barriers. Some prototypes are currently established on the basis of a vertical journey through one specific enabler, for example from a housing need, into mainstream careers and skills services; while others, eg those with intensive coaching roles, rely on the coach to make the links rather than institutional network linkages. To date, it is difficult to assess how a user journey which involved moving between multiple enablers before entry to the core, might work, though there is of course time, and plans, for this to develop.

Seamless user journey

The prototypes are experimenting with several different approaches to creating the 'seamless user journey'. These can be seen as either network approaches, which knit together existing services and improve sign-posting and referrals between these; or, caseworker and coaching approaches, whereby a broker or *'super-coach'* creates a personalised package of services to fill the clients needs, by *'stitching together'* services for the user, and then following their journey.

The network approach was described by national stakeholders as '*hiding the wiring*' of local services working together. It is concerned with creating strong links between providers, and improving various gateway advisors' knowledge of local service provision, by developing effective referral and sign-posting processes, and improving and increasing the information flow about services. This has been attempted in some prototypes by a combination of training more staff in being able to identify broader needs, building partnerships, creating/enhancing processes of referral or sign-posting, and/or developing directories of services and provision. It would seem that some progress has been made, but there is likely to be more to do since most prototypes have not started delivery and do not know how protocols will work in practice. Creating these types of local network links can be difficult but has the potential to be cost-effective in the long-run.

'The over-arching aim is to provide a seamless journey for any individual whether they want to get into employment, to increase their skills, or to advance in their career, that they can come into a network or a picture whereby their journey is simple, easy, quite clear, quite straightforward because every individual they deal with can signpost or refer very appropriately.'

ANP Lead

A smaller number of prototypes, have chosen to develop approaches based around a caseworker, broker or coach who will help the user to access and navigate the advice services, or can themselves work intensively with the user to address employability issues. Intensive help is likely to offer benefits to the individual, particularly those furthest from the labour market. However, a danger noted by one of the regional stakeholders was that this might simply show that intensive support works, which is already known and is expensive to fund.

Delivery Arrangements

Key points

- The prototypes are testing one or more of the following approaches: making better use of existing services; engaging people that mainstream careers, learning and employment services typically do not through 'trusted' services; and delivering support to individuals before they are ready to engage with mainstream advice and employment and skills services.

- Each has developed local delivery arrangements and the models differ across (and even within) the ten prototypes. The majority of the prototypes were expecting to launch delivery from April 2009.

- There is significant local level support for the prototypes. The make-up of steering groups varies between areas, and most involve a combination of Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Local Authorities, Primary Care Trust and organisations from the voluntary and community sector.

- The links between the prototypes and other careers advice services namely, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service, require strengthening to ensure duplication is avoided and to enable greater universality to develop.

- The LSC did not specify common branding or quality standards for the prototypes, and therefore different approaches have emerged.

- The prototypes are developing ways to share information across partners.

'I don't want to prescribe in detail how Advancement Agencies might develop. There is a strong case for encouraging a number of different pilot models under one national umbrella.'

'Making work work: creating chances across the labour market', John Denham Lecture to The Fabian Society, 2004

Developing the advancement offer

The LSC specification for delivery of the prototypes gave freedom for them to be developed in a way that best met local priorities and partnership and delivery structures, but suggested that the most typical arrangements might include:

- a network of **advancement experts** who act as brokers to obtain a personalised package of advice for an individual;

- the development of **comprehensive service standards** across careers advice and wider advice services, so that people get the personalised advice they need;

- full or partial **co-location** of careers advice services in other advice services.

Since the prototypes have been able to plan and develop local solutions and delivery arrangements based on existing local partnership structures and local priorities, different delivery models have emerged across the prototype areas, and in some cases there are different approaches within prototypes (see section 3.3.1)

However, some common threads in service delivery have developed, and have been introduced in Chapter 3. Each of these elements will be discussed in turn in more depth after the development of partnership approaches within the prototypes has been explored. First, however, we provide an overview of the progress with delivery to date.

Progress with delivery to date

The majority of the prototypes were expecting to launch delivery from April 2009, with the aim of delivering for the following financial year until March 2010. There are exceptions to this, with the Advancement Expert in the Islington implementation already at capacity, and in Greater Manchester where training for front-line advisers and their managers has started. National stakeholders generally felt that delivery of the prototypes was behind where they had hoped, although they recognised the 'behind the scenes' work (and associated time) to set up before delivery could start. The need for significant development work appears to be particularly the case where the model involves brokering access to outreach centres, developing delivery tools, or common quality standards and systems.

Working in partnership

Significant local level support among partners for the aims of the prototypes is emerging. Partners have welcomed the joining up of government agendas, such as housing (the departmental responsibility of Communities and Local Government), health (responsibility of the Department of Health), worklessness (overseen by the Department of Work and Pensions) and skills (formerly responsibility of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and now under the remit of Business, Innovation and Skills).

Most prototypes are building on existing partnerships rather than starting from scratch and prototype implementation is offering an opportunity for closer partnership working between some organisations.

Strategic partnership working

Steering groups have been formed in most prototypes with the aim of bringing together partners to oversee the strategic direction of the prototypes. The make-up of these varies, depending in some cases on the focus of the prototype, but most involve Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC, Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and

organisations from the voluntary and community sector. Some areas have found statutory agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and existing guidance providers ie **nextstep**, more difficult to engage, particularly where the IES trials are operating. The IES trials and the prototypes have been implemented simultaneously, and resourcing and rolling out two new projects at the same time is likely to have proved challenging[3].

Uncertainty about the organisations which will be awarded the Flexible New Deal Contracts also meant that the relationship with welfare to work providers has been more limited to date in some areas than prototypes would have liked. However, since the interviews took place these contracts have been awarded so this should no longer be an issue.

The advancement agenda clearly touches the work of a wide range of statutory, third and private-sector organisations. At a national level, although the adult advancement and careers service prospectus has been cleared by ministers across government, a national stakeholder noted that links between the DIUS (now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)), and the Departments of Health, and Communities and Local Government are yet to be developed to support the agenda. Perhaps as a result, some prototypes felt that partners funded by departments other than DIUS could be better informed.

> *'If health is an integral part of the aacs model then why aren't the people that are delivering and responsible for commissioning community health trainers, which obviously are an integral part to it, why don't they know about it even at the regional level?'*
>
> ANP Lead

It is important therefore that some awareness-raising activities are configured to support the implementation of aacs to ensure the range of national and regional partner organisations are fully cognisant with its aims. This should facilitate the development of an agreed purpose and expectation in order to smooth the process of partnership creation at national, regional and local levels.

Operational partnerships

Some prototypes have also put in place operational partnerships to help front-line agencies share information and effective practice. These are likely to develop over time as prototypes become more operational. Greater Manchester and Islington were the most developed at the time of the first round of evaluation research.

Some prototypes, for example Slough, have or plan to 'map' the local organisations and agencies that can support and work with people to help them advance. As discussed in Chapter 3, the boundaries of an advancement service are not yet clear, so the potential network of referral and partner organisations is wide and varied.

Given the potential breadth of the advancement remit, generally the prototypes feel that their partnerships and networks will widen over time, as individual needs are identified and as the prototypes roll out.

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[3]   The first report of the evaluation of the IES trials will be published by DWP shortly.

Where prototypes are working with Local Authorities several interviewees identified that they also offer an opportunity to develop partnership-working across the Local Authority, for example between Housing, Children's Services, and Economic Development. Young people's advice services are now part of the remit of Local Authorities however the links between these and the prototypes has not been developed in most areas. Some prototype Leads felt that this relationship would develop in time, where appropriate. For other staff, the lack of integration between advice services for young people and adults is a greater concern '*there is confusion around the transition for people aged 18, and who should be providing which service at which point'*.

Interaction with existing careers guidance services

The relationship between **nextstep** and the prototypes varies and largely depends on the model being implemented. Overall there seems to be marked differences in the way in which the prototypes and **nextstep** are expected to work together. In Greater Manchester for example, the **nextstep** prime contractor is the 'hub' of the hub and spoke model, and in East Staffordshire, a **nextstep** contractor is also involved in supporting the activities of partners.

In the Black Country, where the health of residents in Housing Association accommodation has been identified as a priority, partners discussed that the prototype would work closely with the **nextstep**-led 'Improving Health, Increasing Employment' project in the area, although the development of this relationship is still in the early stages.

In contrast, in some of the London prototypes, **nextstep** is likely to be brought in as a partner at a later date once the prototypes have become more established. London regional stakeholders described how they wanted the prototypes to have time to establish their own model before involvement with **nextstep**, and that **nextstep** could be the end-point after pre-referral work to tackle deep-seated, wider barriers to moving forwards in employment and learning. However, this message has not necessarily yet reached the prototypes: in one of London prototype for example there was uncertainty about whether, and how, **nextstep** services would be linked in.

It seems therefore that there is potential for the prototypes to increase the extent to which they work with **nextstep** and it will be important for aacs implementation to define the nature of the relationship between the partnership element and 'the core', careers offer delivered by **nextstep** (if this is the model taken forward) to promote this interaction.

The telephone advice service offered by the Careers Advice service (CAS) was also mentioned by some prototype partners as a potential referral point, although awareness of the service varies and overall is limited. Some contacts have not heard of it, or know of it as learndirect. Others have heard of CAS, but note a preference to refer to a local partner than a national telephone service. It seems therefore there is potential for the prototypes and their partners to increase their awareness and understanding of the CAS and how this service might complement local services and the 'universal' agenda.

Operational partners and funding

Most partner organisations are not receiving prototype funding. For example, in the Greater Manchester hub and spoke model, the support provided by the 'hub' is funded, but the development work in the 'spokes' is not. Most of the spokes in this

prototype have been able to find money to support a co-ordinator, however a few have not been able to make the resource commitment and are seeking funds from the City Strategy Pathfinder to support these roles. The prototype Lead said: *'their [the Local Authority] commitment is voluntary and they are funding that commitment, we don't have ownership of the co-ordinators in the Local Authority areas'.*

An alternative model is operating in East Staffordshire, where the 'spokes' involved in delivery have been able to access some funding to support their development and delivery work for the prototype. This is similar to the Black Country where all the outreach points and Housing Associations are receiving some funding, reflecting the shared working arrangements of the five registered social landlords who wrote the bid and jointly form the steering group.

In the Islington, Camden, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea prototype funding is being aligned with London Development Agency and European Social Fund to enable them to deliver the holistic support that they feel is needed to meet residents' needs.

These different models raise questions about funding aacs activities. If hub and spoke models are taken forward, a decision is needed about whether all partners are funded or the resource is concentrated on the hub. The former appears less risky as it eliminates the possibility that resources to fund the work would not be found, although could potentially be more costly as more organisations would be funded through the aacs. Consideration will need to be given to current funding regimes for different partners and whether it is desirable, and possible, for these to be routed through aacs.

As the concept of advancement is understood to be quite broad the extent to which the aacs requires the bringing together of multiple partners and multiple funding streams must also be considered. This raises questions about the proportion of the cost of the aacs that should be met by BIS via the Skills Funding Agency and the proportion that is required from other budgets and departments whose public service agreements and priorities are also part of the advancement concept.

Service delivery models

Joining up and making better use of existing services

Several prototypes, particularly those based on a 'hub and spoke' model, are primarily arranged to try to join up and make better use of existing services. These prototypes are testing **nextstep**-led and Local Authority-led hub and spoke models (eg Brighton and Hove) and in one case, a third sector-led network (the arrangements for this network, in Greater Merseyside, shares similarities with the hub and spoke model).

The extent to which front-line services that are part of the network, or spokes, work with the users themselves or refer them to other organisations varies depending on the needs identified and the services they offer. The large-scale training programme for front-line advisers in multiple agencies to identify needs and to refer within the network has the potential to produce a 'no wrong door' service within a common service framework. Brighton and Hove, and South Hampshire, are planning adviser training, and Slough had continuous professional development planned for their advisers in late March 2009.

Other models are not providing services in the same way, either because they have not cast their net as wide in terms of possible referral organisations, or because they have not developed common referral standards across the network. This approach relies on a shared common purpose and willingness to work in partnership across agencies involved in many different agendas and user groups. In some instances of this model, staff co-ordinators are being commissioned to develop materials and the support needed across the network of organisations. For example, in Greater Manchester the 'hub' had developed or planned to develop:

- an advancement directory which could be accessed by front-line advisers at each organisation that was part of the network (an approach also being pursued by Greater Merseyside)

- a quality standard and quality kite-mark for organisations in the network

- training for front-line advisers and their managers about potential barriers to skills development, employment and advancement and how to make an effective referral

- support to develop Local Authority wide delivery plans.

East Staffordshire plans to develop the capacity of other organisations to make referrals. As with other prototypes based on a hub and spoke approach, such as Brighton and Hove and Slough, which are both Local Authority led, the 'hub' provides a source of expertise for other organisations that primarily reach users with other barriers, such as mental health issues. The spokes are a 'trusted' way to reach out into communities and this is one of the strengths of the model that partners in these prototypes recognised.

In Brent and Ealing some contacts have concerns that discussing skills and employment with a user in a housing setting might be disruptive and front-line advisers do not want to be seen to be '*pushing*' the services of other organisations onto users. This challenges the advancement concept and concerns such as these will need to be overcome if a wide-ranging referral model crossing many agendas is taken forward.

The hub and spoke models had not yet begun to refer users between organisations. This is something that the evaluation must assess from the user perspective since referral processes will be key to the successful implementation of a 'no wrong door' approach and a 'seamless service' for customers.

Outreach through 'trusted' organisations

Several of the prototypes have deployed a model of outreach through trusted organisations that the individual is using or is in contact with for another purpose. An example of this is in Islington where users may be liaising with the Tenancy Management Organisation about a broken boiler and in Slough where they might be working with the probation service, or in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth where users might be dropping their child off at a Children's Centre or an Extended School. Prototypes involved in this form of outreach model see it as capable of reaching those who traditionally do not engage with advice and support. For example in the Black Country, where outreach through five Housing Associations is operating, a partner said:

'... with traditional outreach, you put it somewhere and people come to it, and you can get as close to the front door as you like. Sometimes the types of people that are hardest to reach don't come out of the front door. Sometimes you need to be on the sofa, having those types of conversations, and because we provide them with something that's very valuable to them in the first place, ie a family home, this is service that can complement their quality of life for their particular family.'

ANP Partner

Other contacts commented that for some users accessing mainstream services in places that look official is a barrier. For example, the manager of a Children's Centre said that Jobcentre Plus is not necessarily a child-friendly place, whereas Children's Centres have access to crèche facilities. An advancement expert in an outreach location suggested that it is mainstream services that are hard to reach for specific user groups rather than the users themselves being hard to reach. Taking the advancement service to specific groups that do not typically (have to) engage with mainstream employment and skills services could be one way of trying to ensure that access to aacs is (or becomes) universal.

The broad agenda of advancement is reported to be more likely to make the service more appealing to potential users and to ensure that it is not duplicating activities of Jobcentre Plus which is felt to have a narrower remit.

'What we don't want to happen is for these advisers to come in and to do the job that Jobcentre Plus is already being paid to do. They need to know what other services are available… and for them to focus on the bits that Jobcentre Plus aren't able to do around the longer-term thinking.'

ANP Outreach Partner

The prototypes using outreach through trusted organisations are tending to focus on reaching new people rather than smoothing referrals of existing users to a wider range of organisations (although this may happen in some models). For example, advisers in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth will work with users as they come into contact with via Children's Centres and extended schools. There are also other agencies working within the Children's Centres and some users may be sign-posted to the service from those.

Support prior to engaging with mainstream services

Some prototypes, most notably East Staffordshire and Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth are testing types of support to engage and work with clients prior to their referral to other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus or **nextstep**. In essence they are planning to deliver pre-mainstream service support.

This support typically would be delivered in an outreach setting. The East Staffordshire prototype has developed two tools called 'My Advancement Wheel' and 'My Advancement Plan' to assist measurement of progress in light of this support. The advancement wheel has 12 categories covering employment, education and skills, housing, health, social determinants, confidence/self-esteem and aspirations. This will be reviewed by the users and advisers at regular intervals to measure progress. The tools are designed to be owned by the user and be taken with them to

the other organisations they may work with. East Staffordshire partners felt that the tools will help to ensure a seamless user journey, although from an evaluation perspective, the extent to which they will be recognised and understood by other partners is not clear. Users will also be able to take part in group work and gain peer support, as well as one-to-one sessions with an advancement coach. Regular contact between an adviser and user over a period of time is essential to this model.

Regular contact over a period of time is also central to the support provided to users in the Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth prototype. The delivery organisations are planning a coaching approach with up to nine hours of support time for each user. A contact in the prototype said that the boundaries of the prototype and **nextstep** need to be established, although felt that the greater depth of support available through the prototype would complement the **nextstep** service, which might be one possible end referral point.

> *'I see a lot of intensive one-to-one that challenges or addresses individual barriers and working with those [in the prototype]… this may not be the role of the **nextstep** adviser, they might focus on the possibilities for taking the next steps in a journey… it's much more generalist and not focusing on the intensive one-to-one… the **nextstep** co-located staff would be highlighting pathways in work and where to go for example.'*

> Prototype Partner

A national stakeholder also envisaged that **nextstep** would have a role in working with users after they had been supported by the prototype, and that the two services could complement each other well.

In Islington the advancement experts are offering ongoing support to clients, but have already reached capacity in terms of caseload so are referring some users to the local college IAG staff. This means that the outreach and 'trusted' organisation is no longer in primary control of the services and support offered to the user. It also raises questions over the impartiality of advice delivery as colleges will have a vested interest in the take up of learning. The advancement expert said that referring in this way *'is not ideal as it's more difficult to keep a handle on what services they [the user] are receiving'.* This example raises the issue of trust both in the advancement service and in the organisations that provide the enabling services, as the reputation of the referring agency is at stake.

Advancement experts as a novel concept

A question surrounds whether the 'advancement expert' is a new role, or the extension of the existing roles of advisers in outreach locations that is broadened with training and support. Some prototypes have appointed new delivery staff and advancement experts, whereas others have worked with partners to train existing staff working with potential clients to become 'advancement experts' and to be able to sign-post and refer effectively.

Some prototypes are offering a new service to users in order to help them better engage with mainstream services. The cost of delivering a more intensive service in specific localities to specific client groups needs to weighed against the benefits of engaging with typically 'harder to reach' groups. An assessment is needed of whether this depth of service and continuity of face-to-face support is what (some)

individuals need in order to advance. If it is, then it raises the question of whether this depth of support has a place in a *universal* advancement service and if so, for which groups. This issue is already on the mind of national stakeholders who are considering whether resources (eg types of advice channel, adviser time, and frequency of support) will need to be weighted towards specific groups to enable them to advance.

Branding and marketing

The LSC did not require the prototypes to market or brand the offer in any specific way and this has led to the development of a range of approaches. Some prototypes have been reluctant to develop a brand that may be superseded when the aacs is introduced in 2010.

> *The guidance is very loose, and this makes it difficult. I can understand why they've done it as it… gives us a free reign, but we are aware that this is leading to another service, so we don't want to set something up that confuses the relationships in a years time.'*

> Contact working in an un-branded prototype

This view is supported by another contact: '*it would be a bit of a waste to promote a brand that has not yet been decided on'.* Instead, word of mouth about the availability and nature of the service will be relied on.

Nevertheless some prototypes were developing brands. Depending on the delivery model, the target group for the brand is either the partners and stakeholders who will be involved in delivery, or the users who may be affected by delivery. In the network-based models, such as Brighton and Hove and Greater Manchester, the hubs have developed (or planned to develop) brands to be recognised among partners in the network.

In Greater Manchester this then had the flexibility to be adapted to reflect the local networks in each of the Local Authorities that make up the spokes. The prototype-wide brand is 'The Greater Manchester Advancement Network', and then this will be customised, for example to be 'The Greater Manchester Advancement Network in Salford'. In Slough they are building on an existing brand rather than creating a new one and will market the prototype under 'Slough Working Better'.

For aacs implementation, decisions will be required over whether the service is promoted to partner organisations and to users under a single brand; and whether all advancement services are encompassed under one banner or maintain their established identities (eg **nextstep** or Careers Advice).

Quality

As with branding, the LSC did not prescribe specific quality standards with which prototypes must comply. One national stakeholder said that they did not want to prescribe a quality standard since there was a risk this would exclude some organisations from participating in the prototypes.

Use of the matrix standard (the quality standard for **nextstep** and college IAG services) varies between prototypes. In some, Leads and providers working as part

of the network are matrix-accredited (eg **nextstep**-led prototypes). In some others, partners had not heard of the standard. In many areas, monitoring and assessing quality has been given low priority in delivery plans. National stakeholders on the other hand saw the monitoring and assurance of quality as a growing priority.

In Greater Manchester, aware that not all organisations within their network would be matrix-accredited, the hub is taking forward four elements of the matrix standard that it deems to be a minimum quality standard. These are the elements of the matrix relating to delivering a service, and do not include the four standards about managing a service. Specifically the elements are:

- how people are made aware of the service and how to engage with it

- people's use of the service is defined and understood

- providing access information and support in using it

- people are supported in exploring options and making choices.

Partner organisations within the network will receive support to work towards these standards and support to obtain the full matrix standard should they wish.

The Greater Merseyside prototype Lead described how they are working with ENTO (the organisation responsible for promoting and monitoring the matrix standard) to develop matrix workshops as many voluntary and community sector organisations within their network do not have this accreditation.

Other prototypes are using, or planning to use, other quality standards. For example, the Westminster part of the Islington, Camden, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea prototype is using the Westminster Works quality standard and the delivery organisation in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth is using their own quality assurance and management framework.

Information sharing

All the prototypes are planning to collect user data and store it in a database. Depending on how the prototypes have been set up, data about the users and their progress might be shared with partners. Information sharing requirements depend on the model chosen and extent of the networks and whether there is a handover and hand-back between delivery organisations planned in as part of the process and customer journey.

Several prototypes, have consent forms for users that set out the potential use of their data by other partners. In others there are no plans for the user data collected to be accessed by advisers from other organisations.

There is some evidence that partners will be able to share user data to aid the referral process and to prevent users having to repeat their story and circumstances to several different support organisations. However, the practicalities of using this system, and the quality of the data stored, are yet to be tested.

Experience elsewhere, eg in Children's Services, suggests the sharing of information is likely to be highly challenging. It will however be a critical success factor for the aacs and therefore the evaluation will investigate how these systems are working within the prototypes.

Planned Impacts

Key points

- Distance travelled and soft outcomes are seen by prototypes and stakeholders as key measures of success for users.

- For the prototypes themselves, the key measure of success is likely to surround improved capacity to deliver and improved ways of working.

- Significant goodwill has been established in the prototypes and safeguarding this, as the aacs is developed and implemented, is seen as important.

Outcomes

In light of the funding level and time-scale, national stakeholders expected relatively small tangible local impacts to derive from the prototypes. Of greater potential significance was the learning that could arise from the delivery models to build towards the aacs about what works and what does not, and surrounding what the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), outcomes and targets should be.

This brings us into the established debate on the difficulties of measuring the outcomes of guidance. One national stakeholder identified that success might best be measured by the user journey and whether they had *'all the advice and support they needed to help them to achieve their aims and goals, it was a seamless smooth service, they hadn't had to repeat their story, and they almost didn't know they were in a prototype'*. It is unclear how this might be captured by a KPI however.

Regional stakeholders also felt that tangible progress on the ground would be represented by better user journeys. In addition they felt that learning and capacity-building were important outcomes. Some contacts however noted that measurement of the users' journey is problematic, and would be made much more difficult by data sharing and protection issues.

Local prototypes are largely prioritising elements of capacity building, joining-up of services and softer outcomes which they feel will be of long-term significance.

Distance travelled and soft outcomes

A good deal of emphasis was placed by local interviewees on the softer outcomes, and the distance travelled by users. Many felt that given the groups they were trying

to help, primarily those furthest from the labour market, that soft outcomes were more pertinent and a better measure of advancement.

'My beef with a lot of employability and training stuff is that there is too much emphasis on those hard outcomes. There needs to be a way of measuring and evaluating the soft outcomes. I haven't been out of work for ten years not thinking I could ever do a job again because I haven't got the right skills. I can't imagine how much that would bring to someone's life… they could take a training course, have a job, have a vastly inflated income – their whole quality of life changes.'

ANP Partner

'There are other objectives… measuring from the start how they come in, and seeing if they increase in confidence… whether they feel good about themselves, confidence going into an interview… it's about changing somebody's outlook and giving them a sense of self-respect.'

ANP Partner

Building capacity

Both regional and local interviewees placed a great deal of emphasis on capacity building. This partly revolved around the up-skilling of local advancement and careers staff. Several prototypes were doing this through funding NVQ qualifications for advisors but beyond this there was work going into up-skilling non-advisory staff in user-facing roles to ensure effective signposting. However, as funding streams, organisations and individuals change, interviewees identified that there is a need for this to be an ongoing process rather than a one-time task.

Contacts also reported that capacity was being built through more effective linking of local services and better local or sub-regional working, with *'more bringing of the essential services that people need together'.* Many local interviewees felt that one of the most valuable impacts would be the development and strengthening of partnership structures. This may be particularly true where the work to date has involved bringing in new partners, as was noted in several of the prototypes.

'The prototypes should form the glue between other services.'

ANP Partner

Local interviewees generally felt this linking was how they could best add value, by making services more joined-up and efficient. Some also felt that the pre-engagement help given to the most disadvantaged groups had the potential to make their interaction with mainstream services more effective.

'The added value will come from providing pre-engagement and aiding sustainability, leading to services being more cost-effective and there being less drop out.'

ANP Partner

For one prototype the co-location of advisers and agencies was an essential element of success, which was seen as important to longer-term sustainability of the partnerships that had been formed.

Sustainability of developments

In some senses the recession appears to be dampening the ambitions of the prototypes. Interviewees were clear that there would be implications of the economic downturn and that their meeting job outcome targets would be difficult. It was suggested by some of the local contacts that the recession may drive a greater emphasis in delivery, on *'widening people's horizons',* encouraging them to look at different options and routes to employment such as voluntary work, part time work, and further education. However it will continue to be important that in widening horizons employment goals remain central.

> *'We can't talk about job targets and sustaining jobs, but we could maybe increase in training outcomes and voluntary placement opportunities.'*

> ANP Partner

This picture is however quite variable, with some prototypes retaining a stronger employment focus than others, and as noted previously, one (South Hampshire) has reacted to local redundancies by establishing extra support.

Lastly, it should be noted that there has been a significant amount of goodwill built up among prototype partners, and in many there is a strong desire for the progress made during the prototype funding not to be lost. Most contacts felt that sustaining these gains is important whether or not the prototypes are adopted for aacs.

> *'We are keen that the prototypes projects are sustainable. That it's not just a pot of money that is used once to trial a new way of working, but that we're actually thinking about, if that way of working is successful then how do we make it continue beyond the life of the prototype.'*

> ANP Lead

One prototype reported that they felt they were developing an offer in readiness to subcontract the aacs partnership work however, as national stakeholders made clear, sustainability through this route is far from certain at this stage.

> *'Our longer-term vision for aacs is that when the regional contract is let, whoever wins that sub-contracts it [the partnership] to our consortium model.'*

> ANP Lead

Key points

The prototypes' activities

- While delivery had yet to start in most prototypes, their plans suggest that there is something to be learned from each about delivering locally-based advancement networks, and for the development of the aacs.

- A strong focus on local need has already established, as has a focus on the hardest-to-help.

- While set-up has taken longer than national stakeholders had hoped, significant local level support and goodwill has developed. More development to link up with national partners, for instance the Careers Advice Service, would be advantageous.

- Three types of approach have emerged: joining up and making better use of existing services; outreach through 'trusted' organisations; and support prior to engaging with mainstream services.

- The next phase of the research will begin to test the effectiveness of the models that prototypes have established for users and for partnership-working.

Learning for aacs

- Once a definition of advancement has been agreed it will need to be communicated to the range of government departments and agencies as it is likely their cooperation will be needed to provide the service. Awareness-raising in advance of operation should ease the process of bringing partners together locally and nationally.

- There are some interesting issues that surround the boundaries of advancement for instance, which agencies need to be involved and the implications of their involvement (and level of involvement) has for funding. Careful targeting may be needed to ensure advancement does not take on aspects of delivery that are best left to other agencies' current remits.

- There are suggestions that some prototypes are creating new service levels rather than providing the linkages between existing services. Questions surround the sustainability of this model.

- Learning about some policy objectives from the prototypes may be limited since the prototypes are not operating a fully universal model. For instance, there is limited engagement with young people's services, which will limit the learning for an all-age strategy; there are only a small number prototypes showing any engagement with employers currently; and there is a limited focus overall on in-work individuals.

- Nevertheless, some interesting models have evolved which may provide learning about how partnerships can best be leveraged and how those distant from the labour market and mainstream agencies can be engaged.

- The prototypes will also provide evidence about the breadth and depth with which local partners can be engaged with on the advancement agenda and raise interesting questions about the possible shape and structure of the aacs.

Conclusions from the prototypes' activities to date

In most prototypes delivery was due to commence in April 2009 therefore limiting any learning about delivery at this stage of the evaluation. However, it is likely that each prototype will offer aspects of learning, both in terms of what works in delivering locally-based advancement networks, and for the development of the aacs.

The prototype models have been developed based on local need. The approach to target users and resources varies. Some prototypes are targeting geographically, for example at particular wards or estates, while others are targeting on a needs basis.

The focus of the prototypes is largely on groups considered hardest-to-help. While a more universal aspect of work may develop with time, at present this is not a strong focus, perhaps limited by the level of funding available.

There is significant local support for, and goodwill towards, the prototypes. Most, but not all, are working with a combination of Jobcentre Plus, the LSC, Local Authorities, PCTs and organisations from the voluntary and community sector. Some prototypes however have found that statutory agencies such as the Jobcentre Plus, and existing guidance services, more difficult to engage. There is potential across the prototypes to increase links with other careers advice services specifically, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice service.

Three types of approach have emerged, with each prototype testing one or more of these. The approaches are:

- **Joining up and making better use of existing services**: a focus on the better co-ordination existing services through networks and developing tools to support *how* organisations work in partnership, as well as building capacity in information, advice and guidance delivery. For example, through the development of common resources (an advancement directory) and adviser training.

- **Outreach through 'trusted' organisations:** reaching people that mainstream careers, learning and employment services typically do not, by engaging them through other 'trusted' services and organisations. For example, Tenancy Management Organisations, Housing Benefits Offices or Children's Centres.

- **Support prior to engaging with mainstream services**: offering an in-depth service to support individuals before they are ready to engage with mainstream advice and employment and skills services. For example, using a coaching

approach, peer support or an 'advancement wheel' to develop an individual's understanding of their career and other goals, working to overcome barriers to achieving these, so that they are then more confident and better able to engage with mainstream support services.

Looking to the future, the prototypes offer the opportunity to see which of these approaches works best, for engaging partners and encouraging user take-up of advancement services, and which approaches best support the user and their advancement.

This analysis is necessarily at an early stage and it will not be until much later in the evaluation programme that we will be able to comment fully on the implications for aacs of the prototypes however some early thoughts have emerged which we outline below.

In advance of the specification of the aacs, a further contract for **nextstep** services will be drawn up and put out to tender. In a final section of this chapter we consider the messages arising from the prototypes for this specification.

Implications for aacs

Defining the boundaries of advancement and the universal aspiration

1. Stakeholders and the prototypes collectively (although to a lesser degree individually) have taken a relatively broad definition of advancement[4] and one that straddles national government agendas and departments. Before the aacs is rolled out, a working definition needs to be arrived at so that expectations can be set accordingly. National level awareness-raising among the impacted departments and agencies would be useful to push forward understanding of the aacs and its aims so that there is an agreed purpose and expectation which in turn can act as an enabler for local partnership formation.

2. The definition of advancement has been narrowing with the recessionary climate and a consensus is growing around a definition that focuses on advancement for work, rather than personal growth outcomes. This may have implications for the willingness of some agencies to get involved. The straddling of government agency/department boundaries alongside the highly segmented work in some of the prototypes may mean that only pockets of learning arise from the prototypes' implementation. This raises the question about whether some aspects of advancement are best left within the remit of existing agencies (eg the re-assimilation of ex-offenders into the community).

3. Careers information, advice and guidance can currently be accessed through a range of channels: the internet, telephone and face-to-face and these channels will be a recognised part of aacs. Budgetary constraints mean it is not feasible to have a universal face-to-face service therefore consideration is being given to targeting this in some way. The prototypes will provide information on the needs of different groups and the extent of the support they require. However, there is opportunity for greater joining-up with national services such as Careers Advice service as a channel for some users. This expectation should be clearly stated

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[4]   For instance, to encompass workless and in-work groups, working with the hardest to help such as ex-offenders and those most distant from the labour market

within the aacs specification and in advance of that, prototypes should be encouraged to make this link.

4. The weakest part of the offer to date surrounds the engagement of employers within the prototypes. If the boundaries of aacs include work with employers on training and in terms of the local labour market, then more work on this issue is likely to be needed for any learning to emerge in time for aacs implementation.

Funding aacs

Since advancement has a broad definition that covers the agenda of several government departments, consideration must be given to the funding arrangements for aacs. An holistic service may require some aligning and pooling of budgets between partners. This raises questions about the proportion of the cost of the aacs that should be met by DIUS via the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the proportion needed from other budgets and departments whose public service agreements and priorities are also part of the advancement concept.

The model for aacs

The prototypes have developed three strands of delivery:

- better co-ordination of existing services

- reaching out to people that mainstream careers, learning and employment services typically do not reach

- supporting individuals before they are ready to engage with mainstream advice, employment and skills services.

It would seem that all these aspects potentially have a place in the aacs in some form. An implication is that a greater depth of support than is currently provided by **nextstep** has a place in a universal advancement and careers service. This raises questions about whether the aacs should be providing a new service for individuals to address wider barriers (such as debt and housing) prior to accessing existing mainstream services (through Careers Advice Service, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep**) or whether it should co-ordinate access to services that already exist.

Where highly targeted work is taking place, and new adviser roles are being created, this is being done in some cases on the basis of individuals being adverse to contact with the mainstream services and agencies. The prototypes will need to show that they can assist individuals to engage with the mainstream, rather than replace the mainstream for these individuals, for effective learning to be delivered for aacs.

Working with key partners for aacs

The ways in which face-to-face advice and guidance services work together within the aacs at a local level will be critical its success. There is potential for the prototypes to increase the extent to which they work with national guidance providers, specifically **nextstep**. Their knowledge of the Careers Advice Service is limited and 'trust' issues appear to apply, with local services being the preferred option for referral. Since aacs is likely to involve all these channels and approaches further development work for joint-working is likely to be needed to establish the role of these different agencies within aacs.

Given the models that are being tested there is little scope to gain evidence of the fit between the services for adults and young people and specifically the ways in which

these might work together in future and support transitions to adulthood. The prototypes are unlikely to deliver much in the way of learning towards the all-age strategy that is planned.

The shape of aacs
The local freedom to design and build on partnerships, with an aim of meeting local need, has led to the development of different delivery models across the prototypes. National stakeholders are considering the aspects of aacs which need to be in nationally-led and those which can be left to local determination. At this interim stage we would suggest that the **national offer** consists of:

- **Three channels** (a web-based service; a telephone service; and a face-to-face service), **and a core and enabling offer** linking together careers, employment and skills advice with support for wider needs (housing, health, financial support etc.) to enable advancement by mainly national partners' web and telephone services. This type of model reflects notions of different services levels required by different groups.

- A consistent brand for the core and enablers to clarify the message to both users and partners. This will encourage partnership working between the access points, ie reduce competition and users are likely to develop better knowledge of their entitlements through multiple access of the one brand.

- A national quality standard (capable of being adapted for use by specific partners). This may require consideration as part of the current Matrix review.

A **local offer** providing face-to-face support for the careers, employment and skills **core and the enabling part of the service** delivered by local advice partnerships for those accessing the face-to-face service. Depending on the resources available there could be **local discretion** to provide additional in-depth services and targeting to increase awareness and use of the services among priority groups (as outlined in Local Area Agreements). These local based elements could include:

- targeted outreach through trusted organisations to increase demand and use of the local offer

- in-depth support to prepare individuals to access mainstream employment and skills services and the national aacs offer.

Sufficiency of information from the prototypes
The prototypes offer the opportunity to test and learn from locally-based solutions in order to inform the aacs. Reflecting on the initial aims of the service and its vision we can see that there are some potential gaps in evidence. Resources have been targeted in the main towards deprived areas where partners feel they can make the most difference and get better value for money. While some models will engage with people who are in low-skilled and low paid work it appears unlikely at this stage that routes for the engagement, and services to support, those in work will have been explored sufficiently within the current prototypes given their focus on other groups.

Measuring outcomes of aacs activities
It is clear that the outcomes from contact with the prototypes are unlikely to be for the majority measurable through gains in employment (moved into or up in work) or in learning. Instead measures of distance travelled and soft outcomes are more important. While recording the advances made by individuals is a key focus in two of

the pilots, will this deliver sufficient learning about the outcomes for different types of users as a result of contact with aacs. It is likely that outcomes from the core service will remain the hard outcome measures for guidance that are used currently. Potentially the network outcomes will be more about building users capacity to engage with the core.

The contacts for the prototypes felt that a key outcome of their operation will be the partnerships that they have created. While policy has made allowance for prototypes to fail, it was clear in the interviews that the prototypes saw themselves as part of the future. Safeguarding this local goodwill is likely to be important whether or not the prototypes are taken forward through the aacs.

Implications for the nextstep contracting process

The issue of the upcoming contracting process for the **nextstep** service was raised by national stakeholders during their interviews. We did not anticipate this theme when constructing our research tools and therefore did not raise it systematically with individual prototypes. We consider the following points to be the implications of the prototypes to date for the **nextstep** contracting process.

Before decisions about the content of the **nextstep** contracts are made we would suggest that the overall structure and shape of the aacs, and how **nextstep** (as is currently branded) would fit into this, is determined. For example, a decision is required about whether the prime contractor model remains; another is needed for whether **nextstep** will lead the core service delivery *and* development and management of an advancement network, or whether the network element will be led by another organisation.

With these fundamental issues outstanding we think that at this stage the contracting process should set out expectations that **nextstep** seek to leverage the learning arising from the prototypes. This may include:

- Working with the prototypes (where they overlap) and specifically to start to link into the partnerships that have been established. While prototypes may provide the network necessary for some targeted groups (rather than a universal network), to save duplication of effort, it would be useful for **nextstep** to use these networks as a starting point when working with the same groups.

- Again, where there is overlap between **nextstep** and prototypes, an expectation of some alignment, referral between or joint working. This is likely to be particularly important where prototypes are focused on pre-engagement support. It may also provide a funded route for users once prototype resources come to an end.

Whatever the decision is regarding the shape of aacs it is important that the lessons from the prototypes' operation are captured by the organisations involved in delivery.

At the time of the national stakeholder interviews, policy regarding what was being contracted had not crystallised. There was discussion about whether it was simply delivery, or delivery and the partnership or network lead role, that would be commissioned. If the partnership aspect is put out to tender at this stage, there appears to be some useful models in the prototypes for the drawing together and operation of these (most notably, those identified below). However, these do not

necessarily have to be led by **nextstep**. We would caution that the evaluation to date cannot comment on the effectiveness of the work from a user's perspective.

- The hub and spoke model in Greater Manchester is likely to provide the greatest learning about how **nextstep** can draw together and operate the partnership element. The hub and spoke model may be effective to take forward.

- A number of prototypes have leveraged partnerships through Local and Multi-area agreements and are led by Local Authorities. Again, this may be effective going forward and link well with local priorities and the funding streams of other partners.

- In Greater Merseyside the prototype network is voluntary and community sector led, and again this sector may be an effective network-lead, although we do not have sufficient evidence to make recommendations on this to date.

Appendix 1: Prototype Case Studies

Black Country
Aims, delivery plan and target groups
Five Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are running the prototype as a cluster model with one RSL acting as the lead organisation; they meet once a month as a strategic group. The aim of this prototype is primarily to tackle worklessness and to help improve the skills of the local community but with additional aims to work holistically and tackle any barriers that are blocking progression. The prototype will be as flexible as possible in order to respond to the needs of the local community. It will target not only people who receive housing support through the RSLs but also the community. This is a universal service and operates a "no wrong door" approach.

The delivery model is based on each RSL having one or more Employment Development Officers (EDO) managing a caseload of customers. The EDO will offer the customer intensive one to one support on an outreach basis (primarily in people's homes). Initially the EDO will conduct a needs assessment and develop a personalised action plan before referring the customer onto appropriate local provision. The EDO is also expected to 'map' local provision to make the best and appropriate referrals for customers.

Local context
The five RSLs operate over a large area in the West Midlands. The operation is concentrated in the urban areas in which the RSLs have a large presence; these include Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country. A lot of the most deprived groups in these areas are young (under 25), low skilled, and unemployed (claiming welfare benefits). There are also a high number of people who "churn" on and off the benefits system unable to sustain work.

Partnership composition
In addition to the five RSLs running the prototype there are a number of partnership organisations involved. These include Jobcentre Plus, Next step, the LSC, and a new initiative that operates in Birmingham and Solihull called Improving Health, Increasing Employment. In addition they are working with a lot of local providers that they have previously accessed through their social housing work, including local colleges, although these will act on the periphery of the prototype and be used for customer referrals.

Progress to date
The partners are engaged with the prototype and the details of the partnerships are being finalised with the strategic group. Some Employment Development Officers have been recruited and the recruitment process is underway for the others. A universal telephone number has been set-up for customers to access the service and the details of the marketing plan are being finalised. Delivery of the prototype was scheduled to begin in April.

Potential lessons for the aacs
This prototype offers a chance to explore whether or not RSLs are a good resource to engage with the local community. Providing outreach in people's homes presents an opportunity to examine whether or not this engages harder to reach groups. The mapping of local provision could enable a better understanding of how provision is clustered and help to identify provision gaps.

Brent and Ealing

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

The aim is to deliver coherent and integrated housing *and* employment advice to residents in social housing, private rented accommodation and to those who are homeless. This will bridge the gap between employment and housing advice to ensure a 'no wrong door' approach for residents.

Brent and Ealing are operating separate initiatives due to local need and prior activity.

• Ealing will deliver IAG and training through having a presence in the housing benefits department at the Council. This complements existing initiatives (non-prototype funded) which provide IAG and back-to-work support to social housing residents.

• Brent is planning its offer which is likely to include training for housing advisers to deliver employment and training IAG.

Local context

Brent and Ealing have the highest levels of worklessness in West London. Ealing is a very high rent area which can mean that residents entering employment may realise only a marginal increase in income (when compared to benefits). This can create a culture of benefit dependency for those currently not in employment.

Partnership composition

The prototype is led by Catalyst Housing Association in Ealing who are responsible for delivery. Main advisory partners are Brent and Ealing Councils, Fortunegate (part of Catalyst), Brent into Work (part of Brent council who deliver an advice service), JCP, **nextstep**. Two other local projects, HELP (Housing Employment Link project) and West London Working are also involved and the former may have a delivery role for training in Brent.

Progress to date

The planned start date was 1 April 2009 following research carried out among residents in February and March. A staff member is in post in Ealing, and is currently preparing to facilitate the surgeries in the housing benefit office. In Brent, IAG training was in the planning stages although firm decisions had not been reached at the time of the research visit about which housing officers would receive the training.

Potential lessons for the aacs

While some contacts expressed concern that people facing homelessness would be hostile towards, or reject, employment advice others reported that this had not been realised in similar initiatives; the prototype therefore should deliver learning about the extent to which integrated approach is welcomed by residents. The initiative will also provide lessons on the role of the adviser(s), issues arising from culture change for frontline staff, partnership development, operation across agencies and effective approaches for referral/recruitment to IAG providing support, without coercion, to address worklessness.

Brighton and Hove

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

The aims and objectives detailed in the bid came out of two key documents – the Local Area Agreement (2008-2011) and the City Employment and Skills Plan.

The over-arching aim is to provide a *'seamless journey for any individual whether they want to get into employment, to increase their skills, or to advance in their career, that they can come into a network whereby their journey is simple, easy, quite clear, quite straightforward because every individual they deal with can signpost or refer very appropriately'*

They plan to have a central hub of co-located services in the City centre and three community hubs in local deprived communities. There has been a lot of partnership development established in Brighton and Hove over the last few years (under successive regeneration funding initiatives) but the prototype will reach out beyond the core partners and make links into housing, legal services, Welfare to Work providers and other key advice agencies.

Local context
Brighton and Hove has a population of 251,400 (2006). The city is characterised by pockets of deprivation as well as areas of relative wealth: 15 of the city's 164 Super Output Areas (SOAs) were within the most deprived 10 per cent in England, and eight were within the worst 5 per cent (2007).

Partnership composition
Brighton and Hove City Council are the lead organisation of the prototype. Other key partners include **nextstep**, and the community hubs, The Whitehawk Inn Training Centre, Hangleton & Knoll Project and the Bridge Adult Education Centre. They are seeking the involvement of the library service, Connexions, CVSF (an umbrella community organisation), legal services commission providers (eg, CAB), the PCT, Family Information Services, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and local training providers. They have had some initial issues getting JCP contractors to buy into the prototype.

Progress to date
Most of the work in the initial period has gone into building the delivery partnership structures for the prototype and linking *'an incredibly disparate set of players'*. This has particularly been around providing the infrastructure to develop the enhanced and intensive services which underpin the community hub approach. Two of the community hubs are significantly further developed than the third.

It was thought that delivery that could be branded as being genuinely prototype activity would begin in mid-April. They also ran an event for local providers in April to raise awareness and build links.

Potential lessons for the aacs
The model will test out the co-location of services in both deprived communities and a central setting and will offer potential lessons about the cost-effectiveness, sustainability of, and any issues arising from such an approach. It also aims to join-up or network a wide-range of services, and will again offer insights of the benefits and challenges of this, and importantly, how the no wrong door and seamless-user journey can actually be operationalised.

East Staffordshire
Aims, delivery plan and target groups
The prototype aims to develop a housing focussed network in East Staffordshire and a health focussed network in North Staffordshire, together with support to ex-

offenders by the probation service across the whole patch[5]. Each partner will have a different delivery model but their approach is unified through use of the advancement wheel tool. There is a directory of services to use to sign-post clients.

The health-based delivery model involves group work and peer support. Up to ten clients at a time will attend a training session where clients will use the wheel tool. This will be followed by one-to-one sessions with an Advancement Coach. Continuing support will be available through peer support groups. The housing-based delivery model is focused on outreach and monitoring in order to increase awareness of and access to services and help keep people on track once receiving support from those services. The probation service delivery model is still in development but will involve delivery of pre-IAG to clients.

The target groups are clients or potential clients of the providers aged 19 and over: people with mild to moderate mental health problems, social housing tenants and ex-offenders.

Local context
Stoke-on-Trent has the highest proportion of incapacity benefit[6] claimants in the West Midlands (including high proportion with mental health problems), and a very high number of social landlord tenants. There are several wards that exceed the Staffordshire LAA benchmark 20 per cent plus of the working age population claiming benefits; many of these are social rented housing tenants.

Partnership composition
There are three main delivery partners: Changes (a mental health charity), Trent & Dove housing association and the Probation service[7]. These will be supported by Connexions Staffordshire (which run, and will provide the link, to the **nextstep** service). At a strategic level there is involvement from Stoke-on-Trent Council, Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC, the PCT, Connexions/**nextstep** and the Enhanced Housing Options project (part of the Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazers Programme).

Progress to date
They have established and developed the partnership, got operational staff in place, created the action plan and advancement tool and directory, and are setting up a monitoring and quality framework. Delivery is scheduled to begin in April. Changes clients will attend an 'Advance week', which provides three training sessions, plus a one-to-one session.

Potential lessons for the aacs
This prototype will offer insight into the possibilities for a joined-up network and effective (pre)engagement methodology. Stakeholders felt that the wheel tool has the potential to be mainstreamed in aacs.

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[5]   The Probation service has since withdrawn from the project due to difficulties recruiting for the delivery post.

[6]   Incapacity Benefit, and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds, were replaced by Employment Support Allowance for new claimants from October 2008.

[7]   See footnote 4: Probation Service will continue to support the project by referring clients onto Changes

Greater Manchester

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

Manchester Solutions (the Greater Manchester **nextstep** prime contractor) is the hub in this hub and spoke model. The intention is that the spokes will be led by each of the ten Local Authorities (LA) in Greater Manchester. The hub will provide support to each of the Local Authorities by establishing the Front line Adviser and Manager Training events, establishing the referral directory, developing a diagnostic tool and Client Relationship management system.

The targets for the prototype include training 4,000 advisers from a range of organisations focusing on identification of the needs of the individual and how to make a good referral to other organisations to support the individual. The Hub team is concentrating on gaining commitment from each Local Authority and organising the training events. Development of a quality standard for the Advancement Network is nearing completion.

Local Context

The prototype covers all 10 Local Authorities in the Greater Manchester area. There is a City Strategy Pathfinder in the area and Working Neighbourhoods Funding. There is also a Multi-Area Agreement. The prototype aims to compliment and builds on these strategies.

Partnership composition

The membership of local networks with vary depending on each Local Authority Area but will include organisations such as **nextstep** provider, Connexions, police, council services, children's services, learning providers, health associations, housing. There is also a strategic relationship with trade union representatives via the TUC.

Progress to date

To date the hub has been working with the spokes to develop capacity and partnerships. The hub is working with each Local Authority to identify staff to take forward this work and to develop their delivery plans. They have mapped local advice organisations that could potentially be part of the networks. They have produced resources for the network including a directory of advice agencies to ensure effective referrals, a membership pack that explains their role and potential benefits. They are developing a brand and quality kitemark which will demonstrate achievement of the quality standards.

Potential lessons for the aacs

The model works with a wide range of organisations and partners. It is likely to offer insight into how a hub and spoke model might work and the boundaries of an advancement network. With **nextstep** providers involved in the network it will also offer an opportunity to address individual's barriers before accessing advice and guidance and thus making more effective referrals to the **nextstep** service

Greater Merseyside

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

Blackburne House is a social enterprise and accountable body for the Voluntary Organisations Learning Association (VOLA) Consortium. VOLA is an umbrella for a consortium of over 150 voluntary and community organisations involved in providing employment and skills support.

The aims of the prototype include to create a 'no wrong door' approach which enables individuals, both employed and unemployed, to access a range of quality assured services and places **nextstep** careers advice within a broad mix of linked service networks that are key to overcoming barriers to progression.

Local Context

The area has a Multi-Area agreement and City Employment Strategy with themed priorities. It was reported that the prototype fits well with the priorities identified by these partnerships.

Partnership composition

The steering group has met twice and will now meet quarterly. The members include VOLA Learning Consortium; Blackburne House; MerseyTravel (an employer); LSC; Unionlearn, TUC; **nextstep**; Jobcentre Plus, two third sector local advice agencies, Halton MBC, City Employment Strategy via Knowsley MBC. Other partners of the prototype include Mercia Training, Federation of Small Businesses, National Probation Service, Association of Colleges and Greater Merseyside Connexions.

Progress to date

A manager to develop and oversee the work of the prototype was appointed in March. The work to date has focused on a pan-Merseyside introductory event, developing a working brand, producing marketing materials, building relationships with key partners, embedding research elements and liaising with ENTO and local HE institutions about quality, training and development. The prototype is exploring designs for an internet portal which will provide the opportunity for IAG providers to raise awareness of their services to other agencies and clients and actively refer and signpost. The prototype is in discussions with ENTO on plans to set up Matrix workshops. The City Employment Strategy funding will be used to support third-sector organisations to prepare for and obtain Matrix accreditation and for other capacity-building activities.

Potential lessons for the aacs

The prototype has the potential to offer insights into how the voluntary and community sector can be part of the aacs. The research elements will also provide insights into the needs of specific groups of aacs customers. The approach using a portal for active referral practice and transfer of customer information, including public accessibility, across the network could also provide lessons about how best to support an advancement network.

Islington, Camden, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

Westminster and Camden are operating a borough-wide service. The other two boroughs are concentrating their prototype's provision in some of their most deprived areas, including Canonbury and Packington.

Common priorities for the boroughs include improving the outcomes for vulnerable groups specifically improving their skills, addressing factors in worklessness, participation in employment, income maximisation through employment, and ensuring that welfare entitlements are fully utilised to avoid knock-on effects such as loss of tenancy.

Although each borough is operating its version of the prototype slightly differently, they are all based on the principle of Advancement Experts providing a brokerage service and referring clients on to Employment Coaches and other services.

Local Context

Levels of deprivation are high, Islington being the sixth most deprived borough in London. Camden, Islington and Westminster all receive Working Neighbourhoods Fund. The boroughs have observed a substantial link between social housing and worklessness. The most recent estimates for Camden are that 70 per cent of new social housing tenants are workless upon arrival.

All boroughs are levering in other funds to run their prototypes, principally from LDA and ESF sources.

Partnership composition

The partnerships vary between each borough. For example in Islington key organisations worked with are: JCP; Parent House; Bemerton Children's Centre; and Groundwork, Hyde Housing and Cripplegate Foundation and EC1 Connect. In Westminster key partners are: City of Westminster college; Paddington Development Trust and Groundworks, and for brokerage: JCP, libraries, Vital Regeneration and City West Homes.

Progress to date

Each of the boroughs is at a different stage of delivery. For example, in Islington referrals are coming in quickly and their employment coach (funded through LDA) is already at capacity. In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea the ANP will go live in April.

Potential lessons for the aacs

The four models in this area offer the opportunity to, amongst other things, test the value of an area-based outreach approach. The ANPs are also aligning LSC funding with funding from other sources (LDA and ESF) so there may be evidence about how this could work in the aacs.

Slough

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

The aim of the ANP partnership, led by Slough Borough Council, is to develop the local economy by working in partnership with local organisations and local branches of national organisations. Slough hopes to deliver a universal service which tests different delivery methods to inform the new adults' advancement and careers service. A major aim is to make the partnerships work in practice, not just 'on paper'.

The prototype will be delivered in the form of four mini test-bed projects focused on different priorities. The initial mini test-beds were decided on by looking at the labour market information for Slough and following the interests of the partner organisations and the priorities of the Council. Each has a target group that they will support ie ex offenders, unemployed people, long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants, low skilled. Partner organisations focus on delivering the different mini test bed projects; a work-taster mini test-bed, advisers in GP surgeries, a job club to ex-offenders based on the Britwell estate, and a final mini test bed for learners to have a mentor or 'buddy'.

Local context

Slough is a multicultural community with 26 per cent of residents from BME backgrounds, compared to 5 per cent in the South East. It has high levels of social

and economic inequality, it ranks 115 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (ONS Neighbourhood Statistics). It has a lower proportion of people who are economically active than the national and regional averages (77 per cent compared with 79 per cent and 82 per cent). In Slough 13 per cent of working age people do not have any qualifications and life expectancy is below the average for the South East.

Each day 40,000 higher skilled people commute into the town and nearly 30,000 commute out

Business Plan, Slough Prototype

Slough has 2,060 lone parents, which is 0.6 per cent above UK average and a disproportionately high number of people unable to work because of illness. The number of people on Incapacity Benefit due to musculoskeletal problems is higher than the national average (17 per cent compared with 15 per cent nationally).

Partnership composition

Slough Borough Council is leading a group of partners who will be delivering the mini test-bed projects. The management group of the project is made up of East Berkshire College, VT Enterprise, Slough Borough Council, Thames Valley University, and Jobcentre Plus.

The Slough Advancement Network for Employment and Skills (SANES) steering group consists of Slough Borough Council, Slough Council for Voluntary Services, Wellness at Work in Slough Group, VT Enterprise, LSC, Jobcentre Plus, East Berkshire College, Thames Valley University, Thames Valley Probation Service, the Slough Physical and Learning Difficulty Partnership Boards, A4E and Shaw Trust.

Partners involved in the delivery of these test beds, who have not already been mentioned include, Slough Community Business Partnership, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, GP practices, health trainers, Patient Advisory and Liaison Services, Family Actions, Britwell Family Centre, Offender Learning and Skills Service, St Giles Trust, Volunteer Centre Slough, Slough and Eton Adult and Community Learning Centre, Age Concern, Slough Citizens Advice Bureau.

Progress to date

They have established both a management group and a steering group for the project and have decided on four mini test-bed projects in which to trial different methods of prototype delivery. They are in the process of setting up appropriate monitoring systems ready for commencement of delivery in April 2009.

Potential lessons for the aacs

There are many partner organisations involved in each of the mini test-beds, the crux of this prototype is to get all of those partnerships working smoothly with no over, or under-lap.

The leaders of the mini test beds are expected to draw-down funding from other sources for delivery before using the LSC prototype funding, as each min test-bed as a small amount allocated to it. A potential lesson would be to see how aacs delivery could be done on a small budget in conjunction with other funding. By building on existing initiatives, the evaluation of the prototype should be able to see whether additional funding and partnership working has created any additionality.

South Hampshire

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

The aims in South Hampshire surround the enhancement of the existing infrastructure and network for employment and skills support. There is an emphasis on partnership-working and achieving no wrong door access.. A hub and satellite model is planned with centres in Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth and Southampton.

The role of the prototype is to provide holistic support and the connection between core careers advisory services and the full range of other services that provide advice for adults on a diverse range of needs. The prototype plans to provide individualised support through referral to advancement experts and to provide referral training to other advisers from the partnership organisations. Each individual in touch with the advancement service will be recorded on the MI system which will also record their action plan and progress. End-to-end support will be provided to enable users to make informed choices that assist them to enter work, change careers, and progress in work. Advancement and employment-awareness training is being offered to a range of frontline services such as Housing, Community Wardens and Library staff to prepare and enable agencies to make referrals to the new service.

Local context

The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) is concerned that while average salaries in the area are above the South East average, it is highly skilled non-residents who attract this premium, working in the blue-chip companies/economy. Their action plan (as PUSH rather than the prototype) is to up-skill residents to enable greater equity in the local economy.

Partnership composition

The prototype builds on PUSH. A multi-agency task group is formed of Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth and Southampton Council representatives, the LSC, the local **nextstep** contractor/lead, and Jobcentre Plus. Other partners include third sector organisations, Connexions, Citizens Advice Bureau, Local Authority services (housing, childcare, health improvement, libraries), local colleges, SEEDA, PCT, Business Link and Probation Service.

Progress to date

The multi-agency task group has been meeting weekly to refine the implementation plan and prepare for launch (planned for July). A project manager has been appointed who will oversee the implementation. Due to some delays determining the contract arrangements there has been a slight delay to delivery..

Potential lessons for the aacs

Learning may arise from the leveraging of existing local partnerships and the potential these have for effective joint working. The extended use of the MI system (meganexus) as CRM/action plan recording system, and the plans for engagement with employers through job matching using the MI may also provide useful lessons. Some learning may also arise about the effectiveness of co-locating advisers and the training needed to promote referrals.

Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth

Aims, delivery plan and target groups

The overall aim is to place IAG within Children's Centres and Extended Schools to reach parents on low incomes. Any parent can use the ANP: they can be in-work or

out of work, they can be a coupled or lone parent and there are no restrictions on qualification level.

There are job outcome targets, entry to learning targets (not achievement given the time limit of the project – and not target NVQ levels of course started), as well as referral targets. Some clients will access a more limited service (30 mins IAG), and then it is profiled that 300 will move onto the full programme of support (up to 9 hours of support via a coaching approach). The delivery of these services has been sub-contracted to Women Like Us. A partnership consultant is helping to engage with partners.

Local Context

Southwark and Lambeth are, overall, more deprived, whereas Wandsworth tends to have 'pockets' of deprivation. Travel in the borough is an issue for job seekers (in lower paid work) as there is no tube, and a limited number of railway stations, with lines going into central London rather than across the district. There is an Integrating Employment and Skills trial in the area.

Partnership composition

The project steering group consists of the economic development leads in the three local authorities, the LSC, the partnership implementation consultant, and the delivery organisation. Representatives from Children's Services within the Local Authorities are also going to attend the steering groups in future. The breadth of the partnership may broaden over time as specific needs are identified.

Progress to date

The prototype plans to start delivery in April 2009. To date there has been some work on building the partnership and liaising with Children's Services and Children's Centres to secure space for outreach activities.

Potential lessons for the aacs

The model is testing an intensive model of support and a coaching approach. It offers the opportunity to test the difference this level of support makes for target groups in order to assess whether this depth of service should be part of the aacs. It will also test whether Children's Centres are a good way to access and engage with parents.