

Evaluation of Adult Guidance Pilots

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Adult Guidance Pilots were launched by the DfES in November 2001. The aim of the initiative was to explore the potential additional value of offering in-depth guidance in ways that complement the basic provision of information and advice already available nationally. The pilots were across the UK, and had a range of target groups. The focus of the work was on helping disadvantaged individuals by offering guidance and support on work and learning opportunities. This report presents the findings of the national evaluation drawn from survey work with clients, the analysis of management information, and case study work with pilot staff, partners and clients.

Key findings

- 13,132 clients used the AGPs, with considerable variation in the numbers reached by individual pilots. The smallest project worked with 67 and the largest almost 3,000.
- Fifty per cent of clients used their AGP more than once, and some of these required extensive support, a tenth using the service four or more times. Some clients were in contact with their AGP for extended periods of up to a year – these tended to be disabled clients, those with low qualifications, and benefit claimants.
- Ninety per cent of sessions were delivered by an adviser qualified to either level 3 or 4, and almost 90 per cent of sessions were delivered face-to-face, with clients preferring this to telephone and email services. Outreach was at the heart of service delivery.
- Nine per cent of AGP clients have improved their qualification level since their first contact, and gains are particularly marked amongst those who began with no qualifications – 27 per cent of this group now have a qualification of some kind.
- Over a quarter of individuals who had been unemployed for less than six months were in work following contact with an AGP. Of those unemployed for more than six months, around 17 per cent had found a full- or part-time job.

- Thirty per cent of clients surveyed felt that they had gained new skills since their involvement with an AGP and over half of these attributed it to the work of AGP staff. Of those who had moved into work, half again felt this was due to their involvement with an AGP.

Background

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched the Adult Guidance Pilots (AGPs) at the end of November 2001, with pilot activity funded for around 15 months. The AG pilots were established to explore the potential additional value of offering in-depth guidance in ways that complement the basic provision of information and advice already offered through the IAG partnerships, as their programme does not currently involve funding for guidance (pilots of enhanced services are due to begin in 2003).

The AGPs involved service delivery to priority groups with the aim to provide a seamless information, advice and guidance service to disadvantaged people. The pilots also aimed to explore a variety of models for delivering holistic guidance services to a range of disadvantaged groups. Target groups included individuals with disabilities/learning difficulties, people with basic skills needs, refugees and asylum seekers, and offenders/prisoners.

The evaluation

The objective of this evaluation was to consider the range of barriers faced by clients using the AGPs, the impact of the services in helping clients to overcome these barriers, and the wider social and economic impact of the services.

In order to achieve this, the evaluation consisted of:

- a survey of AGP users to assess their views on the services provided and any changes in their situation that occurred as a result of their involvement with the service
- analysis of the management information system (MIS) completed by pilot staff, to analyse outcomes for the entire user population, where possible
- work with staff, partners and clients in ten case study areas over the life of the pilots, to gain an in-depth understanding of their challenges and successes during this period.

Survey participants were limited to those who had been in contact with the AGP during the first half of 2002, or before, to allow some time for initial outcomes to emerge. In total, 544 individuals were interviewed between December 2002 and February 2003, across 17 of the pilots.

The MIS consisted of records for over 13,000 clients across all the pilots. The MIS was very thorough for some aspects, but the pilots were unable to track their clients over time in the same way as had been hoped. Because many individuals used the services only once and were not followed up, the outcomes data is limited to a sub-sample. However, by drawing together the survey data, MIS and case study examples, the evaluation was able to explore the impact of the AGPs in some detail.

Pilot approaches

The AGPs were successful in reaching a wide range of clients, many of whom are considered 'hard to reach' using traditional approaches. This success was based on in-depth knowledge of the target groups and successful networking (with organisations and individuals). The links established through the pilots, and their often unique contribution to local provision, often had an enabling role for communities, linking with community leaders and agencies. Some ethnic groups in particular benefited from a strong AGP presence in their community.

Case study work demonstrated the range of barriers faced by clients in relation to both work and learning. These included a lack of knowledge and awareness of opportunities, low aspirations, limited confidence/self-esteem, a lack of transport or physical accessibility, and cultural and language barriers. One of the strengths of the AGPs was that they were flexible enough to tackle some of these barriers through the use of outreach sessions, home visits, and guidance workers with specialist knowledge of the target groups.

The services on offer were also tailored to the needs of clients, offering extended support to clients where required, and this too emerged as a real factor in their success. For some client groups, generic providers can lack real understanding of the levels of support required. This aspect of the work of the AGPs represents real additionality.

Service usage

The main reasons individuals gave for seeking guidance were job related, either to improve job prospects (32 per cent) or to find a particular job (30 per cent). White clients were more likely than any other ethnic group to use the AGP for guidance on jobs (27 per cent compared with 15 per cent of Black/Black British clients), but less likely than other groups to seek guidance on basic skills (seven per cent of White clients compared with 20 per cent of the other ethnic groups).

Around half of clients used the service on more than one occasion. Multiple users were slightly more likely to be women than men

(13 per cent compared with 11 per cent of men), to be disabled, older and qualified to level 1. Of those using the service more than once, half had their final contact within eight weeks of registering, but over one-third were in contact for 20 weeks or more. Clients tended to dip in and out of guidance; where they had found work or training opportunities that later ended, they would often then return to their AGP.

Outcomes

Over half of AGP clients reported having engaged in some form of learning since their first contact with an AGP. Around two-thirds of those recorded as working towards a qualification were studying at level 2 or below. Nine per cent of individuals are recorded as having improved their qualification level since receiving guidance, but this figure rises to 27 per cent for individuals who began with no qualifications. Those most likely to have made a qualification gain were full-time workers and those not in work but without unemployed status, individuals with English as a second language, and those meeting with their adviser four times or more.

In relation to work, almost 30 per cent of clients who had been unemployed for less than six months were successful in finding work, as were 17 per cent of those unemployed for longer than this. The most important factors involved in movement into a job were qualification level and disability status. Individuals with no qualifications before their guidance intervention have higher odds of gaining work than many other groups. Similarly, disabled individuals are more likely to have found work. These differences are likely to reflect the fact that the work of AGPs targeted those who traditionally find it more difficult to find work.

Client ratings of the service they received from their AGP were overwhelmingly positive. Over 80 per cent found the service either fairly or very useful. Around two-thirds would probably or definitely use the service again if it was available, and half of users found the AGP to be very useful. Individuals with disabilities, in particular, gave very positive ratings.

Advisers appeared to have developed the trust and respect of their clients, with at least two-thirds regarding advisers as polite, helpful, having time to talk and taking a personal interest in them. The main progress people felt that they had made was in relation to learning/training (31 per cent had taken part in a course and 20 per cent were working towards a qualification) and gaining awareness of the opportunities available to them (28 per cent are more aware of training courses available and 25 per cent more aware of job options). Clients gave high ratings to the role of the AGP in helping them gain more confidence (18 per cent felt they definitely wouldn't have achieved this without AGP input). They feel more motivated (20 per cent feel this is definitely due to the

AGP) and their awareness of opportunities and options has improved (a quarter attribute their awareness of training courses directly to the AGP input, for example).

Costs of provision

The costs associated with such interventions are related to the needs of the clients. Disadvantaged groups facing a range of barriers to employment and training are likely to need more sessions and support. The flexible approach of the AGPs was a key component in their success, but outreach is, by definition, expensive and the AGP costs reflect this. Also reflected in the costs is the fact that 90 per cent of sessions were delivered by an adviser qualified to either level 3 or 4, and that 90 per cent of sessions were delivered face to face. The spend per head varied significantly between pilots (between £101 and £2,531), and the average across the pilots was £220.

Conclusions

AGP clients had made significant changes to their lives even within the short evaluation period. The steps made into employment and enhanced qualifications were clear for a significant minority. Over half of clients surveyed were now engaged in taught learning, suggesting that qualification gains for many more will follow. Those individuals undertaking a course were doing so mainly for job-related reasons or to improve their skills. In particular, gains appear to have taken place for those with lower qualification levels.

It is also important to recognise the role of the AGPs in facilitating smaller steps for some clients, which may, over time, lead to more substantial and measurable progress. Many clients considered their awareness of career and learning options to be greater since their involvement with an AGP. Again, this would suggest that in the longer term these individuals will be able to take a more proactive role in sourcing opportunities and making appropriate decisions. Thirty per cent of clients surveyed felt that they had gained new skills, and half of these attributed it directly to the work of AGP staff. Of those who had moved into work, half again felt that this was due to the AGP intervention.

The evidence would suggest that the impact of AGP provision has been particularly marked in relation to individuals with learning difficulties/disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees, those with low qualification levels, and those with low or basic skills needs.

There are some important lessons from the pilots, as follows:

- The nature of the target group needs to be clear. Successful pilots not only knew the barriers faced by their potential

clients, but also knew what they would respond to. If this knowledge is not already available in an organisation, it should either be hired in, or a feasibility study undertaken. It is worth spending money up front in order to save money further down the line.

- For some client groups, it is not only the individual that has to be considered in guidance delivery. People around that person (eg support workers, family, community members) are also important, particularly in ensuring that guidance results in positive action. In some cases, in particular with many disabled clients, it is not appropriate to view an individual in isolation. People in the individual's life may construct barriers that also have to be removed.
- Providers need to be very clear about what they can offer. Misunderstanding or 'over-selling' may result in disengaged clients. However, a positive approach, acknowledging the importance of barriers in the lives of individuals, whilst at the same time offering solutions as to how these can be overcome, is vital.
- Provision has to be tailored to need. A 'one size fits all' approach can end up fitting no-one. By taking some risks and being prepared to change tack, or work with new target groups, provision becomes more flexible. Satisfied clients are the best, and least expensive, marketing tool available.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Adult Guidance Pilots

The work of the AGPs is part of the Adult Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) initiative launched by the DfES in 1999. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched the Adult Guidance Pilots (AGPs) at the end of November 2001 and were funded for around 15 months¹. The AGPs involved service delivery to priority groups with the aim to provide a seamless information, advice and guidance service to disadvantaged people. This report evaluates the work of the AGPs.

The Adult Information, Advice and Guidance initiative also established local IAG partnerships with the aim of co-ordinating provision of IAG services relating to learning and work opportunities. The programme does not currently involve funding for guidance,² although the coverage of the IAG partnerships is far greater in geographical and numerical terms than the AGPs. The Learning and Skills Council has contractual responsibilities for the 75 local partnerships, whose remit is to offer free local information and advice services of a consistent quality to adults across England. The AG pilots were established to explore the potential additional value of offering in-depth guidance in ways that complement the basic provision of information and advice already offered through the IAG partnerships. The pilots also aimed to explore a variety of models for delivering holistic guidance services to a range of disadvantaged groups.

In assessing the bids for the provision of this service, a number of factors were considered. These included whether:

- the bid was innovative and tested out new approaches
- the proposed services were additional, either building on previous work or entirely new

¹ Some projects had a later start and finish date.

² Pilots for 'enhanced services' for individuals without level 2 qualifications are to be introduced in 2003.

- priority groups were identified with a consideration of actual local need, providing services that were specifically relevant to the community in which they were placed
- the work aimed to reach out to client groups, ideally through non-traditional delivery methods
- disadvantaged areas were specifically targeted and at a micro, local level
- there were links with other initiatives, so that the pilots complemented the existing work of, for example, IAG partnerships
- the bidding organisation had a good track record in terms of equality of opportunity for clients and staff.

Unlike the work of the 75 local IAG Partnerships, the AGPs contracted directly with the DfES. Merlin Minds acted as contract managers for the pilots on behalf of the DfES, and provided monitoring and expert support throughout the life of the pilots where required. In addition, a specially developed Management Information System (MIS) was developed by Data Resource Specialists. The MIS was designed to collect evaluative and monitoring information about the work of the AGPs. Consultants visited AGPs offering support in using the system, and many pilots were provided with laptop computers to allow them to complete the information at all their sites, even during outreach visits.

1.2 Project aims and objectives

The objective of this evaluation was to consider the range of barriers faced by clients using the AGPs, the impact of the services in helping clients to overcome these barriers, and the wider social and economic impact of the services. In order to achieve this, the original aims were to:

- conduct a baseline and follow-up survey of a sample of AGP users to assess their views on the services provided, and any changes in their situation that occurred as a result of their involvement with the service
- conduct a baseline and follow-up survey of a control group of non-users of AGP services
- use the management information system (MIS) completed by pilot staff to analyse outcomes for the entire user population, where possible
- work with staff, partners and clients in ten case study areas over the life of the pilots, to gain an in-depth understanding of their challenges and successes during this period.

The coverage of the survey work actually conducted differed in a number of ways from that originally planned. Initially, the survey

coverage was designed to involve a control group and a follow-up survey in order to investigate what would have happened to clients without the intervention of the AGPs (in order to complement the MIS). However, it became apparent that tracking this group over time was extremely problematic, and plans to develop a valid control group at a local level proved virtually impossible. Also, it was difficult to recruit individuals for the survey in the numbers originally anticipated, largely due to problems involved in working with transient populations (eg homeless, ex-offenders, refugees/asylum seekers) who did not keep in touch with their AGP for long enough to allow them to be recruited into the research.

As using a control group did not prove possible, participants in the survey were limited to those who had been in contact with the AGP during the first half of 2002 or before. This allowed some time for initial outcomes to emerge, but meant that the numbers available for interview were further limited. However, comparisons have been made within the sample wherever possible on a range of characteristics.

The decision was also taken with the DfES to concentrate on the first survey wave rather than engage in a follow up, mainly due to the difficulties involved in gaining participants for the first wave.

In addition, there were a number of limitations with the MIS data. Whilst the MIS was very thorough for some aspects (particularly regarding the initial meeting), the pilots were unable to track their clients over time in the same way as had been hoped. Because many individuals used the services only once and were not followed up, the outcomes data for them is limited, and there are also cases where important data is not recorded. Also, the time period over which individuals are tracked varies, so it is not possible to compare like with like. Other problems relate to the extent to which projects were able to complete the MIS idiosyncratically, resulting in a data set with a large percentage of 'other' responses outside the main classifications; this again reduces the data available for analysis.

1.3 Methodology

As outlined above, the final evaluation was composed of three strands of work – a client survey, MIS data analysis and case study visits. By bringing data from each of these sources together, it has been possible to build up a detailed picture of the work of the AGPs and some indication of the impact of this work on clients. Where difference are quoted in the report, these represent statistically significant differences.

1.3.1 Survey

In total, 544 AGP clients were interviewed from across 17 of the pilots. In the main, individuals were interviewed at AGP provider premises and offered an incentive payment to cover travel and other expenses. Fieldwork took place from December 2002 to February 2003.

The survey therefore provides useful evidence from the perspective of clients. However, as data collection occurred at only one point in time, long-term tracking was not possible. The data do provide individual perceptions of the impact of the AGP on subsequent outcomes. However, using the MIS and case study data alongside the survey data provides a fuller picture of how the AGPs affected the lives of individuals.

Full details of how the survey was conducted are presented in Appendix 1.

1.3.2 The Management Information System

The Management Information System was commissioned and specifically developed for use by the AGPs. Data were collected at the initial meeting¹ between the client and the AGP on an individual's personal circumstances and characteristics (*eg* gender, age, ethnic group, employment status). Information was also recorded at this stage on the barriers that the adviser felt their client faced, their reasons for seeking guidance, and a range of other factors. At each subsequent meeting this information was updated (*eg* changes in an individual's learning and employment status). The last entry for an individual was used to determine their intermediate 'outcomes'. Data are recorded for over 13,000 clients.

Throughout this report, full use is made of the MIS data where possible. However, base sizes (*ie* the number of individuals or cases where analysis has been possible) vary significantly in places, due to differences in the way in which data have been recorded between projects and advisers. The MIS is also unable to demonstrate what would have happened to individuals without the intervention of the AGPs (*ie* it is unable to show the counterfactual position). Therefore, data from the MIS should be seen as offering a useful guide to the activities of the AGPs and an overview of any changes clients made to their lives during their involvement with the AGPs. It is not possible to use these data alone to provide conclusive measures of the impact of the AGPs.

¹ 'Meeting' is the term used throughout this report to signify some kind of contact between the AGP and the client. Most commonly this involved face-to-face contact, but other types of contact were also possible.

1.3.3 Case studies

Additional qualitative information comes from the case studies conducted with ten of the pilots.¹ Providers were selected in order to provide a good coverage of different target groups, approaches and allocated budgets. Visits were made to provider premises twice during the period of their activity. On each occasion interviews were conducted with AGP management and staff, any active partner organisations and with clients themselves. The purpose of the case studies was to examine the work of the pilots in more detail, to discuss any difficulties inherent in providing this type of in-depth guidance, and to discuss individual perceptions of the impact of the AGPs to complement data from the client survey and MIS.

Throughout this report, data from the three main sources will be interwoven on a thematic basis.

1.4 Structure of report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the approaches taken by the AGPs and an overview of the clients involved nationally.
- Chapter 3 looks at how the pilots reached their clients, the barriers that these clients faced, and examines their reasons for seeking guidance.
- Chapter 4 discusses the guidance intervention in some detail.
- Chapter 5 examines the data in relation to learning/training and work outcomes.
- Chapter 6 considers other outcomes, including client satisfaction, confidence and motivation.
- Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the research.

¹ A full list of the pilots involved in the case studies is presented in Appendix 2.

2. Users and Approaches

This chapter describes the work of the AGPs in more detail. The AGPs were originally set up to work with a range of disadvantaged groups, and in this chapter we examine their client base to determine the extent to which this was achieved. The AGPs also aimed to offer a client-centred service, and identifying the client base is an important part of understanding the approaches that were actually used by individual pilots. Using innovative approaches and working with new client groups also meant that as the pilots learnt from their experiences, they made adaptations and improvements to the services on offer. Some examples of the approaches adopted are also presented here.

2.1 Target groups

The AGPs had a range of different target groups (Table 2.1). Out of the 18 projects returning management information, the most common target group was individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, followed by the targeting of deprived areas, people with basic skills needs, or individuals from minority ethnic groups. The project with the most target groups aimed to work with 11 of those listed, whilst seven of the pilots focused their work on only one target group.

2.2 Overview of users

As the work of the AGPs was designed to focus on harder to reach groups, and disadvantaged individuals, it is interesting to see how the breakdown of users tallies with these original aims. This also offers a useful profile of users that can be compared with other surveys (here National Adult Learners Survey, or NALS, data is presented), to determine any key differences that would affect the way in which the results could be compared. A comparison of the characteristics of the survey respondents with those of the MIS client database as a whole is also useful in determining the extent to which the survey accurately represents the full client base (Table 2.2).

A weighting factor has been used throughout the analysis of the survey data in order to make it more comparable to the MIS data

Table 2.1: AGP target groups

Target Group	N (projects)
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	8
Deprived areas	5
Basic skill needs	5
Minority ethnic	5
Unemployed or returners to work	4
Older people	4
Refugees and asylum seekers	4
Offenders or prisoners	4
The under-employed	3
English as a second language	3
Remote areas/rural outreach	2
Lone parents	2
Mental health problems	2
Drug addicts	2
Women	2
Homeless	1
Those in adult education or FE	1

Note: Projects were able to identify more than one target group, hence the total does not sum to 18.

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

from which the sample was drawn (full details are provided as part of the technical report in Appendix 1).

Comparisons reveal that:

- The MIS records have a higher proportion of men than in the NALS dataset.
- The MIS records a significant proportion of AGP users from minority ethnic groups, a higher proportion than those surveyed by NALS.
- The proportion of individuals who are not in paid work is substantially higher in the MIS data than in NALS.
- The MIS records a lower number of disabled clients than there are disabled respondents to NALS.
- There are more individuals with very low qualifications (*ie* under NVQ 1) in the MIS data than in NALS.

The AGPs therefore appear particularly successful at attracting men, minority ethnic individuals, those not in paid work and individuals with low qualifications. Projects working with disabled people and/or those with learning difficulties as their main client base were generally smaller in scale and provided

Table 2.2: Characteristics AGP clients – a comparison

Characteristic	AGP MIS	AGP Survey	NALS¹
Gender (%)			
Female	49	49	55
Male	51	51	45
Base (N)²	<i>12,297</i>	<i>544</i>	<i>5,654</i>
Ethnic group (%)			
White	65	51	88
Mixed	1	2	1
Asian/Asian British	15	18	7
Black/Black British	12	15	1
Chinese/other	8	14	2
Base (N)	<i>11,760</i>	<i>543</i>	<i>5,654</i>
Employment status %			
In paid work	41	38	67
Not in paid work	59	62	29
Base (N)	<i>9,428</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>5,654</i>
Physical or learning disability %			
Yes	10	25	24
No	90	75	76
Base (N)	<i>12,437</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>5,654</i>
Highest qualification (%)			
No quals or less than NVQ 1	25	7	9
NVQ 1	13	5	31
NVQ 2	24	14	14
NVQ 3	16	31	16
NVQ 4	17	34	25
NVQ 5	4	9	6
Base (N)	<i>8,332</i>	<i>373</i>	<i>5,653</i>

¹ NALS data all relate to respondents aged under 70.

² For both the NALS and AGP surveys, weighted results are shown. Age group comparison is not presented, as the categories differ across the three sources.

Source: AGP MIS, 2003; MORI/IES, 2003; NALS, 2002

more in-depth guidance. This is likely to account for the lower percentage of this type of client in the MIS data.

AGP client survey respondents vary slightly from the profile of clients held on the MIS, so some caution should be taken in comparing data from these two sources. This is particularly true for the proportion of individuals with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and minority ethnic clients, both of whom are over-represented in the survey data.

Survey respondents also tend to be more highly qualified in general than across the MIS as a whole, although this is likely to

reflect the fact that one of the projects with the greatest number of survey participants was working with a more highly qualified client base than many of the other AGPs represented in the MIS.

2.3 Approaches to guidance

Definitions of information, advice and guidance vary, and distinguishing between these different elements can be difficult without detailed information on the exact content of each IAG session. In this report, rather than focus on any strict classification of the work of the AGPs, the focus is on the services offered to clients in a broader sense.

The approach taken by the projects depended greatly on the individual client. Information from the case studies suggests that clients came from a range of starting points. Some already had clear plans for the future and simply needed help to work towards their goals. Others needed specific help in finding work in a particular sector, a specific job type or in getting work experience more generally. Many clients, however, required more in-depth support relating to a range of social, financial and personal issues. By building confidence and helping individuals to become 'guidance ready' by removing a range of barriers, clients were then able to take positive steps, and start to realise their potential (more detail on the barriers faced by clients is presented in Chapter 3).

Learning and work guidance for people with disabilities. An experienced guidance worker with a detailed knowledge of the benefits system was recruited to run and administer the activities. Since the client group often faced a range of issues including possible loss of benefits, low self-esteem and low aspirations, establishing trust between the guidance worker and the client was an extremely important first step. In addition, many clients required help with benefits and housing issues before they were ready to discuss learning and work issues. Barriers were addressed and worked through using a step by step approach. Work with individuals included in-home visits with individuals and their carers, finding ways to cover the cost of work related items (*eg* optician appointments and glasses), and taking people to learning providers to give them a 'taster' session before they committed to doing a course.

Typically, clients would start by having an individual interview with a guidance worker, although group work was also used in some instances. Laptop computers were used by a number of the projects to deliver guidance using specialist software packages, in outreach venues or in the client's own home. These initial meetings were arranged through a mixture of drop-ins, providing on-the-spot guidance and pre-arranged appointments. The guidance worker would take down the client's details, using the MIS, which collected contact details for any follow-ups and more detailed information for evaluation purposes. It also allowed guidance workers to explore the clients' starting points, and their background and prior experiences, to help determine their next steps.

Contact Guidance to Employability. This Liverpool-based project for refugees and asylum seekers aimed to give clearer guidance on the relevant education, training and employment opportunities available across the city. Many of the clients are highly qualified but need experience to convert their qualifications for use in Britain. One example of this involved offering clients a course in advisory work, with a special focus on advising the asylum seeker and refugee community, delivered in partnership with a Citizens Advice Bureau. Following the pilot, therefore, the city would have access to many more qualified advisers with specific skills in working with this section of the community.

The project also invested in a computer system that converts qualifications from all over the world into their English equivalent, and gives information on the steps that must be taken to bring professional qualifications in line so that clients can use them in this country.

The case studies highlight the greater flexibility offered by AGP funding compared with other streams. This freedom allowed providers to change the nature of the services on offer in order to meet the needs of their clients as the projects progressed. Examples of the ways in which these changes took place include the methods by which individuals were contacted, the types of IAG provided, and the locations in which provision was offered. In all cases, where changes were made, these were in order to bring the work of the AGP more in line with the needs of particular communities and individuals.

Nechells Employment Resource Centre. This project in an inner city ward of Birmingham accessed many of its clients through the local Mental Health Trust. A guidance worker visited the Trust sites to meet informally with Trust service users and the staff who support them. One-to-one sessions were arranged with those service users and staff who might be interested in exploring their future options. An initial package of basic skills training courses was offered to guidance clients, who were both service users and staff. A 'buddy' system was introduced so that service users and the staff they knew well took courses together. This helped to build service users' confidence and widen their aspirations. However, the staff also found the courses — which included first aid, fire safety and food hygiene — to be useful and relevant to their own work. Following the courses, there were numerous opportunities for clients to talk again with the guidance worker about next steps, and to set new goals.

2.4 Overcoming difficulties

With responsiveness at the heart of the aims of the AGP, adaptations to approaches were common. These were often as a result of increased awareness of how to reach particular groups. Most pilots avoided any major difficulties, although two pilots (not included in the data analysis) had their funding withdrawn due to start-up and other difficulties.

Byte Sized Guidance originally planned to deliver guidance by email as part of its strategy to reach clients in rural locations. The uptake was lower than anticipated and the project investigated this. Clients fed back that whereas they were happy to receive information via email, they preferred face-to-face contact where possible, although guidance by telephone was also preferable to electronic contact. As a result, the project concentrated on providing guidance in these more personal forms.

The holistic approach of the pilots was contrasted by clients and providers with the 'one size fits all' approach they felt was used by some of the more generic agencies. Staff were clear that many of their clients, particularly those hardest to help, had previously tried to access support from such agencies in the past and had often found it difficult to get their needs fully understood and met. This demonstrated the additionality of the pilots.

PATH/Opportunities for Women. Approaches consisted mainly of individual and group initial assessment sessions with follow-ups as requested by the clients. Activities were determined by clients' needs, but clients particularly sought employment-related guidance and assistance. Following the initial assessment, a high proportion of the guidance workers' time was spent providing help with CV writing and interview skills, identifying suitable courses to help clients to move into particular fields of work, and job matching — searching for suitable vacancies to pass on to particular clients. In addition to conducting personal sessions, when clients contacted PATH by telephone or visited their offices or outreach venues, suitable job vacancies were also posted out by guidance workers to their caseload clients.

Whilst the pilots were generally supportive of the MIS, as it offered a useful starting point and basis for follow ups, there were some problems. Case study pilots felt that collecting MIS data from some hard-to-reach clients could be problematic. Establishing trust is an important part of any client/provider relationship and some sensitivity in the collection of standard information was required on a client-by-client basis. Within some pilots, staff had inferred the contents of some fields rather than ask clients directly. Similarly, some pilots reported that the MIS form itself was unsuitable to use in front of certain clients, as it was seen as overly obtrusive. Where this was the case, guidance workers had taken down the information required by the MIS on a different piece of card, transferring it over at a later time. This not only involves the duplication of effort and resources, but also raises some further concerns about the quality of the MIS data.

2.5 Summary

Overall, the AGPs had a varied range of target groups. On a pilot-by-pilot basis, approaches varied from the target groups being very focused (*eg* just one) to extremely diverse (up to 11). The AGPs were particularly successful in reaching men, minority ethnic users, individuals not in paid work and those with low

qualification levels. Clients were offered a range of support according to need. Many individuals required pre-guidance assistance with issues relating to their personal circumstances before guidance on employment and education/training opportunities was appropriate. Holistic guidance over a number of sessions, dealing with a range of issues, was common. Providers worked flexibly and responsively, adapting their approaches to best meet the needs of their clients and local communities. Providers and clients highlighted the importance of offering an additional service to the 'one size fits all' approach of more generic providers. In-depth guidance was a key component of the work.

3. Recruitment and Barriers

The design of many of the AGPs involved specific target groups with specially tailored guidance packages. With such a client-led approach, the barriers faced by clients, particularly in relation to learning and work, are an important aspect of the activities of the AGPs. In this chapter, the extent to which individuals faced a range of barriers is discussed. The techniques used by the pilots to encourage individuals to take part in guidance are also considered, as are the reasons individuals gave for initially contacting an AGP.

3.1 Provider track records

As Chapter 2 has shown, the AGPs had a varied range of target groups. In determining these, providers often used existing organisational or staff knowledge to draw up plans to reach potential clients. AGP providers also tended to have a track record of working with their target groups (see Section 1.1 on the selection of pilots). However, the AGP funding enabled them to extend their provision through the use of new methods or the employment of additional and/or specialist staff. This not only helped to raise awareness of existing services but also involved people who otherwise may not have engaged in guidance services.

The **PATH** organisation (provider of the PATH/Opportunities for Women pilot) has worked with Black and minority ethnic individuals in the West Midlands since 1987. The DfES pilot built on a long history of IAG provision for this client group. There was a great deal of variation, in terms of culture, gender, prior qualifications, experience and aspirations in their client base. Some of the clients were refugees and asylum seekers, and so had different needs to clients who had lived in the area for a long time. Interventions were provided on a case-by-case basis addressing individual needs.

The AGP pilots tended to have a fairly tightly defined target client group; some were wary of 'casting the net too wide' or in offering too 'thin' a service. Ensuring the appropriateness of guidance on offer was very important, and drawing on staff experiences was vital. Some of the projects found that as time went on they widened or modified the scope of the clients with whom they worked. This usually happened when it became apparent that

there was a strong demand for these services from client groups outside the original remit.

The **Nechells Employment Resource Centre** pilot targeted people living in the inner city ward in Birmingham where the NERC was based, and had worked with the area's residents for many years. The DfES pilot facilitated focused and intensive provision with particular groups in the area (*eg* Asian women, and people using mental health services). The focus of the interventions shifted during the life of the project, from clients involved with a residents' organisation, to people using mental health services in the local area. It was clear that there was a greater demand for services amongst the latter group, and work with this group represented an opportunity to make a real difference to the local community.

3.2 Spreading the word

Whatever service is on offer, it is vital that individuals get to know about it, particularly when the service is something new and relatively short-term, as is the case for the AGPs. The type of funding offered by the DfES for this initiative gave many of the projects a unique opportunity to try out new and innovative ways of reaching new client groups. Without the need to meet strict outcome quotas, projects were able to test out new approaches. In virtually all cases, these new techniques proved effective. In this section, more detail on the types of activities used to engage clients are explored using data from the case studies.

The use of **Partner networks** was very important for some projects. These networks were strengthened, and evolved as the projects gathered momentum. Providers used the AGP opportunity to network more widely with local, regional and national organisations. New working relationships were established between a range of organisations (*eg* community groups, charities, local colleges and statutory service providers) as a result of the pilots. Often the links were informal, but they were also effective in trialling new collaborative working methods and in strengthening or creating referral systems that benefited providers and clients alike.

Word of mouth was a very strong element in raising awareness of the guidance opportunities available. Clients who found the service useful were quick to point out the benefits to their families and friends. This method did take some time to become effective, but eventually proved to be one of the most powerful ways of tapping into latent demand amongst new types of clients.

By the time of the second case study visit at **Community Empowerment & Development**, the project workers reported that there was no longer the need to actively market or advertise their services in the same way. Word of mouth in the community had gained momentum, and this now ensured that they had a constant supply of new clients, together with support from local employers.

Personal contact was felt to be very important in engaging clients, and in building up the necessary trust for people to return for follow-ups. Key workers going out into communities and meeting people in familiar surroundings on their own terms was an important part of this (also see outreach below). It was also important that key workers understood the particular needs of the client groups they worked with. The pilots often tried hard to employ key workers from similar backgrounds to the target groups.

The **Contact Guidance to Employability** project worked with refugees and asylum seekers, and deployed a specialist guidance team at the heart of people's communities. Most of the team members had personal experience of entering the UK on this basis, and so could relate to the needs of the clients they were working with. Workers were also fluent in a range of community languages, further easing the passage of clients into guidance.

Workers at **Community Empowerment and Development** were from the Sikh community and they felt that this is a key feature of the project. They were able to understand issues about the Sikh culture and religion, and because of this they felt that they had been able to build up the necessary trust and gain client's respect.

Some projects raised awareness of the services they were offering by participating in specific events (*eg* Careers Fairs) where they were able to talk to people, hand out leaflets, or even offer on-the-spot guidance to people who were interested.

PATH/Opportunities for Women and Community Empowerment and Development both had stands at a major Careers Fair at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham, and this had enabled them both to raise their profiles, and offer guidance to clients within and outside their target groups.

Outreach was a key part of the work and featured strongly in many of the case studies. Sessions took place in a variety of settings, including generic community venues (*eg* Job Centres, public libraries, schools and colleges). More specialist venues were also used to tap into particular groups (*eg* cultural resource centres and religious meeting places). Outreach was a common theme amongst the AGPs and the opportunity to engage in outreach was welcomed. This was particularly true where physical barriers to access existed (*eg* for wheelchair users). Other less visible barriers (*eg* low confidence) also had to be overcome. Offering services in venues that clients would normally use and in places in which they felt familiar was a further theme of the work.

Establishing Links worked with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and was designed to offer guidance 'where people are', as travel is often a major barrier for disabled people.

Byte Sized Guidance offered guidance to people in a rural area on an outreach basis, again going to places that people already visited on

a regular basis (*eg* contacting mothers of children at primary schools). This location-based target group included people from a variety of starting points and needs, including the unemployed and people in work who wanted a career change.

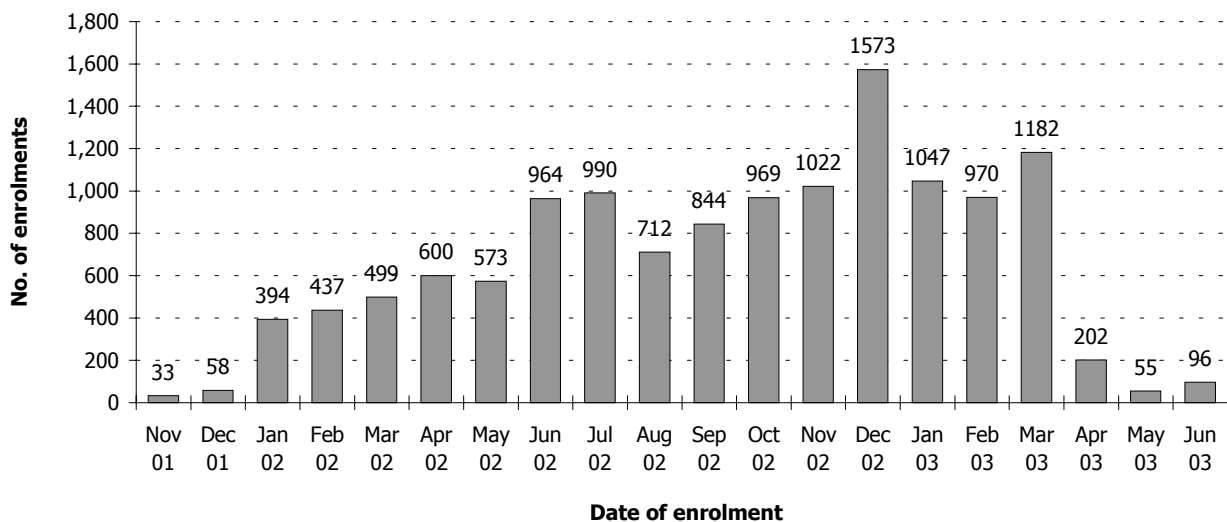
The use of **publicity materials** was another aspect of many of the pilots. Several of the projects distributed leaflets in suitable locations, often in a variety of community languages, or in appropriate accessible formats, *eg* large print, simplified text, audio-based and Braille.

Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities recruited four people from cultural minorities and trained them to deliver guidance. These guidance workers delivered IAG in local colleges and community groups, and used contacts in their local communities to engage people who would have been unlikely to have become involved in the absence of this personal encouragement. They distributed leaflets in nine languages and through these methods have been able to deliver over 500 guidance sessions to clients from 22 different ethnic groups.

All types of awareness-raising work were reported to have a relatively long set-up period and required time to make contact with relevant partner organisations, recruit key staff and test out the efficacy of various approaches. However, once a successful method had been found, demand for services quickly rose as a result of word of mouth. In this way, many of the projects gained momentum in the later months, and were able to meet their targets, despite initial recruitment difficulties.

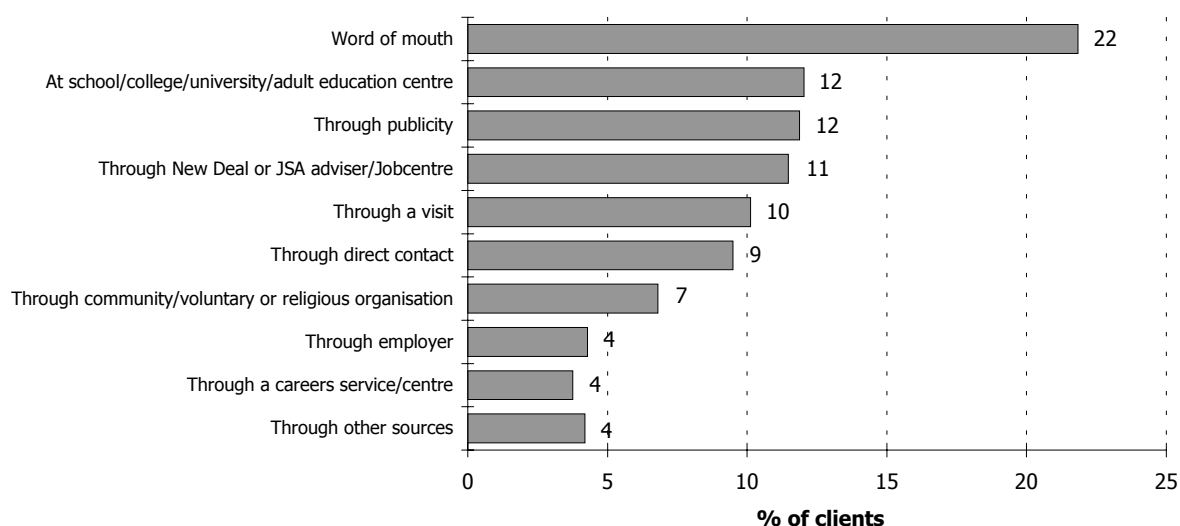
The MIS recorded the date of individuals' first enrolment and also shows that the recruitment within pilots gathered pace with time. The bulk of enrolments took place between June 2002 and March 2003 (Figure 3.1), with a peak during December 2002.

Figure 3.1: Date of enrolments (MIS data)



Source: AGP MIS, 2003

Figure 3.2: Where client first heard of AGP (survey results)



Base: 540

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

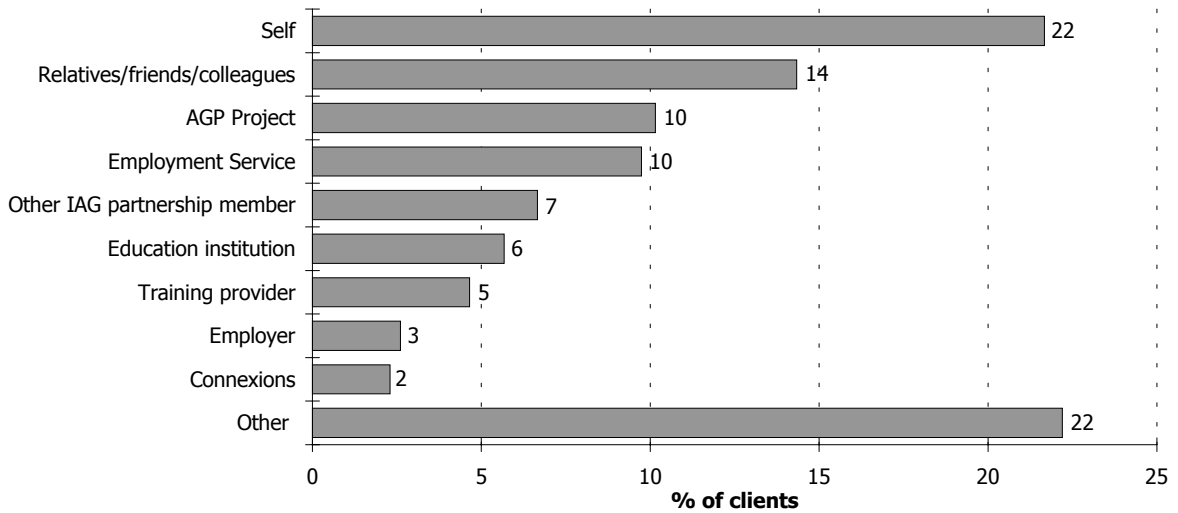
Source: MORI/IES, 2003

3.3 How individuals heard about AGPs

Having utilised a range of techniques to draw in individuals, it is interesting to see which of these techniques had the most impact. Individuals were asked in the survey to describe where they had first heard about the AGP. The most common response was 'word of mouth', with over 20 per cent of clients finding out about the service in this way (Figure 3.2). Advice or information from a friend, family member or colleague about a service can be a very powerful incentive. By engaging in a variety of publicity and networking activities, the pilots ensured that informal sources of referrals were maximised. Other sources were also important, however. For example, over ten per cent of clients in each case had heard about AGPs at an education centre, through publicity on television, radio or poster format, at a Jobcentre, or by someone from an AGP visiting another organisation.

The MIS system also provides detailed information on the source of referral (as described to the AGP adviser at the initial interview) for the majority of clients using the service (the main sources are shown in Figure 3.3). The main source of referral was actually the client themselves. This is presumably through marketing of the service, the client 'dropping in' to the AGP premises, or through prior knowledge and/or use of the provider. Word of mouth, through family and/or friends, was also a common source of referral, as was the Employment Service and other IAG partnership members. However, there were differences in the way in which individuals were referred according to a range of factors.

Figure 3.3: Sources of referrals to AGP services (MIS data)



Base: 11,814

Note: The 'other' category includes community groups, health services, support services, **learnirect** and other advice services. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

Self-referral was most common amongst White clients. Twenty-six per cent found out about the AGP themselves, compared with only 19 per cent of Black/Black British, 17 per cent of Asian/Asian British clients, and just nine per cent from the Chinese/other ethnic group. However, this trend is reversed for referrals from family and friends, with almost half of Chinese/other clients (46 per cent) referred in this way, compared with around a quarter of Black/Black British clients (23 per cent), 15 per cent of Asian/Asian British, and only seven per cent of White clients. This may suggest that certain ethnic groups have less contact with statutory providers of support and advice services generally, and would uphold evidence from the case studies that gaining access to certain minority ethnic groups is reliant on establishing a presence in their community.

Age also appears to be an important factor in determining how individuals found out about the AGP. The likelihood that individuals were referred by relatives or friends decreases with age and those aged 19 or under were almost four times as likely as those aged 20 to 30 to have been referred in this way (46 per cent, compared with 16 per cent).

Individuals not in paid employment, but who are not registered as unemployed, were over twice as likely to be referred by family/friends as any other group (eg 27 per cent of those not in paid employment, compared with ten per cent of those in full-time employment, and four per cent of those unemployed for six months or more).

As might be expected, individuals who were unemployed were around twice as likely to be referred to the AGP via the Employment Service as those who were in full-time employment (20 per cent, compared with ten per cent in full-time work). White clients were also more likely than any other ethnic group to have been referred in this way (12 per cent compared with, for example, eight per cent of Black/Black British, and seven per cent of Asian/Asian British).

Those working full-time were much more likely to be referred to the AGP by their employer than those working part-time (11 per cent, compared with two per cent).

Other results show that women are more likely to be referred by an educational institution than are men (eight per cent compared with three per cent), while men are more likely to be referred by family/friends (17 per cent compared with 11 per cent). This is likely to be due to the greater participation of women in further education as a whole.¹ Referrals from training providers tended to decrease as an individual's qualification level increased (*ie* from 12 per cent of those with no qualifications to only two per cent of those with a level 5 qualification). This may reflect the fact that those with higher level qualifications are less likely to have contact with this type of educational provider.

Ensuring that individuals find out about the services on offer is very important. However, it would seem that different methods have differing penetration levels amongst individuals with different characteristics. The AGP initiative does show, however, that it is possible to reach disadvantaged groups if marketing activities are designed appropriately.

3.4 Barriers to accessing guidance

The case studies are helpful in highlighting the wide variety of clients who were contacted as a result of the Adult Guidance Pilots. They had differing reasons for seeking guidance, and differing barriers as a result of their backgrounds and starting points. It is important to acknowledge that in addition to barriers to employment, some of the clients also had barriers that could limit the extent to which they feel/are able to access guidance opportunities.

Examples of some of these pre-guidance barriers included:

- a lack of knowledge and awareness of availability and opportunities for receiving guidance
- low aspirations

¹ For example, *Statistics of Education: Vocational Qualifications in the UK: 2001/02, Issues No. 02/03, June 2003.*

- low confidence and self-esteem
- previous negative experiences (with other providers offering a less tailored service) which they found to be impersonal and lacking in empathy
- lack of transport or physical accessibility
- a fear of their needs not being understood
- cultural and language barriers
- a lack of provision of guidance outside normal office hours for individuals in work or with other daytime responsibilities.

It is important to note that one of the strengths of the AGPs was that they were flexible enough to tackle some of these barriers. The use of outreach sessions, home visits and offering appointments at times convenient to the clients, for example, were particularly useful in overcoming these pre-guidance barriers and engaging clients.

3.5 Barriers to learning and work

When clients first registered with an AGP, following their interview, each adviser was required to complete a list of the barriers faced by that client in relation to learning, work or both (Table 3.1). English as a foreign language was the most common problem (over a quarter of clients faced this barrier). This is likely to be at least partly due to the large proportion of AGP clients who are refugees/asylum seekers (around 15 per cent with this as a stated barrier). Disabilities/learning difficulties/health problems were the next most common problem, again reflecting the target groups of many of the AGPs.

The barriers faced in relation to both work and learning appear similar overall. However, there were a few differences. Firstly, motivational issues or a lack of time apply much more to learning than to work. Conversely, age or out-of-date skills appear to be much more of a barrier to work than to learning. The availability of suitable employment opportunities is a more common barrier to work than the availability of appropriate learning provision, and low skill levels or qualifications were only noted in relation to work.

The barriers reported by the survey respondents were slightly different from those recorded in the MIS (Table 3.2). Just over 55 per cent of clients reported barriers to taking part in learning and 65 per cent to finding work. Of these barriers, the most widely cited was low and basic skills levels. Financial reasons were the second most common barrier to obtaining learning/training and lack of relevant experience was widely perceived as a barrier to finding suitable employment. Financial issues were far more prominent amongst the survey respondents than recorded on the

Table 3.1: Recorded barriers to learning and work (MIS data)

Barrier	% of cases	
	To learning	To work
English is second language	26.4	26.0
Disability/learning difficulty/health problems	16.0	17.2
Asylum seeker/refugee status/non-UK quals/ethnic minority	15.7	13.7
Basic skills needs	14.3	13.7
Confidence issues	13.2	13.2
Motivational issues/lack of time	12.3	5.4
Caring responsibilities	9.7	9.2
Benefits implications	9.1	8.6
Unclear goals	9.0	9.2
Transport/geographical isolation	6.2	6.8
Offending history	5.6	6.3
Age/out-of-date skills	5.2	9.0
Earlier employment experiences	4.9	5.9
Lack of childcare	4.3	4.5
Availability of suitable learning provision or work	4.3	6.5
Drug/alcohol/drug user	3.7	3.8
Homelessness	3.0	3.0
Other	29.6	26.4
Low skill level/lack of qualification	—	7.8
<i>Base (N)</i>	<i>9,636</i>	<i>9,608</i>

Note: Each individual can have more than one barrier for either/both work/learning, hence the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

Table 3.2: Reported barriers to learning and work (AGP survey results)

Barrier	% of cases	
	To learning	To work
Low skills/basic skills levels	46.8	47.6
Lack of relevant experience	—	29.3
Financial issues	26.2	20.7
Nothing suitable available	24.7	27.8
Lack of confidence	22.9	22.9
Family and childcare commitments	16.2	18.9
Personal health problems	11.3	11.7
Lack of information about courses	8.3	—
Do not enjoy exams/learning	5.8	—
Too old	4.8	7.7
Motivational issues	3.2	4.1
Lack of time to look for opportunities	2.5	3.7
Base (N)	306	367

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

MIS. The most frequent barrier from the MIS data (English as a second language), however, is a sub-set of the most frequently perceived barrier from the survey (*ie* low skills/basic skills level). Perhaps unsurprisingly, survey respondents were less likely to see themselves as having a confidence issue or a motivational issue than advisers using the MIS. However, individuals in the survey were more likely to report a confidence issue, than recorded in the MIS for the client base as a whole.

3.5.1 Pinpointing barriers to work¹

There are many differences in the barriers that different individuals face in relation to work. The MIS provides a useful record of the barriers individuals faced as recorded and assessed by advisers.

The issues facing younger clients (19 or under), for example, are somewhat different in nature from older age groups. They are over three times as likely to be an asylum seeker/refugee than the closest older age group (42 per cent, compared with 13 per cent of 20 to 30 year olds). They are also more likely to have basic skills needs (18 per cent, compared with 12 per cent of those aged 56 to 65) and English language difficulties (64 per cent, compared with 17 per cent of those aged 56 to 65). However, this is likely to reflect the fact that over half of the clients from this age group were users of a pilot concentrating on asylum seekers and refugees. In contrast, older clients (those over the age of 56) are more likely to have a disability (22 per cent, compared with seven per cent of those aged under 30), and/or have suffered² in their earlier employment history (11 per cent, compared with just three per cent of those aged under 30). Individuals between the ages of 20 and 55 were, as might be expected, almost exclusively the ones with caring responsibilities and/or who suffered from a lack of suitable childcare.

The issues facing those with disabilities/learning difficulties are also different from those who are non-registered disabled. Very few individuals with asylum seeker or refugee status, or with English language difficulties, were disabled. The barriers that disabled clients are more likely to face are the benefits implications of taking up work (23 per cent, compared with just seven per cent of non-disabled clients) and a lack of confidence (21 per cent, compared with 12 per cent of non-disabled clients). However, of some interest, a quarter of disabled individuals were not assessed as their disability in itself acting as a barrier to work.

¹ As the barriers facing individuals in relation to work and learning are very similar, in this section we have only analysed, in more detail, the barriers to work.

² The MIS did not record specific details on how individuals had suffered.

This emphasises how varied the needs of disabled people can be, and shows that disability in itself need not be a barrier.

Men and women also differ in terms of the barriers they face. Men were over twice as likely to be asylum seekers (13 per cent, compared with six per cent) and far more likely to have an offending history (11 per cent, compared with just one per cent of women), although this is likely to reflect the fact that pilots working with current offenders were based in male prisons working exclusively with men. Men were also more likely to have alcohol or drug issues (six per cent, compared with one per cent of women). Women, in contrast, suffered more from a lack of childcare (nine per cent, compared with virtually no men) and barriers related to their caring responsibilities. They were also more likely to have confidence issues than were men (17 per cent, compared with ten per cent).

Individuals with low qualification levels (*ie* below level 1) also faced different barriers to those with higher level qualifications. Unsurprisingly, the former group were more likely to face basic skills issues and low skill levels (by a factor of ten compared with those with level 4/5 qualifications). They were also more likely to have problems with English as a second language. The lowest qualified clients were more reliant on benefits, too, than those more qualified (21 per cent felt that working would have benefits implications, compared with only ten per cent of those qualified to level 3), and they were also more likely to have confidence issues (22 per cent, compared with 16 per cent of level 2 and 3 qualified).

Ethnic origin also affects the type of barriers that AGP clients were likely to face. Individuals from certain ethnic groups were far more likely to have difficulties with English as a second language (39 per cent of Chinese/other, and 28 per cent of Black or Black/British, compared with less than ten per cent of White clients). Similarly, individuals from all minority ethnic groups were far more likely to have refugee/asylum seeker status than were White clients. White clients were also far less likely to have basic skills issues (nine per cent, compared with over 20 per cent of all other ethnic groups).

This complex picture highlights the importance of offering in-depth guidance, which can take account of an individual's personal circumstances and work through the options to find the most suitable course of action for them.

3.6 Reasons for seeking guidance

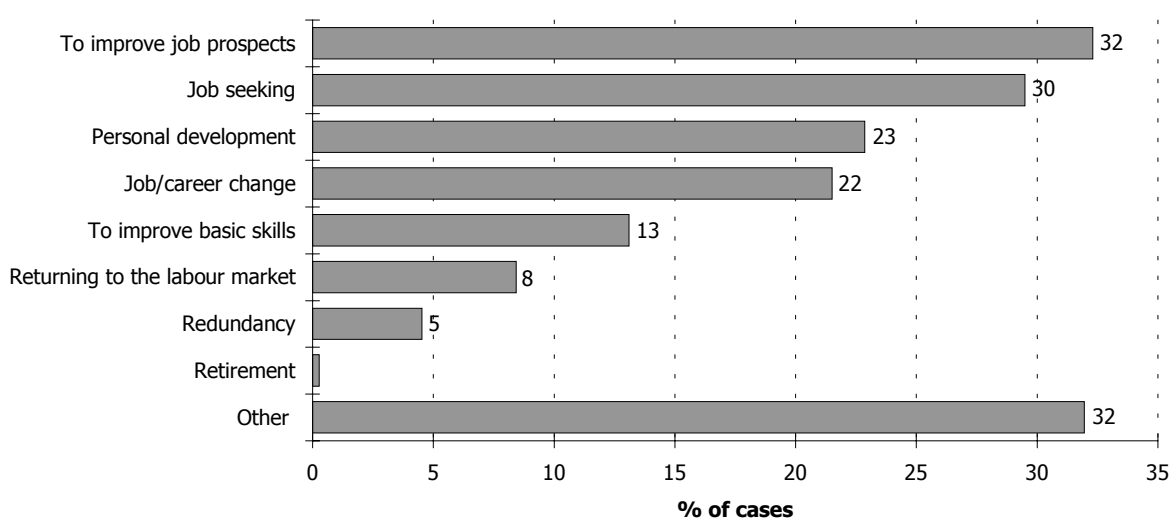
Simply being aware of a service is not enough in itself to engage individuals. It is useful therefore to examine the reasons why individuals decided to take up the offer of guidance through the AGPs. The case studies demonstrated that the reasons for

individuals seeking guidance were dependent on their starting points, backgrounds and prior experiences.

Some clients sought general direction, whilst others wanted to pursue particular careers, and needed help with identifying appropriate routes to take, or gaining relevant training. Some clients were already highly skilled, but needed assistance in finding employment at a suitable level, and some needed help to convert overseas qualifications to those that would be recognised by employers in this country. Other clients did not even actively seek out guidance at first; they either asked the key workers for help of a specific nature when they were at outreach venues in the community, or the guidance workers got chatting to them informally and encouraged them to think about what they might like to do in the future.

The MIS data provides evidence across all the pilots on this issue. The main reasons individuals gave for using the AGP services were job-related (Figure 3.4), either to improve their job prospects or to help them find a particular job. This is interesting when the content of the guidance interventions is examined (see Section 4.3), as the most common topic of guidance was education and learning opportunities. This highlights the complex relationship between work and learning, and illustrates how an individual's long-term work outcomes may differ from their initial post-guidance outcomes. For example, an individual may seek initial guidance about a specific career/job and then decide to improve their prospects by gaining further qualifications, and only return to this area of work some time later. This is an important consideration when examining the outcome data in Chapters 5 and 6.

Figure 3.4: Main reasons given for seeking guidance (MIS data)



Base: 11,881

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

As would be expected, the reasons individuals gave for seeking guidance differed according to their situation and personal characteristics. Regarding age, the general trend was for those over the age of 20 to be more interested in a job/career change, whilst those under 19 were more likely to seek guidance on personal development issues. More specifically, individuals aged over 56, but still of working age, were twice as likely to be seeking advice about redundancy than those aged 31 to 55 (13 per cent, compared with six per cent). Also, those aged over 30 were almost twice as likely as individuals aged 20 to 30 to be seeking guidance on returning to work (11 per cent, compared with six per cent). This is likely to reflect the fact that clients over the age of 30 were more likely to be disabled and/or female, and therefore returning after some form of career break.

Employment status, as would be expected, was also a factor in the reasons for seeking guidance. Individuals in full-time employment were less likely to be job seeking (17 per cent, compared with 55 per cent of those unemployed for six months or less, and 43 per cent of those unemployed for over six months), and less interested in personal development (15 per cent, compared with between 20 and 30 per cent for all other groups). Those most likely to be seeking guidance on dealing with redundancy were those recently unemployed and those in full-time employment (11 per cent for each group, compared with two per cent or less of all other groups). Guidance on how to improve basic skills was mainly sought by those unemployed, both registered and non-registered, rather than those in work (eg 24 per cent of those unemployed for six months or more, compared with just six per cent of those in full-time employment).

Ethnic group was another factor apparently influencing an individual's reasons for seeking guidance. White clients are around twice as likely as any other group to be seeking a job/career change (27 per cent, compared with, for example, 15 per cent of Black/Black British clients). They were also twice as likely to seek guidance on dealing with redundancy (seven per cent compared with less than one per cent of any other ethnic group). White clients were less likely to seek guidance to help improve their basic skills (seven per cent, compared with over 20 per cent each of the other ethnic groups) and they were less interested in personal development (17 per cent, compared with over 35 per cent of Black/Black British and Chinese/other, and a quarter of Asian/Asian British clients). These results may be related to the fact that White clients were more likely to be in work than were the other ethnic groups.

Gender and disability appeared to have less of an impact. The main differences between men and women were that men were more likely to be job seeking (35 per cent, compared with 24 per cent) and less likely to be returning to work after a break (seven per cent, compared with ten per cent of women). There was only

one real difference with regard to disability, in that disabled clients were more likely to seek guidance after a break from work (14 per cent compared with eight per cent of those non-registered disabled).

As the MIS shows, there is a wide range of reasons why individuals seek guidance. The main differences appear to relate to employment status, age and ethnic group, although it is likely that complex inter-relationships between these factors exist. The large percentage of cases where other reasons (not recorded) were cited as the main factor in seeking guidance, would suggest that the picture is even more complex than this. Meeting the expectations of clients using the AGPs therefore represented a real challenge for the pilots.

3.7 Summary

The AGPs used a range of marketing and publicity tools to attract clients. Their marketing strategies were largely dependent on organisational knowledge and based on track records of working with particular target groups. Nevertheless, the AGP model allowed providers to test out new approaches. The pilots made maximum use of existing networks, developed new relationships with other agencies/providers and were therefore able to encourage word of mouth and self-referrals. Minority ethnic groups, in particular, were likely to benefit most from the AGP establishing a presence in their community. The employment service also acted as a useful referral point for unemployed clients.

Individuals using the AGPs faced a range of barriers. Initially it was important for providers to offer a flexible service (*eg* outreach and early evening appointments) in order to overcome barriers to accessing guidance. The most common barriers faced by AGP clients were having English as a foreign language, and disabilities/learning difficulties/health problems. Financial barriers, including benefits dependency, were also common in terms of access to both work and learning. The most common reasons given for seeking guidance were to improve job prospects and/or to get help with job seeking.

4. Guidance Episodes

The aims of the AGPs were to offer an additional and in-depth service that built on existing provision. Determining the ways in which individuals used the pilots is therefore important in understanding whether this was, in fact, the case. In this chapter, the actual nature of the guidance interventions themselves is examined, including the intensity, duration and content of the sessions.

4.1 Intensity of interventions

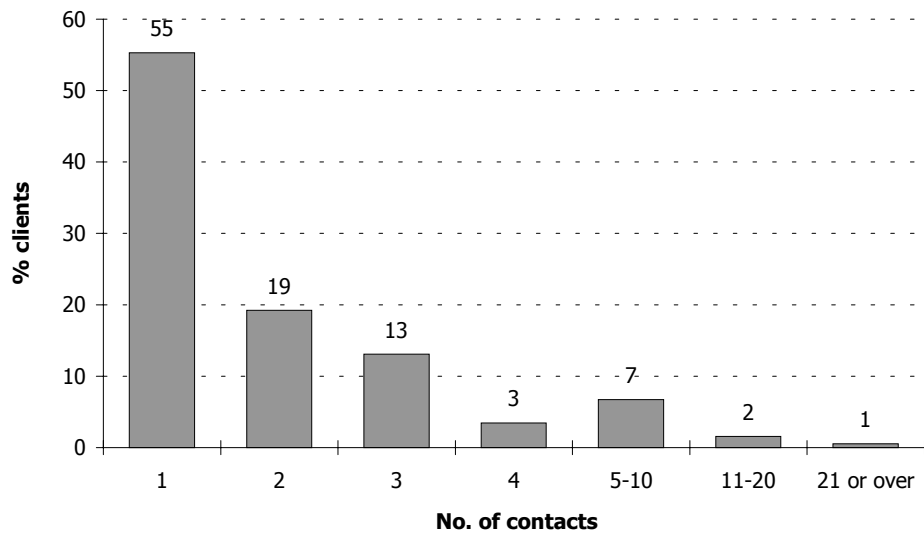
The MIS reveals that, in total, 13,132 clients were seen by the AGPs. The number of clients per pilot varied widely, with the maximum at close to 3,000 (Seamless Steps to Learning and Work) and the minimum number 67 (Friendly Face). As would be expected, the number of clients seen by pilots varied according to the budget, with those pilots receiving the most funding more likely to work with a greater number of individuals. However, there were some exceptions to this, as reflected in (the rather rough and ready measure of) spend per client.¹

The mean spend per client was £220, with the minimum spend at just £101 per client and the maximum at £2,531 per client. However, these figures provide only a very rough estimate that does not take into account the needs of the individuals involved or the approaches taken, and serve simply to highlight the very different resourcing approaches taken at pilot level. Additionally, the pilots were briefed to try out innovative approaches with hard to reach groups and this is undoubtedly reflected in the spend for some projects (see Section 2.4 on difficulties and challenges). Where very hard to reach groups were the sole target of the work, and where comprehensive support was required over time, the spend per client is likely to reflect this.

Further details of the numbers of clients worked with in each of the pilot areas are presented in Appendix 2.

¹ Calculated by dividing the project spend by the number of individuals using the service for each pilot.

Figure 4.1: Number of contacts individuals have had with AGPs (MIS data)



Base: 12,590

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

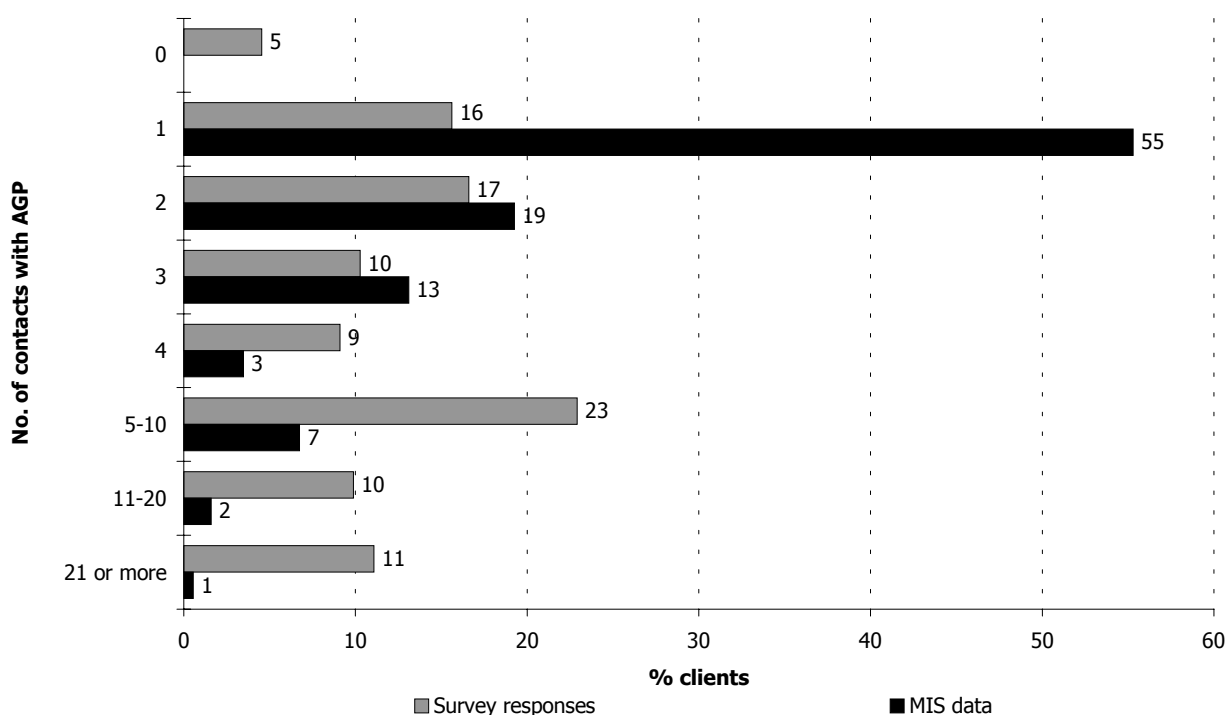
4.2 Frequency of interventions

An important part of the work of AGPs was to offer extended contact for individuals who needed more than one session with an adviser. The management information suggests that over half of people made only one contact with their AGP, and that a further 20 per cent used the service twice. However, there were a number of individuals who needed more extensive support (Figure 4.1), and the maximum number of contacts recorded for any one individual was 131, with around ten per cent of clients making contact four times or more. However, the duration of an individual's involvement with their AGP was limited to some extent by the date when they first accessed services. The end date for most projects was Spring 2003, but MIS data shows that the bulk of enrolments took place during the latter half of the pilots' operating period (see Section 3.2).

Clients' recall of events differs from the information recorded about them in the MIS (Figure 4.2). When asked to recall how many meetings they had with their AGPs, just over five per cent of those in the survey claimed to have had no contact with an AGP, despite having their details recorded by an AGP adviser. Analysis of the characteristics of clients reporting having had no meetings showed that they were not more likely to come from a specific AGP or be of a certain age, although there were twice as many men in this group as women.

In contrast, very few survey respondents recall having only one contact, and almost three-quarters of survey respondents who

Figure 4.2: Comparison of client recall and MIS data on number of contacts with AGP



Base: 506

Note: This figure presents data only for those with survey and MIS data. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003 and MORI/IES, 2003

were recorded as having only one contact on the MIS recalled having more than one meeting.

The discrepancy between the two sources reflects the dangers of relying solely on client recall for evaluation purposes and highlights the importance of good record keeping at provider level. The experiences of case study projects suggested that the MIS was not always used to record time spent with clients, particularly if the time was spent in activities other than guidance (eg taking individuals to learning providers, working out travel routes, checking out access to premises). This is important as the MIS is therefore likely to underestimate the overall time spent with clients.

4.2.1 Multiple compared with single users

This section examines whether or not the extent to which individuals used the service is related to their personal characteristics (Table 4.1). The data from the MIS suggests that there are some interesting patterns.

Men and women use the service in similar ways, although women are slightly more likely to use the service four times or more. The pattern of usage is more complex by ethnic group, with White and Black/Black British clients the most likely to use services four

Table 4.1: Number of contacts with AGP, by personal characteristics (MIS data)

Characteristic		Number of contacts with AGP (%)			Base (N)
		1	2/3	4 or more	
Gender	Male	56.1	32.8	11.1	6,085
	Female	53.9	32.8	13.3	5,709
Ethnic group	White	58.4	27.8	13.8	7,421
	Asian/Asian British	41.2	53.6	5.2	1,539
	Black/Black British	54.8	31.0	14.2	1,296
	Chinese/other	50.6	42.1	7.3	946
	Mixed	64.7	32.4	2.9	68
Disabled status	Registered Disabled	46.1	35.1	18.8	1,234
	Not registered disabled	56.1	32.5	11.3	10,662
Age	Under 19	48.3	47.0	4.7	149
	20 to 30	60.5	29.8	9.6	4,655
	31 to 55	53.6	32.4	14.0	5,927
	56 to 64	41.7	44.4	13.9	527
	65 and over	31.7	40.9	27.4	164
Benefits recipient	No	80.9	14.9	4.2	2,551
	Yes	48.4	43.0	8.6	4,354
Qualification level	No qualifications	23.4	62.0	14.6	158
	Under NVQ level 1	17.9	66.7	15.5	252
	NVQ level 1	24.4	42.8	32.9	353
	NVQ level 2	32.3	49.2	18.5	644
	NVQ level 3	40.4	42.6	17.0	470
	NVQ level 4	57.8	27.8	14.4	632
	NVQ level 5	43.3	41.8	14.9	134

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

times or more. Disabled clients also tend to use the services more frequently than non-disabled clients, and frequency of usage of the service generally appears to increase with age.

The picture is clearer with regard to benefits receipt, with those in receipt of benefits far more likely to use the service on a regular basis than those not receiving benefits. Examining differences by qualification level, those with a level 1 qualification are the most likely to use their AGP four or more times.

The case studies illustrated how these sessions were used. The first session was the initial point of contact, which established clients' prior history and starting point. This session was intended to help determine the level of future intervention that might be needed by the individual client or to deliver one-off guidance. There were instances where clients would book another appointment to see the guidance worker in a few days' time, while others would telephone for another appointment, or drop in to the venue when they needed more assistance. Where clients found employment or training courses that later ended, guidance workers reported that they did not see these clients for a while, but that they often came back when they needed help to move on to something else.

4.3 Duration of contact

A further consideration is the length of time that individuals used the service for, although this was restricted by the fixed period of the pilots' operation. The data from the MIS shows that for those clients who did use the service more than once:

- over half had their final contact within eight weeks of registering
- ten per cent were in contact for up to 12 weeks
- 14 per cent were in contact for 20 weeks
- 17 per cent were in contact for between 20 and 52 weeks, and
- three per cent were in contact with their AGP for over a year.

The data shows that projects in the higher spend group (*ie* £400 per head or more) were the most likely to have contact past the first visit. Two-thirds of clients using these 'high spend' projects received more than one AGP intervention, compared with just one-third of clients at projects spending less per head.

Some clients required particularly intensive help (*eg* refugees and asylum seekers, or those with basic skills needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities). The case studies suggest that these clients needed preliminary advice of various kinds (*eg* welfare, housing, benefits) before guidance workers were able to take them through their training or employment options. One of the projects described this process as 'hand holding' and many of the projects stressed that without this sort of work, these 'hard to help' clients would not be able to access learning, training or employment opportunities and had often 'fallen through the gaps' with other, less intensive, provision.

Clients with fewer issues often simply needed pointing in the right direction, and they were able to help themselves once they had had an initial input from a key worker. There were also clients who required a number of sessions to address particular

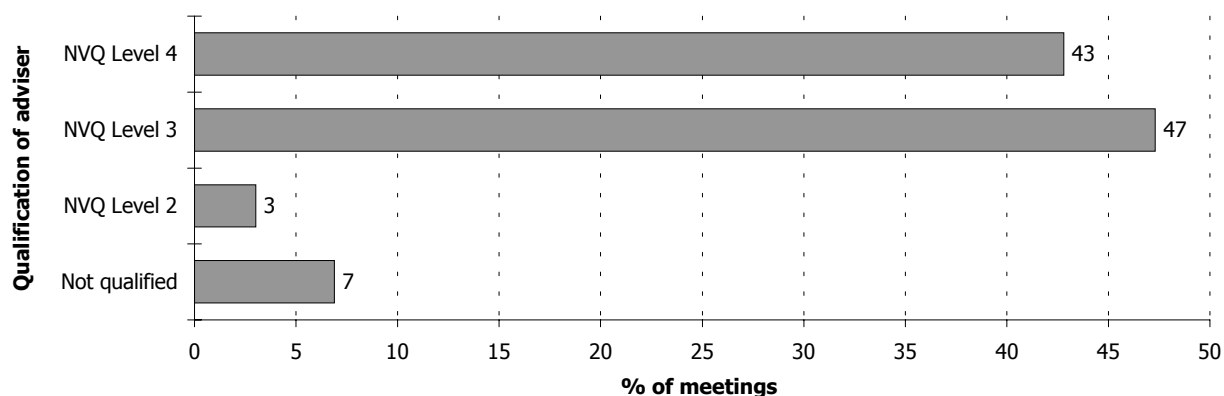
issues (eg CV writing or confidence building), or those who needed regular help with looking for and applying for jobs. In all of these cases, the AGPs were able to offer guidance and continued support due to the nature of their funding (ie linked to more in-depth work with fewer clients).

4.4 Adviser credentials

The AGPs set out to offer a quality guidance intervention and as such we would expect the majority of meetings to have been delivered by individuals with a level 3 guidance qualification or higher. As illustrated in Figure 4.3, this tended to be the case, with less than ten per cent of interventions delivered by an individual qualified at a lower level. This serves as a proxy measure of the quality of intervention received, in the absence of any independent assessment and suggests that the vast majority of staff were sufficiently well trained to be able to offer in-depth guidance in line with the AGP objectives. The advisers without qualifications are most likely to be community representatives (responsible for marketing and spreading the word about services) who may have recorded data on individuals at the very early stages of their involvement. The experiences of the case studies would suggest that this is the case.

Another important aspect of the guidance experience is whether an individual can trust and identify with their adviser. Clients involved in the case studies often appreciated being able to see the same person for guidance and follow-up sessions. This aspect of the AGP package was contrasted with other services (eg Jobcentres) where clients saw different advisers each time they visited. The personal nature of the AGP provision made it particularly suitable for many clients (eg individuals with learning difficulties or mental health problems). Many clients required considerable support over time and worked best with advisers with a detailed understanding of their needs. Clients felt that the

Figure 4.3: Qualification of adviser delivering meetings (MIS data)



Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

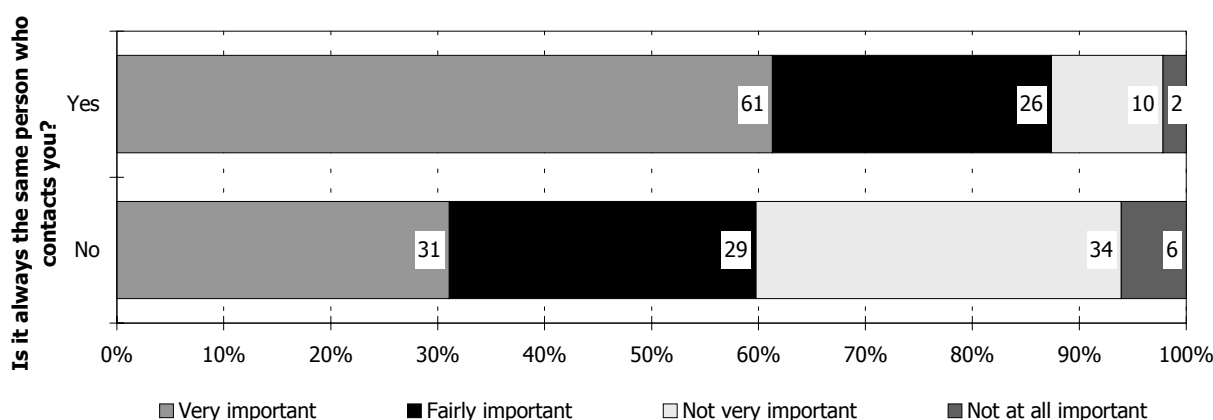
guidance workers got to know them, their background and their aspirations. This meant that clients did not have to explain their circumstances each time they made contact – an important factor in building trust and encouraging repeat visits.

Establishing Links offered an easy access outreach service, providing guidance to individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It accessed clients through a range of services, including day centres, residential homes, supported accommodation, and other networks. The overall model was to provide a single point of contact to take individuals through the whole guidance process, in order to establish trust, make progression as smooth as possible, and in doing so, to increase the clients' confidence.

This concept was also explored in the survey. Respondents who met with an adviser more than once (58 per cent of the total sample) were asked whether they had seen the same adviser each time, and also how important this kind of staff continuity was (Figure 4.4).

Individuals who had seen the same adviser throughout were more likely to feel that this was important (almost 90 per cent thought this to be very or fairly important, compared with just under 60 per cent of those seeing more than one adviser). It seems that individuals who do see only one adviser value the experience, but that those who see more than one do not perceive this as a negative experience. However, those clients to whom meeting with the same adviser is important may have been more likely to seek out appointments with that individual. The reverse may also be true, in that advisers working with individuals who needed a secure point of contact may have been more likely to ensure that this was part of the service.

Figure 4.4: Importance of meeting with same adviser, compared with whether same adviser was met (survey results)



Base: 400 (Yes: 231, No: 169)

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

4.5 How and where contact was made

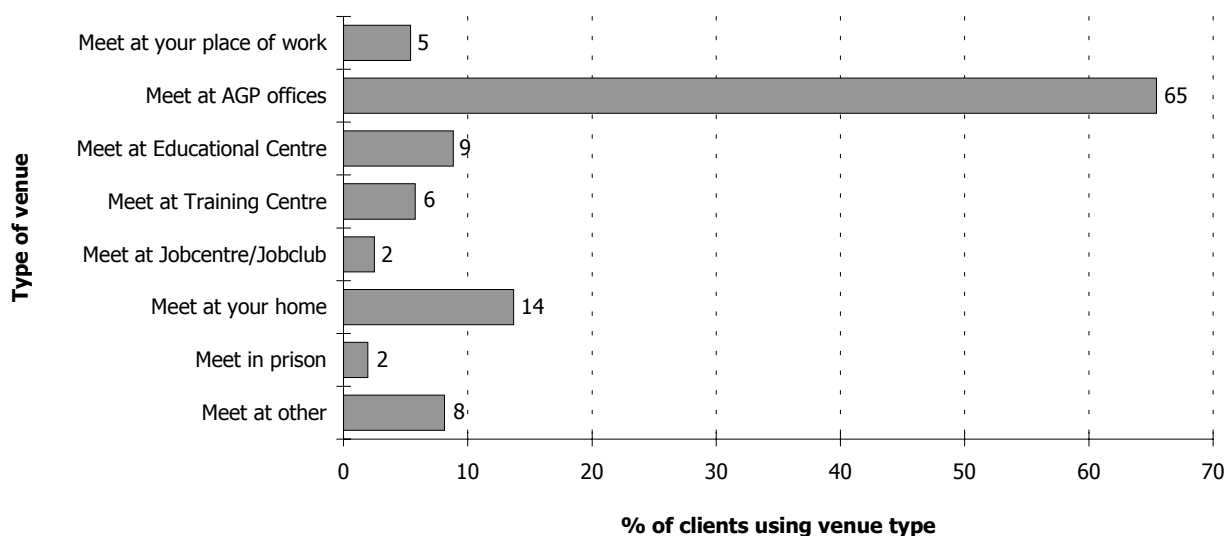
The data available from the MIS regarding the type of meeting individuals had with their AGP is limited. This is due to the large number of meetings where this information is unavailable on the MIS (*ie* missing), or where the type of meeting is classified as 'other' (*ie* where the type of contact lies outside the pre-specified categories, but where details are not provided). However, for those meetings where we do have this information (around half), the majority – almost 70 per cent – took place face-to-face during an appointment. A further eight per cent took place on a drop-in basis, another eight per cent involved a home or outreach visit by the adviser, and six per cent took place by telephone. Very few contacts were made by email (less than one per cent), which is likely to reflect a low computer usage/ownership amongst the target group, as well as the small number of projects who made this type of contact a priority.

The survey also supports the face-to-face nature of most meetings. Client recall suggests that the most frequent type of meeting took place face-to-face and all clients who could recall any type of contact had had at least one of these meetings. Just over 40 per cent had been contacted by letter and over 30 per cent by telephone. There were only a small number of other types of contact (such as email) amongst survey respondents.

Outreach work and flexibility was a prominent feature of the work of the pilots, and the case studies revealed the full range of venues used for guidance delivery. These included Jobcentres, community centres, libraries, health service venues, religious centres (*eg* mosques, temples) and specialist venues (*eg* refugee centres, day-care centres, centres for specific minority ethnic groups). Projects often reported that the outreach venues they used had changed over the life of the project, depending on how suitable particular venues proved and client demand at the venues. Guidance workers often used laptops to take the provision to clients. An outreach service was regarded as a key element of the work of the pilots. This enabled advisers to contact a wider variety of potential clients. It also publicised their services and overcame the barriers of clients unwilling or unable to travel. An outreach approach was also seen as useful in overcoming the lack of confidence amongst many clients who were unwilling to visit unfamiliar places to receive guidance.

When survey respondents were asked to recall where they met with an AGP adviser during face-to-face contact, a variety of locations emerged (Figure 4.5), verifying the large outreach component of many of the pilots. However, the most common venue for meetings was at AGP premises, with 65 per cent of clients meeting here. There were some differences in the venues used by different types of clients, including:

Figure 4.5: Type of venue used for meetings (survey results)



Base: 492

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

- Those not in paid work were more likely to meet advisers in their own homes, whereas those in work were more likely to meet at their place of work.
- Individuals with reading, writing or numeracy difficulties were more likely to meet in their own homes than were other clients (this group are also less likely to be in work).
- Females were more likely than males to meet at an educational centre (this would be due either to the greater number of females engaged in training, amongst AGP clients, or the outreach that took place within schools).

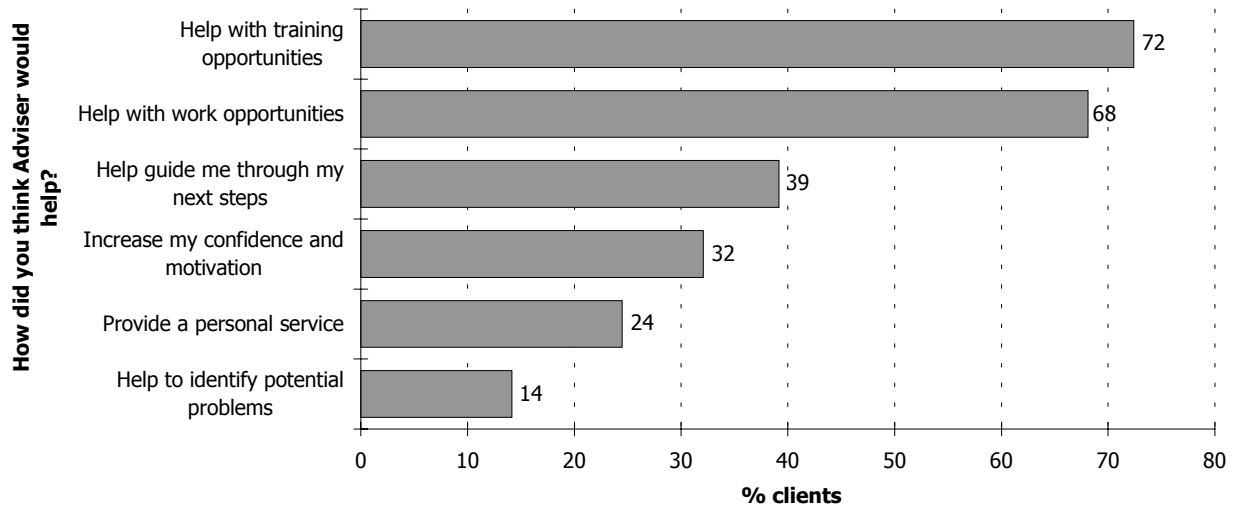
4.6 Client expectations and content of guidance sessions

In this section, data is explored on the expectations of guidance clients in terms of the help they thought they would receive from AGPs. The actual nature of the intervention as recorded by advisers is also considered, and a comparison is made of how expectations and guidance delivery matched.

4.6.1 Expectations

Survey respondents were asked to recall the type of help they hoped to receive from the AGPs. At this point, the time since initial contact with the AGP may have been as long as one year, so the accuracy of client recall may be limited. However, the results fit well with the aims of the AGPs, as the most common types of help clients thought they would receive related to work and training. About 70 per cent of clients cited each as an area in which they were expecting help (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Type of help clients thought they would receive (survey results)



Base: 509

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

There were some differences in the type of help sought by clients, according to their circumstances and characteristics:

- Most people in work, nearly 80 per cent, were seeking help with work opportunities, compared with just over 60 per cent of those not in paid work. In contrast, those not working were more likely to seek help with training opportunities (nearly 80 per cent, compared with 65 per cent of those in work).
- The younger age groups were more interested in help with work opportunities (80 per cent of 17 to 25 year olds, compared with just over 65 per cent for all other groups); 20 to 25 year olds were more interested in training than were the other groups.
- More females expected help in every category than did males, which might reflect the fact that males did not know what to expect or had fewer expectations initially.
- Those with a physical or learning disability sought more help with training opportunities than did those without a disability (75 per cent compared with 66 per cent).
- Those with low qualifications (NVQ levels 1 or 2) were more likely to expect help with training opportunities than were clients with no qualifications and/or those with higher levels of qualifications.
- Over 80 per cent of Black/Black British clients expected advisers to help with training opportunities (the percentage of other ethnic groups ranged from 62 to 73).
- A higher proportion of those in low income groups thought they would receive help with training opportunities, and more of those in higher income groups thought they would receive

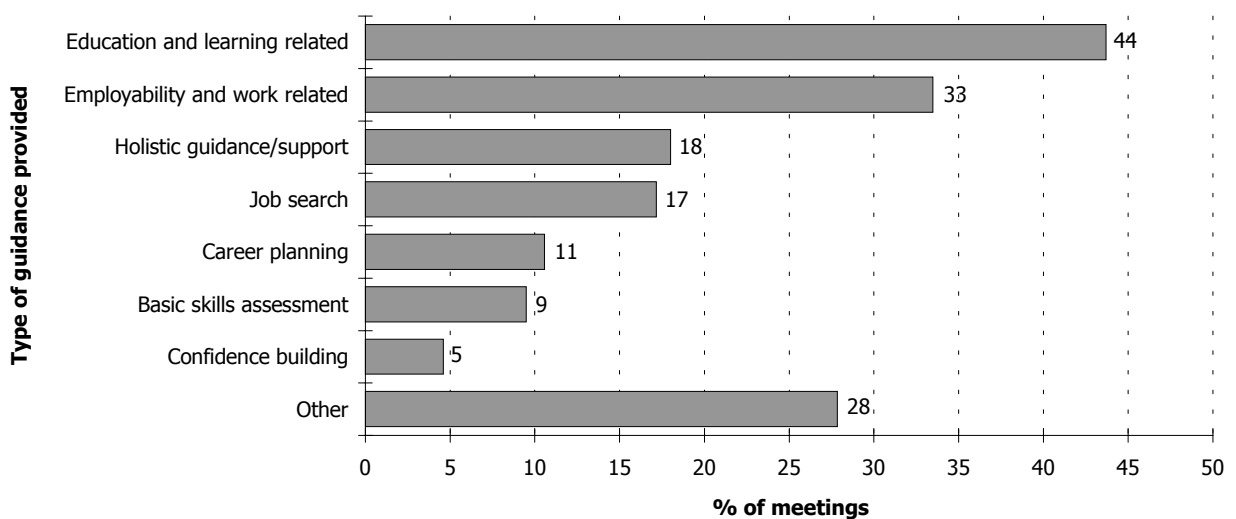
help with work opportunities, although this is likely to be related to an individual's employment status.

The majority of individuals felt that they had received the type of guidance they had sought. Over 80 per cent of clients who had sought guidance about training opportunities recalled having received this type of advice. Those who sought guidance on work opportunities also recalled having received this type of guidance in around 80 per cent of cases. Individuals who sought help in identifying potential problems, however, were more likely to have actually received advice on training options (65 per cent), than help with identifying these difficulties (55 per cent). This would appear to show the positive nature of guidance offered by the AGPs, as rather than point out difficulties, the advisers were able to offer potential solutions.

4.6.2 Guidance content

The actual content of the guidance intervention (as recorded by advisers) is available in the MIS, although still over a quarter of meetings lie outside the pre-defined categories (Figure 4.7). The most common type of guidance offered was concerned with education/training opportunities (44 per cent), followed by employability and work-related opportunities (34 per cent), although a further 17 per cent were involved in a specific job search during their meetings. The 18 per cent of meetings which involved 'holistic guidance/support' ties in well with the case study evidence, which shows that the pilots particularly welcomed the opportunity to engage in this type of interaction with their clients.

Figure 4.7: Content of meetings offered by AGPs (MIS data)



Base: 24,186 meetings

Note: Each meeting may have involved more than one category of assistance, hence the overall total is more than 100 per cent. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (values of less than 0.5% not shown).

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

Pulling the survey and MIS data together, it is possible to compare the reasons why individuals sought guidance with the guidance that they actually received (Table 4.2). This not only provides a measure of whether individual needs were actually met, but also gives a better flavour of the guidance interventions themselves.

Individuals seeking guidance on work opportunities were most likely to receive guidance on work-related issues (just under one-third), and another 15 per cent received help with job search. However, around one-third of those seeking help with jobs/work also received guidance about education. Individuals seeking help with training/educational issues were the most likely to receive help with this (38 per cent), although over a quarter received some guidance on work-related issues as well. Just under ten per cent of this latter group also received a basic skills assessment.

Learning and Work Guidance for People with Disabilities

provided in-depth support for its clients. A typical example is of a young disabled woman living in a residential home. A college course was found that would allow her to socialise with people of her own age and to further her interests in a specific area. The client found the course difficult and felt it was moving too fast for her. Through continued contact, building trust and sensitive probing, her adviser was able to discover and discuss her basic skills needs. A basic skills assessment was set up by the adviser who also identified the best travel route from the client's home to college and travelled with the client the first time she made the journey. There were accessibility problems on the route which the adviser was able to sort out with the transport company. The client herself lacked the confidence to complain and would therefore have been effectively barred from the college without the AGP intervention. Now that this problem has been sorted out, the client is attending college full time, studying basic and life skills.

Thus, whilst individuals were likely to receive guidance that in some form met their expectations, a large percentage were also helped in other ways. This illustrates the reflective and in-depth nature of the provision on offer, as shown by the case study visits. Individuals may initially present advisers with a very specific idea of what they want to achieve, but managing their expectations is an important part of the guidance process. Certain careers or jobs are not open to individuals without the relevant learning behind them, for example. Initial discussions about work can often lead to guidance about learning and *vice versa*.

One further comparison is between how individuals viewed the contents of their guidance session/s and how the content was described by advisers. Of those who felt their guidance had consisted of help with training opportunities, according to their adviser, 37 per cent had actually received this, but a further third had discussed their employability and 17 per cent engaged in job search. Of those who thought they had discussed work opportunities, 30 per cent had actually discussed employability, 16 per cent job search, but one-third had also received guidance

Table 4.2: Comparison of reasons individuals sought guidance with guidance they actually received

Help sought	Guidance offered (%)											Base (N)
	Basic skills assessment	Career planning	Confidence building	Education/ learning related	Work related	Holistic guidance/ support	Job search	Mentoring	Psychometric testing	Specialist guidance	Other (undefined)	
Work	10.5	9.3	6.1	32.0	30.4	16.2	15.8	4.5	0.8	5.3	36.0	247
Training/education	9.3	10.7	4.4	37.8	28.1	15.2	17.4	3.3	0.7	3.7	30.7	270
Guidance through next steps	11.7	9.0	4.8	40.0	26.9	16.6	18.6	3.4	0.7	5.5	35.9	145
Personal service	13.7	11.6	3.2	37.9	31.6	11.6	14.7	3.2	1.1	7.4	30.5	95
Increased confidence	12.8	10.3	6.0	36.8	33.3	13.7	19.7	5.1	0.9	3.4	35.9	117
Identify potential problems	14.0	14.0	—	34.0	28.0	26.0	18.0	—	2.0	2.0	26.0	50

Note: The base for this table is those in the survey and MIS with non-missing data on the variables

Source: AGP MIS and MORI, 2003

on their education and training options. This would suggest that individuals have a different view of the guidance they have received than advisers, who are likely to talk through a range of options with individuals. Clients are likely to recall only those outcomes that have most relevance to them.

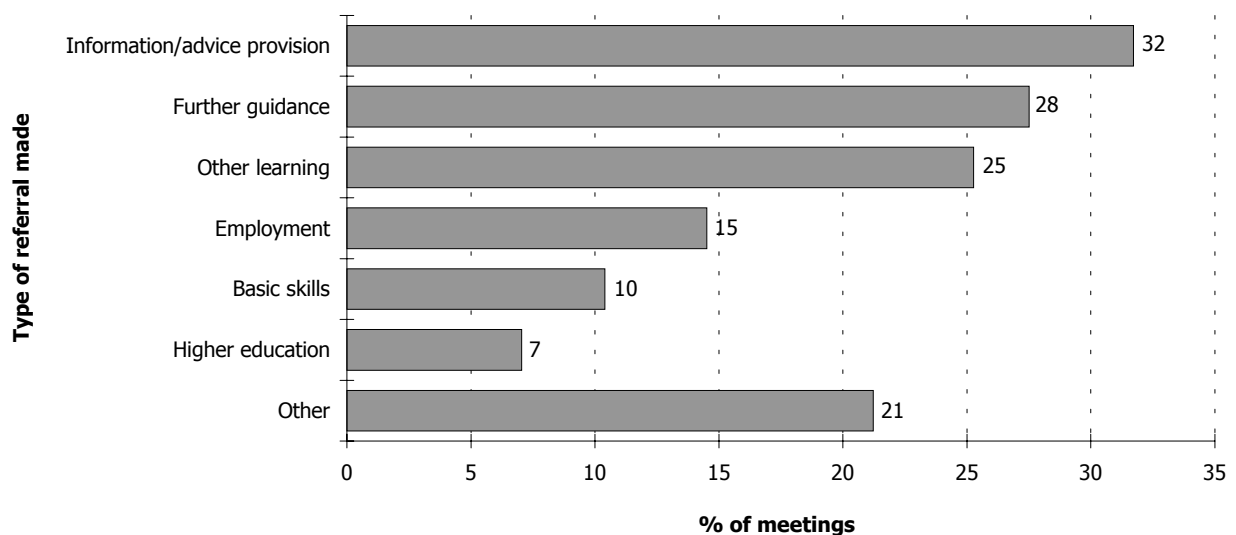
4.7 Referrals made

Another part of the work of the AGPs was to refer clients on for further assistance where required. In total, 8,656 meetings resulted in referrals, either within the AGP itself (perhaps for another appointment) or to other agencies. There is no information in the MIS on the external agencies to which individuals were referred, but the case study data (see Chapter 2) provides a useful insight into the way that AGPs interacted with other local provision. We do have information from the MIS, however, on the types of referrals made (Figure 4.8). The two most common types of referrals were for further advice/information (32 per cent of meetings) or further guidance (28 per cent of meetings), although a range of other reasons were given.

4.8 Summary

There are 13,132 clients recorded as having made some form of contact with the AGPs. The number reached by individual projects varies considerably, with some reaching tens of clients and others reaching thousands, reflecting the variety of target groups and approaches. Over half of clients are recorded as having used their AGP only once, although many individuals

Figure 4.8: Type of referrals made (MIS data)



Base: 8,656

Note: Each meeting may have involved more than one category of assistance, hence the overall total is more than 100 per cent. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (values of less than 0.5% not shown).

Source: AGP MIS 2003

needed more extensive support. Some ten per cent of clients used their AGP four times or more, and records show that some clients were in contact with their pilot project for up to a year. Individuals who did require more support tended to be the most disadvantaged, and included disabled clients, those with low qualifications, individuals on benefits and/or those from certain minority ethnic groups.

Clients interviewed in the survey tended to recall using the service more often than their records from the MIS would suggest was the case. This shows the importance of both accurate record keeping – case study pilots cast doubt on whether they were able to complete records for all the time spent with clients – and the dangers of relying too heavily on client recall for evaluation purposes.

The qualifications of advisers delivering the sessions were high, with 90 per cent of sessions delivered by an adviser qualified to either level 3 or 4. Almost 90 per cent of sessions were also delivered face-to-face, with little take up of telephone or email contact. The pilots used a range of venues for delivery, reflecting the fact that outreach was at the very heart of the service provided.

Client expectations about the guidance they received showed that most were expecting help with work or learning opportunities. Individuals currently working were most likely to seek work-related guidance, whilst disabled clients were more likely to seek help with training/learning, as were individuals with low qualifications. Low income groups were more likely to be seeking learning-related guidance, whilst higher income groups sought help with work-related opportunities, which is likely to relate to their work status. Managing client expectations, however, was an important part of the guidance process, although the type of guidance individuals actually received did match this fairly closely. A total of almost 9,000 meetings resulted in a referral, and over half of these were for further advice/information or guidance.

5. Activities Since First AGP Contact

This chapter focuses on ‘hard’ outcomes. These are changes to an individual’s work or learning status that have been made since their first contact with an AGP. There are a number of issues to consider in examining data on these changes to the activities of individuals.

Firstly, value judgements about whether changes are positive or negative for the individual in question are very difficult to make. Even in economic terms the picture is complex. Leaving low-paid and/or low-skilled work, for example, to pursue training, voluntary work or some other avenue may lead to longer-term economic benefits despite short-term economic ‘pain’. For other individuals (eg those with learning difficulties), the path into paid work can be an extremely lengthy one, and expectations of ‘hard’ outcomes after less than 15 months of AGP activity may be unrealistic. Finally, the fact that the client base of AGPs overall is disadvantaged compared with other comparable samples must be taken into account when considering outcomes. No comparisons have been made with other data sources (eg NALS) due to the very different sample profiles.

Previous work examining the impact of careers guidance has determined a range of outcomes in relation to learning and work.¹ However, these studies also demonstrate the difficulties of separating the impact of guidance from the effects of other factors (eg local economic forces, the work of other agencies, personal attitudes and abilities). In this chapter, the data available on the AGP clients is examined to determine any changes made by clients in terms of their work and learning status. Whilst it is not possible to attribute this directly to the AGPs, data are also presented on the extent to which individuals perceive these changes to be the result of AGP guidance interventions. Case study examples also illustrate how AGP interventions have made real differences to the lives of some individuals.

¹ eg Killeen J, White M (2000), *The Impact of Careers Guidance on Adult Employed People*, DfEE Research Report RR226: Sheffield.

5.1 Data limitations

There are a number of difficulties in estimating the impact of AGPs on individuals, using the MIS data. Firstly, it is only possible to consider individuals who were in contact with their AGP for more than one meeting, or over a period of time, including any follow-ups made. Those who were not followed up, or who only attended one meeting, will only have their data recorded at one point in time. If these were included in the analysis, any impact would be significantly underestimated, as it would not be possible to determine any changes in their situation. Unfortunately, this means that for the majority of individuals, it is not possible to examine progress using the MIS data.

Another issue is that the clients for whom data are available for more than one meeting, have a different profile than the population of users as a whole (see Chapter 4). Basically, they appear to be more disadvantaged. Therefore, there is a possibility that analysis of the outcomes data from the MIS may again underestimate the impact of guidance work, by concentrating on those clients who are hardest to reach. However, it is still possible to examine movement on a number of variables for this sub-population.

A more significant issue is that the MIS data is unable to demonstrate what would have happened to these individuals without guidance, and therefore show conclusively whether it was the AGP interventions that made the difference, or some other factor(s). A further limitation of the MIS was raised by pilot staff, who felt that the limited range of outcomes that could be recorded (the MIS is mainly concerned with hard outcomes) was not appropriate for some groups who made small but significant progress.

There are also a number of limitations presented by the data collected as part of the survey. For example, it is very possible that the survey data does not fully capture the views of all clients, due to the complexity of the interview, particularly in the case of individuals with low or basic skills, and/or learning difficulties. Whilst a simplified questionnaire was used with those clients identified by their AGPs as having such difficulties (see Appendix 1 for further technical details about the survey), pilots working with this particular client group were, nevertheless, concerned about the extent to which their clients would be able to recall interventions or comment on progress.

The survey data does, however, provide individual estimates of the impact of AGP interventions on various factors, and will be discussed in tandem with the MIS analysis and the experiences of the case studies. Multivariate analysis was also conducted on the MIS data in relation to key outcome data.

5.2 Learning and qualifications

One of the main purposes of the AGPs was to provide guidance on learning opportunities for clients. In this section, the extent to which individuals participated in learning following contact with their AGP is examined, as are any changes to the level of their qualifications as a result.

5.2.1 Participation in learning/training

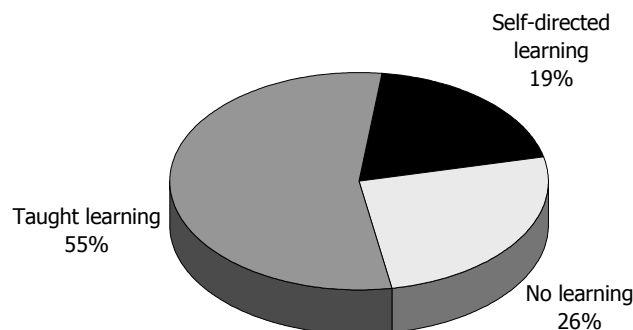
In the survey, individuals were asked to provide details of any training or learning opportunities they had engaged in since their first contact with an AGP (Figure 5.1). Over half reported engaging in some form of taught learning/training, and a further fifth had embarked on some form of self-directed learning. Just over two-thirds of individuals had also engaged in more than one learning episode (Figure 5.2), and the maximum number of episodes for any one individual was six.

There were some sub-group differences in terms of learning take-up, as follows:

Women were more likely than men to have engaged in some form of learning (21 per cent of women were non-learners, compared with 30 per cent of men). This may reflect the far higher proportion of women in part-time work, who were thus able to begin learning part time without changes to their work pattern.

- Individuals stating they had difficulties with numbers, reading, or writing, were more likely than those without these difficulties to engage in some form of taught course (62 per cent, compared with 51 per cent).

Figure 5.1: Engagement in learning since first contact with AGP (survey results)

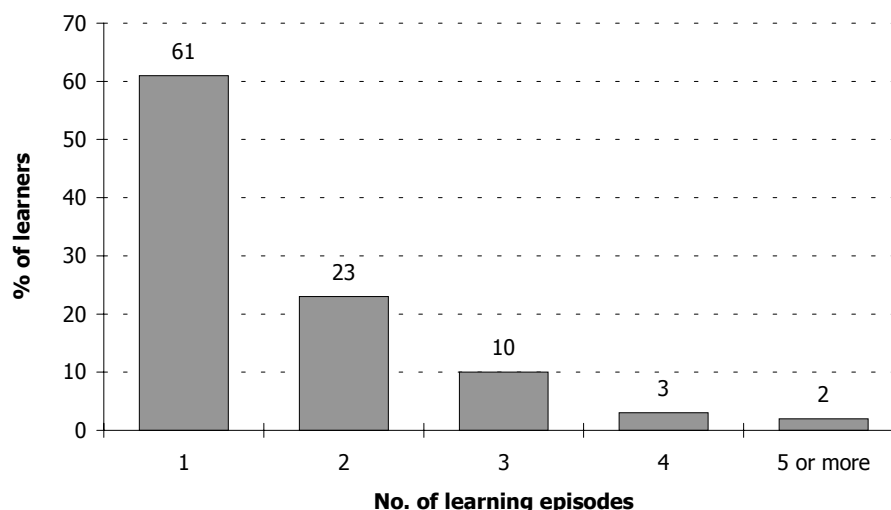


Base: 544

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

Figure 5.2: Number of learning episodes since first contact with AGP (survey results)



Base: 311

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

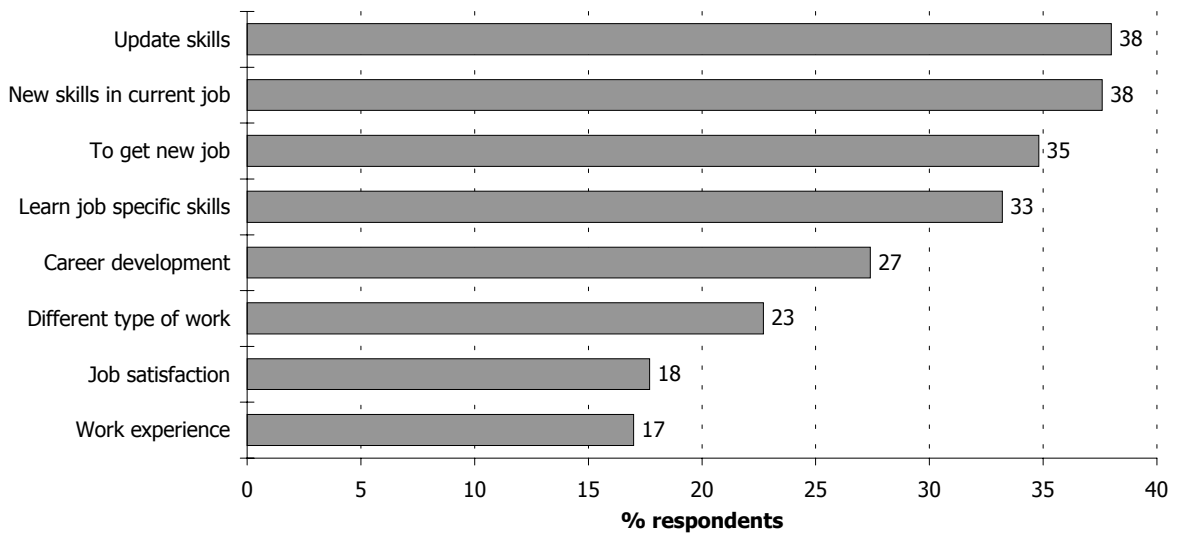
Source: MORI/IES, 2003

- Disabled individuals were less likely to have engaged in learning of some kind (32 per cent were non-learners, compared with 24 per cent of individuals without a disability).
- White clients were the least likely to have taken up taught learning (49 per cent), followed by Asian/Asian British clients (50 per cent). Black/Black British, and Chinese/other clients, were the most likely to have engaged in taught learning (68 per cent in each case).

The motivations for first engaging in learning were explored with survey respondents. They were asked to outline the reasons why they decided to take the initial step into learning (the main reasons are presented in Figure 5.3). Updating or improving skills was the most common reason, although finding a new job was also an important motivator. Therefore, the importance of learning as an intermediate outcome in gaining future work advantage is again highlighted.

In addition to this learning activity, 68 individuals in the survey had taken part in a government training scheme since their first contact with an AGP. Half of these described the scheme as either work-based learning or work-based training for adults. The other main sources of government training were through a range of New Deal programmes (*ie* 25 plus, 50 plus, lone parents, and disabled people).

Figure 5.3: Reasons given for entering learning (survey results)



Base: 309

Note: Individuals were free to give as many reasons as applied, so percentages do not add to 100. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

5.2.2 Qualifications taken

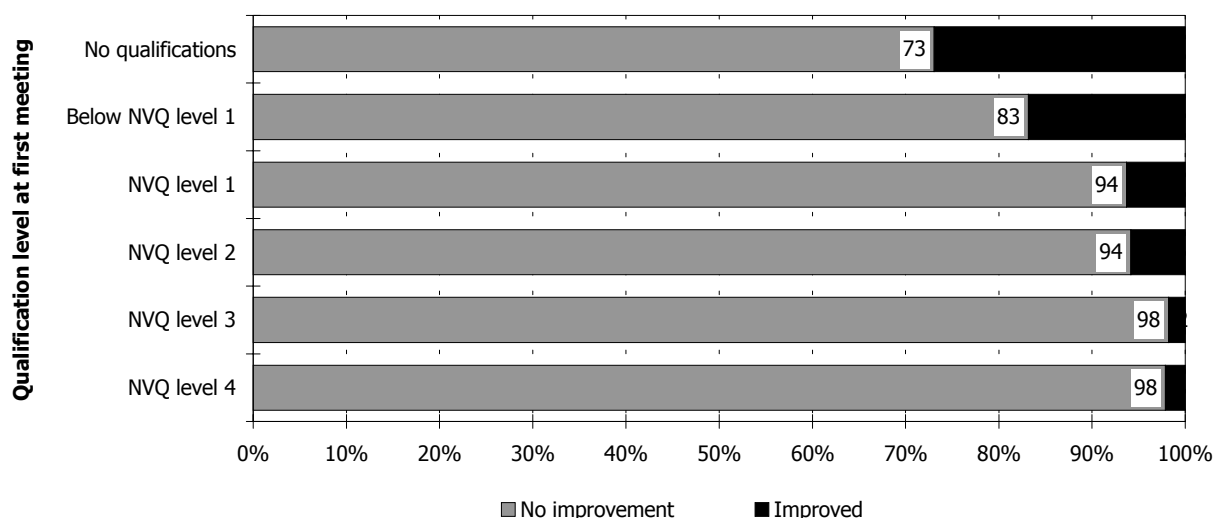
The qualification level of individuals, and how this changed over time, is an important indicator of the impact of the AGPs, particularly as almost 45 per cent of AGP meetings offered some form of guidance on education and learning, either in isolation or in tandem with other issues (see Chapter 4).

Of those survey respondents engaged in only one learning episode since their first contact with an AGP, two-thirds were (or had been) on a course leading to a qualification. As the number of learning episodes an individual had been engaged in increased, the likelihood of that episode leading to a qualification decreased. Individuals with reading, writing, or numeracy difficulties, were less likely to be in learning leading to a qualification initially. Further evidence from the case studies would suggest that some individuals who start a mainstream course leading to a qualification, find it inappropriate for their needs. They may be unable to complete it due to basic skills difficulties (or other issues), and they subsequently leave to take up more suitable courses. These courses may, or may not, lead to a qualification initially.

For those individuals recorded as working towards a qualification at the time of their last contact with the AGPs, the level of this qualification was recorded in the MIS for around 80 per cent of clients. The breakdown of these qualifications was as follows:

- 38 per cent were working towards a level 1 qualification or below

Figure 5.4: Improvements in qualification levels (those with more than one meeting, MIS data)



Base: 700

Note: Those with a level 5 qualification at time of first meeting are excluded from this figure as no improvement could be made according to this scale.

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

- 30 per cent were working towards a level 2 qualification
- 15 per cent a level 3 qualification
- 17 per cent a level 4 or 5 qualification.

For those individuals for whom data is available¹ from the MIS, 8.5 per cent now have an improved level of qualification compared with when they first made contact with their AGP. The improvements for those with lower-level qualifications are particularly marked (Figure 5.4). For example, of the 78 individuals who began with no qualifications (and for whom we have data), 27 per cent now have a qualification of some kind; and of the 101 individuals with qualifications to less than level 1, 17 per cent have made an improvement.

For those with higher-level of qualification, making an improvement during the period of time for which we have data (*ie* less than two years) may not have been possible (*eg* in going from level 2 to level 3). This is also complicated by the fact that higher-level qualifications are likely to be offered by more formal providers, and therefore subject to more restrictive start dates. Hence, they may have to wait some time between receiving guidance about a particular course or subject, and the opportunity to start that course.

If the AGPs were able to track their clients over a longer period of time, and monitor the extent to which the individuals still

¹ *ie* clients with data recorded over more than one point in time on this variable.

studying for a qualification were subsequently successful in gaining that qualification, then the impact on qualification levels would be likely to prove to be greater than is shown by the MIS data.

The numbers are generally too small for detailed sub-group analysis, but there do appear to be greater gains amongst those not in work (around 15 per cent improving their qualification level) compared with those working full or part time (around six per cent). This may be as a result of greater flexibility in taking up learning opportunities amongst those without work commitments. Alternatively, this group may be able to improve their qualification status more quickly due to them having further to travel in qualification terms. Lower-level qualifications generally take less time to complete.

There are also differences in the improvements made according to the number of contacts individuals have made with their AGP, although those with only one meeting are excluded from this analysis (as elapsed time since first AGP contact is zero, they cannot be expected to have made any progress). The most likely group to have improved their qualification level are those attending two or three times (just over ten per cent of this group, compared with around five per cent of individuals using the service four or more times). However, this may simply reflect the fact that clients using the service more regularly often face greater disadvantage, and therefore have further to travel towards better (or any) qualifications.

The gains made by clients appear to increase according to the AGP spend per head. Only three per cent of clients using projects with a spend of £200 or less made a qualification improvement, compared with 12 per cent of projects spending £200 to £400 per head, and 19 per cent of projects spending more than £400 per head. However, this may again be a function of the target groups of these projects.

Multivariate analysis was conducted to determine which, of a range of factors, was the most important in determining whether an improvement in qualification level had been made. Gender, age, ethnicity, whether the client had a disability, their initial level of qualification, the barriers they faced¹, the number of contacts they had with their AGP, and their employment status, were all entered into a logistic regression. Once the effects of all the other variables were taken into account, employment status, the number of meetings, and whether the client had English as a second language, were the most important factors in determining improvements in qualification levels. Part-time workers have lower odds of having improved their qualification levels compared with full-time workers. Those not in work, but who

¹ Barriers to learning & work were combined for this analysis.

don't have unemployed status, have higher odds than those in full-time work of making an improvement. Those who reported having English as a second language as a barrier, and individuals meeting four or more times with an adviser, had higher odds of improving their qualifications.

This confirms that individuals without work commitments are more likely to be able to improve their qualifications quickly. This appears to be a more important factor than their existing qualification level, but is obviously related. Part-time workers may find it more difficult to juggle a range of work and learning commitments. Part-time study also takes, by definition, longer to complete. It is interesting to see how individuals with more contact are able to improve here. This suggests that AGP interventions do have an impact (Appendix 3 contains full details of this analysis).

5.3 Work

Assessing the impact of AGP participation on work status is complex, as it is not possible to talk about improvements *per se*, only changes. The move from full- to part-time work, for example, may be due to the need to free up time to take on a course that will eventually lead to a better job. People may also give up a job to move into learning, and subsequently find themselves a job at a later date, but again this cannot be captured with the data available from the MIS. Another consideration is that people who are in short-term work, on temporary contracts, or who face redundancy or some other type of job change outside of their control, may be more likely to have sought guidance in the first place. Hence, it might be expected that their work status would change with or without a guidance intervention, and not necessarily for the better.

Bearing these limitations in mind, in an attempt to map changes in work status, the data for individuals visiting the AGP more than once was examined to determine changes in employment status from their first to their last visit (Table 5.1). The majority of people in work remained in work, and if they were working full time they continued to do so, as did those in part-time work. Around 29 per cent of individuals who had been unemployed for less than six months were successful in finding work. Of those who had been unemployed for six months or more, around 17 per cent were successful in finding work of some kind. Individuals who were classed as neither in work nor having unemployed status (*ie* those in the 'other' category¹) were most likely to remain in this category (although changes from, for example, a lone parent to

¹ Other category included individuals 'looking after home', 'retired', 'in training/learning', 'disabled'.

Table 5.1: Changes made between first and last contact (survey results)

Activity at first AGP contact	Activity at last AGP contact %				Other	Base (N)
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Unemployed (< 6 months)	Unemployed (=> 6 months)		
Full-time work	95.6	1.5	0.8	0.7	1.5	1,532
Part-time work	3.9	89.9	2.0	1.2	3.0	563
Unemployed (< 6 mnths)	23.0	5.6	44.1	12.6	14.8	270
Unemployed (=>6 mnths)	11.7	5.1	5.4	63.6	14.2	316
Other	7.0	4.2	2.0	4.8	82.0	811
Total	1,642	594	175	291	790	3,492

Source: AGP MIS, 2003

disabled, could have been made), but around eleven per cent had also found work.

There were no significant differences in work outcomes by the project spend per head.

The survey also sought to map any changes that individuals made in terms of their work status. However, the picture is more complex, as individuals were asked to describe their main activities in the year prior to contact with the AGP, rather than give their main activity at a single point in time. As would be expected, a significant minority were engaged in more than one activity in the year prior to contact. Individuals have been classified as in work, training/learning, or unemployment, or any combination of these three. Details on changes made are presented in Table 5.2.

It is not possible to draw direct comparisons between the survey data and the MIS data due, to differences in the way that the information was collected. However, it is interesting to note whether the same trends exist.

Table 5.2: Changes from activity prior to and after guidance (survey results)

Activity pre guidance	Current main activity %			Base (N)
	In work	Unemployed/inactive	Training/learning	
Work only	78.2	13.4	8.4	119
Work & Learning/training	71.0	16.1	12.9	31
Work & Unemployed/inactive	61.0	29.9	9.1	77
Unemployed/inactive only	12.6	57.4	30.1	183
Learning/training & Unemployed/inactive	13.0	55.6	31.5	54
Learning/training only	10.3	25.9	63.8	58
Work & Learning/training & Unemployed/inactive	40.9	50.0	9.1	22
Total	207	205	132	544

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

Individuals who reported work as their sole activity prior to guidance, were likely to be still in work (78 per cent), although eight per cent had entered training since their first contact with an AGP. Individuals with some experience of work in the year prior to AGP contact, but who had also been doing other things, were less likely to have work as their main activity (eg just 61 per cent of those who had experienced periods of unemployment/inactivity in addition to work prior to AGP contact).

Where individuals' sole activity prior to guidance was unemployment/labour market inactivity, the majority were likely to remain unemployed/inactive (57 per cent). However, almost one-third now classified their main activity as training/learning, representing a significant shift, whilst a further 13 per cent had entered work by the time of the survey.

Individuals whose sole activity prior to guidance was learning/training, were still likely to be engaged in this activity (64 per cent), but ten per cent had entered work.

In conclusion, a significant number of AGP clients have made changes to their work/learning status since receiving guidance. These changes include leaving unemployment for work or training, and finding work after completion of a period of learning/training. In the next section, client views on the extent to which their AGP was helpful in facilitating these changes are examined.

Further multivariate analysis was also conducted to determine, of those not in work at the time of their initial AGP contact, who were most likely to have found work. Gender, age, ethnic group, whether the client had a disability, a range of barriers, the number of contacts made with an AGP, and their level of qualification at the first AGP contact, were entered in to a logistic regression. In this case, qualification level, disability, and asylum seeker status, emerged as the most important factors. Interestingly, those without a disability have lower odds of having moved into work from unemployment than those with a disability. This may reflect the fact that help is targeted on those who, traditionally, find it more difficult to find work.

Individuals qualified to level 2 before their guidance intervention have lower odds of having moved from unemployment to work than those with no qualifications. This again highlights the impact of the work of the AGPs with individuals with low qualification levels. Also, individuals with asylum-seeker status were more likely to move into work than those without this barrier to work. However, this may reflect the fact that over time, if individuals are granted refugee status, they also gain the right to work.

5.4 User perceptions of AGP impact

Individuals were asked to say what changes had happened to them since they first became involved in the AGP. They were also asked to state the extent to which these changes were a direct result of getting involved in the AGP, or would have happened anyway (Table 5.3). Only a quarter of respondents felt that their work and training situations had not changed in some way since their contact with an AGP.

The most common changes individuals outlined were improvements to skills and/or learning and training position. The data tell a similar story to the MIS, although a slightly higher percentage of survey respondents note having improved their qualification levels than is recorded on the MIS. Comparing the data for individuals where data is available from both sources (a total of just 119 individuals), 14 per cent of survey respondents state that they have improved their qualification level. Of these, just 11 per cent are recorded on the MIS as having made this improvement. This is likely to reflect the poor tracking data available from the MIS, which reflects a shorter timeframe than that recalled by survey respondents in many cases.

Table 5.3: Outcomes and likelihood of them occurring without AGP (survey results), per cent

Outcomes	Sample with outcome	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely	Don't know	Base (N)
Improved existing skills/learnt new skills	31.5	22.9	27.6	28.2	19.3	2.1	171
Took part in a training course	31.1	20.3	30.2	26.7	16.7	6.0	169
Enrolled on a course	30.2	15.9	31.3	30.1	17.0	5.6	164
Working towards a qualification	19.9	13.2	30.1	32.8	19.4	4.6	108
Learnt to how write a C.V./letter/fill out forms	19.0	27.3	30.9	22.5	15.7	3.6	103
Started applying for jobs	17.5	7.2	21.7	37.9	33.1	-	95
Started looking for a job	16.3	10.9	20.7	37.2	30.1	1.1	89
My English-speaking skills have improved	13.1	23.2	19.8	33.1	20.4	3.4	71
Got a job due to help from AGP	12.8	10.7	35.7	38.9	13.4	1.3	70
My reading/writing skills have improved	12.6	27.0	24.3	26.2	15.8	6.7	69
Changed to a different type of work	12.5	18.3	36.2	27.6	14.4	3.6	68
Obtained a qualification	12.2	23.6	34.3	27.9	12.3	1.8	66
Attended more job interviews	9.6	12.4	39.7	35.0	12.9	-	52
None of these have happened	27.4	—	—	—	—	—	

Source: AGP Survey, 2003

User perceptions of the influence of the AGP are very positive, although again this is more so for training and learning opportunities than for work. More than 30 per cent of survey respondents felt they had either improved existing skills or learnt new skills, and over 50 per cent of these thought this would probably, or definitely, *not* have occurred, had it not been for the help provided by the AGPs. As low and basic skills were perceived to be the biggest barrier to both work and training opportunities by survey respondents, this evidence would suggest that involvement with an AGP did appear to break down these barriers for a significant proportion of clients.

Just over 12 per cent found a new job after involvement with an AGP, and of these, just under half thought this outcome unlikely without the help obtained through the AGP. Individuals who started to search for work or apply for jobs, were less likely to attribute this to the AGP intervention, although around one-third in each case thought they probably, or definitely, wouldn't have taken this action without help.

The MIS identified the most common barrier amongst clients as being poor English language skills, so it is interesting to note that around 13 per cent of survey respondents felt they had made an improvement in this area. Of these, over 40 per cent felt this was due, in some part, to the influence of the AGP.

There were differences by the amount of contact individuals had with their AGP. Using data from the MIS on the actual number of meetings recorded, individuals with more recorded meetings (*ie* two to three, or four or more) were more likely to credit the AGP for their greater awareness of job options or where to look for jobs, than those with just one meeting.

Overall, therefore, individuals did feel that the work of AGPs had some impact on their work/learning situation. This appears to be particularly true in relation to skills and qualifications, although there was also a perceived impact on work and job seeking.

5.5 Examples from the case studies

Many of the case studies were able to provide examples of the work/training outcomes achieved by their clients. Pilot staff were keen to put these achievements in context, and were keen to adopt a 'distance travelled' approach to outcomes. The different starting points of clients, realistic expectations about what could be achieved and when, also had to be taken into account. *'Get them making little choices and this can lead to big choices later'*. In this way, looking at hard outcomes only tells part of the story of clients' progress and achievements (other outcomes are examined in Chapter 6).

However, case study pilots were able to offer a range of different client experiences and outcomes as evidence of their impact on the lives of individuals. Often, these outcomes involved a mix of learning, work experience, and jobs, and it is useful to acknowledge the complexity of outcomes – and AGP activities – which quantitative data is unable to capture.

Some examples of client experiences include:

- a client who became involved with the DfES pilot at Nechells Employment Resource Centre when he was doing voluntary work at the NHS Mental Health Trust. After receipt of guidance, he enrolled on a series of basic skills courses. This subsequently helped him to secure full-time paid employment with the Trust, for which he had previously only volunteered. Currently, he is also doing a day-release college course, which should provide him with the qualifications he needs to study to be a nurse. Throughout these decisions, he continued to work with his adviser at an AGP in order to review his progress and to plan his future activities.
- a client at the Community Empowerment & Development Forum was unemployed when he first sought guidance. He had previously worked in factories, but was hoping for a change of career, possibly in community-based work. He is now doing a teacher training course, and also working for the Forum on a voluntary basis.
- one of the clients using Learning and Work Guidance for People with Disabilities, who was able to find a work placement with his local council. The AGP was successful in securing a support worker for 20 hours a week to support him in this placement. Another factor was his need for suitable office clothing, which was difficult to source as the young man was born with no limbs. Again, the AGP stepped in and secured funding for a specially tailored suit. Despite strong IT skills, his disability had prevented him from gaining full independence in the past. His aim is to find work that is not a placement targeted at disabled people, and his adviser is confident that he will be able to do so now he has this work experience.
- a PATH client, who had been unable to secure full-time employment despite having some experience. It seemed that he lacked interview skills, and this was preventing him from progressing. A mock interview showed that he had lost confidence, was nervous, and didn't know how to promote himself effectively in an interview situation. He was given mock-interview practice, sessions to help him to compile a CV, and help with application forms. He is now in full-time employment.
- a client at the Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities project, who was previously working in retail, but left her job as she did not

enjoy it and felt that she did not have any prospects. She was unemployed when she sought guidance, and didn't know what she wanted to do. With advice from the project, she has since taken courses in book keeping, desktop publishing, and Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), and has continued to keep in touch with the guidance workers for help in applying for work. She now feels confident that she will be able to get a job that she will be happy with in the long term.

- a Byte Sized Guidance client, who had been at home looking after children for some years when she came into contact with the project. She felt very isolated, and thought that a job would help her socially, but her confidence was very low and she was nervous about the interview process. Over several meetings, the guidance worker helped this client to put together a CV, and talked about potential areas of work. These sessions helped her to be successful at an interview she had for a job at her local school.

5.6 Summary

Estimating the way in which receipt of guidance affects work and training/learning outcomes is historically difficult, and the data used in this evaluation has some limitations. However, it is possible to describe the ways in which individuals have changed their circumstances, and also provide details of the extent to which these changes are attributed to AGP interventions.

There were very positive changes in relation to work and/or learning/training. Of those surveyed, 55 per cent claimed to have engaged in taught learning, and a further 19 per cent in self-directed learning, since their first contact with an AGP. The MIS also offers a range of evidence:

- Those most likely to get involved in learning were women, individuals with basic skills needs, and certain ethnic groups (eg Black/Black British).
- The reasons given for engaging in learning related mainly to improving and/or updating skills, and to improving work prospects either in new or existing jobs.
- Around two-thirds of those in learning were taking a course leading to a qualification, and of these, the majority are working to a level 2 qualification or higher.
- Nine per cent of individuals involved in the AGPs have improved their level of qualification since their first contact, and improvements are particularly marked amongst those with no qualifications who have engaged in learning, 27 per cent of whom now have some form of qualification.

These outcomes are mirrored in changes to clients' work status. The main results in relation to work, from the MIS, are that:

- Just over a quarter of individuals who had been unemployed for less than six months had been successful in finding full-time work since their first contact with an AGP.
- Individuals unemployed for six months or more were less likely to enter work, but around ten per cent still did so.

The survey also provides useful information on the extent to which individuals considered their contact with an AGP to be an important factor in initiating these changes. Again, the results were very positive. More than 30 per cent felt that they had learnt new skills, and over half of these did not think this would have occurred without contact with an AGP. Of the 12 per cent of individuals who had found a new job, just under half attributed this, in some measure, to their AGP.

The chapter also presented interesting insights from the case studies as to how these changes can take place on an individual basis.

6. Other Outcomes

The original aim of the evaluation was to capture a range of outcomes, including less tangible, 'soft' outcomes, on the wider benefits of guidance to individuals and communities. This is particularly important considering the often short follow-up periods for which client data is available.

Advisers and managers working in the case study pilots were keen to stress that for many of the clients they worked with, hard outcomes were not sufficient to convey a true picture of progress. Moreover, they felt that it was not possible to pick up the complexity of individual needs or progress from the MIS or quantitative survey data. Advice and guidance workers felt that it was important to take clients' starting points into account, and to look at the distance travelled by individual clients. As one project manager said, 'it's all about the process'. Research evidence also highlights the fact that attitudinal change is an important 'precursor' to the economic benefits of guidance.¹

In this chapter, outcomes outside the main categories of work, learning and training are examined. These include satisfaction with the AGP service received, levels of confidence, career and job/education awareness, and motivation.

6.1 Satisfaction and engagement with the service

The degree to which individuals were satisfied with the service they received is a useful indicator of their engagement with the service. Previous research has shown that individuals generally tend to show very high levels of satisfaction with guidance services.² It is therefore important that this is considered only as part of a wider set of outcomes.

Using the MIS data, an aggregate 'satisfaction score' for each individual was calculated, using available data for all contacts recorded for that person. The results were overwhelmingly

¹ Killeen J, White M, Watts AG (1992), *The economic value of careers guidance*, Policy Studies Institute.

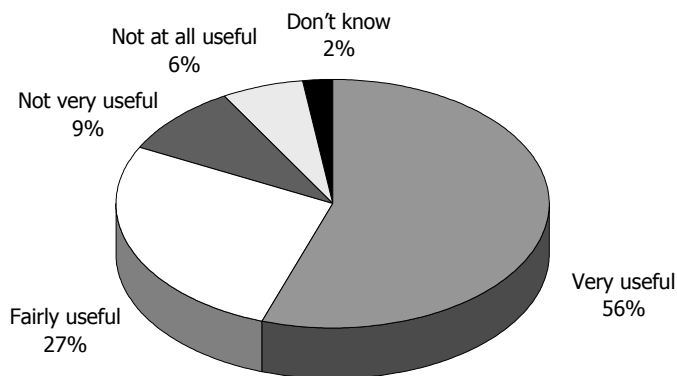
² MORI (2001) *Demand for Information, Advice and Guidance*, The Guidance Council: Winchester.

positive. Sixteen per cent of clients were 'very satisfied' overall, whilst a further 82 per cent were 'satisfied'. Less than one per cent of clients were 'not satisfied', while the remaining clients returned a 'neutral' satisfaction rating. However, whilst these results should not be dismissed, it is worth noting that advisers were responsible for collecting this information, so it is possible that clients felt unable to voice their dissatisfaction with the service in this way.

The survey is likely to provide a more independent measure of satisfaction. Three main questions were asked (see Figures 6.1 to 6.3).

Again, the results show high levels of satisfaction with the service. Over half of the survey respondents found the service provided by their AGP to be 'very useful', and less than one-fifth rated the service as 'not useful'. Eighty per cent of clients thought it likely

Figure 6.1: How useful individuals overall found the AGP services (survey results)

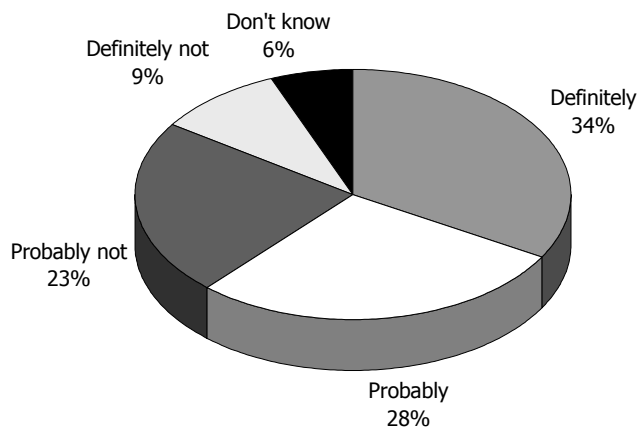


Base: 544

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

Figure 6.2: Whether client would use the service again (survey results)

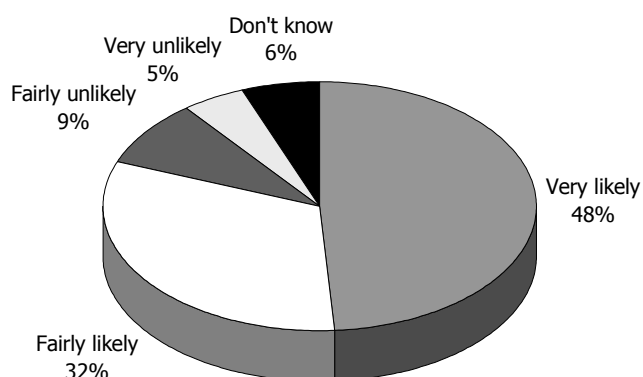


Base: 544

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

Figure 6.3: Whether clients would seek guidance elsewhere if AGP not available (survey results)



Base: 544

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

that they would use the service again in the future if it was available. Over half of those surveyed also indicated that guidance was important to them, as they felt they would seek out such a service from other providers if it was not available from their AGP.

Individuals who used the service four or more times were the most likely to find the AGP services 'very useful'.

The results were also analysed against barriers recorded in the MIS. Only two were significant: asylum seeker status and disability. Individuals with disabilities were more likely to rate the services as 'very useful' (80 per cent compared with 52 per cent of those not disabled). However, asylum seekers were less likely to have found the service very useful (44 per cent compared with 58 per cent of those without asylum seeker status).

The survey also recorded whether individuals had used other sources of IAG, and around 40 per cent of respondents recalled having done so. The most common sources were:

- Jobcentres or New Deal advisers (34 per cent)
- recruitment agencies (30 per cent)
- computer information points or the Internet (22 per cent)
- advice from friends/family (16 per cent).

The work of the AGPs was designed to add to rather than duplicate the efforts of existing agencies; therefore, it is important to consider the proportion who would have received help anyway, from another source, in the absence of the AGP initiative. It is an important finding that 60 per cent of individuals did not consider themselves to have used other sources of IAG. Also, when the sources that individuals had used are considered,

perhaps with the exception of New Deal advisers, their service is likely to involve information or advice rather than in-depth guidance. This would suggest that the vast majority of individuals did gain something from their AGP that they would not have been able to access elsewhere.

6.1.1 The role of advisers

The case studies provided opportunities to explore some clients' perceptions of the guidance they received in more depth. An important message from several of the clients was that they felt that the AGP guidance workers understood their needs in a way that other services that they had used previously did not. Specific examples of this came from interviews with minority ethnic clients.

'When you go (to Jobcentres) they do give you advice but you don't feel comfortable somehow. And Jobcentres never helped me to get a job. These advisers understand where I am coming from, being Asian. My job needs to be hours that my parents agree with.'

'The Jobcentre don't understand so much where you're coming from, and I'm more reluctant to talk to them on that level anyway... What I get here balances my own beliefs with what I want to do in the future.'

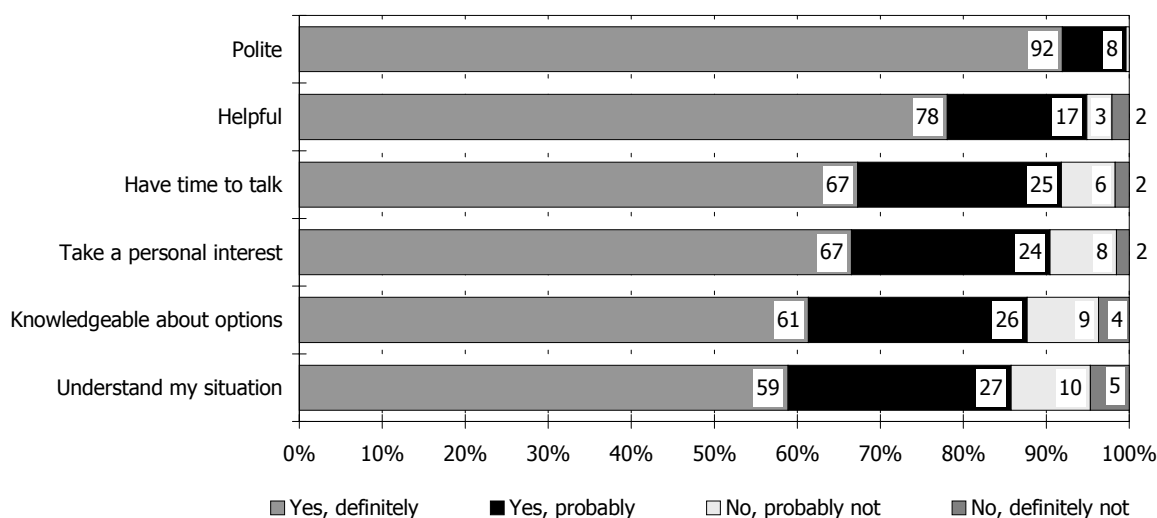
'They understand the needs of the African person. It's not like other agencies, it is providing appropriate, relevant support and guidance to people.'

A lack of trust of more generic provision was a theme which emerged across many of the projects. One example of this was the 'Back on Track' guidance project, which ran within a prison. Prisoners tended not to trust the system, and needed reassurance that any intervention would be positive. Interviews with clients showed that they were disillusioned with other support and help available within the prison system. In contrast, they were very positive about the AGP, and the ways in which it had helped them.

'You get lots of false promises in prison, but this is the first time that anyone has done what they said they would do.'

These positive statements were reflected in data from the survey on client perceptions of advisers (Figure 6.4). Clients were overwhelmingly seen as polite and helpful. Other responses showed that the ratings for an adviser's ability to understand a client's situation and their knowledge of a range of options were slightly lower, but still overwhelmingly positive.

Figure 6.4: Ratings of adviser attributes (survey results)



Base: All valid responses (numbers vary between 513 and 532)

Note: Percentages shown are rounded to nearest whole number (any values of less than 0.5% are not shown).

Source: MORI, 2003

6.2 User perceptions of AGP impact

In the same manner as for work and learning/training outcomes, clients were asked in the survey to outline any less tangible changes they had made since their first contact with an AGP, and to rate the extent to which they felt that AGP interventions had impacted on a range of these types of outcomes (Table 6.1).

The progress that people most commonly felt they had made was in relation to learning. One-third of respondents felt that they were now more aware of the learning options available to them, and a further third were now more confident about starting learning. Around 30 per cent of individuals stated that they had met new friends/people since using the AGP, and/or that they were more aware of training courses available. Job-related outcomes were slightly further down the list, but around a quarter of individuals felt they were now more confident in their ability to get a job, and/or that they were more aware of job options. Fifteen per cent of clients felt more confident at job interviews.

Clients ascribed a great deal of credit to the role of the AGP in helping them take these steps forward. Two-thirds of those who felt themselves to be more aware of suitable jobs, attributed this in some way to the AGP intervention. A similar percentage in each case felt they would definitely, or probably not have made new friends or gained greater awareness of training and/or learning options without AGP help. Sixty per cent of those who were now clearer about what to do with their career also felt that the AGP had some role in helping them achieve this.

Table 6.1: Outcomes and likelihood of them occurring without AGP (survey results) per cent

Outcomes	Sample with outcome	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely	Don't know	Base (N)
More aware of learning options	34.9	21.4	40.9	18.6	17.9	1.1	190
More confident about starting learning	33.2	18.8	33.9	25.6	19.4	—	181
Made new friends/ met similar people	30.8	32.8	32.5	15.0	19.7	—	167
More aware of training courses available	28.0	24.5	40.0	19.0	13.6	2.8	152
Know where to look for training courses	27.1	18.3	34.4	30.7	15.1	1.5	147
More motivated to do a course	25.9	19.8	35.5	23.2	20.2	1.3	141
Confident in my ability to get a job	25.0	13.9	43.1	26.8	16.2	—	136
More aware of job options	24.9	15.7	46.1	22.6	13.1	2.5	136
Clearer about what to do with career	23.1	17.5	43.1	27.0	12.5	—	126
More aware of suitable jobs	20.4	17.2	49.5	25.8	7.4	—	111
Know where to look for jobs	18.5	10.4	48.2	25.7	13.4	2.4	100
Feel more motivated to seek work	17.9	12.9	33.0	30.4	21.5	2.2	97
Widened job search	16.2	13.5	33.7	31.1	19.3	1.4	88
More confident at job interviews	15.2	16.3	41.7	22.9	17.6	1.5	83
More confident about doing voluntary work	13.1	21.9	29.4	20.4	27.2	1.0	71
None of the above	18.9	—	—	—	—	—	

Source: MORI/IES, 2003

6.3 Examples from the case studies

Evidence from the case studies also illustrates the extent to which clients were able to identify the benefits of their contact with an AGP adviser. Some specific examples are provided below.

One client, who had been trying to juggle a lot of different courses and activities when she had first sought help, summarised the way in which working with an AGP adviser had helped to clarify her goals. She felt that the guidance she had received had helped her to determine her priorities and make her life more manageable:

'I was all over the place, scattered, what I needed was some guidance, and I got that from the staff here. They are great, they help you, they are there for you.'

The Back on Track project provided IAG within the Prison Service, adding value to existing resettlement services.

Prior to one client's involvement with the Back on Track initiative, he 'did not know where to turn', feeling that he had lost all confidence and direction. He also felt that the standard resettlement programme was too slow, but that Back on Track had really helped him by placing him on a work training scheme, which he was really enjoying. For him, Back on Track was a good name for the pilot, as it had done exactly what it said it would, and had helped him to feel positive about his life again.

Another client had found that Back on Track had helped him where he felt prison officers had not, as they often saw problems rather than opportunities. Through helping him to explore several training and job opportunities, the pilot had placed the man with a local pine furniture maker, utilising his prior experience as a joiner before his sentence. The job was going really well, and he hoped to resettle in the area and continue working with his current employer when released. The intervention seemed to have made a real difference to this client's employment prospects and his confidence and self-esteem.

Many of the projects had clearly helped to boost clients' confidence, make them consider new options, and raising aspirations:

'My discussions have made me realise I could do things that I did not think were possible. It has certainly broadened my horizons and hopefully I will be able to get a management job quicker than would otherwise have been the case.'

'I had definitely not thought about going back to education before the interview.'

Additionally, the case study visits gave the evaluation team the opportunity to talk with representatives of partner organisations, who were able to highlight the wider benefits to their communities.

Contact Guidance for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

This pilot had made links with a range of different agencies. One example is how clients were cross-referred between the pilot and the Merseyside Volunteer Bureau. By taking on volunteer work whilst waiting for their refugee status, individuals can gain experience of British employers and culture. The pilot can also help to find courses to improve English language skills, or other courses. *'It would be a missed opportunity not to link up the pilot with other provision in the city.'*

Other examples include work that the pilot has done with local community organisations, including the Refugee Support Network, which includes representatives from 69 different organisations. A guidance worker employed by the pilot who works within the Congolese community, himself an ex-asylum seeker, said of the work of the pilot: *'We try to share a vision with them (clients) that most of us couldn't speak English either when we arrived. The service we*

provide is invaluable; it builds self confidence and skills without raising unrealistic expectations'.

Nechells Employment Resource Centre drew praise from staff at the local NHS Mental Health Trust, who commented on how the involvement of both staff and service users had greatly benefited them:

'The courses boosted the confidence of the clients and the volunteers. The buddy system has really helped to get clients onto the courses in the first place. It did a lot for our clients to see us on the same courses, it opened up doors for them and broke down barriers... I have been talked in to doing the NVQ in guidance now! I'm much keener to do this as a result of having done the other courses first; they have opened up possibilities.'

6.4 Summary

In considering the impact of the AGPs, it is necessary to take account of a wide range of 'soft' outcomes, particularly as many of the clients face a range of barriers and disadvantages in relation to learning/training and the labour market. These outcomes are also important in order not to underestimate the potential longer-term client outcomes, particularly as the evaluation did not involve a tracking element.

AGP clients were very satisfied with the service they had received, the MIS recording only one per cent of clients who were not satisfied. The survey also revealed that over half of the clients interviewed found the service *very* useful, and that 80 per cent thought it was likely that they would use the service again if it was available. Advisers appeared to have developed the trust and respect of their clients, with at least two-thirds of survey respondents regarding advisers as polite, helpful, having time to talk, and taking a personal interest in them.

The main progress individuals felt that they had made was in their awareness of the opportunities available to them, particularly in relation to learning/training. A quarter were also now more confident about getting a job. Clients also rated highly the role of the AGP in helping them gain more confidence, feel more motivated, and improve their awareness of opportunities and options. Evidence from the case studies demonstrates the wider benefits of the AGPs through their networking activities and involvement with other local agencies.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Reaching people

The AGPs were successful in reaching a wide range of clients, many of whom are considered 'hard to reach' using traditional approaches. This success appears to be based on an in-depth knowledge of the target groups, either present from the outset (due to a track record of work with specific clients), or developed through an iterative cycle of work during the life of the pilots. Whilst a range of publicity and marketing tools were used, the successes pilots have experienced in engaging individuals were mainly through networking (with organisations and individuals). The concentration of many AGPs on outreach work, the availability and approachability of advisers, and their awareness of the barriers faced by their clients, ensured that the pilots gathered momentum quite quickly, and that word of mouth within communities and networks became the most common source of referral.

This is a particularly important point in relation to certain key target groups. Where individuals have a mistrust of 'authority', or where they have been through 'the system' time after time without feeling that they have benefited, having a service recommended by friends, family, or colleagues, can be very important. Thus, by maximising the role of informal marketing routes through appropriate and targeted provision, the AGPs were able to draw in those most in need.

7.2 A targeted approach

Having successfully spread the word about the services on offer, the pilots were then able to engage individuals by offering a service tailored to their needs. Throughout the report, the extent to which the pilots offered extended support and 'hand holding' to clients who needed it, emerged as a real factor in their success. Additionally, the links that pilots had made with other organisations and networks meant that they were able not only to signpost opportunities, but to actively create them.

A number of pilots were offering something unique in their area, or for their clients. Where approaches were not only successful in

reaching out to clients in new ways, but were also *seen* as being successful, this gave clients a real voice, as their needs could be communicated *via* the pilots and, for example, appropriate courses established where none existed before. Furthermore, the pilots often had an enabling role for communities, linking with community leaders and agencies. For some client groups, the existing provision is inadequate, as generic providers often lack a real understanding of the levels of support required. This aspect of the work of the AGPs represents real added value.

7.3 The costs of guidance

The intensity of the interventions required by individuals is related to their needs. Disadvantaged groups, facing a range of barriers to employment and training, are likely to need more sessions and support. For some groups, innovative approaches can offset some of these additional costs (*eg* the use of community mentors rather than costly interpreters), but overall, the costs are likely to be higher. Some client groups are more likely to face multiple difficulties, some of which need to be dealt with before guidance on work, learning and training opportunities is appropriate. Again, this makes the costs of such provision higher.

Additionally, the flexible nature of the provision on offer, a key component of the success of the AGPs, will, in turn, impact on the costs. Outreach is, by definition, expensive, as staff time is spent travelling to and from different locations. Sourcing appropriate outreach venues can also be costly. Marketing venues which then prove to be unattractive to clients or lacking appropriate resources (*eg* private consultation rooms), costs both time and money. However, only by finding the right delivery points can the benefits of outreach be maximised. Funding these 'false starts' is expensive, but an important part of the development of a client-centred flexible service.

7.4 Client progress

AGP clients had made significant changes to their lives, even within the short evaluation period. The steps made into employment and enhanced qualifications were clear for a significant minority. Over half of clients surveyed were now engaged in taught learning, suggesting that qualification gains for many more will follow. Those individuals undertaking a course were doing so mainly for job-related reasons, or to improve their skills. Again, therefore, the possible benefits to individuals already within jobs must also be considered. In particular, gains appear to have taken place for those with lower qualification levels.

It is also important to recognise the role of AGPs in facilitating smaller steps for some clients, which may, over time, lead to more

substantial and measurable progress. Any initiative, like the AGPs, which focuses mainly on disadvantaged individuals, must acknowledge more than 'hard' outcomes. Many clients considered their awareness of career and learning options to be greater since their involvement with an AGP. Again, this would suggest that in the longer term, these individuals will be able to take a more proactive role in sourcing opportunities and making appropriate decisions.

In the main, clients acknowledged the role of the AGPs in the progress that they had made. In the absence of further evidence, this would suggest that the AGPs have made an impact on at least the lives of some of their clients. Without further tracking, it is impossible to accurately estimate the magnitude of this impact, not least because individuals often take time to think through their options before pursuing a course of action.

Neither is it possible to accurately gauge the extent to which individuals would have made these changes without the intervention of AGPs. However, considering the additional nature of the service in many cases, and the ways in which specific groups were targeted, it would be hard not to conclude that the AGPs had some impact. The evidence would suggest that this impact has been particularly marked in relation to individuals with learning difficulties/disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees, those with low qualification levels, and those with low or basic skill needs.

7.5 Evaluation and record keeping

The specifically-designed MIS was a useful evaluation tool. However, it was not without its limitations. Feedback showed that pilots found the system overly complicated, at least initially, and this may have been one reason for the variable quality of the client outcomes data recorded on it. In addition, the system was not considered flexible enough to record the full range of client outcomes, particularly for clients who made small but personally significant steps, rather than immediately finding work or beginning some kind of course, or gaining a qualification.

The system was also seen as inflexible in recording the time advisers spent with clients. This was felt to be a particular problem as the work of the AGPs often went further than traditional models of guidance. In many cases, advisers spent a significant amount of time engaged in advocacy work, for example, negotiating access with providers, liaising with other agencies, or investigating sources of additional support. Pilots were concerned that the MIS was not able to record such data easily, and that the extent of their interventions may have been underestimated as a result.

Another evaluation issue is that of longer-term tracking. The original plans were for pilots to follow up their clients at some point after initial contact. By sending out a postal form or collecting information by telephone, the last entry on the MIS would be recorded as their 'final' outcome. This would have overcome the issue of evaluating outcomes for clients using the service only once (*ie* those for whom no progress could be recorded). However, the extent to which pilots were able to engage in such activities is unclear. Certainly, the majority of individuals had only one contact, and therefore no outcomes data, suggesting that any tracking activities (for the pilots as a whole) were limited.

The difficulties experienced in following up clients for the survey demonstrate why tracking can be such an issue for providers. Transient populations, such as asylum seekers/refugees, and ex-offenders, are historically very difficult to track. As so many of the pilots worked with transient client groups, this will have had some impact on the evaluation.

Therefore, the priorities for future work must include more consistent record keeping (*eg* by extending the IAG partnership record system) across a range of providers to allow the progress of individuals to be tracked over time, and between different interventions. The current approach varies too widely between funding streams and providers. There is a role for policy makers and funders to come together in designing a system with much broader scope. The MIS used by the AGPs is a useful starting point, and much has been learnt about what works well and what needs development.

Consultation with providers about their needs will be key to the successful implementation of any new system, which must be realistic in what can be collected. Consistent and high-quality data on a few key items is preferable to large datasets with many blank fields. Data collection for evaluation should not be overly arduous or intrusive, or raise barriers between advisers and their clients. However, the case for guidance can only be strengthened (either way) by the introduction of a more coherent record-keeping system that exists nationally for evaluation purposes.

7.6 Lessons learnt

There are important lessons from the pilots, including the following:

- The nature of the target group needs to be clear. Successful pilots not only knew the barriers faced by their potential clients, but also knew what they would respond to. If this knowledge is not already available in an organisation, it should either be hired in, or a feasibility study undertaken. It

is worth spending money up front in order to save money further down the line.

- For some client groups, it is not only the individual that has to be considered in guidance delivery. People around that person (eg support workers, family, community members) are also important, particularly in ensuring that guidance results in positive action. In some cases, particularly with some disabled clients, it is not appropriate to view an individual in isolation. People in the individual's life may construct barriers that also have to be removed.
- Providers need to be very clear about what they can offer. Misunderstanding or 'over-selling' may result in disengaged clients. However, a positive approach, acknowledging the importance of barriers in the lives of individuals, whilst at the same time offering solutions as to how these can be overcome, is vital.
- Provision has to be tailored to need. A 'one size fits all' approach can end up fitting no-one. By taking some risks and being prepared to change tack, or work with new target groups, provision becomes more flexible. Satisfied clients are the best and least expensive marketing tool available.

Appendix 1: Technical and Methodological Details

Research design

As a prelude to the evaluation work, a workshop was held for all providers involved in the AGP. This event gave policy makers, the evaluation team, and staff from the pilots, the opportunity to discuss ideas for the evaluation, particularly in relation to the collection of realistic outcomes data. The workshop helped to shape the design of the survey and the selection of case study pilots.

Case study selection and visits

The case study pilots were selected in order to ensure broad coverage of a range of variables. These included: geographical location, target group, project budget, and the approach to guidance delivery. Visits were conducted during May/June 2002 and January/February 2003. The visits involved discussions with pilot management, advisers, partners, and clients. Full details of the pilots and other projects are provided in Appendix 2.

Sample design and sampling process

The sample for the survey was drawn from the combined quarter 2 (Q2) Management Information (MI) database for all participating pilot projects (17 in total¹). As such, only clients who had registered with the pilot projects up to and including 30 June 2002 were included in the survey². This data was made available to MORI in November 2002. The MI was supplied as an anonymised database, containing client reference numbers only (*ie* no contact details). MORI therefore wrote to all projects asking them to provide contact details for their clients as at 30 June 2002, by matching names and addresses against client reference numbers supplied on the Q2 MI. Contact details were only

¹ Originally, 20 pilot projects obtained funding from the DfES. However, two of these had funding withdrawn in the early stages of their operation, and one other ('Friendly Face' in a Merseyside prison) was unable to supply sufficient 'usable' leads for sampling purposes.

² The two exceptions to this general rule were the 'Establishing Links' and 'Back on Track' projects (see note to Table A1.1).

requested for clients who had opted in to the research exercise on the original registration form. In addition to a detailed explanatory letter, a pro-forma was sent out to all projects, setting out the information requirements for the survey. As well as supplying contact details, projects were asked to indicate any client 'special needs', such as low basic skills or learning difficulties, or English as a second language. This information was used to ensure that the survey was as inclusive as possible.

Contact details were supplied for just over 2,500 clients in total, across the 17 pilot projects, as illustrated in Table A1.1 below.

Fieldwork and data collection

Approaching respondents

Initial calls were made to project co-ordinators during Spring/Summer 2002 to identify potential problems likely to emerge in contacting clients and administering the interviews,

Table A1.1: Number of survey leads for each AGP

Project name (location)	Valid leads available¹
Community Outreach (Hereford & Worcester)	45
PATH/Opportunities for Women (West Midlands)	153
Nechells Employment Resource Centre (Birmingham & Solihull)	47
Guidance in the Community – the Black Country Co-Worker Project (Sandwell)	20
Community Empowerment & Development (Sandwell)	130
Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities (Oxfordshire)	44
Confidence, Choice & Change (Croydon)	115
Learning & Work Guidance for People with Disabilities (Wirral)	17
Fast Track Routes to Employment (Oldham)	83
Contact Guidance to Employability (Merseyside)	443
Establishing Links (Merseyside) ²	35
Workforce (London)	140
Breaking Barriers (London)	149
Byte Sized Guidance (North Yorkshire & York)	137
SAGE (South Yorkshire)	92
Seamless Steps to Learning & Work (York)	926
Back on Track (Lincolnshire) ²	19
Total	2,595

¹ Those who opted in to the survey on the registration form.

² For practical reasons, Q2 MI leads were supplemented with additional (and more recent) leads for the 'Establishing Links' and 'Back on Track' projects.

Source: MORI, 2001

and to discuss potential solutions. At this stage, projects were also asked if they would be happy for MORI to contact their clients directly, or whether they would prefer to make the initial contact and/or set up appointments with their clients. This information was supplemented by data collected on the sampling pro-forma (see above) to facilitate the setting up of appointments and the interview process for clients with 'special needs'.

In total, 11 projects opted to make first contact/set up interview appointments with their clients. These were projects where some or all of the client group was felt to be particularly 'vulnerable', and included:

- 'PATH/Opportunities for Women'
- Nechells Employment Resource Centre (NERC)
- 'Guidance in the Community – the Black Country Co-worker Project'
- 'Community Empowerment and Development'
- 'Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities'
- 'Establishing Links'
- 'Learning & Work Guidance for People with Disabilities'
- 'Fast Track Routes to Employment'
- 'Contact Guidance to Employability'
- 'Seamless Steps to Learning & Work'
- 'Back on Track'.

Clients at the remaining six projects were recruited directly by MORI by telephone, using contact details supplied by the projects at the sampling stage (see above). Prior to the MORI recruitment exercise, letters were sent out to clients to explain the purpose of the survey. Following recruitment, MORI sent letters to respondents to confirm the date, time and location (where appropriate) of their appointment.

Data collection methods

All interviews were administered using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), mostly face-to-face at project premises (sometimes at multiple locations). However, telephone interviews were conducted in a small number of cases (64 in total) at clients' request. Telephone interviews were mostly conducted in more remote rural areas where travel to a central location was relatively difficult/time-consuming (such as that covered by the 'Community Outreach' pilot project), or where clients were working full-time and/or on shifts (eg at 'SAGE', 'Breaking Barriers', 'Byte Sized Guidance' and 'Confidence, Choice and Change').

Fieldwork dates

Fieldwork was staggered over the period December 2002 to February 2003, with a three week break for Christmas. Interviews were scheduled so as to avoid particularly busy periods at individual projects, in order to encourage participation and maximise the number of achieved interviews.

Incentive/payments

All clients who participated in the survey were paid £10 to cover any travel costs and other expenses. Where interpreters were required, the cost of their time was paid for. Any room hire costs incurred by individual projects were also covered.

Response rates

A total of 544 interviews were completed. Table A1.2 below reports the total number of 'valid' leads available, the number of interviews achieved, and the calculated unadjusted response rate for each project. In some cases, unadjusted response rates were extremely low, due to a number of factors that varied on a project-by-project basis, but the most common:

- out-of-date contact details, due to an extremely transient local population, and therefore target client group (eg refugees/asylum seekers, homeless clients and ex-offenders)
- significantly high numbers of incomplete or missing telephone numbers/addresses.

Unfortunately, not all projects were able to supply the information required to calculate adjusted or 'valid' response rates (*ie* after removing leads/clients that were unobtainable due to 'bad' or incorrect/out-of-date contact details). However, where this information was available, the adjusted/valid response rate averaged out at around 35 per cent, varying widely from 20 per cent to 100 per cent, as shown in the final column of Table A1.2. **Care should be taken when referring to these estimates, however, as the reliability of the data supplied by individual projects to calculate valid response rates is uncertain.**

Where adjusted/valid response rates were relatively low, this was due either to a large number of refusals, or to 'no shows' (where clients failed to turn up for scheduled appointments despite a number of reminder calls¹).

¹ Where possible, missed appointments were rescheduled or replaced.

Table A1.2: Response rates for each AGP

Unadjusted response rates				
Project name (location)	Valid leads available	No. interviews achieved	Unadjusted response rate (%)	Adjusted response rate (%)¹
Community Outreach (Hereford & Worcester)	45	21	47	89
PATH/Opportunities for Women (West Midlands)	153	38	25	N/A
Nechells Employment Resource Centre (Birmingham & Solihull)	47	24	51	N/A
Guidance in the Community – the Black Country Co-Worker Project (Sandwell)	20	2	10	N/A
Community Empowerment & Development (Sandwell)	130	19	15	N/A
Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities (Oxfordshire)	44	19	43	N/A
Confidence, Choice & Change (Croydon, London)	115	39	34	N/A
Learning & Work Guidance for People with Disabilities (Wirral)	17	6	35	N/A
Fast Track Routes to Employment (Oldham)	83	12	14	32
Contact Guidance to Employability (Merseyside)	443	90	20	58
Establishing Links (Merseyside) ²	35	24	69	N/A
Workforce (London)	140	20	14	34
Breaking Barriers (London)	149	41	28	100
Byte Sized Guidance (North Yorkshire & York)	137	42	31	74
SAGE (South Yorkshire)	92	32	35	N/A
Seamless Steps to Learning & Work (York)	926	104	11	20
Back on Track (Lincolnshire) ²	19	11	58	61
Total	2,595	544	21	35

¹ These adjusted response rates should be treated as indicative only, due to uncertainties over the reliability of the data collected by individual projects to calculate these.

Source: MORI

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was developed by IES and MORI, and programmed into CAPI format. As usual with computerised interviewing, several logic and consistency checks were included to minimise keying errors and implausible answers.

A ‘simplified’ version of the questionnaire was developed for clients with low basic skills and/or learning difficulties. This was made possible due to the invaluable input from project workers at ‘Establishing Links’, one of the pilot projects specialising in work with these particular client groups. Interviewers consulted with pilot project co-ordinators prior to each interview, in order to establish whether or not there was a need to administer the

simplified questionnaire. A total of 63 interviews were completed using the simplified version of the questionnaire.

Where telephone interviews were conducted, showcards were mailed out to respondents in advance, for use during the interview.

Pilot

The CAPI questionnaire was piloted among 18 respondents face-to-face, at three pilot project premises, namely:

- 'Fast Track Routes to Employment'
- 'PATH/Opportunities for Women'
- 'Seamless Steps to Learning & Work'.

Personal briefing sessions were held with the pilot interviewers. Following completion of the pilot fieldwork, each interviewer returned detailed written comments on the conduct of the pilot, setting out any issues that arose, and suggesting amendments to the questionnaire. This written feedback was supplemented by a detailed face-to-face debrief meeting, led by MORI and attended by DfES. A number of amendments were then agreed and incorporated into the questionnaire for the main survey, following close collaboration between MORI, IES, and DfES.

Interviewer briefings

Prior to the main survey, interviewers were fully briefed by telephone by members of the MORI research team. A comprehensive briefing pack was supplied to every interviewer working on the survey, including information on background to the study and advice on interviewing people with 'special needs' (although many members of the interviewing team had extensive experience of this).

Data processing and weighting

Data processing

Coding staff at MORI Data Services (MDS) checked verbatim comments entered by interviewers as open-ended and 'other-specify' questions. Code frames were prepared for all open-ended questions and where the 'other-specifies' constituted more than ten per cent of all responses. As well as computer tabulations, a fully labelled SPSS data file was supplied to IES by MORI, for more detailed analysis.

The MI dataset, which was originally supplied in Microsoft Access format, was reformatted by MORI and supplied to IES as an SPSS dataset, also for analysis purposes.

Weighting

Weighting factors are sometimes applied to survey data in order to minimise any bias that may occur as a result of under- or over-representation of certain groups amongst those who respond. Any weighting that is applied, however, has a 'design effect', which reduces the effective sample size, and therefore increases the sampling error.

To decide whether or not to weight the data, the demographic profile (namely age and gender) of survey respondents was compared with the profile of participating pilot project clients as at 30 June 2002 (*ie* the sampling frame). On the basis of these comparisons, a decision was made by DfES and MORI to weight the survey data to match the age and gender profile of the sample frame. The weighted data was used throughout the report.

Statistical reliability

The respondents to the survey are only a sample of the total 'population'. We cannot, therefore, be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the 'true' values). However, we can predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based, and the number of times that a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95 per cent – that is, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. Table A1.3 illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the '95 per cent confidence interval', based on a random sample¹. For example, with a sample size of 544, where 30 per cent give a particular answer, the margin of error/specified range will be plus or minus four per cent.

Thus, the confidence interval (or margin of error) is the amount by which the survey result could increase or decrease and still be considered to reflect the 'true' result that would have been recorded if everyone in the population had been surveyed.

¹ Where the 'population' is the total number of clients registered up to and including 30 June 2002 (3,336).

Table A1.3: Sampling tolerances

Sample Size	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
50	8	13	14
100	6	9	10
200	4	6	7
500	2	4	4
544	2	4	4

Source: MORI, 2003

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real' or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one, *ie* if it is 'statistically significant', we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer, and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume '95 per cent confidence interval', the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in Table A1.4.

Table A1.4: Differences required for significance

Size of sample compared:	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
50 and 50	12	18	20
50 and 100	10	16	17
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	7	11	12
200 and 200	6	9	10

Source: MORI, 2003

Appendix 2: Pilot Details

Details of the pilots are presented in Table A2.1. The case study pilots are highlighted in bold.

Table A2. 1: Details of the pilots

Project Name	Original target group	Broad Approach	No. of clients	Spend per client (£)
Community Outreach (Hereford & Worcester)	People in remote and/or deprived areas. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, people with low and basic skills needs	Individual guidance using outreach delivery either face-to-face or using video links	527	245
PATH/Opportunities for Women (West Midlands)	Minority ethnic clients, particularly those not in work	1:1 work, action planning, work experience, outreach	534	130
Nechells Employment Resource Centre (Birmingham & Solihull)	Residents of deprived city wards	Matching skill shortages of local employers with training or participants, 1:1 work on employability and life skills	139	841
Guidance in the Community – the Black Country Co-Worker Project (Sandwell)	Lone parents, older people, disabled people, refugees/asylum seekers, mental health service and/or drug users	Outreach work using community representatives relevant to the target group	1,038	217
Community Empowerment & Development (Sandwell)	Sikh/Asian community	Outreach, out of hours services, home visits	375	210
Oxfordshire Cultural Minorities (Oxfordshire)	Cultural minorities including asylum seekers and refugees	Individual sessions with workers from a range of minority cultures, in a range of languages, also referrals to other agencies	294	670
Confidence, Choice & Change (Croydon, London)	Refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, mental health service users, individuals with learning difficulties	Individual assessment, confidence building, work-related skills. Use of one-stop-shop in Croydon	524	376
Learning & Work Guidance for People with Disabilities (Wirral)	Disabled people	In-depth guidance and support, outreach and tracking	93	341
Fast Track Routes to Employment (Oldham)	Asian women, low-paid and low-skilled workers, women returners and homeworkers	Individual and group guidance, specific training programmes and ongoing support	279	362
Contact Guidance to Employability (Merseyside)	Refugees/asylum seekers across Liverpool	Vocational and educational guidance delivered through community outreach in relevant locations by community representatives	1,270	171
Establishing Links (Merseyside)	Individuals with learning difficulties and /or disabilities	Outreach guidance service offering in-depth support and guidance in relation to a range of educational and work-related issues	123	400

Project Name	Original target group	Broad Approach	No. of clients	Spend per client (£)
Workforce (London)	People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with basic skills needs, low or outdated skills, returners to the workforce, offenders and ex-offenders, people for whom English is not their first languages, people in areas of high deprivation locally	Develop and implement new guidance delivery model including skills assessment	980	147
Breaking Barriers (London)	People with basic skills needs for whom English is second language, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, people in areas of high social deprivation	Initial assessment, group working, ongoing support	825	156
Byte Sized Guidance (North Yorkshire & York)	Adults in remote rural areas or other areas with poor transport links	Outreach delivery using short interventions encouraging clients to think through their options	1,564	139
SAGE (South Yorkshire)	Employed people with low or outdated skills, basic skills needs, older workers at risk of becoming economically inactive, those for whom English is not their first language	Assessment, group work and 1:1 work on employer's premises and from centrally located and outreach venues	1,087	183
Seamless Steps to Learning & Work (York)	Residents of deprived wards, travellers, disabled people, individuals with basic skill needs, older workers, long-term unemployed, lone parents, returners to work, adult education and further education drop-outs, ex-offenders, drug addicts, minority ethnic groups, unemployed/underemployed graduates, other vulnerable clients	Outreach and ongoing 1:1 support	2,995	101
Back on Track (Lincolnshire)	Offenders and ex-offenders (who may also have basic skills needs and low levels of employability)	Based in a prison using initial 1:1 session on sentencing and a second session eight weeks before end of sentence, linking prisoners with external agencies	416	172
Friendly Face (Merseyside)	Prisoners in high security jail who are already participating in a drug rehabilitation programme	Resettlement help through 1:1 sessions, support, mentoring and buddying	67	2,532

Appendix 3: Statistical Appendix: Multivariate Analysis

Introduction

Most of the analysis in this report has been based on bivariate analysis (looking at the relationship between a dependent and an independent variable). This allows us to establish a single association between a given independent variable (*eg* gender or age) and a dependent variable (such as a change in employment status). This method of analysis does not, however, enable us to establish how far the independent variables are related to one another, and what their combined effect is upon the dependent variable. In order to establish these effects, we need to use multivariate analysis.

For example, simple bivariate comparisons may show that there is a correlation between gender and improvements in employment status, but we cannot be clear of the precise relationship between these two variables without taking other factors into account. Multivariate analysis, on the other hand, establishes the strength of the relationship between a dependent and independent variable, taking into account the effects of a range of other factors.

The multivariate analyses presented here further explore and explain some of the bivariate relationships that were observed for the 'hard' outcomes discussed in Chapter 5.

The dependent variables involved in the analysis were:

- improvements in qualification levels
- moving from unemployment to work.

The independent variables were:

- gender
- age
- ethnicity
- disability
- number of contacts with AGP
- qualification at outset

- employment status at outset
- barriers faced (*ie* asylum seeker status, basic skills needs, problems coming off benefits, caring responsibilities, English as a second language, and unclear goals).

Logistic regression

The method of multivariate analysis used was logistic regression. In order to carry out this analysis, it is necessary for dependent variables to be recoded in order to make them binary in nature. This was done as follows:

- Improvements in qualification levels were recoded so that a 0 represented someone with the same qualification level at outset as they did at their final intervention, and a 1 represented someone who had improved their qualification level (clients with only one intervention were excluded from this analysis).
- Moving from unemployment to work was recoded so that a 0 represented a client who was unemployed at outset and had remained unemployed, and a 1 represented someone who had moved from unemployment into either full-time or part-time work (clients with only one intervention were excluded from this analysis).

Once the dependent variables have been recoded in this way, it is then possible to assess the impact of changing one of the independent variables on the odds of the respondent having improved their qualification/employment status. For each of the independent variables, one of the groups is chosen as the reference category (shown on the tables below in bold) and is given a coefficient of 1 in the regression equation (Exp B). The odds of all the other groups within the independent variables are then interpreted in relation to the reference category. A coefficient higher than 1 means that the group have higher odds of having improved than the reference group, and a value lower than 1 means that they have lower odds of having improved than the reference group.

The test for statistical significance gives a value between 0 and 1. In order for us to accept the results as statistically significant, the value must not be greater than 0.05. Independent variables with significant results on the tables that follow are highlighted in italics.

Two separate logistic regressions were carried out with our two dependent variables.

Clients' qualification levels were recorded after each intervention, and coded as NVQ levels. Exp (B) scores above 1 indicate higher odds of having improved qualification levels between the initial and final intervention than the reference group, and scores below

1 indicate lower odds. Table A3.1 presents the results of the logistic regression for this dependent variable.

Clients' employment status was recorded after each intervention and recoded to show movement from unemployment or other inactivity to full- or part-time work. Exp (B) scores above 1 indicate higher odds of having moved from unemployment to work between the initial and last intervention than the reference group, and scores below 1 indicate lower odds. Table A3.2 presents the results of the logistic regression for this dependent variable.

Table A3.1: Improvements in qualification levels

		Exp (B)	Sig			Exp (B)	Sig
Gender	Male	1.0		First meeting employment status	<i>Other</i>	<i>1.832</i>	<i>0.012</i>
	Female	0.935	0.614	Barrier – Asylum seeker	No	1.0	
Age	Under 19	1.0			Yes	0.821	0.423
	20 to 30	21.161	0.784	Barrier – Basic skills	No	1.0	
	31 to 55	2.858	0.925		Yes	0.767	0.141
	56 to 64	2.479	0.935	Barrier – Benefits implications	No	1.0	
	65 and over	2.170	0.944		Yes	1.045	0.825
Ethnicity	White	1.0		Barrier – Caring responsibilities	No	1.0	
	Mixed	2.307	0.932		Yes	0.857	0.376
	Asian or Asian British	0.002	0.878	Barrier – Confidence	No	1.0	
	Black or Black British	4.726	0.873		Yes	0.864	0.348
	Chinese or other	3.209	0.905	Barrier – Disabilities	No	1.0	
Disability	Yes	1.0			Yes	0.548	0.113
	No	0.598	0.154	Barrier – ESOL	No	1.0	
First meeting* qualification	None	1.0			<i>Yes</i>	<i>0.701</i>	<i>0.039</i>
	Below NVQ level 1	0.001	0.407	Barrier – Unclear goals	No	1.0	
	NVQ level 1	3.117	0.531		Yes	1.230	0.309
	NVQ level 2	4.571	0.403	No. of meetings	2 or 3	1.0	
	NVQ level 3	2.858	0.563		<i>4 or more</i>	<i>1.415</i>	<i>0.024</i>
	NVQ level 4	7.001	0.283				
First meeting employment status	Full-time work (30 hours or more)	1.0		Note: * People of NVQ level 5 were not included as they could not improve their qualification level.			
	<i>Part-time work (Less than 30 hours)</i>	<i>0.464</i>	<i>0.002</i>	Base = 908			
	Unemployed less than 6 months	0.581	0.080	-2 log likelihood = 812.4			
	Unemployed more than 6 months	1.629	0.084				

Source: IES/MORI, 2003

Table A3.2: Changes to employment status

		Exp (B)	Sig			Exp (B)	Sig
Gender	Male	1.0		Barrier – Asylum seeker	No	1.0	
	Female	1.107	0.299		Yes	1.538	0.041
Age	Under 19	1.0		Barrier – Basic skills	No	1.0	
	20 to 30	0.182	0.812		Yes	0.938	0.696
	31 to 55	4.513	0.662	Barrier – Benefits implications	No	1.0	
	56 to 64	4.765	0.650		Yes	1.085	0.605
	65 and over	4.131	0.681		Barrier – Caring responsibilities	No	1.0
Ethnicity	White	1.0		Yes		1.282	0.116
	Mixed	0.785	0.389	Barrier – Confidence	No	1.0	
	Asian or Asian British	0.569	0.533		Yes	0.867	0.295
	Black or Black British	0.862	0.637	Barrier – Disabilities	No	1.0	
	Chinese or other	1.711	0.083		Yes	1.417	0.282
Disability	Yes	1.0			Barrier – ESOL	No	1.0
	No	0.580	0.038	Yes		0.873	0.407
First meeting qualification	None	1.0		Barrier – Unclear goals	No	1.0	
	Below NVQ level 1	0.898	0.721		Yes	0.917	0.516
	NVQ level 1	0.764	0.284	No. of meetings	1	1.0	
	NVQ level 2	0.374	0.002		2 or 3	0.708	0.395
	NVQ level 3	1.084	0.664		4 or more	1.121	0.267
	NVQ level 4	1.237	0.321				
	NVQ level 5	1.361	0.114				

Base = 908

-2 log likelihood = 812.4

Source: IES/MORI, 2003

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