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Evaluation of the Advancement Network Prototypes

Second Interim Report

March 2010

ⓘ For information

Contents

Executive Summary

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

The research for this phase of work took place between June and September 2009. The focus was upon delivery. The research, which was qualitative in approach, comprised a two-day visit to each Prototype and interviews with:

- strategic staff and project managers

- delivery staff

- users of the Prototypes' services.

In addition, adviser feedback meetings, launch events and local steering group meetings were attended and some Prototypes made available local monitoring and evaluation reports, and outputs from their management information systems.

Policy context

Since the first interim report from the evaluation, developments to support the introduction of the adult advancement and careers service (aacs) have progressed. By August 2009, work to establish a brand was in train as was the development of a customer relationship management system to underpin delivery. The Careers Advice Service and **nextstep** will be merged to provide the core of the aacs, and will work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. There is recognition that building the local networks which are part of the aacs vision will require a longer development timeline but an ambition exists that these networks will be established by 2011. The Prototypes are providing information about the organisations needed in these networks to support advancement, and the ways in which networks can be effectively established.

The Prototypes vary in composition, scale, scope and aims. For instance, the Greater Manchester Prototype aims to draw together advice services within and across 10 Local Authorities. Others are targeted in more limited geographies, such as the Islington part of the Islington, Camden and Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea (ICWKC) Prototype which is undertaking outreach within three deprived neighbourhoods. While 10 Prototypes have been commissioned, within each it is common for a number of approaches to exist. In some, this has been a deliberate strategy to test different ways of working (for instance, in Slough Prototype where four test-beds, or trials, have been established) whereas in other Prototypes it reflects differences in strategy between local authorities which have joined together for the purposes of funding (for example, Brent and Ealing, and ICWKC Prototypes). It is challenging therefore to quantify the extent of the conceptual models identified by the evaluation. Instead, indications of scale and examples of Prototypes engaged in these models are offered in the analysis.

Distance travelled by the Prototypes

Delivering on their aims and plans

■ Most of the Prototypes were adhering to initial plans and aims, albeit with some delays.

■ The most prominent change was in the Prototypes that initially had aimed to target offenders (Slough and East Staffordshire Prototypes). Both had struggled to establish an effective partnership with the Probation Service and it was likely that neither would deliver specifically to this group. In others areas links had been established with the Probation Service, for offenders who had entered the Prototypes as part of a broader caseload, rather than being targeted for support.

■ Advisers were generally well informed about the aims and objectives of their Prototype however were less clear about the vision for the aacs and how their Prototype's activity would feed into this context.

Developing partnerships

■ There was evidence of new partnerships establishing and care being taken over the achievement of an optimal mix of partners. Some Prototypes were seeking to partner with a package of provision to meet the needs of local target groups. Strategic staff reported that new partners who had become involved since the first phase of research included statutory and third-sector organisations.

■ There were varying degrees of partnership at strategic levels, though partnership boards or steering groups generally included the main statutory agencies. The depth and scope of partnership varied at delivery level (within and between Prototypes) but included:

    □ a **'key partnership' model** which operated through identified key partners, most often where a relatively narrow target group had been identified who it is perceived might share similar barriers which can be overcome by the expertise in the key partner organisations. This was the most prevalent form of partnership observed across Prototype implementations. Examples included the Black Country Prototype where advisers from Registered Social Landlords (RSL) work closely with Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** to meet the needs of individuals.

    □ a '**super coach' model** which worked intensively with a client on a range of barriers, as well as providing employment and skills advice, which drew less on other provision or services. The emphasis was on providing one-to-one support, delivering pre-employment training and providing other employability advice. Second most prevalent of the partnership models, examples of this mode of partnership included Brent and Ealing, and ICWKC Prototypes.

    □ a '**networked' approach** engaging with large numbers of local services and agencies. These Prototypes appeared to operate

a model closer to a network than a partnership. Fewer of the Prototypes operated in this way, with Greater Manchester and South Hampshire providing examples, as did most of the hubs in the Brighton and Hove Prototype.

■ The role of **nextstep** varied widely: one Prototype was **nextstep**-led; in other Prototypes there was little evidence of joined up working having developed. In some of these latter examples, it was reported that brokering links had been difficult and this appeared due to a lack of understanding about the service offered by **nextstep**, particularly the 'universal' entitlement to support through **nextstep**; as well as a lack of understanding of the extent to which the Prototype and **nextstep** should link up.

Drivers and barriers to implementation

■ The importance of project managers to rapidly respond to challenges to the Prototype's planned delivery, and to facilitate communication, networking and sharing of information across organisations, emerged from the research.

■ Established partnerships such as those for Multi-Area Agreements (MAA) and those that have supported pre-existing projects have provided an effective underpinning for Prototype activity.

■ Those Prototypes trialling multiple models, and those where it appeared there was less cohesion at a strategic level, seemed to be struggling most to move into the delivery phase.

Progress made with working with customers

■ Most of the Prototypes were working with customers by the time of the second phase research (one reported that it was not possible to claim that customer work was taking place since the customer relationship management (CRM) system was not available to record delivery activity).

■ All integrated some aspect of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (Careers IAG) into their work with customers. This might be an initial diagnosis of needs taking into consideration the wider barriers which might be addressed before work and learning could be progressed in some way. In some examples, most notably those operating a networked model, referrals to **nextstep** were more common. This referral might be used to gain specific support with careers advice, or with accessing Skills Accounts or gaining support with CVs.

■ A few Prototypes had proposed to work with a specific target group, such as offenders (for instance, in Slough and East Staffordshire Prototypes) and parents in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth Prototype. Most had made some headway (although not those which had targeted offenders as noted previously). The targeted approach brought employment and skills advice into established work thereby extending the service level. In these examples, advisers tended to lead Careers IAG, in parallel to assisting with wider barriers.

■ A similar number of Prototypes were addressing a particular barrier as a means to explore advancement. Examples included issues of health in Slough and in East Staffordshire Prototypes but most prominent was housing, for instance addressed by Brent and Ealing, and the Black Country, Prototypes. Again, advisers integrated Careers IAG into their discussions with customers. However it was noted that it could be difficult to promote discussion of careers to a group whose housing (or other specific barrier) required urgent resolution.

■ The Prototypes' interpretation of a universal service surrounded: a lack of any eligibility criteria to access the service(s) for instance, no requirement for individuals to be either un- or non-employed, or to be qualified below a specific level to gain support; and no limitation to the number of sessions that an individual might receive, eg most of the Prototypes provided an unlimited number of sessions to individuals. In practice, Prototypes were experiencing high demand from non- or un-employed individuals.

■ Work to engage with employers continued to be slow to take off partly because the recession created high demand from the newly unemployed, and partly because clarification about the benefits of the Prototype to employers was needed. The high demand for Train to Gain funding, which outstripped the planned investment in 2009/10, was felt to have limited the offer to employers. In these cases, it had been hoped to link Prototype operation to the brokerage available through Train to Gain.

■ Advisers were either organised by level with more highly qualified staff leading on complex cases (frequently observed in networked models), or were case-loaded (often in Prototypes operating a 'super coach' model. The evaluation will track implications of work organisation on referrals. There was some evidence of Prototypes easing the demands on **nextstep**: this was through providing a venue for **nextstep** to work from locally (as happened for instance, in the South Hampshire Prototype), or providing additional support to customers while they received IAG from **nextstep** (an example of this was in evidence in the Brighton and Hove Prototype).

■ Most of the Prototypes were providing training to staff. Depending upon the qualifications of the advisers, accredited training in IAG to NVQ Level 3 or 4, was common. Other forms of training included short courses on themes such as the different types of advice available in the network, or how to make referrals in the network. The training of advisers, and increasing their awareness of the range of organisations in the network, should continue to support the quality of delivery and referrals.

Progress with infrastructure development

■ Venue appeared important where universal access to Prototype services was being established. Locating the Prototype in the town centre, near to local agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, was thought to be important to ensuring demand. An example of this was found in South Hampshire Prototype, where initially a hub had been located on a deprived community,

however demand was much less when compared to the town centre hubs it had elsewhere.

■   Advice directories and ICT portals were being developed by two Prototypes by the second stage of research. These offered a tangible outcome of the network developed, however they also required resources for updating and checking for accuracy.

■   In general terms, the systems to share customer data, noted by a few of the Prototypes, were slower to develop. They proved challenging to implement as understanding of data protection issues, and the implications of sharing customer data, varied considerably. The evaluation will track benefits, and any drawbacks, of these systems in the final phase of work.

■   A small number of Prototypes had developed tools to support the customer journey as part of their implementation. Examples included: the '*Outcomes Star*' in ICWKC Prototype, and the '*Advancement Wheel*' in East Staffordshire Prototype. These tools appeared to offer a useful means through which users could identify needs, record their journey and outcomes. However uptake had been problematic. Some Prototypes had not sufficiently promoted the tool, while others had not explored the resource implications for partners. In some, the tool was considered inappropriate for some clients.

■   Around one-third of the Prototypes had established a local brand as a hook to engage with agencies and users. Transition arrangements may be needed for these, to reduce any confusion when the aacs brand is introduced.

Progress with improved use of existing resources

■   Referral through the more network-based Prototypes has taken time to get off the ground. This was due to the time required to develop and test complex IT systems and ensuring compliance with data protection, as well as a reluctance to share client information in some instances.

■   Consequently, there has been a stronger focus on 'no wrong door' access than a seamless customer journey in network-based Prototypes so far. While advisers are providing a 'no wrong door' approach to their customers, the seamless journey can be compromised when advice agencies and services keep hold of their clients rather than refer onwards.

■   Challenges to a 'no wrong door' approach were identified. Advisers found that a small proportion of their customers might not be eligible for the provision that would best meet their needs (eg pre-employment training). This had led a small number of Prototypes to develop and deliver bespoke provision. For example, due to a lack of provision in the Black Country, this prototype developed and offered a Work Skills course.

Progress with outreach work

■   Outreach-focused Prototypes tended to already have referral processes in place which they were either using (or planning to use) in the delivery, simply by adding extra paperwork as needed.

■ This model of engaging customers generally seems to have worked well, although in some instances, such as work from Children's Centres, it has taken time to establish a presence.

Progress with intensive support work

■ In this approach, advisers work intensively with the majority of their customers until they are ready to access mainstream employment or careers guidance. The intensity of the support provided to the customers is dependent on the customer's individual support needs. Providing customers with multiple sessions had meant that advisers had rapidly reached capacity.

■ Advisers offering an intensive service reported that the referral process was working however the extent of referral appeared minimal. More work is needed to 'find the balance' between where the intensive support model should provide help and when clients should be referred on.

Views of advisers

■ Advisers were fairly confident in 'working past the immediate need'; those who were fully qualified in IAG (often to Level 4) were most confident in this.

■ The extent of local provision, and the opportunities to access it for clients, varied considerably. Gaps had been identified and had led to the development of bespoke solutions: eligibility criteria and waiting times to enter existing provision had often driven this.

■ Many advisers were positive about their Prototype because it had introduced a way of working with 'no restrictions'. A small number of staff claimed the Prototype had made no difference to their job since the Prototype had provided funding for an existing post and its activities.

Views of users

■ Users had entered the Prototypes without difficulty and found it an easy process. They had few expectations about what would be offered. The sample at this phase of research was small, although reasonably diverse, however two groups emerged: those who were work ready and those with complex barriers.

■ The **work-ready group** had relatively straightforward barriers. They needed to be directed to sources of funding or training, support with their CV or jobsearch, and could often gain the support they needed in a couple of sessions. Their knowledge of the labour market was relatively current, and once they had received support to make a first step, they moved rapidly through the service and into learning and work outcomes.

■ The **complex barriers group** had more significant difficulties, less recent or no work experience at all, low confidence and self-esteem. They needed intensive one-to-one support and regular lengthy appointments to make small steps towards the job market. Hard outcomes were less prevalent however users recognised their progress in terms of soft outcomes and distance travelled.

■ There was limited evidence of referrals within the sample of users interviewed.

□ It appeared that there was greater likelihood of the work-ready to follow a linear path between the Prototype's advice and if the Prototype was working jointly with **nextstep**, to the advice available through **nextstep**, before making a transition into work and/or training.

□ Among the complex barriers group, the extent of needs varied considerably, and it was likely that customers would need support from a specialist organisation (eg for crisis support, substance misuse or domestic violence), and support for esteem and confidence (which might be offered by the lead Prototype organisation) and then advice on training, skills and work.

■ The users were highly satisfied with the support they received, in many cases, they appreciated that it had not been available elsewhere. The experience of feeling that someone was finally listening to their needs was important.

Working in the context of the Integrated Employment and Skills trials

■ The Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) trials overlap four of the Prototypes areas. In one of these a strategic linkage between the services has been made, with Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** both involved in the partnership. Elsewhere links between the Prototypes and IES trials have not been made. The aacs will be central to a wider IES approach, so testing ways in which advancement networks might work alongside the IES trials and join up services with Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** could provide some useful learning.

■ The Prototypes have the potential to provide a 'wraparound service', by offering support to customers before, during and after engagement with the mainstream services of both Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep**. Evidence of this was available in South Hampshire, and Brighton and Hove, Prototypes.

Monitoring and evaluation

■ All Prototypes are monitoring their progress against the success measures set out in their delivery plans. Since national indicators were not specified, a variety of measures are being used. These measures include the number of clients seen and outcomes achieved, the development and implementation of customer relationship management (CRM) and management information (MI) systems, provider directories or delivery of staff training.

■ Local evaluation had started in around half of the Prototypes. This was at an early stage and lessons had not yet emerged.

Conclusions

■ The successes of the Prototypes include leveraging **significant networks** and partnerships with a range of voluntary and community, and statutory organisations.

■   The Prototypes are testing **tools** which they have developed and modified, such as the Outcomes Star, aimed at working with customers across a range of barriers, and tracking their progress towards their goals. These approaches have not proved appropriate for all customer groups, particularly those with higher levels of skills.

■   Most Prototypes have **broadened the organisations linked to the delivery of careers and employment advice.** They have increased the number of organisations delivering careers and employment advice, increased the awareness of networked organisations of the careers and employment advice that is available, and generally encouraged customer referrals to careers and employment advice where appropriate. In several instances, such as in Housing Associations, these approaches have demonstrated to the organisations involved the value of careers and employment advice for their customer group.

■   The Prototypes have tested ways of **reaching out** to customer groups that would not ordinarily engage with the mainstream providers of careers and employment advice. Working in Children's Centres, the Prototypes have provided learning about the length of the lead-in time required, competition for space, and the peaks and troughs in footfall related to school holidays in venues of this kind.

■   The Prototypes have demonstrated that some customers need a **significant depth of support** before they are able to advance or to access mainstream support. They have also learned that the time-intensive nature of providing this type of support and the potential demand for a service of this depth can put strain on advisers' time and ability to deliver this depth of service on a sufficiently large scale. Where funding is limited, consideration needs to be given to overall priorities and where this depth of service can add most value.

Current learning
■   At the time of the Phase 2 research, the majority of the Prototypes were still in an early phase of implementation although the scale of their delivery varied considerably. A few had not yet worked with customers, whereas others had engaged a few hundred customers.

■   Several lessons have emerged from the approaches that are being trialled:

●   **Network-based approaches** have the potential to 'reach' large numbers of customers and to facilitate existing services to work together more effectively. These approaches have the potential to reduce duplication, to increase co-ordination and enable customers to have access to general and specialist advisers. It is clear that networks require resources to develop: to promote the joining up of services, and in documenting them to ensure a sustainable outcome.

●   Additional **outreach services** may not be necessary alongside a networked model if the range of organisations within the network is sufficiently diverse and comprises the services and

organisations that target customers already use, for example, libraries, GP surgeries and Children's Centres.

- The Prototypes providing **in-depth support** have developed evidence and understanding about the considerable scale of demand for a service of this type. Some client groups need intensive one-to-one support over a significant time period before they are able to access mainstream services.

■ Prototypes are trialling different leadership models. Previous partnership working, and particularly MAAs, has been instrumental in enabling many Prototypes to implement a sufficiently large network. Whether or not MAAs exist, Local Authorities appear to have an important role in strategic partnerships, perhaps not least since they have detailed knowledge of the local labour market, and skills priorities in areas, and manage many of the services related to the advancement agenda.

■ Prototypes that have struggled to extend their networks tended to be those trying to build relationships from scratch; this involved finding common ground and work on shared values. There are examples of some organisations, such as the Probation Service, proving difficult to work jointly with on the advancement agenda, and two Prototypes have discontinued working with offenders because of this.

Lessons for aacs

■ There is potential across the Prototypes to increase links with mainstream careers advice services specifically, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice service. These will form the 'core' of the aacs offer, so it is vital that local networks work with these services to enable lessons to emerge about this interaction. Some success was evident with **nextstep** integration however, the extent and effectiveness of the relationship depended very much upon the way in which the Prototype had been designed.

■ In some instances the Prototypes have demonstrated a reluctance to refer clients to other organisations preferring instead to provide customers with the many services that they may need in one place. The balance between supporting the client at their first entry point, as against making referrals to other organisations, will need clarification for organisations in the aacs.

■ 'Keeping hold' of clients has been further encouraged in some instances by perceived gaps in provision and in some instances the eligibility criteria of particular provision or services. It is unclear whether the aacs will seek to fill perceived gaps, in the way some Prototypes have: this has included developing bespoke training for their customers, and operating discretionary funding to help customers overcome barriers to advancement.

Gaps in learning for aacs

■ Although the Prototypes offer some depth of learning, based on the current models, lessons about some policy objectives may be limited since the Prototypes are not operating a fully universal model. For instance:

- there is limited engagement with young people's services, which will limit the learning for an all-age strategy;

- there are only a small number of Prototypes showing any engagement with employers currently; and

- there is a limited focus overall on in-work individuals.

■ There has been little structured development towards understanding and supporting the needs of older adults, who want to bring about some change in their life, perhaps moving sideways in their current employment, or shifting down to part-time work or into retirement.

■ The Prototypes also do not currently provide information about what it will mean to offer a service in rural locations, since none are experimenting with this.

Introduction

Guidance policy developments

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

In 2004 Lord Leitch was tasked with conducting a review of skills[1]. The aim of the review was to 'identify the UK's optimal skills mix in 2020 to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, and to consider the policy implications of achieving the level of change required'. One of his main recommendations, taken forward by the government in World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England (2006), was the aim to create a new integrated employment and skills service, in order to promote career development and sustainable employment.

At a similar time (also in 2004), John Denham mooted the idea of Advancement Agency Networks in a lecture to the Fabian Society[2]. This set out a vision of individuals in work receiving wide-ranging advice to support their needs and to enable them to develop their working life in ways that would lead to greater personal satisfaction and productivity. A group identified for this support was low-skilled employees, attracting the Working Tax Credit, who can often experience limited job satisfaction and career development. Similar to the Leitch review (ibid.), employers' needs were also considered and Denham set out that they should also receive advice about how training could increase productivity and how staff release for training could be managed (which is particularly important for small employers).

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

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[1]   Leitch Review of Skills. 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills'. See: www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/2006-12%20LeitchReview1.pdf
[2]   'Making work work: creating chances across the labour market' Downloaded, 26 April 2009 from: www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/UsersDoc/MakingWorkWork.pdf

The review itself[3], joined together key government departments and agencies including Department for Education and Skills (DfES)[4], and the LSC, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), The Department for Trade and Industry (DTi), Jobcentre Plus, Ufi and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Its findings suggested that the guidance 'market' was confusing for users who do not know their entitlement; that those most in need of help are often those who are least likely to seek it out; and that services tend to focus on progression in learning rather than work and careers outcomes. The focus on referral to link organisations was found to vary between IAG delivery agencies. Key recommendations included a single user-facing service available in person, by telephone or over the Internet, with strong partnership links, entitlement to a 'skills MOT' and continuing support to assist progression. Employers' needs were recognised with particular note made of integration with the Train to Gain service and Business Link.

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

A second White Paper, 'Work Skills' in June 2008, moved the agenda forward with its proposals for mainstreaming Skills Accounts and introducing an entitlement for funding for a first Level 3 qualification. However the key message arising from the paper was the need for close partnership working and local flexibilities, to enable the system to be driven by the needs of 'people on the ground'. The prospectus for the aacs, 'Shaping the Future', was launched in October 2008[5].

Trials towards the adult advancement and careers service

The adult advancement and careers service (aacs) will be a single service, available to everyone. The intention for aacs is that the service will be holistic and combine the provision of careers advice with advice about other barriers that people can face to work and learning, such as suitable and affordable childcare, transport, housing, debt, and health. It will also link in initiatives such as Train to Gain, Skills Accounts, and the Integrated Employment and Skills trials. The core service will 'connect to the full range of other services that provide advice for adults on a diverse range of

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[3]   Downloaded 26 April 2009 from: http://www.iagreview.org.uk/
[4]   The work of DfES was subsequently split between two departments: Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), and Children, Families and Schools (DCSF); at the same time, DTi became the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). More recently DIUS and BERR have merged to become the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).
[5]   Downloaded April 2009 from:
www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/announcements/~/media/publications/5/5203_1_dius_prospectus

needs'[6] through Advancement Networks. These will draw upon Local Area Agreements and/or Multi-Area Agreements, which are existing local partnerships that have identified the most important local priorities for employment and skills, and are working together to achieve the desired outcomes. They will provide the access to wider sources of advice individuals need to advance, such as childcare and entitlements, however also provide access to advice sources required to meet local area priorities.

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

- the co-location of **nextstep** careers advisers in Jobcentre Plus through the implementation of 'Integrated Employment and Skills Trials' which includes a 'Skills Health Check' (both of these have been subject to evaluation)

- 10 advancement network Prototypes which were commissioned in November 2008 and are the subject of this evaluation. These 10 Prototypes are spread across four regions of England.

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[6] ITT for the Advancement Network Prototypes (LSC, 2008)

Figure 0.1: 10 advancement network Prototypes spread across four regions of England

North West (Greater Manchester and Great Merseyside)

West Midlands (Stoke on Trent, North Staffordshire and the Black Country).

London (Brent and Ealing; Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth; Islington, Camden and Westminster; and Kensington and Chelsea)

South East (Brighton and Hove, South Hampshire, and Slough)
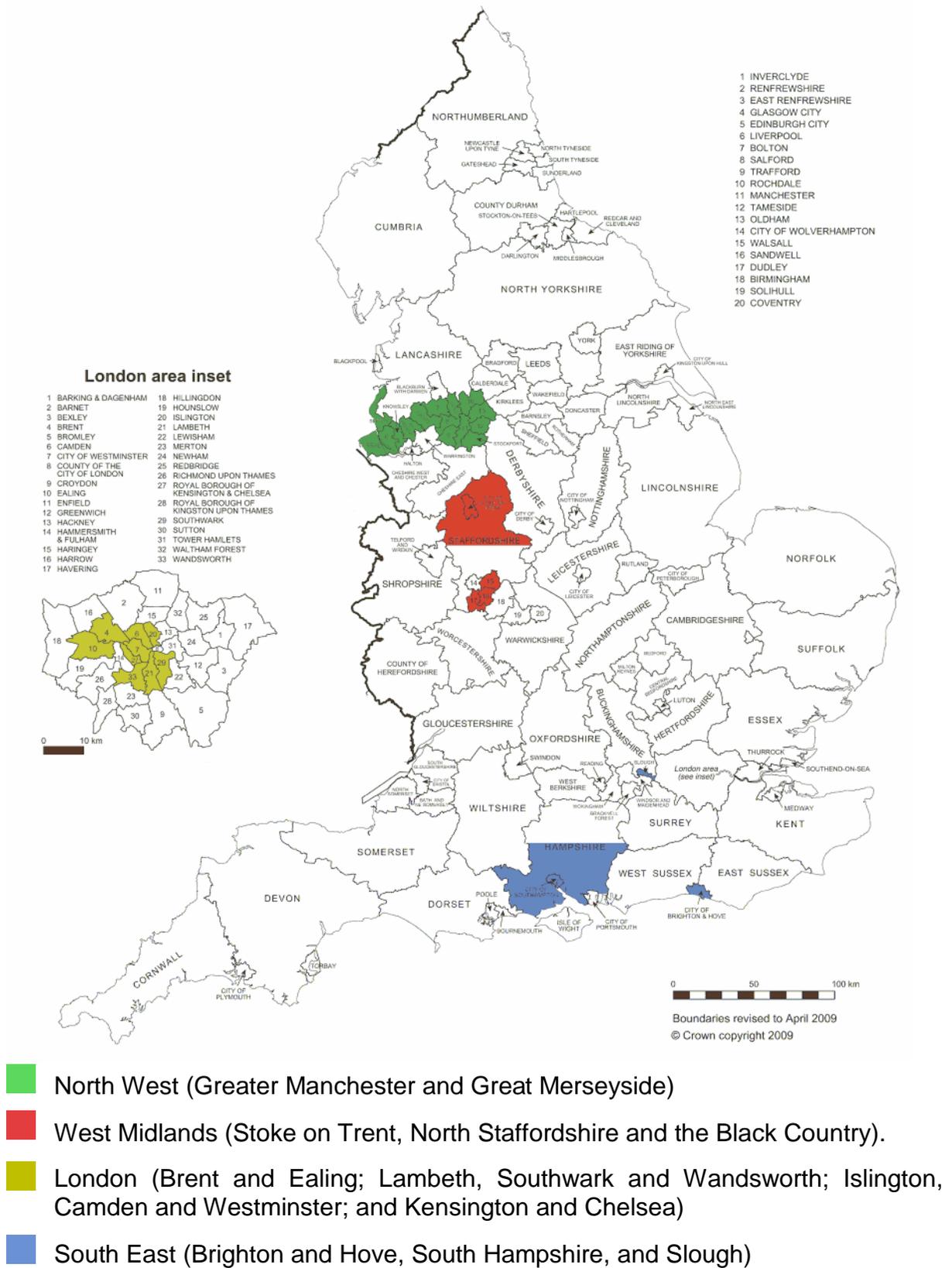
Source: IES, 2010

Figure 0.2: The concept of advancement

housing

well-being health

self improvement

entitlement

careers
employment
skills

getting in
getting on
moving up

employment rights

life satisfaction

finances childcare

inclusion
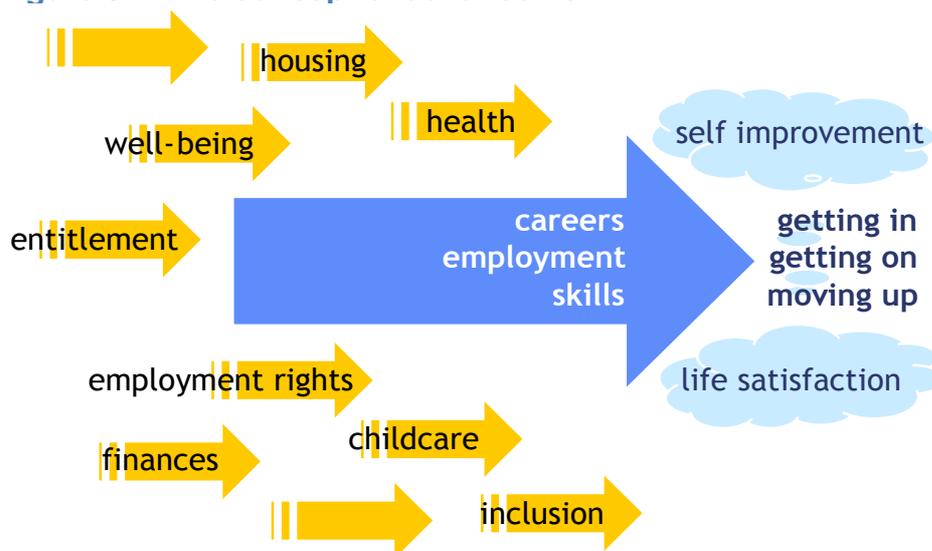
Source: IES, 2010

Between them the Prototypes are testing a broad range of approaches, offered through a range of channels centring on face-to-face services enhanced in some cases by web resources and planned telephone lines. Their delivery includes a range of leadership models such as Local Authority-led, voluntary sector- and housing association-led. The Prototypes are testing hub and spoke models, multi-agency models, using targeted networks and testing outreach-driven approaches. The Prototypes aim to deliver personalised and tailored packages of support.

A variety of practice has developed, for instance, some Prototypes are using 'advancement advisers' who work in communities to provide an outreach service, to engage users who might not ordinarily be involved with mainstream advice and support services. Others are more focused on improving the links between existing services; others still are looking at the 'advancement' needs of particular groups. Three types of approach had emerged by the first stage of the evaluation, with each Prototype testing one or more of these:

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

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

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

The Prototypes vary in composition, scale, scope and aims. For instance, the Greater Manchester Prototype aims to draw together advice services across 10 Local Authorities. Its key aim is to increase referrals and improve the quality of support available to individuals. Others are targeted in more limited geographies, such as the Islington part of the Islington, Camden and Westminster and Kensington

and Chelsea (ICWKC) Prototype which is undertaking support and outreach within three deprived neighbourhoods. Other Prototypes are looking at the issues associated with advancement for particular groups such as ex-offenders, long-term incapacity benefit claimants or parents. Others still are trialling different approaches to achieving advancement (such as work placements in the Slough Prototype) and tools and systems to support and track the user journey (East Staffordshire, Greater Merseyside and South Hampshire).

While 10 Prototypes have been commissioned, partnerships are taking different approaches to delivery, with some Prototypes aiming to roll out one model of delivery across all localities, and others trialling different approaches in different localities. A key finding from the first interim report from the evaluation of the Prototypes was that each Prototype was likely to deliver one or more aspects of learning towards aacs. Other conclusions were that:

- the Prototype models had been developed based on local need

- their focus was largely on groups considered hardest-to-help

- significant local support for, and goodwill towards, the Prototypes had already been established

- there was potential to increase links with national core services specifically **nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service

- overall few Prototypes were focused on the needs of individuals in work

- few had strategies to link with young people's services which would enable learning towards an all-age strategy for advice and guidance.

Moving towards aacs

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) envisages staged development towards aacs. By autumn 2009 work to establish a brand for the service was in train. By August 2010, BIS intends that the newly branded national, universal service will be available, accessible face-to-face, by telephone and over the Internet. The Careers Advice Service and **nextstep** will be merged to provide the core of the aacs, and will work in close partnership with Jobcentre Plus.

The procurement process for the telephone and face-to-face channels of the new advancement service is well underway. The contract for the telephone channel of the new service was awarded in December 2009, while contracts for the face-to-face channel are due to be awarded by the end of March 2010.

Development is underway for the systems necessary to underpin this, including the specification of a customer relationship management system (to track users) and a national database of providers of learning. The fundamental linkage between careers advice and the learning and skills system has informed the decision to locate the aacs within the Skills Funding Agency which, together with the Young People's Learning Agency, will replace the LSC from 2010.

There is recognition that the local networked aspect of aacs may require a longer development timeline but an ambition exists that networks will establish by 2011. BIS plans, with its partner organisations, a programme of engagement with local partners as a step towards the mobilisation of these. The Prototypes will provide information about the partners needed in these networks to support advancement, and the ways in which networks can be effectively established.

While the Prototypes might be conceived as 'pathfinders' or 'trailblazers' to the development of local networks, the way in which they have been commissioned and their funding leads to some uncertainty as to their future role. Alongside the vision for localised solutions within their specification, was recognition that not all might succeed. The Prototypes are a true trial in that they have been encouraged to experiment (and possibly fail in their attempts) within a safe and accepting policy environment while this contract lasts, but with no guarantees of any further funding in the future.

Aims for evaluating the Prototypes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- the perceived cost-effectiveness of the Prototypes' models

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

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

Phase 2 evaluation methodology

The focus for the Phase 2 research was to explore progress with delivery. The research comprised two days of qualitative research in each Prototype to understand the progress made strategically and 'on the ground', the opportunities and barriers to development and progress, changes and transitions in the planned delivery model, and future directions and plans. As part of the research a range of staff were interviewed as were users. Between seven and eight in-depth interviews were completed in each Prototype. The composition of the respondent group varied by Prototype, to take account of local circumstances and arrangements, however the work in each generally encompassed:

- key strategic and management staff

- Prototype advisers and advancement experts

- advice service users.

In addition, key events were attended such as adviser feedback meetings, launch events and local steering group meetings which drew together key staff involved in delivery. Further to this, some Prototypes made available local monitoring and evaluation reports, and outputs from their management information systems.

Structure of this report

This report presents an analysis of the findings from the second stage of research. Chapter 2 examines the progress made by the Prototypes since April 2009. It considers the extent of networking that has developed as well as progress made with delivery.

The third chapter seeks to pinpoint the policy messages arising and considers the issues on which the Prototypes have been able to make progress, and the barriers they have encountered in their implementation. It also considers the characteristics of effective leadership in the local context, and the sustainability and potential legacy from the work. The chapter culminates with the lessons that emerge for development of the aacs. The appendices provide an updated 'pen portrait' of development in each of the 10 Prototypes.

Distance Travelled

This chapter focuses on the progress with delivery made by the Prototypes since April 2009, first exploring progress with their aims, and the opportunities and barriers experienced in moving towards delivery. It then turns to the partnerships established and the extent to which it has been possible to make further progress within these. Development of infrastructure and direct delivery of support to customers is also explored.

It concludes with a review of progress with the three types of delivery model established in the first interim report and looks at the extent to which these support the key principles of the aacs service: that customers should be able to enter the service from the first organisation they come to (a no wrong door approach) and that an individual's journey through advice sources should be seamless. This latter principle contains two concepts: firstly, overcoming the need for individuals to repeat their story as they travel between sources of advice and secondly, ensuring that individuals do not struggle to find appropriate help and support.

Delivering on aims and plans

As part of the experimentation allowed by the policy model, Prototypes were enabled to change tack should they wish, or should local circumstance suggest, rather than maintain their original aims or delivery plans. In practice, most of the Prototypes were adhering to initial plans and aims, albeit with some delays, although in some there had been slight shifts in the approach as a result of 'learning by doing':

'You intend to do the thing you proposed in the bid but when you start, the practical elements change – they might be do-able but other ways [of achieving the aims] are preferable – it alters how you think in terms of strategy'

Prototype Project Manager

An example was the Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth Prototype which had reworked its delivery model to include a greater focus on one-to-one support rather than group work.

In a minority of Prototypes, there had been more significant changes to plans. The most prominent were in the two Prototypes which had aims to target offenders through joining up with the Probation Service. Both had struggled to establish an effective working partnership and it was likely that neither would deliver specifically

to this group. Instead plans were in train to broaden their focus to include other disadvantaged groups. While this suggests difficulties in making linkages with the Probation Service, in other Prototypes, good working relationships have established although in these examples, offenders are not a target group for the service.

> The boundaries for advancement and the ways in which different services will join together requires consideration in advance of the establishment of networks for aacs. Mobilisation at a national level to support links at a local level will be required to establish stronger working links such as Department of Work and Pensions to ensure good linkages with Jobcentre Plus, and the Ministry of Justice to assist linkages with the Probation Service.

Advisers were generally well informed about the aims and objectives of their Prototype however less clear about the vision for the aacs. This was most frequently the case in Prototypes working with target groups, or on exploring advancement through a particular barrier. Since aacs will be a universal service, advisers were unclear about how the targeted offer supported learning towards it.

Getting people closer to the job market was seen as a key aim of the Prototypes and most advisers felt this could mean customers taking 'a step' towards employment rather than getting a job necessarily.

'The aim is to get people into/back into employment – but it's all the things we can do, all the services we can offer, dealing with all the barriers that are stopping them move forward – if we can't help them we can refer them onwards to help them get back into work.'

Prototype Adviser

Development of delivery partnerships and networks

It is important to make the distinction between a partnership and a network. A partnership should have some overall governance in place and strategic aims, whereas a network tends to be more informal and to have no group governance. In this section we consider how the delivery partnerships have developed and in section 2.2.3 look at the development of the networks.

Some Prototypes were working through pre-existing partnerships, and were often seeking to add new partners and services to these. Others were developing the partnership from scratch. In some of these latter instances agreeing common goals and creating effective working practices had been more difficult.

While some of the key partnerships in Prototypes existed prior to the Prototypes, across Prototypes there was evidence of new partnerships establishing. There was careful consideration of the needs of communities and therefore the reasons particular organisations were being engaged, and an element of searching to partner with a package of provision that would best meet the needs of local target groups. New partners included a wide range of statutory and third-sector organisations.

Strategic and operational partnerships

There were varying degrees of partnership at strategic levels, though most Prototypes had established partnership boards or steering groups which included representation of the main statutory agencies. At delivery level there were more significant differences in the extent of partnership working. The depth and scope of partnership varied but included:

- a '**key partnership' model** which operated through identified key partners, most often where a relatively narrow target group had been identified who it is perceived might share similar barriers which can be overcome by the expertise in the key partner organisations. This was the most prevalent form of partnership observed across Prototype implementations with around half of the prototypes organised in this way. Examples included the Black Country Prototype where advisers from Registered Social Landlords (RSL) work closely with Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** to meet the needs of individuals.

- a '**super coach' model** in which the 'entry organisation' worked intensively and one-to-one with a client on a range of barriers, as well as providing employment and skills advice, drawing less on other provision or services. The emphasis was on providing one-to-one support, delivering pre-employment training and providing other employability advice. Second most prevalent of the partnership models, examples of this mode of partnership included Brent and Ealing, and ICWKC Prototypes.

- a '**networked' approach** engaging with large numbers of local service providers. These Prototypes appear to operate a model closer to a network than a partnership. Fewer of the Prototypes operated this model, with Greater Manchester providing an example, as do some of the hubs in South Hampshire and in Brighton and Hove Prototypes.

The importance of **nextstep** in Prototype delivery varied widely. The Greater Manchester Prototype is **nextstep**-led. In the Brighton and Hove Prototype, the **nextstep** service formed a core of employment and careers advice, which the broader, networked service surrounded to offer a longer-term and more holistic approach to addressing barriers to work and learning. In other Prototypes there was no evidence of links with **nextstep**. In some, it was reported that brokering links had been difficult and this appeared due to a lack of understanding about the service levels offered by nextstep, and particularly the entitlement to ongoing support through nextstep as well as the Prototype; as well as a lack of understanding of the extent to which the Prototype and nextstep should link up.

Most of the Prototypes were also involved with Jobcentre Plus to some extent, at the strategic level, and among steering and partnership groups it was generally accepted that this was an important link to make. At delivery level however these links were weaker and in many Prototypes, it was unclear how Jobcentre Plus fitted into the delivery model. There were several reasons for this but the primary factor was that

Jobcentres had been so swamped by new claimants as a result of economic recession that doing anything outside their core function, for example advisors going out into the communities and co-locating, had been extremely difficult. The second reason was persisting reservation about linking up among some Prototype partners, stemming from a perception that the Jobcentre Plus offers a narrow, work-first approach, inconsistent with the Prototypes' client-led approach.

> A significant issue for the aacs, and learning for the Prototypes to deliver, is the extent to which effective links can be established between the wider network of specialist advice organisations, including the third sector, and the core organisations, namely nextstep, Careers Advice Service and Jobcentre Plus.

Several of the Prototypes had significant Local Authority involvement, with some being Local Authority-led. Overall, Local Authority involvement was seen as both important and beneficial. For some the linking-up of council departments had been very valuable.

Some Prototypes had made links to welfare-to-work providers, for example Pathways to Work providers. There had been some success, however, in one Prototype particular difficulties were encountered because of the outcome-funded model of the provider. This again created the potential for a clash between work-first and client-focused approaches.

Support available to the development of the Prototypes
The relationship between the Prototypes and the LSC varied. While most were satisfied with the local support they received, there was some concern about lack of information about national MI requirements and particularly, a lack of clarity about exactly what information would be requested at the end of operation.

Generally the national meetings were regarded as valuable. It was clear however that the range of different Prototype models was somewhat confusing to individual strategic/management staff, and some felt that more clarification of the context about the overall aims of the Prototypes, and how the different models fitted together, would be beneficial. For some the regional meetings, with more in-depth learning from a smaller number of Prototypes, were considered more useful.

Drivers and barriers to implementation

The importance of having project management staff appointed and in place to address challenges as they arose, clearly emerged from the research. In areas where project manager roles had been successfully filled, their role was noted as a critical success factor. In contrast, where Prototypes had experienced difficulties or delays in making appointments, this was felt to have been a barrier to become fully operational.

> The Prototypes identified project managers as important to implementation since a project manager can provide the interface between the strategic partners in the network, and advisers working 'on the ground' and in different parts of the network. This may be important in advising how the network aspect of aacs might best be designed at the local level.

Established partnerships such as those for Multi-Area Agreements (MAA) and those that have supported pre-existing projects have provided an effective underpinning for Prototype activity in terms of smoothing the transition to delivery. The benefit of working through established mechanisms is that time has not been required to 'form, storm, norm and perform'.

Those Prototypes trialling multiple models, and those where it appeared there was less cohesion at a strategic level, seemed to be struggling most to move into the delivery phase. An example of the first of these was the Slough Prototype which was managing significant complexity with four 'test-beds' (essentially trials[7]), each implementing a different model. Some of these had been able to make greater progress than others. Positively, the buddying test-bed had recruited and trained the potential buddies and was now beginning work with individuals. More difficult had been the work placement test-bed where it seemed the lack of a project manager role, and funding disincentives for the provider, had led to a slower start and questions being raised over the quality of placements on offer.

The Slough Prototype is unique in bringing an activity-led approach[8] to advancement within its Prototype and the benefits of activities to support advice and guidance have been established elsewhere (eg Hawthorn and Alloway[9]). It is the attempt to trial a number of models of activities, and to mobilise different networks for each, that has hampered delivery. This suggests learning about the 'manageable scale' of networks and activities for aacs and potentially a need to keep developments relatively simple in the early stages of implementation.

The Brent and Ealing Prototype is an example where it appeared close working has not developed at a strategic level, rather each borough was focused on moving forward with its own 'version' Prototype delivery. This did not appear particularly detrimental to progress although, since they were drawn together in the contract there may have been expectation of a 'joined-up' approach evolving. There was greater strategic cohesion in the Greater Manchester Prototype however staff noted that the speed of progress varied across the 10 Local Authorities with some of the larger ones still to come 'on board'. It was felt that the varying needs of residents and differing extents of disadvantage in Local Authorities gave a sense of urgency for some areas that was not mirrored in others.

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[7]   See Appendix Case Study of Slough Prototype for full details of the four test-beds

[8]   For instance, through work placements and buddying

[9]   Hawthorn R and Alloway J, *Smoothing the path: advice about learning and work for disadvantaged adults*, funded by City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development and CfBT Education Trust

Varying degrees of strategic cohesion are evident among the Prototypes. The extent to which the Prototypes are underpinned by true partnerships rather than forced marriages appears to determine this cohesion. Where some level of interest for cross-boundary working, or a Multi-Area Agreement, does not exist, the Prototype itself may not provide sufficient impetus to join up. This suggests learning about the appropriate 'scale' of networks for aacs and indicates that a variety of scales may be necessary.

Progress with delivery

The form of delivery varies by Prototype since aims and operational models differ considerably. Broadly, there are two focuses: working with 'customers', and infrastructural development. Most Prototypes have a dual focus however this categorisation provides a useful means to assess progress.

Figure 0.1: Most Prototypes have a dual focus, both working with 'customers', and developing infrastructure

working with customers — dual focus — infrastructural development
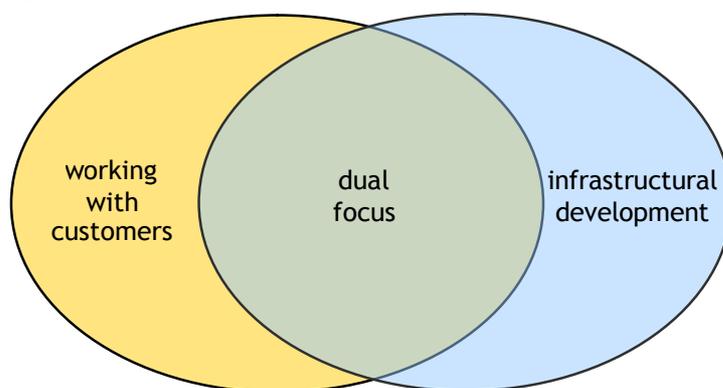
Source: IES, 2010

Progress with working with customers

Most of the Prototypes were now working with customers although the scale of their operation varied considerably. The key dimensions of this variation surrounded the intention to target particular groups of disadvantaged customers or to offer universal access, the type of intervention (eg activity-led or longitudinal support) and the role envisaged for advisers (signpost and referral, or intensive support). In practice, the scale of current delivery ranged from 50 to over 400 customers accessing Prototypes' services. Some Prototypes reported demand of around 40 customers each week in their central hubs.

Overall, there appeared to be considerable demand and in some Prototypes, such as the Black Country, strategic staff were monitoring advisers' caseloads to ensure an appropriate balance between quality of support and quantity of users seen. There was also evidence of hard outcomes in many of the Prototypes with customers progressing into work or learning and soft outcomes following interaction with Prototype advisers (see section 2.3.2).

All integrated some elements of IAG into their customer sessions. This might be an initial diagnosis of needs taking into consideration the wider barriers which might be addressed before progression in work and learning would be considered. In some examples, most notably those operating a networked model, referrals to **nextstep** were more common. This referral might be used to gain specific support with careers advice, or with accessing Skills Accounts or gaining support with CVs.

Working with target groups and targeting specific barriers
A few of the Prototypes had established target groups (such as parents, and people with health difficulties or disabilities) with whom they would work. Most had made headway with this, although the difficulty encountered in two of engaging with offenders has already been noted. The benefit of a targeted approach, in the view of Prototype staff, was the inclusion of careers, employment and skills advice into established work thereby extending the service level available to customers. Approaches to the delivery of careers IAG varied, however most common was training the specialist advisers in IAG, and for them to deliver IAG to customers.

A similar number of Prototypes were addressing a particular barrier as a means to explore advancement. This included health and mental health, but most prominent was the issue of housing. These Prototypes noted that it could be difficult to promote discussion of careers, employment and skills to a group whose housing (or other barrier) needed urgent resolution before they could consider moving on in work and learning.

> While specialist organisations supporting one type of barrier may have interest in expanding their advice to include careers and employment, or in inviting nextstep to co-locate, for some types of barrier this may not be appropriate. For instance, the Prototypes show that where housing needs are urgent, individuals may not wish to consider employment and skills until their housing has been resolved.

Universal service levels
A minority of the Prototypes were attempting to offer a universal service. Their interpretation of this surrounded the lack of eligibility criteria to enter Prototype support, and no limitation to the extent of support that could be offered. In practice, these Prototypes were experiencing high demand from non- or un-employed individuals, and often the newly unemployed, which in part was felt to be an impact of the recession. Advisers tended to welcome the opportunity to support a broader client group and to be able to offer the support that individuals needed, rather than the amount set out by particular project funding.

The first interim report identified that few of the Prototypes had aims to support individuals in work and there was a risk that insufficient learning would be delivered for aacs on this issue. The second phase of research showed that the high demand from the newly unemployed was limiting 'satellite' operation within employers. A couple of examples emerged however: a Prototype had provided in-work support (a job club) to individuals identified for redundancy by their employer. The same Prototype was planning 'satellite' operation in a strategic health authority to enhance the careers guidance available there. In another Prototype, staff noted that the cessation of Train to Gain funding, had limited their ability to support individuals in

work and their employers since links had been planned with the Train to Gain brokerage and funding. Compounding this, staff felt that benefits to the employer of Prototype activities were unclear and until these were more certain, marketing an 'offer' was problematic.

Adviser roles

Differing staff roles were in evidence across the Prototypes. Some, for example the South Hampshire Prototype, had established a tiered model that had some similarity with that of the Careers Advice Service. It was originally planned that advisers qualified to Level 3 would lead registration and diagnosis, and would support customers with relatively straightforward needs while advancement experts would support those with more complex needs. The intention was that both adviser types would signpost and refer customers to other agencies and services. In practice, due to high demand, both types of advisers were leading registration and diagnosis although advancement experts maintained their role for those needing more intensive support.

Where tiered roles did not exist, advisers supported a caseload of clients without consideration of higher or lower level support needs; this was often the case in 'super coach' or 'key partner' models. The evaluation will monitor the extent to which these differing adviser roles encourage or discourage the referral of customers within the networks established by the Prototypes.

Adviser qualifications and training

The Prototypes' approach to IAG training for advisory staff varied by the extent to which staff were already IAG qualified. The research showed that advisers were drawn from different backgrounds, with some having delivered IAG previously perhaps in education or training settings; others had been involved in the delivery of other types of advice. Where advisers were not IAG qualified, Prototypes were funding their training to either NVQ Level 3 or 4 eg in the East Staffordshire, Black Country, South Hampshire and Brighton and Hove Prototypes.

Other forms of training were also being delivered for instance, about the different types of advice available, or how to make referrals in the network. In the Brent and Ealing Prototype, housing advisers were receiving three short courses: training on in-work benefits from Citizen's Advice Bureau; a half day with Jobcentre Plus advisers to train them in Better Off Calculations; and a half day introduction into 'Brent into Work' which is an established programme of employment support, job search and job brokerage in the area This may raise questions over the extent to which the Prototype complements or duplicates the work of other organisations. Much would depend upon whether additional capacity is required and whether the intention is to increase advisers' understanding of these processes to promote a higher number of referrals, or to lead these processes themselves.

Across the Prototypes, advisers identified some issues on which they would like training or more information. These included:

- the different parts of the same Prototype (where there was more than one approach being tested) and how the networks fitted together

- how to discuss issues beyond those immediately presented, and where and when to signpost and/or refer customers.

Some Prototypes have already begun to address these points. For example, in the Brighton and Hove Prototype a series of events were being rolled out to improve adviser knowledge in a range of areas including welfare benefits, debt management, redundancy and self-employment. Overall, staff training should remain a priority to encourage good working practice among Prototype and other advisers and to build trust to support referrals.

Infrastructural development

Infrastructural developments have taken various forms including the establishment of new venues for Prototype service delivery, and the drawing together of information about local services into directories which are available to all advisory staff within the networks. Other forms of infrastructure development take the form of tools to support the advancement journey, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems to record and track users.

Venues for service delivery

Some Prototypes have aimed to establish new venues from which to deliver the Prototype service. Examples of this include some of the hubs in South Hampshire Prototype and Brighton and Hove Prototype. Staff in the hubs have been required to undertake dual aspects of development. Firstly, to establish localised networks which has involved scoping services and provision and raising awareness among agencies to ensure the optimal mix of partners, and secondly, encouraging users to access the centres. Largely the new venues have been working effectively although some learning has already arisen about how best they can be located. In the South Hampshire Prototype, one of the new hubs was located on a deprived estate in an established community centre. While this was an effective venue for that particular community, residents from the wider area were not accessing the service. A decision has been reached to replicate the model of the other hubs, and move into the city/town centre; satellite operation, where advancement advisers travel out to communities, will continue on the deprived estate.

More frequently, the Prototypes have added a new service level into established venues, and into the operation of established services. In these, venue remains an important issue in determining the 'reach' of the service, however since these Prototypes have taken a more targeted approach, broad reach is a lesser concern.

The Prototypes show that there are benefits and drawbacks to different venues for service delivery that need to be considered for aacs. 'High street' venues, with proximity to mainstream services such as Jobcentre Plus, ensure accessibility for a broad range of clients and help to promote transition between agencies. Location within existing specialist centres assists with targeting particular groups although unless other services are close or co-located, referral transitions may be more limited.

Advice service directories

The Greater Manchester and Greater Merseyside Prototypes have made advice service directories a key part of their delivery plan. Both revealed that the development time needed for these should not be underestimated. Staff in Greater Merseyside noted that the ICT Portal, which contains the directory, had launched by

September (ie some way into the Prototypes' operational timeline) and 100 local organisations had inputted their profiles although this represented only part of the picture of the network of services. Already, staff felt that lessons were emerging from their efforts.

The directory in the Greater Manchester Prototype, being developed through a customer relationship management (CRM) system, is a slightly more complex model. While, local services and organisations each have a presence, there is an additional level whereby each customer will have an account which can be accessed by the different organisations they encounter. The CRM was being trialled in one Local Authority, facilitated by a local network co-ordinator. While the process worked effectively, until the user element became operational, there was a lack of evidence of any impact on individual users of the service.

There were different approaches to keeping the databases current. In one, organisations were asked to input and update their organisational profiles. The other anticipated updating would be undertaken by an individual within the lead organisation for aacs.

Systems to share customer data
Some of the Prototypes had developed systems and databases to share organisational and customer data. It was anticipated that databases would go some way to making the referral and signposting process more seamless for the customer, although in the main this was as yet untested because of the lead in time required to develop and pilot these systems before they were rolled out.

For those Prototypes using customer data management systems, data protection had been identified as an issue. Prototypes had managed this in different ways. For instance, one remained unclear about data protection issues created by the system and lacked clarity about data which might be inputted and shared. In another, data protection requirements were satisfied by gaining the customer's consent for their data to be shared with other organisations in the network. A third Prototype was concerned about the potential duplication of information, since organisations in the network also had data management systems into which their advisers were required to record client information.

> Within the Prototypes there are several examples of customer databases being developed and used. Consideration should be given to how to migrate data already collected to the aacs system as well as how to avoid duplication with systems of networked organisations.
>
> The Integrated Youth Support System (IYSS) is addressing issues of data sharing, with an aim to effect successful referral and partnership working between all children's services (including schools, social services, Connexions) and family services. While the Prototypes do not have particular links into young people's services, developers for the aacs may wish to look to IYSS for relevant lessons.

Tools developed by the Prototypes to support the customer journey
A number of Prototypes set out that they would develop and use a tool for customers to identify their needs and to assess their progress as a result of support afforded through the Prototype. Examples of these tools included the 'Advancement Wheel' in

the East Staffordshire Prototype, and the 'Outcomes Star' in ICWKC Prototype. The tools focus on presenting the issues on which an individual might need help for instance, social determinants such as housing, personal barriers, and consideration of employment and skills needs. The intention in a number of examples was that this tool would follow the user (and be updated) through their referrals reducing the need to re-explain their story. The tool would also provide a means of review since users, and Prototype staff, could reflect on the starting, and end-points, of the individual's journey.

While these tools appeared to have good potential to help users to identify needs holistically, and to enable Prototypes and individuals to track the distance travelled, uptake by the networked services had been problematic in all instances. In some examples, agencies seemingly lacked any awareness of the tool; in others, completion of the tool with users would require them to record information in two ways (ie additional bureaucracy) which they were unable to resource.

Local branding

A number of Prototypes had established local branding as a hook to raise awareness of the service to agencies and to customers. The main reason for establishing a brand was that the 'Advancement Network Prototype' as a term lacked meaning. There was similar feeling about labelling the service as 'aacs', and although one had gone forward with this, marketing activity surrounded agencies rather than individuals. These findings support the national development of a brand for aacs that is more meaningful in terms of the service that will be offered. However the existence of these localised brands, when the aacs is in implementation, may add to the confusion of agencies and customers.

Progress with the three types of delivery model

The first interim ANP evaluation report identified three delivery models, one or more of which were being implemented in each of the 10 Prototypes. These models were: making better use of existing services through mobilising networks; engaging customers through outreach and supporting customers not yet ready to access mainstream support services.

Figure 0.2: Delivery arrangements
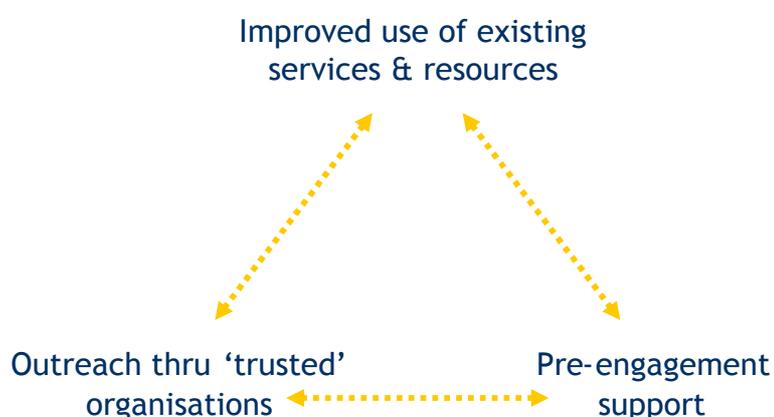
Source: IES, 2010

Improved use of existing services

Most of the Prototypes have sought to develop networks in order to promote customer referrals to appropriate provision. An aligned purpose was to increase organisational awareness and understanding of other services which may help Prototype clients to overcome barriers and achieve goals.

Some organisations were working with a different client group via the Prototype than they had previously, and therefore reported that they were increasing their links with other organisations in order to best support their new customer groups. For example, the majority of previous beneficiaries of the delivery organisation in Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth had been fairly highly skilled women returners. Prototype delivery had identified the need to broaden links with support organisations and employers for customers with lower levels of skills.

Other Prototypes were now supporting their existing type of clients with issues broader than their previous remit, such as the Tenant Management Organisation in Islington which as a result of the Prototype, now discussed employment, careers and skills with their customers and had broadened their networks in order to facilitate this.

Advisers in organisations with established networks reported improved referrals systems and working within networks were the added value of the Prototype.

'For the Prototype the referral process needs to be of a certain standard, at the moment our [delivery organisation] referral process needs improvement and the Prototype will enable this to happen.'

Prototype Adviser

Several of the Prototypes operating network-based models had held launch events to increase the profile of the Prototype among local organisations with aims to establish common ground and gain buy-in. These were felt to have been successful in raising awareness of the Prototypes. Referral through the more network-based Prototypes seems to have been slower to get off the ground however, often due to systems development and the time required to develop and test complex IT systems. Problems surrounded data protection, as well as organisations 'being reluctant' to share clients and waiting times between referral and appointment.

Advisers in the East Staffordshire Prototype reported problems referring users to **nextstep** because of a four to five week delay between the referral and first appointment. In the same Prototype an adviser reported that some clients were also reluctant to go to **nextstep** because of a previous bad experience. This sentiment was echoed in other Prototypes; advisers in Greater Merseyside, Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth and Slough commented that they are wary of referring to statutory agencies, and in some cases **nextstep**, because of customer's previous poor experience of these services.

Examples were found in the Prototypes where the links with core services were weak and trust had not been established. In some cases this was the result of negative feedback from customers. A lesson for aacs is that it will be necessary to build trust between advisers working in the networks and the core service in order to encourage referrals between the two.

Documenting networks

Using network-based approaches has led to the creation of data as the Prototypes increase and record their knowledge of local organisations. This data has been stored and accessed in a variety of ways, some more formal than others.

In the ICWKC Prototype, an advancement adviser reported that they had developed a personal network of provision to which they would refer customers, but that this was not formalised or recorded. While this has produced benefits at the local level, it is unclear how aacs could benefit from personalised networks such as this. While some Prototypes sought to develop a network specifically in line with local need and their aims, others had their own pre-existing networks. While these were utilised for the benefit of the Prototype currently, if the organisation was not a successful bidder to deliver as part of the aacs, this network could be lost.

The potential solution to this was demonstrated by Greater Manchester and Greater Merseyside Prototypes which are developing advice service directories. Documenting the network should ensure a legacy, however, the ownership of these directories is unclear for aacs. Their value however must be understood in measured terms (see earlier comment in section 2.2.2 on advice service directories) since their currency and accuracy must be assured, and practitioners may still prefer to rely on their personal networks.

A key issue for the aacs is whether the networks created locally are personal to the adviser (and potentially informal) or organisational (strategic and formal). A related issue is the extent to which the networks are documented and thereby accessible to the core. Formal, strategic networks that continue to flourish when individual personnel leave an organisation are likely to be better placed for medium to long-term success than those which are less formalised and rely more heavily on individual staff.

When aacs networks are contracted, consideration should be given to which organisation is best placed to lead and co-ordinate them. This should include consideration of how networks would be sustained if contractors were to change.

The resource involved in documenting networks, and keeping information about organisations within them up-to-date should not be underestimated. The Prototypes show this needs active support of communication channels, and the drawing together of regular meetings to promote information sharing. This can be a challenge given the time and resource pressures in the organisations and services involved.

No wrong door and seamless customer journeys
The primary purpose of a networked approach was to draw on the services of other organisations to help customers overcome barriers to advancement through referrals and signposting. The Prototypes are using different referral approaches and in some there appears to be some tension about when it is appropriate to refer to a specialist. Some organisations (and delivery models) 'keep hold' of clients and aim to provide the range of support they need to achieve their overall goal. This limits learning about achieving 'seamless customer journeys' since individuals do not make transitions between advice agencies and services. While the 'first point of contact' adviser offering a range of advice can go some way to providing a 'no wrong door' service for a customer, it is perhaps not viable for front-line advisers to increase their knowledge sufficiently to provide high quality advice about careers, employment and skills alongside providing support and advice about other issues, such as health, or housing for example.

The Greater Manchester Prototype offered training to advisers throughout the network on how to make an appropriate referral in order to encourage this behaviour and to ensure referrals were made most effectively throughout the network. To increase the confidence of advisers about quality in the network, when first joining the network, organisations were required to sign-up to, and self-assess against, the first four standards of Matrix, as a means of ensuring quality in provision.

Some challenges to a 'no wrong door' approach have been identified. For instance, staff in the Black Country Prototype, which is working with housing association customers, found that their clients were not always eligible for the services and support provided by other organisations because of the eligibility criteria that apply to these services. Examples of this were means tested funding for training courses, age restrictions on certain provision or that some services are dependent on an individual's employment status, for example some Jobcentre Plus services are open only to individuals who have been unemployed for six months or more.

The East Staffordshire Prototype had encountered problems with eligibility when referring to **nextstep**. An adviser gave as an example of this, an employed customer who was seeking to gain new skills. The customer was told by a **nextstep** adviser that they could not receive support as **nextstep** specialises in helping only unemployed people.

'We could do with more services – it's about services and funding, they have limitations about who they can see and help.'

Prototype Adviser

The difficulties encountered by some Prototypes in accessing the services and provision customers need may illustrate a challenge to providing a 'universal' service as part of the aacs. The concept of universal can be understood to include a service that is able to help a range of people, as well as a service that can provide a range of advice. If the service cannot provide access to the range of provision and services customers need in order to overcome their barriers to work and learning, it may be judged to be ineffective.

Engaging customers through outreach

The second delivery model being used by the Prototypes is outreach. These Prototypes aim to reach, and engage with, customers through organisations not usually associated with careers, employment and skills IAG. Between them, Prototypes are using outreach approaches through social housing providers, Children's Centres, and community centres.

Figure 0.3: Outreach – adviser pull and support
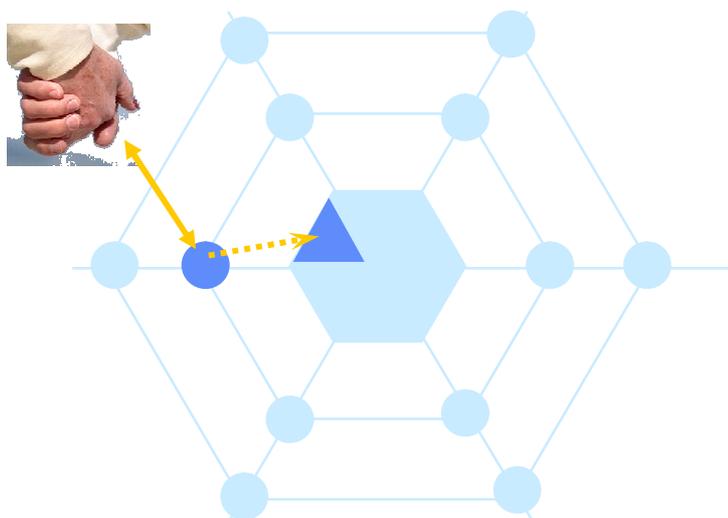
Source: IES, 2010

Outreach-focused Prototypes tended to already have referral processes in place which they were either using (or planning to use) in delivery, simply by adding extra paperwork as needed. Advisers in these Prototypes were not concerned by the extra paperwork, although it had the potential to limit the amount of time spent with a client.

This model of engaging customers generally seems to have worked well, although in places it has taken time to establish. Two of the Prototypes working from Children's Centres have had separate, but related issues in establishing outreach services. In the ICWKC Prototype, there were difficulties in gaining access to Children's Centres. This was resolved by Local Authority intervention. In the Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth Prototype, Jobcentre Plus had recently started a pilot programme of outreach into Children's Centres to provide employment and benefits advice. The Prototype had to review the outreach sites it used, to work from different Children's Centres than initially planned and to use its own premises to deliver Prototype services.

> Other initiatives and programmes, such as Brent in2 Work, the Migrants Fund etc, are trialling some of the approaches being tested by the Prototypes, particularly outreach and co-location of services. As part of aacs development, it is important that learning arising from these other employment and skills programmes is drawn upon.

Supporting customers not yet ready to access mainstream services
The third approach offers a significant amount of support to customers, some of which has been developed specifically for the Prototype delivery. This intensive work would continue until customers were ready and able to access mainstream employment or careers advice and guidance. The majority of customers within Prototypes using this approach would be given this intensive support. However the intensity of the support delivered and the number of sessions needed for each customer is very much dependent on the individual's needs. Providing customers with multiple sessions of tailored support had meant that advisers in some of the Prototypes had rapidly reached their capacity (this was the case in the Black Country, and parts of the Brent and Ealing and ICWKC Prototypes). This had led to some clients being moved to other sources of support, a maximum number of sessions that would be offered or a decision to close entry until caseloads subsided.

Figure 0.4: Pre-engagement
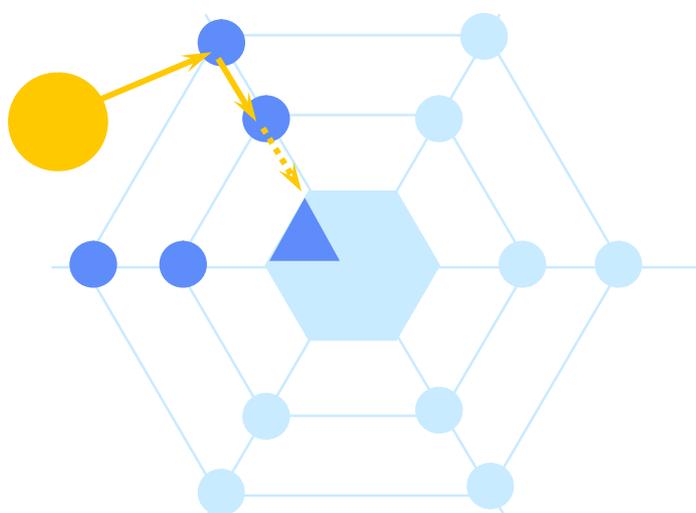
Source: IES, 2010

The advisers in Prototypes offering an intensive service felt that the referral process was working, however there appeared to be a lesser extent of referral than was evident elsewhere. There appeared to be a difficulty with 'finding the balance' between where the intensive support model should provide help and when clients should be referred on. In some respects, the intensive support afforded customers a 'seamless journey' and 'no wrong door' service, but arguably not in the way that is intended by aacs. The adviser was providing the range of advice for the customer, instead of drawing on specialist advisers in the network. There is a danger in this that Prototypes are replacing the mainstream rather than assisting individuals to engage with it. There may also be a risk that the intensive support does not sufficiently develop the customer's resilience and skills to enable them to work through similar situations in the future by themselves.

> The boundaries of advisers' roles, and their understanding of when it is appropriate to refer to other more specialist advisers may need development for aacs. Awareness raising and staff training within the networks would help to address this.

The perspective of advisers and users

This section reviews some essential elements of the ways in which the Prototypes are working, firstly from the perspective of advisers and then from the perspective of users who have accessed support.

Advisers and advancement experts

Delivery and referral processes
Advisers in the Prototypes were fairly confident in 'working past the immediate need'. Many reported that some care was required when exploring beyond the immediate barrier presented by the customer, however in the majority of instances they had found that clients were willing to talk further about their problems. Advisers who were qualified in IAG (often those qualified to Level 4) were most confident in managing this process, and other advisers expressed an interest in further training to better enable them to do this more effectively.

Cross-referral appeared to be happening sporadically across the Prototypes, at least in the view of advisers. They reported that most referrals were from the Prototype outwards, although one Prototype reported a high level of inward referral from Jobcentre Plus. Advisers felt confident that inward referrals would increase when other organisations became more aware of the Prototypes' offer.

Local Provision

Analysis of the advisers' views suggested the extent of local provision, and the opportunities to access it for clients, varied considerably between Prototypes. Organisations that had previously worked in areas of IAG tended to know of local provision and services, and therefore had a head-start on those which were developing this knowledge from scratch. The outreach-focused Prototypes appeared successful at accessing local provision since if they did not already have a relationship with a certain type of provider, as an adviser noted, they had the resource within their role to *'go out and find it'*.

There were reports of varying standards of service provided by some networked organisations. Greatest difficulties were seen in the West Midlands, however the low volume of referrals and a preference to 'keep the customer' in other Prototypes may have meant that these issues have not yet arisen.

Some gaps had been identified in provision in some Prototypes and this had led to the development of bespoke solutions. In some cases the eligibility criteria needed to enter some mainstream provision, had driven this development.

Added value

Many advisers were positive about their Prototype because it had introduced a way of working with 'no restrictions', (this was the case in South Hampshire and Brighton and Hove amongst others). However a small number of staff involved in the Prototypes claimed it had made no difference to their job role. An adviser from ICWKC Prototype for example, reported they were not 'doing anything new'. However, the cause of this may be that the Prototype has essentially part-funded an existing post after another source of funding finished. It is unclear how far such a model of funding use was envisaged when the Prototypes were commissioned.

As might be expected, delivery organisations that were already providing an IAG service seemed most confident about delivering the Prototype and most embraced the flexibility the Prototype provided.

'It works and it's a really good Prototype. We've waited a long time for a project like this without restrictions.'

Prototype Adviser

Though some Prototypes seemed to benefit from the lack of eligibility restrictions and the free reign in terms of their design and development, others appeared to struggle because of these factors. In some, advisers did not feel sufficiently prepared to perform their job role:

'Until now the managers have been doing the planning and thinking, but we're the ones that are actually delivering and we don't really know enough about it.'

Prototype Adviser

These issues appeared to be caused by lack of communication between the strategic managers and the advisers. Understandably, leadership, and particularly the role of project managers, was identified as a critical success factor by advisers.

> The Prototypes demonstrate differing levels of staff confidence in scoping, and brokering access to provision and support, and understanding of the eligibility criteria that may apply to some provision and services. Where a project manager exists, this role can provide the interface between the strategic partnership, and advisers working 'on the ground' in different parts of the network to help develop advisers' knowledge and awareness. Training of staff across the network would also be beneficial.

The experience of users

The research with users in this phase was limited since not all Prototypes had started delivery, and the respondents for the phase needed to include strategic and local staff as well as users. The evaluation did not specify the types of user to be interviewed, and many were at an early stage of receiving support, often having taken up one or two sessions with an adviser. It may not be the case that the users interviewed represent the diversity of the Prototypes' customers, however their stories provide a useful insight into what it means to be supported by the Prototypes.

Starting points and routes into the Prototypes
Users accessing the Prototypes were very varied. Those interviewed represented a broad range of ages, ethnic minorities, previous work histories and differing skill levels. Beyond this, there were two distinct groups:

- **Complex barriers:** This group included those who had been unemployed long-term for a number of reasons, including bringing up children, caring responsibilities and health issues. The group tended to have little or no work history and low skill levels. They often had complex barriers to overcome before they could start work or training and required high levels of support. These users tended to come through the Prototypes which delivered the service through housing associations and organisations focused on helping disadvantaged groups to (re)enter work.

- on women returning from maternity leave and the advancement needs of parents.

The customers had found the route into the Prototypes easy to negotiate. It often involved an initial referral from a separate organisation such as Jobcentre Plus, or from a member of staff within the delivery organisation such as a housing officer. The process was quick and simple; none mentioned undue form-filling or application procedures.

Generally users had entered the Prototype with low, or few, expectations. Many had previous experience of provision organised through Jobcentre Plus or other organisations. Most reported that this had either not been relevant or not sufficient to support their needs. However because they understood the Prototype was offering a new service, they were prepared to give it a try.

Barriers and needs

The **work-ready group** tended to have fewer barriers, and often these could be relatively easily overcome. In most cases, their issue surrounded access to appropriate provision to assist a transition into a different profession, which they felt would be more reflective of the needs of the current labour market. These users were unsure where to start their search, and needed help to assess appropriate training provision or relevant job opportunities. This group appeared more likely to follow a linear path between the Prototype's advice and potentially that available through **nextstep**, before making a transition into work and/or training.

The **complex barriers group** had more varied difficulties. These included health conditions, lack of skills and lack of work experience. Where users had been referred through housing associations they were often living in unstable situations which made it difficult for them to return to work. More broadly, many individuals in this group were naïve about the labour market and lacked sufficient confidence and self-esteem to embark on a job search. While the extent of needs varied considerably, it was likely that customers in this group would need support from a specialist organisation (eg for substance misuse or domestic violence), and support for esteem and confidence (which might be offered by the lead Prototype organisation) and then advice on training, skills and work, potentially from **nextstep**.

The users' support needs consequently varied considerably. The work-ready group tended to need one or two sessions with the Prototype adviser in order to get advice on the right direction to pursue, and possible provision for further training and work opportunities. In one or two cases additional help was required to look at possible funding opportunities for training that was identified. In the South Hampshire

Prototype, where a discretionary fund is available, the users who had been unable to source funding through other means, accessed training through Prototype's funding.

The complex barriers group needed much more intensive one-to-one support and often regular lengthy appointments to make small steps towards the job market. Sessions focused on building confidence and laying the foundations for the user to return to work, such as CV development and addressing basic skills deficits.

Referrals to additional services
There was limited evidence of referral to other services in the user interviews although as noted, the sample may not have been particularly representative and many had not received any particular depth of service. The most common referrals were to learning providers or organisations dealing with sensitive and complex issues such as substance misuse.

Where they had been referred, users were satisfied with the support they received. All referrals made by the Prototypes seemed to be appropriate for the users' needs and completed at an appropriate time for the user.

Outcomes
The **work-ready group** were more likely to report 'hard' outcomes such as entry to work and training. This group had moved quickly through the service since individuals were confident in their abilities and had a better understanding about the process of applying for jobs.

Stephen (South Hampshire)

Stephen had been made redundant from his sales job in December 2008 and had initially wanted to go back into sales work. After two meetings with his Prototype adviser he had changed his aims and he now wanted to train as an independent financial adviser. Stephen found a company that was prepared to set him up as a franchised financial adviser. The company offered the relevant training although required an investment in the initial course from Stephen, which he could not afford. After checking the veracity of the company and training the Prototype adviser applied for discretionary funding of £1,000 to help Stephen fund the initial training. This was agreed by the steering group. Stephen is now trading as an independent financial adviser and undertaking FSA approved courses. He was very satisfied with the support he received, finally believing *'there is light at the end of the tunnel'.*

'Hard' outcomes were less prevalent in the **complex barriers group** although a few had gained Skills for Life qualifications. However, most reported 'soft' outcomes, and felt that they had made the most of their journey through the Prototype. Many as a result felt able to start to search for work or training in a more confident and systematic way. Often these users were receiving more support from the Prototype and were hoping to progress further as this continued.

'I can see that I am moving on with everything … I'm already getting there – it's very helpful.'

Prototype user

There were a few users whose barriers were not so easily overcome, such as those with ongoing housing difficulties. It was impossible for Prototype advisers to place people into jobs or training without these issues first being resolved. In some cases this was going to be a lengthy and complicated process. Often these users were working with Housing Associations who were in the best position to support this barrier.

Ben (Brent and Ealing)

Ben was referred to the Prototype through a housing adviser as he was experiencing prolonged problems with his housing. Ben had previously been to Jobcentre Plus as he felt a job would help his housing situation, but found the Jobcentre Plus advisers too busy and ill-informed on housing issues to help him. Ben has decided that despite the support available through the Prototype being helpful he is not able to move forward with work or training until his housing issues had been resolved.

High levels of satisfaction

The users' views of the Prototypes, irrespective of their initial starting point, were universally positive (although as noted this was a small, opportunistically drawn sample). Users had appreciated the support that they had received and felt that the individualised nature of the service had helped them progress – even if a hard outcome had not resulted, or progress had not been as swift as they had hoped. Working with the Prototype had increased confidence and self-esteem.

Those users working with Prototypes operating a universal service level, whereby there were no eligibility criteria to entry, were grateful that they had been able to access support as they had been ineligible for support through other schemes.

The only real criticism levelled at the Prototypes by their users was that they were not sufficiently publicised. Users felt this was a key point as raising awareness would mean that more people would know about the service and could then access the support.

Working within the context of IES

The Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) trial, an initiative which promotes closer and better co-ordinated working at both a strategic and operational level between Jobcentre Plus, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service has been implemented in the same geographical areas as four Prototypes (see Figure 2.5). The Prototypes which overlap with IES trials are South Hampshire, Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth, the Black Country and Greater Manchester. Some of these trials went live in early 2009 and were in the early phases of implementation and therefore any relationship between the Prototype and IES was difficult to discern. The aacs will be central to a wider IES approach, so testing ways in which advancement networks might work alongside the IES trials and join up services with Jobcentre Plus could provide some useful learning.

In South Hampshire Prototype, there is an alignment of the service levels between the Prototype and IES trial in that customers will receive, when ready, a Skills Health Check will open a Skills Account and will work with **nextstep** on careers and employability issues. However, in the remainder of affected Prototypes there was

little evidence of joint working between the Prototypes and IES trials, or exploration of how the approaches might dovetail.

In some areas, demand from Jobcentre Plus clients for the Prototype was reported to have been one of the main sources of referrals, despite the availability of the IES. It appeared that Prototype support could complement the support available through Jobcentre Plus. What it was not possible to discern was whether the Jobcentre Plus customers referred in these Prototypes were eligible for, or had been directed to the IES trial ie **nextstep** support. Despite this, there were examples of unemployed individuals gaining advice through the Prototype, from the advancement adviser and **nextstep** adviser, the former providing the support for wider barriers, over time, to the latter. This issue requires greater exploration in the final stage of the evaluation.

Where IES trials and Prototypes overlap, in most cases joint working has not been established. Consideration should be given to how the aacs will work with and complement IES services. Drawing together evidence from the IES trial evaluation with the ANP evaluation, or focusing a Prototype evaluation case study on this specific issue, might help to provide an evidence base from which to further develop these aspects of policy and service delivery.

Figure 0.5: IES trials implemented in the same geographical areas as the four Prototypes
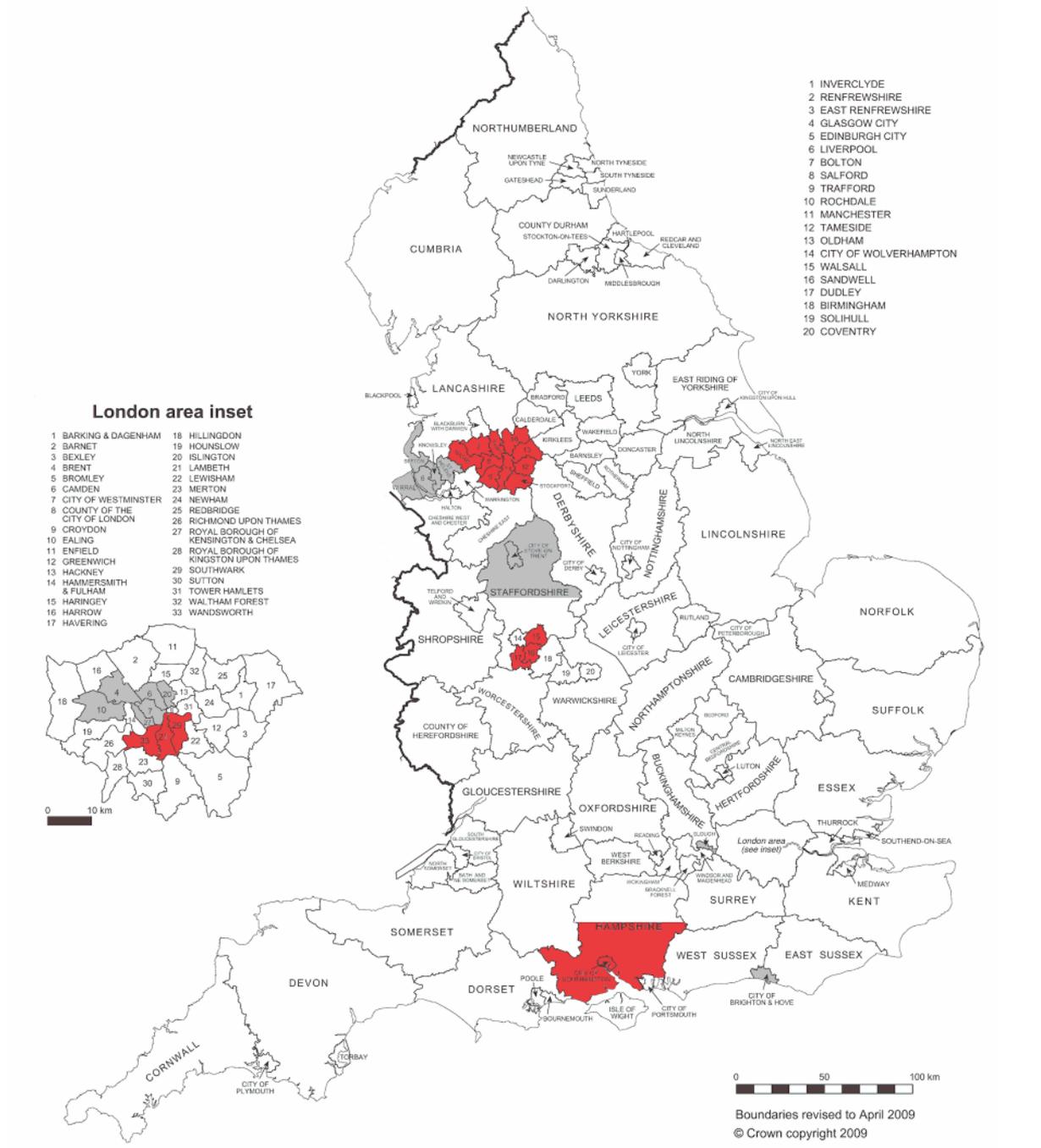
Areas where IES trial areas overlap with Prototype areas

Prototype area only

Source: IES, 2010

The perceived legacy of the Prototypes

In most of the Prototypes the strategic partners had begun thinking in detail about whether the work of the Prototype could continue after funding ceases in March 2010, and if so how this could be achieved. There were essentially two options: some Prototypes were looking towards their incorporation into the aacs, others at accessing alternative funding.

Those Prototypes looking at the possibilities of receiving funding through the roll-out of the national aacs saw this as potentially a good opportunity. Prototypes considering the possibilities of this included Greater Merseyside, Brent and Ealing, Brighton and Hove, Slough, South Hants and Greater Manchester. However, the lack of information about how the national aacs will be established, and the eligibility criteria to be part of it, meant that most remained uncertain of whether, or how, they could make the transition to aacs. Despite this, a number of the Prototypes viewed the possible (sub)contracting of the aacs service as the natural outcome of their work.

A second group of Prototypes had given relatively little consideration to the aacs and were instead looking at alterative sources of funding to carry on. The Boroughs within the ICWKC Prototype had, from the start, subsumed Prototype funding into their overarching employment and skills policies and so did not identify the need for a specific exit strategy. In others, like the Black Country and East Staffordshire, Prototype staff were encouraged by the impact, or potential impact, of their work and wanted to be able to draw on alternative sources of funding to continue.

In many Prototypes, delivery partners were only part-funded by the Prototype, with the bulk of their work funded through other streams. However, in some cases the Prototype funding had paid for specific posts which were important to delivery, and in others it had funded extension to the delivery agents' core offer. If no other funding is forthcoming, delivery partners would revert to their previous role with the loss of elements specifically funded by the Prototype, including specialist staff roles, and more intensive or additional service levels.

> Many Prototypes are intending to sustain delivery beyond the funding period, by bedding into other local employment and skills projects. Aspects of adult guidance have been funded, over many years, through various trials and pilot projects with the consequence of add-ons, overlaps and discontinuities in service levels. A question surrounds the extent to which aacs will overcome these issues in its contracting model, to ensure sustainable capacity and service levels in the adult guidance arena.

Several of the Prototypes involving Housing Associations, including Brent and Ealing, the Black Country and East Staffordshire, reported that the Prototypes had demonstrated to them the value of supporting clients to gain and progress in employment. Each of these Housing Associations said that they would continue with an expanded focus in the future, with several looking to continue to fund Prototype advisers from other sources. For example, the East Staffordshire Prototype reported that a future focus would include tackling worklessness and promoting sustainable employment alongside the previous remit of property maintenance and tackling antisocial behaviour.

There are also examples of plans for the work of the Prototypes to be brought under the remit of overarching local employment and skills programmes (where this had not already happened). Many of the London boroughs have services that pool various funding resources that support the employment and learning of their residents, such as *Southwark Works*, *Islington Works* etc. In Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth and ICWKC Prototypes, all were planning to sustain the Prototypes work in this way or to learn the lessons from the approaches tested and integrate these into their existing services.

The sustainability of the Prototypes that had built up substantial networks was less clear, largely because of the time and resources required to maintain and continue to develop the network, and the need for a common purpose and active delivery to sustain it. It was hoped that a local network of some description would form part of the aacs, but Prototypes were unclear as to whether this would be the case and were unsure about the scale and purpose of a network should one be required. Among Prototypes with primarily network-based approaches there were some concerns about the potential funding gap between March 2010 and August 2010 when the aacs is meant to start. South Hampshire reported that they were looking at funding options to bridge this gap and continue to run with skeleton staff in order to keep the network running so as not to lose the knowledge and staff they have gained over the course of the Prototype.

The health arm of the East Staffordshire Prototype and the Slough Prototype were as yet unsure about the sustainability of the work that had been implemented and this was due to funding. In Brighton and Hove it was felt that other sources of funding would be found to continue and build on the work in the hubs.

Potential impact of the Prototypes
Prototypes were asked to reflect on what they thought their impact would be. Two areas were felt to be particularly significant. One was the development of the quality of services. This included advice staff being up-skilled, with many Prototypes funding, or part-funding, NVQ qualifications in IAG. In addition, the overall quality of organisations involved was in some cases being improved and accredited, for example through Matrix.

A second important area of impact was around the institutional legacy that could be expected. This particularly related to the partnership and network relationships that were being built and the potential for these to continue developing to the benefit of advice seekers. There was some concern that if the national aacs was structured in such a way that it did not effectively capture and build upon the Prototypes' work, these local networks would begin to erode.

For several of the partners involved in Prototypes which have historically not offered a careers IAG service, the work of the Prototype had formalised and developed their role as an advice provider, something they were keen to build on.

Local monitoring and evaluation

All Prototypes were assessing their progress through monitoring against the success measures that were set out in their delivery plans. Since national indicators were not specified, a variety of measures are in use. These include the number of clients seen, the development and implementation of CRM systems, provider directories

and/or staff training. Some of the Prototypes were also assessing customer feedback and some were gathering case studies of the ways in which the Prototype had supported individuals to advance. As would be expected, local monitoring was delivering information about the progress made with particular client groups, in joining together 'networks' of advice organisations, and feedback on the use of systems and tools to track an individual's advancement experience. This information was being used to provide feedback to steering groups and the local/regional LSC, and formed the basis of strategic decisions on the direction of the Prototypes.

In just under half of the Prototypes, local evaluation was in train. However, at the time of writing, the local evaluations were at an early stage and therefore the lessons arising were not yet clarified. The ways in which these evaluations have helped Prototypes to develop will be explored in the next phase of work.

In Islington (part of the ICWKC Prototype) a broader review of IAG had been scheduled. This was not commissioned by the Prototype, but rather is part of a project seeking to assess adviser roles and capacity, in light of an integrated employment and skills system in England, Scotland and Wales. It was unclear how far this review will lead to direct feedback to the Prototype about its operation.

Many Prototype strategic and management staff were concerned to know the suitability and desirability of their operational model for aacs and wanted feedback on this point. While the Prototypes have been encouraged to experiment, they have no wish to fail, and therefore would like feedback to ensure they are 'on track' with policy aims.

Conclusions and Policy Messages

The Prototypes' achievements

By September 2009 most of the Prototypes had entered the delivery phase, and were working with and supporting customers. As was originally envisaged they were all testing different ideas and ways of working. These approaches have taken varying amounts of time to set up. The pace of development has also been influenced by the ambition of the Prototype and the extent to which they were building on existing structures and programmes. This means the Prototypes are all at different stages of delivery, and aiming to achieve different things. This presents a challenge to the assessment of the merits of these different approaches in comparison to each other.

The successes of the Prototypes include leveraging **significant networks** and partnerships with a range of organisations involved in the arena of advancement, and successfully engaging voluntary and community, as well as statutory, organisations. The commissioning approach has given the Prototypes the freedom to form networks based on their perceptions of the requirements of their local geography, and the largest scale networks have built on the successes of Multi-Area Agreements.

The Prototypes are testing a number of **tools to support the customer journey** which they have developed, such as the *Outcomes Star* and *Advancement Wheel*, aimed at working with customers across a range of barriers, and tracking their progress towards their goals. These approaches have not proved appropriate for all customer groups, particularly those with higher levels of skills. In one Prototype, using a delivery tool as a way of enabling data about the customer and their progress to be shared across a network proved challenging, mainly because of the less well-embedded partnership working in that area.

There are numerous examples of capacity development and enhancement through **training for front-line advisers** in a host of organisations to recognise and diagnose customer needs, and to make appropriate referrals throughout a network. Training for advisers in some of the Prototypes risks duplicating existing services unless either extra capacity is needed, or where training would enable advisers to better understand services they can refer customers to. For example, in one Prototype advisers have been trained to undertake 'Better Off Calculations', usually carried out by Jobcentre Plus advisers. There are also other examples of increasing

the knowledge and formal training of IAG staff, with advisers in some areas working towards NVQs in IAG.

Over two-thirds of the Prototypes have **broadened the organisations linked to the delivery of careers and employment advice.** For example, they have increased the number of organisations delivering careers and employment advice, increased the awareness of networked organisations of the careers and employment advice available, as well as encouraging customer referrals to mainstream careers and employment advice where appropriate. In several instances these approaches have demonstrated to organisations the value of careers and employment advice in increasing aspirations and overcoming barriers to finding work and progressing in work. For example, the Prototypes led by Housing Associations have offered the opportunity for this sector to engage with employment and careers advice and has demonstrated to them the value that this can have for their own work by increasing people's aspirations and overcoming barriers to finding work and to in-work progression.

The Prototypes have tested ways of **reaching out** to customer groups that would not ordinarily engage with the 'core' providers of careers and employment advice. The Prototypes have provided learning about the length of the lead-in time required to establish work from Children's Centres and the competition for space that can exist as well as the peaks and troughs in footfall related to school holidays in these types of venues. The Prototypes have also highlighted the possibilities for outreach via tenancy management organisations.

The Prototypes have demonstrated that some customers will need a **significant depth of support** before they are able to advance or to access mainstream support. They have also learned that the time-intensive nature of providing this type of support and the potential demand for a service of this depth can put strain on adviser's time and ability to be able to deliver this depth of service on a sufficiently large scale. Where funding is limited, consideration needs to be given to priorities and where this depth of service can add most value.

Current learning

The majority of the Prototypes are still in the early phase of implementation, some are still yet to work with customers, whereas others have worked with a few hundred customers. Despite this, several lessons for policy have emerged from what is being trialled. While this evidence is not necessarily novel (some aspects were known in the guidance community), to organisations that have been brought into this sphere through the advancement agenda it is important nonetheless.

When the aacs is a national service, consideration should be given to how the wealth of information and knowledge in the guidance community about issues relevant to the aacs and networked approaches, can be disseminated and understood by the range of organisations which will be involved in delivery. Possible means of achieving this include the provision of resource booklets and toolkits, dissemination and training events, and articles in specialist professional media.

The Prototypes are providing evidence about the following issues related to networked approaches:

- how to engage and work with a range of organisations on a common agenda

- issues of competition and duplication of services

- difficulties of working systematically with some organisations, such as the Probation Service which has had to withdraw from two of the Prototypes, and in some instances Jobcentre Plus which has its own procedures and policies which can make their engagement as an equal partner at a local level difficult

- the benefits of a strong network in order to facilitate referrals

- the appropriate scale (geography and breadth) of a network

- the resources and infrastructure necessary to facilitate an effective network (including branding, quality standards and engaging a range of organisations including from the voluntary and community sector)

- the extent of capacity in existing organisations to meet the identified 'advancement' needs of customers and the gaps and eligibility criteria restricting this.

Lessons from the delivery approaches
Network-based approaches have the potential to 'reach' large numbers of customers and to facilitate the capacity in existing services to work together more effectively. These approaches have the potential to reduce duplication, to increase co-ordination and enable customers to have access to general and specialist advisers. The breadth of the network will influence its reach. The work to develop the network has established that:

- networks require resources to develop: to promote the joining up of services, and in documenting them to ensure a sustainable outcome

- the services and provision within the network may require quality assurance, and more certainly promotion, to support cross-referrals.

Additional **outreach services** may not be necessary alongside this model if the range of organisations within the network is sufficiently diverse and comprises the services and organisations that target customers already use, for example, libraries, GP surgeries and Children's Centres. The Prototypes suggest that outreach has a role in reaching customers who would not normally engage with careers and employment advice services and enabling them to access this form of support. Through outreach approaches understanding about the following issues has emerged:

- Finding (and negotiating access to) suitable premises that are already used by potential customers for other things, and understanding the footfall in those outreach centres and how it varies at particular times of the year.

- Co-ordinating with other local initiatives and practices to ensure that outreach is not being duplicated.

- The benefits of outreach and how it can help people who would not ordinarily access careers and employment IAG to access these 'core' services (**nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service).

The Prototypes providing **in-depth support** have made progress and developed evidence and understanding about:

- the considerable scale of demand for a service of this type and the support needs of different client groups, and particularly where some target groups need intensive one-to-one support over a significant time period before they are able to access mainstream services

- the unresolved tension between providing generalist advice and when to refer to specialist support organisations (some organisations want to 'keep hold' of the customer). There is a risk that some organisations are trying to provide the full service in one location for the customer.

The characteristics of effective leadership

Prototypes are trialling different leadership models. The chosen models affect the learning that can arise about the characteristics of effective leadership. These issues aside, what has emerged from the Phase 2 research is that previous partnership working, and particularly MAAs, has been instrumental in enabling many Prototypes to implement a sufficiently large network. The lead organisation in the three Prototypes complementing MAA boundaries varies: **nextstep**; Local Authority; Voluntary and Community Sector. All seem to have been successful at engaging partners, which suggests that it is the history of partnership working rather than lead organisation that might be the crucial success factor here.

Whether or not, an MAA exists, Local Authorities appear to have an important role in strategic partnerships, perhaps not least since they have detailed knowledge of the local labour market, and skills priorities, in areas and operate many of the services linked to the advancement agenda. However, beyond this issue, the involvement, and improved joining up, of Local Authorities services has been a benefit emerging from Prototype activities in some areas. The involvement of Local Authorities may drive forward links with Connexions and/or young people's services, and the adult community learning sector, to provide significant outcomes in terms of localised networks and solutions.

A second emerging issue is the importance of a dedicated project manager to smooth implementation and to keep the network on track with strategy. Project managers can provide the interface between strategic partnerships and activities 'on the ground' and through the network. The role can also ensure a rapid and timely response to issues that arise as services embed.

Lessons for aacs

In the introduction to this report (section 1.1.2) the planned development of the aacs was set out. In essence, the core service is being commissioned from August 2010 and ambition exists for the networked aspect of operation to be in place in 2011. To

underpin these plans, the national brand is in development alongside a customer relationship management system which will be capable of interacting with the range of systems used by for instance, **nextstep**, Careers Advice Service, providers and potentially Jobcentre Plus.

In this section, the Prototypes are explored in terms of the lessons that have emerged for the development and operation of aacs.

Working with the aacs 'core'
There is potential across the Prototypes to increase links with other careers advice services specifically, **nextstep** and the Careers Advice Service. These will form the 'core' of the aacs offer, so it is vital that local networks work with core services to enable lessons to emerge about this interaction. Some success was evident with **nextstep** integration however, the extent and effectiveness of the relationship depends very much upon the way in which the Prototype has been designed. It is also worth considering whether referrals are expected both into and from the core services and local networks and how this would work. Having a common aim and potential benefits (in terms of increased volumes of customers) for all organisations involved in the network is likely to increase buy-in. Some Prototypes have provided wraparound services for customers, to both Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** advice services, whereby the Prototype supports the client both before and after they access mainstream services. This could provide the key to the joining up of the core and the networked aspects however outdated attitudes about the core (work first versus client centred) may also need to be addressed to ensure effective working evolves.

The development of a customer relationship management system to support the core aacs service (web, telephone, face-to-face and networks) is currently underway. In developing this, consideration needs to be given to networked organisations that already have their own customer database. The Prototypes have tried to keep the information they ask network members to collect to a minimum to reduce duplication. Providing a specification of the information that will be collected nationally within the aacs system will enable planning at a local level to similarly avoid duplicated effort.

Who should lead a network
The Prototypes offer some learning about the sustainability of networked approaches. Where Prototypes have trialled a new service level within an existing project there appears greater likelihood of mainstreaming where proven to be successful, although taking this work forward may risk duplication of some of the planned work of aacs.

Prototypes that have struggled to extend their networks tended to be trying to build relationships from scratch and to find common ground. There are examples of some organisations, that it has proved difficult to work in close partnership with. For instance, two Prototypes had planned to target their service at offenders. Due to difficulties in operationalising the partnership locally, these two Prototypes had discontinued projects targeted at offenders. However, there were examples of Prototypes establishing links locally with the Probation Service to ensure 'joined up' support for individuals on the caseload.

The appropriate geography of a network

The boundaries of those Prototypes implementing network-based Prototypes largely mirror those of previously established MAA geographies. The scale of the network is influenced by this and being able to build on pre-existing partnership structures seems to have benefited the Prototypes in building their network. Even within these cross-boundary Prototypes however there is evidence of localised networks underpinning those at MAA level. This suggests that rather than region-wide approaches to contracting networks (as is the case with the current **nextstep** Prime contract model) a more local and varied geographic approach might be most appropriate. If a region-wide approach was administratively desirable, then an expectation should be set for the region-wide contractor to establish and mobilise 'local satellite' or sub-regional networks to ensure that localised solutions are achieved.

The Prototypes also raise questions about the difference between a partnership and a network. Some have developed an approach that aims to draw together organisations and services across the geography, whereas the approach in others uses key partner relationships that are felt to offer complementary services to the Prototype's customers. When the network element of aacs is contracted, the expectation for networked or indeed partnership working must be clearly expressed to ensure the policy achieves its aim.

Similarly, the Prototypes are instructive about the different levels of network that may be required and this may prove challenging when contracting aacs. The Prototypes demonstrate that effective networking is required at a strategic level, perhaps involving Jobcentre Plus, **nextstep**, Local Authorities and their departments, and health and/or other services, and practice can be cascaded down to delivery level from these. However, other aspects of the Prototypes' work show that local networking may also be required particularly to develop the optimal mix of partners for each locality, and to ensure the engagement of small, and often, third sector organisations and services.

Referring in a network

In some instances the Prototypes have demonstrated a reluctance to refer clients to other organisations preferring instead to provide customers with the many services that they may need in one place. The balance between supporting the client at their first entry point, as against making referrals to other organisations, needs clarification as part of the aacs specification. It will be important to ensure that clear guidelines exist for front-line advisers, including specification of role boundaries and the benefits of specialist referral.

'Keeping hold' of clients has been further encouraged in some instances by perceived gaps in provision and in some instances the eligibility criteria of particular services. It is unclear whether the aacs will seek to fill perceived gaps, as has been the case in some of the Prototypes which have developed bespoke training for their customers, and in one case operated a pot of discretionary funding to help customers overcome barriers to advancement.

The depth of support funded

There are suggestions that some Prototypes are creating new service levels rather than providing linkages between existing services. Questions remain about the sustainability of this model in some instances, although it is intended that several

examples of additional services provided by Housing Associations become mainstreamed in the future. Bottom-up policy development has led Prototypes to identify a need to provide an additional, significant depth of support to some target groups.

Gaps in learning for aacs

Although the Prototypes offer learning about the implementation of network-based approaches, based on the current models there will be a lack of evidence from the Prototypes about how to network and link (to a greater extent) with:

- careers provision in Higher and Further Education

- young people's services, particularly about how transitions will be managed

- the full range of employees, employers and relevant employer funded provision, such as Train to Gain (there is some limited work within the NHS and some involvement with unions);

- the 'core' of the aacs, particularly the Careers Advice Service (both the telephone and web-based resources), but also in some instances, **nextstep** services which have been a limited part of the network in some of the Prototypes. Information is also required about how the core will interact with the advancement networks.

- the advancement needs of people at different life-stages, in rural areas, and with specific barriers such as migrants and refugees, and visual or hearing impairments. Information from research elsewhere, and other projects, may to some degree help to fill these gaps.

Consideration should be given to the current gaps in understanding based on the set-up of the Prototypes, and where appropriate, ways in which these can be filled. For example by:

■ drawing on existing evidence

■ directing and expanding the current Prototypes to cover the gaps highlighted above

■ commissioning new Prototypes to explore and test how the linkages highlighted above could be made in practice

A universal service?

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

the key tenet of advancements. However the original Denham vision had a broader view of a service that could support people at different life-stages. There has been little structured development towards understanding and supporting the needs of adults, who want to bring about some change in their life perhaps moving sideways in their current employment, or shifting down to part-time work or into retirement. The Prototypes also cannot provide information about what it will mean to offer a service in rural locations, since none are experimenting with this.

To be universal, the aacs will need to provide support for the needs of advantaged and disadvantaged individuals, the high and low skilled and be able to wrap other services around careers and employment advice as individuals require. The Prototypes certainly provide evidence of working with disadvantaged and often low skilled individuals, however less learning will emerge about advantaged and high skill customers since these groups are not targeted.

The Prototypes are trialling different models of support, many of them targeted with eligibility criteria applied, and sometimes limited to a set number of sessions. However, others are providing untargeted support and providing an unlimited number of support sessions to individuals. As the aacs policy moves forward, there needs to be greater clarity about what it means to offer a universal service.

Cost-effectiveness of delivery
Understanding the cost-effectiveness of Prototypes' delivery is likely to be problematic given their different emphases on customer groups, differing intentions towards intensive support and different aspirations for infrastructural development. Also, complicating any analysis is separating their effect when they have drawn on other resources such as Local Area and Multi-Area Agreements. The way in which the funding has been used to extend established project working, or pooled into funding pots within Local Authorities to support adviser roles, further adds to the difficulties. However pooling funds in this way, helps to remove some of the instability faced by projects and reduces the risks of losing staff with high levels of knowledge, skills and expertise.

The final phase of the evaluation

The final phase of fieldwork for the evaluation is scheduled to take place in early 2010. Issues arising to date that will need further exploration include:

- the customer experience of different service levels, particularly in the Prototypes that are more network-based and an increasing focus on the outcomes (both hard and soft);

- the extent to which the Prototypes are referring compared to the extent to which they want to work with a customer themselves;

- how the Prototypes link to the IES trials (in areas with these and a Prototype);

- the extent to which intensive support services result in referrals to mainstream services (or otherwise);

- links to the 'core' careers services, including **nextstep**, Jobcentre Plus in IES and non-IES areas, and Careers Advice Service; and the factors

underpinning an effective 'signposting and referral' culture between the core of aacs (**nextstep**, Careers Advice Service, and Jobcentre Plus) and the non-core service (the prototypes and local networks);

- links with Skills Accounts and Skills Health Checks (diagnostic tools and processes);

- how the quality of services customers are referred to is measured and assessed by advisers when making referrals;

- indications of the cost-effectiveness of, and the value for money offered by, the different approaches.

Appendix 1: Prototype Case Studies

Black Country

Progress

The Prototype had worked with 196 clients, of which 157 were unemployed and looking for work, and 39 were employed and exploring a change in career direction. As a result of the support, 37 people had progressed into work since delivery started in March. The Prototype had embedded well within existing services and provision within the area. However the 'mapping' of existing provision was ongoing to ensure the most appropriate mix was available for users.

The Prototype was attracting interest from a steady flow of potential clients, with 44 new clients joining the service in a month. They had experienced more difficulty engaging clients who were already employed.

There had been no change to the aims of the prototype or the delivery model, using 'super coaches', since the first phase of the evaluation.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition

The partnership is overseen by the strategic group which comprises five Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the formal partners (below). This group meets monthly to discuss the Prototype and issues arising from delivery. The 'formal' partners involved in the Prototype are Jobcentre Plus, **nextstep**, Improving Health Increasing Employment (IHIE) which is a pilot targeting people who are workless through health care providers, and the local LSC. The partners had not changed since the inception of the pilot however some relationships in the partnership were working more effectively than others. Initially it had been difficult for the Employment Development Officers (EDOs) to establish a point of contact within local Jobcentre Plus offices to gain information on welfare benefits, and the IHIE pilot had, until very recently, still been in the conceptual phase although delivery has now got underway.

The strategic group forms a responsive hub in which delivery and strategic issues can be quickly resolved. Problems establishing effective working patterns with partners have been rapidly addressed.

Networking and referrals

The EDOs are proactive about networking with as many local providers as possible. They felt it was important to link in with existing services and to avoid duplicating services. Networks were primarily formed using each EDO's local knowledge and the time they had available to develop the network. The Prototype was not monitoring the quality of the providers they refer to, and in some cases this had led to users being sent to inappropriate or substandard provision. This had led to strategic staff considering how quality might be more effectively managed. While the 'matrix model' adopted by the Greater Manchester Prototype had been considered, it was felt that introducing it at this late stage of network formation, could be damaging to the relationships already formed.

The Prototype was doing its utmost to ensure that information about referrals both into, and from, the Prototype to other organisations was collated and passed on to the relevant providers so all could share in success stories and learn lessons for the future. However EDOs reported the entry restrictions that applied to other services

made it difficult to refer certain clients onto any further services. This particularly affected individuals in work, and as a result, the Prototype had developed and started to offer in-house courses to overcome this problem.

Potential lessons for the aacs

There are a number of lessons that can be taken forward for the development of the aacs. The clear leadership structure and regular contact of the strategic group meant that difficulties had been resolved quickly and ensured the smooth and consistent running of the Prototype.

The evidence suggested that the formal partners were supportive of the Prototype and keen to be involved. However one or two were not ready to be involved in delivery as quickly as the Prototype had been. This impacted on how these partnerships worked together on the front-line.

The engagement of employed adults needs different strategies and tactics to ensure effectiveness. It is also important to consider the types of provision available to this group, particularly whether gaps exist in provision that allows them to progress into different career choices.

A 'map' of local providers and some strategic input into the development of networks is crucial to ensure that these networks are not built on the relationships and knowledge of key individuals. This is a high-risk strategy as these individuals may take the knowledge and the contacts away with them if they move jobs.

Housing authorities seemed to be an effective way of engaging users who would previously not have engaged with this type of support. The RSLs felt that they already had an established level of trust with clients and could benefit from engaging with people in their own homes.

Brent and Ealing

Progress

Both Brent and Ealing reported they had progressed as planned in delivery. In Ealing: the team is in place and the IAG Adviser is working with customers. The priority group is individuals in private rented accommodation and Catalyst staff (the delivery organisation) are finding that clients' housing problems are so great (eviction, rent arrears) that the housing issues have to be addressed before education and training can be even considered. This means more intensive work with clients and has led to a great deal of time being invested in addressing and lobbying against structural barriers in Local Authority housing policy. Customers have received more intensive support than was expected and this means that while they feel they are providing the support that individuals need, the number of individuals receiving the support is lower than expected. It has taken operation in Brent a little longer to establish, however strategic staff felt that the pace of development had increased to ensure the Prototype was on track with its timetable. The training of housing staff in IAG and Prototype-working was about to commence.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition

Management of Brent and Ealing arms of the Prototype is very much separate. Brent is operating under Ealing's management but in practice each is doing a distinct and

separate activity. Funding has been allocated to Brent from the Prototype pot and it is being spent on the staff training.

Networking and referrals

In Ealing the network is developing but partners are usually referral agencies rather than delivery partners, eg clients are referred to Shelter for specific advice on homelessness or specialist legal advice about eviction.

In Brent the whole programme builds on the Housing Employment Link Project (HELP) project and its pre-existing partnership although some development of this was in evidence: for instance, the Citizen's Advice Bureau had provided a one-off input for the training and strategic staff hoped that the relationship will build from this.

Potential lessons for the aacs

Strategic staff felt that an impact on housing allocations policy was emerging and this was unique amongst the Prototypes. However, it may not be a national priority. It was felt that aacs will need to acknowledge the hierarchy of need since education and training support cannot be delivered in isolation from clients' more basic needs.

Brighton and Hove

Progress

The local authority heads the Brighton and Hove Prototype and activity has been branded as the Brighton and Hove Adult Advancement and Careers Service. The aims and objectives of the Prototype were based on the Local Area Agreement (2008–2011) and the City Employment and Skills Plan.

Delivery is through a central hub, and three community hubs which are located in some of the city's most deprived areas. Delivery in the hubs began in April. The community hubs are each seeing between 12 and 30 people a month, and the central hub is delivering to around 40–50 adults each month. The community hubs have recently been looking in greater detail at the partnership mix which is required, as they all have somewhat different client groups.

There has been a focus on up-skilling IAG workers as part of the Prototype. Fifteen IAG staff have been part-funded to work towards the Level 4 NVQ in IAG. The Prototype has also run several local events to increase the knowledge of frontline advice workers from a variety of services. Most recently an information sharing and training event was held, which offered a series of workshops on a number of areas, including housing, debt management, welfare benefits, tax credits, creative industries, redundancy, and self-employment.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition

The steering group of the Prototype includes representatives from Brighton and Hove Council (including learning and skills, and housing departments), the regional **nextstep** contractor, the community hubs, Jobcentre Plus, The Advice Services Strategy Group and the Learning and Skills Council. Links have also been made at the strategic level with the Primary Care Trust, Jobcentre Plus, and Family Information Service.

The broader networks which the Prototype is fostering tend to be brokered at the local level by the community hubs. This process has been facilitated by the lead

partner and steering group through the launch event and adviser workshops, and by the development of Frontline, a social networking site format, to be launched shortly to enable delivery workers in different advice organisations to access information about other providers.

The hubs have individual arrangements with partners dependent on the level of need for particular services. They operate a mixture of co-location and referral and signposting to non co-located services.

Networking and referrals
The hubs have 11 organisations, outlined in their funding agreement, with which they should be involved for the Prototype. In addition they are encouraged to establish, or plug into, broader networks with other advice and provision services. At the operational level the extent of these network relations varies between the hubs. The scope of co-located services varies too, with between two and four organisations in each hub.

IAG workers in the community hubs are making referrals to a range of different local providers, though the extent of referral appears to be variable. There are also some issues around data transfer between organisations which means service users need to repeat their story.

There is a strong referral link to **nextstep** in two of the community hubs. In these the Prototype service acts as a wraparound to **nextstep** advice. This works in several ways: gateway IAG workers can refer clients to **nextstep** for careers advice; gateway IAG workers can continue to work with the client after they have exhausted their **nextstep** entitlement; part of the **nextstep** careers advice can involve referral to one of the courses run by the hubs. The feeling in the hubs is that the **nextstep** role is quite short-term and work specific, while the Prototype IAG workers can offer a longer-term and more holistic service to helping clients. This is particularly useful to those furthest from the labour market and who need to make multiple steps back to work.

The prototype has been generating around five referrals to non-accredited training and five referrals to accredited training each week (it was felt this would rise further from September). This has included hubs referring to local, community based courses (for example basic skills, IT and motivation and confidence building) which are mainly LSC funded and are run by a range of Brighton and Hove providers.

Potential lessons for the aacs
Enhanced partnership working at the strategic level has been a tangible outcome of Prototype delivery. An impact has been fostering links between council departments (eg housing, health trainers, economic development and education). At the operational level the hubs have the flexibility to develop a network which is tailored to local need and to have services considered of greatest importance co-locate with them.

There is a strong emphasis on a network rather than a partnership approach in Brighton and Hove Prototype and there has been concerted effort to link up a broad set of advice services. Significant progress has been made with this.

The prototype shows how the core careers advice offered by the **nextstep** can be integrated as part of a longer customer journey for those furthest from the labour market.

East Staffordshire

Progress
The prototype has worked with 49 clients since it started delivery in April 2009. The main change to the delivery model is that the Probation Service – the third delivery partner – has withdrawn, largely due to not being able to get staff in place in time. The Prototype is working towards matrix accreditation.

There have been some changes to the advancement tool that the Prototype has developed: it has converted the hard copy into a booklet (to make it more attractive and user-friendly) and is looking at introducing 'pen drives' (a USB stick on a pen) on which users can store the electronic copy of their 'advancement wheel'.

The tool developed was designed to enable sharing of information between agencies, however this has not happened on a wide scale. It is hoped that the redesign will make it more user friendly and encourage clients to make more use of it when accessing other services. Prototype staff feel the tool is proving effective in identifying areas of need and pinpointing priority areas for customers.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
The Prototype has had difficulties developing a network. These have been ascribed to: the wealth of other short-term projects and initiatives seeking to develop relationships with statutory and other organisations; the recession increasing adviser workload and meaning that they tend to deal with and refer to services with which they are already familiar.

Networking and referrals
Work on developing the two thematic networks (a mental health-related network and social housing-related network) is ongoing. To date, the networks include key employment and skills support agencies, including Jobcentre Plus, the LSC and **nextstep**. Various activities have been, and are being, undertaken to develop networks, including launches and presentations for stakeholders, as well as regular ad hoc contact and relationship-building.

The most effective inward referral route into the Changes (the mental health theme) service has been through 'Healthy Minds' (a project offered by the local Primary Care Trust). The number of referrals to **nextstep** has been lower than anticipated. This is due to a combination of misunderstanding between **nextstep** and delivery partners over referral targets and arrangements, changes to key personnel at **nextstep** with whom the Prototype had made links, and disinclination of some clients to access **nextstep**. Rather than always signposting or referring clients, advisers have sometimes obtained information and other assistance from services themselves and then passed it on to clients.

Potential lessons for the aacs
The Prototype seems to be effectively engaging and supporting 'hard to reach' and 'hard to help' client groups. The Prototype also offers learning around the difficulties associated with developing a network.

Greater Manchester

Progress
The Greater Manchester Advancement network is led by **nextstep** (the hub). **nextstep** provide resources and support each of the 10 Local Authorities covering the Greater Manchester area (the spokes). The spokes have responsibility for developing local networks. There has been strategic buy-in from all 10 Local Authorities, but the pace of implementation has been varied, with some networks fully formed and populating an advancement directory, and others yet to appoint a local co-ordinator with responsibility for developing the running of the local network.

The hub provides support for each of the networks. This has included training for front-line advisers in the network organisations focused on how to make appropriate referrals. They have developed a quality standard for the network, based on the first four components of the matrix standard, to encourage organisations to have confidence that they are referring their customers to a quality service. There is a network brand and membership pack which sets out the organisational benefits to, as well as the responsibilities required of, network members.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
The Prototype builds on the City Strategy Pathfinder, Working Neighbourhood Funds activity and Multi-Area Agreement partnership working. The Prototype has a sub-regional-wide strategic partnership board which oversees the work of the 10 local networks. The membership of local networks vary depending on the needs and organisations in each Local Authority but include organisations such as council services, children's services, learning providers, health associations, and housing associations. There is also a strategic relationship with trade union representatives via the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

Networking and referrals
The hub has also developed a customer relationship management database which all organisations in the network can access. This will include a directory of all the organisations in the network and the support they can offer to customers so that advisers can search for the most appropriate support for their clients. There is also space to include client details, so that a 'warm' referral can be made and the adviser that is referred to knows something about the customer's situation and aims. The aim is to increase referrals to **nextstep** by 30 per cent from wider organisations, although as yet this cannot be tested because IT functionality to support the network is still being piloted.

Potential lessons for the aacs
The Greater Manchester Prototype already offers several lessons for the aacs in terms of the resources required to make a network effective. Over time as the network develops and moves towards implementation it will also provide evidence about how networks can effectively link into and refer to the face-to-face channel of the new adult advancement and careers service.

Greater Merseyside

The Prototype is being led by Blackburne House which is a social enterprise and accountable body for the Voluntary Organisations Learning Association (VOLA)

Consortium. VOLA is an umbrella for a consortium of over 150 voluntary and community organisations involved in providing employment and skills support.

The aims of the Prototype include to create a 'no wrong door' approach which enables individuals, both employed and unemployed, to access a range of quality assured services and places **nextstep** careers advice within a broad mix of linked service networks that are key to overcoming barriers to progression. The Prototype includes an online referral portal, where organisations can make direct referrals to partner agencies via an electronic appointment booking system. Two active referral pilots are being undertaken, one through an employment centre and one through a housing association. A piece of research on the advancement needs of lone parents is also underway in partnership with Liverpool University. This Prototype has secured additional funding via the City Employment Strategy partnership for capacity-building activity with 3rd Sector organisations. They aim to fund 41 advancement agencies to gain **matrix** Standard accreditation and deliver staff development activities for both managers and advisory staff.

Progress
The Prototype was progressing to the delivery plan. The referral portal had been launched and the two delivery pilots started at the beginning of September. The lone parent research project had also begun although in a slightly different format than originally planned. The research is now working intensively with a group of 40 lone parents instead of less exhaustive research with a larger group. This Prototype originally wanted to engage with 150 employers, via the referral portal, but have re-addressed their strategy and are looking to engage indirectly with employed customers via intermediaries such as Union Learning Representatives, Learning Advocates and work-based training providers. Direct engagement with employers will be via the lone-parent research project.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
This Prototype has an overall project manager to oversee all aspects of implementation. Everyone involved with the Prototype is very satisfied with the project management and communication.

The Prototype works with strategic partners including nextstep, TUC UnionLearn, Jobcentre Plus, City Employment Strategy partners, and local Community and Voluntary Services, who are also members of the steering group. Delivery partners and the wider circle of local voluntary and statutory agencies make up the advancement network in Greater Merseyside. Each delivery organisation also has its own established network of referral partners. One of the aims of this Prototype is to highlight the role of the voluntary sector in IAG services. Partnership with strategic and delivery partners is working well, and delivery was due to start at time of visit.

Registration on the referral portal stood at around 100 at time of visit and recruitment is continuing. It is however recognised that the success of the portal is dependent on whether it is actively used by agencies to support customer journeys and outcomes. The first 'live' referrals are scheduled for November, once borough profiles are sufficiently robust and representative. The aim is for this to take off, in staged launches across the whole of Greater Merseyside, over the next five months with the help of continued marketing about the purpose and aim of the Prototype.

Networking and referrals

The aim is to assist 1,500 beneficiaries through the Lone Parent research, two delivery pilots and the portal. The highest proportion of beneficiaries is expected to come through the portal.

It is expected that the referral process will work both ways, inwards and outwards. However, there are some foreseen data protection issues to overcome. Difficulties are also anticipated in ensuring an even spread of organisations across all six boroughs within the Prototype timeframe.

Potential lessons for the aacs

If the referral portal works effectively, this could introduce a cost-effective way of networking and referring as it should save advisers' and clients' time. It should also ensure customers do not have to 'repeat their stories' when they are referred through the network. This may provide lessons about how to transfer customers' data effectively and safely through a large network of organisations.

The Prototype will also deliver learning about the third sector's involvement in aacs networks and how this can be maximised.

A further emerging lesson is the difficulty of engaging with employers: the benefits to their involvement are not necessarily clear to them. This indicates work may be needed to identify tangible benefits for employers, when the aacs is introduced, and effective ways of working with the most appropriate intermediaries.

This Prototype also highlights the importance of a project manager to successful operation. The project manager has been instrumental in implementation and in communication with all parties.

Islington, Camden, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea

Progress

The Local Authorities in this Prototype have signed up to the same set of core values and methods of working – they are each aiming to provide a client-centred approach, with an active referrals process that uses a common set of tools to measure progress. On the ground, each Authority is applying those principles in different ways to meet local circumstances – in essence there are four mini-Prototypes in operation. Islington and Kensington and Chelsea are using outreach to target support at deprived communities and disadvantaged individuals. Islington is using some of its Prototype funding to work with a Tenancy Management Organisation on one relatively deprived estate. Kensington and Chelsea has used the Prototype funding for an additional worker in its **nextstep** provider to provide outreach in a number of locations, including four Children's Centres. The Camden Prototype is part-funding an existing role in an NHS job shop to support the advancement of new entrants to entry-level NHS jobs. The specifics of how Westminster has used the funding are less clear, although it has been subsumed into its wider *'Westminster Works'* programme.

It would appear that in all four Authorities the Prototype funding has been subsumed within the wider development of their employment and skills programmes. It is therefore difficult to disentangle the overall impact of the Prototype funding from the

wider impacts of the programmes as a whole. However integration in this way may provide future sustainability of delivery activities.

There is some sharing of ideas and best practice between the Local Authorities, however this is not a formal process. One unifying feature was intended to be the 'outcomes star' that would be used to monitor the progress of clients in all the Prototypes. It is currently being used to a limited extent in two: Islington and Kensington and Chelsea. This is because it is not always felt to be appropriate for certain clients, and was not deemed suitable for working customers (in Camden).

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
In Islington, efforts have been made to bring partner bodies round the table, as it seeks to provide a more holistic package of support for customers as part of its wider reform, and its employment and skills support programmes.

In Kensington and Chelsea the adviser has built up a network of approximately 20 organisations. This is being expanded and developed according to client need.

Networking and referrals
Outreach workers make informal referrals and signpost customers to local support. In some instances advisers are case-loading clients and making the service 'seamless' for the customer by joining up services themselves. Islington is participating in a local pilot in one area that builds upon the common assessment framework used by children's services to identify the needs of families as a whole.

Potential lessons for the aacs
The Prototypes have shown that new types of customers can be engaged through outreach. The ANPs are aligning LSC funding with funding from other sources (London Development Agency (LDA), European Social Fund (ESF) etc.) so there may be evidence about how this could work in the aacs. Islington has reported significant benefits in bringing partners round the table and using the outcomes 'star' to enable advancement to be discussed in a common language.

Slough

Progress
The Prototype is trialling four 'test-beds', each with separate aims and a different set of partners.

- **Test-bed 1:** work placements through A4E (a private training, and Welfare to Work, provider).

- **Test-bed 2:** focused on musculoskeletal problems and working in partnership with health and benefits agencies.

- **Test-bed 3:** targeting ex-offenders and establishing a key partner relationship with the Probation Service

- **Test-bed 4:** introducing a buddying/mentoring system to help individuals to advance.

It has made varying degrees of progress: Test-bed 4 (Buddying) has trained buddies although their mentees were yet to be recruited. Test-bed 1 has supported a few

client work placements. Test-bed 3 has widened its target group from ex-offenders to all vulnerable groups on a housing estate, due to a change in the lead partner. The organisations involved were satisfied with the new focus and had made good progress in preparing for delivery. Test-bed 2 was not yet active in delivery.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
After the initial planning stage, external consultants CFE returned project management responsibility to Slough Borough Council in preparation for a new Project Manager to take over. However, due to unforeseen delays in the recruitment process the Prototype had operated without a Project Manager through to September. There were delays in getting Service Level Agreements signed which delayed the start of delivery. There were also delays with getting Data Protection documents agreed, which in turn delayed the launch of the management information system.

Many of the partner organisations reported a lack of integrated leadership and clear communication. It was felt that operational guidelines for working were not sufficiently detailed to support delivery. The partnerships were most effective in getting delivery started were those where there had been a history of working together and which understood the mutual benefit to linking up.

Networking and referrals
Slough Borough Council had an established network at management level of employment, skills, business support and health organisations through which it was hoped a network would emerge which would produce tangible output.

nextstep advisers had a key role in referring to the test-beds but reported a lack of information about the purpose and progress of each. Some **nextstep** advisers felt that **nextstep** already offered a 'no wrong door' approach to clients and the organisation had established a referral network which included a wide range of services and organisations. **nextstep** advisers also noted that there had been little feedback about the customers referred to the test-beds and this was leading to some reluctance to refer more.

A good relationship was evident between one of the lead organisations and the **nextstep** advisers, which was due to the closer working brought by test-bed, and some advisers received additional awareness training as a result of the Prototype.

Potential lessons for the aacs
By trialling four models in this area, 'Slough Working Better' has highlighted many potential lessons for the aacs. The Prototype has shown that having the right staff involved in the partnerships is essential to progress and success: changes of key personnel had caused delays for one test-bed and a change of focus for another, the success of a third test-bed was attributed to the dynamism of one individual.

This Prototype was encouraging the partner organisations to seek alternative sources of funding before drawing down Prototype money to deliver the test-beds. This had caused problems for test-bed 1 as it had meant the lead organisation had slotted Prototype customers into existing provision. This undermines assessment of the 'added value' of this aspect of work although does suggest how funding streams may interact under aacs.

The Prototype also demonstrates the need for strong leadership with clear operational guidance for partners. Staff in leadership roles need to have decision-making powers in their organisation otherwise delays in progress can result.

The test-beds require promotion and buy-in from the staff on the ground who will refer customers to it; they also require information about the nature and quality of the service to be able to 'sell it' to potential clients.

South Hampshire

The focus in South Hampshire is on providing a universally accessible service: there are no restrictions to the individuals who might access it or the number of advice sessions each may receive. A hub and satellite model has been established: the hubs provide 'drop in' and appointment services within town and city centres, the satellites take the Prototype's advice service into the community (for instance, into employers or local community centres). Each individual in touch with the service is recorded on the MI system which also records their action plan and subsequent progress (if they consent to tracking). Local branding has been established (as a means to communicate the Prototype as a novel approach) and the Prototype is known locally as FastForward. A distinctive feature of the South Hampshire Prototype is the inclusion of a discretionary fund to remove barriers to progression in training, and subsequently, work.

Progress
This Prototype has made significant headway in the achievement of its targets. It set out that four hubs would deliver FastForward. Two of these would be new centres while two were established centres (with co-located advice services). All hubs are operational however demand in one new centre was somewhat less than had been seen elsewhere. This was felt to be due to its location within a deprived community. The Prototype has reached a decision to research new premises in the city centre and to offer satellite operation from the established centre. A lesson that has been drawn from this is the need for hubs to be 'on the high street' to ensure universal accessibility. There are also benefits to being located closely with other services and particularly Jobcentre Plus. Overall, the Prototype was felt to be progressing well.

South Hampshire set out a number of measures of success within its implementation plan. These surrounded the number of users who would access the Prototype, and measures of their outcomes eg movement into work and learning. By the time of the second round research, close to half the planned number of users for the year had been engaged (approximately 400 individuals). The advisers and advancement experts reported high demand from new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants although also reported helping individuals facing redundancy and some long-term un/non-employed. Many of the individuals they were supporting had significant and/or multiple barriers. It was initially planned that Level 3 qualified advisers would lead registration and diagnosis with advancement experts (Level 4 qualified) then assisting individuals with complex needs or ready to make progress into work and learning. These role boundaries have blurred a little due to demand, although advancement experts continue to lead the support for progression and complex barriers.

Despite the complexity of many cases, achievement of the outcome measures for the year was also progressing well. A large majority of users had received a personalised action plan (well ahead of target); further, the Prototype had achieved two-thirds of its target for progression into basic skills, Level 2 and 3 learning. Progression into work was behind target however due largely to the impacts of recession. High levels of user satisfaction are in evidence.

Due to high demand in the hubs, less satellite operation and a lesser degree of employer engagement has taken hold than initially envisaged. However, the Prototype was in discussion with a strategic health authority about offering FastForward alongside health-service careers advice to support health sector workers wishing to consider a career change.

The discretionary fund has been carefully managed to ensure that only training that cannot be funded through other sources is supported. The area has been successful in gaining Future Jobs Fund and Migrants Impacts funding and some aspects of the FastForward service will be rolled out through these.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition
The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) strategic group for the Prototype remains unchanged and is a partnership between the four local councils, the LSC, **nextstep** and Jobcentre Plus. On a day-to-day basis a project manager leads the implementation with the support of a member of the strategic team. The project manager role is felt to have smoothed implementation and has enabled a rapid response to issues raised and feedback from the advisory staff; also rapid response to situations arising in the labour market. An example of this was the provision of a job club offer to support employees in a company which was making redundancies.

Networking and referrals
At a local level each hub has made contact with a range of services and organisations including those offering crisis support, housing services, health and mental health support, and training (for example, confidence building and IT skills). There are also a growing number of government initiatives targeted at the unemployed and those facing redundancy, being made available in the area due to the recession to which FastForward can refer its users. There was a sense that the service increased individuals' knowledge of the benefits systems to enable better navigation of it. Sharing information about users between services has been unproblematic: advisory staff discuss potential referrals with users and the benefits of speaking with other services, they then seek their permission to share details of their case.

Advisory staff are tending to lead networking activities within localities. At the strategic level, the project manager and members of the steering group sit on a range of local committees to further the networks.

Potential lessons for the aacs
Lessons include the provision of services in readily accessible city/town centre venues to ensure a footfall of new users. Satellite operation can support the provision of advice to particular communities or contexts (eg employers). The project manager role has been key to ensuring rapid response and timely decision making. The time needed to establish, mobilise and sustain networks should not be

underestimated. The discretionary funding has meant that individuals have been able to access funding and training, that was not possible through other sources. FastForward has clearly established that there is demand for its service.

Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth

Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth Local Authorities have partnered for the Prototype. Delivery has been contracted out to Women Like Us (WLU), a social enterprise which aims to assist women-returners back into work. Through the Prototype, WLU has expanded its service to provide support to fathers. The organisation runs an advice and coaching service, and a recruitment service. Some advisors work solely on the Prototype; others are involved as one part of their working week eg an adviser would spend two days of their time with Prototype customers and three days with customers on other projects. The advisers who work on the prototype are part of a wider team of advisers at WLU. The Prototype is called 'Parents at Work', and accordingly it aims to target parents for support. The aim was to deliver the service through an outreach approach by establishing it in children's centres and advertising it in schools throughout the three boroughs.

Progress

Since the last evaluation visit the Prototype has made good progress in its planned delivery. WLU has been working in Children's Centres (CCs) as planned, although with some changes to the original plan. The school holidays meant that fewer parents have been seen within the CCs.

The Local Authorities are working on building relationships with Jobcentre Plus advisers under the Integrated Employment and Skills trial, however at the point of the visit there was evidence that more was required to develop this partnership: advisers from WLU and from Jobcentre Plus were competing for time in the CCs. There appeared a lack of clarity about any need to be working together.

The numbers of customers seen to date is below target due to the summer holiday issue, and it is not expected that the Prototype will be able to rectify this gap however it is anticipated it will achieve the targets set for subsequent quarterly operation.

Leadership arrangements and partnership composition

This Prototype is managed at two levels. There is an overall manager from Southwark Council and then a project manager from WLU who is essentially responsible for the day-to-day running of the Prototype; the project manager reports to the manager at Southwark Council who then reports to the LSC. The manager from Southwark Council is responsible for the strategic partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and the project manager from WLU is responsible for the referral partners and relationships with possible referral partners.

The leadership and partnership arrangements are felt to be working well. There is an appreciation that more development may be required to bring in, for instance, the Citizen's Advice Bureau as a partner and establishing contact with more schools. Advisers feel they get sufficient information through the project manager to effectively deliver the Prototype. In their view, communication is working well; there are regular project meetings which are attended by the advisers, the project manager and staff are involved in marketing and outreach.

Networking and referrals

WLU has a large number of organisations to which they can refer. These were already logged on a database. The database is widely used by all staff. It is constantly updated by the Information Manager at WLU. Although WLU already had a large network of referral agencies the project manager noted there has been a need to 'build up a much more substantial range of referral partners'. Prototype delivery has for example, indicated that more partners are required that can help individuals find low-income work.

'I guess what this project has shown a need for is more of the dinner lady type jobs on our website.'   Adviser

Inward referral has happened but on a much smaller scale than outward referral. The project manager feels more confident that cross-referral will increase over the next six months.

Potential lessons for the aacs

Lessons from Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth include the means of engaging, and support needs of, parents. School holidays need to be taken into consideration when planning outreach to provide IAG. Flexible ideas for venue can work: while it was anticipated that parents would wish to meet in the CCs, it has become apparent that many are comfortable to meet at WLU offices.

Other lessons surround how the aacs might work with initiatives such as the Integrated Employment and Skills trials. In this example the relationship had not been established because there was a lack of communication between Jobcentre Plus and WLU about any need to join up.