Learning brokerage

Building bridges between learners and providers

Report on phases 2 and 3 of the project

learning &skills research centre

Learning brokerage offers a way to tackle the UK's 'learning divide' by helping learning providers to reach adults excluded from learning. This report presents findings from the final stages of a study of how brokerage works in communities and the workplace. Case studies reveal innovative partnerships that have succeeded in opening up learning opportunities. Six stages of brokerage are described, with questions to help readers review and improve practice. The authors argue that learning brokerage could flourish within existing systems, but changes are needed – new funding mechanisms, more responsive learning providers, training for brokers and effective ways to measure achievement.

Learning Brokers Research Project

The Learning and Skills Research Centre

The LSRC is an independent centre for strategic research to inform long-term policy development and to improve practice in post-16 learning. Based at the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), the centre identifies key priorities, commissions major studies and ensures that research findings clearly and usefully inform practitioners, policy-makers and the research community.

The Learning Brokers Research Project

This project was commissioned to identify different forms of learning brokerage and effective strategies for good practice to engage 'non-traditional' adult learners. The interest in brokerage arises from its potential to stimulate new demand, both to tackle skills deficits and to improve social inclusion and equity. Brokers include a wide range of organisations and individuals that act as catalysts or agents of change, inspiring adults to take up learning and helping them to succeed. The research objectives are to:

- review the use and application of the term 'learning broker'
- identify key characteristics of brokerage practice and the benefits for potential learners
- develop understanding of the patterns of interaction between learners or potential learners, brokers and learning providers in different contexts
- explore effective approaches to brokerage in relation to specific communities and groups
- identify barriers to effective brokerage and areas for further support
- investigate the role of information and communications technology (ICT) and its impact on the relationship between learners, brokers and learning providers
- contextualise the development of more widespread and coherent networks of brokers within the contemporary policy environment
- assess the wider implications for learning providers.

This report was prepared by a research team at the Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University. Additional reports relating to this project are:

Thomas L, Quinn J, Slack K, Casey L, Vigurs K, Flynn N (2004). *Learning brokerage. Building bridges between learners and providers. Interim report on Work Package 1.* London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.

Thursfield D, Hamblett J, Holden R (2004). *Learning brokerage in the workplace: some preliminary reflections.* London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.

LSRC research report

Learning Brokers
Research Project

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Report on phases 2 and 3 of the project

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Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the second and third (final) phase of a research project designed to identify different forms of learning brokerage and effective strategies for good practice to engage 'non-traditional' adult learners. It builds on two earlier reports. These analysed the functions of learning brokerage, pointing to conditions that promote or hinder success (Thomas *et al*. 2004); and looked specifically at the practice of learning brokerage in the workplace (Thursfield, Hamblett and Holden 2004).

Methods of investigation

Evidence was gathered mainly from 11 case study organisations. These were selected from organisations that identified themselves as playing a central role in learning brokerage. Case studies were chosen to allow learning brokerage to be explored across four domains: the community, the workplace, brokerages led by educational institutions, and brokerages strongly influenced by voluntary agencies. A balanced geographical spread of case studies was also sought.

Case study organisations set up interviews with stakeholders – in particular, people in key brokerage roles, representatives from learning providers, course tutors, researchers, potential learners, learners, project managers/ coordinators, referral agencies, employers and representatives from funding bodies. Interviews examined key issues of concern at strategic, managerial and operational levels. In addition, 'mapping' exercises enabled intra- and inter-organisational relationships and relationships with learners to be investigated. Learners' experiences of brokerage were also recorded.

Practitioner involvement and feedback via a practitioner panel, workshop and conference were crucial elements of the study.

What is learning brokerage?

The essence of learning brokerage is effective mediation between learners or potential learners and learning providers. Learning brokerage seeks to negotiate and inform change – both in learners and in learning providers. It makes a distinctive contribution to widening adult participation by 'joining up' a range of activities – outreach; information, advice and guidance (IAG); new courses; learner support; and pathways for progression to employment or further learning. It stimulates change by looking for better ways to meet learners' needs. Thus, learning brokerage is a valuable tool for strategies aimed at widening participation.

An ideal model for achieving effective learning brokerage is set out, covering a broad spectrum of activities. These are grouped into six stages:

- understanding the current situation
- gaining entry and building trust
- raising interest in learning, and making learning meaningful
- identifying the right learning opportunity
- promoting learning success
- addressing organisational issues.

The six stages offer a framework to help those whose role is to create, manage or improve mediation between learners and providers. Using it can also increase understanding within and between organisations about ways to work together to the benefit of learners. The framework is detailed further in **section 3.12** and illustrated by reference to the case studies in **sections 5.1–5.6**.

Case study 'hub' organisations

The full spectrum of brokerage activity is likely to be conducted by several organisations, working in partnership, but led by a 'hub' organisation. To show how learning brokerage works on the ground and to illustrate the factors that influence success and the challenges, researchers worked with 11 diverse organisations. These case studies, listed in **section 2.1**, illustrate a wide variety of learning brokerage examples: from voluntary and community-based schemes to further education, higher education and the workplace; from work with homeless people to work with factory workers, health and social care employees, and with people needing support with mental health issues.

Drawing on the experience of the case studies, a list of key questions and activities for brokering learning is contained in **appendix 1** to help organisations to evaluate and improve practice. Questions relate to issues such as:

- engaging with target learner groups; undertaking research; dissemination activities
- building trust in learners, learning providers and brokerage partners
- benefits of learning and barriers to it; the need for more flexible provision
- communication with learning providers; progression issues; staff development
- defining, promoting and supporting learner success
- skills and training for learning brokerage staff.

Organisational structures

Relationships between organisations are central to an understanding of learning brokerage. They have potential to add value to the work of hub organisations, for example, through the sharing of knowledge and expertise, by providing complementary services and by diversifying learning opportunities. No learning brokerage is completely self-contained. The number and types of link vary between case studies, but generally fall into one of the following categories:

- funder-directed links
- access-oriented links
- links with learning providers
- links to facilitate a holistic approach to learners' needs.

Such links influence the structure of learning brokerage networks. Two key models of learning brokerage were identified in the case studies: those that were externally focused and those that were internally focused. The first is a simple, outward-looking model of learning brokerage; the second is a complex, inward-looking model. The outward-looking model achieves its goals by connecting with a vast array of external bodies, but its own internal structure is straightforward. Conversely, the inward-looking model seeks to bring all the learning brokerage roles into the hub, creating a complex internal web of relationships with less reliance on external partnerships. Specific examples of such models are given in **section 4.2**.

Learning brokerages work well when networks are fluid, enabling different permutations of working together. An important test of the learning brokerage network is that it creates more effective learning opportunities, which are also diversified and flexible.

Key findings from the case studies

Section 5 uses the learning brokerage framework to analyse evidence from the case studies. The following points emerge.

- Models of learning brokerage vary: there is no single blueprint. There is as yet no standard use or understanding of the terms 'learning broker' and 'learning brokerage'. However, the study finds that effective learning brokerage is dependent on good practice in all six stages of the brokerage framework, whether conducted by one organisation or through collaborative links between several.
- Good research and consultation about learners and provision provides a sound foundation for effective brokerage.
- Most learning brokerages in the study prioritised work to gain entry to and build trust with learners and potential learners, 'gatekeepers', learning providers and other partners.

- Raising interest in learning was a vital and time-consuming activity for most of the case studies, which continually tried and tested new ways to engage potential learners.
- Identifying the right learning opportunity represents the critical area for negotiation between learner and provider and hence a key area for mediation by brokerage staff. Most case studies had strong links with one or two supportive and accommodating providers. But the inability of some learning brokers to influence provision (due in part to funding policy) limits their effectiveness. Some learning providers also struggle to show that they are capable of responding imaginatively.
- Effective brokerage looks for flexibility in defining 'success' for learners, in ways that match their learning objectives (whether to achieve qualifications, gain employment, progress to higher levels of learning, or to gain in personal and social development). The funding regime may place limits on learners' freedom to choose their progression routes.
- The personal characteristics of staff are seen as crucial to effective brokerage (being approachable, friendly, outgoing, trusted, and able to take the initiative, good at communicating). Indeed, the case studies showed signs of an over-reliance on the qualities, good will and energy of individual staff members.
- Formal training for learning brokerage appears to be rare; more often there is reliance on professional knowledge and skills or informal learning on the job. The training of union learning representatives (ULRs) is highlighted as the best example of brokerage training found in the study.
- Case study organisations used a combination of approaches to evaluate the success of their work. These included data collected in response to funding requirements, which tended to be based on 'hard' outcomes; and evidence they gathered to monitor their work (eg based on interviews with learners and feedback from employers and community members), which included 'softer' outcomes.
- The case study organisations derive their funding from a variety of sources, usually on a short-term basis. Problems with funding and the achievement of sustainability were recurring themes in the study. The traditional funding model based on student numbers does not capture the full range of work conducted by learning brokerages, from engaging learners and helping them to progress, to their work as catalysts for institutional change. Target-driven funding can lead providers to avoid 'high risk' learners, thus undermining the goals of brokerage.
- Sustainable development (ie changing partners' practice and embedding new practice) lies at the heart of learning brokerage. **Section 5.8** describes two main approaches to sustainability demonstrated within the case studies: turning learning brokerage from project status to mainstream status; and changing the practices of partner agencies, so that the brokerage project can be wound up.

Recommendations

Section 6 draws out recommendations for policy and practice.

Recommendations for national and regional policy-makers

- The contribution of learning brokerage to strategies for widening participation should be recognised and promoted. This should not be a 'one size fits all' approach, but one that encourages flexible interventions appropriate to different contexts.
- Effective learning brokerage calls for longer-term funding and better understanding of the breadth of brokerage activity that needs to be funded. The funding model adopted should recognise all the stages of the learning brokerage process. A detailed study of the costs of brokerage should be considered.
- A training module for learning brokerage staff should be developed to strengthen the professional identity of learning brokerage workers and to train other staff for whom learning brokerage is a secondary role (eg health visitors).
- A funding regime that properly recognises learning brokerage should be supported by a new approach to monitoring and evaluation. The framework developed in this study shows the range of roles, activities and learner outcomes that should be taken into account in evaluating the impact of brokerage for funding purposes.

Recommendations for learning brokerage practitioners

- Despite the difficulties of influencing learning providers to develop and change their provision, brokerage organisations must continue to work towards this goal.
- The framework of learning brokerage established through this research provides a useful tool for practitioners. Hub organisations and networks should consider using the framework as an aid to self-evaluation, enabling them to check (and prove) that they are undertaking the full range of activity needed to mediate effectively between learners and providers.
- More robust and transparent recruitment, support and progression mechanisms should be developed for learning brokerage staff. This would help to avoid 'burnout' and over-reliance on individuals, and ensure that learning brokerage is a sustainable process.
- Better training and support for brokerage staff should be sought. Key staff (particularly those in regular direct contact with clients) will benefit from greater and more formalised training and support, and opportunities for career development.

Recommendations for learning providers and partners

- Engaging non-traditional learners and assisting them to progress into mainstream education institutions calls for organisational change on the part of learning providers. Change should embrace practical arrangements, pedagogy, curricula and culture. It is not sufficient to rely on learners to change to fit into a traditional model of learning. The learning brokerage framework can be used to help providers adapt the way they work.
- Widened access to learning, improved marketing and flexibility from providers and effective IAG provision are all features of learning brokerage. Better understanding and cooperation within and between organisations is needed to put in place the links on which effective learning brokerage relies and to ensure that it becomes ‘more than the sum of its parts’.

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2002, when this research was commissioned, learning brokerage was a largely unexplored and under-conceptualised topic. This three-phase research project was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) to:

- develop definitions of learning brokerage
- bring together existing knowledge on the subject
- identify different forms of learning brokerage
- identify effective strategies for good practice to engage educationally marginalised adults in learning
- produce effective criteria and workable models.

Phase 1 of the research (see Thomas *et al*. 2004) incorporated a national survey of learning brokerage activities, but was primarily literature-based. It aimed to explore the idea of learning brokerage and create a conceptual understanding of the term by drawing on existing knowledge and practice. The research team also drew on a separate report on workplace brokerage, commissioned to supplement this project (Thursfield, Hamblett and Holden 2004).

From the literature, and in collaboration with interested practitioners, a six-stage framework was developed to chart key activities and roles (see Thomas *et al*. 2004). Representing an ideal model for achieving effective learning brokerage, the six stages are as follows:

- understanding the current situation
- gaining entry and building trust
- raising interest in learning, and making learning meaningful
- identifying the right learning opportunity
- promoting learning success
- addressing organisational issues.

These stages have informed much of the subsequent research and are used in this report to structure analysis and discussion of empirical findings; however, our understanding and articulation of these stages, as well as the key activities and roles, have undergone change during the subsequent research phases.

The project's second phase developed this theoretical understanding by examining learning brokerage in practice via in-depth case study research with organisations that identified themselves as playing a central role in brokering learning. That is, they saw themselves as 'hubs' in brokerage networks. This research has informed and improved our learning brokerage framework and has led to policy and practice recommendations. Phase 3 focused on identifying and evaluating effective strategies within the six stages of the learning brokerage framework through action research with a small group of organisations.

This report, drawing on the research undertaken in phases 2 and 3, explores and clarifies the characteristics of effective learning brokerage in radically diverse contexts, and with equally diverse learners. Just as learners can be found (and targeted) either in the community or the workplace, learning brokerage partner organisations and individual workers can be found in education, other public sector areas, community or voluntary organisations, the workplace, even in the family. This can influence the values and objectives of learning brokerage.

1.2 What is learning brokerage, and why do we need it?

Learning brokers have been proposed as a means of addressing and reducing the 'learning divide' (Taylor and Cameron 2002), which continues to exist in the UK (LSC 2003). Further research has developed our understanding of the process of learning brokerage, defining it as a process of building bridges and mediating between learners or potential learners and providers (Thomas *et al*. 2004). This implies two fundamental features.

- First, learning brokerage works *both with and for learners and education providers*, seeking to inform and negotiate – or broker – change on both sides of a learning context. Indeed, reformation on the part of providers is crucial to the successful engagement of learners for whom the current system has little or nothing to offer, but this must be informed by the realities of potential learners' lives. Institutional change and the development of more suitable learning opportunities must involve learners and be communicated to potential learners. This is not to suggest that learning brokerage is idealistic or naïve. Rather, it is informed by the constraints that education providers face, but can simultaneously seek to bring about systemic change (eg in funding policies).
- Second, learning brokerage is a *process*, uniquely linking together a range of existing activities and roles, individuals and organisations and adding distinct value to them by bringing them into a coherent framework. Thus, it offers a strategic approach to widening participation in lifelong learning – offering more than outreach, IAG, new courses, learner support and so on; and the learning brokerage framework illustrated in this report (see **sections 5.1–5.6**) is a valuable tool to assist those whose role is to manage or provide sustainable arrangements for mediation between learners (or new learners) and providers. Using the brokerage process can increase understanding within and between organisations about ways to work together to the benefit of learners. We suggest (in the introduction to **section 3**) that the framework should be adapted as an aid to self-evaluation for organisations that conduct or coordinate learning brokerage activities.

An effective process of learning brokerage should feature all six of the stages listed in **section 1.1**. However, there is not necessarily a linear progression from one stage to another for individual learners, nor a need for learners to participate in each stage. It should also be stated that some of the case study organisations (such as ALP) do not engage directly with learners, but work primarily to promote links between providers and other organisations (such as employers and community organisations) in ways that will indirectly benefit learners.

In practice, none of the case study organisations featured in this report was observed to be fulfilling *the complete range* of activities outlined in the framework (see **appendix 1**). Subsequently, however, in response to the framework, some of these organisations have developed their practice, moving towards the process described in this report.

1.3 Structure of the report

Section 2 provides an overview of the methodology used in phases 2 and 3 of the project. **Section 3** provides a summary of each of the 11 case studies, including contextual information. Diagrams of their organisational structure are contained in **appendix 2**. Further details of the individual case studies, including discussion of the approaches used to research the views of 'non-learners' (people not already engaged in organised learning activities), are given in **appendix 4** (published online as *Learning brokerage: building bridges between learners and providers. Eleven case studies of practice*, available via www.LSDA.org.uk/pubs/). Each case study's activities are described there in relation to the six-stage learning brokerage framework. This is followed by a brief appraisal of the strengths of each learning brokerage network and the challenges that it faced.

In **section 4**, we consider organisational structures and patterns of inter-organisational relations. **Section 5** presents the empirical research about learning brokerage in the case studies. Findings are related to the six stages of the learning brokerage framework. This data is analysed to extend the definitions of learning brokerage and to develop our understanding of the complexities and forms of the learning brokerage process. Examples demonstrate alternative ways of undertaking similar or complementary activities. This section ends with a discussion about the costs of learning brokerage. In **sections 4** and **5**, a set of questions are proposed to help individuals or groups to review practice in learning brokerage and plan for improvement.

Section 6 summarises the research findings and draws conclusions; the implications for policy and practice in relation to the further development of learning brokerage throughout the UK are then discussed and recommendations made.

Section 2

Research methods

The empirical research (phases 2 and 3 of the project as a whole) has been conducted via 11 case studies. Seven learning brokerage organisations were studied in phase 2 only; another two in phases 2 and 3; and two in phase 3 only. The inclusion of a case study focused on health promotion (community nutrition) aimed to draw on expertise and learn from existing good practice in learning brokerage developed within the health sector. For example, the 'link worker strategy' is well established within a health setting and there has been development work at a national level on accreditation, which is currently lacking in the case of education link workers.

2.1 Selection of case studies

Excluding the community nutrition project, the majority of case studies were selected from the self-identified examples of learning brokerage submitted during phase 1 of the project (see Thomas *et al*. 2004). Further examples were suggested via the project's advisory group and its practitioner panel (set up to enable the project to draw on the expert knowledge of professionals in the field). At the start of phase 2, a shortlist of 24 potential case studies was drawn up and further information sought about their work.

With the help of advisory group and practitioner panel members, we then selected eight initial case studies which would allow the learning brokerage framework to be explored across four domains (see Thomas *et al*. 2004): the community, the workplace, those led by educational institutions, and those strongly influenced by voluntary agencies. (A ninth case study – the Bolton CNA project – was selected subsequently, without input from the practitioner panel.) As learning brokerage is undertaken differently within different contexts, case studies were also selected to ensure that together they provided in-depth information across the six stages of the learning brokerage framework.

At the outset, it was envisaged that the selected case studies would focus on marginalised groups, for example, prioritising the engagement of under-represented ethnic minority groups, lone parents or older people. However, it became clear at a very early stage in the research that the focus of many learning brokerages is based on geographically defined areas. Those working in regeneration areas, for example, may have a formal remit to work in that specific geographical area: within this, though, they may then target specific groups, for example, unemployed men, older learners or women from ethnic communities. Case studies were therefore also selected to encompass this aspect, for example, by involving voluntary organisations working nationally with specific target groups and community groups working at a local level in specific rural or urban areas. The role of information and communications technology (ICT) in the development of learning brokerage and its potential impact on relationships between learners, providers and mediators is a subsidiary theme of the research: the EverybodyOnline case study was chosen specifically to focus on this issue. A balanced geographical spread was also sought.

The second stage of the empirical research (phase 3 of the project) aimed to develop definitions of effective learning brokerage by involving the case study organisations in a critique of the framework devised in phase 1. Once again, case studies were selected from a shortlist drawn up to give a broad enough spread in terms of geography, project scale, sectors and client groups. Two case studies were chosen from the initial data set (SPELL and the Big Issue Foundation) together with two new ones (Bridges to Learning and Stoke-on-Trent College).

The 11 case studies selected and carried out across phases 2 and 3 of the project were as follows:

- Arts Learning Partnership (ALP), focusing on building capacity within the community arts sector that works with disadvantaged communities in London
- the Big Issue Foundation's (BIF) JET (Jobs, Education and Training) Scheme, a voluntary organisation working with homeless people in Birmingham
- Bridges to Learning (B2L), a partnership of organisations working to widen participation and extend learning in the health and social care sector within workplaces and communities in Newcastle upon Tyne
- Building Bridges and Breakthrough (BBB), a targeted initiative for people with mental health issues in Aberdeen
- Community Nutrition Assistants (CNA), an initiative of the department of nutrition and dietetics within Bolton Primary Care Trust, which aims to promote healthy eating within poor urban communities
- ESOL–IT course for Asian factory workers, provided by Gateway College, Leicester
- EverybodyOnline, a charity working to increase internet connectivity and promote online learning in specific urban and rural communities throughout the UK
- Go4 Advice about Learning and Work [1] (managed by the Connexions service for Devon and Cornwall), providing workplace information, advice and guidance (IAG) on learning to employees and union learning representatives (ULRs) throughout the two counties
- Progression Pathways Project (PPP), an education outreach initiative focusing on disadvantaged urban communities in Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley
- SPELL (Supporting People into Employment and Lifelong Learning), a community organisation operating in a disadvantaged and isolated urban community in North-East Sheffield
- Stoke-on-Trent College, an FE college based in North Staffordshire, facilitating learning brokerage through three main initiatives: College in the Community (CiC), the business development unit (BDU) and the trade union studies unit (TUSU).

The selection of the CNA case study was based on national recognition of its innovative brokering practice and success, plus the availability of internal and externally verified documentary evidence.

1 After the completion of the LSRC research, Go4 Advice about Learning and Work changed its name to **nextstep** advice on learning and work.

2.2 Case study methods

We collected substantial written documentation and verbal information from potential case studies prior to selection, and again prior to visits, to ensure that case studies would indeed involve elements of learning brokerage. Two research team members visited each case study for a period of 2–3 days.

In order to provide a meaningful insight into their work, organisations involved were asked to set up interviews with key stakeholders – in particular, people involved in brokering relationships with and between learners and learning providers, representatives from learning providers, course tutors, researchers, potential learners, learners, project managers and coordinators, referral agencies (eg community mental health nurses, employment agencies), employers and representatives from funding bodies. These interviews highlighted key issues across strategic, managerial and operational levels, allowing different perspectives to be examined. Practitioner panel members and the learning brokerages themselves helped to inform this process, with a broad range of stakeholders being interviewed for each case study (fuller details are given in **section 3**).

Both group and individual interviews took place, with a focus on key issues drawn from phase 1 of the project. Some follow-up telephone interviews were also conducted. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed by the research team to highlight key issues and common themes. Areas of discussion involved the process of learning brokerage, perceived impacts and the implications for the future of learning brokerage. Before the visits the case study organisations were asked to produce a diagram illustrating how they perceived the learning brokerage framework to operate in their own project context (these are reproduced in **appendix 2**). Interviewees were asked to discuss the diagram, for example, highlighting areas where they felt there were barriers to developing effective relationships.

Reaching and then conducting research with potential learners presented a range of difficulties. In the original research proposal, we had suggested 'street corner' research to elicit the views of people who are not participating or have not participated in organised learning (other than compulsory education). Following discussion with practitioner panel members, however, it was decided to abandon this approach for two main reasons. First, there were the difficulties of identifying 'non-learners' on the street; in particular, it was felt that a lack of targeting would result in low response rates and that the potential for researcher bias (eg approaching people who look like 'non-learners') would result in an unrepresentative sample. Second, in our earlier report (Thomas *et al*. 2004) we noted the importance of both the sector and the specific context for the learning brokerage. For example, learning brokerages may be targeting specific learner groups with a particular range of learning opportunities; therefore, it was felt to be more appropriate to attempt to speak to potential learners more closely associated with the objectives of each case study organisation. Consequently, specific strategies to reach 'relevant' potential learners were developed in consultation with the key contact in each case study (see **section 3** and **appendix 4** for further discussion).

The second stage of the empirical research (phase 3 of the project) saw visits made to the two 'new' case studies – Bridges to Learning (B2L) and Stoke-on-Trent College – in order to build up a learning brokerage profile for each of them. The researchers then visited each of the four phase 3 case studies again, their focus this time being on identifying and evaluating the learning brokerage activities being practised and collecting evidence of successful learning brokerage. This stage included:

- interviews with learning brokerage staff, learners and representatives from other agencies
- group mapping exercises to identify and critique, in collaboration with case study staff, specific learning brokerage activities in relation to the six-stage framework devised in phase 1 of the project (see **section 1.1**).
- the collection of learner accounts, using a 'short life history' approach, in order to embed details in their broader life contexts. This is consistent with learning brokers needing to identify and incorporate the apparently peripheral details of people's lives into learning contexts.

2.3 Practitioner involvement

As in phase 1, the involvement of practitioners has been a key part of the research process and issues raised during panel meetings have been incorporated into the research findings.

The practitioner panel[2] met twice during phase 2: to help with selecting the initial eight case studies (see **sections 2.1** and **2.2**) and to critique the learning brokerage framework developed by the research team. This meeting also focused on how to show evidence of successful learning brokerage in practice – these findings fed into the content and format of the next four case study visits.

A participative conference was held after the first nine case studies had taken place, to discuss emergent themes and issues arising from the research. A presentation of the research findings to date was followed by four workshops structured around the following issues: conceptualisations of learning; working across contexts or sectors; what constitutes 'success'; and funding and sustainability. The conference was well attended, and representatives from the case study organisations, the voluntary sector, learning providers, learning partnerships, government agencies and the FE and HE sectors were present. Issues raised and discussed at the conference have been incorporated into the research findings.

A workshop was also held in phase 2 of the project with a number of case study and planned case study participants. Its aim was further to refine the learning brokerage framework as a self-evaluation tool; to discuss alternative approaches for demonstrating effective learning brokerage practices; and to discuss possible ways to measure the impact of learning brokerage processes on learners.

2 Members were drawn from Citizens Online, the Women's Institute, the Workers' Educational Association, the FE and higher education (HE) sectors, the Beth Johnson Foundation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Racial Equality Council, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Big Issue Foundation (BIF).

2.4 Action research

In the second stage of the empirical research (phase 3 of the project) there was an emphasis on generating new knowledge about the effectiveness of learning brokerage activity by working *with* case study staff to help them to think differently about their practices. The idea was that involvement in the research process would be a useful mechanism for reviewing and changing existing practice within the case study organisations.

Case study practitioners participating in this final stage of the research said how valuable they had found the experience. Some said that the research workshops allowed staff to stand back from day-to-day activities and to see their work on a more strategic level. Others spoke about the usefulness of having external researchers facilitating reflective sessions with staff, affording case study project staff the space to gain perspective and to 'think outside the box' – this allowed them to come up with more creative ways of tackling issues involved in carrying out learning brokerage on the ground.

Section 3

Summaries of the case studies

This section provides a summary and contextual information about each of the case studies researched in phases 2 and 3 of the project. Diagrams of their organisational structures are presented in **appendix 2**. More detailed descriptions of each case study in relation to the six key stages of the learning brokerage framework are given in **appendix 4** (published online as *Learning brokerage: building bridges between learners and providers. Eleven case studies of practice*, available via www.LSDA.org.uk/pubs/). These summaries have been agreed by the key contact in each instance.

All of these case studies have strengths, but they do not necessarily either undertake all the stages of the learning brokerage framework, or perform all of them equally well. For example, some of the case study organisations do not work directly with marginalised learners, although they work closely with the organisations that do. The case studies represent interesting and useful examples of practice in different sectors, with different structures and meeting the needs of different learner groups. Some (eg ALP and B2L) may be working at a strategic level rather than directly brokering learning between learners and providers. It has become clear through the research process that effective learning brokerage is dependent on good practice in all of these stages, either in one organisation, or through collaborative links between agencies. Thus the learning brokerage framework and the associated discussion in Thomas *et al*. (2004) serves as a benchmarking self-evaluation tool for the case studies and all other potential learning brokerages. Policy-makers and funding bodies should be looking for learning brokerage networks that address all areas of the framework. Equally, they should be supporting and evaluating all activities, not just the number of learners enrolled on courses.

3.1 Arts Learning Partnership (ALP), London

ALP (www.artslearningpartnership.org) is based on the premise that the voluntary arts sector provides an effective way to engage or re-engage people marginalised from mainstream learning provision. It can be described as a federated learning brokerage. It does not work directly with learners, but with community arts organisations that routinely engage with marginalised learners, promoting links between them and providers in ways that will indirectly benefit learners. It takes a partnership approach to learning brokerage, aiming to build capacity within the fragmented and under-resourced community arts sector, while developing sustainable progression routes with local learning providers and encouraging them to develop more appropriate provision. ALP works closely with the London Open College Network (LOCN) as a means to affirm alternative curricula; this gives ALP partner organisations credibility as ‘learning brokers’, providing accreditation and the possibility of progression routes.

Through a range of specific initiatives, ALP operates as a learning broker for voluntary arts organisations, post-16 education providers, regeneration agencies and local authorities. It is driven by the 'learning needs' of communities rather than the recruitment needs of post-16 education providers. Its first concern is to establish flexible arts and learning strategies with communities, then build these into pathways with FE, HE and adult education providers. Its other main activities are:

- to create applied research opportunities for artists, arts workers, academics, students and regeneration agents who are committed to establishing new forms of cultural education and curriculum development
- to provide advice to arts organisations on curriculum development, accreditation, student support, project planning, evaluation and impact; and supply information and responses to a range of national and regional policy initiatives
- to support a number of theme-based discussion forums on its website to facilitate online project development and research.

3.2 The Big Issue Foundation (BIF) JET Scheme, Birmingham

The Big Issue Foundation (BIF) (www.bigissue.com) is a registered charity which assists homeless people across the UK – predominantly those selling *The Big Issue* magazines – to achieve greater self-reliance and independence by providing a range of services, including jobs, education and training (JET) support. The BIF was set up in 1995 to complement the work of The Big Issue Company Ltd, established in 1991. The work of the foundation, and particularly that of JET staff, has developed in different ways in each location, due in part to the particular clients and the existing educational provision locally. This case study focused on the JET work in Birmingham, where one part-time worker's job is to raise the interest of vendors in learning, help them to develop thereafter and, if appropriate, support their progress on to other learning opportunities by offering advice and guidance. The worker acts as a pivot between the homeless learners and learning providers and, as part of a brokerage network with local colleges and library services, negotiates appropriate provision both within the BIF learning centre and these mainstream services.

3.3 Building Bridges and Breakthrough (BBB), University of Aberdeen

Building Bridges and Breakthrough are both courses specifically designed by the University of Aberdeen for individuals recovering from mental illness who wish to return to work, education and training. Tutors liaise closely with a broad range of referral agencies which broker the courses to their clients. Both courses are based in the key learning opportunities department at the university, which has a remit to widen access and promote social inclusion. Breakthrough, which started in 1992, is an accredited course funded by Aberdeen City Social Services. It runs twice a year, comprising a series of 20 workshops run over 10 weeks. The programme enables clients to develop group-working skills, to develop and practise key verbal and written communication techniques and to produce a personal action plan based on their strengths and objectives. Building Bridges is part of the Grampian New Futures Fund Consortium and has been running for several years. It consists of a series of courses designed to increase self-confidence and self-esteem: titles include Fresh Start, Choices for Life and Creating Confidence for Returning to Education and Employment. Both courses are primarily taught within the university and are specifically designed to provide a link between community, social and medical services.

3.4 ESOL–IT Course, Gateway College, Leicester

This non-accredited ESOL–IT course was created at Gateway College to respond to the learning needs of Asian factory workers in Leicester. Gateway College already received funding from the local Learning Partnership to put on ESOL courses, which are free of charge to learners. However, the college learnt via their workplace union representative that the workers were more interested in learning IT skills, so a course was developed incorporating both IT content and the ESOL content needed to secure the course funding.

3.5 EverybodyOnline (EOL)

The locations for this national pilot project (www.everybodyonline.org.uk) are: Cornwall, Croydon, Glasgow, Mid Wales, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Wales, South Wales and Stoke-on-Trent.

EverybodyOnline aims to increase access to IT and the internet in local communities, with a particular emphasis on groups identified nationally as at risk of exclusion or marginalisation by reason of age, previous educational opportunities, employment status, gender, ethnic background or disability. It also aims to enhance the quality and level of IT knowledge among new and existing users. It was piloted in 2002 by Citizens Online (www.citizensonline.org.uk), a national charity set up in 2000 in the wake of research highlighting a direct correlation between social exclusion and digital exclusion.

3.6 Go4 Advice about Learning and Work, Devon and Cornwall

Go4 Advice about Learning and Work (www.go4lw.co.uk) is the IAG Partnership for Cornwall and Devon, comprising 150 organisations that provide information, advice and guidance to adults about employment, training and education. It is managed by the Connexions service for Cornwall and Devon. The case study focused on the Go4 network's workplace development team – four part-time staff dedicated to working with local companies (both unionised and non-unionised) and union learning representatives (ULRs) to develop workplace delivery of free and independent IAG on learning and work. Funded since 2002 from the local Learning and Skills Council's (LLSC) Quality Development Fund, Go4 aims to target employees of 'willing and receptive' companies.

The team's aims are to:

- identify local basic skills providers, colleges and training organisations, in order to help in meeting the employees' learning and training needs
- set up supported information access points (SIAPs) on employers' premises – these include physical stands, usually placed by the canteen, which Go4 keeps up to date with local and national information about learning activities
- provide confidential IAG sessions for individual employees – this mainly involves 'signposting' people to relevant organisations; sessions can cover any topic from courses to financial worries to information about finding a 'better' job
- provide responsive, mobile and temporary information access points (IAPs), supported by IAG sessions, when companies are facing redundancies
- visit receptive companies each fortnight or month to support the resident ULRs in promoting learning among their colleagues.

3.7 Progression Pathways Project (PPP), Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley

Led by the University of Teesside and Middlesbrough College and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the LSC, PPP was a major initiative to widen participation. It ran for 3 years (2000–2002) in the Tees Valley region and involved 17 FE and HE learning providers – including the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and two local careers services – working together to develop progression routes for local people, particularly those from excluded groups. The project had two main target groups: 16–19-year-old learners and adult learners, and developed three key strands of activity:

- an audit and mapping of current progression routes among a wide range of education providers in the region
- outreach work in the community
- identification and investigation of education advice and guidance provision locally.

3.8 SPELL (Supporting People into Employment and Lifelong Learning), North-East Sheffield

SPELL (www.spelldirect.org) is a large, comprehensive learning brokerage organisation, with 40 employees, including intermediate labour market workers dedicated to encouraging and supporting local people into all types of learning and employment. It does outreach work, offers a range of education and training opportunities in the community, negotiates with local learning providers and provides learner support services in areas such as finance, childcare and IAG. Originally known as SPELL North East, it was established in 1999 and operates within a designated regeneration area in North-East Sheffield. The area covers seven of the city's most deprived communities, comprising approximately 20,000 households and 47,000 residents. Working with the full range of learning providers and covering all types of learning, SPELL aims to make providers more responsive to local people's needs and local people more aware of the available opportunities. As well as being responsible for planning and coordinating learning provision in the area, the organisation also brokers employment opportunities for the local community.

3.9 Community Nutrition Assistants (CNA), Bolton Primary Care Trust

The community nutrition assistant (CNA) posts in Bolton (www.bolton.nhs.uk/Services/foodteam) were set up to tackle premature mortality rates for heart disease and stroke, and major problems with obesity and diabetes. The approach reflects significant findings in the US and the developing world, which suggest that many positive outcomes can be achieved through employing lay educators and peer workers. The pioneering work of the CNAs began in 1995, arising primarily from the dieticians' need to develop a more facilitative role, feeling that they were 'too removed from the community'. Initial joint funding was agreed with Bolton PCT and the Regional Health Authority.

The key aim was to train and support local people who were interested in community nutrition and had local knowledge to contribute. Initially, 12 CNAs were recruited, largely through word of mouth; they were mainly locally educated people, already active in community development. Ten of these qualified and there are currently three CNAs in the team. Achieving Beacon Status was a key milestone for the project, along with the resolution, passed by the British Dietetic Association, to accept dietetic assistants. The work of the CNAs has been seen as a model of good practice and used as a template in other parts of the UK. The title 'project' has now been dropped and the CNAs have been absorbed into the dietetics department.

3.10 Bridges to Learning (B2L), Newcastle upon Tyne

Bridges to Learning (B2L) (www.bridgestolearning.org.uk/home.htm), based in Newcastle upon Tyne, was set up in 2001 through a regional partnership between UNISON, Careconnect Learning, the Open University, the WEA and NHS University to widen participation and extend learning in health and social care within workplaces and communities. The partnership offers people who would not otherwise have access to learning or career mobility through training, the opportunity to meet their learning needs – from skills for life to vocational HE qualifications. A major goal is to contribute practically to regional policy on learning opportunities: B2L plans to integrate policy concerns on workforce development into its operations.

B2L has been funded for 2 years via the TUC/LSC Learning for All Fund. The B2L learning centre, operational since April 2003, has achieved learndirect status: it provides a common base and shared frame of reference for individual partners and other key players, and also has a vital role in developing an integrated approach to learning activities. A learning and computer training centre linked to the OU's internet library and resource materials and Careconnect Learning distance learning materials has also been established. The learning centre serves as a base for one UNISON and two OU outreach workers, with the aim of establishing work-based learning (WBL) partnerships with health and social care sector employers.

In the future, B2L aims to target staff and employers within the health and social care sector through the offer of progression routes, with a 'learning escalator' to different levels of study and appropriate learning programmes. It also aims to help in changing the learning culture within organisations by offering learning brokerage, diagnostic help and professional IAG to staff and employers.

B2L also aims to:

- improve the qualifications of health and social care employees through learning in the workplace to meet national standards
- work with employers to build a culture of lifelong learning in their workforce
- develop partnerships to share good practice in delivering health and social care education and training
- encourage innovative approaches to learning
- promote wider participation in the take-up of learning opportunities by all sections of the community
- encourage and support lifelong learning advisers and learning representatives in their work with learners in the workplace.

3.11 Stoke-on-Trent College: College in the Community initiative, business development unit and trade union studies unit

Stoke-on-Trent College (www.stokecoll.ac.uk) is one of the largest FE colleges in the UK, serving the Potteries area, North Staffordshire and beyond. With 1400 members of staff and 35 000 students of all ages, it offers a wide range of courses at all levels, for example, opportunities to take part in the Prince's Trust, College in the Community (CiC) and learndirect. It also provides links with employers to promote workplace learning through its business development unit (BDU). The college's learning brokerage work is broad and has been influenced by contextual issues.

The case study focused on the work of CiC, the BDU and the trade union studies unit (TUSU) in order to examine learning brokerage in the community and workplace. The development of CiC was greatly influenced by work in France and by the work of a previous CiC postholder in the Wirral. It is outreach-focused, aiming to deliver learning opportunities at community locations – at neighbourhood colleges in Longton, Tunstall and Bentilee and 12 community centres. Provision ranges from a one-off course to longer courses.

The commercially focused BDU was set up with two key aims: to generate income and to bring about employer engagement. Its key roles are the promotion of college services and the promotion of training and development. BDU has close links with TUSU, which was set up to develop training courses for TU and health and safety representatives and has been extremely successful in attracting employees onto training courses via the ULRs.

3.12 Aspects of brokerage in the case studies

Table A highlights the existence of different learning brokerage activities taking place across the 11 case studies. It shows how the six-stage learning brokerage framework – an ideal model for achieving effective learning brokerage – can be used as a self-evaluation tool for organisations that coordinate and support learning brokerage. It may also be possible to develop the framework into a separate evaluative tool for use by individual practitioners.

None of the case studies was observed to be fulfilling the complete range of activities. **Table A** is based on a series of snapshot visits to each case study: it does not represent a judgement on the quality of each organisation's work; rather, it indicates the weight given to different activities within the learning brokerage process, or the extent to which certain activities have been developed or prioritised so far.

Table A
Learning brokerage activities within the case studies

Learning brokerage stage	Arts Learning Partnership	Big Issue Foundation	Building Bridges and Breakthrough	ESOL–IT course, Gateway College, Leicester	EverybodyOnline	Go4 Advice about Learning and Work	Progression Pathways Project	SPELL	Community Nutrition Assistants	Bridges to Learning	Stoke-on-Trent College
Understanding the current situation											
Research with learners	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	○	●	●	●	○	●
Research with providers	▶	○	▶	○	●	●	●	▶	▶	●	▶
Research with other organisations	●	○	▶	○	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶
Secondary analysis of data	●	○	▶	○	●	▶	▶	●	▶	●	▶
Gaining entry and building trust											
Negotiation about learning activities with learners	●	▶	▶	●	●	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶
Negotiation about learning activities with gatekeepers	●	▶	▶	○	▶	○	●	▶	▶	▶	▶
Negotiation about learning activities with learning providers	●	▶	—	—	▶	○	●	▶	●	○	●
Establishing relationships or networks with informal brokers	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	○	●
Establishing relationships or networks with formal brokers	●	▶	●	▶	●	▶	●	●	▶	▶	●
Raising interest in learning, making learning meaningful											
Awareness of potential learners' lives	▶	●	●	●	▶	▶	●	●	●	▶	●
Understanding of barriers to learning	●	▶	●	●	●	▶	●	●	●	▶	●
Employing informal learning approaches	●	●	—	▶	▶	○	●	▶	●	○	●
Starting from where learners are	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▶	▶	●
Appropriately validating learning experiences	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	○	●

Key
— = not applicable to the case study
○ = not observed
▶ = emerging practice
● = well-developed practice

Learning brokerage stage	Arts Learning Partnership	Big Issue Foundation	Building Bridges and Breakthrough	ESOL–IT course, Gateway College, Leicester	EverybodyOnline	Go4 Advice about Learning and Work	Progression Pathways Project	SPELL	Community Nutrition Assistants	Bridges to Learning	Stoke-on-Trent College
Identifying the right learning opportunity											
Signposting of existing formal pathways	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	●	●	—	●	▶
Developing informal learning pathways with learners	●	●	—	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	—	▶	▶
Negotiating with mainstream providers to develop different learning pathways	●	▶	○	▶	○	○	●	▶	—	○	▶
Informally introducing learners to other learning contexts to ease progression	●	●	▶	▶	▶	○	●	●	—	○	●
Work with providers to ensure that learner support is provided	●	●	●	▶	▶	○	●	●	▶	○	●
Encouraging the creation of peer support	▶	▶	●	●	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	○	▶
Promoting learning success											
Preparing the learner	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	▶	—	○	▶
Preparing learning providers	●	▶	▶	—	○	○	▶	▶	—	○	●
Developing appropriate pedagogy, curricula and assessment	●	▶	●	▶	▶	○	●	▶	●	▶	●
Providing support services	●	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	▶	○	●
Facilitating horizontal progression	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	▶
Facilitating vertical progression	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	▶	—	▶	▶
Facilitating progression to employment	○	▶	▶	▶	○	▶	○	▶	—	▶	▶
Addressing organisational issues											
Forming and maintaining partnerships to aid learning brokerage activity	●	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	●	▶	▶	●	●
Established processes for selection and recruitment of brokerage staff	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	●	▶	▶	●	▶	●
Provision of training for brokerage staff	▶	▶	▶	○	▶	●	▶	▶	●	▶	●
Support for brokerage staff	▶	▶	●	○	▶	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	●
Defining and recognising effective learning brokerage	●	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	▶	—	▶	▶
Quantitative approach to monitoring and evaluation	▶	○	●	▶	●	●	●	●	▶	●	●
Qualitative approach to monitoring and evaluation	●	▶	●	●	▶	○	●	●	▶	○	▶
Alternative approaches to monitoring and evaluation	●	○	○	○	▶	○	○	○	○	▶	▶
Project-based funding	▶	▶	●	▶	▶	○	●	●	▶	▶	●
Mainstream funding	▶	●	○	○	▶	●	○	○	▶	○	●
Embedding brokerage practice within existing agencies	▶	▶	▶	○	▶	▶	▶	▶	—	▶	▶

Section 4

Learning brokerage organisations and their networks

This section presents the organisational structures of learning brokerage hubs and the patterns of inter-organisational relations.

4.1 Organisational structures and inter-organisational relationships

Research in phase 1 of this project (see Thomas *et al*. 2004) established that learning brokerage is a *process*, undertaken through a *network* or chain of individuals and institutions, to create structures that nurture and support learners as well as influencing and changing learning providers and other related agencies. Some case studies represent a federated learning brokerage model, using an informal network-based approach to learning brokerage. Thus, inter-organisational relations are central to understanding learning brokerage, and can in turn influence the organisational structures of learning brokerage networks.

Key contacts in each case study organisation were asked to produce an organisational 'map', illustrating roles and relationships *within* the organisation, as well as external organisational links. These maps (see **appendix 2**) provided a starting point for discussion within the case study organisations and were further developed by the research team, assisting the analysis of organisational structures and inter-organisational relations, and helping to identify gaps within the learning brokerage framework for each case study.

Organisational structures

Each case study has a unique organisational structure, primarily determined by the sector to which it belongs. This organisational structure relates to other issues – breadth of task, geographical and historical context, and funding sources. Given this number of variables, the wide variety of organisational structures is not surprising, but there are two key characteristics worth noting – whether the learning brokerage structure is simple or complex, and whether it is internally or externally focused. At either end of the scale, a simple, outward-looking model of learning brokerage can be contrasted with a complex, internally focused model. The outward-looking model achieves its goals by connecting with a vast array of external bodies, but its own internal structure is straightforward. Conversely, the inward-looking model seeks to bring all the learning brokerage roles into the organisation, creating a complex internal web of relationships, but with less reliance on external partnerships. None of the case studies exactly reflects one or other of these contrasting types, but there are tendencies towards different models and elements of each in some instances.

A distinction must also be made between those organisations whose main focus is on brokering learning; those that are explicitly community projects while performing learning brokerage activities; and those that are primarily providing courses which include learning brokerage elements. **Section 4.2** illustrates differences in organisational structure via examples from the case studies.

Inter-organisational links

The organisational structure of a learning brokerage network determines the extent to which external partnerships must be forged, maintained and developed, as well as the number of direct activities undertaken by the coordinating hub organisation. Setting up and maintaining effective inter-organisational relations are time-consuming and ongoing activities. It is vital that hub organisations acknowledge how much the development of inter-organisational relations adds value to their work, and how much can be achieved collaboratively that would be impossible if organisations were acting alone. Factors that add value are as follows:

- sharing knowledge and expertise (eg about geographical areas, specific communities, certain groups and ways of working which have previously proved effective)
- expanding communication networks and multiple working permutations
- providing complementary roles and services
- increasing and diversifying learning opportunities.

When learning brokerages identify the partners with whom, ideally, they should seek to work, the following factors influence their choice:

- the number of targeted learners and geographical distribution
- the specific nature of the target group (eg a very tightly and narrowly defined group of learners or a broad constituency; severity of problems and range of issues faced)
- the range of learning opportunities (eg a single programme or a wide range)
- the extent of intervention (eg the number of learning brokerage activities they undertake)
- the number of organisations working in the geographical area(s) covered (eg in areas that qualify for significant levels of external regeneration funding, the number of other agencies may be especially large)
- the extent to which networking and partnership working is precedented.

No learning brokerage is completely self-contained, although the number and types of link do vary between case studies. The most common are as follows.

- *Funder-directed links* – organisations are sometimes steered towards making certain links because of their source of funding. For example, the BIF received funding which was ‘filtered’ through local authorities, each of which had different priorities. Believing it would benefit their work if services could be tailored locally, the BIF therefore had to build up relationships with individual local authorities. One case study, however, found the process of being steered towards partners by funders less beneficial. ‘Important intermediaries’ were identified by the local LSC as organisations with whom the learning brokerage *should* liaise. In practice, the funder-directed links were less useful than ones developed by the learning brokerage team itself.

- *Access-oriented links* – the majority of learning brokerages needed to develop links to gain access to potential learners, though the importance of this varied, depending on context. Learning brokerages working directly with their target group (eg the BIF) had access to potential learners daily and consequently less need for this type of link. By contrast, BBB staff working with people with mental health issues have had to develop numerous external links – with voluntary agencies, health professionals, Job Centres and other projects in the same field – to access their target group. Within the employment sector, Go4 used a variety of strategies to reach potential learners, forging links with receptive employers, trade unions, learning representatives and training managers.
- *Links with learning providers* – such relationships focused on those providers who offered the 'right' learning opportunities. Some case studies collaborated with educational providers that were perceived as more supportive, for example, those that focused less on formal progression pathways and more on what they could offer directly, such as in-house laptop provision and tutor support. Some case studies had to work with HE institutions, even when the courses offered were not tailored to their learners' needs, because few alternatives were available. Case studies made distinctions between partners with whom they were able to work, and those with whom they had little contact. For example:

  FE colleges are very involved and they are going out to communities and speaking to people … But universities don't get involved. They have never contacted me about whether I have any potential students for their courses, or talked to me about what they look for in students or given me promotional material. FE colleges have. I think that's because of a perception that some of the people I am working with are a million miles away from university, but they're not. They may be a year away from university.

- *Links to facilitate a holistic approach* – in order to support individual learner needs more holistically, some organisations developed links with professional networks such as IAG and careers services. Learning brokerages in the education sector were able to access these services within their own partnership or organisation. For example, PPP was able to provide additional support for learners through the University of Teesside's IAG team and careers services. As part of Stoke-on-Trent College, CiC and the BDU could link into the college's basic skills and IAG teams. Projects were also linked through a common funding body (such as the LSC), enabling cross-referral of clients to other initiatives offering specialised help; for example, the Building Bridges development workers, funded by Grampian New Futures Consortium, are able to cross-refer to other projects supported by the consortium.

The advantage of an inward-looking model is that there are fewer crucial links to other organisations, and any external links tend to be 'useful' rather than 'essential'. This affords the hub organisation a high level of control to ensure that learners receive a specified service. By contrast, in an outward-looking model, inter-organisational links are crucial to achieve the overall goal of widening participation in lifelong learning. This outward-looking approach is inclusive, both in terms of the learning brokerage framework (ie covering all stages) and in connecting with relevant local agencies to draw on their expertise. This avoids duplication of services and should help to simplify the options available to people wanting information or support. This approach requires a high level of *trust* – partners need to feel that other partners will deliver and, equally, will not overstep the mark (eg not referring learners on or poaching students). This raises two fundamental questions.

- How is trust created between partners and what incentives are required for partners to work together?
- Is this form of collaboration ever really possible in a largely competitive environment (for learners, for funds, etc)?

Generating credible relationships

For a learning brokerage network to succeed and be sustainable, it must generate *credibility* at different levels:

- with learners and potential learners
- with learning providers and other partners
- with funders.

Credibility, however, cannot be created overnight. It takes time to develop and is only achieved by passing different forms of 'test'. For example, learners and potential learners will apply the following tests: whether they feel listened to and respected; whether learning opportunities are delivered reliably and sensitively; and whether the opportunities provided match their desired trajectory of learning.

For credibility with learning providers and other partners, the test is not purely operational; for example, there needs also to be useful dialogue which recognises the constraints that exist on both sides, but can also find constructive solutions to practical problems while developing trust between partners. Within PPP, for example, high levels of trust and credibility were evident, partly because there was already a well-established partnership of learning providers, but also because of the project manager's focused activity in building and maintaining relationships with individuals and groups from the community.

For funders, the tests focus on accountability: many learning brokerages have to provide different forms of proof to account for what they have done, why they have done it and what benefits it has produced.

The difficulty for learning brokerages is to sustain credibility at all these levels and not to tilt the balance towards any one factor, as they are all equally important.

Working across sectors

Complementary agencies working together and across sectoral divides are at the heart of learning brokerage. It is much easier under these circumstances to generate added value than when partners are perceived as (potential) competitors (eg when trying to get different learning providers to work together within one geographical community). Encouraging innovative approaches to pedagogy and curricula across different contexts is another way in which learning brokerage can add value. Learning brokerages work well when networks are fluid, enabling different permutations of working together. Finally, the learning brokerage network needs to create more effective learning opportunities, which are also diversified and flexible. Learning brokerage must be more than just the sum of its parts.

Learning brokerage networks need to provide, for all participants, genuine and relevant incentives – intrinsic and extrinsic, short term and long term. Thus, learners can be driven both by the desire to take part in a pleasurable learning experience and the expectation that this will create benefits for them. For example, workplace learners choosing to learn a conversational language do not necessarily want a job-related skill, but they do expect to apply their knowledge in a useful context. Similarly, those learning 'crystal healing' in a community context are seeking something that will enhance their lives rather than simply an informal introduction to learning. Learning brokerages must consult learners to identify relevant incentives, as these are not always transparent and will differ from context to context. Incentives for providers may be altruistic on one level, encompassing shared values and a desire to promote equality; but, inevitably, another incentive will be promoting the growth and survival of their own service.

Effective cross-sector work also means ensuring that different aims are fulfilled and tensions overcome. This may be relatively straightforward:

There's no tension with ALP – we don't expect anything from them and they don't expect anything from us – we're there to support.

(Director, London OCN)

To cite another example, a learning brokerage hub like Go4 aims to encourage employers to facilitate their employees' participation in learning activities. In the first instance, Go4 approached companies with Investors in People (IiP) status, taking this as an indication that they might grant Go4 access to their employees. The training manager of one of the non-unionised companies working successfully with Go4 explained their involvement thus:

Because the business has to grow and stay competitive and our people do as well. And if we didn't get people that were motivated to learn and constantly change and develop, we wouldn't be able to do what we do in the marketplace, particularly in the food industry, it's incredibly competitive. Unless we have that competitive edge, we can't deliver. So it is important. We need the stability of our workforce to keep the skills in our skills base. We need to keep people motivated to stay with the business.

When asked if involvement in learning had an impact on turnover and recruitment, the response was: 'Yes, our staff stability is about 87%, so it is fairly stable. It does have an effect on motivation and morale.'

Other relationships are potentially more problematic. Learning brokerages trying to work with employers who currently place little value on engaging their staff in learning activity find that they are usually less willing to allow access to their workforce. Developing relationships with ULRs may also be problematic if the learning representatives have more pressing concerns and priorities, particularly in industries undergoing restructuring or facing potential job losses.

Learning brokerages working in the community face different tensions. PPP, for example, although based on a well-established partnership of learning providers, had to develop new links and build trust with community members. The PPP project worker had to fulfil both the aims of the community organisations (ie developing the courses that learners wanted in local centres and increasing the numbers of people using them) and the aims of providers (increasing the number of people on their courses, providing and signposting progression routes). Both the community centres visited during the case study were striving to raise their profile, and both used the PPP project to increase the number of people using their facilities – this could even mean changing public perceptions of the centre:

That's what it's all about for us. We can be the best room-hire business in the country, but if it's people from outside the area who are coming, then okay, it's a useful use of rooms, but it doesn't really access the community and that's what it's all about. I think some of the activities that have been done … it's brought people in and I've noticed there's more buzz to the place, more excitement … now it's more about the community. There are kids in here, there are mothers in here, there are people expanding their own hopes and aspirations of what they can do.

(Community centre manager, PPP)

Working across sectors can also offer different opportunities and constraints. For example, the BDU manager at Stoke-on-Trent College felt that being based within a well-known local college offered a 'head start' with employers and gave them increased credibility. The university environment of BBB also attracted referral agencies and potential learners because, as an academic rather than a medical environment, participants are seen as 'students' rather than 'patients'. The importance of developing this partnership approach was emphasised by referral agencies:

We found we had to network in order to be able to provide the right kind of environment for our customers [with mental health problems]*. Not everything is provided through Jobcentre Plus, you have to look elsewhere.*

(Jobcentre Plus representative, BBB)

Being based in the education sector, however, can raise issues of competition between providers. Within PPP, the long-standing partnership of providers in the area had helped to overcome this tension as agreements already existed as to who would provide what course and where.

Organisations based within voluntary and community sectors are usually competent at developing trust and credibility with marginalised groups, and this is often an incentive for other organisations to develop partnerships or networks with both sectors. For example, the director of the College of London (part of London Metropolitan University), talking about ALP, said that 'the voluntary sector can get into places that even an institution like this can't go, in terms of hard-to-reach groups like young people at risk.' Similarly, Stoke-on-Trent's CiC initiative used established voluntary sector groups to access potential learners, rather than developing a direct relationship. The link to a specific target group also offered opportunities for the BIF to develop partnerships:

What the partner organisations often wanted, and what they saw the Big Issue as, was a link into that particular group. They wanted to have a link into excluded [groups]*.*

(Project worker, BIF)

The partnership approach, moreover, increases the extent of support that voluntary and community organisations can offer and also the degree of choice open to their clients:

There was an open door project … [who were] *taking out laptops into the community for people to do IT courses, so I just phoned them up and said, 'Can you send your laptops out to us? Do you want to come here as well?' And they thought that was a great idea.*

(Project worker, BIF)

As a result of this collaboration, 30 vendors of *The Big Issue* began the course and 15 subsequently completed and received an accredited certificate.

The extent to which some voluntary and community sector organisations are able to influence provision, however, may be limited without strong partnerships. ALP, an umbrella organisation for community arts organisations, aims to develop a strong 'line' through which projects will be able to negotiate with FE colleges and HE institutions:

If the vision works, the pros are that you are in a position to say, 'All of the lines forward from the community activity base can potentially lead here', rather than standing outside and saying, 'Oi, we're doing excellent stuff, why aren't you taking any notice?'

(London regional agent for NIACE)

The director of the London OCN emphasised their role within ALP as building credibility and developing accreditation and progression routes. The ability of ALP to work at a strategic policy level was also stressed:

Community arts don't have the inclination or the resources to go through to the next step or to find out what's on the next step. ALP opens the conversations, fosters the conversations, developing the formal routes, developing the resources in the best way.

4.2 Case study examples

To illustrate differences in the organisational structures of learning brokerage organisations, examples have been chosen from case studies located within each of the four sectors outlined in Thomas *et al*. (2004): the voluntary, education (two examples), work-based and community sectors. Inter-organisational links and instances of working across sectors are identified and discussed. The organisational structure of each case study is also defined, in the main as either a simple, outward-looking model or a complex, inward-looking one (see **section 4.1** and diagrams in **appendix 2**).

The Big Issue Foundation (BIF) JET Scheme, Birmingham

The Big Issue Foundation (BIF) is a registered charity which assists homeless people across the UK – predominantly those selling *The Big Issue* magazine – to achieve greater self-reliance and independence. Services include jobs, education and training (JET) support. In terms of inter-organisational links, the JET worker can access other in-house services to support learners (eg housing advice and support). This is particularly important when supporting people with a range of problems and issues which are not directly related to learning. In terms of organisational structure, the case study can be seen as a simple, outward-looking model (see diagram 2 in **appendix 2**).

Because the BIF works with a specific target group and has a small project team, external links have been developed with other organisations working with the same target group. Workers from other projects can operate from the BIF site, which facilitates a sharing of knowledge and expertise and opens up more opportunities for vendors. Links have also been developed with the Birmingham library services to access mainstream services and other resources, and a strong relationship has been established with Fircroft College.

SPELL (Supporting People into Employment and Lifelong Learning), North-East Sheffield

SPELL is a community-based organisation. It has a large team of people who come from a range of backgrounds and fulfil different learning brokerage roles. Additional team members are brought into the organisation on secondment, for example, from local FE colleges. Any external links have therefore been developed in response to an identified need, for example, the need for training in the construction industry, or the identification of a lack of childcare as a barrier to learning. In the latter case, SPELL contacted every agency with an interest in childcare throughout the sub-region; from this, a childcare partnership was developed which works at a strategic level to establish childcare support systems across the sub-region. SPELL also set up its own childcare team as a more immediate practical response to local need. In terms of organisational structure, this case study can be seen as a complex, internally focused model (see diagram 8 in **appendix 2**).

Go4 Advice about Learning and Work, Devon and Cornwall

Go4 Advice about Learning and Work is an IAG Partnership which aims to work between employers and providers (training organisations and colleges) to engage employees in learning. Go4 has developed links with trade union learning representatives, employers (working initially with training managers) and training providers. It has a broad range of over 150 partners, including FE colleges, the National Probation Service, local library services, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and JobPlus employment agency. The case study focused on the Go4 network's workplace development team, which works with employers and ULRs to develop the workplace delivery of IAG via supported information access points (SIAPs) on employers' premises. In terms of organisational structure, this case study can be seen as a simple, outward-looking model (see diagram 6 in **appendix 2**).

Progression Pathways Project (PPP), Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley

PPP, based on a well-established partnership led by the University of Teesside and Middlesbrough College, involved 17 FE and HE providers (including the WEA and two local careers services) working together to develop learning progression routes for people within the Tees Valley region. As the partnership already involved educational providers, the emphasis tended to be on sustaining these relationships. However, the number of partners continually increased and much work was done to engage local community centres and groups. In terms of organisational structure, this case study can be seen as a simple, outward-looking model (see diagram 7 in **appendix 2**).

Stoke-on-Trent College: College in the Community initiative, business development unit and trade union studies unit

The case study has focused on three aspects of the college's work: the College in the Community initiative (CiC), the business development unit (BDU) and the trade union studies unit (TUSU). CiC delivers learning opportunities in neighbourhood colleges and numerous other venues in the community. Links with other external organisations are also made to raise the profile of CiC in the local area (eg with BBC Radio Stoke) and provide additional support (eg childcare through Sure Start). The BDU aims to promote training and development to local employers and employees, working closely with the TUSU. The BDU also acts as a conduit into the college; for example, facilitators from the college's basic skills unit will respond to requests from employers made via the BDU. In terms of organisational structure, this case study can be seen as an outward-looking model of learning brokerage (see diagram 11 in **appendix 2**).

4.3 Questions for consideration

The following questions are suggested for use in evaluation or self-evaluation exercises, to help improve learning brokerage in practice. Since learning brokerage is a process undertaken by a network of individuals and organisations, these questions will assist in determining the structure of organisations and the inter-organisational relationships needed to cover all the stages of the framework.

- Is the learning brokerage predominantly internally or externally focused, and what kind of organisational structure is required to facilitate this?
- What links with other organisations are necessary or desirable? How do these links add value?
- Do organisational links facilitate coverage of the learning brokerage framework?
- How can credibility be generated with (potential) learners, providers and other partners and funders?
- What are the incentives for individuals and organisations to be involved in the learning brokerage network?
- What links can be developed to policy-makers and planners?

Section 5

The learning brokerage framework

5.1 Understanding the current situation

This sub-section focuses on how learning brokerages use research and consultation to explore and evaluate the situation in which they work. Those whose understanding of learning brokerage is the most sophisticated are those who see the value of research. For example, ALP built itself out of pre-existing networks and used research to assess progress so far and what was still needed to create a new and more dynamic structure. The research underpinned their decision-making and was constantly referred back to, providing a rationale for their actions. Interestingly, it is not only research in the local context that has value. CNA in Bolton, in the health sector, gained its original impetus and formative ideas from research in the US and the developing world. Research was undertaken in a variety of forms and led by individuals and organisations with a variety of roles within the learning brokerage network.

For example, ALP, in the voluntary sector, instead of using external expertise, gave members of an existing network a small sum of money and instructions to research and review themselves. This added value by developing new skills among staff; it also fostered shared ownership of the research and self-knowledge on which the emerging learning brokerage would build. PPP, which featured a university partner, used academic researchers for ongoing research and evaluation. This helped to spread knowledge of the project – as a positive innovation worth being associated with – both within the university and across the HE sector. By contrast, EOL used existing statistical data and a marketing company did further quantitative research. This was driven by a funding body that prioritised a 'scientific' approach to data collection and analysis; this approach also aimed to establish the effectiveness of the pilot scheme.

These context-specific approaches were strategic in creating the forms of knowledge and credibility required to build and sustain the brokerages. Thus it is not only what research uncovers, but also the manner in which it is done that contributes to effective learning brokerage. Research must be integrated into a developmental model of activity, rather than being seen as an 'add-on'.

Consultation with participants, including learners and tutors, about potential learning needs was recognised as important in setting up an effective learning brokerage, but it was less clear how best to accomplish this. There was evidence that simply 'cold calling' potential learners about their learning needs was ineffectual, even if done face-to-face. Consequently, a more informative approach was advocated, since people cannot ask for something of which they have no knowledge. For example, PPP's community workers found that a majority of women, when simply asked what learning activities would interest them, referred to childcare or caring in general. But involving them in a broader discussion about learning and possible opportunities resulted in the expression of a much wider range of interests.

Other effective strategies included working from the ground upwards, using established groups which may not necessarily be learning-focused. Thus, while learning brokerage activity is seen as innovative, it can be built onto pre-existing practice and expertise. This was clearly seen in the CNA study where practitioners from a community education background 'piggybacked' themselves onto long-standing groups to develop and disseminate their service. However, it was acknowledged in other case studies that such groups may only represent part of a community:

Accent, attitude, cultural values are all relevant and I think an awareness of the community is important. There are divisions within communities and there are divisions between communities.

(Learning and skills coordinator, community centre, PPP)

By contrast, EOL conducted a local audit to identify learning needs.

What happens when there is no consultation? There were several case studies where providers had proceeded without any form of consultation; this led to misguided assumptions about what learning opportunities were wanted, forcing a revised strategy after attempts at engaging learners failed. For example, in their relations with the BIF, some public library staff assumed that basic skills provision would raise interest among homeless people. In practice, however, learning opportunities based on personal interest, which were delivered in familiar settings, were far more effective. Thus, esoteric university-level talks on 'body art' delivered what a basic skills agenda could not – fully engaged learners.

Similarly, at Gateway College, Leicester, ESOL funding was made available on the assumption that members of the Asian community would want and need it. When the ESOL tutor contacted the learners signed up for the course, it was discovered that they thought IT skills were far more relevant to their needs than English tuition. Consequently, a course combining ESOL and IT was developed. Consultation has continued, with tuition based around the group's expressed requirements (eg searching for new employment, constructing CVs and IAG sessions).

Although consultation at the initial stages is clearly the optimum goal, these examples show that a learning brokerage which facilitates continuing discussion among its partners – especially those who know the client group well – enables providers to adapt learning provision and retrieve what might otherwise be deemed a failure. Thus, ongoing consultation is a particularly valuable activity in learning brokerage, as long as there are mechanisms for adapting to changing contexts. In SPELL, for example, staff with different roles fed information into a large database and this was central to the learning brokerage framework, facilitating appropriate course provision, follow-up contact and support.

Conclusions

Where evolving learning brokerages first survey their situation, both in terms of potential learners and existing provision, and back this up with ongoing consultation, then there is a firm foundation for effective learning brokerage. Ongoing consultation is crucial, since the changes that learning brokerage facilitates call for knowledge of both the current and the desired state of affairs. Within different organisations, the task of carrying out research and consultation will vary, and may be split, according to organisational structure. What is vital, however, is to allocate this task to people with the skills and authority to apply the findings.

Questions for consideration

- Who are the target group or community of potential learners, and how are they identifiable?
- What current learning is undertaken and what opportunities are accessible to this target group and/or in this geographical community? Is this information corroborated by potential learners and providers?
- What can be learned from research from alternative locations or target groups?
- Who should undertake the formative research – for example, professional researchers or learning brokerage members?
- What kind of information or data is required, and are there different requirements from different partners?
- How can one best engage the target group or community to discover their learning interests?
- How can ongoing consultation be built into the learning brokerage framework?
- How is new knowledge disseminated and acted on (ie how is organisational learning facilitated)?
- What additional information is needed to inform the decision making and planning of learners and/or providers?

5.2 Gaining entry and building trust

Learning brokerages need to gain entry to and build trust with learners and potential learners, 'gatekeepers', learning providers and other partners. Gaining the trust of learners is vital, particularly when working with vulnerable groups, for example, those experiencing mental health difficulties in Aberdeen's BBB project. Furthermore, a lack of trust among learners or potential learners has an impact beyond those immediately involved:

It's a trust game out there, there's that many cogs in the wheel and if one cog breaks down, then the person who does the job after me is going to have a hard time trying to get people on board again. It's not just those people, it's the people that person tells, 'Oh don't go there, because that never materialises.' A lot of this community work spreads by word of mouth.

(FE college principal, PPP)

Trust is also required within the learning brokerage partnership, to provide access to people, skills and resources, and to allow innovation. Gatekeepers can either facilitate entry into a particular group or community, or create a barrier to accessing learners. In one case study, for example, referrals were made via a practitioner from an external organisation, who effectively decided who would and who would not be offered new learning opportunities. A subsequent evaluation of this project revealed the negative impact of such gatekeeping activity. Consequently, this post was abolished and a common referral form was developed for use by other agencies.

A community tutor explained the importance of trust between herself and other partners:

I had confidence in what you're calling the learning broker and I'm calling my employer … I also had a lot of confidence in my employer [the PPP project manager] *and I knew that I would be able to turn up in a class and know it would be well organised, everybody would be happy, comfortable and the environment would be right. It just worked well.*

(Community tutor, PPP)

The PPP project coordinator valued the trust that the management committee had placed in her and, in turn, was encouraged to develop trust relationships and the work of the learning brokerage:

People have to trust in you to let you go out and try things … the management group were superb in that, they'd let me go out and try things and if I said we'll get 15 people on that course, we would, where too many people before had said we're expecting 15 and they might get three and then FE have put so much work into it for nothing really.

(Project coordinator, PPP)

In all these contexts, a relationship is built between insider and outsider knowledge. For example, in Go4, which provides IAG in workplace settings, the learning brokerage was most effective when it used workforce members as conduits for information, and helped them by giving them information about local learning opportunities and more advanced advice and guidance provision. This was also demonstrated in the B2L project, where ULRs had good access to and trust relationships with health sector colleagues. These ULRs were also credible role models because they could point to their own recent learning activity that had occurred through the learning brokerage.

Other learning brokerages emphasised the importance of their own staff in building trust – according to the EOL project manager, for example: 'The project officer needs to be seen as a trusted intermediary locally … they need to be able to understand the community.' Similarly, SPELL employed people with similar backgrounds to potential learners because they felt they could relate to learners and *vice versa*, which was 'very much part of the trust-building process'.

Gaining entry and building trust can be a lengthy process: it involves becoming visible, becoming known, being open about what can and cannot be achieved and keeping promises. A community centre worker involved in PPP described how she attended local events, distributed leaflets, carried out small surveys and generally made herself visible within the community. To have a continued impact, this had to be viewed as standard practice. Similarly, at the BIF, where potential learners came into the centre each week or day, the project worker described the way in which he tried to engage with people to develop relationships:

I would grab them and ear'ole them. The first approach is always from me and usually the second and third approach is from me in that I'm always trying to encourage people to come and use whatever facilities we've got and whatever courses or activities we're offering … The process of getting them into the learning centre is about whatever relationship I have, it's about me establishing a personal relationship with them.

(Project worker, BIF)

A similar process was described by a potential learner:

First day I came down and I came into the [organisation] *and got a new badge … and that's all I did for a bit, was just buy issues* [magazines] *and I didn't even know they had a computer room in there at the time until a good few months afterwards. I've been clean now for about 7 or 8 months, and since I've been clean I've been trying to find things to occupy my time which has been coming in and using the computers … and* [project workers] *have been giving me all these different options I can do.*

(Vendor, BIF)

Ongoing consultation is a significant factor in developing trust and openness between learners and learning brokerages. Case studies continually assess how they are engaging with target groups and if necessary, initiate change. For example, the PPP project coordinator was required to change the project's original publicity materials in favour of more sophisticated leaflets featuring a learning provider logo. However, market research into the impact on potential learners showed that some people felt the glossy brochures were alienating, whereas simple leaflets containing information on crèche facilities and free lunches were felt to apply to them. This shows that a uniform approach would not always satisfy all members of a target group. Similarly, SPELL, which had a permanent shopfront facility, continued to engage in 'door knocking' and talking face-to-face with people to ensure that 'the research is always coming back in'. Building trust can only happen when relevant learner-centred knowledge is sought, shared and acted on.

Conclusions

Gaining entry and building trust with potential learners is prioritised by most learning brokerages. The nature and purpose of learning activities are discussed, notably with potential learners and their perceived gatekeepers; less time and resources are spent negotiating with learning providers, either because this is not seen as a requirement, or because it is perceived as either too difficult or, conversely, as relatively straightforward. For example, an EOL project officer spent much time creatively engaging community groups, but, where providers were concerned, it was more a case of collecting prospectuses or telephoning to find out what courses were available. Go4 had to gain entry to local employers and build trust with them before gaining access to employees; priority was given to working with companies with IiP status, on the assumption that they would be easier to engage. Another key activity at this stage is exploring and establishing relationships from which further learning brokerage networks can be developed, but this is carried out with varying degrees of success across the case study projects.

Questions for consideration

- What qualities do potential learners, gatekeepers, learning providers and other networked organisations wish to see within the learning brokerage?
- Who are the key individuals within various groups or organisations with whom it would be most productive to build a trust relationship?
- Whether inside or outside the learning brokerage, who is best placed to engage credibly with each group of key contacts (eg potential learners, learning providers, additional support services)?
- What information can be used to gain entry and build trust?
- Have the time and an appropriate programme of activities for gaining entry and building and maintaining trust been built into the standard practice of the learning brokerage?
- How is information gathered from ongoing consultation with various parties to be collated and used?

5.3 Raising interest in learning, and making learning meaningful

This stage of the learning brokerage framework was originally called 'making learning meaningful', but prior to phase 3 of the project, practitioner panel members agreed that this title was nebulous and not representative of the activities involved, which were more about raising interest in learning. Consequently, in the final phase of the project, this stage was renamed.

Raising interest in learning was initially a key activity for most of the case studies and a very time-consuming one. This motive also informed activities to develop understanding of the current situation, gain entry and build trust. The activity was also ongoing, as most case studies continually tried and tested new ways of engaging people. This sub-section focuses on the following issues:

- the ways in which learning brokerages enable people to perceive themselves as learners
- how learning brokerages develop awareness of the context of people's lives
- the ways in which learning brokerages raise interest in learning that is meaningful to all parties, including the learner and learning provider.

How do learning brokerages enable people to perceive themselves as learners?

Discussions with learning brokerage staff, potential learners and learners revealed a variety of reasons that prevented many people from getting involved in learning. These included childcare responsibilities (including looking after older children excluded from school), shift work and more pressing priorities (eg the survival imperatives of homeless individuals). A recurring theme was low self-confidence; for example, in one of the community centres involved in PPP, which worked in a very disadvantaged area, potential learners spoke of negative experiences at school and the risk of mockery and bullying. Comments included:

I didn't learn anything at school, that's why I'm reluctant. I feel like I'm thick. And that's what's done my confidence.

Just [scared] *of doing it because I'm just so totally thick. I can't even help my daughter with her exams or nothing. Even forms frighten me. So that's how I feel about myself.*

It's got a stigma round here. I wouldn't go in there, they think you're soft. I think for lads … even at school, for lads who want to learn, they get called swots … I mean a lot of lads who want to get into it, and I'm glad they do, but other boys, they give them a hard time and probably penalise them really, don't they? It's a shame … they get picked on, then they get bullied … all forms of bullying with their mouth or their fists, and I think the worst form of bullying is with their mouth.

(Potential learners, community centre, PPP)

In this case study, the methods used to raise people's interests in learning included informal focus-group discussions with local people about their interests and needs, local people 'door knocking' in the neighbourhood, staff attending community events to promote learning and identify interests, and running events such as a 'women's day' to promote taster sessions.

Throughout the case studies, there was evidence of staff using learning brokerage tactics that had been identified previously (see Thomas *et al*. 2004). For example, the importance of appropriate vocabulary was voiced on many occasions. EOL project officers were encouraged to avoid terms such as 'education' and 'training'. As one officer said, learning does take place, 'but it's not been badged-up and labelled as that'. The importance of appropriate language in publicity was also highlighted in PPP and CiC, where staff preferred using cheaper materials which simply asked people to come along and 'have a go', as this was more effective in engaging people.

The importance of providing learning in local, familiar spaces was also emphasised. In Go4, offering courses on site and during lunch breaks proved successful. In SPELL, difficulties in getting men to engage with learning had been overcome by proactively targeting working men's clubs:

For working-class men, they're used to being the breadwinners … they find going into education as something soft, something that's a feminine activity and not what a man should be doing, and so what we've done is allocate the time of a worker to men and we've been working where men feel comfortable … and we've actually set up the first UK Online centre in a working men's club and that's been very successful.

(Project worker, SPELL)

In BBB, which worked with individuals recovering from mental health problems, courses were provided in a university rather than a medical setting, which was extremely significant to learners and other stakeholders. This made the course more credible as there was a shift from the notion of therapy:

I like it being here. It makes you feel as if you're actually doing preparation for study if you're in a place where you're going to study.

(Learner, BBB)

The university has already got that credibility. They're a student there like everyone else.

(Referral agency involved in BBB)

How do learning brokerages develop awareness of the context of people's lives?

To engage people in learning successfully, brokerage staff must understand the life context in which learning would take place. This should inform appropriate provision. The case studies revealed the importance of employing local people, with comparable social backgrounds to their target groups, to raise interest in learning, build trust and pave the way for comfortable and good communication. For example, a SPELL project worker, when asked how important it was to be local, replied as follows:

It depends who you're talking to, so it depends if you're coming from the clients' point of view, in which case it's quite important, I'm not saying it's vital, but it is important, because, apart from negotiating with providers, a lot of negotiation is done with the clients and if they can see – through you – that you know where they're coming from, you've perhaps encountered the same difficulties that they're encountering, it makes it a more open discussion. So it's not vital, but it does help … we've got nine recruitment and support workers who do a lot of our primary research … and the majority, if not all, of those are local people because that's where it's important, that's at the sharp end.

It's often difficult that people who are perhaps from a working-class background that have had a good education … they find it a very difficult concept – that it's not the same for everybody and it's not that easy for everybody … that's where using people like myself and other people gives us that strength because we know what the barriers are.

Employing local people also helps to support and develop the local economy and workforce. For example, in PPP, some of the outreach workers had poor school experiences, but through this activity received a prestigious award and much publicity.

In workplace settings (eg with Go4 and B2L), learning brokerage employees acting as ULRs were crucial in getting their peers to take part in learning, being able to relate to the learners and potential learners and being aware of the working context. This contributed to information gathering on the types of course that would interest colleagues (occasionally supplemented by short surveys) and how courses could be organised to operate alongside working hours, and in negotiating employers' support:

Between the three of them, they cover all of those shift patterns. So what they've been doing is, as they've been working, they've been informally saying, 'We can offer you this now' and some of them said, 'Right, next time I come on shift, I'm going to take half an hour and I'm just going to wander round to the different departments and keep that message going around … what we try and say is that the more face-to-face communications you can have, the more likely you are to get some kind of response … we can do all the fancy communication things, but unless people feel comfortable about coming forwards, then the chances are that they won't.

(Manager, Go4)

Raising interest in learning by all parties

The goal here is to create learning which is meaningful to a range of stakeholders, for example, to learners, learning providers and employers. For learners, meaning was attached to learning if it related to their lived experience. For example, a mobile population such as the young homeless men who use the learning centre and college links of the BIF found that gaining ICT skills could help them make and sustain contacts around the country:

If you're living on the streets or you're living in hostels, you get to meet a lot of people, but a lot of the time you break contact with those people because people move around, so it was an option to [know] *where you could open up e-mail addresses and keep in touch with people.*

(Learner, BIF)

Such learning was connected with personal and social needs and in many cases was not expressed or experienced in direct educational terms. This is not to say, however, that learning should only be measured subjectively. Learners generally wanted their experience and activities to be recognised and validated, but not in a way that shifted or devalued the learning experience. Thus, ALP, for example, was engaged in a delicate balancing act: trying to promote the value of community arts activities in generating communal learning, developing citizenship and raising skill levels; trying to encourage mainstream providers to recognise some of these subtleties; and working with the OCN to find flexible and authentic forms of validation. It is still too early to know whether ALP will achieve its goals; however, its early practice has been learner-centred, there is a strategic approach towards changing provision and the organisation seems to be 'brokerage conscious'.

Most of the case studies which did not originate in the education sector prioritised learners' needs over those of providers; for example, staff 'shopped around' for the best provider. They risked, however, upsetting some providers and needing then to find alternative sources of provision. In SPELL, for example, learning provision was part of its role; while this may have been in learners' best short-term interests, it may have inhibited their 'moving on' from the learning broker.

In terms of negotiating with the provider in order to make the learning meaningful:

It's usually easier if you can latch on to something that they already provide, so IT, for instance, is relatively easy … we know how many learners they need to make a course viable, we'll know the added incentives that we could perhaps offer, for example, room rent … The carrot for them is that we can say, 'Well, we've got 12 people here who all want to do this. This is a ready-made course for you. Are you interested? Would you be able to deliver that?' They say 'yes' or 'no'. If they say 'yes but', then we have to start the whole negotiating.

(Project coordinator, SPELL)

Workplace learning brokerages need the support and interest of employers, otherwise access can be denied. Go4 noticed that some employers were resistant to letting their employees learn, fearing they would leave or seek promotion. By working with supportive employers, however, they have been able to articulate to less receptive ones the following benefits of workplace learning.

- Basic skills can be beneficial for meeting the requirement for staff to read health and safety notices.
- Learning for personal interest can motivate employees; this can be especially beneficial if a job is dull.
- Staff turnover can be reduced as employees become happier, more fulfilled and grateful for such opportunities.
- Introducing or encouraging learning activities helps employers keep the staff they want to keep.
- Learning for personal interest makes employees more able and ready to learn at work. This is vital for organisations that envisage changing the working environment through, for example, new technology:

I think they want to get people back into learning … now we're in a huge period of change … to enable people to take on that … if they're already … in that learning mode, they'll absorb it far more easily … So I think the message is coming down a little bit from the top, it's not filtering down as much as it could be, but the support mechanisms here have been excellent.

(ULR, Go4 project)

Conclusions

Activities to raise interest in learning will vary, depending on the stakeholder (learner, learning provider or employer). The learning brokerage worker – whether aiming to raise interest on the part of individual learners, providers or employers – must present learning provision in a credible way for the audience in question. This stage could be seen simply as marketing: but, as with other stages of the framework, raising interest in learning is one part of a holistic process. Problems associated with this stage relate to conflicts of identity (related to 'learning'), time (for learners and employers) and material interests (employers). Learning brokerages that become providers and those that tend to use a limited range of providers are in danger of inadvertently promoting learning provision by monopoly or cartel. This poses a risk to the form of learning brokerage posited here, which favours greater competition among providers for learners, as this gives providers a greater incentive to adapt provision to best suit those learners.

Questions for consideration

- What 'hard' and 'soft' benefits would learning provide for the target group?
- What are the practical and psychological barriers to learning? Are these individual or socio-cultural barriers? What kind of approach do these necessitate?
- What would be a non-threatening 'language of learning'?
- How is awareness of the potential learners' living contexts achieved?
- What learning activities would be relevant to the lives of the target group?
- What practical and psychological barriers prevent learning providers from adapting provision? Is there information or are there incentives that can break these barriers down?
- Do learning providers perceive competition for the recruitment of new learners? How can this be ensured so that providers have a greater incentive to adapt provision to meet learners' needs?
- How can sceptical employers benefit from supporting workforce learning? How can learning be related to existing and future demands on the workforce?

5.4 Identifying the right learning opportunities

This sub-section will focus on the role learning brokerages play once initial interest in learning has been aroused, exploring how they help learners to find appropriate learning opportunities; the ways in which they link and negotiate with local learning providers; and their role in encouraging learner progression.

Identifying an appropriate learning opportunity was perceived as a gradual process – usually the result of outreach or development, or project staff working closely with individuals to explore their particular learning interests and goals. Within the workplace, this information is provided to training managers by the staff member responsible for employer liaison. At Stoke-on-Trent College, for example, this is the BDU manager. If the company wants more information, the request is forwarded to the relevant person within the college or, as frequently happens, to the TUSU, which then works directly with employees to identify appropriate learning. This is a particularly effective way of working with large organisations such as FE colleges, where many individuals are involved in outreach work. The importance of having a single point of contact for employers was emphasised by the BDU manager.

Since individuals often had no clear idea initially of what learning they wanted to pursue, a key activity was to tease this out. Approaches included providing relevant information about existing courses, setting up taster courses, negotiating with providers to create pathways for their client groups, or even setting up new courses for them.

Providing relevant information about existing courses

The original aim of most case studies was to liaise between learners or potential learners and learning providers: an EOL project officer said: 'My role is supposed to be, you meet a person in the library, then pass them on to college, job done.' Similarly, at the BIF, 'the main thrust behind the scheme was acting as this liaison between the clients and the providers'. In all case studies, this liaison was taking place at some level; however, many learning brokerages are now also involved in providing learning themselves.

Several factors underlie this shift of role. In PPP, one of the community organisations had found it hard to recruit enough students to fulfil college course requirements; it had therefore become a member of the local accreditation body, enabling staff to write their own courses and deliver them to smaller groups of learners:

We're becoming more autonomous. We decide. The emphasis is moving if you like … we're taking on the roles of all these other things.

(Learning and skills coordinator, community centre, PPP)

In the BIF, a move to in-house provision resulted from local colleges' inability to supply appropriate courses; the need to boost learners' self-confidence before entering college; and the need to offer an end in itself for those not wishing to progress further. The JET worker linked with local providers, but primarily for use of their resources, rather than progression. Learners clearly appreciated this provision, as reflected in the following comments:

If you're in the Big Issue, it's because you're homeless or you're vulnerably housed, so if you're homeless you don't really feel like going to college … you just think 'I'm from the streets' … but whereas here they get into your mind, [saying] *'Look, sort yourself'; they get you into a hostel, they give you grants for clothes, they get you to present yourself better so you get more confidence, then they say, 'Well, how do you feel about doing a course?'*

Well, here I think you feel more comfortable, you've got your friends around … it's just relaxed.

(Learners, BIF)

SPELL workers spoke of the difficulty of securing funding for learning brokerage activities. Although this was the 'ultimate goal' and the local LSC recognised the value of these activities, SPELL still faced financial pressures to become a provider:

The whole issue has been around [the fact that] *we like to keep this independence, this community focus, this brokerage between what a learner wants and what a provider can provide, and a switch to LSC funding made it very difficult for us in that you needed to be a provider to access the funding. So even though we had actually got a contract twice with the LSC, they pulled out and said, 'We can't fund you because you're not a provider' which resulted in quite a drastic reduction in the amount of staff that we had … we had to rethink our priorities … most of my time and energy was taken up trying to secure funding for bits of what we do rather than the project as a whole, which is still the case actually.*

(Project coordinator, SPELL)

Within Go4, external providers are used, but emphasis is also placed on using the skills of company staff to deliver learning:

We do use external providers, but not all the time. What I'm keen to do is … where we've got expertise in the business, we can utilise that by training somebody to … deliver that information.

(Training manager, company working with Go4)

Setting up taster courses

Taster courses were agreed to be a key activity for outreach and development, and for project workers, in engaging with potential learners. Stoke-on-Trent's TUSU, for example, had in 18 months 'signposted' over 2100 people to college or other learning providers. Taster sessions are often delivered in collaboration with local providers; for example, the BIF had arranged for local library staff to deliver a week of taster sessions at the Big Issue learning centre. Young people using the centre selected the sessions to be delivered, including one on body art and one on downloading music from the internet. This outreach activity aimed to encourage the young people to use the library resources.

The value of taster sessions is reflected in one woman's experience of attending a PPP 'women's day' event. Taster session topics included one on 'Northern men':

It was hilarious! But the topics they picked up, you went away and thought about it. I went home and thought that if there was a course like this [at school] *… because … you always thought back to school and learning. It wasn't very nice sitting in front of a person teaching you. My experience from school was horrible.*

She has subsequently achieved an adult learner's award and progressed to university.

While the importance of taster courses was acknowledged, the issue of funding was frequently raised as representing a barrier to this activity. Developing and accessing sources of funding was an essential and time-consuming activity for the person responsible – in SPELL, for example, this was the project coordinator; in CiC, the deputy director – requiring a flexible and creative approach. Links to other organisations and networks are important. CiC, for example, works closely with Asian communities throughout Stoke-on-Trent and has set up a 6-week rolling programme for older members of the Asian community in association with the local Racial Equality Council. The non-accredited programme includes topics such as ESOL, crafts and flower arranging, with an end-of-course celebratory event. Such a programme could not be funded via the college's normal routes, but alternative funding was obtained by linking it to well-being and health-related programmes. The college is working hard to build on its links to local Asian communities and the long-term nature of this type of work was stressed.

Negotiating with providers to set up pathways for learners

Learning brokerages' ability to negotiate with and influence local providers varies. For example, PPP's position, as an education sector brokerage based on an existing strong partnership of local providers, enabled the project manager to negotiate with providers to set up new courses. Originally based in the university, she was able to call on the expertise of faculty staff to write and develop these; her strong links with local community organisations also helped, as she could guarantee learner numbers:

If I said we'll get 15 people on that course, we would, where too many people before had said we're expecting 15 and they might get three and then FE have put so much work into it for nothing really.

(Project manager, PPP)

Most case studies had developed strong links with one or two supportive and accommodating providers. For example, the BIF project worker had formed a strong link with a local adult residential college; many individuals were progressing on to short courses there and then on to the 1-year Access to Higher Education programme. The college valued this relationship:

We see our relationship … like a strategic partnership. In fact we talk to people about having a relationship with the Big Issue and it's very important to us.

(College principal, involved with the BIF)

Negotiating with providers was difficult for some case studies. One project worker spoke of resistance from a college in relation to formalising the partnership and providing higher levels of learning in the community:

We still have an issue in that they [college] *still feel that when someone gets to a certain level, they should go in to the college, which we don't necessarily agree with, but it's not always that easy for people. College is still a barrier for some. Why can't they learn and progress in the community? Why do they have to be within the college?*

The way in which this case study finally persuaded providers to offer community provision was by latching on to something the college already provided:

[What] *we then say is we know how many learners they need to make a course viable, we'll know the added incentives that we could perhaps offer … the carrot for them is that we can say, 'Well, we've got 12 people here who all want to do this. This is a ready-made course for you.'*

Other learning brokerages had also encountered negative attitudes from some providers about community provision, although it was recognised that such provision can be very expensive for providers:

There are people at the university who don't like it, they don't like the idea that we're doing HE in college, let alone in community centres, but that's their problem. They have the problem, not us.

Even though they'll agree with what you're saying, they find it very, very difficult because they get funded for bums on seats in college, to move their resources into community delivery is difficult for them. I know it's difficult for them, but the negotiation is always that this is going to be for your benefit, because you're still getting a class full of people, it just so happens that you're running it in a church hall.

The way in which funding was linked to numbers was problematic for both sides. Learning brokerages invested time and effort to raise the interest of potential learners, but if numbers were not high enough, colleges would not put on courses in the community, and the credibility and trust built up with learners was destroyed:

If we could guarantee 8 or 10 people, we'd be laughing, but we can't. So we could put a lot of effort in and get 5 people, who it's a big step for them to come along. The college turn up and say, 'Oh sorry, only got 5, can't run it.'

(Learning and skills coordinator, community centre, PPP)

Similarly, the extent to which learning brokerages can work with individual faculties within a college can be limited by the faculty's need for additional student numbers. This was not just an issue for FE colleges; HE institutions experience similar problems – teaching staff may want to work out in the community, but faculty heads responsible for departmental budgets may veto such activity:

The university needs an SSR [student–staff ratio] *of 30 to 1 to cover the cost of delivery. Therefore it is difficult to persuade, for example,* [x and y] *departments to do outreach in community centres because they can't afford to,* [because they are] *forced to guard the gates of the school* [and may have] *no objections to teaching in the community as such, but are dreadfully concerned about the costs of this.*

(University representative in PPP advisory group)

Setting up new courses

What happens all too often is providers decide we've got a tutor who can teach local history and says, 'We'll go to [x place] *and put them on a local history course', and no one wants to do local history. So we, if you like, reverse that and say, 'What do we want?' and then we look for someone who can give us that.*

(Learning and skills coordinator, community centre, PPP)

Responsiveness and imagination were crucial in recognising that the stimulus for learning might come from unexpected quarters and being able to react positively and quickly. In PPP, for example, in an area where participation in education was traditionally low, an interest in forensic science, generated by television programmes, was noted by the learning and skills coordinator. Through brokerage contacts, a successful FE course on forensic science was then delivered in the community. In SPELL, a local politics course was started due to unrest about regeneration issues. CiC has also set in place a very popular family learning project (developed through the BBC and links to a local museum) on building robots.

Progression

Learning brokerages also have a role in both coaxing and challenging learners to go further, even when learners perceive this as risky and threatening. At Gateway College in Leicester, where some students were Asian female factory workers, the tutor saw his role, in part, as slowly introducing the women to other learning contexts, encouraging them to overcome their fears. There is a balance to be struck between what is 'right' because it feels good, and what is 'right' because it can help to break down exclusion and inequality, but this must always be negotiated with learners. They must decide what opportunities to take, not have an expectation imposed on them; and it must be recognised that opportunities are not 'open' in the same way to everyone.

There were many important issues raised about the difficulties of moving people on, particularly to more formal courses in college and university settings. For example, college dates, courses and curricula can be inflexible and difficult to work with because they are set so far in advance. Conversely, people may become 'spoilt' in community settings and consequently struggle to adapt to formal course admissions and traditional provision 'that's not on your doorstep, not free and not flexible'. Alternatively, they become 'too cosy' and are not interested in progressing to another setting: some learners had taken part in most, if not all, of the courses available in the community, rather than progressing to college to study a particular subject at a higher level. Again, this links to the issue of different definitions of learning 'success': for some people, participation in learning can fulfil needs or aims which may not focus specifically on progressing 'upwards'.

Another problem – of moving individuals on before they are ready – was also voiced, highlighting possible tensions between measures of 'success' for learning brokerage staff and 'success' for the individual. In one case study, premature progression for a learner resulted in that person leaving college after a few weeks, with negative implications also for the college:

I knew intellectually they were ready. They were saying, 'Well yes, I think I'd like to', but really I'd found out about the college and I encouraged and pushed him to go, but that was me and my agenda, that would have been a success for me … it's been far more successful when I've been relaxed and let people come, but at the same time let them know what the possibilities are … a much gentler process, a much slower process … until they are committed to the idea, then it isn't going to work. When they are a bit dubious, you can't force the pace because you just build failure into the system.

(Project worker)

Inappropriate or premature referrals would be the problem for us and it's a problem for the poor person … they fail, and the cycle of failure gets reinforced and you very rarely see them again.

(College representative)

Learners who had successfully made the jump from community to college provision spoke of encouraging phone calls from tutors and other forms of transitional support.

Conclusions

This stage represents a key area of negotiation between learner and provider and learning brokerage staff play a pivotal role in this mediation process. A lot of activity is focused on this stage: however, the inability of some learning brokers to influence provision limits their effectiveness. This failure is partly due to funding policy – the linking of funding to student numbers has an impact on learning brokerages, which have to seek alternative sources of funding and lose learners' trust.

Questions for consideration

- How do learning brokerages find out about existing courses, and could this process be improved?
- Could the number of learners required by colleges to deliver learning in the community be reduced? What mechanisms are in place if numbers fall short?
- Do learning brokerages have to become learning providers? How can the right balance be achieved?
- Within learning brokerages, who negotiates between learner and provider? At what level does this take place?
- What activities or strategies can help learners to progress from community-based provision to college?
- What staff development is in place to improve attitudes towards community learning?
- How can different measures of success for learners and learning brokerages be accommodated?

5.5 **Promoting learning success**

This sub-section focuses on supporting learners to achieve their goals. Who decides what learning success is? How is learning success promoted and supported? The answers to these questions are largely determined by the type of learning – in particular, whether it is an off-the-peg or bespoke course. Most case studies preferred tailor-made learning, though there were exceptions in both the workplace and the community. Some learning brokerages were using a mixture of standardised and customised courses, while others were using hybrids (ie adapting existing programmes).

In terms of successful outcomes, *specifically designed courses* can embrace a wider definition of success, for example, regular attendance, completion of a predetermined number of classes, attaining a certain level of competence, producing an output (eg an exhibition or learning diary) or progression to another course. Such notions of success may be proxies for 'soft' indicators, in particular, self-confidence or interest in learning. *Generic* courses, particularly those offered by formal providers (eg colleges) tend to be governed by funding regimes which frequently require student assessment using externally determined criteria.

A *hybrid* occurs when a learning brokerage requests (and usually pays for) a course from a traditional provider – the curriculum may be more or less generic, but the requirement for assessment may be less rigid; alternatively, the learning outcomes may be similar, but the learning strategies may be tailored to the target group. This hybrid model was seen in both the workplace and the community.

Several tutors spoke of tailoring the course to the learners' interests:

I come in and I meet the people and I can pitch it to what they want. Although I've got schemes and lesson plans, they go out the window because you see what people want and what they need.

(Community tutor, EOL)

In some cases, though, this has to be balanced with funders' requirements: Gateway College, for example, had funding available for ESOL rather than IT courses. The new course incorporated both elements.

Learning success is promoted in two key ways: through additional support on existing courses (eg informal help, mentoring, supplementary skill development, IAG sessions linked to what learners do on their courses); or through courses specially designed to include the learning support that is needed.

Key activities within this stage of the framework are:

- preparation, including informal and formal support from learning brokerage staff
- reducing the cost to learners
- curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; activities focused on retaining students either through course subject or teaching style
- additional activities to support learners – either 'add-on' activities provided by learning brokerages and external organisations or more integrated support
- supporting progression.

Other activities, which were identified in phase 1 of the project (see Thomas *et al*. 2004) and take place at this stage of the learning brokerage framework (eg developing groups of learners to provide mutual support), are also important in promoting learning success. Some of these developments came about, however, without intervention by the learning brokers.

Preparation

Thomas *et al*. (2004) suggested that good preparation is essential for student success. Within the case studies, the nature and extent of support in preparing learners varied significantly. Most support was informal, offered by outreach or development workers in response to expressed or visible needs of learners and potential learners. SPELL has to spend time with learners individually, exploring their interests and indicating the relevance of learning to these. This approach is clearly valued by learners.

SPELL: Tom's story

Tom, off work long-term with a back injury, wants to move into alternative employment. He is attending courses in a local centre, accessed via SPELL, to update his skills in English, mathematics and computers. He describes his initial visit as follows:

Even from the girl that's on the desk when you walk into SPELL, you get this positive vibe and then she'll introduce you to whoever you need to talk to. She'll ask you your basic information and then pass you on to someone else who will advise you.

Question: *So you get quite a lot of time?*

Oh yes, my initial interview should have been three-quarters of an hour and I was there an hour and a half and I actually said to her, 'Do you think I should be going because I've used your time up?' And she said, 'If you want to go, I can get on with other work searching for ideas and information for the type of course you require.'

Question: *So did she get in touch with you after?*

Oh no, we made an appointment then for the following week and I was in again an hour … Very good. And there will be another follow-up later on.

Question: *So do they arrange that?*

Yes. I also get information through on what course[s] *they do. A newsletter. They keep you updated on a wide variety of courses and anything else you need to know. You just ask.*

SPELL supported Tom to overcome his initial fear and embarrassment about attending classes again. The classes have increased his confidence sufficiently to enrol on a higher-level course and he has encouraged other family members to become involved. After advice from SPELL, Tom's father completed a computer course and is using his new skills as chair of the local parish [council], and in his local pensioners' club. Through SPELL, Tom's daughter is also now engaged in learning:

My youngest daughter comes on a Thursday for her English because she's like me, she struggles with her spelling. And she's really excited about that. She's 22 coming up 23, with two little kids of her own. She'd like to get a job that will fit in with the children at school. And I'm trying to persuade my oldest daughter to come too. Because she's like me, she struggles and I know she's really nervous when she's around people and she's got to write anything down.

Other informal one-to-one support includes telephoning people prior to the start of the course; and just being available (eg on the telephone, through drop-ins or via e-mail) – a strategy that relies on learners approaching brokers, rather than *vice versa*. In the BIF, more structured preparation was provided individually. This type of formal support was more likely in learning brokerages working with specific, narrowly defined target groups, where learners' needs are more uniform.

Cost

Many of the courses promoted by learning brokerages were free of charge (some work-based programmes were subsidised); thus, learning costs (particularly tuition fees) posed a major problem as regards progression. In one case study, much of the progression was horizontal, as students wanted to access the free community-based courses, rather than progressing to college-based programmes. Learning brokerage staff ascribed this to perceptions about cost, rather than to cost *per se* (or fear of the college) – people could afford to contribute a small amount, but they were in the habit of not paying. At the project conference, it was asked whether offering free courses and then requiring people to pay to progress is productive, since false expectations may be raised. However, course fees are clearly prohibitive to some learners and may deter them from accessing learning initially. Conversely, free courses are a big incentive:

Sometimes you can pay … and find you don't like it and then you've wasted your money.

(Learner, EOL)

Individuals who were fairly fired up and enthusiastic to do things and then pulled out at the final hurdle, which for them was seeing a future of debt. I can think of one particular person, she had won an award in Adult Learners' Week … was very keen to go on to do a degree and clearly had the capacity … but she had an 18-year-old daughter … going to university the same year and after she had gone through everything and taken all the advice, she said, 'I just couldn't saddle the family with all the debt' … and she backed out.

(Community worker, PPP)

Increased travel costs were not cited as a major deterrent, possibly because much of the college provision is very locally based. A reluctance to travel was noted in some cases, but this was due to a lack of familiarity and low confidence, rather than costs.

Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

Activities in this area involve learning brokerage staff working with tutors whose job is often time-consuming and requires a high level of personal commitment.

The research revealed an interesting link between curriculum and progression: groups of students often want to continue learning the *same subject* together (eg flower arranging or crystal healing) and are happy to repeat the same or a similar course, though tutors and learning brokerages work hard to develop and extend the curricula around the favoured topic. This suggests that learning is fulfilling far broader objectives than simply increasing knowledge and skills (see 'social relations' below). Progression therefore relies on the tutor or course developer's skill to create a programme in which the topic remains the same, but the level or area of knowledge or skill is expanded. In SPELL, some groups of learners were taking sport and exercise courses, but were not interested in progressing to the instructor's level – the cost may also have been prohibitive.

A related phenomenon is the desire of students to stick with the *same tutor* – often in the belief that other tutors were not as good (eg less patient, more academic, less caring) at teaching students like themselves. This offers either opportunities for or limitations to progression, depending on the tutor's skills. It also indicates the significance of relationships within the learning brokerage framework, and perhaps the need for staff development to ensure that all tutors meet students' expectations:

You'll have certain tutors who don't just forget about you when they walk out the door. They'll take your phone number and they'll say, 'Well, are you coming next week because you didn't come' … and that keeps you thinking I will finish this course.

(Learner, community centre, PPP)

[It's] *very different* [to school]*, not sitting behind a desk being talked at. The course here, you're interacting with other people, you've all got your own opinion, each opinion is never wrong or right, so it's giving you different options, it's opening your mind to other things, whereas at school it's like 'This is this and that is that and tough if you don't agree with that.'*

(Learner, TUSU, Stoke-on-Trent College)

The literature (eg McGivney 1999; Noble and Lynn 2002) suggests that early successes are important for non-traditional learners. Indeed, many of the case studies organised learning round a series of short courses, thus enabling students to be successful and 'progress' to another course, often with the same group of learners, the same tutor and a related topic. Some brokerages also organised award ceremonies and gave out certificates. A number of case studies used these in the form of photographs or 'good news' stories to raise their profile in the local community (eg PPP and CiC).

Support services

Apart from the support built into learning programmes and one-to-one informal help in response to learners' needs, there are examples of more specific and proactive support, provided by learning brokerage staff, or through links to other services. Childcare provision was identified as a key factor by many learners; consequently, CiC has developed links with local Sure Start initiatives, but problems have arisen in terms of how the different organisations define learning. SPELL has its own mobile service of trained childcare workers; currently this is paid for by fund-raising, but the aim is to make the service self-financing through city-wide provision of childcare services. Support linked more directly to the course or learning opportunity is available in PPP; for example, library staff based at the partner HE institution ensure that resources are available locally for those unable to travel to the university.

IAG is available in several of the case studies. Go4 offers an 'add-on' service, regularly visiting companies – employees can either arrange an appointment or drop in. The support offered is personal and specific to learners' needs, and the topics covered are wide-ranging. This approach offers good-quality IAG, but the numbers using such a service are necessarily low, and evidence suggests that usage is often below capacity.

A more integrated approach is used in SPELL and PPP, where IAG staff visit each programme towards the end to discuss progression issues. This approach encourages learners to think about progressing to a higher-level course, though there is no requirement to do so. Although the focus of discussion tends to be on the group rather than the individual, personal IAG can be arranged.

CiC has worked closely with IAG staff in Stoke-on-Trent College to develop new ways of working with community learners: these will be incorporated into college-based practice to improve support to a more diverse student body. CiC is moving towards involving IAG staff at an earlier stage in community sessions, based on a 'Where am I now, where do I want to be in the future?' footing, believing that this provides a professional and more impartial IAG service than that provided by outreach workers. This reflects a change in practice within CiC, whereby outreach workers are being encouraged to become more engaged with learners and are bringing in IAG workers at an earlier stage to spell out options, with a stronger focus on moving them into college.

Some learning brokerages were actively negotiating with learning providers about courses and support; but in others, more interaction is required (or a more accommodating stance by learning providers). In several cases, students progressed from community-based learning to a university course and were treated inappropriately. Thus, part of the learning brokerage role is to ensure that learning providers are aware of the diverse needs of *all* their students and that they respond appropriately. Some HE tutors have phoned students who stopped attending classes, and coaxed them into coming back, but this is unusual and tends only to be done by those with community teaching experience. In some cases, support from learning brokerage staff continues even when learners have progressed to a college setting:

What's key to … brokerage is [that] *there isn't a cut-off relationship, there isn't a sense in which I pass somebody over to* [college] *and that's the end of my role. My role doesn't end there and it can't end there, my role has to continue … at some point there will be a backing off … but there has to be an overlap between the two … there has to be that linkage … and that is quite informal.*

(Project worker, BIF)

Horizontal and vertical progression

There is strong evidence that learners want to continue learning, but not necessarily by progressing to another level, or even to a different course. For example, in 'leisure learning' classes (eg flower arranging and exercise), progression is not necessarily desirable (at least from a learner's perspective). More commonly, learners favour horizontal progression – for example, moving from word processing to spreadsheets in IT classes – and this is often done as a group of learners, thus preserving the social element. The funding regime tends to determine the extent to which horizontal progression is possible, and sooner or later this is exhausted:

They [the LSC] *don't seem to care that the kind of chaotic lives that come across this field of work … often require very different … ways of support, of back-up, and it doesn't follow a linear direction.*

They [funders] *don't see that somebody just wanting to go to another course which is at the same level, they don't see that as success. They don't want to fund it, so then we have to sit and think … is there any funding stream that would fund it and that's what I spend quite a lot of my time doing … to say no to them, we're going to go right back to square one and they* [learners] *don't understand that … what they've* [funders] *said, which I agree with in some respects, is that they won't fund people to tread water. That's fair enough, but they can't see the success in an older learners' group that are never going to go back into employment or college or university. They can't see that to keep them as a social group, and to bond them together to become a committee in their own right to start applying for funding, they don't see that as a success. They see it as a drain on resources.*

Stoke-on-Trent College: gender issues in learning

Staff in the trade union studies unit (TUSU) feel that while men and women face many of the same barriers to involvement in learning, there are differences in how they view opportunities. Women tended to look for courses from which they would gain fulfilment, with a more long-term outlook: 'This is something I want to do and I will do what's necessary to get there.' Men initially opted for more practical, employment-related courses: 'I will do a forklift truck course because I know that I can get a job doing that.' However, once they have completed that initial course: 'We get a phone call saying, "Well, I've done that, I want to do something else"; the money's coming in … it builds their confidence and they want to do something else.' This creates issues in terms of funding:

Sometimes the people that deal with the funding at the other end of the road, they say, 'Well, why are so many people doing this, like the forklift?' Well, if we can get them on that, they want to do that because they will be bringing money in, but once they've done that, we know that they will come back and do something else.

Some of the case studies have vertical progression built in, for example, from one tailored course to another. This is easier for organisations offering a limited range of learning opportunities and/or working with a specific target group with strong shared characteristics. Others offer less rigid progression, for example, through IAG sessions that promote progression. There could be difficulties over progression, with some education providers assuming that certain target groups (eg homeless people or those with mental health difficulties) will not be able to progress to higher levels, and so not offering appropriate opportunities, discriminating against certain target groups, or simply not considering them.

SPELL: work with recovering addicts

SPELL workers visit a local drug rehabilitation hostel to talk to residents about becoming involved in learning. One resident, currently attending classes at a local community centre – the first learning he has been engaged in since leaving school – wants to keep learning because it has 'kept me healthier physically, mentally and stuff like that. So I want to educate myself and have the possibility of a job.' He has a place on an Access to Higher Education course confirmed, prior to going to university. He feels he would not have gone through this process without SPELL's support:

The fact that they actually go round and speak to people as well because a lot of people wouldn't make the arrangements to do it whereas, if it is brought to you …

I'd have done nothing! I know I wouldn't. It's like if you're getting stressed out by anything, if any of the classes might be too many hours, stuff like that, all you've got to do is ring them up and they'll try and make it easier for you … I always know where she [SPELL worker] *is if I have to phone or anything like that …* [She] *is alright! We've had some good chats.*

For other groups (eg community learners), vertical progression is required by funding regimes. This is particularly problematic given the short length of many of the courses, meaning that continual upward progression cannot be sustained.

Within the limits of the evidence, attitudes towards progression vary according to sector. In *community learning*, the preference seems to be for horizontal progression: learning brokerages facilitate this, but funding regimes can hamper it. In the *voluntary sector* and/or where courses are targeted at specific learners, vertical progression can more easily be built in (eg the Building Bridges programme), but assumptions about learners may inhibit progression. In the *education sector*, there is a clear tendency towards vertical progression, but learning brokerages can be very skilful at working around such limitations.

In the *workplace sector*, Thomas *et al*. (2004) noted that employers may wish to curb vertical progression – in Stoke-on-Trent's BDU, for example, training managers must be involved in any discussion about an individual's progress. However, tutors involved in workplace training will advise on options that employees can take up in their own time and refer them to appropriate college staff. Discussions with learners, learning representatives, tutors and a training manager in phase 2 case studies suggest that the participation of employees in learning is varied. There are a few who are independently learning and wish to progress vertically to achieve their own personal goals. But there are far more learners in groups, who are more interested in horizontal progression. In one case, the learners wanted to develop a range of skills at a similar (low) level that would assist them personally and instrumentally; in others, learners appreciated the leisure benefits and social nature of the learning, but were not interested in progressing (eg learners of a conversational language for foreign holidays seemed more likely to progress to another language at a basic level, than to progress to a higher level in a single language).

Overall, many learners are interested in horizontal rather than vertical progression, but there is pressure on all of the learning brokerages to ensure that vertical progression is available (at some point). CiC, for example, is moving towards a more 'aggressive' marketing campaign and outreach workers are carrying out more targeted work with clients to build on that initial contact. This move is driven by an increased emphasis from the college on moving people on. However, CiC's deputy director does not see accredited programmes as necessarily the way forward: learners can progress in other ways, including horizontal progression to non-accredited courses run by CiC in the community. Accordingly, programmes are now defined as non-accredited, accredited and social programmes.

This raises broader questions about the purposes of learning and who makes decisions about 'appropriate' progression. Education may have broader benefits than simply enhanced employment opportunities and other economic advantages, such as greater community involvement and inclusion, improved self-confidence and better health (see eg Schuller *et al*. 2001). Funding regimes, however, tend to require vertical progression, with little or no consideration of the learners' needs and the wider benefits of learning (see also **section 5.7**):

The measure of success from funders is very much tied up with people into jobs and vocational learning.

(Project coordinator, SPELL)

Question: *Have you seen any changes in people when they have started to get involved?*

Yes, you can see people get excited by what they are doing and kind of rejuvenated … getting out of the rain for an hour and coming in here and accessing the internet … it can be quite a breath of fresh air for people, I find, and you can physically see it in people, they come in, they're a lot more chilled out, a bit more at peace with themselves.

(Support worker, BIF)

In a significant number of case studies, learning is viewed as contributing to (improved) employment and many learning brokerages have links with employment agencies. In some cases, funding regimes have been secured on the basis of promoting progression to employment. For some learners, this is undoubtedly beneficial; but for others, it may be inappropriate, reducing their opportunity to benefit socially and personally from learning.

Social relations

The activities discussed above all involve learning brokers, either directly or via negotiation with learning providers or developing links to IAG organisations and other agencies that provide additional support to learners. Other activities at this stage of the learning brokerage framework are also important in promoting learning success, but generally involve less direct intervention by case study organisations. For many students, social relations were of paramount importance to their learning experience, but the extent to which learning brokerages actively fostered groups varied. Development workers on BBB, for example, would, if necessary, 'create' groups of students whom they thought would provide mutual support through the course. Tutors were also influential in developing a sense of group identity:

I love the way they teach here … it's all in a group so you don't have to be vocal or it's not all your work, you can share the work. That's why I like that type of learning really. And the social part of it as well, because there's such a strong group supporting each other.

(Learner, TUSU)

Many learners were very keen to progress as a group. For example, one student in a computer group preferred to repeat a course which she had taken before joining the group, rather than progress into an unknown group or miss out on 'learning'. For some students, especially women in community settings, social relations seemed of greater importance than the relevance of learning:

Coming to a centre like this, it is very relaxed, it's an easy way to learn. Also it's a socialising effect, you're meeting new friends.

(Learner, community centre, PPP)

When you leave at the end of the day, you think 'Yeah, we did something today' and you can see the point of it. Just the fact that you wake up in the morning and think 'I want to see these people.' Not just the tutors, but the other people on the course. You know 'cos in the past I've thought 'I can't be bothered … I don't care. No one will notice if I'm not there, so what's the point.'

(Learner, Building Bridges)

Initially, there was very much a feeling that 'The initiative centre is somewhere I go, so what can I do next term … so that I can continue to go?' and I think that's a bit less now. There is still that as well; for example, mothers who come to the parent and toddler group, they certainly see themselves as coming here to do things and what they do is another issue.

(Outreach centre manager, PPP)

Sometimes the preference for group rather than individual progression was problematic for staff:

The difficulty arises when a group wants to progress as a group, but actually it's going to be more beneficial if they then become individuals in their own right, because within any one group you've got different abilities.

(Development worker, SPELL)

Conclusions

There are different concepts of what constitutes learner success. Learners are involved for a number of reasons, which may be employment-related, but often relate to social interaction – meeting each other and a continuing relationship with one tutor is often more important than traditional vertical progression. However, narrow definitions of learning success (often driven by inappropriate funding regimes) may make it hard for learning brokerages to acknowledge the wider benefits of learning – increased socialisation, self-confidence and social capital. Funding regimes can militate against learners progressing in ways that they determine or feel most comfortable with, even to the extent of being 'forced' into employment.

'New' learners seem to benefit from providers having the autonomy to build appropriate success criteria and integrated support into programmes. However, for some relatively new learners, the purpose *is* to gain externally validated qualifications; for example, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) proved popular. Furthermore, getting a recognised award helps to boost learners' confidence and learning brokerages are essential in providing and identifying additional support.

For students progressing to higher levels of learning (perhaps in more formal or educationally oriented settings), 'add-on' support is usually more appropriate. For example, SPELL provides academic and personal support for students who have progressed to higher education in the form of specialist HE mentors, since it would be difficult and probably inappropriate for SPELL to renegotiate the curriculum and support with the HE institution. In ALP, however, progression to higher education was problematic, as students who entered via the community route were not considered equal to their peers. This suggests that additional support for learners is not always enough to ensure success, as long as a change in institutional attitudes (even in higher education) is still needed. The research suggests that opportunities for learning brokerages and providers to share knowledge of learners' needs are limited.

Questions for consideration

- Who decides what learner success is? How can different definitions of success be recognised?
- How is learner success promoted and supported?
- How can individuals be better prepared to take part in learning?
- How can more collaborative support be achieved?
- How can learning brokerages help to inform individuals about the costs of learning and dispel any myths?
- How can the broader objectives of learning be demonstrated and supported?
- What staff development takes place around tutoring in the community?
- What activities and strategies will promote early successes?
- How can brokers' knowledge of learners' needs be shared with learning providers?

5.6 Addressing organisational issues

People are at the heart of successful learning brokerage. It is therefore appropriate to review how staff and volunteers are selected, trained and supported. First, it is notable that in the majority of the case studies, learning brokers were staff members rather than volunteers. The notable exceptions (eg in B2L and Go4) were the trade union learning representatives, who could be seen as volunteers, since their role – often revolving around gaining entry, building trust and raising interest in learning – was undertaken in addition to their normal workplace role:

They're all volunteers, in April they've just received statutory recognition for their role. Up till then, people were doing it entirely voluntarily, their own time, their own enthusiasm, at least now they've got some recognition so that they are given 'reasonable' time to do their job … but still they're volunteers and still … it's very much in the hands of employers as to how much time, and obviously they've got to work sympathetically with employers. They can't just dash in and say, 'Right, I'm going to have 2 days off now to go round and see everybody', because obviously we recognise that companies have got production targets and the business has got to go on, but they are an essential element to all this because they are somebody promoting learning if you like, from the employee point of view.

(TUC Learning Services representative, Go4)

Tutors who are employed to teach classes (eg in the community or workplace), but who effectively become individual learning brokers represent a second type of informal 'volunteer'. Their work involves supporting learners to succeed and negotiating with colleges regarding the provision of further courses. The value of such apparently incidental activity was recognised in some case studies. For example, a long-term aim of EOL was the development of a 'sustainable network of local volunteers'.

Recruiting staff and volunteers

Two issues emerged: personal characteristics and the types of knowledge required. Learning brokerage managers tended to focus on employees' personal characteristics, for example, approachable, friendly, outgoing, trusted, flexible, able to take initiative, and having an ability to communicate at different levels:

The focus is heavily on interpersonal skills … we also try to get people that have got an empathy, not just a sympathy, so someone like myself, this is my area, I grew up here and faced all the barriers that everybody else faces, and ended up having to go to university as a mature student because nobody helped me to do it earlier.

(Project coordinator, SPELL)

The project officer needs to be seen as a trusted intermediary locally … they need to be able to understand that community.

(EOL representative)

In EOL, senior management described the process of employing project officers as 'a leap of faith'. However, since this is a pilot project, the success and skills of current project officers will inform future recruitment processes. It was observed in SPELL that all staff appointed to engage directly with potential learners and providers were women, and indeed in other case studies women dominated, particularly in sectors other than the workplace.

In the voluntary sector, taking the BIF as an example, there was additional emphasis on relevant experience and working with the client group:

Staff need to have an understanding of the client group, that can either be direct experience … but I'm a great believer in transferable skills, therefore that could be working with another socially excluded group … you need to have a broad understanding of the learning environment and what's hot and what's not … there's definitely got to be a genuine belief and commitment to equal opportunities … you need to have a certain mindset to work in this sector because it can be incredibly distressing, it can be hugely frustrating … also not taking stuff home … you need to be reasonably tough and you need to have an awareness that people will try it on.

(Regional manager, BIF)

So what you're talking about is a grounded knowledge about what it's like to be homeless … and that seems to be a totally different world in a way to the formal college or university … how do you bridge those two types of world?

(Interviewer)

You employ staff who are able to work in both. Communication skills on all levels are vital … so it's just about being a very skilled communicator.

(Regional Manager, BIF)

In some cases, people volunteer for the role (eg learning representatives); in other situations, people's jobs can evolve into that of an individual 'learning broker'; and, where staff are sought, the emphasis tends to be on the knowledge that individuals have – in particular, local knowledge (eg of the community, the workplace and the target group) and professional knowledge (eg of education, teaching, community development, regeneration, IAG and even social work).

In community learning, the emphasis tended to be on personal characteristics and local knowledge – learning brokers tended to live in or very close to the target area and ideally were 'known' in the community. For example, a SPELL employee was engaged in various community-based activities and was well known to local young people and their families as he ran the local football team. In the education sector, staff tended to be professionals (with a good knowledge of the education system). In the voluntary sector, staff tended to be professionals within the relevant field. In the workplace, learning representatives had much in common with community-based outreach workers, while other learning brokerage staff occupied discrete roles (eg IAG staff, tutors and training managers).

On balance, the best approach to recruiting staff and volunteers is hybrid. A combination of appropriate personal characteristics, local knowledge and professional knowledge would provide the broadest credibility. This combination has been achieved in the Bolton CNA initiative, where the key aim was to identify local people who were interested in community nutrition and had local knowledge. Most of the 12 trainee CNAs were already active in the community development field.

Training staff and volunteers

Three approaches have been identified: reliance on professional skills, formal training programmes and 'learning on the job'. Such reliance on personal initiative tends to lead individuals to then seek the professional training that they lack. Where learning brokerage staff are recruited for their professional knowledge and skills (eg IAG staff and tutors), additional training tends not to be offered, even when the context and/or groups are significantly different from the norm.

From this research, the best example of training for learning brokerage related to union learning representatives. In Go4, the ULRs took a short course in which their role was explained and additional information provided (eg on seeking course information, negotiating with employers and IAG). Active ULRs found this training extremely useful, though additional training and continuing support was not forthcoming. However, staff involved in delivering training and support to learning representatives noted that they needed a facilitative environment (eg employer support) and personal initiative to move on from training to taking an active role. Also, Cowen, Clements and Cutter (2000) and Cutter (2002) suggest that some trained learning representatives were not able to fulfil their role in the workplace. In one sub-region, additional funding from the TUC enabled a network of learning representatives to be established, with regular support and training meetings; learning representatives and organisers saw this as particularly effective:

When we recruit people or they come onto the training courses, we make sure we know them very well during the initial 5 days so they get to know us and understand what we can do for them … so they feel able to come to us with any particular worries. We've set up quarterly network meetings where we try to organise a programme which the learning reps have an input to, just to update their information or introduce them to things we think they ought to be interested in … alongside that … every month we send out an activity report … which is [a] *chance for them to report back to us the activities that they've been doing … the idea is not to check on people but to say, well, some people may be doing a lot of activity, some may not, if people aren't doing so much is there a problem here, what's the issue, can we support that?*

(TUC Learning Services representative, Go4)

In a similar vein, in the Bolton CNA study, the team drew on the experiences of community nutritionists and developed their training course accordingly.

The dominant model was, however, to offer little or no formal training, but to rely on informal 'learning on the job':

It's on-the-job [training] *because as far as I'm aware, there's not training that equips you for being able to negotiate. It's a skill that people have and they develop over time by practice … that's why the recruitment and retention of staff with those skills is really important to us.*

(Project coordinator, SPELL)

'Learning on the job' ranged from relatively informal shadowing of experienced staff to simply being 'thrown in at the deep end' where initiative counted for all. For example, a PPP project coordinator felt that they developed their activities by trial and error. Such processes are not, however, necessarily unsupported or doomed to failure: in PPP, the manager offered regular support for this process of learning by trial and error, and in all instances a line-management system was in place. For some learning brokerages, however, it is not enough for staff to learn on the job. For example, in SPELL, no one had responsibility for training community tutors – they ended up seeking out their own professional training; one worker undertook a teaching qualification, while another secured funding to undertake a Community Practice Certificate. Here, at the level of the individual employee, a weak support system had led to the demonstration of personal initiative.

There are some *de facto* learning brokerage workers who have no training and no support. In one case study, the tutor felt that he was brokering learning by dint of the fact that no one else was fulfilling this function. These tutors supported learners, encouraged them to succeed, provided IAG on progression, negotiated with their employers (local colleges) to provide further courses and designed relevant curricula and pedagogies to suit the learner groups. These one-person 'brokers' are not only learning on the job, but their work is often unrecognised and unsupported. This point was made succinctly by a community tutor about her experience prior to involvement with PPP:

They [education institution] *won't give you a proper job. They want you a couple of hours here, a couple of hours there. I put my home number in all of my handouts because some of the women wanted to ring me at home … I'd liaise with them over e-mail and that. You've got to commit yourself to your learners, but you see, people other than* [the learning broker] *didn't understand that and they just paid you for your two hours teaching and you were just supposed to be grateful for it … community tutors are just an add-on, an added extra because they've got to look as if they're into community learning.*

Professional skills may well help to equip people for learning brokerage roles, but further formal and informal training and ongoing support strengthen the effectiveness of learning brokerages, particularly in the short term. Learning brokerages should therefore consider the extent to which they can provide more formal introductory training. Looking into the issue of training provision might be a job for the LSC. However, training must be flexible enough to take account of existing skills and experiences and the context and objectives of the learning brokerage. Interestingly, practising learning brokerage staff found the 'participative conferences' organised as part of this project a useful mechanism for networking and providing alternative ways of developing their work.

Supporting staff and volunteers

You've got to be willing to make yourself available … if you want a 9 to 5 job, being a learning broker is not for you.

(Project coordinator, PPP)

All development and community worker staff who participated in this research were highly committed individuals, many of whom had studied as 'mature' or 'non-traditional' learners. This increased the need for effective boundaries, supervision or support and organisational structures to ensure the protection of staff (and volunteers), learners and the organisation. There is a risky tendency to rely on individual enthusiasm and energy, which may not be sustainable at personal or organisational levels:

[X] *is only contracted to do 20 hours a week … last week* [a week of taster sessions] *he didn't do it* [extra hours] *for the money, he did it because he wanted us to learn.*

(Learner, BIF)

In other words, individuals may experience 'burnout'. Fundamentally, learners in need of continuing support will benefit more from organisational support than from relying on individuals who may not always be available. In order to minimise the impact of key staff leaving, organisations need to be greater than the sum of their staff.

Strategies to minimise over-reliance on individuals include:

- detailed documentation of all contacts and relationships
- feeding information into a centralised database
- working in teams
- regular staff meetings for sharing information
- a range of staff being actively involved in supporting learners.

Learning brokerage staff frequently work long hours, including 'out of work', weekend and evening hours. As the limits of individual roles can be ill defined, staff will often do whatever it takes to support learners into and through learning. A BBB tutor pointed out: 'You can be all day with … students even though you only teach for 3 hours.'

However, this is less true of staff from professional backgrounds who are trained to be more aware of boundaries and are much clearer about what is and what is not within their role. This suggests that a specific professional training for learning brokerage staff could be useful. Not only do staff need to know the limits of their role and have the confidence to signpost people towards further support, but they also need simple accounting systems to help with working unconventional hours, for example, timesheets allowing time off in lieu. However, this can be hampered by personal commitment and measuring success through numerical indicators.

Support for learning brokerage staff is organised in various ways, but on the whole is relatively weak. The most positive approach is to hold *regular* meetings with a line manager, to reflect on progress and to discuss process and personal support needs (a process akin to the supervision received by professional counsellors and social workers). This is especially important for those working in emotionally taxing ways with particularly vulnerable clients (eg the BIF and BBB). Supporting staff through meetings with line managers 'as and when required' is less successful, as this tends to slip down the list of priorities.

When learning brokerage staff work in teams, this provides informal support. Inter-brokerage networking could similarly provide a welcome opportunity to meet colleagues, update knowledge and extend skills, especially since key outreach staff, in particular, often work in isolation (eg in a particular community location) or in a small team.

Support for learning brokerage staff and volunteers is also essential within learning providers, employers and IAG services:

I've found out that a lot of learning reps fail. They go on the course, but then never get started, and one of the things is if you're not supported, if you're in a very negative situation, you get cheesed off with that and give up before you start.

(ULR, Go4)

The attitude of colleges and employers varies: on the whole, large employers were more receptive to the concept of learning brokerage than SMEs. Employer support included:

- time for learning representatives to undertake learning-related activities (significantly facilitated by new legislation)
- time for staff and ULRs to learn (rarely offered)
- space for promoting and undertaking learning (eg a training room)
- active promotion of learning activities within the organisation.

The role of ICT

ICT is used particularly effectively in EOL and SPELL where data about learners (contact details, course preferences, progress, etc) is fed into a centralised database, enabling other staff to follow learners and intervene as appropriate. However, the role of ICT in building capacity and supporting staff could be developed, particularly to provide initial and ongoing training, information about particular issues, and networking between learning brokerages (though this does happen within EOL).

Throughout the case studies, ICT *is* being used as a hook to encourage people to access learning (eg BIF, ESOL–IT). However, there is very little evidence of it playing a key role in providing support or facilitating progression. In some instances, IAG advisers use the internet to provide information to individual learners about opportunities, but when learning brokerages are negotiating the setting up of group courses and progression, this tends to be done with known providers (eg the local FE college) rather than using ICT to find out about other providers.

Conclusions

Individuals are currently crucial to learning brokerage practice – indeed, an over-reliance on personal characteristics, good will and energy has been revealed. However, the processes for recruiting, training and supporting staff and volunteers in learning brokerages are generally weak. Recruitment strategies need to be robust and transparent, and employees should ideally combine personal characteristics, local knowledge and professional knowledge. In addition, training must be offered to support these qualities and skills. While the sector and specific context for learning brokerage is important, more formal training would be advantageous to many learning brokerages, followed by ongoing support to help set boundaries, deal with emerging issues, protect staff and learners, and ensure the continuing effectiveness of the organisation. There is the potential for ICT to help in meeting the training, support and networking needs of learning brokers nationally.

Questions for consideration

- What knowledge and skills should learning brokerage staff bring to their roles? What knowledge and skills will be developed from within the learning brokerage?
- What training is available for the development of learning brokerage staff? How does this match their knowledge and skill needs?
- For the benefit of new staff and in the interests of sustainability and improvement, what data ought to be recorded on current learning brokerage activity and on networks developed by individuals or by the organisation?
- How can training for learning brokerage be further developed formally and validly?
- What is the mechanism for providing ongoing support for staff; and is this realistically accessible? What is the potential contribution of ICT to staff training and support?

5.7 Learning brokerage success

Defining success

Before attempting to gauge the success of learning brokerage, we need to know what is meant by success – what does 'success' refer to? In this context it refers to learner success and successful learning brokerage. The issue of learner success has already been touched on in **section 5.5**: learners have different goals and motivations, and it is inappropriate and often problematic to impose external notions of success onto learners with fragile learning identities. However, it is equally important not to prejudge or make assumptions about the learning needs and 'success' of particular groups; for example, that homeless people need basic skills and are not interested in higher education. Possible indicators of learner success include:

- greater awareness of future learning needs and interests
- regular attendance and ongoing engagement
- continuation to another course (including horizontal and/or non-linear progression)
- engagement in other forms of learning
- personal benefits, for example, increased confidence, more social contacts
- social benefits, for example, playing a greater role in the community or workplace
- longer-term benefits, for example, encouraging or assisting children with education
- fulfilling learner-determined success criteria.

The evaluation of *the learning brokerage* needs to be broader than the success of learners, taking into account the six stages of the learning brokerage framework (see **section 1.1**), particularly the extent to which effective relationships have been developed with primary and secondary partners. A competence-based approach to monitoring and evaluation could be developed, based on the six stages of the framework (see **section 1.1** and Thomas *et al*. 2004). Learning brokerages could state what they intend to do in relation to each stage and, if funded, provide evidence of their competence for each of these. The methods used to collect evaluation data could be diverse, reflecting the context and type of learning brokerage and who is involved. Possible indicators of learning brokerage success include:

- undertaking research into the current situation, and using this to inform activities
- making links with gatekeepers
- increasing interest in and awareness of learning among the target group
- reaching new groups
- engaging the 'correct' target group, rather than having a 'bums on seats' mentality
- increased uptake of courses (irrespective of subject and level)

- evidence of learner success (see **section 5.5**)
- actively involving the full range of key partners and building and maintaining effective relationships with them
- influencing the types of course on offer from learning providers
- developing and delivering new curricula
- creating appropriate progression pathways
- challenging and negotiating definitions of learner success
- recognising limitations (and their causes) and areas for further development.

Approaches to monitoring and evaluating the learning brokerage

As shown in **Table B**, case studies used a combination of approaches to evaluate their work, based both on data collected in response to funding requirements, which tended to be based on 'hard' outcomes, and the evidence they used to monitor their work, which included 'softer' indicators.

Table B
Approaches to evaluation by learning brokerage organisations

Approach	Example
Numerical targets, especially for learners, but also including number of contacts, etc	Go4 EOL – monthly report, which includes hard targets (number of contacts, meetings, etc)
Quantitative data (eg attitude surveys)	Stoke-on-Trent College – statistical information collected from learners
Qualitative data	Go4 – follow-up phone call to everyone visited in the workplace EOL – informal interviews with learners
Informal data collection	Go4 – informal feedback from employers
Peer evaluation	CiC – learner evaluation
User participation	SPELL – externally facilitated day to enable community members to comment on services
External evaluation	Building Bridges – monitoring and evaluation committee evaluates all projects receiving funding from the same source SPELL – external evaluator undertook evaluation of programme, as required by funders

The reliance on numerical targets set by external bodies was widely criticised in the case studies and at the participative conference. Practitioners complained about the intrusive level of information required from learners, time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, inappropriate targets and a lack of awareness of the complexity and time-consuming nature of learning brokerage. Such measures may also be intrinsically flawed, as determined practitioners find ways to 'play' the system – as one project manager said: 'the culture of performance indicators pushes one towards the things that are easily quantified'. Examples include setting very low (and therefore achievable targets), using broad target groups (thus making the targets easier to meet with people who may not be the intended policy beneficiaries) and cross-subsidising. Such organisational behaviour is the product of an environment that is trying to widen participation, but is still target-driven (ie student numbers/retention and achievement = funding). This makes it financially risky for learning providers to engage in ventures with potential learners who are seen by funders as 'risk-heavy'. If there were alternative funding mechanisms in place for higher-risk initiatives, learning providers would be more motivated to serve the broadest cohort of potential learners.

For example, a college principal involved with the BIF felt that the local LSC recognised them as a niche provider and consequently was 'not trying to put us in the same box as the large FE colleges'. By contrast, some learning brokers felt that funding bodies were not interested in their 'real successes':

The annual report was guided by the hard and soft indicators the funders wanted. Often … there were lots of other benefits to the learners … but nowhere to put them on the form, they weren't particularly interested in that.

(Project coordinator, PPP)

The challenge then is to combine the two approaches, accepting the validity also of softer outcomes to support other indicators of success. Recognition of this challenge at a policy level is evident:

And in developing the new quality improvement and accountability framework, we will take into account, for all providers, the need to define targets and performance measures in a way which recognizes and values learning which does not lead to qualification yet demonstrates 'distance travelled'.

(DfES 2002)

Meeting this challenge appears to be proving more difficult in practice, however, as the need to work with funders to achieve this balance was emphasised in case studies:

We would much rather use unrestricted income for new projects, new pilots … so currently we're using a lot of this 'no conditions attached' money. What we want to do is to get to a situation where there are conditions attached, but conditions we've worked [out] *in conjunction with funders to try and hit that happy medium, because I think the thing that we and other learning brokers do is sit as a sponge between the ultimate beneficiaries, so the clients that we're working with and their expectations* [and] *hopes, and funders and their expectations and their conditions, and we somehow have to translate what the clients are saying they want, to match with what the funders are saying they want. One of the difficulties we have is there's a huge drive towards hard outcomes … like 'We want to see 20% of your service users in jobs by the end of the year'; we'd love to see* [that] *… the reality is it ain't going to happen and so there has to be this to-ing and fro-ing between us and the provider to try and negotiate some way whereby they're happy that their money is being spent properly, and they're getting some kind of tangible outcomes which they can then feed back … but we can be honest, and say this is what we can actually achieve.*

(Regional manager, BIF)

Some case studies *have* reached agreeable arrangements with their funders: within Building Bridges, it was clearly felt that the funder did recognise softer outcomes and that there was:

An expectation that personal development with support is important and they're more interested in that than employability. So although you increasingly get the employment card dragged out, it isn't always what's being pushed, so the soft options have been recognised.

(Project manager, Building Bridges)

This was also emphasised by course tutors:

I was very surprised at one point when we were talking about soft outcomes, about how we recognised these soft outcomes, one of the funders said, 'It can be your own subjective observation, how someone has progressed' and we went, 'Oh okay, so if we think someone has progressed, gained more confidence in 6 weeks, we can say that, that's fine.'

Funders are also currently working with projects to come up with new ways of providing alternative evidence of success, for example, holding a workshop to discuss softer outcomes with key stakeholders. These outcomes are recorded on a flipchart and included in the project's milestones.

5.8 Learning brokerage costings

This sub-section is based on confidential information collected from eight of the case study organisations. In the interests of confidentiality, we do not report here the actual costs, but rather explore the implications of this data.

Different activities

The costing of learning brokerage is complicated by several factors, including the range of activities undertaken and their intended impact (on both institutions and learners), who is financially responsible for the different activities, and the different levels of disadvantage of the target groups.

Widening participation and traditional learner activities

In their report entitled *The costs of disadvantage*, Critical Thinking (2002) have differentiated widening participation from other FE college roles and categorised the activities as:

- 'engagement': reaching out to engage disadvantaged learners and communities
- 'progression': support to ensure the participation, achievement and progression of disadvantaged learners.

The report suggests that engagement and progression costs should be differentiated and funded differently; some activities can be undertaken collaboratively (eg raising interest in learning generally), while others must be undertaken at the individual level and by specific institutions. This suggests that the various components of learning brokerage should be separately identified and costed. The case study data, however, does not allow disaggregated costs to be calculated.

Learning brokerage and widening participation

This argument can be extended, however, since our research shows that, in three ways, learning brokerage is broader than just widening participation – as it is conceptualised by Critical Thinking (2002).

- Learning brokerage is not just concerned with engaging learners and helping them to progress; it involves working also with agencies (including learning providers), with the aim of *facilitating change* on all sides. Traditional funding mechanisms relate to the number of students recruited, but such a funding model is out of sync with the breadth of learning brokerage activity.
- To this end, a range of partners must be involved in a learning brokerage network. This requires additional activities: mapping current provision; considering a much broader range of progression routes (eg from informal learning to formal); and developing, maintaining and monitoring effective partnership arrangements. Funding must therefore take account of these activities, which should ultimately be cost-saving through avoiding duplication and promoting inter-organisational learning. Where learning brokerages can identify discrete activities that provide specialist support in facilitating access and provision, then funding from a broader range of sources may be justified. For example, where a learning brokerage provides an open forum for supportive employers, unions and learning providers to negotiate developments in learning provision, cross-cutting regeneration funding may support this. Or, where learners require specialist support – associated, for example, with recovery from emotional problems or drug dependency – then health sector or Home Office funding may be sensibly directed to the learning brokerage hubs. This calls for a sophisticated model of 'mainstream plus additional multi-agency' funding, but it is beyond the scope of this report to explore this further.

- Because of partnership working, not all learning brokerage activity is led by FE colleges. This has two interrelated consequences for costing and funding. First, it is difficult to include the costs incurred by all partners; for example, when IAG is provided by the Connexions service, is this a cost of learning brokerage or a routine cost to be borne by Connexions? Second, there may be additional costs, for example, when a voluntary sector organisation (as opposed to an FE college) sets up and delivers an accredited course – an expensive activity. Direct comparisons should not be made between brokerages that are simply referring people on to other agencies, and those that are developing, accrediting and delivering courses, and providing ongoing learner support.

Different learning brokerage activities and target groups

It should also be recognised that there are significant differences in the types of activity undertaken directly by case study organisations, and this is reflected in the financial information.

- Some learning brokerages (eg SPELL) were involved in almost all the activities identified in the learning brokerage framework, while others (eg ESOL–IT and Go4) focused on particular activities (see **section 3.12**).
- There are also significant differences in the implementation (and impact) of key activities. For example, raising awareness and providing information can be done in a general way (eg leafleting) or in a more targeted, and arguably more effective, way (eg engaging more personally with potential learners). These activities will have quantitatively and qualitatively different results. Thus, funding needs to relate not just to quantitative targets, but to qualitative measures too.
- Another qualitative difference relates to the targeting of different groups. While all the case studies are working with educationally marginalised groups, the degree of marginalisation may be more extreme in some cases. For example, the BIF and BBB are targeting particularly challenging groups (the homeless and those with mental health needs). Critical Thinking (2002) notes the greater cost of recruiting and supporting disadvantaged learners, pointing out that disadvantage is not uniformly defined: ‘the type and level of effort required is determined by the needs of the [under-represented] communities, not by the number of disadvantaged students actually in the institution’. But they assume that all disadvantaged learners are equally expensive to engage and progress, which may not be true (and certainly is not proven).

Indicative cost guide

Activity	Cost per person[3]
Awareness raising and signposting	£15
One-to-one IAG	£52
Engaging and supporting learners and delivering a course	£223
Reaching and supporting very excluded learners	£670

These costs do not take into account broader issues, such as creating partnerships and institutional change; nor do they include all the costs incurred, as the financial information tends to come from one partner in the network, rather than from all agencies.

3 This is a one-off cost, based on the figures provided by the case studies. It is reasonable to assume that further costs would be incurred subsequently, but they would be lower. This level of detail was not available to the research team.

Staffing costs

Proportion of costs

Staffing costs are a major expenditure for all case studies, ranging from 40% of total costs to more than 80%. It is therefore useful to consider who these staff are and to provide some indicative costings.

Types of staff

There are at least three types of staff directly involved in learning brokerage, though not all staff fall precisely into one category: generalist staff with managerial responsibility (eg project coordinator), specialist staff (eg IAG advisers) and support staff (eg doing outreach and supporting learners). There are also managers and course tutors involved in some learning brokerage initiatives.

Indicative costs

Staff type	Cost per annum
Generalist	£20,000–33,000
Specialist	c. £36,700
Support	Up to £22,800

These are approximate gross costs, including employer costs, based on the information supplied. They are only indicative, since the categories cover staff with different levels of experience and responsibility, working in different sectors, different parts of the country and with different target groups. These figures exclude London weightings.

Funding sources

Funding has been secured from a range of the following sources, usually short term:

- LSC: local budgets and AimHigher
- HEFCE: AimHigher and special initiative funding
- other government funding: Arts Council, New Opportunities Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Scottish Enterprise's New Futures Fund
- local funding: Employment Service and Social Services
- regeneration funding: European Social Fund (ESF), Objective 1 funding, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)
- private sector: BT
- charitable trusts.

Funding in comparison to cost

Funding problems were a recurring theme. It should also be noted that the costs presented here actually relate to what has been funded, and do not necessarily reflect the true costs of providing these activities. Many of these initiatives are working on low budgets and often do not receive the full funding requested. It would therefore be useful to carry out an additional exercise to calculate not the funding provided for these activities, but the full costs.

Sustainability

It is widely recognised in fields such as adult education and community development that short-term projects may fail to achieve their potential, or even be detrimental to the intended beneficiaries – for example, raising an interest in learning that cannot then be supported and thus further entrenching negative attitudes towards education. Within the case studies, two approaches to sustainability were evident. The main one aimed to move from project funding to mainstream funding, thus turning learning brokerage into a mainstream service (like the Youth Service or adult education). The second aimed to bring about change in partner organisations, embedding learning brokerage practices within existing agencies, so that the project could be wound up after a specified period of time. The first approach therefore is about 'project sustainability', primarily in a financial sense, while the second is concerned with bringing about changes *in others* and may be termed 'sustainable development'.

Most learning brokerages that have tried to move from project status to mainstream status have experienced difficulties, as there is competition for limited funds. Problems include a continuing dependence on comparatively short-term sources of funding, and either having to reduce services or promising to take on additional activities to secure funds from alternative sources. In two instances, though, learning brokerage has been built into an existing service – once within the voluntary sector, where additional costs were relatively low (c. £20,000) and once involving a regional LSC, which now includes learning brokerage among its 'core activities'. The LSC was persuaded to take on the learning brokerage service by reviewing the primarily quantitative data about its success. Similarly, staff at ALP – a newly established learning brokerage – were highly aware of the need to collect data to challenge received wisdom about learner needs and progression, as some comments show:

We will have our own set of evidence which is based around individual learners and their opportunities for progression and non-linear pathways, now can that body [of research] *influence the other body of evidence?*

I think research is an important tool … the evidencing of things is an important weapon to help people change their minds.

(ALP representatives)

Sustainable development (ie changing partners' practice and embedding new practices) lies at the heart of learning brokerage. Sustainability may be determined by the organisational structure of the learning brokerage (see **section 4**). For example, in an internally oriented organisation, close control over areas such as the curriculum, learning and teaching approaches and learner support is possible; but this may be more difficult in a partnership, where the learning broker's role can be that of change agent for an external organisations (eg an FE college). The former, however, will not be sustainable if funding is not forthcoming, but the latter may remain in place even after the demise of a learning brokerage intervention, *if* it can successfully influence and change its partners during its period of operation. EOL was focusing on this approach and a related 'exit' strategy and has been identifying suitable partners (in part via a local audit), researching and documenting their processes and successes, and recruiting volunteers from the community. It must be noted, though, that the project's initial timeframe has been extended and the exit strategy has been postponed.

The chosen model of sustainability (project sustainability or sustainable development) determines the elements of sustainability pursued, but key issues include:

- sustaining staff and volunteers – recruitment, training, support, development and retention
- sustaining learners – providing ongoing support through organisational structures rather than dependency on individual staff and volunteers
- empowering the learners – for example, to take further control over both their own learning and that of their peers
- sustaining the region or sub-region – working in partnership or in tandem with other agencies (eg educational, social, health and regeneration interventions), rather than competing for 'beneficiaries'
- sustaining relationships with partners
- financial sustainability
- organisational structures and learning (eg information and data collection, sharing and use), reducing dependency on key individuals and learning from experience:

The ideal scenario is that we have a toolkit … if one of the officers got hit by a bus tomorrow, we could almost pick up with what she has and hand it over to someone else … there's a good percentage of systems in place: 40% of their time probably is spent doing paperwork … it's not just touchy feely going out, there's a lot of paperwork, there's a lot of self-discipline needed.

(Project manager, EOL)

In practice, however, the majority of learning brokerages were very concerned about financial sustainability, and paid less attention to the other elements of sustainability.

Conclusions

- It is difficult to cost learning brokerage accurately because of the range of activities undertaken, the breadth of change sought, the different target groups and the need to work in partnership.
- Different learning brokerage activities need to be recognised and costed separately.
- The function of learning brokerage is much broader than simply engaging learners and helping them to progress: it also includes institutional change. This is not captured in the traditional funding model based on student numbers.
- Partnership is at the heart of learning brokerage and partners share roles and activities; therefore the funding model needs to take account of these factors.
- Not all learning brokerages will undertake all activities, thus there are qualitative differences between learning brokerages. The funding model therefore needs a qualitative dimension, too.
- The nature of the target group and the associated cost implications need to be considered.
- A more detailed study is needed of the cost of the different stages of the learning brokerage process in relation to different providers, different target groups and different types of intervention.
- Guidelines on funding for different types of learning brokerage staff could be developed.
- A range of funding sources are identified, but overall there is a lack of security.

Section 6

Conclusions, implications and recommendations

6.1 Summary of findings and conclusions

The main findings are summarised below, grouped in such a way as to provide a useful way to reflect on major issues and possible future developments. Again, it is worth noting that the case studies featured here identified themselves as being at the hub of learning brokerage activities. No individual case study was able to demonstrate tried and tested practice in relation to all parts of the learning brokerage framework. That said, their reflection on the framework has informed our findings and their subsequent practice.

Findings and conclusions relate to the six-stage learning brokerage framework:

- understanding the current situation
- gaining entry and building trust
- raising interest in learning, and making learning meaningful
- identifying the right learning opportunity
- promoting learner success
- addressing organisational issues.

General comments

- While the learning brokerage framework is presented in a singular form, it calls for context-specific interpretation. Thus, there are different models of learning brokerage practice – some will be focused on a central hub organisation whose strategic relations and networks are largely internally focused (the 'simple' model'); in others, inter-organisational relations will be predominant, and collaborative or partnership working will be central (the 'complex' model) (see **section 4**).
- Collectively, the case studies provided evidence of developed and developing practice relating to all elements of the learning brokerage framework (see **section 3.12**).
- Most learning brokerages in the study prioritised work to gain entry to and build trust with learners and potential learners, 'gatekeepers', learning providers and other partners.
- Raising interest in learning was a vital and time-consuming activity for most of the case studies, which continually tried and tested new ways to engage potential learners.
- In terms of looking at change in learning provision, the hub organisations were not an ideal starting place to begin such an exploration; consequently, the ability to provide evidence of new curricula and pedagogies informed by learning brokerage was relatively scant (see **sections 5.4** and **5.5**).

- Evaluation of learning brokerage ought to take a multi-functional approach, looking at evidence of brokerage activities, improvements in practice, knowledge production for individuals and organisations, and 'impact' (see **section 5.7**).
- Learning brokerage networks should be able to develop 'joined up' service provision – with learning at the centre.
- The learning brokerage framework calls for learner-centred provision, accreditation and progression.
- It is likely that the process of learning brokerage will take place informally in various small-scale settings without ever being recognised as such.
- Learning brokerage can be incorporated into existing systems and partnerships.

Targeting learning brokerage

- Good research and consultation about learners and provision provides a sound foundation for effective brokerage.
- Learning brokerage can take place in all sectors and on various scales.
- Learning brokerage can be based on targeting a particular cohort of potential learners, or a geographic locale based on socio-economic factors.

Applications of the learning brokerage framework

- Effective learning brokerage is dependent on good practice in all six stages of the brokerage framework, whether conducted by one organisation or through collaborative links between several.
- The process of learning brokerage can relate to the supported mediation between potential learners and providers at any level of education.
- This research enabled a broad range of organisations to recognise the value of the learning brokerage framework as a tool in service and organisational development and strategic planning.
- Case study organisations also recognised the value of the learning brokerage framework in self-evaluation – as a tool for reflecting on and improving existing practice and relationships.
- The framework may be used to develop brokerage practices from scratch, beginning with 'understanding the current situation' (see **section 5.1**); or it may be used to guide the development of organisations' and networks' existing brokerage practice.

Challenges for learning brokerage

- The terms ‘learning broker’ and ‘learning brokerage’ are not used consistently. This was demonstrated by the range of organisations that identified themselves and their practice as being relevant to this research.
- Work is needed to establish the understanding of learning brokerage as a process – there remains a risk that individuals and agencies do not recognise the strategic or organising weight of this activity.
- The value of horizontal progression to some learners and the broader community ought to be recognised.
- With greater awareness of the learning brokerage process, organisations may seek to draw down funding for non-brokerage activities – in which, for example, giving greater access to traditional (‘safe’) students is generally preferred to changing learning provision.
- Some self-identified ‘learning brokerages’ will use the term inappropriately to refer to standalone activities such as marketing, IAG provision or increasing access – with little, if any, responsibility for change falling on the learning provider (an integral part of ‘real’ brokerage).
- Evidence suggests that SMEs are less able to contribute to the development of learning brokerage, and are less likely to benefit from workforce learning opportunities.
- Learners’ potential progression routes – theoretically guided by the learning brokerage hub organisations – were not always clear. When there is a lack of clarity about suitable progression routes, learners are at risk of cyclical low-level learning.
- There needs to be clarity as regards funding mechanisms and sources for the broad range of learning brokerage activities across sectors.
- Exclusively target-driven funding may force hub organisations and providers to avoid ‘high risk’ potential learners, thus damaging the potential for learning brokerage to facilitate social inclusion.
- Identifying the right learning opportunity represents the critical area for negotiation between learner and provider and hence a key area for mediation by brokerage staff. Most case studies had strong links with one or two supportive and accommodating providers. But the inability of some learning brokers to influence provision (due in part to funding policy) limits their effectiveness. Some learning providers also struggle to show that they are capable of responding imaginatively.
- Influencing learning providers is difficult even within the learning brokerage framework, but it is vital and must not be dropped from future activity. Crucial to this will be the hub organisations gaining access to those who can effect change in course provision.

Accessing key stakeholders

- Larger employers and trade unions are better positioned to contribute to and benefit from learning brokerage networks than SMEs.

Staffing learning brokerage

- The personal characteristics of staff (being approachable, friendly, outgoing, trusted, able to take the initiative, good at communicating) are seen as crucial to effective brokerage. Indeed, the case studies showed signs of an over-reliance on the qualities, good will and energy of individual staff members.
- Training for learning brokerage staff (to include support staff not directly attempting to raise engagement in learning) must be valued; better awareness of learning brokerage within and between organisations will make the future development of the learning brokerage framework 'from within' more likely.
- Developing the professional identity of learning brokerage staff will enhance the cultural acceptance of the process and improve transferable skills.
- Learning brokerage staff must have a broad view of what constitutes valuable learning – this means recognising informal learning as valid too.

Funding learning brokerage

- The value or wider benefits of learning brokerage may be viewed in terms of 'learning engagement plus'.
- Recognising learning brokerage as a multi-agency networked process that provides supported mediation between learners and providers is consistent with developing broad multi-agency methods for gauging 'success'.
- The learning brokerage framework enables organisations to identify – for funders – the broad range of learner-related activities that contribute to the supported mediation between potential learners and learning providers. Where the value of discrete support tasks could be demonstrated, this would justify 'mainstream plus' funding.
- Short-term funding is said to have a limited impact and can also increase feelings of vulnerability and therefore brokerage staff turnover; this is especially problematic since building relationships is a pervasive feature of learning brokerage.
- Large-scale employers and trade unions may give financial support to learning brokerage that is driven by specific workforce planning issues.

6.2 Implications

This sub-section looks at further development of the learning brokerage process and raises issues that must be addressed in learning brokerage policy.

- Learning brokerage is a process for engaging and retaining potential learners (including those traditionally marginalised from formal learning environments), and has the potential to be rolled out for other locations and groups. However, this requires developing a flexible approach that takes account of existing good practice, overcomes the current weaknesses and avoids the potential danger of naïvely replicating context-specific projects.
- The development of horizontal or non-linear progression pathways would further support learners' engagement. This is a matter for learning providers and funding bodies. In terms of promoting lifelong learning, learners' progression needs to be at a pace which is appropriate to them. Failure to acknowledge this will contribute to the outright rejection of learning by some people who would otherwise benefit from a more measured approach. The inter-generational impact of this is obviously a matter of concern.
- Much learning brokerage activity (both formal and informal) is not recognised or, in some sectors, even named. Within this project, practitioners have valued the development of an identity. Development of a professional identity and recognition could be achieved through basic and advanced training and inter-organisational support in the form of career progression opportunities.
- Longer-term funding is required for learning brokerage; this must recognise all the stages of the brokerage process and avoid funding only at the point of course enrolment or completion. There are many brokerage activities that need to take place before learners reach this stage. Funders should remember that learning brokerage is broad in nature (eg creating and maintaining partnerships, changing attitudes of learning providers, employers and other gatekeepers).
- A funding regime that supports not just learners on courses, but the wider learning brokerage role, requires the development of a more appropriate evaluation system that takes into account the context of specific learning brokerage activity and the breadth of activities involved.

While there is good evidence of the potential for the development of learning brokerage, there are also some possible problems.

- Although learning brokerage could be a cost-effective way of reaching, supporting and educating marginalised individuals and groups, it has significant long-term cost implications. There is a tension between who pays for learning and who benefits. There is therefore a danger that economic imperatives will prevail and learning related to the labour market and employer needs is prioritised over learning that promotes personal development and social or civic participation.

- A more comprehensive funding mechanism (ie not just based on learners on courses) would require a more robust monitoring and evaluation system, ensuring accountability and promoting ongoing learning and development – adaptation and flexibility is crucial. Implementing such a system would perhaps challenge conventional thinking in some policy circles. (A monitoring system based exclusively on targets may have detrimental implications, as staff in learning brokerages and learning providers may be encouraged to 'play the system' and particularly challenging or time-consuming groups will remain excluded from the benefits of education and lifelong learning.)
- The wider benefits of learning need to be recognised and promoted, including the fact that increased self-confidence and social interaction may lead to greater employment opportunities. The focus should be on creating networks to facilitate changes in provision as well as targeting learners.
- Key staff (particularly those involved in regular direct contact with clients) would benefit from more (and more formalised) training and support and opportunities for career development. To a great extent, this will relate to increasing intra- and inter-organisational knowledge and becoming familiar with the broad context of learning brokerage activity.
- Engaging non-traditional learners and assisting them to progress into mainstream education institutions requires organisational change, for example, to practical arrangements, pedagogy, curricula and culture. It is not sufficient to rely on learners to change to fit into a traditional model of learning. The learning brokerage framework is designed to inform and facilitate this process.

6.3 **Recommendations**

Recommendations for national and regional policy-makers

- The process framework and practice of learning brokerage should be recognised, encouraged and properly funded.
- Learning brokerage should be encouraged through national and regional policy-making, but this should not be a 'one size fits all' approach. Instead, policy-makers should promote flexibility and context-sensitive interventions that are informed by the learning brokerage framework.
- There needs to be recognition and support for non-linear progression. The current policy climate and associated funding regimes promote upward vertical progression. The time-consuming nature of transition into learning for some groups should be recognised and horizontal (as well as vertical) progression encouraged and financed. This needs to be supported by the development of appropriate curricula and progression pathways – either by learning brokerage 'hubs' or via other regional bodies and networks.

- A training module for learning brokerage would help to create a range of professionals who would be better informed about the process and would recognise the breadth of activities associated with it. This would help in raising awareness of learning brokerage within and between organisations and allow staff to place their context-specific roles against 'the big picture'. Training (eg at Level 2 or Level 3) could be available both for those who identify themselves as learning brokerage workers – thus enhancing their professional identity – and those for whom brokerage is not a central concern (eg health visitors). More specialised courses could also be offered to support specific professional development; this might be based on strategic network development.
- Learning brokerage encompasses much more than just recruiting learners. While this makes it an effective and distinctive strategy, it also necessitates longer-term funding which looks beyond the number of learners recruited onto courses within a fixed time period. A broad range of activities requires funding and the incremental nature of working with marginalised potential learners must be recognised. Furthermore, funding should be available to support all learning brokerage partners, for example, enabling colleges to provide more flexible learning (eg smaller class numbers in off-site locations).
- Learning brokerage calls for evaluation based on the range of activities and partners involved in the process, including less tangible activities, 'softer' outcomes and taking account of learners' views of success. A competence-based model of evaluation could be developed, based on a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that the aims and objectives of each learning brokerage partnership have been met. Additional or unintended benefits can be captured, and recognition of mistakes and subsequently amended strategies should be positively acknowledged. Evidence could be presented in multiple forms – statistical data, photographs, learner case studies and other artefacts. Moreover, such portfolios of evidence might well arise from learning brokerage organisations' use of the framework (see **sections 5.1–5.6**) as a guide for self-evaluation and improved practice.

Recommendations for learning brokerage practitioners

- While a rigid view of learning brokerage should not be adopted, interventions should be informed and guided by the learning brokerage framework. Hub organisations and networks should use the framework to check (and prove) that they are undertaking a full range of activities that aim to provide sustainable and supportive mediation between learners and providers.
- Learning brokerages require effective relations within and between organisations. Thus, partnership working is likely. This should involve a broad range of partners, including smaller groups (ie at 'grass roots' level).
- Learning brokerage networks need to undertake early research to ensure that they are working with the most appropriate partners, building on existing good practice, filling gaps and identifying the most strategic places in which to operate.

- Appropriate progression pathways need to be developed for learners, from initial 'taster' courses into other forms of learning. Learning brokerages must therefore encourage and support organisational change in mainstream education institutions (eg FE colleges and HE institutions) as well as providing other forms of learning.
- The development of more robust and transparent recruitment and progression mechanisms for staff would aid clarification of individuals' and organisations' roles in learning brokerage. Crucially, key staff must be supported to avoid individual 'burnout', to avoid over-reliance on individuals, and to ensure that learning brokerage is a sustainable process.
- As a matter of routine, the learning brokerage framework should be used to assist learning brokerage networks to undertake self-reflection and formative evaluation to improve practice. Such exercises should also be used to meet external evaluation requirements.
- The framework should inform organisations' recruitment strategy for learning brokerage activity, and their identification of ongoing training needs.
- Research should be used to identify those who are (and are not) engaged in learning, current learning provision, gaps in provision, other agencies involved and their perspectives. This information should then aid the identification of strategic sites for intervention.

Recommendations for learning providers and partners

- Learning providers and partners must be actively involved in widening participation; partnership in general and learning brokerage in particular provide a framework for this. Likewise, they should be *active* partners.
- Learning brokerage networks provide crucial information and knowledge about the needs of marginalised learners; this insight should be respected and acted on by other bodies to bring about organisational change.
- Education institutions and other agencies should be willing to provide their services in a different way – for example, without requiring minimum group sizes – or in another location.
- Support for learners to access learning and succeed at it needs to be tailored to individual and group needs with an emphasis on proactive support – rather than 'We're here if you need us.' Learning brokerage should demonstrate a 'joined up' understanding and support of learners, matched with responsive flexible provision. This requires institutions to recognise and demonstrate ongoing support as being crucial to ensure marginalised learners' access to sustainable learning.
- Several case studies demonstrated the importance of early research to develop supported learning opportunities which complement – and do not replicate – existing provision and services. Future provision should build in time and money for such research and consultation.

Section 7

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Appendix 1

Key questions and activities for brokering learning, using the learning brokerage framework

Stage of learning brokerage framework	Key activities for brokering learning
Understanding the current situation Who are the target group or community of potential learners, and how are they identifiable? What current learning is undertaken and what opportunities are accessible to this target group and/or in this geographical community? Is this information corroborated by potential learners and providers? What can be learned from research from alternative locations or target groups? Who should undertake the formative research; eg professional researchers or learning brokerage members? What kind of information or data is required, and are there different requirements by different partners? How can the target group or community be best engaged with to discover learning interests? How can ongoing consultation be built into the learning brokerage framework? How is new knowledge disseminated and acted on (ie how is organisational learning facilitated)? What additional information is needed to inform the decision-making and planning of learners and/or providers?	Research: ■ mapping the local area ■ using evidence or indicators from national and international research ■ employing external research or promoting internal research Consultation: ■ with potential learners (ie via established groups, 'door knocking', etc) ■ with learning providers and tutors ■ with organisations working in similar or complementary areas
Gaining entry and building trust What qualities do potential learners, gatekeepers, learning providers and other networked organisations wish to see in the learning brokerage organisation? Who are the key individuals within various groups or organisations with whom it would be most productive to build a trust relationship? Whether inside or outside the learning brokerage organisation, who is or are best placed to credibly engage with each group of key contacts (eg potential learners, learning providers, additional support services)? What information can be used to gain entry and build trust with each group? Have the time and an appropriate programme of activities for gaining entry and building and maintaining trust been built into the standard practice of the learning brokerage? How is information that is gathered from ongoing consultation with various parties to be collated and used?	Ongoing consultation: ■ being open about brokerage constraints Negotiation about the nature and purpose of potential learning activities: ■ with gatekeepers (ie employers, community or religious leaders, health visitors, etc) ■ with learners ■ with learning providers Exploring and establishing relationships from which networks can be developed: ■ with informal contacts (ie those who have casual – though direct – links with the target group; eg peers currently involved in learning) ■ with formal contacts (ie link workers, union learning representatives, outreach workers)

Stage of learning brokerage framework	Key activities for brokering learning
Raising interest in learning, and making learning meaningful What 'hard' and 'soft' benefits would engaging in learning provide for the target group? What are the practical and psychological barriers that prevent the target group from engaging in learning? Are these individual or socio-cultural barriers? What kind of approach to raising interest do these necessitate? What would be a non-threatening 'language of learning' that could be adopted here? How is an awareness of the potential learners' living contexts achieved? What learning activities would be relevant to the lives of the target group? What are the practical and psychological barriers that prevent learning providers from adapting provision? Is there information or are there incentives that can break these barriers? Do learning providers perceive competition for the acquisition of new learners? How can this be ensured? How can sceptical employers benefit from supporting workforce learning? How can learning be related to the existing and future demands on the workforce?	Developing awareness of the context of potential learners' lives to create relevant and accessible learning opportunities Developing an informed understanding about barriers (economic, social, emotional) to involvement in learning by collaborating and engaging with: ■ potential learners ■ learning providers ■ support services Employing informal learning approaches: ■ separate to mainstream provision with a view to progression ■ as part of mainstream learning provision Starting from where learners are by: ■ swapping the language of formal learning (eg 'exams', 'education', 'learning', etc) for more user-friendly terminology ■ recognising and valuing local people's interests – integrating 'learning' into other activities ■ making learners 'comfortable' (using local venues, involving friends and family, etc) ■ starting from existing knowledge and skills (accrediting prior learning) Appropriately validating learning experiences: ■ encouraging mainstream providers to adopt flexible and authentic forms of validation
Identifying the right learning opportunity How do learning brokerages find out about existing courses, and could this process be improved? Could the minimum number of learners required by colleges for delivery of learning in the community be reduced? What mechanisms are in place if numbers fall short? Do learning brokerages have to become learning providers in their own right? How can the right balance be achieved? Within learning brokerage organisations, who carries out the negotiation between learner and provider? At what level does this negotiation take place? What activities or strategies can be used to help learners progress from community-based provision to college provision? What staff development is in place to improve attitudes around community learning? How can different measures of success for learners and learning brokerages be accommodated?	Formal approaches, identifying existing learning options and pathways: ■ effective signposting of existing formal pathways Developing informal approaches for learners to create their own learning pathways: ■ based on accrediting prior learning, skills and experiences ■ setting up 'taster courses' based on interests ■ mediating in an imaginative way between formal providers and potential learners Negotiating with mainstream providers: ■ encouraging them to provide relevant pathways or set up new 'tailor-made' courses Providing support: ■ informally introducing learners to other learning contexts – coaxing them to go further and easing the transition and progression from one learning context to another ■ working with learning providers to ensure that support is provided ■ building group or peer support

Stage of learning brokerage framework	Key activities for brokering learning
Promoting learning success Who decides what learner success is? How can different definitions of success be recognised? How is learner success promoted and supported? How can individuals be better prepared to take part in learning? How can more collaborative support be achieved? How can learning brokerages help to inform individuals about the costs of learning and dispel any myths? How can the broader objectives of learning be demonstrated and supported? What staff development takes place around tutoring in the community? What activities and strategies can be employed to promote early successes? How can the knowledge of brokers on the needs of learners be shared with learning providers?	Preparation: ■ for the learner, both formally and informally (ie clear information on potential costs, indicating relevance of people's existing interests to learning activities, being 'available' to answer learner queries, etc) ■ of the learning providers (increasing understanding of learners' needs) Developing appropriate pedagogy, curricula and assessment: ■ negotiating with learning providers to adapt courses and accreditation ■ working with learners to explore what they want from learning and then meeting these needs – learning activities developed to support the objectives of the learners (eg to assist in their children's education) ■ sensitivity to cost restraints for certain learners Providing support services: ■ integrated support built into learning programmes ■ 'added on' services ■ working with formal IAG services ■ for individual learners ■ for groups of learners Facilitating progression: ■ horizontally ■ vertically ■ to employment

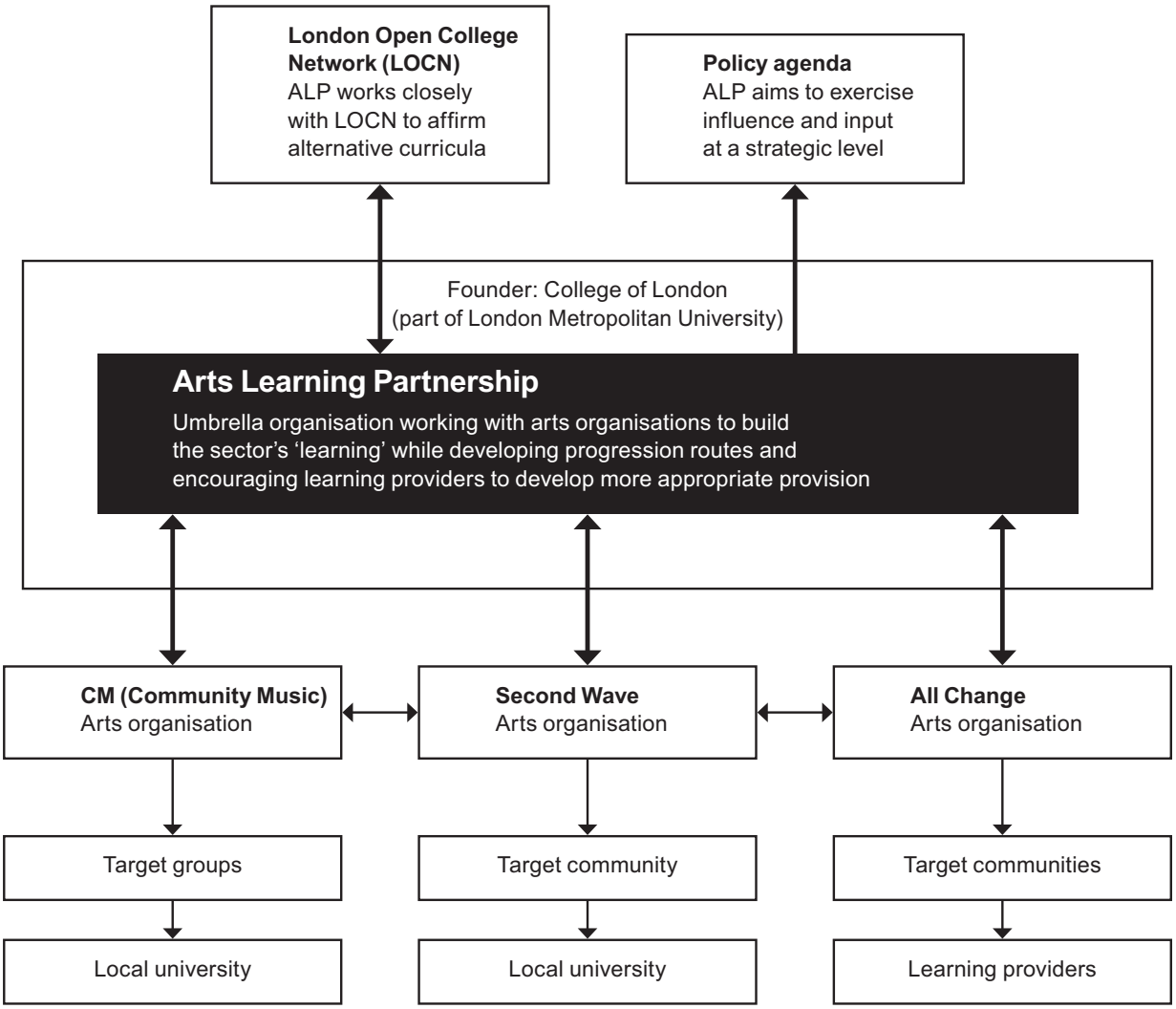
Stage of learning brokerage framework	Key activities for brokering learning
Addressing organisational issues What knowledge and skills should learning brokerage staff bring to their roles? What knowledge and skills will be developed from within the learning brokerage? What training is available for the development of learning brokerage staff? How does this match their knowledge and skills needs? For the benefit of new staff and in the interests of sustainability and improvement, what data should be recorded on current learning brokerage activity and networks developed by individuals and by the organisation? How can training for learning brokerage be further developed formally and validly? What is the mechanism for the provision of ongoing support for staff; and is this realistically accessible? What is the potential contribution of ICT to staff training and support?	Recruitment and selection issues (formal and informal): ■ personal characteristics required for brokerage activities ■ types of knowledge and skills required Training for brokerage staff: ■ formal ■ informal ('learning on the job') Support for brokerage staff: ■ ongoing ■ formal (regular meetings with line managers) ■ informal (team support) ■ organising networking meetings – opportunities to share experience ■ external support (from providers, IAG services, employers) Defining and recognising 'effective' learning brokerage: ■ accounting for the various stages of the brokerage process ■ gauging effective relationships with primary and secondary partners Approaches to monitoring and evaluation: ■ numerical targets ■ quantitative data (questionnaires and attitude surveys) ■ qualitative data (case studies) ■ tracking (non-linear pathways) ■ peer evaluation ■ user participation ■ external evaluation Sustainability and funding issues: ■ moving from project-based funding to mainstream funding ■ embedding brokerage practices within existing agencies ■ sustaining staff and volunteers ■ sustaining and empowering learners ■ sustaining the region – working in partnership with other agencies, rather than competing for 'beneficiaries' ■ strengthening organisational learning structures.

Appendix 2

Diagrams showing the organisational structure of the case studies

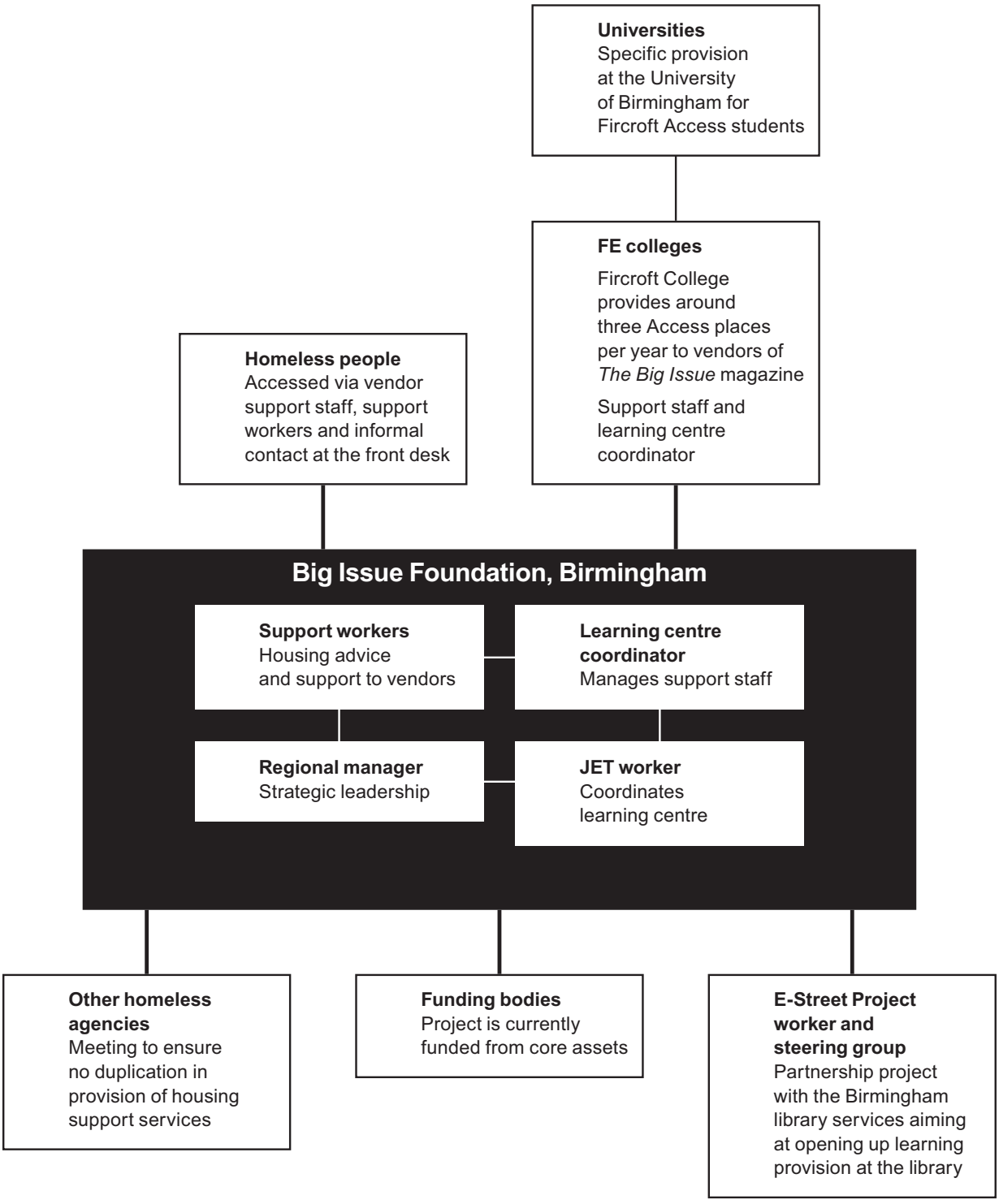
These diagrams present the main organisation visited as the ‘hub’ of a learning brokerage process (represented by a shaded background), with linked organisations shown on the periphery. The diagrams do not represent objective pictures of the relative status of the different agencies; rather, they are snapshots based on the relationships and links as conveyed by the case study organisations.

Case study 1
Arts Learning Partnership (ALP), London

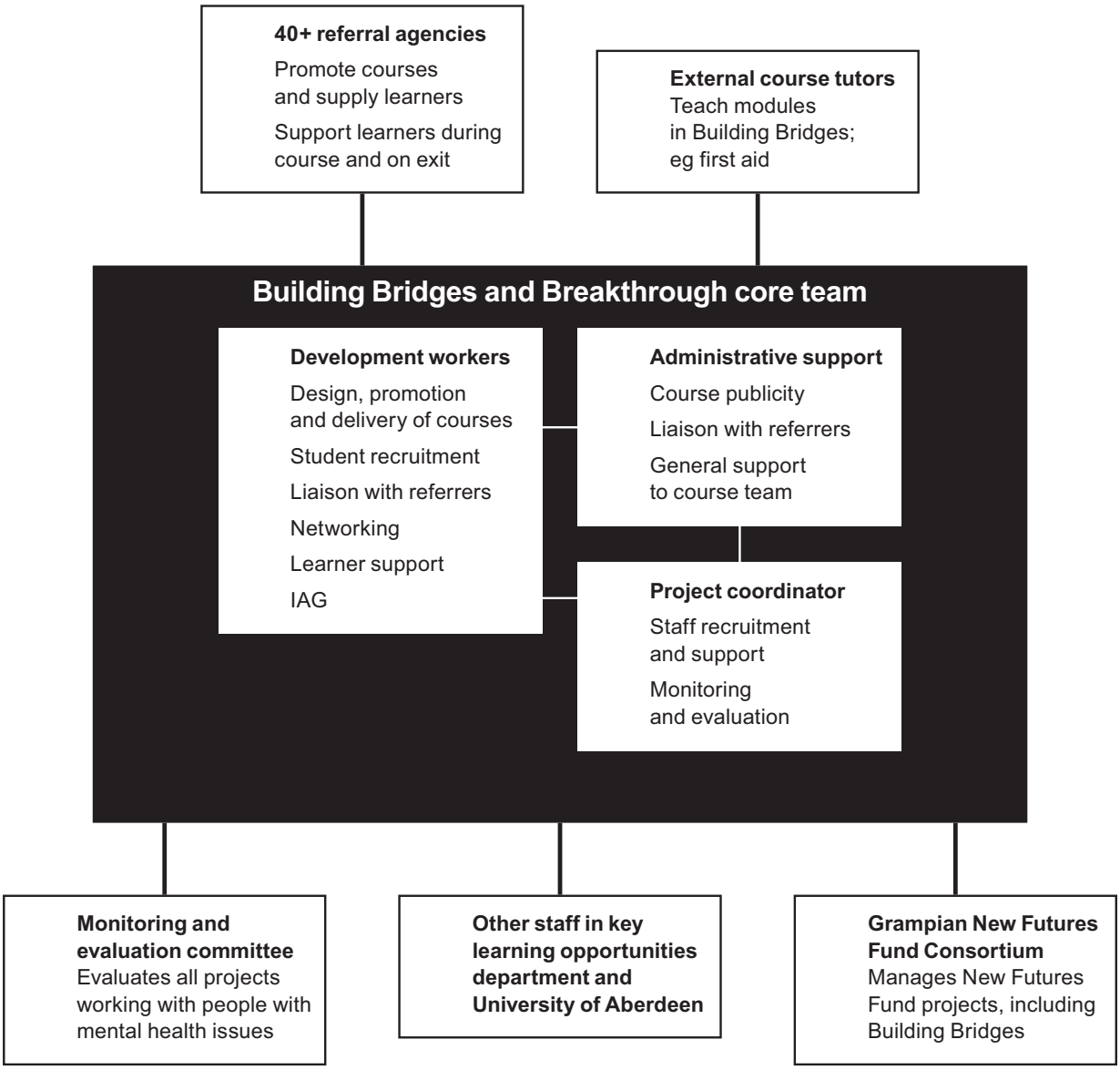


Case study 2

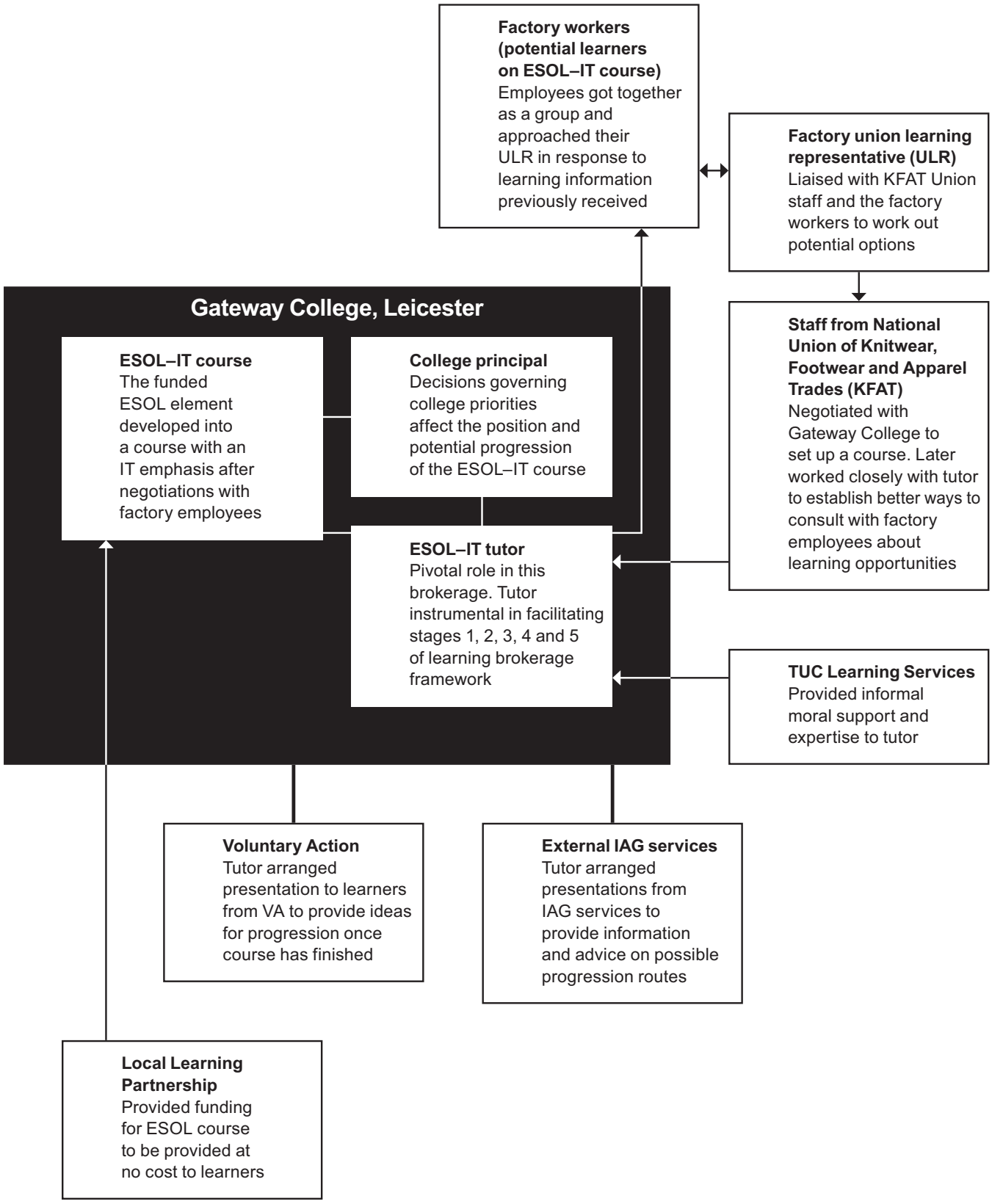
The Big Issue Foundation (BIF) JET scheme, Birmingham



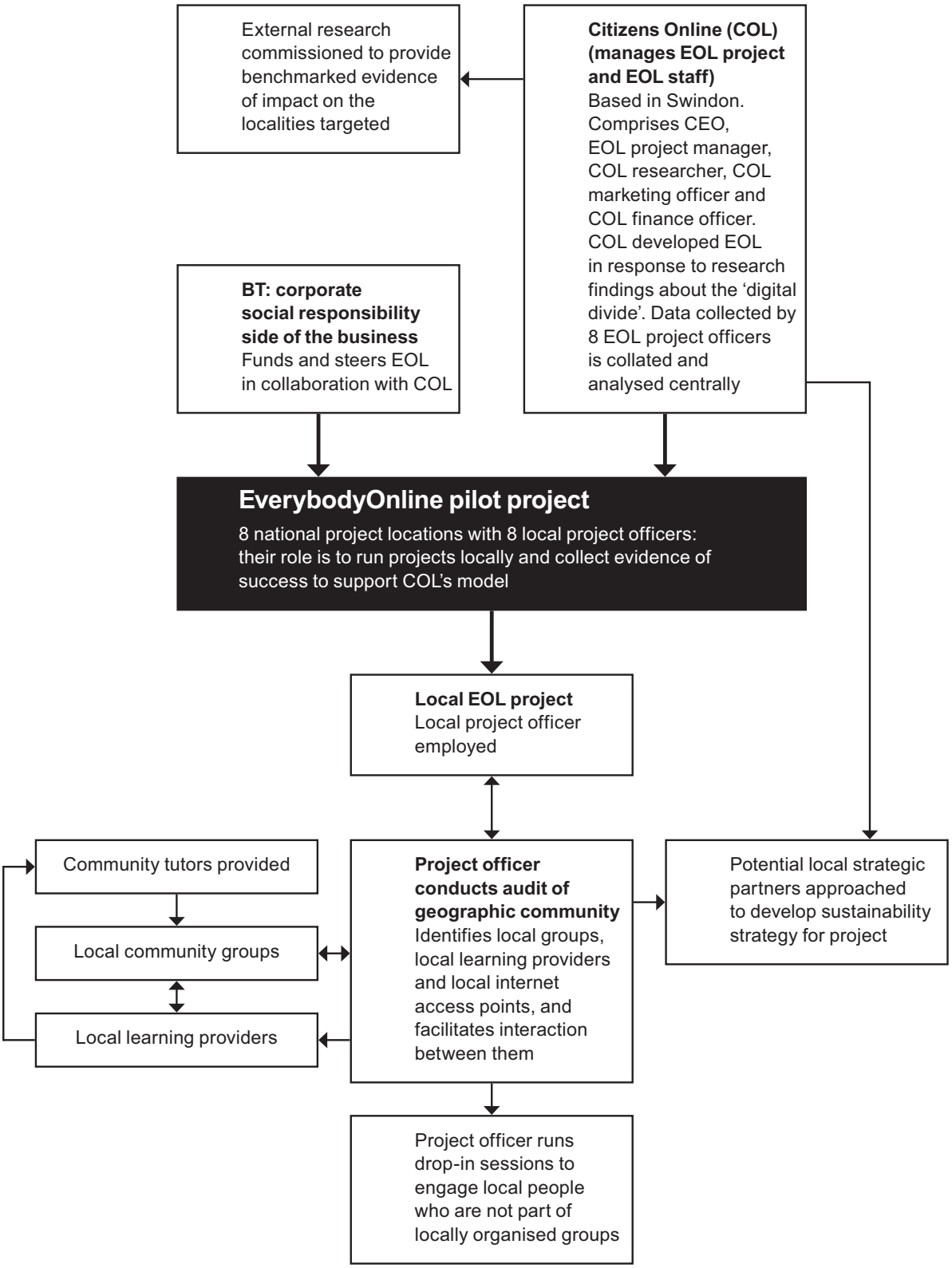
Case study 3
Building Bridges and Breakthrough (BBB), University of Aberdeen



Case study 4
ESOL–IT course, Gateway College, Leicester

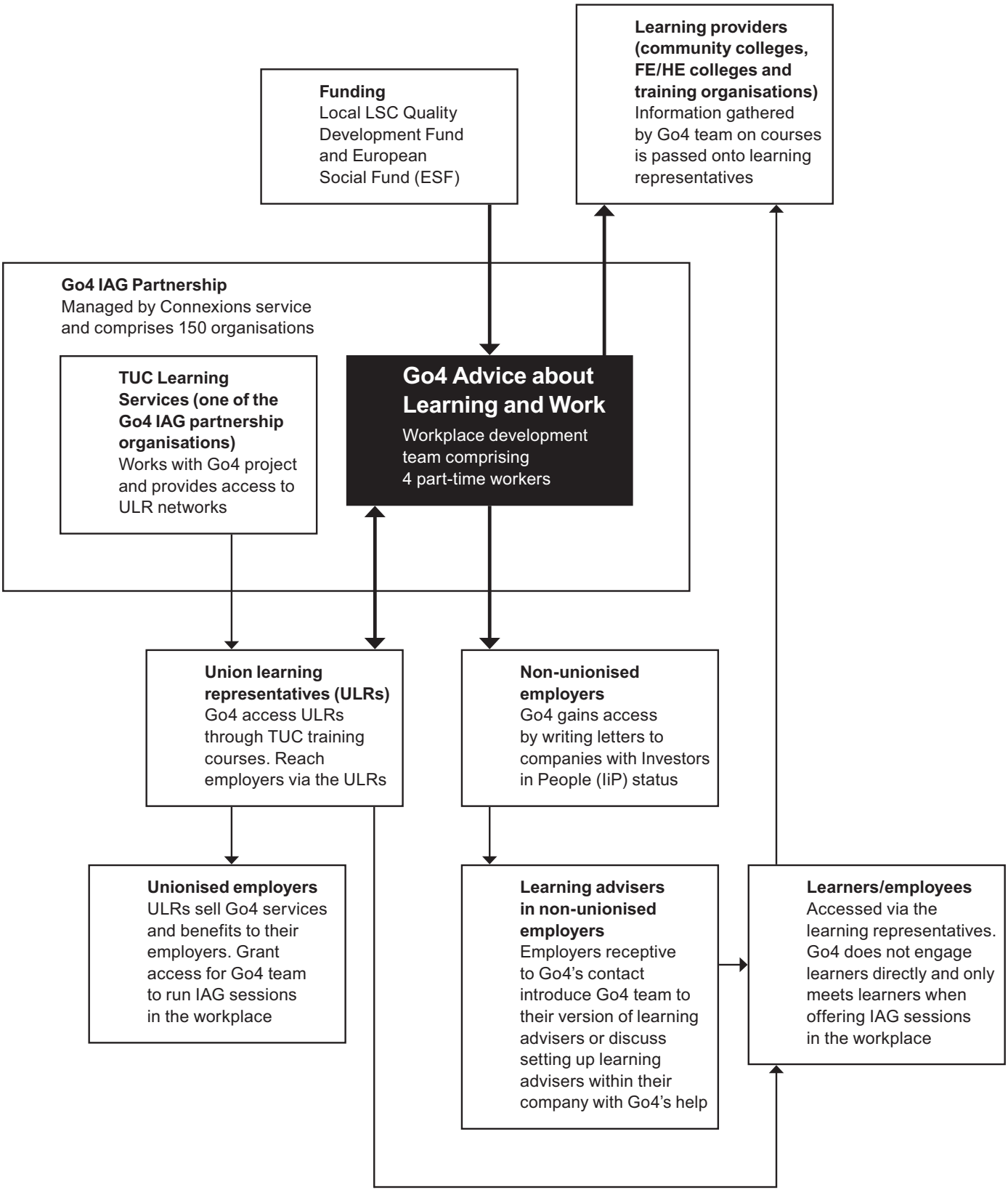


Case study 5
EverybodyOnline (EOL)



Case study 6

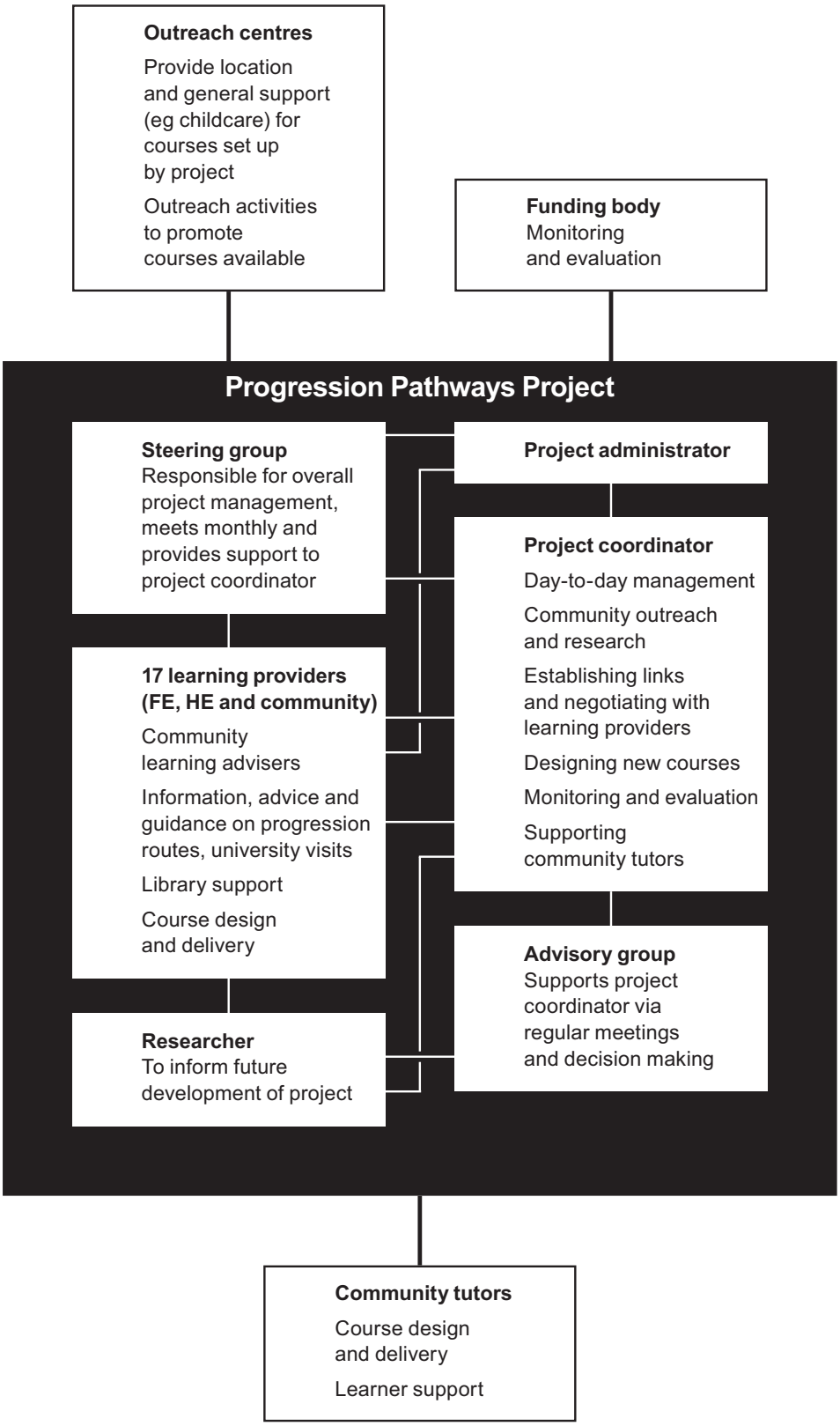
Go4 Advice about Learning and Work, Devon and Cornwall



After the completion of the LSRC research, Go4 Advice about Learning and Work changed its name to **nextstep** advice on learning and work.

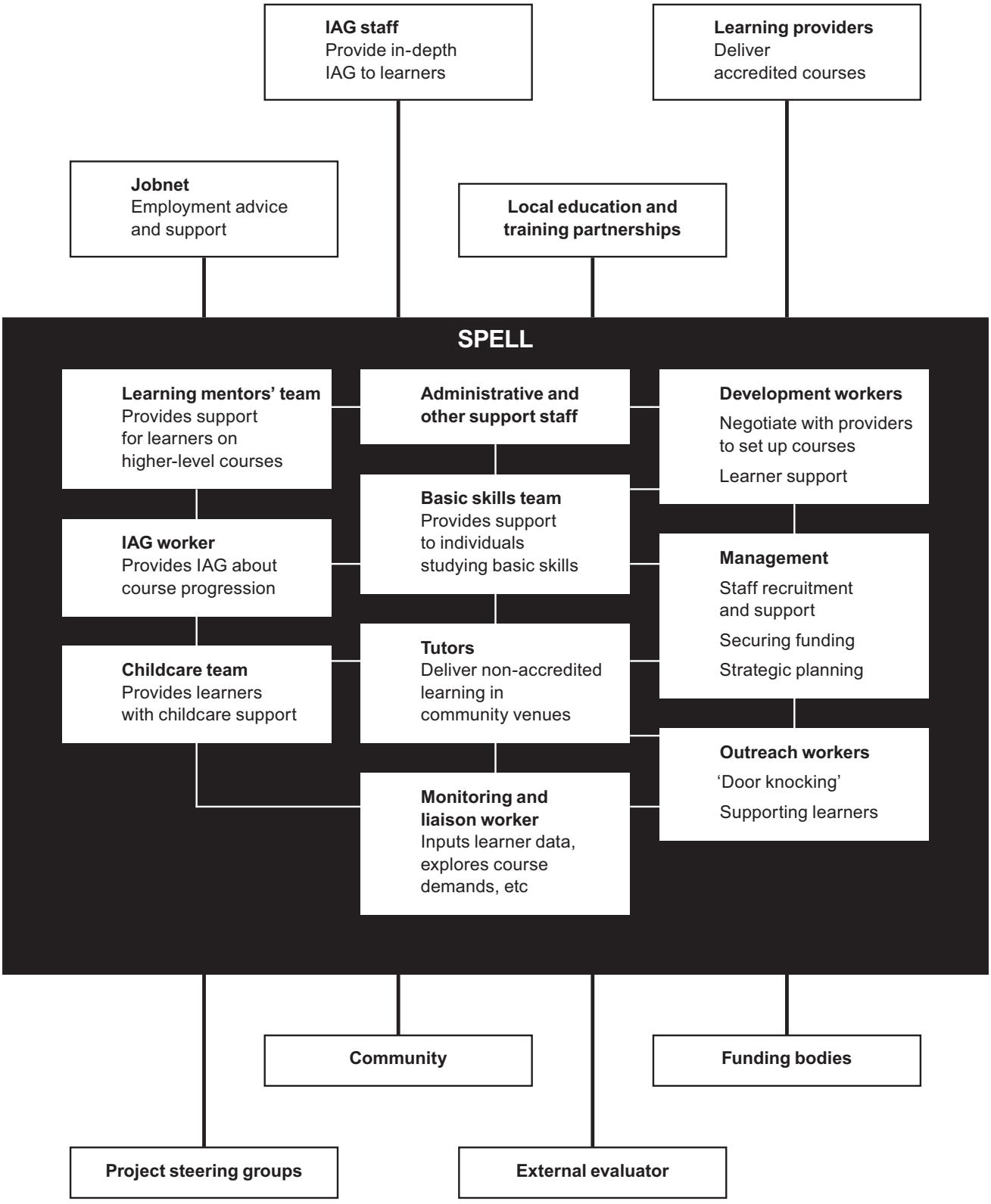
Case study 7

Progression Pathways Project (PPP), Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley



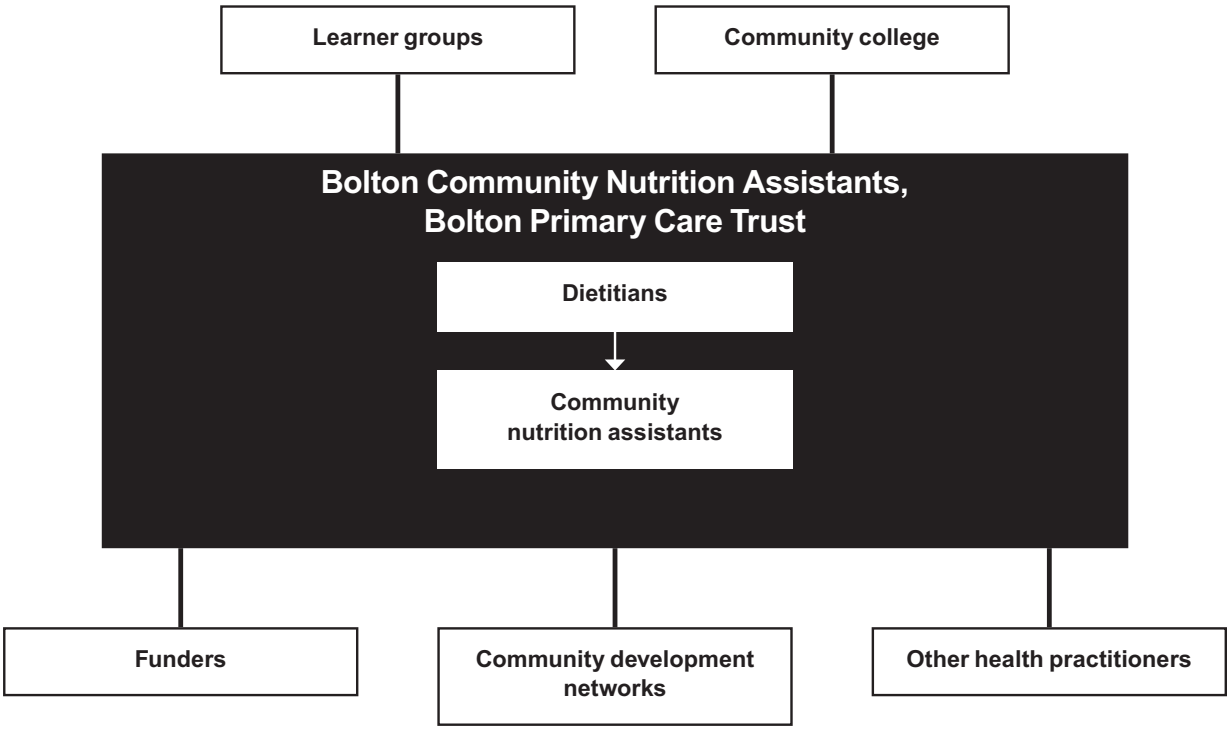
Case study 8

SPELL (Supporting People into Employment and Lifelong Learning), North-East Sheffield



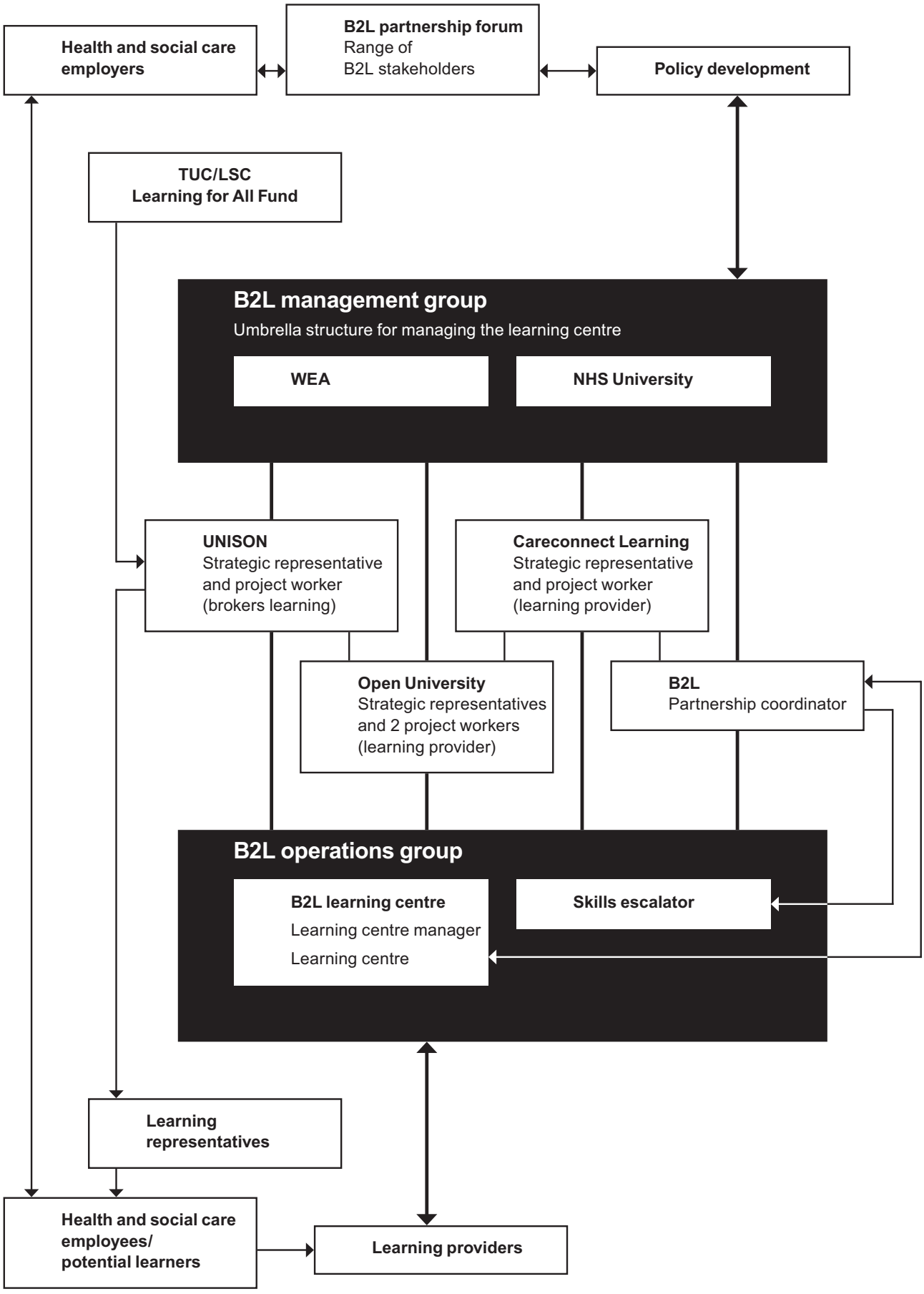
Case study 9

Community Nutrition Assistants (CNA), Bolton Primary Care Trust



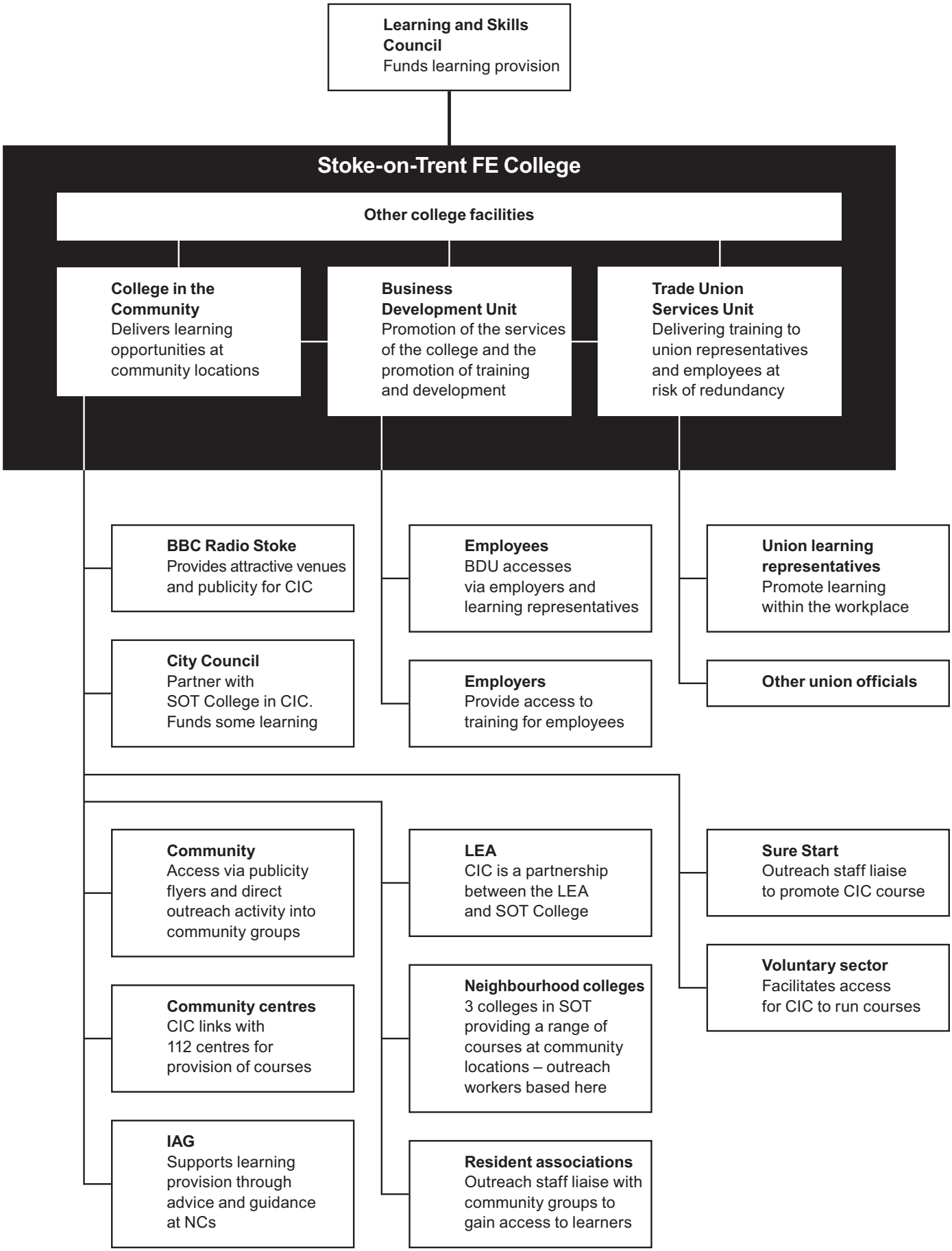
Case study 10

Bridges to Learning (B2L), Newcastle upon Tyne



Case study 11

Stoke-on-Trent College: College in the Community initiative, business development unit and trade union studies unit



Appendix 3

List of members of practitioner panel and advisory group

Practitioner panel members

Jennifer Adshead, Education and Training Director, Denman College

Jan Barber, Leeds Metropolitan University

Sally Benn, Newcastle Voluntary Sector Training Project

Jay Gardiner, Events Coordinator, North Staffs Racial Equality Council

Aileen Gilhooly, Leeds Metropolitan University

Alan Hatton-Yeo, Beth Johnson Foundation

Brenda Jackson, Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council

Kathryn James, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

Gay Lobley, Basic Skills Agency (BSA)

Pauline Lynn, Teesside University

Catherine Maxwell, National Project Manager, Citizens Online

Pauline Murphy, TUC National Development Worker, Union Learning Fund

David Peet, Regional Manager (Midlands and East Anglia), The Big Issue Foundation

Jane Samuels, Access and Widening Participation Coordinator, Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication

Dawn Walker, Basic Skills Agency (BSA)

John Williams, District Secretary, Workers' Educational Association (WEA), London District

Advisory group members

Parin Bahl, Associate Director, Capita Strategic Education Services

Tony Chandler, Chief Executive, Careconnect Learning

Professor John Field, Director, Division of Academic Innovation and Continuing Education, University of Stirling

Sally Faraday, Research Manager, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

Sue Taylor, Research Manager, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

Professor Tony Watts, Life President, National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) and Visiting Professor of Career Development, University of Derby

Appendix 4

The case studies

This appendix is published online as *Learning brokerage: Eleven case studies of learning brokerage practice*. Available via www.LSDA.org.uk/pubs/