Department for Education

The evaluation of the raising the participation age locally-led delivery projects (RPA) 2011 to 2012: case study findings

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Executive summary

Background

1. The Education and Skills Act (2008) increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning. From 2013, young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 and from 2015 they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday.

2. Raising the Participation Age (RPA) does not mean young people must stay in school; they will be able to choose one of the following options:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education;
- an Apprenticeship; or
- full-time work with part-time education or training.

3. Work has already been undertaken to prepare for RPA at a local level. The previous phases of local work – the RPA trials – have already shown some of the steps that areas can take to prepare for full participation. In Phase 1 (September 2009 – March 2010) 10 local authorities (LAs) and one sub-regional group (SRG) focused on one of three specific themes: Information Advice and Guidance; Re-engagement of 16- and 17-year-olds; and the development of area-wide local solutions. In Phase 2 (April 2010 – March 2011) four new LAs and one SRG joined the programme. Areas were asked to maintain an in-depth focus on specific trial models in order to establish best practice in preparing for RPA.

4. This phase of RPA Locally-Led Delivery Projects (LLDPs) (April 2011 – March 2012) is different from the previous trials. It has focused on local determination of the challenges to be addressed and the actions local areas[1] could take to develop their approaches to increasing the numbers of young people continuing in education or training in the run-up to 2013 and 2015. Areas were asked to identify their priorities and to develop and test their own approaches to address these, rather than focusing on a prescribed theme. Nineteen individual LAs and three SRGs (comprising 16 individual LAs) have participated in the LLDPs.

Methodology

5. DfE commissioned Isos Partnership (Isos) and the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) to undertake an evaluation of the LLDPs in August 2011. The evaluation team used a mixed-method approach to explore the impact of the LLDPs including a baseline survey (carried out during September and October 2011) and follow-up survey (carried out during March and April 2012, as well as 18 case study visits (carried out from December 2011 to March 2012). This report presents evidence collected from 18 case study visits completed between December 2011 and March 2012.   A separate report, with findings from the two surveys is also available on the Department for Education's website (Day *et al.,* 2012).

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[1] The term 'area/s' is used to refer to the LAs and/or SRGs collectively.

6. The report is structured around the six RPA priorities identified in earlier evaluations of the RPA trials. These are:

- Priority one: Understanding the Cohort
- Priority two: Determining Local Priorities
- Priority three: Managing Transitions and Tracking
- Priority four: Establishing Support Mechanisms
- Priority five: Identifying and Meeting Provision Needs
- Priority six: Communicating the RPA Message.

Summary of key findings

Priorities one and two: Understanding the Cohort and Determining Local Priorities

- There was a strong focus on identifying young people at risk in the case study areas. Only four of the 18 areas visited did not have a risk of NEET indicator (RONI) or were not planning to develop one.
- Understanding of the cohort was much stronger than previously seen in the RPA trials. Evidence from the case study visits showed the majority of areas were using data on a regular basis to challenge the performance of providers.
- All of the 18 areas visited had, or were developing, a RPA plan.
- Case study visits also showed that governance arrangements for managing RPA were more clearly focused than those seen in the previous RPA trials.

Priority three: Managing Transitions and Tracking

- Case study evidence showed an increased focus on support for transitions throughout a young person's education including at Key Stage 3.
- Case study areas provided limited evidence about managed moves protocols or the RONI being used to share information between pre- and post-16 providers.
- Five areas demonstrated good practice being developed by colleges to improve their own retention rates and ensure young people were not dropping out.

Priority four: Establishing Support Mechanisms

- Building on the work of previous RPA trials, two case study visits provided evidence of developing early-leaver protocols.
- A number of areas were able to demonstrate impact as a result of engaging with schools to provide support and through the use of RONIs. For example, in one area, from a cohort of 76 young people targeted for additional support only six remained with an 'unknown' or 'unintended' post-16 destination.

Priority five: Identifying and Meeting Provision Needs

- The case study visits illustrated different approaches to mapping provision gaps. Linking local areas' mapping of provision gaps to progression routes or looking at current rates of pre- to post-16 progression made gaps easier to identify.

- The evaluation team found examples of innovative new provision being developed. One area, for example, had developed a flexible full-time holding course which combined Foundation Learning provision with opportunities for volunteering and work experience. In addition, they had developed a new pre-Apprenticeship route.
- Three of the case study areas identified reducing numbers in Jobs without Training (JWT) as a top priority. These areas identified work around identification and prevention work pre-16 in relation to JWT as critical to reducing numbers in JWT.

Priority six: Communicating the RPA Message

- Overall levels of awareness amongst schools, colleges and other providers that were visited during the case study visits were generally high. RPA was on the agenda for most school and college senior leaders, but with varying degrees of understanding of RPA amongst classroom teachers and lecturers.

Top tips from the LLDPs for other areas to consider

Local areas might want to consider how they can...

- develop or refine early identification indicators (EIT) or RONIs for use post-16 as well as pre-16 and decide how best to present the data to schools and other providers to make it as easy as possible for them to understand (see p.11);
- develop projections for participation in 2013 and 2015 that take account of assumptions about non-participants; strengthen trajectory planning and be clearer about the link between their data analysis and the priorities for action they have set (see p.14);
- review governance arrangements to ensure reporting lines at a political level are clear to ensure responsible lead members have a thorough understanding of RPA (see p.155);
- discuss with post-16 providers that have low participation rates at age 17, their own retention practices and whether there is anything to learn from others (see p.16);
- develop systems to use an EIT or RONI to act as the mechanism by which targeted support is deployed to young people, and then used to evaluate the impact of that support (see p.20);
- ensure that early notification systems and protocols emphasise the importance of providers' own pastoral care systems and moves between providers (see p.20);
- identify whether gaps in provision exist by mapping the most common progression routes and consider developing new provision to meet any gaps (see p.25);
- consider whether they can distinguish the characteristics, pre-16, of young people who are at risk of JWT from the characteristics of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and focus preventing young people from entering JWT (see p.26); and
- continue to communicate the RPA message as widely as possible. Consider developing a local brand for RPA so messages are recognised (see p.30).

1.   Introduction

1. The DfE commissioned Isos Partnership and NFER to carry out an evaluation of the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Locally-Led Delivery Projects (LLDPs) during 2011/12. Building on two previous evaluations of the RPA trials, the overall aim of the third evaluation was to explore the implementation of local RPA projects, to measure their impact and assess projects' value for money. The research objectives were to develop a clear understanding of local areas':

- processes to support RPA and to identify what works well;
- baseline position and their success measures for assessing change; and
- issues, barriers and solutions to achieving RPA.

2. This report summarises findings from the 18 case study visits completed between December 2011 and March 2012.

1.1   Background to RPA

3. The Education and Skills Act (2008) increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning. From 2013, young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 and from 2015 they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday.

4. RPA does not mean young people must stay in school; they will be able to choose one of the following options:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education;
- an Apprenticeship; or
- full-time work with part-time education or training.

5. Under the Education and Skills Act (2008), local authorities (LAs) will be required to promote the effective participation in education or training of the young people in their area and make arrangements to identify young people not participating. Learning providers will be required to promote good attendance of 16- and 17-year-olds and inform local authority support services if a young person has dropped out of learning, so that the young person can be contacted swiftly and offered support.

6. Additionally, the Education and Skills Act (2008) placed duties on employers who are employing young people full time[2], where they are not providing accredited training themselves. These duties included checking the young person's evidence that they are enrolled in part-time accredited learning, for the equivalent of a day a week, before they start work and agree reasonable hours of work so that the young person can access training elsewhere, for the equivalent of a day a week. On 2 July 2012 the Government announced that it would **not** be commencing these duties on employers in 2013.

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[2] 'Full time' means for 20 hours or more per week, and for eight or more weeks in a row.

7. There has already been a range of work to help local areas prepare for RPA. The previous phases of local work – the RPA trials – have already shown some of the steps that areas can take to prepare for full participation. Phase 1 (September 2009 – March 2010) focused on one of three specific themes: Information Advice and Guidance (IAG); re-engagement of 16- and 17-year-olds; and the development of area-wide local solutions. In Phase 2, (April 2010 – March 2011) four new LAs and another sub-region joined the programme and existing areas were asked to maintain a more in-depth focus on their specific trial models in order to establish best practice on implementation of RPA.

1.2 Focus of the LLDPs

8. This phase of RPA LLDPs is different from the previous trials. It has been about local determination of the challenges to be addressed and the actions local areas could take to develop their approaches to increasing participation in the run-up to 2013 and 2015. Areas were asked to identify their priorities and to develop and test specific approaches to address these, rather than focusing on a prescribed theme. A full list of the LAs' leading projects is shown in Figure 1.1 below, including whether they had previously participated in RPA trials.

Figure 1.1   Local Authorities Leading RPA LLDPs

Phase 1 Trial Area	Phase 2 Trial Area	New to LLDPs
Barnsley	Coventry, Warwickshire, Solihull	Blackburn with Darwen
Derby	Ealing	Bournemouth, Poole, Dorset
East Sussex	**Plymouth**	Brighton and Hove
Greater Manchester (10 LAs)	**Worcestershire**	Cornwall
Hertfordshire		Essex
Newcastle		Nottingham
Staffordshire		Medway
Swindon		Sheffield
Wandsworth		York

9. The other major difference between the LLDPs and the previous RPA trials is that the DfE identified six areas to act as 'local leaders'. These areas have provided support and challenge to other local areas and led on disseminating learning (both regionally and nationally). There has been no National Participation Adviser involved with the LLDPs. The 'local leader' areas are highlighted in bold in Figure 1.1 above.

1.3   Evaluation methodology

10. The evaluation team adopted a mixed-method, three-staged approach, which included a baseline survey (September and October 2011) and follow-up survey (March and April 2012) as well as 18 case study visits (December 2011 to March 2012). This report is based on evidence from the case study visits. The criteria for selecting areas were agreed with the evaluation steering group. Priority was first given to local areas new to the LLDPs, and then to areas involved in previous trials. Two areas not involved in the LLDPs or previous trials were selected to give a comparison with areas outside of the project. Case study areas represented a mix and spread of areas including those in urban and rural locations, small and large authorities, and one SRG. The case study visits lasted one day and involved conversations with LA staff and other local stakeholders including local providers. The evaluation team explored local areas' ambition and trajectories; explored activities and associated costs; and looked at the impact of the areas' work.

1.4   Final report and updated tools

11. At the end of the Phase 2 RPA trials the evaluation team developed the framework (see Figure 1.2 below) to draw together learning from the trials. This was intended to help other areas think about their preparations for RPA. Feedback from the LLDPs confirmed that areas have found this a useful framework for thinking about RPA planning. The evaluation has used the six priorities to allow areas to report on their activities in a consistent way. This report is therefore structured around these headings.

Figure 1.2   Framework for Planning for Raising Participation:
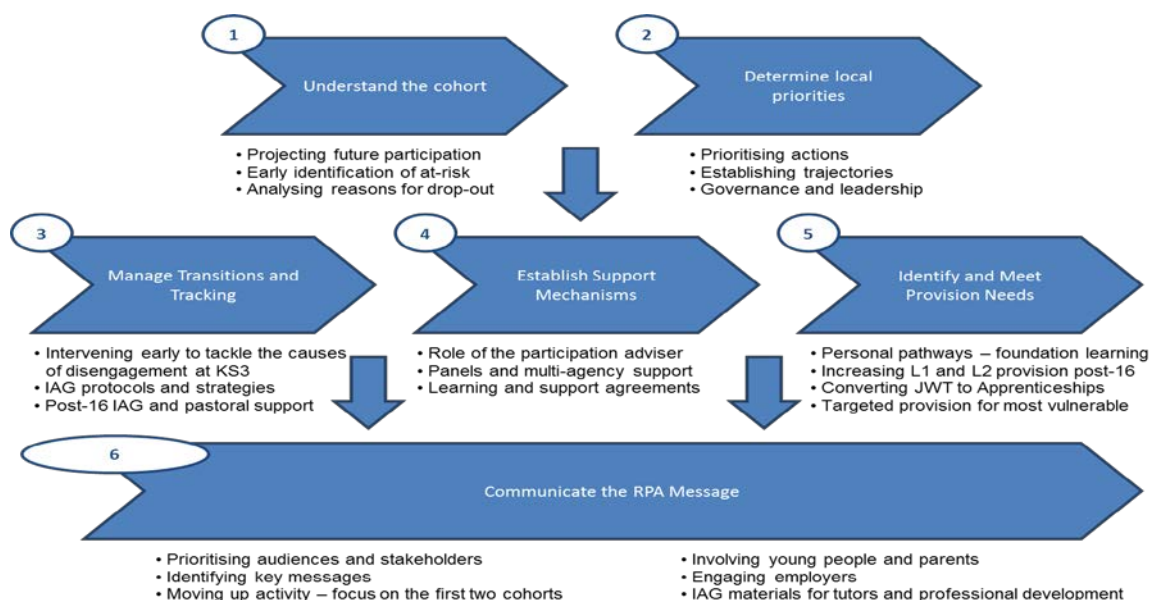
12. At the end of Phase 2 of the RPA trials the evaluation team also produced a number of tools based around the RPA planning framework (see Figure 1.2 above). These tools have been updated on the basis of evidence from the LLDPs and can be found at the link below:

www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/participation/rpa/a0075564/rpa-past-projects

2. Findings from case study visits

2.1 Priorities one and two: Understanding the Cohort and Determining Local Priorities[3]

2.1.1 Identifying young people at risk

What have areas done?

13. The final survey identified the most common activities in these priorities were those relating to identifying young people at risk (15 areas undertaking 25 activities) and included activities related to:

- the development of early identification indicators; and
- identifying target groups for the purpose of the RPA LLDPs.

14. This is supported by evidence from the case study visits – only four of the eighteen areas visited did not have a RONI or were not planning to develop one.

How have they done it?

15. This has been a particular focus of activity for a number of the areas that were new to the LLDPs. Medway and Essex, for example, developed RONIs or EITs which are based on a robust statistical analysis of the factors that have led young people to become NEET in the past. They have then applied these factors to the current cohort of young people to create a probability rating of becoming NEET for all young people who are judged to be at risk. These ratings are then given to schools. In Medway's case this is also based upon an analysis of the written comments captured by advisers working with young people. Medway believe this tool to be over 80 per cent accurate in predicting young people's likelihood of becoming NEET which gives them confidence that it is a reliable guide for identifying support needs and allocating resources.

16. In developing their EIT, Essex considered how best to present the outcomes to schools. They have produced an A3 sheet for each school which explains:

- the methodology behind the tool and the weighting given to different risk factors;
- the known risk factors and which ones have been included in the analysis because information is available and which ones cannot be included because it is not; and
- a risk summary for all young people in that school which places young people into one of four risk bands – highest risk, very high risk, high risk and medium risk.

17. In Essex schools are then given more detailed tracking sheets with the name of individual pupils, their unique pupil number and a summary of the data against each of the

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[3] For the purpose of the research, priority one and two activities are reported together because of the close link between the use of data to understand the cohort and then determine local priorities.

key risk identifiers. In other areas, they have also chosen to include columns on this school-level sheet for schools to add their own intelligence about young people and what they know about the potential risks they are facing. Consideration is being given to how such tracking sheets might then be used within the school and by the LA to evaluate the impact of any support that is put in place. In Staffordshire, for example, Two Rivers Special School had identified a simple tracking system that assessed whether the support had had any impact. In Ealing, Brentside High School has a four-stage model to identify and track at risk young people, which concludes with an assessment of impact.

18. The development of RONIs has also been an ongoing priority for areas previously involved in the trials. The difference in the approach of some of these areas, to that of Essex and Medway, has been to simplify the analysis phase of developing the RONI by simply giving a score to a risk factor. The potential advantage of this approach is it allows areas to establish and use a RONI more quickly, and it can be refined at a later date. An example of this approach is shown in the case study below. It still enables a conversation with schools about the potential young people at risk amongst their existing cohorts, and ultimately the schools can take the decision about which young people should be supported. The potential downside of the approach is that it is less statistically robust in predicting the likelihood of NEET and therefore cannot be used as confidently in resource-allocation decisions. More detail on developing early identification tools can be found in the tool 'Projecting Participation: Part One: Understanding the Cohort'.

Case study: The development of a RONI in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire

What did they do?
Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire are three LAs working collaboratively as a sub-region on RPA. They decided to develop their own RONI building on the work which had taken place in other local areas and which would apply across all three LAs. The development of the RONI has attracted strong support from schools that have been piloting it. One head commented that it fitted well with his own school-based vulnerability index which he used to deploy a team of support staff to young people and their families, in part funded by the school's pupil premium. LA staff and their partners also thought the RONI would help by formalising a system which was already being used informally.

What has the impact been so far?
To date 2914 young people have been identified as being at risk of becoming NEET across the whole of Solihull and in 10 schools in Coventry and Warwickshire. Of these, 952 are considered to have a high risk and 1962 a medium risk of not participating. The RONI is already being used to allocate resources with 200 pre-16 pupils across Coventry and Warwickshire referred to the Right Track Project for support to make positive transitions. Although there is no recorded evidence about how many are more likely to participate post-16, teacher perception questionnaires relating to the Right Track Project show that behaviour, attendance and attainment have improved for the majority of young people who participated.

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19. There has been less focus in case study areas on the use of early identification indicators post-16 with colleges and other providers. Barnsley and Sheffield are the only areas the evaluation team are aware of that have developed a fully operational post-16 RONI or EIT. In part this is due to concerns expressed by some post-16 providers about risks to the culture of a 'fresh start' for young people if too much information is available about their past. However, conversations with further education (FE) colleges suggested there would be no objection to the use of a RONI on a 'needs blind' basis, so that it was separated from any decision about the admission of young people to courses.

What are the lessons for other areas?

20. There are a number of factors which areas might want to think about in developing a RONI or EIT, based on the experience of the LLDPs. For areas that already have one, there might also be merit in considering how to refine it and strengthen its use. The list below does not provide a comprehensive guide to developing a RONI but reflects some of the key lessons from areas that have done so to date:

- **Consider what type of RONI or EIT you want to develop.** The options include using weighted probability factors or simply attaching a score to different indicators; and whether to include just data or to try and analyse textual information about young people as well.
- **Identify what data you think you will need and where it will come from.** Most areas have found they need to access multiple sources of data from across the local authority to get information about all of the relevant factors they want to include in their RONI. This may involve agreeing new information-sharing protocols.
- **Test the predictive power of the RONI on previous cohorts.** Most areas that have developed a RONI have first tested the predictive power of the data by applying it to previous cohorts of NEET young people to see how many would have been identified. Areas are unlikely to achieve 100 per cent accuracy but 80 per cent should be possible.
- **Consider how best to present the information to schools.** There are a number of options for areas to consider including how much detail to provide about the methodology and data used and whether to include space for schools to add their own data or intelligence to confirm or alter the young people identified by the RONI.
- **Think through how the RONI can be used to deploy and evaluate support.** If the RONI is going to be used in decisions about the allocation and prioritisation of support there is a need to ensure a high level of accuracy in its predictions. It might also be used in schools, and by the LA, as a mechanism for tracking the impact of support. Areas could think about existing tracking mechanisms in schools that this could tie into.
- **Consider how a RONI can be used post-16 as well as pre-16.** This could be through having clear information-sharing protocols in place to ensure the information about young people identified pre-16 by a RONI passes directly to post-16 providers; or by repeating the RONI process at the start of post-16 education.

2.1.2 Understanding local needs

What have areas done?

21. A smaller proportion of areas have undertaken activities relating to understanding local needs (12 areas undertaking 16 activities). These activities involved local areas carrying out research into non-participation or undertaking work to better understand the local cohort of young people. Evidence from case study visits suggested that this activity was most often associated with areas that had low participation rates of 17-year-olds and wanted to better understand the reasons for drop-out between 16 and 17. This activity was also frequently seen in areas with high proportions of young people in JWT who wanted to better understand the motivations of these young people.

How have they done it?

22. As the evidence from the final survey showed, 21 out of 25 areas have set goals for participation in 2013 and 2015. Evidence from the case study visits also demonstrated that understanding of the cohort was stronger in many areas than it had previously been in the RPA trials. All of the case study areas visited had, as the minimum, a forward projection of the number of future 16- and 17-year-olds and the majority were using data on a regular basis to challenge the performance of providers. Areas said they had more work to do to consider how the data presented by the RONI or EITs, the new Destination Measure[4], and the more regular monthly data on NEET numbers should be brought together at both a strategic LA level and in discussions with schools. Most planned to make use of the Destination Measure to discuss with their providers how well they were doing for all young people in their care.

23. The development of local trajectories was less well advanced. In part, this related to the constraints that some areas felt about what they could publicly say about their planned targets and trajectories, but in most cases areas had not yet been able to quantify the likely impact of the interventions and actions they were taking. This made it difficult to have a conversation about trajectories for 2013 and 2015. Where trajectories had been set they were based on assumptions about past performance and likely future trends.

24. The other aspect of areas' work related to their projections for the participation of groups of vulnerable young people. Most areas had set clear projections for these groups of young people. Although it was clear that areas' priority groups often included some of the most vulnerable (and difficult) young people to engage in education or training, there had often been too little systematic consideration of what contribution increasing these groups' participation rates would have on overall participation levels. The groups had not been prioritised on the basis of where the biggest gains needed to be made, but instead were often identified as the result of existing or ongoing work.

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[4] Two education Destination Measures were introduced to show the destinations of young people the year after Key Stage 4 or taking A level or equivalent qualifications. The Key Stage 4 Measure is based on activity at academic age 16 and the Key Stage 5 Measure is based on activity in the year after the young person took A level or equivalent qualifications.

What are the lessons for other areas?

25. The accompanying tools 'Understanding the cohort' and 'Determining local priorities' set out the steps which areas might want to consider in relation to strengthening their understanding of local needs. This approach has been confirmed by the experience of areas in the LLDPs, but it also suggests that areas might want to be even clearer about:

- **Projections for participation in 2013 and 2015** to take into account assumptions about non-participants and projections for vulnerable groups' participation rates.
- **Trajectory planning** by setting stronger success measures for planned activities and determining whether the impact will be one-off or scalable.
- **The link between their data analysis and the priorities for action they have set.** Areas should make sure the data supports the priorities they have set. For example, if the data shows that 17-year-olds in Jobs without Training are the largest group, areas might want to consider if their proposed activities address this.

2.1.3 Developing/amending RPA plans and project set-up/governance

What have areas done?

26. A popular activity in this area was work to develop or amend RPA plans and priorities (11 areas undertaking 12 activities). A smaller proportion of areas also identified activities relating to setting up the project (seven areas with eight activities), for example putting into place management structures or governance groups. The case study visits confirmed the work that was taking place in many areas to develop their RPA plans. All 18 of the case study areas either had or were developing an RPA plan.

How have they done it?

27. There were some interesting approaches in sub-regional areas and in large single LAs to encourage either individual LAs or individual areas within an LA to develop their own RPA plans, to undertake their own RPA self-assessments and to complete their own data analysis. Areas then identified some common priorities and activities across sub-regions or LAs, as in the case study from Essex below. Greater Manchester had also developed a similar approach to RPA planning across all 10 LAs involved in their work.

Case study: Establishing new governance arrangements for RPA in Essex

What did they do?
Essex already had an RPA strategy before they started the project and had been successful at raising participation for both 16- and 17-year-olds – a five per cent increase in 16-year-old and a six per cent increase in 17-year-old participation between 2008/09 and 2009/10. They have used the opportunity of the project to determine how RPA will be governed and managed moving forward. Following a major reorganisation within the LA, they have appointed an Assistant Lead Strategic Commissioner for RPA and RPA commissioners for each of their four local quadrant areas. They have also created a county-wide lead for IAG with a team of 11 Participation Consultants within the RPA team.

> **What has the impact been so far?**
> The new governance structure has enabled Essex to take a more localised approach to delivery of RPA. Each of the Quadrant Leads has completed the RPA self-assessment tool to determine their own local priorities for RPA and they will be developing quadrant level localised trajectories and plans. Essex is now in the process of establishing an RPA Advisory Board to oversee the new RPA strategic plan and in order to involve a range of local partners. The group will meet on a termly basis and include the member with responsibility for RPA, representatives from the college and school sectors, an employer representative and staff from across the LA as well as Area Planning Group Chairs.

28. At LA level, organisational changes had often led to some uncertainty about roles and responsibilities over the preceding months, but in all cases there was now a clearly identified lead for RPA. There were also stronger links between different parts of the LA emerging. For example, the Government's focus on increasing Apprenticeship numbers had encouraged the education and employment side of the local authority to work together more closely. This was now being extended into wider RPA work. In one of the case study areas visited, the RPA work formally reported to the Lead Director responsible for Economic Development.

29. There was also evidence from the case study visits of stronger interest in RPA from local council members, and of areas developing their RPA plans and governance arrangements to strengthen the reporting lines to lead members responsible for the delivery of RPA. Governance arrangements for managing RPA were more clearly focused and tighter than those that had been seen in previous RPA trials in most areas. An RPA group existed or was being established in all the areas visited.

What are the lessons for other areas?

30. There are a number of factors other areas may wish to think about if they want to establish new planning and governance arrangements or to strengthen their existing ones:

- **In large LAs or sub-regional groups** areas might want to think about building their RPA plans bottom up by asking localities or individual LAs to complete the RPA self-assessment tool and/or by undertaking detailed analysis of the cohort at this level.
- **Establishing strong links with different parts of the local authority.** In particular areas, the LLDPs have found a need to strengthen relationships with the economic development side of the LA to ensure activity for 16- to 24-year-olds is joined up.
- **Reviewing governance to ensure reporting lines at a political level are clear** and that they have built an understanding of RPA with the lead member responsible.

2.2 Priority three: Managing Transitions and Tracking

2.2.1 Improving tracking and managing transitions

What have areas done?

31. Areas were undertaking activities relating to improving tracking that included the improvement and development of tracking tools and the set-up of progression agreements,

plans and protocols across providers and different support organisations within the LA (14 areas undertaking 17 activities). Areas were also undertaking activities defined as 'managing transitions', which included the development and testing of new delivery models and of transition toolkits or tools (9 areas undertaking 10 activities).

How have they done it?

32. Three case study areas provided evidence of an increased focus on support for transitions throughout a young person's education. At Key Stage 3, some areas were exploring how their core work to raise attainment could make an important contribution to young people participating successfully in future – see Cornwall's example below.

Case study: Cornwall's focus on Key Stage 3
What did they do?
The Camborne consortium (which includes two schools and an FE college) decided to focus on raising boy's literacy in Years 7 and 8 because they have identified low literacy levels as one of the key determinants of non-achievement and non-participation amongst many young people in their schools. They are piloting the use of iPads with learners and their parents/carers or other positive role models to encourage increased reading amongst this group of boys. They have measured the boys' reading ages at the start of the project and will re-test them on a regular basis to measure the progress being made and link to an assessment of their likelihood of successful achievement and participation.

What has the impact been so far?
Both schools have seen a real impact from this project. All but two students have seen progress in reading ages since the beginning of the project. The increase in reading ages has been between one year and four months and four years and four months in one of the schools. Parents/carers have commented on their sons' new enthusiasm for reading real books as well as those downloaded onto their iPads. The schools believe that although these students are now engaged with all types of reading material the iPads themselves were the motivation and trigger for boys to see reading as an enjoyable, worthwhile and rewarding activity, and for their fathers and other male family members to get involved and see the benefits of reading together. There are plans to extend the project in one school by using the successful students from this year as paired readers for those selected for next year's intervention and by working with primary cohorts in Year 5 and 6.

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33. The use of Managed Moves protocols as a mechanism for managing transitions into and out of post-16 education or training was less evident than it had been in previous trials. In Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire they had planned to develop such a protocol between post-16 providers, but when they piloted it providers did not see the value. This was because they had their own informal arrangements for securing moves between providers, which suggests that the Managed Moves protocol approach may be more appropriate in areas that do not have a history of strong collaborative arrangements post-16 and in which a new lever is needed to secure a move between one post-16 learning provider and another.

34. While there had also been relatively little use made of RONIs or EITs as an information-sharing tool to support pre-16 to post-16 transition in the case study areas, there were some examples of ways in which areas have done this:

- In Sheffield they were planning to share information about learners who have previously been identified as at risk of non-participation by the RONI. To achieve this they plan to use the same mechanisms and systems which allow the Section 319As for LLDD to be shared with post-16 providers.
- Ealing had developed an information-sharing protocol for all schools which means students had to opt out of information being shared with post-16 providers.

35. There was greater evidence of a focus amongst FE colleges in case study areas on improving their own retention practices and supporting the transition to post-16 education, and of sharing good practice in this respect between post-16 providers. Examples were given in Medway, Blackburn with Darwen and Warwickshire of colleges developing more flexible provision to pick up young people judged by their own systems to be at risk of dropping out and trying to re-engage them on provision within the college in the first instance, but with another provider if that did not work. More research and work was being done in Essex, led by the Federation of Essex Colleges, to identify good practice in this field. In Nottingham they were capturing good practice in retention and support from their post-16 providers.

What are the lessons for other areas?

36. There are a number of ways in which areas might think about strengthening transitions and tracking. More detail on these is set out in the tool 'Managing transitions and tracking'[5]. One starting point is for areas to map the range of support for transitions from primary to post-16. The experience of LLDPs suggests areas might also want to:

- **Consider the link between RPA and activity aimed at raising attainment** in particular in Key Stage 3. A number of areas have found overlaps in activity aimed at addressing the challenges of under-performance and not being able to access the secondary curriculum, with interventions aimed at increasing chances of progression.
- **Strengthen the use of RONIs as an information-sharing tool** to support pre-16 to post-16 transition. There are a number of ways areas could consider doing this which might include agreeing new information-sharing protocols for all young people or for specific groups of young people identified at risk by the RONI.
- **Discuss retention practice with local post-16 providers** in areas with low participation rates at 17, and determine whether there is anything they can learn from other providers locally or by looking at good practice nationally.

2.2.2 Mitigating the risks to transitions and tracking

What did they do?

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[5]Managing transitions and tracking tool can be accessed at:
http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/t/tool%20three%20managing%20transitions%20and%20 0tracking.pdf.

37. LAs and schools involved in case study visits identified two risks to the work on transitions and tracking as a result of local decisions about Connexions services and the new duty on schools to secure independent and impartial careers guidance to their pupils:

- that the targeted service would be unable to maintain the same level of tracking and support to the most vulnerable young people; and
- that schools would be unable to provide the 'impartial' information advice and guidance (IAG) which will be their statutory responsibility.

38. There were also examples given in the case study visits of how local areas could be working to mitigate these risks. On the first of the risks identified above, the RONI was seen by some case study areas as a potential mechanism for the deployment of targeted support and a means by which to evaluate the impact of that support to help ensure it was deployed and focused on the right young people. On the second of the risks identified above, some schools expressed concerns about their readiness to take on their new responsibilities and were choosing to buy in expertise either alone or in collaboration with other schools.

How have they done it?

39. In relation to the use of the RONI as a mechanism to manage and track the impact of targeted support, areas noted the importance of the accuracy of RONI predictions and the need to be aware that it might overestimate the support needed. There were also areas that had invested additional resource specifically to support work to maintain their tracking systems and help keep the number of 'unknown' young people as low as possible.

40. To mitigate the risk associated with schools' new responsibilities for IAG, some areas had maintained networks in which schools could discuss and share ideas with other schools around advice and guidance. In Ealing, for example, schools reported that the IAG Learning Network was proving a positive source of information. In Greater Manchester the use of the 'Inspiring IAG award' was helping schools and other providers to focus on what they needed to do to improve their IAG – see below.

Case study: Developing the Inspiring IAG quality award across Greater Manchester

What did they do?
The 10 local authorities that make up the Greater Manchester region have been involved in the RPA trials since 2009. One of the key strands of work throughout that period has been the development and roll-out of the Inspiring IAG award. This is a quality award which has been designed to provide a good practice framework and recognition of high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). It is available to schools, colleges and other learning providers, as well as voluntary and community sector organisations and has three standards: Bronze, Silver and Gold. The award includes a self-assessment process and external assessment and validation.

What has the impact been so far?

By July 2012, 89 providers had achieved the bronze award, 29 had achieved silver and 18 had achieved gold. This includes all types of schools. For example, a grammar school, which was moving from the silver to the gold award, had identified CEIAG as a top priority in the school's development plan on the basis of feedback from pupil and parents/carers that too little information was available about alternative pathways to A-levels and higher education (HE). The school had used the process of going through the silver award to strengthen its internal processes and communications to staff and students about the information and resources available to them. To achieve the gold award the school knew they would have to do more. They were now developing testimonials and case studies from employers demonstrating alternative pathways, as well as talks to parents/carers from high-profile employers about pathways available to young people who do not go direct to HE.

What are the lessons for other areas?

41. Every local area will be considering how best they can support the transition to schools' new statutory responsibilities for information, advice and guidance, whilst maintaining support for targeted groups. The experience of the LLDPs suggests there are several mechanisms areas might want to consider:

- **Continuing to support local tracking systems to reduce the number of 'unknowns'.** A number of areas in the LLDPs had chosen to invest additional resource to ensure the accuracy of local tracking systems is maintained.
- **Considering the use of the RONI as a resource allocation tool.** Given the need to prioritise support for targeted groups, a number of areas had used their RONIs in discussions with schools to agree which young people would receive additional support.
- **Developing local IAG networks and/or quality awards** to continue to support schools as they take on their new responsibilities for IAG. Many schools welcomed the opportunity to have access to good practice and to talk with other schools.

2.3 Priority four: Establishing Support Mechanisms

2.3.1 Managing transitions

What had areas done?

42. Many of the activities that areas were undertaking in this priority related to the development of support mechanisms to help all young people with the transition to post-16 education and training and to ensure they were re-engaged if they dropped out (16 areas undertaking 26 activities). The case study visits provided strong evidence of work in two areas to develop early leaver protocols which built on the work of other areas previously involved in the RPA trials.
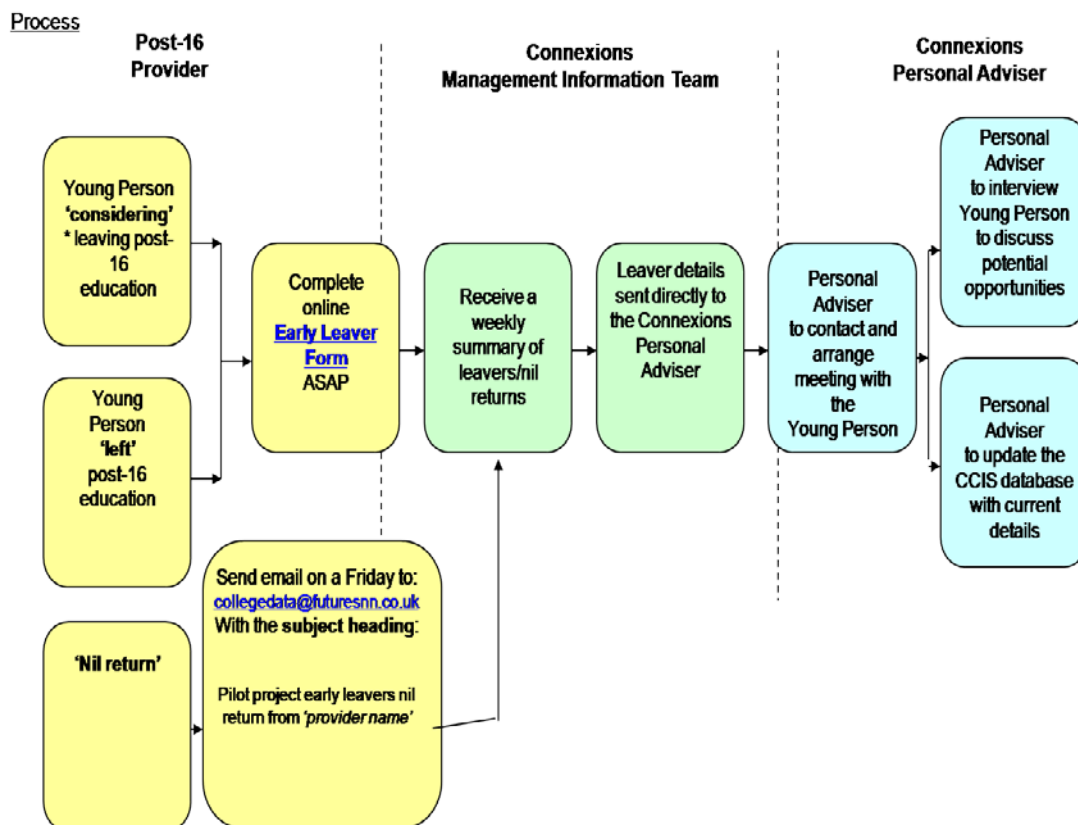
How had they done it?

43. Ealing has developed an agreement with their providers for early notification of young people at risk of dropping out. This involves notifications from providers as well as an opportunity for young people to self-refer if they feel they are not getting the support they need from their provider. Nottingham has also developed a formal 'early-leaver' process which they have trialled with a mix of colleges and schools in the city – the process is set out in Figure 2.1 below. It requires providers to submit a weekly email with notification of any young people who are either considering leaving learning or who have already left. If the provider has no young people in these categories they are still required to submit a nil response. This data is then shared on a weekly basis with Connexions personal advisers who can intervene with young people. Prior to this system, the notification of drop-out was dependent upon the provider reporting it to the Connexions service; this would often take 4 to 12 weeks. This new system ensures young people are identified quickly and supported by a Connexions adviser at the earliest opportunity. During the trial period (January to March 2012) 27 young people were identified through the Early Leaver Form.

Figure 2.1: Case Study of the development of an early leaver form in Nottingham

Nottingham Early Leaver Form. Pilot Project. 9th January 2012 – 31st March 2012

The purpose of the online Early Leaver Form is to ensure young people who are *'considering leaving'* or *'who have left'* post-16 provision are referred immediately to Connexions to ensure they are supported into other post-16 opportunities, as soon as possible.

Process

Post-16 Provider	Connexions Management Information Team	Connexions Personal Adviser

Young Person 'considering' * leaving post-16 education

Young Person 'left' post-16 education

'Nil return'

Complete online **Early Leaver Form** ASAP

Receive a weekly summary of leavers/nil returns

Leaver details sent directly to the Connexions Personal Adviser

Personal Adviser to contact and arrange meeting with the Young Person

Personal Adviser to interview Young Person to discuss potential opportunities

Personal Adviser to update the CCIS database with current details

Send email on a Friday to: collegedata@futuresnn.co.uk With the subject heading:

Pilot project early leavers nil return from *'provider name'*

*Please note: The Early Leaver Form should be used once internal reengagement activities have been exhausted

What are the lessons for other areas?

44. A number of areas have now developed early notification systems for young people dropping out of education post-16. These systems are seen to provide a simple safety net to ensure that young people do not drop out and become 'unknown'. There are a number of factors to think about in developing such a system:

- **How to minimise any burdens on providers in providing information.** Areas in the LLDPs have done this by developing simple online forms which the providers can submit automatically if a young person is dropping out.
- **How to ensure the system is sustained beyond the initial pilot.** One strategy to mitigate this risk is to ensure that the data is reported on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly or every six months) to the RPA strategic group.
- **Using the system to encourage providers to refer on to other providers.** Some of the areas that have developed early notification systems have found that one benefit is that it encourages providers to think harder about whether they themselves have any alternative provision that might be suitable for the young person, or whether they can think of any other provider to which they might refer them.

2.3.2 Supporting vulnerable groups

What had areas done?

45. A number of areas were undertaking activities specifically aimed at vulnerable groups (9 areas undertaking 14 activities). Types of activities included creation of support mechanisms and packages for vulnerable groups, creation of a particular role (such as an adviser) to help support vulnerable young people and the implementation of multi-agency panels.

How had they done it?

46. Evidence from the case study visits revealed a number of different mechanisms being used to support specific groups of vulnerable young people. In relation to LLDD, three areas had looked closely at their current support for transition between pre- and post-16 education for these learners and had introduced new mentor arrangements to support their transition. Newcastle had taken a particular approach focused on supporting LLDD into sustainable employment – see case study below.

47. Less work had taken place in the case study areas in relation to other specific groups of vulnerable young people. Again, Newcastle provided one example of targeted additional support to youth offenders. In relation to teenage parents, although case study areas provided some good individual examples of localised provision and support which were cited as working well for teenage parents, these were not deployed systematically. Many case study areas thought they needed to strengthen their arrangements in other local hot-spot areas.

Case study: Supporting vulnerable young people to participate in Newcastle

What did they do?

Newcastle's work had focused on supporting specific groups of vulnerable young people to participate. They had set ambitious targets for participation, expecting all of these groups to reach participation levels in excess of 90 per cent by 2015. Work with LLDD included a sharper focus to secure longer-term employment through greater opportunities for work experience. The work had been supported by schools that had identified and supported young people to go on placements, and by a training provider that brokered the appropriate placement according to the young person's expressed interests. The second group being supported were young offenders. A new offer had been developed in which members of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) spent time in schools working directly with young offenders. This included those whom the YOT had a statutory duty to support, but also young people whom schools had identified as at risk of offending behaviour in the future.

What had the impact been so far?

A number of the young people supported through the work with LLDD had already secured a place at college to continue their education and training. For young offenders, one testament to the success of the work was that other schools were now asking for, and paying for, support from in-school YOT workers.

What are the lessons for other areas?

- **There are benefits to joining up with existing support mechanisms for vulnerable groups.** Many of the LLDP areas found that they already had mechanisms in place that were providing support to these groups, which they have since strengthened and refined.
- **Continuing to have high aspirations for all groups of young people.** In Newcastle they are aiming for participation rates for all groups of young people of in excess of 90 per cent on the basis these groups should be able to achieve the same level of participation as others.

2.3.3 Engaging schools and partners

What had areas done?

48. The other major area of work under priority four related to the engagement of schools and partners in the development of support mechanisms (seven areas undertaking seven activities). This included consideration of how local area support mechanisms and services would fit alongside and complement schools' own support mechanisms. This was a particular feature of the approaches taken by both Ealing and Staffordshire amongst the case study areas.

How had they done it?

49. In Ealing they have developed a number of the systems and processes needed for RPA in collaboration with their schools. This included the development of a RONI and early notification and information-sharing protocols. The discussion with schools had now moved onto consideration of how the schools would own and take forward the processes for supporting young people, off the back of this initial identification. More detail on how Ealing propose to take forward this work can be found in the accompanying tool 'Establishing Support Mechanisms'[6]. The other area that had worked closely with their schools in developing a RONI and then using it to deploy support were Staffordshire. Their work is shown in the case study below.

Case study: Support for at risk young people in Staffordshire

What did they do?

Staffordshire used their RONI indicator to identify 76 young people in seven schools who they targeted with additional support. A wide range of schools were involved including a special school, two pupil referral units, a middle school and three secondary schools including one academy. Each school adopted their own in-school approach but a common programme of taster activities was offered to all the young people involved, including a university and college visit and work with a range of local employers as well as providing bespoke support for individual young people.

What has the impact been so far?

The impact of the support is demonstrated by the number of young people with intended positive destinations or who have already accepted a post-16 offer. Out of the cohort of 76 young people, 62 intend to go to an FE college, three intend to go into employment with training, five intend to go into work-based learning and only six remain undecided or their destination is unknown. Twenty-three young people have already accepted an offer and 32 are waiting the result of an interview. Only five have not submitted an application. Final destination data gathered in September 2012 will be used to find out actual destinations and evaluate if the programme was successful. Learners will be tracked through the first year of post-16 provision to monitor any drop-out.

What are the lessons for other areas?

Areas may want to:
- **Engage schools in the development of new support mechanisms or processes.** Areas in the LLDPs have gained real benefit from the involvement of schools in the development and testing of new approaches to supporting young people. They have drawn on existing good practice in schools.
- **Build on current systems and processes in schools.** One of the most important lessons in thinking through how the RONI can be used as a tracking tool, has been to

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[6] Establishing Support Mechanisms tool can be accessed at:
http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/t/tool%20four%20establishing%20support%20mechanisms.pdf.

think how it would fit alongside existing 'in-school' processes which often already exist for tracking particular groups of young people and then build on these.

- **Tracking the impact of any support provided.** In the Staffordshire example above, they were able to demonstrate the impact of the support from the intended destinations of young people. Areas may want to think through how they demonstrate the impact of any support through other measures on a more frequent basis if they are to ensure that the support provided is having an impact and can be tailored accordingly.

2.4 Priority five: Identifying and Meeting Provision Needs

2.4.1 Developing provision to meet local needs

What have areas done?

50. Areas were undertaking activities related to developing new provision or developing particular types of provision such as Apprenticeships or other work-related learning routes (10 areas undertaking 23 activities). Areas were also undertaking activities to better 'understand local needs' which involved reviewing local provision or undertaking needs analysis with young people on provision (seven areas undertaking seven activities).

How have they done it?

51. The case study visits illustrated different approaches being taken by three areas to the mapping of their provision:

- In Blackburn with Darwen, for example, they had captured all of their existing provision on a simple database by provider type and provision level. They were using this analysis to look to identify any potential gaps, but had found that unless there were levels or types of provision missing this type of analysis did not add much value.
- In Sheffield they have attempted to map the 22 most common pathways from pre-16 to post-16 provision linking a wide range of different courses to the progression opportunities available to young people beyond compulsory education and training. The advantage of this approach is that it is easier to identify any provision gaps which are getting in the way of progression opportunities for young people.
- Wakefield had undertaken their own analysis of pre- to post-16 progression which identified issues with particular groups of young people who were achieving level 1 or Level 2 but not progressing to a suitable course post-16. They were interrogating the data with providers to try to understand why this was so. They were also using school level data from intended destinations surveys in Year 9 and 10 to build a pattern of likely demand in future years and sharing this with post-16 providers.

52. Sheffield was one area that had developed innovative new provision to meet the needs of young people – see below:

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Case study: Developing innovative new provision in Sheffield

What did they do?

Sheffield has developed two new offers for young people. The first is a personalised fully funded programme which combines foundation learning qualifications with skills building, outreach tasters, volunteering, work experience and bridging units to prepare young people for progression. *Preparation for Success* is designed to be a 'holding' programme for those who have dropped out of provision but are awaiting a start date to return to the mainstream. The programme can be delivered by any organisation including those from the voluntary sector on a subcontracted basis from a Foundation Learning provider. The second is a six-week pre-Apprenticeship programme targeted at young people who are NEET who have so far struggled to secure an Apprenticeship place but who are level two ready. The programme focuses on developing employability skills and work readiness and includes a two-week work experience placement from employers who are new to the Apprenticeship programme. A partial wage subsidy is offered as an incentive, funded through the local authority.

What has the impact been so far?

The first of these programmes was due to run in May 2012, targeting the 52 young people NEET waiting to return to the Sixth Form College in September. The second programme began in September 2011 and in May 2012, when the 100th apprentice began his programme. The conversion rate has been approximately 50 per cent from the programme to Apprenticeships and Sheffield is looking to increase this with the second cohort with more considered targeting of both young people and employers. Those who have not been successful have been supported to access other provision. The programme has acted as a filter to ensure that employers receive those young people who are committed and capable, thereby ensuring that they will be receptive to taking on another apprentice without the subsidy.

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What are the lessons for other areas?

Areas may want to:

- **Use local data to identify whether any provision gaps exist.** The experience of the LLDPs suggests this will need to get beyond simply looking at current provision to identify whether gaps exist. Considering the most common progression routes or existing patterns of pre- to post-16 provision are more likely to identify gaps.
- **Consider whether any new types of provision or offers need to be developed.** The example from Sheffield demonstrates two areas which others have often found to be problematic: 'holding' provision and pre-Apprenticeship provision.

2.4.2 Reducing young people in JWT

What have areas done?

53. The other strand of work under this heading, which was a specific priority for three of the case study areas, was converting JWT to Apprenticeships or other provision. This has proved one of the most difficult issues facing local areas and one where lessons from previous RPA trials have proved more difficult to adapt in new contexts.

How have they done it?

54. Areas involved in previous phases of the RPA trials had developed a targeted approach to individual young people in JWT and their employers. However, some of the areas in the LLDPs found this was impractical given the size and scale of employers in such a large area. Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset and Herefordshire were large rural areas with a high number in JWT that faced this problem. In the example below, Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset developed a new solution of utilising providers to do the outreach work to employers. This has so far focused mainly on post-16 providers with existing relationships with local employers. However, there have also been discussions in some areas about using schools for this purpose, given that many will have existing links to local employers through governing bodies.

55. The difficulties encountered by areas in the LLDPs in trying to reduce the current numbers in JWT have also encouraged some areas to focus more on preventing young people from entering JWT in the first place. This is a feature of both the York and Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset case studies below. The experience of these areas suggests there might be merit in looking at the development of a risk of JWT indicator which looks to identify a slightly different set of characteristics from the RONIs that have already been developed in many areas. If areas could more successfully identify early those young people at risk of entering JWT, there may be different types of interventions and support that they could develop for this cohort, as opposed to that needed for the at risk of NEET cohort, e.g. a better targeted and more intensive pre-16 work experience programme specifically for the at risk of JWT cohort. At least one area plans to explore this further in the next phase of the LLDPs.

Case study: Early identification of young people at risk of JWT in York

What did they do?
York have undertaken their own detailed research into the characteristics of young people in JWT and have identified similar characteristics to those identified by other areas in previous trials. This research suggests that young people entering JWT often do so as a positive choice having attained at least Level 1 qualifications and often close to Level 2. It also suggests that young people in JWT often have different characteristics from those becoming NEET. This has led some to think about whether the identification of this potential cohort, and interventions for them, might need to be more tailored. York are using the Intended Destinations survey in Year 11 to identify those young people who say they intend to move into employment and target them with additional advice and guidance about their options.

What has the impact been so far?
York will be continuing to provide support to the 'at risk of JWT' cohort over the summer and then tracking the destinations of this cohort beyond this. Depending on the outcomes of this work they are considering piloting an Intended Destinations survey earlier in Year 10 or Year 9 to see how many young people identified employment as an intended destination at that point of their education and then to provide appropriate support at an earlier stage in school.

What are the lessons for other areas?

- **Use existing provider networks to target employers with young people in JWT.** Areas in the LLDPs have found this a more sustainable way of reaching larger numbers of employers, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses.
- **Consider developing a risk of JWT indicator.** Evidence from the LLDPs suggests that a focus on early identification and prevention of JWT may be more successful than trying to convert existing JWT into jobs with training or Apprenticeships.

2.4.3 Provision for vulnerable groups

What did areas do?

56. The third group of activities in this priority fell under the heading of 'provision for vulnerable groups' (five areas undertaking seven activities). The types of activities that fell under this priority related to developing alternative provision and reviewing the current provision for vulnerable groups.

How did they do it?

57. The case study from Blackburn with Darwen below illustrates how one area used volunteering as a mechanism to engage some of the most vulnerable groups of young people. Other areas were looking at opportunities for new provision through Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges (UTCs) to see whether they could better help to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

Case study: Supporting vulnerable groups in Blackburn with Darwen

What did they do?
Blackburn had already seen large increases in participation in recent years – in 2009/10 they saw a five per cent increase in 16-year-old participation to 97 per cent and a seven per cent increase in 17-year-old participation to 87 per cent. They believe these increases in participation rates were due to the rigorous implementation of the September Guarantee process and work with providers to ensure an appropriate range of provision was in place. They are clear they will need more innovative solutions for some of the most difficult to engage groups of young people. They are working with the local college to develop an innovative curriculum offer in which the most at risk students will be offered up to 20 hours volunteering experience a week alongside a foundation learning offer.

What has the impact been so far?
Ten students have been engaged successfully through the new volunteering offer to date, and are receiving a package of support including a range of different local volunteering opportunities. The young people have responded well so far to the new mix of provision.

What are the lessons for other areas?

58. There has been less work in this area than some others, and that which has taken place still needs to be fully tested. Nonetheless, there are a number of issues for areas to think about:

- **Engaging with the voluntary and community sector** to identify how opportunities for volunteering might fit within existing provision to strengthen the offer to specific groups of young people.

- **Consider what opportunities new types of provision might provide** for particular vulnerable groups. This could include provision provided through existing providers or new providers like Studio Schools or UTCs.

2.5   Priority six: Communicating the RPA Message

2.5.1 Getting the RPA message out

What have areas done?

59. Nearly all activities within this area related to dissemination and awareness raising (22 areas undertaking 43 activities). They included both internal and external communication relating to RPA. The case study visits demonstrated that there has been less activity in this area than in previous RPA trials due to the restrictions on how the grant funding can be spent. Nonetheless, a number of areas have used their own funding to support communications activity and a number of new products have been created.

How have they done it?

60. Much of the work in this area has aimed to promote awareness amongst both internal and external audiences. In Ealing, for example, they developed a simple questionnaire to use with their own LA staff to test their knowledge and understanding of RPA. They found that most staff had some knowledge but where the questionnaire revealed a lack of knowledge and they were subsequently able to address it. Nottingham, Blackburn with Darwen and Medway were other areas that had prioritised communications activity – as areas new to the LLDPs, they felt that getting the RPA messages out to providers and young people was critical.

61. Overall levels of awareness amongst schools, colleges and other providers that were visited during the case study visits were generally high. RPA was on the agenda for most senior leaders within these schools and colleges, with varying degrees of understanding as one moved down through these organisations. Those with a specific role in relation to supporting young people – for example, heads of year in school or advice and guidance advisers in schools and colleges often had a better understanding of RPA than individual teachers or lecturers whose knowledge would depend on their own personal interest in education. One of the most innovative communication tools seen during the case study visits was in Wakefield. They have developed an RPA App – more detail in the case study below – which is linked to their online prospectus giving young people information about courses and choices.

62. Other audiences presented more of a challenge to some case study areas. Communications with employers remained a difficult issue and, although areas welcomed the messages which DfE had provided, many felt they still did not have the leverage or communication channels themselves to get the RPA message out. The use of providers to communicate directly with employers was therefore attractive, as shown in the example from Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset above. Parents/carers were the other key audience to whom local areas continue to find it very challenging to communicate the RPA message.

What are the lessons for other areas?

63. The tool 'Communicating the RPA message'[7] contains examples and lessons from previous RPA trials and new material developed during the LLDPs. This has reinforced some of the key messages about how areas might spread the RPA message:

- **Test knowledge and understanding of staff working directly with young people.** Areas might use this as an opportunity to engage them in discussion about what RPA will mean for them or for their service, and to clarify any misunderstandings that exist.
- **Utilise existing communication channels to reach a wide range of audiences.** Given the financial constraints facing LLDP areas, they have developed innovative ways to reach as many audiences as possible, for example, by including messages about RPA in existing publications and developing digital tools like the Wakefield RPA app.

Support from local leaders and DfE and work in non-LLDP areas

64. The evaluation team collected feedback on the support from local leaders and the DfE during the case study visits. The support from local leaders was well received by the overwhelming majority of areas. They valued the ability to engage with local leaders to learn from them, share their thinking and be supported and challenged by them. The format of bringing local areas together with their local leader has also worked well – most areas were positive about the benefits they gained from being able to talk with and share their learning with other local areas involved in the projects. They have also particularly welcomed the ability to engage with the local leaders on a one-to-one level, both by visiting the local leader's area and by having them come and talk to partners and providers in their own area.

65. The one issue that was raised about the local leader support is whether they are always aware of, and able to share, good practices in other areas as well as their own. The main focus of the initial support from local leaders has been on sharing their own learning, and while areas have undoubtedly found this extremely positive, it does not always fit entirely with their own needs or priorities. This links to an ongoing challenge that local areas have posed to DfE. Namely, how they can find out about practice in other areas? Their view is that there is currently no effective mechanism for sharing practice between areas and that the national CCIS system is proving very difficult for some people to access and to locate the material that they need. This has hindered some areas that wanted to find out what others had done at the start of the projects and suggests an ongoing need for better signposting of resources emerging from the LLDPs.

66. The evaluation team also visited two areas, Herefordshire and Wakefield (see case study below), which were not involved in this phase of the LLDPs to compare and contrast what activity they had been able to undertake without the additional funding from DfE. In both areas RPA was seen as a core strategic priority for the LA and they had dedicated resources to taking forward activity before 2013.

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[7] Communicating the RPA message tool can be accessed at: http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/t/tool%20six%20communicating%20the%20rpa%20message.pdf.
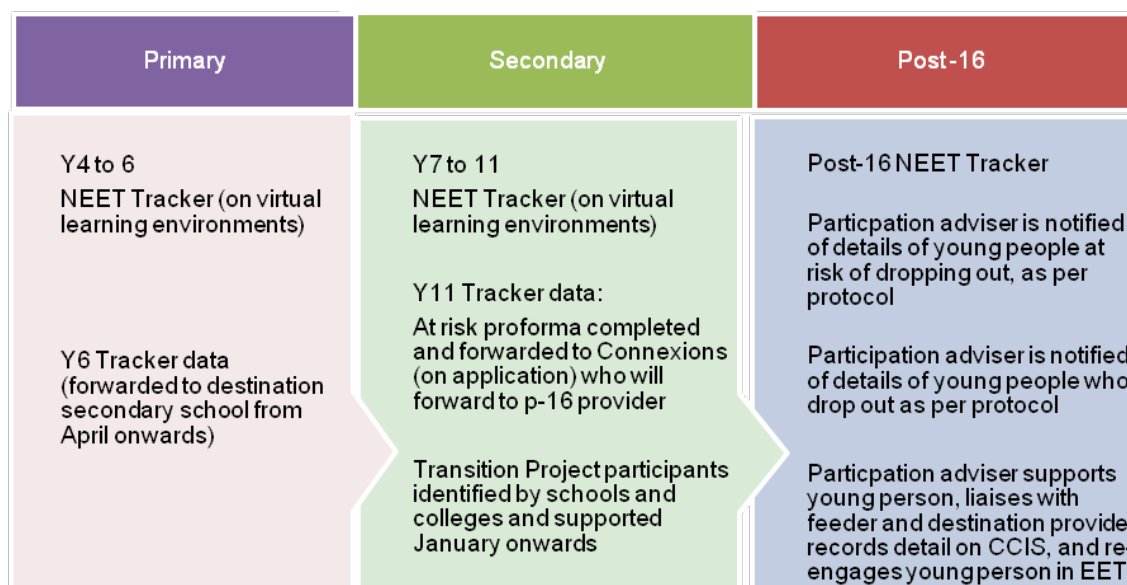
Case study: Planning for RPA in an area not involved in the LLDPs

What did they do?
Wakefield were not involved formally with the RPA LLDPs, though they had benefited from learning from other local authorities regionally who had been involved. Nonetheless, Wakefield have achieved much in their preparations for RPA. In part this was a result of clear commitment to RPA from all levels of the local authority. They have developed an end-to-end view of RPA as illustrated in the diagram below which shows how their work starts with the transition from primary school, flows throughout secondary school from Year 7 to Year 11 and then transitions into post-16 education. They have put in place a number of the building blocks they will need to deliver RPA including detailed data analysis to understand the current cohort and support provision mapping; the development and testing with schools of a RONI; and a clear information-sharing tool to use pre-16 information to inform support post-16. Their work on communicating the RPA message had produced an innovative and powerful new tool – the Wakefield RPA app – which is available for others to use and see at http://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/rpa-wakefield/id481388496?mt=8.

Raising the participation age: an end-to-end view

Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Y4 to 6 NEET Tracker (on virtual learning environments)	Y7 to 11 NEET Tracker (on virtual learning environments)	Post-16 NEET Tracker
	Y11 Tracker data: At risk proforma completed and forwarded to Connexions (on application) who will forward to p-16 provider	Particpation adviser is notified of details of young people at risk of dropping out, as per protocol
Y6 Tracker data (forwarded to destination secondary school from April onwards)		Participation adviser is notified of details of young people who drop out as per protocol
	Transition Project participants identified by schools and colleges and supported January onwards	Particpation adviser supports young person, liaises with feeder and destination provider records detail on CCIS, and re-engages young person in EET

What has the impact been so far?
Drop out from post-16 learning between September 2011 and April 2012 is 7.4 per cent lower than for the same period 2010/2011. Applications to post-16 learning using the Wakefield online prospectus have increased 21.6 per cent from 64.4 per cent in the 2009/2010 academic year to 86 per cent as at March 2012. The Wakefield activity survey for October 2011 school leavers showed 5.5 per cent were NEET and 86.6 per cent were in learning, an improvement on September 2010 reporting 5.94 per cent NEET and 84.88 per cent in learning.

Conclusions and recommendations

67. The experience of the LLDPs has confirmed many of the lessons from the Phase 1 and 2 RPA trials. At the end of RPA Phase 2 trials, the evaluation team developed an overarching planning framework for RPA and accompanying tools. The experience of the LLDPs has confirmed that this overall framework has proved useful in helping areas to think through their RPA plans. There have also been a number of new developments and refinements though to the approaches taken in the LLDPs. The evaluation team have therefore produced an updated set of tools which will be published alongside this report, showing new evidence and examples from the LLDPs. The new tools can be found at the link below:

www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/participation/rpa/a0075564/rpa-past-projects

68. At the end of the Phase 1 and 2 RPA evaluation reports, the evaluation team also developed a list of top tips for trial areas and other local areas to think about as they prepare for RPA (see appendix 1). Many of these top tips still apply. These top tips have been further developed to take account of lessons from the latest round of LLDPs in a number of areas (see p.7 of this report).

69. In relation to each of the six priorities, the experience of the LLDPs has confirmed many of the lessons from the previous trials, but also suggested some new approaches or issues that other areas may need to think through.

70. In understanding the cohort and determining local priorities, the LLDPs have confirmed the value and importance of early identification of young people at risk of NEET. All but four of the 18 areas visited had already developed a RONI or EIT or were planning to develop one. However, less focus had been given to developing risk indicators post-16 than pre-16 suggesting this is a gap other areas could be thinking about. Local areas should also consider how best to engage their schools in developing a RONI or EIT and how to present the information to them.

71. Although overall understanding of the cohort has improved, some common weaknesses remain. Only a few areas have fully thought through when, and if, young people might require a temporary break in learning and how to account for this in their projections. In a number of areas the link between their data analysis and the priorities they have set has been unclear, for example, with too much focus given to increasing 16-year-old participation or participation of particular groups, when they face a much bigger challenge in increasing 17-year-old participation.

72. Overall governance arrangements for RPA were much improved in the LLDPs, and there had also been a number of successes in bringing on board locally elected politicians. Other areas may wish to focus on this.

73. In improving tracking and transitions the focus on improving participation between 16 and 17 has been a priority in a number of the LLDPs. Some post-16 providers have made good progress in looking at their own retention practices, examining whether they are as effective as they should be and trying to identify good practice that others can learn from.

The LLDPs have also confirmed that the early notification system can be a useful safety net to ensure all young people dropping out of post-16 education are being picked up.

74. In developing support mechanisms, as well as confirming the importance of developing some form of EIT, the LLDPs have helped to move this work to the next stage in considering how such a tool should be used to deploy and evaluate the impact of any support provided. This is something other areas may want to think through.

75. The LLDPs have also confirmed work with young people in JWT as one of the most important and difficult issues many areas will face. There may be merit in looking at whether a separate risk of JWT indicator would help to identify those young people and to prevent JWT. In relation to wider provision, the work of the LLDPs has confirmed the importance of identifying any provision gaps or needs, and thinking innovatively to fill them. There are a number of examples of how areas have done this that others can learn from.

76. Finally, the experience of the LLDPs has confirmed the importance of ongoing communication of the RPA message. In the main, areas have done this through existing communication channels, but there have also been some creative and new ideas developed during the LLDPs which others may want to learn from including the development of the first RPA online app which is available for others to use.

Recommendations

77. Based on the evidence collected through this latest evaluation of RPA LLDPs, the research team makes the following recommendations for the DfE and local areas to consider:

- So that local areas can demonstrate the impact of their work more clearly, the DfE should consider providing even greater support at the start of the projects to try to help areas set measures of success and establish systems for collecting information about impact. Local areas also need to consider how they can set better measures of success in the timescales available to them.
- Areas that are in the early stages of preparing for RPA will want to ensure they have put in place the basic building blocks needed to deliver RPA. Evidence from the evaluation of the LLDPs suggests this means focusing on activities in priorities one and two; understanding the cohort and determining local priorities in particular, as they provide the foundations for further action to deliver RPA.
- Local areas should consider using the RPA tools to identify any gaps in their implementation and see how they can learn from others. The tools can be found at: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/participation/rpa/a0075564/rpa-past-projects.
- Local areas should test themselves against the Phase 1, 2 and 3 evaluation 'top tips' to ensure they have considered each of these fully (see appendix 1).

Appendix 1: Top tips from previous RPA evaluations

Top ten tips from Phase 1 trial areas for other local authorities

All areas should...

- carry out detailed cohort analysis using data from Connexions and the local authority to better understand at risk young people and those who have dropped out;
- on the basis of this analysis develop a clear set of priorities for action and focus on delivering these – determining how they fit within wider 14-19 plans;
- consider how best to embed RPA governance within existing 14-19 arrangements to ensure the 14-19 partnership is focused on what it will take to deliver RPA;
- nominate a senior lead for RPA as well as an RPA trial manager to implement activity and think about the sustainability of this resource beyond the trial period;
- 'galvanise the system' locally and get local stakeholders and providers talking about RPA – this means engaging all providers in RPA activity in some way;
- consider appointing local young people, parents/carers and employer champions to spread the message;
- develop RPA plans and trajectories and consider the implications of these for wider 14-19 plans including commissioning priorities;
- make sure Connexions and other key partners locally both within and outside the LA are engaged fully in delivering RPA – use RPA as an opportunity to strengthen relationships;
- engage more regularly and informally with other local areas to learn from one another and be willing to share and engage in debate with other local areas; and
- consider your own plans for evaluation especially if RPA activity is starting now but will not impact until 2013/15 – setting a baseline now will be important to determining success.

Source:
http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/rpa%20phase%201%20evaluation%20report.pdf (p.9)

Top tips from the Phase 2 trials for other local areas to consider

Local areas should think about how they can...

- develop a comprehensive plan for delivery of RPA;
- develop their understanding of their cohorts and identify a set of priorities for delivering RPA with expected impact demonstrated through trajectories to 2013/15;
- measure the impact of planned interventions by looking at the different segments of the cohort activity is targeting and quantifying the potential impact of each;
- review their own governance and leadership of RPA to ensure they are getting full engagement from the wider LA and other partners, and have maximised opportunities to streamline governance and leadership drawing together youth, IAG, post-16 and schools' arrangements to minimise bureaucracy, ensure coherence, sustainability and efficiencies;
- establish stronger links with wider LA governance and employers through local economic partnerships or LA regeneration teams;
- engage with young people and parents/carers to ensure young people's voices are reflected in plans for delivering RPA and the hardest to engage are aware of RPA;
- engage with the full range of providers, using the data to agree which providers have issues with post-16 progression and what support they might need/benefit from;
- think about how to strengthen their engagement with schools and colleges in particular, identifying the right strategic lead for RPA to work with at each institution;
- learn from the successful work of some Phase 2 areas in engaging employers and think about who has the credibility to lead this work in their locality;
- focus on the transitions throughout secondary education and into post-16 education, identify and map all of the universal and targeted support available and identify gaps, overlaps and efficiencies through conversations with providers;
- identify particular groups within their own cohorts that will be critical to RPA and map the interventions, support and provision in place for each 'at risk' cohort including all of the LA services and other delivery partners working with them;
- approach their work with those at risk of disengagement or who have already disengaged more systematically, including considering what the role of the participation adviser and support panels should be, and how they will define when young people have a reasonable excuse, and how to support those with one;
- discuss and debate the need for a RONI, think through the key measures to include in one for their own local area and ensure schools are using it;
- identify provision gaps through mapping, data analysis and/or feedback from learners and decide how to fill them, learning from the experience of engaging with employers for young people in Jobs without Training (JWT) and developing new provision;
- develop future delivery models in the context of the changing financial climate and decisions already taken, such as the development of the National Careers Service; and
- identify areas facing similar challenges where lessons are likely to be transferable and ensure they are visiting and talking to them to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Source:http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/rpa%20phase%202%20evaluation%20report.pdf (p.9)

Top tips from the LLDPs for other areas to consider

Local areas might want to consider how they can...

- develop or refine early identification indicators (EIT) or RONIs for use post-16 as well as pre-16 and decide how best to present the data to schools and other providers to make it as easy as possible for them to understand (see p.11);
- develop projections for participation in 2013 and 2015 that take account of assumptions about non-participants; strengthen trajectory planning and be clearer about the link between their data analysis and the priorities for action they have set (see p.14);
- review governance arrangements to ensure reporting lines at a political level are clear to ensure responsible lead members have a thorough understanding of RPA (see p.15);
- discuss with post-16 providers that have low participation rates at age 17, their own retention practices and whether there is anything to learn from others (see p.16);
- develop systems to use an EIT or RONI to act as the mechanism by which targeted support is deployed to young people, and then used to evaluate the impact of that support (see p.20);
- ensure that early notification systems and protocols emphasise the importance of providers' own pastoral care systems and moves between providers (see p.20);
- identify whether gaps in provision exist by mapping the most common progression routes and consider developing new provision to meet any gaps (see p.25);
- consider whether they can distinguish the characteristics, pre-16, of young people who are at risk of JWT from the characteristics of young people who are at risk of NEET and focus preventing young people from entering JWT (see p.26); and
- continue to communicate the RPA message as widely as possible. Consider developing a local brand for RPA so messages are recognised (see p.30).