



The **14–19** Prospectus

10 Case Studies of Emerging Practice



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Foreword

The 14–19 Prospectus: young people’s first choice for information on 14–19 learning opportunities.

The recently published DCSF *Action Plan for the 14–19 Prospectus and Common Application Process* describes how, in delivering the 14–19 reforms, we need to move to a system that is responsive to young people’s needs:

‘Young people should have genuine choice and be engaged in their learning in order to achieve their potential and progress. Young people should be provided with high quality impartial information, advice and guidance, including being able to find out online what opportunities are on offer to them. They should also be able to apply for these opportunities through the same online resource’ (page 2, DCSF Action Plan).

Young people need to be able to plan their learning journey, understanding what is on offer at each stage and how to access it. The 14–19 Prospectus should be a user-friendly, searchable and comprehensive directory of the local education and training opportunities available, from Entry Level through to Level 3.

About this booklet

This booklet does not seek to define ‘best practice’ with regard to the 14–19 Prospectus but instead showcases 10 areas that have volunteered to demonstrate their own emerging practice for the benefit of others making the same journey.

The purpose of this booklet is therefore to enable practitioners to share experiences of how they have tackled issues, overcome problems and achieved success in specific elements of Prospectus/CAP development. It is not meant to tell you ‘how you should do it’ but ‘how others did it’, giving you information which could help you to tackle challenges and avoid pitfalls in your area. It should also facilitate communication between 14–19 partnerships so that areas can talk to and learn from each other. It is also intended to support the links between 14–19 partnerships and local developments with decision-makers and policy-makers at a national level.

This booklet, the *Action Plan for the 14–19 Prospectus and Common Application Process*, the self-assessment tool and the online forum together represent a developing ‘toolkit’ which seeks to promote progress and learning country-wide on the issues and challenges involved in the development of the 14–19 Prospectus and CAP. It also looks at connected issues – from the CAP and the ILP to the development and application of meaningful management information to support the September Guarantee.



Gareth Griffiths

14–19 Provision and Attainment Director
Learning and Skills Council



1. County Durham

Achievement

Development of a resource pack – a one-stop shop for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers – to support the implementation of the 14–19 Prospectus, ILPs and the CAP.

Called 'Progression Planning using ICT at Key Stage 4', the pack has been given to each provider. It contains resources for initial implementation and curriculum development for integrating ILPs (Plan-it), the Prospectus itself called *Help4Teens* and the CAP, and for the planning and management of applications.

Approach

We began by putting together a development team consisting of the information co-ordinator (Access) from Connexions County Durham and an IAG consultant. The aim was to create a framework to enable practitioners not only to support young people in the use of all three core products (with lesson plans, quizzes, etc.), but also to design a practical 'repository for knowledge' to physically house related documents that would be helpful.

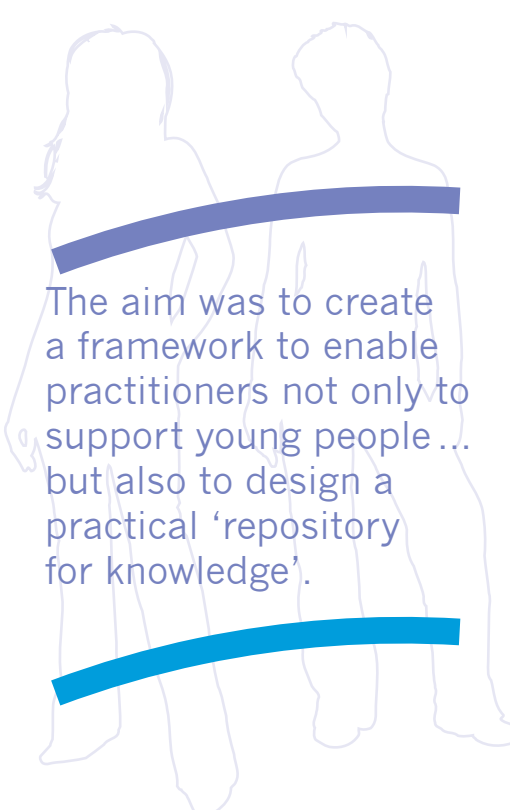
From the start, we recognised the importance of the resource pack being driven by existing operational and technical processes and the importance of integrating existing IAG resources and practices into our solution.

The brief for the pack set out three objectives:

- to introduce ILPs and the benefits of using electronic portfolios;
- to explain how products in the suite combine to provide a tool for transition planning; and
- to set out the benefits of integrating these products into existing curricula.

The resulting pack has five sections. Sections 1, 2, 3 cover the core products and include presentations, lesson plans and pre-prepared student activities; section 4 covers mapping the process to existing frameworks and guidance; and section 5 is called 'resources' – currently it contains the quality standards for IAG, programmes of study for PSHE, extracts from key documents such as the National Framework for *Careers Education and Guidance in England* and the QCA's *Framework for economic wellbeing, 11–19*. Contact details of the project leaders are also included.

The intention is that the resource pack can be continually updated and amended. To facilitate this, a plastic folder with five sections holds A4 sheets, printed literature and CD-ROMs; currently, two-thirds of the binder has been used, so more information can be added over time. To keep costs down, binders, plastic pockets, dividers and so on were purchased locally, a local printer selected, and administration staff from the 14–19 partnership team put the packs together prior to distribution. The total budget for the pack was around £8,000.



The aim was to create a framework to enable practitioners not only to support young people ... but also to design a practical 'repository for knowledge'.

The pack was distributed to provider representatives via the project co-ordinator through meetings, presentations and briefings; if staff were unable to attend these sessions, then the packs were taken into schools and colleges and personal briefing sessions arranged. This approach was an important element in the success of the pack – it would not have been so well received if sent out ‘cold’.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

Initially, a three-month timescale was set in preparation for a launch event in early October 2008. There was a print run of 100 (to cover 70 providers and other stakeholders).

More administration time than had originally been allocated was required to ensure accuracy in the collation of materials, and agency staff had to be drafted in to help. The scale of the task and the amount of project management/liaison required between the co-ordinators and the printers were underestimated.

We were able to fast-track the development of the pack because it had been conceived of as a ‘living document’. This means that instead of delaying until all the information that we may want to include is ready, we can send out materials to add in as and when they become available. We envisage that additional sections and expanded content will include implementation of programmes in the enterprise curriculum, further information on new Diploma lines, and case studies from providers on their success in using the 14–19 Prospectus, ILPs and the CAP.

Outcomes/benefits/measures of effectiveness

It is still early days – there has not been sufficient time to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the resource pack. However, anecdotal feedback and the reactions from providers at the launch event and since have all been very positive. Providers claim that it is really useful – both in terms of the quality and relevance of the materials and to have everything brought together for them. We are planning to undertake a more formal evaluation of the Prospectus in the spring, and the resource pack will be included in this programme.

The pack has been praised as a driver to get providers who were not previously engaged to become involved with the 14–19 Prospectus, ILPs and the CAP. It is seen as a set of tools for them to use, not as a set of tasks or more work for them to do.

Useful links/contact details

- [http://durham.futures4me.co.uk/\(X\(be9c571d-ec44-485a-87e70f6c43e25241\)\)/durham/Home.aspx](http://durham.futures4me.co.uk/(X(be9c571d-ec44-485a-87e70f6c43e25241))/durham/Home.aspx)

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2. East Riding and Hull

Achievement

Production of a partner protocol agreement to underpin effective partnership working on the 14–19 Prospectus and the CAP.

The purpose was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders contributing to and using the Prospectus and the CAP to ensure that benefits to learners are maximised.

Approach

Following a pilot of the CAP system in 2006, we began 2007 by realising that, with the DCSF's requirements to introduce a Prospectus and with our plans to further roll out the CAP system, it was vital that all the stakeholders in the partnership not only understood what their own roles were, but also knew what others had responsibility for. The East Riding and Hull Area Prospectus Board, which meets monthly to oversee the development of the Prospectus, the CAP and the ILP, unanimously agreed the production of the protocol document.

The protocol agreement sets out all partners' involvement and details, including:

- shared roles and responsibilities – setting out what the Prospectus Board will undertake and how it relates to the partners;
- specific roles and responsibilities – for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, Connexions Humber, local authorities, the LSC Humber and the Consortium for Learning (a network for work-based learning providers);
- an annual delivery timeline clarifying who is doing what and when;
- a data entry pro-forma setting out the requirements and layout for all 14–19 information included within the Prospectus; and
- careers, education and guidance (CEG) – a framework for delivery covering Years 9, 10 and 11 – this is backed up by a full CEG package.

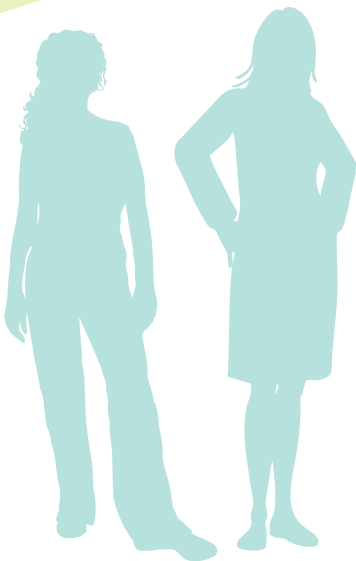
An important element of the protocol document is the declaration of understanding and commitment to the detailed processes. Each partner signed this to demonstrate their commitment to their responsibilities within the specified timescales.

The protocol document was written in summer 2008. It was sent out to lead contacts in each organisation at the start of the autumn term with a covering letter from the Area Prospectus Board chair. All partners in the East Riding of Yorkshire and Hull have been willing to sign the agreement. This has resulted in clarity of roles and responsibilities and strengthened partnership working.

An important element of the protocol document is the declaration of understanding and commitment to the detailed processes.



The area prospectus protocol included a timeline for 2008/09 stating all partners' responsibilities and giving clear deadlines that all partner organisations had to work to.



Challenges overcome/lessons learned

Getting all the partners to engage fully in their defined roles and responsibilities proved difficult at first; some felt the Prospectus and CAP projects would result in a lot more work for them with little gain. By selling the positives – for example, impartial access to all opportunities for all young people, instant applications, data for supporting the September Guarantee, instant information on the progress of each learner and potential NEET data – we have gradually gained the acceptance of all organisations as they realised the benefits to young people and themselves, either as a provider or a support agency.

Delivering the Prospectus and the CAP during 2007/08 was challenging: learning provision was not uploaded at the same time, and not all schools delivered our locally developed CEG programme, all of which resulted in young people not receiving the full experience. To overcome these and other problems, the area prospectus protocol included a timeline for 2008/09 stating all partners' responsibilities and giving clear deadlines that all partner organisations had to work to. The protocol agreement does not provide an answer to all the issues that arise, but it has provided a framework that we can build on. As development, technical or partnership issues have occurred, we have addressed these through formal reporting at the Area Prospectus Board. Working groups have provided the forum for discussion and recommended actions. The activities of the Board and working groups are communicated to all stakeholders to keep them aware of current activities and future developments.

Outcomes/benefits/measures of effectiveness

With 'buy-in' from all partner providers and agencies, we have greater access to a wider range of resources – for example, college MIS managers have developed solutions to MIS issues. All providers are now engaged with the Prospectus and there has been a piloted introduction to their applications – we are on target to achieve the CAP across all providers by 2010. All partners are kept up-to-date on expectations, system developments and timescales through regular contact with the area prospectus project officer and the monthly newsletter.

Providers located outside the local authority boundaries but within travel-to-learn distances are engaged in our Prospectus and the CAP. This ensures that learners can access and apply for opportunities within their travel-to-learn area and are not restricted by local authority boundaries. Due to the extent of our learner movements, our Prospectus is jointly run by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council.

The whole process depends upon willing and supported partnership working, clear and consistent exchanges of information, trust between all partners, clear roles and responsibilities and an achievable timeline that all organisations can work towards. A great deal of time is taken to support partnership working across the East Riding of Yorkshire and Hull and the protocol agreement is the demonstration of this work and an important facilitator in the achievement and position of the East Riding and Hull's 14–19 Prospectus and CAP today.

Most importantly, young people are able to search for all opportunities within the Prospectus, there is support from Connexions personal advisers, school careers co-ordinators, Connexions curriculum consultants and tutors throughout the application process, and partners feel pride in what they see as a joint endeavour.

Useful links/contact details

- The 14–19 Prospectus can be found at:
www.learneastriding.co.uk
www.learnhull.co.uk

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3. Greater Manchester

Achievement

Bringing together data contained within 10 local prospectuses into one sub-regional 14–19 Prospectus to inform the planning and commissioning process and to provide wider course searches for learners.

The aim was that the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus would supply information that could inform 14–19 sub-regional planning by local authorities, the LSC, providers and 14–19 partnerships to better meet the needs of learners, the community and employers.

Approach

We had been working in collaboration across the 10 local authority areas for some time, helping them to develop their own prospectuses. While setting these up, we felt we had an opportunity to create something even more useful. In collating course information from the areas, we felt this snapshot of current provision could be used more widely both in terms of supporting individual learners and in terms of commissioning learning provision.

We decided to develop a joint approach from the 10 local authority areas and to build a single overarching 14–19 Prospectus that could search through the data of each area. The 10 areas all agreed to share data from their prospectuses to feed into a broader Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus.

We consulted with learners and professionals to understand how the new Prospectus needed to be structured and formatted to be user-friendly, and we looked at the individual area prospectuses for comparison and compatibility. As learners are introduced to their local area prospectus in a formal manner at school, college or with their personal adviser, we needed to ensure that the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus would work intuitively, as it would not be introduced in its own specific lesson.

We consulted with learners and professionals to understand how the new Prospectus needed to be structured and formatted to be user-friendly.

The software provider that developed and now hosts the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus and the data tool also provides prospectus services for six out of the 10 areas. The overarching Prospectus was then developed to pull in data from these six area prospectuses, while the software providers for the four other areas agreed to provide data to the main supplier, where it was saved to facilitate searches. This means that learners searching on the Greater Manchester Prospectus are able to view the 'live' data from the individual prospectuses for these six areas, while in the other four areas the searches use the most recently uploaded dataset.

The tool can present information in a variety of formats: charts, Venn diagrams, Excel spreadsheets, pie charts, and so on, so that the information can be exported into Excel spreadsheets and manipulated for reporting and wider use. Users can search by one or more of the following categories in combination: by area, by sector subject area, by course level, by postcode, by provider or by mode of delivery.

Analyses can be run across more than one course, for example searching on two courses and creating a Venn diagram to illustrate which providers offer either or both of the chosen courses. This is invaluable for learners taking more than one course who do not want to travel between providers, and it gives them a range of provider options. For stakeholders who need to commission learning, this type of detailed data helps understand how well provision caters to learners' needs, by level, provider and course type.

The tool is able to inform the September Guarantee process and the planning of geographically coherent provision by providers and 14–19 partnerships, by offering a list of courses by provider and by level across Greater Manchester. This helps with 14–19 education plans in each borough, as well as with plans to meet the learner entitlement in 2013.

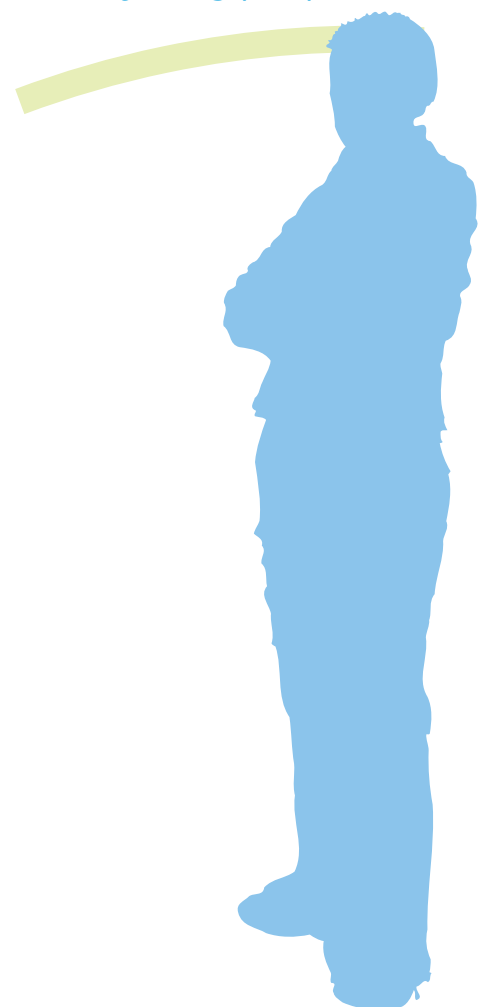
The tool also helps to facilitate the planning of provision to ensure curriculum breadth and progression opportunities for all learners, such as 14–19 Diplomas and Apprenticeships. This helps us engage or re-engage all learners and reduce the number of young people who are NEET. We can search for and list the courses in each borough by level, to see whether they are appropriate and/or of sufficient variety for these young people.

Supporters at local authority level, as well as at an individual NEET co-ordinator level, can search for suitable types of courses, such as those that start part-way through the year or have flexible start dates and those that are not taught in a classroom. This helps both from a commissioning point of view to ensure that courses are available to suit these groups, and from an individual planning point of view. Personal advisers can provide learners with a detailed and flexible range of options to try to better meet their needs, which makes it easier for young people who may potentially become disengaged to continue or to get back into learning.

We can also check that course provision meets the needs of employers, by listing by level and by sector subject area the courses on offer in each area. This means that if there are particular developments happening that require certain qualifications at a certain level in a particular sector subject area, then that supply can be checked and listed by provider.

We have invested a significant amount of time and resources in developing, building and supporting the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus, and we are seeing the benefits of our input in terms of increased cohesion across the 10 areas.

We can search for and list the courses in each borough by level, to see whether they are appropriate and/or of sufficient variety for these young people.



Challenges overcome/lessons learned

Obtaining data feeds from the suppliers that do not run the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus is tricky, as their systems are different. The six prospectuses with the same supplier are integrated so that during searches on the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus, data from each local area prospectus is generated live. However, data from the other four areas needs to be uploaded and saved into the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus, which means that the data generated in searches is not 'live' and requires regular uploads. This leads to discussions around data-sharing as well as the practicalities of merging datasets. Discretionary funds have been made available to support this work; however, it is still not a perfect solution, as these four areas are required to be much more hands-on in helping to ensure that the data is up-to-date. Further, this funding is available only until 2010, so after that the issue will need to be re-evaluated.

The data tool can draw up and then analyse data, which means the quality is dependent on the data that is put into the area prospectuses. The quality of the data in each local prospectus varies, such as multiple spelling of titles and names for the same courses. This means reports produced by the Greater Manchester Prospectus are subject to any errors contained in the local area prospectuses. The data is checked for validity and currency by the City of Manchester local authority, which spends time going through course descriptions checking that the details and clarity provided are sufficient and accurate. Further, the data tool allows for targeted data cleansing that can save valuable time, allowing systematic searching so that providers can clean their data in this way.

Improvements have been made to the quality of data which have been of benefit to learners. For example, the data tool can identify which courses in which prospectuses have not been allocated a level. The tool can then 'drill down' and list those courses by provider. In one borough, that specific information was used to save data-checking time and to target the cleansing of its data with the providers listed by the tool, and as a result all courses now have a level allocated.

The tool has also helped people think of the data in a standardised way, so in future these checks should become an automatic part of the process, rather than being done retrospectively.

The data tool allows for targeted data cleansing that can save valuable time, allowing systematic searching so that providers can clean their data in this way.

Outcomes/benefits/asures of effectiveness

As a result of the data tool we know that there are 12,439 courses in 2009 listed in the Greater Manchester 14–19 Prospectus. We know how many are listed in each borough, by level, by sector subject area, by course and by provider.

The Prospectus is widely used by each of the 10 areas, although we do not have specific usage statistics. Certain areas are more likely to use it than others, for example in one area over half the learners travel across the border for post-16 learning. Before our Prospectus was available, these learners would need to rely more heavily on provider marketing and word of mouth to understand what was available to them, whereas now they have the tools to carry out their own research in a structured and informed manner.

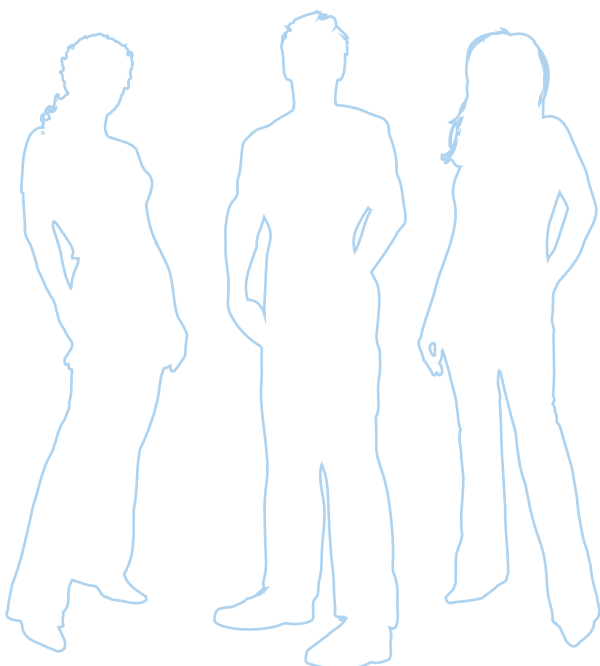
We feel this sub-regional 14–19 Prospectus, developed through collaboration between 10 local authority areas, builds a framework for a growing interdependence of institutions, enabling them to meet government education and training priorities.

Useful links/contact details

- www.greatermanchesterfutures.co.uk

- **Ian Ellis**
Partnership Director

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4. Greater Merseyside

Achievement

Continuous collation and analysis of user feedback to drive improvement and use of the 14–19 Prospectus.

From the outset, and on an ongoing basis, Greater Merseyside has consulted students, providers, personal advisers, support teams and parents/carers to understand how to design and develop a 14–19 Prospectus, called *i-chooseliverpool*, that best meets their needs.

Approach

We conducted focus groups among students to inform the initial site development stage. The topics we covered included all aspects of the Prospectus – from site content and design to marketing routes that would appeal to students. Our marketing campaign included posters and pens, and we also had a campaign on buses, which worked well.

We organised workshops with providers and personal advisers to promote awareness of the site and to get feedback during the marketing and implementation period. We wanted to ensure that the website was going to cater to a wide range of users, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (such as visual impairment or dyslexia), and those whose first language is not English. To that end we consulted with specialist providers, qualified advisers and the Connexions specialist support team, who guided us in terms of choosing the best font, type size and page layout so that the overall presentation is clear, colourful and engaging. We investigated providing translations of some areas of the site; however, at this stage it is not a financially viable option.

Comparable 14–19 Prospectus sites were evaluated in group workshops with students from various ability backgrounds. This included reviewing the search facility, presentation of information and overall attractiveness to students – would it hold their attention, could they find what they were searching for, and what improvements would they make to the site?

The Prospectus has a feedback section to allow users to provide comments that are reviewed on an ongoing basis. This is currently being updated in order to encourage young people to input their views, and to maximise the value of the information provided. The revised format asks users a series of short yes/no questions about whether they found the website easy to use, liked the design, and whether the site provided enough information about the courses they were interested in. It also asks an open question regarding how they would improve the site, and provides a section for comments or queries. The form asks respondents to state whether they are a young person, a parent, or a personal adviser/teacher, so that responses can be analysed by user type.

The Prospectus is evaluated each spring by young people and advisers. Any necessary amendments are then made: for example, in 2008 we added Aimhigher information on higher education.

In spring 2009 we launch version three of our Prospectus and CAP along with the latest course booklet and a new DVD highlighting the benefits of the Prospectus for SEN pupils.

The new version of the 14–19 Prospectus will now include post-16 options starting at Entry Level, as well as the usual annual updates to such things as web addresses, new case studies and information on the minimum wage. We have also added a section providing advice to young people about what to do if they change their mind about their course, as we found that this is an area that young people worry about and are not sure where to go for information and guidance. A further development is that a progression pathway is to be introduced, allowing searches by career, then qualifications required (Level 4/5) and courses available in the Prospectus, showing students which courses can lead to which careers.

Recent focus groups among young people and practitioners covered the new 'i-choosediploma' booklet; topics discussed include the introduction of the Diploma into Liverpool and the new process for schools. Outcomes will be fed into the development of the next version of the Prospectus and the course information booklet.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

Difficulties emerged where students on the borders of the six Greater Merseyside areas had to access several prospectuses; while there was only one CAP, we had six prospectuses. Learners logging in would access Liverpool but a web page did provide links to the other prospectuses. Learners in Liverpool can access course information throughout Greater Manchester, which is especially beneficial to learners who want to apply across borders for their provision. Students, schools and personal advisers fed back to us that although the Prospectus was good, learners had too many providers to search through, which made it time-consuming and off-putting.

We negotiated with our software provider to provide a solution, which resulted in the six Greater Merseyside areas having to work together to merge information. Now, when learners log on to i-chooseliverpool, providers in Liverpool come up first, then all the other areas as well, so that it is clearly demarcated for learners to navigate. This took a year to achieve from receiving the feedback, but now one search covers all areas.

We negotiated with our software provider to provide a solution, which resulted in the six Greater Merseyside areas having to work together to merge information.

The Steering Group found through research that parents/carers need specific consideration as a major influencer of students' educational and/or employment decisions. We now target our marketing specifically towards each audience – parents/carers, students, providers and personal advisers. Personal advisers have a stand with information at parents' evenings, open evenings and provider functions. The leaflet for parents/carers contains a summary of the choices young people will soon be making, the different routes, providers and qualification levels, information about available funding schemes and key dates.

Outcomes/benefits/asures of effectiveness

As a result of user feedback, the site includes a range of case studies, highlighting the experiences of students from a range of backgrounds and ability levels, and across different opportunity sectors.

One whole cohort of Year 11 learners has now been through the process using the site – 6,000 learners.

We have recently updated the site to allow us to monitor and analyse use, including web hits and so on. The new version provides the number of hits by provider and by course and then this data can be compared with the number of applications per course. Each provider gets its own data on hits per course so that provision and information about each course can be quality checked. It also helps us at Connexions and at the local authority, as we can analyse the number of hits per course and the resulting number of applications. This evidence then helps in commissioning to streamline provision and in ensuring that it caters to learners' needs.

Continuous consultation helps to reassure and engage students, parents/carers and providers, and encourages them to become involved in further developing and improving the 14–19 Prospectus.

Useful links/contact details

- www.i-chooseliverpool.org.uk/CAP/Home.aspx

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5. Kent

Achievement

Incorporating the CAP into the 14–19 Prospectus and using management information to support the requirements of the September Guarantee.

Kent is beginning to apply the management information generated to inform future planning of provision.



We recognise differences among the provider groups and aim to demonstrate a flexible and pragmatic approach catering to their differing needs and perspectives.

Approach

At the point when the 14–19 Prospectus contract for Kent was awarded in 2007, there was no online application functionality. We felt that to equip learners with the relevant information to make informed choices and to provide us with the management information we needed, particularly to support the September Guarantee, the online application process needed to be fast-tracked.

From the beginning we knew that for this to be a success it had to be a collaboration between all interested parties. Our first step was to set up a consultation group of schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to agree on the initial brief to the software designers. We appointed a single provider, as this was believed to be the most efficient and cost-effective way to manage the process. A project steering group was set up to provide the impetus required to push the work programme forward; it also ensured that there would be buy-in from key provider stakeholders.

In order to meet the strict launch timetable, we agreed to prioritise working functionality over style and usability for the initial launch, with continual upgrades to improve performance made throughout the year. This approach ensured that the launch met the deadline.

Pragmatism was key to ensuring that the launch was not delayed. For example, Connexions personal advisers were trained on demo/incomplete software, and were then briefed on any changes as they were made throughout the year. User views on the functionality of the website were applied to the improvement of the processes used by Connexions and schools after the launch.

Overall, we feel that our engagement process worked well, thanks to having a clearly defined rationale and to achieving buy-in, first at a wider area level, then at a local level. This was achieved through ongoing consultation about processes and software design. We also placed importance on discretion when bringing different providers online. We recognise differences among the provider groups and aim to demonstrate a flexible and pragmatic approach catering to their differing needs and perspectives. Related to this, we also place a focus on customer care, spending time with providers in training and offering telephone support aimed at providing a same-day response to their questions.

It is vital for the long-term success of the online application process that the 14–19 Prospectus is kept fully up-to-date.

The 14–19 Prospectus in Kent is funded jointly by the LSC, the local authority and Connexions Kent and Medway. The costs include software, training, marketing and a project team that has grown to consist of two officers and two administrative staff, as Kent is the largest local authority in the UK, with 236 providers currently listed on www.kentchoices4U.com.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

The online application process is only as good as the information supplied and updated by the schools and other providers involved, so it is vital for the long-term success of the online application process that the 14–19 Prospectus is kept fully up-to-date.

We have become more aware of the problems that arise from inconsistencies between different sources – paper and online – and now seek to ensure that the information held in college paper prospectuses and their entries in the 14–19 Prospectus are consistent. Only when learners can find the courses they want in the Prospectus and the CAP can they apply.

Feedback from the initial year of use with this version of the 14–19 Prospectus (in 2006/07 we had a different software provider) has been integrated into the plan for continuous improvement. The priorities identified in the 2007/08 review are:

- to include the 14–19 Prospectus as part of a broader programme of educational support and IAG to enable learners to help themselves and support them through the process;
- to further streamline the application process to reduce the time-lag between application, interview and offer;
- to simplify the process of unlocking accounts, creating passwords, searching and applying online; and
- to raise awareness among users of the full functionality of the online application process.



Learners are given access to their online application accounts through a unique unlock code, which securely links the learner to their personal details that have been pre-populated on the website.

We have uncovered a few key issues which will be addressed in our planning for the next academic year, including:

- learners often had a limited understanding of their post-16 options and the qualifications framework;
- the mass unlocking of accounts by schools in early November can mean that by the time learners are ready to make their applications later in the year they have forgotten both how to use the website and, more importantly, their passwords;
- 23 per cent of learners were unaware that they could message their Connexions PA using the website; and
- 27 per cent of learners had difficulty accessing the internet at home or at school.

As part of the process of addressing these issues, in early 2009 we sent a letter from Connexions to all parents/carers explaining the online application process, what it enables learners to do and the benefits of using it.

Learners are given access to their online application accounts through a unique unlock code, which securely links the learner to their personal details that have been pre-populated on the website. In 2007/08 these codes were issued in November by the schools so that those learners who wished to make early applications could do so. However, we now also send a letter to learners' home addresses advising of the unique unlock code with a card for them to keep as a record of their password for future use.

Outcomes/benefits/measures of effectiveness

While the area is in the initial stages of fully utilising the CAP, early indicators are positive. The preliminary review of the post-16 online application process for 2007/08 demonstrates that:

- five out of nine areas in Kent are included in the online application process;

- 40 per cent of Year 11 learners in Kent are eligible to apply;
- almost all Kent work-based learning providers are represented on **www.kentchoices4u.com**; and
- more than 4,000 learners applied online in 2007/08.

User feedback was also sought to validate the success of the online application process with the learners themselves. We now know that:

- 61 per cent of learners who responded thought that as a result of **www.kentchoices4u.com** they were more aware of the post-16 opportunities available to them;
- 75 per cent of learners thought that it had been easy or very easy to make an application online; and
- 66 per cent of learners preferred to apply online.

Progress in 2008/09:

- three new areas joined the online application process for post-16 applications, making 60 per cent of Year 11 learners in Kent eligible to apply online; and
- by mid-2008/09, 72 per cent of the total cohort had made an application, equating to more than 7,600 applicants – 11 per cent over the total percentage for the whole of 2007/08.

Progress in 2009/10:

- two new areas have signed up for post-16 online applications, making 90 per cent of Year 11 learners in Kent eligible to apply online.

As more areas sign up to the CAP, the management information data it generates will become ever more valuable in informing future strategic decision-making. In particular, the data will be used to steer our approach to reducing the number of people who are NEET and to extend participation to learners on the fringes of mainstream education.

Useful links/contact details

- www.kentchoices4u.com

- **Rob Williamson**
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6. Leicester and Leicestershire

Achievement

Raising awareness and encouraging the use of the CAP and the 14–19 Prospectus – and developing a learner workbook to achieve this.

Connexions Leicester Shire has developed the *Get Learning* workbook, a learner guide to choices, the 14–19 Prospectus, the CAP and next steps, that is introduced in schools and guides learners through key decisions.

Approach

We developed the *Get Learning* workbook from an information booklet that we had produced for the last four or five years. When the requirement for a Prospectus came about, we felt we needed to revise the glossy information booklet into a larger workbook that learners could write in and use as a reference throughout their decision-making process.

We carried out research among learners and consulted a school careers co-ordinator at various stages in the production of the workbook. We found that learners particularly valued bright and colourful pages, illustrations, real-life case studies, and interactive quizzes such as ‘What kind of career planner are you?’ Learners also appreciated learning provider contact details. Now in its second year, a printed copy of *Get Learning* is sent to all our Year 11 learners (the cohort is around 11,000) in Leicester and Leicestershire. The workbook is A4 size, 24 pages in full colour and is made of thick paper that can be written on.

The *Get Learning* workbook contains information, advice and guidance to help learners with course and career planning and with decision-making, as well as checklists to prompt learners to consider the various types of learning and qualifications available, and those which would be most relevant to them. It provides step-by-step instructions on how to use the 14–19 Prospectus and the CAP, quizzes to encourage learners to use the site (to find the answers), as well as a calendar of key steps in the planning process to check off throughout the year, and links to the relevant parts of the Prospectus and the CAP.

We found that learners particularly valued bright and colourful pages, illustrations, real-life case studies, and interactive quizzes.

The workbook is used to introduce learners to the Prospectus. Teachers use the complementary lesson plan, which includes classroom activities designed to familiarise learners with the Prospectus and the CAP, referring to the workbook as a guide. The lesson plan is referenced to national outcomes for careers education and guidance and work-related learning. We feel it is best used as part of a career education programme, focusing on helping young people with all aspects of decision-making when it comes to post-16 options.

To help keep partners engaged and informed, we also produced a flyer signposting relevant web pages and publications for teachers and personal advisers, and we distribute a monthly update with information

We have at least 8,000 learners using the CAP this year from the Year 11 cohort, which equates to around 73 per cent of all learners.

on curriculum development, information provision and related Connexions news. Reply-paid feedback forms are sent out with each workbook, so we can gather data to make ongoing improvements.

The workbook cost £7,000 to design, print and deliver (the print run was 17,300), which was provided by the joint inter-authority fund for the development of the 14–19 Prospectus.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

We found the timing a challenge. The workbook was being developed at the same time as the 14–19 Prospectus, which meant that it was a struggle to get the correct screenshots and so on before the print deadline.

It was also difficult to find young people's case studies to illustrate a range of learning options. To achieve this, we needed to liaise with learning providers and sector skills councils – Leicester College, the City of Leicester School and Sixth Form Centre, and Energy and Utility Skills – and we finally managed to gather four case studies. These learner profiles covered a range of learning routes: a BTEC Introductory Diploma in Health and Social Care; a BTEC National Diploma in Applied Science; an Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering at Severn Trent Water (after completing A-levels); and a profile of a learner studying a BTEC National Diploma in Travel and Tourism, A-level Psychology and Entry Level Spanish.

Outcomes/benefits/measures of effectiveness

We have at least 8,000 learners using the CAP this year from the Year 11 cohort, which equates to around 73 per cent of all learners. All Year 11s in all schools (except special and independent schools) should receive a copy of *Get Learning* via their school.

The lesson plan and activities help to ensure that the Prospectus and the CAP are used effectively within schools and are embedded as part of careers education, and that they are used outside schools in the learners' own time. This is happening in the majority of schools, and the feedback from teachers and other supporters is largely very positive. We have also received requests for further copies from schools and from other community locations such as libraries and youth centres, so we now include these on our distribution list.

We also have evidence from the learner feedback form, which generates around a 5 per cent response rate, typical for this kind of format. This data illustrates that *Get Learning* is very well received by learners: 97 per cent of respondents found the workbook useful, 97 per cent found it easy to read and 89 per cent liked the design. Other comments highlight the clear layout, structure and content, the readable and easy-to-absorb text and the way that it successfully appeals to teenagers.

We have produced an appealing, coherent learner workbook supported by teaching aids, which successfully promotes use of the 14–19 Prospectus and provides a clear and accessible guide to aid learners' decision-making.

Useful links/contact details

- www.connexions-leics.org/lecap/
- A pdf of the *Get Learning* workbook can be found at: www.connexions-leics.org/library/13_19.asp
- Information for students and supporters can be found at: www.connexions-leics.org/staffroom/lecap.asp
- The lesson plan can be found at: www.connexions-leics.org/pdf/pubs/lessonplan_getlearning.pdf

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Roz Smith**
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Connexions Leicester Shire

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7. London

Achievement

Providing information on available courses and careers in a clear and accessible manner to aid learner decision-making.

The 14–19 Prospectus connects course information with career pathways, providing detailed, relevant job descriptions linked to the qualifications required and the steps needed to achieve them.

Approach

The Prospectus *Choice* was originally built by our own in-house developer at London Connects. We agreed the structure following a broad consultation with all local authorities and Connexions, where we asked them to select which functions they would find most useful.

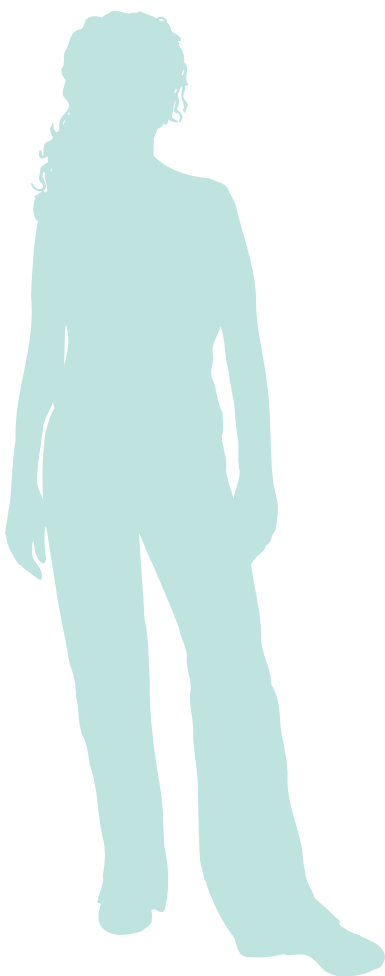
We tested the first version of the Prospectus with young people and personal advisers and our ongoing development group, which comprises Connexions, 14–19 co-ordinators from each borough, careers advisers, and representatives from schools, colleges and work-based learning providers.

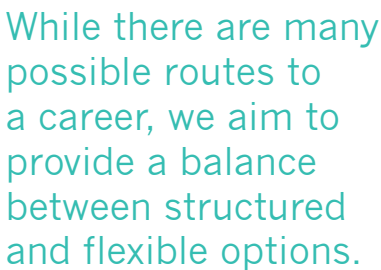
We also introduced the first version of the Prospectus into two schools for testing, spending a day with each to see how it worked in practice, and how it could be improved for each type of user or search. Following this, we developed a second version using software architecture from a national supplier, and this allowed us to add modifications, such as structuring the course search under three headings (subject, keyword or provider) and developing a set of online advice and guidance functions.

The Prospectus search facility starts from either courses or careers of interest, detailing career information on entry routes, qualifications required, training, progression, salary levels, hours and overall working environment. However, it also includes information such as the typical personal skills and interests of people in that occupation, to provide a real-life overview that young people can relate to.

The site also contains a careers quiz which identifies the type of work that learners prefer and provides suggestions for potential careers, again linked to the career/qualification pathway pages. A progression planner allows young people to plan a pathway through the qualification system to any of 800 possible careers. When learners have found a course of interest through the career quiz or progression planner, a link to the detailed course data on the Prospectus is provided, as well as an illustration of the location of the provider on Google maps, and a link to the Transport for London journey planner, to provide timetables and travel instructions for using public transport.

The administration tools behind the system allow the data to be a resource for all: providers can upload their course data in bulk using Excel or Word, and borough co-ordinators can access (but not amend) the information.





While there are many possible routes to a career, we aim to provide a balance between structured and flexible options.

A central help desk analyses the data to provide regular reports on data health, using a traffic light system to signify when a provider has uploaded information and when the information was last updated. This allows us to follow up with providers, to keep the Prospectus up-to-date. The help desk also reports to the LSC and local authorities, to enable them to develop the curriculum map.

Choice was funded out of core budget from the local authorities and matched funding was supplied by the London regional LSC. The software development, including for the Prospectus itself, totalled around £80,000. This included around £15,000 for the team of up to five advisers from the careers network to collate and develop the progression pathway information.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

The 14–19 Prospectus is used in schools with lesson plans, and young people can also use it independently. However, an issue with young people using it in their own time is that the language is not always as learner-friendly as it could be. For example, it refers to ‘levels’, which is provider-oriented terminology rather than learner/parent-friendly usage. This will be updated over time by our editorial group, who check for clarity and consistency of language.

The process of building up the bank of career pathways relies on judgement. While there are many possible routes to a career, we aim to provide a balance between structured and flexible options. Our network of careers advisers reviewed numerous different pathway interpretations by referencing sources including the DCSF and Jobs4U. The advisers aim to provide learners with examples of routes to each career from certain start points. As a result of this work, the 14–19 Prospectus presents clear guidance on available routes without being too prescriptive or too open.

The administration tools behind the Prospectus allow providers with administrator access to write new pathway combinations as new courses become available. Each of these again needs to be reviewed and sense-checked by our advisers before they become live, which can make the process quite lengthy.

We are considering whether or not, and how, to link to the information provided by QCA on career and qualification pathways. Although that data source is not aimed at young people or structured in the same way as we have structured our Prospectus, ideally we would be able to refer to this national database.

Outcomes/benefits/asures of effectiveness

The 14–19 Prospectus is widely used, as is evident from the number of hits on the website. The total number of hits has almost doubled from 9,500 in January 2008 to 18,000 in January 2009, with the number of unique visitors also doubling from 6,000 to 12,000 over the same period. On average, users look at 12 pages of the site, over 11 minutes – a rise from a 4-minute average visit in January 2008, and a 7-minute visit in December 2008. These figures demonstrate that awareness and interest (hits) are increasing at quite a rate, and the increase in visit time illustrates that the site is engaging and useful.

We collect ongoing feedback in a number of ways. Once a month a young person is assigned to review the site and report back to us. We also made a ‘vox pop’ video for the launch which includes young people’s feedback (see link on page 26). The comments on the video include the following:

- ‘Having all the information in one place makes it easier to find the details and with tools like CV builder on the same site you don’t need to look elsewhere.’
- ‘Searching is easy and use of maps and journey planner help find out where colleges are.’
- ‘The career matching quiz provides all details about jobs and how much you can earn.’
- ‘I found the pathways provided a picture of the different qualifications I might need to get a job.’

We regularly hear from personal advisers and our help desk also collates feedback gathered during calls and passes that back to us in reports. We receive feedback from schools in a more structured way as well as informally, face-to-face, when we are on site. An example of feedback from one of our colleges is:

‘The Association of Colleges (London) and individual colleges have worked closely with *Choice* to make sure further education is well represented on the site. It’s now up to us to keep our course data in good shape, so that the young people using the site get the accurate information that they deserve to make their FE decisions.’

Key stakeholders also provide us with feedback, including Chris Heaume, Chief Executive of Central London Connexions:

‘In London more than anywhere, young people need impartial and comprehensive information on their options, given the complexity of the education and work landscape. *Choice* provides that in a way we’ve never had before. It is a key tool in helping young people participate and progress successfully to adulthood, keeping them motivated, informed and supported. It is central to the work of Connexions.’

We believe we have made significant progress in developing a learner-centred 14–19 Prospectus focused on allowing users to progress from education through to career choices by providing clear, relevant and insightful careers IAG.

Useful links/contact details

- <https://mychoicelondon.co.uk/eilp/ldnEilp/home.aspx>
- The ‘vox pop’ video can be found at:
http://www.choicefriends.org/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_details/gid,44/Itemid,63/
- **Peter Williams**
Deputy CEO
London Connects

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8. Norfolk

Achievement

Tracking young people's use of the 14–19 Prospectus and the CAP – and developing a bespoke data collection system that is integrated with CCIS.

Norfolk has generated useful management information that not only tracks who is using the 14–19 Prospectus and the CAP, and to what ends, but also identifies those learners who need more help from Connexions personal advisers.

From start to launch, the development and testing phase took seven months of staff time, and was completed over the course of a year, allowing for other commitments.

Approach

It was important to start with a programme of consultation with Connexions personal advisers and the management information team. We set out to establish where various bits of existing data were kept and how they could be recorded and integrated in the future in a way that would make sense to the personal advisers and enable them to work more effectively.

We involved about 20 personal advisers (out of a total of 130 in the region); they detailed what their data needs were. Simultaneously we undertook a thorough review of the structure and current use of CCIS. This meant that the new system could be specified to produce information that personal advisers had confidence in and that had practical applicability.

Two software companies – suppliers of the CAP and CCIS programmes – were brought together to undertake joint design and development of the project. Extensive testing was required, including visual checks, to ensure that nothing was lost. Training sessions were conducted for small groups of personal advisers. It was vital to allow significant time for all personal advisers to go through the training programme to guard against the possible negative reaction that the introduction of the CAP might 'change Connexions' records'. Briefing and updates ensured that they knew what was coming and when. Articles appeared in the local newsletter to ensure that there were no surprises when the system was launched with the flick of a switch on 21 November 2008.

For specification and testing, approximately six days of the management information team's time was required; around 30 days were invested by the Prospectus team in project management, research, testing and monitoring. The budget for external suppliers on design, development and testing was initially £7,000; this figure was exceeded by £1,900.

From start to launch, the development and testing phase took seven months of staff time, and was completed over the course of a year, allowing for other commitments.



In Norfolk we decided that access to the CAP should not be denied to learners on the basis of their relationship with Connexions.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

We did manage to get two sets of developers to work together, but we want to advise others not to underestimate the difficulties and time that this takes. With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better and quicker to have appointed one as the lead supplier; they could then have undertaken most of the project management and saved considerable internal staff time, as well as avoiding communication problems between two suppliers who had different approaches to project management and data/system design. The 'second' suppliers could then be given responsibility for testing. Although we eventually overcame this challenge, it did cause delays, and costly revisions had to be made to the system (twice!).

Consideration must be given to what work is required on legal and customer service issues before applicant data is transferred.

A decision needs to be made about whether learners who refuse consent for Connexions to keep their data should be allowed access to the CAP. In Norfolk we decided that access to the CAP should not be denied to learners on the basis of their relationship with Connexions. Allowing learners to register with the CAP without having a CCIS record was an additional technical challenge that had to be considered early in the process.

Outcomes/benefits/asures of effectiveness

Although it is early days, as the system became operational only on 21 November 2008, as of January 2009 we have already experienced:

- improved engagement of Connexions advisers with the CAP – the CCIS link provides clear benefits to them and this encourages them to promote the CAP;
- 100 per cent of personal advisers being trained in the use and promotion of the CAP;
- CAP use written into partnership agreements with schools (by personal advisers); and
- evidence of personal advisers using the data to inform more effective interaction with learners.

Because of the link between Prospectus user data and CCIS information, the CAP captures more accurate management information on learner use and there is more confidence in the data. Earlier contact can be made with learners not engaged with the application process, and therefore more effective IAG can be offered.

We anticipate a reduction in staff time this year for tracking September Guarantee data for both personal advisers contacting individual learners and the Connexions management information team that works with bulk data provided by schools and colleges. As the CAP use increases, use of staff time will reduce further.

We believe we have developed a more effective, cost-effective and efficient data collection system that is fully integrated with CCIS.

Useful links/contact details

- www.helpyouchoose.org
- Articles from the newsletter and a draft of data output can be found at: www.helpyouchoose.org/casestudy
- **Chris Barnes**
Systems Officer, 14–19 Prospectus
Connexions Norfolk
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9. West of England

Achievement

An integrated 14–19 Prospectus within the online planning and progression process which creates a record of the learner journey and provides real-time management information.

Our vision was that, with a single web address (the MyPlan4Life portal), young people would be able to access a range of tools to help record their learning journey and access information to make informed decisions from a position of knowledge and clarity about their skills, abilities and ambitions.

Approach

The West of England may be unusual in that we didn't start with the Prospectus; we started with the online planning and progression system. The system is available nationally but it first started here in this area six years ago, originally commissioned and funded by the LSC. It is now managed by a steering group of four local authorities, the LSC and Connexions, and is funded by the local authorities.

The cost includes the system and support for providers (approximately £1,500 for a mainstream school). The support package includes assistance during set-up, when a representative from the MyPlan4Life team at Connexions takes the school team through the system. Each school can also access a number of structured training sessions and helpline support. Training can be selected from a range of sessions, either at a regional level or for an individual provider, covering areas such as delivery team training and launches for learners and/or parents/carers.

Every year the 14–19 adviser from each local authority meets with the MyPlan4Life team at Connexions to agree targets and outcomes. The training programme is then designed to support achievement of the outcomes, and each school completes a planning sheet to show how it will contribute to meeting these outcomes. The Connexions team then provides regular updates on progress, and offers additional training or support as necessary.

The system is now at the core of our 14–19 Prospectus – young people can follow the planning process and gain direct access to the Prospectus from the planning system. About 70 per cent of our Year 9 young people now use the system as a tool to support the Key Stage 4 option choice process, and we are looking to extend its use in Year 11 linked to searching the Prospectus.

The planning system also enables young people to record and build on their data – this assists them in completing CVs, applications and personal statements at key progression points. Alongside the personal record of their skills, ambitions, future careers and so on, they can record the courses they are interested in.

Teachers and Connexions advisers can view a young person's record so that they can provide appropriate information, advice and guidance. Supporters' comments can be recorded within the system and supporters from different institutions (with permission) can see the learner's record and contribute to reviews.

The system is now at the core of our 14–19 Prospectus – young people can follow the planning process and gain direct access to the Prospectus from the planning system.

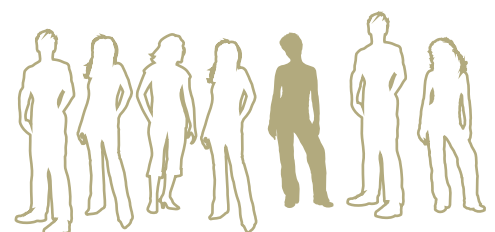
The data from the planning system not only allows supervisors to review and support individual learners, but on a broader level it also helps them to tailor provision and to plan for emerging interests.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

We found that within each school or college there needs to be a designated staff team to provide a link to Connexions, including a senior manager and a co-ordinator. The co-ordinator manages a programme of teaching and helps integrate the system into school processes and structures so that it is used to its full potential. Each school is also encouraged to have a trained administrator to manage the system and passwords. This structure helps us to support the school, and ensures that the 14–19 Prospectus has a continued focus. As these are cross-curricular tools, they can fall off the radar without the right structure in place.

It can be difficult for schools to provide learners with school-time access to IT, particularly those above Year 9. We feel schools could encourage and help learners to use the planning system and the 14–19 Prospectus at home in their own time. We are looking at ways of developing the MyPlan4Life portal to support young people in using the tools both through schools but also more independently. The next step will be to further integrate the planning section of the website to the 14–19 Prospectus titled *Futures4me* so that, when searching for a career or course of interest, learners can see the relevant information to help them make their decisions – starting from a backdrop of their current abilities and ambitions, and moving from there to plan their futures. This is largely how learners use the system at the moment, but we are planning far more integration of the systems data for the benefit of the learner.

We also need to begin reviewing the quality and accuracy of the 14–19 Prospectus information added by providers. For 2009/10 we have 89 per cent of post-16 providers showing an offer – we need to ensure that providers add and change their offers to reflect ‘real-time’ data. Providers are beginning to see the importance of the Prospectus tool and realising the impact that a good and accurate entry will have on potential applicants. We are working on raising awareness and understanding of the value of the 14–19 Prospectus to encourage wider use and show how the planning system can be used to help prepare young people to make the most of the Prospectus information.



Outcomes/benefits/measurements of effectiveness

Currently 95 per cent of schools in the region (82 schools) use the pre-16 planning system, while 20 post-16 providers use a post-16 version. The Prospectus element is used by all schools and colleges and some work-based learning providers, although many also use NAVMS. For 2009/10 applications, 89 per cent of mainstream post-16 providers have an entry in the Prospectus, and we are now checking the accuracy of their entries, setting up consortia/partnerships within the Prospectus and making sure all Diploma offers are included.

The data from the planning and progression tool allows teachers and supporters to review trends throughout the school, or tailor and plan provision within particular year groups. For example, the data may illustrate that a number of learners are interested in a career in medicine, which could lead to arranging for a doctor or nurse to come in and speak to learners; or it may show that Year 10 learners are less likely to feel informed about their post-16 options, which could prompt additional lessons on options.

The data can be used to monitor trends over time, to measure for example the number of learners seeking an Apprenticeship. This kind of data can be analysed not only by providers within their learning establishments, but also by the regional steering group, to compare differences by local authority, by provider type and so on.

Ongoing evaluation helps us to develop and improve the system. As we are often in schools, we hear feedback on a regular, informal basis. We also gather feedback in a more structured way, analysing at a regional/provider level data such as number of learners using the site, types of courses, levels of interest, and so on.

We also collate case studies on individual schools' use of the systems and regularly send providers reports of key data to help their curriculum planning, or remind them of the need for intervention with learners, and so on.

The value that learners gain from the planning system was shown in a recent survey in which: 79.8 per cent of the learners surveyed said they would recommend it to other learners; 69 per cent of Year 9 learners said they used it to support their option choices; and 70 per cent of Year 10 learners said they used it to support them in their work experience plans. We feel we have succeeded in producing an integrated system providing real-time information that is used by learners and supporters alike to aid planning and decision-making.

Useful links/contact details

- www.myplan4life.org/

- **Sue Lewis**

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10. Wolverhampton

Achievement

A secure online environment made up of a web-based ILP linked to the 14–19 Prospectus where learners can access and input key information about their learning, progress and plans for the future.

The ILP (my-iPlan) is a key part of our 14–19 infrastructure. Learner-owned and managed, it includes feedback and validation from adult supporters throughout the process. The ILP contains all information relevant to learning and wider activities, so that it is used not only to generate web-based course applications through the 14–19 Prospectus, but more broadly as a guidance and progression tool throughout the planning stages. This helps learners record and understand their interests and their abilities, helps supporters understand learners, and allows ongoing wider learning and progression planning.

Approach

As early as 2003 Wolverhampton, through area-wide collaboration, started developing timetabling agreements using a curriculum framework across all 18 secondary schools in the area, our further education college and local training providers. The curriculum framework was established so that learners could access post-16 provision from a range of providers across the area. This was a great asset when it came to planning further 14–19 reforms, as we had already adopted a demand-led approach. We followed the same approach with the web tools, continuing to focus on the learner by first developing the ILP and then, around that core component, building the Prospectus and the application tool – the online progression process (OPP).

Stakeholders from schools, further education, Connexions, training providers and the Youth Service have been involved in planning our approach, coming together to decide what the online tools of the infrastructure needed to achieve, both for learners and to help stakeholders support them more effectively.

In developing the ILP, we focused on helping learners to understand their abilities and from there to develop and refine their ambitions and aspirations, working with their supporters to develop a structured and achievable learning and progression plan.

Learners begin by analysing their interests and skills, using the CARD (Choose A Real Deal) guidance element of the infrastructure. They then plan and record their learning progress in the ILP, while the Prospectus and the OPP are the tools that enable that plan to come into being.

- CARD: this combines a 14+ promise for future progression and a process of engagement in activities and experiences, including everything from a master class to a career taster session. It enables learners to record, review and gradually refine their interests and aspirations as they seek the best learning opportunities.
- my-iPlan: this is our ILP, which is the focus for the recording, discussion, review and further planning of learning and progression. The ILP allows learners to manage their curriculum and, crucially, allows adult supporters to help learners through reviews and target-setting.

Our processes have taken time to evolve, but we think that this has led to a better system that will now be more widely used as we move towards the requirement for the CAP.

- Area-Prospectus.com: this provides access to all available learning opportunities in the area (including the youth offer).
- The OPP then combines data from the ILP and the Prospectus to create informed applications for future learning.

In CARD, learners are encouraged to record all guidance activities and experiences. These are then validated by adult supporters and reviewed through one-to-one guidance discussions in school. This can start as early as Year 7 and begins in earnest in Year 8. Learners are then encouraged to investigate the progression options they are interested in, continuing to keep a record on my-iPlan.

At the start of Year 9, learners use the 14–19 Prospectus to find out which Diplomas and other courses are offered, and to register for a CARD taster to get experience of the Diploma they are interested in. Once they have taken part in these tasters, learners record an account of their experience on my-iPlan which is then validated by an adult supporter at their school. This is also a required element. Learners must also show that they have received impartial guidance from a Connexions personal adviser. All of this information is recorded in the ILP. The OPP software then communicates with the Prospectus and the ILP to securely pull the data into the OPP, which collates the data into an application to send to the appropriate Diploma management network in the city.

This means that by the time a Diploma course has been selected, because of these formative stages of recording and, importantly, validating data input into the systems, the learner needs only to click to apply and the required information is sent to the relevant provider. Our processes have taken time to evolve, but we think that this has led to a better system that will now be more widely used as we move towards the requirement for the CAP.

As the processes are increasingly integrated into school planning cycles, it has helped to refine and improve the infrastructure, and has led to wider engagement as learners begin planning at earlier stages. Further,

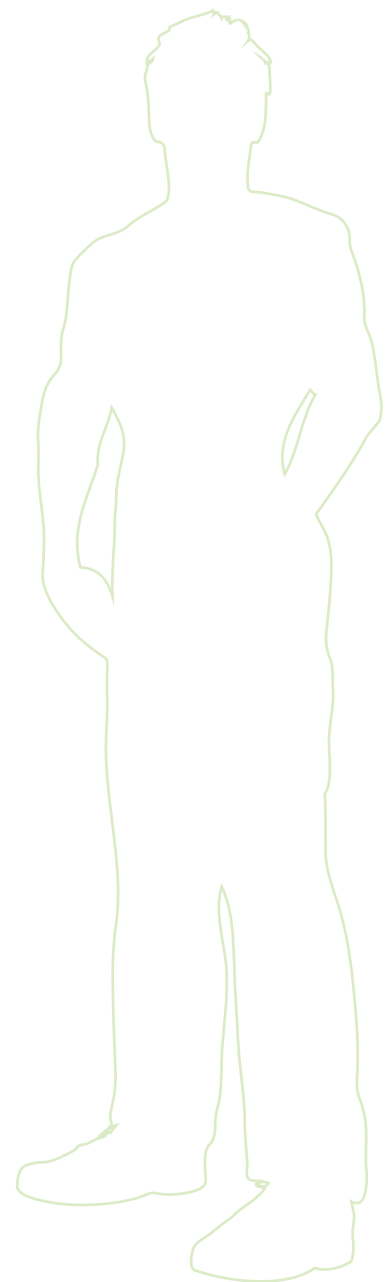
in Wolverhampton, learners from Key Stage 4 are increasingly able to access learning provision from across the area, just as they do for post-16 provision. This has inevitably increased the pace at which earlier use of the 14–19 infrastructure is required, and means that both curriculum and timetable planning and the infrastructure itself have become more sophisticated to facilitate this.


The system can analyse the data to produce reports on any subject/provider/cohort, as required. This means we can identify particular groups and run reports on them to check on their progress. For example, we can access the looked-after children list and see how many have an active my-iPlan account, how many have completed each stage of the process and so on, to ensure that provision and support across the area are consistently available. This helps to raise the aspirations of learners who have not previously considered progression into post-16 learning, further or higher education, as we can ensure they are offered, and are able to access, the same opportunities as every other learner. We funded the web tools development and hosting from a number of joint funding streams (such as with Aimhigher) and provided our own resources through hosting learning visits and other income-generating activities. In staff terms we have allocated specific web-management roles to a number of people to manage day-to-day technical administration, training and engagement, and promotional activities. In total, around five staff (fte) are involved in various aspects of managing the tools and their engagement.

Challenges overcome/lessons learned

Incorporating the systems of all stakeholders was difficult, as we aimed to create a framework that met the common needs of the learners and the stakeholders in the area. We agreed a data-sharing principle with relevant data feeds to populate the ILP, as we felt it best to use data from existing sources rather than creating a new system that would need to be populated manually.

By extracting data from existing management systems, every learner's ILP can be pre-loaded with their personal information, attendance records and prior attainment. This not only saves considerable time for individual teachers, but it also avoids duplication of data and ensures that the information input is accurate.





A similar issue involved how to amalgamate the processes of personal reviews, guidance and target-setting from 18 schools, the college and Connexions. We needed to find a way to continue their practices, and our software provider responded to the need to develop the ILP so that it can provide any bespoke templates they may require and recognises data from their systems. The learner's data can now be reviewed with any stakeholder and the ILP is able to identify and pull in the relevant data, and allow it to be shared across the support network. For example, when Connexions personal advisers develop personal action plans with the learner, or when learners meet with other tutors, they can access previous reviews or feedback and understand the holistic view, helping them to provide a better support service.

The process of engaging schools began quite slowly, as it was primarily elective. Schools that took part in designing and developing the infrastructure were among the early adopters, as they had had more interest in and involvement with it from the outset. Increasingly, however, area agreements are making its use mandatory, for example with the introduction of the Diploma. With the CAP on the horizon, we made it compulsory for all Diploma students to apply via the OPP, and this has helped spread its use and engagement. Each school now has an engagement plan, and the 14–19 team works with them to help them engage learners at a pace that suits them and that is relative to their strategic priorities.

Outcomes/benefits/measure of effectiveness

The web tools of the 14–19 infrastructure are used throughout the area: by all 18 schools, further education, work-based learning providers, Connexions and the Youth Service. This means that around 18,000 learners have an account available to them – every learner in the area.

All Diploma students starting on the programme in September 2008 (approximately 300) applied using the OPP, and have gone through the whole process from developing their my-iPlan to making their application.

In 2007/08, some 1,400 Year 8 learners took part in city-wide CARD progression days, which provided a broad introduction to the potential choices they would face and the decision-making skills required. This will double in 2008/09 as the process is replicated for Year 10 learners. From Year 9 the majority of learners are regularly using the tools.

These 14–19 tools were originally introduced early in Key Stage 4. However, due to development of the OPP, the response of guidance processes and following positive feedback from users, this is now extended to Key Stage 3 and includes all 11- to 19-year-olds.


In September 2008, Ofsted judged the quality of IAG and support in Wolverhampton as 'outstanding', commenting that provision through the OPP provides a very effective focus for the use of the student my-iPlan and the 14–19 Prospectus.

This ILP linked to the 14–19 Prospectus resolves the key issues of learner ownership, operational effectiveness and effective collaboration.

Useful links/contact details

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 - www.area-prospectus.com
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Glossary



CAP	common application process
CCIS	Client Caseload Information System
CEG	careers, education and guidance
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
fte	full-time equivalent
IAG	information, advice and guidance
ILP	individual learning plan
MIS	management information system
NAVMS	National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service
NEET	not in education, employment or training
PSHE	personal, social and health education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SEN	special educational needs
September Guarantee	a guarantee of a place in learning for all 16- and 17-year-olds

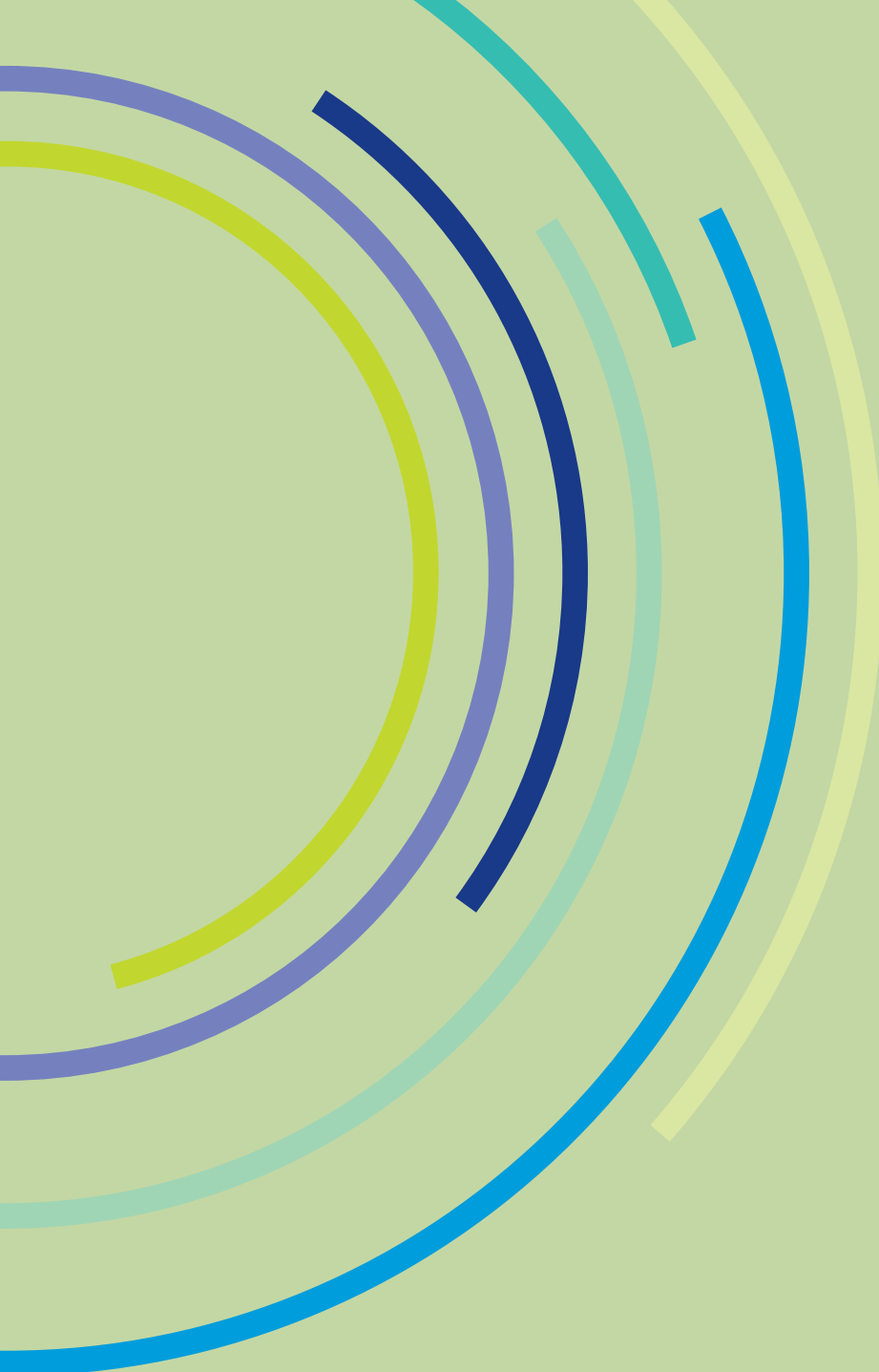
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