

New Start : Personal adviser pilot projects

Final Report

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March 2000

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Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report examines the experiences of New Start pilot Personal Advisers working with 'at risk' young people aged 16-17 years. It follows from an earlier evaluation study completed in October 1999 and reported in November 1999 (*New Start – Paving the way for the Learning Gateway: Personal Adviser pilot projects, DfEE, November 1999, ref: NSREP3*).
- 1.2 In November 1999, many Personal Advisers were newly in post, and their experience was limited. This report focuses on their experiences in their role, and is able to identify emerging issues for those undertaking Personal Adviser work. This should also inform the planning and development of the Personal Adviser role within the Connexions strategy.
- 1.3 Pathfinder projects for Personal Advisers were negotiated during March and April 1999, in order to offer a small pilot for the new Personal Adviser role being introduced within the Learning Gateway in Autumn 1999. Funding became available from May 1999 and ended in March 2000. Most of the finance comes from the 'Invest to Save' budget, with a small proportion from DfEE funds. Projects were located in larger conurbations which were already involved with the New Start strategy. Of seven projects in total, five are located with New Start (Round Two) projects and two with New Start (Round One) projects.
- 1.4 The New Start strategy seeks to increase participation of 14-17 year olds in education and training. Round One projects focused on building strategic partnerships and addressing the issues affecting 14-16 year olds. Round Two projects explored delivery methods aimed at re-engaging 16-17 year olds in the more deprived districts in England. Both stages of New Start address issues which are important in the context of the work of the pilot Personal Advisers and the new Connexions strategy.

Research methodology

- 1.5 This study covers six of the seven pilots. The visits undertaken in previous studies showed that in one case the pilot funding was being used to improve the support offered to trainees on an ESF-funded course operating within the New Start (Round Two) strategy. As all participants were already enrolled onto courses at NVQ Level 2, this project was not addressing the problems of working with 'out of contact' young people. Therefore, the project steering group agreed that this should not be included in the study of the Personal Adviser pathfinder projects.
- 1.6 The study has drawn on the following elements:

- a) Issues were identified from the initial evaluation to inform the development of two questionnaires and to identify key issues emerging from the pilot areas. The primary concern was to discover 'what was working' with young people and to identify common factors of good practice. The questionnaires for this study were developed to build on the findings from the last study. For example, having established from projects last year the characteristics of their clients, we drew upon those findings to ask this time how those specific characteristics are being addressed in the working methods used by Personal Advisers.
- b) Questionnaires were sent to six project managers and to 18 New Start Personal Advisers for return in early March 2000. The project managers' questionnaire examined the overall intake of young people, their allocation to Personal Advisers, their progression, and considered some aspects of developing Personal Adviser skills and influence. The Personal Advisers' questionnaire examined their background, experience and training relevant to work with young people. Caseloads, working methods, and Personal Advisers' perceptions of their role and influence were also explored.
- c) Visits were made to each project, and the topics from the questionnaires were discussed in more detail with managers and Personal Advisers. Discussions were also held with staff from other agencies, Training Providers and TEC managers. In most cases discussions were also held with young people individually or in small groups of between two and five.

The projects covered were as follows:

New Start (Round One)

Merseyside
Sheffield

New Start (Round Two)

Bradford
Coventry
Hackney
Tower Hamlets

- 1.7 In the previous report, information was provided on a project-by-project basis, but with anonymity. The designations A – F have been used again and each letter indicates the same project as previously. The rationale for this approach is to allow some comparisons to be drawn from the November report.

Section 2 Background to the evaluation

The National Context

- 2.1 A detailed overview of the national context is outlined in the following reports:

New Start – Paving the way for the Learning Gateway: an evaluation of second round projects. (DfEE, November 1999, ref NSREP2)

New Start – Paving the way for the Learning Gateway: Personal Adviser pilot projects. (DfEE, November 1999, ref NSREP3)

Since then, further detail of the government's strategy has been published in *Connexions: the best start in life for every young person* (DfEE, 2000). Respondents to the survey were aware of the development of the Personal Adviser role within the Connexions framework, and it was apparent that this was already exerting influence on how projects were developing the role.

- 2.2 In five of the six pilot Personal Adviser projects, the project staff are integrated to a significant extent with the careers service Learning Gateway provision. In most cases, they are seen as having a developmental role in relation to Learning Gateway, both in relation to staff development and the development of materials and systems of working. Most careers services anticipate significant further development in the coming year, in preparation for the Connexions strategy in 2001. Where Personal Advisers are undertaking development work, it impacts on the time available for direct work with young people. This is an issue that will be explored more fully within this report.

Section 3 Young People

- 3.1 This section examines the total numbers of young people who have been allocated to Personal Advisers since the inception of the projects. Projects had funding from May 1999, but full operation was in some cases as late as September. These figures are not intended for comparison between projects in terms of overall numbers, but are explored to show variations in the proportions of male and female clients and in other characteristics, including the ethnic mix of young people with Personal Advisers. The survey questionnaires also explored progression issues and personal characteristics of young people.
- 3.2 Comparison between projects is neither possible nor desirable, as staff time allocations and project priorities vary considerably. In some projects, staff undertake developmental duties for a significant proportion of their time, with a particular emphasis on helping the organisation to develop the Learning Gateway and to move towards the requirements of the Connexions strategy from 2001. Some projects have taken a deliberate and strategic approach to targeting particular client types, whereas others work largely on a referral basis.
- 3.3 Since September, the Learning Gateway operated by careers services has also deployed Personal Advisers, and these are frequently working alongside pilot Personal Advisers. This study examines only the caseloads of those supported by the national funding for pilot Personal Advisers. In some cases projects have specifically targeted groups, such as teenage mothers, or areas, which may have a distinctive ethnic make-up. In most projects, the pilot Personal Advisers are recognised as having higher levels of experience and expertise, and receive referrals of those clients who are recognised as the hardest to help. This inevitably has an impact on progression rates.

Allocations of clients to Personal Advisers

- 3.4 We asked respondents for a breakdown of the total numbers of young people who had been allocated to the pilot Personal Advisers, subdivided into male and female clients. The findings are recorded in Table 1.

Table 1

Project	Numbers of young people taking part		Number who achieved a positive destination		Number still on the project		Number who dropped out		Total number of young people
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
A	32	26	22	18	4	4	6	4	58
B	56	17	33	12	8	4	15	1	73
C	31	16	4	4	20	11	7	1	47
D	72	49	16	10	48	25	8	14	121
E	29	27	6	8	17	12	6	7	56
F	44	15	12	6	15	6	17	3	59
Total	264	150	93	58	112	62	59	30	414

- 3.5 The findings indicated that 63% of young people leaving the projects have achieved a positive destination. This figure is lower than the previous interim finding of 78% young people achieving a positive destination, mainly because the young people being referred to Personal Advisers are some of the 'hardest to help'. Table 5 shows the reasons for young people leaving the projects.
- 3.6 Project managers were asked how many young people had a disability which makes it difficult to carry out day-to-day activities. The responses by project are in Table 2.

Table 2

Project	Number of young people identified as have a disability		
	M	F	Total
A	0	0	0
B	1	0	1
C	Not known	Not known	Not known
D	9	11	20
E	1	2	3
F	2	1	3
Total			27

Table 2 indicates that only one project (D) is working with young people with disabilities. This project has a strong relationship with a range of statutory agencies and community groups. It also has an effective referral system. One of the Personal Advisers has a background in working with young people with special needs and this may have encouraged referrals to the project. Examples of young people who have been referred include one young person who has lost an arm and another who suffered a stroke at 16, following heart problems. Both young people are being encouraged to try out different options by their Personal Adviser. This picture indicates a need for support for young

people with disabilities that may not be being met at present. This raises a concern about the low number of young people identified as having disabilities taking part in the projects and also the level of data available.

- 3.7 Table 3 provides an overview of the ethnic background of the young people within each project.

Table 3

Personal Adviser clients of the six projects by ethnic background														
PROJECT	A		B		C		D		E		F		No	%
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Black-African	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	10	2
Black-Caribbean	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	3	13	3
Black-Other	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	5	0	15	4
Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	5	1
Pakistani	1	2	0	0	5	3	11	11	0	0	0	0	33	8
Bangladeshi	0	0	37	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	52	13
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.5
Asian-Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	27	22	14	2	23	13	57	38	27	26	12	5	266	64
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	5	19	4.5
Total number	32	26	56	17	30	17	72	49	29	27	44	15	414	100

A number of variables affect the figures in Table 3. Some projects had either identified target populations from ethnic minority groups or were targeting geographical areas (e.g. housing estates) with high proportions of ethnic minority families. One project had recruited female Muslim workers to increase their involvement with young Asian women. Another project, in an area which is 90% white overall, had deployed an Asian worker to develop contacts in one particular housing estate, thus increasing the Asian client group to double the incidence across the area as a whole.

Destinations of young people

- 3.8 Project Managers were asked to record the destinations of young people from their projects who had progressed to other provision. Table 4 shows the findings.

Table 4

Destinations of young people by project and gender														
PROJECT	A		B		C		D		E		F		Total	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	No	%
Education - full time	4	6	12	8	3	1	3	2	3	1	4	4	51	34
Education - part time	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2
Training provision	7	5	0	0	0	3	7	4	3	7	6	1	43	28
Job with training	7	7	16	4	1	0	5	2	0	0	1	1	44	29
Job without training	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	8	5
Other	0	0	*2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total numbers of young people	22	18	33	12	4	4	16	10	6	8	12	6	151	100

* denotes part-time training

- 3.9 Table 4 shows 34% of those who have progressed from the projects entering full- or part-time education, and 57% entering training or a job with training. There are, however, several young people who are still on the projects who are undertaking part-time training who are not included in this table. Discussions with Personal Advisers and young people showed mixed views and numerous issues about opportunities available to young people. These are explored in detail in Section 6.
- 3.10 Respondents were also asked for the reasons why young people had left the projects. Table 5 shows their replies.

Table 5

Reasons for leaving the project by gender														
PROJECT	A		B		C		D		E		F		Total	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	No	%
Pregnancy		0		0		0		1		0		-	1	1
Health reasons	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	-	-	2	2
Custodial sentence	2	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	-	-	8	12
Left the area	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	4	1	0	-	-	11	16
Unknown/lost contact	1	1	6	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	-	-	15	22
No longer wanted help	0	1	4	1	3	1	4	6	3	3	-	-	26	38
Other	[^] 3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	[*] 1	1	-	-	6	9
Project F													20	
Total numbers of clients	6	4	15	1	7	1	8	14	6	7	17	3	89	100

[^]Four young people became 18 and moved to other help

^{*}One young person ceased to be eligible and the other is supporting a family

Project F was unable to supply a breakdown of the figures and has, therefore, been omitted from the total numbers and percentages.

- 3.11 Unsettled accommodation is identified as a key factor which hinders maintaining contact with young people, who may change their address unpredictably.
- 3.12 A general characteristic of 'low levels of application' is described in different forms by most projects:

"They find it hard to stick at things – they have often been non-attenders and cannot adapt to routine at all"

There is a high incidence of family unemployment/underachievement (52% - see Table 6) suggesting that many young clients may live in family contexts where there are no other adults operating within the time structures and disciplines which come from regular attendance at work or training. This lack of role models for work and learning has a pervasive effect on personal habits and on young peoples' attitudes towards learning and the potential rewards of working life.

- 3.13 Table 5 indicates that the largest proportion of young people left the projects because they no longer wanted help. Discussions with Personal Advisers suggest a range of reasons for this. In some cases, it may prove extremely difficult to win the trust and increase the motivation of a young person. Personal Advisers indicated a need for more training on motivational strategies and new approaches. In other cases, young people may have positively adopted an alternative lifestyle which is more attractive to them than the formal opportunities

available to them. In a minority of cases, this may include illegal activities within the black economy. In other cases young people may prefer to devote their time to an overriding interest such as music. Personal Advisers need to engage with the realities of the lives of young people. This raises a number of complex moral and ethical issues. These are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Characteristics of young people

- 3.14 Each of the six projects was asked to indicate the characteristics of their Personal Adviser clients grouped by domestic, personal and educational characteristics. Table 6 shows the breakdown by project, and the total numbers and percentages. Project F was unable to give a detailed breakdown and is, therefore, excluded from the number and percentage figures.

Table 6

Breakdown of the characteristics of young people who are clients of the Personal Advisers								
PROJECT	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total	%
Domestic								
In care/leaving care	4	2	4	21	15	-	46	13
Family unemployment/underachievement	7	70	2	80	24	-	183	52
Poor relationships with parents/guardian	4	5	7	79	18	-	113	32
Abuse/domestic violence	1	1	2	28	15	-	47	13
Teenage parents	1	0	0	5	7	-	13	4
Unsettled housing	7	2	3	38	17	-	67	19
Personal/Social								
Health difficulties	2	4	2	16	5	-	29	8
Poor employment prospects	8	70	9	117	25	-	229	65
Transport difficulties	0	0	1	10	14	-	25	7
Ex-offenders	9	20	3	45	10	-	87	25
Low self-esteem/confidence	11	70	9	117	19	-	226	64
Drug abuse	1	2	0	18	8	-	29	8
Mental health problems	1	0	1	17	5	-	24	7
Emotional/behavioural problems	6	20	6	48	12	-	92	26
Educational								
Excluded/long term truancy pre-16	6	20	8	85	21	-	140	40
Lack of qualifications	41	70	10	109	21	-	251	71
Learning difficulties	6	4	10	35	13	-	68	19
Little contact with careers service/careers education	0	10	9	93	19	-	131	37
Negative view of education	37	23	10	111	20	-	201	57
Total numbers of clients	58	73	47	121	56	59	355	

An analysis of the strategies used to overcome the barriers faced by young people is provided in Table 12. In the previous research, the numbers of young people participating within the pilot projects were relatively small compared to the current situation. In the former report, a detailed breakdown of the characteristics of each young person was provided however, in this survey respondents gave aggregate figures. As a result, the figures are not directly comparable. This also applies to the figures in Table 7.

- 3.15 As in the previous report, these figures show that family unemployment and underachievement affect about half of all young people who are allocated to Personal Advisers, and this is compounded in many cases by poor relationships between young people and their parents. Low self-esteem and confidence together with poor employment prospects are recognised by Personal Advisers as significant factors for some 65% of their clients. A negative view of education is common, and is frequently associated with a lack of qualifications. As in the findings of the previous study, it is only in a smaller number of cases that this is also associated with learning difficulties.
- 3.16 There is a rise, from the previous survey, in the number of young people who are ex-offenders. This may reflect more work by Personal Advisers with Youth Offending Teams and a greater number of referrals. This may also contribute to the decrease in positive outcomes as several young people have received custodial sentences.
- 3.17 40% of young people on the projects have been excluded from school or have chosen not to attend. Both young people and their Personal Advisers described the problems arising from a school system which has offered too little individual support at early stages of difficulties:

"If I had had someone to talk to I might have gone back, I don't know for sure."

Some young people suggested that they were 'labelled' and then had difficulty in breaking free of this. Many of the young people interviewed referred to being 'ordered around' at school, and when defining the provision they may now be prepared to consider, 'not like school' is a key requirement.

- 3.18 The general picture which emerges is entirely consistent with the findings of the DfEE-commissioned study 'Mapping Troubled Lives: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training' (DfEE Research Brief no 181, January 2000). This research, commissioned by the Social Exclusion Unit, finds that there is commonly a series of events or circumstances in a young person's life which forms a chain that culminates in their becoming 'disaffected' and marginalized. The report notes that institutional interventions were often at a stage when the young person was already seriously in trouble.

Progression

- 3.19 Respondents were asked to indicate progress made through the support of a Personal Adviser for the young people on the projects. The purpose of asking this is to identify progress in 'soft outcomes'. It is important to note that responses are affected by Personal Advisers' judgements of what constitutes 'progress'. Table 7 gives the responses. Projects A, C, D and E provided a breakdown of the categories. Projects B and F provided incomplete responses.

Table 7

Indicators of progress made through the support of a Personal Adviser by the number in each project and by total number and percentage for all six projects								
PROJECT	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total	%
Significant improvement in								
Attendance/punctuality	1	44	1	36	14	-	96	27
Self-esteem/confidence	36	48	3	35	14	-	136	38
Preparedness for decisions	12	*	2	35	20	-	69	20
Forming individual relationships	11	*	4	33	13	-	61	17
Participating in a group	11	*	8	33	11	-	63	18
Coping with new situations	42	*	5	37	12	-	96	27
Participation in								
Informal learning e.g. outdoor activities	0	50	5	23	3	-	81	23
Formal agreement to participate	51	73	14	115	31	-	284	80
Individual Development Plan	51	40	13	27	28	-	159	45
Named award schemes	2	30	0	1	2	-	35	10
Work experience	10	18	0	9	1	-	38	11
Accredited training	0	20	2	25	10	-	57	16
Total number of clients	58	73	47	121	56	59	355	

*replies not given

- 3.20 An analysis of the strategies used to enable progress to be made by young people are provided in Table 13.
- 3.21 Table 7 reflects different ways of working in different projects, which is partly influenced by the New Start priorities of Rounds One and Two. Where Personal Advisers are being used as a specialist referral point for the most hard-to-help young people, improvement may come more slowly. If the Adviser is able to catch their attention sufficiently to motivate and engage them, this is a first success, and a prerequisite for further work. There is however nothing to 'measure', except the Personal Adviser's intuitive sense that progress is possible.

Section 4 Personal Advisers

Backgrounds of the Personal Advisers

- 4.1 Personal Advisers were asked for details of their professional backgrounds. The 17 replies are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Professional background	Number of respondents
Careers service	9
Youth service	5
Youth service and careers service	2
Information officer	1
Total number	17

- 4.2 Personal Advisers demonstrate a wealth of experience working with young people.

Adviser 1 has worked for ten years in industry, followed by a wide variety of youth work. He has experience of working with young people in schools, centres, detached youth work and in project work. He holds qualifications in youth and community work, counselling, a diploma in management (leisure) and a basic skills teaching certificate.

This Personal Adviser emphasises his commitment to working with young people, and helping them develop their capabilities. This also occupies his non-working time, where he acts an international coach. His voluntary activity creates a real contrast to his working role with 'at risk' young people.

Adviser 2 has a BA in History and English and a Diploma in Careers Guidance. She has worked for four careers services. She has experience as a generic careers adviser and working with unemployed young people and those with special needs. She worked on a lottery-funded young achievers' project and then became a Personal Adviser. At present she is taking a Masters degree in Inclusive Education. The latest module is 'Including the excluded'.

Adviser 3 has a background in youth work and has extensive experience of working across ethnic and cultural boundaries. He holds professional qualifications in youth work and a degree in Community and Youth Studies and a post-graduate qualification in Housing. He has been seconded to the Careers Service for the past four years.

Adviser 4 has 22 years experience in the youth service, having worked on projects including conflict resolution (particularly relating to street gangs), outreach, adult education and counselling. He feels that he brings a particular empathy to the client group as he had no academic achievements from school, but entered higher education in his thirties, and completed a degree without undue difficulty. Looking back, he reports 100% attendance during his own school career (he never wanted to miss the football), but low expectations and stereotyping of West Indian males meant that no one expected him to achieve. The move into higher education, stimulated by a professional colleague, was initially fraught with anxiety until he realised that he could comfortably cope.

4.3 Several Personal Advisers placed high value on 'knowing where young people are coming from'. This may arise from growing up in that area themselves, or from their own life experiences, as with Adviser 4, above. Many emphasised the need for 'street credibility' – being able to demonstrate a knowledge of the behaviours, interests and attitudes of young people 'on the street'. The need to acknowledge the realities of life without condoning inappropriate behaviour is a tightrope walked by all Personal Advisers. It is considered in more detail in Section 5.

4.4 Personal Advisers were asked to describe the particular qualities and abilities they bring to their role. They highlight:

Experience of:

- Working with disadvantaged young people.
- Mentoring.
- Knowledge and appreciation of life patterns and local environments.
- Networking with a wide variety of agencies.
- General awareness and understanding of the living/educational situation of young people.
- Working knowledge of the educational opportunities for young people along with the issues which they may be facing that prevent them from entering education.
- Counselling techniques.

Key qualities	Additional qualities
Patience Continually motivated Sense of humour Honesty Non-judgemental Able to get on with all types of young people Flexible Good listener	Hardworking Organised Innovative Realism Reliable Impartial Good communication skills

Ability to:

- *Initiate* by understanding the unique circumstances of individual young people and gain an overview of other agencies working with young people to provide a more holistic approach for each individual.
- *Consolidate* by listening closely to young people's needs and concerns and encouraging and developing good working relationship with young people and other agencies. In particular, to appreciate the value of other peoples' work (e.g. youth worker) and understand their philosophy in working with young people.
- *Sustain* by undertaking an advocacy role on behalf of young people with a range of opportunity providers and using a variety of innovative methods including motivational training and developmental group work.

Caseloads for Personal Advisers

4.5 We asked how many Personal Advisers are currently working on the project, either full or part-time. Table 9 illustrates the findings and shows that projects have between 2 and 4 advisers.

Table 9

Number of Personal Advisers used by each of the six projects						
Project	Full time	Part time				Total
		1 day per week	2 days per week	3 days per week	4 days per week	
A	2	0	2	0	0	4
B	1	0	1	2	0	4
C	2	0	0	0	0	2
D	1	0	0	2	0	3

E	2	0	0	0	0	2
F	1	1	1	0	0	3

- 4.6 Project Managers were asked for the caseloads of each Personal Adviser. Table 10 indicates their responses and shows that the majority of full-time/part-time equivalent Personal Advisers have a caseload of between 10 to 35 young people.

Table 10

Caseloads for full time Personal Advisers for the six projects	
A	20 - 35
B	6 - 25
C	10 - 19
D	20*
E	12 - 17**
F	10 - 20

* Plus 30-50 non-attenders

** This is being built up to 30.

- 4.7 We asked project managers if caseloads had changed during the project and the reasons for this. Of the 6 projects all stated that caseloads had changed. The reasons for this varied because of differing circumstances. One project had anticipated that each Adviser would have up to 50 young people. However, referrals have concentrated on the most hard to help young people and a lower case load seemed more realistic. Another project started with a small number of young people to each Adviser and this gradually increased. Several Personal Advisers have additional caseloads of young people who are non-attenders.
- 4.8 Personal Advisers were asked if they could manage their caseload effectively. 16 replied yes and one replied no, but tempered this response with a comment on the need for local circumstances and provision to develop so that he could be effective. Those Personal Advisers working with the most hard-to-help young people felt that there was a limit to the number of young people that they could effectively deal with. In some projects, Personal Advisers are undertaking a number of developmental activities which occupy a proportion of their time. If caseloads increased, some Personal Advisers felt there would be a tendency to work with those young people who were easiest to move forward. If the most difficult are to be helped sufficiently, the time this takes must be acknowledged.

Training

- 4.9 Project managers were asked if they had undertaken a training needs analysis with their Personal Advisers. All replied that they had. From this analysis a variety of training priorities arose.
- 4.10 These include:
- Work with offenders
 - Personal safety
 - Motivational Group work and other motivational techniques
 - Counselling certificate, basic counselling skills
 - Quality assurance
 - Initial assessment, assessment techniques and tools
 - Special needs awareness
 - Disclosure of offences
 - Child protection issues
 - Money advice and finance
 - Awareness of issues affecting young people e.g. mental health, anger management, drug awareness
- 4.10 Project managers were asked if training had been provided for the Personal Advisers. All replied yes. Personal Advisers were also asked if they had undertaken training specifically linked to the Personal Adviser role. Of the 17 respondents, 12 replied yes, four replied no, with one offering no response. The subjects covered are varied, reflecting the work of the advisers and resulting from the training needs analysis. Additional topics include:
- NVQ3 in advice and guidance
 - Mentoring, including situational mentoring
 - Neuro-linguistic programming
 - Drug and substance abuse
 - Law and ethics
 - Health and Safety
 - Assessment training – basic skills agency, NFER Skillscape, Richter Scale
 - Inter-agency training on the barriers faced by young people
 - Knowledge-based sessions by specialist local agencies e.g. vulnerable young women
 - Introductory training on 'Advice and Guidance', introduction to interviewing
- 4.11 On one project, the Personal Advisers have developed a training package for others. Several advisers have attended the ICG courses 'Equipping the Personal Adviser' and 'Working with Young Offenders' and found these very useful. Another project has a detailed training programme covering key aspects of the role of Personal Adviser including: referral, initial assessment, interviewing skills, counselling, lone-working and quality assurance.

4.12 Personal Advisers were asked if they thought the training was effective and asked to identify other training which they felt would be helpful. 11 of the 17 replied yes, one replied no, and there were five non-respondents. Examples of training needs were as follows:

- Sign language
- Counselling skills e.g. the Certificate in Counselling
- Joint training with Social Services and other agencies
- Assessment e.g. D32/33
- Drugs awareness
- IT
- Time management
- Understanding education and training jargon
- Motivational techniques
- Management of Personal Advisers and organisational management of educational programmes
- Presentation skills
- Evaluation strategies
- Working with young people who have mental or behavioural problems
- Dealing with stress and threatening situations.

4.13 Project managers were asked if the training would be accredited. Four replied yes and two no. Accreditation used includes:

- Pitmans Diagnostic Profiling Award
- Work as a quality assessor for New Start provision, including Life Skills, accredited through the Certificate of Education Studies.

Influence on learning provision

4.14 Project managers were asked how the views of Personal Advisers were being taken into account to shape learning provision in the area. All of the project managers hold regular meetings with Personal Advisers. Meetings are held with training providers at operational and strategic levels. On one project there is participation in the Learning Gateway Steering Group, the local task group on social inclusion and meetings with the TEC.

Other approaches used to draw on the experience of the Personal Advisers includes:

Advocacy

Young people sometimes wait a long time for work-based training, and this leads to a loss in motivation. On one project, the Personal Advisers operate a fax-based system, which highlights client needs. If the Personal Adviser is unable to find appropriate training for a young person, they send a fax on a pro-forma directly to the local Chamber contract manager who then takes action. This enables him/her to contact providers and speed up the process. The Personal Advisers also use the system to highlight any important issues they have been unable to resolve. They see it as a key part of their advocacy role for clients.

Assessment and Referral

One project has a pro-forma for requesting provision to meet the specific needs of a young person. The Personal Adviser can complete this, with a summary of any assessment outcomes (assessment is used quite extensively in this project) and a statement of why current provision does not meet the need. The form is sent to the link person at the TEC.

Influencing provision

One project holds case conferences which are attended by practitioners from other agencies. The New Start steering group can purchase provision on the recommendation of the case conferences e.g. funding was provided for a Young Mums six-week course. Monthly meetings are also held with contract managers at the TEC.

- 4.15 When asked about the success in influencing provision, project managers responded as in Table 11.

Table 11

Perceptions of success in influencing learning provision	
	Number of projects
Very successful	1
Some success	4
Little success	1

The majority of projects have indicated that there have been successful measures to influence provision. Examples of success include:

- *Additional Life Skills provision* in shortage occupational areas as tasters for young people.
- *Good relationships* built up between the major partners, which has led to a better understanding of Life Skills provision.
- *Directories of provision* produced jointly with the TEC, which list the broad range of provision including TEC, and non-TEC funded provision.
- *Quality frameworks* developed for Life Skills training provision.
- *On-going dialogues* with Life Skills providers to look at issues of concern e.g. pushing for individual timetables and changing start dates.
- *Higher quality provision* leading to expansion of Life Skills provision
- *New and additional courses* run by YMCA and the Youth Service based on the recommendations from Personal Advisers supported by TEC funding.

4.16 Project managers described some of the problems they have encountered:

- a) *Reluctance of young people to lose the 'benefit safety net'* and to move to what they perceive as a low rate of training allowance.
- b) *Few agencies have been contracted by TECs* to offer innovative new programmes.
- c) *Difficulties experienced in influencing large providers*, such as FE colleges.
- d) *Life Skills providers are generally seen as still focusing on delivering programmes*, rather than creating individually tailored opportunities for young people.
- e) *Accessible Life Skills provision is essential*, if nothing suitable is available when clients are ready to move on, then clients are most likely to opt out of the system.

Influence on service delivery

4.17 Project managers were asked if the experiences of Personal Advisers had impacted on other aspects of service delivery. All of the six projects replied yes. It is clear that good progress has been made and significant impact has been made across a wide range of areas.

The main changes include:

- a) *Development of protocols and procedures* for joint working within a multi-agency framework.

- b) *Improvements to quality assurance and monitoring* the work of the Personal Adviser team.
- c) *Higher quality, more accurate management information* has been developed.
- d) *Personal Adviser training pack* containing documentation on referral, initial assessment, data protocol and provision requests.
- e) *Personal Advisers are acting as role models* for other staff within their organisation.
- f) *Closer community links* are in operation.
- g) *Caseworker approach* is becoming standard practice with young people in school who are identified as 'at risk'.
- h) *More differentiated, individual approach* to all young people on the careers service live register.

The experience of being a Personal Adviser

4.18 Personal Advisers were asked to describe their feelings about their work.

"I wouldn't want to be doing any other job in careers at the moment."

"I find the work demanding, both physically and mentally. Travelling around to different locations, visiting clients in training and always trying to be motivated and innovative can be a strain. However, I find it enjoyable and definitely worthwhile."

"I would define my role as being given the first step of freedom to be truly client-centred."

"Marvellous, exciting, challenging and frustrating and tiring all at the same time. It is worthwhile, I am making a difference and moreover I believe in the process. It will and does work."

"I feel the concept of the Personal Adviser is a good thing and one which is really needed, someone who has an overview of all aspects of a young persons life. I feel it is a fresh approach to youth issues."

"As a detached youth worker in partnership with careers, I find my work very challenging. I feel my ideas and methods of work are very different from careers although we are finding new ways of working together."

- 4.19 Personal Advisers acknowledge that the demands of the job would not suit everyone. They consider that:

“Some careers service staff would not choose to work in such depth with this client group, or to work in off-site locations”.

- 4.20 Finally, we asked Personal Advisers how they could be more effective in helping young people in the future. The questionnaire offered a number of headings as prompts to aid their responses. These are as follows:

- a) In response to the *status* of Personal Advisers, the general feeling was that their influence, standing, pay and conditions were less than those of other professions such as teaching, probation and social work. Career service staff also highlighted the discrepancies in salary and conditions of service compared to the youth service.

“The pay is lower than other professionals, such as youth workers and teachers. Until this is looked at we will not have the status.”

“Impartial, it is important not to be seen as part of school or the Benefit Office system”.

- b) In response to how *management and support* could be improved, some Personal Advisers mentioned that a good support network including senior and middle management involvement was well established and proving very effective:

“Our system of performance management and review has proved very successful because the Chief Executive is fully involved and takes part in our quarterly review sessions”.

Others indicate the need for additional support:

“Line Managers are not always available to offer regular supervision and support. We need to find new ways of working together”.

“Needs to be wider support for Personal Advisers than just training. The work is demanding and young people have lots of problems that can be difficult to leave behind when not in work.”

“More understanding of how long a relationship takes to bear fruit before a young person can be moved on.”

“As this is such a demanding role, it requires a lot of flexibility. The new Personal Advisers will need flexible support mechanisms to help them adapt to new working styles.”

- c) In response to *training*, all respondents indicated that they had recently received training but highlighted the need for this to be part of an on-going strategy to maintain and update their knowledge, skills and experience. The following suggestions were made:

"Intensive training is necessary at first and at different levels to meet different needs, to ensure we are all operating to high standards."

"More training on the work of other professionals as well as knowledge of housing, drugs, homelessness and young offenders."

"More training in dealing with young people's attitudes towards education and motivation to work."

- d) In response to *location*, it is clear that a variety of community venues are being used to reach out and attract young people. The use of drop-in centres feature in many of the projects. Personal Advisers indicated the importance of working in a diverse range of settings:

"Community based for easy access to young people and well-publicised. Closer links with the youth service to give credibility to the work with young people."

"Considering drop-in centres throughout the city for young people who are not currently being reached, but this will have resource implications."

"Flexibility - Personal Advisers need to be prepared to meet clients at different locations where young people feel at ease".

Section 5 Working with young people

- 5.1 We asked Personal Advisers and managers how effective they felt they were in the following areas: initiating contact, developing confidence and willingness to engage young people, assessment and individual development plans, dependence and exit strategies and supervision and support for Personal Advisers.

Effectiveness of Personal Advisers

- 5.2 Personal Advisers were asked how effective they thought they were in particular aspects of their work. Their replies are given in Table 12. This shows that personal Advisers felt they were most effective in advocating on behalf of young people and forming good relationships. They felt least effective in influencing and changing provision and re-engaging young people who have dropped out of provision.

Table 11

Area of work	Effectiveness		
	Very effective	To some extent effective	Not effective
1.Engaging young people in thinking about their future plans	13	4	0
2.Forming good relationships with young people	16	1	0
3.Winning trust	14	3	0
4.Advocating on behalf of young people	17	0	0
5.Influencing providers	3	13	1
6.Following up the progress of young people	11	6	0
7.Re-engaging young people who have dropped out of provision	5	12	0
8. Re-engaging young people who are in danger of dropping out of provision	8	8	1
9.Changing provision	4	10	3
10.Any other aspect - <i>Please specify</i>	*1	**1	***1

* Providing variable provision; ** Supporting colleagues in the youth service in their development of the Personal Adviser role; *** Improving the quality of provision

- 5.3 Respondents were asked to explain why they felt they were not very effective in particular areas. Their replies indicate the range of constraints experienced by Personal Advisers and young people.

A lack of effectiveness in influencing and changing provision was a major concern:

"Where youth service staff undertake the Personal Adviser role they feel they lack knowledge of providers."

"There are still providers who do not understand what New Start and Learning Gateway is about and it is hard getting through to them as they do not know how to treat the young people on the project."

There are difficulties experienced in monitoring young people's progress after they have moved into provision:

"Tracking progress became difficult when young people moved to hostels out of the area."

"It takes time to undertake follow-up activities."

Re-engaging young people who have either dropped out of provision or are in danger of this, was viewed as a less effective aspect of their current work:

"Some young people are perceived as being unwilling to make plans for their future."

"Some young people who have alternative careers are perceived as being difficult to re-engage in an opportunity."

"You have to respect that a young person has the right to say no."

"Time required to do this, especially if young people have had negative experiences with learning or training."

Barriers to progression

- 5.4 Respondents were asked how they were addressing the characteristics of young people which may act as barriers to progression. Table 12 gives examples of strategies used by Personal Advisers to overcome the barriers faced by young people.

Table 12

		Strategies to overcome the barriers faced by young people
Domestic		
In care/leaving care	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local links with after care projects and Education Access for potential referrals • Work with learning mentors in schools • Develop close relationship with Social Services and carers to understand young people's circumstances • Befriending and being available when needed as a regular contact for stability • Seconding one post to Social Services to work directly with this group • Clear referral system • Keep close links with the key worker and social workers working with young person
Family unemployment/ Underachievement	61%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat young people as individuals • Visit parents and discussing how the employment situation is changing and the importance of qualifications in the long term • Bring other agencies on board • Provide information on current opportunities to parents to break the cycle of unemployment and dispel the myths around training • Involve parents in the decision making process • Create opportunities to achieve • Create space in a safe environment to explore new skills • Provide support in schools and colleges • Home visits with tutors • Provide training in job-awareness • Flexible system that allows circumstances to be taken into consideration and support provided
Poor relationships with parents /guardians	47%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss problems at home and encouraging young people to seek help from other agencies and projects • Foster relationships with parents to keep them informed of all the options available to young people. • Meet parents and young people separately and attempt to link them together • Advocate on young people's behalf • Mentor young people • Actively ignore negative comments about self and family and pick up on the rare positive comments • Allow young people to explore being complemented and praised • Provide a role-model
Abuse/domestic violence	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to appropriate agencies • Gain trust • Utilise specialist agencies • Use listening skills, stand back to move forward • Use group work to explore emotions around bullying and self-defence • Build confidence

Teenage parents	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise a specialised team within the careers service to link with local college for provision • Work with Lone Parent Adviser at the Job Centre • Examine part-time educational options • Ensure young people are aware of benefits and support available to them • Provide young mums group with support from the youth service • Provide basic skills • Provide on-site childcare
Unsettled housing	34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge a link with agencies such as Cyrenians and Foyer-type accommodation • Work with Housing Advice Worker from voluntary sector • Have knowledge and contacts at all housing/hostels in the area in order to advocate and support young people to secure a place • Link Personal Advisers with specific housing projects, where they meet young people on a regular basis
Personal/Social		
Health difficulties	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with all other agencies that might provide support such as Women's Health project • Acknowledge the barrier and use it positively • Give information • Explore personal hygiene issues • Liaise with the disability team and other specialist agencies • Make sure young person is registered with a doctor and dentist - provide names of local practitioners
Poor employment prospects	74%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with CVs, application forms and interview skills • Provide job search sessions at a drop-in centre • Encourage young people to be flexible to achieve training and qualifications • Provide appropriate guidance in terms of realistic progression routes • Assess to identify needs and abilities • Build self-esteem • Provide whole programme of activities designed to build a better positive self-image • Use assessment folder as a slow build-up • Work on skill development • Encourage short-term programme to improve employment prospects • Suggest realistic training opportunities • Encourage young people to try taster courses and work experience
Transport difficulties	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bus fares or travel tickets • Give young people lifts • Encourage young people to travel out of the area • Show young people the bus and tram stops and identify suitable travel routes

Ex-offenders	18%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link and work with the Youth Offending Team to provide information and advice and develop knowledge • Use specialist agencies to address behaviour if needed • Liaise with the Probation Service • Work with Youth Justice in prisons • Adopt a non-judgemental approach
Low self-esteem/ confidence	78%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run short courses (2/3 days) with the youth service to boost confidence • Provide certificates of achievement or attendance and portfolios • Motivational interviewing • Self-assessment • Use assessment tests that draw on positive statements • Discuss barriers and how they can be overcome • Use activities which have immediate rewards and praise achievements • Build up independent living skills e.g. cooking, washing clothes and cleaning • Improve communication skills e.g. letters and bills • Provide on-going and regular contact to build up trust and focus positively on past achievements • Look for verbal and non-verbal indicators • Encourage participation on motivational courses • Acknowledge young person's strengths and build around these • Create a safe environment
Drug abuse	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train staff in issues such as setting up a drug education programme • Refer to specialist help with permission and continue with support • Have regular contact with specialist drug agencies • Use drug awareness programmes
Mental health problems	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to local specialist agencies • Offer support • Use a holistic approach with other agencies
Emotional/ behavioural problems	49%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise support from special needs team in the careers service • Discuss appropriate behaviour • Work closely with other agencies to be informed and link with appropriate providers • Utilise Life Skills • Build self-esteem • Develop close contact with PRUs • Refer to counselling services • Allow young people time to talk through, reflect and focus on their problems

Educational		
Excluded/long term truancy pre-16	44%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish closer links with Behavioural Support Services • Link with colleges who run Year 11 programmes • Work with the Learning Mentor • Ensure preferred learning style is addressed • Build relationship and introduce alternative routes • Use empathy tactics • Ignore the past and start with a clean sheet • Link Personal Advisers to specific schools and establish strategies with Learning Mentors, careers advisers and others • Visit community centres to make contact with young people • Provide a home visit service
Lack of qualifications	84%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage young people to consider the long-term benefits of work-based training as opposed to jobs without training • Use Life Skills to build confidence • Discuss the training and qualifications that they could realistically achieve and relate to progression routes • Boost aspiration by one-to-one discussions - emphasise that nothing is impossible • Reflect positively with young person on their other achievements e.g. work experience, sporting, voluntary work • Use assessment to help young person feel positive about themselves and to identify and access other options that could lead to future qualifications • Encourage young people to consider part-time qualifications • Encourage short/long term education and training • Set realistic goals
Learning difficulties	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify needs with training providers to enable support strategies to be put in place to make the most of young people's abilities • Assess appropriately • Try to engage them gradually • Liaise with special needs team • Give basic skills education in reading, writing, speaking and listening
Little contact with careers service/ careers education	44%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide outreach programme including home visits by careers staff to young people, from Year 10 onwards, to prevent them slipping through the net • Link with the Youth Service, Careers Service and other agencies to help to identify these young people • Link with learning mentors • Develop links with the community • Have initial meetings on their own territory • Use 'pizza money' to build relationship • Utilise youth work skills • Visit young people at home

Negative view of education	59%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at non-academic ways of learning or gaining qualifications • Move away from larger group learning in classrooms to one-to-one support • Motivational interviewing • Help young people to identify their own barriers and overcome these • Provide information and alternatives in a positive way • Understand without colluding • Use a sensitive approach to unravel past issues and incidents that correlate with the negativity • Look at different methods of achieving qualifications • Build up positive relationships with young people and talk about life-experiences
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‘What works?’

5.5 We asked Personal Advisers what they did that made a difference to young people. Table 13 gives examples of the actions taken by Personal Advisers to facilitate young people’s progress.

Table 13

Action taken by Personal Advisers to make a difference		
Significant improvement in	%	What action led to this improvement?
Attendance/ Punctuality	46%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take young people to interviews • Make sure they enrol on relevant programme • Enable young people to see the need to change • Initially negotiate and set dates and times that are suitable for the individual • Continually reinforce the importance of punctuality and always be there yourself • Show interest in their lives • Payments such as bus fares or a McDonalds • Open time clinics with no set times for drop-in sessions initially • Constant communication and contact with young people, by telephone and home visits • Liaise with providers from the outset

Self-esteem/ Confidence	65%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational interviewing • Provide support and show genuine interest • Help young people to recognise their own skills, abilities and achievements • Provide real options • Have regular discussions • Give sincere recognition and praise, but also share displeasure and disappointment • Establish trust and reflect on their achievements to build up confidence at their pace • Give unconditional positive regard and show faith in young people with agreed boundaries • Find the young person's strengths and build around this
Preparedness for decisions	37%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept that some young people may take a long time before they are able to reach a decision • Provide information on the labour market situation, progression routes and opportunities so young people become informed • Provide as much information as possible e.g. arranging 'no obligation' visits to providers • Give young people access to decision making processes and active participation • Draw up realistic action plan • Improve organisation and management skills and decision making through work on NRA folders
Forming individual relationships	48%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a rapport with the Personal Adviser and then develop this with a training provider or tutor • Provide one-to-one support if needed • Build up trust, being reliable and supportive encourages relationship forming • Develop inter-personal skills of young people • Regular contact by phone, home visits and appointments • Work on the basis of empathy, respect and honesty without professional lies • Regular attendance at community centres to make the experience less stressful • Set firm boundaries and let young person know what is acceptable and what is not • Encourage young people to access social events outside of their normal experience
Participating in a group	16%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide group sessions in partnership with the youth service looking at group dynamics • Start off at appropriate level - small group or one-to-one if necessary • Motivational group work

Coping with new situations	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce young people gradually to new situations e.g. through one day tasters or short work-based programmes • Take young people to interviews • Discuss with them what will happen beforehand • Work alongside them • Take young people to different locations while their confidence grows • Accompany them, then gradually let go • Divide each visit to a provider into three parts, before, actual and post visit • Create opportunities for experiential learning
Participation in		
Informal learning e.g. outdoor activities	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 'It's a knockout' type activities with training providers • Provide away days e.g. with the Princes Trust, army • Develop innovative activities • Use outdoor pursuits and residential visits to develop confidence and team building • Ensure activities are age-appropriate and low cost
Formal agreement to participate	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use jargon, even terms like Learning Gateway • Stress the practical benefits to young people • Explain what is being offered and what support you will provide e.g. assistance with benefit claims, housing at initial contact • Negotiate with young people • Set boundaries and ground rules • Draw up written contracts
Individual Development Plan	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete after a rapport has been established • Start with a few notes and build up as relationship grows • Try and get young person to put in their own words • Explain this and introduce it gradually when the young person feels ready • Make process informal so as not to intimidate the young person • Set targets by young person
Named award schemes	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with other agencies e.g. Princes Trust • Run award schemes for young people
Work experience	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide flexible work tasters where young people are paid and provided with travel costs • Ensure supportive situation attending for a few hours at first to build up confidence then gradually progress to full time • Stay with them for a while initially • Make this relevant to the needs of young people • Use voluntary work

Accredited training	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand their knowledge of training available and why this can benefit them • Provide flexible courses • Attend interviews with young person • Important process to re-engage young people back in society on an equal footing and give them certified programmes • Giving awards and certificates to encourage young people to take part and get something out of it
Education	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give information and build self-esteem • Provide more flexible programmes e.g. colleges offering January starts • Introduce education at an appropriate pace • Contact college tutors direct to discuss provision which could be accessed after the September start date, then follow-up progress • NVQ courses are successful • Work at the local college
Job with Training	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop job-seeking skills • Raise awareness amongst employers of the value of training and NVQs • Encourage young people to consider why training is relevant • Recognise the interests of the young person and be specific • Provide direct support • Find training projects that create a chance of accessing real job opportunities

Initiating contact

- 5.6 Personal Advisers are aware of the need to avoid bureaucracy right from the first stages of contacting a young person. They use the telephone rather than post, whenever possible. One project has established that postcards get a better response than letters in envelopes. Staff at all levels now collect postcards, especially free ones, which may be suitable for this use.
- 5.7 As indicated in paragraph 4.4, Personal Advisers emphasise the importance of establishing effective relationships with young people from the very outset. They reported the need to adopt a step by step approach using their skills and personal qualities, in particular listening, having frequent contact and offering continuity and support.
- 5.8 Some Personal Advisers from careers service companies indicated that they would benefit from developing their interview skills further. They also highlighted their interest in undertaking counselling skills training.
- 5.9 Many projects have considered aspects of matching Personal Advisers to clients in relation to ethnic background, gender and other characteristics. The clear consensus view from our findings was that

the willingness and capability of the Personal Adviser to engage with young people is by far the over-riding factor. 'The right person' for this job is the key issue. Within that broad context, it is important to be sensitive to particular issues for occasional young people, and to allocate a Personal Adviser appropriately. One project had problems attracting young women clients in its early days, but by appointing two young Muslim women as part-time Personal Advisers they were able to redress this balance to some extent. There is however clear value in having teams of Personal Advisers which broadly reflect the local community, and who are seen by clients to show each other mutual respect and support. Another project has all male staff and another all female. In neither case does this seem to have had a noticeable effect on the client intake.

- 5.10 The way that Personal Advisers behave with their own colleagues, with opportunity providers and with other agencies, all create role models which are influential on young people. This issue is seen as important in teams of mixed gender and mixed ethnicity. Whilst matching of client to Personal Adviser by these characteristics is not generally important, the role modelling which shows that all are equally treated and valued is a powerful message.
- 5.11 From the interviews with young people, many recognise the qualities that are important to them in their Personal Advisers. They contrast the listening skills of the Personal Advisers with their past experiences with some school staff who *'tell you what to do'*.

"I know he's an adult, but he puts himself in our place. ...I can relate to him; it's good."

"He listens to me, and gives me his opinion. He listens to me and I listen to him."

Some young people described how the Personal Adviser had influenced them:

"She is dead down to earth and makes you feel relaxed."

"I just like him. He's funny. I can talk to him. I used to feel right depressed, and he made me laugh and cheered me up."

"It helped me learn to trust people more."

Developing confidence and willingness to engage

- 5.12 Others, clearly understand the purpose of the relationship:

"Sometimes he's a laugh but sometimes there's a serious side to him. You've got to listen to him sometimes. I like it when he's

serious; he puts my mind straight onto things, not just laughing the whole time. He's good at getting attention."

Even when some of these young people were not entirely comfortable with their Personal Adviser's agenda, they were able to separate this from their on-going supportive relationship:

"They are concerned about me, they want me to get more qualifications but I don't want trainingMy Personal Adviser is trying to force me onto courses but I know she just wants to help me."

5.13 Personal Advisers use considerable skill and sensitivity to nurture these delicate relationships. Objections to training, such as those expressed above, cannot be addressed by argument and persuasion. The 'small steps' towards change may include:

- acknowledging the potential for change;
- making 'no strings' visits to look at opportunities;
- undertaking a few days' placement in the workplace;
- having a short taster at college.

Personal Advisers recognise the importance of having a purposeful agenda, but know that if they try to force certain issues it may be counter-productive. The skills to manage one's own professional activity in this field can be very demanding.

5.14 Young people greatly value the support they receive from Personal Advisers who take them to interviews and to visit potential placements. They show high levels of insight into how they are being helped. One young man describes his Personal Adviser:

"I remember I went for a bricklaying job once, and I were right nervous, and I were sat down having my interview with the boss, and he (Personal Adviser) stayed with me for ages, sat next to me and talked to me. Then he turned round to me and said: "Sam, I got to go now", and I said: "Good, 'cos I feel better". It's like he thought "Sam looks a bit nervous; I'll keep him company and give him some support". He looked at me, he knew when to go."

5.15 All Personal Advisers reported that advocacy is a significant aspect of their role. Sometimes advocacy is used to gain access to opportunities which are closed to young people either because of their history and characteristics, or through their own feelings of inadequacy to make the approach. On other occasions advocacy is used to sort out issues which have gone wrong: maybe a young person failing to attend a booked appointment, or some inappropriate behaviour which has led to suspension from an opportunity. Personal Advisers make judgements about when to act for young people, and when to support them in

acting for themselves (self-advocacy). Some young people are very aware of the subtle skills which are being employed:

“He doesn’t always tell you. He gives you a hint and helps you out”.

- 5.16 Telephone contact is used extensively to augment and support face-to-face meetings which may happen only once a week. Many young people, especially in the larger conurbations, have mobile phones, and are comfortable to use this as a way of maintaining contact. Personal Advisers are able to follow up their clients at limited cost of time and travel. This aspect of technology is important in designing working methods for Personal Advisers. It allows young people relatively unlimited access to their Personal Adviser without divulging personal information, and can be used to ensure timely face-to-face contact when needed. A regular topic of conversation amongst young people is how to keep ‘credit’ (i.e. for advance payment mobile telephones) and this could offer an incentive for engagement in Learning Gateway.

Assessment

- 5.17 One project has a well-developed assessment strategy. Others are currently using a range of methods which were reported in the evaluation of New Start (Round Two) projects. Such approaches include:
- Information from a referring organisation
 - School reports (where these have been provided to the careers service)
 - Discussion with the young person
 - Activity-based exercises
 - Assessment undertaken by training providers at point of (possible) referral

In the one project where assessment is well developed it contributes to the referral system to the TEC and facilitates negotiation on the provision of suitable opportunities. This approach has fostered closer working links with the local TEC.

Other projects are working on client-friendly tools which support both informal assessment and the development of an Individual Development Plan. One example, uses a visually attractive form, printed on card and folded to A4 size. The Personal Adviser and client jointly identify and log information about the young person into the central areas, then use outer areas to log potential action on the issues identified.

5.18 The priorities in relation to assessment remain the same in all projects:

- A holistic view of the young person
- User-friendly approaches
- Assessment only when the client is ready and sees some value in the activity.

Individual Development Plans

5.19 Various forms of Individual Development Plans (IDP) are used in all projects. Table 7 shows that 45% of young people on these projects have an IDP and 80% have established a formal agreement to participate. The format tends to vary from a printed plan to a simple two page hand-written sheet.

Dependence and exit strategies

5.20 For some young people, their relationship with their Personal Adviser may be their most significant relationship with another adult:

“He’d make a better Dad. My Dad was never there for me.”

Over-dependence is an issue which concerns some Personal Advisers. In order to overcome this, some projects have developed a system whereby the young person relates to more than one Personal Adviser.

In Project B, each young person is taken into the caseload of the project co-ordinator, who has a primary role in maintaining contact with both referring organisations and possible providers. After an initial period, the client is passed on to one of three part-time Personal Advisers.

This project works from a single site, and it is likely that young people will have become acquainted to some extent with all the Personal Advisers during their initial period with the project. Young people appear to relate well to the team, rather than having over-dependence on one member of staff.

5.21 One significant step towards reducing over-dependence on the Personal Adviser is to help young people develop a wider range of satisfying relationships. This may arise through their progression into other provision or through liaison with other agencies which address the particular needs of the young person. Projects vary in the extent to which they see this as an issue. Two projects are exploring the potential role of peer mentors. Others, place considerable emphasis on giving young people as varied experiences as possible, including voluntary sector and community organisations. Where there is a forced hand-over of the client at a certain age or a stage of progression, the

Personal Adviser may feel that they are 'letting down' someone with whom they have worked hard to develop trust.

- 5.22 Exit strategies are a topic for further consideration within projects, and may need to be part of the agenda for any future supervision mechanisms to support Personal Advisers.

Supervision and support for Personal Advisers

- 5.23 When Personal Advisers have worked successfully to win young people's trust, they may be made aware of personal issues which give rise to moral quandaries for the adviser. Examples arising in discussions with Personal Advisers include:

- Drug use
- Drug dealing
- Other criminal activity
- Black market 'employment'
- A young person wanting to discuss their sexual orientation

- 5.24 Discussions with Personal Advisers show that they are maintaining client confidentiality in all cases where there is not an identifiable, direct risk to another person. Personal Advisers are aware that if they are seen to break confidences, the word will spread 'on the street' and their future work with young people will be severely compromised.

- 5.25 Youth workers have traditionally worked in this way with young people, and have supervision systems to support them in their role. Supervision has been explained in our discussions with youth worker Personal Adviser as covering:

- Case management, including ethical issues and possible access to specialist help
- Personal development for the worker.

Some youth workers operating as Personal Advisers still access supervision within the youth service, others have built a system within their team, and some now operate without this support. Some careers services have established this type of approach in order to support their Personal Advisers.

- 5.26 Personal Advisers identify a number of issues which help maintain the relationship, and start to move young people on in developing confidence and starting to address progression issues. This is discussed more fully in section 6.

Section 6 Creating a conducive climate

Flexible funding

- 6.1 The pilot Personal Advisers working within New Start projects have had access to flexible funding which allows them to support young people in many different ways:
- Buying training provision and access to personal development opportunities such as outdoor courses
 - Running small taster courses and paying allowances
 - Meeting travel costs.
 - Incentives for attendance at particular events.
 - Personal hygiene and hairdressing costs.
 - 'Pizza money': funding which allows the Personal Adviser to use congenial settings, either for meetings away from home or careers centre, or as a time to talk after making a visit or attending an interview.

Personal Advisers universally value this funding. It gives young people messages that they are 'worthwhile' and allows the adviser to be effective in meeting immediate needs, thus developing the relationships with young people and opening doors for them.

Training allowances

- 6.2 Both Personal Advisers and young people commented on the levels of training allowances as a strong disincentive for young people. One project suggested that:

"It is important to make young people feel worthwhile, and paying them a proper allowance will do this. It is important not to make them feel used and worthless. A proper allowance will save money in the long term. £40 per week is really only just over £1 per hour – many young people live independently and cannot manage".

- 6.3 Our findings show that there appears to be a growing incidence of young people gaining occasional work through employment agencies. Two days of such work may leave them better off than being on a training scheme. In this case young people may choose part-time college provision as it is compatible with agency work, or may simply miss days from the training course, with subsequent problems over their poor attendance.

Location

- 6.4 Most Personal Advisers work from a variety of locations, including their own office base, youth or community centres, specific agencies, such as the Youth Offending Team, in fast food outlets, and through home

visits. Initial contact is typically offered at a place which suits the young person. Two projects (both careers service based) have very strict guidelines relating to staff safety. In one case, this would exclude home visits by one staff member alone. Those from youth work backgrounds are more used to operating independently. One careers service is working on issues of personal risk assessment around home visiting, rather than having a strict policy. If a worker judges the risk to be small (e.g. they already know something about the home situation) they can choose to go alone. Another project, has a clear well-understood safety policy within which there are 'buddying arrangements' to provide back up and support.

- 6.5 From the interviews with young people, they emphasised that they want to be treated with respect. Generally, they like first contact being made on their own ground, but once a relationship is developed, they are usually prepared to go where necessary as long as costs do not prohibit this.
- 6.6 Some Personal Advisers expressed concern that a larger service - the Learning Gateway and, later, Connexions – might result in the loss of the personal contact with young people in their own neighbourhoods. Some argued that Connexions should be run from local 'hubs' within an overall area strategy.

Tracking

- 6.7 Respondents were asked if they had a formal tracking system in place to monitor young people's progress. 100% had a system in place which could be categorised as follows:

Database management to facilitate tracking and closer scrutiny of target groups. In some cases, this had led to new links with neighbourhood organisations and voluntary groups.

Data protocols to facilitate the sharing of information on clients between agencies. In some cases, a declaration of acceptance has been signed by most local agencies. This is relevant to supporting Excellence in Cities and the Learning Mentor role.

Direct referrals to facilitate active monitoring and tracking of all young people who are taken into the programme.

- 6.8 Most projects see issues of confidentiality in transfer of information to be a significant hurdle. Different agencies work to different guidelines, often from different government departments. Specific examples quoted include:
- The limited flow of information to Personal Advisers from some Social Services about care leavers

- Failure of Personal Advisers to make training providers aware of issues, including criminal activities, which may affect training placements.

Many project managers argue that there should be a national steer on data protocols. They believe that there is no sense developing these at many different sites, especially with the boundary changes to the new Learning and Skills Council areas.

Provision

- 6.9 Personal Advisers commented on the need for local, flexible provision for all young people. They emphasise that Life Skills provision should be customised to meet individual needs.

Pre-16 provision

- 6.10 Many Personal Advisers and managers commented on the lack of support for young people who truanted or were excluded from school. There are small schemes demonstrating good practice, but there is a general failure to address the need to engage such young people in purposeful activity. Young people may spend quite long periods with minimal contact with educational provision. They may develop life styles which take extensive work to remedy.
- 6.11 One project manager commented that there is a need to pass information about New Start and the Personal Adviser role back into schools. They are not generally aware of the good work that is being done.

Pre-Life Skills

- 6.12 Several areas have identified a need for specific provision which can offer a first step towards Life Skills provision with training providers. One TEC has identified this as a priority for the coming year. In some areas, careers services and youth services felt that they could play a part in delivering pre-Life Skills provision, if they were funded to do so. Pre-Life Skills provision needs to be flexibly delivered for young people who cannot adapt to routine at all. This offer a first step towards changing habits gradually.
- 6.13 One project makes extensive use of short taster experiences and they report successful outcomes. They emphasise the need for a wide range of options:
- Work experience
 - College tasters
 - Tasters with training providers
 - Army assault courses

These are ‘no strings’ offerings, and are supported by daily attendance payments. Typically they may last for only one or two days, but may be the first towards moving into more extensive activity. The focus is on young people getting varied experiences, and they may be supported by their Personal Adviser accompanying them on the initial visit or interview. Personal Advisers discuss the experience with the young person, and provide certificates of attendance. In this project, the initial stage of attendance in training may be as little as one half-day a week, if that is what seems suitable for the young person. The Personal Adviser will visit them when they have started, and will place high priority on maintaining a dialogue with the training provider.

Other provision

- 6.14 Many projects make use of other local provision, such as SRB-funded projects, the Prince’s Trust and Millennium Volunteers. The focus of such training is typically personal development, confidence-building and teamwork skills. Funding regimes vary, but flexible money may be needed to support either course costs or the cost of equipment such as outdoor clothing and shoes.

Life Skills

- 6.15 Almost every Personal Adviser and manager expressed concerns about the need for Life Skills provision to become more flexible. Training providers must use the needs of the young person, rather than the resources or programme available, as the starting point for designing provision. Some young people are reported to have said that Life Skills was like ‘being back at school’, which puts them off.

Style of provision

- 6.16 Finally, work experience has proved a powerful motivator to young people, particularly in one project where good links with employers have been developed and there is financial support. A Personal Adviser in another project argued the case for much more involvement of employers and the real workplace:

“I learned how to be an adult with adults. These young people are trying to learn to be adults with other young people.’ There is a real need to give young people the chance to grow up in a real world, and employers have a big role to play in that”.

Section 7 Future challenges

Clients and progression

- 7.1 Some young people have little structure to their lives, and lack positive role models. Helping such young people develop the habits needed for engagement in training and work is of necessity a slow process. A minority of young people have adopted alternative lifestyles which they find more personally rewarding than anything a Personal Adviser can offer. They are unlikely to choose to remain within the Personal Adviser's caseload.
- 7.2 Many problems stem from young people's experience at schools, perhaps starting from a poor transition to secondary education at age 11. Young people are unable to find anyone to listen to them at school.
- 7.3 Provision for young people who truant or are excluded from school is generally inadequate. Many young people's situation is exacerbated by the lack of provision if they stop attending school.
- 7.4 Positive destinations were found to be lower in this survey than in the earlier days of the projects. Many pilot Personal Advisers are playing a key role within the broader context of Learning Gateway in accepting the most hard-to-help young people. Success measures need to be sensitive to the difficulty of the task.
- 7.5 Zero movement may indicate 'success', if the young person stops their downward slide on a 'slippery slope'.
- 7.6 Life Skills provision is generally considered to be insufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual young people. Some careers services and youth services would like to be funded to provide pre-Life Skills options.
- 7.7 Short-term taster opportunities are valuable in developing young people's confidence and widening their horizons. Payment and certificates of attendance are valued by young people.

Personal Advisers

- 7.8 The 'right person' in the Personal Adviser role is vital. From our findings, matching by gender or ethnic background is generally not necessary, but Personal Advisers need to remain aware of any sensitivities and allocate a worker appropriately. Mixed teams (by race and gender) of Personal Advisers offering mutual respect and support provide good role models for young people.
- 7.9 Many pilot Personal Advisers are highly trained and experienced, and have exceptional levels of commitment to the work. There are

questions on how many such people can be recruited and trained to meet the staffing requirements of the Connexions strategy.

- 7.10 Training activity has increase since the interim survey. All projects have undertaken a training needs analysis. Training needs cover a wide spectrum:
- *Direct work with young people* – interviewing and counselling skills, assessment techniques, increasing motivation, handling aggression
 - *Awareness of issues affecting young people's lives* - drugs, housing, abuse, sexual orientation
 - *Operational issues* – I.T., legislation, knowledge of other agencies and of opportunities for young people.
- 7.11 Caseloads range between 10 and 35 for a full-time equivalent Personal Adviser. Those with smaller caseloads often have a developmental role which occupies part of their time. There is a ceiling to the number of very hard-to-help young people that a Personal Adviser can manage, as the cost in emotional energy is high.
- 7.12 There is scope for improvements for Personal Advisers to influence provision. In some areas procedures have been established to allow Personal Advisers to make direct requests for provision for clients. The credibility of Personal Advisers is undermined if they cannot provide access to suitable opportunities when young people are ready to move on.
- 7.13 Much good work in the interests of difficult clients relies on the personal credibility of the Personal Adviser in local networks. Time and commitment is needed to develop and maintain relationships.
- 7.14 Some projects are aware of issues around over-dependence of clients, and of the need to improve 'exit strategies' which continue to offer young people on-going support.
- 7.15 Personal Advisers need a system of supervision and support as they engage with the ethical and emotional issues arising from intensive work with young people.
- 7.16 Issues of personal safety are handled in different ways in different projects. Good practice should be shared.

Managing the work context

- 7.17 Flexible funding is of great importance. It supports Personal Advisers' activities with young people and allows them to up open opportunities which would otherwise be closed to their clients. It is also a powerful incentive for engagement, though it is insufficient to retain a young person within provision they find unsatisfactory.

- 7.18 Tracking is universal but not consistent. Database analysis has allowed some projects to target their efforts effectively. Data protocols and confidentiality issues have been addressed fully in only one project. National guidelines, across different agencies, are required.
- 7.19 A variety of different assessment techniques are used in different contexts with a variety of young people. Some projects argue that there is a case for a national framework of materials which could be used collaboratively by agencies involved with any young person.

Section 8 Key Findings

- 63% of young people, who have left the six pilot, have made a positive progression into education, training or work (paragraph 3.5)
- There is evidence to suggest that young people with disabilities are not participating in the pilot projects (paragraph 3.6)
- All Personal Advisers require on-going training and support to improve their effectiveness in meeting the needs of young people. Motivational techniques are identified as a key area for development (paragraphs 4.9, 4.10 and 4.20)
- Current Life Skills provision is programme orientated rather than designed to meet the individual needs of hard-to-help young people (paragraph 4.16)
- Performance management and supervision for Personal Advisers is required within the new Connexions strategy (paragraph 4.20)
- National guidelines for data protocols and confidentiality are required (paragraph 4.17)
- A small step approach continues to feature strongly in most projects particularly in relation to formal assessment and achievement of learning plans (paragraph 5.7)
- Personal Advisers, reflecting the local community, offer positive role models (paragraph 5.10)
- Flexible funding is essential to meet the diverse needs of young people. Telephone credits can act as an incentive to nurture positive relationships and encourage participation in learning (paragraph 5.16)
- Exit strategies to support young people in learning needs to developed as part of an agenda for case-work supervision (paragraph 5.22)
- All Personal Advisers should have clear guidelines on personal safety issues (paragraph 6.4)
- Work experience placements and links with employers are essential to provide role models and active engagement in learning and work for young people (paragraph 6.15)

CASE STUDY 1 : SEAN

Sean is 17 years old. He attended a boarding school away from his home. When he was 16 he was not entered for any exams and was encouraged to stay at the school for another year. This he refused to do and returned home without any qualifications. Shortly after his return, he visited the local Careers Centre. There he was told about opportunities and was later introduced to his Personal Adviser. She met him a few times at the Careers Centre as he quite happily met there, and told him about different opportunities. According to Sean:

"I was nervous meeting her at first but she told me about a college course and I went on this."

Sean stayed on the course for a 5 months then left due to unspecified personal problems. He tried to find jobs in retail for himself but was unsuccessful. He wanted to get work but as he says:

"I had no qualifications and no experience so I did not get anything".

After trying to find something, Sean contacted his Personal Adviser and met her again. She told him about the Learning Gateway. He again went through the options open to him with his Personal Adviser. He is very positive about the way he has been treated and the confidence that this has given him:

"She treated me like an adult not the way we were treated in school, like little kids"

After several meetings, he went with his Personal Adviser to look at a Life Skills course. By accompanying Sean, his Personal Adviser gave him confidence to try something new and he joined the course. This was very new to him, even after attending college and he expressed reservations:

"I was nervous at first about meeting new people but I was in a small group of eight. In the group it was nerve-racking to start with but we mixed in and got along well"

"We got on all right. We did different things to help us, like being more sociable and outgoing. It helped me learn to trust people more. I wasn't very good at this to start with".

Sean stayed for the full length of the course then felt able to move to training provision. He is very pleased with this as he feels it will help his progression into full-time work, which is his main aim.

"I stayed on the course for 15 weeks then I moved to an admin. NVQ1 course which I like. I will have another placement soon and get some more experience and I hope I will get a job at the end. I feel hopeful now, I get on and I think I will do quite well, my mum thinks so too".

CASE STUDY 2: ALAN

Alan is 17 years old. He went into foster care as a baby then was taken back by his mother and put into care when he was four. He has been to a variety of children's homes, although for the last six years he has lived with his current foster family. He now lives independently, just round the corner from his foster family. He also has two foster sisters who get on well with him.

In Year 9, he was expelled from school and had a home tutor for some time. His family then moved away from the area and he attended another school in the south. Whilst at school he earned money by working in various jobs such as fast food production and building site work. He took some examinations at school but does not know any of the results and is not interested:

"I don't care about exams, I don't need them."

His family returned to the area and he has continued with finding well-paid casual work. However, a change of management has caused problems and this led to trouble and Alan left. He was referred to a Personal Adviser and she made initial contact with him through a home visit. He thinks she has been helpful to him:

"She rings up about jobs and goes through the job papers with me. I think I will find a job, I didn't think that before. We fill in application forms."

When asked why he didn't keep his previous job, Alan describes his attitude to working with others:

"I just flip, that's the way I have been brought up –if I don't like them, I just hit out then go away. I've been fostered since I was a baby. If you go into a children's home, they pick on you, you have to stick up for yourself. The staff don't really help you. I'm polite but I don't like people giving me grief. I don't like being picked on and treated unfairly or differently. I want respect and they kept telling me to make drinks all the time."

Alan's Personal Adviser has discussed his attitude towards work and they have jointly explored his expectations:

"I will not look at training because they are ripping you off. They should pay you more."

He now comes regularly into the Careers Centre and feels motivated to get a job; however, he still will not consider training.

CASE STUDY 3: IAN

Ian dropped out of school in Year 10. He is unable to give any specific reasons for this:

“I just didn’t like it – nothing particular, I just didn’t like going. The careers adviser tried to get me back in and he was OK but I didn’t go back. Through him, I went on work-based training and that was OK, like a proper job and I went on work experience and got good reports.”

Ian was positive about the help he has had from his Personal Adviser:

“She is concerned about me and wants me to get more qualifications, but I don’t want training.”

Ian has also attended college and successfully completed a word processing course. However, this was not a positive experience:

“They treat you like a child, I didn’t like the way I was treated. It has put me off all training. My PA is trying to force me onto courses but I know she just wants to help me. I want to run a pub or a café when I can, so I need money for that. I might get Business Admin. qualifications; I know I can do that at night school. I am motivated now to get something. I know I need money for a business and I want to start to get some. I have got application forms and now I need a CV, so she will help me with that.”

CASE STUDY 4 : SARAH

Sarah left school at 13 years old. She had enjoyed primary school and remembers being praised there for her work but feels that she never settled down at senior school. She just stopped going after an unspecified incident with a boy.

"There was too many people in the classroom - you can't get help. The teachers haven't time. In college there are only five round the table. At juniors I got certificates and stars because I was doing well then I went to seniors. I didn't get any credit or praise for working - there was no point in working hard."

Looking back now, Sarah wishes she had stayed at school and not just left:

"If I had had someone to talk to I might have gone back, I don't know for sure."

Sarah came into the Careers Centre and saw one of the staff, then she returned and met her Personal Adviser. Initially she kept crying every time they met. Then she stopped coming and the Personal Adviser went round to her house to see her. Her Personal Adviser feels that without that intervention, she would never have returned. Sarah explains that her crying was caused by a total lack of confidence which lasted over three months. However, gradually she began to talk more and to gain some confidence. As she says:

"I was interested in retail but hadn't finished school or got exams so I didn't think I could do it. She built up my confidence."

Sarah went through a time of being on the dole and finding it very difficult to motivate herself:

"When I was on the dole I was just sitting around - I stayed in bed till 12.00 pm and never went out even though I had a bit of money. You just get into the habit of staying in."

Sarah is now on a work-based training course in retail and feels very positive about this:

"I feel OK now because I'm getting out and doing stuff - I'm doing a course - I was put on Level 2, and that surprised me. I'm going to get somewhere and get a job at the end of it - I'm going to make sure I have a job."

She appreciates the help and support of her Personal Adviser over a long period:

"She is dead down to earth and makes you feel relaxed. She phoned and got me interviews and tried different things. She also helped sort

out my money and my benefits. Like a friend. I had problems with mum getting on my back and giving me grief – my Personal Adviser helped talk it through with me."

Sarah is also positive about her training:

"They treat me like an adult - I felt everyone was looking down on me. She just talks to me like everyone else. It's not like school you don't have to ask to go to the toilet. I feel relaxed I am working with people my own age and with adults too - it makes you feel good about yourself."

Sarah thinks her future is bright although she does highlight a warning:

"Everyone knows there is a second chance now, my sister doesn't go to school she says she will do training like me. I know though that people take school leavers first and its tough if you haven't been to school much. Application forms always emphasise qualifications and I haven't got any. It's a big part of the form and always comes first."

Sarah's mum, though, is not happy at being woken up by her getting up early to go to college. She is not very supportive of the college option. Neither her mother or sister gets up in the morning and her mum complains constantly about being woken up by the noise of the water pipes. Her dad who now lives away, is working. He is supportive and encouraging:

"He is pleased for me and he phones at night to see how I am getting on."

Her boy friend also works and Sarah would like to leave home and get a flat with him.

"He wants us to start saving and perhaps go on holiday."

Sarah can now see herself living and working independently. She is now 16 years old and on a retail training scheme at college ready for her first placement. She has her first interview next week. Although she is articulate and appears confident, this has taken a long time and involved intensive work with her Personal Adviser.

CASE STUDY 5: EDDY

Eddy arrived in this country two months ago, as an unaccompanied minor, seeking refugee status. After making his Home Office application he was referred to Social Services, who suggested that he should meet with a Personal Adviser.

Eddy has taken GCE examinations in his own country, and is ambitious to become 'a business man'.

"I don't know the country. I know things back home, but I know nothing about the system here."

He has met with his Personal Adviser several times. She has provided information, both through college publications and by writing things down for him. She has explained routes and followed up with letters when necessary. Eddy has to find ways to make personal progress while he waits for a Home Office decision on refugee status.

"Some courses require status, so I've got a lot of problems over what I can learn. I have been enrolled for a part-time course."

Eddy is aware that fees may be covered but travel costs will be a problem. He has appreciated help from someone who is aware of the legislation, and puts efforts into helping him find answers to his problems.

In relation to other agencies, he says:

"People should give the right information and stick with commitments. Otherwise you have no trust."

In relation to his Personal Adviser:

"She always give you an answer..... People need to listen and encourage you. I'm happy that I am alive today. I should thank God for that."

CASE STUDY 6: LISA

Lisa left school and entered an FE college to study for A Levels in English, Sociology and Law. By the early stages of the second term, things were not working out well. Her Personal Adviser has a specific responsibility for identifying and helping those who are early leavers from post-16 destinations.

“I was feeling I couldn’t continue in college. I couldn’t cope. I came here and we talked for about three hours! Coming here was more helpful than college people. They said ‘Stick it out to the end of term - two more months – and come back then.’ But I thought ‘No, I’m having problems now.’ So I came here and I was here all day.”

On that first day, Lisa was also helped by another member of the careers service staff who runs a CV drop-in clinic. Lisa produced a CV with her support, and recognised that people were working together as a team to help her.

On her next visit:

“We looked through jobs. They helped with covering letters.”

Lisa has seen her Personal Adviser intensively over a short period:

“It’s good to have one person you see all the time; they know about you. I’ve seen her three times a week. She’s like a friend who understands, like an older sister. She just listened to everything and was so understanding. She knew what I was going through.”

Lisa’s job-hunting has now led to job interviews, and she is hopeful of success soon. She is grateful for her Personal Adviser’s telephone calls to ask how interviews went. She has also appreciated her Personal Adviser sitting in when she makes telephone calls to potential employers, and taking the time to talk through how she handled the call.