Mapping the alternatives to permanent exclusion

Pat Thomson and Lisa Russell

This report investigates the programmes provided for young people permanently excluded, or at risk of permanent exclusion from school in two Midlands local authorities.

The research investigates the type, location, enrolment, scale and scope of programmes for excluded young people. It also examines six examples of good practice.

The study addresses the government's policy commitment to ensure that all young people under 16 access their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and explores concerns that some young people 'fall through the cracks' of provision.

The researchers used a mixed methods approach, combining:

- surveys

- geographical mapping

- interviews

- observation, and

- case studies.

The research will be of interest to policymakers and practitioners dealing with social and educational exclusion.

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Government policy guarantees an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, with access to personalised education and training pathways, for all young people aged 14–19. The onus is on the educational system to ensure that all young people, regardless of their formal academic achievement or behaviour in school, have access to such an entitlement.

This study was based in two local authorities (LAs) in the Midlands and sought to investigate the entitlements of young people permanently excluded from schools or at risk of permanent exclusion. Using mixed methods, and including six ethnographic case studies, it asked the following questions.

- What kinds of alternative programmes are there?

- What is the nature of the qualifications on offer?

- Where are they located?

- Who goes there?

- How do pupils access these programmes?

Findings

The study showed that alternative programmes are of two main types: core provision, where a young person is on roll and may attend full-time, and specialist provision where a young person undertakes a part-time programme. Core providers typically organise a package of programmes for young people excluded from school by purchasing places from one or more specialist providers. Alternative programmes are not only academic and/or therapeutic, but also cover work-related programmes, life and basic skills, and recreation programmes. Core providers tend to offer academic programmes while work-related and recreational programmes dominate specialist provision. Both offer basic/life skills.

There was a tendency for providers to assume that all excluded young people need and want vocational options. This potentially limits what is developed for what is in reality a diverse group of young people. There were a wide range of qualifications on offer. However, these were often left as portfolios of certificates and not articulated

into GCSE, for example, and some of the qualifications were not recognised by colleges. This is particularly concerning, as the pathways afforded by qualifications are as critical to entitlement as the actual qualifications themselves.

The majority of young people in alternative provision were part-time, white males aged between 14 and 16. There was pressure on providers to extend their programmes to younger students and many were concerned about the effects on girls of programmes designed for and dominated by boys. Further investigation is needed in these two LAs about the access and participation in alternative provision of traveller children and children of African-Caribbean descent.

Access to alternative programmes was through the brokerage of staff who used their networks, rather than any central database. This was potentially problematic, since those young people who were with services where there were extensive networks may have had more choices than others. Young people and their families appeared to have very little say in the processes through which they were moved out of mainstream programmes and into alternatives. This is particularly an issue: for young people who are part-time in schools; where there is delay in finding an appropriate placement; where programmes that are offered are inappropriate or unattractive to the young person; and where young people are being sent back to the mainstream from an alternative programme.

The study initially assumed that there would be elements of a database that monitors and tracks 'who gets what'. However, there was no up-to-date centralised data about all programmes in these two LAs. LAs kept good data about students who were permanently excluded. However, schools kept only individual case data about students who were on part-time programmes rather than also aggregating this information to produce a consolidated picture of how many part-time students there were. Indeed, our data suggests that some young people in schools were not accessing the mandated hours for education and/or training. Across the alternative programmes there was no standardised framework for data collection – a range of time frames, types and formats were used. Data about the socio-economic status of excluded young people was only kept by schools as information about Free School Meals. The location of programmes was not routinely mapped. This created the potential for there to be gaps in services and obscured the correlation between areas of high deprivation, young people excluded from school and alternative provision.

The study found instances of very good practice where staff established good relationships with young people, allowed them some say in decisions about their programme, offered them a meaningful pathway to further study or work, and provided a rich mix of academic learning, recreation, life skills and vocational

education. Six ethnographic case studies of good practice across the two LAs demonstrated that delivering an entitlement is dependent on small groups and individual attention, negotiated programmes, highly skilled and committed staff, and a holistic view of needs. The cases suggest that a diversity of programmes and approaches is both needed and possible.

The study suggests that the field of alternative provision is characterised by the relative isolation of the staff who work in small programmes, and a competition for places that advantages those core providers who bulk buy specialist places early. This can limit choices for students who must do what has already been purchased, as well as reduce choice for students who enrol in programmes that do not bulk buy any places.

The study suggests that the field of alternative provision can be understood as a relatively unregulated market in which there are diverse scales of operation, inspection regimes, data-collection frameworks and priorities. These factors combine to limit the development of comprehensive local forward planning. However, ensuring an entitlement depends on a sound local system of monitoring and tracking programmes, a quality assurance system and a forward planning process. This may mean new roles for local authorities.

1 An entitlement to education

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has produced explicit policy to guarantee the rights of children and young people to education. School students under 16 are now only to be excluded from education and/or training for a maximum of 12 days. Local authorities are to ensure that children who are permanently excluded are enrolled in an educational provision within this time period. Schools are also urged to take preventive action to avoid permanent exclusion altogether.[1]

Some might see this policy as ensuring that children attend school, that is, they focus on its disciplinary functions. This view suggests that young people are reluctant to be educated and must be compelled to do so.

An alternative position, and the one taken throughout this report, is that education has been made legally compulsory in order to ensure that nothing prevents children and young people from their entitlement to an education. The notion of an educational entitlement is historically derived, referring in Britain to the campaign to stop the exploitation of child workers and to make schooling universal and compulsory. The right to an education is now enshrined in the United Nations (1990) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Pertinent to this study, Article 28 states that nations will:

> … encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child … take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

The DfES has defined the nature of this entitlement. A child or young person must experience no less than 20 hours of education and/or training per week, and this must consist of a balanced range of experiences:

> Between 14 and 16, whatever choices they make, they should experience a broad curriculum which prepares them well for future life and learning. Whichever route they take, they will not narrow down their options – and will be able to make a further choice about how to continue in learning. (House of Commons, 2005, quoted in McCrone *et al.,* 2005, p. 4)

The 14–19 curriculum framework spells out the nature of the entitlement in detail. The White Paper (DfES, 2005) highlighted four key priorities:

1 a focus on functional skills needed for everyday life

2 stronger vocational routes

3 more 'stretching' options in both general and applied routes and more flexible provision

4 new ways to tackle disengagement.

According to the DfES website, this is:

> … an entitlement for all young people to access the education that is best suited to them, in a setting appropriate to what they are learning and where standards are assured.
> (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/dsp_stakeholders.cfm?page_id=1)

This statement, however, does gloss over some important issues. Particularly pertinent to this study is the dilemma of how to avoid different educational pathways becoming a two- or three-track system that reproduces social, economic and educational disadvantage.

The notion of an educational entitlement does not place the onus for ensuring it is met on the child or young person. Rather, the emphasis is on what educational authorities must do. It is up to those who run schools and local authorities to ensure that all children and young people engage in education, regardless of who they are, where they are, how well they are achieving academically or how well they are behaving. Appropriate provision must be provided for their education.

Exclusion and entitlement

Exclusion is one of a number of disciplinary measures available for schools. It is generally reserved for misbehaviour that is either: (1) persistent and not amenable to interventions such as removal of privileges, withdrawal from lessons and detentions; or (2) extreme and antisocial such that it severely disrupts the learning of other pupils and/or damages property, and/or harms persons.

Research suggests links between the behaviours that lead to exclusion and the learning achievement of young people, their perceptions of the relevance of the curriculum and the nature of the interpersonal relationships they experience with adults at school (Eckert, 1989; Fine, 1991; Dorn, 1996; Parsons, 1999; Smyth

and Hattam, 2004). In some cases, there are also peer, family and community pressures and needs that contribute to the kinds of school behaviours that lead to exclusion; these are often linked to more general local/regional social and economic circumstances (Thomson, 2002; Lupton, 2003). Attending to the root causes of misbehaviour therefore requires attending, not only to the educational and social needs of the individual young person, but also to the general educational provision that is implicated more widely in the continued production of excluded pupils, and to the social welfare and health services that can assist in addressing common needs.

Different schools have varying capacities for in-school amelioration and remediation of disorderly behaviour. There are also significant differences in philosophy among schools, with some adopting a zero-tolerance position, in contrast to those who see exclusion as a last and unproductive resort, to be used only after significant effort has been made to offer alternative in-school programmes and personalised support. There is thus some variation in the actual behaviours and events that lead to exclusion.

However, regardless of these differences, and whether individual schools are prepared to investigate whether their own cultures, curriculum and practices might be implicated in the disengagement and misbehaviour of pupils, young people who are excluded from school still have an entitlement to education. Exclusion from school does not equate to the abdication of the responsibility of educational authorities to ensure that the aspirations and learning needs of this particular group of young people are met.

This presents a challenge to schools and to local authorities who are now asked to do more, more effectively, than has ever been the case before. There is therefore a need for research that can provide evidence to assist policymakers and those responsible for education and associated services to ensure an educational entitlement for young people who are either permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.

The research project

The research project aimed: to investigate the scope and nature of provision of alternatives to exclusion; to ascertain who attended, for how long and with what effects; and to find instances where provision was meeting the needs of young people. The specific questions addressed were as follows.

- What kinds of alternative programmes are available?

- What is the nature of qualifications on offer?

- Where are they located?

- Who goes there?

- How do pupils access these programmes?

The project was located in two Midlands local authorities (LAs) where there are significant pockets of high deprivation and a history of high levels of school exclusions. Both LAs are working to reduce the number of students out of school and each has innovative approaches to providing alternatives to mainstream schooling. Two Phase 2 14–19 Pathfinder projects are located in the authorities.

The project did not engage with debates about whether alternative provision is by its very nature inequitable, nor whether the aim of alternative provision is to return pupils to the mainstream (for a summary of these debates see Munn *et al.*, 2000). We began with the view that alternatives to mainstream schooling exist and therefore ought to be of comparable quality and effectiveness to what was offered in mainstream schools – our interpretation of the entitlement. We also took the view that ensuring equity and guaranteeing an entitlement requires the collection and tracking of two kinds of data – what is on offer to young people (the provision), and who is involved and to what effect (access and participation). The research questions that guided the project could thus be summarised in the single question: 'Who gets what and to what effect?'

We were cognisant of recent reports highlighting the number of children not on roll anywhere (Griggs *et al.*, 2006), as well as Ofsted reports that highlight the 'missing data' on young people under the age of compulsion (Audit Commission, 1999; Ofsted, 2004) and the 'poor performance' of some alternative providers. We were also aware that there was a 'grey area' around the provision for young people deemed by schools to be 'at risk' of permanent exclusion, with at least some offered part-time programmes of less than the 21 hours[2] mandated for those who are formally excluded (Reed, 2005; Thomson *et al.*, 2005). We did not take these findings as our starting points and, as far as is possible, we tried to avoid a 'blame' focus and to seek instead to try to understand the root causes of the phenomena described in these reports.

Methods

The research took a mixed-methods approach, combining statistical mapping, survey, interviews and observations. Phase 1 aimed to identify, survey and map all the alternative education programmes and sites in the two LAs and their enrolments. Phase 2 involved constructing a set of six ethnographic case studies, which showed different types of provision in more detail. Fieldwork commenced in December 2005 and was completed in July 2006. In practice, Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection ran alongside one another.

Fieldwork in each case study site occurred in the order shown in Table 1. Approximately two weeks in total was spent in each site; ethnographic data included extensive field notes documenting site layout, use of space, use of time, referral procedures, student behaviour, activities and perceptions, student–staff relations, staff practices and teaching methods. Further details can be found in Appendix 1. Documents giving details of the provision's mission statements, referral forms and student activity reviews and work were collected.

The total data corpus consists of 85 transcribed interviews (see Table 1), observation field notes, two summary local authority maps, 31 survey returns and official documents. Interviews have been hand-coded to establish broad themes (Silverman, 1993), and triangulated where possible from multiple sources and set against observation data, as is customary in ethnographic research (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Wolcott, 1999).

All interviews were conducted with informed consent via a signed or recorded permission. Informed consent for students was gained via the case study site but confirmed verbally with them to ensure no coercion. Parents/carers were accessed via organised events such as parent evenings or through the relevant institution.

Table 1 Composition of interviews

Institution	Director of institution/ senior LA people	Staff	Students (gender/ethnicity)	Parents/ carers	Programme co-ordinator	College staff	Other
LA2	5	2			5	3	3
LA1	2		1 (white male)		3	2	1
LA1 and LA2							
The Educate Centre	1	2	7 All white male except the 2 E2E girls (all white female)			1	
The Midlands College	2	2	7 1 (mixed-race male) 5 (white male) 1 (white female)	2			
The Absolute PRU	1	2	3 1 (white female) 1 (male minority ethnic) 1 (white male)				
The District PRU	1	1	3 (white male)	2	1		1
CATE	1	3	5 4 (white male) 1 (mixed-race male)	1	1		3
Alternative School Programme		1	2 (white male)		1		1
Total	13	13	28	5	11	6	9

Note: All programmes listed have been anonymised. These are not their real names.

2 Missing data

In the first chapter, we addressed the question of entitlement and reported the approach used to investigate the entitlement of young people in two local authorities. In this chapter, we discuss the difficulties we encountered when beginning the project. We describe the kinds of data deficits encountered, and argue that these work against knowing whether young people who are excluded from school are in fact getting their entitlement to education and training.

No central directory

We began the project by searching for *the* directory of alternative programmes in each of the LA areas and found two 'official' texts that seemed to have the information we needed. However, they both contained somewhat different lists, contact names and descriptions. We quickly realised that there was in fact no conclusive list of alternative programmes, even though one of the documents appeared to be such. We supplemented these lists with information from the web, an LA report and a hand-written text from a provider. We had to find another means of getting the necessary information and did so by the time-honoured method of 'snowballing' (Berg, 1988; Atkinson and Flint, undated) – that is, talking to as many people as we could possibly find.

Not only did we fail to find an up-to-date centralised list of alternative provisions, but also the data that was available was not standardised across lists and conversations, and was incomplete. The various compendiums that were available had been compiled on a 'project' basis and there seemed to be no systematic way for this information to be regularly updated.

Importantly for our concerns with access and equity, all of the programmes we eventually located had different frameworks for data collection about attendees. LA-run services such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) did of course have common data frameworks between them, but these were not the same as the colleges, and both were different again from what was counted and kept by other providers where data ranged from almost nothing more than the number of pupils attending, right through to very detailed case records. Some programmes kept data on a termly basis, others much less frequently. Some programmes reported gender by number, while others used percentages. Most programmes kept good data around the age of the young people attending because they set up programmes for particular year levels and recruited on this basis.

As we encountered more and more programmes, we also observed differences between their 'official' documentation and what appeared to be current practice. For example, a provider whose documentation stated that it offered only full-time provision actually also ran part-time courses for some young people. Another programme whose written documentation indicated a prescribed catchment area was actually prepared to take pupils outside of this locality if it had spare places.

It was thus very hard for us to answer our most basic questions – how many alternative programmes there were and who they catered for. We therefore decided to send out a census in June 2006 to all of the sites where we knew alternative programmes were held – a total of 150. Despite the provision of a self-addressed envelope we received only 31 valid responses.[1]

It is noteworthy that the most often missing statistic for pupils across all of the alternative providers was related to the socio-economic status and/or the Free School Meal eligibility of excluded pupils.[2] From the 31 programmes that responded in our census only two said they kept information on family income. Programmes in which pupils were enrolled full-time were the only ones likely to keep this information; programmes where pupils attended part-time were likely to note their gender, but much less likely to record anything about race or ethnicity. Our survey says only four of the programmes that responded did not keep records on gender and eight did not keep (official) records on ethnicity. This lack of data did not mean that programme staff did not know this information – they often had very detailed knowledge of the personal circumstances of each young person they worked with. It was rather that this data was not recorded.

We found different kinds of data held in different places. The LAs for example keep up-to-date data on school exclusions, as they are required to do. They also have data on their own PRUs. Schools keep aggregated data on those they exclude, but the data on what alternative programmes young people access during exclusion or as an alternative to exclusion are maintained in individual files. Connexions, the service responsible for providing career advice to all young people, and specialist support services to those young people who are deemed at risk, has details of exclusions and participation in alternative provision but, again, this is mostly kept at the level of the individual case study.[3] And, as we have noted, a range of alternative providers keep very different datasets, which are disconnected from the LA data in particular. In some cases, individual records were not up to date because details of the young person had not arrived from the referring agency or, when they did, they were often inaccurate or incomplete.

The data we have accumulated must be treated, therefore, with a little caution. In order to develop the tables and summaries we present in the remainder of this report, we have compiled, wherever possible, as much information as we can from multiple sources. We have prioritised in order: data from the survey (where available); interview and observation data; official documentation, and other informal documentation (leaflets, websites and so on).

But the sheer diversity and lack of order in the available data has more significance than simply causing us trouble. The dispersed nature of data about excluded pupils is not news. However, unlike official reports of incoherent evidence about inclusion and exclusion (Audit Commission, 1999; Ofsted, 2004), we do not designate the two LAs as totally responsible for this state of affairs. We think that the root problem lies in the nature of the alternative provision field, which we explain in more detail in Chapter 9. Now, however, we want to highlight a critical consequence of this data deficit.

The lack of an up-to-date centralised database on provision and enrolment has, in our view, serious consequences for equity policy, which relies on systematic data collection and regular monitoring. Only when what happens to the most disadvantaged children and young people is tracked on an ongoing basis can judgements about the fairness of the education system be made. Entitlements cannot be guaranteed if there is no means to know about access and parity of provision. It is, thus, we think a priority to ascertain an effective way in which the kind of data we have sought – what programmes are on offer and to whom – can be routinely collected, regularly updated and centrally maintained, in a form that is publicly available. This is not a simple task, as we will explain later.

Despite the data-collection problems we have just outlined, our numbers and maps do have 'take'. They are sufficiently reliable to provide patterns in provision and enrolment in the two LAs and should be read in this way, rather than as numerically accurate to the finest detail. In Chapters 3 to 6, we discuss types of programmes, their location, the nature of the programmes on offer and how young people access them.

3 Alternative programmes for excluded pupils

In this chapter, we report the first results of our mapping. We develop a typology of provision, which applies to the question of 'who gets what'.

A typology of provision

There are two broad types of alternative provision made for young people who are permanently excluded from school, without a school place or close to permanent exclusion.

The first is what we have called a *core* provision. This is a programme where a pupil is 'on roll'. Being on roll does not mean attending full-time. It means that the institution has prime responsibility for organising an educational programme, which must be no less than 21 hours per week[1]. This provision must be organised within 12 days of the pupil being permanently excluded (LA1, 2006). Core institutions are also, through the *Every Child Matters* agenda,[2] to organise health and welfare support where necessary. Core providers are public institutions and are subject to regular inspection by Ofsted. They tend to be relatively stable, although they are subject to restructuring within LAs or rationalisation within their sector. They have varying degrees of autonomy and some combine income derived from per capita public funding for designated programmes with income from courses run on a fee-for-service basis. Core providers in our sample consisted of schools, PRUs and colleges (primarily but not exclusively sixth form colleges). We refer to those that are not schools as alternative core. There were 15 alternative core providers[3] – six in LA1 and nine in LA2. A major site under LA2 control had smaller sites in both LA1 and LA2.

There are also *specialist providers*. These offer primarily part-time programmes of varying durations, although some full-time provision does also exist in our dataset. Typically a core provider or a referring agency buys places on a specialist programme. Sometimes funding for these places is provided from another source (such as European Social Fund, the Football Foundation, the Lottery Fund, Children's Trust and/or Neighbourhood Renewal)[4] and, in some cases, programmes access different 'pots' and pupils attend free of charge, or for less than 'market rate'. Core providers negotiate a 'package' of options for a young person on roll, which generally consists of part-time involvement in a programme at the core site and participation in one or more programmes with specialist providers. Specialist

providers are subject to random inspection by Ofsted but many can go for long periods without any formal audit.

We identified 181 specialist providers. But, because of the kinds of data difficulties explained earlier, we don't necessarily know exactly where they are located. Nor are we sure that this is the exact number. Because of the lack of information about some of the programmes, numbers vary in the following tables. Of the 181 specialist providers used by the two LAs, nine were actually outside their geographical boundaries.

There is also in our dataset a *brokerage* – a formal organisational partnership put together by a collective of schools. On behalf of member schools, the brokerage organises a range of options for young people, including participation in specialist provision and 'managed moves' to other core sites, including the local PRU. This brokerage, which also commissions special-purpose specialist provision for the collective of schools, is the subject of one of the case studies.

Connexions, as already noted, has a role across all of these – core, alternative core and specialist provisions. In addition to its role in providing direct advice to young people about careers, family issues, health, housing and finance, it has a particular responsibility for the most vulnerable young people, whose access to opportunities for education and training opportunities it must support. This is done through individual case meetings conducted by personal advisers, and through participation in a wide range of interagency forums and practices, now organised through Children's Trusts and other partnership arrangements. In 2006–07, LA2 contributed £32,000 towards the salary of two Connexions personal advisers to work with their children's services teams.[5] Connexions may, together with other agencies such as Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), refer young people to either core or specialist provision.

Problems with this typology

Confusingly, some core providers are specialist providers as well, and programmes can often have a mix on roll of full-time pupils as well as part-time pupils from other core providers. This means that counting becomes difficult, as individual pupils will appear on both core and specialist provision rolls; indeed, they may appear on the rolls of several specialist providers over the course of a week.

The categories of core and specialist also suggest some commonality within each of the two groups. This is misleading. In reality there is great diversity within each group.

The size of alternative core and specialist provision programmes varies enormously. The smallest programmes in our dataset are providers of work experience and one-to-one tuition that cater for one and two young people at a time. The largest was a 'double provider' college, which reported in interview that it had 750 young people enrolled in full- and part-time alternative, vocationally oriented programmes. The bulk of provision, however, can be represented as smaller specialist providers, with a few larger core and specialist providers.

4 The location of programmes

In this chapter, we take the typology of programmes developed in Chapter 3 and consider where core and specialist provision is located.

The geography of alternative provision

Location is important because where a programme is based has an effect not only on who goes there but also on how the programme is managed, as we explain below.

Some research suggests that young people who are excluded are likely to occupy quite boundaried territories – their own 'hood' and possibly a specific part of a city centre. They are unlikely to want to go into another 'hood' to attend a programme, and our data does have examples of service providers and young people who say precisely this. Many programmes also aim to do more than offer activities to young people; they seek to integrate them into their communities through involvement with local mentors and service projects. Young people 'turned off' by schooling are also unlikely to make complex or long journeys on public transport and this often means that either programmes have to factor in project buses and/or taxi fares, or the additional cost becomes a burden on already financially stretched families. Sometimes of course it is important to deliberately take young people literally out of their comfort zones for educational and recreational purposes, and many of the programmes we have found do this. However, this works best when relationships are already established within local programmes.

In addition, there is little data that connects questions of poverty and formal school exclusion, although the more general issue of educational and social inclusion is tied together in policy initiatives. There are of course students who are excluded from school who come from homes and neighbourhoods that are not deprived. Nevertheless, the coincidence of high numbers of excluded students and poverty has been noted by researchers (Parsons, 1999), and conclusions can be drawn from the correlations of juvenile justice statistics and areas that are at the bottom of socio-economic tables. If it is the case that more excluded pupils come from areas of high deprivation than from more affluent areas, then staff in alternative programmes must be skilled in health, housing and other income-related issues.

There are, thus, efficiency and effectiveness reasons for needing to monitor and track the location of programmes.

Location and programmes in LAs1 and 2

LA1 is a regional Midlands city with a significant 'inner-urban' population; it consists of several large council estates that were targeted as Education Action Zones/ Excellence in Cities and/or Neighbourhood Renewal sites. The African-Caribbean and Asian populations represent significant minority groups, as do recent refugees from Eastern Europe and Northern Africa.[1] These populations are concentrated in the council estates and lower socio-economic wards. LA1 has been criticised by Ofsted for its lack of alternative places and Pupil Referral Units.[2] Interestingly, one large estate in LA1 had far fewer alternative programmes than other similar wards. We can find little explanation for this save the presence of a very large core provider (college), which may take most of the excluded pupils in the area. Failing that, it may be that pupils in this area have to travel to alternative provision in ways that pupils in other localities do not appear to have to do. LA1 had 82 specialised alternative programmes and six alternative cores.

LA2 takes in rural localities, regional towns and villages, as well as some middle-class city suburbs. The regional towns and some villages were formerly coalfields and manufacturing areas, and have suffered considerable hardship since the mid-1980s. Without exception, alternative programmes were located within the poorest parts of this LA, particularly those targeted by the Coalfields Regeneration Initiative. We identified 78 alternative programmes in LA2, including nine alternative cores (including the brokerage).

In our dataset, alternative programmes were not distributed evenly across the two LAs. Broadly speaking, they were situated within wards that had high levels of deprivation,[3] thus demonstrating the connection between poverty and school exclusion that individual programme data collections, none of which required data on the SES (socio-economic status) of pupils' families, left invisible.

As we noted earlier, we were unable to ascertain the addresses of all programmes. The following data therefore is not quite complete. Our locality database consists of 88 programmes physically located in LA1 and 78 in LA2 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Programmes by LA

	Alternative core	Specialised
LA1	6	82
LA2	9	69 (including brokerage)

When we break these down by ward, we can see that those with the highest levels of deprivation are generally where the programmes are located (see Table 3). However, this is not uniformly the case. It is also important to note, however, that wards are not uniform and we have made a judgement about how to represent them.

Table 3 Programmes by ward

Area	Location	Deprivation level	No. of alternative providers found
LA1			
1	N	Mostly worst 10%	3
2	N	Mostly 10–20%	13
3	NW	Mostly worst 10%	9
4	Centre	Mostly worst 10–20%	10
5	NE	Mostly 20–40%	3
6	E	Mostly worst 10%	4
7	W	Mostly 40–80%	6
8	S	Mostly 20–40%	3
9	S	Mostly 10–20 %	2
LA2			
1	W	Mostly 40–80%	6
2	W	Mostly 10–40 %	29
3	N	Mostly 40–80%	11
4	Centre	Mostly 40–80%	19
5	W	Mostly 20–40%	4
6	S	Mostly 80%	9
7	SW	Mixture but comparably more worst 10–40%	78

In order to ensure equity of provision, it would be desirable to have a central database, as discussed in Chapter 2, which shows the:

- home locations of young people enrolled in alternative provision on full- and part-time bases and the correlation with deprivation

- schools from which they are excluded and/or referred

- locations of programmes

- journey requirements of individual young people, ascertained through home postcode and programme's location.

It would be possible to create this kind of geographical database for programmes, using GIS software.[4] This is already part of LA1's reporting of GCSE results, which can be literally mapped both by school and by home postcode. Such information would considerably aid planning decisions about where to locate programmes to minimise expense and maximise effectiveness.

5 Educational programmes

We have already observed that the kind of programmes and where they are located is critical to the notion of entitlement. We have also noted that the way that young people get access to their educational entitlement is as a 'package'. In this chapter, we turn to the nature of what is being offered to young people.

The nature of the educational offer

In order to make sense of what is available to pupils in alternative core and specialist programmes, we have developed a typology[1] of approaches (see Table 4).

Table 4 Typology of programmes

Nature of programme	Type of activity	Examples
Vocational	A programme that is specifically geared towards a particular occupation/profession/career. Often offering a qualification that will help a young person to enter the 'world of work'.	Construction, motor vehicles, hair and beauty
Work skills	Generic work skills, such as 'being able to follow instructions', are developed.	General experience on farms
Basic skills	English, maths, science and IT are offered (not necessarily at GCSE level).	E-learning sites
Life skills	General skills needed to function in society, such as social skills, cooking, talking without swearing, are developed.	Team-building exercises
Activity-based	The programme has an activity/leisure focus.	Fishing, cycling
Environmental	The focus is on teaching young people about nature and how to utilise materials in the outdoors and survive outside.	Work in forests
Arts	Has a focus on teaching and learning the arts.	Dance, media, music and drawing, pottery
Therapeutic	Focuses on offering a remedial option.	Anger management, family therapy
Work experience	Various work placements that form part of a young person's educational package. Some are offered as part of actual programmes.	
Academic	Has a strong scholastic focus, with an emphasis on known educational qualifications such as GCSE.	One-to-one tuition

Each programme was classified and most offered more than one type of activity.

We then further collapsed together vocational education, work skills and work experience under the general heading 'work-related'; life skills and basic skills under one heading 'basic/life skills'; and activity, environment and arts under the heading 'recreation'. We present the complete findings for the alternative core providers (Table 5). This table does not include specialist provision.

Table 5 Core providers

Core providers	Work-related (vocational, work experience, work skills)	Basic/life skills	Recreation (activity, environmental, arts)	Therapeutic	Academic
LA1-1	X	X	X		
LA1-2	X	X	X		
LA1-3	X	X	X		
LA1-4	X	X		X	
LA1/LA2-5	X	X	X		X
LA1-6					X
LA2-7	X	X	X		X
LA2-8	X	X	X		X
LA2-9	X	X	X		X
LA1-10	X	X	X		X
LA2-11					X
LA2-12	X	X	X	X	
LA2-13	X	X	X		X
LA2-14	X	X	X		
LA2-15		X			X

Note that one provider listed here as LA1 and located in LA1 is actually run by and in theory serves LA2.

We have no data for a few programmes and so the total number of specialist programmes reported is 172. When we add in this specialist provision to the alternative core provision, then the total offering across the two LAs is:

- 105 work-related

- 136 basic/life skills

- 58 recreation

- eight therapeutic

- seven academic.

But, before we discuss this further, there is a caveat to make about the process of classifying programmes.

Complex categories

As noted, much of the alternative provision has multiple purposes and activities. This comment made by one worker about her specialist programme is typical:

> For example, we've just had a new project which started in January …
> and that works with all the schools in the area and they can refer young
> people onto the course and we work with eight young people and we
> do citizenship, sports, basic skills and physical activities. It's not very
> educationally focused; it's more about social skills and reintegration. Most
> of the young people have offended so we work quite closely with the
> Youth Offending Team.

However, there are also instances where the same specialist provision is utilised for different purposes by different core providers. In this next example, the specialist provider describes the provision they have available and then two alternative core providers discuss how they use it.

Specialist provider's perspective

Grey Forest (pseudonym) lies in a historic area; it is a 250-acre site that offers a broad range of activities and facilities:

> From a relaxing break in one of our private and secluded camping
> areas to an action-packed corporate team-building programme.
> (Information brochure)

Activities include climbing, outdoor swimming pool, rifles, archery, canoeing, orienteering, camping, frisbee golf, quad biking, rafting, crazy golf, traversing wall, kayaking.

Core provider 1

Core provider 1 uses Grey Forest for environmental education purposes and activity-based work. Students generally like going:

> You've got the educational side; you've got the environmental side;
> you've got the outdoor education side as well.

> The main thing we've got on the health and safety side is because it is
> such a vast area there is nowhere to run. If they went walkabout I'd just
> get in the car and fetch them. There is very little risk to young people
> here. The nearest village is two miles down the road.

continued

Climbing; shooting – that's indoor small bore which is air rifles; you've got a swimming pool; you've got a 45-foot climbing wall, a 20-foot one and a low-level one; you've got chess or draughts; you've got crazy golf and frisbee golf; football on site; accommodation on site; heated showers and toilet facilities; a shop on site; meeting room on site for conferences and things like that. Let's see – you've an indoor site for activities during inclement weather. More or less anything and everything. Quad biking; rafting; canoeing.

You've got team-building skills like jigsawing and chair walks, which are both team-building exercises. Chair walking – you've got seven chairs to put down in the barn; two rows on and you might have nine persons on and you've got to travel the full length and maybe take one away. There are still nine persons on. Down to six. Travel all the way back. Down to five. Down to four. So it's team building and bonding.

Core provider 2

Core provider 2 calls its day at the Grey Forest site 'work experience' on the timetable and it uses the site to prepare young people with basic work skills such as being able to follow instructions. Observation data suggests that Grey Forest is also used as a second-best option to work placement – pupils continue to go there if they have failed to gain a work placement. Student interview data suggests that most view it as just 'doing a load of digging':

Over the year they'll experience a bit of everything. Obviously quite a lot of those things are weather dependent but the research is well documented as to why these activities are beneficial to them. It encourages them to personally stretch themselves; gives them a wide experience base; team-building skills, etc.

All students start off with an induction, where they will go off with a tutor and a learning support assistant to work on some kind of environmental project. We've actually got a big project at the moment with Grey Forest. We are there helping with the scrub clearing and tree felling, path maintenance, etc.

And what we are looking for is a good work ethic; so we are looking at health and safety at work and it will be unit awards again, although there is a huge chunk here which is going to be key skills.

> We are not using it as a facility, we are using it as a work placement. And it's a place that is way out of their comfort zone where they will have to face up to whatever it is that they are having a problem with.
>
> What we are looking for is a good work ethic: can they problem solve; can they work with others; can they do a bit of physical graft?

It is clear from this example that categorisation is a difficult business. Core programmes have distinctive cultures and emphases that cannot be described easily in a typology. And specialist provision does not exist in isolation. It is framed by the work of the core provider who may or may not place restrictions and expectations or have limitations on use determined by funding. Where we encountered such multiple use and interpretation in the sample, we erred on the side of multiple classification.

The educational offer as an entitlement

In recent years Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in particular have placed much greater emphasis on GCSE and basic skills, and these account for the bulk of academic programmes in alternative core provision. In the vast majority of cases, this academic programme translated to literacy and numeracy, social science and general science.

The attention to basic and life skills is not surprising given that many pupils whose behaviour results in them being permanently excluded do have histories of transience and family disruption that result in disengagement from learning. Indeed, it can be argued that much of what manifests as undiscipline in schools is actually the result of unaddressed gaps in learning (e.g. Slee, 1995; Watkins and Wagner, 2000). This kind of programme does meet students' needs.

However, the dominance of vocationally and recreationally oriented activities in alternative provision is very obvious.

This raises two concerns: the question of balance and the question of accreditation.

A balanced entitlement

Providers told us that they were preparing young people for work and for life in the community:

… if somebody is only coming in one day a week from a school we would assume that they are coming here for vocational and social skills. There is a lot of emphasis here on citizenship and that aspect of it.

You see we are a social enterprise here and we have a very holistic approach to caring for our young people. They have the luxury here of space; of flexibility – they are not sat in a class being told that they will do this and that. We have a degree of flexibility here.

Alternative providers in particular spoke of young people who did not want to sit in classrooms, who preferred to work with their hands, who needed physical rather than mental activity. Working in small groups and being treated like an adult were also frequently mentioned. Young people also talked about enjoying activity-based work and work placements:

> *R:* So did somebody sit you down and ask you what you wanted to do as a work placement?

> Yeah.

> *R:* And what did you say?

> Mechanics or the building trade. And there wasn't much work coming into the garage so we were just sitting around doing nothing. So I had a word with *[worker]* and she sorted me out with another one that I suggested … so I went down there and they gave me an interview and I've been working there for three weeks and it's alright.

> *R:* So what sort of stuff do you do there?

> Make number plates; mix body paints and things. And I've done a bit of spray painting as well.

> *R:* So it's quite a good work placement?

> Yeah. And he's offered me a job when I've done my six-week work placement.

> *R:* So you do six weeks on your work placement?

> Yes, but if you like it you can stay and if you don't like it they'll find you another one.

There are clear benefits for young people when, as in this example, a work placement leads to an offer of a real job. As well, work placements and work-related learning often offer a more 'adult experience' than school and may work as a kind of 'rite of passage' to adulthood, thus standing in sharp contrast to what is often experienced as the childlike requirements of schooling. Such experiences are not necessarily confined to vocational education and can also be offered in the mainstream curriculum in ordinary schools – this, however, is not the norm, as our interview data shows.

The push for vocational education is not surprising given the current interest in personalisation, and the importance of 14–19 year olds having access to a menu of education and training offerings. And, as noted, vocational courses often do offer some things that young people want from their schooling – not sitting down all day, doing something that has a demonstrable 'real-life' application and outcome, relationships with adults that are more informal and personal. Yet there is also at work here an older set of beliefs that 'at risk' pupils need to work with their hands, because their heads are clearly not up to anything but the most basic academic tasks.

We suggest that the assumption that vocational education is an 'answer' to alternative provision and necessarily equates to an entitlement needs to be approached with caution. This is because:

- there is some international evidence to suggest that early school leavers drop out of vocational education at much the same rate and way as they drop out of school (Angwin *et al.*, 1998; Ball and Lamb, 2001)

- young people do not all have the same aspirations and needs; our research, for example, located some excluded pupils who wanted to do A levels and go to university

- not all vocational education is equally good

- the CBI and the Learning Skills Council currently suggest that they are looking for young people who have a good set of GCSE qualifications.[2]

We do not have space to debate this issue in this report, nor is it appropriate to do so here, and we are not averse to vocational and recreational activities, but we

note the historical trajectory of 'work skills for the alienated' and its socio-economic reproductive effects (Livingstone, 1998; Kincheloe, 1999). We do assume that the mental/manual split adopted by alternative programmes has specific consequences for young people who are directed into particular pathways. We suggest that there is a need for longitudinal research that studies the effects of participation in this kind of educational entitlement.

It was apparent that not all of the young people in alternative provision in the two LAs received the kind of broad and balanced curriculum that the Government suggests is desirable for young people. The entitlement appears to be more randomly distributed, as well as inadequately monitored (of this, more later).

Accreditation that counts

The problem highlighted by this research project is not simply one of what is available. There is also the matter of what recognition is offered for participation and success in alternative programmes and projects. Across the alternative core and specialist programmes, there is a wide range of courses and credentials.

The alternative core providers in this study offered GCSE and five other vocational qualifications. Pupils spent at least some of their time undertaking GCSE or, as we have suggested, GCSE preparatory programmes. However, in schools, it is not at all uncommon to find 'at risk' pupils spending the majority of their time out of mainstream classes undertaking remedial instruction in basic skills, and/or working off campus with specialist providers (e.g. see Thomson *et al.*, 2005). And, we found very few instances in alternative provision where pupils were undertaking any more than one or two GCSEs and then generally in subjects like art.

The specialist providers offered 13 vocational, recreational and basic skills qualifications, and a range of specialist sport awards. While some did offer GCSE, this was not generally their main focus (there were exceptions, but these were few in number). Many of these qualifications equate to parts of GCSE subjects and can count towards the more 'academic' qualification. However, young people were often left to themselves to try to manage the complexities of getting equivalencies of qualifications sorted out.

In specialist provision, results of pupils' tests and exams were generally given to the pupil rather than sent to the core provider or referring agency, even if the core provider had provided the funding for the course or programme. If the pupil does not give their assessment report to the core provider, there is no chance that their

achievement will be incorporated into any more general educational award for which they might be enrolled. Where the pupil does pass their report and results on to the core provider, it takes time and effort on the part of a staff member to translate the credential into another qualification structure. In our study this seemed not to happen.

When young people went to 'cash in' their certificates at enrolment in local colleges, they found they were not recognised:

> *R:* So are you doing OCNs?
>
> Yeah. Everything that I am doing and maths and English and things like that. I've already got my maths one and I got a D for that and I'm doing my English one not today but next week, Wednesday. I need an A to C grade because it's kind of hard to get into college with OCNs because you need GCSEs.
>
> *R:* Have you found that?
>
> I've applied to places like College A and College B and they've said that if I can't get GCSEs then I will have to do GCSEs there. And then I phoned College C and they said that they take OCNs so I'll probably go there.
>
> *R:* Would that be your first choice?
>
> If I had GCSEs I would go to College B but College C is nearest to me so College C would be my feeder college.
>
> *R:* And what are you going to do when you go there?
>
> A-level history.
>
> *R:* Do you do anything related to history now?
>
> No.

The example above might be read as suggesting there is no agreement between the specialist and core providers about what is actually needed for transition/entry to a mainstream core provision. This was not the case; existing LA protocols were not being followed by at least two local colleges. This clearly worked to the detriment of the young people who had little way of making their concerns known. If they were confident young people, they might take up the issue with their Connexions personal

adviser. We found no evidence that this was happening and no evidence that anyone was tracking what was happening. There seemed to be no mechanism to monitor the aggregated selective enrolment decisions of devolved and autonomous institutions such as colleges, and their potential impact on young people.

The problem does not stop at colleges. Recent research also suggests that employers misunderstand qualifications such as NVQs (Roe *et al.*, 2006). It is likely that at least some young people with a portfolio of qualifications find they mean little in the competition for employment. Given the general lack of destination studies in the field, it is also not clear how alternative providers would know this was the case.

This credential 'articulation' problem signals the precariousness of the educational and training routes into which these vulnerable young people were being directed. Given that alternative providers offer a diversity of courses at various levels, and that this may well increase within the 14–19 agenda, there is some urgency in ensuring excluded young people have an entitlement, not simply to qualifications, but also to pathways that will actually make a difference to their life chances.

6 Who attends?

In the last chapter, we argued that the nature of qualifications and the pathways on offer to young people were key to ensuring entitlement. In this chapter, we consider the question of enrolment and ask, in our two local authorities, who is actually accessing and participating in alternative provision, given their type, location and educational offer?

Enrolment patterns

Although we have a matrix of attendance by programme and by numbers of pupils according to age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, our data, as we have explained previously, is not robust. We therefore are going to present information about enrolment as broad trends rather than as a statistical table, which might be misleading.

The majority of pupils in alternative programmes were attending part-time

As explained, students in core and alternative core programmes were also enrolled in specialist provision, so they attended each on a part-time basis. In some cases, there was attendance only in the specialist provision, even if the young person was on the roll of a core provider.

This was particularly the case with schools, rather than the alternative core providers. Schools are not required to report specifically on such part-time enrolments in, for example, the Self-evaluation Framework. We do have evidence of some young people on school roll who were attending some kind of provision for only one or two days a week. This is clearly in violation of policy but is produced from the combination of the school running out of options and the lack of accessible full-time core provision. These situations appeared to be unmonitored and it was only if a parent complained that the particular circumstances might come to light. It was even suggested to us (by some school staff) that the new policy requirement for provision of an educational programme after five days of exclusion will mean many more schools will move to short exclusions followed by part-time arrangements, rather than exclusions that require extensive work and documentation.

One core provider offering full-time provision suggested that packages of part-time attendance in specialist provision created communication problems:

It's a bit like having two parents if they have shared provision, one telling them one thing and the other saying something different.

Parents/carers were often confused by the plethora of programmes offered to their children. We found one instance of a parent who was very carefully tracking the number and nature of the provisions his child attended, with a view to possible legal action (see Ned's story in Chapter 7).

The majority were 14–16 years old

The vast majority of programmes on offer were for the 14–16 age range. However, we found increasing pressures on alternative core and specialist providers to take younger pupils:

Currently we do Key Stage 4 – Years 10 and 11 – and we have a fair number of them join us either at the beginning of Year 10 or fairly soon after the beginning of Year 10. We are not set up to reintegrate into school – once they come to us they stay with us is the idea. We will take Year 11s up until Christmas because we think that anything less than two terms doesn't allow us the opportunity to work with them effectively.

R: Do you take any Year 9s?

Well we did and we stopped and we are about to start again. We started a full Year 9 provision and we ran it for about two years and realised that what we do has a shelf life and we were generating a lot of problems for ourselves. The first Year 9s who had worked through to their Year 11 – there was actually no magic left to what we did and that caused us a lot of problems.

The pressure has been fairly consistent to have Year 9s but what we realised was that the crucial point was the Key Stage 3 SATs and there's a glitch in exclusions round about February/March time in Year 9, so what we've agreed is that we will take Year 9s from February half-term.

Therefore it is kind of two-and-a-half years but our plan is to have them out on work placement full-time after two years from February half-term for the remainder of their statutory entitlement.

The majority of pupils in alternative provision were white and male

This response was typical of a small specialist provider:

> White male. This area is very, very white dominated. Only 2 per cent are
> anything other than white.

Given the publicity attached to 'black underachievement' and the over-representation
of African-Caribbean students in exclusion data (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Wright
et al., 2000; LA1, 2006), their relative lack of presence in alternative provision was
surprising. In our study, most black pupils live in LA1, not LA2, in two large council
estates. But, even though LA1 had a specialist provision for African-Caribbean young
people in one estate, this hardly began to deal with what we suspect is a significant
gap between provision and demand. We found evidence of one black pupil who
refused to attend a majority white core provision and a number of black pupils in the
LA1 provision who stated categorically that they would not attend a majority white
site. (Provision for African-Carribean and other minority ethnic young people in LA1
is currently the subject of a separate piece of doctoral research.)

The situation for traveller children was puzzling. They hardly featured at all in any
of the programmes, despite oral evidence that they were in the area and did get
excluded. Derrington and Kendall (2004) found in their study of gypsy traveller
children that over one-quarter of their sample had been excluded from school,
a statistic quite disproportionate to any other group of young people. It seems
reasonable to assume that something like this was also true in LAs 1 and 2, but they
do have a specific traveller service staffed by people skilled in working in this specific
context whom we did not interview, since they are not part of the EBD (emotional
and behavioural difficulties) service provision.[1] We did, however, find instances in our
study where some traveller children found their own way to specialist provision rather
than through any formal referral process. This requires further investigation.

Somewhat different, but equally concerning, was the position of girls within male-
dominated provision. As with the national picture, there were fewer girls than boys
who were excluded from school in the two LAs, although this does not mean, as
Osler and Vincent (2003) explain, that they were all actually attending. Many girls
virtually exclude themselves from school, but, in so doing, take themselves out of the
formal processes that could place them in alternative programmes (cf. Lloyd, 2005).
Pregnant girls may be offered a place in LA1's specialist unit or they may have some
kind of visiting home support. Those girls who did feature in the exclusion data faced
some very stereotypical options. If they were not attending highly gendered specialist
provision – for example, the pink hair and beauty bus that visited schools, or the
'African hair' programme – they were placed in alternative core classrooms where

they had little choice but to spend at least some time on activities that were designed for the perceived needs of boys. There had been attempts in LA1 to set up single-sex provision in motor mechanics, but funding was not forthcoming. Most providers were aware of the problems faced by girls, and some alternative core providers noted that girls were more likely to tackle GCSEs and be successful.

We were unable to ascertain what connections there might be between the nature of programmes and their enrolments. It seems reasonable, however, given the lack of representation of particular groups of young people, to posit some kind of 'catch-22' – 'I won't go because this isn't right for me and, because I'm not there, they won't offer something right for me' – around what is on offer and who attends.

7 Accessing alternative programmes

Having mapped the field in Chapters 3 to 6, we next address the vexed question of how pupils actually move from the mainstream and into this set of alternative provisions. We consider the processes and barriers that shape 'who gets what'.

Access via brokerage

Access and participation must be seen from the point of view of those it is intended to assist and this section attends to this perspective.

As already noted, in order to get into alternative provision, pupils must either transgress their school disciplinary code or be so disengaged that they take themselves out of the school system (Parsons, 1999; Smyth and Hattam, 2004). Different schools do of course operate with diverse levels of tolerance and support, and there is little standardisation around disciplinary questions across schools except at the final stages of permanent exclusion in which the LA may become involved (but see Harris *et al.*, 2006 for an exception in LA2).

However, what emerges from our data is the importance of brokerage and referral in the process of accessing alternative programmes.

Core providers have enormous discretion about the opportunities they create for the young people on their roll. To determine what will be on offer to a pupil, they tend not to use any directory of provision, but rely on their own networks, their 'diagnosis' of what the young person needs and the funding they have available. They use their experience to determine which programmes are of good quality. They must also consider local limitations – what places are available within the area, whether inclusion on a particular programme will detract from overall group dynamics and whether the timing of the pupil's needs matches the time cycles of programmes.

Depending on the time of year and available funding, case workers may have a wide choice of options or very restricted ones. Our data contains several examples of pupils being sent on specialist programmes because nothing else was available.

We found that schools and bigger alternative core providers tended to 'bulk buy' places in specific programmes and direct their 'at-risk' pupils into them. While this created financial security for specialist providers, it tended to limit choices for alternative core providers such as smaller PRUs where pupils come from schools

throughout the year. It also limited what was on offer to the 'at risk' pupils in school, since only so many options could be afforded.

We tell one story to illustrate some of the processes involved in alternative provision.

Ned's story

Ned feels as though he has been moved around without having much say. He had been to five schools/PRUs before his current placement. He is 12 years old.

Well I started in the infants' primary school. I got excluded from there and then I went to A, and B and then I started in C and then I went to D.

R: Is that a school?

Well it's like this.

R: So how come you moved from there to here?

Because we moved into this county and where we were weren't providing, like, a unit like this.

R: So you come here rather than going to school or do you see this as school?

I see it as school.

R: Do you remember what you were excluded for?

In which one?

R: The last one.

Taking a penknife to school.

R: Do you remember what happened?

Not really.

Ned lives with his mum and dad. They both want him to stay in an environment that is stable and works with small groups, but Ned cannot stay where he is full-time. The proposal is to 'dual place' him so that he can reintegrate into mainstream. The head of the provision talks about how dual placement is a step forward in general, as it allows young people to maintain mainstream status:

We are actually maintaining young people's places in a mainstream school by doing this. They may, at this moment, be struggling but, if we can get them through to Year 10, the school will then have their own access to the colleges as we do so they can put their own alternative provision in. So it's just maintaining them in the school environment until Year 10.

Ned's family had a different perspective:

Dad:	The thing we've got to recognise is that he can't stop here. This is a way station before he goes somewhere else.
Grandmother:	Well where are they going to put him now then?
Dad:	They are proposing to reintegrate him back into comp, which I think would be wrong.
R:	You want him to stay here?
Dad:	Not so much here but the options open to us was to send him to boarding school which was going to be paid for by the local authority. In an environment like this – small groups with specialist teaching.
R:	Otherwise he'll end up in and out all the time, won't he?
Dad:	That's where the conflict arises. He doesn't like change and he takes a long time to adapt to new environments. It took him a while here coming part-time but he seems to have fitted in OK.

The history of Ned's education has led his father to go to great lengths to track what is happening:

Dad:	We keep a diary every week.
R:	About what? How he's getting on and what he's doing?
Dad:	Yes.
R:	I don't know whether that's because your wife works in education but some parents might not be able to do all that.

Continued

Dad:	Well it's because we've been doing it since he was five.
R:	So it's something you've learnt to do.
Dad:	We've been to every type of assessment possible and we keep every record. Luckily we got onto a child psychology unit … it's not part of education, it's part of the NHS and he's been attending that for four years and they've assessed him.
R:	And you've got records of all that.
Dad:	Yes. They've given me a full report from the first day that they met him until he started attending here.

Ned's family were sure that they would need to stay alert in the next few years in order to ensure that their son got the kinds of services and education he needed.

Family agency

In the set of decisions and judgements made about access and placements, young people and their families had relatively little say.

Parents/carers and young people appeared to have no formal structures for input into discussions about what kind of alternative provision was available within their locality. But, more importantly, they seemed relatively powerless in the process of allocation to programmes. Our data contains examples of young people who were much more part-time than they wanted to be, young people who aspired to A levels who were clearly not being provided with the opportunities they would need in order to realise this ambition, and young people who were simply unhappy and bored with what they were doing in their alternative programmes.

We also found examples of young people who had actively sought their own placements and programmes, and parents/carers whose major preoccupation was ensuring that their child got a fair hearing:

Parent:	P is not an easy guy. He hasn't been easy at school and there have been little things through the years and I think it has just built up until the school has had enough.

R:　　　　So you got on the phone to the education and welfare – what was their response?

Well they said that they had to wait until the report came through but I said that I wasn't interested in that. I wanted something doing now. I didn't want P, in September, to have nothing set in place for him.

R:　　　　When was he taken out of school?

In July. Just before the summer holidays, so we had, like, six weeks. I think I must have been on the phone every week to find out what was happening. But I was told that so and so was on holiday and then that I had to get in touch with Behavioural Support … but we had to send the referral. But I said: 'Give me the number and I will refer him myself' and I got in touch with Behavioural Support and they contacted me within a couple of weeks and said that they would get somebody out to see us, blah, blah, blah. And I think it was only through me keeping going at them that we finally got something sorted.

R:　　　　So was something set up in place then?

There was nothing set up for September. He went on something called Key Stage 3, which is like a work placement until they get the educational side sorted out. So it's to keep him in that routine of getting up and going out so that he's not sat at home fiddling with his thumbs. He did that for two weeks before he actually started college here. And we had the appeal as well to try and get him back into school.

Clearly, not all parents have the energy and bureaucratic know-how of this particular mother, nor should they have to go to such lengths to ensure their children are educated.

These stories of parent frustration with brokerage processes resonate with those of Wright and colleagues (2005) who noted that African-Caribbean families reported similar experiences:

Where the young person was left in a state of educational limbo, some relatives had sought to empower themselves through seeking help from voluntary community organisations, through the process of appeals against the exclusion, and by demanding educational rights for the young people.
(Wright et al., 2005, p. 4)

Providers told us that it was not uncommon for parents to ring to see if there were places available for their child. In most cases self-referral was not possible because of the way that the funding was structured; that is, pupils had to be referred from a core agency, which then transferred some or all of its per capita funding along with the pupil.[1] But, at a time when government policy is supporting the development of citizenship and pupil voice in schools (DfES, 2003), and is committed to notions of parent choice, the contrast with the experiences of these young people and their families is striking.

It was certainly the case that most workers we spoke to were concerned about the young people in their care and did not deliberately or wilfully seek to disempower them. By and large, the staff we saw were highly skilled and committed. It seems that it is the culture of the programmes and of wider policies on exclusion that privilege professional judgement and thus determine the pathways that are on offer at any one time (cf. McKnight, 1995).

LAs are in a position to initiate practices that increase the say of parents/carers and young people in the processes that lead to them being excluded. They might also, for example, consider the development of a forum for parents/carers whose children are involved in a 'package of provision' so that they can hear first-hand, and on a regular basis, about the ways in which brokerage is managed.

We now go on, having outlined the difficulties in alternative provision, to consider some helpful examples of good practice.

8 Inside alternative provision

In this chapter, we describe six alternative education provisions that highlight some of the different types of programmes available within the two LAs. We selected sites that we were told by LA authorities and other providers were examples of good practice. The six sites focus on different aspects of the 14–19 agenda. They show how an entitlement can be tailored to an individual student's needs while providing a pathway that might lead to, if it is not already, a broad and balanced curriculum. Nevertheless, some equity issues do emerge in some of the sites.

Two of the case studies are located in LA1, three in LA2 and the sixth case study has sites located in both LA1 and LA2. The sites serve a mixture of urban and rural areas; some serve large numbers of excluded young people, while others provide education for a select few. Most, but not all, cater for KS3 and KS4 students.

The Educate Centre

The Educate Centre is a specialist provider; local schools and outside agencies access the programmes and facilities available at the centre. Young people of mainstream compulsory school age mainly attend a vocational 'taster' programme. Although there are other courses on the site, these tend to cater for older students (18–25 years).

The Educate Centre is owned by a local FE college, but is located a few miles away from the college's main site. The two sites rarely share facilities and the Educate Centre staff reported that they operated separately from the main college site. Before the college took responsibility for the site it was a secondary modern Catholic school for boys. Two teaching assistants, an E2E co-ordinator and a manager are based at the Educate Centre.

The programme works with one local school in particular and all of the students were from the immediate area. Young people who are at risk of exclusion are targeted but there was one young person who was excluded from school while on the course during the fieldwork. Staff have deliberately moved away from working with the permanently excluded, as they considered them to be a 'difficult population to work with'.

The school refers young people for a number of reasons including behaviour problems, truancy issues and a perceived inability to gain GCSE results within the

mainstream. The enrolment process is fairly informal once the young people reach the site where the manager decides, after showing them around, whether to take them on.

Each student undertakes a six-week taster from a menu of five subjects run by five partner training providers at the Educate Centre site, including:

1   hairdressing, beauty therapy and IT – run by the main college site

2   brickwork, tiling, plastering, painting and decorating – run by a local organisation

3   childcare, animal care and retail/warehousing – run by a local organisation

4   vehicle maintenance – run by a local organisation

5   horticulture – run by a national organisation.

Students can gain OCNs, NVQs, Edexcels (levels 1, 2 and 3), first aid certificates and the Educate Centre's own certificates for things such as good attendance. Students can leave the site for lunch – but they are responsible for cooking and providing a meal for staff and students on site each day.

The physical space has been adapted to facilitate vocational education; a kitchen has been updated and has an interactive projector. There is a stand-alone computer room. A local house on site is used for decorating, painting and building work, while the outside is used for horticulture. The Centre is thus fairly self-contained.

There are no real classrooms as such. Young people work in small groups in 'working areas' such as the kitchen. Each student follows a group timetable; the cohort changes focus each six weeks. Each student is informed about their daily routine each day, even though timetables tend to remain the same each six-week period. Staff can change the timetable to include special events if desired, so the use of time is flexible and may vary according to students' daily needs.

During the fieldwork there were 24 students registered on the Gateway Course, including 12 Year 11s and 12 Year 10s. All of them were white males aged between 14 and 16 years. Not all registered students attended regularly but there were two core groups of six that attended the site on a regular basis. Most said they enjoyed the provision and preferred it to their mainstream school, primarily because staff talked with and listened to them at the Educate Centre. One student was a bullying victim at school and preferred the centre because it was away from the bullying.

Students reported that they could say what it was that they didn't like about their timetable and subjects; they believed that something would happen if they did so. The Centre thus gave students a sense of agency.

Many suggested that they were not accepted at school and felt as though the school had placed them at the Educate Centre to keep them out of sight and out of mind. But participation in programmes was also a positive experience.

> They want to keep us here.
> (Student)

Students felt as if they could be a different person and make a fresh start.

> I get into a bit of trouble at school and I can keep out of trouble here.
> (Student)

The staff thus provided young people with a sense of security and belonging. This extended beyond the students to their families and beyond the period of enrolment. According to the manager, past students and parents/carers often came onto the site to offer their thanks and to tell them about their current situation. Some of the students joined the E2E course post-16 and the manager actively encouraged young people to take up modern apprenticeships by getting them involved with their local Connexions Personal Adviser.

However, both staff and students suggested that the Educate Centre was somewhat isolated from the mainstream (school and college) and this did lead to the occasional lack of communication between them all.

> The Educate Centre is a small, predominantly vocational provision offering a flexible and varied programme that differs from the student's mainstream education. It provides a 'progressional route' (manager interview) into further education and/or employment. Its flexibility and responsiveness, and strong caring relationships are the key to its success.

The Midlands College

The Midlands College is a core provider. It is spread over four different sites and crosses LA borders. It provides provision for LA1, LA2 and beyond.

The college became a further education corporation in 1993. The alternative provision was introduced over ten years ago. A behaviour support service outside LA1 and LA2 jurisdictions supported and helped develop the provision. However, now, the provision takes more students from LA1 and LA2. In June 2006, the Midlands College merged with another local college.

Three-quarters of the referrals come via the LAs; there was an increase in intake from LA1 in the 2005–06 school year. The remaining quarter of referrals tend to come straight from schools, with a few from Connexions, Social Services and the Youth Offending Team. Each referring body completes a referral form devised by Midlands College: the information is not, however, uniform and the school's view often dominates the student's. Consequently, all students are interviewed by college staff before embarking on the alternative education provision.

The college is a very large provider. Approximately 750 students attend full-time at any one time. The college staff talk about the importance of full-time enrolment in both pedagogic and pastoral terms. However, the requirement for full-time can be varied. During the fieldwork, there was one female who was seven months pregnant and she went to one site to prepare and sit for a maths exam. Most of the students are male and white, but there is a greater proportion of minority ethnic groups within one LA1 site.

The purpose of the alternative programme is to help students move onto further education or employment after their compulsory education. College staff are pragmatic about the nature of post-programme options but determined that they will support the process of choice.

All sites work on a four-day timetable, which includes maths, English, ICT, recreation activities, work experience and PSHE (personal, social and health education). There are nine students to a group. There are three members of staff to assist each group; this ratio is far higher than the norm in the mainstream schools from which the students have been referred. Different sites have different numbers of groups dependent on their facilities and size. Students tend to work within the same group rather than move around.

The college quite closely follows a school model – each group has their own classroom, set tutors and support staff. General patterns of participation are comparatively structured and uniform across all four sites, where students follow similar set timetables, but these are generally organised so that groups from separate sites avoid contact. However, the different sites do mix on work experience – here, they tend not to get along and the staff see them as distinctive and somewhat hostile groups.

Students do appear to form small friendship networks across sites, but these networks constantly change, especially with the girls, whose friendship networks appear less stable than the boys' networks.

Although all four sites operate under the 'alternative provision' umbrella, they all have distinctive differences. There are differences in the following.

■ Staff approaches: some sites have a more team-based approach and the staff relations with students are more intimate.

■ The student population: LA2 is thought to take 'less mature' and 'less urban' students. The different populations have different needs.

■ Location/site building: different locations have specific facilities. These shape how the site is both used and perceived by the students and the local community.

Most students enjoy the provision and prefer Midlands College over their mainstream schooling. However, during fieldwork, a few students said that, given the choice, they would prefer to be in mainstream doing their GCSEs. Most of the students reported not enjoying their work experience day – a day out in a nature reserve area, aimed at instilling a work ethic and work-related skills such as team building and following instructions (see p. 18–19). Most enjoyed their particular and negotiated work placement, which they saw as a valuable experience relevant to their future.

Students reported feeling accepted and listened to. They valued the more informal channels of communications. Some had actively sought to leave school to attend the college:

> I knew what was here because my mum's mate told me what they do here … I knew her already and everyone else was, like, friendly and that. The first day I came everyone made me feel welcome. And when I was here for a couple of weeks all the group here were asking me to go to dinner and stuff like that.

Many students talked about how staff supported them with social issues such as appearing in court. They appreciated the extra effort made on their behalf.

Many parents/carers expressed relief that their child was at the college. While they were positive about the college provision they were less positive about the process of getting their child in. They found the processes of their child's exclusion alienating, confusing and frustrating. One set of parents/carers had set up a 'self-support

for looked after families' excluded children group' as a result of their experience of their son being excluded from the mainstream. While some parents/carers were knowledgeable and active in terms of their child's placement and education, in general parent/carer–staff relations were varied, with some having better relationships and more contact than others.

The college is perceived by insiders and outsiders as embracing an entrepreneurial culture. It virtually monopolises alternative education within the localities in which the four sites are situated. It is also one of the more expensive providers in LA1 and LA2 but it believes that its full-time provision fills a significant gap in the current education market.

> This large core provision tackles disengagement by offering a mixture of vocational and more academic options. These allow young people more varied and flexible pathways in the future. It helps support young people in developing functional skills needed for everyday life. A small ratio of adults to students, a balanced curriculum, a four-day provision with set routines and extensive pastoral support are keys to its success.

The Absolute PRU

The Absolute PRU is a core provider. It serves and is run by LA1. It was established in January 2005 to work specifically with KS4 young people without a school place. This provision was funded originally by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and it helped to define the target group:

> We can only work with young people who are without a school place; they have to live within LA1 because it is an LA1 project; they have to be Year 10 or 11 and referred by another agency. Usually they are referred by Connexions, social services or the departments within the LA; educational welfare service can also make referrals to us.
> (Manager)

Five support staff and one manager cater for a large number of LA1's inner-city youth. In March 2006 they were actively working with 75 young people. Most of the students are white, male and aged between 14 and 15 years of age. However, compared to other LA1 providers, the PRU has a significantly larger population of females and young people from an ethnic background other than white. Approximately a third are female and a third are from minority ethnic heritage.

When referrals are made, the young people's cases are considered and then matched against the Absolute PRU's own admission criteria:

Manager: Once we get a referral the case is considered and matched against our admissions criteria and we will decide whether or not we can offer a place. It's not very often that we will say no. And then we do a list of checks: have they got a Connexions PA or are they involved with YOT or any other social agency? *[We]* try and gather some information about this young person and then we will go out and do a home visit, which I have to say is really, really enlightening.

People respond differently to us because, when they think it's the education department, they think: 'Oh, God!', but when we get into their house and we tell them that we are not a school and this is what we are about they calm down. Very few houses will refuse us entry …

So what we do is an initial interview and a risk assessment in terms of the young person's support need. Sometimes it's around behaviour – we have some kids who will self-harm, we've got kids who have been bullied in their previous schools so they are vulnerable. So it's about identifying their support needs really and their social needs.

And then it's about determining a package of education for them. So, perhaps on the next visit, the support worker will do an assessment of the young person's educational ability. And, once we've got all that information together, we will try to put together an individualised package of education.

R: Is the assessment a basic maths and literacy test?

Manager: It's a basic skills assessment. It's very rarely that we will get information from where they've been before. And, if we do get any information, it will be three months after they've been here and we've already engaged with them then.

But my role is to find the provision really and to work with as many different groups as I can. I think that is my biggest concern because FE originally had been the biggest provider of alternative provision.

The PRU's individually designed 'package' aims to help students move onto a college placement or work. There is a strong focus on vocational routes and applied pathways. GCSE is offered together with five other qualifications.

The social needs of young people are foregrounded. Staff sometimes work outside of their remit and help to sort out a young person's living arrangements or health resources. Staff suggest that such needs must be met before students can succeed educationally.

The five staff and manager are based in one office space. As a rule, no young people go to the office. The staff go to the students.

Because of the tailored nature of the provision, timetables vary according to the individual. Some have larger programmes than others; some see their support worker more than others. Student–staff relations are intimate; each student has a designated support worker who sees them on a regular basis in their home and educational environment. Students sometimes travel in staff cars, which provide an informal context for conversation. Students do not form friendships with peers, as they have little contact with one another.

The majority of students without a school place have had a negative experience of mainstream schooling. Many were thankful that the Absolute PRU tracked them and had provided an education for them:

> Well a lot of them have been poor attenders due to bullying or they've just not enjoyed school. A lot of them moved to LA1 and it's so full here that they can't get places.

> We don't deal with any excluders – the other PRU works with them. A lot of time they've just not been going to school and the school has just taken them off roll … Some of them have had no secondary education at all …

> I think a lot of the time they have just been lost in the system, which is quite disappointing really. And, while they've been out of school, nobody has been actively involved with them, like a welfare officer. You would have thought that they would maintain contact with them but they've kind of just been left in the system really, which is disappointing. A lot of them do have a lot of anger towards education but a lot of the time the parents could have done a lot more. They could have been active but they haven't.

Most students enjoyed some parts of their provision more than others. This depended on how relevant they thought their package was to their future. One female wanted to study dance, but ended up doing a display arts course, which covered dance and drama. She thoroughly enjoyed the dance section of the course but 'hated' performing in front of her group during drama sections. Most students reported that their package had been of some use. Many suggested that the qualifications on offer weren't well regarded by colleges. Some expressed a preference for GCSEs but said that they hadn't been given the opportunity to do them.

Absolute PRU staff said that most parents expressed relief that their child was in some kind of provision. Some parents/carers took a more active role with their child's provision than others, attending parent evenings and the like. In our fieldwork, we found that some parents/carers expressed discontent about the communication between Absolute PRU staff and themselves.

> The Absolute PRU is a core provider that seeks simultaneously to tackle disengagement and offer more 'stretching' options for young people who are not on a school roll. It has a vocational focus and offers tailor-made packages available from a range of specialist providers. It is a safety net, picking up pupils who in the past would have missed out on any access to education. Its success relies on staff regularly visiting and monitoring the young people it serves.

The District PRU

The District PRU is a core provider. It has one main site located in the North of LA2 and provides for a large geographical area. Its site is shared with an LA2 specialist programme team and the YOT. There is also a vehicle project located on site in an outdoors garage.

The site is fairly large and separated by a green field from the main road. It has numerous facilities: a kitchen and larger and smaller classroom spaces. The LA2 Individual Programme team and Children in Public Care sector uses the District PRU facilities, and other LA2 PRUs see it as having plentiful resources.

The purpose of this provision is to provide education for young people (11–16 year olds) who are having difficulty in mainstream schooling. It has the facilities to take small groups of young people and includes 'dual-placement' students – those who have a place on roll at the PRU *and* within a mainstream school. There was an increase in dual-placement students in 2005–06, allowing students to maintain some mainstream schooling status. The LA pays for dual-placement students.

Most of the referrals come via local schools and the LA, and most go through the Pupil Placement Panel (PPP) before an outcome is decided:

PRU Head: What should happen is that, when we get a name, we will arrange a meeting – usually we like it to be a home visit so that they feel more comfortable. Then we will bring them in here to have a look round and we usually allocate a two-week assessment period where they come in and we get some baseline assessment done and we will put together a pupil profile. As a result of that, information is taken back to a staff meeting and we look at who would be the most suitable person to be that young person's key teacher. That role is crucial because they are the ones who maintain the links with the young person and the links with the other agencies and the links with the parents. As a result of that two-week assessment period, we would decide what type of programme we would put them on and what type of learner they are and whether they can work in a small group, or need to have individual tuition or a mixture of both. And it's a nightmare.

R: Do you get any information from the school or any other institutions that they have come from?

Head: Yes, because the PPP have set documentation, so there is actually quite a lot of information from the schools, which is usually a list of negatives, although it will also contain what the school has tried and what has worked. My first question is usually: 'Where do you want to be when you are 16? What job are you going to be doing?' That has an impact.

R: So it's not just about reintegration into school but also about getting them into employment.

Head: Yes, or training, or further education or whatever. We want them to see this as part of the process of going towards something long term. So the choices they make now are actually quite important.

Thirty-one students access provision. They are predominantly white and male. There are 14 single-roll students and 17 dual-placed pupils. The centre also provides respite for local schools; young people who are on school roll come once a week for an activity (a cookery lesson, for example). There also are eight available places on an intensive programme designed for the most troublesome young people in LA2; only seven were involved during the fieldwork.

Actual curriculum content varies from one student to the next. Reintegration into mainstream is an option for some, while employability or FE status is advocated for others. Thus, some students have a more academically focused programme than others. Student timetables tend to include some activity-based outdoor pursuits and there is a strong emphasis on the development of basic and life skills. The therapeutic dimension of the curriculum is comparatively high; there is a strong focus on developing functional skills needed for everyday life, especially in the intensive programme. The PRU offers GCSEs and OCNs as accreditation in addition to certificates gained for attendance.

Most students seemed to enjoy their time at the District PRU. Most preferred it to mainstream as they were talked with and listened to in the PRU. They were in small groups with peers with whom they could relate:

> Good school. Nice teachers. Sometimes well behaved kids – sometimes. Not boring. Always something to do … I'd rather be here than at another school. Cos, like, other schools has, like, kids that distract you and things like that. There are loads of 'em in a class but here there is only four of us in one group. I walk into a new school and I don't know anybody there – it's like walking round on my tod. But here you are always with somebody. (Student)

Students liked working in small group environments, though some said that they did miss female company. Many described their time here as a fresh start.

Most parents/carers reported that their child was getting a valuable experience and that they would like their child to stay, even if it was not LA policy.

> The PRU is a core provider. It offers small classes and personalised activities. There is a strong emphasis on basic and life skills rather than vocational programmes. By helping students learn and practise the attitudes and behaviours necessary for mainstream participation, it aims to assist them to return to schools or go on to further education. Its success is based on small groups, bespoke tailored programmes that are geared to the students' aspirations, and a strong focus on negotiation.

CATE

CATE is a brokerage provision, which was initiated by LA2 in conjunction with some current member schools. It has no main site as such. The eight link schools and the interagency Pupil Placement Panel (PPP) are its basis. The Panel consists of seven school deputies/assistant heads, the PRU, the YOT, social services, the Behaviour Support Team, the police and Connexions. Health is not yet represented.

CATE's function is to both 'manage moves' of students excluded from one local school to another and provide funding for schools so that young people can access alternative provision from external specialist providers.

CATE students are referred by schools to the PPP; the Panel shares information about the student and collectively discusses the most appropriate receiving school. The student and parent/carer are not present during the PPP meetings:

> The young person doesn't come … It would just be too daunting for them because there are about 20 people there. If one of the secondary schools are going to refer a student to CATE, then they would discuss the process with the parents and get the parents' agreement, and then prepare the information about the student and then they would send that out a week before the CATE meeting to everybody who is at the table so that anything that anybody had, the Youth Offending Team, the police, social services, could all be brought to the meeting and be discussed.

> And all the schools would be able to look at that and to ask questions and, if it's a straight transfer that they are looking for, then the schools can agree to take them or they might say that they can take them but they would need some support … and then we all talk about whether a package needs to be put in place or whether the PRU would play a role. (Manager)

Since September 2005, 23 students have come to the CATE panel – 18 males and five females. Young people come mainly from the local area. All but one is white. Traditionally, CATE has worked with Year 10s and 11s, but has recently noted the lack of alternative provision for Year 8s and 9s (KS3). It has commissioned work to look at KS3 provision, hoping to identify not only what types of provision are already in existence but also the quality.

'Managed-move' students have a focus on academic aspects of the curriculum, accessing mainstream schooling (including GCSEs) within the formal structure and timetabling of the receiving school. The 'activity-packaged' students have a stronger

focus on basic skills, life skills, activity, environment and arts. These are provided by external specialist providers who market to both CATE and individual CATE schools. They are also beginning to commission specialist programmes to fill gaps in what is available. Information about provision is shared via the PPP. Students in receipt of activity-based funding tend to gain more vocational qualifications such as ASDAN awards, Duke of Edinburgh and first aid certificates. Student curriculum content and learning environment varies according to the individual's needs.

Not all CATE schools refer and exclude equally. Some CATE schools' exclusion figures remain very low, as they have a strongly inclusive ethos. Others however refer more. As a consequence some CATE schools take more 'managed-move' students than others. There is a potential equity issue within the brokerage, which it has to date managed successfully.

> The main dilemma is to do with the equitability. There is one school in the group that has had about 16 or more students taken from that school but haven't taken anywhere near 16 into it. And that issue is becoming crucial now and I think it will get to the stage where some of the other schools will think: 'Well are they a partner or not?'
> (Deputy)

The overarching purpose of the provision is to help those students at risk of exclusion to reintegrate into mainstream and to drive down exclusion figures in the local vicinity. However, CATE also offers the schools a new way to collectively tackle disengagement in the area via multi-agency work:

> The local manager of social services is there and that is fantastic because the people we end up talking about are known to social services. At the last meeting we also had the school's liaison officer from the police there, which is good. Youth Offending is always there. Connexions are always there. Their input is useful when we are talking about individuals. If you want a scenario: I was being pressurised to take someone and I'd spoken to the key worker who was making the referral and I'd had a concern because we'd already got a young man who had been in the same year group and from the same school, so I was just concerned that there might be an issue about bringing someone else in. But everyone was saying that it would be fine, until the police said that putting those two together would be dynamite. So, instantly, I had backing because the police knew that the two lads hanging around together outside school were causing problems and the police view was that putting them together in the same school would just be inviting trouble. I mean we

are just about holding on to the first lad so, if we put the second lad in, it would probably destroy everything. So that information was really useful.
(Deputy)

One of the potential problems with the multi-agency approach is that, in revealing and dealing with complex and multifaceted issues, the young people concerned can sometimes feel as though too many people are involved. This further complicates the process rather than resolving it.

CATE schools sometimes use the threat of a managed move as a disincentive to bad behaviour. Since most students don't want to move schools, this was often effective. However, the majority of those who moved were glad of the fresh start:

> *[I'm]* quite happy about things … Because, with me moving here, I've stopped messing about as much and I'm not always pratting about in lessons, like in drama, at my old school, I'd be running up ladders and swinging on lights and stuff.
> (Student)

Students reported that changing schools could have a positive impact on their behaviour but, because they were sheltered from the CATE process, most were not entirely clear about the positive rationale for moving schools. Some parents/carers were reluctant to accept a managed move; their perception was often dependent on the precise schools they were transferring from and to. If they believed the receiving school had a good reputation they were less likely to disagree with the move. Some parents/carers in the fieldwork reported that they did not have much decision-making power in the CATE procedures, whereas others seemed quite happy.

For the majority of the young people who are moved, the programme has offered a means of staying in mainstream education.

CATE is a brokerage partnership, which allows schools to take responsibility for their own students. It offers an interagency process for managing moves of students around the schools, so that they can continue to get their entitlement and funding. Schools can use this to pay for specialist provision, which provides choices and experiences not available within the school's normal programmes. Participation in such activities can enhance engagement, while also offering variety in educational pathways. Its success has been created through the trusting relationships between the partner schools and agencies, the funds devolved to it by the LA, and the range of options that the partnership is able to offer.

The Alternative School Programme

The Alternative School Programme is a specialist provision, which is funded and operated by a secondary school in LA1. It occupies a site a few miles from the main school.

This provision was set up as a response to a group of lads causing trouble within the community. The school decided it had to do something to help them to re-engage with school and the community. This is indicative of the school's inclusive philosophy.

The purpose is to provide for some 'lost kids' and help them move on to a college placement or work. There is one staff member and his focus is on social needs and functional skills needed for everyday life. The goal is to help young people become active citizens. There are no qualifications offered. OCNs were tried but the lads stopped coming to the provision and so the programme co-ordinator stopped doing them.

This is a male-dominated provision; all lads are white, thus reflecting the local community population and school intake. The programme co-ordinator works with two groups. There are eight lads who form one core group. Others come and go more frequently; they are a 'quick jolt' group who will return to school. The core lads are unlikely to return to mainstream. All are between Years 9 and 11.

All referrals come through the school. All will have had some Learning Support Unit intervention prior to referral. Only one student has ever been sent from the school to a provision outside of the Alternative School Programme. He did not fit in with the existing group members and was perceived as needing more intervention (family support) than the Alternative School Programme could provide. However, he remains on the school roll even though he attends another facility.

The students have a lot of agency in this provision. They negotiate curriculum content, timetable, and starting and leaving times with the co-ordinator. The lads have ownership of the site; they feel like they belong and it is theirs. The site is very isolated and enclosed, which helps facilitate relations between the co-ordinator and the lads. There is a hierarchy clearly evident, with the programme co-ordinator at the top and then a student leader that the co-ordinator works with to influence the others. Relations are very respectful; the lads call the co-ordinator 'sir'.

The co-ordinator is generally left to run things as he sees fit and purposely alienates himself from the school main site, so as to distance himself from school authority. His relations with the students and the community as a whole are important elements helping the re-engagement of local disaffected students.

All those who attended the provision enjoyed it, but not all attended. Most appeared to value schooling and regretted leaving the main site:

> *R:*　　　　　Did you like school?
>
> *Student:*　　Yeah, I loved it. I loved it. I wish I could go back I really do. I'd go, like, in the morning and I'd be perfect, right, but after I'd had me dinner and something to drink and that's it. I'd go back to school and just be a bit cheeky and a bit naughty.

Some said they preferred the Alternative School Programme to school and described their experiences as valuable and unique:

> We are already doing a college thing and we are doing it two days a week. Well we are starting it soon and no one else is doing it and it's costing £600 each. And they said that we would be a year forward of all the other people in the school because we are starting now and it's better really.
> (Student)

Most students suggested that their behaviour had calmed down as a result of the programme.

The co-ordinator had close links with the community and utilised this resource in generating good parent/carer relations. He speaks with parents/carers regularly and always rings home when the lads are late or don't turn up. Parents/carers appreciated being informed about their child's education activities and whereabouts.

> The Alternative School Programme has been established by one school as a means of catering for a group of lads who were highly problematic in the mainstream setting. The programme aims to hold a high-risk group of young people in education and training. Its success is created through small-group activities, which are negotiated within a secure and safe climate in which strong relationships with the male co-ordinator have been built up. The lads have a considerable degree of agency but are expected to behave respectfully with each other and the co-ordinator.

Across the cases

Each case study represents a unique educational provision available to young people across two LAs. Contrary to the more patchy general picture, young people in these programmes are carefully managed and monitored, and their entitlement is better assured than in other programmes.

Programmes share a number of characteristics. They offer small groups and/or individual attention. They negotiate programmes with the young people. They are flexible in their approach and have transformed, or are willing to transform, their activities and purpose to meet changing student populations and needs. The people who work with these young people are highly skilled in their communicative and negotiation skills with both young people and outside agencies. All have a strong desire to engage disaffected young people, to help them achieve a meaningful life as citizens and as workers. These alternative education providers have a strong focus on meeting young people's social needs in addition to their educational ones. Students are well prepared about what is going to happen to them and they rely on staff to be there for them, to listen to them and help them in their educational and personal lives.

The case study programmes are also diverse, thus demonstrating that there are multiple ways in which an entitlement can be delivered. Indeed, they suggest that multiple provisions are necessary, since young people present with particular needs and preferences.

Each provider also has some means of ensuring quality in programmes; staff are carefully selected, suitably qualified and trained appropriately. Programmes are included in institutional self-evaluation processes and most are also subject to regular Ofsted inspection. Data about students and outcomes is collected. However, as outlined in the first part of this report, this data is not standardised and there is no aggregated destination data within or across providers.

The challenge for LA1 and LA2 is to move beyond these cases to set up systems to ensure that these kinds of good practice are spread across the region. However, one challenge is that these programmes do not come cheap. They are staff intensive:

> *[Students]* have the wonderful luxury of being educated one to four and
> that is sheer luxury. That's why we get them to talk and that's why these
> kids who never went to school turn up every day.
> (Programme staff member)

Both LA 1 and LA2 recognise that there is little choice but to bring alternative provision into the centre of the 14–19 agenda. This is an important step in making sure that the most marginalised young people have the same rights and benefits as their peers.

9 Understanding the field of alternative provision

In the last chapter, we looked at details of six programmes that offered good examples of provision. In this chapter, we return to the concern we outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, namely, the need for a central database that shows 'who gets what'. We elaborated in Chapters 3 to 6 what our mapping had shown and highlighted the importance for entitlement of data about the nature of the offering, location, qualifications, quality assurance, and enrolment and destination data.

In this chapter, we suggest some key features of the field of alternative provision that not only affect 'who gets what', but also help to produce the data deficits we have discussed. These are: the relative isolation of staff, competition for provision and the nature of the field itself.

Relative isolation of staff

It is clear from the case studies that the skills of staff are paramount in redressing the alienation of excluded young people from their school and for re-engaging them in education. However, there is no consistency across the field in base educational qualifications required of staff, nor of processes of recruitment, selection and continuous professional development. Most staff in our study did have either youth work or teaching qualifications, but very few had further qualifications in counselling or in therapeutic approaches.

In our study we found that staff who worked in small programmes (and this was the majority) felt their isolation keenly. They were often responsible for both service delivery and administration, and, if time was scarce, it was the management tasks (like data collection) that were sacrificed. Staff knew that they had expertise to offer and were aware that they could benefit from the experiences of others. They also knew that, if they worked for a large provider, they might have the benefit of better support and also more consistent and appropriately tailored and sequenced staff development. We also noted a high turnover of staff in some services, but it was not clear how much this might be related to the lack of support and opportunity for professional growth.

There were no structures across the field for staff in alternative provision to access such training and support, and it was largely left to their own initiative to seek this out.

Competition for provision

It seems that the need for places for vulnerable young people is always greater than the supply. In these conditions, some core providers are better placed than others to ensure the young people on their rolls get access to specialist providers. Some (including some schools) have greater capacity to reserve and bulk buy places:

> *R:*　　　　　　　　　So how many places do the PRUs reserve?
>
> *Specialist provider:*　One of them's done 30, one of them's done 20 and the other one's done 25. All of them had filled their places by October and all of them came back asking for more places and I had to say 'no'.

Bulk buying is good for the organisations involved – the purchaser knows they have alternatives available, and the provider is assured funding and a full course. However, it is not always as positive for young people. Bulk buying inevitably leads to some missing out on a place in a suitable programme because they have all been taken. The young person is left with less desirable options. It also means that a young person in a core provision that has not purchased places is directed to less attractive programmes. This situation may also arise when the core provider has used nearly all of their available funds on a limited set of pre-purchased options. We found examples of all three in our research.

Both of the above issues must be understood in the context of the nature of the field itself.

The nature of the field

The field of specialist provision can best be understood as a mixed market. In a study about the positive provisions for young people across England, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2006) reported that the make-up of the market varied from local authority to local authority, but that:

> … while the exact scale of positive activities provision occurring independently of local authorities is unknown, anecdotal evidence suggests that the voluntary sector is extremely active within many segments of the market and private providers focus on certain, more profitable areas of provision.
> (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006, p. 7)

The 'mixed market' of specialist provision lends itself to entrepreneurial and reactive/ responsive modes of activity of various kinds. A complex set of circumstances shapes the ways in which provision is determined and planned.

In our corpus of data we have examples of programmes established by individuals who had a 'good idea' and then sought funding for it; this adds to what is available to core providers. There are also examples of large providers who have the resources to regularly develop new fee-for-service programmes to offer to core providers in an increasingly monopolistic manner. Some smaller specialist providers told us that they were increasingly unable to compete for contracts with these bigger players, even though they were offering a quality service. They simply didn't have the same capacity to write high-gloss submissions or offer such a diversity of facilities and equipment. They did, they suggested, offer highly personalised attention and support, which might be of greater significance.

We suggest that at least part of the reason for the proliferation of gender-stereotypical vocational programmes we found is related to the nature of the alternative provision landscape. Specialist providers believe that such programmes meet the expectations of schools and core providers, as well as the interests of young people. This perceived match of supply and demand is intended to make programmes financially viable and thus successful in the educational provision marketplace. Our dataset shows clearly that alternative provision does not offer activities to support a range of masculinities and femininities, and our conclusion is that this is an instance where entrepreneurialism and lack of co-ordination, central planning and monitoring functions cannot guarantee equity.

Better monitoring at the system level would allow specific interventions to be designed across provisions and providers.

The following story is typical of the philanthropic, entrepreneurial provider we encountered. This instance is of a single individual who struggled with funding for a motor-vehicle-based programme, which he had set up as a business:

> I've tried to get funding from all sorts of places but without success so, consequently, I've invested my own money in it. I've invested £100,000 in it ….

> One of the European funds I tried to apply for was for women only … to try and get women from the outlying areas because … there are problems with transportation and other things in these little villages. But I don't think that is going to happen.

> What is happening is that we've got the voluntary sector phoning up to see if we can do something with them.

This anecdote can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the entrepreneur could be seen as someone who saw a market niche but could not capitalise on it. On the other hand, he also could be seen as someone with a good grass-roots reading of local needs that were not met through existing regional and local authority planning processes. The latter interpretation is supported by other examples we found of unmet local needs where providers seemed to have no pathway to a body that was responsible for the forward planning of alternative provisions.

Another provider was convinced that national funders were able to exert their own priorities over local needs and experience, using cash as a carrot to stimulate response:

> We have students out of school one day a week for a whole year and we also work in the school holidays. We are contracted to work with them for 50 weeks of the year including two residentials …
>
> *[Funder]* is quite specific in terms of the programme elements that we need to meet. Five per cent of their programme time has got to be spent around sexual health education; 10 per cent around substance abuse; 10 per cent around healthy living and eating and exercise; and then your percentages get a little bit bigger – 20 per cent towards sport; 20 per cent towards life skills and things like that … that is the funder's criteria.
>
> And we have a set number of hours that we have to have the students on the programme. It averages out that we have young people on the programme 6.5 hours a week. Obviously that doesn't give us much of a margin if we've got an absence for two weeks, but, because we have two residentials in there, we can up the averages that way. So, over the space of a year, we should end up around 6.5 hours per week.
>
> That's quite a bizarre programme really … what we've done in previous programmes is work for six weeks and cram in some really hard work so that, on the seventh week, we can do something decent. But we've moved the decent activity into their holidays, so now, in term time, they get on with the work from the programme and then, in the school holidays, they might go swimming or they can choose an activity.

This is clearly a difficult issue. If they are to deliver, national policy initiatives cannot afford too much variation across the country, and yet we found several such instances where local staff attributed less effective outcomes to rigid nationally-prescribed rules. What is at issue, we suggest, is the capacity of the local authority to mediate across national programmes, using local expertise in order to meet locally, as well as nationally, determined needs.

The mixed market of alternative provisions does have some room for local agency, but it is marked by a mixture of scales of control and accountability. In some instances, market forces appear to be at work and may or may not ensure efficiency and effectiveness; in other instances, local authority procurement processes or regional and national policy priorities hold sway.

Fluidity in funding and policy lifetimes can also create instability. When funding is available for limited-life programmes, structures are developed in response, networks are established and plans are made in anticipation of either continuation or replacement. When such programmes are terminated, and even when the end is known ahead of time, if there is no available replacement then what is on offer to young people can be severely limited. While some specialist provision is relatively durable, there is always change within the field caused by the tenuous nature of funding and the responsive nature of provision. What is on offer can change from month to month. This makes it hard for core providers to know what is available and also makes data collection difficult.

10 Conclusion: ensuring access and entitlement

In the last chapter, we suggested that the field of alternative provision, as it is currently organised, is difficult to know, track, manage and regulate. The particular mix of agency, entrepreneurialism and diverse regulative and accountability practices has consequences for guaranteeing an entitlement for all young people.

In order to guarantee entitlements, we have identified three major areas for intervention:

1   data collection

2   quality assurance

3   forward planning.

We explain why these are important and what might be some of the difficulties in addressing them.

Data collection

The nature of the mixed market militates against the compilation of a standardised dataset and a directory as we have explained (Chapter 2).

The diversity of provision is one where providers have variable accountabilities; specialist programmes in particular are often answerable to funding bodies and national or regional third-sector organisations. The relative autonomy of some core providers (such as FE colleges) means that their data collections are locally determined and reported via annual audit and reports to governors, rather than to the LA. Some large providers cross several LA boundaries and do not disaggregate data geographically, but by programme. This diverse set of controlling bodies equates to: variable requirements for data collection, various timeframes during which data is collected and a sometimes fluid set of collection sites.

We note that this marketised and diverse topography is national, and the difficulties we have raised about data collection and monitoring[1] have greater application than this specific study. As PricewaterhouseCoopers (2006, p. 7) observes, 'the exact scale of positive activities provision occurring independently of local authorities is unknown'.

But the lack of data emanating from the field not only compels core providers to rely on their own networks and knowledge to arrange programmes for young people, it also makes it almost impossible to tell who is getting their entitlement and who isn't.

Quality assurance

Diversity of accountabilities means variable sets of outcomes and measures of quality.

Core providers are subject to Ofsted inspections on a regular basis, specialist providers less so. However, inspection does not necessarily focus on the 'grey area' of students on part-time programmes. Procurement processes also allow local authorities to be explicit in their requirements and to exercise some control over some alternative core and specialist provision through contractual arrangements. However, many specialist providers are pretty much left to monitor and evaluate themselves and their work after they are given funding:

> One measure of success is that we have the social inclusion students back here on a regular basis. And the other measure of success is the attendance level of the youngsters we have from schools.
>
> Inevitably, the young people that come down to us from schools tend to be the ones that are more difficult when they are at school. But they attend all the time and we have quite a good experience with them. We don't have a lot of incidents so we must be doing something right.
>
> But the thing is whether they are going to be successful at the end of it or not.
> (Specialist provider)

The corollary of diverse outcomes and accountabilities is diverse practices of quality assurance. The lack of consistent and coherent formal quality assurance across specialist provision creates problems for core services, which need to know that what young people on roll are doing when they are off campus not only is relevant, but also operates on a sound educational basis. In our study, some large core providers in LA2 have begun their own quality assurance procedures, but this is not an option available to all. And, indeed, it would be both inefficient and a burden to service providers if all schools and alternative core providers ran separate quality assurance processes.

The lack of a system of quality assurance means that it is almost impossible to answer the question of whether all young people are getting educational and training experiences of equal value.

Forward planning

Two factors limit the capacity to locally plan provisions.

The first is the lack of central data already described. The second arises from the relative autonomy (already noted) of some of the core and many of the specialist providers, which means that decisions about what is on offer can be made outside of local planning parameters. At its extreme, what is offered may be what providers think will 'sell' or what funders want to fund, rather than what is actually needed.

Mixed loci of decision making can lead to particular biases in provision. They can limit what 'packages' core providers are able to offer young people (as already explained) and may mean, as is the case in LA1 and 2, that programmes are not always in localities of greatest need or addressing gaps in LA provision.

Without sophisticated planning procedures, it is almost impossible to guarantee that appropriate alternative education and training programmes will be offered to diverse young people in various locations.

A stronger role for local authorities?

Local authorities are perhaps the logical place for ensuring entitlement. However, as we have indicated, many of the providers needed for a viable quality assurance and planning system are regional and national, while others have a high degree of autonomy by virtue of their statutory devolved status.

We proposed to a meeting of LA1 and 2 staff that a system of local authority registration, similar to that operated for early childhood providers, might be an option. We also floated the idea of schools being required to report part-time enrolments as part of the SEF (self-evaluation form) and of Children's Trusts taking up the issue of monitoring the educational pathways offered to young people. These proposals were met with some sympathy, but the LAs were very clear that national support would be needed for these kinds of initiatives to have effect. Nevertheless, LAs are keen to do better for this group of young people. For example, LA2, in response to our research, is already investigating whether a system of service agreements between all core and specialist providers is feasible.

If LAs are to take on the role of ensuring entitlement, then they must have the authority and resources to develop the following.

- *A local system for monitoring and tracking programmes:* the range of data collected should include the type of programme and educational offer, details of qualifications and pathways, details of enrolment data including socio-economic data, location and referral policies.

- *A quality assurance system* should monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of provision. This means, not only the student and family experience of provision, but also the aggregation of data to track whether there is equity of entitlement across the diverse population of young people involved in alternative provision. A good quality assurance system would thus systematically survey the offers made to young people and their destinations.

- *A forward planning process:* ensuring that there are enough of the right kinds of services is dependent on both data collection and quality assurance. However, it also relies on the designation of a body that is responsible, the development of an appropriate national regulatory framework that allows for consistency and local agency and responsiveness, and sufficient resources to do the job.

Regardless of whether LAs are the appropriate body to undertake this work or not, an entitlement to education and training is not in question. It is a commitment already made by policymakers. What is needed now is painstaking work to make sure that it is delivered. Co-ordinating, tracking and monitoring activities and enrolments are not tasks that can be ignored, however daunting. They are critical to the life chances and opportunities of the most vulnerable and marginalised, so that they too have access to the kinds of educational experiences and qualifications that employers now deem essential, and that government policy promises to deliver.

Notes

Chapter 1

1   Since the completion of fieldwork, the DfES has introduced more changes that require parents to keep children at home for the first five days of a school exclusion and require schools to provide an educational programme that children can undertake while they are away from school.

2   Full guidance on times of exclusion can be found on http://www.teachernet.gov. uk/wholeschool/behaviour/exclusion/guidance/part7/.

From February 2007 schools are also obligated to provide an educational programme on the sixth day of exclusion. The DfES website states that: 'Full time' means supervised education equivalent to that provided by mainstream schools in the area and will be different for each Key Stage (KS).

The recommended minimum hours per week of taught time are as follows:

KS1	21 hours
KS2	23.5 hours
KS3/4	24 hours
KS4 (Y11)	25 hours

Chapter 2

1   We suspect a mix of factors led to the poor return.
   - Some questionnaires went to wrong addresses (arising from the problem with lack of accurate baseline information about programmes).
   - The information we asked for was not easy for some to provide (the programme did not keep detailed statistics).
   - It was more paperwork.
   - Some could not see the point in giving this information to university-based researchers.
   - Some may have felt this was a repetition of information given in interview.
   - The census period was too near the end of the school year.

2   One possible issue arising from the lack of collection of data on Free School Meals (FSM) is that some young people may not be offered a meal on the days when they attend such alternative provision. We were unable to get robust enough data to venture a view on whether this was the case.

3   The data kept by Connexions has already appeared as an issue in research; Anderson *et al.* (2006) found that Connexions had inadequate data both on young people in jobs without training and on local employers.

Chapter 3

1   See note 2, Chapter 1 above.

2   See http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

3   This does not include umbrella organisations.

4   PricewaterhouseCoopers (2006) suggests that there are five sources of funding for alternative programmes: central government, lottery, charities, corporates, private payments to providers.

5   From website of LA2: education portfolio meeting, 1 March 2006, report of Assistant Director of Education (Inclusion Services). Accessed 3 January 2007.

Chapter 4

1   This information is taken from the 2001 Census.

2   We cannot give the reference for this for reasons of confidentiality.

3   We have literally placed pins in a map that shows wards with levels of deprivation, to make the connection between poverty and alternative programmes.

4   GIS – Geographical Information Systems software is routinely used in government to bring together location and various kinds of population statistics.

Chapter 5

1 Our typology differs from that developed by NFER (Kinder *et al.*, 2000), namely, multi-agency or multidisciplinary panels; reintegration with an off-site mainstream provision; work-related learning programmes; combined alternative learning programmes; PSE programmes and work with young offenders. Our framework focuses solely on the educational offer.

2 On 21 August 2006, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) released a report bemoaning the educational levels of English workers. Two days later, CBI followed up with a critique of the standards of basic skills reached by young people, as evidenced in the latest GCSE results. The CBI Director General noted:

> Employers regard competency in the 'Three Rs' as achieving Grade C or above in Maths and English at GCSE. But this year barely half (54 per cent) reached this benchmark in the former and only slightly more managed the latter (62 per cent). The proportion who made the grade in both subjects is likely to be even lower – last year's figure was only 45 per cent.

A further tilt at the Government's educational agenda followed the next day. On 24 August, the Learning and Skills Council issued a press release headed 'GCSE dropouts "unemployable"'. See: http://www. cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/0363c1f07c6ca12a8025671c00381cc7/ 5d927772e409afcd802571cd0060db21?OpenDocument (accessed 25 August 2006); http://www.cbi.org.uk/ ndbs/press.nsf/0363c1f07c6ca12a8025671c00381cc7/ 74ec7c9a5fcb1ca8802571d4002ac230?OpenDocument (accessed 25 August 2006).

Chapter 6

1 LAs have made considerable efforts to separate out traveller services from those associated with PRUs, EBD services and the like. We found considerable resistance to pursuing the question of exclusion with services other than those dedicated specifically to it. The exception to this were LA staff with responsibility for 14–19 services.

Chapter 7

1   Core providers transfer all funding if pupils are going off roll, but only part if pupils are attending specialist provision.

Chapter 10

1   Connexions services are franchised and their databases vary from service to service across the country. Because one Connexions service covers both LA1 and 2, this was one set of inconsistencies we did not encounter.

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Appendix 1: Case study sample and method

	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme
Number of observations	Six days	Eight days	Six days	Seven days	Six days	Five days
Nature of observations	Once-a-week visits. Occurred at The Educate Centre observing Gateway course students. Plus one visit to the parent college site. During programme activity and free time.	A day in each of the four sites, plus a week at one site observing a set group of students. Occurred at each site, in formal and informal settings, consisting of external provision accessed and parent evenings.	A day was spent with four of the five support workers. Time was also spent with the manager and externally used alternative education provision sites including a farm, drama and dance class, e-learning environment, youth inclusion project and mechanics project.	A week was spent with a group of students; observation occurred on and off site. Time was spent with the Head, a specialised team and at the end-of-year celebration.	Observations occurred in two of the CATE schools, the PRU, outside agencies' localities including the police, social services and Behaviour Support, and with one of the external providers accessed via CATE.	Observations focused on the site over a two-week period during the lads' programme designated time and free time.
Number of interviews	11	13	Six	Nine	14	Five
Time of observations	January–March 2006	February–May 2006	March–May 2006	May–July 2006	June 2006	June 2006

	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme
Nature of provision	Located in LA2.	Located in LA2 and LA1.	Located in LA1.	Located in LA2.	Located in LA2.	Located in LA1.
	Part of an FE college but physically separate.	An FE college.	A PRU. Caters for students without a school place within LA1.	A PRU. Serves a large rural area; local schools and other providers access the site.	A brokerage. School-based. Multi-agency.	A small isolated site a few miles from the mainstream school, set up to serve a specific section of the community.
	Relatively small, operates on one site.	Relatively large, highly entrepreneurial, appears to have a near monopoly on alternative education provision in certain sections of the city, operates across four sites.			Serves an LA2 region, set up with a view to reducing local exclusion figures.	School-funded.
	Offers part-time provision.	Offers full-time provision.	Has flexibility in terms of hours of provision.	Has a mixture of full-time, part-time and dual-placed students at KS2, 3 and 4.	CATE students are full-time but students are funded via CATE to access external provision.	Full-time and part-time.

Appendix 2: Cross-case analysis

Description	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme	Common Themes
Type	Specialised	Core	Core	Core	Broker	Specialised	Three core, two specialised, one broker.
Site structure	One main site that has various facilities such as a hair and beauty salon, horticulture land, interactive whiteboards, computer room, kitchen facilities, mobiles and classrooms. Connexions shares some of the office space. The site is owned by the main college but is physically separate. E2E courses are run here.	Spread across four sites in LA1 and LA2: 1 Hillcrest Centre 2 Student quarters 3 Mill Street Site 4 City Place. Three of the sites are occupied exclusively by the college, whereas one is a shared space where other community initiatives occur. All sites have classrooms.	There is no central student base; there is one main office space but work is done across numerous external sites across LA1.	One main site located LA2. The site is shared with other alternative education providers and youth services. The site also runs another project accessed by the PRU itself and referring agencies. There is a kitchen, mobile facilities and classroom spaces.	Eight CATE schools. No central student base. Work is done with students in school. CATE also funds other alternative education providers.	One main site located LA1 a few miles separate from the referring school. This is an isolated site owned by the church.	Three have one central site, two have no central student base, one has four student base sites. The core providers are open to wider geographical areas compared to the specialised providers. All have a relatively high student to staff ratio.
Staffing structure	There are two main teaching assistants, an E2E co-ordinator and a Head that occupy the site.	Each site has its own staff and student grouping.	There are five support staff that access a specific geographical division of LA1.	There are several members of staff and each tends to concern themselves with specific parts of the curriculum.	Managed-move students work within the existing school structure.	Students work in small designated groups. There is one teacher/co-ordinator.	Most work within LA1 or LA2 borders.

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Staffing structure (*continued*)	Students work in set small groups.		There is one manager. Students work in small groups and on a one-to-one basis. Each student has one support worker.	Students work in small groups and some one-to-one tuition occurs.	The PPP is made up of seven school heads/deputies, Connexions, YOT, social services and police.		Two operate within the city, three operate within LA2 and one operates between LA1 and LA2.
Catchment area	LA2	LA1 and LA2	LA1	LA2	LA2	LA1	
Timetable	All part-time. The Gateway course is predominantly vocational. 'It's looking at two days' vocational experience and we've got a timetable that sets off a seven-week rotation. So, every seven weeks, they do a taster so, from September, there would be 24 on the course and then they would be split into four groups of six. Then we would	All full-time – but there are exceptions to the rule, e.g. one female accessed her maths GCSE part-time at Mill Street Site. Four-day timetable. Students tend to work within designated groups. Example (typical): Mon. a.m. maths, p.m. English Tues. work experience all day	The aim is 21 hours a week provision, but not all receive this. Each student has a different timetable made up from accessing different provisions across the LA1. Example (not typical – each timetable is different): Mon. nothing Tues. 1.30–3.30 'Learn Straight' Wed. 10.00–12.00 PSHE,	Full-time, part-time and dual-placement provision available Academic and/or vocational centred. 'It depends whether they are vocational focused or academic focused. We may have youngsters coming in who are just taking traditional academic exams. So they were doing maths, English, art, ITC.	Full-time. Mainstream schooling timetable. Others access packaged education sessions/ activities via CATE funding.	Full-time, but there is no set timetable, so the quantity and content of the provision can vary from one week to the next. There are two main groups, which may involve 'quick jolt' students. These students are mainstream students who access the programme on a short-term basis as an immediate and direct intervention	Core providers are more likely to offer full-time provision. Core providers are more likely to have an academic focus; however, all have a vocational element except in the case of some of the CATE students.

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Timetable (continued)	rotate those four groups: one group would be doing horticultural work; one would be doing brickwork; one would be doing first aid; and one would be doing painting and decorating' (manager interview).	Wed. nothing Thurs. a.m. ICT, p.m. PSHE Fri. activities.	12.00–1.00 tutorial Thurs. 10.00–12.00 creative writing, 1.30–3.30 arts Fri. 10.00–12.00 music session (11 hours a week total).	So they were accessing five GCSEs. But I suppose a typical timetable would be a mixture really. A bit of college; a bit of work experience; maths and English because they need those bits of paper' (Head interview).		for those having difficulty coping within mainstream schooling.	
Accreditation	Edexcel levels 1, 2 and 3	OCN GCSE D&T AQA	OCN GCSE CLAIT AQA OCR ASDAN	OCN GCSE	CATE students access GCSEs. Packaged students may gain alternative accreditation.	None – tried OCN but the students rejected it.	Various
Referring bodies	Local schools	LA1 and LA2, plus another LA. School, Connexions, social services, YOT.	LA1	LA2	CATE Pupil Placement Panel	The local school	The LAs and the schools tend to be the main referring bodies but this is by far not exclusive.
Pathway procedure	The Educate Centre has an 'open-door' policy and generally	The LA block book at the beginning of the year.	Referrals are considered and matched against the PRU's own	Students go through a Pupil Placement Panel – the District	Referrals come via the CATE schools (and	Behaviour Managers and Learning Support Unit intervention	Various

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Pathway procedure *(continued)*	accepts any student referred from a local school. It does not deal with the permanently excluded quite so much as it used to, but one male was excluded while on the Gateway Course and continued to access his education at the Centre.	Each referring body fills out a pupil referral form devised by the Midlands College (some fill this out better than others) and then each student is introduced to their site, usually with the head of provision; parents/carers are encouraged to attend this.	admissions criteria and they then decide whether to offer a place.	PRU scheme was the pilot for CATE (Head interview).	sometimes outside of them but this is not common), then the PPP decides where to place the student. Young people are not present at the PPP as it is considered 'too daunting' because of the number of people involved with the Panel.	within school are tried first; the students are identified within school. The Alternative School Programme is for those students where previous 'in house' interventions have not worked.	
Programme ethos	'Progression route' onto further qualifications	Employability, not necessarily reintegration into mainstream.	'And the aim of the provision really is to try and engage these young people with education' (manager interview).	Reintegration into mainstream, or college or employment.	Reintegration into mainstream for those at risk of exclusion and to drive down exclusion figures in LA2, but this isn't necessarily the case for all CATE schools. Some schools' exclusion statistics remain unchanged as they have a non-exclusion policy.	For 'quick jolt' students, the aim is for reintegration, whereas, for the other KS4 students who access the programme on a long-term basis, the aim is for the students to use this as a 'stepping stone' onto something else, whether that be college or employment.	Three main aims: 1 reintegration into mainstream schooling 2 gain employment 3 enter further education.

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Access Barriers to enrolment	*Structure*: the schools and the college largely dictate who enrols. *Student profile*: Year 10/11 – usually at risk of exclusion. *Funding criteria*: the referring body, i.e. the school pays. The college main site may take on specific students who have school phobias and the like, and tutor them from home. *Time of referral*: the Educate Centre is fairly flexible, the college is less so. *Group dynamics*: are considered after enrolment.	*Timing*: 'we take students at any time in Year 10 and up to Christmas in Year 11'. *No more places available*: demand exceeds provision capability. *Student profile*: need to show commitment in interview, 'Even this course needs some commitment but it's of a different nature and that is why, at the interview stage, I make them go away'. *Group dynamic*: this may not determine access to the provision but will help determine access to what site.	*Student profile*: must be within LA1 and 'without a school place'. *Funding criteria*: set out the student profile. *Timing and no more places available*: demand exceeds provision capability and so work does operate on a first-come-first-serve basis. *Staff's willingness to take them*: if there are no more places then staff have some discretion over who they do/do not take on. *Student's criminal record*: can prevent them working with young children, for example.	*Structure*: the PPP decides who enrols, but the LA has to take legal responsibility for excluded students. *Student profile*: PPP documentation, risk assessment and time of referral can have an impact. *Group dynamics* are carefully managed. *No more places*: demand exceeds capacity.	*Student profile*: age. Learning ability and behaviour have an impact. *Availability*: outside providers only have so many places; the schools can pre-book these but have limited spaces. *Schools' willingness*: not all schools take their fair share of students. *Group dynamics*: have an impact on managed-move success and on the package education young people receive. *Time of referral*: can have an impact.	*Group dynamics*: the co-ordinator believes this to be one of the most important factors. *Student profile* must be at least Year 9. *Staff's willingness to take them*: the provision co-ordinator does have a high level of decision-making power/ autonomy. *School red tape/structures*: students actively find the provision co-ordinator but this contradicts school policy. *Student acceptance*: students have informal control over who gains access.	*Student profile* is important to all. They devise their programmes targeted to specific youngsters. This is shaped by the demand (market structure) and sometimes funding criteria. *Group dynamics* is considered. How individuals will 'fit in' is very important – even in the Educate Centre and Absolute PRU. But this is after enrolment, whereas, in the others, it is considered before.

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Barriers to enrolment *(continued)*		*Bureaucratic red tape:* some students and parents/carers are forced to express agency due to the exclusion from school/referral structure.	*Group dynamics:* are considered after enrolment.		*Funding:* influences what is out there and how many places are available. *Security:* will usually use programmes that have been tried and tested already.		The providers themselves seem to have a lot of autonomy.
Who decides?	Head of Centre	Head of provision	Absolute PRU has ultimate say.	PPP	PPP	Provision co-ordinator. Lads have some say.	
What basis?	The Head of Centre is reactive to (a) what the college will allow and (b) who the schools send	The Midlands College has a self-devised form that it asks the referring body to complete; it receives this with varying degrees of information that tend to be school-biased.	Must fit its criteria (see student profile above)	The PPP has set documentation; the schools are asked to list what preventative measures they have taken and why that failed.	A decision is reached collaboratively via the PPP.	A referral will come to the school inclusion officer. He will ask the programme co-ordinator who will consider their enrolment according to how they will 'fit in' with the other group members. Fairly informal procedure.	Young people access varying routes but, ultimately, the providers themselves are largely responsible for who they enrol and on what basis.

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Equity Student populations	Approx. 24 on the Gateway Course	Approx. 750	Actively working with 75 in March 2006	Approx. 31 (including 17 dual-placement students), plus six on the special programme	Approx. 23 managed-move students.	Eight full-time (core group) Approx. eight a year on the 'quick jolt'.	Approximate numbers are given, as enrolment figures constantly change.
Full-time/part-time status	Part-time	Mostly full-time	Mixture of full-time and part-time	Full-time and part-time	Those who have been managed moved are full-time, others access other programmes funded by CATE on a part-time basis.	Officially full-time	All except the Educate Centre offer full-time provision. Most offer a mixture – but this is not typical of the field as a whole. Core providers tend to be full-time.
Age range	14–16 year olds	14–16 year olds	14–16 year olds (but work is being done with one Year 9)	11–16 year olds	13–16 year olds	14–16 year olds	All are open to males and females of varying ethnic backgrounds, but most in reality cater for white males. Most cater for 14–16 year olds. The gender split reflects local exclusion figures and the ethnicity split is explained
Gender	Mostly male	Mostly male	About 60 per cent male, 40 per cent female	Mostly male	Mostly male	All full-time are male	
Ethnicity	Mostly white (all Gateway students are male and white)	Mostly white. Site populations reflect mix of locality (in ethnicity terms).	Mostly white (a significant percentage are mixed-race)	Mostly white (reflects catchment area)	Mostly white	All full-time are white	

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Other		A disproportionate percentage have mental health issues or are looked after.					largely in terms of reflecting local ethnic populations.
How is equity monitored?	Largely internally; the referring school and the main college have minimum contact	Student populations are recorded on an internal register but it is not really questioned – however, there is some voiced concern about the lack of provision for girls.	Support staff tend to work with the same gender as themselves. They monitor attendance. LA1 has a PRU Management Steering Group that meets at least once a year and statistics on gender and ethnic populations are recorded for all LA1 PRUs.	The District PRU registers students. Students' progress is monitored in weekly meetings; they have a staff meeting every morning to discuss pertinent issues. This is done fairly informally.	CATE evaluation conducted externally. Student referrals and their details are recorded.	Internally – the programme co-ordinator takes a daily register. There is awareness that males dominate the provision.	The provision that has the student on roll tends to take control over monitoring attendance and so on. Schools that access external provision can be rather distant in terms of their monitoring.
Participation How is it monitored?	Largely internally	Largely internally	Internally and under LA1 umbrella	Largely internally, although LA2 PRUs have their own umbrella datasets	CATE evaluation and internally	Internally	Formally the student populations are not really questioned, although people have started to

Description	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme	Common Themes
How is it monitored? *(Continued)*							talk and think about girls and their level of participation. Ethnicity is seen largely as a reflection of the local area rather than a deficit.
Structure Funding	Referring body – the school	The referring body pays	NRF Referring body	The LA pays for excluded young people and dual-placed students, the school pays for any other provision it accesses.	LA	School	Funding is gathered via a mixture and conjunction of means. The LA pays for those it has legal responsibility for, otherwise/or in addition to external funding is gathered via funding bodies and referring agents (i.e. schools).
How is programme evaluated?	Largely internally; the referring school and the college are perceived as having minimum	The student's progress is evaluated in terms of an Action Plan devised by	Management Steering Group meets and evaluates the LA1 PRUs. The Absolute	The District PRU is compared to others under the LA2 PRU family. Staff have daily staff meetings to	CATE evaluation and PPP	Internally – the students have a great degree of autonomy. Their level of participation	LA providers tend to have more structured regular evaluation points compared to

Description	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme	Common Themes
How is programme evaluated? *(continued)*	contact. Level of participation is measured as an evaluating factor.	the Midlands College. Staff meetings and student staff meetings occur as and when needed. Parents/carers may be contacted.	PRU evaluates programmes by asking students in informal and formal contexts. Programmes are largely evaluated internally via tutorial packs devised by the PRU. The PRU has annual meetings to discuss the successes and problems with existing programmes and to change its provision accordingly.	discuss pertinent issues regarding students.		and what their outcome is after the programme has ceased are used to evaluate the programmes success. Most of this is informally monitored.	the specialised programmes. All view level of participation and progression route as important, some view accreditation as more important than others.
Culture Student opinions	Prefer it to school; some see it as a getaway from the bullying that occurs at school, others prefer their treatment as an adult here. Some prefer to do activity-based work rather than	Enjoy some parts of the provision better than others. Some females enjoy male-dominated environments, others struggle.	Enjoy parts of the provision better than others.	Enjoy working in small groups and being talked to like an individual.	Those that have been threatened with a managed move see it as an effective intervention. Students, in general, do not want to be forced to move schools. However, those that have been	Enjoy it, but understand the importance of mainstream schooling	Most enjoy some parts more than others. Some view it as a release from academic-related work or from social strains experienced at school, others clearly state that they'd prefer

Description	The Educate Centre	The Midlands College	Absolute PRU	District PRU	CATE	Alternative School Programme	Common Themes
Student opinions *(continued)*	academic work.				moved generally view the move in positive terms.		to remain in mainstream.
Staff opinions	Feel like they have little say over their activities, funding and structure, but react to the colleges needs. Communication links between the main site and the Educate Centre are low.	Believes it is filling a gap in the education sector.	Enjoy their work and see it as worthwhile.	Enjoy their work and see it as valuable.	See it as valuable and necessary work.	The co-ordinator highly values his work and relations with the students and community.	All feel as though they fill a gap in the education sector and believe that what they do is important and worthwhile (positive self-promotion).
Parent/carer opinions	Are glad their child is enjoying something.	Are pleased their children are accessing something.	Parent links vary; most work is done through the child.	Think that the provision is good.	See the value of CATE, but sometimes feel fairly alienated from the process.	The co-ordinator has close links with most parents and they appear to trust his opinion.	Most express alienation from the process of their child exclusion but are glad that their child is in alternative provision – most argue that their alternative provision is better suited to their child's needs.

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What works?	The range of facilities able to cater for several different courses all available on one site.	The structured full-time provision.	The flexible nature of the hours provided.	The individual timetable that can emphasise academic and/or vocational elements.	The holistic approach.	The close school–Alternative School Programme links.	Each provision has its own key strengths that work with its student population intake.

Please note that all centre and programme names are given pseudonyms to conceal their identity.

Key:

PPP = Pupil Placement Panel

LA = local authority

YOT = Youth Offending Team

NRF = Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

City = Midlands City

County = Midlands County

FE = further education

HE = higher education

Core = a type of institution that has prime responsibility for organising a young person's educational programme

Specialised = a type of provision that tends to offer part-time programmes of varying durations

Broker = a collection of schools that manage young people's educational careers as a group