

Keeping track

Mapping and tracking vulnerable young people

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Glossary

CHP	Cambridge Homeless Partnership
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DSS	Department of Social Security
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
ES	Employment Service
ESF	European Social Fund
HITS	Hertfordshire Individual Tracking System
IT	Information Technology
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
PAT	Policy Action Team
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
UPN	Unique Pupil Number
YCS	Youth Cohort Study
YOT	Youth Offending Team
<i>YOUTHSTART</i>	One of the four strands of the <i>EMPLOYMENT</i> Community Initiative, financed by the European Social Fund. Through <i>YOUTHSTART</i> member states of the European Union worked together to tackle the problems of exclusion of young people from the labour market. <i>YOUTHSTART</i> was implemented in two phases: 1995-97 and 1997-99

Introduction

Background

Social exclusion and young people

The notion of social exclusion, and the need for its existence and effects to be addressed and combated by government social policy, has gained great prominence in recent years, as illustrated by the establishment and work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). One of the issues of particular interest and concern to policy makers and practitioners has been the fortunes of 'vulnerable' young people, especially those who become detached from 'mainstream' youth transitions. Such transitions have tended to become longer, more ambiguous or uncertain and more diverse as a plethora of different pathways into the labour market and other domains of adulthood have emerged. Indeed, the SEU has published reports on truancy and school exclusions, teenage pregnancies and opportunities for young people out of education, employment and training, who are:

... disproportionately from poor backgrounds in deprived areas. They may suffer multiple disadvantage and few recover from the poor start that they have had ... where life goes wrong, or continues to go wrong, for young people in this age group, social exclusion in later life is disproportionately the result. They are much more likely to be unemployed, dependent on benefits, to live in unstable family structures, and to be depressed about their lives. (SEU, 1999a)

The policy response

The acknowledgement of the problems posed by the existence in successive cohorts of young people of a significant proportion who could be categorised as 'vulnerable' or 'disaffected', has led to a range of policies designed to support young people at risk. Increasing participation in and access to education is a central element in support of the goal of building a fair and prosperous society. Careers services have been charged with prioritising work with vulnerable young people, and with developing better systems for identifying and keeping in touch with them – usually in collaboration with other agencies, in light of the recognition that a multi-agency response is required.

The emphasis on partnership working and joined-up policy delivery has led to the development of the *Connexions* strategy, with the Connexions service, a support service for all young people, as its centrepiece. Connexions is a new advice, guidance and support service for all young people aged 13-19 years, phased in across England from April 2001. It is designed to integrate existing careers advice and support services for young people, creating a single point of access through personal advisers who will be able to give advice and guidance on learning opportunities and careers, and help young people overcome barriers to a successful transition to adult life. The intention is that the Connexions service will ensure that access to all the support services that a young person might need is coordinated through a personal adviser (DfEE, 2000a).

Opportunities for evidence-based policy in the information age

In order to support ‘young people at risk’ it is necessary to know:

- how many there are
- who they are
- where they are

and from a policy perspective:

- what works with whom, where and how?

The numbers within the ‘vulnerable’/‘disaffected’/‘disengaged’ group are difficult to quantify with any great precision because of the lack of common agreement about who is or should be included in the scope of the definition. At present, a range of disparate agencies collect and collates data relating to the individuals constituting their ‘caseload’. Developments in information technologies (IT) enhance the possibilities of linking information from different sources to ‘map’ caseloads from different agencies on to one another, and to ‘track’ individual young people as they move between agencies and/or as their activity status changes. Hence, in the information age there is greater potential than was previously the case for joined-up working and greater opportunity to develop and implement evidence-based policy, with the ultimate aim of reducing the numbers of disengaged young people.

Purpose and scope of the study

Aim

This study is concerned with *examining some of the advantages and limitations of ‘mapping’ and ‘tracking’ methodologies, identifying examples of good practice and the difficulties which agencies have encountered in building reliable, accurate, up-to-date and robust systems.*

Scope

In order to achieve this aim, the study involved:

- identifying a range of attempts to develop systems of mapping and tracking vulnerable young people, from across different types of agencies;
- comparing and contrasting different

approaches to mapping and tracking;

- highlighting difficulties (both conceptual and practical) encountered, and key issues arising, in the course of the development of mapping and tracking systems;
- identifying examples of interesting and good practice;
- outlining implications for policy and making recommendations for future practice.

It is hoped that the findings from the study will influence the debate concerning, and contribute to the agenda for, the Connexions service, as well as raise issues of wider relevance to the research agenda on young people, partnership working, and mapping and tracking methodologies.

Mapping and tracking initiatives in England form the focus of this study, although some evidence was gathered from other parts of the United Kingdom. This additional evidence included some Social Inclusion Partnership projects in Scotland and various projects concerned with working together to tackle the problems of exclusion of young people from the labour market supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) under the *YOUTHSTART* strand of the *EMPLOYMENT* community initiative. This extra material has informed the discussions and conclusions presented in this report.

Methodology

The approach adopted in this study consisted of four main elements:

1. Identification of existing or evolving models for mapping and tracking vulnerable young people

The first element of the project involved identifying a range of initiatives (or models) from which a number of examples of interesting or good practice for possible case studies could be selected. Given the refocusing of the careers service and the position of careers service companies as key in many activities concerning mapping and tracking vulnerable young people, it was considered valuable in the first instance to achieve an overview of careers service activity. A pro forma was sent to all careers service companies in England (see Appendix A) in order to provide details about any recent initiatives, and what they perceived to be the rationale for, and

key issues in, tracking young people. In addition, contact was made with other agencies, including the Youth Justice Board, selected Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and local authorities, the National Youth Agency, Social Inclusion Partnerships and research institutes, to elicit information about other relevant initiatives.

2. Interviews with key informants

As well as establishing the existence of mapping and tracking systems, it was also considered useful to liaise with key informants in central and local government, the careers service, the care system, the justice system and outreach organisations. The purpose of the discussions was to:

- identify emerging policy developments;
- flag up difficulties which had been encountered at the planning and/or implementation stage in setting up mapping and tracking systems;
- identify ways in which these had been overcome or alleviated; or
- gain ideas or recommendations for future practice.

3. Case studies

In order to elicit robust information concerning the potential efficacy of different models of mapping and tracking vulnerable young people, a number of case studies were undertaken. The case studies selected included a range of different lead agencies and partners, and activities/systems at various stages of development, in order to illustrate the range of practice in summer/autumn 2000. The main focus for the case studies was on process and operational issues, with the intention of identifying key issues for mapping and tracking, and examples of good practice. In most cases, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were undertaken with individuals or partners responsible for devising the system, and, in some instances, with end-users of the information derived. Less detailed discussions – either face-to-face, by telephone or correspondence – were held with a range of other individuals or organisations concerned with developing mapping and tracking systems. These may be thought of as ‘mini case studies’. Issues covered in case study interviews (see Appendix B) included:

- a description of the tracking system in a local and/or thematic context – including development, purpose, coverage, information updating, access to and use of the system;
- issues – including partnership working, IT (hardware and software), data protection and confidentiality;
- assessment of success – covering how to assess success, identification of more and less successful elements of the system, key lessons learned and recommendations for others concerned with developing tracking systems; and
- plans for, and expectations of, the future operation of the initiative – over the short-, medium- and longer-term.

4. Roundtable discussion

Following the survey of careers service companies, the key informant interviews and the case studies, a roundtable discussion was held to feed back findings, reflections and recommendations on the basis of the evidence gathered to practitioners. The aim was to test out and gain feedback on the findings and themes emerging from the fieldwork. Seventeen individuals, drawn from a range of relevant agencies and organisations, responded to the findings and contributed to a roundtable discussion covering:

- the rationale and aims of tracking;
- partnership working;
- resource issues;
- technical, data protection and confidentiality issues;
- the consent of young people to tracking;
- the way forward – recommendations and suggestions for future development.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 of the report sets the context for the study in more detail. It begins by outlining the position of young people in the labour market, with particular reference to ‘vulnerable’ groups. The definitions of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘disaffection’ are discussed, and some of the key factors contributing to social exclusion are identified. The changing policy context is also outlined, with particular reference to the refocusing of the careers service, multi-agency partnership working and the background to Connexions.

Chapter 3 provides an introduction to the concepts of and rationale for ‘mapping’ and ‘tracking’. The range of terminologies used with respect to tracking are discussed. The strengths and weaknesses of the existing information base for mapping and tracking are rehearsed. The potential benefits of mapping and tracking are discussed, and some of the barriers and practical questions to be addressed in implementing tracking systems are identified.

Chapter 4 focuses on the activities of careers service companies in relation to tracking. This chapter draws largely on the results of the survey of careers service companies. Chapter 5 presents case study material. It provides an insight into the scope, coverage and progress of mapping and tracking activities involving a range of multi-agency partnerships in different local contexts. Chapter 6 discusses in more detail some of the most important issues arising from the case studies. Topics covered include resources, the benefits and difficulties of partnership working, the ethical issues involved in tracking, a range of issues associated with data protection, confidentiality and information sharing protocols, and IT.

The final chapter summarises the main findings of the report and draws out their policy implications.

Context

Introduction

This chapter sets the context for the study. It outlines the position of young people in the labour market and makes particular reference to changing youth transitions and destinations in the context of restructuring in the wider labour market. An overview of research on vulnerable and disaffected young people is presented as a backdrop to the advent of Connexions.

Young people in the labour market

Changing youth transitions

There have been profound changes in the experiences of young people over the past three decades. Indeed, the entire process through which young people now negotiate entry into the labour market is very different to that in previous years. The main changes have been:

- the decline in the proportion of young people entering the labour market;
- increasing post-compulsory education.

Research on young people in the 1980s and 1990s devoted considerable attention to describing and interpreting 'youth transitions', which were widely recognised to have become more prolonged, complex and less predictable (Gray and Sime, 1990; Cote, 1995; Irwin, 1995; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Roche and Tucker, 1997). The range of opportunities for young people has widened, but the risk of failure has increased and the gap between those who succeed and those who do not has widened (Chisholm, 1990).

Increasingly, the transition from youth to adulthood has been described using such terms as 'extended', 'protracted', 'fragmented', 'shattered' and 'destandardised' (Evans and Heinz, 1994; Roberts, 1995; Bynner et al, 1997; Evans and Furlong, 1997). Underpinning this development has been the protraction of youth as a life stage beyond its conventional age boundaries. Indeed some young people may never manage to make the transition to full adulthood, facing life on the margins and social exclusion (Istance and Williamson, 1996; Williamson, 1997; Merton, 1998).

The extension and differentiation of the transition into employment has complicated other key transitions such as household formation and independent living. Some of the changes which have occurred in the youth labour market have made it more difficult for young people to become independent, particularly the extension of education and training, withdrawal of Income Support in 1988 and exclusion of the under-18s from the National Minimum Wage. Consequently, there is a tendency for young people to remain dependent upon parents for longer in the family home (Jones, 1995; Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998).

Increasing participation in post-compulsory education

One of the most dramatic changes to have occurred in the youth labour market has been the increase in the proportion engaged in full-time education and the decline in the proportion entering employment directly from school. In the early 1970s two thirds of young people left school at age 16 and all but a small minority obtained full-time jobs almost immediately. With the

collapse of the youth labour market from the late 1970s onwards, young people found it increasingly difficult to negotiate entry into the labour market. During the 1980s youth unemployment presented a huge problem (Raffe, 1985; Ashton and Maguire, 1989; Ashton et al, 1990) and there was an expansion of various training schemes. Some researchers argued that these schemes acted as a ‘warehouse’ for young people who would otherwise have been unemployed (Raffe, 1985; Coles, 1988; Ashton et al, 1990; Hollands, 1990). During the 1980s there was growing disenchantment with training as a secure and permanent bridge to work, which was further reinforced by the erosion of the value of training allowances. However, one of the ironies of the withdrawal of benefits and the training guarantee was that it failed to reduce the numbers of disengaged young people.

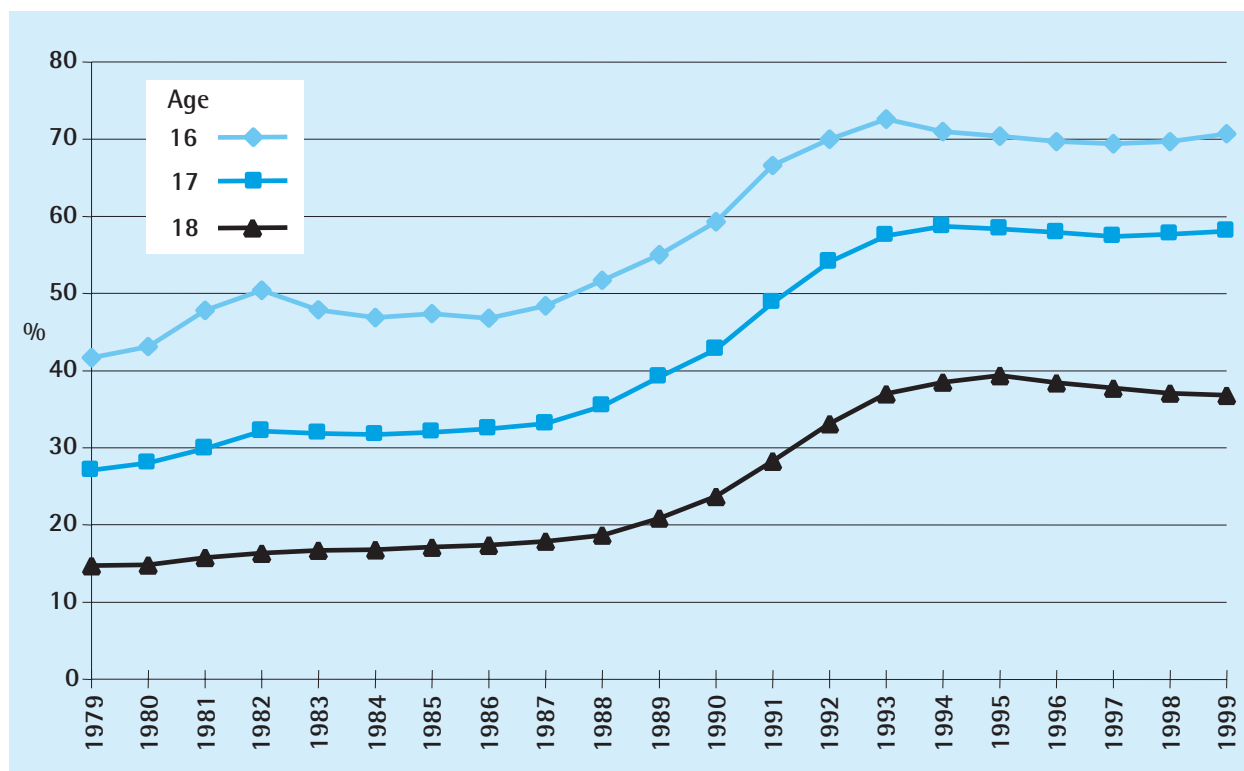
The education system has witnessed significant changes since the late 1970s, with the expansion of higher education and significant development of new educational credentials and vocational education. Figure 2.1 shows that, in 1979, 42% of 16 year olds were engaged in full-time education. This proportion increased substantially during the 1980s, and by the early 1990s 70% of 16 year olds

were in full-time education. Thereafter the trend has remained fairly level. Statistics from the Department for Education and Employment for 1999 (DfEE, 2000b) show that over 86% of 16 year olds were engaged in some form of education and training. The participation rates for 17 and 18 year olds have also risen sharply. In 1979, just 27% of 17 year olds and 15% of 18 year olds were engaged in full-time education. By 1999 the figures were 58% and 37%, respectively.

Destinations

Examination of destinations of Year 11 school leavers confirms this trend away from employment and training. Conversely, there has been a significant decline in the proportion of young people entering full-time education. Figure 2.2 shows that, in 1989, 39% of Year 11 school leavers were engaged in employment or government supported training. By 1999 this proportion had declined to 17%. The proportion of the Year 11 cohort entering full-time education increased from 48% in 1989 to 71% in 1999. Brown (1990) has argued that as society becomes more qualified, this in turn raises expectations and creates a higher demand for education. There is also evidence that educational credentials are

Figure 2.1: Participation rates (%) in full-time education in England (1979-99)



Source: DfEE Statistical First Release on Participation in Education and Training by 16-18 year olds in England

increasingly being used as an insurance policy against the vagaries of the labour market (Brown and Scase, 1994; Brown, 1995). As a result, those vulnerable young people who are unable or unwilling to participate in post-compulsory education are faced with a higher risk of failure and exclusion in a labour market that is increasingly demanding higher skills and qualifications.

The increase in participation in full-time education has been accompanied by an increase in work – particularly part-time work among students (Howieson, 1990; Hobbs et al, 1993; Lucas, 1997). The growth in part-time student employment is likely to contribute to the further marginalisation of young people who leave school early and face increased competition from middle-class young people for part-time jobs (Roberts, 1995). For those young people aged 16-19 years who do manage to get jobs outside government supported training, the majority are in poorly paid, insecure jobs, which lack any real training and have no or low level qualifications (SEU, 1999a). This suggests very different labour market experiences for qualified and unqualified young people.

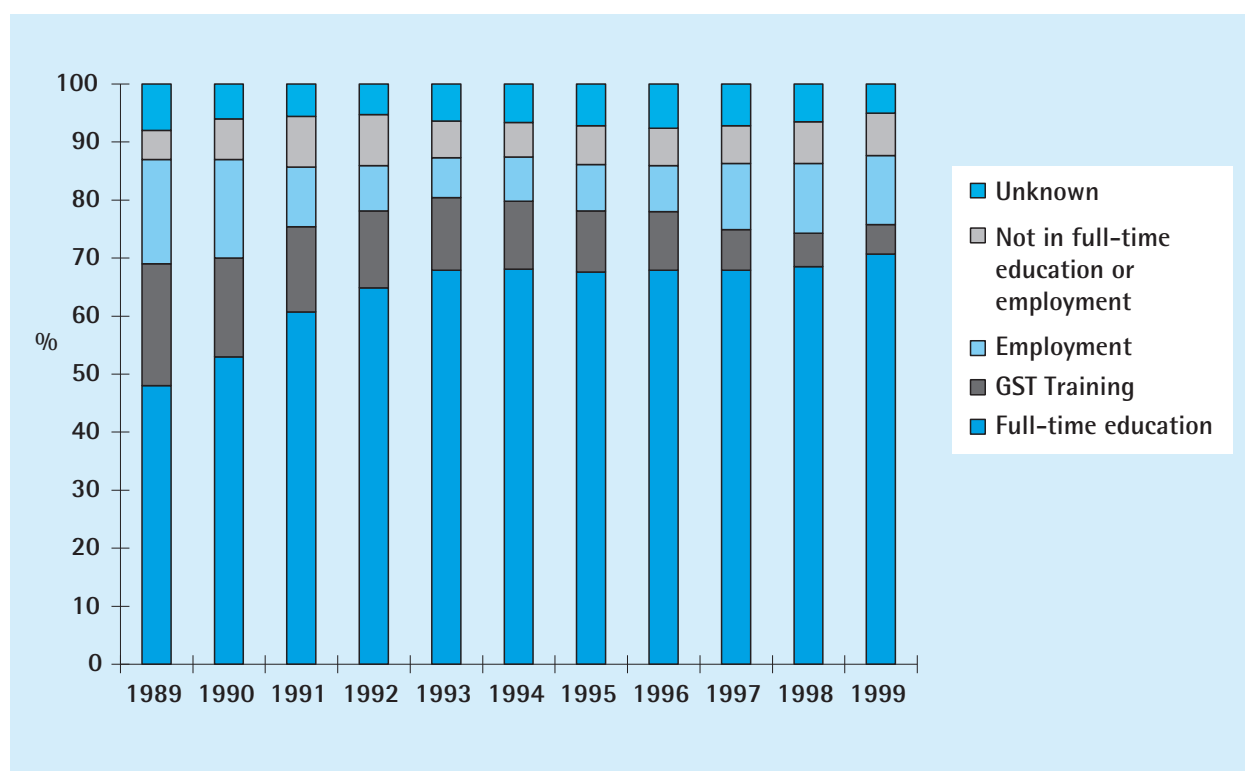
Key features of labour market change

Industrial and occupational change

The changes in youth transitions into the labour market are unpinned by changes that have occurred in the wider labour market. One of the most profound features of restructuring has been the sectoral shift from manufacturing to services. In 1981 nearly a quarter of employment in the UK was in manufacturing. By 1998 the share had fallen to 16% (Wilson, 2000). Inextricably linked with a decline in employment in manufacturing was the demise of opportunities for young males to enter traditional apprenticeship-type training. Indeed, Crompton et al (1996) define this transformation as the shift from a largely homogenous, skilled and semi-skilled workforce towards service employment, which is characterised by a more segmented, fragmented and heterogeneous workforce.

Key features of occupational employment change are the expansion of higher level white-collar occupations such as managers, professional and associate professionals, and declining employment levels and shares in most manual

Figure 2.2: Year 11 destinations (1989–99)



Source: Careers Activity Survey

occupations. While the expansion in personal service and leisure occupations will provide employment opportunities for relatively unqualified young people, the general trend has been towards higher demand for qualified workers (see Maguire and Maguire, 1997).

Industrial and occupational shifts have also altered the types of skills and attributes demanded by employers. There is increasing demand for interpersonal skills, higher level technical and managerial skills, team-working skills and willingness to enhance skills through learning. Moreover, entry into organisations is becoming increasingly segmented by qualifications. Opportunities for a young person to work their way up the organisational career ladder have diminished – due both to changing employment profiles within organisations and changing recruitment strategies. These developments have culminated in a polarisation and marginalisation of unqualified and poorly qualified young people into a decreasing number of unskilled manual and lower non-manual occupations, which offer low pay, poor training and lack job security.

The widening gap

The changes outlined above mean that it is now increasingly difficult for young people with poor or no qualifications to negotiate entry into the labour market. On the one hand they are competing with students and other more qualified young people for the growing number of part-time temporary jobs; they are also competing with adults – particularly adult females – for full-time jobs. On the other hand, they do not have the requisite skills or qualifications necessary for entry into the increasing number of high level non-manual occupations.

Thus, while the economic situation improved in the late 1990s, it is possible that unqualified and early school leavers face great risk of exclusion and/or marginalisation than previous generations. Indeed, Payne (2000) concluded that although young people who left school at the minimum age in 1995 faced less risk of becoming unemployed than those of 10 years previously, they were more likely to be economically inactive and not engaging in either education, employment or training.

It was the recognition of this ‘widening gap’ that gave rise to repeated calls for a concerted effort to

tackle social exclusion (CBI, 1989, 1995). In *A foundation for working life: 14-24 – ten crucial years* (TEC National Council, 1997) the TEC National Council argued for a coordinated approach to improving the skills of young people, and provision of a consistent framework of learning opportunities and qualifications supporting progression across institutional barriers and various learning routes.

The overall aim of the DfEE’s Green Paper, *The learning age*, and the White Paper, *Learning to succeed* (DfEE, 1999a), was to equip individuals, employers and the country to meet the demands of the 21st century with new skills and abilities.

Our vision of the Learning Age is to build a new culture of learning and aspiration which will underpin national competitiveness and personal prosperity, encourage creativity and innovation and help build a more cohesive society. (DfEE, 1999a, p 13)

Hence, there was recognition that lack of qualifications and skills reduces people’s chances of well paid and steady employment and, consequently, increases the risk of social exclusion, particularly within an increasingly technologically-driven society and economy.

Vulnerable and disaffected young people

Enhanced risk

While the majority of young people manage to successfully negotiate their transition to adulthood in an increasingly uncertain world, a minority experience significant difficulties, particularly those young people who leave education at the minimum school leaving age. Researchers associate growing up in late 1990s with enhanced risk and uncertainty (Beck, 1992; Wyn and White, 1997; Wyn and Dwyer, 1999). Berger et al (1993) likened the changes to:

... a shift from a ‘train model’ of life-course with a relatively small number of different trains, fixed tracks, and timetables, to a ‘car model’ of life-course patterns, where individuals and families can and have to choose between different routes, departure times and travelling speeds. Of

course, there are constraints and unintended consequences within this individualized life-course system too. And the stabilization of instabilities will bear new risks and disadvantages for those people lacking the necessary 'means of transportation' or unable to adapt to rising speeds. (Berger et al, 1993, pp 57-8)

According to Beck (1992) formal education is becoming increasingly important. It provides the credentials, which lead to individualised career opportunities in the labour market. However, anyone denied access or failing to attain qualifications faces increased risk of social and material disadvantage.

Not in education, employment or training

There is a growing body of literature which raises concerns about young people who have failed to make the transition from education to employment, who face exclusion from full citizenship and life on the margins. During the 1990s several research studies focused on young people not participating in education, training or work – often referred to as 'status zero' or NEETs (not in education, employment or training) (see Istance and Williamson, 1996; Istance et al, 1994; McVicar, 2000). There have been difficulties in quantifying the proportion of 16-19 year olds falling into this category as it varies over time, depending on the current economic situation (Pearce and Hillman, 1998; Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999). It has been argued that national level statistics underestimate the size of the group because of the changes to the benefit system in 1988. The SEU (1999a) estimated that, at any one time, 161,000 16-18 year olds (9% of the cohort) were not in education, employment or training, with a further 20-25% experiencing some degree of vulnerability. Wilkinson (1995) estimated that about 5-10% of young people aged 16-17 years had dropped out of school having neither found employment or training. NEETs are disproportionately concentrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, experience fractured family lives, enduring poverty and alienation from the labour market, in situations where fragmented social policies have failed to make a difference (see Newburn, 1999).

The policy response

In the 1980s and for much of the 1990s the principal policy response was one of 'containment': various training initiatives were established to deal with the problem of mass youth unemployment and exclusion. However, Williamson (1997) has argued that policies directed at young people increasingly worsened opportunities and possibilities for this age group and contributed to further polarisation (see also Stafford, 1991; Riseborough, 1993). Similarly, Craine (1997) contended that vulnerable young people became trapped in a 'black magic roundabout' where they are circulated through an array of training schemes, casual work in 'McJobs', petty enterprise, quasi-criminal activities, cash-in-hand 'fiddly' jobs and further unemployment (see also Craine and Coles, 1995).

The majority of academics have warned against treating young people as a homogenous group (see Morris and Irwin, 1992; Morris, 1994; MacDonald, 1997), arguing that there was a strong commitment to work among young people not in education or employment. Indeed, as a case study respondent noted: "Young people are not groups. They are individuals". Nevertheless, there has been concern over the relatively large proportions of young people who are homeless, care leavers, from black ethnic groups, and so on, who lose contact with mainstream social institutions and disappear from the system (see Berthoud et al, 2000).

Williamson (2000) has categorised 'status zero'/'disengaged' young people into the 'confused', the 'temporarily side-tracked', and the 'deeply alienated' – who may be further subdivided into the 'purposeless' and the 'purposeful'. With the recognition of the heterogeneity of vulnerable young people, there have been repeated calls for more inter-agency cooperation, communication and response to the needs of young people (Coleman and Warren-Adamson, 1992; Coles, 1995). For instance, those who truant from school are significantly more likely to be from black ethnic groups, have special educational needs and are more likely to be youth offenders. Thus, tackling truancy means that other interrelated issues have also to be addressed which, in many cases, require inter-agency cooperation. Indeed, Pearce and Hillman (1998, p 2) argue that policy making has been constrained by a failure to recognise the variety of interconnected issues

concerning young people and by “professional, institutional and organisational boundaries that prevent an integrated approach to individual needs”. The ‘problems’ faced by young people are complex, interrelated and multi-faceted, such that they are difficult to tackle using standard, often ‘vertical’, delivery methods.

In a report on the *Youthstart* programme, the Employment Support Unit (1999) recommended the development of inter-agency networks to provide a coordinated response to the needs of young people. This was argued to be necessary for the right service provider to ‘get to the right person at the right time’. Consequently, those who provide services to young people need to be aware of the responsibilities of all the different local agencies and services. The ideal of the ‘one-stop shop’ was promoted, where “all relevant services are located under one roof” (Employment Support Unit, 1999, p 12). Similarly, the TEC National Council (2000) called for more effective and proactive partnership arrangements to deliver better support for young people with special educational needs. The SEU (1999a) identified weaknesses in the existing support mechanism for young people, pointing to institutional fragmentation and the vast array of individual agencies providing often overlapping services.

Connexions

Principles and objectives

It was in this context of increased awareness of the complexity of issues confronting young people in the transition from school to work that the *Learning to succeed* White Paper (DfEE, 1999a) was published. The White Paper outlined the government’s commitment to establishing a Connexions strategy to support the foundation of a single support service for all young people, with an explicit aim to:

... raise the number of young people continuing in education and training beyond 16; to reduce the levels of post-16 drop out by improving the quality of provision and of advice, guidance and support services; and to increase levels of attainment by driving up standards across all post-16 education and training in further education, work-based learning and school sixth forms. (DfEE, 1999a, p 49)

Connexions is part of an overall strategy to reduce social exclusion. The ideology informing the Connexions strategy can be conceptualised in terms of tackling disaffection through prevention, recovery and re-integration. Phased in from April 2001, Connexions offers a new service to all 13-19 year olds, placing particular emphasis on those young people at risk in the transition to adulthood. Indeed, a greater emphasis on the needs of this group is already apparent in the ‘refocusing’ of careers service activity on the needs of vulnerable young people. From September 1999 a Learning Gateway was established for those vulnerable 16-17 year olds who required extra help and advice. The central support mechanism were the personal advisers whose remit is to provide young people individual advice and support, which is accessible, consistent and coordinated in order to ensure that they stay in a learning environment.

Structures and supporting information

Up until now service provision has been largely fragmented and overlapping, with very little communication between local, regional and national agencies delivering essentially the same service. Connexions is intended to address the fragmented nature and variable quality of advice, guidance and support available to young people and also to address the quality and relevance of some post-16 education and training.

The Connexions service is designed to be more coherent across current service boundaries in order to provide a more holistic response to individual needs. It is envisaged that collaboration will be achieved through flexible and innovative delivery structures that will connect the public and private sector, community and voluntary sector and deliver a more effective joined-up service to all segments of the community. These ‘flexible’ and ‘innovative’ structures, with more “outreach work, more imaginative ways of providing services and more joint working” (Connexions, 1999a, p 4), are intended to be more outward looking, accessible and more tailored to individual young people’s needs. The Connexions service is intended to work with parents, carers and a wide range of partners such as schools, pupil referral units, youth work organisations, probation services, local community and voluntary organisations, employers, health service, police and social services and the young people themselves.

Within this partnership, the personal adviser is intended to play a pivotal role in connecting young people with appropriate guidance and support services, acting as a 'youth broker' (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999).

Closely allied to this is the need to have readily accessible, organised and accurate information to provide the young person with the most appropriate advice, guidance and realistic choices, which should allow the young person to achieve their full potential. It is also crucial in enabling more effective service provision. At the heart of this is the establishment of an up-to-date and comprehensive "register of the 13-19 population", detailing their learning progress and current economic status (Connexions, 1999a), which:

... will help the Connexions service to ... keep in contact with all young people they work with and ensure that there is detailed monitoring regarding the progress and outcomes for those young people receiving in-depth and specialist support. (Connexions, 1999b, p 41)

It is envisaged that through the development of a comprehensive records system, prompt and coordinated action will be taken if a young person is at risk of dropping out of education or training. Hence, the Connexions strategy proposes the development of a database to:

... ensure that young people do not fall through the net, or become lost to the Connexions service, a database to track their progress through their teenage years.... It will maintain the record of the services support to the individual and referrals to other agencies. It will allow monitoring of the help provided to those not in learning or at risk of becoming disconnected from their current learning or work. (Connexions, 1999b, p 57)

It is envisaged that the database will have national, local and possibly regional components. At the national level, it is proposed that key data will be available for national monitoring and, although anonymised, there will be a need to identify young people who move between areas. At the local level, it is envisaged that the database will be accessed by a number of local agencies. Regarding access to client information, it is proposed that clear protocols will be established

to govern data exchange and access to information. However, while this service will be provided to all 13-19 year olds, the focus will be particularly upon "keeping track of the most disadvantaged young people and helping those at most risk of dropping out" (DfEE, 1999a, p 52).

Thus, three key activities relating to mapping and tracking associated with the Connexions strategy may be identified:

- *maintaining contact with young people*: as exemplified by targets set for careers service companies to reduce the number of 'missing' in the Careers Activity Survey;
- *inter-agency and partnership working*: so that 'seamless' support is provided to the young person, providing a more holistic response to their individual needs; and
- *continual monitoring of their progress*: so that effective, coordinated and timely intervention can be given to young people who, at various stages of transitions, face particular problems, which, unaddressed, could result in their becoming disaffected and socially excluded from mainstream society.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the changing position of young people as they negotiate the transition from school to the labour market. Indeed, the process through which young people enter the labour market is very different today than it was 30, 20 or even 10 years ago. The most profound change has been the extension of the transition from school to the labour market, with young people remaining dependent longer. The most significant changes in the transition have been the increase in the proportion of young people engaged in full-time education and the decline in the proportion entering employment directly at 16/17 years of age. The labour market has moved against those young people who *do* decide to leave school as early as possible. First, industrial, occupational and organisational change has resulted in fewer positions within the labour market of the type formerly filled by young people. Second, increased demand for both qualified and high skilled workers, with less demand for unqualified and unskilled workers, means that unqualified young people face stiffer competition for fewer jobs.

Consequently, the risk of social exclusion and/or marginalisation has increased. Concern with the 'widening gap' between qualified and unqualified young people, and the significant proportion of young people disappearing from the system, who are neither in education, employment or training, has resulted in a concerted effort to tackle social exclusion. Up to the mid-1990s the principal governmental policy response was one of 'containment', with the establishment of various training initiatives. Service provision for young people was largely fragmented and overlapping between different agencies and government departments. However, recognition of the heterogeneity of vulnerable young people, and the multiplicity of interlinked factors accounting for their disadvantage, often requiring a multi-agency response, has given rise to the Connexions strategy.

Central to the Connexions strategy is the concept of 'connecting' all the various services for young people and providing one single 'seamless' support service to young people. The Connexions service will focus particularly on vulnerable young people, who, through personal advisers, will receive individual support, advice and information. At the heart of Connexions is the establishment of a comprehensive and 'live' register of the 13-19 population, which will allow monitoring and timely intervention if a young person is at risk of dropping out of education or training. Thus, there is increased pressure on the careers service to maintain contact, monitor and track those groups of young people who are not engaged in a learning outcome. Additionally, with inter-agency cooperation being a central component of connecting up support services, issues of partnership, cooperation and consultation will become more important and necessary to the work of support services.

Mapping and tracking

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the concepts of and rationale for 'mapping' and 'tracking'. The range of terminologies used with respect to tracking is outlined, and the strengths and weaknesses of the existing information base for mapping and tracking are rehearsed. The potential benefits of mapping and tracking are discussed, and some of the barriers and practical questions to be addressed in implementing tracking systems are identified.

Concepts of 'mapping' and 'tracking'

Definitional issues

'Mapping' and 'tracking' are problematic terms. 'Tracking', in particular, has no universally accepted definition: it means different things to different people. Therefore, it is important at the outset to discuss some definitional issues.

'Mapping' is about charting or outlining where people, things or features are. In the context of this study, it describes the process of quantifying the population and characteristics of young people, and how those characteristics relate to each other. In an inter-agency framework it may be about measuring the 'overlap' between different 'caseloads' or 'stocks' of vulnerable young people. The term might also be used to describe how the services offered by different agencies link together, and is therefore of particular significance in the context of partnership working.

'Tracking' is a more emotive term, since for some people it has connotations of 'surveillance' and

'big brother'. Hence, some practitioners and organisations prefer not to use the term, but have had difficulty in finding an acceptable substitute. A 'track' is a mark, or a series of marks or footprints. 'Tracking' is the process of tracing that series of marks or footprints. It is inherently dynamic. In 'An issues paper for future action' prepared by the Sheffield Strategic Education Forum in 1998, tracking in an education, training and labour market context was described as:

... the planned, systematic updating of knowledge of the status of a person's attainments measured in qualifications, and their participation in the education, training and employment market. (Sheffield Strategic Education Forum, 1998, p 1)

Interestingly, insertion of the term 'tracking' into an Internet search engine throws up terms such as 'tracking parcels' and 'hurricane tracking', rather than 'tracking people'. Nevertheless, the 'parcel' and 'hurricane' metaphors are interesting from the perspective of this study. The process of 'tracking parcels' is about tracking progress from an origin to a destination, whereas 'hurricane tracking' is more complex. Changing meteorological conditions are taken into account and real time developments are monitored. The overall process of 'hurricane tracking' is designed to inform preventative action so that negative consequences can be minimised.

The concepts of 'mapping' and 'tracking' are closely related. For example, the fact that x per cent excluded from school at age 15 and living in a certain area go on to be homeless and/or have substance use problems, combines 'mapping' and 'tracking'. Hence, the term 'tracking' is used as

shorthand to cover the whole range of activities in the rest of this report.

'Historical tracking' and 'interventionist tracking'

A survey of views from agencies engaged in tracking young people (Lifetime Careers, 1999) identified three 'types' of tracking: (1) historical, (2) event driven and (3) operational/interventionist. However, use of these terms varied, with different terms sometimes being used to describe the same activity. As use of the term 'tracking' has increased, the key distinction to emerge (and used in *Careers service planning guidance* for 1999-2000 and 2000-01; DfEE, 1999b, 2000c) is that between:

- *historical tracking*: tracking the progression of young people to aid the planning of learning partnerships and to inform careers education, information and guidance; and
- *interventionist tracking*: tracking in order to work with individuals in priority groups, and to provide essential underpinning for focusing services on such groups.

A crucial difference between historical and interventionist tracking is the frequency of information collection required and the timeliness of the information held, with more frequent and timely information being required to support interventionist tracking than is needed for historical tracking. This, in turn, has implications for time, staff and monetary resources. The 2000-01 *Careers service planning guidance* identifies interventionist tracking as a priority task for careers services. It outlines the need to establish regular means of obtaining information about young people's situations (in learning, jobs and activity status terms) at least for those young people within the range of school Year 9 (that is, aged 13/14 years) until the end of the second post-compulsory year (that is, aged 18 years). Chapter 4 provides further details of the information collection activities of careers service companies. The shift in emphasis from historical to interventionist tracking is underlined by the thrust of government policy on social exclusion:

The key principle in our strategy is intervention at crucial points in the lifecycle to prevent poverty and social exclusion in the future. (DSS, 2000, p 5)

Despite this shift in emphasis from historical to interventionist tracking, this study revealed widespread recognition of the continuing need for historical tracking in order to set the context in which interventions take place (as outlined in subsequent chapters).

The rationale for mapping and tracking

Helping young people

The mapping and tracking of young people is a central policy issue in the context of national and local level concerns about tackling disaffection, raising standards and addressing social exclusion. The underlying rationale for such activity in the context of this study is to *help young people* and, notably, vulnerable young people, through transitions – especially those into the labour market and into independent living.

Pathways

The notion of 'pathways' is a helpful one in this respect (see Roberts, 1968). It is linked to the concept of 'opportunity structures' open to individuals – how opportunities are structured by region, education, labour market conditions, household circumstances, and so on. Anderson and Tulloch (2000) use this notion in relation to research on homelessness, although the notion may be applied usefully to other domains of life. A 'pathway *through* homelessness' describes the route of an individual into homelessness, their experience of homelessness, and their route out of homelessness. At the most complex level each individual has a 'unique pathway', but it is also useful to try and identify 'generalised pathways'. Using such generalised information it may be possible to identify the risk factors and trigger factors associated with undesirable outcomes. The notion of pathways emphasises that consideration needs to be given to processes and dynamics in relation to different trajectories, and highlights that tracking is about 'pathways through', rather than merely 'pathways into'.

Potential benefits of mapping and tracking

Ideally, mapping and tracking need to provide a time series of comprehensive up-to-date information on:

- the size of the population of interest and its characteristics and needs;
- the activities and achievements of that population;
- interventions and the outcomes of interventions;
- destinations.

By providing such information, mapping and tracking activities have the potential to inform the targeting of resources towards identified groups of young people. They also involve a process which, given sufficient resources and the existence of appropriate structures, should enable inter-agency cooperation to target appropriate interventions towards a specific individual at the right time.

From past to current and future perspectives

A greater focus on interventionist tracking implies a shift in emphasis in temporal trends from historical to current (real time) information. The ultimate goal of interventionist tracking is to achieve 'advance notification' of changes in activity of young people. Indeed, reflecting this trend of looking to the future, the report of Policy Action Team (PAT) 12 on Young People (SEU, 1999b, 2000a) highlighted the need for a shift in emphasis from 'crisis intervention' to 'prevention'.

Increasing activity – 'tracking by stealth'

The amount of mapping and tracking activity has increased markedly in recent years. In part, this reflects the policy emphasis on tackling social exclusion and multi-agency and joined-up working. In the case of young people the fragmentation of policy thinking and service delivery has been particularly acute. Policy Action Team 12 pointed out that at least eight departments have an interest in policies and services for young people, and at least four local authority services work directly with young people (SEU, 1999b). Increasing activity is, at least in some quarters, linked to targets, which are in turn linked to funding, a process which might be described as 'tracking by stealth'. This is a

matter for concern if it means that the central focus on helping the young person is lost. Indeed, this issue was raised at the roundtable discussion and in the survey of careers service companies. There is an important challenge, therefore, to ensure that tracking is a 'live' process with the young person at the centre, rather than merely a 'statistical' process in which organisational concerns are uppermost.

The existing information base

Existing data sources contain a substantial amount of information about the circumstances, attitudes and experiences of young people, and about the wider family, social and economic context, pertinent to transitions made by young people. However, in the context of mapping vulnerable young people it is salient to note that differing data sets are usually held by a variety of different agencies, with varying degrees of efficiency, over differing time-spans, based on differing administrative units and with differing levels of detail. From a tracking perspective, an ONS (1999) review of longitudinal data sources entitled *Tracking people* makes a distinction between information from surveys and from administrative records.

The Youth Cohort Study

Foremost among the longitudinal surveys containing information on young people is the Youth Cohort Study (YCS). The DfEE conducts the YCS across England and Wales on a series of samples of young people just after they are eligible to leave compulsory schooling, and follows it up for a number of sweeps. A sample of around 20,000 young people is followed up over a two-year period, with information collected on topics such as activity status (for example, whether they have a full-time job, are in education), family background and other socioeconomic and demographic data. The YCS has been analysed to identify factors associated with the NEET group (Payne, 2000) – see Box 3.1. Similar factors, together with other factors associated with disadvantage, have been used to map the 'hot spots' where the transition from adolescence to adult status is most likely to be problematic (The Prince's Trust, 2000).

Box 3.1: Factors associated with non-participation in education, training and employment, 16–18 year olds

- no/unknown/not stated qualifications
- excluded from school in Years 10 and 11
- persistent truant in Year 11
- parents' occupation unskilled manual
- neither parent in full-time employment
- living with neither parent or father only
- living with their own children
- living with a partner
- parents living in rented accommodation
- having a disability or health problem

Source: DfEE Statistical Bulletin 02/2000

Although large samples have been accumulated over the years from the YCS, the YCS does have drawbacks (Berthoud et al, 2000):

- It *covers a relatively short time-span* (from 16–18 years). Given that research (for example, Johnston et al, 2000) has shown that early experiences (at the age of 12–13 years) can have a significant impact on people's later lives (in their twenties) and that experiences may be complex and unpredictable, it can be argued that the time-frame should be longer: starting earlier and finishing later.
- It suffers from *low response rates* (which are compensated for by weighting factors in subsequent sweeps) – particularly among certain vulnerable young people (notably those with poor literacy skills and those who do not attain good educational qualifications and/or employment), while those who are homeless or otherwise suffering from multiple disadvantage may not even be covered (Hughes and Morgan, 2000).
- It *does not have substantial samples of some groups* of particular interest from a policy perspective (for example, ethnic minority groups); special schools are not included within the sample frame, thus excluding one 'vulnerable' group.

Other survey sources

In addition to the YCS there is a range of other national surveys of young people – including Department of Health surveys of smoking, drinking and drug use among young people, and the Youth and Lifestyles Survey. There are longitudinal contextual studies – such as the Birth Cohort Studies, the Labour Force Survey and the British Household Panel Survey. There are government continuous surveys – including the British Crime Survey, the Family Resources Survey and the Millennium Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. In addition, the Youth Justice Board undertakes an annual survey of both school and excluded pupils which focuses on youth offending and young people's attitudes to offending, school, alcohol and drugs. Moreover, in the context of a number of major policy initiatives concerning young people, feasibility studies have been undertaken for:

- a longitudinal survey of young people (La Valle and Shepherd, 1999); and
- a longitudinal study of the transition from school to work among young people from different ethnic groups (Berthoud et al, 2000).

Administrative sources and other tracking activities

Administrative sources may also provide information pertinent to mapping and tracking activities. They may be cheaper to collect and maintain than cohort surveys, and the fact that they focus on a particular target population may have some advantages. A range of disparate agencies collect and collate information relating to 'stocks' of clients – even if only for administrative and operational purposes. Moreover, the range of relevant administrative sources is increasing and other tracking activities being undertaken are increasing. Examples include:

- the tracking of individuals through the New Deal for Young People;
- the development of a DfEE 14–21 database in an attempt to provide information about qualifications and routes followed by matching details for individuals held in existing administrative records within the further and higher education systems in England;
- the ASSET Young Offender Assessment Profile used in Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) – designed to improve practice and service delivery;

- the YOTs' individual monitoring systems;
- the Client Progress Kit used in the Employment Service with unemployed people as a tool for 'guiding interventions' by assisting decision making about what support and help an individual client needs and enabling the measurement of progress towards employability;
- the Careers Activity Survey undertaken by careers service companies to track destinations of Year 11 (and other) pupils.

Overview

The existing information base provides valuable contextual information on the circumstances of young people, and some of the administrative sources identified provide examples of information collection to inform interventionist tracking. However, despite these data collection activities gaps do remain and, in the light of Connexions, the need for further information gathering activity has been identified. An element of the Connexions strategy is the establishment of national and local databases of information about young people (as outlined in Chapter 2), serving the following purposes:

- a database for *national* anonymised monitoring and analysis, but also identifying young people moving between local areas;
- *local*-level databases to be accessible to many different agencies and professionals, with clear protocols covering data exchange and access, with usage strictly controlled on a need-to-know basis in order to preserve client confidentiality – to be used to inform the efficient and effective targeting and deployment of resources to help young people.

Practical issues to be addressed in implementing tracking systems

A comprehensive mapping and tracking system – from concept to reality

There are a number of major stumbling blocks in the way of designing, implementing and using a comprehensive mapping and tracking system. These include:

- *Strong and universal commitment from partner agencies* – as discussed in Chapter 6, building and maintaining partnerships is a resource intensive process;
- Resolving *practical questions* regarding:
 - *Who* should be tracked; should the tracking system include 'all' young people (that is, have universal coverage) or should it focus solely on 'vulnerable' young people? In the case of the latter, this may well be complicated by the fact that different agencies use different definitions and categorisations: even if the content of two categories appears similar at 'face value', different terms may have different meanings for different people in different agencies. A further complication is that the status of 'vulnerable' groups changes over time: a young person may become 'vulnerable' through unforeseen circumstances.
 - For *how long* should they be tracked? What is the most appropriate age range to track? How feasible is this in practice? When should individuals be removed from the system?
 - *Who* should do the tracking and *how* should records from different agencies be merged? Key issues here are whether it is appropriate to establish a stand-alone tracking database or extend or modify an existing database of one of the partners. In terms of linking individual records, the lack of a common system of *unique identifiers* is a key issue. The availability of a common set of unique identifiers would obviate double counting and would enable the linkage of information on the same individuals from different agencies. The merging of records from different agencies is also complicated by the fact that partners' information systems are likely to vary in their degree of sophistication. Indeed, not all data are computerised, hardware and software used may vary, and data are often

held in different formats. Such a lack of comparability and consistency between data sets was one of the issues highlighted in the report of the Policy Action Team on *Better information* (SEU, 2000b). In general, existing databases have largely been set up to satisfy operational activities within individual departments or services, and this may be at odds with a multi-agency strategic tracking system designed to inform interventions and referrals.

- *Respecting the provisions of the Data Protection Act and safeguarding the confidentiality of individuals.* In building a comprehensive mapping and tracking system, it is necessary to follow the principles of good practice set down in the Data Protection Act, to have due regard to the rights of data subjects and the handling of sensitive information. Yet, as highlighted by the report of the PAT on *Joining it up locally* (DETR, 1999a; SEU, 2000a), many agencies are unsure how to share data on individuals without violating data protection law, with many local studies revealing evidence on, and experience of, confidentiality barriers to successful data sharing (SEU, 2000c; outlined in more detail in Chapter 6).

It is notable that several of the issues identified here have resonance with the obstacles of data pooling identified by Foley (1992) in a study of collaboration in labour market information collection undertaken in the early 1990s (see Box 3.2 for a list of obstacles and benefits).

Box 3.2: Obstacles to and benefits of data pooling

Obstacles	Potential benefits
Confidentiality	Effective use of resources
Incompatible computer systems	Minimisation of disruption to information suppliers
Incompatible objectives	Consistency and continuity
Reconciling data needs	Fostering cooperation and understanding
Management and funding	Improved labour market policies

Source: Foley (1992)

Gaining consent of young people, keeping in touch and retaining goodwill

Consent and resistance

In accordance with data protection principles, young people need to be clear about how information relating to them which is held on tracking systems might be used. The issue of young people’s ‘consent’ and ‘resistance’ to having information held on tracking systems is discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Keeping in touch – the challenge of mobility

Potentially, the difficulty of keeping in touch with young people increases in line with the extent of the mobility of the individuals concerned. In some respects, young people are well connected electronically, with many having access to mobile phones and/or email. This offers mechanisms for keeping in touch which were not available to the same extent even a few years ago. On the other hand, the very mobility of many young people poses particular challenges for keeping in touch. Indeed, with increasing household fission, some young people may not even have a ‘regular’ residence; rather, they may live with one parent for part of the week, and with the other for the remainder; posing particular problems for mapping and tracking. Young people have a high rate of residential mobility: they may leave the parental home to set up on their own or form a new family, and then perhaps move back. Vulnerable young people may display particularly high rates of mobility. Such mobility presents an important challenge to tracking, which may be particularly acute in large metropolitan areas. Indeed, evidence from the Careers Activity Survey, compiled from returns from careers service companies (see Chapter 4 for further details), reveals that the percentages ‘moving out of contact’ of the careers service have been consistently higher in London than in other regions. Hence, some environments, as well as some individuals, may be inherently ‘more challenging’ from the perspective of making a comprehensive mapping and tracking system a reality.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concepts of mapping and tracking. 'Tracking', in particular, is a problematic term, which is often used in different ways by different people, and which can conjure up negative connotations for some. Essentially, in the context of vulnerable young people, it is about tracing pathways through transitions with the aim of informing strategic planning of service provision and intervening on behalf of a young person to facilitate positive outcomes.

In recent years, the information base providing data of relevance to mapping and tracking young people has expanded, while technological developments have enhanced possibilities for connecting databases and linking individual records. In the context of policy initiatives to tackle social exclusion and promote multi-agency and joined-up working, the amount of mapping and tracking activity has increased considerably. Indeed, terms such as 'historical tracking' and 'interventionist tracking' have been introduced to denote the nature and purpose of tracking activity in different contexts. Increasing emphasis has been placed on 'interventionist tracking', although 'historical tracking' remains important and, arguably, essential.

The design and implementation of tracking systems raise issues of 'ethics', 'data protection' and 'confidentiality' – particularly in a multi-agency partnership context (discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6). Keeping in touch with the individual young people themselves is a further challenge, and this task may be especially difficult in the case of vulnerable young people in large urban areas. There are, therefore, considerable obstacles to be overcome before the potential and actual benefits of mapping and tracking can be attained. This suggests that establishing a comprehensive mapping and tracking system will be no 'quick fix'; there is a substantial amount of groundwork to be done against the backdrop of a great deal of activity in a rapidly changing policy, institutional, information and technological context.

Activities of careers service companies

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the activities of careers service companies in relation to tracking.

As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, given the refocusing of the careers service and the position of such companies as a prime mover in many activities concerning mapping and tracking vulnerable young people, it was considered valuable to:

- achieve an overview of careers service activity; and
- identify examples of interesting or good practice for possible case studies.

A pro forma (see Appendix A) was designed for careers service companies to:

- provide details about mapping and tracking initiatives engaged in, methods used and approaches adopted;
- give their views on tracking;
- comment on aspects of tracking that were both successful and unsuccessful;
- find out what they considered to be the key issues in establishing tracking systems.

This pro forma was circulated by post to all 66 careers service companies in England. A total of 41 questionnaires were returned (a response rate of 62%).

The main findings of the survey and some of the key issues arising from the results are reported in this chapter.

Information collection activities

The vast majority (95%) of careers service companies indicated that they routinely collect information on young people additional to the core DfEE careers service contract and monthly management information return. For most, this additional information collection was a relatively recent initiative (starting in the last three years). Many funded information collection from their own resources, but some cited external sources such as TECs, colleges, the ESF and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

The main purposes for this information collection were:

- *Monitoring of destinations*: in order to identify those groups of young people who are vulnerable and at risk of disaffection or exclusion. Among groups of young people tracked are New Deal participants, those on the Learning Gateway and sixth form school leavers.
- *Resource allocation*: in order to best optimise service delivery to those young people who are at risk. For example, one company reported monitoring:

“... a) how much time we spend with each client in our interventions – in order to measure which of our interventions are the most effective with particular client groups; and b) how long young people have to wait when they come and see us in our careers centres. We know that some young people will not wait more than a few minutes to be seen, particularly those who are at risk of non-participation in learning. We call it the ‘McDonalds syndrome’ – they

expect that all service must be instantaneous. If not some walk out and become difficult to track.”

- *Equal opportunities monitoring*: in order to identify those groups who are failing to use the careers service. A number of careers service companies monitored postcodes in order to identify possible areas of exclusion.

Refocusing: an increasing emphasis on vulnerable young people

Virtually all careers service companies indicated an increased emphasis on keeping track of vulnerable young people, with the aim of delivering and targeting service resources more effectively and efficiently. There was an awareness that vulnerable young people are a heterogeneous group (as outlined in Chapter 2), including young offenders, travellers, teenage mothers, homeless young people, care leavers, young carers, non-attenders in education or training, those excluded from school and Year 11 leavers who lack any clear career or educational intentions.

Overwhelmingly, careers service companies argued this increasing emphasis had been largely initiated from the DfEE; in line with requirements to reduce the number of ‘unknown’ destinations, and to ensure records are both comprehensive and up to date. In addition, the establishment of headline targets as a requirement for audit purposes was reported, and it was noted that targets can have financial implications regarding funding from the DfEE.

Additionally, increased inter-agency partnerships (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more discussion) have also led to an upsurge in activity, as exemplified by the comment: “we are far more proactive because of the focusing agenda and in preparation for Connexions”. Another respondent observed: “Networking has meant that a number of agencies are referring youngsters to us who are ‘at risk’ and may not have come to us in the past”. Partnership working has fuelled an increased demand from careers service companies for up-to-date client information. There is “greater interest in data produced by partners, [and data are] requested more frequently, with greater degree of analysis”. One respondent reported: “Since August 1999, we have had a dedicated tracking team to follow up young people”.

In general, these activities and trends have entailed a move away from historical to interventionist tracking, where careers service companies are now able to intervene more effectively in order to increase the proportion of young people entering positive outcomes (either in education, training or employment with training). Several respondents reported a “move from annual snapshots/historical tracking to a more interventionist model focusing on clients most in need of services”.

The majority of careers service companies track young people from Year 9 (although some start at Year 7 or Year 8), until 21 years of age, or 25 years for special needs cases. ‘Age’ was the most common reason for removal from the tracking system. Additionally, in some cases, if the young person was known to have left the area, they were removed from the system.

Dealing with ‘movers’

Keeping track of young people who enter and leave an area is an essential element in ensuring continuity of service and support to the young people concerned. Tracking young people who leave and enter the area presents problems for the careers service (as highlighted in Chapters 3, 6 and 7).

In the majority of cases careers service companies do not automatically transfer data to another careers service company, but only on request: “If the new careers service is known to be in contact with the young person. In most cases we do not know exactly where the young person has gone”. Conversely, ‘new arrivals’ to the area tend to be identified either through contact from the previous careers service or simply by the young person coming to register at the company. However, ‘vulnerable’ young people are often among those least likely to go to a careers centre. The main problem is tracking new arrivals beyond school leaving age: “If they do not register with the careers service they are not identified in any systematic way”.

Partnerships with other agencies, in particular local schools, colleges and TECs, also play a crucial part in identifying new arrivals. Some careers service companies also make use of other agencies such as social services, outreach centres, the Probation Service and so on, to help identify

new arrivals. A number of neighbouring careers service companies have agreements to share data on young people who have left the area.

Processes/methods for collecting information on vulnerable young people

Careers service companies employ a *multi-faceted approach* in collecting information on vulnerable young people.

Most careers service companies identify vulnerable young people through one-to-one interviews when the young person comes in to register. This interview plays an important part in assessing and identifying needs, while also providing both careers guidance and other forms of assistance and/or advice. However, the majority of careers service companies are actively involved in data sharing partnerships with both statutory and voluntary agencies in order to identify vulnerable young people. The most important partners cited are schools, colleges, TECs and social services.

Information from partnerships with other agencies is obtained through *formal* and/or *informal* means. A number of careers service companies indicated they had established partnership agreements which provide a framework for liaison, referral and exchange of information with a variety of partners including schools and colleges, TECs, Pupil Referral Units, Leaving Care Teams, probation, education, welfare, social services, youth and community services and so on. One careers service company indicated that it had “seconded staff to work in the social services leaving care teams also working with young offenders, young carers and homeless young people; staff in each centre were allocated to find ‘disappeared’ young people”. In many instances information is also collected through informal liaison with other agencies.

The majority of careers service companies indicated that the methods used to track vulnerable young people have changed over time, with a greater emphasis on *proactivity*:

“As the DfEE requirements have changed we have added new codes to the client database to collect more information. More follow-up of clients is conducted and we have established partnerships with

a number of agencies working with these young people.”

Proactive follow-up of young people to encourage engagement in a learning outcome has entailed more imaginative and innovative approaches to monitoring and keeping in touch with vulnerable young people. There is a tendency towards more systematic utilisation of networks, increased use of outreach workers, of community careers officers focused specifically on vulnerable young people, of home visiting and evening telephone calling and so on: “Response to letters is generally poor, telephone is better but often requires out-of-hours work – hence community callers”. One respondent commented:

“We have ‘captured’ more children that are outside mainstream education. This has been as a result of inter-agency cooperation.... The positive response we have received is due in no small measure to the government’s commitment to social inclusion – *Learning to succeed* and *Bridging the gap* being particularly helpful.”

Another careers service company had adopted a ‘call-centre approach’ to track young people by employing out-of-hours staff to contact young people in the evenings.

There is also an increased awareness of the need to collect more detailed, accurate and reliable information on young people. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the survey also pointed to a trend towards more widespread adoption and use of sophisticated electronic systems to collect, collate and store data on young people.

Problems encountered in tracking

The most common problems associated with tracking related to:

- *staffing resources*: identified by 64% of respondents;
- *time resources*: presented problems for 62% of respondents;
- *data protection problems*: highlighted by 61% of respondents;
- *computer/IT issues*: mentioned by 46% of respondents;
- *financial constraints*: identified by 41% of respondents;
- *partnership problems*: indicated by 36% of respondents.

Box 4.1: The nature of problems encountered in tracking

Staffing and time resources

Both staffing and time resource problems are intertwined. The increasingly proactive approach taken to track vulnerable young people has placed burdens on staffing resources. Tracking vulnerable young people is very difficult and time consuming because they are the group that do not respond to letters, telephone calls and also tend to move around to different addresses. Reducing the 'no response' rate requires a considerable amount of resources and commitments, which, in turn, impacts on their ability to deploy financial and staffing resources to other important tasks. A number of careers service companies recommended the establishment of a unique identifier, which they feel could make it easier to track young people; particularly those with unstable addresses and who move between different careers service areas.

Data protection issues

There is concern among all agencies who are involved in collecting information on young people regarding confidentiality, relevance and accuracy of the information. The most common way around data protection problems has been through the establishment of formal codes of practice outlining the principles and conditions of data sharing. A number of careers service companies argued that a common DfEE protocol for data sharing, storing and exchanging information would be helpful in clarifying data protection issues:

"DfEE could really help as many of the problems are in exchanging data between schools, colleges, LEAs, ES and, soon, LSCs, which are ultimately responsible to DfEE. A common DfEE protocol for obtaining, storing, exchanging data would be really helpful."

Another respondent commented: "Data protection issues can cause problems with passing information between agencies. Although work is being done locally, it can only be addressed totally by central government". However, some careers service companies indicated that agencies often use data protection as an excuse for not sharing information.

Computer/IT issues

Two main problems were identified: (1) incompatibility of data between agencies, and (2) incompatible computer systems. Careers service companies also identified the need to have up-to-date, accurate and reliable information on young people. Schools/colleges were specifically criticised on this front. A unique identifier was also seen by many as a way to resolve data problems:

"Different information/computer systems means manually inputting the data – this would be facilitated by a unique number, but in the absence of this we have developed protocols for identifying clients – eg, name, address, data of birth – to identify young people."

Financial constraints

The need to devote extra resources to tracking vulnerable young people has placed financial burdens on most careers service companies. The need to reduce the number of young people not responding to the careers service follow-up surveys has presented costs for careers service companies in relation to increased use of out-of-hours and flexible working to contact young people, and the use of incentives (such as cinema tokens) in order to get young people to respond to questionnaires. Some also argued that greater liaison between agencies means that extra resources will have to be devoted to this area.

Partnership problems

It was reported that some agencies are sensitive about and/or reluctant to share their information. Some agencies do not see the value in tracking and feel it will undermine the trust they have gained with young people. This was particularly an issue for the Youth Service. However, a prerequisite for successful partnership is inclusive cooperation and liaison between all partners. Some respondents recommended: "... more opportunities for careers service staff to be on steering or consultation groups involving outside organisations". "Building up trust and respect from outside organisations by sharing examples of good practice and different methods of outreach work", was also identified as a possible way forward. Data protection and partnership problems were often seen as intertwined, as cooperation between partners in sharing data also in many cases eliminates data protection problems.

The nature of problems and issues raised under each of these headings is outlined in more detail in Box 4.1. (Many of these issues were also raised in case studies – see Chapter 5 – and are among the ‘key issues’ discussed in Chapter 6.)

Aspects of tracking that have been successful or unsuccessful

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify those aspects of tracking that have been particularly successful or particularly unsuccessful. These aspects are highlighted in Boxes 4.2 and 4.3, respectively.

Box 4.2: Aspects of tracking that have been successful

- Better identification, targeting and monitoring of vulnerable young people.
- Increased multi-agency cooperation. This has built respect and better understanding among the different agencies. One respondent commented that “greater cooperation and talking to agencies gets more accurate data and information”. In some cases it has also highlighted gaps in local service provision: “Working with local TECs more closely by sharing data has led to the lack of training provision being analysed and acted upon”.
- Data sharing has led to early identification of vulnerable young people.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of ‘unknown’ young people – which has also led to an increase in the number of positive outcomes.
- Tracking allows careers service companies to plan caseloads better in order to focus on those most in need.
- Increased emphasis on interventionist as opposed to historical tracking has meant they have a better understanding of what happens to young people over a period of time, rather than only at one point in time.
- Careers service companies have more frequent contact with clients over a longer period of time, which has also led to an increase in the number of positive outcomes.

It is notable than certain aspects – including multi-agency/partnership cooperation and data sharing – appear in both lists. Partnership working can lead to better understanding, but can also be blighted by lack of cooperation. Similarly, on the one hand, data sharing has been successful in helping to identify more vulnerable young people. On the other hand, reluctance to share information and doubts about quality and relevance of information from other agencies led some respondents to regard data sharing initiatives as ‘unsuccessful’.

Box 4.3: Aspects of tracking that have been unsuccessful

- The difficulties experienced in tracking vulnerable young people. A number of respondents pointed out that certain groups of vulnerable young people, such as the homeless, refugees, are difficult to track as they tend not have stable addresses (see also Chapter 3).
- Lack of cooperation in sharing information between the different partners. In this respect, schools and colleges were highlighted in several instances for not having accurate records and arrangements for up-to-date information exchange, while incomplete records was noted as a problem in relation to the voluntary sector.
- Data sharing problems and associated problems of data protection were also issues of concern for some careers service companies. Some agencies were criticised for their reluctance to give up control of information: “Individuals/managers are reluctant (across all agencies – including careers!) to ‘give up’ control of information”. Additionally, doubts were expressed over the relevance of some organisations’ data.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that information collection and tracking activities of careers service companies have increased over recent years. Information is collected to monitor destinations and inform resource allocation decisions.

'Refocusing' has led to a greater emphasis on keeping track of vulnerable young people. The evidence gathered in the survey highlights the associated move from historical to interventionist tracking outlined in Chapter 3. However, there is a tendency for 'movers' to be dealt with in a predominantly ad hoc fashion.

Approaches to information collection are increasingly multi-faceted and proactive, involving the use of formal and informal data collection methods. Overall, a clear trend is evident towards the collection of more detailed information, with an emphasis on achieving and maintaining high standards of accuracy and reliability. There is also more widespread use of electronic systems to collect, collate and store data.

Problems encountered in relation to tracking relate to limited staffing and time resources, data protection problems, computer/IT issues, financial constraints and partnership problems. Some careers service companies considered that partnership working and data sharing initiatives had been successful, while others reported disappointments on these fronts. Hence, the overall picture appears to be one of 'variable success'.

Case studies

Introduction

This chapter presents ‘pen portraits’ of a number of local projects concerned with mapping and tracking. The purpose of the case studies is to examine in more detail a range of initiatives to develop mapping and tracking activities and systems.

The case studies selected for investigation involved a range of different lead agencies and partners, and activities and systems at various stages of development in summer/autumn 2000. They are intended to be illustrative of the nature of mapping and tracking activities.

Scope of the case studies

As outlined in Chapter 1, in most cases, face-to-face semi-structured interviews (using the checklist in Appendix B) were undertaken with individuals or partners responsible for devising the system and, in some instances, with end-users of the information derived. The main focus for the case studies was on process and operational aspects, with the intention of identifying key issues for mapping and tracking. These issues are flagged up in this chapter, but are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The emphasis in this chapter is on describing case study activities, with particular emphasis on the background to developments and their purpose. The coverage of activities and systems is outlined, and processes of information updating and access and usage of systems are described. Issues of partnership working, IT (hardware and software), data protection and confidentiality are central to activities, so points arising from the case studies are highlighted. The key successes of activities to date are identified and plans for future developments are outlined.

Key themes and common issues arising from the case studies are highlighted in the final section of this chapter. Some of these are the focus for more detailed discussion in Chapter 6.

‘Pen portraits’

Eight case studies were undertaken (see Box 5.1), and these are described in this section. (The ‘mini case studies’ – comprising less detailed discussions, either face-to-face, by ‘phone or by correspondence, with a range of other individuals and organisations concerned with developing mapping and tracking systems – are not described in detail here. Rather, findings from these studies are drawn on in other chapters of the report.)

Box 5.1: Case studies

Hertfordshire: *Hertfordshire Individual Tracking System*

- An example of a strong and committed partnership establishing a stand-alone tracking system covering 'vulnerable young people' with potential for expansion into an 'all age, all agencies' system.

Nottinghamshire: *Guideline Careers*

- An example of an advanced tracking system, with intensive development over the last three to four years – a particular feature of interest is the potential of developments relating to a 'Connexions card' to feed into tracking.

Black Country: *The Black Country Tracking Project*

- An example of a tracking project towards the forefront of tracking developments in England, providing a practical model of a working tracking project and of the types of information it can provide.

Tyneside: *Progression Observatory Project*

- An example of a specific initiative developed using SRB funding to identify and track young people who are disaffected or potentially disaffected.

Teesside: *Future Steps – mapping and tracking activities*

- An example of the development of a bespoke system producing management information and wider information pertinent to social exclusion, as well as information for historical and interventionist tracking.

Merseyside: *Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Pilot*

- As the title suggests, a Connexions pilot with a particular emphasis on tracking, providing an example of some of the issues to be addressed in developing a tracking system in an area with a complex institutional structure.

Inner London: *London South Bank Careers – mapping and tracking activities*

- An example of the challenges to mapping and tracking in part of a large metropolitan area with an ethnically diverse and mobile population with high levels of deprivation (a particularly 'difficult' context for mapping and tracking).

Cambridge: *Cambridge Homeless Partnership – Young People's Sub-Group*

- An example of a 'bottom-up' thematic development, in which frontline workers from voluntary agencies have been among the key players.

Hertfordshire: *Hertfordshire Individual Tracking System*

The Hertfordshire Individual Tracking System (HITS) was initially developed under New Start in 1998, with four key *partners* involved:

- Hertfordshire Careers Service
- Hertfordshire TEC
- Hertfordshire Local Education Authority (LEA) – Student and Community Service
- Hertfordshire Social Services.

The organisations in the partnership recognised the need for strategic and operational coherence in work with young people, and explored an

electronic solution to data sharing between agencies.

The challenge was to create a single consolidated database of information on young people in the *target group* (as identified by each of the partners):

- 14+ 'at risk' – those with fixed term or permanent exclusion (Hertfordshire LEA)
- 14-18 in residential care or leaving care (Social Services)
- 16-19 leaving work-based training for young people, with no 'positive outcome' (TEC)
- 14-18 at risk (Hertfordshire Careers Service Limited).

Each of the partners operates an information system with different hardware and software. It was decided to establish one common repository (HITS) for 'shared information', accessed via web browser software, leaving partners' own databases unchanged for independent use. Updating of HITS is undertaken on a 'real time' basis, as changes in relevant data fields of individual records on partner databases are 'stripped off' each night. For each individual on the database, HITS provides information on name, address, contact details, date of birth, ethnic group, school, further education, training, destination history, guidance history, activity (contacts with the young person, and so on).

The operation of HITS is in strict accordance with an *inter-agency protocol*. The purpose of the protocol, as recorded in HITS documentation, is:

... to facilitate the exchange of accurate and relevant information about young people in order to improve the progression support available to those young people from the agencies in the partnership and the partnership itself.

The protocol emphasises a commitment to partners working together with a view to ensuring that services are complementary and cost-effective, and maximise human and financial resources. The central focus on 'young people's needs' (rather than on the partners' traditional services) is enshrined in the protocol. The partners interviewed considered that HITS had facilitated a combined approach and integrated delivery of services to young people.

The assessment of HITS has two aspects, with the first having to be completed satisfactorily before progress can be made on the second:

1. Technical application
 - Does the system work?
 - Is it doing what it is supposed to do?
 - Are all necessary security features in place?
2. Progression framework
 - What impact is HITS having on the effective transition of young people into learning and work?

Progress on the second aspect will undoubtedly take time, since it involves ensuring that the tracking system is implemented within the day-to-day working of those individuals directly in contact with young people.

HITS is continuing to be developed as part of the Hertfordshire Connexions pilot. There is scope for, and interest in, expanding HITS to incorporate new partners – although this will have resource implications. In the long term, there is potential for HITS to develop into an 'all age, all agencies' system – used by all agencies and organisations working with young people and adults.

Nottinghamshire: *Guideline Careers*

Work on a tracking system in Nottinghamshire has been ongoing for approximately five years. The original partners were the Government Office for the East Midlands (an initial funder), North Nottinghamshire TEC and Guideline Careers. In 1997, Greater Nottingham TEC and the LEA joined the partnership. All schools and colleges in Nottinghamshire are regarded as partners in the tracking project. By autumn 2000, the partnership was expanding to include YOTs, and the Nottinghamshire Constabulary, and the Employment Service had expressed interest in becoming involved in the project. Guideline Careers is the 'lead partner' in tracking activities and has invested substantial funds in the development of the tracking system.

The aim of the tracking system is to 'benefit young people': "to build up information to provide them with the best possible advice and better choices at the end of the day". Provisionally, the aim of the tracking system was to track young people aged 16-24 years old, but, in practice, the system concentrates on those aged 16-19 years, and those deemed to be 'at risk' over 19 years.

The tracking system is populated with Year 7 (age 11) records from schools in Nottinghamshire, and the intention is to track every young person at a Nottinghamshire educational establishment (whether or not they are resident in Nottinghamshire). Annual updates from school records are received on Years 8, 9, 10 and 11, and changes are recorded on the system. Coverage of state schools is good, but for independent schools coverage is less complete.

Each individual on the system is allocated a unique number, and data on participation on training courses (from the TECs), on qualifications (from the LEA) and on participation on college courses (from colleges) is merged onto the careers service client record system which has been

developed into a 'fully-blown' tracking system (a different model from the 'common repository' approach adopted in Hertfordshire).

Access and usage of the tracking system is governed by strict protocols, with direct access to the database by partners being facilitated by the development of a secure website using Internet technology. As in Hertfordshire, it is recognised that widespread use of the system will take time to build up.

In Nottinghamshire, the intention is that tracking-related activities move forward in such a way that all key players are involved with a single database. Parts of this 'single database' need to be 'protected', so that the confidentiality of young people is maintained and partners do not see information they do not need. It is hoped that the tracking database will continue to develop in a way such that partners can meet their own organisational requirements using the database. It is possible that in the future a fee will need to be charged for access to or usage of the tracking system, since some organisations may wish to make use of the information held without contributing data to the system.

A number of other developments and initiatives in Nottinghamshire have important implications for tracking. Since 1999, Guideline Careers has been involved as a demonstration project for the development of 'Connexions cards': smart cards for 16-19 year olds which can be used for:

- *Attendance monitoring*: in one Nottingham sixth form attendance at lessons has been monitored electronically, so facilitating Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) returns (Nottingham is an EMA pilot);
- *Developing reward systems*: including discounts on selected leisure and travel facilities;
- *Auto-enrolment*: to obviate the need for duplication of individual information each time an individual enrolls on a college course and/or changes course;
- *Facilitating interventionist tracking*: by providing real-time information on patterns of course non-attendance, it provides an 'early warning' of potential problems.

Black Country: *The Black Country Tracking Project*

The Black Country Tracking Project has been in operation for approximately three years and is a *partnership* comprising:

- Prospects Careers Services (covering the Black Country)
- the four Black Country TECs (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)
- the four Metropolitan Borough Councils (covering the same areas as the TECs)
- the colleges in the Black Country
- the Government Office for the West Midlands
- the Employment Service
- the Further Education Funding Council
- the Black Country New Start Project
- the University of Wolverhampton.

Dedicated initial funding (from the TECs, the Careers Service and the Government Office for the West Midlands) was crucial in getting the project off the ground. Funding has remained on the Tracking Project's agenda throughout its life.

All partners to the Tracking Project have signed up to the 'Code of Practice' which sets out the operation of the Project and defines the roles and responsibilities of each partner, as well as setting out which data are to be collected. The Code of Practice incorporates a 'Grievance framework' – to be followed in the case of a partner not being given access to relevant data or feeling that another partner has had access to restricted information or has used information to the detriment of another partner.

The project is hosted by Prospects Careers Services and operates using Prospects' client database. Access to data reports is controlled by the Project Coordinator, working on behalf of the Project Steering Group. Data reports to be released are agreed before any project is undertaken.

The tracking database is intended to cover all young people in the Black Country between the ages of 14 and 19. Data are collected from:

- the Careers Service: name, address, date of birth, ethnic origin, destinations, and so on;
- the LEAs: qualifications data;
- the TECs: starters and leavers on training courses, qualifications gained;
- colleges: course titles, qualifications studying for and achieved.

Box 5.2: Project on children in public care in the Black Country

The DfEE provided funding for the development of an innovative project with young people leaving care in April 1999. The aims of this project were:

- To supply post-16 destinations and qualifications data for individual social services departments for 'quality protects' returns.
- To identify young people who were not accessing their post-16 options in education, training and employment, so that proactive intervention work could be undertaken.
- To provide information on how this group of young people progress through post-16 options.
- To explore the relationship between historical and interventionist tracking.

Among the outcomes of this project were:

- Partnership working between Prospects Careers Service, the social services and the Tracking Project – through an information exchange, consolidated links that already existed and facilitated a more focused approach to working with 'looked after' young people.
- The process led to the identification of young people not previously on the tracking database.
- Tracking contributed to the progression trends for 'looked after' young people (such as poor take up of post-16 education and training opportunities, high level of unemployment, and high level of low-skilled employment with little or no training).

'Fuzzy matching' (that is, linking on selected data fields, such as first name, last name and date of birth) is used to link individual records from different sources.

Much of the initial emphasis of the Tracking Project was on historical tracking – providing longitudinal information for use in strategic and operational planning in partner organisations and for monitoring outputs. More recently, greater prominence has been placed on interventionist tracking. Initial work on interventionist tracking has been undertaken on young people in public care (see Box 5.2), teenage parents and young offenders. The interventionist tracking approach adopted involves sharing of information between key professionals concerned with an individual young person in order to facilitate support (intervene) on behalf of that particular young person. The Tracking Project also incorporates a facility for geographical analysis (mapping attributes by postcode), thus enabling patterns of geographical concentration of particular attributes or problems to be identified. In turn, this informs needs-related provision in specific localities and targeting of particular initiatives.

The intention is to carry forward the Black Country Tracking Project into Connexions.

Tyneside: Progression Observatory Project

The Progression Observatory Project was developed by Tyneside Careers with SRB funding as part of the Tyneside-wide 'Effective Progression to the Labour Market' programme. Over a seven-year period (starting in 1997), the Progression Observatory Project is aimed at improving communication between schools and the careers service, and developing a coherent monitoring system to identify and track young people who are identified as disaffected or potentially disaffected. Specifically, the Project's objectives are:

- to develop a tracking system to monitor young people who have been identified;
- to provide an information database to target areas of greatest need;
- to identify intervention strategies offering continuous support to meet some of the causes and effects of disaffection.

The main partners in the Progression Observatory Project are Tyneside Careers, the Education Business Partnerships, the Education Welfare Service and secondary schools.

Approximately 1,300-1,400 young people across Tyneside are involved in the Project each year.

Young people who are ‘disaffected’/‘disengaged’ take part in work experience and attend school for part of the time in Year 11. All young people on the project are tracked, with personal contact being the preferred means for collecting information from young people. Information included on the tracking system includes name, address, date of birth, and behavioural problems, and (from schools) how the young person mixes with staff, with teachers, with their peers and so on. Over time, adjustments have been made to the precise information collected, in accordance with the principle that information collection should not ‘take over’, but should inform the development of support systems for young people.

The Progression Observatory Project has been shown to increase ‘positive outcomes’ at age 16. In the future, it is possible that tracking information from the Progression Observatory Project might be included in the Tyneside Careers tracking database, as work continues towards developing a more thorough tracking system for all young people.

Teesside: *Future Steps – mapping and tracking activities*

Future Steps (the careers service company on Teesside) has devised a bespoke tracking system in collaboration with a software company, because of dissatisfaction with ‘off-the-shelf’ systems which were currently available. The bespoke system produces the management information returns required by DfEE, but otherwise focuses on information deemed necessary by Future Steps. A particular feature of the bespoke system is that it accommodates unstructured, and sometimes contradictory, information collected from different sources or perspectives. A great deal of rich, ‘soft’ information is collected and inputted into the system, but there is insistence on there being an acceptable ‘evidence trail’ for verification. The tracking system is ‘owned’ by the company, although it incorporates information collected from partners – including valuable tracking information from voluntary sector organisations. Access to the system is open to all careers and personal advisers.

Tracking activities are geared to generating records on:

- intelligence: what the service knows; and
- what the service needs to do.

At an individual level, information is collected on personal characteristics (name, age, contact details, and so on) and status information (for example, current activity in education or training). Additional areas of information which would be welcomed are:

- more ‘case study’ information about individuals;
- the recording of those ‘barriers’ to young people’s trajectories and decision making.

To comply with the DfEE, Future Steps follows up young people in the two years after they have completed compulsory education. For those young people not in learning, tracking is done on a day-to-day basis, through outreach work in 12 centres increasingly related to the Learning Gateway.

In the Teesside context, it was felt that a number of factors came together to make tracking a more difficult task than in some other areas:

- 90% of young people who are in post-16 education transfer to colleges of further education, rather than remaining in school sixth forms, of which there are few;
- an area-wide approach is hampered by power and resources being devolved to smaller operational districts, which do not necessarily liaise and collaborate;
- the development of effective partnerships is constrained by a relative lack of resources;
- Teesside has some of the highest levels of local deprivation in England.

Looking to the future, it was considered that the advent of Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) would give a greater degree of ‘statutory impetus’ to tracking activities.

Merseyside: *Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Pilot*

Greater Merseyside has been selected as a Connexions pilot. It is intended that over a two-year period there will be a comprehensive tracking system in place for the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership which will inform national tracking developments and the implementation of the Connexions service in the partnership area. The partnership area is a complex one, covering six local authorities, four careers services, and with experience of many

types of government initiative. As the pilot develops, there is potential to discover whether there is variation in ‘what works’ in different parts of the Greater Merseyside area, and why.

The objectives of the Connexions pilot include:

- Provision of a comprehensive map of all agencies and providers working with young people in the Partnership area.
- Establishing a protocol and agreement on information sharing with each key agency.
- Establishing processes and procedures for collecting, updating and sharing all information with local agencies.
- Setting up a comprehensive computer system, utilising up-to-date technology in terms of data entry and access.
- Setting a process in place for consulting young people.
- Embedding the system, processes, protocols and procedures within the working practices of all staff delivering the Connexions service.

Initial work on a tracking exercise was undertaken in Merseyside with ESF funding and with New Start. This involved some development of protocols, but these were at an organisational rather than at an operational level. The Learning Gateway on Merseyside, which aims to target vulnerable young people aged 16-17 years who are disengaged from learning or who are in danger of dropping out of the education and training system, has a ‘data protocol and code of practice’ defining the role of each partner organisation, and itemising the types of data to be collected, shared and used in the operation of the Learning Gateway. Hence, there is experience of local tracking activity on which the Connexions pilot can build. As in Nottinghamshire, within Merseyside (in Knowsley) there is experience of working on a pilot for the Connexions cards.

Inner London: *London South Bank Careers – mapping and tracking activities*

London South Bank Careers covers the London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich. As with Teesside and Merseyside, this area includes some of the most deprived areas in England. It shares with the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Pilot a complex institutional structure, and has been a recipient of a wide range of area-based and thematic initiatives. Formerly covered by South

Thames TEC (which left a sour legacy in some quarters after bankruptcy), the area encompasses parts of two TEC areas and in future will encompass parts of two LSC areas. The four boroughs have an ethnically diverse population and are home to significant numbers of refugees to the UK. As part of a large metropolitan area, there is a considerable amount of cross-boundary mobility. For example, in Lambeth, approximately half of the Year 7 cohort (age 11 years) are educated at schools outside the borough, with many attending schools in Westminster, Wandsworth and Croydon (in other words, outside the London South Bank Careers area). In one year, young people in Lambeth attended 32 different further education colleges around London. This cross-boundary mobility means there is potential for young people to be ‘lost’ from the tracking system or to have duplicate records on different systems. Despite a long history of multi-agency working in inner London, all of these features make for an extremely challenging context in which to engage in mapping and tracking activities.

At the outset, the careers service database used for tracking purposes is school-based: it is populated from Year 9 school lists. Nonetheless, on leaving school, South Bank area residents educated outside the area can avail themselves of services offered by London South Bank Careers. Of the 10 independent schools in the London South Bank Careers area, only six have pupil records on the database. Resource constraints and the refocusing agenda of the careers service have militated against complete coverage for the database. Moreover, the refocusing agenda has led to the necessity of making stark choices between spending more time with disaffected and disengaged young people and spending less or no time with others. It is estimated that at least 20% of young people on the London South Bank Careers database have a ‘special need’ of some sort – for example, a language need or learning difficulties – yet this is not recognised in careers service funding (which remains based largely on ‘headcounts’: 93% of funding was allocated on the basis of ‘headcount’ and 7% on ‘need’ at the time of writing).

London South Bank Careers has not received or invested dedicated funding from external sources to develop mapping and tracking systems in the same manner as those developed in Hertfordshire, Nottinghamshire, the Black Country, Tyneside and Merseyside. Hence, it has proved difficult to

engage in mapping and tracking activities beyond statutory requirements for destinations tracking. Yet London South Bank Careers is actively involved in a wide range of development work (in some cases involving secondment of staff to partner organisations) and is also involved as part of the Central London Learning Partnership in a project on 'Making Tracking Destinations Work' which is designed to initiate the process of establishing a holistic tracking and destinations system.

Cambridge: Cambridge Homeless Partnership – Young People's Sub-Group

The Cambridge Multi-Agency Accommodation Forum (now known as the Cambridge Homeless Partnership [CHP]) was formed in October 1991 to provide a forum for voluntary and statutory agencies concerned with the issue of homelessness. By October 1999, there was a membership of 27 agencies, covering both the statutory and the voluntary sector. A key voluntary sector member agency is Centre 33, which is concerned with providing counselling, information and other services to young people. The role it plays in 'helping young people through the system' in Cambridge means that Centre 33 staff come into "contact with all the different players in the field that aren't necessarily in contact with each other".

The Young People's Sub-Group of the CHP was set up:

... to promote the welfare of young people who may be subject to homelessness including those issues relating to leaving care, mental health problems, the criminal justice system, drugs and alcohol, employment/ education/training and welfare benefits/ financial problems. (CHP internal papers)

The activities of the Sub-Group as specified in the terms of reference are:

- information sharing, networking, developing inter-agency working;
- lobbying on specific issues;
- developing new areas of work in response to client need and changes in legislation.

The Young People's Sub-Group has been involved in:

1. Production of a leaflet on 16/17 year olds claiming Jobseekers' Allowance locally;
2. Work on Joint Allocations
 - a) development of a Joint Referral Form which can be used to refer young people to any of the five young people's housing projects in the city;
 - b) development of a Joint Allocations Panel (including the five accommodation providers in the city) to promote a more efficient application process, appropriate allocation of bedspaces, and provide a forum to aid communication when residents move between projects;
3. Work on direct access accommodation
 - a) data collection on where young people come from, where they go, how long they wait, and what problems they encounter in the meantime. Analysis of individual needs reveals the existence of 'multiple needs', and a tendency for the number and intensity of these needs to increase with age;
 - b) facilitating communication between projects to develop proposals for redefining the use of existing beds to be used for direct access.

Through these activities, there has been a growing recognition that there could be value in developing a system for tracking vulnerable, homeless young people, and such a system is under discussion, and is likely to be included as part of the Joint Applications process.

Conclusion – common issues arising from the case studies

The case studies provide a flavour of the range of current activity in relation to mapping and tracking vulnerable young people, with a focus on some of the larger initiatives. There is a plethora of smaller exercises, including some of those funded under the *YOUTHSTART* initiative, often focusing on very vulnerable young people.

A number of common issues arise across the case studies (some of which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6):

While there is growing activity around 'mapping' and 'tracking' there are relatively few fully-fledged tracking systems. In those instances where tracking systems are more developed, initial emphasis has been on setting up data-sharing protocols and on technical aspects of the systems, as a pre-cursor to day-to-day use by front-line workers. In many (but not all) instances the careers service plays a key role in the development of such systems, reflecting both the role of the careers service as a linchpin between different services for young people, and the statutory requirements on the careers service to undertake tracking activities.

Some tracking systems attempt to be *comprehensive* – collecting data on most or all young people, while others *focus* on those categorised as '*vulnerable*'/ '*disaffected*'. Key questions are:

- How much resource should be concentrated on 'vulnerable' young people?
- Do other young people, with seemingly 'easier' transitions, lose out?
- What are the resource implications of 'chasing' the 'missing'?

The importance of *partnership working* in underpinning tracking systems is highlighted. Among the key attributes mentioned in relation to successful partnership working were 'trust', 'understanding' and 'shared purpose'. There are important issues around:

- the ease of incorporating new partners;
- the absence of 'key' partners;
- potential partners having different 'mind sets' – with some having no tradition of systematically recording information;
- the potential for some potential partners to feel 'threatened', and so adopt a 'defensive' stance, in the context of partnership working.

Considerable *time* and *resources* are incurred in setting up successful partnerships. A general consensus emerged that this is an activity that cannot be rushed (indeed, rushing may mean 'disenfranchisement' of some organisations). Pressure of work, staff turnover, different approaches and values between organisations and lack of material resources to support joint working can militate against successful partnership working.

Establishing formal *data sharing principles* and *protocols* is an essential prerequisite for a successful tracking system. There was a consensus that *data protection* is one of the biggest barriers to be tackled in setting up tracking systems.

Although access to *IT* may be a problem in some instances (particularly in the voluntary sector), in general it was considered that '*human*', '*ethical*' and '*time-scale*' issues were more likely to pose barriers to tracking. The majority view concerning IT can be summed up as: "the availability of IT outstrips our requirements".

The general view was that there seems to be *no or little resistance from young people themselves to data sharing* – "they never really seem to mind" – although important questions need to be raised here, including:

- Does this represent greater openness and acceptance about information sharing among the current generation of young people?
- Does it represent a lack of awareness about the likely implications of information sharing between organisations?
- Does 'tracking' necessarily have connotations of 'big brother'?

However, it is noteworthy that, to date, *processes of consultation with young people* regarding the content, use and role of tracking databases *are relatively undeveloped*. On the one hand, taking account of the views of young people in deciding what information fields should be included in such databases, might add further assurance that the databases serve the needs of young people, rather than the information needs of agencies. On the other hand, there could well be information that agencies 'need to know' in order to help young people, that young people would be unhappy about them knowing. This is part of a wider paternalistic versus youth empowerment tension in interventions with young people.

In all instances, the development of *local systems* was felt to be important (even in the context of the development of a more limited national tracking system). The development of local tracking systems has the potential to aid practical inter-agency working at local level. However, if local databases are being accessed by a range of different agencies (with different cultures for example), there is an important question regarding how the integrity of the underlying data is to be maintained.

The *role of tracking* in helping to provide a more integrated support system for young people and in reducing the time spent 'toing and froing' between agencies providing the same information was emphasised. A key test of a tracking system might be to assess the impact it has on easing the 'transitions' and the progression of young people.

Key issues

Introduction

This chapter discusses in greater detail some of the key issues emerging from the case studies presented in Chapter 5 and other discussions undertaken during the course of the study. The topics selected for coverage here are:

- resources
- partnership working – benefits and difficulties
- ethical considerations and a range of issues associated with data protection, confidentiality and information sharing protocols
- IT.

Resources

The need for dedicated resources on a continuing basis

The establishment, operationalisation, maintenance and development of ‘successful’ mapping and tracking systems involves a considerable input of resources – in terms of both money and time.

Of the ‘most developed’ tracking systems outlined in Chapter 5, HITS, was developed initially with New Start funding. In Nottinghamshire, there was initial funding from the Government Office and the TECs, while Guideline Careers has since invested substantial resources in the development of the system. In the Black Country, the project partners ring-fenced funding for the Black Country Tracking Project. Yet even for these relatively established and successful projects “funding is an issue that’s always on the agenda”. Indeed, looking to the future, some case study interviewees spoke of the possible need for subscriptions or fees to keep the systems going.

In those cases where tracking activities were relatively less developed, the lack of dedicated resources was identified as a key barrier to tracking. Such lack of resources emerged as a particular issue for voluntary sector organisations.

Where should the resources go?

Getting the support mechanisms in place

As highlighted in the case studies and in previous chapters, it is important that information collection to underpin mapping and tracking activities does not become an end in itself. If, as intended, ‘helping the young person’ is to remain the central focus for such activity, the support mechanisms associated with tracking are crucial. After all:

“It’s okay identifying these problems but if there aren’t any support mechanisms in place to do something about it then what’s the point ... you’re just stating the obvious.”

Tough decisions about finite resources

A recurring issue emerging from the case studies was how best to deploy finite resources. There was a general consensus that it would be possible to spend a lot of resources on those who are hostile to being helped or tracked. Similarly, considerable resources could be devoted to ‘chasing the missing’. The majority of interviewees considered that, in the face of resource constraints, it was probably most cost-effective to concentrate resources “on those who want to respond, while keeping the doors open to the unresponsive”. The implication of this is that, without extra resources, it is not worthwhile ‘chasing the missing’. However, as outlined in

Chapter 2, the ‘missing’ encompass a variety of young people, from different backgrounds and in a range of different locations. Several respondents also emphasised the importance of ensuring that the needs of those who make transitions “relatively easily” are not ignored. In any case, the ‘vulnerable’ and ‘disaffected’ are ‘not a static crew’. Some young people become ‘vulnerable’ due to circumstances beyond their control. Moreover, it was considered important:

“... not to lose sight of the negative impact focusing on the most vulnerable might be having on those 70% of young people who have to pay for it.”

Tracking ‘movers’

In the face of finite resources, the difficult task of how to deal with ‘movers’ in and out of local areas is often ignored. This is an important issue for tracking generally, and in large metropolitan areas the potential for young people to get ‘lost’ in the interstices of local tracking systems is perhaps greater than elsewhere.

There would seem to be scope for funding a pilot project focusing specifically on mechanisms for improving information collection and exchange on ‘movers’, and assessing the implications of this for improved coverage of mapping and tracking systems.

Partnership

The rationale for partnership working

As noted in Chapter 3, a large number of organisations and agencies are involved in providing services to young people. The issue of disaffection involves lots of different organisations and agencies from an array of different fields (Craig, 2000), such that “partnership working is the only effective response to tackling disaffection” (Cambridge and Greater Peterborough New Start Partnership, 2000). This means that any single agency is likely to find it hard to track young people ‘in isolation’. Indeed, a recurring theme of the case studies was that partnership working was essential in helping vulnerable young people, with one interviewee contending that it would be a ‘precondition’ of a successful local mapping and tracking system.

However successful an initiative by a single agency may be:

Resource constraints, dysfunctional competition and lack of communication between agencies mean that there is a tendency towards piecemeal and short-term activity and a distinct absence of coordination. (Pearce and Hillman, 1998, p 61)

In the context of a multiplicity of policy initiatives and a plethora of targets there is, in the words of an interviewee:

“... potential for different initiatives prompting defensive attitudes; you ring fence your money and you protect it. You tend to ignore potential partners. The first reaction tends to be defensive; or the attitude may be: ‘if you want to come in and do something you do it on our terms’.”

Hence, there is a need to:

- improve coordination
- bring coherence to complexity.

Partnerships as complex and dynamic phenomena

Partnership is a complex process of building and maintaining a coalition of ‘interests’ through the focusing of resources and energy. It is about communication, cooperation, coordination, cross-fertilisation and integration (Hughes and Morgan, 2000). It is described by the Employment Support Unit as:

... a process involving a variety of different players from a variety of sectors coming together in a common purpose to work towards an agreed goal. The process is based on democratic principles, operates with clearly defined support systems, and involves continuous evaluation to produce outcomes which will add to our current provision. (2000, p 7)

Partnerships can have very different objectives, structures and lifetimes. The nature of a partnership depends on its tasks and goals, the parties involved, and its evolution over time. Hence ‘partnership’ cannot be treated as “a hardened structure, a ‘done deal’ in theory or in

practice. It is a process, not an event” (CIPFA, 1997, quoted in DETR, 1999b, p 4).

Many case study interviewees emphasised that partnership is not, and cannot be, a ‘static thing’. In practice, partnership working is often very complex:

“We have spiders’ webs of partnership working that are so complicated it gives you a headache trying to follow them.”

Moreover, in a context of continuing institutional change these are *dynamic spiders’ webs*. This sheer complexity of inter-agency working seems insurmountable in some contexts:

The complexity of inter-agency working in London is enormous. Agencies describe simple mapping exercises that collapse under the sheer volume of voluntary agencies that are relevant to the client group. The lack of common boundaries for different organisations and projects adds further problems, and future changes in boundaries and areas of responsibility could aggravate the situation in the short-term. (Barham and Hughes, 2000, p 2)

Hence, there would seem to be merit in identifying some of the key elements emerging from the case studies concerning how to grow successful partnerships.

‘Growing partnerships’

Establishing ‘win-win’ situations

A key principle in establishing a partnership is identifying and building possible ‘win-win situations’ between partners. Two partners will work together more easily if it is to the advantage of both. This is most easily achieved in a context in which there is a realisation that the roles of partners are ‘complementary and not competitive’.

One case study interviewee asserted that one of the best ways of getting partners ‘on board’ was to offer access to information that they otherwise would not have, and then offer to store their information electronically on the system. Hence, the suggested approach was one of ‘we can give you this’, rather than ‘we want this from you’:

“You’ve got to be prepared to give out from your organisation; not to receive directly.”

Once ‘on board’, reciprocal information flows may well be established. In the first instance, however, joint working may be based on the attitude that ‘giving is more important than receiving’.

The need for trust

Virtually all case study interviewees identified trust as an essential ingredient of successful partnership working. For example, the key partners in HITS emphasised their mutual “trust”, “understanding” and “shared purpose” as fundamental to the establishment and development of the system. Other interviewees also described how trust led to collaboration and information sharing.

The role of key individuals

Many interviewees highlighted the important role of key individuals in setting up, nurturing and driving forward partnerships:

“... personalities are absolutely crucial in making the initial links, setting up the procedures, thinking about joint working initiatives and putting mechanisms in place.”

If key individuals move on they can ‘leave holes’ in partnerships which are difficult to fill. Hence, there was widespread recognition that creating an ‘atmosphere of joint working’ is important, so that new people know “you talk to each other here”. Nevertheless, high levels of staff turnover can militate against joint working. Any partnership “comes down to people” at the end of the day, because without them it does not exist.

Taking time

A recurring theme in the case studies was that considerable time and resources are incurred in setting up successful partnerships. The fact that it takes time to develop the partnership working necessary for a successful tracking system was often reiterated by interviewees:

“A lot of people think, ‘Oh yes, tracking – you just talk to all those people and the information starts pouring in and we can do this and that with it’, and it doesn’t work like that. It is a continual process, even when you’ve got everybody on board.”

It can take a long time to build up the ‘trust’ that is essential to joint working. According to the coordinator of a well-established tracking system:

“I don’t think there’s any short cut to actually getting people around the table and ironing out the issues.... Particularly if data exchange and tracking has come in new to certain people as an idea.”

Even with a ‘model’ Code of Practice or Information Sharing Protocol “they’ll still raise the issues ... you have to walk them through the process”.

Another interviewee asserted that rushing the process of setting up a multi-agency tracking system can be counterproductive:

“A realistic time-scale is needed to ensure that you get off to the right start. You can disenfranchise some organisations very easily.”

Some interviewees felt that this ‘time’ element was not sufficiently recognised:

“Any government initiative that looks at multi-agency work doesn’t take into account the amount of time multi-agency work can take.”

As noted by Craig (2000), effective partnership working depends on the timely cooperation of many agencies, often at the expense of their own schedules and work programmes.

Establishing ‘ground rules’

A further key element of successful partnership working is “getting a clear set of ground rules that everyone can agree to”. It is necessary for partners to feel ‘comfortable’ about exchanging their data. Indeed, one interviewee identified the tracking project Code of Practice as “the key to actually putting people’s minds at rest”.

Key challenges to partnership working

Many factors may inhibit partnership working with respect to mapping and tracking activities, over and above those relating to technical and data content issues. These include:

- *resource constraints*, encompassing:
 - lack of time
 - lack of staff
 - lack of money
 - restrictions on flexibility and innovation in the deployment of resources;
- *rigidities*, involving:
 - organisational structures
 - insufficient corporate drive
 - deep-set professional ideologies
 - fear of change;
- *inadequate funding incentives for collaboration*.

Different ‘mind sets’

In the case studies interviewees mentioned many of these barriers, but one of the greatest challenges to further development of mapping and tracking activities identified was that posed by the different ‘mind sets’ and different ways of working of potential partners. In particular, different attitudes towards information recording posed enormous challenges for the development of mapping and tracking systems. One interviewee felt that the increased emphasis on destinations tracking by the careers service had served to widen the gap between themselves and organisations having no tradition of systematically recording information:

“It’s very hard to get past the strains that go on between agencies because of differing values and differing approaches.”

If those individuals and organisations working with young people who do not record information are going to be involved in tracking there is a ‘psychological barrier’ to break through. Tracking is a “mega issue” for them, because the relationships that they establish with young people are often based on the premise that information is *not* recorded. For other individuals and agencies with more tradition of information recording, a key challenge is to change the perception of logging and recording of information from “just an administrative chore” to something that is “helping the young person”.

This suggests that ‘human’ and ‘organisational’ issues may lie at the heart of barriers to mapping and tracking, rather than the legalities surrounding data protection and confidentiality, and the technical issues discussed below. Rather it is the ‘cultures’ of organisations, and individual and agency-wide working procedures and practices – particularly with respect to recording, storage and exchange of information – that may prove the more difficult barriers to break down in establishing successful mapping and tracking systems.

Taking part

The importance of, and the scale of the ‘human’ and ‘organisational’ challenges to, setting up partnerships is reflected in the fact that the most often cited ‘key successes’ or ‘main achievement’ in developing a tracking system mentioned by case study interviewees was “securing agreement from people to take part”. As highlighted above, the existence of different ‘mind sets’ between some potential partners points to the enormity of the challenge.

Data protection and confidentiality issues

Data protection principles

Anyone processing personal data must comply with the enforceable ‘principles of good practice’ (see the first section of Box 6.1) enshrined in the 1998 Data Protection Act. There is certain information that a ‘data subject’ (that is, an individual about whom personal data is being processed) is entitled to be given by the data controller (see the second section of Box 6.1). Certain personal data is classified as ‘sensitive’ (see the third section of Box 6.1). There are also principles regarding the security of personal data which should be adhered to (see the fourth section of Box 6.1).

Box 6.1: Key data protection principles of relevance to mapping and tracking young people

Data protection principles of good practice

Data must be:

- fairly and lawfully processed
- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- not kept longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject’s rights
- secure.

‘Data subject’ entitlements

Subjects are entitled to know:

- the personal data of which that individual is the subject
- the purposes for which they are being or are to be processed
- the recipients or classes of recipients to whom they are or may be disclosed.

Sensitive personal data

Personal data consisting of information including:

- racial or ethnic origin
- physical or mental health
- criminal offences and proceedings.

Principles safeguarding security of personal data

- *confidentiality*: protecting sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure or intelligible interception
- *integrity*: safeguarding the accuracy and completeness of information and computer software
- *availability*: ensuring that information and vital services are available to users when required.

Source: 1998 Data Protection Act

'A framework not a barrier'

Previous research (including the report of PAT 18 on *Better Information* [SEU, 2000b]) and this study have unearthed confusion about the law on data protection. Yet neither the Data Protection Act nor the Data Protection Registrar is there to prevent the sharing of information for beneficial purposes – providing the information is handled in accordance with the law. The Data Protection Act is intended as “a framework, not a barrier”, while the Data Protection Registrar has a role in facilitating data sharing for joined-up government. Indeed, the Data Protection Registrar’s response to the White Paper *Modernising local government* highlighted that:

Data protection is an objective of information age government, not an obstacle to it. (DETR, 1998)

However, the principles enshrined in the Data Protection Act mean that those collecting data have to know about and abide by the powers under which they collect information and observe any constraints on its use.

In the case studies data protection emerged as a major issue for tracking:

“Data protection issues are up there amongst the two or three biggest problems we have to tackle. They can be real fundamental problems in getting people to share information in the confidence they are not contravening the Data Protection Act.”

One interviewee reported:

“It took months and months to actually resolve the data protection issues of transferring data between the various parties.”

There was also a feeling that often people ‘hide behind’ data protection:

“... it’s quite easy to say, ‘we can’t do that because of data protection’.”

Yet very often the barriers might be imaginary, and it was felt that invoking data protection issues may be used to mask deficiencies in a (potential) partner’s information systems or unwillingness to take part in information sharing activities.

The role of information sharing protocols

In order to overcome the barriers to data sharing between agencies, it is important to establish protocols between the various agencies regarding sharing and the use of data. The experience from the case studies was that once protocols were in place, sharing of data became easier. Negotiating and checking the details of such information sharing protocols within a Code of Practice was regarded by the more established tracking projects as the “ground work that has to be laid before you can start doing the work” (that is, the tracking).

Everyone has to be aware how the system is going to be used, what information is going to be shared and who is going to have access to it. Moreover, the updating of protocols as a continuing process, as partners, information sources and/or objectives change, was stressed.

Attitudes to confidentiality

As highlighted in the section on challenges to partnership working, potential partners may have different ‘mind sets’ and ways of working. ‘Tracking’ and ‘observing confidentiality’ are issues that arouse strong feelings. The case studies revealed the existence of different attitudes to what is sensitive and what should be kept confidential between organisations, and sometimes between individuals within the same organisation. For some, concerns are limited to the recording and sharing of certain personal information obtained in certain contexts. Others feel that “having a database on young people and tracking young people is a bit like ‘big brother’” – particularly in the case of a national system (as opposed to a local one).

In general, on the basis of the case studies, it would seem that ethical issues about tracking are more of a concern for the workers than for the young people themselves. In the digital age, the pervasiveness of ‘junk mail’, informed by data from loyalty and credit cards, and the prevalence of CCTV may suggest that “big brother has grown into an entire big brotherhood, keeping track of all aspects of our lives” (Barnett, 2000). In this context, the response of many young people – ‘Why is it an issue?’ – is understandable. While the majority of case study interviewees considered that there was a “generational difference” between younger and older people in their attitudes to tracking and information sharing, others were

concerned that young people might not be aware of some of the civil liberties issues relating to inter-agency exchange of data on individuals.

In the face of different attitudes to confidentiality, there is a tension between:

- having a confidentiality policy which ‘protects’ young people and, perhaps which helps vulnerable young people feel ‘safe’ and able to make an initial step to seek help; and
- having such a strict confidentiality policy that it subsequently becomes a ‘hindrance’ to helping a young person.

In any event, there is a need to ensure that information collection does not ‘take over’. In the words of one interviewee:

“I think you have to be very careful that you do take into consideration the young person’s needs and why you’re collecting the information, and if it will have an adverse affect on the young person. I think you can really get lost in trying to collect as much information as you can, and get really systematised, and forget about what the young person actually wants and why they want it. I think then there’s the whole range of data protection issues, and does that young person know the kind of information that’s being passed on? Is it stopping them from effectively progressing into certain areas of employment, training, education? And, you know, you have to make sure that all of the information that is on a young person is treated with respect: sensitively an professionally.”

Information technology

IT – no problem(?)

There are data- and IT-related challenges to tracking. With regard to data, as outlined in Chapter 3, not all data are computerised, data are held in different formats, and there is often no common format for categorisation. As far as IT is concerned, there is a multiplicity of IT systems in use by different partners. Even where organisations and agencies have the same software, they often use it differently: everyone uses a system in a way that suits their own local

organisation. Nevertheless, the key message emerging from the case studies was that:

“IT can do it: IT availability outstrips requirements.”

There may have been initial teething problems associated with the introduction of new hardware or software. Some of the software developments underpinning the system may have taken longer than initially thought or expected. But for most interviewees, IT was not nearly as important a barrier to developing a tracking system as ‘human’, ‘ethical’ or ‘time-scale’ issues.

A voluntary sector perspective

The main exception to the ‘IT – no problem’ response came from the voluntary sector representatives interviewed. IT is an important barrier to developing mapping and tracking systems in parts of the voluntary sector, due to their lack of access to hardware and software. Much of the voluntary sector is “not in the same league” IT-wise, as the statutory agencies. Many key players in the voluntary sector are not on email and do not have access to the Internet. Hence, forms are often filled in by hand, and are sent between agencies in the post or by fax (not electronically). It would seem that much of the voluntary sector would require considerable investment in time and money to record information electronically and to participate in a fully-automated mapping and tracking system.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted that dedicated resources on a continuing basis are required to underpin the development and operation of tracking systems. The fact that available resources are finite raises important questions about where the resources should go: for example, how much of the ‘cake’ is it appropriate to spend on the ‘missing’ and ‘unresponsive’? There are tough decisions to be made. Often ‘movers’ in and out of local areas are either ignored or receive scant attention. This is one area where there would seem to be scope for some pilot work to support the development of tracking systems.

The sheer number of organisations and agencies involved in providing services to young people means that partnership working is the ‘only

effective response' in order to bring coherence to a complex situation through improved coordination. Partnerships are a complex and dynamic phenomena. 'Growing partnerships' is about building trust and establishing 'win-win' situations (for partners and the young person). A crucial role is played by key individuals in setting up, nurturing and driving forward partnership working through the establishment of 'ground rules' for working. This process takes time: there is limited scope for short-cuts. Resource constraints pose one of the key challenges to partnership working, but organisational rigidities and different 'mind sets' of potential partners may prove among the hardest barriers to break down. Indeed, "securing agreement to take part" was the most frequently cited as a 'main achievement' in developing a tracking system.

Data protection is a major issue for tracking: systems have to comply with the principles set out in data protection legislation. These principles are intended to be a 'framework' for, rather than a 'barrier' to, information sharing. There is substantial confusion regarding data protection (coupled with an associated plea for clearer guidelines from government departments), and a widespread feeling that some agencies use it as a shield to hide behind. Information sharing protocols have an important part to play in governing the operation of tracking systems and outlining the respective responsibilities of partners. Among individuals and organisations there are widely differing attitudes to confidentiality. Many young people appear to take inter-agency information exchange for granted in a digital age – particularly if it has the potential to benefit them. However, there is relatively little substantive information about young people's attitudes to information exchange, and so this is a topic that may be worthy of further research. The fact that there appears to be little evidence that young people question information sharing, does not necessarily mean that they agree with such practices.

IT emerges as one of the less problematic issues in developing mapping and tracking systems. Yet, for much of the voluntary sector, lack of IT poses an important barrier to such developments. There would seem to be a case for some pump-priming here, in order that voluntary organisations are able to play a fuller role in inter-agency mapping and tracking initiatives.

Implications for policy

Introduction

Clearly, the introduction of the Connexions service will be of overwhelming significance for the issues addressed in this study. Indeed, the main *raison d'être* for undertaking the project was to contribute to the debate concerning the implementation of Connexions. For this reason alone, it is worth reiterating the main findings which emerged, and outlining their implications for policy formulation. In a broader sense, however, the messages emanating from the research are of importance for all areas of work with vulnerable young people, and provide insights into issues which require serious consideration.

As stated earlier (Chapter 2), the intention of the Connexions strategy is to establish an 'up-to-date' and comprehensive "register of the 13-19 population", with a national database used for monitoring purposes and local databases accessible to relevant agencies. Throughout, there will be an emphasis on "the most disadvantaged young people" and "those at most risk of dropping out". The two prime concerns of tracking systems will be to maintain contact with young people, and to undertake continual monitoring of their progress. Another important aspect of Connexions is the bringing together of a range of agencies and interest groups.

Key issues emerging from the research

Overall, then, the findings of the study are highly pertinent for the avowed aims of Connexions. The key issues to be addressed in seeking to develop an effective system for tracking vulnerable young people which emerged from the

fieldwork can broadly be grouped in the following categories:

- the role of tracking
- the development of partnerships
- uses of and access to data.

The role of tracking

There is clearly a need for all concerned to be continually aware of *why* tracking is being undertaken – it needs to be regarded as a tool by which support and help may be provided more effectively to individuals, and especially to vulnerable young people. It is not an end in itself. It is essential that this primary aim is not lost sight of, even when other benefits accruing from the implementation of a tracking system become apparent, such as improved management information, or the ready availability of evidence which enables careers service companies to measure their progress towards targets which are used as indicators of their performance (and their ranking in a 'league table').

At the same time, as several respondents pointed out, there is danger of unduly weighting the allocation of resources in favour of the 'lost', 'missing' and the most 'vulnerable'. The increased emphasis on these groups may lead to the needs of those young people who may be more able, or at least less disadvantaged, but who still require advice, guidance and support, being neglected. Thus, important questions need to be raised over the amount of time and effort that should be devoted to those designated as being 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'. The majority of young people, who do not fall into this group, may be easier to track, have less difficult 'transitions', and may be more responsive to offers of assistance. This issue of the balance between 'targeting' and 'universality'

lies at the heart of Connexions, and raises the question of whether there is a cut-off point at which the costs of focusing on the most vulnerable outweigh the gains. As resources are finite, there has to be a cut-off point, but the decision as to where it should be will inevitably be agonising, and possibly rancorous.

What is less contentious is the widespread agreement that the emphasis in tracking should always be on the needs of the client, and what is the best way for those needs to be met. In order to achieve this, it is taken as given that the provision of up-to-date and accurate information is essential.

Two other significant findings relate to the fact that local tracking systems operate in discreet local areas. First, it is important to remember that what is successful in one area will not necessarily be as successful in another, for a variety of reasons, notably differences in the make-up and relationships of local partnerships, and in the environment and context in which policies are being implemented. Second, a specific difficulty which was apparent was in the lack of any consistent or widely agreed process for dealing with individuals who moved between areas. It was acknowledged that most tracking systems are not proactive in following up these 'movers', and that this militates against comprehensive tracking.

The development of partnerships

This report has already placed great emphasis on the importance of developing effective partnerships in order to tackle the problems posed by the existence of 'social exclusion'. It is clear that the problems and challenges of tracking young people, and of inter-agency working are considerable, but that, while progress may be slow and often occurs in small, incremental steps, it can have a profound impact on the effectiveness of policy initiatives. Experience suggests that the process of getting partners round the table can help to 'take the blinkers off' and lead to changes in the way in which they work, especially when they return to the context of their own agencies. What must be remembered is that this process takes time, and there are pitfalls awaiting those who attempt to rush things unduly. It should also be stated that, as some of the respondents made clear, "the journey may be more important than the end result" – in other words, the spin-offs of more cooperative working can be considerable.

Indeed, given the rapidly changing policy context, there may not be an attainable 'end' at which to aim.

Central to the development of effective partnerships is the building of trust and cooperation across all agencies, a tangible sign of which may be the construction of a common shared database accessible to agencies at a local level. Indeed, one of the key issues that lies at the heart of an effective tracking partnership is the maintenance of the integrity of the underlying data. This is a significant challenge to local partners who may have different cultures and who may adopt different approaches to working with young people.

The disparate nature of the many agencies who may be involved in a local partnership calls for an acknowledgement and understanding of the fact that, because of their different remits, these agencies often have different target outcomes, and, invariably, contrasting indicators of what may be termed 'success'. Thus, there is a need for the introduction of performance indicators which are relevant to a range of services or agencies, reflecting their common and agreed goals. In this way, 'success' can be measured in terms of the effectiveness of the partnership as a whole. It may even be appropriate to implement funding incentives which rely on collaboration between 'partners' in order for this to be achieved. Therefore, by making progress in this respect, the notion of 'joined-up' government may become more of a reality.

Uses of and access to data

Access to and the sharing of data have been highlighted as being of fundamental concern in the evolution of tracking systems, and certain prerequisites for the establishment of a successful method have emerged. These include:

- The need to establish confidential agreements between partner organisations regarding the sharing of information on individual young people: this would involve the design of protocols or formalised codes of practice.
- The establishment of mechanisms which allow easy transfer of data.
- The need to inform the young person that they are being tracked, and the reasons underlying this tracking. An important issue is that of gaining the consent of the young person for

gathering and storing information about them. It was felt that the process of gaining consent offered an opportunity for engaging with the young person; however, there may also be a tension between the ‘best interests’ of the client, those of the service provider and those of the general public. The extent to which the system is client-centric should therefore be thoroughly debated and made explicit.

- The need for unique identifiers for individuals, in order to avoid ‘double counting’, and to ensure that data from different agencies is pooled. In this respect, there are restrictions imposed by the Data Protection Registrar on the widespread use of Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs), with a tension existing between the protection of individual rights (that is, preventing the linking of records throughout life) and the strategic planning interest. It is important that information on the discussions regarding a system of unique identifiers is shared as widely as possible.

Policy recommendations

A number of specific policy recommendations can be made on the basis of this research. These may be summarised as follows.

Statutory requirements and protocols

Consideration should be given to the introduction of statutory requirements for collecting, sharing and storing information on agencies other than the careers service companies. At present, contractual requirements to undertake tracking activity, and any sanctions which may be imposed for failing to do so, differ across agencies. There was a strength of feeling among respondents that there should be a ‘more level playing field’, in terms of what information they were required or prepared to share, between lead agencies dealing with young people.

Training

For a tracking system to be effective, there clearly needs to be commitment on the part of staff from all the relevant agencies. At present, there is a tendency for staff, especially at the operational level, to regard work connected with the tracking system to be something which is additional to what they are already doing, rather than

constituting an essential element of their work. Great emphasis should be placed on the provision of training in this area of work, so that the recording of information becomes habitual.

Spatially-referenced analyses

Greater consideration should be given to introducing expertise in spatial analysis, using post-coded tracking data, and for linking such data with other spatially-referenced data sets (either socioeconomic indicators in the public domain, and/or data sets belonging to partners), in order to examine spatial concentrations of disadvantage and the potential for local or area-focused interventions. It is important to investigate how much geographical concentration of disadvantage matters, and why. Spatial analysis might also shed light on the extent to which barriers to inclusion are both geographical, community and institution based. The development of expertise and understanding in these techniques could also help local tracking systems to address the issue of individuals who move between local areas. Indeed, there is scope for a number of pilot studies on tracking of ‘movers’ (as outlined in Chapter 6).

Research issues

This study has also pointed to the need for further research on issues which are central to the development of effective tracking systems. These include the following.

Development of partnerships

It is universally accepted that, without effective partnership working, the prospects of providing appropriate interventions for vulnerable young people, many of whom are confronted by multiple disadvantages, are severely constrained. It is also the case that the partnerships which already exist, and those which will become operational offer a wide variety of combinations, in terms of their membership. They are effectively idiosyncratic, and are often driven by the pertinent issues facing young people in the local context, and the tradition of collaborative working locally. An area of research of key importance would be in tracing, over time, the development of partnerships across a range of types, and across a range of local contexts, with different socioeconomic and institutional structures.

Knowledge, understanding and cooperation of young people

It was apparent from the research undertaken that, while assertions were sometimes made about the degree to which young people themselves accepted or objected to the collection of information about them, there was a dearth of empirical evidence which would enable decisions about young people's role in the process to be made with any confidence. Therefore, further research which explores young people's understanding of the implications of the array of data collection to which they may be invited to contribute, and their attitudes towards this, would be worthwhile. It would be useful here to include samples from a range of groups of young people, including some who may be considered to be 'at risk' or vulnerable.

The way forward

It would be churlish to finalise this report without pointing out forcibly that a phenomenal amount of commitment and endeavour has been, and continues to be, exerted in attempts to develop tracking systems which not only enhance the effectiveness of individual agencies and their ability to fulfil their appointed roles with their target groups, but, crucially, have a beneficial impact on the transitions and trajectories of those young people who are deemed to require more assistance, by dint of their vulnerability. In undertaking this study, the researchers were impressed by the sheer volume of interesting and innovative approaches to tracking and by the expertise, dedication and depth of commitment of those within whose remit these tasks fell.

The introduction of Connexions, along with the whole welter of initiatives targeted at the 'social exclusion' agenda, offers enormous opportunities for 'breaking the mould' and effecting fundamental and lasting improvement to the lot of those most disadvantaged in our society. It would be unforgivably neglectful to pass up the opportunities currently presented to harness the ideas, inventiveness and talents of those involved in developing mechanisms for informing policy and identifying where interventions may be most effective, through the provision of better information and tracking. The prize for bringing together these abilities and the associated commitment is an enrichment of the lives of thousands of our younger, more needy citizens.

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Appendix A: Careers services questionnaire



1. Do you collect information on young people additional to that required for your core DfEE Careers Service Contract and monthly RHOMIS MI return? YES NO

If YES, Please give details of purpose and content (equal opportunity purposes etc).

If YES, for how long have you been collecting this information? (If information is collected on more than one group of young people, please list each group separately.)

If YES, how is it funded (additional funded contract or out of own resources)?

2. Have your tracking needs changed in the last two years? YES NO

If YES, please outline the reasons why (eg, changing client groups, changing age group).

3. Is special emphasis placed on any vulnerable/disaffected young people? YES NO

If so please specify which groups (eg, young homeless, young offenders, care leavers).

4. From what age are young people included in the tracking system?

5. Is there a systematic cut-off point for removal? YES NO

If YES, please give details (eg, change in status, change in location, age).

6. What happens to data on those young people who move out of the local area? (eg is it transferred to the new careers service area?)

7. How are those young people moving into the local area identified?

8. Please outline the process/methods used in collecting information on vulnerable/disaffected young people (eg, using existing administrative information, liaising with other agencies, outreach workers).

9. Have the methods used to track vulnerable/disaffected young people changed over time? YES NO

If YES, please outline the changes that have occurred *and* the reasons for these changes.

10. Are you involved with any other agency/agencies in tracking vulnerable/disaffected young people? YES NO

If YES, please outline which agency/agencies are involved in the partnership, *and* how the partnership works.

11. What have been the main problems encountered in tracking?

- Data protection issues
- Partnership problems
- Problems with computer/information systems
- Resources – staffing
- Resources – time
- Financial constraints
- Response rates
- Other (please describe)

Please provide further explanation *and* how you think these problems have been/will be addressed.

12. Please specify what aspects of tracking have been particularly successful *and* why.

13. Please specify what aspects of tracking have been particularly unsuccessful *and* why.

14. How does information from tracking aid improvements in policy/planning?

15. Other than your organisation, are there any other organisations that have direct access to your data?

YES NO

If YES, Please indicate which organisations.

16. Please outline how your tracking data is stored and archived.

17. Who has access to this data?

18. What do you consider to be the key issues to be addressed in establishing tracking systems for vulnerable/disaffected young people?

19. Do you know of any other youth tracking initiatives, using innovative practices (involving either careers service or other agencies)? Please give details and, if possible, a contact name.

20. Please attach any *supplementary material* or *additional comments/suggestions* you would like to make regarding the mapping and tracking of young people.

We are very interested in learning more about the tracking system you are/were involved with, and would appreciate it if you could send us information on your system.

We would be very grateful if you could return this questionnaire by **August 10th 2000**.

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

Thank you for your time and cooperation in completing this questionnaire

PLEASE RETURN TO:

Mrs Sylvia Moore, Project Secretary

Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.

Telephone: 024 7652 3283 (direct line) Fax: 024 7652 4241 (general) Email: Sylvia.Moore@warwick.ac.uk

Appendix B: Questions for case studies

A. Description of the tracking system – context and process of operationalisation

1. Development of the tracking system

- a) *When* and *how* did it start?
- b) *Why* was it initiated? For instance, was development prompted by/linked to specific programme initiatives (eg SRB, New Start) and/or extra funding?
- c) *Who* was involved in setting up the system (ie the partners concerned)? Were developments driven by one or more key individuals?
- d) Have *new partners* come on board since/have *original partners* left?
- e) Were/are the *young people* to be tracked involved in discussions about the development of the tracking system?

2. Purpose of the tracking system

- a) *What* are the goals of the system?
- b) *How* do these relate to agency objectives?
- c) Have the *objectives* of different agencies *changed* over time? If so, *how*? And how are changing objectives synchronised?
- d) Has the *purpose* of the system changed over time?

3. Coverage of the system

- a) *Who* is tracked? (And who should be tracked?)
- b) *Why* focus on this/these particular group(s)?
- c) For *how long* are they tracked?
- d) *How* are individuals uniquely identified (ie, how are unique identification numbers allocated)?
- e) How are *movers* (between different statuses, and into and out of the area) dealt with?
- f) *What* information do you collect on each individual (ie, what are the fields on the database)?

4. *Updating information on the system?*

- a) What is the *frequency* of updating information on the tracking system (eg periodically/event-driven/real time)?
- b) What are the *mechanisms for updating* information on the tracking system?

5. *Access to the tracking system and use of tracking information*

- a) *Who* has direct access to the tracking system? (And do they have access to all information stored on the system?)
- b) *How* is the information from the tracking system *used* – by whom, and for what purposes?
- c) *How should* information from the tracking system be used?

B. Issues

6. *Partnership working*

- a) Is partnership working a *desirable* and/or *necessary* precondition for a successful local tracking system?
- b) If partnership is desirable, who are the *ideal partners*? Have they been or are they involved? If not, why not?
- c) *What* is needed to make local tracking partnerships work (in terms of collaboration, trust, data exchange, etc)?
- d) *What* are the main *obstacles* to successful partnership working (differences in geographical areas covered, project seen as a threat to organisation, etc)?
- e) *What* are the key *ingredients* to successful partnership working?
- f) *What* are the main *benefits* accruing to partners from the tracking system?

7. *Information technology*

- a) *What* are the main considerations in assessing whether to use/develop *existing databases* for tracking purposes rather than develop *new databases*?
- b) How *feasible* is it/has it been to develop IT protocols for data exchange/import for tracking systems?
- c) What is the relative importance of IT barriers to developing a tracking system as opposed to human/institutional barriers?
- d) What hardware and software do you currently use for your tracking system?

8. *Data protection and confidentiality*

- a) To what extent are data protection and confidentiality issues *barriers* to setting up a tracking system?
- b) Do certain types of data (eg, particular information fields) pose *particular sensitivities* in this respect?
- c) How have you ensured that the information on the tracking system remains *secure* and that *confidentiality* is assured?
- d) Have data protection and confidentiality constraints posed *problems* for partners in gaining information that they want/need?
- e) How is/should information gained through *informal* means be integrated into a tracking system?

C. Assessment of success

9. How to assess success

- a) What *criteria* do you think are appropriate for measuring the success (or otherwise) of a tracking system?
- b) Do you have a *framework* for a formal assessment of your tracking system? And if so does this involve *external* and/or *internal* assessment?

10. Assessment

- a) *Overall*, how successful have your attempts at developing a tracking system been?
- b) What are the *key benefits* of the tracking system (in general)?
- c) Do these *benefits outweigh the costs* of time and effort incurred in setting up a tracking system?
- d) What do you think are the *resource implications* of setting up a successful tracking system?
- e) Have particular elements of the tracking system been *especially successful* and others *less successful*? (If so, which? And why?)
- f) How *appropriate* and *effective* has the tracking system been in meeting the needs of partners involved in delivering services to/addressing the needs of vulnerable young people?
- g) What are the *main lessons* from your own experience of involvement in inter-agency working/tracking activities that you think would be valuable to pass on to others embarking on setting up a tracking system?

D. Plans for the future

11. Future developments – short- and medium-term

- a) What *plans* are there for future development of your tracking system/similar activities?
- b) What is the relative importance of *revisions* to current arrangements as opposed to *extending the scope* of the tracking system?
- c) Are you able to identify *obstacles/developments* that may *thwart* such future plans?

12. Future developments – longer-term

- a) Do you have a longer-term *vision* of a tracking system for vulnerable young people? And if so, what form does it take? And what are its main objectives?
- b) What do you see as the relative merits of *local* as opposed to a *national* tracking system?
- c) Do you think a *national tracking system* is feasible in the medium-/long-term? Why?
- d) Do you have any *specific recommendations* to put forward regarding the future development of tracking systems?