STOCKPORT WORK TRAINING PROJECT

Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Early in 1995 The North West Training and Development Team (NWTDT), as part of the ongoing work in the field of learning disabilities, was asked to undertake a review of the Stockport Work Training Project. This project, set up in 1994 as a joint venture between Stockport CP and Worklink, a part of Stockport Social Services provision, had the original aims of assisting young people leaving Heaton School to find work through a combination of work placements and access to local college courses.

David Race, a member of NWTDT, undertook preliminary work with the project and drew together a team to conduct the review. The members of the team were :

David Race - Team Leader and member of the NWTDT.

Christine McKenna - Formerly course director BA(Hons) Professional Studies Learning Difficulties, Stockport College - actively involved in various user groups in Stockport.

Dave Ashton - Independent consultant, the author of a recent NWTDT report on employment schemes for people with learning disabilities in the NW.

Martin Routledge - Co-ordinator, Learning Disability Services with Oldham Social Services and part-time lecturer on management and evaluation issues on the Stockport BA course.

The review took place during the four days of 14, 16, 22 and 23 June 1995, with an initial verbal feedback presented to the project steering group on 29 June.

A preliminary report which expanded on the verbal feedback was sent to the project in September, and forms the basis of this revised document, produced for wider circulation in the region. Stockport CP, Worklink and Stockport Social Services Department have given permission for publication of this report. This report seeks to draw out lessons from the review for those involved with people with learning disabilities and services for them.

The team would like to thank all those who consented to be interviewed as part of the review, and Doug Cresswell and the Worklink team at Hope House, both for assisting in the arrangements for the review and for providing facilities for the team during the process. Doug, together with Chris Ensor of Stockport CP, kindly gave their comments on the preliminary report, and on drafts of this wider version. We hope this final version is of interest, and that it will stimulate development in the project and in the lives of young people with learning disabilities.

The Review Process

Why a review?

It was clear from the outset and from discussions with the project that what was being proposed for the team to carry out was a 'snapshot' of the working of the project after one year in operation. The word 'review' is therefore used in preference to 'evaluation', since the team were neither applying any standardised evaluation instrument nor, indeed, were there any agreed criteria against which to 'measure' the project. In fact, one of the main reasons why the project is interesting is that it represents one of the relatively few attempts, in our experience, to intervene directly, using integrated educational/vocational college courses together with an established work funding scheme, with the primary objective of finding work at the time of school leaving. Data on similar projects is thus very sparse, so using such data as a means of judging the project under review was also not really feasible.

Instead, information was sought from two main sources. First, and predominantly, from face to face interviews with all those involved with the project. Second, from the limited amount of documentation thus far available.

Interviews

Over the first two days of the review, and on the morning of the third day, a total of thirty one interviews were carried out. They were undertaken by members of the team, either individually, or in groups of two or more. Details of the numbers of interviews with different groups of people are given below:

Table 1:
Interviews undertaken for the review

Group	Number of interviews
Young people using the project	6
Parents/carers of young people	6
Front line staff of the project	3
Immediate line managers	2
Higher level managers from the two services of the project	3
Those involved in outside services that are used by the project	
- North Area College	1
- Stockport College	4
- Heaton School	1
- Community Learning Disability Team	1
- Personal Support Workers	1
Employers/potential employers	3

Interviews were largely unstructured, though an outline guide for interviewers was used (shown in the Appendix). The intention was to get as full an impression of interviewee's experiences of the first year of the project as possible, and to include all comments concerning what was going on in the lives of the young people involved with it. In addition impressions were sought as to the administration and co-ordination of the various organisational elements that made up the project.

Documentation

Given the relatively short duration of the project, large amounts of documentation were not expected. What the team consulted, therefore, were mainly minutes of meetings of the project steering group, budgeting and financial information from the project formation period and, later, a review of progress of the six young people produced for the external funder of the project's first year.

Analysis of information

Following the interviews and documentation consultation the team met together over the remainder of the final two days to analyse the information and draw out suggestions. The process began by all the team bringing out what they considered to be key questions which the review might seek to address. Following this a version of what is known as 'model coherency'[1] was applied to the information gained by the team. This process asked the following questions:

- Who are the people? - a picture of the young people involved with the project, their experiences of it, and other issues relating to their lives was drawn out by detailed analysis of the interviews.

- What are their needs? - again from interviews, summary themes were drawn up of the team view of needs of the young people and their parents and carers.

- What are the roles and identities of staff involved with the project? - from interviews, and from the documentation a picture was built up of the different roles played by the variety of staff and managers involved with the project. Part of this discussion also centred around the co-ordination and cohesiveness of the various roles, and the suitability of staff, given their different organisational positions, in carrying out the roles demanded of them.

- What are people getting? - putting all the views from the interviews and documentation together the team's collective view was sought to form themes that summarise what people are actually getting from the project.

- What are the connections between these elements? - drawing on the previous analysis, how do the elements fit together, in particular 'Needs' , 'What people are getting' and 'Roles and Identities of staff'.

Having discussed, debated and noted the team's answers to the model coherency process, the analysis of information was then concluded by returning to the key questions noted at the beginning. In applying the analysis, answers to the questions and suggestions emerging from those answers were noted, and these lead to the overall recommendations of the review. Subsequent discussions and meetings then added clarification of the wider issues raised by the project, which are covered in the final discussion section of this report.

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[1] Model Coherency originally appeared as a rating in PASS (Program Analysis of Service Systems - Wolfensberger and Glenn 1975) and has been developed in various training events around Social Role Valorisation as a process of analysing information about services. It now forms part of the ten 'themes' of SRV first presented at a workshop in Newcastle in April 1995.

Heaton School Leavers Project - A Brief History

Before giving a detailed account of the findings of the review some background to the team's work needs to be presented, in the form of a brief history of the project. As with all history, memories of events are combined with factual information to form an overall picture in any one individual's mind. What follows, therefore, is the picture gained by the team of the project's history from a series of personal reflections.

Interestingly, a number of people claimed to have had the original idea for the project, and then got together with others to put it into effect. What is certainly clear is that a combination of events and individuals in different parts of the service system, in particular Stockport Social Services, Stockport C.P. and Heaton School, led to a notion of a project, that would focus on school leavers and aim to get them into the work environment, with assistance in work finding and related college placement. On this last point, there was encouraging involvement from N. Area college with regard to inclusion of individuals in some of their courses.

Overall, therefore, the teams impression was of an interesting process, difficult to replicate, whereby ideas coalesce, and then come together as a project.

Over a period of some years this notion took further shape, and a framework began to emerge of how the project might be run. Other developments in day services in Stockport heightened the need for such a project, in that intervention in a young person's life before they became firmly set on a path leading to segregated day services became more clearly identified as crucial. It was therefore decided that Worklink, an existing service that aims to find work for adults with learning disabilities, would provide staff and management to deal with the work placement and training side of the project. Stockport C.P., which was involved with some of the young people at Heaton School, and with their parents, would provide support to young people in integrated college placements in finding such placements, and in travel and other training to make the connection with work.

Funding was initially sought from the European Social Fund, but this did not materialise, mainly because of somewhat over stringent outcome criteria needing to be committed to at the outset by the project. As an aside, such criteria would seem to be something of a disincentive to innovative schemes, which by their nature have uncertain outcomes. The fund raising side of Stockport C.P. therefore sought other avenues. At the same time the arrangement with North Area College was developed to provide work related places in the area of catering. The Extended Education course at Stockport College was not initially involved with the project.

Another usual source of funding for such projects, the local Training and Enterprise Council, was also considered, but again local conditions precluded this being taken further. Funding for the first year eventually materialised by means of a grant from The Equitable Charitable Trust. This was then matched by funds from Stockport Social Services and the staff for the project were appointed in the summer of 1994. Five school leavers were identified, after a few initial changes, and these people, together with another young person who was leaving a residential school out of the borough, became the first school leavers to use the project.

The initial funding, whilst covering the costs of the two part time staff at Stockport C.P., and one full-time and one part-time member of staff at Worklink, only allocated a very small amount of money for management costs, with some time of managers at Worklink and Stockport C.P. being accounted for. In terms of actual management of the project a steering group was set up consisting of the head of Heaton School, two managers from Stockport C.P. and Stockport Social Services, a representative from the Community Learning Disability Team and the two immediate line managers from Worklink and Stockport C.P. This then developed into a management group

to co-ordinate and aid joint management of the project.

The six young people entered the project on leaving school in July 1994. Their experiences will be considered later in this report but two further historical points need to be noted. The first is the involvement of the Stockport College Extended Education Course, and the second is the follow up funding of the 1995 school leavers.

Despite the initial arrangement with North Area College a number of the young people also attended the Stockport Extended Education course for varying lengths of time. This resulted from a number of factors. First, the projects budget did not allow sufficient staff time to provide individual support five days per week. Second, there was a need for time to be taken to find integrated college and work placements. The Stockport course was thus available as a fill-in in terms of students being

able to have some educational/training input during the day. The fact that what was initially seen as a temporary arrangement became more established for certain individuals, and the fact that the Extended of Education course, whilst part of the College at Stockport is discrete, in the sense of all the people on it having learning difficulties, led, as we shall see, to issues of role confusion, and an impression in some peoples minds that Stockport College was part of the project. Fuller implications will be discussed later.

By the time the review took place in June 1995, funding for the 1995 school leavers had been agreed by Stockport Social Services Department. This covers further support worker costs from both Stockport C.P. and Worklink and ensures that the project will continue until at least 1997. The review, as indicated earlier, concentrated on the first year of the project and on the 1994 school leavers.

The Key Questions

Through the process of interviewing those involved and reading the documentation available, the review team had formed, by the time they met for the first analysis session, some ideas about the project and its first year.

These were noted as 'key questions', initially written down as they occurred, but later grouped under a number of headings. Table 2 lists the questions

Table 2
Key Questions

What is the project?

- How should the project be described?

- What is it trying to achieve?

- Does there need to be a specific project to achieve these things?

- What sort of staff should be working in the project?

- What expectations are put on staff?

- What sort of people should be using the project?

- What expectations do families/carers have of the project?

- How do employers see the project?

How does the project operate?

- Is it achieving what it is trying to achieve?

- Is it of the right duration and does it happen at the right time in people's lives?

- How relevant are the individual parts of the project to people's needs?

- Is the sort of work people are going into needs led/provision led/stereotyped?

- What are the ways in which people can be supported in further education?

- What is the role of the Stockport College Extended Education course within the project?

Funding and Finance Issues

- Why does the project need outside funding, beyond that provided by the statutory services?

- What are the difficulties of funding individuals through the maze of work/benefit/education financial systems?

- Can we come to a common definition of 'therapeutic earnings'

Bringing it all together for the future

- How cohesive are the various elements and how might they be brought together more?

- Where does the project sit in the wider service world and where should it sit?

- What would be an appropriate organisational structure for the project?

- Is this an 'elitist' privileged service for a few - is it a best use of resources within the overall context of learning disability services?

- Should it stay small - will it get unmanageable if it expands?

As noted earlier, the notion of a review is to raise such questions as issues of concern to those involved with the project and those who use it, rather than bringing from the outside some notion of how such a project should operate and then 'measuring' the project against it. The questions are therefore the collective experience of what are key issues for people, not just those of the review team.

In raising these questions a general acknowledgement also needs to be made of the basic achievement of those involved in actually getting the project off the ground, both in terms of hard work and commitment to the young people. The team were concerned with development, and therefore may sometimes overlook what it has taken to get this far. It is therefore important, as the report proceeds to the model coherency analysis, to acknowledge the basic fact that a project exists and is working, and the effort that has taken.

Model Coherency Analysis

Who are the people?

In the two days of analysis, the team spent by far the longest amount of time and discussion in answering this question for all those people involved with the project. What follows in this part of the report focuses specifically on the young people and their parents and carers. This is for two reasons. First, that they are after all what the service is supposed to be about. Second, the details of interviews with others involved with the project contributed to the team's answers to many of the other questions in the analysis, and will thus appear later. It may be important to re-emphasise the point that the team have put together their findings from an amalgamation of views expressed in interviews with the young people and their parents and carers. In some cases impressions that people had did not necessarily fit precisely with the 'facts' of the case. What the team regarded as important, however, was to get at those personal views as an indication of the impact of the project on those who use it.

In presenting our account of themes around the young people we have used a couple of examples to illustrate some of the sorts of experiences that they have of the project. This is followed by the team's thoughts on the themes about young people that emerged from the review.

Two stories of young people (names have been changed for purposes of confidentiality)

Arthur

The team member who interviewed this young man described him as an "open, outgoing person". Since joining the project he has progressed to a position where he works in a supermarket three mornings a week.

Work is definitely part of his life, though, in the team members view, his current work was not the 'perfect' job. He likes machinery and

vehicles and it may be better if he can move into the delivery part of the supermarket where these things are around. It is hoped that he can shortly move on to receiving therapeutic earnings for work. His college experience is more mixed, mainly consisting of time at Stockport College, though he talks mainly about his friends as coming from college rather than work. His mother talked of the greater maturity he had achieved in the year of the project, and was certainly pleased that he had been given the chance to get involved with the work situation rather than going into a more sheltered or segregated service. He goes with a Support Worker to snooker on one afternoon and he enjoys this and his college course at Stockport, though the connection with work was not all that clear to observers. Overall, he is considered to be someone for whom the project has been a success.

Molly

This young woman, the second example of people who use the project, seemed, according to the team member who interviewed her "a little bit fed up" with being asked to talk to the review team. She had been given a number of 'tasters' of work during the year in a hotel, a nursery and a kitchen, and though she liked the nursery work, some opinions were that she liked being part of the nursery rather than actually working in it.

For this young woman, unlike the young man, work did not seem to be as high on her agenda as college. Like him, most of her friends were at college and she expressed the desire to spend more time at college rather than work. She was in fact, for a trial period, having the work part of the project considerably reduced.

The two examples given reveal some of the underlying themes for the young people that the team discussed. They also confirm the need for a parallel study to this review, which would folclow-up individuals over the two year period and chart their progress during that time. For the purposes of the review Table 3 below summarises the themes for young people that emerged from our deliberations:

Table 3
Themes about young people

• Most liked working.	With the exception of one young person, who was somewhat indifferent, most of the young people expressed favourable opinions about their working lives. This was generally supported by parents and carers.
• Most are not clear of the connection with their college course, and why they go.	Particularly for those whose only college experience was the Extended Education course at Stockport College, but also others, even those attending N. Area College, there appeared to be not much connection in **their** minds between the college course and their work. This was also the view of most parents and carers, though some could see an alternative purpose to college - usually expressed as helping people with 'maturity'.
• All like the people who work with them.	A series of good relationships had been built-up with both sets of support workers. The young people, and their carers and parents were generally high in their positive view of these relationships.
• Everyone needed some support in what they were doing.	The team were of the view that the support of the project had been essential in developing the young people to the point they had currently reached. This had been successfully and appropriately reduced in some cases, as independence increased. For others, it was thought that needed support might extend beyond the two year time scale of the project.
• Most had expectations other than as service recipients.	This was a key finding for the team, and was not just related to expectations of work, though this was important. In other ways too, the young people, and their parents and carers, were seeing alternatives to being passive recipients of services. Socially, the young people saw themselves as developing adults going into an adult world of work and further education.

These themes, especially the last one, represent, in the team's view, a real achievement of the first year of the project, in that virtually all of the experiences of the young people would not have occurred without the project being there, or at least would have been significantly delayed. An illustration of this point came from the interview with one social worker, who stated that had the project not been there, he would have had to have supported the young person through a much longer, and more difficult process via college, the day centre and maybe eventually Worklink.

Parents and carers

Table 4 below summarises the team view of issues that emerged from interviews with parents and carers.

Table 4
Issues for parents and carers

• All think the project is a good idea.	Many parents spoke about not knowing what would have happened to their young person without the project. The need for something like the project for all school leavers with learning disabilities was expressed consistently.
• Most feel the young people have benefited from the work part of the project.	Expressions like 'maturity', 'independence' or even a basic 'liking' for work were common. A few queries arose as to the particular sort of work people were doing, and whether it matched their abilities and interests.
• A more variable response to the college input.	Though most could see some benefit in people going to college, especially in filling the week with activity, queries were raised about the following: the relevance of college courses especially at Stockport College to the work situation; whether the college courses catered sufficiently for individual needs, or whether group activities dominated; a lack of clarity on the part of parents and carers as to who was providing support and when - was it college support staff or project staff?
• Most feel the project is committed to the young people.	Positive views were expressed about the individual and project commitment to find good things for the young people. The general feeling was that this commitment was for more than just the fixed period of the project.
• Some would like more involvement.	This was expressed in two forms by a few parents. First a greater, and earlier, involvement at the planning/review stage in assisting the project in finding an appropriate job/college package. Second, the possibility of some sort of parents/carers support group.

What are people's needs?

In examining the detail of people's experience, and summarising them in the terms given above, the team had already begun to form a collective view of what their needs were. In writing down a list of these the team's initial effort produced some very broad statements, and we quickly acknowledged that these had made a number of assumptions about more basic needs already being met. We therefore divided our list of needs into two groups, namely basic needs, which might be addressed by a project starting out, and developing needs, which would only emerge after a period of actual working of a project.

Table 5 below sets out the team's view of these needs, expressed both for the young people and for their parents and carers. Obviously some overlap will occur, in that some of the needs of the young people can be expressed as needs of their carers for the young people's needs to be met.

Table 5
Needs of Young People and their Parents/Carers

	Young People	Parents/Carers
Basic Needs	• Work	• Security, via
	• Meaningful Occupation	- 5-day
	• Choice, and help to mature	- long term safeguards
Developing Needs	• A plan and process for people including the place of college courses and qualifications	The same as left, but for the young people
	• Tailored to individual needs	The same as left, but for the young people
	• Information to enable choice	The same as left, but for the young people
	• Range of options (probably from 16)	The same as left, but for the young people
	• An appropriate school leaving process	• One contact person
		• Sharing information and supporting one another
		• A chance to contribute a view

It is important to reiterate that the developing needs identified by the team come largely from the experience of the first year of the project. It is hard to see how many of these could have been identified as the project was being set up, especially given the need for haste in the months of June and July 1994. In addition, as may become clearer, the developing needs could be said to be those of **all** school leavers, not just people using this project, or even just those with learning disabilities.

The basic needs, therefore, of work, a meaningful occupation, some choice over that and the development of maturity, were what the project set out to achieve. Parental needs for security via a five day service with long term safeguards were also there as an aim of the project, but given the view of the project as an 'experiment' could not be expected to have been met from day one.

Given those basic needs were being addressed, however, what Table 5 summarises is the developing need for a more comprehensive process of what might be called a 'career plan' for the young people. The time span of two years, and the initial limitations (largely outside the project's control) on choice of college placement and work experience could now, in the team's view, become more flexible. Wider information on both college and work placements would be needed if real choices were going to be made about a young person's career path. In addition, the importance of this wider range of options being made available, or at least discussed, earlier in a young persons school life, probably from the age of 16 years onwards, was emphasised by the team. Such suggestions led the team on to consider the need for a thorough examination of the school leaving process as a whole, since a clear need existed for a more appropriate process, starting earlier, and involving those with knowledge of the world of work and of further education. As noted above, this may not exist at present for many school leavers, but experience of the project drew the teams attention to such a need, one of a number that the project threw up for others to reflect and act on.

Beyond the needs of the young people, the team also saw some additional needs specific to parent and carers. The most often noted was the need for one contact person, who could represent the project as a whole. Many parents were unclear of the existence of a 'school leavers project' and instead saw both Worklink and Stockport C.P. in separate roles, just

coming together because they were working with the same young person. A need for someone to whom all parents and carers would turn for information and decisions about the project as a whole was clear. The attempt at an 'information evening' had been largely successful for those who had attended, and this could be built on as an aid in the greater clarity available to parents about the project.

Less universally expressed, but noted by some of the parents and carers, were the two final needs expressed in the right hand column of Table 5. Sharing information and supporting one another, perhaps by some sort of parents group, was one of these needs. The other was a greater chance to contribute a view on the overall future of the young person in the assessment and career planing process. As before this is a need of all parents that the current educational system seems poor at meeting.

Roles and identities of staff involved with the project

Having arrived at an overall impression of the needs of the young people and their parents/carers the team then looked at the people attempting to meet these needs via the project. What were their identities, roles and responsibilities did they have?

This part of the model coherency process is often left out by reviewers, or misinterpreted as being some sort of personal issue about staff performance or competence. In fact, what it is trying to get at is **who** would be appropriate people, in terms of background, qualifications and roles in the service system, to address the identified needs of people. It does this by looking at the project and seeing which staff roles are actually operating, and then looking at who is being given the responsibility of carrying out those roles. Table 6 below gives the teams understanding of answers to those questions. Again we need to note that views expressed relate to impressions gained from interviews of "what is". There is no implication here of 'fault' if "what is" is confused. We try in the discussion that follows to put areas of confusion into context, but do not imply that we have discovered the full "reasons" for confusions, merely that they exist.

Table 6
Roles and identities of staff involved with the project

			Who is involved?
Frontline staff	• Work related	)	
	- finding employment	)	Worklink Staff
	- supporting people in work	)	
	- changing attitudes of employers	)	
	• Education related	)	
	- finding college resources	)	CP Staff
	- supporting people in college	)	
	- changing attitudes in educational services	)	
	• Other roles	)	
	- assessment	)	Unclear - various workers doing
	- link with parents	)	some of these for some people
	- travel training	)	
	- 'maturity'		
Management	• Strategy and co-ordination		'Steering Group'
	• Management of day to day		Individual line managers
	• Organisational link to wider service world		Unclear - parts of project linked to own organisational systems - funding group from Stockport SSD

The table reveals a mixture of clarity and confusion when it comes to who is involved. The issue of background and qualifications is clearest in the case of Worklink staff. They came from an existing service involved with finding and supporting work experiences for people, and that has been their task in the project.

Supporting people in college courses, even finding such courses, whilst clearly in the current scheme the responsibility of C.P. staff, is not something which has been undertaken by many organisations. The fact that the original aims of the project also sought to achieve places in 'inclusive' courses (i.e. those available to all students, not specifically set up for those with learning disabilities) made the input of C.P. staff, particularly staff at the level of front line workers, that much more difficult. We will return to this issue later. Similarly, we will

return to the issues of strategy and co-ordination and day to day management. Though these are currently being carried out by the management group and individual line managers respectively, we have questions about this.

More immediately, under roles and responsibilities of staff, the team were distinctly unclear about who was involved, or who should be involved, in two areas. These are indicated by the word 'unclear' in Table 6. The first of these concerns the areas of assessment, links with parents, travel training, and what we have loosely called 'maturity'.

From our interviews the team gained only a limited understanding of the assessment process. What was unclear was the place of staff from the project in this process vis-à-vis others, in particular the Community Learning Disability Team. It appeared that the main responsibility for school leavers' assessments fell to this latter group, and we were unclear as

to why this should be so, and what the contributions of others, particularly staff of the project, might be. We were basically asking the question, is there sufficient integration between the very general assessment of the Community Team and specific elements of people's needs such as those that the project seeks to meet.

Similarly, though staff from Stockport C.P. had links with parents, so too did staff from Worklink and also, on occasion staff from the Community Learning Disability Team and/or others from Stockport Social Services. Travel training, too, appeared to be given by all the different staff groups involved with no really clear rationale for who did what. Finally the issue of 'maturity', though raised by many as a need for young people, produced very unclear answers when the team was trying to find out who was responsible for assisting with this, and what, in any case, constituted assistance with 'maturity' To our knowledge, nothing that could be called an 'objective' measure of maturity is in existence, still less something that could be applied convincingly to people with learning disabilities. Yet is still formed a key element of interviewees impressions of what the project helped with. It is, therefore, not surprising that confusion exists. We realise that these are complicated practical and organisational issues, especially with regard to 'maturity', but needed to note them here as areas to be worked on.

The second broad area which was not clear to the team was how the project was linked to the wider service world. Though clear structures exist for Worklink and Stockport C.P. respectively, the connections of the project as an entity to the broader service system was less clear. With the funding for 1995 school leavers being managed from a senior group at Stockport SSD how were connections with Stockport CP going to be affected? Who, in fact, was linking what was going on in the project to the broader picture of services for school leavers? Where were senior managers from Education, the Careers Service, Stockport Social Services and the Independent College sector in relation to the project? All had potential use of the project, either to replace things their own agencies were doing, to supplement these and/or to co-ordinate potentially complementary provision e.g. new opportunities at Stockport College. In looking at the links with the wider service world, however, the team generally found tenuous connections, and in fact the operation of the project highlighted some of the gaps in co-ordination of services for school leavers in general, and those with learning disabilities in particular. As with other broader issues, these are not within the sole power of the project to control. What the project has done, by its presence and relative success is to point out what the issues are.

What are people actually getting?

Given the people involved with the project, their needs, and the roles and identities of staff, what has emerged in terms of what people are actually getting from the project?

Taking into account the team's observations, what we heard from people involved, and after lengthy discussion our conclusions on what people are getting is summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7
What are people getting?

• A lot of input	- but issues of co-ordination and appropriate responsibility exist
• A lot of time from committed people	- individual attention
• Work	- some earning money linked to benefits
	- some work experience - ? relevance
• Help with skills	- travel - from different people - ? relevance to needs
	- maturity? - from ?
	- work skills
	- ?
• Attendance at college	- qualification (one)
	- educational experiences - ? relevance to needs
	- something to do
• Contact with other young people	
• Contact with adults	
• A number of new experiences all at the same time	- anxiety

As the table shows, the team were of the view that people who use the service were getting a lot of time spent on them and with them. This resulted in some good relationships being built up, and considerable benefits to individuals in terms of attention being paid to them. There were, however, issues of co-ordination of this input, and some confusion over who took responsibility for directing the time and resources for any one individual. In particular, the role of the Support Worker within the overall package raised issues of co-ordination and control.

All the young people had experience of work from being part of the project. Some had gone quite a long way with this, and were earning money linked to their benefits, others had had less success in being helped into a meaningful work experience that was relevant to their individual needs. Overall however, the achievement, in terms of work placement, could be viewed with some satisfaction.

All the young people had received help to develop skills. Travel training had come from a number of different sources, and while from a co-ordination point of view this may be an issue, from the young people's point of view definite skill enhancements had been forthcoming. Questions remained, however, about the relevance of some of the travel training to individual needs. So, for example, specific training to get somebody to work might be much more relevant than just 'being able to go on a bus'.

Improvements had clearly come, too, in work skills, though it was not entirely clear to the team (hence the question mark) how much of skill training had come just from Worklink, or from the various college courses, and again the question of specific relevance of this training to individual needs was raised. To this needs to be added, in the team's view, some thought about what people were getting in terms of longer term work prospects. We acknowledge, as one parent noted, that long term prospects for anybody are increasingly uncertain, but merely wished to reflect that the success of the project in finding work experience should not take their eye off the need for more permanent

possibilities, with prospects for proper wages to go with them.

As for 'maturity', though this was mentioned frequently as an aim of the project, and often as something which had 'improved' over the project's first year, the team were both unclear whether maturity can be called a 'skill', or that it can be taught, but also from where the improvement in maturity had emanated. Given the consistency with which it was mentioned as an issue, however, the team felt that it should remain as something to be thought about.

People had certainly gained attendance at college courses as a result of being on the project, though the team had questions about what they had actually received from that attendance. As we have seen earlier, attendance on the Extended Education course was not part of the original plan of the project, and therefore the fact that the majority of young people had spent more time on this college course than on the course at N. Area college means that our impressions of the relevance of people's experiences are not a reflection on the project. One person had achieved a qualification at N. Area college, but for others it was less clear what the connection was between their attendance at college and their work or, further, between this and their individual needs. This raises the much wider issue of what discrete college courses can, and cannot, do for young school leavers. The specific original intention of the project, to use inclusive vocational courses, was thwarted by the availability of such courses, and so many of the young people had to use the discrete non-vocational course at Stockport. People leading the Stockport course are also aware of this issue but are themselves subject to the

prevailing climate within colleges, both ideological and financial, which largely keeps their provision for people with learning disabilities in discrete, segregated groups. Thus, the young people on the project merely highlight the more general point that for some it seems more a case of college being something to do. Though we acknowledge in this instance the brief nature of our exploration, the wider point of current college culture needs to be made.

Contact with other people, both other young people and the adult world, had also been a consistent factor in what people were getting. A number of the young people spoke highly of the chance to be with their friends that the college element especially Stockport College provided, whilst parents and some staff spoke of the extra maturity gained from the adult world of work.

Overall, in fact, the young people using the project had received a number of new experiences in a relatively short period of time. Most had benefited from these experiences, though the team did wonder whether a more gradual introduction, including time spent during the final two or three years at school might have avoided some of the anxieties that were around for a few people in moving to college and work from the relatively safe environment of school.

What are the connections?

The team focused particularly on the connection between three elements, namely needs, roles and identities of staff and what people were getting. The results of our deliberations are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8
How do the elements connect?

Needs <   ?   > What people are getting

- Basic needs being met, especially work

- Some queries about 'meaningful occupation'

- An important first step away from 'service dependency'

- Families learning about alternatives, and the potential of advocacy and consumer power

- Security to begin to address developing needs

Roles and identities of staff <   ?   >   What people are getting

- Work related tasks match

- Education tasks, roles of staff less clearly matched

- Other roles less clearly matched

Change-making role may need higher level staff to influence systems - current lack of clarity in match

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The preceding discussion should make a good part of the table self-explanatory. The team felt it important however, to highlight the last three elements of the first part of Table 8 and the last element of the second part. It was crucial, in our view, that the project had made an important first step away from 'service dependency'. In other words families were learning about alternatives, people were learning about alternatives, the world of work was learning about alternatives, and the service system was learning about alternatives to traditional models. This represented a solid base from which to progress. The 'developing needs' as identified in Table 5 earlier, could thus begin to be addressed with the security of this solid base. Given the investment of many services in traditional day centres, and an almost automatic expectation of a college course leading to not very much, beyond occupying people for two years, the notion of alternatives is crucial in instigating change in those services.

Matching staff identities and roles with what people are getting revealed a certain incongruity between the organisational level of staff attempting to make changes in the wider system, and the nature of those changes. In other words, if the project was trying, for example, to

influence colleges to provide inclusive courses rather than segregated ones, then front-line staff at Stockport C.P. are unlikely to have much influence over college principals or heads of faculties and schools. This is, perhaps, inevitable in a pilot project, and may reflect a degree of naiveté in some interviewees in their expectations of what such an experimental project can achieve. Attempts have been made by middle and senior managers to approach colleges at that level, and this will continue long-term. In the meantime, however, the front-line staff have had to work with what is available, and so the impetus for change is inevitably weakened. Similarly whilst Worklink staff can deal with immediate changes in the work situation, higher level staff are also needed to influence the attitudes of the wider employment world, speaking to trades associations, business groups and so on. Again, this need is recognised and being acted on in the longer term by the management of both agencies.

The key questions - findings and discussion

The initial feedback to the project dealt with a number of specific points thrown up by the team's review and model coherency analysis. These were discussed then and later, and a number have been addressed at the time this final report is written.

What this particular section attempts to do is to use the team's analysis to bring out certain points in response to the key questions with which we started and to try and draw out the wider issues and implications of those responses. The section is, therefore, set out under each of the broad headings of the original key questions.

What is the project?

The team noted in its summary that, in their view, the project had made the most important first step of actually getting going. By existing at all, it has both challenged and offered an alternative to some fairly traditional routes for people with learning disabilities into being passive recipients of services. It has also, as we shall elaborate, challenged the wider service system by highlighting a number of areas where, we felt, young people as a whole are let down, and young people with learning disabilities in particular miss out.

That being said, what of the project itself, in terms of a future? As we have noted earlier, for reasons largely outside its control and inherent in being a pilot, a clear definition of the project, in terms of aims, objectives, and operational policy is needed because those who use it are not clear on these matters. Because an existing work funding scheme was part of the project, the objective of 'work' was clear to all involved. Because of the limitations on inclusive college places, the nature of the Extended Education course at Stockport College, and the more general lack of clarity over what constitutes 'maturity' and who can help instil it, the objective of the role of colleges, and thus of Stockport CP in supporting the college/work link, was less clear.

The implications of this for services in general are significant, since the situation is replicated in many colleges and college/service links throughout the region. In order for the input of Stockport CP to have been clearer, many more inclusive, vocationally oriented courses needed to have been available for them to choose from, and then support people on. Such courses do exist, of course, in Stockport College and in most FE colleges, except that they are not inclusive. This is for colleges to consider at senior strategic management level, and some have done so (see report of conference, *A Rightful Place for Students with Disabilities in Further Education*). Were such moves to a more inclusive college culture to be made, then the confusion over Stockport CP's role, supporting a person on a discrete, non-vocational course, could not need to arise. It may be that a specific policy on the part of the Work Training Project that only inclusive vocational courses will be supported would have some influence on this, but that would deny the current reality of limited vocational college opportunities for people with learning disabilities in the Stockport area as elsewhere.

Perhaps, though, if the next of the team's views on 'what is the project?' are acted on there would be a strengthening of the power of the project to make such a policy. The team suggested, and reiterate here, the need for a strategic planning process for the project as a whole, including its place in the 'mainstream' of service provision, as opposed to an experimental pilot. Who should carry out that strategic planning process is a matter of organisational and other issues between Stockport Social Services and Stockport CP. Indeed, we suggest that it could involve other services involved in the school leaving process, such as the Careers Service, the Education Department, and Stockport TEC. Certainly we did not see it as a responsibility solely of the project, since we feel it should cover issues of funding, the staffing picture in terms of roles and responsibilities, the management and co-ordination issues and, most importantly, the

identification of who can, and cannot, use the project.

From the parents and carers side, information on this process, and involvement in it, is important, to bolster their growing expectations (to which the project, to its credit, has contributed) of the same chances for their young people as other school leavers.

How does the project operate?

As we have seen, a number of the issues raised under this heading need to be set in the context of a pilot project, lessons from which can be drawn by the strategic planning process. With the numbers of people from the first group achieving work roles, those aims have largely been met, and in fact information on the second ? gained since the review suggests that this has continued. The support for educational aims has, for reasons noted above, been less clear, and we would suggest that there will continue to be a problem here given the ambivalent attitude of TEC's and colleges to inclusive vocational courses. The strategic review, therefore, needs to take account of these developing realities in defining the college/education part of the project. Stockport CP staff had, we noted, to 'go in at the deep end' of existing provision, and therefore confusion about their role was inevitable. They have now, however, more experience than most services (because most services have none) of supporting people in colleges, and the issues this raises. Stockport CP will thus have a crucial input to the strategic planning process based on this experience.

For funding and other reasons, the project had a finite time span. Having had the experience of the first year, we think the planning process needs to consider broader possibilities in terms of time scale for the project, and that other bodies considering such a project might bear these in mind. Specifically our suggestions were:

- starting the project input and involvement **during** the last school year rather than on school leaving (since the initial feedback this suggestion has, in fact, been taken up)

- a closer liaison, again at more senior level, between the various services involved and the Education Department over the whole issue of post-16 provision and the school/college/work mix

- more variability and flexibility in the **duration** of work with individuals e.g., for some, work related input could start earlier, for others later - for some continued support after two years.

Issues of funding

Along with the teams view that the strategic planning process should seek to use the Work Training Project as a model for expansion and embedding in the 'mainstream' of service provision goes a need to go beyond the 'pilot' funding and into more direct commissioning of resources for the scheme and its derivatives. Security of funding, to the degree that this can be achieved for any welfare service at present, needs to be in place to build on the project's success.

A subset of the issue of secure funding is the matter of funding for individuals, and here again the experiences of the project raise much wider concerns. The complexity of the multiple systems of funding that reach any individual, which have to include benefits (including a much clearer understanding of what really are 'therapeutic earnings') educational funding (including transport) and actual payment for work, needs some overall co-ordination, or at least overall understanding, for services, parents and carers, and young people to try and come to grips with it. Whether or not this should be a role of the project is arguable, but there certainly needs to be an identified role where all the complexities of such funding can be focused.

Bringing it all together for the future

The team's remarks under this heading were initially intended to be ideas for the project and its immediate managers. On reflection, however, and after feedback discussions it is clear that the majority of issues raised are for the wider service system, specifically those

involved in the strategic planning process to consider.

We commented on the degree of cohesiveness of the various parts of the project achieved after one year, noting it as a tribute to the commitment of those involved, but also raising it as an issue. The strategic planning process does need to consider the issue of greater management co-ordination of the project. This will be inevitable if they adopt our suggestions concerning expansion and embedding of the project into the 'mainstream' of services. By this we do not, however, mean a takeover by the largest service, the Social Services Department. Trends in services as a whole suggest continuing diversification of provider organisations, and a whole variety of flexible partnerships and joint projects between public and private sections, regardless of the outcome of future elections. Our point, therefore, for greater management co-ordination of the project, is for this to deal with the full range of inputs to young people in the transition from school. The implications for the team of this need was, first, to explore the possibility of one person to take responsibility, either as a manager or as a co-ordinator. This might involve exploring wider organisational implications, such as a separate organisation for the project, with staff seconded from both Worklink and Stockport CP, but again the key point is for those using the project and those working in it to have one point of reference.

The second implication of the need to deal with the full range of inputs was for the strategic planning process to look at the broader issue of assessment and preparation for school leaving, including the role of the Community Learning Disability Team, and the need to start the process well before school leaving.

Overall, therefore, the team were firmly of the view that, though it had started for a few people, it was not an elitist project, and in fact should serve as a model for the development of a routinely available service to all school leavers. Apart from the benefits that we observed, the team were also of the view that the project represented very good value for money, particularly in its potential for reducing long term service dependency by achieving more desirable outcomes. The strategic planning process needs to acknowledge this, whilst including in its future plans the full cost of running such a project, especially realistic management costs. It also needs to use the model in a planned evolutionary way, and not simply to duplicate without thought for the varying needs of individuals concerned.

Conclusion

Questions about the project's existence have, we feel, been fully answered and therefore the strategic planning process can build on this success to develop a broader and more co-ordinated process by which the transition from school to work, or at least to a much reduced dependency on being a client of services, can be achieved for young people with learning disabilities.

We hope, too, that the wider readership of this report, in the North West region and elsewhere, will consider the broader issues raised by the Stockport Work Training Project, most particularly the role of colleges, the need for individualised work and the strategic implications for service co-ordination and funding. Stockport has provided an important starting point, and raised issues well beyond its own original scope and control. It is to be hoped that consideration of these issues, as well as the more fundamental aspects of the project, will be of use to those commissioning and providing services, so that ultimately developments will occur that will be of as much benefit to the wider group of young people who use services as it was to the group of young people we met in Stockport.

Appendix:
Outline for interviews

Person(s) interviewed   Title/Position/Agency/Role

Introductions: (Briefly)

- Purpose of interview; purpose of review

- Time frame of review

- Feedback - report to be circulated and discussed

Your specific involvement with Heaton School Leaver project

- in what capacity

- when (one off or continuous)

- what has happened in these involvements

- who for

- why

What do you think the School Leavers Project is? e.g., how would you describe:

- it's mission and goals?

- it's major activities?

- how is it funded?

- how is it organised/governed?

(Using a scale of 1 = terrible, to 10 = ideal), how would you evaluate the School Leavers Project in terms of:

- professionalism

- quality

- usefulness/impact   Comments

- overall

Do you think the project is important/necessary, how much, why?

As a result of the Project's work what (direct/indirect) changes have occurred in:

Ask   - your agency

whichever   - your staff

is   - your clients

relevant   - your son/daughter

                - yourself

What are the Project's main strengths?

Anything the Project should do, that it is not doing?

Anything the Project should do differently?

What are your main criticisms of the Project?

What would you do if the Project did not exist?

Anything else you would like to tell us?