

## WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework

### 1. Introduction

1.1. The WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework (PAF) has been in operation since June 2008. As part of its launch and introduction it was agreed that its first year of operation would be a pilot year with an evaluation being undertaken from August 2009. The findings of the evaluation will be reported to the WYLLN Management Board in December 2009 and will be made available to partner institutions and other interested parties following the board meeting.

1.2. The evaluation has three aims, a) to examine the extent to which the PAF is achieving its aims as stated in the Strategic Level Agreement of Intent, which are as follows:

- The Progression Agreement Framework marks the first stage of a developmental process to establish a sub-regional approach to improving progression opportunities into and through higher education from vocational and work based routes.
- The primary aim of the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework is to promote clarity, coherence and certainty of progression into and through higher education and to encourage progression opportunities for vocational learners. The Progression Agreement Framework aims to benefit individual learners, and to serve the interests of individual institutions and foster collaboration between signatory institutions.
- The Progression Agreement Framework recognises the need for co-ordinated change in culture and practice across higher education providers in West Yorkshire in order to expand opportunities for learners following vocational programmes to progress into and through higher education.
- The Progression Agreement Framework provides a mechanism for the WYLLN to meet its strategic objective on progression, to manage and monitor progression in relation to ASN allocations, to target IAG partnership agreement and commissioned activities, and to target staff development and advisory activities.
- To facilitate the expansion of progression opportunities for learners, WYLLN partner institutions will where possible be encouraged to develop Progression Agreements which record more than one progression route. Further, WYLLN will work with partner institutions to identify and develop network-wide Progression Agreements, involving either a number of institutions and/or courses/programmes.
- Progression Agreements will firmly establish the legitimate expectations of learners about progression from specific programmes and/or institutions to other programmes and/or institutions, directly address barriers to the successful progression of vocational learners, and encourage greater resonance between institutions particularly in relation to curriculum innovation, development and alignment.

b) to identify drivers and hindrances to WYLLN partner institutions engaging with the PAF, and c) to gather the views of WYLLN partner institutions on the benefits and sustainability of the PAF beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the WYLLN.

1.3. The evaluation used qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of an e-survey, face to face and telephone semi-structured interviews, a review of WYLLN recognised progression agreements and supporting documentation, financial and monitoring information, and feedback from attendees at the November SAF in response to a verbal presentation of the findings of the evaluation.

1.4. An e-survey questionnaire consisting of 24 questions structured around the four themes of Awareness, Involvement, Outcomes and Sustainability was developed in consultation with members of the central WYLLN team, the WYLLN external evaluator and the WYLLN PA Recognition Panel. The e-survey was distributed by email with a link to Survey

Monkey during August to a sample of 55 staff within WYLLN partner institutions. The sample group was selected on the basis of the individuals having had direct contact with the PAF during its pilot year as a consequence of being:

- a member of the Credit and Progression Task Group and/or
- a member of the PA Recognition Panel and/or
- a signatory to a recognised progression agreement and/or
- a WYLLN progression champion and/or
- a commissioned project coordinator

18 responses were received (32% response rate). Of the 18 responses, 16 were completed questionnaires, 1 questionnaire was partially completed, and 1 questionnaire recorded no response to each of the questions. A summary of the e-survey responses is presented in Appendix 1.

1.5. Face to face and telephone semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 individuals. 5 of the 10 individuals work within universities/HEIs and the other 5 individuals work within further education colleges. These individuals were selected as they have each taken a lead and/or active role in introducing and supporting the development and implementation of progression agreements within their institution.

1.6. The review of documentation and data included 76 progression agreements, the WYLLN PAF Resource Pack, the HEFCE progression monitoring table, and WYLLN partner contract information.

## **2. Background to the Development and Introduction of the PAF**

2.1. In accordance with the business plan the WYLLN Credit and Progression Task Group was established in January 2008. The membership of the task group includes representatives from the six validating institutions, HEIs, further education colleges, seven sector groups, OCN, and fdf. The task group was instrumental in the development of the PAF. Draft versions of the PAF were developed, discussed, and shaped by the task group over a 4 month period. A final draft of the PAF, approved by the task group, was distributed to all partner institutions for consultation during March/April 2008 and presented to the Strategic Advisory Forum in May. The WYLLN Management Board approved the WYLLN PAF on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008. Over the last year the task group has met on a quarterly basis and has actively monitored the implementation of the PAF and progression agreements and shaped elements of practice e.g. approved the Progression Agreement Resource Pack, approved a standard termination statement, and approved guidelines for developing progression agreements with employers.

2.2. A key design element of the WYLLN PAF, which interestingly is not an element which is common to progression agreement structures in many of the other LLNs, is the Strategic Level Agreement of Intent. The inclusion of this element was considered to be essential by the task group and this view was supported by a large majority of WYLLN partners during the consultation process. Following the launch of the PAF, 20 of the 21 WYLLN partner institutions signed up to the Strategic Level Agreement of Intent for the 12 month pilot, and subsequently received a certificate to confirm their sign up status. The thinking behind issuing the certificate was that it would be a document that partner institutions could use to publically express their commitment to the PAF to their own staff, potential students, and other stakeholders. In that way, it would also act as a mechanism to support one of the aims of the PAF which is "to benefit individual learners, and to serve the interests of individual institutions and foster collaboration between signatory institutions". In practice though, this has not been the case, and there is little evidence of the certificate being displayed by partners, even in settings where partners for example have Aimhigher plaques and/or similar on display.

2.3. The WYLLN Progression Agreement Recognition Panel was established in August 2008 to provide a peer moderation and formal recognition service for all progression agreements produced on the WYLLN template. The Panel comprises of volunteers from the task group and the WYLLN Sector Skills and Progression Manager. The aim this year has been to maintain a membership level of at least 3 people. This has been achieved and currently there are 4 members of the panel. 2 of the current members have been involved from the beginning and although those individuals remain committed to their panel role this may not be the case beyond the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the WYLLN project, as by that time they will have been panel members for 2 years. The Recognition Panel has played a key role in monitoring the quality of individual progression agreements and the consistency of practice across progression agreements, and in identifying areas for further development and areas of best practice. Feedback from partners suggests the panel's work has made a significant contribution to establishing the credibility of individual progression agreements and partners are supportive of this function continuing within the PAF.

### 3. Progression Agreement Funding

3.1. One of the aims of the PAF is for it to “provide a mechanism for the WYLLN to meet its strategic objective on progression, to manage and monitor progression in relation to ASN allocations, to target IAG partnership agreement and commissioned activities, and to target staff development and advisory activities”. In accordance with this aim the main mechanisms used to fund progression agreement activity within institutions to date have been ASNs, partnership agreements and commissioning. The levels of funding available through each mechanism to support the development of a progression agreement have been as follows:

- Partnership agreement - £7.5k per progression agreement.
- Commissioning - £7k per progression agreement
- ASNs – difficult to calculate due to the different banding of courses

In addition to these three mechanisms during 2009/10 two other funding streams will support the development of progression agreements:

- Sector group curriculum development funding - it is anticipated that around 28 progression agreements will be produced as a consequence of partner institutions receiving curriculum development funding
- 14-19 diploma funding - £3k per progression agreement per institution.

3.2. The respondents to the evaluation process were asked to what extent, if any, the opportunity to access funding had been a driver to the development of progression agreements. From the e-survey (question 10) 5 respondents out of the 18 identified funding as being one of the drivers, however when asked to select their top two drivers (question 11), none of the 5 respondents included funding within their selection. Within the semi-structured interviews the responses were similar. Three of the respondents identified funding as a driver but did not consider it to be one of the main drivers. However, 2 of the respondents did question to what extent the absence of funding from WYLLN in future may have on the development of new progression agreements, and/or the provision of IAG to support the delivery of recognised progression agreements.

3.3. In contrast to the feedback from the respondents the experiences of the central WYLLN team over the last year, gained through working with partner institutions, do strongly suggest that funding has been a key trigger and driver to partner institutions engaging with progression agreement activities. The availability of funding has enabled conversations to be held with partner institutions that have directly positioned progression agreement activities within the minds of WYLLN Champions, HE Directors, course tutors etc. To date, just 5 of the current 68 recognised progression agreements have been produced without the support of WYLLN funding.

### 4. Outcomes and Other Achievements and Benefits

#### Outcomes

4.1. At the time of writing 68 progression agreements have been recognised by the WYLLN Progression Agreement Recognition Panel. These have been developed by 13 of the 20 WYLLN partner institutions that signed up to the PAF. A further 8 progression agreements, which will lead to another partner institution starting to use the PAF and so will bring the total to 14 partners out of the 20, are currently being considered by the Panel. The profile of the 68 recognised progression agreements is presented below.

#### Profile of recognised WYLLN progression agreements as of November 2009

Number of progression agreements recognised	68
Number of internal progression agreements	34
Number of external agreement (2 with an employer)	34
Number of progression agreements from level 3 to level 4	44
Number of progression agreements from level 5 to level 6	23
Number of progression agreements from level 6 to level 7	1
Number of bi-lateral agreements	46
Number of multi-entry progression agreements	9
Number of multi-exit progression agreements	11
Number of multi-entry and multi-exit progression agreements	2
Number of progression agreements explicitly stating guaranteed	21

places	
Number of learner agreements presented to the Recognition Panel	20

### Profile of recognised WYLLN progression agreements by sector as of November 2009

Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing	5
Business Services	4
Construction and Built Environment	5
Culture, Media, Sports and the Arts; Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism	13
Digital, ICT and Print	7
Health, Social Care and Early Years	29
Leadership, Management, Innovation and Enterprise	5

The annual monitoring form submitted to HEFCE in October 2009 provided details in regard to 58 progression agreements. This form has been updated to include the additional 10 progression agreements recognised since the HEFCE submission and is presented below.

Sending Qualifications	Number of progression agreements based on receiving qualifications				Total number of progression agreements				
	Level 0/ Access	FD	Under-graduate	Post -graduate	Signed & implemented	In development or draft	Number of different institutional signatories (implemented & draft)	Expected number of learners per year (implemented) that have progressed	Expected number of learners per year (implemented and in draft) with potential to progress
Access			4		4		6	30	188
APEL									
Apprenticeships		2	2		4		6		20
BA/BSc									
BTEC L3 & L4		10	18		28	8	38	41	710
FD			23		23		39	43	160
HNC									
HND			1		1		1		20
NVQ			1		1		2	2	5
14-19 Diplomas						25	50		60
Other		2	4	1	7		12	33	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1198</b>

4.2. One of the aims of the PAF is to “establish a sub-regional approach to improving progression opportunities into and through higher education from vocational and work based routes”. As noted in 4.1., currently 14 out of the 20 signatory partner institutions are actively engaging with the PAF to formalise and improve progression opportunities for vocational and work-based learners across courses from level 3 to level 7. The 7 signatory partner institutions that currently do not have any recognised/or soon to be recognised progression agreements include 1 HEI, 1 university, 2 further education colleges (FECs), and 3 sixth form colleges. It is anticipated that by January 2010 the 2 FEC partners will be ready or close to submitting progression agreements for recognition, the 1 university partner although not using the PAF documentation will be ready to put in place a 2plus2 arrangement locally, which was brokered as a consequence of the institution signing up to the PAF, and 1 of the sixth form colleges will be actively developing progression agreements as a consequence of being a key partner within a WYLLN funded project. At the time of writing the WYLLN is not aware of any plans that the 1 HEI or the other 2 sixth form colleges may have to begin to engage with the PAF. As the 2 sixth form

colleges currently offer purely A or AS level courses it is unlikely that either will engage with the PAF. The HEI is due to merge with a WYLLN university partner during 2010. This university partner has several WYLLN recognised progression agreements in place and so it may be that the HEI's position in regard to progression agreements may change in future.

4.3. Another aim of the PAF is for it "to benefit individual learners, and to serve the interests of individual institutions and foster collaboration between signatory institutions". In terms of learners, the current 68 recognised progression agreements do span the seven WYLLN sectors although the number of progression agreements per sector does vary quite significantly. The funding mechanisms currently in place for progression agreements have been presented in 3.1. Of the 68 recognised progression agreements, 7 have been produced as a consequence of commissioned activity 1 has been produced as a consequence of sector group activity, 7 have been produced as a consequence of ASN funding, 48 have been produced as a consequence of partnership agreement funding, and 5 have been produced with no funding support. The commissioned, sector group and ASN funding routes have provided WYLLN with a mechanism to have some level of control over the targeting of progression agreement developments for individual sectors. The partnership agreement funding route however gives control to the partner institutions to be free to choose which of the seven WYLLN sectors they wish to develop progression agreements for.

4.4. Another aim of the PAF is for it to "facilitate the expansion of progression opportunities for learners, WYLLN partner institutions will where possible be encouraged to develop Progression Agreements which record more than one progression route. Further, WYLLN will work with partner institutions to identify and develop network-wide Progression Agreements, involving either a number of institutions and/or courses/programmes". The 68 recognised progression agreements offer part-time and full-time progression pathways from level 3 courses through to level 7 courses. In line with the PAF aim and a request from the Board made early in 2009 the majority of progression agreements recognised since March have been multi-entry and/or multi-exit. Currently 22 out of the 68 recognised progression agreements are multi-entry and/or multi-exit. The Board also requested that the emphasis should be on developing external progression agreements. 34 of the 68 recognised progression agreement cover external progression pathways. The other 34 cover internal progression pathways. Although the Board have expressed the view that internal progression agreements are "easier" to produce, feedback from a number of partner institutions, and especially FEC colleges, suggests that the understanding, communication, and joint working on progression between staff within an institution's FE to HE provision or level 5 to level 6 has not always been in place or as perhaps as strong as might be expected, and that the WYLLN PAF has provided a driver and mechanism to strengthen internal progression pathways for learners. In addition, a number of attendees at the November SAF highlighted a recently emerging situation for FECs, resulting from HEFCE's cap on student numbers, which is that progression pathways from FDs to top ups which have up to now been considered to be "an entitlement" for learners may no longer be on offer to the same level of certainty. A key aim of the PAF is to "promote clarity, coherence and certainty of progression into and through higher education and to encourage progression opportunities for vocational learners". In terms of promoting certainty 21 out of the 68 recognised progression agreements explicitly make a guarantee of a place to vocational learners. A number of these progression agreements "qualify" their guarantee offer either by including a statement which explains that the guarantee is made for a specified number of vocational learner places each year e.g. 25 places, or explains that the number of places retained for vocational learners each year may vary due to HEFCE funding. The feedback from attendees at the November SAF was that the PAF has provided, and could continue to provide, a mechanism for the relationships between institutions to be clarified in terms of learner numbers and progression opportunities and/or entitlements, in accordance with the PAF's aim to "firmly establish the legitimate expectations of learners about progression from specific programmes and/or institutions to other programmes and/or institutions".

4.5. To date, only 2 progression agreements are with employers and directly target work based learners. During 2009/10 the development of progression agreements with employers will be a target for the 3 Higher Level Skills Coordinator posts, and it is a target within the WYLLN's 4<sup>th</sup> year plan for 2010/11. Feedback from 1 of the institutions that has developed an employer progression agreement suggests that this is an area of progression agreement activity which requires further development particularly in regard to whether the documentation and processes of the PAF are fit for purpose.

4.6. Out of the 68 recognised progression agreements only 20 have produced a learner agreement. Discussions through the semi-structured interviews with respondents directly involved with these 20 learner agreements suggests there is a significant level of uncertainty as to if, and how, these learner agreements are being brought to the attention of, or used, with learners. The evidence gathered through the various evaluation methods suggests the learner agreement is a blind spot for many partners. A number of respondents within the evaluation showed no awareness of the existence of a learner agreement template within the PAF or of the requirement to produce one to accompany the progression agreement. This supports the experiences of the WYLLN PA Recognition Panel which regularly has to remind partners of the need to produce a learner agreement. The evaluation evidence suggests that the learner agreement and its supporting processes are a weak area of practice within the PAF. However, discussions with respondents suggest there

is strong support for a version of a learner agreement to be in place, as ensuring learners are aware that a progression agreement is in place and explaining what the progression agreement offers a learner were considered to be vital aspects of the progression agreement process.

4.7. Gathering information from partner institutions on the “expected number of learners per year that have progressed for implemented progression agreements” and information on the “expected number of learners per year with potential to progress for implemented and draft progression agreements” for the HEFCE annual monitoring form return in October proved challenging. Email and telephone conversations with partner contacts suggested that none of the 13 institutions had this information readily to hand. Each partner did eventually submit a return against the HEFCE form although a significant number of institutions pointed out that the information supplied may not be fully complete. During the semi-structured interviews each respondents confirmed that their institution does not currently have in place any systematic monitoring process to capture the number of learner beneficiaries of progression agreements or learners progressing as a consequence of a progression agreement, or any other impact measures for that matter. Further more, respondents from the 2 institutions that have produced learner agreements explained that they have not used, and have not considered using, these documents to monitor the number of learner beneficiaries. Further discussions with the semi-structured interview respondents about the review processes in place for individual progression agreements suggested a fairly high level of uncertainty within respondents as to whether these are actually taking place in accordance with the timescales and practices recorded within progression agreements.

### **Other Achievements and Benefits**

4.8. When asked to identify other achievements and benefits gained from using the PAF respondents to the evaluation provided a range of examples relating to their institution, learners, and themselves and colleagues.

4.9. Respondents identified the following in regard to their institutions:

- Formalising the informal – several respondents spoke about the opportunity provided by the PAF to formally capture and record practice and working relationships that were already taking place but often in an informal and sometimes adhoc manner.
- Consistence of delivery to learners – building on the formalising benefit noted above, several respondents referred to this in terms of strengthening the consistency of the delivery of support activities to learners and viewed this as making an important contribution to their institution providing equality of opportunity to services.
- Adds confidence to staff – three respondents involved from a sending institution perspective reported that having a progression agreement in place gave confidence to staff as they now know what their learners should receive and when from the receiving institution
- Clarifies the entry requirements and selection criteria and processes – the majority of respondents reported that the process of developing a progression agreement had required them to discuss and reflect upon the appropriateness of their course entry and selection criteria and processes with their course team colleagues and progression route colleagues.
- Broker new links and working arrangements between institutions – several respondents pointed to the PAF and their involvement with the WYLLN enabling them to forge new links with courses and/or institutions.
- Helps develop new relationships between staff within and outside of the institution – all respondents provided examples of new relationships that had been established between staff as a consequence of using the PAF.
- Has helped HE tutors have a better understanding of FE curriculum and FE vocational learners – 3 of the university respondents identified “knowledge transfer” as being an added value coming from a progression agreement.
- Has helped HE tutors to shape their curriculum - 1 university respondent cited an example of their course colleagues changing module content as a direct consequence of knowledge exchange with FE tutors
- Tutors have got feedback on their learners who are now in HE - 4 FEC respondents spoke about course tutors who have received information on the performance of past learners who have successfully progressed on HE courses and are looking forward to gaining feedback on their learners’ application and progression performance on an annual basis.
- Gives a structure for communications and joint working between staff - respondents referred to the review arrangements required for a progression agreement and the elements relating to the sharing of particular information e.g. disability, quality of applications, year 1 progression data.
- Aids communications and working between academic staff and student support staff - 2 respondents to the semi-structured interviews reported that developing a progression agreement had helped to clarify the roles of academic staff and student support staff and the student support offer to learners in terms of what, when, how, and by who

- Flexibility within the PAF elements has enabled different levels of responses to be put in place across different course

4.10. Some of the quotes from respondents in regard to their institutions were:

“more effective partnership working with FECs, more effective partnership working across schools”

“greater awareness of need for supporting transition between courses, more coherent view of information and levels of guidance required to ensure continued quality of the learning experience”

“added value - I wouldn't be able to put a price on it at the moment, in part because it has opened doors to other practice, contacts and developments”

“the framework has made things happen”

“the PAF has had a faster ride than many other initiatives”

4.11. Respondents identified the following in regard to their learners:

- Provides clear information about routes and the pathways available - several respondents spoke about the challenge of completing elements 1, 2 and 3 of the progression agreement with information that is clear, concise and transparent
- Provides a range of support to help their transition - all respondent felt the understanding HE and personal and career development elements of the progression agreement were important in terms of enabling the successful progression of learners
- Clear information helps learners to have more understanding of the options and routes available to them

4.12. Some of the quotes from respondents in regard to learners were:

“Greater understanding, opportunities to access information”

“A guaranteed interview resulting in better prospects of progression from a non-traditional route”

“The option of a clear progression route from FE level 3 to Foundation degree at a recognised HE institution with in-built support throughout to ensure a smooth transition”

“Empowering learners to make informed choices and raising their aspirations to continue their study in HE”

4.13. Respondents identified the following in regard to themselves and their colleagues:

- Greater awareness of other sectors e.g. HE in FE, universities
- Greater awareness of courses e.g. BTEC, NVQ, Cache, apprenticeships
- Wider network of contacts, both within and outside own institution
- Improved networking, building links and collaborative working with colleges
- Greater understanding of roles of staff e.g. between academic and student support/careers staff

4.14. Some of the quotes from respondents in regard to themselves and colleagues were:

“Effective liaison with other FE/HE institutions. Greater awareness of transitional needs”

“Understanding areas for developing links between us and other institutions”

“A greater understanding of the roles of people in the different organisations and the support that is available for those progressing”

“The opportunity to produce a document which formalises progression for vocational learners and further experience of liaising with colleagues in other organisations and representing the university at sub-regional meetings”

## 5. Drivers and Hindrances to Partners Engagement with the PAF

### Drivers

5.1. When asked to identify drivers to their engagement with the PAF respondents provided the following range of examples.

- IQER - an evidence source of the college enabling the learner journey
- Widening Participation strategy - for one of the partners the focus was on raising aspiration as much as on improving access
- Admissions strategy - a tool to open up and support dialogue with admissions tutors around non-traditional learners
- 14-19 Diploma strategy – a tool to start dialogue with consortia
- Delivering impartial IAG – positioning the role and offer of student services with academics
- As a recruitment and marketing tool not only for new course provision but also existing courses
- Wanting to provide clear information on entry and selection processes for learners and their tutors
- Wanting to provide new progression pathways for current and future learners
- Wanting to develop and/or further develop transition support activities for learners
- Wanting to develop closer working relationships between course teams - both internal and external to the institution
- The availability of funding - 8 respondents reported funding as being a driver
- Having a named person who is responsible and accountable for the coordinate of progression agreement activity within the institution
- Having a senior manager take an interest in, and set expectations about, how the institution will engage with progression agreements and the PAF

### Hindrances

5.2. When asked to identify hindrances to their engagement with the PAF respondents provided the following range of examples.

- Knowing who might be a potential link partner institutions - this was raised in regard to having an awareness or understanding of the course offer of other institutions
- Knowing the right person to contact within a partner institution - this was raised in terms of either knowing who might be an overall WYLLN contact for progression within an institution or knowing who may be a course leader contact
- Staff often having a low level of knowledge and understanding of WYLLN, and/or the concept of progression agreement, and/or the content and processes of a progression agreement - all of the respondents to the semi-structured interviews highlighted this as a factor
- Reluctance of some course leaders to record their practice in writing - this was raised by 2 respondents
- Finding time to meet to discuss the proposed progression agreement and then finding time to complete the documentation
- A sense of it being too much work, paperwork, and the level of monitoring and review required being cumbersome/onerous. Another view expressed was “documentation appears onerous but it’s all necessary, difficult to take things out”
- Initial or superficial level of “buy-in” of a tutor but then little follow on action
- Trying to get information on entry criteria and calendar of activities from HEIs
- Gaining a commitment to guarantee an interview – a partner institution reluctant due to the potential volume of applicants
- Getting the progression agreement signed - this in the main seems to relate to senior managers rather than course leaders
- Knowing who is taking ownership of progression agreements  
e.g. At an institutional level who knows how many and which progression agreements are in place, and who is monitoring their delivery and outcomes. At course level who is accountable for ensuring the delivery and review of a progression agreement. 2 respondents working within institutions that have had one person leading on progression agreements in particular were concerned about this issue
- Learner Agreement - see 4.6. for further details

## 6. Reflections on Sustainability

6.1. Respondents were asked if they would like to see the WYLLN PAF continue to operate beyond the 3 year lifetime of the project. 22 out of 28 stated yes, they would like to see the WYLLN PAF continue to operate beyond the 3 year lifetime of the project. 3 stated they were not sure whether it should continue, 1 did not respond.

6.2. Some of the quotes from respondents were:

“WYLLN have started a framework that is impartial and is easy for institutions to work with. Also it helps institutions engage with each other.”

“3 years is just enough to get them up [progression agreements] and running. Real benefits will come after that”

“It has really encouraged effective communications between partner institutions and will continue to facilitate the best possible choice of progression routes for WY learners who may (for economic or other reasons) want to continue their education in the region”

“It has taken us a while to get going but it is an effective transition framework”

“Having a framework in place offers suggestions re elements of good practice both for those new to progression agreements and those already involved”

“Progression agreements have introduced a new concept which is important for increasing recruitment to HE by students who have taken vocational courses. This is crucial to the national widening participation agenda”

“This has helped widening participation at Leeds College of Art”

“It would be a shame to put in so much work that makes a difference for it to be yet another scheme that falls when funding goes”

“Possibly – but in a more useable format for learners”

“It provides greater clarity on the progression available to those from non-traditional qualifications”

“I believe there are other potential routes to highlight and consolidate through progression agreements and that this can be a useful resource for much needed transitional support work for under-represented adult learners in particular”

6.3. In addition, the following points were raised during the semi- structured interviews.

- Without funding who will take it forward within an institution, especially in institutions where the funding has been used to fund a post or part of a post
- Widening participation, 14-19 diplomas and apprenticeships may be drivers for institutions in the future
- Some case studies are needed to help spread the word about progression agreements and their usefulness
- Stronger monitoring and review processes need to be in place, progression agreements need to be up to date and accurate
- Some of the documentation needs to be in a simpler format

6.4. The majority view expressed by the 28 respondents was one of support for the PAF continuing beyond the 3 year life of the project.

## 7. Conclusion and Issues for Consideration and Action

7.1. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data methods suggest that the WYLLN PAF has made significant progress towards each of its stated aims. At the time of writing it has directly engaged 13 partner institutions, it has enabled 68 recognised progression agreement to be established, it has supported the successful progression of 149 learners into/through HE, and is supporting over 1100 learners with the potential to progress, it has provided an effective mechanism for the targeting of WYLLN funding and resources, it has enabled and encouraged changes in practice, sharing of information, and exchange of knowledge both within and across partner institutions, it has begun to record

multiply entry and/or exit routes, and it has improved the provision of information to learners about they can expect and what will be expected of them.

7.2. The findings also highlight a number of areas which require further development and these are summarised here in the form of action points:

**Action 1** The Credit and Progression Task Group needs to continue to monitor and inform the PAF and progression agreement activity and developments during the 4<sup>th</sup> year of WYLLN.

**Action 2** The PA Recognition Panel needs to continue to moderate and recognise all progression agreements produced on a WYLLN template during the 4<sup>th</sup> year of WYLLN.

**Action 3** Partner institutions need to be consulted on their capacity to deliver the 4<sup>th</sup> year WYLLN progression targets without the support of WYLLN funding

**Action 4** A WYLLN Employer Progression Agreement template needs to be developed and built into the PAF.

**Action 5** The Learner Agreement template needs to be revised and re-positioned within the PAF.

**Action 6** A simple learner beneficiary tracking process needs to be agreed by all partner institutions and implemented for each recognised progression agreement.

**Action 7** A data base of the WYLLN Champions and progression contacts of partner institutions needs to be made available across the Network.

7.3. The evaluation has considered the effectiveness and achievements of the PAF from a number of strategic and operational perspectives. Placing these within the context of the WYLLN moving into its 4<sup>th</sup> year from June 2010 a key issue emerging for further consideration is how important it is for the PAF to be strategically positioned with partner institutions. Should it simply support a relationship between course teams or should the Network advocate the PAF being built into partner institutions own strategies and procedures?



## WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework Survey – Summary of Results

### Background

The WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework (PAF) has been in operation since June 2008. As part of its launch and introduction it was agreed that its first year of operation would be a pilot year, with an evaluation being undertaken from July 2009. The findings from the evaluation will be reported to the WYLLN Management Board in December and will be made available to partner institutions and other interested parties following the board meeting.

### Method

The method used for data gathering was e-survey. A questionnaire consisting of 24 questions was developed in consultation with members of the central WYLLN team, WYLLN external evaluator and the WYLLN PA Recognition Panel. The e-survey was distributed by email with a link to Survey Monkey during August to a sample of 55 staff within WYLLN partner institutions. The 55 were selected on the basis of the individuals having had direct contact with the PAF during its pilot year as a consequence of being:

- a member of the Credit and Progression Task Group and/or
- a member of the PA Recognition Panel and/or
- a signatory to a recognised PA and/or
- a WYLLN progression champion and/or
- a commissioned project coordinator

### Summary of Responses

18 responses were received (32% response rate). Of the 18 responses, 16 were completed questionnaires, 1 questionnaire was partially completed, and 1 questionnaire recorded no response to each of the questions.

#### Q1. Personal profile

**Type of institution:**

Higher Education Institution	8
Further Education Institution	6
Sixth Form College	1
Consultant	2
No response	1

**Job Title:**

Dean	1	Development Officer	1
Head of HE	2	Head of Department	2
Consultant	3	Apprenticeship Manager	1
Sector Officer	1	Partnership and Progression Officer	1
Progression Manager	1	FE to HE Progression Manager	1
Senior Careers & Educational Adviser	1	Pathway & Qualification Manager	1
		Not completed	2

**Q2. How did you first become aware of the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Through a formal briefing by your institution/colleague	6
Through an informal discussion with a colleague	5
Through information gained from you being a member of a WYLLN sector group	4
Through information gained from you being a member of a WYLLN task group	5
Through the WYLLN News-digest	1
None of the above, if so please say how you became aware "Strategic Advisory Forum"	1

**Q3. Have you made use of the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework Resource Pack, either the hard or website copy?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Yes, hard copy	13
Yes, website copy	10
No, hard copy	1
No, website copy	1

**Q4. Have you found the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework Resource Pack useful?**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if so please say why "It provides clear guidance about all the different parts and provides a useful framework" "Helpful in drawing up agreements" "Very clear guidance on information required and levels of support needed by the students" "Provided a very detailed level of advise and guidance about the information required to create a successful progression agreement" "I had completed 2 progression agreements before receiving the file and I realised what I'd missed" "Useful as a guide or for suggestions relating to elements of a progression agreement" "The pack provides detailed guidance about what has been done and what is available" "Useful guidelines for producing a progression agreement" "we have two progression agreements in place"	15
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“Contained all the appropriate documentation”	
“Provides support for completing the progression agreements”	
“Clear”	
“Provided templates and guidelines for required documents”	
No, if so please say why	1
“I haven’t accessed it”	

**Q5. Would you like the WYLLN Progression Agreement Resource Pack to continue to be available in hard and electronic formats?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Hard copy	3
Electronic - website copy	11
No preference	6

**Q6. Is there any further information that you would like to see included in the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework Resource Pack?**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if so please state	1
“Progression agreements for use with employers”	
No	9
Not sure	7

**Q7. How many WYLLN Progression Agreements have you been involved in managing and/or developing?**

Please tick one only:

	Coordinating/ Leadership role	Author role	Contributor to discussions role	Signatory role
None				
One		3		1
Two	2		1	
Three	1		1	
Four or more	5	3		1

**Q8. Which of the following characteristics have the WYLLN Progression Agreements you been involved in managing and/or developing had?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Internal institutional agreement (i.e. between courses within one institution)	9
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External institutional/employer agreement (i.e. between courses in different institutions or between an institution and employer)	9
Multi entry (i.e. more than one sending course)	8
Multi exit (i.e. more than one receiving course)	6
Between Level 3 – 4 courses (e.g. BTEC/NVQ3 to FD/Degree)	10
Between level 5 – 6 courses (e.g. FD to Degree)	4
Between level 6 – 7 courses (e.g. Degree – Postgraduate)	

**Q9. Which of the following factors have been drivers to you developing a WYLLN Progression Agreement?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Increased potential to recruit vocational/work based learners	7
Opportunity to provide clearer information on the progression route(s) for vocational/work based learners	12
Opportunity to further develop activities to support the successful transition of vocational/work based learners	10
Opportunity to develop closer working relationships with other course teams within our institution	6
Opportunity to develop closer working relationships with course teams in other institutions	9
Opportunity to access funding	5
Obligation to meet responsibilities associated with receiving curriculum development funding via a sector group	3
None of the above	

**Q10. Have there been any other factors in addition to those listed in Q9 that have been drivers to you to develop a WYLLN Progression Agreement?**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if so please state “Widening participation” “To be able to offer a clear progression route to HE for suitable Advanced Apprentices”	2
No	11
Not sure	1

**Q11. From the drivers you have identified in responding to Questions 9 and 10 please state which two you consider to have been most influential.**

1. “Opportunity to provide clearer information on the progression route(s) for vocational/work based learners” (3) “Successful transition”  “Clearer information to progression routes”  “Successful transitions”
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“To recruit work based learners”
“To work with external colleagues”
“Opportunity to develop closer working relationships with course teams in other institutions” (3)
“Opportunity to support successful transition of vocational learners”
“Increase potential to recruit vocational learners”
“Opportunity to develop activities to support the successful transition of vocational/work based learners”
“Clear progression route”
“Meet responsibilities re curriculum development”
“Providing info and transition activities to support progression”
<b>2.</b> “Opportunity to develop closer working relationships with course teams in other institutions”
“Clearer information”
“Opportunity to access funding”
“Increased potential to recruit”
“Providing clear information on progression routes”
“Developing and building upon external partnerships”

**Q12. Which of the following factors have been barriers to you developing a WYLLN Progression Agreement?**

Please tick one or more box as applicable:

Meeting the elements of the progression agreement	1
Completing the progression agreement template	1
Completing the learner agreement template	1
Liaising with the other course team	4
Lack of information on potential courses to develop a progression agreement with	1
Lack of access to funding	
None of the above	12
“Lack of information on potential courses to develop progression agreements with”	

**Q13. Have there been any other factors in addition to those listed in Q12 that have been barriers to you to develop a WYLLN Progression Agreement?**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if so please state	5
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<p>“On both sides making the time and getting the other party to see the importance of the agreement”</p> <p>“We have, for a number of years, developed and used progression agreements with various HE institutions. Our links and agreements vary in shape and form, some being very informal and others more structured and formalised. We are currently reviewing our agreements and the template and framework I’m sure prove useful in this”</p> <p>“A number of NALN progression agreements for vocational learners to progress to HE at Leeds College of Art have been agreed. WYLLN progression agreements are more complex. Joining up 2 agreements is a little confusing for staff and students”</p> <p>“Time to co-ordinate”</p> <p>“Little interest in progression agreements from colleges into this HEI: cumbersome nature of the paperwork is off putting to providers and employers; more flexible and less cumbersome transition arrangements are already available and can be built on”</p> <p>“Quantity of monitoring required – for 1 progression agreement commissioned project.</p>	
No	7
Not sure	1
<p>“The HE staff and institutions we have liaised with to date have been receptive however I believe this is not the case globally. When we come to look at similar agreements in other occupational areas I envisage we may come up against some reluctance/resistance”</p>	

**Q14. From the barriers you have identified in responding to Questions 12 and 13 please state which two you consider to have been most influential.**

<p>1. “ Liaising with the other course team” (2)</p> <p>“Lack of information on potential courses”</p> <p>“Meeting the elements of the progression agreement”</p> <p>“Completing the progression agreement template”</p> <p>“Lack of college interest”</p> <p>“Quantity of monitoring required – for 1 progression agreement commissioned project.</p>
<p>2. “Time”</p> <p>“Liaising with course teams – both internal and external”</p> <p>“Cumbersome paperwork”</p>

**Q15. Based on my experiences so far of developing of a WYLLN progression agreement I consider my institution has gained the following outcomes ...**

“More effective partnership working with FECs, more effective partnership working across schools”

“Greater awareness of need for supporting transition between courses, more coherent view of information and levels of guidance required to ensure continued quality of the learning experience”

“Formal agreements between two programmes and shared learning and understanding of these programmes”

“Next year we will begin effective working relationships with students from other institutions which we have really needed”

“An opportunity to increase the awareness of Leeds Met courses, raise the aspiration of learners and manage their expectations of HE”

“Better progression from local feeder colleges”

“Improved awareness of WYLLN and what it is trying to do to improve awareness of vocational learners, opportunity to better support vocational learners”

“Two progression agreements in place and another planned”

“Closer relationships between one dept. and a local college, brokered by the university”

“Formalised arrangement with another institution”

“The opportunity to build on existing relationships with external partners and consolidate our outreach and development work”

**Q16. Based on my experiences so far of developing a WYLLN progression agreement I consider my institution has not gained any outcomes because ...**

“At the moment little because it has not been suitably managed – I did not know what I was supposed to do with them until very recently”

**Q17. Based on my experiences so far I consider the benefits gained by our learners from developing of a WYLLN progression agreement are ...**

“Clear understanding of progression routes and pathways”

“Clearer information and certainty about progression”

“Informed choice and awareness of alternative progression routes”

“Not best placed to comment on this”

“Clarity, support and managed transitions”

“Empowering learners to make informed choices and raising their aspirations to continue their study in HE”

“Better understanding of the range of progression routes open to vocational learners”

“Greater understanding, opportunities to access information”

“A guaranteed interview resulting in better prospects of progression from a non-traditional route”

“Too early to say”

“Greater clarity on the progression available and the support available to promote that progression”

“Learners have a clearer understanding of the progression routes available to them”

“The option of a clear progression route from FE level 3 to Foundation Degree at a recognised HE institution with in-built support throughout to ensure a smooth transition”

**Q18. Based on my experiences so far I consider there have been no benefits gained by our learners from developing of a WYLLN progression agreement because ...**

“Not best placed to comment on this”

**Q19. Based on my experiences so far the benefits I have personally gained from developing of a WYLLN progression agreement are ...**

“Widening the partner network e.g. meeting with the University of Leeds who traditionally deliver on a full time basis but are very happy to work closer with FECs. Gaining a better understanding of who offers what and what gaps still exist.”

“Increased awareness of other sectors”

“Effective liaison with other FE/HE institutions. Greater awareness of transitional needs”

“Understanding areas for developing links between us and other institutions”

“Awareness of the other courses that can provide effective transition to ours”

“An ability to work collaboratively with colleagues in FE”

“Networking and building links with colleagues from other colleges”

“Wider network of contacts”

“A greater understanding of the roles of people in the different organisations and the support that is available for those progressing”

“As a Director of HE I have more confidence in progression arrangements with other institutions”

“The opportunity to produce a document which formalises progression for vocational learners and further experience of liaising with colleagues in other organisations and representing the university at sub-regional meetings”

**Q20. Based on my experiences so far I have personally gained no benefits from developing of a WYLLN progression agreement because ...**

No responses

**Q21. Would you like to see the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework continue to operate beyond the 3 year lifetime of the project?**

Please tick one box only:

<p>Yes, if so please say why</p> <p>“WYLLN have started a framework that is impartial and is easy for institutions to work with. Also it helps institutions engage with each other.”</p> <p>“3 years is just enough to get them up and running. Real benefits will come after that”</p> <p>“It has really encouraged effective communications between partner institutions and will continue to facilitate the best possible choice of progression routes for WY learners who may (for economic or other reasons) want to continue their education in the region”</p> <p>“Because it has taken us a while to get going but it is an effective transition framework”</p> <p>“Having a framework in place offers suggestions re elements of good practice both for those new to progression agreements and those already involved”</p> <p>“Progression agreements have introduced a new concept which is important for increasing recruitment to HE by students who have taken vocational courses. This is crucial to the national widening participation agenda”</p> <p>“This has helped widening participation at Leeds College of Art”</p> <p>“It would be a shame to put in so much work that makes a difference for it to be yet another scheme that falls when funding goes”</p> <p>“Possibly – but in a more useable format for learners”</p> <p>“It provides greater clarity on the progression available to those from non-traditional qualifications”</p> <p>“I believe there are other potential routes to highlight and consolidate through progression agreements and that this can be a useful resource for much needed transitional support work for under-represented adult learners in particular.</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>No, if so please say why</p>	
<p>Not sure, if so please say why</p> <p>“I’ve not been directly involved”</p> <p>“Not sure how it would operate after year 3”</p>	<p>3</p>

**Q22. Would you recommend any changes be made to the WYLLN Progression Agreement Framework?**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if so please say what  "Some how make it simpler"  "Greater simplicity and more flexibility building in opportunities on the part of colleges and universities to customise the agreement to meet their students' needs"  The order of sign off by WYLLN – it's hard to get employers to sign up if WYLLN then sent this back for amendments, it would create bad relations with employers"	3
No, if so please say why	9
Not sure, if so please say why  "I need to use it more to gain a better idea of its strengths and weaknesses in the context of our own institutional needs"	2

**Q23. Are you planning to develop any WYLLN Progression Agreements over the next 12 months**

Please tick one box only:

Yes, if possible please say what  "I will be helping to coordinate all agreements with CBE curriculum developments. I am working with University of Huddersfield - Oldham, to identify possible partners and progression routes. Hoping to establish progression agreements for BSE outside of WY with Northumbria, UCLAN and Liverpool JM"  "14-19 PAs developing links with FECs so hope these will also produce PAs"  "Unsure of precise areas"  "One level 3 – 4 progression route"  "I haven't decided which areas yet"  "An agreement with Bradford University for Health & Social Care Advanced Apprentices wishing to progress onto Social Work courses at university"  "We are still working on PAs with Wakefield College and have a PA with an employer to send to WYLLN"  "More PAs for apprentices"  "Level 5 – 6 to meet requirement of ASN looking at other	9
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curriculum areas within college.	
No, if possible please say why	2
“Not personally involved this year”	
Not sure, if possible please say why	5

**Q24. If you would like, please give further comments to your responses to any of the above questions. Please limit your comments to around 300 words.**

“Most of our formal involvement has been related to IAG rather than progression agreements. The progression agreement framework is, however, of interest and may well be used more by us this year as we review existing agreements or set up new ones. Our experience suggests that the key to success with progression agreements is flexibility”

“I am sorry that I have only been able to respond to a few questions. This is because my role has been as a consultant rather than as a practitioner. I do hope that there is a lasting legacy from the WYLLN Progression Agreements when the current project comes to an end. West Yorkshire further and higher education have a lot to gain if they continue to use and develop progression agreements”