



Making the Connection In North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire Draft Report

Version 2.6 October 2008



**A Review by Martin Yarnit Associates for Alliance for Enterprise and
Alliance Sub-regional Strategic Partnership**

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Introduction

This evaluation of Making the Connection (MtC) in the North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire area was carried out by Martin Yarnit Associates.¹ Interviews and visits for the report took place in July and August 2008.

The report is in four sections:

- The Story so far: evolution and operation of MtC
- Partnership: capacity and delivery arrangements
- Progress on quantitative and qualitative outputs
- Immediately proposed changes

A further report in October will provide an update on outputs and outcomes and also make recommendations on future developments and sustainability.

Summary

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The Story So Far

The MtC Core Team has taken a while to get into its stride. However the current manager bears a large part of the responsibility for making good lost time and establishing the credibility of his team and therefore the entire operation. Although it is early days for the Core Team as a fully functioning unit, there are plenty of signs that it is moving in the right direction. Indeed, some interviewees have suggested that this is an opportune moment to crank up a gear and for the partnership to think about its objectives more audaciously.

Evolution and Progress

MtC is the offspring of two parents: the Alliance Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership, a body funded by emda and charged with economic development and social inclusion in the former coalfields area in North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire; and the Alliance for Enterprise, a partnership of three district councils (Ashfield, Bolsover and Mansfield), funded through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI). MtC targets set by these two bodies complement and contribute to the Local Area Agreement objectives for both counties.

Several factors have shaped the early development of MtC:

¹ See www.martinyarnitassociates.com

- Slow development of employer leads. In part this reflects the state of the economy. There are a number of growth zones in the Alliance SSP area with mixed prospects for employment growth. Alongside the downturn in construction there is continuing growth in other sectors such as retail. Our interviews reveal strong support for MtC's role in employer engagement with large and smaller employers.
- The institutional complexity of the local labour market which made it difficult to carve out a clear role. Two important new developments are JCP's Local Employer Partnerships and JobMAETs. LEPs is the name for a new brokerage system linking employers into the entire range of JCP services. JobMAETs are local teams of front line workers who work with and support personal employment advisers based in community employment teams (CETs). It is vital that the MtC Core Team clarifies its relationship to both LEPs and JobMAETs.
- Staffing complications which meant that the Core Team has had a manager in post for only 12 months out of two and a half years.

As a consequence, the Core Team has only begun to gain real momentum since the start of 2008 under new management. This evaluation covers the short period from then until June/July 2008 so the results achieved have to be set in that context.

Organisations and Systems

The MtC partnership consists of the Alliance SSP, LSC Derbyshire, JCP, Nottinghamshire County Council², several district councils (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Newark and Sherwood, North East Derbyshire, Mansfield - Getting into Work Team) and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT). Working arrangements and procedures are set out in the MtC Operations Manual.

The Core Team reports to the Alliance Employment and Skills Board and to a LEGI Workstream Group (MtC is one of five workstreams funded by LEGI). Although the Core Team makes regular and detailed reports to both bodies, what is lacking is an integrated overview of the work of both the partnership and the Core Team.

As well as its partners, the Core Team engages with other stakeholders including JCP sub-contractors (Working Links, Phoenix and Enable) plus a number of community employment teams. These are Working Communities (North East Derbyshire), Communities that Work (Chesterfield), Family Employment Initiative (wide range of locations), Getting into Work Team (Mansfield) as well as Enable Learning Champions (Newark, Worksop and Manton).

The Core Team comprises a manager, two employment and training outreach workers and a monitoring and administrative support officer. The Core Team works closely with designated officers of the LSC and JCP.

The main way in which MtC matches employers and jobseekers is through Gateways. These are training schemes linked to an employment outcome, often a guaranteed interview. More than 100 places have been offered to jobseekers on Gateways linked to employers in the security, construction, call centre, logistics and leisure sectors. In addition, a range of other training programmes are organised aimed at moving jobseekers closer to the labour market and strengthening social skills, literacy, numeracy and confidence. Training providers include West Notts College, Mansfield CVS and Groundwork.

² Discussions about membership are underway with Derbyshire County Council.

Gateways and training have been largely funded through discretionary funding from the two main funding bodies plus a growing number of local authorities. The LSC's Skills for Jobs fund will also contribute to costs but it is seriously over-stretched.

The Gateways pose several issues for MtC

- how should the competing needs of those closest to and those further away from the labour market be prioritised
- to what extent should the Core Team engage with employer aftercare in an attempt to ensure sustainable employment for those it has helped to place
- which agency should take responsibility for offering continuing support to those who have failed to get a job at the first or subsequent attempts
- how should MtC ensure the financial sustainability of the Gateways in the longer term and reduce its dependency on discretionary funding.

All this poses the need for a business plan which reviews existing capacity and priorities, and consider the options for sustainable funding. We will return to this issue in our follow up report in October.

Partnership: Capacity and Delivery

This section examines four aspects of partnership working:

- Joint planning and strategic management
- Partners' contributions to delivery
- Engagement and referrals
- Joint assessment of performance

Joint Planning and Strategic Management

The aims of the MtC partnership are to

- Create a coordinated seamless service that matches supply and demand in the local labour market
- Develop, deliver and sustain a multi-agency approach that ensures local people benefit from the labour market
- Develop the skills of all people in the sub-region, particularly in the area's most disadvantaged communities
- Address economic inactivity, supporting and enabling workless people to enter the labour market.

Put simply, the case for the MtC partnership is clear: to act as a broker between employers and jobless people in disadvantaged areas so that the former can source well prepared job ready people rather than having to fend off uncoordinated approaches from local agencies. This fits well with the government business support simplification agenda.

A key aspect of this role is joint planning and strategic management which entails

- Developing a shared understanding of the changing nature of the labour market and new developments including employer requirements and changes to public sector labour market management
- Developing a common approach to labour market interventions with integrated business planning by labour market agencies

- Establishing a process of continuous review of the effectiveness of labour market interventions

The momentum for joint planning and delivery is growing with the Gateways as the best example involving JCP and CETs. The Core Team has also been working well with these bodies to agree common criteria – the Red, Amber, Green system - to be used in categorising jobseekers according to their distance from the labour market.

Strategic management, our interviews and research suggest, is relatively under-developed. One way of strengthening it would be by integrating the overview of MtC which is currently shared between LEGI and the Alliance SSP. A compact operational group could report to a combination of both bodies with occasional, annual or bi-annual reports to a full MtC partnership meeting. Another way would be to ensure that the work of the partnership as a whole is kept under review, alongside the focus on the activities of the Core Team.

There is room for a quarterly or at least half yearly review of labour market trends and interventions drawing on the combined resources of partners and other agencies.

Delivery

The Operations Manual sets out each partner's commitment to the delivery of the MtC service. Partnership meetings focus almost exclusively, however, on the role of the Core Team.

There are four main ways in which the Core Team contributes to delivery of the MtC's brokerage service to employers and jobseekers:

- By coordinating the efforts of the partnership
- By collating and distributing intelligence on job and training opportunities
- By brokering links between employers and those who can provide a recruitment, training and retention service (RTRS) , and the CETs
- By delivering services to employers and jobseekers by agreement, where a gap must be urgently filled or in order to pilot new approaches.

A number of interviewees stressed that in their view the Core Team's primary role was partnership coordination. There was even greater support for the view that the Core Team has a key role in collating and distributing information about new employment and training opportunities.

There was an anxiety voiced by JCP staff about the risk of duplication if the Core Team is involved in delivery. However, the Core Team and JCP are evolving a way of collaborating based on procedures set out in the MtC Operations Manual.

Engagement and Referrals

The arrangements for dealing with different types of employers are clearly set out in the Operations Manual. These arrangements seem to be settling down and show signs of working well in the case of CPP, Laing O'Rourke and the care sector. The Core Team has agreed to play a coordinating role in relation to Laing O'Rourke on behalf of Bolsolver and Bassetlaw District Councils, and is developing a similar role on behalf of Derbyshire County Council.

Labour market information flows are complex, involving several different agencies and property developers. Whatever the source, there is unanimous agreement that a key function of the Core Team is to collate and disseminate the information as swiftly as

possible. JCP staff point out that this role is particularly crucial in relation to the district councils with which they do not have direct links. District council staff express a similar view.

Two improvements might be

- To shorten the information supply chain to employers by establishing a physical presence in growth zones such as Markham Vale
- To create an intranet directory of employer leads.

With the expansion in the number of jobseekers recruited to Gateways, follow up is becoming a key issue for those who get jobs and those who fail. It is important for the partnership to track the progression of those who get jobs and ensure that those who falter receive continuing support. It is, in LEGI's view, about working with training providers and employers to put in place an effective progression route for each individual. Responsibility for tracking and follow up - key features of the service MtC seeks to develop – needs to be assigned so that the Core Team do not end up assuming this role by default.

With growing demands on their time, the Core Team need to demonstrate that their existing capacity is being put to best use before they can argue for expansion. In any case, a sustainable way of increasing capacity would be to persuade partners to fund secondments.

Performance assessment: joint review and apportionment of outputs

Paradoxically, the MtC partnership does not have a shared set of targets. Nor does it review the performance of the individual partners. Instead, the focus of review activity is on the targets set for the Core Team by LEGI and the Alliance.

From the point of view of the MtC partnership what matters is how effectively the Core Team operates to broker employer links that lead to training and job outputs, enabling the partners to improve their own performance. This should be the stance of the partnership, rather than a narrow focus on the Core Team's targets per se.

Progress on Quantitative and Qualitative Outputs

The Core Team is making good progress in achieving most of its quantitative targets, especially in relation to those assisted to get a job and those assisted in their skills development. Thanks to the security Gateway, MtC will achieve its target for level 2 qualifications. Discussions are in progress with the LSC about counting employability training towards the basic skills targets.

Challenges for the Partnership

As often with joint funding, there are restrictions on what outputs the Core Team is allowed to count towards the fulfilment of its targets. This leads to two risks:

- Under-counting what has been achieved directly or indirectly by the Core Team
- Over-emphasis on outputs at the expense of the Core Team's contribution to the effective operation of a partnership service.

A related issue is that there are no partnership outputs by which the impact of the partnership as a whole could be judged. In particular, there is no way of assessing the partnership's impact on moving people into sustained employment. However, JCP does have such a target. What is required is a way of taking this into account in measuring the overall effectiveness of the partnership.

The quality of the service offered to employers, jobseekers, CETs, local authorities and JCP needs to be monitored. Although individual partners have quality systems, neither the partnership as a whole or the Core Team has any system for tracking service quality. Currently, getting it right depends on the effectiveness of feedback, usually by word of mouth. Given the accelerating pace of employer leads and Gateway provision, it is important now to create such a system so that lessons can be learned and fed back into delivery. Increasingly, in the future MtC will rely on the willingness of the partners to invest in the Core Team and the partnership. 'We are willing to invest Working Neighbourhoods Fund in the partnership but we need to know what we are getting in return', was the view of one district council interviewee.

Employability Criteria

Key to effective employment brokerage is the ability to match jobseekers to employers' requirements. This entails a detailed understanding of the employer and their business and a methodology for assessing the level of employability of the jobseeker. Making the Connections Nottingham has developed the RAG system, a tripartite categorisation of red, amber and green, with green candidates being closest to employability, and the Core Team has worked with the Family Employment Initiative and Mansfield CVS on applying the criteria consistently (see criteria in Appendix).

Immediately Proposed Changes: Our Recommendations

Operations

Following up Employer Leads

Issue: risk of duplication between JCP and Core Team

Recommendation: re-confirm with JCP staff that arrangements set out in Operations Manual are still to be followed or adjust accordingly; work with smaller employers who don't engage with JCP.

Collating and Disseminating Employer Leads

Issue: current methodology open to risk of duplicate approaches to employers and not accessible to all partners

Recommendation: consider an electronic system accessible to partners.

Gateways

Issue: at risk of crowding out other employer-facing activities by Core Team

Recommendations: consider scope for devolving delivery of Gateways to CETs and/or training providers while retaining responsibility for coordinating funding, ensuring quality and the strategic match with employer needs in the hands of the Core Team.

Development Zones

Issue: partners look to Core Team to work with JCP on identifying employers willing to work with CETs/JobMAETs

Recommendation: establish part-time physical presence in Markham Vale and on A61 corridor in collaboration with LEPs; identify sectors/supply chains in collaboration with JCP/Alliance investment team/council economic development units warranting more in depth engagement. Re-focus Core Team efforts in this direction and away from community engagement.

Tracking and Follow Up

Issue: responsibility for tracking and follow up needs to be assigned so that the Core Team do not end up assuming this role by default

Recommendation: partners review the issue and make a decision.

Partnership

Integrated Overview

Issue: lack of integrated overview of the partnership and Core Team

Recommendation: establish a single operational group of no more than 6-8 members, drawn from existing LEGI Workstream Group and Alliance Skills Board Executive, which

1. meets monthly or bi-monthly to maintain an oversight of the MtC Partnership and Core Team,

2. reports on outputs, outcomes and service quality once a year to the Alliance Skills Board Executive, LEGI, and to a full MtC partnership meeting.

This would replace the separate reports to and meetings with the Workstream Group and the Skills Board Executive, both saving time and ensuring an integrated strategic overview.

Joint Planning

Issue: Core Team viewed in isolation from overall activities of partnership

Recommendation: organise review day for partners and stakeholders to take stock of MtC as partnership – perhaps using SWOT analysis and examples from other areas including MtC Greater Nottingham - and to action plan next steps in the light of labour market trends, and anticipated funding and machinery of government changes. Questions to consider include: where is the partnership going; what should partners do differently; how can Core Team help them; what problems and gaps need attention.

Outputs

Service Quality

Issue: currently no system for reviewing quality of service offered to employers, jobseekers, partners

Recommendation: establish light touch system; report on service quality to Alliance Employment and Skills Board

Numbers into Jobs

Issue: currently no review of partnership's effectiveness in moving people into sustainable employment

Recommendation: that the Skills Board reviews JCP data on moves into employment as part of its assessment of the work of the MtC partnership as a whole.

Abbreviations

CET	Community Employment Team
CRT	Coalfields Regeneration Trust
DGF	Discretionary grant fund
FEI	Family Employment Initiative
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
JobMAETs	Multi-agency employment teams
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LEGI	Local enterprise growth initiative
LEP	Local Employer Partnership
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MtC	Making the Connection
RTRS	Recruitment, training and retention service
SSP (Alliance)	Sub-regional Strategic Partnership

I. The Story So Far

I.1. Evolution and progress: the development of MtC

- I.1.1. The MtC Core Team has taken a while to get into its stride. However, the current manager bears a large part of the responsibility for making good lost time and establishing the credibility of his team and therefore the entire operation. That is the virtually unanimous message to emerge from the interviews we carried out with a wide range of partners (see list in the Appendix).
- I.1.2. 'After an uncertain start, Graham has brought clarity to MtC and expertise on employer engagement and the Gateways' – a typical comment among many, in this case from a district council officer. 'Work with CPP [the new call centre operation] is a good model for J29a and other development zones, with MtC Core Team as the managing agent' we were told by a JCP external relations manager. 'Alliance Board employer reps. think highly of MtC' was another comment.
- I.1.3. So, although it is early days for the Core Team as a fully functioning unit, there are plenty of signs that it is moving in the right direction, judging both by the response of interviewees and the throughput of jobseekers (see below. Section 3).
- I.1.4. Indeed, some interviewees have suggested that this is an opportune moment to crank up a gear and for the partnership to think about its objectives more ambitiously. The Core Team is working with colleagues in Lincolnshire on planning a similar development there, but perhaps the priority should be to create or extend MtC to Derby.
- I.1.5. MtC is the offspring of two parents: the Alliance Sub Regional Strategic Partnership, a body funded by emda and charged with economic development and social inclusion measures in the former Coalfields area of North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire; and the Alliance for Enterprise, a partnership of three district councils (Ashfield, Bolsover and Mansfield), funded through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI).
- I.1.6. An early engagement with the new Sportsworld close to M1 Junction 29 convinced the Alliance SSP that a systematic approach was needed to active labour market interventions and the idea for MtC was born. The Alliance SSP welcomed the decision to apply for LEGI funding and offered support equating to 62% of the total budget of £717,373 over the period April 2006-March 2010.³ One consequence of this arrangement is that MtC has been required to report to two funders using two different reporting formats.
- I.1.7. For LEGI, MtC is one of five workstreams which reflect the objectives laid down in the bid. These are principally about promoting enterprise, supporting business and ensuring that residents in disadvantaged areas gain access to job

³ LSC Nottinghamshire provides £12,000 as part of the original budget plus a growing sum from Train to Gain which is used principally to fund MtC Gateway training.

opportunities which come about as a result of inward investment or native business growth. MtC targets complement the Local Area Agreements for both counties:

‘activities will assist in delivering key aspects of the LAAs including increasing the employment rate, reducing worklessness, increasing enterprise activity amongst young people, and increasing the volume of available employment floorspace.’⁴

1.1.8. Initially, new employer leads were slow and it was difficult for MtC to gain any momentum in employer engagement. In its early months, MtC was also struggling to define its relationships with a frightening large range of agencies including JCP, LSC, the local authorities, the Community Employment Teams (CETs), as well as the LEGI partnership and the Alliance SSP and its inward investment team.

1.1.9. To make matters worse, the first staff to be appointed withdrew before they had started work, and a second manager resigned after a short period in post. Graham Whiting, initially appointed as a part-time outreach worker in autumn 2007, was appointed MtC manager in December of that year and took up post in January 2008, barely seven months before this evaluation took place. Effectively, the evaluation deals with this recent period, when the Core Team was gearing up for delivery of the Gateways, training programmes linked to specific employers or sector and usually entailing a guaranteed interview.

1.1.10. The funding bodies, recognising the exceptional circumstances affecting the early life of MtC, have agreed for the emda outputs for 2007-08 to be rolled into 2008-09, and for the LEGI outputs to be written off. They have also sanctioned unspent resources from 2007-08 to be rolled over into 2008-09 creating a discretionary fund of £170,000. Assuming, as the project does, that £1000 should fund one person to move into work, then this year MtC has the resources to pay for 170. In addition, Bassetlaw LSP has provided £20,000 to support five Gateways and a similar arrangement is being agreed with Nottinghamshire County Council.

1.1.11. As it approaches the end of its current funding arrangements, it makes sense for MtC to look for ways of reducing its dependency on its discretionary funding, making optimum use of the LSC’s mainstream budgets to fund training as well as identifying future sources of its core budget. What will be less easy to come by are resources that can be used to support people into work such as the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. In the end, as one interviewee put it to us, ‘the problem is that there’s plenty of money to support people in work [through Train to Gain] but not a lot to get them there’.

1.1.12. The state of the economy and the local labour market was bound to be a key factor in the evolution of MtC. There are a number of growth zones in the Alliance SSP area (see table below) but developments have a habit of taking longer to come to fruition than anyone expects. The tightening credit squeeze has had a significant impact on the construction sector with the result that further recruitment by Skanska and its sub-contractors has been postponed. On the other hand, despite the overall fall in the number of vacancies, the

⁴ LEGI bid, December 2005, p.15 at http://www.allianceforenterprise.org/media/legi_bid.pdf

demand for labour in retail and care seems to be buoyant: CPP has opened a new call centre in Chesterfield and Tesco is planning to open a new store in Clay Cross.⁵

- 1.1.13. Our interviews revealed unanimous support for MtC's role in employer engagement, with local authorities and CETs agreed as well on the need for a stronger focus on this activity. An earlier debate about which employers MtC should engage with has largely subsided in favour of the view, widely shared, that MtC should work with large employers when the opportunities present themselves, either through expansion or inward investment. And it should also work with smaller employers, preferably on a sector or supply chain basis.

Growth Zones

- **Robin Hood Airport** (RHA -nr Worksop), new regional airport development on the South Yorkshire/Nottinghamshire border. Supply Chain opportunities and Business Park potential.
- **The North Derbyshire Growth Zone** - the North Derbyshire Growth Zone has the A61 as its "spine" and takes in Chesterfield and Clay Cross. In particular it includes the several major brownfield sites along the A61 (Dema Glass, Lavers, Donkin, Avenue, Biwaters) which offer considerable future development potential. The Alliance SSP and its local authority partners (in this case Derbys CC and the three North East Derbyshire District Councils) are at an early stage in scoping the possibilities that this Growth Zone could offer including **Brook Park** (Shirebrook, Bolsover district), major distribution centre site and number of other smaller units for small and medium light industry/businesses. **Markham Vale** (Bolsover/Chesterfield/North East Derbyshire Districts), site is planned to create 5000 jobs in the energy/environmental and logistics industries
- **The Sherwood Growth Zone** -The Sherwood Growth Zone will run from Sherwood Park (M1 J27 Annesley) to Sherwood Energy Village (Ollerton) and will include the Mansfield/Ashfield conurbation. A key feature is the **Kings Mill Hospital** redevelopment (Mansfield/Ashfield districts). This is a 5 year, £500m. development by the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust. Initial priority in the Sherwood Growth Zone will be the further exploitation of the Mansfield Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR). The Alliance SSP and its local authority partners (in this case Notts CC, and the four North Notts District Councils) are currently planning a high quality business park development at the Rushley Farm site in Mansfield (adjacent to West Notts College). Further development of other sites is likely on an incremental basis (consecutive not concurrent). It may also take in the activities being presented by Notts County Council regarding the large scale Living Landmarks project for Edwinstowe/Ollerton.

- 1.1.14. There is an evidence base for this stance:

'Half of all vacancies (50 per cent) and a clear majority of hard-to-fill and (unprompted and prompted) skill-shortage vacancies (59 and 58 per cent respectively) fall within establishments with fewer than 25 staff, despite these

⁵ National Employer Skills Survey for the East Midlands 2007 shows that vacancies have fallen since 2003 - http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/EastMidlands/Regional_NESS_2007_Report_July_08a.pdf

establishments only accounting for a third of all employment. That is, *smaller establishments account for a disproportionately large volume of all recruitment difficulties, whether skills related or not.*⁶

Moreover, the MtC area with its population of 700,000 is characterised by dispersed settlements rather than concentrations of employment. Of course, the drawback is that working on the recruitment needs of small firms does not provide economies of scale.

- I.1.15. A further factor over which MtC has little control is the institutional context in which it works. Complying with LEGL requirements meant that initially its efforts were focused on the three districts of Ashfield, Bolsover and Mansfield. More recently, it has begun to look to other areas of Nottinghamshire, including Bolsover and Newark, and to North Derbyshire, especially Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire. While Nottinghamshire County Council has been a member of the Alliance Skills Board since the beginning, it is only recently that Derbyshire County Council has begun to be represented and to recognise the value of working with MtC. The Core Team is coordinating the employer engagements on its behalf in Markham Vale. Dealing effectively with the Coalfields area is a considerable challenge for a small team.
- I.1.16. Not very far off now are the machinery of government changes introduced by the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration which could spell the end of the sub-regional partnerships and a larger role for local authorities, especially at first tier level. The MtC partnership needs to consider how it will adapt to the new landscape.
- I.1.17. To add to the complexity of the labour market terrain, new arrangements are starting to take effect with the introduction of JCP's Local Employer Partnerships (LEPs) and JobMAETs. LEPs is the name for a new brokerage system linking employers into the entire range of JCP services. Rather like MtC, the idea is that in return for seamless, one stop service, employers will commit to employing people from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁷ Services offered include job-mentoring, work trials, flexible working hours and pre-recruitment training. For employers, the offers from the LEPs and MtC could be confusing unless the MtC partners find a modus operandi and a clear definition of roles. The plan for MtC to share a website with its Greater Nottingham counterpart should help it to offer an employer-friendly face and to set out its unique selling point succinctly and clearly.
- I.1.18. JobMAETs, or flexible routeways as they are beginning to be known, are local teams of front line workers who work with and support personal employment advisers based in CETs. Working Links and Phoenix have won contracts to deliver the JobMAETs scheme in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, respectively. Enable, the Nottinghamshire voluntary sector skills

⁶ National Employer Skills Survey 2005, p.5 at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2006/research/commissioned/nationalemployersskillssurvey2005keyfindings-re-june2006.pdf>

⁷ JCP's definition of the priority groups is PG1- people in receipt of sickness benefit; lone parents on income support; PG2 – people on New Deal; people on JSA for more than six months; PG3 – people claiming JSA for less than 6 months; PG4 – unemployed people not claiming benefits. People in priority groups 1 and 2 are eligible for LEP opportunities. People in groups 3 and 4 are also eligible if they live in a DWP priority ward.

agency, has the job of engaging with potential clients for the service through its teams of learning champions, and putting them in contact with CETs. In theory, JobMAETs should speed up the movement of people off benefits into work at the rate of 17,000 a year across the East Midlands. The Core Team estimate that they will be expected to generate 420 job opportunities a year once JobMAETs is fully operational.

1.1.19. The table below sets out the key points in the history of MtC to date. It took a year from the government announcement that the LEGI bid had been successful until the first manager was in post. She left half way through 2007 and was eventually replaced at the beginning of 2008. MtC has had a manager in post for 12 months out of the 30 months of its existence. Hence the uncertain start.

MtC Milestones 2005-8

2005	
December	LEGI application made
2006	
February	Government announces LEGI application successful
November	Manager appointed, then withdraws
2007	
February	Una Key takes up post as manager
July-August	Julia Warner and Anne Solway-Gluck appointed outreach workers Una Key resigns
2008	
January	GW takes up post as manager
July-August	Evaluation

1.2. Operations and Systems

1.2.1. This section focuses on the operational arrangements of the MtC partnership and Core Team and the systems used to monitor and evaluate progress.

1.2.2. The members⁸ of the partnership are set out in the Operations Manual:

- Alliance SSP
- LSC Derbyshire
- JCP Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
- Nottingham County Council (with Derbyshire in the process of joining)
- District Councils: Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Newark and Sherwood, North East Derbyshire, Mansfield (Getting into Work Team)
- Coalfield Regeneration Trust

1.2.3. Most but not all members of the partnership meet together as the Alliance Employment and Skills Board Executive Group and separately as the LEGI Workstream Group. The rationale for two reporting lines is that the former deals with strategic issues and the latter with operational issues. The members of the two bodies are shown in the table below. Several of those we have interviewed have conceded that it is unsatisfactory that there are two lines of

⁸ LEGI is not cited as a partner in the Operations Manual although it clearly is.

accountability. Although there are detailed regular reports by the Core Team to the Alliance Employment and Skills Board and detailed scrutiny of the work of the Core Team by the LEGI Workstream Group, what appears to be lacking is an integrated overview of the work of both the partnership and the Core Team in relation to the needs of employers and the workless.

Membership of Alliance Employment and Skills Board Executive Group and LEGI Workstream Group

	Alliance E+S Board Executive Group	LEGI Workstream Group ⁹
JCP Derbyshire	■	
JCP Nottinghamshire	■	
LSC Nottinghamshire	■	
Alliance SSP	■	
Ashfield DC		■
Bolsover DC		■
Mansfield DC		■
Nottinghamshire CC	■	
NE Deryshire DC		
Chesterfield BC		
Derbyshire CC	■	
Coalfields Regeneration Trust		
Alliance for Enterprise (LEGI)	■	■
MtC Core Team	■	■

1.2.4. As well as the partners, the Core Team engages with other stakeholders including JCP sub-contractors Working Links, Phoenix and Enable plus a number of community employment teams as set out in the table below.

Community Employment Teams in the MtC Area

Name	Area of Operations	Host
Working Communities	Holmewood North East Derbyshire	NE Derbyshire DC
Communities that Work	Rother and St Helen's wards + St Augustine's (Birdholme) area, Chesterfield	CRT
Family Employment Initiative	Shirebrook and Bolsover Middlecroft, Poolsbrook, Staveley, Langwith Whaley Thorns Creswell Pleasley Hill, Forest Town and	CRT

⁹ JCP and CRT may be invited to join the LEGI Workstream Group.

	Clipstone Mansfield Woodhouse, Warsop, Meden Vale, Warsop Vale, Church Warsop Manton Ashfield Gedling	
Getting into Work Team	NRF wards	Mansfield DC
Learning Champions	Newark (Hawtonville/Devon) Worksop, Manton	Enable

1.2.5. The Core Team is managed by Graham Whiting, with two employment and training outreach workers – Julia Warner and Anne Solway-Gluck - with David Burke providing monitoring and administrative support. Graham is employed and managed by the Alliance, the outreach workers by Bolsover District Council, which is also the accountable body for LEGI, and David Burke is on secondment from JCP who receive a salary contribution in return from MtC. Discussions are in progress to harmonise contracts so that the Core Team are all employed until March 2010.

1.2.6. The Team works closely with designated officers in the LSC, who are part-time assigned to work with MtC, and JCP. The manager is the main point of contact for the key partners and employers, leads major developments, and facilitates with his counterpart from Greater Nottingham MtC a Nottinghamshire group preparing the way for JobMAETs. The outreach workers spend part of the week outposted to FEI, Working Communities and Getting into Work, liaising on the selection of candidates for training and Gateways, helping to set up Gateways, exploring with JCP and employers the potential for new Gateways, and tracking people who have been through the Gateways.

1.2.7. Gateways – training directly linked to an employment outcome – is the main way in which MtC matches jobseekers and employers. So far, the Core Team has run Gateways for construction with Skanska and for the care sector. In the pipeline are Gateways for CPP, Ashfield District Council and the security industry. The Core Team is also talking to Adecco about a retail Gateway. Training, paid for from the 2007-8 delegated grant fund, has been commissioned for the CSCS Construction Card, fork lift truck licences, health and social care, security industry SIA Card, life guard RLSS certificate, and personal development for those on the red and amber Gateways. Trainees are drawn from FEI, GiW and Working Communities.

1.2.8. Setting up and running the Gateways is a major operation. The Health and Social Care Gateway which took place in July 2008 included eleven separate curriculum areas including basic food hygiene and first aid. Thirteen people took part and three secured jobs as a result. Almost all those who were unsuccessful are registered as continuing to pursue employment or training, with job search support from the outreach workers or the CETs.

1.2.9. Records are kept by the Core Team of the progress of every person passing through a Gateway. Tracking progress requires a considerable time investment by the outreach workers which perhaps ought to be carried out by an administrative worker.

DGF-funded Training Programmes

Sector	Places	Area/CET	Provider
SIA security licence	32	Bolsover/Mansfield 12 for FEI and 10 for GiW	
Fork lift training	30	FEI and others	West Notts College
For lift training	6	Working Communities	Mentor
Red Gateway/Personal Development	2 courses	Of which: GiW	Mansfield CVS
Pre-employment	5	YMCA Mansfield	
CSCS Card	40	FEI/ Working Communities	Groundwork Cresswell
Lifeguard	3	FEI	

1.2.10. The development of the Gateways poses a thorny issue of priorities. How much of a scarce resource should be invested in preparing those closest to employment for jobs, and how much those in the red and amber categories? So far, the two MtC funding bodies seem to have been happy to leave the decisions to the Core Team who have responded to demand as it has arisen. In the future, it might be useful to develop criteria for making these decisions.

1.2.11. A logical extension of its work in getting jobseekers into employment is employer aftercare. The early months of a new job, especially for someone who has been unemployed for a long period, can be bumpy for both sides. Providing aftercare is a way of ensuring sustainability by identifying issues, including the employee’s financial concerns, and resolving them before they become insuperable. £52,500 of Working Neighbourhoods funding has been applied for from Mansfield District Council for this purpose in an initiative that could be extended to Ashfield and further afield.

1.2.12. There is a growing agenda of development opportunities including the possibilities of extending MtC to Derby City and Newark, and the joint development with CRT of a physical presence in Markham Vale. The discretionary grant fund (DGF) for 2008-09 is fully committed on Gateways, training and Gateways in Bassetlaw and Newark. All this poses the need for a business plan for the medium term which reviews existing capacity and priorities for development, and considers the options for sustainable funding. We will return to this issue in our follow up report in October.

2. Partnership: capacity and delivery arrangements

2.1. We will examine this question in relation to four aspects of partnership working:

- joint planning and strategic management, including how effectively the partners work together
- partners' contribution to delivery: skills, experience, workloads and support of customer-facing staff and managers
- engagement and referrals: effectiveness of engagement and outreach with employers and job seekers, and referral arrangements with JCP and other agencies
- joint assessment of performance including arrangements for apportioning output

2.2. Joint planning and strategic management

2.2.1. MtC aims to

- Create a coordinated seamless service that matches the supply and demand side of the labour market
- Develop, deliver and sustain a multi-agency approach that ensures local people benefit from the sub-region's labour market
- Develop the skills of all people in the sub-region, particularly in the area's most disadvantaged communities to meet the demands of the changing local economy
- Address economic inactivity, supporting and enabling worklessness/long term unemployed local people to return to the labour market and benefit from local employment opportunities. (Operations Manual, p.3)

2.2.2. Put simply, the case for the MtC partnership is clear: to act as a broker between employers and jobless people in disadvantaged areas so that the former can source well prepared job ready people rather than having to fend off multiple approaches from well-meaning local agencies. This fits well with the government's business support simplification agenda.

2.2.3. In order to meet its terms of reference, we have identified, through interviews and analysis of reports, that the MtC partnership has developed five main areas of collaboration:

- Strategic management
- Collating and distributing information on job opportunities
- Providing a recruitment, training and retention service (RTRS) for incoming and existing employers
- Linking jobless people to employers and employment opportunities
- Developing skills for employment.

2.2.4. By strategic management, we mean

- Developing a shared understanding of the changing nature of the labour market and new developments including employer requirements and changes to public sector labour market management
- Developing a common approach to labour market interventions with integrated business planning by public sector labour market agencies and those working alongside them as well as shared funding where appropriate
- Establishing a process of continuous review of the effectiveness of labour market interventions.

2.2.5. Strategic management, our interviews suggest, is relatively under-developed. Discussion and planning tend to focus on delivery at the expense of a broader view of the state of the labour market or the most appropriate active labour market policies. There is room for a quarterly or at least half yearly review of prospects using the combined resources of the Alliance SSP investment team, the local authorities and regional and EU sources of labour market data. Recent indications are that in addition to the sectors targeted by MtC it is worth looking at skills shortages in logistics such as HGV drivers.¹⁰

2.2.6. One way of strengthening strategic management would be by integrating the overview of MtC which is currently shared by two bodies linked to the two sources of funding. The more compact operational group set up by LEGI is seen as an improvement on the unwieldy MtC Strategy Group which met from November 2006 through to September 2007 and then wound itself up to form part of the Alliance Employment and Skills Board Executive Group. The advantage of this was to integrate MtC into a broader agenda. The disadvantage was that it became one of a number of priorities for the Executive Group with a reduction in the amount of time available for strategic review, although the Manager's reports deal fully with employer engagement, community links and training activities. Monthly meetings of the Extended Core Team began in September 2007 and continue.

2.2.7. It should be possible to establish one compact operational group of no more than 6-8 members which reports to the Alliance Skills Board and LEGI, and annually or bi-annually to a full MtC partnership meeting.

2.2.8. Partner contributions to the MtC scheme are laid out in the Operations Manual. Although it has taken time for the partnership to gear up for action, there are clear signs of a momentum for joint planning and delivery taking place. For example, there are the joint approaches by JCP and the Core Team to CPP, Laing O'Rourke and the care sector, and the agreement by JCP and the Core Team to harmonise Gateway activities. The development of the Gateways is perhaps the best example of joint planning. There is also the work involving JCP, the Core Team and CETs in arriving at common criteria for employability, using the red-amber-green system of categories. Integrated business planning has proved an elusive ideal in most aspects of joined up

¹⁰ See

<http://europa.eu.int/eures/main.jsp?catId=475&lmi=Y&acro=lmi&lang=en&recordLang=en&parentId=&countryId=UK®ionId=UKF&nuts2Code=null&nuts3Code=null&mode=shortages®ionName=EAST%20MIDLANDS>

government but these are positive signs of a willingness to work together that is a novelty in the employment field.

2.2.9. In discussions amongst the partners in the LEGI Workstream meeting and the Alliance Employment and Skills Board, the work of the Core Team is invariably centre stage with very little consideration of the work of the partnership as a whole or the individual members. One local authority interviewee suggested that this tendency to business as usual amongst the partners needs challenging. In our interviews we found a widespread tendency to equate MtC with the Core Team, as 'them' rather than 'us'. But it could be argued that it is early days for the partnership and a new way of working.

2.3. Delivery: partner contributions to MtC

2.3.1. As a way of working rather than a single organisation, MtC's partners are jointly responsible for the effectiveness of the approach. The MtC Core Team's purpose, on behalf of the partners, is to help to ensure that these functions are effectively performed. It does this in four ways, judging by the evidence from interviews and reviews of written material:

- By coordinating the efforts of the partnership, ensuring, for example, that referral systems are well understood and work effectively
- By collating and distributing intelligence on job and training opportunities, ensuring, for example, that those responsible for providing services for employers or jobseekers receive information when and how they need it
- By brokering links between on the one hand, employers and those who can provide recruitment, training and retention service (RTRS), and on the other, between employers and jobseekers through community employment agencies, minimising, for example, multiple approaches to employers or the presentation of under-prepared jobseekers
- By delivering services to employers and jobseekers by agreement, where a gap must be urgently filled or in order to pilot new approaches.

2.3.2. A number of interviewees stressed that the primary role of the Core Team was the coordination of the partnership. There was even greater support for the view that the Core Team has a key role in collating and distributing information about employers and jobseekers.

2.3.3. It is in the area of delivery where there is less agreement about the proper order of priorities for the Core Team. There is widespread praise for their role in organising and delivering the Gateways, with several interviewees wanting to see an extension of this service to other sectors and to the growth zones.

2.3.4. But not everyone was sure about this. In the view of one JCP interviewee, the Core Team's proper role was to act as a conduit on employer leads and to work with partners to ensure proper follow up. It should not get involved in delivery of services to employers where there was a risk of duplication with JCP.

- 2.3.5. The situation cannot be as straightforward as this for several reasons:
- The Core Team has outcome targets for people assisted in skills development and into jobs
 - The Core Team has a budget - discretionary grant fund - that can be used to fund the delivery of recruitment and training and retention services
 - The delays in devolving employer leads from the national JCP team to the districts and the capability for swifter responses by the Core Team
- 2.3.6. Currently, a significant amount of Core Team time is invested in setting up and helping to deliver the Gateways. This reflects a demand on the supply side and evident employer satisfaction with the approach in the care and call centre sectors. The Core Team needs to consider whether
- a. Gateways could increasingly be delivered by training providers and CETs (where appropriate) once they are established, leaving the Core Team more time for identifying need in new sectors, for monitoring the quality of outputs, ensuring the match with employer need and coordinating funding - as well as improving the information flow on job opportunities to CETs and local authorities
 - b. other approaches should be used such as work trials
 - c. it is optimising the use of discretionary as opposed to mainstream funds, and whether the former could be better used to plug gaps such as providing individual support for jobseekers such as CRB checks, clothing and transport for interviews (a la Employment Zones)
 - d. the best balance has been struck between the needs of sectors and new areas of development such as Markham Vale, and smaller versus larger employers.
- 2.3.7. Finally, it is worth considering the advice from some quarters 'to leave community engagement to the CETs'. Close links with the CETs are essential but perhaps less time should be spent liaising with them and more on employer engagement.

2.4. Performance assessment: joint review and apportionment of outputs

- 2.4.1. Paradoxically, the MtC partnership does not have a shared set of targets. Nor does it review the performance of the individual partners. Instead, the focus of review activity is on the targets set for the Core Team by LEGI and the Alliance.
- 2.4.2. As often with joint funding, there are restrictions on what outputs the Core Team is allowed to count towards the fulfilment of its targets. In relation to the Alliance, it can only count 50% of its outputs since emda funding amounts to (more or less) 50% of the total. In relation to training delivered by providers such as West Nottinghamshire College or Mansfield CVS, the outputs will be claimed by the provider unless an apportionment deal can be struck.
- 2.4.3. From the point of view of the MtC partnership what matters is how effectively the Core Team operates to broker employer links that lead to training and job outputs, enabling the partners to improve their own performance. This should be the stance of the partnership, rather than a narrow focus on the Core Team's targets per se.

2.5. Engagement, referrals and follow up

- 2.5.1. The arrangements for dealing with different types of employers are clearly set out in the Operations Manual (p.4):
- JCP and the Core Team will work together to target medium sized and larger employers and those in priority sectors
 - The Core Team will introduce LEPs managers to new investors
 - For SMEs, the Core Team will work together with CETs and the local JCP office to match candidates to vacancies
- 2.5.2. These arrangements seem to be settling down and show signs of working well in the case of CPP and the care sector. Initially JCP wanted the new Laing O'Rourke development to be handled nationally but when the firm expressed a preference for local engagement Jobcentre Plus accepted the position and is now working jointly with the Core Team who are coordinating action on behalf of Bolsover and Bassetlaw.
- 2.5.3. The Core Team can minimise the risk of duplication with JCP by allocating a proportion of their time to working with the smaller employers who do not engage with JCP.
- 2.5.4. Labour market arrangements and flows are complex. Employer leads – ie information about employers who plan to expand or locate in the area – can come from
- MtC Core Team's own growing networks
 - The Alliance's inward investment team and developers themselves
 - JCP, through the local accounts managers and via the national employer account managers
 - Local authority planning departments and economic development units
 - Community employment teams
- 2.5.5. Whatever the source, there is unanimous agreement that a key function of the Core Team is to collate and disseminate the information as swiftly as possible. JCP staff point out that this role is particularly crucial in relation to the district councils with which they do not have direct links. District council staff express a similar view. Currently, this information is relayed to and from the Core Team in a variety of ways: through reports, emails, word of mouth, phone calls. It is collated and reported to the Alliance Employment and Skills Board, although not all partners see those reports.
- 2.5.6. There has been at least one instance where the Core Team and the Alliance investment team found themselves approaching the same employer separately. Perhaps this risk could be reduced and the channels of communication strengthened if MtC maintained a partnership intranet with the latest information on employer leads.
- 2.5.7. Another way of increasing the flow of referrals and shortening the supply chain to employers would be to set up, as is currently being discussed, a physical presence in Markham Vale and even, if resources were available, in Sherwood and other growth zones, an approach that has paid off well already in Bassetlaw, as well as in other places such as Birmingham Bull Ring.¹¹

¹¹ What Works in Economic Development for Deprived Neighbourhoods, DCLG, May 2007, p.40

2.5.8. In many ways, it is premature to pronounce on the Core Team's referral activities. CETs certainly would like to see a larger flow of job leads, especially from larger employers, coming their way although the growth in the numbers going through Gateways (see below) is a positive trend.

2.5.9. With the expansion in the number of jobseekers recruited to Gateways, follow up is becoming a key issue for those who get jobs and those who fail. It is important for the partnership to track the progression of those who get jobs and ensure that those who falter receive continuing support. It is, in LEGI's view, about working with training providers and employers to put in place an effective progression route for each individual. Typically, out of 16 people on a Gateway, only four may end up with a job. To complicate matters, 75% may be referred from JCP and 25% from CETs. Responsibility for tracking and follow up - key features of the service MtC seeks to develop - needs to be assigned so that the Core Team do not end up assuming this role by default.

2.5.10. With growing demands on their time, the Core Team need to demonstrate that their existing capacity is being put to best use before they can argue for expansion. In any case, a sustainable way of increasing capacity would be to persuade partners to fund secondments.

3. Progress on Quantitative and Qualitative Outputs

3.1. In this section we consider two issues: the counting and apportionment of outputs and the criteria for assessing service quality.

Core Team Output Targets

Target	MtC Outputs	2008/9		2009/10	
		Alliance	LEGI	Alliance	LEGI
Emda T1 LEGI 5	Jobs Created or Safeguarded	10	5	5	0 ¹²
Emda T2 LEGI 17	People Assisted to get a Job	100	50	50	0
Emda T4 LEGI 1	Business Assisted to improve their Performance	4	2	2	0
Emda T6 LEGI 18	People Assisted in their Skills Development	140	70	60	0
Emda T6a LEGI 19	Adults gaining Basic Skills under Skills for Life Strategy	40	10	20	0
Emda T6b LEGI 20	Adults achieving a Level 2 Qualification or higher	20	10	10	0
Emda KPI	People over 45 receiving advice / guidance	40	0	20	0

3.1.1. The table above sets out the lifetime project targets which the MtC Core Team are delivering for Alliance/emda and LEGI.

¹² Current LEGI funding for MtC ceases March 2009

3.1.2. Because of the late start of the project, no outputs were reported for the year 2007-08. In the case of LEGI, these outputs were waived but in the case of the Alliance they were rolled forward to be achieved in 2008-09. This is why the Alliance targets for 2008-09 are higher than those for LEGI.

3.2. Progress to Date

3.2.1. This section assesses progress achieved against the MtC targets. The table below sets out achievement against annual targets *by the end of the first quarter of 2008-09*. The core team reports progress to emda monthly and the cumulative figures reported at the end of July 2008 are added in brackets.

3.2.2. As will be seen from the table, most of MtC's targets are common to LEGI and the Alliance, but due to emda's reporting requirements the latter only recognises 50% of the outputs achieved on the grounds that they only provide half of the funding.

MtC QI Progress Against Targets

	MtC Outputs	Alliance		LEGI	
		QI achieved and reported	2008/9 target	QI achieved and reported	2008/9 target
Emda T1 LEGI 5	Jobs Created or Safeguarded	1 (1)	10	2	5
Emda T2 LEGI 17	People Assisted to get a Job	16 (24)	100	114	50
Emda T4 LEGI 1	Business Assisted to improve their Performance	3 (3)	4	4	2
Emda T6 LEGI 18	People Assisted in their Skills Development	57(64)	140	101	70
Emda T6a LEGI 19	Adults gaining Basic Skills under Skills for Life Strategy	0 (0)	40	0	10
Emda T6b LEGI 20	Adults achieving a Level 2 Qualification or higher	6 (6)	20	29	10
Emda KPI	People over 45 receiving advice / guidance	7(9)	40	15	0

3.2.3. The challenge for the Core Team is to show, within the context of partnership activity, the impact of their interventions through funding from the two major funders.

3.2.4. T1/LEGI 5 outputs are a case in point. The MtC Core Team work with a range of partners to secure jobs to the area through recruitment and training of new staff. Other partners are also involved in this support. Reporting 'clean' outputs – those directly attributable to the Core Team - is therefore a challenge. In this case the Core Team worked with the Alliance Inward Investment team to support a new company which created 5 new jobs. The outputs were shared on a 3:2 basis.

- 3.2.5. The Core team are confident that with new developments, particularly at the Steetley Quarry site, the T1 targets for 2008/9 will be achieved.
- 3.2.6. Progress on the number of people assisted to get a job is developing a momentum particularly through the Gateways. As can be seen, a project total of 16 had been reported to emda in June 2008, and by July this had risen to 24. The current trajectory of progress would suggest that the project will achieve its targets for 2008/9.
- 3.2.7. Similar levels of progress can be seen on T4/LEGI 1, T6/LEGI18, T6b/LEGI20 and KPI.
- 3.2.8. In the case of T6a/LEGI 19 no outputs have been reported to date. The MtC's manager reports that work has been undertaken through the RAG system to provide support for a range of clients who required Skills for Life support. He is currently in discussion with the LSC about what constitutes an outcome under this category and is confident that they will achieve this target.

3.3. Challenges for the Partnership

- 3.3.1. We note two difficulties for the partnership and the Core Team. The first is that any targets set for the Core team can distract them from their key role as brokers and coordinators of activity. There is the risk of their activity being skewed by the need to meet targets and to spend large amounts of time on agreeing ways of apportioning outputs. This will be especially true once the JobMAETs sub-contractors become active. In an ideal world funding bodies should recognise that what matters is how well the partnership is doing as a whole and how well the Core Team assists partners to achieve their targets.
- 3.3.2. The second difficulty is that there are no partnership outputs by which the impact of the partnership as a whole could be judged. In particular, there is no way of assessing the partnership's impact on moving people into sustained employment. However, JCP does have such a target. What is required is a way of taking this into account in measuring the overall effectiveness of the partnership.
- 3.3.3. The quality of the service offered to employers, jobseekers, CETs, local authorities and JCP needs to be monitored. Although individual partners have quality systems, neither the partnership as a whole or the Core Team has any system for tracking service quality. Currently, getting it right depends on the effectiveness of feedback, usually by word of mouth. Given the accelerating pace of employer leads and Gateway provision, it is important now to create such a system so that lessons can be learned and fed back into delivery. Increasingly, in the future MtC will rely on the willingness of the partners to invest in the Core Team and the partnership. 'We are willing to invest Working Neighbourhoods Fund in the partnership but we need to know what we are getting in return', was the view of one district council interviewee.

3.4. Employability Criteria

- 3.4.1. Key to effective employment brokerage is the ability to match jobseekers to employers' requirements. This entails a detailed understanding of the employer and their business and a methodology for assessing the level of employability of the jobseeker. Making the Connection Nottingham has developed the RAG

system, a tripartite categorisation of red, amber and green, with green candidates being closest to employability, and the Core Team has worked with the Family Employment Initiative and Mansfield CVS on applying the criteria consistently (see criteria in Appendix).

3.4.2. The importance of getting this right is exemplified by the developing relationship with the call centre operation, CPP. Very few of the people put forward by JCP or the CETs have been successful in gaining employment and CPP considered the people who attended a jobs fair in Chesterfield 'not to be of the right standard'.¹³ To ensure that candidates are properly prepared and meet the employer's requirements, the Core Team has brokered a pre-employment training course to be delivered and funded by Chesterfield College and Working Links, taking place on CPP premises using their equipment. Ten courses are planned for 10-15 applicants over five weeks leading to a NVQ level 1 call centre operator qualification. Successful applicants will progress onto a level 2 qualification.

4. Immediately Proposed Changes: Our Recommendations

4.1. Operations

4.1.1. *Following up Employer Leads*

Issue: risk of duplication between JCP and Core Team

Recommendation: re-confirm with JCP staff that arrangements set out in Operations Manual are still to be followed or adjust accordingly; work with smaller employers who don't engage with JCP.

4.1.2. *Collating and Disseminating Employer Leads*

Issue: current methodology open to risk of duplicate approaches to employers and not accessible to all partners

Recommendation: consider an electronic system accessible to partners.

4.1.3. *Gateways*

Issue: at risk of crowding out other employer-facing activities by Core Team

Recommendations: consider scope for devolving delivery of Gateways to CETs and/or training providers while retaining responsibility for coordinating funding, ensuring quality and the strategic match with employer needs in the hands of the Core Team.

4.1.4. *Development Zones*

Issue: partners look to Core Team to work with JCP on identifying employers willing to work with CETs/JobMAETs

Recommendation: establish part-time physical presence in Markham Vale and on A61 corridor in collaboration with LEPs; identify sectors/supply chains in collaboration with JCP/Alliance investment team/council economic development units warranting more in depth engagement. Re-focus Core Team efforts in this direction and away from community engagement.

4.1.5. *Tracking and Follow Up*

Issue: responsibility for tracking and follow up needs to be assigned so that the Core Team do not end up assuming this role by default

Recommendation: partners review the issue and make a decision.

¹³ LEGI Workstream minutes, 15 July 2008, p.3

4.2. Partnership

4.2.1. *Integrated Overview*

Issue: lack of integrated overview of the partnership and Core Team

Recommendation: establish a single operational group of no more than 6-8 members, drawn from existing LEGI Workstream Group and Alliance Skills Board Executive, which

1. meets monthly or bi-monthly to maintain an oversight of the MtC Partnership and Core Team,

2. reports on outputs, outcomes and service quality once a year to the Alliance Skills Board Executive, LEGI, and to a full MtC partnership meeting.

This would replace the separate reports to and meetings with the Workstream Group and the Skills Board Executive, both saving time and ensuring an integrated strategic overview.

4.2.2. *Joint Planning*

Issue: Core Team viewed in isolation from overall activities of partnership

Recommendation: organise review day for partners and stakeholders to take stock of MtC as partnership – perhaps using SWOT analysis and examples from other areas including MtC Greater Nottingham - and to action plan next steps in the light of labour market trends, and anticipated funding and machinery of government changes. Questions to consider include: where is the partnership going; what should partners do differently; how can Core Team help them; what problems and gaps need attention.

4.3. Outputs

4.3.1. *Service Quality*

Issue: currently no system for reviewing quality of service offered to employers, jobseekers, partners

Recommendation: establish light touch system; report on service quality to Alliance Employment and Skills Board

4.3.2. *Numbers into Jobs*

Issue: currently no review of partnership's effectiveness in moving people into sustainable employment

Recommendation: that the Skills Board reviews JCP data on moves into employment as part of its assessment of the work of the MtC partnership as a whole.

5. Conclusions

5.1. After a false start, MtC both as a partnership and as the Core Team, is finding its feet and beginning to demonstrate that there is a workable model for providing employers with the recruitment and training services they need in return for recruiting from disadvantaged groups and communities. MtC is not a project but a new way of working in active labour market management.

5.2. Progress is due to a number of factors including the sense of direction and dynamism of the manager, the confidence and trust evoked by the Core Team in partners and other stakeholders, and the willingness to collaborate demonstrated by key agencies.

- 5.3. The lynchpin of the enterprise is the increasingly close working relationship between the Core Team and Jobcentre Plus, based on a determination to engage employers and to tackle worklessness.
- 5.4. Having established momentum, it is important to build on it in a number of ways as our recommendations suggest. There is strong backing from partners for a greater focus on employer engagement and improved coordination in activities such as the collation and dissemination of employer leads. Service quality needs to be a central concern in the coming year or so.
- 5.5. We believe that this is a good moment to establish clearly what each partner expects from their involvement with MtC, and how the partnership as a whole *including the Core Team* can help to fulfil those expectations.
- 5.6. In a later report, in October, we will return to review progress since the summer and consider what needs to be done to achieve sustainability.

Appendix

I. Interviewees

Graham Whiting	Manager	Making the Connection Core team
David Burke	Monitoring and Support Officer	Making the Connection Core team
Julia Warner	Outreach Worker	Making the Connection Core team
Ann Solway Gluck	Outreach Worker	Making the Connection Core team
Heather Downey	Consultant	Alliance Employment and Skills Board
Steph Stubbs	Strategic Partnership Manager	Alliance SSP
Judith Scholar Winfield	Programme Manager	LEGI
Victoria Copestake	Programme Manager	LEGI
Ed Newman	Investment and Marketing Officer	Alliance Inward Investment Project
Richard Vincent	Investment Manager	Alliance Inward Investment Project
Robert Wilkinson	Economic Development Team Leader	Bassetlaw District Council
Alison Westray Chapman	Economic Development Manager	North East Derbyshire District Council
Mike Robinson	Economic Regeneration Manager	Newark and Sherwood District Council
Geoff George	Economic Regeneration Manager	Nottinghamshire County Council
Ella O'Connor	Senior Economic Regeneration Officer	Ashfield District Council
Sonia Coleman	Economic Development Manager	Bolsover District Council
Meg Hankinson	Employment and Skills Development Manager	Coalfield Regeneration Trust/FEI
Stuart Hackett	Development Manager	LSC Nottinghamshire
Andrew Marsh	Economic Development	LSC Derbyshire

	Manager	
Jackie Thompson	Employer Engagement Manager	Nottinghamshire JCP
Angela Stansfield	Employer Engagement Manager	Derbyshire JCP
Andrew Pidluznyj	External Relations Manager	Derbyshire JCP
Don Hayes	Chief Executive	Enable
Maureen Davidson	Team Leader	Getting into Work Mansfield DC
Jane Sheppard	Community Employment Adviser	Working Communities NE Derbyshire DC
Paul Lunds	Advice and Guidance Officer	Communities that Work
Matt Lockley	Manager	Making the Connection Greater Nottingham

2. Criteria for a Partnership 'Job Ready' Standard

Red	Amber	Green
Very clear combination of multiple barriers to work	Completed most elements of provider's employability programmes	Shows motivation and commitment – evidenced through 100% attendance at recent appointments
Basic/life skills need to be addressed	Some issues with literacy and numeracy	No identified literacy or numeracy issues
Poor/fragmented work history	Transferable skills evidenced by a current, relevant CV	Understands the importance of punctuality and demonstrates it
Demonstrates no clear motivation towards work or seeking work	Commitment to look for work and evidence of this	Has attended interview skills training or a mock interview
Benefit compliance issues need to be addressed	May have a residual barrier to work but is working with provider to find solutions	Shows confidence and self-esteem and is well-presented
Lack of awareness of own skills and abilities	Participating in focussed pre-recruitment activity	Understands in-work etiquette
Lack of knowledge of support available	Small skills gap (or lower level qualification) that can easily be addressed	Has worked with provider to address all barriers; has stable living environment
Lack of self-confidence	Has had an IAG session and is linked to an advisor	Has good understanding of job opportunities and realistic expectations
	Has an action plan in place that is regularly reviewed with provider; completes agreed actions	Has been contacted within the last month and is actively seeking work
		Has completed relevant employability or pre-recruitment programme
		Has completed better off calculation with advisor
		Has completed a Data Protection form
		Has interview clothes and can access support to attend interviews