EXCELLENCE IN CITIES

LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT STRAND STUDY

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative was launched in 1999 in six major urban areas of England that were facing difficulties as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. It formed a significant element of the Government's commitment to raising educational standards and promoting social inclusion. Since then, two more Phases have been launched, and the initiative now covers 58 LEAs across England. At the heart of EiC are seven main Strands, one of which focuses on the introduction of Learning Support Units (LSUs).

LSUs provide a base in school offering short-term teaching and support programmes geared to the individual needs of pupils experiencing difficulties in school and/or at risk of exclusion. Their aim is to keep such pupils in school so that their difficulties can be addressed in order to reintegrate them back into mainstream classes as soon as possible. Units are small, take a few pupils at a time, mostly on a part-time basis, and have a high staff to pupil ratio. The majority of Units are attended by pupils from the school in which they are based, although a small number do offer provision to pupils from neighbouring schools.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in consortium with the London School of Economics (LSE) and the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), is conducting a national evaluation of EiC. This evaluation involves national surveys of EiC partnership coordinators, schools, teaching staff, pupils, training providers and employers, as well as more in-depth studies of each of the individual EiC Strands. Evidence emerging from the survey data suggests that, although the introduction of LSUs is proving resource intensive, it is being seen as a valuable strategy worthy of investment. Interim findings from the evaluation work carried out on 2000/2001 data[1] (Stoney *et al*., 2002) show that:

♦ Relatively few schools had a facility that resembled an LSU prior to the introduction of EiC. Findings to date have shown that partnerships have used various strategies for making LSU facilities available to schools and pupils.

♦ Four models of LSU provision appeared to be in evidence: an LSU in every school; funds from the LSU Strand being allocated to every school, with some using the money to establish an LSU on site; LSUs being located in selected

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[1] This work included Phase 1 and 2 Partnerships only.

schools, with non-LSU schools having access to alternative provision; and shared LSUs.

♦ At school level, the majority of LSU funds were being used for salaries or supply cover. Only a small minority of schools reported that LSU funds had *'freed up'* resources to spend elsewhere in the school. By way of contrast, over half the schools with an LSU on site reported that other resources had been used to assist with the funding of the LSU.

♦ The majority of teachers surveyed felt that LSUs would be beneficial for pupils attending them. It was suggested that teachers would be more motivated to teach in schools where provision had been made for pupils who were disaffected or had behavioural problems to be taken out of mainstream classes.

Other results from the later 2002 survey of schools and teachers in all three EiC Phases[2] have shown:

♦ Overall, 60 per cent of the schools had an LSU, and a further ten per cent said they had access to one. There were, however, considerable differences between the three Phases of EiC, particularly in terms of access to a Unit in another school. In Phase 1 areas, 18 per cent had access to a Unit elsewhere, whereas only two of the 52 Phase 2 schools (four per cent) had such access.

♦ Schools with a Unit were broadly similar to those with access to one on a number of key indicators of school context. On average, about 30 per cent of the pupils attending schools with an LSU on site, or with access to one, were entitled to free school meals. The corresponding figure for schools without access to a Unit was about 20 per cent. There was a similar pattern for the proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs. Schools with an LSU or with access to one tended to have lower levels of achievement at both key stages 3 and 4. These figures suggest that LSU resources were being targeted at schools on a needs-related basis.

♦ Of the schools with a Unit on-site, a third reported that they had experienced difficulties in staffing it – Phase 3 schools were slightly more likely to report difficulties than those in Phases 1 and 2, but this may, in part, be due to the more recent establishment of LSUs in Phase 3 areas.

♦ There were also regional variations in the proportion of schools reporting difficulties in recruitment. Among schools in inner London, almost half (ten out of 23) reported difficulty, as did six of the 15 outer London schools. Recruitment was also difficult in the West Midlands (13 out of 24 schools). In contrast, only four of the 30 participating schools in Yorkshire and the Humber said they had difficulty in recruiting LSU staff.[3]

♦ Of the schools with an LSU, just over a quarter said that pupils attended on a part-time basis, and a slightly smaller proportion said that all pupils attended full-time. The most common pattern of attendance, reported by 40 per cent of schools, was a

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2   These results came from 319 schools in EiC areas (130 in Phase 1, 137 in Phase 2 and 52 in Phase 3), and from 1,480 teachers (564 in Phase 1, 658 in Phase 2 and 25 in Phase 3).

3   Government Office regions, with London sub-divided into inner and outer London.

mixture of these. (Almost ten per cent of schools with a Unit did not answer this question.)

♦ Over half the responding teachers said that it was very important that all pupils should have access to a Unit providing short-term intensive support for pupils. A further third said this was quite important. There was a similar pattern of responses within each Phase of EiC.

♦ Female teachers, those with more years of teaching experience, and more senior teachers, tended to be the most supportive of the idea of such Units.

♦ Teachers were asked whether particular types of pupils had benefited from recent changes in the school. Teachers in schools with an LSU were the most likely to say that disruptive pupils had benefited. They were followed by teachers in schools with access to a Unit elsewhere; those in schools with no access to LSUs were considerably less likely to say that such pupils had benefited. There was a similar, but less marked, pattern of results with respect to disaffected pupils.

A recent report on EiC and Education Action Zones (EAZs) (Ofsted, 2003) found that, at secondary level, most LSUs were successful in promoting inclusion, tackling disaffection, improving behaviour and reducing the number of exclusions. However, although LSUs were said to be providing *'good personal support'* for the pupils attending, a quarter of those visited were not found to be doing enough to help pupils learn more effectively.

This report focuses on the findings from a qualitative longitudinal study of six LSUs in three Phase 1 and three Phase 2 EiC partnerships. It is based on the views of LEA strand coordinators, the LSU staff and school staff within the six case-study schools in which the LSUs were located, as well as the views of 49 pupils attending the LSUs. The report also presents the findings from a complementary element of the strand study within the 11 Phase 3 EiC partnerships that were introduced in October 2000. This element of the study focused on the views of LEA strand coordinators and LSU managers in the 11 partnerships.

1.2   Aims of the LSU Strand Study

The LSU strand study intended to build on the data provided through the main survey by undertaking an investigation into the impact of LSUs in terms of improvements in pupils':

♦ behaviour

♦ attendance

♦ attainment and achievement

♦ attitudes to learning and education.

Furthermore, the issue of whether such effects for pupils are sustainable in the longer term is also particularly relevant, thus longitudinal case studies with a qualitative focus were adopted as the main research approach. Although the primary aim of the study was to identify the effects for, and on, the young people attending the LSUs, a supplementary aim of the study was to garner perceptions of impact upon:

♦ mainstream schools and fellow pupils
♦ LSU staff and their levels of expertise
♦ the community, including parents and carers
♦ other agencies and multi-agency working.

As well as **outcomes** and **effects**, the study aimed to evaluate the **processes** and **components** of LSUs in order to identify key factors in their success and highlight examples of good practice. Processes to be investigated included:

Pupil-related processes	♦ referral procedures ♦ assessment and diagnosis ♦ individual planning ♦ reintegration and support procedures
Staff and staffing	♦ backgrounds ♦ training requirements
Facilities	♦ premises ♦ resources
Relationships	♦ school and home links ♦ the role and contribution of other agencies
Ethos	♦ the underlying value system ♦ styles of behaviour management
Curriculum and pedagogy	♦ content and curriculum ♦ teaching approaches

The focus of the Phase 3 element of the strand study echoed that of the longitudinal case studies within Phase 1 and 2 partnerships, namely to investigate the impact of LSUs in terms of pupils' behaviour; attendance; attainment and achievement; and attitudes to learning and education. In addition to this, it sought to examine:

- how far Phase 3 partnerships had built on the experiences of Phase 1 and 2 partnerships in the design and implementation of LSUs
- the extent to which Phase 3 partnerships were sharing practice with Phase 1 and 2 partnerships (e.g. through local and national networks).

1.3   Methods

The longitudinal element of the LSU strand study comprised six EiC partnerships selected according to the following criteria:

- EiC Phase: three were within Phase 1 partnerships and three within Phase 2 partnerships
- Type of LEA/location: one London borough, two metropolitan authorities and three new, unitary authorities.
- Contrasting partnership approaches to the introduction and implementation of LSU provision.

Interviews took place with the designated LEA officer with overall responsibility for the LSU Strand of EiC within each of the six partnerships, about their role in coordinating the Strand, the establishment of LSUs (including recruitment and training), and their views on any impact.

Six case-study LSUs (one from each partnership) were then selected with the advice of these LEA officers. Researchers visited each of the six LSUs over the three terms of the academic year 2001–2002 to gather information relating to LSU policy and practice. Impact data was also collected, primarily concerning effects for and on the young people attending the LSUs (in terms of attendance, behaviour, motivation, attainment, relationships, etc.), but also on mainstream schools and other pupils, and on LSU staff and their levels of expertise.

Face-to-face interviews took place with LSU staff, school staff and pupils attending the LSU. The interview sample within the case-study LSUs over the three terms of the academic year 2001–2002 included:

- six LSU managers
- seven LSU support staff
- four school senior managers with line management responsibility for LSU staff
- 12 teachers
- two school staff from other schools receiving outreach support from the LSU

- 49 pupils (23 pupils on whom data was collected in all three terms, ten girls and 13 boys).

A final visit and/or telephone call was made by researchers to each of the six case-study LSUs at the start of the autumn term 2002, in order to ascertain any changes to, or developments in, the provision offered, to gather perceptions of any increased, or further impact, and any future developments planned, as well as to obtain an update on the progress of the pupils interviewed over the previous three terms, including destinations.

The Phase 3 element of the LSU strand study comprised all 11 Phase 3 partnerships and involved telephone interviews with the LEA coordinators with responsibility for LSU provision within each authority, as well as interviews with either one or two LSU managers within each LEA, a total of 16. Thus, a total of 27 telephone interviews were conducted within this part of the study.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The report draws on both the data from the longitudinal study of the six case-study LSUs and the data from the telephone interviews within the 11 Phase 3 partnerships. Where cameos or case studies of pupils have been included to provide illustrative comment, the names have been changed to protect the anonymity of those involved.

Section 2 focuses on the establishment of LSU provision, including how the overall LSU Strand is organised and managed, how the locations of the LSUs and the allocation of resources was decided, the different models of LSU provision in operation, staffing issues, training and support.

Section 3 considers the day-to-day operation of LSUs, including their aims and objectives, staffing arrangements, ethos, procedures (e.g. referral, reintegration, monitoring), curriculum and pedagogy, and the involvement of others (e.g. Learning Mentors (LMs), other agencies, parents/carers, etc.). It also looks at the model of outreach support operating in one of the case-study schools.

Section 4 looks at the impact that LSU provision has had on the pupils attending, particularly in terms of their attendance, behaviour, learning, psychological well-being and their relationships, both with their peers and with adults. It also considers

the factors perceived to be facilitating impact and the destinations of the case-study pupils following a period of LSU support.

Section 5 then moves on to discuss the future development of LSUs, in particular how interviewees would like to see them develop and their views on sustainability beyond guaranteed EiC funding.

Section 6 concludes the report by drawing together the key messages to emerge from the research and highlighting implications for EiC partnerships and schools.

2. ESTABLISHING LSU PROVISION

This Section looks at the processes involved in establishing LSU provision, including:

- how the LSU Strand is organised and managed within partnerships
- LSU locations and the way in which resources are allocated
- the model of provision offered
- recruitment issues (e.g. professional backgrounds, skills, training and support).

The Section focuses on the LSU Strand as a whole, with illustrative comment from interviews with Phase 1 and 2 case-study and Phase 3 LSU staff.

2.1 Organisation and Management of the LSU Strand

Management approaches varied across the three Phases of EiC, particularly in relation to whether or not the Strand had a dedicated LSU coordinator in post. In one Phase 1 and one Phase 2 partnership, an overall EiC manager had taken responsibility for overseeing the LSU Strand. In one of these, a small London Borough, the rationale for this had been to avoid too much being invested initially in coordination, so as to ensure that maximum resources were devolved to the schools. As a result, the overall scheme manager was coordinating all seven Strands. In the other partnership, although there had been a strand coordinator for both the Learning Mentor (LM) and Gifted and Talented Strands, there was no coordinator for LSUs. Thus, in recognition of the need for some sort of overview of the Strand, the overall EiC manager had taken on a coordinating role. Once again, this meant that no LSU funding had to be retained centrally to pay for a designated strand coordinator.

In the remaining four partnerships, overseeing the Strand was the responsibility of a particular LEA officer. These included a Senior Adviser (who also had responsibility for the LM and Gifted and Talented Strands), a Principal Educational Psychologist to whose service responsibility for the Strand had been allocated, a full-time LSU coordinator whose post had been specifically created through EiC, and a Strategy Leader for Behaviour, whose post had not been specifically created through EiC, but which had coincidently initiated the opportunity to provide a strategic steer to the Strand.

Within the 11 Phase 3 partnerships, seven had no designated LSU strand coordinator. In six of these, the Strand was overseen by the overall EiC manager/coordinator, while in the remaining one, it was overseen by the LM coordinator who acted as *'a point of contact'* for LSU managers. In the other four Phase 3 partnerships, responsibility for the Strand fell to particular LEA officers. These included a Study Support Coordinator and three designated LSU strand coordinators/managers, although in one of the latter, coordination was shared with the partnership's Lead LM.

LSU strand coordinators performed a monitoring function and provided direction to the Strand. LSUs tended to operate fairly autonomously and thus the role of coordinator appeared to be very much one of guidance and support, especially where overall EiC managers had assumed the role in addition to their other responsibilities. Several interviewees referred to a recognition of the need to *'be there'* as a point of contact, or to *'provide a lifeline'* for LSU managers. As such, setting up and facilitating network meetings in order to share good practice, issues and concerns was seen as an important function of the role. Other elements included organising and, in some cases, providing training for LSU managers, auditing practice and preparing reports on the Strand for the partnership. In those partnerships without a designated LSU coordinator, lack of funding was frequently identified as the main reason for this: *'It would be better if we had a [designated] coordinator but that wasn't feasible due to the funding, we wanted the money to go to the schools'* (Phase 3 EiC manager).

In order to aid fluency, all personnel with responsibility for overseeing the LSU Strand will be referred to throughout the rest of this report as LSU strand coordinators.

2.2 Locations and Allocation of Resources/Funding

In two of the three Phase 2 partnerships, the decision was taken that an LSU would be located in each secondary school. In one, this was in order to take account of existing good practice in the area of behaviour management, but also because of geographical constraints which were believed to make it unlikely that pupils would travel to an LSU at another school. In other Phase 1 and 2 partnerships where LSUs were in some but not all schools, the criterion for selecting the locations of LSUs was usually some combination of the following:

- school willingness
- physical space available

- geographical location (e.g. so as to ensure an even distribution and/or ease of access for other schools)
- the need to reflect the different types of school (e.g. denominational, co-educational, single sex, etc.)
- the level of need within a school
- academic attainment at key stage 4
- coordination with existing/planned unit provision
- evidence of good practice with the client group of pupils.

Two partnerships (one Phase 1, one Phase 2) had LSUs in some secondary schools with others having access to support, and one (Phase 1) had LSUs in most schools with more planned (although not all funded through EiC). In the remaining Phase 1 partnership, most schools had LSUs, but a small number had vired funding into the Learning Mentor (LM) programme.

The allocation of EiC resources was linked to the decision about the locations of the LSUs, usually according to formulas based on an analysis of need, including such indicators as, for example, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), and the percentage of children in public care, etc. Several interviewees noted that, once divided up amongst the schools, the allocation was not great, with the result that schools often chose to supplement the funding. In one Phase 1 partnership, it had been decided that all schools would receive equal funding for LSUs, but with the provision to vire funds to the LM Strand should they decide not to establish an LSU. Where unit provision had existed in schools before the advent of EiC, the EiC funding had facilitated the enhancement of that provision, as well as leading to the creation of new LSUs in other schools. Allocation of funding was made accordingly, i.e. schools with new LSUs received a greater proportion of setting-up costs.

Resources were allocated to schools to cover both setting-up and staffing costs. However, the point was made that once money was devolved, schools could make their own decisions as to how that money was spent (see sections 2.4 and 2.6 for discussion of the implications of this for salary, status and training). Case-study and Phase 3 LSU managers confirmed that the majority of the budget went on staffing costs.

Figure 2.1 outlines the distribution of secondary LSUs, together with the way in which resources were allocated, within the six Phase 1 and 2 partnerships at the start of the research (autumn term 2001).

Within the Phase 3 partnerships, three of the 11 had LSUs in every secondary school, with the remaining eight partnerships having LSUs in some, but not all, schools. The locations for the LSUs within the latter were usually decided on the basis of which schools had the most need. In three Phase 3 partnerships, interviewees specifically referred to the decision being made according to a points ranking from a series of indicators (e.g. percentage of unauthorised absence, number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, pupils entitled to free school meals, number of pupils with English as an additional language, number of statements for behaviour, etc.). In most cases, resources were allocated according to a formula, based on similar indicators of need. In one Phase 3 partnership, EiC funding was specifically for the enhancement of existing Units (all originally resourced through Standards Fund monies), while in another, EiC funding allowed the development of new LSUs, together with the *'refocusing'* of existing provision. In one Phase 3 partnership, the schools with no LSUs received enhanced LM funding. Once again, where overall EiC funding was perceived to be insufficient, schools were supplementing the funding from other sources, such as the Pupil Retention Grant (PRG) and core funding.

Figure 2.1   Distribution of LSUs and allocation of resources

Phase 1 Partnerships	LSU distribution	Allocation of EiC resources
A	40 LSUs in 43 of the LEA's secondary schools. Of these, 15 officially funded through EiC, 25 through alternative funding streams.	EiC resources allocated according to formula based on analysis of need on a school-by-school basis, taking nominal school allocations aggregated into area totals.
B	LSUs in 4 secondary schools which then provided outreach support to eight other 'satellite' schools (two each).	Equal allocations to the 4 LSU schools. Non-LSU schools received resources to appoint a Learning Support Mentor. LSU schools funded to supply outreach support to non-LSU schools.
C	LSUs in 12 of the LEA's 17 secondary schools. The remainder had vired the money across to support the LM programme.	Resources divided between schools (40 per cent base allocation plus 60 per cent based on formula), with the option to vire LSU funding to LM Strand.
Phase 2 Partnerships		
D	LSUs in all 8 secondary schools.	Resources allocated according to formula based on level of need (number of pupils on roll; number of pupils in Units e.g. EBD, MLD; number of statemented pupils; number of pupils eligible for free school meals).
E	12 LSUs in 16 of the LEA's secondary schools focused on KS3. (The remaining 4 schools had not wanted their own LSU and so had a base in school where a specialist peripatetic teacher provided outreach support (shared provision).)	Resource allocation linked to level of need. Schools with new LSUs allocated greater proportion of setting-up costs. Schools with shared provision allocated funding for refurbishment and additional resources for when outreach teacher not present.
F	LSUs in all 18 secondary schools.	Resources allocated according to formula based on level of need.

Source: *Interviews with strand coordinators, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.*

2.3   Models of Provision

As noted in the previous section, the model of provision differed between LEAs in the six Phase 1 and 2 partnerships, from those with LSUs in all, or most, schools to those where certain schools had LSUs and the remainder received outreach support, or where some schools had vired the LSU funding into the LM programme. A similarly wide range of provision was evident in the Phase 3 partnerships.

This diversity of provision, coupled with the fact that the money was devolved to schools to set up their own LSUs, was believed to have led, in some LEAs, to a lack of commonality. The process was given to schools to take ownership of, although each one had to provide evidence of meeting the objectives within their delivery plans. Within the strand study's six case-study LSUs (see Figure 2.2), five offered provision to their own pupils only. In the remaining one, LSU staff also provided outreach support to two other secondary schools in the LEA. Four of the case-study LSUs catered for all pupils, while in two key stage 3 was the focus. In both of the latter, concern was expressed about the lack of similar provision at key stage 4, because many of the pupils, especially those with difficult home circumstances, would continue to struggle in school as they moved through key stage 4. In fact, during the follow-up interviews with LSU managers in the autumn term of 2002, the manager in one of these schools confirmed that a key stage 4 extension to the provision had been set up for this very reason:

> *A year ago, we realised that the children we had in the Unit then, some were in Year 9, and we realised the problem wasn't going to go away when it came to July. We knew very well with the children that we had, we would still be having them back. Realistically, you can't expect the problem to go away. We approached the management and said we are prepared to still support the children, as long as we know what we are doing and when, and it's timetabled and organised properly … we've now had a key stage 4 room built on the back.* (LSU manager)

Figure 2.2   Case-study LSU models of provision

EiC Phase 1 Schools	Number of pupils (incl. max. no. that can be catered for)	Pupils from other schools?	Age/focus Gender	Maximum/minimum length of stay	Educational background of pupils attending
School A	In practice up to 20, but ideally 12 to 14	None	KS3 and 4 Slightly more boys	Depends on the individual: *'For some, they still need involvement, however small.'*	*'There is definitely a correlation between academic achievement and behaviour.'*
School B	Can have only 1 or 2, 9 would be the maximum	None attending the LSU, but outreach support provided to pupils at 2 other secondary schools	KS3 and 4 All girls (a girls' school)	*'Hugely'* individual.	A range : mainly pupils experiencing barriers to their learning, be it academic, behavioural or emotional.
School C	Between 2 and 6 usually, 7 would be the maximum	None	KS3 and 4 A balance of gender	No particular model – it depends on the individual.	Some have learning difficulties, others have behavioural or attendance problems which affect their learning.
EiC Phase 2 Schools					
School D	Between 4 and 9 at any one time	None	KS3 and 4 Predominantly boys	Depends on each case – most pupils are in for 1 or 2 lessons for a 1- or 2-week block, but it could be for 6 weeks.	A lot of pupils with special or additional needs, several with behavioural and/or attendance problems.
School E	Varies: 12 would be the maximum	None	KS3 (at time of first visit) KS 3 and 4 by time of second Predominantly boys	Around 6 weeks on first entry, not rigid, can be full time. Revisits are part time. The minimum length of stay would be a couple of lessons a week.	Many have problems with basic skills, with controlling their temper and several have learning difficulties.
School F	Can vary but 12 would be the maximum	None	KS3 Predominantly boys	Depends on the individual.	A wide range – *'A lot have learning needs and that is linked with their behaviour and attendance'*.

Source: *Interviews with LSU managers, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.*

The majority of the Phase 3 LSUs also catered for both key stages 3 and 4. Similarly, 15 of the 16 Phase 3 LSU managers interviewed confirmed that their Unit offered provision only to pupils from the host school. One Phase 3 manager reported offering provision to a small number of pupils not on the school's roll, who were reintegrating to mainstream school from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

Notwithstanding the variations that were noted in focus and practice, one or two strand coordinators commented that over time, as more network meetings were set up and plans and practice were reviewed, they were identifying the beginnings of a common understanding or framework. At the same time, some Phase 1 and 2 strand coordinators reported that they had not found the original guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) at the time particularly helpful, referencing later good practice guidelines from the department (DfES, 2002) as more useful. The influence of the latter was particularly highlighted by Phase 3 strand coordinators. Several Phase 3 coordinators also referred to being influenced by the practice of Phase 1 and 2 partnerships through visits made to other LSUs. Other coordinators, whilst cognisant of the benefits of guidance, offered the caveat that prescribed models were not necessarily the best model and that there was *'no blueprint for all'*, and that what worked for one school did not necessarily work for another. There was felt to be a danger in being overly prescriptive:

> *I think it helps to have a framework and one of the strengths I think perhaps of EiC is that it does have a very clearly guided framework, as long as they don't become strait-jackets, because the essence of schools is their individuality and being able to tailor things and then to learn and evolve because thinking does evolve doesn't it? It's not static.* (LSU strand coordinator)

Within the six case-study LSUs, staff felt that it would perhaps have been helpful to have had more guidelines on setting up an LSU, *'because in a sense, you are starting with a blank piece of paper'* (LSU manager). Several felt it had been very much a case of *'just get on with it'*. However, it was recognised that the needs of schools, as well as those of their pupils, were very different and most of the case-study LSUs had evolved over time to meet the needs of their particular schools.

Where similar provision had existed before EiC, several LSU strand coordinators referred to it being more of a *'kneejerk'*, *'time out'* provision, reflecting a form of internal exclusion although, in some cases, instances were quoted of special needs staff working innovatively with pupils. The difference with the current EiC model of LSU provision, reported by both strand coordinators and LSU managers, was that it

was more focused, more intensive and more supportive than what had been in place before:

> *I think the issue is behaviour. As I see it, the majority of children in LSUs have behavioural difficulties and we have to do behaviour modification work with those youngsters to try and effect a change before we even start thinking about reintegrating them. We have to clearly identify their needs, we have to find out what it is they aren't coping with, or doing wrong, and we have to plan programmes to try and help modify those behaviours. I am not aware that schools did real behaviour modification work before, and some are still having difficulty grasping that idea, that that is what you need to do to effect change.* (LSU strand coordinator)

> *Well, it's very different – the behaviour support I offered before didn't allow for withdrawing from lessons, for identifying problem areas, for close work with families and the one-to-one counselling and support that children get. This is very different, it's far more intense.* (LSU manager)

2.4   Recruitment Issues

LSU strand coordinators affirmed that the post of LSU manager was the responsibility of the schools involved and more often than not tended to be an internal appointment. This was borne out in the interviews with the Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSU managers, all but one of whom had been internal appointments. In contrast, their support staff were more often external appointments, perhaps suggesting that the requisite skills for this particular type of work were not necessarily prevalent amongst existing support staff. More than half of the Phase 3 sample of LSU managers had also been internal appointments.

As has already been noted in section 2.2 in the discussion about the allocation of resources, once the funding was allocated to schools, they took responsibility for advertising and appointing their LSU managers. This also meant they were responsible for determining job descriptions and salary scales. LEA strand coordinators reported that this had led to great diversity in status and rates of pay within the overall Strand, even though people were essentially doing the same job. A Phase 2 coordinator highlighted examples of LSUs where a coordinator for special needs (SENCO) had an overview of the provision and a manager on a much lower salary scale handled the day-to-day operation of the Unit, while other LSUs were being managed by personnel at higher salary scales and with far more influence in the school (some even being part of the senior management team). A Phase 1 strand coordinator reported that this was also the case for LSU support staff:

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> [It] *has caused me a lot of problems – we have support staff at scale six … and then we have got other ones at scale one or two, all doing the same work. In retrospect, I think it would have been better to lay down certain criteria that had to be met by schools to carry out this provision, because in my view, if you are asking people to work with these youngsters with challenging behaviour – and some of them have extremely challenging behaviour – there shouldn't be less than behavioural support workers in there.*

Some schools spoke about taking the opportunity to *'tap into other funding streams'* in order to increase the pay scales of their staff, while others had not, which had exacerbated an already complex issue. This wide range in salary and status was also felt to have implications for LSU strand coordinators in terms of managing the Strand, especially when trying to organise network events and/or training to meet the needs of so diverse a group.

2.4.1   Professional backgrounds

All six Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSU managers had teaching backgrounds, and several had experience of working with children with special needs. One had been head of behaviour support within the school before taking up the post of LSU manager and head of pupil support, another had been the SENCO and had taken on the role of LSU manager in addition to this. Four of the seven LSU support staff working with them had been teachers, while the remainder had experience of working with children with behavioural problems. Two had qualifications in counselling.

Of the 16 Phase 3 LSU managers interviewed, only two were not qualified teachers. The majority of those with a teaching background had special needs and/or pastoral experience with several having been SENCOs, SEN managers or heads of year. Of the two who were not qualified teachers, one had a psychology degree and was a qualified counsellor with experience of residential social work. The other LSU manager had been a teacher in the further education sector, training nursery nurses, and had experience of working with children with special needs. This manager felt that it was wrong to exclude people with the appropriate experience from doing the job simply because they were not qualified teachers: *'The expertise is out there for these very difficult kids.'* However, in some cases, it was reported that in order to receive comparable pay and status, those with non-teaching backgrounds were having to re-train to achieve the relevant qualifications.

2.4.2 Skills and qualities of LSU staff

LSU staff identified a number of key skills and qualities necessary for working in LSUs. These included those which focused on personal qualities and those that related to professional skills, and are shown in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3   Skills and qualities of LSU staff

Personal qualities

- understanding the young people's backgrounds and experiences *('where they're coming from'; 'some of the baggage they bring with them to school on a daily basis is just scary')*
- being non-judgmental, accepting
- being a good listener
- patience
- a sense of humour
- commitment (being *'willing to go the extra pastoral miles'*)
- a belief in young people and a genuine love of working with them.

Professional skills

- consistency (*'so they know exactly where they stand, so they know the boundaries'*)
- good cross-curricular knowledge
- being able to manage more difficult pupils, a good insight into emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and special needs
- recognising small successes
- being organised
- being able to work cooperatively with parents
- being able to work cooperatively with, and sometimes challenge, mainstream staff.

The qualities referred to above, especially the need to be able to understand and empathise with troubled young people echo findings from previous NFER studies (Kinder *et al.*, 1999; MacDonald and Kinder, 2001), in particular the concept of the 'kid whisperer'. This term was developed by Kinder *et al.* (1999) to denote skilled practitioners who could recognise and relate successfully to this particular pupil group, a quality that appeared to be very much in evidence among the LSU managers interviewed. One said:

> *Other staff will say 'How can you always find something positive, even in the negatives, when do you give up on them?' And the answer is 'Never' because no child chooses to need the kind of support that my children need. So I think it's patience and it's commitment and it's not being judgmental but trying to find a solution.*

LSU staff felt that they had developed professionally as a result of their experience of supporting pupils within the context of the LSU. There were opportunities for more individual work, which led to a deeper level of understanding of the problems the pupils faced. One strand coordinator commented that this had led to LSU staff becoming regarded as a source of expertise within the school:

> *Many* [LSU staff] *will have gained expertise that few others in the school have and that may have enabled them to come to a point where they can give expert advice*. (LSU strand coordinator)

At the same time, LSU staff felt that this fact was not always recognised by mainstream school staff:

> *Staff maybe don't appreciate the kind of work we do and the kind of skills we have because they don't see them in action – I don't think a lot of people appreciate how challenging it is*. (LSU support assistant)

The need for more communication and liaison with mainstream school staff was highlighted in order to share this expertise and spread good practice. It was suggested that this would also avoid the risk of expertise in working with more difficult young people becoming concentrated in one area of the school. At the same time, the benefits of mainstream teaching staff working within the LSU and sharing their expertise were also identified.

2.5   Training

There was a general perception amongst interviewees that the LSU Strand was very much *'the poor relation'* or the *'Cinderella'* Strand when it came to national training programmes, unlike the LM and Gifted and Talented Strands which both had well-developed programmes. In fact, LMs were said to have *'fabulous'* training opportunities whereas any training provided for LSU staff was considered more fragmented: *'Someone hears of a course and recommends it and we pass it on.'* The fact that there was no national programme for this Strand was felt to be *'a big oversight'* on the part of the DfES, giving the LM and Gifted and Talented Strands a higher profile. Ironically, this perceived lack of profile could be interpreted as continuing the marginalisation of certain pupil types (the disaffected) previously associated with such Units and which the EiC initiative was seeking to address.

Across all three Phases of the initiative, LSU strand coordinators were conscious of the need to organise training at a local level and acknowledged the importance of

local networks in order for LSU staff to raise issues and share good practice. There was an understanding that LSU managers had been appointed because they were deemed to have the necessary skills. However, for the sake of their own continuing professional development (CPD), the belief was expressed that these skills needed firming up through a training programme, so that they felt sufficiently well-equipped and supported. The majority of LSU staff (including managers and support staff) felt that, despite their qualifications and experience, some relevant training would have been helpful, especially in terms of coping with specific behavioural difficulties. Others suggested that practical guidance on setting up rooms would have been helpful, as logistically this could be quite difficult when dealing with such vulnerable young people. Many expressed the view that a lot of training took place *'on the job'*, often through *'trial and error'*. At the same time, because of the diversity already highlighted in terms of the roles and status of LSU staff, it was noted that organising a national training programme could in fact be quite problematic:

> *The roles are different ... and that makes centrally managing that quite difficult because trying to put on training to meet the needs of a diverse group both in background and skills is quite difficult and a challenge.* (LEA strand coordinator)

Other factors, raised specifically by Phase 3 strand coordinators, which were felt to impact on the provision of training, were releasing LSU staff to attend training and the concomitant problem of funding. LSU managers played a crucial role within their Units and providing cover for them could be difficult. By the same token, where funding was devolved to schools, ensuring equality in terms of access to training opportunities could be problematic. In one Phase 3 partnership, because of anticipated difficulties with providing cover for LSU managers, 'twilight' training sessions had been proposed locally. However, headteachers had considered the training important enough to agree to make cover available.

Phase 3 LSU managers referred to *'very useful'* good practice conferences organised by the DfES that they had attended, as did some staff in the Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSUs when reflecting back on the past year of operation.

2.6 Support for LSU Staff

As noted in the previous section, network meetings were seen as an important opportunity for LSU staff to share experiences and good practice, especially in the absence of any training programme. Perhaps surprisingly, given the wealth of

expertise and experience available and the opportunities this might provide, few Phase 3 networks appeared to include representatives from Phase 1 and 2 partnerships. However, involving Phase 1 or 2 representatives would require going outside the LEA and thus might be more difficult to institute. Exceptions noted by two strand coordinators, both of whom had overall responsibility for the EiC initiative within their partnership, were a cross-London network for LSU managers from all three Phases and a network for LSU managers across Phases 2 and 3 in a metropolitan borough (Sefton). Each of these cross-phase networks was reported to have been very useful – experienced managers from earlier Phases had been able to offer help to Phase 3 managers in establishing their LSUs, sharing any mistakes made and lessons learned. In a similar way, another Phase 3 strand coordinator had been able to build on experience gained through previously coordinating the EiC Strand in a Phase 1 partnership.

The majority of LSU staff spoke positively of both network meetings and the support from strand coordinators. Meeting others working in the same field, operating similar systems, was believed to be good for morale: *'It's wonderful to be able to sit and talk to someone in a similar role to me about what it's like working in my school'* (LSU manager). Some managers expressed the wish to meet more regularly, although they recognised that finding the time for this would be problematic. Others noted the importance of clear agendas for meetings to keep them focused and avoid them becoming *'a general moan'*. At the same time, LSU managers and support staff reported feeling well-supported within their schools, both by line managers and other mainstream staff. Indeed, some instances of the latter supporting in lessons in the LSU were highlighted, which was believed to have enabled LSU staff to spread their practice across the school. In the follow-up interviews with Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSU managers, interviewees commented that they felt more supported in school as time had gone on and mainstream staff had come to recognise the need for, and value of, such a Unit. One said:

> *I almost feel that we've proved ourselves now because we've gone through that phase where people appreciate and need our support. It's a lot more positive in terms of feedback.*

3.   OPERATING AN LSU

This Section is based on the views of LSU staff and pupils, primarily in the Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSUs, with additional comment from the Phase 3 LSU managers interviewed. It examines the processes involved in the day-to-day operation of an LSU, including:

♦   aims and objectives

♦   staffing arrangements (including roles and responsibilities)

♦   ethos

♦   referral procedures

♦   curriculum and pedagogy

♦   the involvement of others (e.g. LMs and other agencies, parents/carers, etc.)

♦   reintegration

♦   monitoring procedures

♦   outreach support.

3.1   Aims and Objectives

Forty-eight LSU staff (including Phase 3 managers) and school staff overall identified the following as the main aims and objectives of LSU provision within their schools (with the number of interviewees identifying them in brackets):

♦   to provide support for pupils not coping in mainstream classes in order to equip them with skills and strategies to enable them to manage and thus better access the curriculum (17)

♦   to modify pupils' behaviour and social skills so they are able to return to mainstream classes, thus concomitantly reducing in-class disruption (13)

♦   to keep pupils at risk of exclusion in school, *'to make sure we don't lose them'* (particularly mentioned by school staff) (11)

♦   to support staff and enhance whole-school awareness of pupil management techniques (9)

♦   to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream classes as soon as possible (8)

♦   to increase motivation and raise attainment (8)

♦   to identify the individual needs of pupils experiencing difficulties in school (7)

♦   to build confidence and raise self-esteem (7).

The focus on curriculum access, evidenced in the aims above, is interesting given the Ofsted (2003) finding that a quarter of the LSUs in that study were not doing enough to help pupils learn more effectively.

LSU managers from all three Phases particularly noted the aim of improving attendance and reducing exclusions, although they stressed that this was a requirement of the initiative, *'that's how we got the funding'*. In addition, LSU managers emphasised the need to provide a relevant and responsive curriculum within the Unit in order to re-engage pupils in education, thus enabling them to become more confident, independent learners who want to be in school. At the same time, the importance of developing supportive links between pupils, home and school was recognised.

School staff and some LSU support staff also highlighted the aim of providing a place in school where vulnerable pupils could feel comfortable and receive the one-to-one attention that they perhaps did not receive at home, and that class teachers did not have the time to provide. School staff interviewed particularly referenced the need for this *'quality time'* giving pupils the opportunity to *'talk and unload'*.

LSU staff and school staff alike emphasised the inclusive philosophy underpinning LSU provision, which was often believed to reflect that of the school. The following examples of LSU rationales or mission statements from two Phase 1 LSUs give a flavour of this inclusivity and the sense that the young people involved were valued. The theme of inclusivity is explored further in section 3.4, which focuses on ethos.

Examples of rationales for LSU provision:

The Learning Support Unit (LSU) is about providing a support mechanism in school which encompasses a range of behavioural and learning difficulties. It is about anticipating problems before they arise in the belief that prevention is better than cure in all things. It is about supporting students through difficulties when they do arise, identifying the causes of problems and equipping students with the skills or strategies to enable them to move on from their mistakes and deal with their problems. It is about ensuring that barriers to achievement are identified and removed. It is about supporting students to ensure that all have equality of opportunity. The LSU is a resource which is an integral part of the school support system and is designed to cater for those pupils for whom a short or even extended period of education outside the mainstream classroom will be of benefit.

The Inclusion Centre aims to share the teachings of the Catholic faith, accepting that students will make mistakes and promoting the gospel values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Opportunity must be created for all to be recognised, developed and valued as a unique person in our society. It is in this area that our Inclusion Centre has a fundamental role to play in facilitating achievement for all.

Source: *Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.*

On the whole, LSU and school staff felt that the aims they had outlined were being met, although it was recognised that it was still *'early days'*, especially for the Phase 3 partnerships. Equally, the need to regularly revisit and, if necessary, revise provision plans and policies was acknowledged.

Pupils, when asked what they thought the LSU was trying to do for pupils like themselves, generally viewed it in terms of providing: **support for behaviour**; **support with learning**; or **support for attendance and/or personal problems** that might be preventing pupils from fully engaging with learning, as shown in the illustrative comments that follow.[4]

Table 3.1   Pupils' views on the aims of LSU provision

Support for behaviour	*To get you back on the right track* (Year 9 boy).
	To try and help you get out of trouble and make your behaviour better (Year 8 boy).
	If you've been in trouble you can come in here and calm down (Year 9 girl).
	To make you behave (Year 9 boy).
Support with learning	*To help us do our work so we might pass our GCSEs and get a good job* (Year 8 boy).
	To make us concentrate on our work, to make us know that we can do it for ourselves (year 9 girl).
	To help you catch up, to have the quiet to do that (Year 11 girl).
	To make the work easier so they understand it more and learn quicker (Year 10 girl).
Support for attendance / personal problems	*To help get people back into school – they start you off making friends in the centre and then they gradually bring people up from the class you're supposed to be in to work with you so you get to know people, then they let you go back into class* (Year 8 boy).
	To make you more confident to go back into your lessons because no one is nasty (Year 8 girl).
	To help pupils if they've been out of school or are having problems (Year 11 girl).

Source: *Pupil interviews, NFER LSU strand study 2001–2002.*

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4   Pupils' perceptions of the LSUs are reported in more depth in Section 4.

In almost every case, pupils identified with their own particular difficulty or reason for attending the LSU. For example, the Year 8 girl in Table 3.2 who commented that no one was *'nasty'* in the LSU, which would help her to gain enough confidence to return to her lessons, had been suffering bullying problems in school. A number of Year 11 pupils attending the LSU in order to catch up with GCSE coursework, highlighted the opportunity to receive extra support and *'boost your grades'*. Similarly, those attending for behavioural reasons tended to focus on the support they received to modify their behaviour. However, a small number did note other reasons, usually in addition to the one for which they were attending. For example, one Year 8 girl attending in order to receive support with learning commented: '[It's for] *if you've been naughty or you're trying to catch up on work'*.

When asked whether they felt that the aims and objectives of LSU provision they had identified had been influenced through being part of the overall EiC initiative, the majority of LSU managers felt that they were much in line with those of the initiative as a whole. The aim of the latter was generally viewed as being to reduce disruption and exclusion, improve attendance and raise attainment. However, LSU managers tended to stress the affective dimension of their work, rather than an emphasis on meeting targets for exclusion and attendance: *'To take kids not included for whatever reason and include them'; 'I see my job is to help children avoid failure and achieve success.'*

Several LSU managers commented that being part of EiC had provided the opportunity or *'vehicle'* for the school to pursue a direction in which it had wanted to move anyway. Although these managers recognised the benefits of a common framework, they noted that the aims of the provision needed to be tailored to each individual school, in order to meet their often very diverse needs.

3.2   Staffing: Roles and Responsibilities

Each of the Phase 1 and 2 case-study LSUs was staffed by a manager with proven experience in effectively managing pupils' learning (all six were trained teachers) and behaviour, a requirement noted in DfES good practice guidelines (DfES, 2002). Four, in addition to their role as LSU manager, had other responsibilities in school within this area. One was head of pupil support, which, as well as managing the LSU, involved overseeing learning support in school and the support pupils received from other agencies. This was felt to provide an overview of provision whilst, at the same time, to allow for earlier input to prevent some young people from progressing to

needing support within the LSU. Another interviewee was the learning support manager in school which, in addition to running the LSU, involved SENCO duties. Whilst the dual role was thought to be advantageous in terms of supporting needy pupils, the SENCO role was thought to suffer at times because of having to spend so much time in the LSU and therefore less time out in the mainstream part of school. Two other LSU managers had wider EiC responsibilities – one had responsibility for managing the school's Learning Mentors, the Gifted and Talented Coordinator, the LSU and the Unit's outreach worker – *'a wide brief'* that, once again, provided a useful overview. The other was also the school's Learning Mentor, two roles that it was believed useful to combine because of the similar and/or overlapping focus. The remaining two LSU managers were responsible for managing their Units, although both also had a small teaching commitment in mainstream classes.

Line management of case-study LSU staff was located within the senior management team of the school and, in most cases, within the pastoral system, e.g. deputy head (pastoral), deputy head i/c support, thus emphasising the status afforded the provision in school as well as its more supportive focus. In two cases, mainstream school staff were timetabled to teach lessons in the LSU, which was believed to strengthen relationships and facilitate the sharing of expertise. Within the Unit, LSU managers were responsible for its operation, for managing staff and the young people attending, organising and supervising work, supporting pupils pastorally, and liaising with school staff, other agencies and parents. At least two members of staff were present in the LSU at all times, facilitating better teacher/pupil ratios, thus in many instances allowing for one-to-one tuition. Most pupils found this more conducive to learning:

> *It's a lot easier, you have one-to-one, so you know exactly what you are doing in your work, you have got more help, and there is someone sitting beside you.* (Year 10 pupil)

Five of the six case-study LSUs had between one and three support staff working in them, several of whom were trained teachers and all of whom had experience of working with young people experiencing difficulties in school. Their duties involved supporting the LSU manager, supporting pupils both with their work and pastorally, liaising with parents, liaising with mainstream school staff, obtaining or planning work for pupils, and administration, e.g. record keeping, filing, etc. In the school where the LSU manager was also head of pupil support, an inclusion support worker took responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day running of the LSU and directing support assistants working within it. In the school that provided outreach support to two 'satellite' schools, the LSU support worker spent three days in the host LSU and

two days out in the other schools (one day in each) as outreach worker. Three other support staff also had additional duties within the mainstream school: teaching; counselling and/or mentoring; and conducting group work with pupils e.g. on social skills or self-esteem. Some LSU staff provided support to pupils in mainstream classes, which was believed to enhance relationships and integration. However, this was sometimes seen as problematic when their support was needed in the LSU: *'You just can't split yourself every way.'* See also the discussion on reintegration in section 3.7.

LSU staff spent the majority of their day, including breaktimes and lunchtimes, in the LSU itself. Whilst acknowledging the necessity for this, LSU staff commented that it meant they had no free time which made the already demanding work more tiring – *'you just don't get a breather'*. As a result, some staff also expressed a sense of isolation from mainstream colleagues. It was suggested that this could be overcome through greater linkage between the two. This is discussed further in section 3.3.

3.3   Ethos

LSU strand coordinators in the case-study partnerships felt that it was very important that the ethos of the LSU was shared by the school. Equally, the success of the LSU was believed to depend very much on the support given, and the status accorded to it, by senior management. There was some frustration articulated by strand coordinators over the fact that the different EiC Strands were seen as so separate by DfES, when schools were supposed to look at *'inter-connectedness'*. Cohesion was thought to be important if the LSU was not to be seen as *'bolted on'*. It was thought that it should be viewed as part of a total package, an *'umbrella of support'*, not seen in isolation, but as an integral part of the other support structures in place within the school (e.g. Special Needs departments and LMs).

Interestingly, given earlier comments about the perceived lack of status of the Strand, case-study LSU managers and school staff alike reported that, despite initial fears, LSUs had not come to be regarded as 'sin bins'. Over time they were developing to become more embedded in the structure of the school, a feature noted as desirable by strand coordinators. Equally, initial prejudice over resources going to support small numbers of *'bad kids'* had disappeared as staff began to see the benefits. Indeed, one case-study head of year referred to their LSU as: *'a little microcosm of what the school stands fo*r'. This trend was also becoming evident in the discourse of the Phase 3 LSU managers, who spoke of the LSU becoming more accepted as time went

on: *'I don't want it to be a bolt on'*; *'It's not an add-on, it's inclusion.'* However, teaching staff in the case-study schools pointed out that views of the LSU's integration into the school structure depended on the amount of contact they had with it. Unless staff had a need for it for someone within their form, their knowledge of its role and function could be limited. In three case-study schools, regular briefing meetings for staff were noted, to advise on which pupils would be attending. However, importantly, in other instances, it was suggested that more information for the school staff as a whole would be beneficial:

> *It would be useful to have a training day on it, or even a session, where staff could discuss it, what happens, the stages the pupils go through when they go there. If that was done, I think it could have a very positive effect on the school.* (Form tutor)

There was still some feeling amongst LSU staff that mainstream staff did not always recognise the arduous nature of the job, because they were teaching much larger groups of children and thus perhaps viewed teaching in the LSU as an *'easier option'*. Interestingly, the mainstream teachers interviewed made a point of acknowledging the valuable skills held by their LSU colleagues, and indeed, felt that they could learn something from them. However, these teachers also referred to there still being a need to change the more entrenched attitudes of some of their colleagues, some of whom saw LSU staff as operating within *'their own little empire'*:

> *I think they can see them as people who work with small groups of pupils and do not have the same skills, and I think that can be a problem.* (Head of department)

In some instances, case-study school staff reported improving relationships with LSU staff as it became more an accepted part of the school, with more staff going into the Unit and, in the two cases already noted, school staff timetabled to take lessons in there. At the same time, LSU staff teaching or supporting in mainstream classes was believed to enhance relationships and integration, as well as creating opportunities to spread good practice throughout the school. However, there was a feeling, especially amongst LSU support staff, that more linkage between LSU and mainstream staff and more encouragement to visit the LSU were called for, as some staff still saw it as *'a no-go area'*. At the same time, one head of year warned that staff had to be careful not to think it was someone else's problem, or view the LSU as a panacea: they had to realise that there was still work to be done on their part. A Phase 3 LSU manager commented that some school staff still saw the LSU as a place to send *'difficult'* children: *'If there's a behaviour difficulty, it's "It's your problem".'*

Several case-study LSU managers felt that the schools were fully committed to the LSU provision, a necessity noted by strand coordinators. As noted in section 3.2, line management of LSU staff rested with senior management in school and was usually located within the pastoral system, thus emphasising both the status of the provision and its more supportive focus. By the same token, in many cases, referral was through the pastoral system so as to ensure that the referral was appropriate. Five of the six case-study schools had given their LSUs different names to underline their inclusive nature e.g. Inclusion Centre; Student Inclusion Unit, Pupil Inclusion Centre, and a similar trend emerged within the Phase 3 LSUs:

> *We've never called it a Learning Support Unit, it's always called the* [Name of Centre]. *We had Year 6 parents coming round to look at school for their children and it's quite hard to explain what happens in an LSU. So I said all of us need forgiveness, some of us three or four times, and that is the nature of this room ... the whole thrust of it is that it is a fresh start and we tell them that.* (LSU manager, Phase 1 case-study school)

> *They call themselves 'Learning Centres'. There's a feeling that they are at the heart of learning, in the centre of the school and it's seen as a privilege to be there. We try to make it very positive.* (LSU strand coordinator, Phase 3)

At the same time, this inclusivity was often reflected in the location of the LSU within school – many were very central, visible locations ('*so to be part of the school, not set apart*') or part of a designated pupil support area, e.g. along '*the support corridor*'. Phase 3 LSU managers also noted the importance of a central location:

> *We are in the main block – everyone can see us – pupils can pop in any time.*

> *I wanted it at the heart of the school, not on the perimeter.*

School staff viewed the atmosphere within the LSUs as relaxed and supportive, but at the same time quiet and hard working. This was supported by the discourses of the young people who commented that the atmosphere in the LSU was quieter than the mainstream classrooms, it was 'peaceful' which made it easier to concentrate: '*There's not people round to distract you, you can just get on with your work*' (Year 9 pupil).

3.4   Referral Procedures

At partnership level, LSU strand coordinators emphasised the need for clear identification and referral procedures within schools.   These also needed to be understood and 'owned' by the mainstream staff who were part of that process. At the same time, strand coordinators acknowledged that the support of senior managers was important, to avoid staff who wanted certain pupils out of their lessons making inappropriate referrals, and thus perhaps emphasising the 'sin bin' focus.

As reported in the previous section, in the majority of the case-study LSUs, referral was through the pastoral system of the school, with, in some cases, pastoral teams meeting to discuss and consider referrals. LSU managers reported that procedures were clear and generally well understood by school staff. When a referral was made and the appropriate form completed, in most cases a contract would be drawn up between the LSU, the parent or carer and the pupil, and an action plan prepared for implementation once the pupil began attending the Unit.   Referral forms differed between schools but generally included such information as:

♦   personal details of the pupil
♦   reason for referral
♦   areas causing concern
♦   strategies already tried
♦   details of referring member of staff.

Given that DfES good practice guidelines were introduced some two years after the case-study LEAs had set up their systems of referral, it is interesting to note that, in line with those guidelines, some case-study referral forms also included details of:

♦   other support received (e.g. SEN)
♦   other agencies involved
♦   parental contact details
♦   any agreed action to be taken.

Figure 3.1 shows three examples of referral forms from the case-study schools which vary both in content and in the amount of information requested from referring members of staff. Bearing in mind the LSUs' acknowledged emphasis on individual need, it is worth noting that, when comparing the examples to the recommended list

provided in the good practice guidelines (DfES, 2002), none include the *'skills and strengths'* of the pupils concerned, or *'information about relationships and attitude'*.

In most schools, pupils were not usually withdrawn from all lessons to attend the LSUs full-time, although some cases of full-time attendance were noted, mainly following an exclusion or long-term absence. The majority of pupils attended during the lessons for subjects in which they were having particular difficulties and were then gradually *'fed back in'* to these lessons. This was believed to be important so as to maintain the link with mainstream. Numbers attending the LSUs at any one time were relatively small (usually varying between two and 12 pupils in both the case-study and the Phase 3 LSUs). However, LSU managers noted that this number did not reflect the total number *'in our client base'*, as many more pupils were receiving some form of input, whether it be support in odd lessons, or as part of a reintegration package or just *'to touch base'* in a morning, or when pupils felt the need.

Figure 3.1   Example A: referral form

Referral

Name _____   **Form** _____

Tutor _____   **Year Head** _____

Criteria for Referral

1) Attendance & Punctuality/ Behavioural Concerns / Attitude to Learning

Background (previous strategies employed)

Incident slips (if any)

Number	Areas of Concern

Pupil on report

FT	HOY	SMT	GOVs

(Please indicate number of times in box provided)

Is the pupil on the Special Needs Register?   Yes / No

What stage? _____

Action being taken? _____

Review date? _____

Does the pupil have a mentor?   Yes / No

Name of Mentor _____

Does the pupil have a PSP?   Yes / No

Key worker _____

Has student been referred to other agencies?

Name	Date	Contact	Outcome
Educational Welfare			
Educational Psychology			
Social Services			
Learning Mentor			

Home / Family

_____

_____

_____

_____

Length of stay in centre:

Full time _____   Part time _____

Date entering _____

Signature of recommending teacher _____

Interview: Parent carer / Student / Centre Staff / HOY or FT

Contract signed _____

Agreed Goals   **Date for review**

1._____ _____

2. _____ _____

3._____ _____

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Example B: referral form

Pupil Referral to LSU

PART 1 : To be completed by HOH\LT

Name :	Form :	Referred By :	Date :

Reason For Referral

Action Taken So Far

PART 2 : To be completed by LSM

Agreed Action	By Whom	Time Scale	Outcome

Source: Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.

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Example C: referral form

L.S.U. Referral

Pupil Name: _____ **Form:** _____

Referral from: _____ **Subject:** _____ **Units:** ____

Reason for referral:

What kinds of behaviour cause most concern?

- ☐ Shouting out
- ☐ Late to lesson
- ☐ No equipment
- ☐ Moving out of seat
- ☐ Other: _____

- ☐ Talking when teacher is talking
- ☐ No work
- ☐ Abusive language
- ☐ Stopping others working

Is there a particular time when the pupil is likely to misbehave?

- ☐ Afternoon lessons
- ☐ Listening tasks
- ☐ Beginning of lesson

- ☐ Group work
- ☐ End of lesson
- ☐ Other

What strategies have been tried to overcome problems:

- ☐ Praise/reward
- ☐ Reprimand
- ☐ Subject report
- ☐ Head of Dept.
- ☐ Contact parents
- ☐ Other staff help

*Other information in support of this referral may be
written on the reverse. Please return to*

Source: Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.

Three 'types' of referral to the LSU were evident: learning support; non-attendance; and behaviour, although one or two instances of providing a *'time out'* facility in crisis situations were quoted.

In terms of those pupils referred for **learning support**, the level of need was said to be varied. Referrals included key stage 4 pupils needing to complete GCSE coursework, and a pupil with Asperger's Syndrome, whilst others struggled with particular subjects or basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Here, extra support and one-to-one tuition enabled them to *'catch up'* with their peers.

The most common referrals were for non-attendance and behaviour. For those referred for **non-attendance**, absences ranged from three to over eighteen months, and two pupils in the sample had been diagnosed as school phobic. Reasons given by the young people included boredom, panic attacks, bullying and a prolonged period in hospital.

Where referral was **behaviour** related, several young people had previously been excluded. Two had been permanently excluded from different schools and had started full-time provision at the LSU on entry to the case-study school. For the rest of this group, attendance at LSUs was often subject-specific, with pupils attending provision for certain classes in which they were deemed to be too disruptive. In some cases, it was playground behaviour which formed the basis of the referral to the LSU.

Within the Phase 3 LSUs, the same three reasons for referral were also the most evident: learning support; non-attendance; and behaviour. In addition, there were examples given of referral procedures being triggered more quickly, for example in cases of bereavement, or where immediate removal from a lesson was required, such as for fighting. In the majority of Phase 3 schools, referral also tended to be through the pastoral system, with at least four instances being noted of designated panels or teams (e.g. a social inclusion panel, a pastoral forum) which met to consider referrals.

Once a referral to the LSU had been made, pupils' learning, social and emotional needs would be assessed in order to make sure that appropriate packages of support were put in place.

3.5 Curriculum and Pedagogy

The majority of LSU staff affirmed that provision was planned according to individual need. Both LSU and school staff referred to the need for the curriculum followed within the LSUs to be closely linked to that of the mainstream school, so that pupils did not fall behind and there was some continuity on their return to mainstream. At the same time, knowing that they were doing the same work as their peers in mainstream was believed to show the pupils involved that they were not working in isolation. In two of the case-study schools, school staff felt that there could be more linkage between the two, although they recognised that this was very much a time issue, both for them and for LSU staff. Within the LSU, there was also an emphasis on basic skills, particularly literacy and numeracy skills, IT work and, in some instances, examples of social skills and anger management work were quoted.

School staff usually provided work for the pupils whilst they were attending the Unit, although, within the case-study schools, the way in which the collection of this was organised appeared to be more structured in some than in others. There were examples of school staff being informed at morning briefing sessions whether any of their pupils would be attending the LSU and were asked to provide the appropriate work, while in another instance, requests for work were placed in staff pigeonholes and then followed up:

> *As soon as we know someone's coming in, we pull their timetable. We have a weekly plan sheet where we write down all the subjects, what they are doing, whether we've got work and what date the request was sent out, so that all staff are well aware of the duty to follow the National Curriculum.* (LSU manager)

In the above example, pupils expressed awareness of the fact that work was sent to the LSU by their teachers for them to do, *'it's very organised'*:

> *We do everything we would do in normal lessons. We have a ring binder and in that is our work that the teachers have sent.* (Year 9 pupil)

> *I needed things for a science investigation and they arranged with a technician to bring them up so I could do the investigation there.* (Year 11 pupil)

However, other interviewees spoke more vaguely of work being requested, with some staff providing it and others not. The suggestion was made by one mainstream teacher that every department should have a member of staff with designated

responsibility for ensuring that work was provided for pupils attending the LSU. Pupils variously spoke of doing *'the work we're supposed to be doing in the lesson'*, *'the lessons you would be doing in class'* and sometimes of bringing work with them:

> *The teacher tells you what work you have to do and then you go in and you tell* [LSU staff] *and then they sit down and talk to you one-to-one and help you with any questions you're getting wrong or don't understand and explain it to you and then you do your work.* (Year 11 pupil)

Notwithstanding this, although interviewees were in agreement that LSU pupils generally covered the same work as their mainstream peers, several pointed out that, as provision was planned according to individual need, a rigid adherence to the same timetable was not always possible. One LSU manager referred to doing the same things but not always *'in exactly the same way'*. It was felt that a more flexible or informal approach to lessons was sometimes needed, especially with more vulnerable pupils:

> *I'm not constrained to say it's nine o'clock, we are doing this subject. We might approach things more informally, but we produce the coursework at the end. I like to try and inspire them.* (LSU manager)

Equally, there was recognition that expectations of school staff, in terms of completing work, might not be as high because of their awareness of the complex problems and/or difficult home lives experienced by many of the pupils concerned.

In light of this, several LSU managers, across all three Phases, referred to making sure they had all the relevant schemes of work and accompanying material so that they could then set work that was appropriately differentiated. At the same time, these managers highlighted the need for continuing consultation with mainstream staff to ensure that the managers were *'going in the right direction'*, using the most up-to-date schemes and meeting the relevant objectives. There was little evidence of disapplication from the National Curriculum in either the case-study or the Phase 3 LSUs, as the majority catered mainly for key stage 3 pupils, although it was recognised as an issue. Some of those interviewed spoke of the need for more varied, *'flexible'* programmes at key stage 4, and one or two examples of key stage 4 courses providing alternative accreditation, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) were noted.

One or two also referred to the use of themes or topics as an effective method of teaching within an LSU, an approach perhaps more reminiscent of that employed in the primary phase:

> *I find although we do maths and English, the integration of a project is a successful way of doing things. For example, we do something like symmetry which is going to fit in with their work on Jason and the Argonauts and the masks we're making.* (LSU manager)

Several LSU staff felt it was difficult to follow a more traditional approach of teaching within an LSU as many of the circumstances were unrealistic, for example, having different age groups, often containing some of the most challenging pupils in school, working together in one room. It was a case of employing the most appropriate approach for the group of young people attending at the time. Most interviewees referred to the opportunity to work in smaller groups and more on a one-to-one basis, something that was difficult to replicate in mainstream classes. LSU staff found they were able to offer a varied diet that was tailored to the individual needs of the pupils. At the same time, a great deal of tolerance and understanding was needed: *'offering them the space to chat and talk about their problems, and do some work as well'* (form tutor). The atmosphere in the LSU was said to be quieter and more informal and pupils themselves reported finding it easier to get on with their work. However, a note of caution was sounded by some school staff who warned that this flexibility and informality could sometimes make reintegration into mainstream classes problematic.

3.5.1   Challenges to teaching within LSUs

When asked about the challenges to teaching within such a context, most LSU staff highlighted the demanding and often stressful nature of the work. Staff were in the centre all day, usually at breaktimes and lunchtimes as well, without getting much of a break themselves. Several LSU staff referred to the challenge of having such a concentration of behavioural and/or emotional problems together at one time. This meant staff had to remain constantly alert and could never relax, which was believed to be *'a strain'* or *'like living on a knife edge'*:

> *You're in a highly charged situation where you have to maintain the peace and calm but you've got an interesting combination of young people in there with all sorts of issues, it's taxing.* (LSU manager)

At any time, the issues or *'baggage'* that the pupils brought with them into the LSU could upset the balance: *'One can destroy the whole thing.'*

Equally challenging was thought to be meeting the diversity of need, in order to ensure that each pupil was working to their potential. LSU staff spoke of the challenge to find new methods of delivery, ensuring that a good bank of resources was available and of having a sufficiently broad subject knowledge-base to be able to support and engage the pupils.

Having to juggle crisis management with proactive work also surfaced as a common difficulty for LSU staff. As mentioned earlier, in some cases, schools had introduced an extra facility in school to deal with crises (e.g. a withdrawal room) in order to allow LSU staff to focus more on proactive work. At the same time, the fear of saying 'No' when mainstream staff asked for help or advice with dealing with behaviour problems in class was raised. Being under pressure themselves often meant that mainstream staff did not always appreciate how much pressure their colleagues in the LSU were under. LSU managers believed that sometimes it was important to realise that it was acceptable to say they were too busy at certain times.

Finally the challenge of always being positive was highlighted, at times this could be a strain, especially in the face of the difficulties experienced by many of the pupils.

3.6   Involvement of Others

3.6.1   Involvement with Learning Mentors (LMs)

Within the Phase 1 and 2 case-study schools, the level of LM involvement varied. In one, the Strands were very closely linked as the LSU manager was also the school's LM. In another, although it did not automatically follow that any pupil attending the LSU would be allocated a LM, there was a *'huge'* overlap of cases because of the nature of the LSU caseload. This school had a team of three LMs, described by the LSU manager as *'fantastic advocates and befrienders for these children'*, who offered valuable support to young people both while attending the LSU (sometimes coming in to work with them) and on their return to mainstream classes. LMs also supervised break and lunchtime clubs where they would be involved with a large number of the LSU's *'most vulnerable cases'*. In another case-study school, a 'two-way' arrangement appeared to be in operation – the LSU would pass on pupils to the LMs on their return to mainstream classes and, in some cases, might support a pupil in the LSU that the LMs were reintegrating into school. At the same time, if a pupil being supported by a LM was attending the LSU, the LM might come in and support them

in there. In both this and the previous example, the LM base was located alongside the LSU which was believed to facilitate closer working relations.

In the remaining three case-study schools, the work of LMs did not appear to be as closely linked to that of the LSU. In one, they would continue to work with pupils on their caseload who were attending the LSU, but never in the LSU itself. In the other two, young people on the LM's caseload might be referred to the LSU, and the LSU might refer young people returning to mainstream classes to the LM for ongoing support, but the two would not work together to support a pupil. The roles were seen as quite distinct: *'There wouldn't be a time when they had both, it could be confusing'* (LSU manager).

Case-study pupils who confirmed that they had a LM assigned to them, also appeared to be cognisant of a difference in roles or focus. Some visited their LM during their time in the LSU, others spoke of the LM coming to say 'Hello' to them, but none referred to the LM working with them in the LSU:

> *Once a week I go to her room, she talks to me, it's helpful.* (Year 7 pupil)

> *If I want to go and talk to her, I can. I know she is always there if I need her.* (Year 9 pupil)

> *If you're having problems, you can go to their room but they don't work with me in here.* (Year 8 pupil)

The majority of the 16 Phase 3 LSU managers, although recognising a degree of overlap of cases, also tended to reference LMs working with their pupils either before attending the LSU, or on returning to mainstream classes: *'I refer those I think won't cope in the hurly burly of mainstream'*. Some spoke of pupils not needing LM support once they were attending the LSU, which was believed to spread EiC resources more evenly and *'frees up the mentor for someone else'*. In five cases, the work of LMs was more closely linked, with LMs coming into the LSUs to support pupils with whom they were working and, in one case, all pupils attending the LSU long term being assigned a LM. Relationships were said to be very good and the support of LMs was considered valuable, especially with reintegration, *'that's made a phenomenal difference'*. Once again, in most of these cases, the proximity of LM and LSU bases appeared to be a contributory factor – interviewees referred to bases being alongside each other with, in one instance, *'a connecting door'* between the two.

3.6.2 Involvement with external agencies

Given the nature of their difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the pupils attending the LSUs benefited from some form of external agency involvement. Two of the case-study LSUs in particular were working with 'vulnerable' young people, with turbulent home lives. LSUs tended to liaise with a wide range of agencies, depending on the needs of the particular pupils attending. These included:

- Education-related agencies, e.g. education welfare services (EWS); educational psychology services (EPS); behaviour support services (BSS)
- Health-related agencies, e.g. child and family psychology services; general practitioners (GPs); family therapists; counsellors, drug awareness teams (DATs)
- Offending-related agencies, e.g. youth offending teams (YOT); police, magistrates
- Career-related agencies, e.g. careers services; Connexions; further education (FE) colleges and other post-16 provision, including the business community
- Other agencies, e.g. social services, youth service, voluntary and community organisations, including local football and rugby clubs.

Multi-agency work was believed to be developing in line with the EiC emphasis on collaborative working and diversity of provision. Links with education-related services, in particular the EWS, were said to be quite strong. LSU managers liaised with Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) over joint cases and made referrals where attendance was an issue. Three of the 16 Phase 3 schools had EWOs attached to or working in the LSUs, thus strengthening the link. Similarly, managers liaised with, or were visited by, the EPS on a regular basis. Connexions appeared to be very much in its infancy in the majority of both case-study and Phase 3 LSUs, although good links were envisaged.

Other agencies were contacted according to need – if a pupil was already involved with an agency then LSU staff would liaise with them. Conversely, if it was felt that an outside agency could offer appropriate support to a pupil, then a referral would be made. In several cases, the benefit of regular multi-agency meetings was stressed, where a wide range of relevant agencies could come together to discuss cases of pupils causing concern and 'brainstorm' ideas for how best to support them.

For LSU staff, working with pupils with more extreme problems had highlighted some additional training needs. For example, it was felt that, increasingly, children were coming into the LSU with serious problems, including mental health issues, with which LSU staff did not feel sufficiently qualified to cope. There was felt to be a need for more links with outside agencies that could offer support, although the length

of waiting lists was felt to be an inhibiting factor. Similarly, resource issues meant that some services were having to reduce the amount of support they were able to provide – the BSS was particularly mentioned in this respect. One LSU manager commented for example, that having a social worker attached to an LSU, or a group of LSUs, would be very beneficial, because of the multiple problems faced by many of the pupils attending.

Notwithstanding this, some LSU managers did report increasing contact with other agencies in an effort to explore any options for additional support for their pupils. Once the problem behind a pupil not coming to school became clear, the knock-on effect was believed to be a sense of responsibility to try and do something about it:

> *In some ways, this job creates a responsibility; you are privileged with insights into people's lives. I almost become fired up with this missionary zeal for these pupils with problems, to shake up other agencies.* (LSU manager)

3.6.3 Involvement with parents/carers

LSU managers were unanimous that involvement with pupils' parents or carers was extremely important, their support being described as *'crucial'* and *'essential'*:

> *Children must know you're all coming from the same place, that you're all working together.* (Case-study LSU manager)

> *It is a stated intention to bring* [parents] *into the loop as much as we can.* (Phase 3 LSU manager)

Parents were usually invited to attend initial meetings with LSU staff as well as regular reviews and often they were kept informed of progress through letters or telephone calls. Several LSU managers referred to having *'an open door'* policy to encourage parents to come in more:

> *I always say 'Feel free, at any time of the day if you want, come on in' – and some of them have taken me up on it.* (Phase 3 LSU manager)

Some also spoke of inviting parents to come in and work alongside their child, although few noted occasions on which this offer had been taken up. Examples were given by two Phase 3 managers of LSU staff making home visits and, in another, of the EWO visiting the home prior to the pupil starting in the LSU, to provide the family with appropriate information.

3.7   Reintegration

LSU staff were unanimous that the timing of reintegration was decided according to the needs of individual pupils, and nothing was *'written in tablets of stone'*. It varied according to the progress they made whilst attending the Unit. Some pupils made good progress in the LSU but problems resurfaced once they were reintegrated into mainstream school:

> *I'm good in there, but in my lessons I am not because I just get into so much trouble with my mates, because they egg me on to do a lot of the stuff.* (Year 9 pupil)

One school senior manager felt that this might be symptomatic of wider school and curriculum issues, and suggested there was a need to consider what was being delivered in the classroom. At the same time, whilst most pupils reported improved standards of work on their return to the classroom, often having covered more of the syllabus in the LSU than in normal classes, one pupil felt that he returned at a disadvantage:

> *You don't know what work you are doing, because you have to like start from the beginning and they are like nearly at the end of it.* (Year 9 pupil)

Once the timing of the reintegration had been decided, this was usually negotiated and discussed with school staff, although on a fairly informal basis. In two cases, more formal staff briefings were reported. Reintegration was usually introduced gradually, *'a brick at a time'*, so that pupils built up to being fully reintegrated into lessons. Mainstream staff would be informed if a pupil was coming back into their lesson, although the amount of information provided on reintegrating pupils varied within the case-study schools from verbal comments in the staffroom to more formal, written communications, such as pupil profiles placed in staff pigeonholes, or pro formas sent to staff (an example of a more formal communication is given in Figure 3.2 overleaf).

Figure 3.2   Case-study example of information provided to mainstream school staff on pupils reintegrating from the LSU

REINTEGRATION INFORMATION

STUDENT'S NAME: Kelly   **YEAR: 8**

NATURE OF DIFFICULTIES
Although Kelly's literacy skills are weak, she enjoys reading and willingly reads aloud. She is, however, reluctant to complete written tasks independently. Once a bank of keywords have been given, she must be encouraged to try and write down some of her ideas first before engaging in adult intervention – all too often she asks for help before even attempting the task.

She does not willingly take part in class discussions but is keen to converse in a one-to-one with an adult. Her relationships with her peers are often strained and she does have problems conversing with, and in relating with, her peer group. She responds well to praise and is keen to please.

PROGRAMME OF STUDY
The programme has centred around helping her to improve her basic skills in reading, writing and number. She has made good use of Successmaker programmes in reading, writing, spelling and number, gaining confidence in using IT skills as well as improving her ability to read instructions and act upon them. Orally she has been encouraged to retell stories in a logical sequence trying to remediate the confused rambling tale that has first been related.

She has been encouraged to be pleasant with other pupils, to try to help them when possible and to share resources within the communal group.

TARGETS
1.   To attend homework clubs and complete homework.
2.   To try to complete written tasks.

Source: *Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.*

LSU staff would then monitor pupils' progress during reintegration. In three cases, it was noted that this was done on an informal basis, while in the other three, report cards or monitoring forms provided by LSU staff were noted (see section 3.8 for more on monitoring procedures). LSU staff felt that that, at times, the attitude of some mainstream staff could inhibit the success of reintegration programmes:

> *Sometimes teachers are quite willing and others are not as positive, because obviously they have had problems with them in the past. If they have found that the group has been better without the child you can understand how it might be hard for them to say straight away 'Oh yes' and welcome them.* (LSU support assistant)

At partnership level, LSU strand coordinators also identified the attitude of mainstream teachers and their support for the strategies to be employed as being crucial for the success of reintegration. A Phase 3 LSU manager noted that mainstream staff were encouraged to welcome pupils positively. As noted in the Introduction to this report, quantitative findings from the overall evaluation suggest

that less experienced teachers were not as likely to view access to LSU provision as favourably as their more experienced colleagues.

For many pupils, reintegration was an accepted part of their time at the provision. They entered the LSU on the understanding that it was to address a specific area and would be on a short-term basis. Time spent in the LSU was often termly, or half-termly, so pupils were aware that they would be returning to 'normal' school after a holiday. It was recognised that some pupils might find the security of the LSU too appealing and not want to go back into mainstream lessons, although this was felt to be a short-term effect:

> *Some* [pupils] *do feel very safe, warm and happy here and they don't want to go back – but I think most pupils eventually want to be with their peer group and so it might only be for a short period of time, but I still think they crave their peer group, so I don't think there's anybody who would like to be in here full time, through the school.* (LSU manager)

For the majority of pupils, especially those who had been attending the LSU full-time, reintegration was often a phased process, with pupils describing a 'week-by-week' approach:

> *We just done one lesson more each week, so this week I started IT, last week I started RE, so like that.* (Year 9 pupil)

In most cases, continued support from LSU staff was provided for reintegrating pupils. The amount offered varied according to individual circumstance, ranging from escorting the young person to and from class, to sitting next to them during lessons in an advisory capacity:

> *They just sit beside me and if I am stuck with any work they would just show me what to do and help me and explain it more if I don't understand.* (Year 10 pupil)

Other staff offered social support, especially for those who had been bullied:

> *If you were nervous or anything, the teacher comes with you and sits with you in the lesson, and if you didn't want anybody to talk to you, they would just say 'Please don't talk to her' or they were just there to kind of hold your hand.* (Year 9 pupil)

Several of those who had received the latter type of assistance stated that it was useful initially, but not needed after a couple of lessons, as they thought it drew unnecessary attention.

Providing support in mainstream lessons was viewed as problematic by LSU staff because of pressures on their time, e.g. hands-on work within the LSU itself. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, some LSU Managers also had a small mainstream teaching role. This was thought to be a useful way of maintaining contact with mainstream, although difficult in terms of time allocation. Some Phase 3 LSU managers, although noting the benefits of providing support on reintegration, stressed that this was viewed as part of a *'settling-in process'* and, as such, was a short-term measure.

For a minority of youngsters, particularly those who had been deemed school phobic, reintegration was very much on their terms. They were allowed to choose which subjects they went back to first, often accompanied by a member of staff from the LSU. They were also made aware that should they find it too difficult to cope, the option was always there that they could come back to the Unit. A young person who had been placed in the LSU because of bullying-related attendance issues, suffered some name calling when he went back to one of his subjects, and therefore opted to change the class he attended.

However, two mainstream teachers flagged up the danger of letting pupils *'set the agenda'* too much. Negotiating which lessons they would attend was good for the pupil, but could be very demoralising for staff whose lessons they chose not to attend, especially if staff had not recognised there was a problem either with themselves, or with the lesson. In one Phase 3 school, the LSU manager reported that they had stopped reintegration for some pupils because they had been refusing to go back into certain mainstream lessons:

> *We've tried dropping one or two back in and failed so I've brought them back – the ones from English who started in September are still (in March) being taught here.*

This was now felt to have implications for the LSU's ability to cater for any additional pupils: *'We're looking for gaps'* (Phase 3 LSU manager).

The need for more communication with school staff on reintegration, and particularly strategies for dealing with pupils coming back into lessons, was noted, although the time constraints affecting this were recognised:

> *It's a time thing again as well. I don't know where you'd find the time to sit and really negotiate with members of staff about how to reintegrate each pupil.* (Head of department)

3.8   Monitoring Procedures

Within the case-study and the Phase 3 partnerships, monitoring took place at three different levels:

- partnership level
- school/LSU level
- individual pupil level.

At **partnership level**, the monitoring of LSU provision included reports to the partnership by strand coordinators or, in some instances, behaviour support teams, following visits made to each school. Reports would then demonstrate the development of the provision and progress made towards meeting targets. There were also instances noted, especially within the case-study partnerships, of the use of external evaluators to conduct reviews of the provision. One of the case-study partnerships had developed a central electronic database for collecting information on the overall EiC initiative, which included the LSU Strand. Progress could then be reviewed against EiC targets using partnership-wide data. Several references were made to the use of a DfES audit instrument to collect data from schools. The importance of involving LSU managers in discussions about monitoring and evaluation was stressed.

Overall **school/LSU-level** monitoring involved the collection of a variety of different forms of data, including:

- number of pupils being supported by the LSU
- number of days/sessions spent by pupils in the LSU
- reasons for referral
- attendance data
- behaviour in the LSU and in the wider school

- exclusion figures

- attainment/achievement (including completion of coursework and examination attendance)

- levels of reintegration into mainstream classes

- changes in attitude/motivation levels

- case studies of pupils

- mainstream school staff feedback.

LSU strand coordinators stressed the need to ensure that models of data collection were appropriate for the schools involved – that they would provide the necessary data for evaluation, whilst demonstrating an awareness of the nature of the work that went on within LSUs and the implications that might have for staff time:

> [It depends] *on the schools' access to information – whether they have a behaviour database, whether there is somebody that can simply fill in all the attendance figures for them, or whether an LSU manager has got to trawl through all the books and find it. I mean, in theory it shouldn't be difficult but, if the systems are not in place, it can be.* (LSU strand coordinator)

There were two examples within the Phase 3 schools of whole-school electronic systems for incident tracking and one of a dedicated LSU teacher responsible for the collection of statistics. Several LSU managers referred to preparing regular internal reports for governors, senior management or pastoral teams and the relaying of termly LSU data to the partnership. Some also referenced their contribution to annual strand reports for the partnership.

At **individual pupil level**, LSU staff maintained comprehensive files for each pupil attending the LSU. These included information on admission such as: reasons for referral; home circumstances; attendance; educational ability; behaviour; exclusions; copies of any Pastoral Support Plan (PSP); and any multi-agency input. Pupils' progress whilst attending the LSU was then monitored carefully on a daily, lesson-by-lesson basis against their individual targets. This monitoring included both their progress within the LSU and the wider context of mainstream lessons (see Figure 3.3): *'We monitor before, during and after their time with us'* (LSU manager). In this way, it was felt that the support of the LSU was not perceived as an isolated influence, or as a short-term crisis response, but as an integral part of the overall school approach to supporting pupils experiencing difficulty.

Figure 3.3   Extract from the daily monitoring sheet of a pupil attending a case-study LSU

Daniel	
05/06/01	Excellent in LSU all day.
06/06/01	Letter sent home to mother – Daniel had an excellent day.
07/06/01	An excellent day except for some silliness period 3 in Maths with MT, although he worked well.
08/06/01	An excellent day.
11/06/01	A very good day except for period 2 when he didn't want to do the work set. He was very uncooperative and screwed the paper up.
12/06/01	An excellent day.
13/06/01	Absent – no message. Telephoned and spoke to Daniel who had a dental appointment.
14/06/01	A very good day.
15/06/01	Another excellent day. Daniel's mother attended a review meeting period 1 with [LSU manager] – see review sheet.
18/06/01	An excellent morning. Daniel got into lots of bickering with [another pupil] and had to be spoken to several times. Even when he thought I wasn't listening he made constant asides. Good period 5.
19/06/01	An excellent day.

Source: Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.

As noted in the previous section on reintegration, in some cases mainstream school staff provided informal feedback on LSU pupils attending their lessons, while in other instances, they were asked to complete more formal monitoring forms or report cards. Examples of pupils self reviewing were quoted in several cases. LSU staff made reference to pupils completing diaries and evaluation sheets, as well as taking part in informal end-of-day reviews with more formal reviews taking place on a regular, often weekly, basis (see Figure 3.4). Parents were involved in pupil reviews in many cases, and reports on their children's progress were sent home regularly.

Figure 3.4   Example of weekly review sheet

<u>Weekly Pupil Progress Review</u>

Name: _____   Date: _____

Review No: _____

Review of last week's progress:

Mainstream lessons attended:_____ L.S.U lessons:_____Lessons off site:_____
Truanted lessons:_____Successful m/s lessons:_____Successful L.S.U lessons:_____
In-class support:_____Incident slips:_____Detentions:_____Internal exclusions:_____
Fixed term exclusions:_____Authorised absence:_____Unauthorised absence:_____
Target 1 met: Target 2 met:

Mini targets for next week:

Action to be taken:

Completed by: _____

Source: *Documentation provided by case-study LSUs, NFER LSU strand study, 2001–2002.*

3.9   Outreach Support

One of the case-study LSUs offered outreach support to two other secondary schools in the LEA. There had been a common agreement that the LSU would be based in that school with the other two 'satellite' schools having the benefit of the outreach worker who visited each of them for one day a week.

In one of the schools, the outreach worker was mentoring sixth formers with the aim of raising achievement. In the other school they were working with key stage 3 pupils and responding to their individual needs – for some the work would be curriculum based, for others it would focus on raising self-esteem and offering emotional support. In both schools, referral was through the pastoral system. Space was at a premium in both schools and so the outreach worker did not have their own base in school, but had access to a room in which to work. Gaining familiarity with school staff and school systems and expectations was felt to be more difficult to achieve with such a short time in each school.

School staff at the two schools receiving outreach support were positive about the provision. It was believed to complement and extend the work already going on in school, representing *'another avenue of support'* for those pupils having difficulty accessing the curriculum. Pupils were also said to view the support positively, and some success stories were surfacing of pupils taking a more positive role in their learning. The fact that the outreach worker was a qualified teacher was believed to be particularly valuable, providing them with *'a kudos'* in the receiving school:

> *So she had the status of being seen as a good teacher first, so that rather than it being bolt on, she's seen as a kind of integral part of the staff, even though it's only one day a week. And I think that gives it more status with the students and with the other staff.* (Outreach school staff)

However, the need for some initial guidance on the role of an outreach worker was noted by staff in the schools receiving support:

> *There was no formal introduction or talking about what exactly the role was supposed to be. There was no 'This is what the outreach worker should be doing'. This is why it has been quite difficult to follow the guidelines on what an outreach worker should be doing because nobody really knew. It would have been better to have had a meeting to explain to the heads exactly what that Strand of the initiative was supposed to achieve.* (Outreach school staff)

At the same time, although the idea of pupils from the two outreach schools attending the LSU in the host school had not being ruled out, staff from those schools believed there were inherent difficulties. Differences in ethos, structure and expectations were noted, as well as difficulties for the pupils in actually getting there. Notwithstanding these concerns, it was felt that more linkage, and thus better relationships between schools, would be beneficial, *'anything that breaks down the barriers between schools'*.

Staff at the two schools both expressed a desire for more outreach time, or, providing the appropriate funding was available, an LSU of their own. Interestingly, whether the outreach support was fully meeting the needs of the satellite schools was raised as a concern by the strand coordinator. A debate about the possibility of securing supplementary funds from the LEA to support the development of two more LSUs within the authority was proposed.

4.   IMPACT OF LSU PROVISION ON PUPILS

This section of the report investigates the impact of an LSU on pupils, placing emphasis on the stories and views of the young people themselves who were utilising such support. The destination of pupils after LSU support is also covered, followed by an overview of perceived factors which facilitate positive outcomes and reasons for lack of impact.

Interviews were conducted with 49 pupils: all of whom had entered the case-study LSUs for three main reasons: attendance issues, behaviour issues and support with learning. About half of the sample exhibited more than one of these problems, as Diagram 4.1 below illustrates. It shows the numbers of case-study pupils within and across the three types of problem.

Diagram 4.1   Pupil numbers and reasons for accessing LSU support
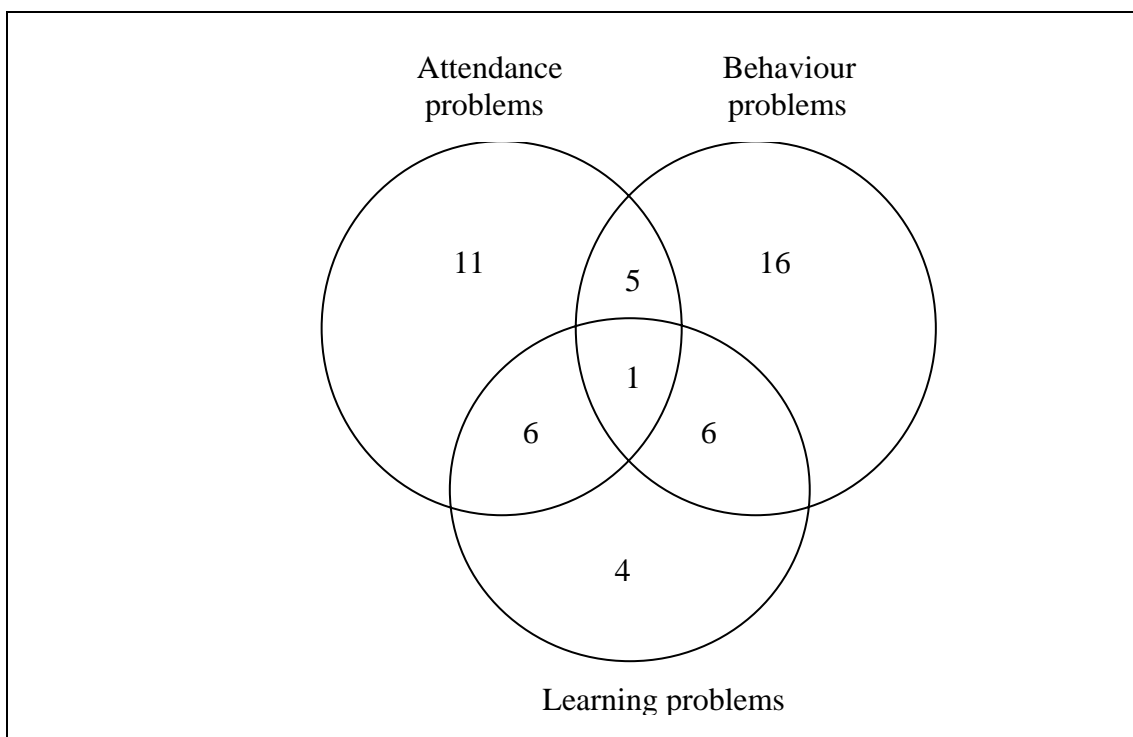
It emerged in the interviews that the pupils requiring LSU support had a number of significant factors in their histories.   These circumstances included one or a combination of the following:

♦ negative attitudes towards school (9)

- family difficulties, e.g. family breakdown, bereavement, pupils with a parent in prison (7)

- behavioural difficulties, including Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (4)

- the subject of child protection cases or suspected child protection cases (3)

- families who did not value school or who condoned absences (3)

- families as a whole who were subject to bullying (2)

- exclusion from another school (2)

- SEN or learning difficulties, e.g. Asperger's Syndrome (2)

- English as their second language (1).

Overall, LSU staff reported significant progress with about three-quarters of the case-study pupils. Examples of typical comments made by staff regarding pupils were: *'a real success story'*, *'he's doing very well'*. *'He's accessing mainstream, he goes into all his lessons now'* and *'I do think we have made a very big, tangible difference.'* Specific improvements noted by LSU staff and pupils covered:

- attendance

- behaviour

- attainment and attitudes to learning

- psychological well-being

- relationships.

Many pupils experienced multiple impacts, for example, improved behaviour and attendance. Impacts might also have been evident in an area which was not a pupil's main presenting need: for example, pupils accessing LSU support for behavioural reasons whose attendance also improved.

4.1   Impact on Pupils' Attendance

Attendance was described as a problem for a total of 23 of the 49 case-study pupils. Of these, attendance was the sole issue for 11 pupils, while it added to issues relating to behaviour (five pupils), academic achievement (six pupils) or both (one pupil).

Interviewees highlighted that attendance problems were often underpinned by other factors including:

- **bullying-related** incidents

- **school phobia** and **school refusal**
- **health-related** issues
- **family-related** issues.

Of the 11 pupils who had accessed LSU support for attendance problems alone, significant progress was made with nine. It was reported that pupils sat and passed examinations and developed positive relationships with their peers, and that their psychological well-being had improved. No impact had been made with two pupils: one was a suspected child protection issue while the other came from a family with a history of non attendance. Thus, the significance of family factors affecting positive outcomes in both instances was notable.

4.1.1 Bullying-related absences

Bullying-related absences had led to four case-study pupils attending a LSU. In all four of these cases, significant progress had been made. Two pupils had been fully reintegrated and their attendance had improved considerably. For example, one Year 9 pupil's attendance was raised from 21 to 90 per cent. His comment on the impact of the LSU was, *'It helped me a lot to come to school and it helped me to stop truanting and it's helped me with my work and it's really good.'* This had been achieved by the LSU allowing him to leave early in order to avoid bullies, and by staff disciplining the perpetrators of the bullying. Eventually, the bullying had stopped which allowed the pupil to concentrate on his work. The LSU support staff were also positive about the impact, one commenting, *'I am convinced he will do well.'* Another successfully reintegrated Year 8 pupil with bullying-related attendance problems recognised the impact of the LSU upon her attendance, *'It's helped my attendance now that people are being okay.'* She said that the centre had helped her attendance because staff had visited her at home and gradually integrated her into the LSU and then the school. She reported that support from the LSU had enabled her to make friends and increased her confidence.

A Year 11 pupil also stated that she was frequently absent from school due to the bullying she had endured: *'It was getting to be a really big problem, it was making me ill, I hated coming to school, I would dread it.'* She felt that the LSU had been helpful since it had enabled her to concentrate on her work: *'I would get along better up there and get my work done and wouldn't be distracted by bullying.'* Staff were impressed with the progress she had made, as she had an improved approach to her work, raised confidence and improved peer relations. The pupil herself recognised the impact of the LSU as enabling her to catch up with her coursework. Consequently, she had

gone on to achieve good GCSE results. She went on to college to study her A levels and had aspirations to become a teacher.

A Year 7 pupil who had been absent from school due to bullying had moved out of the school area due to the bullying his family as a whole had endured. However, staff has been impressed with the progress he had made until that point: *'He was succeeding, his attendance was improving, confidence improving, he was going into more lessons, difficulties were home based'* (LSU manager). The pupil himself reported feeling more confident, happier and settled. Nevertheless, in this instance, family factors again emerged as affecting final outcomes.

4.1.2 School phobia/refusal

Four pupils had been identified by LSU managers as *'school phobics'* or *'school refusers'* (three pupils and one pupil respectively). Their attendance had improved as a result of the support received in the LSU. For example, a Year 10 pupil had raised his attendance from 0 to 70 per cent after being supported for two years. Although he had not been reintegrated into mainstream classes, the fact that he was attending the LSU was considered a success. He acknowledged the impact the LSU had on him, as it had allowed him to catch up on work that he had missed and to make friends. Another Year 10 pupil, diagnosed as a school phobic, was absent from school for 18 months and had panic attacks. She reported that her attendance had improved. The LSU manager commented:

> *She is going to complete this year and go off with GCSEs, which is quite something when for 18 months she wasn't in school.*

The support had enabled pupils to move forward, as one LSU manager said of the Year 11 pupil diagnosed as a school refuser, *'I congratulated her not because she passed but because she's actually changed her life'* (LSU manager). She had passed her GCSEs, surpassing the expectations of her teachers, had gone on to employment, and then undertook an evening course.

4.1.3 Health-related absences

Ill-health had led to lengthy absences for three pupils in the sample. LSUs had supported these pupils and had enabled them to catch up on the work they had missed. One pupil with a broken foot had been unable to get to lessons that were far apart, whereas the LSU avoided the need to move around school. Two other pupils had been absent due to substantial periods in hospital and were accessing LSUs to help

them on their return to school. LSU provision was seen as helpful by all three of these pupils.

4.1.4   Family-related absences

Family problems were said to directly affect the attendance of two pupils. Exceptionally difficult family circumstances, condoned non-attendance and generally negative attitudes towards school demonstrated by all the family were noted in these instances. An example of such difficulties was a Year 11 pupil who went to live with her sister to help take care of her sister's baby. LSU staff visited her at home to help her complete her GCSE coursework. The support of the LSU had contributed to her sitting and passing some of her examinations. As the LSU manager said, *'She won't be a total failure because as a person she has overcome her difficulties and she is well adjusted'*.

Impact on attendance: Cameo 1

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Attendance problems: bullying-related**
Duration of support:	**Four weeks part-time and then gradually reintegrated**
Outcome:	**Fully reintegrated**

Rachel (a Year 8 pupil) was being bullied, and this was adversely affecting her attendance. It also had psychological impacts, and in particular she had lost a lot of confidence. When she was first interviewed, her attendance of school had been intermittent, and she had had a full fortnight in the Unit. Staff described her as having low confidence and as *'isolated'*. Rachel felt that the Unit was helpful and commented that it had aided her attendance, *'It's helped me go back in.'* It had helped her to cope with the bullying she had been subjected to and she said of the Unit, *'It helps them* [pupils]*. It just helps them be more confident in lessons, that's what it's done for me.'* She had liked the fact that there were pupils from other years in the LSU and that it was quieter in the centre.

Rachel commented that, overall, she had found reintegration fairly easy, although it had been difficult at first and she felt awkward going into some of the lessons that the girls who had been bullying her were in. Once back in class though, she mentioned that it was different to before attending the Unit because of the confidence she gained while she was there and because she was feeling better about herself, though she was not sure exactly why her confidence had increased. The last time she was interviewed, she was fully reintegrated and felt that this had been down to her, *'I decided because things were getting better.'* She was very confident about the future.

When the LSU staff discussed her progress, they said that although she was apprehensive about certain classes, she was attending them. She was reported to be succeeding in mainstream.

Impact on attendance: Cameo 2

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Attendance problems: family-related**
Duration of support:	**Full time for two weeks in the centre, then gradually reintegrated into mainstream classes**
Outcome:	**Mostly reintegrated**

Jake was a Year 7 pupil whose school attendance was described by LSU staff as *'intermittent'*. Prior to LSU support, Jake had been absent from school for six weeks. Staff reported that such absences were condoned by his mother. Staff described Jake's mother as *'over-protective'*, as he had been ill and she had allowed him to remain absent from school for longer than he needed. Eventually he became school phobic and his mother could no longer get him to attend school.

A reintegration programme was devised for Jake, which included his form tutor and form friends coming to the visiting him at the centre to re-establish contact. Jake commented that his attendance improved because he was able to gradually build up his confidence of coming to school. For example, he started staying until lunchtime and slowly progressed to staying until three o'clock.

Jake was described by staff as *'a great success story. He has a history of being kept off school'* (LSU manager). Jake commented that not only had his attendance improved, he had also made friends and his work had improved as a result of being in the Unit. He commented, *'there's assistants who can help. I think it has helped. You get your work done'*.

4.2 Impact on Pupils' Behaviour

Behavioural issues had led to 28 of the sample of 49 pupils accessing LSU support. Of these, 16 (about a third) had been referred for LSU support solely for behaviour reasons. As Diagram 4.1 showed, five pupils with behavioural issues also had problems with attendance, six had additional learning issues and one was described as having behaviour, attendance and learning problems. Of the 16 pupils using LSU support solely to address behavioural issues, 15 were boys.

The impacts on behaviour reported by LSU managers and the pupils in the sample were often described in general terms. Typical comments were: *'He's fine'* or *'He has done brilliantly.'* Similarly, pupils often spoke only generally about the fact that they were behaving better, *'[the LSU has]* helped me with my behaviour'*. When more specific examples of improvements in behaviour were volunteered, these referred to:

♦ a reduction in exclusions

♦ fewer behavioural incidents, e.g. less violent behaviour, not getting into fights as frequently, fewer detentions

♦ increased cooperation.

4.2.1 Reduction in exclusions

One measure of behavioural improvement referred to by strand coordinators, LSU managers, and school staff across all three Phases was the reduction in exclusions. Eleven interviewees identified a general reduction in exclusions, one of whom cited a *'70 per cent drop in exclusions'*. Managers in two LSUs mentioned that there had been fewer permanent exclusions and fewer fixed-term exclusions from school. In three partnerships, it was reported that there had been no exclusions at all. A typical comment from LSU staff about the success in averting exclusion for individual pupils was: *'He is doing absolutely brilliantly. We are over the moon with him because he was so close to being permanently excluded.'*

There were also qualified examples of success, even though the final outcome was less than hoped or anticipated. One strand coordinator recalled a pupil who had been supported by the LSU being eventually excluded: *'If you look at the individual you think "well, that young man was kept in learning for another six months longer than he would have been".'* Clearly, this type of impact was less clear cut, as the pupil would still have featured in the school's exclusion figures. Nevertheless, LSU managers still felt that these were evidence of positive impacts. As one manager commented:

> [He] *is not what I would call a success but I have to say there is success in that he is still here... I think he would be a lot worse now if it hadn't been for the Unit.*

4.2.2 Fewer behavioural incidents

Some LSU managers and pupils reported impact in terms of fewer behavioural incidents or detentions. For example, according to one LSU manager, a pupil's behaviour was: *'excellent, excellent. Big change. We've hardly had incident slips at all.'* This pupil also confirmed that he was *'good'* compared with before accessing LSU support, *'I used to be naughty all the time. I used to swear and stuff at teachers.'* A Year 8 pupil commented *'[I] haven't had no detentions in this year'*, while the LSU manager reported his full and successful reintegration.

Behavioural changes also related to pupils controlling their anger better and making fewer outbursts. A Year 8 pupil stated *'I've gone perfect now. Not naughty. Not shouting.'* Typical LSU staff comments were *'staff have seen a marked improvement and he is keeping his temper more'*.

4.2.3 Increased cooperation

Ten of the case-study pupils described how their behaviour had improved in terms of better application to their work. As a Year 9 pupil stated, *'I just come to my lessons and thought "There's no point messing around, I won't even say a word".'* Another pupil in Year 7 commented, *'I used to be silly and talk when I should be working, but now I am better.'* Views such as these were echoed by one LSU manager:

> [He] *sat on his own and was brilliant. He knew exactly what he was doing because he was interested, whereas last year that would have been a major problem because he couldn't have sat still.*

Increased cooperation was also referred to by some of the pupils interviewed. For example, one Year 7 pupil reported: *'When I get asked to do something, I do it. If I'm in geography and I get asked to do work, I do it, because there's no point in getting sent home.'*

Impact on behaviour: Cameo 1

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Behaviour problems**
Duration of support:	**18 months for certain subjects**
Outcome:	**Fully reintegrated**

Ben had been referred to the LSU at his school because of problems with his behaviour. He was fighting with other pupils and found it difficult to control his temper. He had been exposed to a myriad of problems at home, and was taking the drug Ritalin. He attended the LSU for a little over a year. Following this, he was gradually reintegrated into his lessons. Staff commented, *'He has done remarkably well, in particular with controlling his behaviour'.* Ben himself said that his behaviour had improved because he had stopped getting into fights and added, *'If I hadn't gone up here* [to the LSU]*, I would have just got badder. I would have got permanently excluded.'*

Impact on behaviour: Cameo 2

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Behaviour problems**
Duration of support:	**Two lessons a day for four months**
Outcome:	**Fully reintegrated**

Michael had been referred to the LSU for behavioural problems. He had previously been excluded for an incident in which he hit a teacher and for fighting with other pupils. LSU staff commented upon his progress, saying *'He is doing awfully well, he is learning to control his temper which has made a huge difference to him.'* They had been particularly pleased with Michael's progress as he was very nearly permanently excluded. Michael himself remarked on the changes at school, describing his behaviour as *'good'* and said that he applied himself to his work now. The changes on his behaviour had also made a difference to his home life, *'I always used to step out at home and that. I used to smash the house up and punch the doors. I haven't done that for ages.'* He added, *'Me and mum get on better.'* LSU staff commented that he was fully reintegrated and that he no longer required LSU support.

4.3 Impact on Pupils' Learning

Seventeen pupils were accessing LSUs for support with their learning. Of these, academic support was the only type of support required by four pupils. However, as Diagram 4.1 showed, six also required support with behaviour, a further six had problems with attendance and there was one pupil requiring support for all three problems. Support was said to be required because pupils had learning difficulties, they needed to catch up with work having fallen behind, because family circumstances were detrimental to their work, or English was their second language. Impact was described in two main ways, in terms of:

- attainment
- attitudes to learning.

4.3.1 Attainment

Strand coordinators, LSU managers and class teachers reported impact on attainment in terms of increased capability of pupils to cope with their work; increased access to the curriculum; and improved academic achievement. Academic improvements were reported by both LSU staff and the pupils themselves including: general improvements in work and learning; higher standards of maths, reading and writing; progress with coursework; and advancing ICT skills. Some pupils were able to link the LSU directly to this academic success:

> *Well I got a Level 5 in my SATs so that was good, because they also did help me with my revising of Romeo and Juliet when I was doing it, so I suppose they got me Level 5 in that.* (Year 11 pupil)

Indeed, positive advancements were noted in the vast majority of cases. One boy who had an SEN statement had his learning supported by access to ICT resources in the LSU and had gone on to achieve four GCSEs at grade C. He subsequently undertook a college course in ICT. Staff also commented on the fact that pupils actually taking GCSEs was an improvement in itself, whatever the results. An LSU manager said of one Year 11 pupil:

> *She was a little disappointed when she came on results day because she thought she might have done a bit better, which is good. She was quite proud of the work she had produced but there was so much she had missed, the grounding. So it was pleasing that she got what she did.*

In contrast, LSU provision had reportedly had no impact on the academic attainment of one pupil, although in this instance there were also problems with behaviour and attendance. The pupil was described as disaffected. She had missed a significant amount of school and, although a Year 11 pupil, she had only actually been in school for two years and was attending the LSU to catch up with the work she had missed. In addition, staff felt that she received relatively little support from the family. The pupil refused to be reintegrated into mainstream lessons and would only attend the LSU. While attending the LSU, she progressed well but she received a fixed-term exclusion for an incident with the deputy head and never returned. This outcome may suggest that tensions remain between acceptable mainstream behaviour and the specialised support received within an LSU: reintegration and return to mainstream are not always achievable.

4.3.2   Attitudes to learning

All types of interviewee reported that pupils' attitudes to school and learning had improved as a result of LSU support. Nearly a third of pupils in the study mentioned such impacts, in terms of:

- increasing motivation
- improved concentration levels
- feeling better about coming to school.

Five pupils had reported that their motivation to their work had increased since they had begun to attend an LSU. A Year 7 pupil commented that he had not been excluded for two months and said this was because *'I've been in* [the LSU]. *It's weird. I just like the lessons now.'* Some pupils attributed increased motivation directly to the encouragement of LSU staff. One Year 11 pupil said:

> *I am much more motivated now because I sort of know how important it is really, and I have been helped by going there. They have put their faith in me and I have promised them.*

A Year 8 pupil also identified that the change in his attitude was due to the confidence that the LSU staff had given him: *'In Year 7 I thought I were not going to do very well and it took a lot of convincing to realise I would.'* Staff also commented upon the increased motivation of pupils. For instance, one LSU manager said of a Year 8 pupil, *'She's prepared to have a go. She wouldn't even start tackling any written work until you did it for her.'*

Seven pupils said their concentration levels had improved. A Year 9 pupil reported that in the LSU he had *'learned to listen'* and another pupil commented that *'when I go into my lessons, I'm quieter, they made me quieter in* [the LSU]. *I got me head down and did my work.'*

Three pupils also reported that the LSU support they had received had led to them generally feeling better about coming to school. A Year 10 pupil commented, *'I found it better coming to school being in the LSU.'* One manager reported on the progress of a school refuser, *'I see her round school and she's cheerful. And that cheerfulness and the positiveness are the most important.'*

However, LSU support did not always make an impression on pupils' attitudes to learning. A Year 10 pupil with attendance issues said that she did not like school at all and added, *'school is just boring'*. One LSU manager commented on a Year 9 pupil, *'he has a real attitude. He's too full of himself.* [He has] *all of a sudden has decided we haven't taught him anything.'*

Impact on learning: Cameo 1

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Support with learning (English)**
Duration of support:	**Breaktimes and English lessons during the school year**
Outcome:	**College**

Julia was a 16-year-old girl who attended the Unit because English was her second language and this caused difficulties for her in English classes. Staff described her as hard working and dedicated. They reported that her confidence had dramatically increased as a result of attending the centre. Julia herself stated that attending the LSU had *'helped me with my work and with my writing'*. She reported feeling better about school and more confident, and thought she would do well in her GCSEs. Despite her age, staff kept Julia in Year 10, which she was not altogether happy about. Staff reported that she eventually moved on to college and felt that because she was with her own age group, she was happier. They noted this was *'the best place for her now her language skills are better'*.

Impact on learning: Cameo 2

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Support with learning (Asperger's Syndrome)**
Duration of support:	**One year for two subjects**
Outcome:	**Mostly reintegrated**

Paul had Asperger's Syndrome and attended the LSU for PE and French as he found it difficult to cope in those lessons. LSU staff said that he had social interaction and integration difficulties and that they had given him a substantial degree of support. He said that LSU support had an impact on his learning, *'I used to be silly and talk when I should be working but now I am better'* and that he understood more of his work because of what he had learned in the LSU.

Staff remarked on his progress, despite the fact that it has been quite slow, *'He's doing very well. He's accessing mainstream, he goes into all his lessons now, apart from PE. He's doing extremely well. Staff are very good with him. Obviously he has issues relating to his Asperger's. I really think the reintegration was crucial to him. It's a definite success'* (LSU manager).

4.4 Impact on Psychological Well-Being

It was reported by staff that LSU support had promoted improvements in the psychological well-being of 16 of the pupils. Enhanced confidence was also mentioned by 13 pupils. According to these pupils, increases in confidence were partly due to LSU staff: *'I think they are a big help to you. They give you confidence and they are really understanding'* (Year 9 pupil).

Six pupils said that they were happier since attending the Unit: However, though pupils reported being happier in the centre, they were not always as positive about mainstream classes: *'I am a lot happier here than in normal lessons.'* Pupils also reported that they generally felt better about themselves, as a Year 9 pupil stated, *'I am proud of myself for sitting my exams.'*

LSU managers also suggested that this type of psychological impact was particularly important. One commented: *'The most important thing for the child is to feel emotionally stable and calm and able to get something out of school.'* The LSUs' overall ambience is thus clearly linked to this type of outcome.

Impact on psychological well-being: Cameo

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Support with learning**
Duration of support:	**Two years for one subject**
Outcome:	**College**

Mark, a Year 11 pupil, required support with his learning. He said that this support had led to a definite improvement in his work, most notably with his coursework. He added that he enjoyed learning and that his attitude to school had improved. Mark also reported that he felt happier in himself and said that he was more confident. He attributed his increased confidence to the fact that he had made friends and to his teachers: *'The teachers gave me confidence.'*

4.5   Impact on Relationships

Impacts on interpersonal relationships were noted as a result of LSU support. Improvements in relationships with peers were reported by six pupils, as one commented, *'I've made a lot of friends in here. You get to talk to the bigger ones'* (Year 7 pupil). Enhanced social skills were commented on by LSU managers and class teachers, '[it is] *beneficial to a lot of them, social skills, cooperating with people, treating people with respect'*.

Some young people also remarked that relationships with their parents or carers had improved as a consequence of their time spent at the LSU. There were fewer or no telephone calls home about their bad behaviour or poor attendance, which had previously caused tensions. As a Year 8 pupil remarked, '[Mum] *used to get people knocking on her door every day, but she don't no more.'* Similarly, three interviewees noted a positive impact on pupils' relationships with their parents because the school's contact with parents now relayed positive feedback regarding the child's progress:

> *They aren't used to praise – often there will just be a telephone call to say how bad they are. So we phone and say, 'Your son has been really good in school today, he's done this and this.' I think they need that.* (LSU manager)

Impact on relationships: Cameo

Reason for entry into LSU:	**School phobia**
Duration of support:	**One year (integrated gradually to the Centre, then full-time in the centre, then gradually reintegrated to mainstream classes)**
Outcome:	**Fully reintegrated**

Jane was a Year 10 pupil who had been diagnosed a school phobic and had been absent from school for an 18-month period. Following LSU support, Jane was fully reintegrated into school and had significantly raised her attendance (she reported being absent for only one day in Year 10). Aside from the impact on her attendance, Jane said that she now could *'go out with my friends and join in with things I never used to'*. LSU staff also acknowledged the positive impact of LSU support upon her relationships, *'She has made some very good friendships in the centre which have been maintained.'*

4.6   Pupil Progression

> *Generally speaking, we've had several 'Road to Damascus' type experiences for some of the kids and it's been terrific. There's a little lad who used to came back* [to see us] *with a certificate because the French department had nominated him 'pupil of the month'. This boy was Public Enemy Number One*

this time last year. They were delighted when he was absent and he was a pain. His maths teacher is now commenting his work is a delight to mark. (LSU manager)

LSU staff were asked to comment upon the post-programme development of the pupils who had been supported by the LSUs, and for Year 11 pupils who had left school, to give information about their destinations. Seven main types of progression emerged.

Table 4.1   Pupil Progression

Progression	No. of pupils (N=49)
Fully or more reintegrated	23
No longer attending the case-study school	10
Post-16 provision	6
Employment	3
Alternative provision	4
Excluded	2
Still attending the LSU	1

4.6.1   Reintegration

Table 4.1 shows that 23 of the pupils who had accessed LSU support were reported as more or completely reintegrated into mainstream. In fact 17 of these were fully reintegrated into mainstream lessons following LSU support, while six pupils were attending more lessons than they were when they first began to access LSU support.

Diagram 4.2 shows the numbers of pupils reintegrated for each type of problem that had instigated their LSU attendance. For example, of the 11 pupils attending the Unit because of poor attendance at the time of the initial interviews, five had been fully or partially reintegrated by the time of the final visits to schools.

Diagram 4.2   Number of pupils reintegrated more or completely
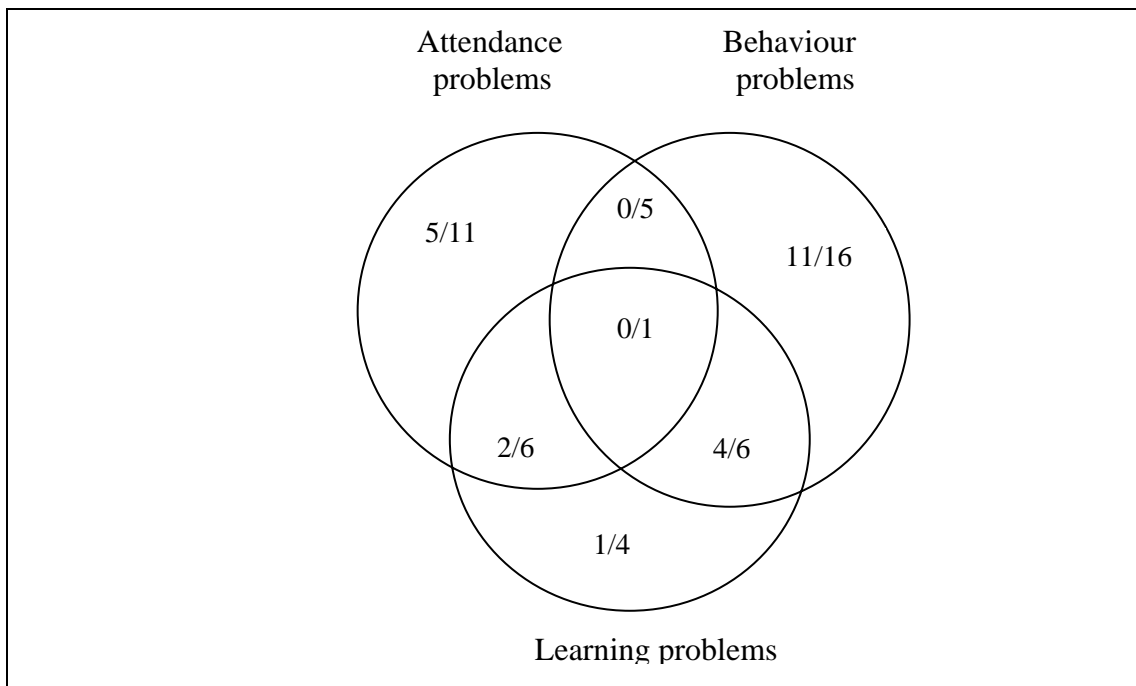
Not surprisingly, reintegration is more difficult to achieve for pupils for whom a range of difficulties need to be addressed.

The year group of the pupils reintegrated could also be a contributing factor to reintegration. About two thirds of the key stage 3 pupils interviewed had been wholly or partially reintegrated in mainstream classes, but only one of the six Year 10 pupils had been reintegrated. Of the year 11 pupils interviewed, none had been reintegrated; although as already noted, several had made positive progression into further education or employment.

4.6.2   Pupils no longer attending the case-study school

Of the 49 interviewees, ten had left their case-study school. Six pupils had moved out of the area or had moved school. One youngster with a particularly turbulent home life, who had poor attendance and was socially isolated at the start of Year 7, was seen as a particular success story by staff at his LSU. By the summer term he was fully integrated and had won a regional 'Aim Higher' award, for which he was nominated by the staff in recognition of his achievements. However, as noted earlier, this was the case of the family experiencing problems in the neighbourhood which were so severe that they decided to move to away. Staff were sure the impact would be sustained. However, this was not true of all cases. One Year 7 pupil had yet to be affected by LSU provision and had moved away without informing the school, and

two pupils had completely stopped attending school. As noted previously, one Year 10 pupil who had poor attendance went on work experience and never returned. Prior to that, she had been making good progress raising her attendance from 12 to 96 per cent, and staff were unsure as to why the impact had not been sustained. Thus, here again, those with attendance problems were particularly associated with lack of sustained impact.

4.6.3 Post-16 provision

Five Year 11 pupils had gone on to post-16 provision, mostly to undertake college courses or AS levels. In these instances, LSU staff were very positive about their progress, with comments such as: '[He has] *the potential and has got the chance to go where he wants to go. That was one of the real pleasing ones'*, *'I think he can go on into other areas and be successful'* and *'She's very happy, very content.'* Even where it was reported that a pupil was less sure about the course she was doing, the LSU manager noted, *'she's sticking at it so she has gone on and she is in full time education.'*

4.6.4 Employment

Three Year 11 pupils had gone into employment. Of these, two pupils had gone to work in hairdressing having completed their examinations. LSU staff were positive about their progression. One of the three who had gone into employment was also continuing to study in her spare time.

4.6.5 Alternative provision

Four pupils were in receipt of alternative provision that was said to *'better suit their needs'*. Three had undertaken work-based provision and continued to be supported by the LSU. One Year 10 pupil had gone on to vocational provision and was working towards an NVQ. LSU staff recognised the benefits of alternative provision in these instances.

4.6.6 Exclusion

It appeared that behaviour problems were so entrenched in two of the 49 case-study pupils that positive outcomes proved very difficult. Despite the best efforts of LSU support staff, these pupils were eventually excluded. In one case, the pupil's behaviour was too severe for the LSU or the school to cope with. His mother was reluctant to accept help. One member of staff commented, *'we are not sure the school can adequately meet his needs'* and the pupil was subsequently excluded. Another pupil had made progress within the Unit but this was not sustained upon reintegration.

Staff said that he attended the Unit regularly and his behaviour there was acceptable. However, his behaviour outside the Unit had been a cause for concern. In mainstream classes, he misbehaved and had poor peer relations. Outside school, he was violent and aggressive. He was excluded for being aggressive towards senior staff.

4.6.7 Pupils still attending the LSU

At the time of the final visits to schools, one Year 8 pupil was still in receipt of LSU support on a part-time basis, and there were no plans for his reintegration at that stage because he till need support to deal with his personal problems. The LSU manager said:

> [He is] *still with us and struggling desperately with personal traumas – his family has split up and he finds that difficult to cope with. He gets lots of support from other agencies. He has good days. He can't cope without us at the moment.*

This would suggest that there is a need for flexibility within the reintegration process. The needs of pupils should be considered on an individual basis and reintegration should not be assumed as a straightforward or inevitable outcome of LSU provision.

4.7 Factors Facilitating Impact

In this section, the reasons for positive outcomes as perceived by pupils are discussed. Certain characteristics of the LSUs were seen to facilitate success: pupils highlighted several key differences between LSUs and normal classes. These were:

♦ ambience

♦ characteristics of LSU staff

♦ ownership over the decision to enter and leave the LSU

♦ resources

♦ size.

A further factor which affected the outcome of LSU support was the extent of support from the pupil's family. This is also discussed in this section.

4.7.1 Ambience

According to about a third of pupils, the ambience of the LSU was a key factor in the positive impact of the LSU. Some pupils mentioned that the LSU made it easier for them to apply themselves to their work because they were less likely to be distracted,

'there was no one to disturb you'. Three pupils highlighted the fact that the LSU was quieter than classrooms, which assisted the learning process as it enabled them to concentrate. A Year 8 pupil commented:

> *It's better in the Unit because when I'm in normal lessons sometimes it's right noisy and you can't concentrate but when you're in* [the LSU] *it's right quiet because there's hardly anyone else in there.*

Separation from friends who encouraged troublesome behaviour was also mentioned. One referred to the fact that his friends were not in the LSU: this assisted his learning as he said that his friends often got him into trouble in mainstream classes.

Other points raised about the favourable atmosphere of the LSU included:

- feeling more supported and secure (4)
- more fun / better than normal lessons (3)
- being able to mix with pupils of different ages (2)
- not having to change rooms (1).

4.7.2   Characteristics of the LSU staff

The LSU staff were recognised as an integral component of the provision by around one-third of the pupils. The following characteristics, which largely mirror the skills and qualities highlighted by LSU and school staff in section 2.4.2, were also noted by pupils:

- being *'cheerful'* or *'nice'* (9)
- offering respect (7)
- being understanding (4).

Nine pupils described good relations with the LSU staff, because they were *'nice'* or *'good'*. Four of these pupils mentioned preferring LSU staff to regular teaching staff. Typical comments included *'they're nicer than normal teachers'* (Year 9 pupil) and *'they are not like normal teachers'* (Year 9 pupil).

Despite the fact that LSU staff were perceived as friendly, it was felt that they could still control pupils, a fact highlighted by four pupils. As a Year 8 pupil commented:

> *Its like Year 10s and 11s coming in and they are all mouthy and everything so when they come in here Miss just – she doesn't actually shout at them – she*

reasons with them and then they get on with their work and then they get to go on the computers or do what they want.

Another pupil mentioned that LSU teachers' control over pupils was maintained by displaying consistent and calm approaches:

If people have ever been rude to them, they haven't sort of let rip or anything. They have just remained calm and dealt with it … they don't ever let the students take over the class. They are always in control. (Year 11 pupil)

Respect was also a key issue for the pupils. They referred to their own respect for the LSU staff because they felt the staff respected them too. This was noted as a contrast to teachers in regular classes. Two pupils who admitted shouting at their teachers in class said that they would never shout at LSU staff because *'they never shout at me'*. Another pupil mentioned:

I have a great deal of respect for them because they are not afraid to admit if they have made a mistake, they are not afraid to say sorry if they get it wrong or whatever, they are just really helpful, really kind, really understanding. (Year 8 pupil)

Understanding of the pupils was considered essential by staff and also described by the pupils. One Year 8 pupil with ADHD and attendance issues felt that the staff in the Unit had been particularly understanding of him:

They give me longer to do my work and don't rush me. If I'm in a bad mood, the teachers leave me and let me calm down.

He also commented that, since he had been diagnosed with ADHD, his teachers in class had been more understanding than previously, *'I can do it in my own time. In Year 7, they rushed me.'* He felt this understanding had led to an improvement in his behaviour, *'*[My parents] *don't have phone calls from school saying what I've done.'* Staff also commented on the importance of demonstrating their understanding of pupils' needs. An LSU manager said of one pupil with literacy problems, *'If you get him motivated and give him the chance to succeed, he is fine, but he needs one-to-one and constant reassurance.'*

4.7.3   Ownership over the decision to enter or leave the LSU

The decision over entering or leaving the centre could potentially involve several individuals: teaching staff, LSU staff, parents or carers and the pupils themselves. Pupils' feeling of involvement in the decision to enter or leave the LSU appeared to

increase the likelihood of impact. Two LSU managers specifically mentioned this sort of involvement. It was the policy in one LSU for a contract of work to be devised, *'We then discuss the contract, it is signed by the child, the parent and myself'* (LSU manager). Sixteen of the case-study pupils commented that they had been included in the decision-making process. For example, one Year 11 pupil said of entering the LSU, *'I didn't have to if I didn't want to'* and another said that they could choose when they were ready to leave. This would suggest that the impact of LSU provision could partially depend upon the ownership pupils held over whether they entered the LSU and whether they were reintegrated to mainstream lessons. However, six interviewees who felt the LSU had an impact on them did say that they had not had any involvement in the decision process yet were still affected by their time at the LSU, *'I didn't really have much say, you have to start going back to lessons when you get into Year 10'* (Year 9 pupil). Of the 17 pupils who had been gradually reintegrated, six said that they had been able to choose the lessons they went into.

4.7.4 Resources

Of the 37 pupils who had reported a positive impact, nearly half reported that the resources in the Centre were better than in regular classrooms. Although some pupils referred to art resources, the vast majority of the pupils referring to better resources mentioned the availability of computers to support their work. This was of particular use to one pupil with Asperger's Syndrome whose learning was supported by the ICT resources available in the LSU. Another pupil with learning difficulties had used ICT resources in the LSU and had been able to progress to an ICT course at college on leaving school. School staff also expressed awareness of the enhanced resources of the LSU and raised the issue that the facilities available in the LSU could perhaps make reintegration more difficult. In making a comparison with the pupil/teacher ratio and facilities in mainstream classrooms, one teacher commented:

> *I just think perhaps* [in the LSU] *they have more stimulus, they have got the computers, they have got more attention, I mean there's usually two to three members of staff and about ten pupils at the most.* (history teacher)

4.7.5 Size

The smaller size of the LSUs appeared to be conducive to the learning environment, with 11 pupils mentioning size as an advantage. Pupils felt that they were more likely to get individual attention if they needed it, whereas this was not possible in the mainstream. A Year 11 pupil commented, *'If you were in like, say a normal lesson, there would be more people so you wouldn't be able to get one-to-one help.'*

4.7.6   Family support

For some pupils, family support was a key element in the success of the LSUs. Positive support from families was mentioned by seven of the pupils who reported that the LSUs had some impact on them. These pupils commented that their parents or carers had visited the school and were very involved in the decision for them to attend an LSU, for example, meeting with staff. There was one example of a parent who had requested some support as her son was unable to participate in PE and had to watch the class, *'Well it were my mum that asked whether something could be done, instead of me just doing nowt'* (Year 11 pupil). However, a further four pupils indicated little support from their families – in some cases, parents were said to be unaware of pupils' involvement with the LSU – but were still regarded as success stories.

4.8   Lack of Impact

As has already been noted, LSUs had a high success rate: just over three quarters of the case-study pupils in the sample made positive progress. However, almost a quarter of those who had accessed the provision were reported not to be benefiting substantially from it.

Of the 12 pupils who had not benefited from the LSU provision, six had attended for behavioural reasons, five for attendance problems and one for support with learning. In eight cases, some progress was made but it was not sustained. LSU managers provided explanations as to why progress was not made in certain cases. These focused on:

- ♦ home circumstances
- ♦ non-cooperation of pupils
- ♦ severity of pupils' problems.

4.8.1   Home circumstances

Home circumstances were a contributing factor in the case of eight of the pupils who had not benefited from their time at the LSU although, as has been discussed earlier in this section, it is not inevitable that a lack of support from the home prevents progress.

Parentally condoned non-attendance was a significant issue in the case of four pupils. For one Year 9 pupil, staff were finding it difficult to make any progress, despite the mother being faced with prosecution: *'We're battling against a problem with mother but [there has been] no impact at all'* (LSU manager).

One Year 8 pupil with severe behavioural difficulties was reported to be held back by the fact that his mother was reluctant to accept any support. The pupil was eventually excluded for hitting a teacher.

Thus, pupils' family situations could determine the impact of an LSU upon the pupil. As one LSU manager commented, *'It depends on the pupil and the external problems.'*

No impact: Cameo 1

Reason for entry into LSU:	**Behaviour**
Duration of support:	**One term full time in the LSU**
Outcome:	**No longer attending the LSU, but rarely in school.**

Matthew attended the LSU at his school for behavioural reasons. His family circumstances were very difficult and he was with foster carers. He had been excluded for fighting before and his behaviour was such that teachers did not want him in their classes. In the beginning, progress was made, and he was happy and settled with his foster carers. In his first interview, Matthew was positive about the effect of the LSU. He felt he had calmed down since attending the centre and his behaviour was improving. He commented that he was fairly happy in school.

His behaviour began to deteriorate and this caused a breakdown in relations between him and his foster carers. Staff reported that he had *'got in with a bad crowd'* and began using drugs. He refused to be interviewed by the researcher a second time and LSU staff were disappointed they had not been able to sustain the impact they had begun to make. One member of staff commented, *'He's at war with the world.'*.

No impact: Cameo 2

Reason for entry to LSU:	**Attendance**
Duration of support:	**Six months, mornings only**
Outcome:	**Stopped attending school**

Joanne was a Year 8 pupil who was a frequent non-attender. She had missed almost the whole of Year 7, and her older sister also had problems with attendance and had attended the LSU. Joanne said that if she was ill, she got into a routine of being absent from school and, despite recovery from illness, she would continue to be absent from school. In order for her to be reintegrated, the school arranged for her to attend the LSU.

For a period of about six months, she attended in the morning and went home in the afternoon. While she attended, staff reported that her attitude to learning and the centre were fine, and that there were no problems with her behaviour. They also commented upon the fact that her confidence had improved. For example, there was a time when she refused to go into any classes, but she progressed to being able to do so. However, since Joanne's sister was in Year 11 and therefore due to leave school, teachers were worried that when she left, Joanne would stop attending school too. Unfortunately, this proved to be the case and at the time of the last interviews, staff said they had not seen her for some time.

4.8.2 Non-cooperation of pupils

Progress was also dependent on the cooperation of the pupils. As noted in section 4.7.3, most of the pupils reported feeling involved in the decision process to enter or leave the Unit. However, four pupils reported a lack of involvement. Of these four pupils, three had not been helped by the LSU. A Year 10 pupil with poor attendance commented that she returned to school only *'so my mum won't get fined again'*. A Year 9 pupil was accessing an LSU for support with behavioural problems, although she did not perceive her behaviour to be a problem. She commented, *'I don't think my behaviour is that bad actually.'* Thus, lack of pupils' acceptance that their own attitudes and behaviour needed to change appeared to be an impediment to their progress.

4.8.3 Severity of pupils' problems

In three cases, the needs of the pupils were simply too great for LSUs or mainstream schools to cater for. Two pupils were excluded and went on to receive what was deemed to be more appropriate provision. Exclusion therefore led the pupils to access the more appropriate support, and this was not necessarily viewed as negative. One pupil *'started at off-site provision which may meet his needs better'* (LSU manager). A Year 10 pupil was in receipt of alternative provision which supported young people and their families through education and leisure.

This overview of a case-study sample has identified that many pupils had very specific needs and that progress was also highly individuated. Pupils' progress may be hindered by the difficult circumstances they experienced, although there may be 'success stories' in spite of the problems that were faced. Thus, consideration of individual needs may well be the most significant a factor in the progression of pupils. The aptitude and skills possessed by LSU staff in order to respond to pupils in this flexible way clearly underpinned many of the successes in this pupil sample.

5.   FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

This Section of the report considers the future of LSU provision in schools.   It includes LEA- and school-level views on:

♦   the development of LSU provision

♦   the sustainability of that provision.

5.1   The Development of LSU Provision

In terms of overall strand developments at partnership level, LSU strand coordinators across all three Phases affirmed that they would like to see LSUs becoming more embedded within school structures, and thus accepted as a whole-school support mechanism with no stigma attached.   There was no suggestion of discontinuing the provision, rather of extending and enhancing it.   Coordinators reiterated the need for greater parity of status and pay scales for LSU staff, particularly support staff, and for a nationally accredited training programme for those working in LSUs.   One strand coordinator felt there should in future be more adherence to EiC guidelines, as they believed it had perhaps been *'a little generous'* to hand over the money to schools and tell them to *'get on with it'*.   However, another called for schools to take more responsibility for putting their own resources into the provision, so as to ensure its development.   In a similar vein, three Phase 3 strand coordinators flagged up the need to access alternative funding streams once the Pupil Retention Grant funding disappeared.   The introduction of Behaviour Improvement Programmes (BIPs) were seen as *'a crucial dimension'* of development in this context.   This perhaps raises the question of how far schools would then need to follow EiC guidelines if funding LSU provision themselves, or from alternative sources.

In the partnership operating an outreach model of provision, the strand coordinator confirmed that further development of this would be welcome and indeed, headteachers receiving the support were said to be positive.   It was believed to be working best in schools where it was properly organised, where the outreach worker had a place to work, and where appropriate structures and mechanisms for monitoring it were in place.   In this way, the outreach worker was not seen as someone who comes in *'like a parachute, does a bit, disappears, then a week later they parachute in again'*.   However, in line with comments from school staff (noted in section 3.9), the coordinator acknowledged that, given the choice, and subject to the resources being

available, schools would probably opt to have their own LSU on site rather than remain in receipt of outreach support.

At school level, across all three Phases, suggestions for development centred on the focus of the support provided. In the two case-study schools where key stage 3 pupils had been the focus, it was noted that this was being extended to include key stage 4 as well. This in turn would mean ensuring the availability of alternative, vocational programmes at key stage 4 and setting up more links with external providers. In addition, given the difficulties many of the pupils had in accessing the curriculum, LSU and school staff in both case-study and Phase 3 schools, suggested that there was a need for work on the development of more fundamental 'life skills', such as independent living, parenting, child care, etc. One of the case-study LSUs was going to be moving to a new location in school following building work. When this took place, the LSU manager intended to lobby for a kitchen/social skills area in order to be better equipped to foster the development of such skills through a more practical, '*creative*' curriculum.

Equally, the need to develop more work on providing pupils with coping strategies for when they returned to mainstream classes was noted. Several LSU and mainstream school interviewees highlighted the benefits of providing courses on anger management, strategies for managing behaviour (e.g. solution-focused brief therapy), and running 'circle time' sessions aimed at developing trust and building confidence. As noted earlier in section 3.7 on reintegration, many of the pupils found it easier to manage their behaviour whilst in the more supportive environment of the LSU, but this was not always sustained on their return to mainstream classes:

> *The biggest problem of all is the children with behavioural problems. Despite how much help we give them here, how much encouragement and support, when they do go back into mainstream, some of them, it's very difficult for them. They still don't conform, or they only conform for a very short amount of time*. (LSU manager)

By the same token, it was felt that mainstream staff could benefit from LSU staff working in the wider school and sharing their expertise, but also that more mainstream school staff should be involved in working with pupils in the LSU, '*interacting with pupils in there in a positive way*' (LSU support assistant). It was believed that this approach would widen the influence of the LSU, thus consolidating its position in school as a long-term support mechanism, rather than as '*a sin bin*':

Really, it's all about opening it up so it doesn't just become about three members of staff who work in that centre, so that it becomes a whole-school thing. (LSU support assistant)

In recognition of the varied and complex needs of the pupils attending LSUs, another important development was considered to be greater access to, and involvement with the young people of, more outside agencies. Once again, the increase in the number of pupils with mental health problems entering LSUs was highlighted.

In addition, in two cases, school staff commented that they would like to see the provision physically enlarged in order to be able to cater for more pupils, although they did recognise that finding space in school would be problematic. One teacher also noted that for vulnerable pupils experiencing difficulties in school, having a smaller place in school where they could feel '*safe'* was perhaps preferable.

Generally, pupils professed themselves happy with the LSU, expressing such sentiments as, '*everything is sound in here'* (Year 8 pupil), and, as a result, suggested few areas for development. Those that did make suggestions tended to focus on improvements to the facilities (e.g. making the room bigger, improving the toilets, changing the furniture and increasing the number of computers available), or to relations with staff (e.g. receiving more respect or trust). Finally, one Year 8 boy did suggest that the addition of a swimming pool would be a welcome development!

LSU managers sounded a final note of caution by pointing out that any developments made to LSU provision were dependent on the knowledge that the necessary funding was available: '*It's not until you have reassurance of that, that you can plan future provision'* (LSU manager).

5.2   The Sustainability of LSU Provision

Sustainability of LSU provision beyond EiC funding was raised as a concern by both strand coordinators and LSU managers. However, there was very much a feeling that if the provision was believed to be worthwhile by schools, then the money would be found within school budgets, or from alternative sources, to support it. Indeed, one strand coordinator affirmed that an important part of the role of coordinator was seeking alternative funding streams in preparation for this eventuality. Equally, the importance of money coming into LEAs through initiatives such as BIPs was highlighted again. One Phase 3 LSU manager thought that, although they hoped it would be, they very much feared that the provision would not be sustainable beyond

EiC funding as it was too expensive. However, strand coordinators believed that, compared with special school or off-site provision, LSUs offered good value for money.

Strand coordinators and LSU managers affirmed that schools would now find it very difficult to actually do without LSUs. They were becoming so embedded in the support systems within schools that the money would be found somehow. This view concurred with sentiments expressed by senior managers in the case-study schools, who stated that whilst funding would be a problem, the LSU was too valuable a resource for the school to do without:

> *We will have to make it sustainable to be honest. We couldn't just cut it off, throw it away and carry on. I would hate to envisage us trying to do without it.* (deputy headteacher)

As has already been identified, schools were seen as having to deal with more challenging behaviour and more complex issues than previously, due to breakdowns in families and in communities. Therefore, the need for this sort of provision would continue, and probably increase. The suggestion was made that, with the need to involve more outside agencies because of the complexity of the pupils' difficulties, perhaps some form of budgetary flexibility, such as joint funding streams, was required.

School staff were also cognisant of the benefits of LSU provision, referring to it variously as *'absolutely invaluable'*, *'a great bonus for the school'*, whilst noting that they too would not like to lose the facility: *'It would be terrible if they took it away.'*

6.   CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This research has highlighted a considerable number of pupil 'success stories' associated with LSU provision, and these are undoubtedly eloquent testimonies to the skills and dedication of LSU staff working within them, as well as the capacity of the concept of LSUs to 'turn around' many troubled young people. However, at the same time it has highlighted that, for a minority (about one in four of the case-study pupils), the outcomes were not so successful. It is important therefore, to recognise that LSU provision can not be seen as some sort of universal panacea, but as part of a wider network of support. Thus the research has identified a number of key issues or concerns.

Firstly, the LSU Strand was still very much considered to be the 'Cinderella' Strand in terms of training and of EiC-level coordination. However, it seems clear that increasing numbers of young people are entering LSUs with more challenging and complex difficulties, in particular behavioural or mental health problems, or extreme home circumstances. For LSU staff, despite their very evident skills, working with this vulnerable group had highlighted additional training needs. Thus the importance of relevant and appropriate training for LSU staff may have been highlighted.

Closely linked to this, the research has shown that it is not possible to effect change without additional help in some of the more complex cases. It has adumbrated the need for access to specialist expertise, perhaps through greater involvement of external agencies, thus extending and enhancing the multi-agency work already taking place in many partnerships.

Although clearly resource intensive, LSU provision has been shown to be valuable both at partnership and school level, as evidenced in the accounts of the interviewees within this study. These accounts showed a belief in the 'extrinsic' cost-effectiveness of the provision, in terms of the subsequent benefits to other agencies or society in general by working with these youngsters, but also the add-on benefits for schools of the development of such provision and expertise within the school. Also highlighted in interviewees' accounts was the 'intrinsic' cost-effectiveness of the benefits of the provision for the young people themselves, in terms of potential learning and life opportunities. This has identified the significance of appropriate resourcing being available beyond guaranteed EiC funding, to support the further development of LSUs. Given the suggestion of greater multi-agency involvement, it also poses the

question of whether some 'budgetary flexibility' could be introduced, in particular joint funding streams.

The research has shown that interviewees stressed the importance of LSU provision being embedded within the structure and ethos of the school, with the support of senior management. This in turn would have implications for parity of status for staff in the LSUs. The research has also highlighted the importance of greater communication and liaison between LSU and school staff, with LSU staff spreading their expertise out in the mainstream school and, vice versa, mainstream staff working more in the LSUs.

Finally, in the light of Ofsted's (2003) comments regarding insufficient focus on curriculum and attainment, the findings here may suggest the need for flexibility in pedagogy and curriculum delivery, and a greater recognition that improvement in learning cannot be readily achieved if other social and emotional needs remain unaddressed. There may therefore be advantage in LSUs offering greater opportunities for some pupils to undergo behaviour modification programmes over longer periods, although this in turn has implications for resources, training and access to specialist support.

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