

Workplace Learning Advocates project

November 2011 – March 2012

Interim progress report

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Executive summary

1. This project aims to fill a gap in the learning and skills infrastructure nationally by creating a new, voluntary role for employees in non-unionised workplaces: the Workplace Learning Advocate.
 2. The Workplace Learning Advocate (WLA) promotes learning in their workplace by
 - Encouraging and supporting learners
 - Organising learning events
 - Offering information and advice about learning to colleagues
 - Engaging management and HR to secure employer support for learning
 - Building networks within and beyond their employer-organisation and linking with local learning providers and other resource-holders.
 3. In the period to March 2012, the project worked in four regions (Midlands, London, the North-West and the North-East) to
 - Promote the WLA role to employers, business intermediaries and skills bodies
 - Train over 70 employees to take on the WLA role
 - Construct an infrastructure to support the WLA role.
- Over 45 non-unionised employers (most employing less than 250 staff) from a range of sectors participated.
4. Results suggest the project has achieved proof of concept for the WLA role. The role has won support in organisations of varying sizes across a range of sectors in various parts of the country.
 5. There is anecdotal and qualitative evidence that the WLA role has impacted positively on teamwork, team cohesion and staff motivation and morale. It is perceived by employers and employees to add value to the employment offer.
 6. In Lincolnshire and Rutland, the Employment and Skills Board (ESB) saw the WLA role as a cost-effective way to encourage informal, employee-directed, voluntary workplace learning. The ESB's employer-members reported that it:
 - Built individuals' confidence in their own ability to learn
 - Encouraged and support staff to share skills informally
 - Fostered a workplace culture of coaching and mentoring
 - Developed workforce skills
 - Enhanced cohesion and team working
 - Helped organisations to meet criteria for quality awards such as Investors in People
 7. Outcomes include uptake of basic skills learning, apprenticeships and vocational qualifications. Employers reported that the role's peer-to-peer focus added value to 'top-down' organisational learning systems.
 8. WLAs recruited and trained by the project came from a range of roles including production, administration, HR and management. Most were women. The WLA role offered these employees career and personal development, including confidence-building.

9. Employer commitment enabled WLAs from different organisations to meet regularly. These meetings were motivational and helped WLAs develop a shared sense of role identity and learn from each other.

10. A modified version of this approach that focused on organisations that provided business services to micro and small employers succeeded in reaching these smaller employers in the East Midlands and London.

11. In some instances, the project offered WLAs small one-off grants to seed-fund learning activities. This appears to have helped WLAs initiate activity without engendering dependency or weakening local ownership.

12. Steps toward a support system for WLAs include

- Work with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions to validate the role and share resources
- Development of a branded website to communicate the role
- Development of training programmes to promote recruit to the role
- Trialling of networking, including newsletters, personal email and telephone support

13. Training appears to be a valuable promotional tool for the WLA role and helps to recruit WLAs. WLAs value training in information and advice skills because it equips them with key knowledge and skills and also because it builds their confidence, a motivating factor for many of those attracted to the role.

14. WLAs benefit significantly from active participation in peer networks. These networks can function as a powerful vehicle for peer learning, enabling WLAs to construct a community of practice and a shared sense of role-identity. They also help make the role and its resources visible to other interested parties (e.g. learning providers). These networks are usefully supported by the project's national website (promoting the brand, informing employers and resourcing WLAs).

15. Active participation in peer networks requires employer support. With employer support, peer networks can be self-managing and self-sustaining.

16. On the evidence to date, a workplace development approach that integrates training with strategic and peer networking offers the most effective approach to establishing the WLA role.

17. This approach would require a support infrastructure to

- Manage the brand and assure quality
- Administer any revenue (e.g. employer subscriptions) / funding (e.g. seed-funding)
- Support training and research, including conferences, seminars
- Develop and disseminate resources, including website and social media
- Assure strategic synergy with other business intermediary and learning and skills infrastructure organisations

The project has made headway in developing aspects of this infrastructure.

1. Introduction

This report reviews the impact to March 2012 of the Workplace Learning Advocates project.

This project aims to fill a gap in the learning and skills infrastructure by creating a new, voluntary role for employees in non-unionised workplaces: the Workplace Learning Advocate.

The Workplace Learning Advocate (WLA) is an employee who promotes learning in their workplace. The WLA does this by

- Encouraging and supporting learners
- Organising learning events
- Offering information and advice
- Building networks within and beyond their employer-organisation and linking with local learning providers and other resource-holders.

The role has similarities to the Union Learning Representative and to the Community Learning Champion.

2. Project activity

The Workplace Learning Advocates project is delivered by a partnership of two organisations, Workbase Training¹ and The Johnston Partnership² and managed by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education³ (NIACE) on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

In the period under review, project partners have focused on three types of activity:

- Promotion of the WLA role to employers, business intermediaries and skills bodies
- Training of employees to take on the WLA role
- Construction of an infrastructure to support the WLA role

While this activity has included strategic networking with national organisations and the development of national website, the project has an explicitly employee-centred, grassroots ethos: activity at firm level must be led by and for employees and their local communities.

Locally, project activity was centred on four regions,

- Lincolnshire and the East Midlands
- London
- North-West
- North-East

with some additional activity around Cheltenham.

In the North-West and North-East, the project focused on training WLAs. In Lincolnshire and the East Midlands it has focused on building a community of committed employers. In London it has concentrated on promotion and networking.

¹ Workbase Training is a London-based third sector organisation that exists to increase access to workplace learning, see <http://workbase.org.uk/>

² The Johnston Partnership is a learning and development consultancy based in Cumbria, see <http://www.learningadvocates.co.uk/>

³ See <http://www.niace.org.uk/>

The project worked with horse-racing sector around Cheltenham.

1. Centres of project activity



By the end of March 2012, the project had

- Formed strategic partnerships with unionlearn (including ULF projects and the unions involved) and with Community Learning Champions
- Worked with a range of
 - National organisations, including the TUC, the CBI, British Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Business in the Community, Campaign for Learning
 - Local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Employment and Skills Boards, sector skills councils and trade associations
 - Micro, SME and large employers
- Created a national website and WLA brand identity
- Developed on-line support for WLAs, including discussion groups, guides, learning materials
- Recruited and trained over 70 WLAs
- Supported WLA network meetings, conferences, seminars and workplace learning activities

The next section considers the outcomes of this activity.

3. Outcomes of project activity

Results to March 2012 suggest that the project has achieved proof of concept for the voluntary, employee role of Workplace Learning Advocate to promote learning in non-unionised workplaces.

The project has

- Defined the scope and boundaries of the role, ensuring complementarity rather than duplication or conflict with equivalent roles in unionised workplaces and the community
- Demonstrated demand for the role in different regions from a range of
 - Employees
 - Employers
 - Employment and skills infrastructure agencies
- Shown how the role can add value in different types of organisation, including
 - Micro, SME and large organisations
 - Private and third sector organisationsfrom a wide range of sectors.

In addition, by

- Gaining recognition for the WLA brand
- Testing different ways to recruit, train, motivate and support WLAs
- Creating a body of guidance and learning materials to support recruitment and training
- Networking WLAs locally and nationally and
- Developing the basis for partnership working with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions

the project has made significant progress towards its goal of constructing of an infrastructure to support the WLA role.

The next section considers the impact of these outcomes.

4. Impact analysis

4.1 Project approaches

Impact across the four regions varied due partly to local circumstances in each region and partly to the approach adopted by the project in each region.

In the East Midlands and London, where activity was led by Workbase Training, the project took a workplace development approach, engaging with firms at senior management level, linking WLAs to employee social clubs and working to create supportive networks of employers. Some of this work has built on Investors in People networks.

In the North-West and North-East, where activity was led by the Johnston Partnership, it adopted an individual training approach, recruiting employees onto training courses that showed participants how to promote learning through information and advice then supporting them with networking opportunities, email updates on learning opportunities and individual follow-up.

The two approaches derived directly from work in progress prior to the project.

In 2010, Workbase Training, started to explore the concept of an employee learning advocate with the Lincolnshire and Rutland Employment and Skills Board (ESB) and one of its employer-members. This employer hosted a learning club run on a voluntary basis by a number of its employees. Workbase and the ESB planned to test this informal, social-club approach to learning with other ESB employer-members.

In the North-West, the Johnston Partnership led a regional training programme named Learning Advocates, established in 2004 and supported by the North West Learning and Skills Council through the European Social Fund. The programme trained employees in non-unionised small and medium-sized enterprises to offer colleagues information and advice on learning. Once trained, these employees received regular e-bulletins from the Johnston Partnership on events and funded learning opportunities, attended networking meetings (set up by the Johnston Partnership) and regional conferences.

Over the course of the activity under review here, the project incorporated information and advice training into the workplace development approach and a focus on linking learning to workplace social events within the individual training approach.

Both approaches achieved greatest impact where preparatory work had been undertaken prior to the project. Thus in the East Midlands, the project

- Developed an active, expanding network of ten employers committed at senior management level to supporting WLA-led learning
- Trained and networked a cohort of 20 WLAs
- Seed-funded a series of workplace learning events.

In London, where activity started only in the holiday month of December 2011, the project has concentrated on the networking and promotion necessary to underpin the workplace development approach. By the end of March, the project had developed a strategy to engage micro-businesses and SMEs, including third sector organisations, that focussed on business support centres, engaged ten companies and scheduled training for 10 newly-recruited WLAs. In effect, this constitutes a third approach.

In the North-West, the project

- Trained 36 new WLAs and inducted five WLAs as 'lead WLAs' to recruit and support new WLAs and develop joint working with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions
- Networked WLAs with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions to establish joint working arrangements.

In the North-East, the project recruited and trained 21 new WLAs, using different recruitment methods to engage employers and employees including work with local authorities, business support agencies and unionlearn. Social media were also used to promote the training approach. (See appendix 2 for a fuller break down of project activity.)

4.2 Workplace impact of WLAs

The workplace impact of WLAs recruited and trained by project has obviously been limited in the brief period under review here (between four and six months, depending on region). There is, however, some indicative evidence.

4.2.1 Employers

How the WLA role impacted on employers depended in part on whether or not the employer already had an internal learning and development (L&D) infrastructure. This in turn tended to reflect the size of the employer: typically medium-sized and larger employers had an L&D infrastructure while micro and small employers lacked one.

4.2.1.1 Employers with their own L&D infrastructure

Employers with an L&D infrastructure supported the WLA role because they wanted to encourage informal, employee-directed, voluntary workplace learning. They believed this type of workplace learning would

- Add value to their employment offer
- Build individuals' confidence in their own ability to learn
- Encourage and support staff to share skills informally
- Foster a workplace culture of coaching and mentoring
- Enhance workforce skills, cohesion and team working
- Help the organisation to meet criteria for quality awards such as Investors in People

Importantly, the WLA role would help achieve this at little or no direct cost to the employer.

The voluntary, peer-to-peer focus of the WLA role was of particular interest to employers who saw it as a way to transcend some of the limitations of 'top-down' organisational learning systems. The WLA would be able to engage colleagues in ways the organisation could not – important, for example, to a company in Lincolnshire and Rutland wanting to develop positive attitudes to learning in its workforce prior to introducing new production methods.

"One of the difficulties facing [our organisation] is how we get people interested and involved in learning. Since the WLA training, we now have the ability to find learning opportunities that suit everyone, including free courses. We will encourage everyone to take control of their own learning and development and hopefully, through the four informal learning events planned this year, we will be able to engage everyone in the learning process!" **HR Manager, Lincolnshire and Rutland**

Consistent with this, employers were prepared to endorse a wide range of WLA-facilitated learning simply because it was employee-led. Employers reasoned that for employees to 'buy in' to learning, they must feel ownership of their learning. Thus, in addition to apprenticeships and vocational qualifications, project records also show WLAs promoting social and community events. Employers believed such informal learning built employees' confidence, developed soft skills and enhanced the sociability of the workplace.

For employers already supporting an employee social club, WLA-promoted learning added a new dimension: ‘something people find useful in their everyday lives, such as first aid, self-defence or crime prevention’.

“The fact that this is an employee-led scheme is a real strength. People who have not previously come along to Social Club events have got involved with the Give it a Go sessions.” **HR Officer, Lincolnshire and Rutland**

For employers without a social club and/or for whom learning had been mostly a compliance issue (e.g. to comply with Health and Safety regulation), adding a social element to workplace learning was compelling.

“People don’t always come forward to take up training opportunities. The WLA training has given me lots of ideas as to how to engage those people.” **Manager, North-East**

Employers also recognised that ‘no-pressure, at-your-own-pace’ learning would offer employees a further route to express and address individual learning needs – often necessarily overlooked by mandatory organisational training initiatives.

In these ways, employers valued the WLA role for providing an employee voice on issues related to workplace learning.

While the period under review is too short to generate substantial evidence of impact on employers, anecdotal evidence from employers in the East Midlands links WLAs to reduced absenteeism, improved morale and improved teamwork as well as increased participation in learning at work. In the North-East, two companies started doing business together after their WLAs participated in the same training event.

4.2.1.2 Employers without an L&D infrastructure

The project succeeded in engaging a range of micro and small employers in the North-West, North-East, the East Midlands and London. In the North-West and North-East the project achieved this by promoting its WLA training courses to companies and to organisations that support micro and small businesses (i.e. providers of managed business spaces and business innovation hubs). In the East Midlands and London the project focused on these support organisations. They engaged with the WLA role in two ways:

- Supporting a member of their own team to become a WLA
- Promoting the role to the micro and small employers they supported

Where the business support organisation supported a member of its own staff to become a WLA, this person would then promote learning to their organisation’s micro and small employers and support learners within those companies in much the way a WLA in a larger organisation would support their own colleagues.

This led to a number of shared learning events, including an event at a business innovation hub in the East Midlands where one of the hub’s employers with specialist expertise trained other companies using the hub in social media.

The micro and small employers introduced to the WLA role through the support organisation recognised that supporting a member of their own team to take on the WLA role was an affordable way for an employer without an L&D infrastructure to bring L&D expertise into the company.

One company in London introduced to the role in this way has arranged training in Excel software and social media to support organisational objectives and, in response to personal interest from staff, plumbing skills.

To support business support organisations disseminate the role to their client organisations, the project has agreed to train the business support organisations' WLAs to deliver information and advice training to staff from the client organisations to equip these staff to take on the WLA role.

The activity described above suggests that work with business support organisations represents a realistic way to promote the WLA role to micro and small employers and also that the WLA may represent an organisational resource companies too small to support an L&D infrastructure.

4.2.2 Employees

Employees were attracted to the role for a range of reasons, determined partly by their workplace role and career aspirations. A majority were women and many worked in roles associated with HR, but the project also recruited employees in production and customer-facing roles (including organisations offering community, mental health and social services). The WLA role offered opportunity for career development within and/or beyond their current employer-organisation, but also for personal development and, especially, confidence-building.

The action plans produced by WLAs on the project's information and advice training courses indicate how WLAs intended to approach the role in their workplaces. Planned actions included

- Arranging drop-in sessions for staff to ask about learning
- Meeting with HR managers to discuss the organisation's learning culture
- Presenting to colleagues at team meetings
- Encouraging colleagues to become WLAs and/or promote learning
- Mounting displays to promote learning on notice boards
- Promoting learning through the company intranet and/or newsletter
- Emailing information about learning opportunities to colleagues
- Setting up a Learning Club/Workplace Learning Group
- Making learning materials available at work
- Organising workplace learning activities (including activities in Adult Learners Week)
- Working with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions to promote learning

Evidence from project training courses shows that WLAs have encouraged and directed colleagues into a range of informal and formal learning opportunities including basic skills, apprenticeships, NVQ qualifications and on-line learning.

"I have recently helped two office staff employees to sign up to a Business Admin NVQ. We have never done NVQs for office staff before." **Workplace Learning Advocate, North West**

WLAs trained by the project from organisations that deliver community, mental health and social services also report using their skills to support learning for clients and local residents.

“Encouraged staff team to engage with Learning Supporters role, including on-line training resource, for own use and to enhance role as Link Workers supporting adults with mental health.”

Workplace Learning Advocate, North East

4.2.3 Employer networks

In Lincolnshire and Rutland, the project achieved an impact across workplaces by networking employers through the Employment and Skills Board. This allowed employers in a geographic area from different sectors (e.g. manufacturing, construction, retailing) to support each other in developing WLAs and WLA-stimulated learning. With prompting and support from the project, the employer-members of this network promoted learning and WLAs to other local employers, including supply-chain firms, leading them to join the network.

Networking an area’s employers and their WLAs in this way offers various economies of scale and conveniences in relation to sharing resources and learning activities, WLA training, communication among and beyond network members and work with third parties such as learning providers.

Individual WLAs consistently reported that peer networking functioned as a powerful vehicle for their own learning and development in the WLA role.

As noted above (see 4.2.1.2), by working through business support organisations the project succeeded accessing ready-made networks of micro and small employers. Economies of scale were crucial in these contexts and, due these companies’ typical lack of any L&D infrastructure, the value added to these employers and their employees by the WLA role was different in quality to that added in larger firms already operating an L&D infrastructure. Networks led by business support organisations also appear able to take on a WLA training role.

4.2.4 Project-mediated networks

To encourage networking in the North-West and North-East, the project held two events for WLAs. One was a workshop with five experienced WLAs to discuss how they might take on a wider role as ‘lead WLAs’, recruiting and supporting newly-trained WLAs and working with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions. Participants at the lead WLA workshop did subsequently recruit additional WLAs and engaged an employer-organisation (the Road Haulage Association). The other was a shared learning event for WLAs, Union Learning Representatives and Community Learning Champions. Impact from this event includes planning of further joint-working to support learning campaigns and employability initiatives. Events such as these help support the formation of self-managing, self-sustaining networks.

4.2.5 Seed-funding for workplace learning activity

The project’s occasional use of very small one-off grants (£100.00) to seed-fund workplace learning helped to initiate activity by newly recruited WLAs. These grants also helped WLAs leverage support (i.e. match-funding) from their employers. By offering only these small, one-off grants, the project

ensured that WLAs did not become in any way dependent on the project. It also protected the sense of local ownership.

4.2.6 Value added from cooperation with unionlearn, Community Learning Champions

The project's cooperation with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions added value in several areas. It enabled the project to enrich its information and advice training with unionlearn materials, it gave the project access to additional resources (e.g. unionlearn workplace skills assessment tools) and led to a number joint events, in all four regions, where WLAs, union learning representatives and community learning champions were able to share expertise and plan further joint action, e.g. during Adult Learners Week. Such joint working is clearly helpful to avoid duplication of effort and ensure efficient use of resources.

"I attended a unionlearn conference at TUC HQ which was great for further networking and developing a further understanding of youth unemployment which was the final confirmation that putting focus into an Apprenticeship scheme was the right thing to do." **'Lead' Workplace Learning Advocate, North West**

4.3 Developing an infrastructure to support the WLA role

The project has made progress towards an infrastructure to support the WLA role by

- Developing a branded website⁴ to communicate the WLA role
- Validating the role with unionlearn, Community Learning Champions and other national and regional organisations (see section 2 above) and developing collegiate working, including resource-sharing, at national, regional and local levels
- Developing a range of training programmes (both on-line and face-to-face) and associated support and guidance materials, e.g. promotional templates and scripts
- Testing different ways to network WLAs

Types of WLA training tested by the project included

- On-line introductory course to inform WLAs of the range of learning opportunities and campaigns available to their companies.
- Two-day accredited information and advice course to enable WLAs to carry out information and advice interviews, identify and advise on individual learning needs, gather information on learning opportunities and promote a learning culture in their workplace/local area.
- Lead WLA training workshop to encourage experienced WLAs to recruit and support newly trained WLAs and encourage joint working with unionlearn and Community Learning Champions.

Response from participants suggests that training is valuable to promote the role, to recruit WLAs and equip them with essential knowledge and skills. Also that training addresses the key issue of confidence, a motivating factor for those attracted to the role. (It is worth noting that even the experienced organisers of a long-established workplace learning club reported significant gains in confidence and also knowledge from the project's two-day information and advice training.)

⁴ www.workplacelearningadvocates.org.uk

"I attended the two day Workplace Learning Advocates course and found it totally inspiring. It was also the ideal opportunity to meet up with people from different companies and to swap ideas. We left feeling up-beat, confident and raring to get started in our own workplace." **Workplace Learning Advocate, Lincolnshire and Rutland**

"WLA training has given me the motivation and a buzz about training again. There will be much more focus on training and support for members of staff who are wishing to participate in training in the future within the company." **Workplace Learning Advocate, North-East**

"Really enjoyed the course, every workplace should have a learning advocate." **Workplace Learning Advocate, North-East**

Employer response to this training indicated demand for another format not tested during this period: a half-day face-to-face session customised to the skills needs of a given employer. This format would include the project's two-hour on-line training course. For employers where staff release was a particular issue (e.g. micro and small employers), such a half-day programme might be delivered over e.g. two still shorter sessions.

Types of networking tested by the project included

- Strategic networking of companies at senior management level, e.g. through the Lincolnshire and Rutland Employment and Skills Board
- Employer-supported developmental peer networking of WLAs across employer-organisations, e.g. Lincolnshire and Rutland WLA network of WLAs with a regular schedule of meetings hosted on a rotating basis by participating companies (this network produces its own newsletter)
- Email networking, e.g. the Johnston Partnership's networking of WLA training graduates in the North-West and North-East (particularly around action-plans completed during training)
- On-line networking (LinkedIn discussion group)
- Occasional seminars and workshops, e.g. Lead Learning Advocate Preston workshop in January, Joint ULR-CLC-WLA Bolton conference in February

In the East Midlands networking was a central focus of the project. Here, the experience of the project suggests that the inter-organisational peer network developed by the project played a vital role in motivating and empowering newly-recruited WLAs to act in their own organisations. It also acted as a decision-shaper for project development in the region, consistent with the project's bottom-up ethos of 'by employees, for employees'. As noted above (4.2.3), WLA networks were strongly developmental. Network meetings allowed WLAs to share ideas and address practical problems as well as inspire and reassure each other with practice accounts from the workplace. They also allowed for cost-effective training (e.g. an hour-long session on presentation skills incorporated into a network meeting in Lincoln in March) and helped make the role and its resources visible to other interested parties, e.g. local learning providers. The newsletter produced by the group reinforced WLAs sense of purpose, achievement and value. In these ways, the network helped local WLAs construct a community of practice and a shared sense of role-identity.

Organisational support was crucial to the success of the peer network, since it demanded members take time away from work to attend quarterly network meetings. The key to securing this

commitment from employers appears to have been the project's strategic networking through the Employment and Skills Board.

Project experience in the North-West and North-East suggests that organisational commitment is harder to secure when WLAs are recruited purely through training courses. Consequently, networking is more reliant on third-party intervention (in this case, the project) to organise e.g. networking events and individual email follow-up on action-plans developed in training. Encouragingly, however, in the northern regions this support did lead to the emergence of peer networks. The development of lead WLAs appears likely to further this process.

5. Conclusions

The project has achieved proof of concept for the WLA role. It has tested promotional approaches and begun to develop a support infrastructure. It has also gathered indicative evidence of how the WLA role impacts positively on employers, employees and the wider community.

On the evidence to date, a workplace development approach that integrates information and advice training with strategic and peer networking offers the most effective approach to establishing the WLA role.

This approach can be summarised as follows:

- Approach strategic learning and skills bodies to identify employers receptive to workplace learning initiatives in a given geographic area
- Use testimony from committed employers elsewhere to promote the WLA role to the most receptive employers – employers find other employers persuasive
- Use those employers to promote to other employers to create a core network of employers committed at senior management level to trial the WLA role
- Recruit and induct WLAs in each employer-organisation, offering information and advice training to build role understanding and confidence
- Create a developmental, self-managing peer network to help WLAs construct a local community of practice and a shared sense of role-identity
- Integrate the WLA network into the local learning and skills infrastructure to ensure synergy and avoid duplication and/or conflict with other skills intermediaries
- Incentivise the network with very small, one-off grants to seed-fund initial activity
- Use conferences and on-line tools to link the local WLA network with others elsewhere

A modified version of this workplace development approach may be effective for employers without a learning and development infrastructure, e.g. micro and small employers:

- Approach business services organisations that support micro and small employers
- Use testimony from other business services organisations that have adopted the WLA role to promote the role as a way of adding value to the organisation's service offer
- Recruit and induct a member of the business services organisation as a WLA, offering information and advice training to build role understanding and confidence

- With the business services organisation, promote the WLA role to the micro and small employers served by the organisation, as an affordable way to build learning and development expertise
- Recruit and induct WLAs from the micro and small employers, offering information and advice training to build role understanding and confidence
- Create a developmental, self-managing peer network to help WLAs construct a local community of practice and a shared sense of role-identity
- Integrate the WLA network into the local learning and skills infrastructure to ensure synergy and avoid duplication and/or conflict with other skills intermediaries
- Incentivise the network with very small, one-off grants to seed-fund initial activity
- Use conferences and on-line tools to link the local WLA network with others elsewhere

These approaches would probably require and certainly benefit from an on-going support infrastructure to

- Manage the brand
- Assure quality
- Administer any revenue (e.g. employer subscriptions)/funding (e.g. seed-funding)
- Support training and research, including conferences, seminars
- Develop and disseminate resources, including website and social media
- Assure strategic synergy with other organisations within the learning and skills infrastructure

The project has made some initial headway in developing aspects of this infrastructure. Specifically it has developed branding, built links with key organisations involved in similar work, created a national website with guidance and resource materials and developed a programme of training.

Overall, results suggest the project has achieved proof of concept for the WLA role. The role has won support in organisations of varying sizes across a range of sectors in different parts of the country.

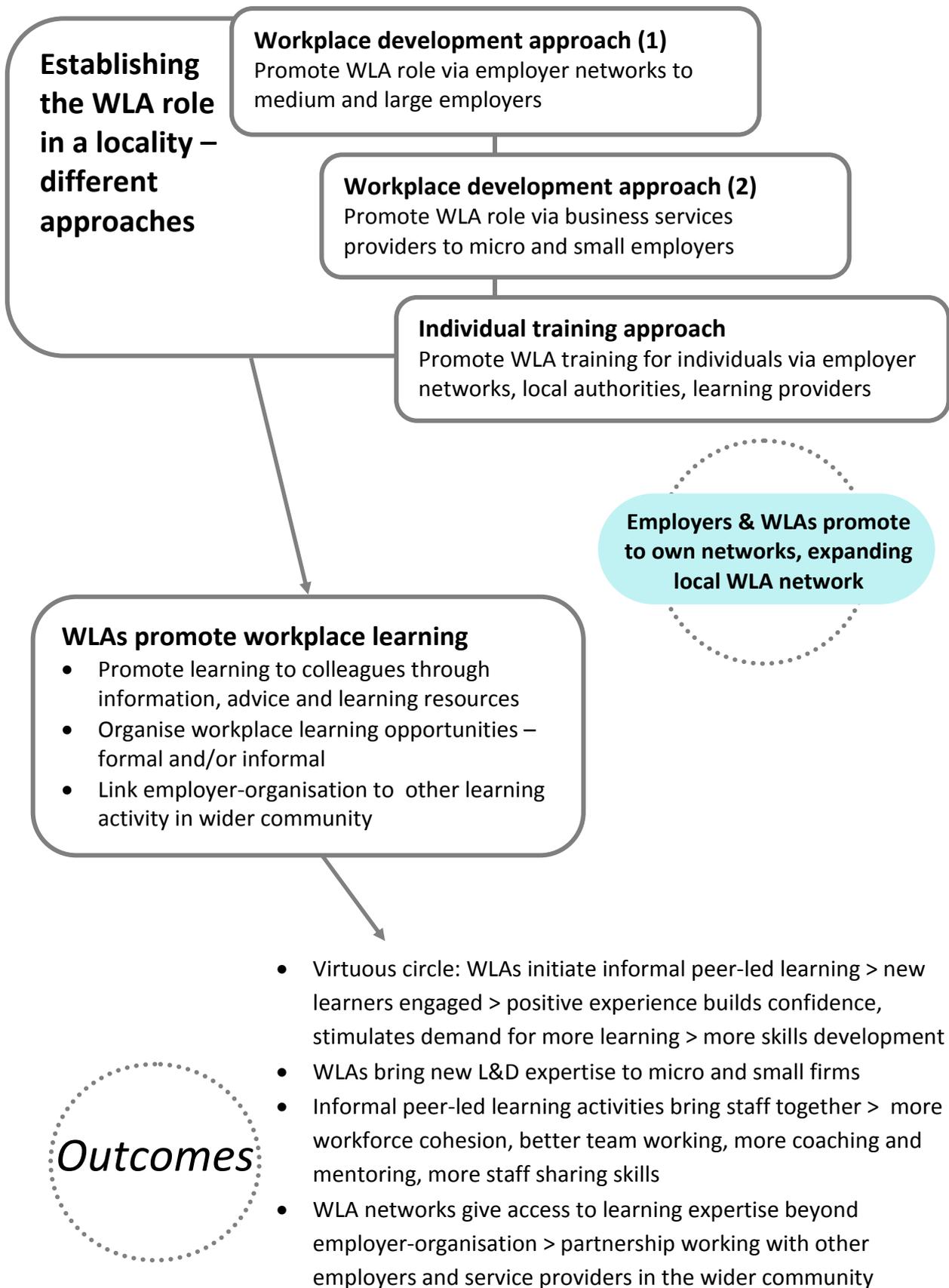
Appendix 1. Participating employers

Companies and organisations actively engaged with Workplace Learning Advocates

Midlands (including Lincolnshire and Rutland)

1. **Gelder Group** national construction company
 - a. Head office, Sturton on Stowe, Lincs
 - b. Kettering office, Northants
 - c. Barlborough office, Derbyshire
2. **RPC Containers** (Oakham, Rutland) manufacturer of injection moulded open-top polypropylene containers
3. **Forum Packaging Ltd** (Horncastle, Lincs) manufacturer of paper sacks and packaging
4. **Lincolnshire Co-operative** (Lincoln, Lincs) large retail co-operative
5. **Longhurst Group** (Boston, Lincs) independent provider of homes, care and support services
 - a. **Spire Homes** (Rushden, Northants) social housing provider throughout Northamptonshire and Rutland
 - b. **Longhurst & Havelok Homes** (Boston, Lincs) providing affordable homes for rent and sale, as well as a specialist provider of retirement leasehold schemes, and care and support services
 - c. **Friendship Care & Housing** (Nottingham and Midlands) providing homes, care and support services
6. **Mortons of Horncastle** (Horncastle, Lincs) publishing company
7. **BG Futures** (Lincoln) hub for small businesses
8. **Ruscello Management Services Ltd** (Lincoln) independent business management consultancy
9. **Skills Reach** (Lincoln) independent business management consultancy
10. **EPICTs** (Lincoln) training company offering comprehensive range of ICT continuous professional development courses for primary schools
11. **Tots on Tour** (Lincoln) organisation that works with families and professionals to enhance children's early communication and language skills
12. **New Youth Theatre** (Lincoln) drama classes and productions for children aged 3 to 16 years
13. **Multi Sports Pro** (Lincoln) provider of effective professional physical education training
14. **Blink Creative** (Lincoln) creative agency specialising in branding, web design, photography and product design
15. **RJL** (Lincoln)
16. **Amethyst Health Screening** (Lincoln) independent health screening for corporate businesses and individuals

Appendix 2. Logic model for WLA role



Appendix 3. Project activity by region

North West

- 41 employees have received WLA training, including
 - Two-hour on-line training course completed at various times in Wigan, Warrington, Liverpool and West Cumbria by 34 employees
 - Two-day, accredited Information and Advice course completed in Preston on 23 February and 16 March 2012 by five learners, four of whom had previously completed the two-hour on-line training course
 - Two-day, accredited Information and Advice course completed in Wallsend, North Tyneside on 19 and 26 January 2012 by one learner based in the North West
 - Half-day Lead Learning Advocate workshop completed in Preston on 25 January 2012, by five experienced WLAs trained previous to this project
- Participating employees come from 38 SMEs and large companies operating in a diverse range of sectors including leisure and tourism, sports, food processing, recruitment, engineering, IT services, telesales, transport and social care
- Half-day networking seminar in Penrith on 29 March, attended by 31 delegates, including seven WLAs, four ULRs and 11 CLCs from NW and NE regions

North East

- 21 employees have received WLA training, including
 - Two-hour on-line training course completed at various times in Billingham, Newcastle and other venues by eight employees
 - Two-day, accredited Information and Advice course completed in Wallsend, North Tyneside on 19 and 26 January by seven North East learners
 - Two-day, accredited Information and Advice course completed in Gateshead on 7 and 14 March by seven learners, one of whom had previously completed the two-hour on-line training course
 - One-hour briefing session attended on Teeside on 31 January, by one employee each from two local taxi firms
- Trained employees come from a total of 18 SMEs and large companies operating in a diverse range of sectors including hospitality, manufacturing, waste management and recycling, design services, community services, environmental services, transport, mental health services, business support services, childcare services

East Midlands

- 20 employees from ten employers recruited, trained and recognised by their employers as WLAs
- Sectors represented include food retailing, printing, manufacturing, construction, social care, business services
- Training included
 - Three hours of workshop training how to set up learning clubs and activities
 - Taster course on Information and Advice (network meeting, Horncastle, 24 November 2011)
 - Two-day, accredited Information and Advice course (Horncastle, 2 and 9 February 2012)
 - Taster course on Presentation skills (network meeting, Lincolnshire, 8 March 2012)
- In their workplaces, WLAs led seven workplace learning activities that attracted a total of 67 participants.

London

- Ten employer-organisations engaged
- Sectors represented include business services, community services, construction, social care
- Training scheduled for 10 WLAs

Cheltenham

- Work in local horse-racing sector through National Association of Stable Staff (NASS)
- Learning opportunities created for staff of local horse-racing employers

Appendix 4. Job roles of WLAs trained by the project

Job roles of participants on the project's two day information and advice training courses:

North-East (January 2012)

Training and Development Manager (Waste management sector)

Player Development Manager (Active Leisure sector)

Head Player Development Manager (Active Leisure sector)

Supervisor (Waste management /recycling and retail sectors)

Unit Manager (Waste management /recycling sector)

Tours Co-ordinator/Contracts Advisor (Transport sector)

Service Worker (Mental health sector)

Development Worker (Community services sector)

East Midlands (February 2012)

Housing Support Worker (Community services sector)

Learning and Development Advisor (Retail sector, food)

HR Placement Student (Retail sector, food)

Operations Manager (Manufacturing sector, packaging)

Manufacturing Team Leader (Manufacturing sector, packaging)

HR Manager (Manufacturing sector, packaging)

Service Claims Manager (Financial services sector, insurance)

Magazine designer (Publishing sector)

Apprenticeship Development Manager (Construction sector)

North-West (February 2012)

HR Administrator (Engineering sector)

Recruitment Consultant (Business services sector)

Personal Assistant (IT sector, Telesales)

HR Recruitment Executive (Business services sector, IT)

Education Officer, Visitor Attraction (Leisure sector)

North-East (March 2012)

Volunteer co-ordinator, conservation charity (Leisure/environment management sectors)

Admin officer, conservation charity (Leisure/environment management sectors)

Office/Accounts Manager (Design sector)

Director (Social care sector)

Nursery Nurse (Social care sector)

HR Officer, Business Support & Office Space (Business services sector)

Office Manager (Legal services sector)