

**Immigration Appointment Pilot
(Wales & the South West)
Evaluation**

April – June 2009

October 2009

Immigration Appointment Pilot (Wales & South West) Evaluation

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1. GLOSSARY

1.1 Terms used in the Evaluation

- **Access date** – the date on which the appointment was made for the client by the Operator
- **Adviser:** an Adviser provides legal advice on behalf of their organisation under the terms of the LSC Unified Contract specification.
- **Appointment:** an Appointment is a **booked** Slot.
- **Appointment Booking System (ABS):** this is the Internet based appointment system, which was created for testing in Social Welfare Categories.
- **Appointment date:** the date on which the appointment with the Adviser is scheduled for.
- **Diary:** each Adviser will have one or more Diaries. Each Diary will have an associated Office, allowing an Adviser to set up different days at different Offices. Diaries 'inherit' their Office's Accessibility Options.
- **Liaison Officer:** the individual within each Provider and the LSC who acted as primary point of contact during the pilot.
- **No Shows:** an instance where an applicant fails to attend their scheduled appointment with a particular provider. Under both the Paper Rota and the VAS, the provider is entitled to claim upto 1 hour of attendance time for each No Show.
- **Office:** an office or premises of an Organisation which customers can visit to receive advice. The location of an outreach service is treated as an Office within ABS.
- **Operator:** these were the individuals within the Welsh Refugee Council who met with the clients and offered them the option of booking an appointment.
- **Provider:** A Provider is an advice organisation participating in the appointment-making pilot. A Provider may have more than one Office or location. The Provider holds an LSC Unified Contract and Schedule to undertake publically funded Immigration work.
- **Slot:** a Slot is a period of time defined in a Diary when an Adviser is willing to take an Appointment. Slots 'inherit' all categories of law and Accessibility Options.

- **Voluntary Appointment Making System (VAS)** The official title of the Internet based appointment system used in Immigration.
- **Wraparound Provider:** The holder of a UKBA contract to provide services for applicants in a NAM region e.g. to assist in applying for NASS support
- **WRC:** Welsh Refugee Council, the Operator in the pilot

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Purpose of the pilot

Following the introduction of the New Asylum Model (NAM) by the UKBA in 2006/07, a paper based rota system was organised by the LSC and administered by different organisations in each NAM area. This rota offered those clients who require legal advice on their asylum application, an appointment with a provider who was listed on that rota. The appointment would be made within the first few days of the NAM timetable.

A review of the performance of the rota across the various regions suggested that a number of applicants encountered difficulty in securing an appointment with a legal representative prior to the likely date of their Substantive Interview.

In Wales, only 50% of applicants were able to receive an appointment within a week of the request, with a likelihood that the remaining 50% may not be able to access legal advice prior to their Substantive Interview, which may be scheduled for day 7-12 of the NAM process.¹

The main aims of the pilot were to:

1. Reduce the time between appointments being booked and the date on which they were due to take place, as compared to the previous Paper Rota.
2. Increase the ability of a client to access legal advice prior to their Substantive Interview.
3. Increase client choice in determining which appointment they attended and which provider they chose to instruct.
4. Reduce the number of 'No Show' claims from providers compared to the previous Rota system.

2.2 The Evaluation

The evaluation demonstrated that the pilot was successful in relation to three of the four aims that were set:

- i. 59% of clients were given an appointment within 3 days, compared to 22% under the previous system.

¹ This data was obtained from the rota records from March to June 2008 (14 weeks) and December 2008 to February 2009 (10 weeks).

- ii. 100% of clients were given an appointment within 6 days, compared to 50% under the Paper Rota.
- iii. 92% of clients were offered an appointment for a date prior to their Substantive Interview, compared to a target of 90%.
- iv. Against a target of 90%, 84% of appointments were deemed effective. This compares to 75% under the previous rota arrangements.

Feedback on the system itself from providers and Operators was mixed; some found the system easy to use, some more difficult. The Operator's main concern was the speed of the system, which in some instances negatively affected their experience. Providers in general found populating and amending entries the most difficult aspect of the system itself.

The evaluation suggests that the system should be implemented as the preferred referral mechanism in the Wales & South West NAM region, replacing the current Paper Rota however further amendments to the system should be considered to improve its efficiency for users.

The evaluation also suggests that the Welsh Refugee Council should continue to act as the VAS Operator in the region. This will be dependent on the WRC continuing to hold the UKBA contract as the Wraparound provider in the region².

The system will also be pilot in two further areas:

- **North West** – a similar pilot commenced on 20 July in the North West NAM region with caseworkers in the UKBA Asylum Screening Unit acting as Operators.
- **North East Yorkshire and Humberside** – the system is currently being tested in the three Initial Accommodation centres in the region, replacing the current Paper Rota. In all three locations the Wraparound provider in the region, the Refugee Council, is acting as Operator.

Similar targets to those tested in Cardiff will be set in each of the above locations, comparisons between the areas and Cardiff will also be included in any future evaluations.

If successful in each of the pilot areas, the LSC will seek to implement the system in place of the Paper Rota in readiness for the contract period due to commence in October 2010.

² The current Wraparound contract with the UKBA expires in 2011

2.3 Summary of Recommendations

In addition to recommending the implementation of the system in Wales and the South West, various recommendations have been made regarding the future operation and use of the VAS both in this region and elsewhere:

Technical changes

Building on both Provider and Operator feedback on the system, the LSC should design and cost proposals to amend the system to improve its efficiency and relevance to the Immigration category. These proposals should incorporate the suggestions contained in Recommendations 7 and 9.

Service Operator

The LSC should appoint a service Operator, who based on this pilot should be the holder of the regional Wraparound contract with the UKBA (Recommendation 14).

As detailed in Recommendations 1, 6 and 12, the mandatory collection of certain data should be incorporated into any agreement with the Operator. This should include but not be limited to: summaries of the number of applicants offered appointments and more specific detail regarding those that accept/decline an appointment. The agreement with the Operator should allow some flexibility to alter the information requested by the LSC, balancing this need against the burden placed on the Operator in collating this information.

The Operator should ensure that adequate facilities are available to allow the appointment to be offered, chosen and booked in the presence and with the agreement of the client (Recommendation 11).

Performance management of the system

The LSC should agree an internal process for administering the system, allowing for the regular monitoring of the four suggested targets for the VAS (Recommendations 3 and 4) and producing sufficient Management Information to support Contract Management and Policy Development as required (Recommendation 2).

In particular the LSC should, in conjunction with Providers and the Operator, continue to monitor the level of No Shows, and should the number experienced pose a concern then this should be subject to further investigation.

This process should also ensure that where providers are not completing feedback fields on the system, that this is identified and raised with them, either individually or as a collective.

This internal process should be agreed as a priority in implementing the system.

Guidance on the system and process

The LSC should ensure that the available guidance is reviewed and amended to reflect the feedback obtained from Providers and Operators, and that any amendments as a result of changes to the process or system in future are communicated to the relevant parties (Recommendation 13). Providers and Operators should ensure that members of staff with access to the system are familiar with the current guidance, are aware of subsequent changes and the mechanisms for raising queries, both technical and operational.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Background to the pilot

The need for prompt access to legal advice was considered and accepted by the Home Office in the development of their New Asylum Model (NAM). The LSC worked as partners on the North West Pilot in 2004, which was a forerunner to NAM. The Home Office also recognized the importance of incorporating access to early advice within an accelerated detained fast track process following unsuccessful legal challenges against the speed of the 'super fast track' process at the Oakington Reception Centre. The judgment found the process to be fair and commented that the access to on site legal advice ensured that detainees' rights were sufficiently protected. It is against this background and in this context that the LSC instigated a paper rota system.

Since the introduction of the New Asylum Model (NAM) by the UKBA in 2006/07, a paper based rota system was organised by the LSC and administered by different organisations in each NAM area. This rota would offer those clients who require legal advice on their asylum application, an appointment with a provider who was listed on that rota.

In Cardiff, the 4 providers in the Wales region were all included on the rota. Two of them would be on one week, the other two the next, and this pattern would be repeated each week. In Wales, the rota was administered by the Welsh Refugee Council, who would offer an appointment to those clients who attended their Wraparound Service.

Whilst the paper rota aided applicants in obtaining legal advice on their asylum claim, that otherwise may have encountered difficulty in doing so, it did also present several problems in its practical application.

One criticism of the paper rota from providers was that it did not accurately reflect the size and capacity of each provider, or their availability at any individual moment in time. The rotational nature of the list meant that on any one day if there were 8 clients requiring an appointment, then both providers on the list for that day would potentially receive 4 clients each.

The primary concern for the LSC was to ensure that access to legal advice was available prior to the client's Substantive Interview with the UKBA. The interview is a key stage in the application process, ultimately assisting the Caseowner to formulate a decision. The need therefore for the client to have obtained legal advice prior to the interview is crucial. This should ensure that a statement setting out the basis for the client's claim could be drafted and considered prior to the interview and that the client was aware of the nature and purpose of the interview. This is particularly important given that an Adviser would not normally be funded to attend the interview with the client.

From anecdotal information obtained from providers and the third sector organisations such as Asylum Support Partnership³, it was suggested that on a national basis, there were potentially significant numbers of clients who encountered difficulties in obtaining legal advice prior to their interview, despite the existence of the paper rota in each of the NAM areas outside of London.

Whilst this information did not suggest that this problem was particularly prevalent in Wales, the existence of the Welsh Refugee Council as the Operator of the paper system in the region, offering an appointment at an earlier point in time in the asylum application process than existed in the other regions, offered a unique and relatively straightforward opportunity to test a new system and see whether the timeliness of appointments could be improved upon. If benefits could be seen in this region, then it would be hoped that greater benefits might be achievable in areas where the speed of the appointment was suggested to be a more substantial problem.

3.2 No-shows and the cost of the Paper Rota

Under the Paper Rota, providers were entitled to claim up to the equivalent of 1-hour of attendance time in the event that a client did not attend their first appointment with the Adviser obtained through the rota system. This cost (up to £52.55) was designed to cover the lost time spent by the Adviser and in the event that an interpreter was instructed, a portion of their lost time also.

No Shows were less of a concern in the Cardiff region than in other areas across England and Wales, however data obtained from three of the providers in the area suggested that in the 4 months prior to the start of the pilot (December 2008 to March 2009) a total of 28 No-Shows were claimed, a total cost to the LSC of £1471.40

In addition to the cost of No Show claims, the cost of administering the Paper Rota would also be considered as part of the pilot, with a desire to move towards payment being more reflective of the specific demands of the system and the likely intake on a weekly basis allowing a unit cost to be used as the basis of any future procurement and Service Level Agreement with a chosen Operator.

3.3 The Appointment Booking System (ABS)

The Appointment Booking System itself is an Internet system that was designed and piloted in 2008 by Community Legal Advice (CLA) in the Social Welfare categories of law, in various locations across England and Wales. The system allowed providers to upload details of their office, the categories of law that advice was offered in, in addition to individual diaries for each of

³ Asylum Support Partnership Policy Report – ‘Access to legal advice for dispersed asylum seekers’ July 2008

their Advisers. These diaries could then be populated with blank appointments, which could be offered in any of the applicable areas of law.

Clients could contact CLA through their telephone call centre. If the client was then diagnosed as requiring face-to-face advice in relation to a category of law within the pilot and within the pilot locations, then the Operator would search for any available appointments that providers in the area had uploaded onto the system, and would offer to book one for the client. The details of the appointment were then confirmed to the client and electronic confirmation automatically sent to the individual Adviser. The Adviser would also then be able to access the client's details through their online diary, which would now contain a booked appointment.

The system allowed providers to then record whether the client attended the appointment, whether advice was given, also allowing the client to evaluate the system.

Through discussions with CLA, it was decided that given the existence of the paper rota for asylum, the Internet system offered an excellent opportunity to test a more efficient method of matching clients with available providers, in their locality. The two drivers within the system are the proximity of the client to the provider(s) and the time delay between the appointments being requested and being required. These two drivers tied in with the demands required of the paper system.

A copy of the system was created by the developers, based on the CLA system but solely for use in Immigration. It was apparent before the start of the pilot that many of the fields that existed and were copied from the CLA system, would not be relevant to the Immigration pilot and that if successful these fields would need to be either removed or renamed for more appropriate usage. This Immigration specific system is referred to throughout this document as the Voluntary Appointment Making System (VAS).

3.4 Maintenance of the pilot

During the life of the pilot, every Provider had a dedicated Liaison Officer within their organisation. That individual acted as the primary contact for communicating login and system information, guidance, requesting information and co-ordinating responses from their organisation on the evaluation questionnaires.

The LSC had three contacts during the pilot for any basic system, process or policy issues. For any technical queries, the system developer BSS, provided a dedicated Helpline and Service Desk email address for providers and the LSC to use.

A Users meeting involving providers, LSC and the WRC was organised at the midway point of the pilot. This meeting was used to confirm updates in guidance, to discuss any practical issues or common best practice that had

arisen and to then look forward to the evaluation of the system and the pilot procedures.

The Pilot commenced on 1 April 2009 and concluded on 22 June, running for a total of 13 weeks.

3.5 Evaluation Aims

As mentioned above, the main aim of the pilot was to improve the ability of clients to access legal advice prior to their Substantive Interview with the UKBA. Three key areas will be evaluated to demonstrate whether the aims of the pilot were achieved:

- i. Were sufficient appointments available to meet demand
- ii. Was there a reduction compared to the paper rota in the delay between the date an appointment was made, and the appointment itself
- iii. Were the appointments effective

Due to a lack of data confirming the average timescales between an appointment-taking place under the paper rota in Wales, and the Substantive Interview, a reduction in the delay between the dates the appointment was made and the appointment itself would instead represent a likely reduction in these timescales and demonstrate the success of the pilot.

Ultimately, even where appointments were made earlier than under the previous system, their effectiveness i.e. the client attending the appointment and advice being given, would be key to measuring success.

The Evaluation will seek to review each of these areas.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data

The evaluation will meet its aims by analysing a number of critical factors derived from the following sources of data:

Data Source	Description
Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) Appointment Log	<p>This excel record was maintained by the WRC during the pilot period and was designed to provide data to summarise the number of applicants they saw as part of the Wraparound service and the proportions who accepted or declined the offer of an appointment.</p> <p>Data provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Numbers seen2. Numbers accepting appointments3. Numbers declining appointments4. Reasons for declining appointments5. Client CRN6. Date client seen
Summary of Appointment records	<p>Given the limited number of data fields in the system it was necessary for a number of data entries to be recorded in the narrative fields in the system. As a result in order to collate much of this data, the individual records had to be examined and the data extracted into a separate excel form.</p> <p>This data allows comparisons with not only the WRC appointment log to analysis the effectiveness and timeliness of appointments, but also to then compare this against the previous levels recorded in relation to the NAM Paper Rota.</p> <p>Data provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Client name2. Client Post Code3. Client CRN4. Date appointment made5. Date of appointment6. Provider7. Adviser

	<p>8. Date of First Reporting Event (FRE)</p> <p>9. Date of Substantive Interview (SI)</p> <p>10. Confirmation of whether the following details were recorded on the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Client's nationality - Language spoken - Need for interpreter <p>11. Confirmation of effectiveness of appointment</p> <p>12. Reason for ineffective appointment</p>
Locally sourced unpublished UKBA data	<p>Whilst the WRC Appointment Log provides an overview of the number of applicants seen and offered an appointment, it was also necessary to obtain locally sourced data to demonstrate what proportion of regional intake this represented. Given that only those applicants who require accommodation would be likely to access the WRC Wraparound Service, there would be a proportion of applicants (subsistence only) who may then not be able to access the pilot.</p> <p>Data provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total intake into region during Pilot 2. Total requiring Accommodation (therefore potentially will see WRC)
Statistics from NAM Paper rota	<p>Records of the previous NAM paper rota were also collated to obtain data on the levels of appointments made and the timeliness of those appointments. This data informed not only the targets set for the pilot but would also then inform any evaluation of the aims of the pilot.</p> <p>Data provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date appointment made 2. Date of appointment 3. Provider
No Show data	<p>Confirmation from providers regarding the number of No Shows, which occurred between December 08 and March 09 for comparison with the pilot period.</p> <p>This would be obtained from each of the four Cardiff providers.</p>

4.2 Data accuracy

As with any data recorded on such systems, there is the potential for human error, however where any clear inconsistencies or gaps in data have been identified, this has been flagged and any such data either not included within any analysis, or it has been further investigated to ensure the information is accurate.

4.3 Other information obtained

Feedback from Providers

In addition to the data obtained above, direct feedback was also submitted from Providers as part of the evaluation. The feedback focused on the operation of the system itself, the performance of the Operator and also on the potential improvements and further uses of the system.

The feedback was obtained through a questionnaire, which was to be completed by each of the Advisers who accessed the system through the life of the pilot. Given the varying level of use of the system, and the different roles within the pilot (e.g. Adviser, administrator), each individual's experience of the system would have been different.

Feedback from Operators

Similarly, feedback was obtained from the Operators through a questionnaire regarding the operation of the system, potential improvements and further uses of the system as well as their general comments on the working of the pilot.

4.4 Limitations on the analysis

There are no published UKBA statistics, which can be included within this evaluation, any future monitoring of the system should include where possible comparable statistics regarding size and breakdown of regional intake in the NAM area.

5. ANALYSIS

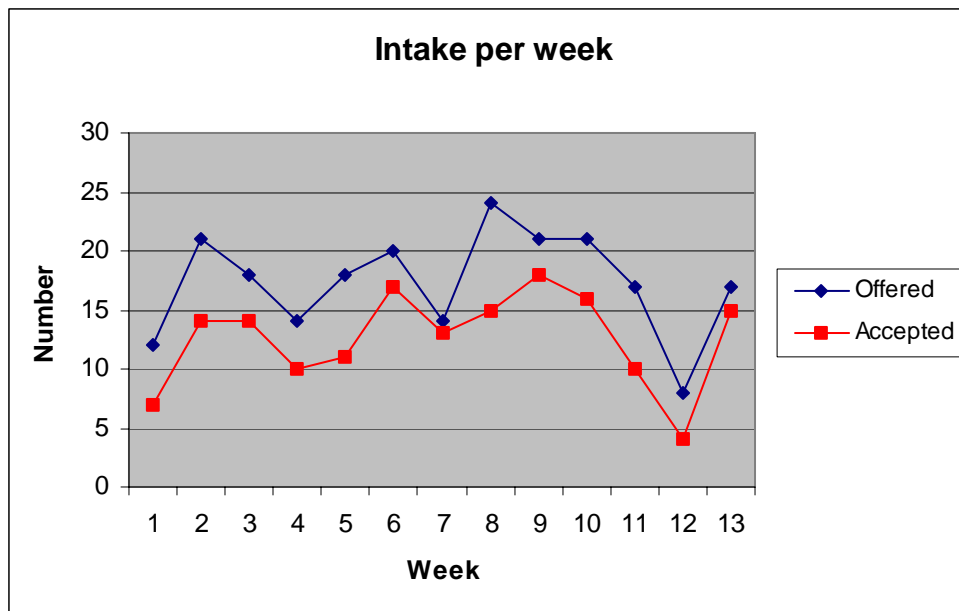
5.1 Intake and numbers of clients offered appointments

Unfortunately no data was available prior to the pilot period regarding the number of applicants who were offered an appointment through the Paper Rota, only the numbers who accepted.

The Pilot itself ran for a total of 12 weeks,⁴ in this time 225 applicants were offered an appointment, an average of 19 per week.

Intake fluctuated each week; the highest recorded intake was seen in Week 8, with 24 applicants seen.

Fig 1

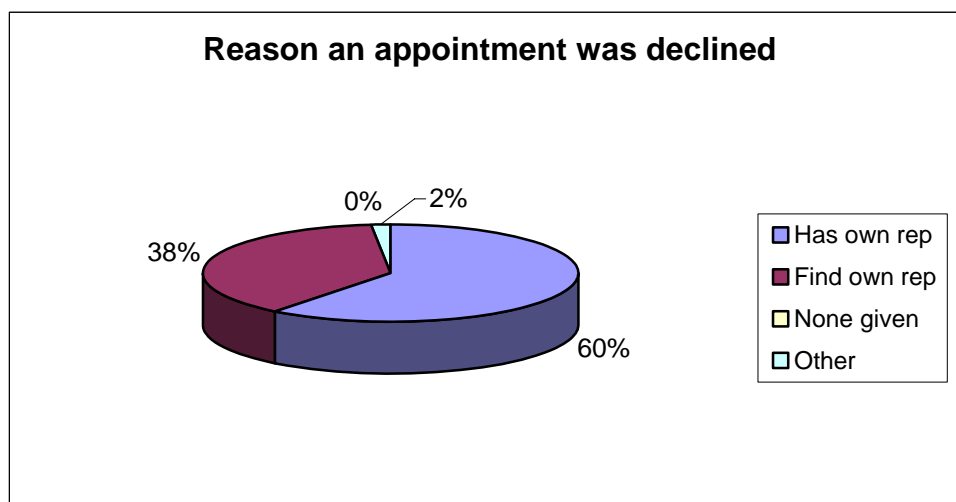


Appointments were accepted in 164-recorded instances, equivalent to 73% of cases. This proportion was relatively consistent throughout the pilot, the highest take up rate being 93% in Week 7, the lowest 50% in Week 12, which also saw the lowest number of applicants offered an appointment. Of the 4 who declined an appointment in Week 12, 3 of these applicants had their own representative.

The remaining 61 cases were generally declined for 2 clear reasons; either the client had their own Adviser already, or they would look to find their own.

⁴ The pilot ran from Wednesday 1 April to Tuesday 22 June, spanning 13 calendar weeks but only incorporating the equivalent of 12 full weeks.

Fig 2



It was not apparent whether those applicants who had their own representative already, had a representative in Cardiff or the South West or whether that representative was from a different location, such as London.

Feedback from the WRC suggested that particular nationalities were seemingly more likely to have secured a representative in London and would seek to continue to instruct them. Eritreans were identified as one such nationality. Unfortunately insufficient information has been available to analyse this aspect of the pilot in greater detail.

It was not possible during the pilot to ascertain whether those applicants who sought to obtain a representative on their own, were in fact able to do so and if so at what point during their claim. A lack of understanding of the potential consequences or difficulties in being able to instruct a representative further along the asylum process may have led to these applicants declining the service, or alternatively they may have had concerns about seemingly being allocated a solicitor, despite the independence of the Operator from the UKBA process. This may be an area where the Operator could play a greater role in informing the applicant of the potential benefits of taking an appointment offered at this stage.

Whilst no official published UKBA statistics concerning the number of applicants or cases routed to the region in the pilot period are available, locally sourced figures suggest that the number of cases routed to the region where the applicant(s) required Initial Accommodation was likely to represent around 60% of intake.

This would also suggest that around 90% of the applicants requiring Initial Accommodation were offered an appointment by the WRC. The remaining number were likely to be applicants who would have been routed to the region in June but did not arrive and attend the Wraparound service until after the pilot period and would have therefore been counted in that post-pilot figure.

Recommendation 1:

Where the system is implemented, the LSC should obtain quarterly figures from the chosen Operator concerning:

- i. The number of applicants seen by the Operator
- ii. The number accepting the offer of an appointment
- iii. The number declining the offer and the reason why
- iv. Nationality of the applicant
- v. Home Office Reference number of the applicant

5.2 Number of appointments made

During the two periods reviewed prior to the start of the pilot the following numbers of appointments made were:

Fig 3

Period	Total number of Appointments	Average intake per week
March to June 2008	171	12
Dec 2008 to Feb 2009	156	16
Total	327	14

The average number of appointments made per week during the two periods was 14.

During the pilot, the average number of appointments made per week was also 14, indicating that the pilot did not positively or negatively alter the level of applicants able to access advice compared to the Paper Rota

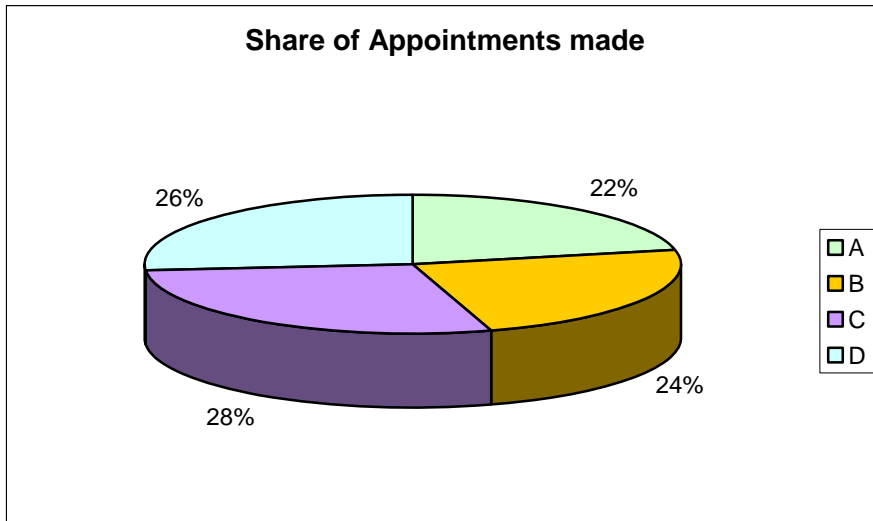
5.3 Share of appointments made

a) Paper Rota

From analysing the Paper Rota data from the two periods, over the total 24 weeks the number of appointments made per provider was as follows:

Fig 4

Provider	Number of Appointments	Share of total	Average per week
A	71	22%	3
B	77	24%	3
C	93	28%	4
D	86	26%	4
Total	327	100%	14



As the paper rota took no account of the capacity of each provider, but simply consisted of a rotational combination of two providers per week, it is not surprising that the share of appointments are relatively equal. There would have been times when despite a provider being on the rota, they would be unable to facilitate an appointment and that slot may then have been allocated to a different provider, this explains the slight differences.

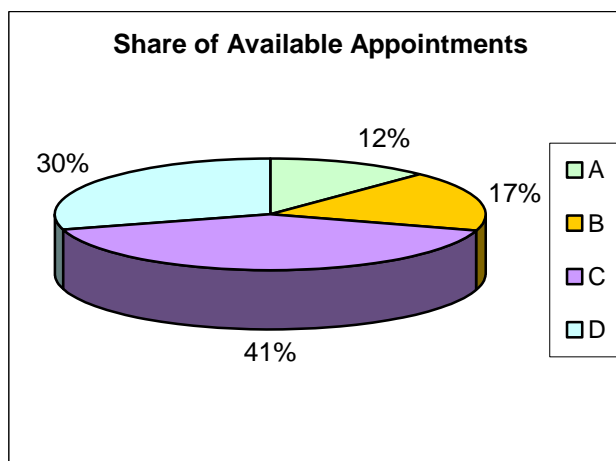
During the pilot it was expected that whilst the total average number of appointments may remain consistent (or at least proportionate to any changes in regional intake) the share of appointments might vary given client choice and the differing capacity, and availability of appointments.

b) The Pilot

The share of appointments offered by the four Cardiff providers during the pilot were as follows:

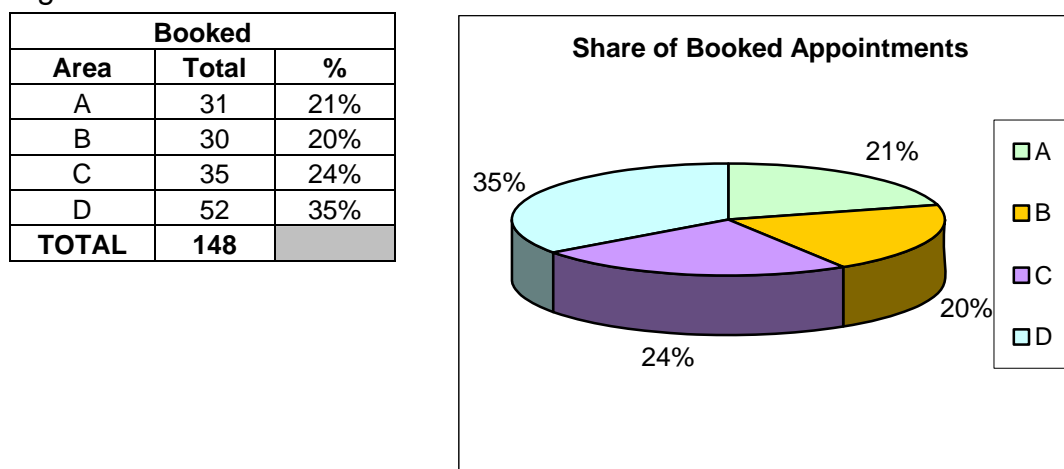
Fig 5

Available		
Provider	Total	%
A	99	12%
B	143	17%
C	337	41%
D	244	30%
TOTAL	823	



The share of appointments booked with the four Cardiff providers were:

Fig 6



It was not possible to predict the likely share prior to the pilot and several factors were identified during the pilot, which may have had an impact on the share of appointments made.

The main factor, which affected the share of appointments booked, was the time that individual Advisers chose to record as the appointment start time. Given the practical difficulties of the WRC having to move to another room to physically book the appointment, the client was not able to directly select from the list available on the screen. The WRC would select the appointment listed in first position on the screen; this would be the earliest appointment by whichever provider was closest to the client. Given all clients were accommodated in the same initial accommodation and therefore this point was fixed, it became apparent that all four of the Cardiff providers would always be ranked in the same order should they all offer the same appointment start time.

Different providers offered different start times for their appointments, some at 10, some at 11 and some in the afternoon. Given the above, on a daily basis the appointments listed for 10 am would always sit higher in the list than those at 11, purely due to time and date being the most important driver. Where two providers had appointments starting at the same time e.g. 11 am, the provider who was marginally closer to the applicants address, would always be listed first and therefore more likely to be given the appointment.

This goes some way to explain the difference that all providers experienced, both in their favour and sometimes not, between the numbers of appointments offered compared to the number booked.

For instance provider A, offered 12% of the available appointments in Cardiff, but received almost double that number in booked appointments, 21%.

Conversely, provider C offered 41% of appointments but only received 24% of booked appointments.

The distribution of appointments did change during the life of the pilot as providers increasingly varied the start time of their appointments, with some choosing to offer appointments before 10 am and therefore increasing the likelihood an appointment being booked.

The potential impact of the start time of the appointment is discussed further at section 5.4 in conjunction with the effectiveness of those appointments.

Recommendation 2:

LSC Relationship Managers should continue to monitor the share of both appointments offered and booked with each provider, as part of a provider's contract management and review against NMS uptakes.

5.4 Timeliness of the appointments

a) Paper Rota

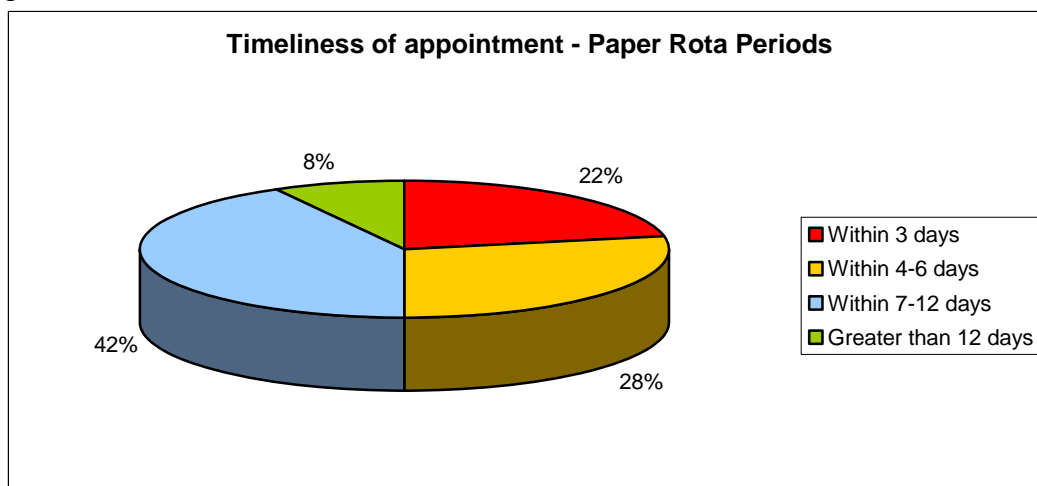
From reviewing the NAM Paper Rota in the pilot area for two periods, it was possible prior to the start of the pilot to confirm the average time scales between the dates on which the appointment was made (Access date); and the date of the appointment itself (appointment date) under this previous rota system. The NAM timetable is in Calendar days; the analysis therefore mirrors this.

The two periods reviewed were March to June 2008 (14 weeks) and December 2008 to February 2009 (10 weeks).

Across the 327 appointments, the average time delay between the Access date and the Appointment Date was 7 Calendar days

- 22% of appointments were within 3 calendar days of the access date
- 28% were between 4-6 days after the access date
- 50% were within 6 days of the access date
- 42% were between 7-12 days after the access date
- 8% were over 12 days after the access date

Fig 7



In relation to the time delay between the appointment and the Interview date, this data was not available from the Paper rota record, however from the Home Office timetable, the interview may take place between days 7-12, therefore it is likely that around 50% (if not more) may have either had their first appointment scheduled for the date of the interview or later.

From reviewing the two sets of data it appears that within the last 12 months there has been a reduction by 21% in the number of clients who were able to access legal advice within 6 calendar days of their request, from 60% to 39%. These clients would have been more likely to encounter difficulties in obtaining legal advice prior to their Substantive Interview.

b) Targets for the Pilot

Three targets were set for the pilot relating to the timeliness of the appointments. The meeting of these targets would assist in demonstrating the success of the pilot in improving the timeliness of appointment making process compared to the previous paper rota.

All of these targets relate to cases in which the relevant data was available.

The targets were:

1. For an appointment date to be within 3 days of the access date in at least 50% of cases
2. For an appointment date to be within 6 days of the access date in at least 90% of cases
3. For an appointment date to be before the Substantive Interview date in 90% of cases.

Given that the Wraparound provider would normally meet with the applicant on around day 2-4, this would allow potentially a further 3-5 days before the earliest point at which their Substantive Interview may take place. It will therefore be a key measure of success of the pilot, whether or not the appointment date can be for a date within this timescale.

As data confirming the Substantive Interview date was not always available to the WRC on initial meeting with the client, the time delay between the First Reporting Event (FRE) and the appointment date would be used as a proxy to indicate whether advice had been obtained prior to the interview. As the Substantive Interview would take place at the earliest several days after the FRE, then if all appointments were for a date prior to the FRE or within 3 days of this date then it was extremely likely that advice would have been obtained prior to the Substantive Interview.

Where the Substantive Interview date has already passed before the access date, these cases will not count towards Target 4.

c) Performance in the Pilot

Target 1: For an appointment date to be within 3 days of the access date in at least 50% of cases

This target was met across the Pilot; in actuality clients were able to secure a first appointment with a provider within 3 days of the access date in 59% of cases, an improvement of 37% compared to the Paper Rota.

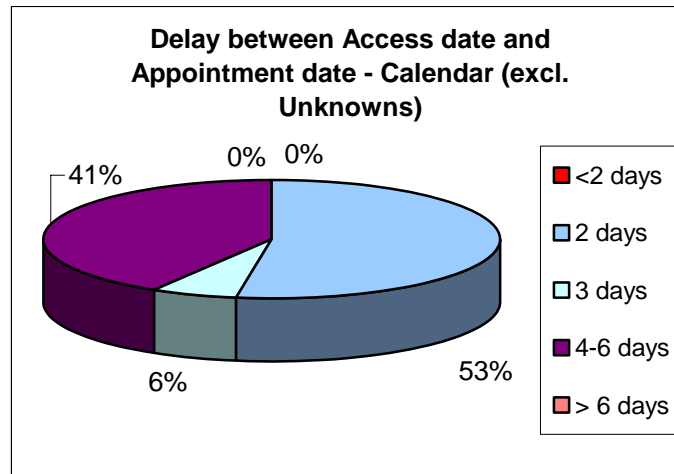
Target 2: For an appointment date to be within 6 days of the access date in at least 90% of cases

This target was also met across the Pilot, with an impressive 100% of clients able to secure an appointment with a provider within 6 days of the access date compared to only 50% under the Paper Rota.

The meeting of either of these targets would lead to an increased likelihood of clients being able to obtain legal advice before their Substantive Home Office Interview. Given that the Interview would take place between day 7 and 12, with the client meeting with the Welsh Refugee Council on day 2-4, it was vital that as many clients as possible were able to obtain an appointment if not within 3 days then at least within 6.

Fig 8

Access date to Appointment date			
Delay	Total	%	%
Unknown	15	10%	(Excl Unknown)
<2 days	0	0%	0%
2 days	70	47%	53%
3 days	8	5%	6%
4-6 days	55	37%	41%
> 6 days	0	0%	0%
Average	3		



Target 3: For an appointment date to be before the Substantive Interview date in 90% of cases.

Fig 9

148			
Delay	Total	%	
Unknown	12	8%	
Prior	125	84%	92%
After	11	7%	8%

Given the unavailability of the Interview date in the majority of cases, a proxy date was used in its absence. Where an appointment was within 3 days of the FRE, it was then assumed that this would also be prior to the as yet unscheduled interview-taking place.

Using this proxy in addition to the data available concerning the interview date, a total of 92% of cases were assumed to have had an initial appointment before their Substantive Interview date, compared to a target of 90%.

Recommendation 3:

The LSC should incorporate all three Time targets into the performance monitoring of the Voluntary Appointment Scheme. Providers should also be encouraged to update the appointment details confirming the interview date once scheduled.

The targets should be:

- i. For at least 50% of applicants to have an appointment scheduled within 3 days of the access date
- ii. For at least 100% of applicants to have an appointment scheduled within 6 days of the access date
- iii. For the initial appointment to be scheduled for a date prior to the Substantive Interview in 90% of cases.

5.5 Effective appointments and No-Show claims

Under both the paper NAM rota and the Appointment Pilot, providers have been able to submit claims for costs in relation to clients who did not attend their scheduled appointment made through that system.

The LSC allows providers to claims costs up to the value of £52.55 for each NAM no-show. These costs may be a combination of Profit Costs and Disbursements, but the total of the two should not exceed this value.

a) Paper Rota

Three of the four Cardiff providers confirmed the number of No Shows for the period December 2008 to February 2009; totalling 28, equivalent to a total of £1471.40. These three providers received 114 of the 156 appointments made between December and February; therefore the effectiveness rating of these appointments under the Paper Rota for that period was 75%.

b) The Pilot

The fourth target for the pilot required that an appointment be effective (i.e. the client attended and help was given) in 90% of cases.

During the pilot, of the 148 appointments made, 137 contained feedback on the effectiveness of the appointment. Of the 137, a total of 115 were effective with 22 being ineffective.

This equates to an effectiveness rating of 84%, an improvement compared to 75% evidenced in the period prior to the start of the pilot but just short of the target of 90%.

Recommendation 4:

The LSC should adopt the same target for effectiveness in the rolled out VAS; that 90% of initial appointments should be effective. Providers should update the appointment details confirming the effectiveness of the appointment in all instances.

The data collected during the pilot suggests that the start time of the appointment could potentially be linked to the likelihood of the appointment being effective. 100% of the 18 appointments starting at 11 or 11:30 am were effective, compared to 83% of the 100 appointments that started at 10am, and 77% of those that started earlier than 10am.

Providers suggested that clients who accepted these earlier appointments were more likely to encounter travel difficulties, would turn up late restricting the amount of time they would have to give advice and would be more likely to result in increased costs for interpreters due to higher travel fares associated with early morning travel. A greater appreciation by the client of the potential difficulties of attending appointments early in the day, particularly for those with families may lead to an increased likelihood of later appointments being accepted. Only 6 of the 146 appointments made were for a time in the afternoon.

During the pilot it was apparent that the client would not be able to view the list of available appointments as initially envisaged due to the computer terminal being located in a different room to the one that the client would meet with the WRC adviser in. This prevented the client choice aspect of the pilot from functioning as intended and as a consequence those appointments which were listed higher in the search results (due to their start date/time as distance was less of a factor) tended to be the ones that were booked. If the client had sight of the available appointments and had a greater awareness of the likely difficulties in making appointments prior to 10am, they may well have chosen an appointment an hour or two later, or indeed in the afternoon, leading to a greater likelihood that the appointment may be effective.

Recommendation 5:

The LSC and providers should review the potential impacts on effectiveness of appointments where the start time is before 10am. The Operator should ensure that the client is aware of any travel difficulties that may be experienced at certain times of the day e.g. rush hour, which may impact on their ability to attend the appointment.

Recommendation 6:

The LSC and Operator should where possible monitor the reasons given by clients for not attending their initial appointment, where a rescheduled appointment is required this should be facilitated.

5.6 Feedback on the system

Feedback was obtained from both providers and the Operator as the effectiveness of the system itself. Prior to the start of the pilot, it was apparent that some level of redesign of the system would be required if the pilot were a success as various fields did not reflect the data types that would be most relevant to Immigration given that the system was a copy of the one designed for use in Social Welfare categories.

For instance, there were no separate fields for the Operator to enter details regarding the FRE or Interview date, the nationality or language spoken by the client. Instead this information was provided in narrative format in the "Operator Notes" section of the system, making any extraction of data more difficult and allowing for greater inconsistency between entries made by individual Operators.

Operators in particular also agreed that such changes would be necessary as incorrect data entry in the current fields may result in error messages and delays to completing a booking.

Recommendation 7:

The LSC should investigate the costs and potential for making changes to the available fields to better reflect the data to be recorded. The screen should also if possible be redesigned to ensure as little scrolling or navigating between tabs is required.

Feedback on the system was mixed; most negative feedback concerned the speed of the system. Individuals' experience of this aspect would be determined by the speed of their own organisation's Internet connection; the faster the Internet connection, the faster the system can be navigated.

Recommendation 8:

Providers and Operators wishing to participate in the VAS should review their Internet connection to see whether the connection could be improved to maximise the speed of the system. Similarly the system developer should be contacted to discuss whether there is any potential from a development side to enhance the speed of the system.

83% (5/6) of the Operators questioned, suggested that delays in logging into the system were an issue, believing that this added between 1-10 minutes to the process. One suggestion was that Operators' usernames were available from a dropdown menu rather than having to be re-entered upon each login.

Recommendation 9:

The LSC should investigate whether the system can retain login details, whether that be the Username, Company Code and/or password.

66% (4) of Operators believed that the total time to access the system and confirm an appointment was between 10-20 minutes on average, the remaining 34% (2) suggested it took more than 20 minutes.

Specific feedback was requested from providers and Operators on the ease their experienced in navigating, populating and amending respectively.

43% (3) of Operators thought the system was Very Easy and 14% (1) Easy to navigate. The remaining 43% (3) had a mixed experience.

Providers' experiences were more mixed however; 33% (2) found it difficult, 33% (2) Easy or Very Easy, and 33% (2) mixed.

Unlike Operators, providers would have a greater need to navigate through various additional screens detailing their office, personnel and diary details; their experience in doing so may be linked to the frequency in which they were required to access the system.

In terms of populating the system, 66% (4) of the Operators found the system Easy or Very Easy to populate, the remaining 34% (2) having a mixed experience.

This compared to 50% (3) providers finding the system difficult to populate, 17% (1) very easy and 33% (2) having mixed experience.

It would be expected that only providers would need to amend any entries on the system, unless an Operator has mistakenly recorded data incorrectly and is required to amend it. All six of the Operators found this aspect difficult or very difficult, greater clarity may be required as to the circumstances in which they would be required to action any amendments and how this is to be done.

83% (5) of providers also encountered difficulty in amending the system. The providers who gave an example of their difficulty cited the removal of appointments as being the main issue, with formatting of the screen preventing access to the appropriate button to cancel recurring appointments.

Recommendation 10:

Further engagement should be had with providers and the Operators to increase understanding of how best to navigate, populate and amend the system, building on the positive experience of those that have indicated they find those aspects of the system straightforward. Where system issues are identified which prevent such ease of use this should be raised with the developers.

Operators also suggested that one of the main issues was that they could only access a PC to search the system and book an appointment by leaving the meeting room to access a terminal elsewhere. This added time to the process.

Recommendation 11:

To ensure that any delays are minimised and to allow a greater degree of client choice and decision making, as originally intended, discussions should take place with the Operator, to ensure that adequate facilities are available to allow the appointment to be offered and booked in the presence of the client.

Operators also raised an issue with some appointments not saving and therefore providers being unaware that a slot had been booked or allowing another Operator to also book the same slot.

This issue was identified at the start of the pilot and has been attributed to Operators selecting an appointment, completing the various fields but navigating away from the page before confirmation of the details being "saved" has been made. Technical and User testing has not identified any other issues which could cause this to occur and no feedback of further occurrences of this issue has been received since the first few weeks of the pilot.

Operators also suggested that there were instances of more than one Operator being able to book the same appointment for two or more clients. Again, as mentioned earlier, this is most likely to be attributable to one Operator not saving a completed appointment as the system automatically then prevents any other Operator, even if they have started to also enter details against that appointment, from going on to confirm it.

One provider raised an issue concerning their ability to update the system confirming whether the client attended or not. In attempting to do so they often had to save the amendments several times before the system reflected the amendment. LSC testing of this aspect has not found any systematic problems with this feature; this may be an area for further guidance and training.

Providers' experience of how long was spent on an individual basis accessing the system was mixed, mostly reflective of their mixed need to access the system due to frequent appointments or lack of. For instance two of the three providers who spent less than 30 minutes a week accessing the system were based in the South West, in which no appointments were booked during the pilot so no need to access the system to amend the details was required. The one Cardiff provider who spent less than 30 minutes was also one who experienced no general difficulty in navigating and amending the system also.

The three providers who spent 30-120 minutes a week on the system were those providers who also experienced the most booked appointments during the pilot and therefore would be required to re-enter the system to update the appointment and potentially upload further blank appointments. The time taken may also have been lengthened due to the difficulties that some experienced in amending the system (see 5.6.16).

Other technical issues raised by providers concerned them being unable to login to the system, though where this was an issue it was resolved by the BSS technical team and was due to an error in their login details.

Providers and Operators were united in their desire for the system to be quicker and easier to amend where required.

Most Operators thought that the length of time encountered in using the system affected its usefulness from their perspective and one would also have liked increased information from the providers regarding their expertise in particular case types to help inform any bookings.

5.7 Feedback on the Operator

Feedback on the Operator from the Providers also included feedback on the level of information that the Operator was able to provide, which would vary depending on the circumstances of the case.

There were instances however where the entry on the system did not clearly distinguish between those cases in which information was unknown or simply not recorded by the Operator.

In 25 and 28 cases out of 148 respectively, no reference to the FRE or Substantive Interview date was given, therefore it was unclear whether this was an omission by the Operator or simply the information was not available.

Similarly in 6 instances the client's nationality was not provided, in a further 3 their language and in 3 it was not clear whether an interpreter was required. This information should be available for the Operator and should be provided in all instances.

Providers in general believed that the level of information provided by the Operator was satisfactory, with only one out of five believing it was

insufficient. That provider believed that the Operator should also provide as a matter of course the client's date of birth, Home office reference, Language/Country details, address of client, and port/HO ref. Any second language if applicable could also have been useful.

The Home Office reference number or Port reference number is currently provided in all cases in the CRD field, the postcode of the client's address (which in the Cardiff pilot is always that of the Initial Accommodation and therefore fixed initially) is always included as this is part of the search criteria for booking an appointment.

Recommendation 12:

As part of the service agreement with the Operator, certain mandatory fields should be completed in all instances. Where information is not available at the time of booking this should be indicated. The developer of the system should advise whether further navigation can be prevented if a mandatory field is not completed.

All providers were satisfied in general with the accuracy of the information provided by the Operator, with only two noting any individual instances where unknown abbreviations were used or language information was incorrect.

Three of the Operators clearly thought that the system was good and would be beneficial to clients, particularly if the issues above were addressed. Two Operators did not indicate whether the system should be implemented further or not and one thought it was less convenient for them and the Operator than the previous system.

5.8 Feedback on the supporting materials and training

Three out of five of the providers believed that the User Guides were sufficient in allowing them to undertake the relevant work on the system, one believed the system was more difficult than envisaged the other believed the guides should have been provided earlier in the preparation of the pilot.

Two of the providers believed that further training from the LSC would have assisted in overcoming the problems encountered.

All of the Operators thought that the User Guides were sufficient in allowing them to undertake their further work. No further training was though necessary.

Recommendation 13:

The User guides for both Advisers and Operators should be updated to reflect the feedback obtained from this evaluation and subsequently updated to reflect any future changes. Both Operators and Advisers should ensure that all staff accessing the system have been trained and are familiar with the guides.

5.9 Suggested further uses of the system

Providers questioned whether the system could be used in any other Immigration case types or stage of the process.

In particular, one provider questioned whether any use in the non-asylum category could lead to a larger number of appointments which do not lead to substantive matters as the case is either out of scope or has no merit to warrant funding.

One of the Operators suggested that the system may also be useful to those client's who have failed the merits test following receipt of their initial decision and may want to find an alternative representative to review their case.

5.10 Future arrangements with Operators

The LSC should seek to appoint an Operator in the region to deliver the service.

Recommendation 14:

The Operator of this service should be the holder of the Wraparound contract with the UKBA.

6 ADDENDUM TO MAIN REPORT

6.1 Post Pilot findings:

Following the conclusion of the pilot and the evaluation of its findings, we have also reviewed data from the 3 months directly following the pilot in which the system continued to be in operation in Wales and the South West.

The findings in the post pilot period appear to suggest that the results obtained in the pilot are sustainable and indeed can be improved on still further.

6.2 Timeliness of Appointments:

- The pilot demonstrated a reduction in the average delay between an appointment being booked and it then taking place, from 7 days to 3, this has been maintained through the post pilot period also.
- The pilot also led to an increase in the proportion of applicants able to obtain an appointment within 3 days of the request, from 22% to 59%. In the post-pilot period this has increased further to 65%.
- Similarly to the pilot, 100% of appointments were for a date within 6 days of the request, compared to only 50% prior to the pilot. In fact all appointments were within 5 days of the request.
- In relation to the time between the appointment and the Substantive Interview, where both dates were recorded, the average delay was 3 days with the appointment-taking place prior to the interview in 96% of cases.

6.3 Effectiveness of Appointments:

- As for the effectiveness of the appointments made, during the pilot period this rose from 75% to 84%. This result was also maintained in the post pilot period.

Similarly to the pilot period there appeared to be a direct correlation between the start time of the appointment and whether the client did in fact attend.

- During the pilot 77% of those appointments scheduled before 10am were effective, in the post-pilot period this fell to 72%.
- The proportion of appointments scheduled at 10am which were effective rose however from 83% to 91%.

- The proportion of appointments made for 11am or later which were successful reduced from 100% to 88% (though only across 8 appointments).