

***Evaluation of School and Workplace
Travel Plan SSA Programme***

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Dr Stephen Potter (Project Manager, The Open University)
Dr Ben Lane (Principal Researcher, The Open University)
Dr Graham Parkhurst (University of the West of England)
Dr Sally Cairns (University College London)
Dr Marcus Enoch (Loughborough University)

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Abbreviations used in the report

AEAT	AEA Technology
DfT	Department for Transport
EST	Energy Saving Trust
LA	Local Authority
PVQ	Pre-Visit Questionnaire
SSA	Site Specific Advice

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The SSA Evaluation Study

In 2002, the Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned the Open University (in collaboration with University College London, University of West of England and Loughborough University) to evaluate the Travel Plan Site Specific Advice (SSA) programme, and to advise on the most appropriate way of providing Travel Plan advice and support in the future. The key objectives set for the evaluation were to assess the scope and quality of the advice given, the impact of the advice offered, the management of the programme, the overall value for money of the scheme and how the scheme might be improved.

As of the end of November 2003, 552 organisations (284 workplaces and 268 schools) had been offered advice through the SSA programme. For the purposes of the evaluation, a survey sample was selected to be broadly representative of the SSA programme as a whole and included school and workplace clients. The evaluation study was conducted through the analysis of existing SSA documentation (including Pre-Visit Questionnaires, Interim and Final Reports and Feedback Forms), and structured interviews with SSA recipients, advisors, managers of the programme and a selection of local authorities.

The evaluation study team completed interviews with 27 client organisations, documentation analysis of 61 cases and interviews with 9 advisors (representing 14 cases). Interviews also took place with SSA Managers at AEA Technology (AEAT) and the Energy Saving Trust (EST) and with four local authorities that have promoted the use of the SSA programme to support the development of Travel Plans within their regions.

It should be noted that, during the period of the evaluation study, Ministers agreed that the SSA programme would continue for workplace organisations for a further two years from April 2004. For primary, secondary and LEA maintained nursery schools¹, the decision has been made that they will no longer be able to apply for Site Specific Advice (assignments currently underway will be completed but no further applications from schools will be accepted). However, from April 2004, £7.5m a year for at least two years has been allocated to fund more local authority based School Travel Advisers and for schools to carry out surveys and prepare and implement Travel Plans. Part of the School Travel Advisor allocation will be able to be used to pay for consultancy advice if this is considered necessary and represents best value.

1.2 Results of SSA Evaluation

The results of the evaluation study show that, on applying for SSA, almost half of the clients had not developed a strategic Travel Plan. Of those that had, the plan was still at an early stage. Around half of clients requesting SSA were implementing Travel Plans on a voluntary basis, with around half doing so because of planning requirements. The most common ways of hearing about the SSA were via the local authority and via specific publicity about the scheme, and only a small number had used reference materials such as the Travel Plan resource pack or the telephone Helpline (provided formerly by AEAT and now by TransportEnergy). Nearly three-quarters applied for advice as soon as they heard about the programme indicating that SSA is perceived as an attractive service to potential clients.

The survey shows that, take-up has varied strongly by region, possibly suggesting variations between councils that promote Travel Plans and SSA and those that do not. From the parallel research on the Local Authority Bursary scheme,² it was noted that only 30% of bursary holders

¹ Independent nursery schools will continue to be eligible for SSA from April 2004.

² In 2001, the Department for Transport provided funding for 111 bursaries for Travel Plan co-ordinators, available to 84 local authorities across England for a 3-year period until March 2004 (Evaluation of the

appear to recommend the SSA to potential clients. It has also been noted that take-up of SSA has been greater by large organisations; for non-school cases sampled, the average number of employees per client was 2,500.

For the cases sampled, on average, the time over which SSA was delivered was seven months, typically with three site visits being combined with telephone and email follow-up from the advisor. In most cases, five days of SSA was delivered, although there were some larger organisations that received more time. Most clients and advisors were satisfied with the time available and provided anecdotal evidence that clients had actually received more than the official allocation. However, most clients and advisors indicated that they would have benefited from a relatively modest increase in the time available to assist with implementation. Some advisors also thought that their time would have been better used in linking the client's Travel Plan to the stakeholders in the Travel Plan network.

Analysis of the documentation and client interviews suggest that, when applying for SSA, around a third of organisations seeking SSA often lacked a clear idea of what help they required from the scheme, or the extent of the tasks they faced. Furthermore, over three-quarters of clients wanted the advisor to lead the Travel Plan process, rather than just assist with the development of certain measures. This suggests that a key role for the advisor is to perform a 'mentoring' role, to help the client to articulate needs and to provide strategic assistance. In particular, gaining the support of senior management is often more important than the client initially envisages.

The three most common tasks undertaken by the advisors were: travel surveys, liaison with external organisations, and general mentoring. This mix of activities reinforces the findings that the organisations' Travel Plans were often at an early stage, and that the advisory role tended to be strategic rather than focused on specific issues. These results highlight that a major component of many SSA projects is the learning process through which the client discovers how the SSA can best be used. It is, therefore, an important part of the advisor's role to manage this process.

There was a very positive response from SSA recipients regarding the advice given. In general, around 80% of clients were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with both the appropriateness of the recommendations they received, and the SSA programme as a whole. When asked what were the most beneficial aspects of the scheme, clients mentioned the following: the fact that advice was free, that advisors would provide strategic advice and support specific tasks, having an advisor who was time-dedicated, who could lead Travel Plan process and was an independent source of information and who could liaise with network including senior management. However, there was less satisfaction with support from other organisations. For example, clients and advisors reported a wide range of views regarding the help that local authorities and transport operators were able to provide.

In terms of the impact of the SSA programme, it is clear that it is having a number of beneficial effects. In particular, both clients and advisors reported improvement in Travel Plans, with new or faster Travel Plan development resulting directly from the advice. There is strong evidence that client knowledge and understanding of the Travel Plan process increased due to involvement in the SSA programme, which was also effective in strengthening the commitment to the Travel Plans at a number of levels, including an increase in staff time and money committed to the process. In addition, analysis of client perceptions suggests that senior managerial commitment to Travel Plans improved as a result of SSA.

Analysis of the Travel Plans developed through the programme show that the three main objectives of clients' were to: reduce traffic, address parking constraints and improve alternative travel options. In contrast, less than 30% said that their Travel Plan was intended to improve the attractiveness of the organisation to staff (or students) and only 12% were using the Travel Plan to

help meet the requirements of general environmental standards sought by the organisation. This suggests a degree of isolation of travel planning from other organisational functions.

The study analysed the effect of the SSA programme on the level of successful implementation of Travel Plan measures. Over half of clients said that there were travel planning developments or changes that had *only* taken place as a result of SSA, while almost two-thirds reported that developments or changes had taken place *more quickly* as a result of the programme. The survey shows that, around a third of infrastructure and organisational measures recommended have been successfully implemented to some degree. Whilst the overall picture seems broadly positive, it is also clear that nearly all clients examined to date were unable to implement at least one of the measures recommended by their advisor. The main reasons given by clients were stakeholder opposition or a lack of resources.

Clients and advisors were largely positive about the overall management for the programme. However, regarding the application process, clients indicated that it was difficult to provide some of the requested information for the Pre-Visit Questionnaire prior to receiving advice. In its defence, the application procedure (including paperwork) is likely to be filtering out less committed potential clients. Nearly all advisors offered possible suggestions as to how the current programme might be improved. These included: a streamlining of the payment procedure, more information and/or training, a more stringent client selection process and the need to strengthen regional Travel Plan networks.

A number of observations can be drawn from interviews conducted with the four local authorities that had supported a relatively large number (a 'cluster') of SSA projects. The first is that the most successful authorities (in relation to SSA) appear to be the ones who have a clear strategy for Travel Plans in their region. The precise strategies vary across the country and involve, by necessity, different approaches. However, having a strategy seems to be associated with success more than the precise details of the strategy itself. Secondly, successful local authorities are also those who have dedicated staff for the purpose (either funded through the bursary scheme or self-funded).

Although different in emphasis, style and extent, many of the local authority strategies investigated have a number of important features in common. The first is having transparent selection criteria with which to select those organisations that should be offered Travel Plan support. The second common approach is to develop formal or informal methods to identify which organisations are likely to be most receptive in receiving SSA (or other) support. A third success factor for SSA is for local authorities to take a long-term view of Travel Plan development in their region. This involves the use of SSA within an extended support strategy that extends well beyond SSA, both in scope and in time-scale.

1.3 Value for money of the scheme

Two methods were used to evaluate the value for money provided by the SSA programme. The first estimated the cost to the government of reducing car use and emissions via another policy measure, that of tax concessions and compared this with the implied SSA cost. The second illustrative method was to compare estimates of the values of the incremental reduction in external costs, environmental and congestion, with the costs of funding the SSA.

The calculations used information from the interviews to make estimates of the type of Travel Plans that were *envisaged* before and after the SSA intervention, and was based on the average SSA cost of £2,560 per site delivered over an average duration of 5.1 days. For the external cost calculation, a cost of 20.5p/mile for marginal external costs was used. Three quantitative measures were produced: the cost per vehicle trip reduced, the cost per tonne of CO₂ reduced and the ratio of SSA spend to external costs saved.

A mapping of a sample of workplace clients suggests that the effect of the SSA has been to produce improvements to the Travel Plans resulting in an average of 2% cut in vehicle use. (It should be

noted that this is the *additional* modal shift that can be attributed to the SSA intervention, not the total anticipated modal shift for Travel Plans receiving SSA.) For schools, a figure of 10% cut in car use (due to SSA intervention) has been assumed, partly based on evidence from the ongoing DfT project 'Making School Travel Plans Work'.

If the benefits of the SSA programme are assumed to have a lifetime of three years, then the value for money estimates are as follows:

- Workplaces: £29 per vehicle trip reduced, £27 per t-CO₂ reduced, cost-benefit ratio of 1:21.
- Schools: £48 per car trip reduced, £152 per t-CO₂ reduced, cost-benefit ratio of 1:3.8.

(Note that the cost for car trip reduction and per tonne of CO₂ emissions reduced is higher for schools than workplaces due to the smaller number of people affected per site and the shorter car trip lengths involved.)

By way of comparison, the tax concession on employers subsidising bus fares in the 2002 Budget was estimated to cost at least £140 *per annum* per vehicle trip cut and £110 *per annum* per tonne of CO₂ cut. Therefore, on this basis, the workplace SSA programme compares well to other policy measures to reduce CO₂ emissions.

Given the high cost-benefit ratio for workplaces, only very few modal shifts away from car are required to make the scheme cost effective. The reduction in social costs (economic and environmental) per annual car-commute avoided is around £600. It therefore requires just 4 behavioural changes lasting one year (or fewer lasting longer) for the SSA intervention to 'pay for itself' in terms of wider benefits. Therefore, on this basis, workplace SSA projects represent very good value for money indeed. The scheme is low risk, in that only a small number of modal shifts are needed to produce a net benefit surplus, and the overall taxpayer cost for the policy impact is also low. The cost-benefit ratio for schools is lower than for workplaces, but even so, the costs of an SSA scheme are more than counterbalanced in the first year. Each SSA project needs to only cut 11 car trips at a school for one year (or fewer lasting longer) for the scheme to pay for itself.

1.4 Management of the scheme

Overall, the evaluation team, clients and advisors perceive SSA to be a well-managed programme. However, some detailed management aspects do require attention. For example, SSA reporting requirements are clear and appropriate, but are not always adhered to by advisors³. Following reiteration of the guidelines in 2003, there is evidence that report standards have improved, with the incidence of very poor reports being low. Although this suggests that AEAT's quality assurance procedures are appropriate and effective, the evaluation team are still of the opinion that the use of an electronic report pro-forma (used for guidance) would raise the quality of the remaining poor reports up to a minimum standard.

AEAT already promotes the SSA programme through seminars, cross selling in Local Authorities and other general marketing. Although this is regarded as successful in most respects, more could be done to increase awareness for potential clients and to strengthen the Travel Plan support network. Clients do not seek SSA via all possible routes, many are unaware of other sources of advice and advisors feel that the programme could be better linked with other Travel Plan-related resources, such as websites, telephone helplines, and regional Travel Plan networks. Therefore, more information regarding other Travel Plan support needs to be made available to new SSA recipients.

As discussed earlier, most clients are very satisfied with the advice that they received. However, clients' views of advisors suggest that knowledge of local context, and of the organisations for which they are working, are two areas where advisors' skills could be improved. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of advisors establishing both senior management and local authority

³ AEAT report writing guidelines are presented to advisors at training workshops and are issued in writing.

involvement from an early stage. There is some evidence that the skills-base necessary to engage senior management could be increased and that, in a few cases, advisors were not making sufficient links with the relevant local authority as they are contracted to do. These are issues that could be addressed by the Programme managers in the delivery of induction training for new advisors.

The series of interviews conducted for the evaluation indicated that some advisors would have benefited from more feedback (from AEAT and other colleagues). In some cases, advisors were informally self-organising in order to share information and experiences of working with clients. This leads the evaluation team to conclude that there does not seem to be an effective support network for advisors as present, in spite of there being an existing e-mail group with an archive facility run by AEAT for SSA panel members.⁴ Increased support could be provided through the better use of existing e-groups and an expansion of website support for advisors to disseminate information, best practice and promote information and experience exchange.

The rationale of including the Energy Saving Trust within the SSA Programme management chain appears to have been to integrate SSA with the Trust's other best-practice programmes. However these other programmes are primarily about technical issues and not behavioural change. Although there is a case for linking SSA with other programmes within TransportEnergy, the evaluation team are of the opinion that, at present, the role of the Trust is not significantly 'adding value' to the SSA scheme and needs to be more clearly defined. Furthermore, EST has relatively little expertise in behavioural change initiatives and is stretched keeping up with its core responsibilities.

This raises a fundamental question as to whether SSA has been incorporated within the 'wrong' set of policy initiatives. Rather than being integrated into networks of Travel Plan advice, it has been integrated with technical energy efficiency advice. In addition, the current management structure does not readily integrate SSA into the developing local and national Travel Plan networks, with which AEAT and the advisors have better links. This view is supported by the fact that AEAT is already well placed to further develop the support network for advisors.

There is also a related problem with Travel Plan inquiries being accommodated as part of the TransportEnergy Hotline service. There has been a decline in the number of enquiries dealt with at a time when they would be expected to rise. This is related to the issue of the SSA programme's management structure, as Travel Plans requests are very different from the other Hotline enquiries. By moving to a Hotline system within TransportEnergy, SSA inquiries have been isolated from Travel Plan networks. A return to a dedicated helpline that links enquirers with people experienced with Travel Plan issues would be extremely valuable. It should not just be an SSA service, but one that could help integrate the range of Travel Plan advice provided both locally and nationally.

1.5 The future provision of Travel Plan support

The evidence from other countries that have introduced Travel Plan SSA-type advice schemes is that they have integrated it into evolving local and regional support networks, which have then taken over the advice function to provide it on a permanent basis. Although now renewed until the end of March 2006, there needs to be a consideration of whether the SSA Programme is intended to be a permanent government service that will continue to be used in the future, or a transitional scheme. If it is the latter, consideration needs to be given to what long-term support structure could be developed for the future. The options range from the delivery of advice by independent regional organisations to a long-term nationally funded function that is integrated with other advice sources, but remains a separate institution.

⁴ There is no equivalent of UKLAST for workplace Travel Plan advice as there is for schools.

1.6 Improvements to the scheme

Detailed recommendations on improving the SSA scheme are as follows:

- 1. From April 2004, AEAT continues to promote SSA for workplace organisations and independent nursery schools.**
- 2. The DfT continues to issue guidance to local authorities that, from April 2004, local authorities will be able to use part of their School Travel Advisor allocation to pay for consultancy advice if they consider that this is necessary and represents best value.**
- 3. That the SSA programme continues to be available beyond April 2006.**
- 4. AEAT should advise on, and send out, DfT Travel Plan resource materials, and advise new SSA applicants on local sources of support, at the same time as supplying Pre-Visit Questionnaires.**
- 5. AEAT should modify the Pre-Visit Questionnaire by adding compulsory questions that require applicants to provide evidence of the commitment of senior management.**
- 6. AEAT should oblige advisors to have regular contact with each of the local authority teams in the areas covered by the advisor in order to establish good working relationships. Programme funding should be made available to advisors to attend meetings as required.**
- 7. From April 2004, the SSA programme could usefully include short-term follow-up advice at half cost. There should be clear criteria for eligibility for additional advice beyond the (usual) initial 5 days.**
- 8. For guidance, AEAT should send out standardised electronic format in order to ensure all reports achieve a specified minimum standard. This should include: site issues; strength/weakness analysis; requests from client; advisor's recommendations; action-plan showing responsibilities; timeline; budget; and an appendix of materials produced.**
- 9. AEAT should use the Documentation Analysis Guide used for this evaluation study to monitor report standards. (A copy of the Guide is included in Appendix 13.6 of the Final Report.)**
- 10. As part of the process of appointing a new panel of SSA advisors (due April 2004), there should be induction training for new recruits as has occurred previously. In addition, every effort should be made to ensure that more than one advisor is appointed per region.**
- 11. When appointing a new panel, care should be taken to ensure that all new panel members have appropriate negotiation skills to work with senior management and Travel Plan partners. It may be necessary to provide additional training to focus on these key skills.**
- 12. AEAT should promote existing e-groups for panel members and expand website support for (particularly workplace) advisors to disseminate information, best practice and promote information and experience exchange. This could be achieved through partnership with other Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society and TravelWise.**
- 13. In allocating the time available for larger organisations, AEAT should clarify, and make more transparent, the process for allocating more than five days.**

- 14. The DfT, EST and/or AEAT should investigate new ways to support local authorities in developing Travel Plan advice for their region. Increased support could be achieved through partnership with existing Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise and UKLAST.**
- 15. AEAT should investigate the development of an accreditation scheme for consultants who provide Travel Plan advice (or a short term version of this if the Department is already developing a more advanced accreditation programme for the long term). This could be achieved through partnership with existing Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise and UKLAST.**
- 16. Panel members should be reminded of the existing position regarding the permitted use of junior staff during the introductory training session presentation given by AEAT.**
- 17. The overall management structure should be reviewed. While only one of several options, DfT should consider managing AEAT directly with EST liasing with AEAT in the areas where a partnership would be useful (e.g. where EST's link with fleet managers and local authorities might be extended to cover Travel Plans as well).**
- 18. There should be a return to a dedicated Travel Plan Helpline to be operated by AEAT, staffed by trained officers who have experience of Travel Plan issues. This should operate in parallel with the TransportEnergy Hotline, which should continue to provide basic information and would also transfer enquiries to the Travel Plan Helpline where appropriate.**
- 19. The revised dedicated Travel Plan Helpline should be promoted at a number of levels, including: general enquiries, PVQ request, SSA support, 2-hour 'gearing' advice and post-SSA project advice.**
- 20. A review of the long-term options for Travel Plan advice should be conducted by DfT (in conjunction with AEAT and EST) well before March 2006 to assess the strengths of different models of Travel Plan advice provision in the UK.**

2 Study Background and Objectives

In the five years since the Transport White Paper was published, the Department for Transport has promoted a range of travel awareness initiatives to encourage modal shift away from single occupancy car journeys. This is intended to cut congestion, reduce the local and global environmental effects of car travel and, for travel to school especially, to improve levels of health. In this context, the Department has encouraged the voluntary take-up of Travel Plans.

Following two pilot studies, in April 2001 a programme of Travel Plan Site Specific Advice (SSA) became available to businesses, schools, hospitals, local authorities and other major employers in England. This is part of the Government's TransportEnergy Best Practice Programme (formerly the Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme), and provides up to five days of free advice from a panel of 35 external consultants.⁵ The programme is managed by the consultancy AEA Technology (AEAT) with a budget of £0.5m for the period of April 2001 to the end of March 2004.

In November 2002, the DfT commissioned the Open University (in collaboration with University College London, University of the West of England and Loughborough University) to evaluate the SSA programme, and to advise on the most appropriate way of providing Travel Plan advice and support in the future, based on national and international experience.

The key objectives set for this study are to assess:

- A. The scope and quality of the advice given, including recipients' perceptions of the usefulness of the advice.
- B. The impact of the advice offered in terms of practical solutions and evidence of changes in travel behaviour that might otherwise not have occurred.
- C. The management of the scheme, including the extent to which any recommendations for change made in the evaluation of the pilot schemes have been met.
- D. How the scheme might be improved.
- E. Overall value for money of the scheme.

To receive advice client, organisations contact AEAT and are sent a **Pre-Visit Questionnaire** (PVQ) to complete (see Appendix 13.1). Having returned this form, and been deemed eligible, the organisation is allocated an advisor who is selected from a panel of experts in the preparation of Travel Plans (see Appendix 13.2 for the current advisor contract specification). The advisor makes contact with the client, visits the site, and produces an **Interim Report**, outlining the nature of the issues to be addressed. The advisor and client then decide on the best use of the remaining time. On finishing the assignment, the advisor produces a **Final Report** (the structure of which is stipulated by AEAT) for the client. The client is also requested to return a one-page **Feedback Form** to AEAT evaluating of the advice received. As of the end of October 2003, 560 organisations (287 workplaces and 273 schools) had been offered advice through the SSA programme.

⁵ For more information about the scheme, contact can be made through the following website:
<http://www.transportenergy.org.uk/bestpractice/travelplans/how.cfm>.

3 Research method and data collection

3.1 Research Method

The research evaluation examined in detail 27 cases of organisations receiving advice, selected to be broadly representative of the SSA programme as a whole. The criteria used to select cases included:

- The type of organisation (to ensure a 50:50 School:Workplace split);
- The region in which the project took place (to ensure that all areas of the country were covered);
- A range of types of site area (to ensure consideration of cases in city centres, urban and rural locations);
- The SSA advisor involved (to ensure that as many advisors were included as possible);
- Completion of the SSA project (as those at the beginning of the process were expected to be less able to comment on it);
- Cases where there were special reasons for inclusion (because of the innovative way in which the SSA was used).

Examination of each case included:

- Analysis of existing SSA documentation (including the PVQ, Interim and Final Reports and Feedback Form, where available);
- A structured interview with each client;
- A structured interview with the relevant advisor (advisors were asked both about the case study(s) in which they were involved, and general issues related to the SSA programme).

The first stage of analysis was an assessment of the Feedback Forms available. The forms considered a number of topics that a series of interviews sought to explore in more depth.

'Interview Discussion Guides' were developed to structure the interviews and the analyses of the documentation. Questions in the guides were either open response, yes/no response, or rated on a five-point scale (interviewees were asked to rate statements on a scale ranging from 1-negative to 5-positive). Many of their assessments are shown in the charts shown later in this report.

In total, 28 Feedback Forms were analysed, covering 11 schools and 17 other organisations. The study team also completed interviews with 27 client organisations, the documentation analysis for 61 cases and interviews with 9 advisors (representing 14 cases). Interviews also took place with SSA Managers at AEA Technology and the Energy Saving Trust and with four local authorities involved in Travel Plan implementation who promoted the use of the SSA programme. Half of the client and nearly three-quarters of the advisor interviews were conducted face-to-face, whilst the remainder were completed by telephone.

3.1.1 SSA Project Selection

The cases were selected so as to be broadly representative of the SSA programme as a whole. The criteria used to derive a group of cases considered:

- a) The type of organisation;
- b) The region in which the project took place;
- c) The need to represent a range of types of site area (*i.e.*, city centre, urban or rural);
- d) The need to include a large proportion of SSA consultants (who varied somewhat in the number of clients they had served).

Initially, a total of 60 projects were selected in order to allow for some dropouts as interviewing progressed. Of the 378 SSA projects underway when the research began, 49% of organisations in the database were schools and 51% workplaces. Hence, 29 of the selected cases were schools and 31 workplaces. These were then subdivided using the database classifications. Within the group of

school SSA projects, an analysis of the full database showed 68% to be primary schools and 32% secondary schools. Thus, 19 primary and 10 secondary schools were selected.

For the workplace SSA cases, the database provided six categories, which were NHS sites (27% of projects), Local Authorities (19%), Leisure and Retail (9%), Other Private (29%), Other Public Sector (6%) and Further Education (10%). This meant that the total of 31 workplace SSA projects would involve 8 NHS sites, 6 Local Authorities, 3 Leisure and Retail sites, 9 Other Private, 2 Other Public Sector and 3 Further Education sites.

Having selected the spread of SSA project according to organisation type, these were then split by region. From the database, the regional distribution of School and Workplace SSA projects was calculated. For schools, 4% were in London, 21% in the South East, 16% in the North-East, 3% in the West Midlands, 32% in the South West, 6% in the East Midlands, 15% in Yorkshire/Humberside, 1% in the Eastern Region and 2% in the North East. The strong concentration of projects in the South West and South East is notable (see Section 4 for a more detailed discussion of the distribution of SSA projects).

Workplace SSA cases had a wider spread, although as with schools, very few (only 4%) were in London. 22% were in the South East, 14% in the North-East, 13% in the West Midlands, 12% in the South West, 11% in the East Midlands, 10% in Yorkshire/Humberside, 9% in the Eastern Region and 5% in the North East. Table 3.1 shows the required distribution of the 60 case study projects by organisation type and region, in order to reflect the proportions found in the database as a whole.

Table 3.1 Project Selection by Organisation Type and Region.

Schools, 49% = 29				Workplaces, 51% = 31						
	%	Primary (68%) = 19	Secondary (32%) = 10	%	NHS Sites (27%) = 8	LA (19%) = 6	Leisure/ Retail (9%) = 3	Other Private (29%) = 9	Other Public Sector (6%) = 2	Further Ed. (10%) = 3
London	4	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sth East	21	4	2	22	2	0	1	2	1	1
Nth West	16	3	2	14	1	2	0	1	0	0
West Mid	3	1	0	13	1	1	1	1	0	0
Sth West	32	6	3	12	1	0	1	1	0	1
East Mid	6	1	1	11	1	1	0	1	0	0
Yks/Hum	15	3	2	10	1	0	0	1	0	0
Eastern	1	0	0	9	0	1	0	1	1	0
Nth East	2	0	0	5	0	1	0	1	0	0

Note: the percentages refer to the incidence of each category within the database as a whole.

Actual selection closely followed Table 3.1. Projects were randomly chosen within the distribution requirements, although with some adjustments, as certain workplace project types did not feature in some regions. A check was then made of the selected projects for the advisors involved. Of the 34 advisors, 26 were involved in the selected projects, and the level of involvement in these case studies were approximately in proportion to the consultants' overall SSA workloads. The selection was therefore viewed as appropriately representative for consultant participation. The Pre-visit Questionnaires (PVQs) of the projects were used to classify city centre, urban and rural projects.

In order for this study to obtain complete data sets from case studies, it was necessary that as many of the selected projects as possible should have been near completion or finished. Only 87 projects in the whole database were completed when the research started (*i.e.* as of 31st October 2002, although 96 had been completed by 28th February 2003). Just over half (31) of the projects chosen for this study were completed and this group was prioritised for interviewing. It was not possible to raise this proportion further without producing an imbalance in the regional spread or project type. As interviews progressed it was necessary to substitute some cases. This was largely because the

original contact person had left and nobody had sufficient knowledge of the SSA project. The drop out rate was relatively low and only four cases were substituted.

In discussing the selected projects it was agreed to examine the cluster of Travel Plan projects in Cornwall, Merseyside and Hampshire and also to include two 'premature completion' (*i.e.* abandoned) projects.

3.2 Data Sources

SSA Documentation

The four main documents related to each SSA case included: (1) Pre-Visit Questionnaire (PVQ), (2) Interim Report, (3) Final Report and (4) Feedback Form.

The research team obtained from AEAT and the Department for Transport all the documents that related to the selected cases where available. Document analysis occurred as part of the data collection process, the results of which are reported later in this report. The main documentary analysis was conducted using a Document Analysis Guide (see Appendix 13.6), which was used to structure the assessment of the PVQ, Interim and Final Reports. A separate and detailed assessment was also made of all the Feedback Forms. It should be noted that Feedback Forms were not available for all selected cases analysed as part of this SSA evaluation. In total, the number of Feedback Forms represents about 30% of the completed SSA projects.

At the beginning of the evaluation project, an overview analysis of a sample of the Final Reports took place. This informed the full document analysis and the design of the interview discussion guides. This analysis showed that the scope of the reports varied greatly. One source of variation is to be expected, in that the reports need to be tailored to the needs of the individual sites. Furthermore, in some cases the clients were well advanced with their Travel Plans and seeking detailed assistance, whereas others were at very early stages and needed more overarching advice and guidance.

However, the advisors only rarely reported their response to the brief and how they identified the priority areas for Travel Plan development. The reports also varied considerably in their length, the quality of their presentation, and evidence of interaction with the clients. Discussions with AEAT about the reporting guidelines indicated that, although the guidelines were provided to advisors during the induction workshops, AEAT provided more written details to advisors during 2003 to clarify the existing guidelines (see Appendix 13.3). Therefore, the evaluation analysed 24 final reports (associated with 24 of the 27 SSA cases) that were completed before the re-issuing of guidelines occurred (results discussed in Section 6.2.3) and a further 37 reports that were completed after the re-issue of the brief (these later reports are analysed and discussed in Section 8.3).

Interview Discussion Guides

Two interview discussion guides were used to structure the interviews with clients and advisors:

- Client Discussion Guide (see Appendix 13.4).
- Advisor Discussion Guide (see Appendix 13.5).

The Client Guide formed the basis of interviews with clients, which focussed on their specific experience of receiving SSA for a particular case. The Advisor Guide formed the basis of discussion with advisors and was structured in two parts; the first was related to each case with which the advisors had been involved, the second related to general issues related to the SSA programme (e.g. administration, etc.). The results from the interview analysis were entered into a database, analysed, and are reported in the sections which follow.

Access Database

As the project team collected data, it was input into an Access database that was structured in the same way as the Discussion and Documentation Analysis Guides. The analysis was conducted

either using tools available within Access or by exporting the data to an Excel spreadsheet and conducting statistical counts and text analysis within the spreadsheet environment.

4 Distribution of SSA projects

One issue explored in this evaluation study concerned factors affecting the uptake of SSA projects. It was therefore of interest to the research team to map the distribution of SSA projects and compare this with the more general distribution of Travel Plans across England (note that the SSA programme evaluated does not operate in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland).

Mapping of workplace and school Travel Plans and SSA projects was undertaken using a 2-digit postcode analysis to map data supplied by the Department for Transport and AEA Technology. (Due to a lack of available information, the data used excludes non-SSA related Travel Plans within the London Boroughs.) The results of this analysis are shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 (note scales used as shown by respective keys). The AEAT database also contained information according to SSA project stage, including projects that are completed and those that are ongoing. These were also mapped by postcode (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

In using these maps, it should be noted that some of the source data categorised the location of Travel Plans according to government region rather than postcode area. For these cases, postcodes have been assigned to each case. In cases where a government region covers more than one postcode zone, the code that most closely matches the region is chosen. Therefore, the maps are accurate to the size of a government region or postcode zone, whichever is the largest at that point. Although more accurate mapping techniques are available, it was felt that the level of accuracy offered by this method was adequate for this evaluation, showing sufficient resolution of project distribution across the country.

Fig. 4.1 Distribution of Travel Plans in England⁶

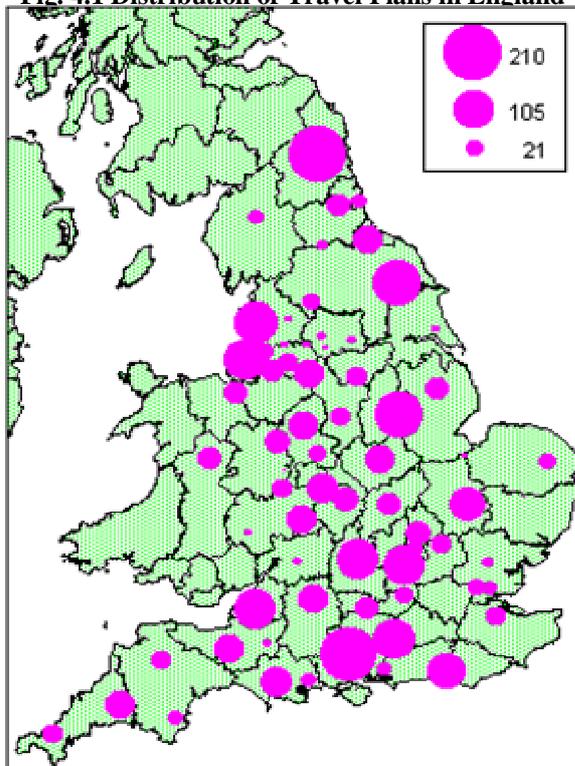
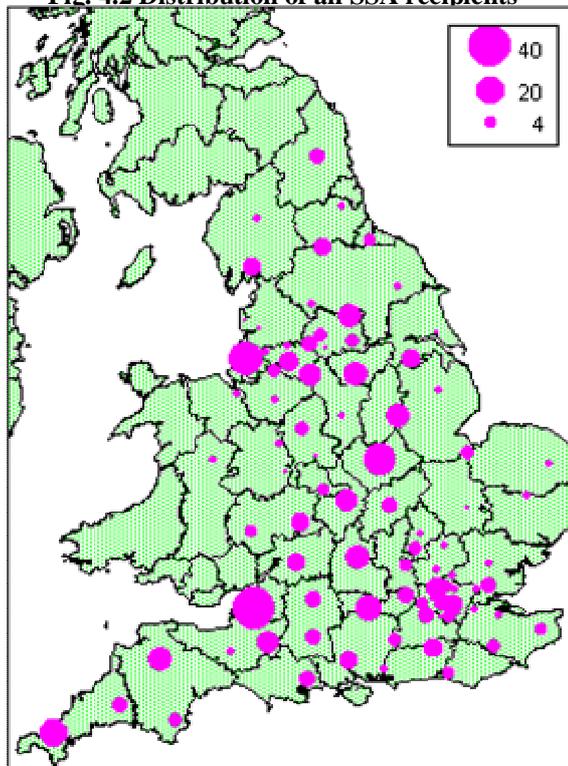


Fig. 4.2 Distribution of all SSA recipients⁷



⁶ Note that map does not include Travel Plans within London.

⁷ Data sampled mid-2003. Total number of entries (including enquiries) = 1288. Total number of entries with postcodes (including enquiries) = 1123. Total number of SSA recipients (England only) = 581 (3 unknown postcodes).

In general, it can be seen from Figure 4.1 that there is a good distribution of workplace and school Travel Plans across England with some high levels of activity in the North West, the North East and the South coast. Relatively fewer Travel Plans are apparent within the Midlands. From Figure 4.2, it can be seen that a somewhat different distribution exists for SSA activity. Although most parts of England are covered, there is a degree of clustering of SSA projects, particularly in the North West, East Midlands and South West of England.

If the SSA projects are mapped according to their stage of development, Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show that the first SSA cases to be completed were more often to be found in the South West, suggesting that this region was initially the most proactive in promoting the SSA programme. It is also clearly the case that the more recent ongoing projects are more widely distributed than the earlier projects now completed. However, there remains above average SSA activity in the North West, East Midlands and the South West.

Fig. 4.3 Distribution of completed SSA projects⁸

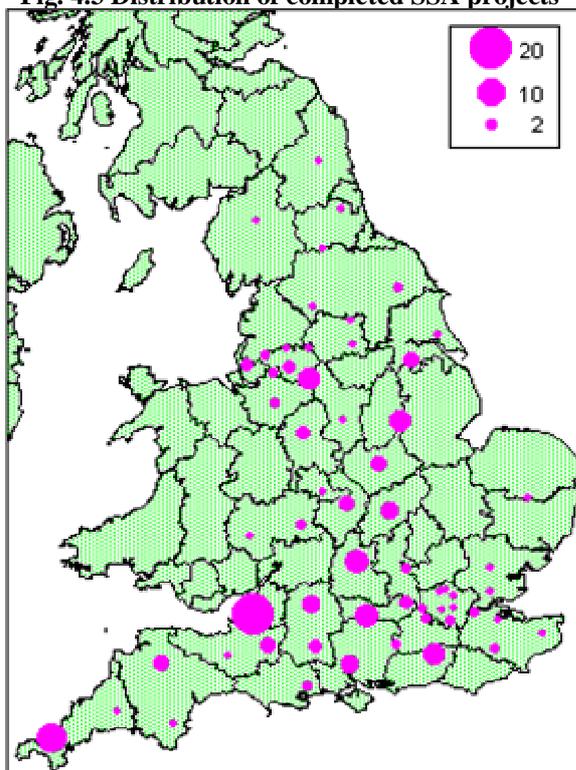
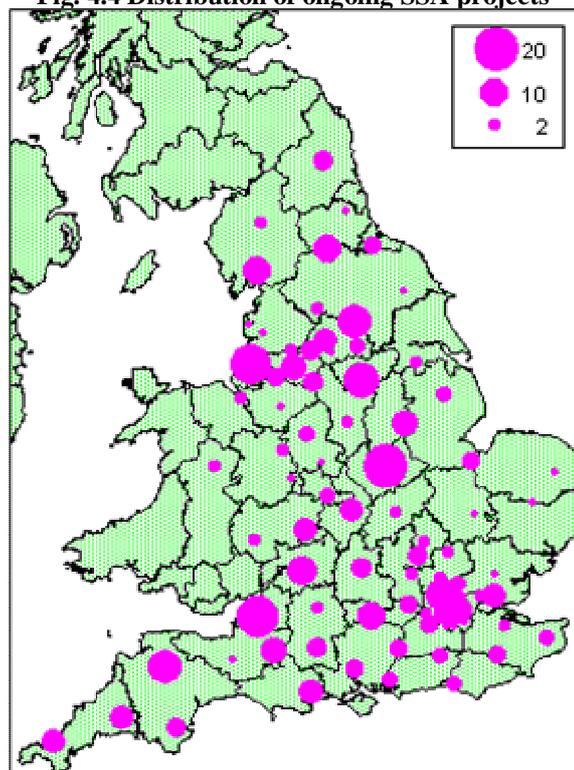


Fig. 4.4 Distribution of ongoing SSA projects⁹



Although a detailed comparison of Travel Plan and SSA project distributions with population density was not undertaken, the information was a valuable contribution to the study and was used to inform the evaluation study in three ways. First, the overall distribution of SSA projects informed the selection of cases sampled by the evaluation study (see Section 3). Second, where Travel Plan and SSA clusters exist, interviews were conducted with some of the local authorities in those regions so as to ascertain any underlying reasons for high levels of regional activity. Third, where significant discrepancies exist between the distribution of SSA projects and Travel Plans in general (e.g. the North East), this was taken into account during analysis of the evaluation study.

⁸ Data sampled mid-2003. 'Completed' includes: 'Final invoice signed off', 'Final report' - Total 168 cases.

⁹ Data sampled mid-2003. 'Ongoing' includes: 'Warrant requested', 'Joint application', 'PVQ returned' - Total 378 cases.

5 Analysis of Feedback Forms

This section contains results an initial ‘pre-evaluation’ survey based on Feedback Forms that were completed by clients and returned to AEAT. These forms were not designed or administered by the evaluation team, but were a valuable data source at their disposal. Section 6 describes the findings of the evaluation survey work specifically conducted for this research project.

The Feedback Forms permitted a simple and effective evaluation of the SSA projects at completion. The opportunity was therefore taken to complete a full analysis of the information they contain. Copies of all the available Feedback forms on the SSA projects were obtained from AEAT. This involved 28 Feedback forms from 11 schools and 17 other organisations. This represented about 30% of the completed SSA projects. The following is an analysis of the eight questions asked.

1. Where did you hear about Site Specific Advice?

The responses were as shown in Table 5.1 (some cited more than one source)

Table 5.1 How client heard about SSA

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
Mail Shot	6	3	3
Council	4	2	2
ETSU/EEBPP/AEAT	3	1	2
Web	3	0	3
Sustrans	2	2	0
Travel Plan Resource Pack	2	0	2
Local Education Authority	1	1	0
A ‘Seminar’	1	0	1
Better Ways to School	1	1	0
Greater Manchester Hearts and Minds Group	1	0	1
Road Safety Officer	1	1	0
No answer	4	1	3

The sources of initial information about the SSA were diverse. Mail shots and via the local council were the main two. A local authority Travel Co-ordinator was mentioned once, although Travel Co-ordinators may have been involved in the other four instances when the client heard about the SSA through the council. Contacts via the AEAT organisation (mail-shots, the Resource Pack and the AEAT seminars) were also important, but there was no mention of use of the programme’s telephone Helpline.

2. What were your main objectives in applying for SSA?

Some responses were in terms of the problems they faced, while others saw their objectives in terms of the stage they were at in developing a Travel Plan. Many appeared to be at an early stage of a Travel Plan, seeking advice on how to set one up. This particularly applied to Schools.

Table 5.2 Main objectives in applying for SSA

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
To start a Travel Plan	17	9	8
To develop/complete/promote existing Travel Plan	5	0	5
To review/audit existing Travel Plan	2	0	2
To implement a Travel Plan	1	1	0
To help with specific Travel Plan Measures	3	3	0

In terms of problems faced, congestion and parking problems were the main drivers. Only one specifically mentioned the need to meet a planning condition.

Table 5.3 Problems addressed in applying for SSA

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
Congestion/Parking problems	7	4	3
Promote walking/bike/bus	5	4	1
Road safety	2	2	0
Children's fitness	1	1	0
Poor transport links to site	1	0	1
Planning permission needed	1	0	1

3 & 4. How useful were the consultant's visits and reports?

There were a variety of responses to this question, so for both questions 4 and 5, the responses were categorised using the same 5-point scale as was used in the main survey discussion guides. This was a 5-point scale with 1 representing 'of no use' and 5 'excellent'. This can be compared with Question 6 where the client was asked to provide an overall satisfaction score.

In general there was a very high level of satisfaction in answer to both these questions, with 89% finding the consultant's visits very useful or excellent (and most in the top category) and 89% viewing the consultant's reports as very useful or excellent (again most in the top category)

Table 5.4 Satisfaction with Consultant's visits and reports

	Q3. Consultant's visits			Q4. Consultant's reports		
	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
1 of no use	1	0	1	2	0	2
2 of some use	1	0	1	0	0	0
3 moderately useful	1	0	1	1	0	1
4 very useful	7	1	6	8	2	6
5 excellent	17	9	8	17	9	8

Examples of views on the consultant's visits included:

The visits "were vital in both collecting opinions and attitudes and developing the issues paper on which to base the Travel Plan" and "got our school Travel Plan established and off the ground".

On the consultant's reports, comments included:

The reports were "direct and easy to understand", "helped us clarify our objectives", "helped mobilise opinion" and were "good in negotiations and gaining finance".

However, there were two who felt there was little value in both the visits and reports. One said of the visits and report that they were "not useful other than confirming what we already know – everything seems to relate to inner city transport links" and "very limited use".

The single middle-scoring respondent said that the visits were "quite useful, but could have been in more depth" and the reports were "useful, but hoped for more information".

One of the high-scoring respondents noted that "writing the Plan is the easy bit. Difficulty is in implementation".

It is interesting to note that the positive responses largely referred to how the SSA project had helped strategic issues such as building up consensus for a Travel Plan, winning finance and building a relationship with the local authority. The SSA is, therefore, addressing these key higher order objectives, which are crucial to the long-term success of a Travel Plan.

5. Has the service helped you to take action and develop/implement a Travel Plan?

26 respondents (93%) replied ‘yes’ and only 2 (7%) ‘no’. The comments were analysed to identify in what way the SSA had helped the clients to take action to develop or implement a Travel Plan. These were categorised, the results of which are shown in Table 5.5. Again, it is notable that these relate largely to strategic issues, such as winning funding, links to local authorities and building up acceptance and support for a Travel Plan. Only a few comments related to technical issues, such as providing information. This indicates the strategic use and benefits of the SSA programme.

Table 5.5 How the SSA helped client Travel Plans

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
Generally advanced Travel Plan development	10	5	5
Motivated and developed support for the Travel Plan	4	2	2
Highlighted obstacles	1	0	1
Provided information	1	1	0
Helped secure funds for a Travel Plan	2	2	0
Provided reassurance/confidence	3	2	1
Travel Plan won local authority approval	4	0	4
Led to use of specific measures	2	2	0
Strengthened case for assistance from Local Auth.	1	0	1

Specific comments included:

The SSA “helped to get things moving on a project for which no budget was (previously) assigned”, “provided stats and data for decision makers”, “useful for getting staff involved” and “helped draw up action plan”. “A great help. Our plan has now been drawn up and money awarded”.

The few negative comments included:

“Specific advice asked for not actually given. Slow in giving advice”

However, there were qualifications to some positive comments. These largely reflected the fact that many of the Travel Plans were at the development rather than implementation stage, which some felt would raise problems. Some also had not secured funding for the implementation of their Travel Plan.

Evidence from this question suggests that, overall, the SSA is having an overwhelmingly positive impact and the ‘leverage’ effect in making the case for funding and management support seems particularly of note.

6. Overall satisfaction with the service received

The respondent was asked to provide a rating out of ten to reflect their overall satisfaction. Both schools and employers averaged a score of 8 out of 10, although there was a wider distribution on scores for employers and the schools seemed reluctant to award maximum marks.

Table 5.6 Scoring of overall satisfaction with the SSA

Score	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Average
Schools		6	4							1	8
Employers	5	3	4	3	1			1			8

7. Other comments on the visits and reports

Only about half the respondents provided further comments (Table 5.7)

Table 5.7 Other comments on the SSA project

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
Would have liked longer period of advice	3	1	2
Plans to employ consultant further	1	0	1
The good quality of consultant's work/interaction with client	4	2	2
Would like further support of some kind to take Travel Plan forward	2	1	1
Financial difficulties in Travel Plan implementation	2	0	2
Time only allowed for basic work to be done	1	0	1
Concerned about consultant's experience	1	0	1
Needed senior management engagement	1	1	0

Comments included:

"The consultant was good value and worked well with pupils and adults".

"We were given a very generous 8 days advice".

"It was a shame there were not more funds to develop the Travel Plan and initiatives further".

"Once the SSA had finished we felt very much on our own again with no one to consult concerning the Travel Plan and any problems. There is no Travel Plan Co-ordinator in our local council".

"We would welcome some additional time!"

It is notable that, having had the advisor's input, a number of clients subsequently felt the lack of advisory support. There also seemed to be no awareness of the TransportEnergy telephone Helpline or other support organisations.

8. Summary Comments

The final question asked that, if the SSA had been of use, what 'sound-bite summary' they would use to promote it. This produced responses that focused on what clients thought the SSA really delivered. Six responses emphasised the isolation and inexperience many organisations feel when starting a Travel Plan, for example:

"It's easier than trying to invent the wheel on your own".

Five chose to focus on key processes involved, for example:

"Very useful particularly when discussing the issues with local councils";

"Expert advice on engaging with staff";

"Got the concerns further up the agenda";

"Helped prepare the necessary paperwork".

Five responses concentrated on the end result, including:

"Professional help that achieved results";

"Friendly, professional service ensuring a great Travel Plan";

"The SSA gave us the Travel Plan we are now using".

Overall, the Feedback Forms indicated that the SSA was being used by schools and other organisations largely in the early stages of getting a Travel Plan started, the crucial process of securing and justifying resources for it and developing appropriate measures for a site. With very few exceptions, there was a high level of satisfaction of the service received from the advisors, who were concentrating upon the key strategic processes such as developing understanding and support for the Travel Plan. However some felt that implementation would be difficult and would have appreciated further advice and assistance.

6 Evaluation Survey

This section describes the findings that are a result of analysis of the original data collected for the evaluation survey. The data sources include:

- SSA documentation (PVQ, Interim and Final Reports, where available);
- Structured interview with clients;
- Structured interview with the advisors (advisors are asked both about the case study(s) in which they are involved, and general issues related to the SSA programme);
- Interview with the SSA Manager at AEAT.

6.1 Context of receiving advice

6.1.1 Client motivations

“We needed guidance on how to start a Travel Plan and had no in-house experience” [Client]

Results from the structured interviews show that, prior to the SSA, over 40% of the clients sampled had not developed a strategic Travel Plan (though many had focused on specific transport measures). Of those that had a Travel Plan, the plan was at an early stage; the average time that any pre-existing plans had been in place was 18 months. Around half of clients requesting SSA were implementing Travel Plans on a voluntary basis, with around half doing so because of planning requirements. It is noticeable that take-up of SSA has been greater amongst large organisations; of the non-school cases, the average number of employees per client is 2,500, implying that the SSA has an impact on a large number of people. Travel Plans in general tend to be mainly adopted by larger organisations, so this concentration in the SSA is to be expected.

The evaluation shows that the most common ways of hearing about the SSA were via the local authority (half of clients interviewed) and via specific publicity about the scheme (just over a quarter). Take-up varies strongly by region, possibly suggesting variations between councils that promote Travel Plans and the SSA and those that do not. From the parallel research on the Local Authority Bursary scheme,¹⁰ it was noted that only 30% of bursary holders appear to recommend the SSA (see also section 6.1.3).

Only two clients interviewed had used reference materials such as the Travel Plan resource pack and only a small number had used the telephone helpline provided by AEAT. Many organisations were unaware of the different forms of advice and support that may be already available to them. Nearly three-quarters applied for advice as soon as they heard about the programme. This indicates that SSA is an attractive concept, and that the availability of other forms of help does not negate its perceived usefulness.

In most cases, it has been difficult to ascertain the particular transport problem motivating each client to apply for SSA. This is largely due to the fact that most clients cite a large number of issues (at the PVQ stage) for which they need assistance (this point is discussed in the next section.) However, as clients were asked to list the objectives of their Travel Plan, it is possible to analyse the main motivating factors of clients receiving advice. According to clients, the three main objectives of their Travel Plans were to reduce traffic (mentioned by 88% of cases), address parking constraints (77%) and improve alternative travel options (85%). In contrast, less than 30% said that the Travel Plan was intended to improve the attractiveness of the organisation to staff (or students) and only 12% were using the Travel Plan to help meet the requirements of general environmental

¹⁰ In 2001, the Department for Transport provided funding for 111 bursaries for Travel Plan co-ordinators, available to 84 local authorities across England for a 3-year period until March 2004 (Evaluation of the Programme of Bursaries for Local Authority Travel Plan Co-ordinators - Interim Report, April 2003, Department for Transport). From April 2004, Bursary Posts will continue for school Travel Plan support only.

standards sought by the organisation. These results indicate that links between the Travel Plan and core activities of an organisation occur in less than a third of cases. There is, therefore, a degree of isolation of Travel Plans from other organisational functions.

6.1.2 Client requirements and expectations

“[We] didn’t know what to expect” [Client]

*“Most clients expected too much for 5 days - A Rolls for a Metro.
I needed to explain what is possible and the best use of 5 days.” [Advisor]*

Analysis of the PVQs shows that, on average, clients cited around seven areas about which they were hoping for advice. Rather than take this at face value, we interpret this as reflecting clients’ level of uncertainty about what the SSA could provide, and what they would need in order to progress their Travel Plan. This is backed up by responses from the client interviews; around a third of clients were conscious that they had not really known what to expect. Over three-quarters of clients had wanted the advisor to lead the Travel Plan process (rather than just assist with the development of certain measures). Hence, it seems that a key role for the advisor is to perform a ‘mentoring’ role, to help the client articulate their needs and to provide strategic assistance.

In the cases analysed, the advisors generally shared the view that many clients did not initially have a clear idea of what they wanted from the advice programme. As a consequence, in some cases, advisors noted that client expectations of the SSA programme were highly unrealistic; in extreme instances, clients expected the advisor to ‘do’ the whole Travel Plan for them and implement the recommended measures.

The need for advisors to provide general guidance is reinforced by analysis of clients’ responses about whether there was a trigger for seeking advice at the *particular* time that they did. As shown in Table 5.8, the three main reasons given were that: they needed help with starting a Travel Plan; that they were unclear how to progress an existing Travel Plan; or that they were starting or finishing a travel survey. It is of note that the response ‘problems with senior management commitment’ was mentioned exclusively by non-school clients.

Table 5.8 Reasons for seeking SSA at the time when they did so

	<i>All</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Other</i>
No reason - just discovered SSA was available	1 (4%)	1	0
Travel survey starting or finishing	5 (19%)	2	3
Meeting or focus group due	3 (12%)	1	2
Problems with senior management commitment	3 (12%)	0	3
Needed help with starting Travel Plan	12 (46%)	6	6
Unclear how to progress existing Travel Plan	6 (23%)	2	4
Other	14 (54%)	5	9

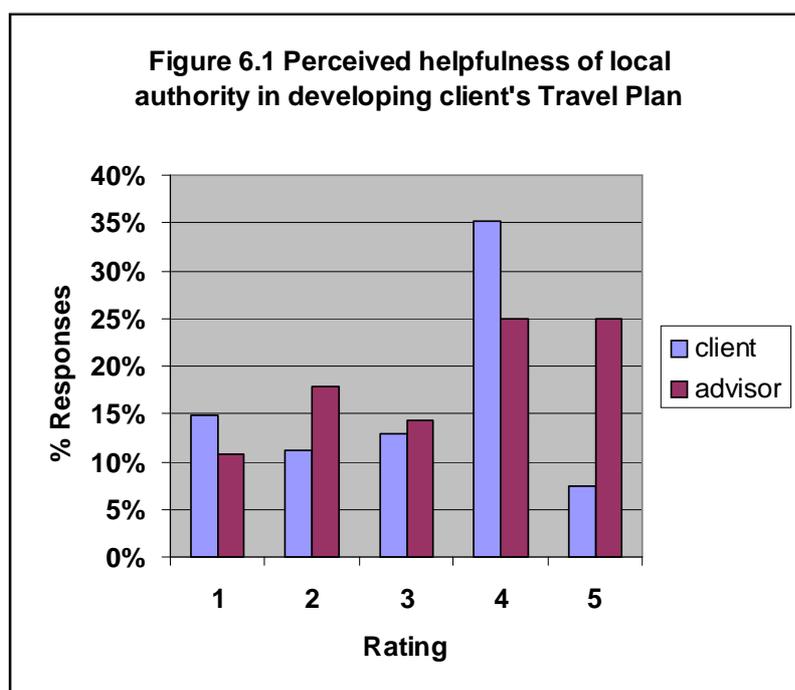
The reasons behind the uncompleted (‘premature completion’) projects appeared to be about client expectations. One of the two examined, which are not included in Table 5.8, was a school having trouble recruiting someone for a crossing patrol. SSA was not really relevant to them. The other, an employer, seems to have applied for SSA in anticipation that they would need to do more to fulfil a planning requirement, but in practice satisfied the local authority on their own.

6.1.3 External Support

“Some individuals [at the Local Authority] are good, but very frustrating as a whole, particularly in terms of implementing engineering measures.” [Client]

As mentioned above, over three-quarters of clients reported that they had obtained some sort of assistance with specific travel *measures* before receiving SSA. Support was sought mainly from the local authority, although a number had also contacted local public transport operators (see below). According to the advisors interviewed, local authorities were involved in all but one of the cases analysed. In over a third of cases, the advisor was responsible for involving the council in the process. Predominantly, the main point of contact in the local authority was a Travel Awareness coordinator, but Safety Officer and Highways Departments were also represented. Where councils were involved, over 80% provided ‘general support’ and over a third ‘provision of off-site infrastructure such as bus or cycle lanes’. Less than a fifth ‘promoted contact with other organisations in the local area’ and less than 10% provided ‘help with surveys’. In the cases where there was no local authority involvement, this was due to the absence of appropriate staff and sufficient resources.

Given the obvious importance of local authorities in many aspects of transport planning, it is interesting to note that clients and advisors reported a wide range of views regarding the help that local authorities were able to provide. Using the 1 (low) to 5 (high) scale, Figure 6.1 shows how clients and advisors rated the ‘helpfulness’ of their local authority in developing their Travel Plan.



The large proportion of low scores (by both clients and advisors) is perhaps surprising given the (apparently) central role played by local authorities in many cases. Although the numbers are statistically small, the data also suggests that school clients rated local authority ‘helpfulness’ (mode=3.0) slightly lower than did non-school clients (mode=4.0). No schools awarded a 5 in response to this question. However, as there is some anecdotal evidence that clients were often unaware of the true level of support of their local authority, the advisor views are, perhaps, more telling on this issue.

Looking in detail at the responses behind the scores shown in Figure 6.1, when questioned about the role of the local authority, almost half of advisors thought that the local authority involvement could have been enhanced in some way. This was most often by being involved at an earlier stage or

being more actively involved. However, the advisors were aware that many local authorities were limited by lack of staff or general resources.

These results are also somewhat at odds with initial results from the Local Authority Travel Plan Bursary Evaluation project¹¹, which showed a higher level of satisfaction regarding the role of the local authority. As bursary posts supported only around half of the SSA cases surveyed, it could be argued that the results shown in Figure 6.1 more closely represent the national situation. However, on closer analysis, it is apparent that, of those SSA cases which advisors scored the helpfulness of the local authority at 4 or above, nearly two-thirds of cases were supported by a bursary post, whereas, of those cases which advisors scored helpfulness at 2 or below, only a quarter of cases were supported by a bursary post. Therefore, this provides some evidence that having a key person within an authority who is responsible for Travel Plans is an important indicator of how much support a local authority are able to provide. This is backed up by comments from high and low scoring cases: 4 – “Enhanced by the personnel responsible”, 2 – “No appropriate people, not enough resources” and 1 – “Travel Plan coordinator left post”.

The involvement of other organisations was also investigated. As with views about the role of local authorities, there was a very mixed response. Using the 1 (low) to 5 (high) scale, almost half of clients rated the ‘willingness’ of transport operators to be involved in Travel Plan development as only 1 or 2. A typical negative client response was the following: The “bus arrives as children go into school, and when they leave [which is] very dangerous due to congestion. Asked [transport operator] to move 10 minute earlier or later, but no.”

There was a similar quantitative response regarding the opportunities for working with other organisations in the local area. For example, those schools that wanted to work more closely with others, were often hindered by the large distances to other schools, or were unaware of other schools that had were also developing Travel Plans. Winning support from other organisations is clearly problematic and the process of building up support networks is generally weak.

Key findings: Context of receiving advice

- Many organisations have not linked their Travel Plan to the core activities of the organisation.
- Many organisations seem unaware of all the different forms of help and support available to them.
- Most clients are at the initial stage of developing a Travel Plan – and often lack a clear idea of what help they want, or the extent of the task they face.
- Advisors need to be able to provide strategic guidance on what organisations need, not simply help with specified tasks.
- Positive local authority support for the Travel Plan process is strongly dependent on the authority’s access to personnel and available resources, such as Bursary Post holders or Travel Plan Coordinators.

6.2 Scope and quality of the advice

6.2.1 Activities undertaken

“Things went rather slowly at first. (The advisor) asked what we wanted - but we didn’t know! So it was a mutual learning process” [Client]

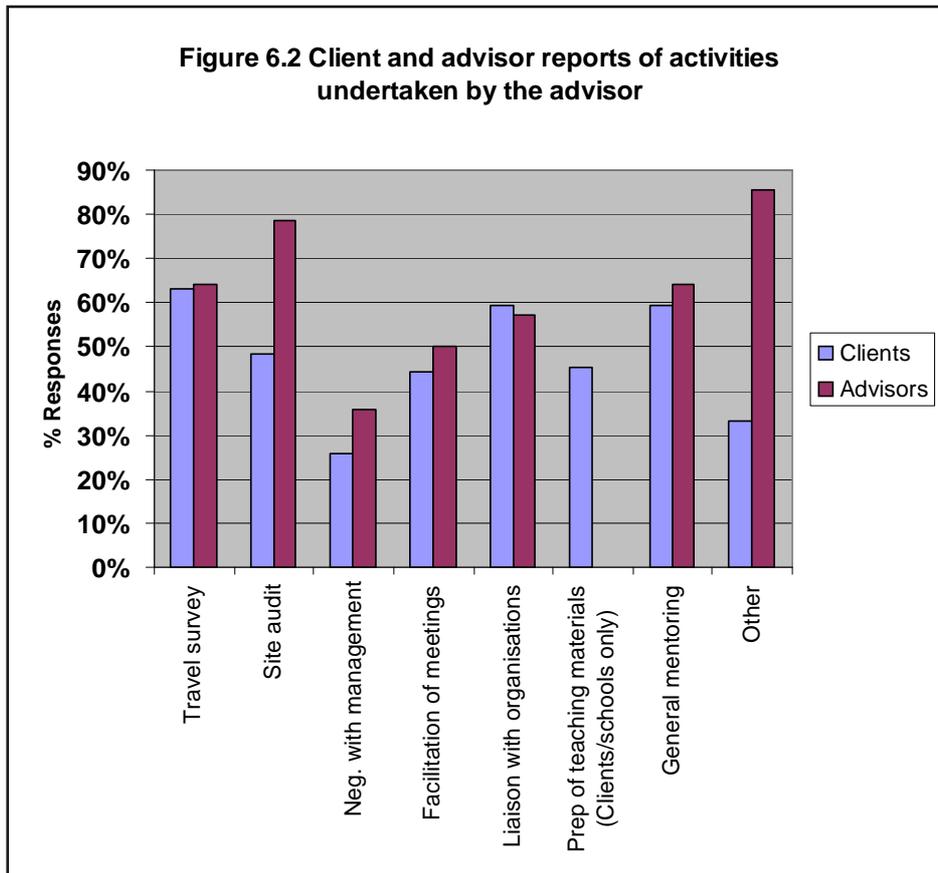
As shown in Figure 6.2, according to the clients, the three most common tasks undertaken by the advisors were: travel surveys; liaison with external organisations; and general mentoring. This mix of activities reinforces the earlier findings that the organisations’ Travel Plans were often at an early

¹¹ Evaluation of the Programme of Bursaries for Local Authority Travel Plan Co-ordinators - Interim Report, April 2003, Department for Transport.

stage, and that the advisory role tended to be strategic rather than focused on specific issues. The frequent mention of ‘mentoring’ highlights the importance of the advisor’s role in providing *strategic* support, not simply practical expertise. In analysing responses from different client types, schools reported ‘facilitation of meetings’ significantly more often than did non-school clients by a factor of four (on a percentage basis) and ‘negotiation with management’ significantly less often (also by a factor of four).

The advisors’ own perceptions of their activities were broadly consistent with the clients’ views; almost 60% reported involvement in survey work with a similar percentage reporting ‘general mentoring’. Around a third said they had negotiated with management, over 40% reported facilitating meetings and half had liaised with external organisations.

The data suggests some discrepancies between the recollections of clients and advisors. Over 80% of advisors mentioned conducting site audits, whereas only half of clients had reported advisors conducting this task. This may have been as much for advisors’ own understanding of the situation as for the needs of the client. Advisors also reported many more specific tasks conducted on behalf of the client. It is interesting to note that, whereas liaison with management was only *specifically* requested by 13% in the PVQ (prior to receiving SSA), it was actually an important issue for around 30% of cases (see Figure 6.2). Hence, it seems that clients underestimated the need for this activity as part of Travel Plan development.



These results highlight that a major component of many SSA projects is the learning process through which the client discovers how the SSA can best be used. It is, therefore, an important part of the advisor’s role to manage this learning process.

6.2.2 Period of the advice

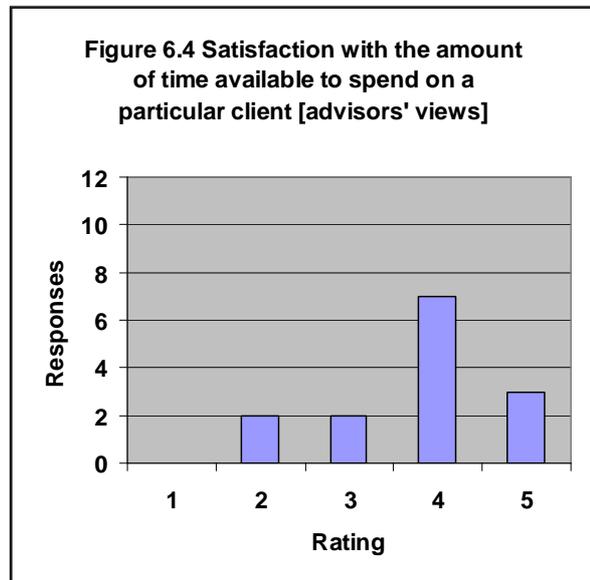
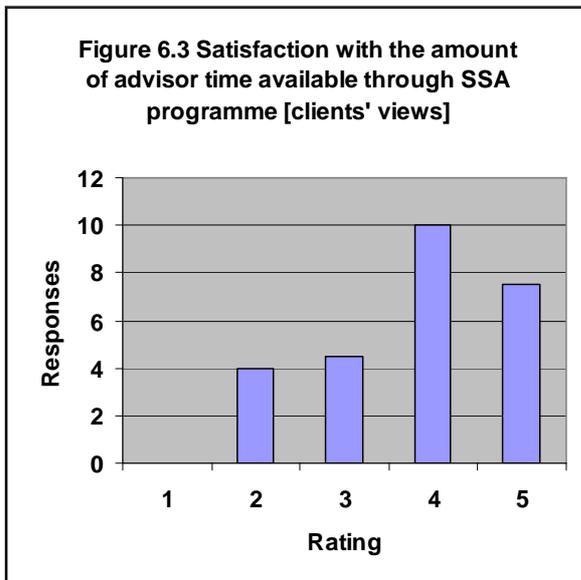
“They needed more time to take things closer to implementation” [Advisor]

On average, the time over which SSA was delivered was 7 months, typically with three site visits being combined with telephone and email follow-up from the advisor. The longest-duration for a project in the cases analysed spanned 20 months. In most cases, 5 days of SSA was delivered, although there were some larger organisations that received more time.

Most clients and advisors were satisfied with the time available (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4). In particular, of the schools responding, all rated their satisfaction at 3 or above using the 1(low) to 5(high) rating scale. In addition, many clients felt that they had actually received more than the official allocation of advisor time than had been purchased through the SSA programme. However, almost two-thirds of clients would have liked more time, often a relatively modest amount (a quarter of this sub-group wanted some, or further, assistance with *implementation*). Over half of advisors also felt that more time would have been useful.

However, the AEAT SSA Programme Manager felt that the amount of time was appropriate to focus upon key issues and that it would be inappropriate to provide more SSA time. There is an issue here regarding the function of the SSA programme and how far SSA funding should extend. Through the instigation of a Travel Plan process, the AEAT Programme Manager sees SSA as assisting organisations to overcome particular barriers: in particular, the important issues of senior management commitment and winning funding. Furthermore, the Manager is of the opinion that the SSA programme should not function as the sole resource for organisations developing Travel Plans.

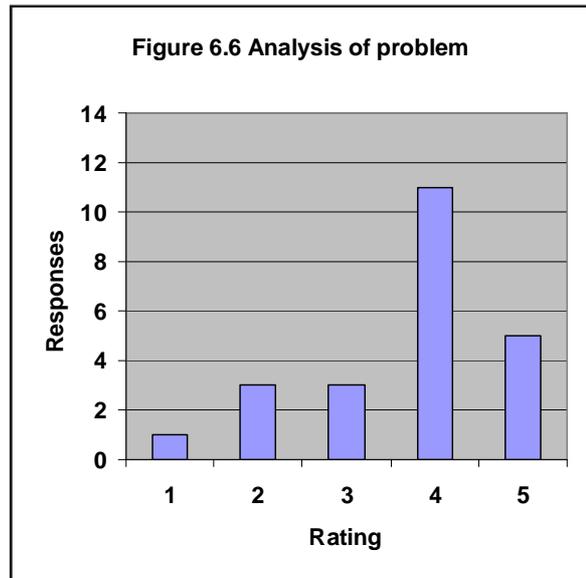
When asked whether their time could have been put to better effect, 40% advisors thought that their time would have been better used in increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the Travel Plan network (in particular senior management) and assisting clients with implementation. Others mentioned that technical assistance with analysing travel survey responses was not necessarily the best use of their time, and might usefully be done by someone with specific expertise (possibly, for example, from the local authority).



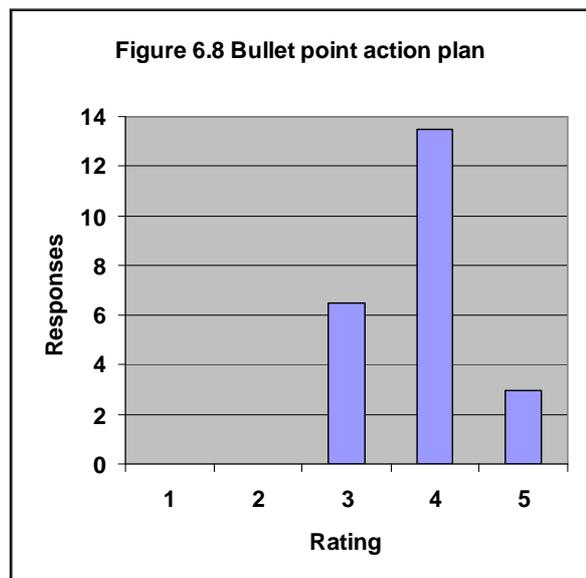
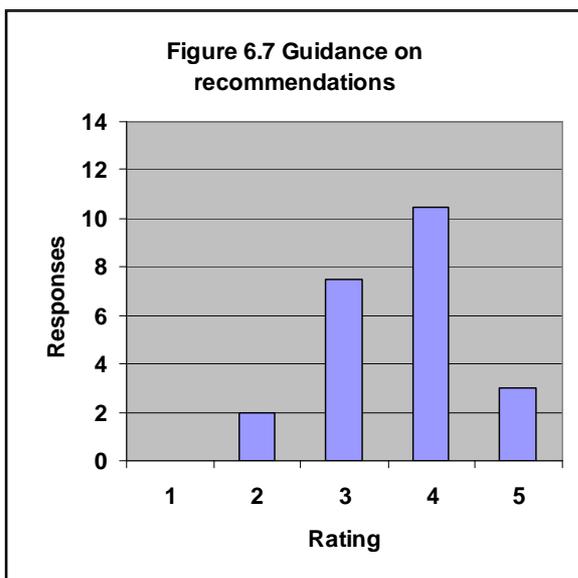
6.2.3 Quality of Reports

This section provides the results of analysis of the 24 final reports associated with 24 of the 27 SSA recipients who were interviewed as part of the evaluation. A further 37 reports were analysed to assess the impact of re-issued reporting requirements (for clarification) that occurred during the period of the evaluation survey. These later reports are analysed and discussed in Section 8.3.

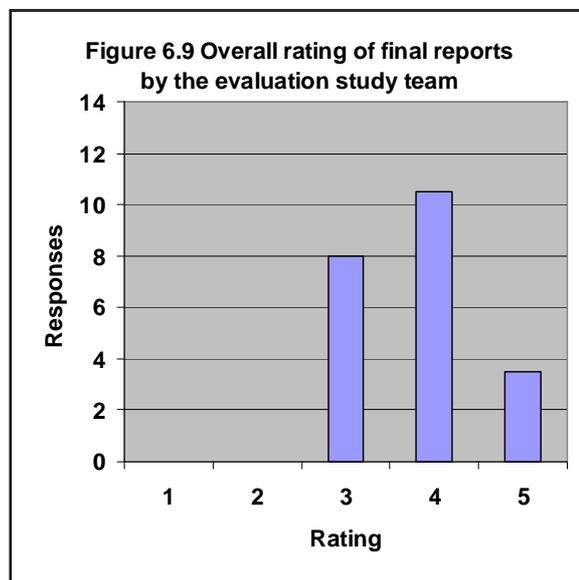
Overall, the clients reported a very high level of satisfaction with the final reports that they received from the advisors, as can be seen by the chart in Figure 6.5. Using the 1(low) to 5(high) rating scale, schools rated their satisfaction at 3 or above, on average slightly higher than non-school clients.



However, the project team conducted an independent document evaluation, which was somewhat less positive. According to AEAT guidelines, in the final report, advisors are supposed to give an analysis of the problem, provide guidance on solutions/recommendations and include a bullet point action plan that the organisation can implement. Figures 6.6-6.8 show the project team's rating of the final reports, according to these criteria. These suggest that there remains some room for improvement regarding problem analysis and development of recommendations.



In addition, it was noted that, while most reports had a very clear report structure, many had no contents list, summary or a map of the site. Almost a fifth of final reports provided only a ‘poor’ understanding of site issues. Perhaps most importantly, although the majority did provide some kind of action plan, only around a third were sufficiently clear with respect to three out of four criteria including “next steps, longer-term goals, and timescales for action and who is responsible for each action”. The overall rating of the reports, by the project team, is given in Figure 6.9.



To some extent, the discrepancies between the project team’s evaluation of the reports, and the clients’ views, are likely to result from the broader perspective of the clients, who (we suggest) view and evaluate the reports as part of a whole SSA process. Similarly, many advisors do not consider writing the report to always be the best use of advisor time and some commented that they preferred to spend more time with the client, and less time writing reports. For example, one advisor was quoted as saying “I’m more ‘hands on’ and don’t provide all the ‘gumph’”.

Report guidelines were initially issued to advisors in May 2001, during advisor induction at the beginning of the SSA scheme. However, when surveyed by the evaluation team during 2003, although two-thirds of advisors interviewed were ‘clear’ about these requirements (as specified by AEAT), around a third were not. One advisor commented that the “requirements [were] open to own interpretations” and another that the guidelines were “not clear regarding length/volume - my reports are more lengthy than average - many are very short”. Partly in response to this feedback, AEAT provided more written details to advisors during 2003 to clarify the existing guidelines (see Appendix 13.3). (It should be noted that the sample of reports analysed in this section were completed before the guidelines were re-issued. For analysis of subsequent reports, see discussion in Section 8.3.)

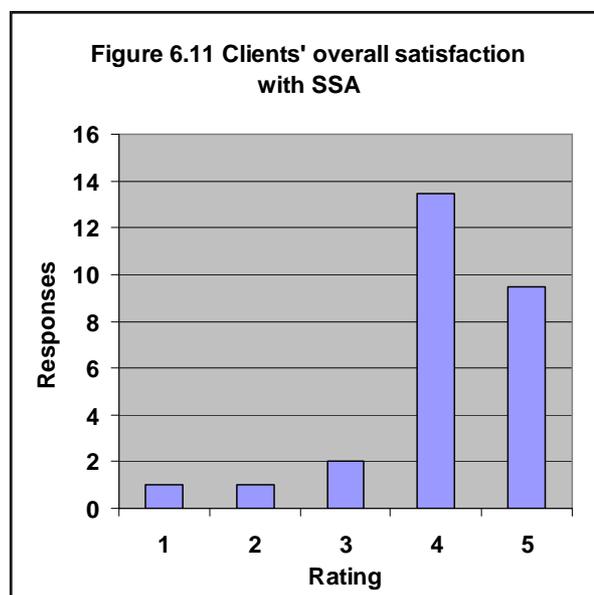
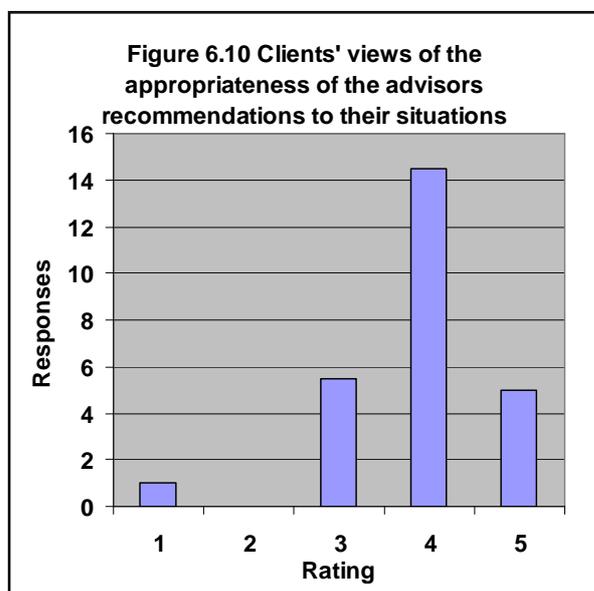
6.2.4 Overall client satisfaction with SSA Programme

“We received good advice – it’s the implementation that is more of a problem” [Client]

All clients rated the advisors’ general knowledge of Travel Plans positively (scoring at least 4 out of 5). Although still broadly positive, the clients’ ratings of the advisor’s understanding of the local context and/or of the organisation were slightly less good, with one or two cases giving a low rating.

In general, around 80% of clients were either satisfied or very satisfied with both the appropriateness of the recommendations they received and the SSA programme as a whole (as shown in Figures 6.10 and 6.11). When asked what were the most beneficial aspects of the scheme, clients mentioned the following: the fact that the advice was free, having an advisor who was time-dedicated, could lead the Travel Plan process and was an independent source of information who

could liaise with network including senior management, and that advisors would provide strategic advice and support specific tasks (such as conducting a baseline travel survey). It is interesting to contrast the high levels of satisfaction of advice with the perceived helpfulness of the local authorities as reported earlier in Figure 6.1.



Key findings: Scope and quality of the advice

- The initial phase of giving advice often involves defining what help is required.
- Advice given often relates to general support and strategic issues, rather than more specific, technical aid.
- Advisors believe that gaining the support of senior management is often more important than the client initially envisages. Many advisors think that their time allocation for SSA would often be better invested in pursuing this goal.
- Many of those both receiving and giving advice think that being able to spend more time per client would be useful, with only a small amount of additional time being proposed.
- The final reports produced satisfy the client, but could be improved in terms of their legibility and usability and by the inclusion of a clearer work plan for the future.
- In general, most clients are very satisfied with the advice that they receive, with only a few recording dissatisfaction. Nonetheless, there may be some scope for improving advisors' knowledge of the local contexts, and the types of organisation to which they give advice in future SSA allocations.

6.3 Impact of the advice

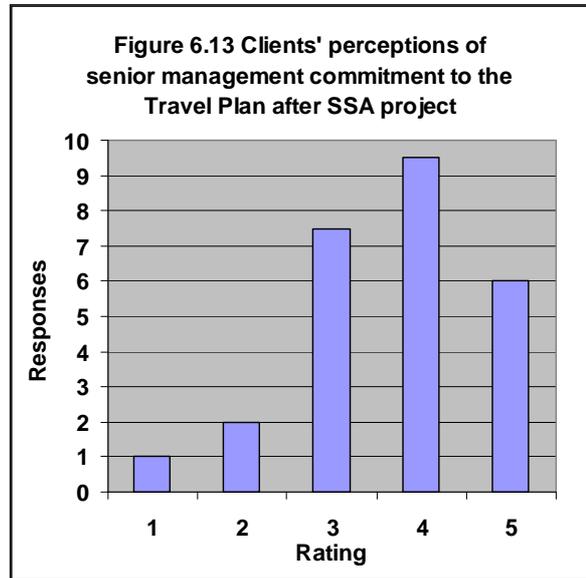
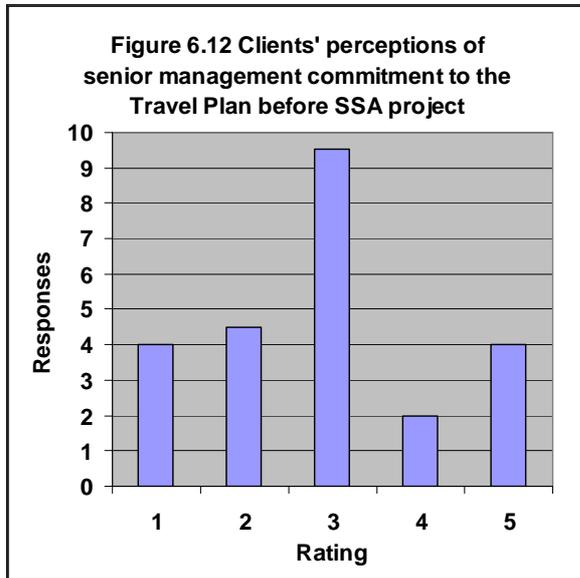
6.3.1 Strategic impacts of the SSA

“As a result of SSA, our knowledge went from 0% to 100%” [Client]

There is strong evidence that client knowledge and understanding of the Travel Plan process increased due to involvement in the SSA programme. In over 85% of cases, clients provided examples to support this conclusion. In particular, many clients reported that they had become more aware of the strategic organisational factors that are crucial to the success of a Travel Plan.

The SSA also seems to have been effective in increasing the amount of staff time and resources committed to the Travel Plan. This is an important impact of the SSA. At the time of seeking SSA, around a quarter of the clients had some specified staff resources for their Travel Plan. Following

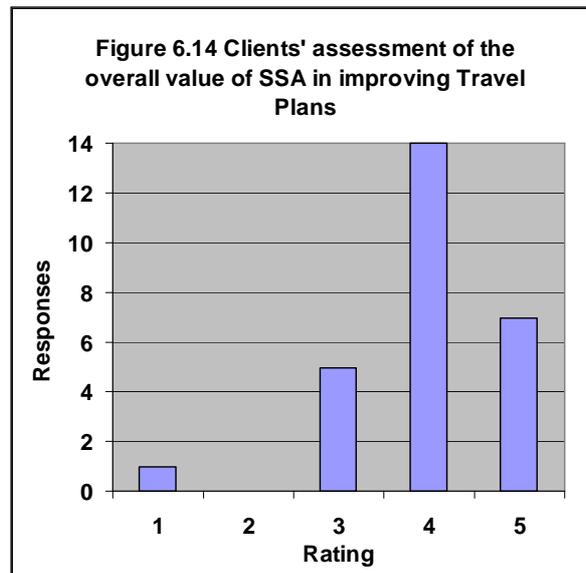
SSA, this was true for over a third of the organisations. (However, it should be noted that the majority of Travel Plans still depend on non-dedicated staff.) Budgets have also increased as a direct result of receiving SSA. Prior to SSA, only one client organisation had a budget for its Travel Plan. (This was £30,000 for a pilot project.) Post-SSA, over a quarter had budgets for their Travel Plans (although, in many cases, this was only a few hundred pounds).



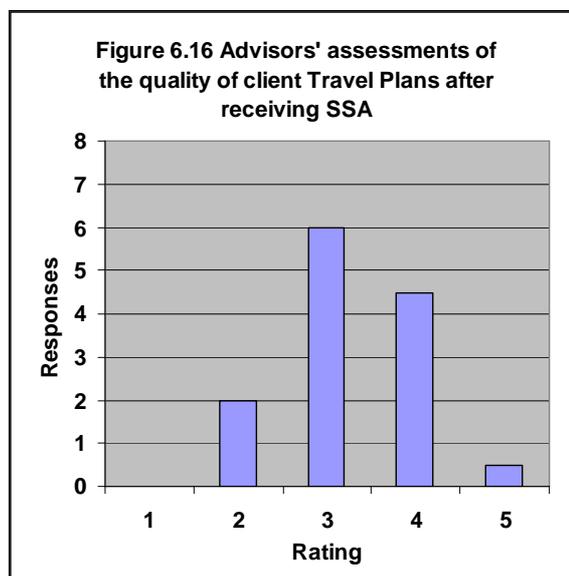
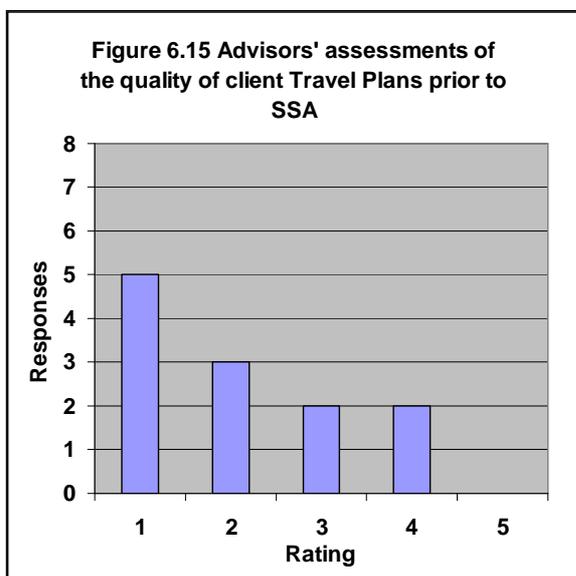
Analysis of client perceptions also suggests that senior managerial commitment to the Travel Plan has improved as a result of SSA (see Figures 6.12 & 6.13). This suggests that major changes were achieved within the organisations in terms of commitment to Travel Plans. This shift was particularly noticeable in non-school clients; prior to SSA, over 80% rated senior management commitment at 3 or less, after SSA, 80% rated this commitment to 3 or more. (Advisors were asked a similar question, about changes in the seriousness of the client towards developing a Travel Plan, and their responses showed a broadly similar picture.)

6.3.2 Overall changes in Travel Plan quality

Despite the problems noted above, both clients and advisors felt that the SSA has improved Travel Plans. As shown in Figure 6.14, most clients assessed the improvement in the top two 'positive' categories.



The advisors' assessments (Figures 6.15 and 6.16) showed a generally negative view of clients' Travel Plans before the SSA, moving to a more middling score afterwards. This seems a realistic assessment; that SSA makes a difference, but alone will not totally transform an organisations' Travel Plan.



6.3.3 Implementation of Travel Plan measures

“The staff car parking charge was simply not supported by all senior management” [Advisor]

The study sought to analyse the effect of the SSA programme on the level of successful implementation of Travel Plan measures. Over half of clients said that there were travel planning developments or changes that had *only* taken place as a result of SSA, while almost two-thirds reported that developments or changes had taken place *more quickly* as a result of the programme. Advisors thought that both new and quicker developments or changes had resulted from the SSA in most cases.

In general it appears that the SSA projects have provided the means for organisations to implement a mix of infrastructure and organisational measures. Clearly most of the Travel Plans are at an early stage, and implementation was only just beginning (if not yet to occur). Appendix 13.7 shows the measures recommended (by advisors) for most of the SSA projects analysed and which of these had been implemented (according to clients). Infrastructure measures are shown in bold and organisational measures have been left in plain text.

A survey of the information in Appendix 13.7 shows that, for the cases listed (which represent the majority of the sample analysed), 164 recommendations were made, of which 53 have been implemented. Therefore, 32% of recommendations have been successfully implemented to some degree (though some may have been subsequently removed). If infrastructural and organisational measures are separately analysed, then the levels of successful implementation are 45% and 29% respectively. (Note that measures categorised as ‘infrastructural’ range from low-cost bike storage facilities to major road improvements.) This suggests that, in general, it may have been easier to implement infrastructure measures (often Travel Plans focus on these as they are viewed to be easier than organisational measures).

Interestingly, for the schools and hospitals analysed, the equivalent ratios¹² for successful implementation of all measures are 41% and 20% respectively. For infrastructural measures the

¹² Ratio = Number of measures implemented / Number of measures recommended.

ratios are 48% for schools and 0% for hospitals. For organisational measures, the respective ratios are 38% and 21%. This suggests that schools are generally more successful in implementing both infrastructural and organisational travel measures than are hospitals. Furthermore, the hospitals studied have had no success in implementing infrastructure measures at all. These results can, in part, be explained by the fact that advisors are less likely to recommend large scale, and often prohibitive, high-capital infrastructure solutions to schools, opting instead for achievable low cost measures. (Unfortunately, an insufficient number of businesses and local authorities were available for analysis to be able to quantify their success in implementation.)

Whilst the overall picture seems broadly positive regarding implementation of measures, it is also clear that nearly all clients examined to date were unable to implement at least one of the measures recommended by their advisor. The main reason given by clients was usually some sort of opposition (either from senior management or trade unions, or due to parental attitudes or safety fears). The second major category of reasons given for failing to implement suggested measures was lack of resources. According to advisors, key barriers that block implementation were senior management attitudes and policies.

Although beyond the scope and time-scale of the current evaluation study, the team note that further research regarding the implementation phase would be beneficial. This would be to ascertain, in more detail, the following issues: the nature of the barriers that inhibit the implementation of certain measures, the overall level of success of advisors' recommendations, and which types of measures are more or less successful in being implemented.

Key findings: Impact of the advice

- SSA is making a substantial difference to clients' understanding of Travel Plans, and is increasing the commitment of staff time and resources (although these allocations often remain small).
- SSA is improving organisational commitment to the Travel Plan process, although convincing senior management to support particular measures can remain difficult.
- Clients and advisors feel that SSA is resulting in better Travel Plans, with new or faster Travel Plan development resulting directly from the advice.
- Where implementation occurs, infrastructural changes are more easily implemented than are organisational changes (with the exception hospitals where the required infrastructural changes are often prohibitive).
- Recommendations from SSA are only being partially implemented, either due to internal or external resistance. The basis of resistance may be opposition to the concept itself or resource constraints.
- Further research is needed regarding the nature of the barriers that inhibit the implementation of certain measures, the overall level of success of advisors' recommendations, and which types of measures are more or less successful in being implemented.

7 Overall value for money of the scheme

The SSA programme has potential for a wide variety of beneficial effects on a number of groups. These are categorised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Potential Direct and Indirect Benefits of the SSA

For the organisation	For individuals	For transport policy and the community	For the Travel Plan industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better site management / more intensive use of site • Savings in parking costs • Better utilisation of staff work-time • Improved staff recruitment and retention • Improved staff / student health (reduced rate of absence through sickness) • Improved knowledge of travel needs by management • Access to Travel Plan resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater range of travel options • Healthier travel options • Improved safety / fewer accidents • Social interaction opportunities • Better use of travel-to-work time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic / congestion reduction • Emissions/ CO₂ reduction • Improved public transport / walking / cycling facilities • Improved social inclusion • Healthier population • Reduction in accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-on consultancy work • Higher level of Travel Plan competence
<p>The Department for Transport's main objectives are highlighted in bold.</p>			

For the Department for Transport, it is important to document the full range of benefits achieved, but a central question is the extent to which the SSA programme represents value for money in addressing the policy objectives set for it. If the SSA can be shown to provide good value for money for these objectives, any further benefits to organisations, individuals and the Travel Plan industry will be a bonus.

7.1 Estimating the effect of SSA

The SSA projects in our survey have largely been involved with planning and developing rather than implementing Travel Plans, although there is some information on the introduction of measures in a minority of cases. However, the interviews contain a variety of information on the type of Travel Plans that were *envisaged* before and after the SSA intervention. The following method has been developed by this evaluation study that applies a categorisation of Travel Plan effectiveness based upon DfT and other research.

7.1.1 Workplace Travel Plans

Previous work for the Department for Transport¹³, and subsequent research they have commissioned on the effectiveness of workplace Travel Plans, indicates that up to a 20% reduction in vehicle trips can be achieved. However, this is only attained by the best and most consistently applied Travel Plans.

¹³ Potter *et al.* 2001.

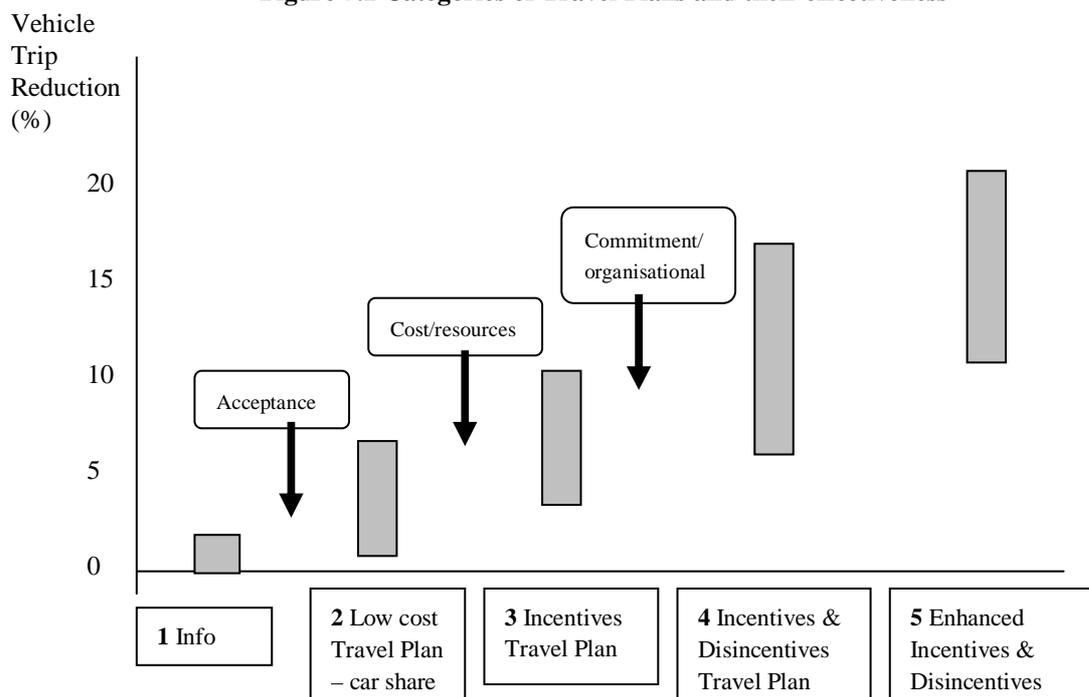
Five key categories are based upon the likely reduction in vehicle use of workplace Travel Plans with:

1. Very little reduction resulting from a Travel Plan consisting only of information-provision;
2. Up to 5% from schemes consisting mainly of car sharing;
3. Up to 10% from those incorporating incentives to use alternative modes;
4. Up to 15% from those incorporating disincentives for car use; and
5. Up to 20% for those that, as well as providing mode-specific incentives/disincentives, also provide additional services/incentives.

Using this categorisation, it is possible to ‘map’ the particular Travel Plans envisaged ‘before’ and ‘after’ SSA intervention and estimate the likely change in vehicle use. The SSA could have two important effects. The first is that it does not alter the nature of the organisation’s Travel Plan, but does enable more effective implementation. So, for example, the SSA project may have assisted an employer in introducing an effective car-sharing scheme. The result might then be that good take-up is attained with a consequent 5% cut in vehicle commuting trips, whereas, without SSA, the Travel Plan process may have achieved a lesser, 1%, reduction in vehicle trips, with the car-share scheme possibly falling into disuse. The second potential effect is that the SSA results in the organisation moving to a *different type* of Travel Plan, containing more effective measures. For example, receiving SSA could persuade the organisation to move from a low cost Travel Plan, consisting of information measures, car sharing and season ticket loans, to one with incentives such as subsidised bus routes and fares.

These situations can be represented diagrammatically in Figure 7.1, together with the barriers that exist in moving between the types of Travel Plan.

Figure 7.1 Categories of Travel Plans and their effectiveness

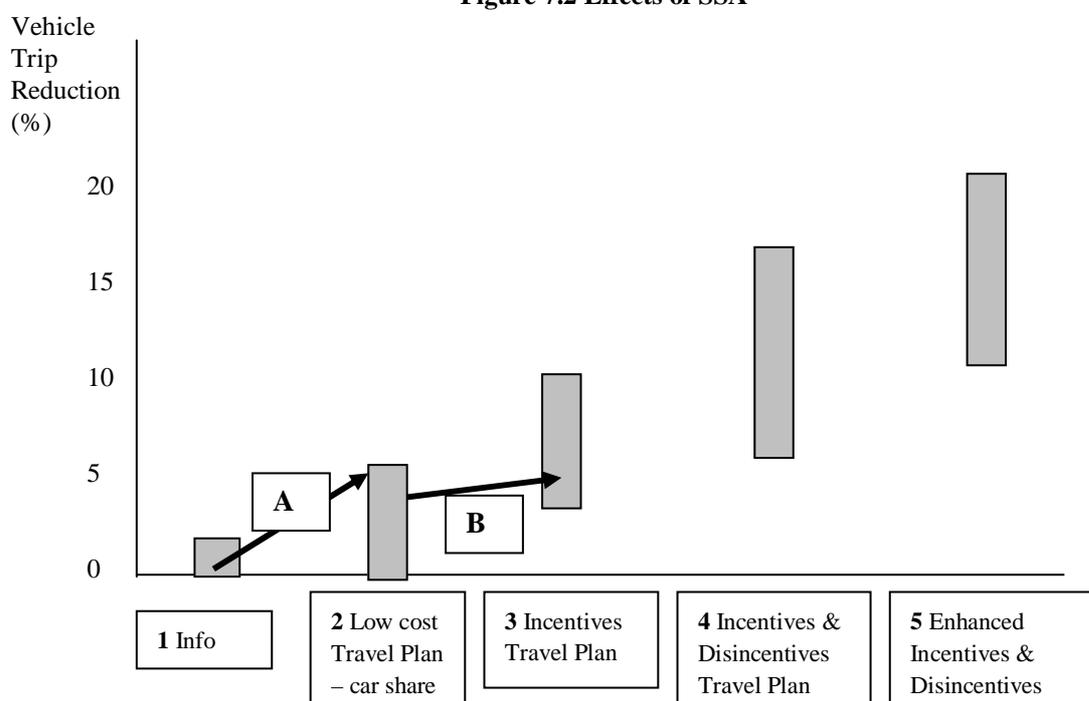


The barriers faced in making the transition between these categories of Travel Plans are different. Between 1 and 2 it is essentially a matter of organisational acceptance that a Travel Plan is something they should do. Between 2 and 3 the key barrier is winning resources, and here issues arise of how to justify resources to be devoted to a Travel Plan. Once justification is achieved, incentive measures may be provided. The barriers to providing disincentives are very different. These essentially relate to internal opposition to measures such as car park charges or restrictions on

parking rights. The barriers here are not essentially one of costs, indeed as some of our study cases noted, introducing measures such as car park charges actually cut the cost of a Travel Plan. The transition between categories 3 and 4 requires organisational commitment and will mark a shift in the Travel Plan from being an isolated estate management measure towards relating to an organisation's core purpose. The transition to category 5 requires a full integration of a Travel Plan to be accepted as a normal business or organisational practice.

The effect of the SSA project can be mapped onto this diagram. Because many of the Travel Plans were still at the planning and design stage, this may be more a matter of identifying how the SSA affected what is planned to be implemented rather than the introduction of actual measures. Thus one SSA project might move a Travel Plan from category 1 to being a 'good practice' in category 2 (see Figure 7.2, arrow A), whereas another (arrow B) has helped win over senior management to release resources and so move from category 2 to 3. But (B) may not have particularly helped in improving the incentives offered and so there may only be a marginal change in effectiveness.

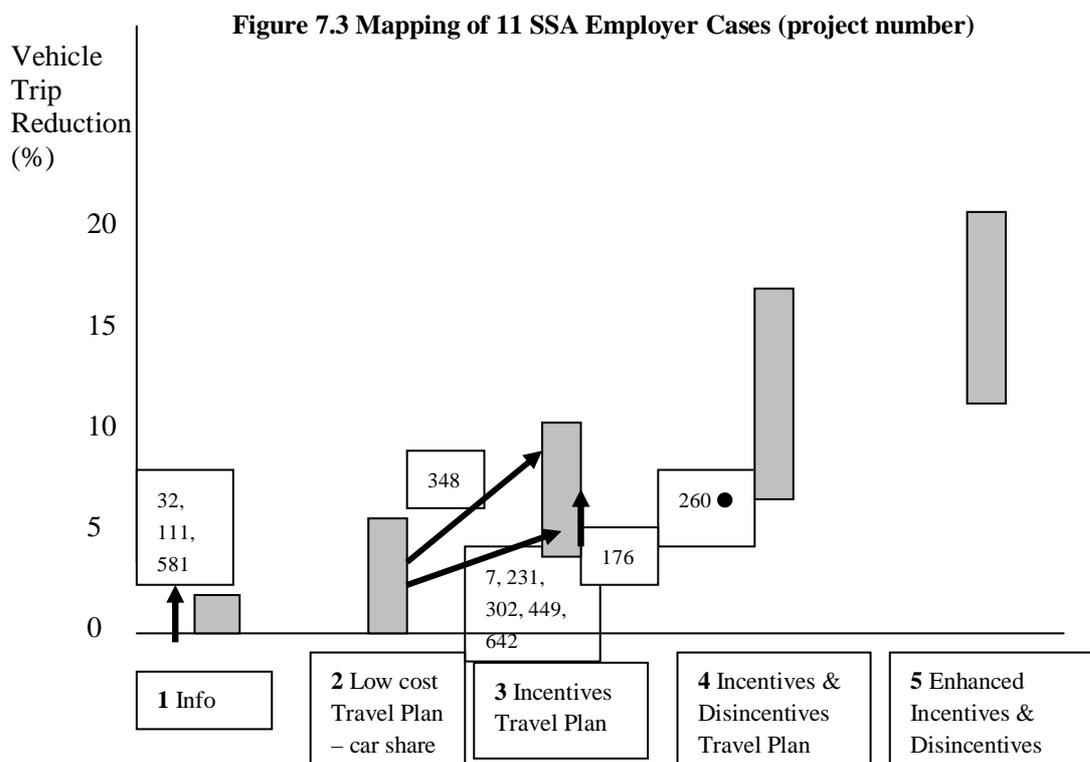
Figure 7.2 Effects of SSA



Using such an approach, it is possible, using the information obtained from the survey cases, to map the effects of the SSA and make an approximate estimate of the likely subsequent impact on vehicle trips. Figure 7.3 represents a mapping of 11 of the employer cases from the database. The mapped positions were based upon the questions in the survey about the Travel Plan measures envisaged before the SSA project, what measures were recommended by the advisor and which of these the organisation expected to implement. As is shown in the diagram, the main transition being addressed is between informational/low cost Travel Plans and getting the resources to move on to offer incentives, with some work on improving the measures themselves and support for their implementation. Although a number of cases mentioned a desire to move to disincentives (usually car park charges), in the cases analysed the SSA project did not overcome this barrier.

The overall results of this mapping exercise are supported by views expressed in an interview with one of the four local authorities interviewed as part of the evaluation. This authority used the Travel Plan Evaluation Tool to track the development of Travel Plans and noted that, of the Travel Plans that progressed to the higher stages of the model, almost all had received SSA. The SSA seems to be associated with really moving Travel Plans on within an organisation.

This mapping exercise suggests that the effect of the SSA was to produce improvements to the Travel Plans of about a 2% cut in vehicle use in 9 cases, a 4% cut in one case and none in one other case. **The average was a 2% reduction in car use overall.** This is probably an underestimate, as the impact of a particular SSA intervention could well yield greater vehicle trip reduction in the longer term. However, the more cautious estimate of the effects of the SSA programme can be taken as robust. This also provides an early indication that, for workplace interventions, the programme represents ‘good’ value for money.



7.1.2 School Travel Plans

Data on the impact of school Travel Plans was obtained from the ongoing DfT project ‘*Making School Travel Plans Work*’¹⁴. Local authorities and other school Travel Plan experts were invited to recommend any schools that they knew of which could in some way be considered an example of good school Travel Plan work, and which were thought to have before and after data about what the school had achieved. At the time of the last assessment of school survey returns for the project (September 2003), information about 111 schools had been received, and information about before and after levels of car use was usable for about 80 of these, representing a total of over 45,600 pupils¹⁵.

From this, there has been a choice of schools for the project to focus on (i.e. the ‘selected’ schools). The data for the final selection is currently being checked with the schools and local authorities involved, as part of the interviews for the project. Nonetheless, it is interesting to discover what the interim results are showing (see Box 7.1).

¹⁴ Interim analysis supplied by S Cairns & C Newson, from research being undertaken on the ‘Making school travel plans work’ project for the Department for Transport, London.

¹⁵ Note that this is a slightly larger number than that given in the ‘Report on school surveys and selection’ submitted to the Department for Transport on 3rd September 2003. This is because information about pupil numbers was missing for 12 schools, and has subsequently been supplied by the Department for Education and Skills.

Parallel evidence from a DfT project about ‘The influence of soft factor interventions on travel demand’ highlights that the current provisional estimate of a 26% car use reduction from a good school travel plan is reasonably similar in magnitude to the scale of reduction recorded at ‘level 3’ schools in Buckinghamshire (‘level 3’ meaning that the school has a Travel Plan adopted by the school community which is reviewed annually), and also to the achievements of schools in Cambridgeshire where Safe Routes To School work has been undertaken (compared with Cambridgeshire schools where Safe Routes work has not been undertaken).

Box 7.1 Provisional Interim results from ‘Making School Travel Plans Work’

The 26 schools currently analysed represent 16,162 pupils, averaging 621 per school. The average proportion of pupils at the schools who had shifted away from car use was 11.5%, which was equivalent to a reduction in car use of 23.9%. Weighting the results by pupil numbers suggested that 10.2% pupils at the schools had moved away from car use, which was equivalent to a 25.7% reduction in car use.

There was wide variation between schools. 2 schools had persuaded few or no children to move away from car use, 13 schools had persuaded up to 10% of pupils at the school to move away from car use, six had persuaded up to 20% of pupils to move away from car use and 5 had persuaded up to 30%. In terms of impacts on traffic, car use was stable or increasing at 2 schools, 2 schools had achieved reductions of up to 10%, 7 schools had achieved reductions of up to 20%, 6 schools had achieved reductions of up to 30% and 9 schools had achieved reductions in excess of 30%, including three where car use had more than halved.

Note: Data liable to change following inclusion of results for all 30 selected schools, and final checking of existing data.

These are results for schools with an active Travel Plan. However, what impact can be attributed to the SSA project upon a school’s Travel Plan development? Information is not available to undertake a staged mapping exercise as was undertaken for the workplace SSA projects. However there is information from the evaluation survey from responses to questions (put to schools and advisors) regarding the impact of the SSA project. 60% of school clients said that there had been Travel Planning developments or changes that only took place because of the SSA and 40% that Travel Planning developments were faster because of the SSA. The schools largely noted specific Travel Plan measures or processes (survey, parent liaison and planning work). The advisors also generally expressed the view that they had introduced or sped up Travel Planning developments. In most cases they emphasised building up (transport related) links with local authorities and obtaining funding.

The role of the advisor in crucial activities such as winning funding, making key organisational links and helping to build up consensus and support for the Travel Plan suggests that the SSA had an important influence upon the performance of school Travel Plans. Well-applied school Travel Plans can achieve over 25% car use reduction. It appears that the sort of influence arising from the SSA is of the order that would make the difference between achieving a top class 25% impact on car use as opposed to a 15% reduction, or a 15% impact rather than a mediocre 5%.

It would seem reasonable to assume that about a **10% cut in car use** is the order of impact from the school SSA projects.

7.2 Estimations of Benefits

Having made a robust estimate of the impact of the SSA projects on vehicle trip reduction, what are the benefits this produces? To estimate these, two evaluation methods have been used. The first estimates the cost to the government of reducing car use and emissions via another policy measure, that of tax concessions, and compares this with the implied SSA cost. This method is useful for

comparing the cost of different measures, which is required for example, in examining the range of policy instruments used in the climate change programme. The second illustrative method is to compare estimates of the values of the incremental reduction in (environmental and congestion) external costs with the costs of funding the SSA. (The impacts of SSA on other central government objectives, as set out in the New Approach to Appraisal,¹⁶ have not been quantified. However, these impacts are expected to range from neutral to positive. In particular the safety objective impact is expected to be strongly positive.)

7.2.1 Cost per Tonne of CO₂ emissions

The first illustrative method is to estimate the taxpayer cost. As the benefits are identified as those that can be attributed to the SSA project alone (and not other inputs to the organisation's Travel Plan), the costs have been defined as solely those of delivering SSA (no other costs are included).

Estimates for workplace SSA interventions

The starting point is that the workplace SSA projects are likely to improve clients' workplace Travel Plans so as to produce a 2% cut in car driver trips. With the employers in our survey being, on average, quite large (particularly due to the hospitals and as some projects involving groups of employers), a 2% cut would produce 29 fewer cars being used per year per employer site¹⁷. With car commuting averaging around 3,000 miles a year¹⁸, there is a saving of 87,000 miles resulting from the use of 29 cars being replaced with alternative travel arrangements, cutting CO₂ emissions by 32 tonnes¹⁹.

The SSA is a one-off project, so the costs too are one-off, whereas the impacts will be spread over a number of years. A pessimistic view of the SSA would be to divide the cost of a SSA project by only the effects in one year. The average cost of SSA is £2,560 per site with an average project length of 5.1 days²⁰. If this is divided by the estimated changes in the number of vehicle commuting trips for one year alone, the cost per vehicle trip cut is £88 and the cost per tonne of CO₂ cut is £80.

If a more reasonable assumption is taken that the SSA effect lasts for a total of three years, then the cost per vehicle trip cut is £29 and the cost per tonne of CO₂ cut is £27.

By way of comparison, the tax concession on employers subsidising bus fares in the 2002 Budget was estimated to cost at least £140 *per annum* per vehicle trip cut (approximately £0.54 per vehicle trip avoided each working day) and £110 *per annum* per tonne of CO₂ cut²¹. Therefore, even using pessimistic assumptions taken for the SSA programme, with costs being set against improvements

¹⁶ The five objectives are: environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility.

¹⁷ The average number of employees was around 2,500. The Labour Force Survey shows that 70% of employees travelled by car to work in 2001 (DTLR 2001, Table 4.8) whilst the National Travel Survey of 1999/2001 (NTS 2002) shows that the overall occupancy of cars used for commuting is 1.2. Hence, a group of 2,500 employees can be expected to use 1,460 cars (amongst other modes) to get to work. A 2% cut would be equivalent to 29 fewer cars being used per year.

¹⁸ The National Travel Survey estimates that, on average, each car in the UK travels 2,820 miles per annum on commuting journeys. This may be a cautious estimate, as the average length of a work journey is 8.4 miles (by all modes, but mainly car), which suggests an annual mileage to work by car per person in the region of 4,000 miles, or 3,300 miles/car once allowance is made for passengers. Hence, the mid-range value of 3,000 miles (4,830 km) is used here.

¹⁹ A litre of petrol produces about 2.4 kilograms of CO₂ and a litre of diesel about 2.7 kilograms. A figure of 2.5 kilograms per litre would represent an average for all cars, allowing for the petrol/diesel mix in the car stock. The average UK fuel economy is 9 litres per 100km, although the driving conditions for commuting trips might well involve a poorer fuel economy than the average. If the average fuel economy is used, then each vehicle-commuting trip produces about 1.1 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per annum. Therefore, 29 car commuting trips avoided over a year reduces the annual emissions of CO₂ by 32 tonnes.

²⁰ This includes AEAT's administration costs. Source: AEAT.

²¹ Potter *et al.* 2001, op cit.

for one year alone, the workplace SSA programme compares well to other policy measures to reduce CO₂ emissions. The result stands even if costs are somewhat higher and impacts somewhat lower than have been assumed in these figures.

Estimates for school SSA interventions

According to the National Travel Survey (NTS 2002), in 1999/2001, over a quarter of school pupils (39% of primary and 19% of secondary school pupils) travel to school by car. The distances are less than for work commuting, with the NTS noting that the average daily 'Escort Education' trip is 2.2 miles, involving an annual distance of around 880 miles (approx. 1,400 km). The NTS records car occupancy for education trips as averaging 2.1 people, suggesting that for the school run there are an average of 1.1 passengers on board.

Using the school Travel Plan effectiveness figures from Section 7.1.2, for each school of an average of 621 pupils, about a quarter (155) would be expected to travel by car before the Travel Plan was implemented. The figures also assumed an impact of a 10% reduction in car use over what might have been achieved without SSA. This would reduce car use by 15.5 pupils and 14 car trips per school.

Assuming the same fuel consumption figures as for commuting, a reduction of 880 miles per annum leads to a reduction of 0.31 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per annum per escorted car school trip. With 14 car trips being saved by the Travel Plan, then the total annual cut in CO₂ emissions per school Travel Plan would be 4.4 tonnes of CO₂.

School SSA projects tend to be shorter than workplace ones. A figure was therefore taken of £2,000 per site. The taxpayer cost, if viewed over only one year is £143 per car trip cut and £457 per tonne of CO₂ emissions reduced. If the more realistic three-year effect is assumed, then the cost is £48 per car trip cut and £152 per tonne of CO₂ emissions reduced.

The cost for car trip reduction and per tonne of CO₂ emissions reduced is higher than for workplaces due to the smaller number of people affected per site and the shorter car trip lengths involved. A comparison to tax measures is inappropriate for school trips (where personal taxation has no effect), but these figures could be compared with other policies to influence school travel behaviour (e.g. the Safer Routes to School initiative, school Bursary Posts, etc).

7.2.2 Cost-benefit ratio

The second illustrative method takes into account a wider range of benefits. Transport activities result in economic and environmental costs that are not borne by those conducting the transport activity; the so-called *external* costs (or 'externalities') borne by society as a whole. Externalities typically include the cost of congestion on the road network and the costs to the health service of road accidents and of disease resulting from noxious and noise emissions.

In practice these costs to society are often high where private cars are used intensively, particularly on a congested road network. They often fall disproportionately on particular groups in society, for example those living near major roads. A range of values exists for the external costs of car use. This variation reflects the range of factors particular experts consider to be important in making the calculations, and the road conditions and situations to which the various values refer. Estimates have tended to increase in recent years, despite the car fleet becoming, on average, 'cleaner'. Reasons for this increase include the wider range of factors it is seen as important to include, and higher estimations of the real costs of externalities, particularly congestion.

Samson *et al.* have reviewed estimates of external marginal costs and report several categories (Samson *et al.* 2001)²². These include external accident costs to be in the range of 1.32-2.25p per mile (1998 prices), air pollution 0.55-2.74p per mile, noise 0.03-1.26p per mile, climate change 0.24-1.0p per mile and congestion at 15.6-18.0p per mile. Updating the Samson study to 2003 values, produces a central figure of a marginal cost of 20.5p per vehicle mile for external costs. This was viewed as a justifiable figure and is somewhat below the Surface Transport Costs & Charges data (marginal congestion and environmental costs) for car used at peak time of 23.0 p/mile at 1998 prices. Our estimates of external costs are therefore likely to be on the low side.

It is worth noting that the largest external cost is the marginal social cost of congestion, a cost imposed on other drivers that is not taken into account when deciding to make a trip. Car drivers do, however, take account of the average costs of congestion reflected in their own in-vehicle travel time. Given that car ownership rises as real incomes rise and more car trips are taken, the level of marginal social congestion costs increases over time. The value of these costs rises further as the value of time rises with real income.

Estimates for workplace SSA interventions

The estimate of a saving of 87,000 car miles (per annum) being replaced with alternative travel arrangements creates a typical total annual benefit of £17,800 in externality values per SSA intervention against the average one-off SSA cost of £2,560 per site. As with the previous method, a sensitivity analysis has been used by assuming the SSA benefit lasts between one and five years. Table 7.2 provides indicative values for the cost-benefit ratios of the SSA programme.

Table 7.2 Ratios of costs to benefits of workplace SSA programme

Duration of benefits	Cost-benefit ratio²³
<i>Years</i>	<i>Externality value of 20.5 p/mile</i>
1	1:7
3	1:21
5	1:35

Given these high levels of cost benefit ratios, only very few modal shifts away from car use are required to make the scheme cost effective. The reduction in social costs (economic and environmental) per annual car-commute avoided is around £600. It therefore requires just 4 behavioural changes lasting one year (or fewer lasting longer) for the SSA intervention to ‘pay for itself’ in terms of wider benefits.

Overall, workplace SSA interventions represent very good value for money indeed. It is low risk, in that only a small number of modal shifts are needed to produce a net benefit surplus, and the overall taxpayer cost for the policy impact is also low.

Estimates for school SSA interventions

Benefits calculated in terms of external costs avoided by society are positive, if somewhat more modest than in the case of workplace interventions (again due to the smaller numbers influenced and the shorter trip lengths involved). The overall benefit of the typical intervention in Year 1 will be £2,530 against an outlay of £2,000. Table 7.3 indicates cost-benefit ratios for impacts lasting 1, 3, and 5 years.

²² These authors in fact report a very wide range of values referring to different classes and locations of road ranging from £0.09/vehicle-mile to £3.14/vehicle-mile.

²³ No allowance for discounting in years 2+. Values have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 7.3 Ratios of costs to benefits of school SSA programme

Duration of benefits	Cost-benefit ratio²⁴
<i>Years</i>	<i>Externality value of 20.5 p/mile</i>
1	1:1.3
3	1:3.8
5	1:6.3

The cost-benefit ratio for schools is lower than for workplaces, but even so the costs of an SSA scheme are more than counterbalanced in the first year. Each SSA project needs to only cut 11 car trips at a school for one year (or fewer lasting longer) for the scheme to pay for itself. A cost-benefit ratio of almost 1:4 is still better than that achieved for many other transport investment projects.

Key findings: Value for Money

- According to two methods used to assess cost effectiveness, the SSA programme is delivering very good value for money.
- Both school and (particularly) workplace SSA interventions are cost-effective measures that address government policy to cut congestion and CO₂ emissions.
- If the benefits of the SSA programme are assumed to have a lifetime of three years, then the value for money estimates are as follows: Workplaces - £29 per vehicle trip reduced, £27 per t-CO₂ reduced, Schools - £48 per car trip reduced, £152 per t-CO₂ reduced.
- When considering wider external costs and benefits (over three years), central estimates of workplace SSA projects yield a cost-benefit ratio of better than 1:20 and school SSA projects of almost 1:4. These are considerably better ratios than the ratios used to justify many other mainstream transport investment projects.

²⁴ No allowance for discounting in years 2+. Values have been rounded to two significant figures.

8 Management of the SSA Programme

This evaluation has addressed a number of issues regarding management of the SSA programme. These range from specific managerial and administrative issues to consideration of the management structure as a whole. The specific issues include:

1. Aspects of management that could be changed to enhance the effectiveness of the programme;
2. Appropriateness of amount of time available;
3. Administration of SSA programme;
4. Quality Assurance procedures for client cases, advisors and reports;
5. Use of telephone Hotline for Travel Plan support;
6. Overall management structure and relationships between DfT, EST and AEA Technology.

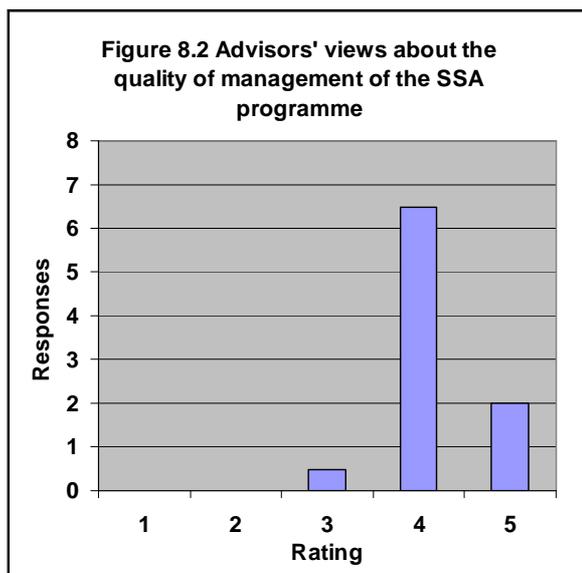
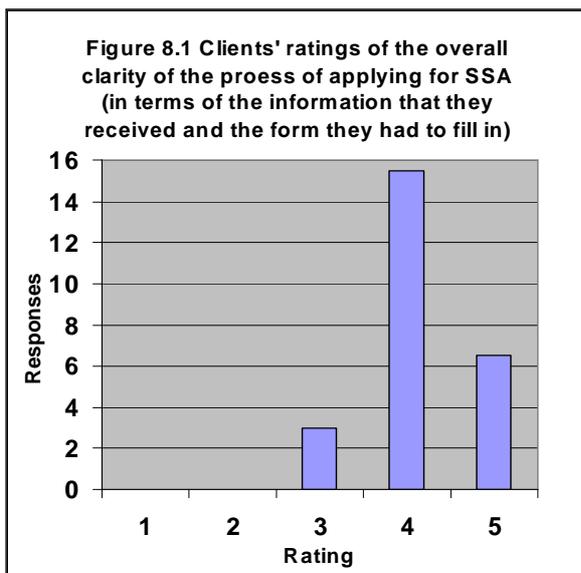
The following section is based on the series of interviews conducted with SSA recipients, advisors and key personnel at AEA Technology and the Energy Saving Trust who are responsible for the management of the SSA programme.

8.1 Survey results on SSA management aspects

8.1.1 Management of the SSA programme from the client's perspective

“We found it hard to fill in parts of the PVQ before receiving the SSA” [Client]

The client survey asked recipients to rate management aspects of receiving Site Specific Advice. This used the scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) used throughout the survey. As shown in Figure 8.1, clients were largely positive about the overall application process for receiving SSA. They were also asked, specifically, about the PVQ. One concern was whether this was rather long and detailed and was putting clients off applying for SSA. Again, responses were positive, although some indicated that it was difficult to provide some of the requested information prior to receiving SSA. (In particular, information about what they had wanted from the advisor, and information on travel surveys.) Advisors were also largely supportive of the PVQ, though some thought it could be redesigned to be both more concise and precise.



However, this analysis is based on organisations that had returned a PVQ and received advice. Information from AEAT shows that, by the end of December 2003, over 1,205 organisations had requested, or downloaded from the Internet, a PVQ, but only 552 sites had returned them and been offered SSA. This dropout could be due to factors other than the application process, but some advisors feel that the initial paperwork may be a deterrent. In the interview with the SSA Manager, it was noted they had followed up where a PVQ had not been submitted. The result of this work was that, overall, it was felt that the PVQ is useful at filtering out less committed potential clients and that it was not discouraging applications from those with a genuine need. Organisations put off by the initial paperwork were not strongly committed to the Travel Plan process and were unlikely to be the most worthwhile recipients of public money.

8.1.2 Management of the SSA from the advisor's perspective

*“We need to be getting into the implementation process
- and selling the process to senior decision makers.” [Advisor]*

Overall, advisors thought that the instructions about their advisory role were ‘clear and straightforward’, and were generally positive about the management of the scheme, as shown in Figure 8.2. However, nearly all advisors offered possible suggestions as to how the current programme might be improved. One suggestion was that the invoicing system be streamlined to account for the fact that relatively few days of paid work are spread over a long time period. In some cases there can be large amounts of paperwork and delay between delivery of the advice and payment. The AEAT Manager felt, however, that the system was appropriate for all but the smallest consultancies and changing to a monthly invoicing would be more complex and expensive to administer for all concerned.

In order to provide induction training to new advisors, AEAT ran workshops for consultants in April 2001, October 2001 and Feb 2003, the aim of which was to explain the SSA programme in detail. The workshops provided information on procedural issues and advisor responsibilities and were also an opportunity for advisors to exchange experience in delivering Travel Plan advice. However, in many of the advisor cases analysed, it was noted that more information and/or induction training regarding the SSA programme would have been useful. Comments from advisors interviewed included the need for “Training in negotiation skills to assist with working with management and Travel Plan partners” and “...more needs to be done to ensure that those recruited understand what’s involved... and what’s required for different types of clients.”

These views are somewhat at odds with the position that all panel members should already be ‘experts’ in Travel Plan issues. However, it seems that there is a real need to prepare new SSA advisors *at the induction stage* who, although knowledgeable, have a variety of previous professional experience. Based on information gathered during interviews, this evaluation study has identified the need for further training at future induction and training workshops in the following areas: the importance (and contractual duty) of working with the local authority, the importance of gaining support from senior management, existing report writing guidelines, and the clarification of allowed roles for junior staff.

Advisors highlighted the need to make sure that organisations ‘get the most out of’ the SSA, by making best use of advisors’ time. In particular, they highlighted a desire to be able to focus on the issues of implementation and/or addressing senior management commitment. The implication is that client expectations may need managing at the point when they apply for advice, and possibly that there are other sources of advice that they should be directed to, before receiving SSA. The need for a more stringent client selection process was also mentioned (on the basis that clients are not as motivated as they need to be – which supports the continued use of the PVQ in its present form).

Some advisors suggested that, to complement SSA, there is a need to strengthen regional Travel Plan networks. This would both enable organisations to learn from each other’s experience, and

might also give prospective SSA recipients a better grounding in general Travel Plan issues, so that they could then be more specific about what they wanted from SSA. However, in practice, it may be that 'getting started' is the hardest part of the Travel Plan process, and that one reason why SSA is valuable is precisely because it provides a catalyst for this part of the process.

Advisors also felt that the scheme would benefit from being advertised more via the Internet and the TransportEnergy Best Practice Programme²⁵ telephone Hotline was under-utilised (this issue is specifically discussed in Section 8.5).

Key findings: Survey results on SSA management aspects

- Both clients and advisors perceive SSA to be a well-managed programme.
- Those who have successfully completed the PVQ application process do not find it onerous, although there is a large dropout. There are arguments both for and against making this part of the programme less stringent, or alternatively, more stringent.
- Advisors would like some changes to the payment procedures and more training for performing the functions required by the SSA programme.
- It seems that SSA could be more closely linked with other Travel Plan-related resources, such as websites, telephone helplines, and regional Travel Plan networks - at the moment it is integrated into more general energy advice.
- Some advisors feel that it would be useful if clients could do more general Travel Plan learning prior to receiving advisor expertise, although it is possible that SSA is critical as a stimulus for an organisation making a serious start to Travel Plan development.

8.2 General administration issues

8.2.1 Length of projects

One AEAT SSA Manager noted that the usual time allocation was:

- 3 days for smaller employers (well below 250 employees) and when there is a group application for schools (e.g. Cornwall and Liverpool),
- 5 days – this is the standard allocation for workplaces and schools,
- 7-8 day projects for larger firms, and
- 10 days for large or multi-site employers.

Another AEAT manager noted that additional time for larger sites is currently arranged through an informal procedure by making a case to AEAT. This process could perhaps be formalised and made more transparent. (However, it is recognised that it remains important to balance the provision of very clear and specific guidance on the number of days per organisation with retaining the flexibility and judgment for AEAT to respond to particular situations.)

There is also the issue of whether more time is required for Travel Plan advice through the SSA programme. As discussed in Section 6.2.2, although most clients and advisors were satisfied with the time available, many clients felt that they had actually received more than the official allocation, almost two-thirds would have liked a modest increase in the advice period, and over half of advisors also felt that more time would have been useful. Although, there is a danger that more time would tend to change the intention of SSA, the view of the evaluation team is that a half-cost SSA follow-on project could be useful. There would need to be a clear justification for the expenditure and it there is a case for insisting that a follow-on project were linked to assisting network development (e.g. networking to implement). Indeed, support for network development could be an important next step for the DfT and EST to undertake.

²⁵ Formerly the Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme (EEBPP).

8.2.2 SSA administration

As noted previously, although the advisors interviewed rated management of the SSA programme quite highly (mode=4 using 1-low to 5-high scale), some advisors expressed particular concerns about some aspects of the administration. One aspect mentioned by around half of advisors concerned the system of invoicing system used by AEAT. Comments made included: “Invoice structure... is very demanding as advice is given over long time span - monthly invoicing would be helpful”, “There is relatively a lot of admin for £1-2K projects...A lot of admin for a small job...Suggest it is replaced by larger contracts for say 30 days over a period of time and then allocate advisors for projects”, “Payment is prompt but requires a detailed breakdown for expenses, which can be tedious”, “Prefer monthly invoicing system rather than after visits and at project completion”.

On this issue, the AEAT SSA Manager felt that any changes to the administration processes need to be considered carefully and some minor improvements could be made. He emphasised that any additional procedures can take a lot of time and resources for all as the SSA involves a lot of small contracts. In his view for a small 12-month contract, 2 invoices can be dealt with adequately by both consultancies and AEAT.

8.2.3 Proactive role of SSA consultants

The research for this report found that some consultants were actively promoting the SSA programme. The AEAT manager noted that private sector marketing of a public programme happens in other programmes and whether this is a good thing depends on how it is done. There is a fine line. If a consultant has existing relations with a site and gets them to apply to SSA because it is free, there is a danger of abuse with consultant getting client to use SSA for a job they would have otherwise paid for. The management procedures at AEAT mean that this would not normally be a problem as AEAT allocates advisors to each SSA project, so the consultant who advocates use of SSA may not necessarily get the work. However, should there be only one SSA consultant in that area a difficulty could arise.

Problems can also arise if an advisor, who is the sole panel member from a particular consultancy, moves to another consultancy organisation. Without the panel member as a member of staff, the original consultancy is unable to continue working for the client, even if that organisation has been nurturing its relationship with organisations in receipt of SSA.

8.2.4 Premature completion cases

One issue has been that a number of SSA projects have taken a long time to be completed and there is an issue of how ‘premature completion’ projects (those that ended before completion) may be identified and wound up. This was discussed with the AEAT Manager. It was noted that the management procedure has developed in response to this issue.

The initial stance was for completion within six months. In practice, many projects ended up taking longer, particularly in schools with long holiday breaks. As there was (at the time) no defined procedure for reviewing long-running projects, a problem emerged of how to distinguish between projects dragging on and those that needed to be spread over a longer period due to organisation’s decision-making process. It is possible to extend warrants (when an advisor is allocated to a project), but this can take a lot of extra administration for small contracts. Consequently it was decided on the practical approach, not of specifying a particular deadline, but of reviewing cases and ask consultant for progress at three-month intervals.

However, in practice this process was unsatisfactory and some projects were left to continue ad infinitum. As from 2003, AEAT has adopted a policy that projects should not take longer than 12 months. After 12 months have elapsed, AEAT contacts the SSA advisor and ask them to round off the project and submit final report within 8 weeks. This is intended to ensure that all projects are

completed in a maximum of 14 months. It was noted that it is necessary also to tell clients that projects are expected to be completed within 6 months, 12 months at a maximum. (For premature completion projects, the advisor is still contracted to complete a report as far as possible for future reference, should the Travel Plan be picked up again at a later stage.)

The EST Manager for SSA reported that he had looked at this issue. He was now satisfied with the situation, and would not expect further on-going premature completion cases to arise. It was a problem of past management and he considers the system now to be adequate in this respect.

8.2.5 Links with local authorities

The interview with the AEAT Manager was informed by the organisation's active work with local authorities. He reported a considerable variation in the support and emphasis the authorities put on Travel Plans, the case being that Travel Plan aware authorities will use the SSA well (refer to Figure 6.1). This is why AEAT has promoted schemes to local authorities and prioritised getting them on board. He noted the need to promote Travel Plans from different angles. For example, through tourism and leisure and development control seminars. Contacts are also asked to get in touch with colleagues. However, he noted that, in some cases, good links do not exist between some local authority departments (e.g. between Development Control and Travel Planners). AEAT has found that making contact with several links in LAs is important. These observations supported the views of SSA users, some of whom noted support for Travel Plans varied within local authority departments. This issue is considered further in the Section 9.

A related issue is the independence of SSA from local authorities, which can both be a strength and a weakness. One AEAT manager commented that advisor's advice might raise client's expectations and yet be unrealisable. He felt the best results were gained where advisors worked closely and coordinated efforts with local authorities. This led to good working relationships and allowed advisors to build up local knowledge of issues and political sensitivity.

Key findings: General Administration Issues

- There needs to be clarity in the amount of time available and what sort of sites/situations would qualify for a longer project.
- The new SSA programme could usefully include short half-cost follow-up projects.
- General administration appears appropriate, but some detailed improvements could be made.
- There is a danger of an overloaded administrative burden with the large number of relatively low-value SSA contracts and warrants (which would be exacerbated by monthly invoicing).
- The promotion of SSA by consultants can be positive, particularly if linked to promotion by Local Authorities. Potential abuse of the system can be avoided through the existing procedures of allocating SSA projects to consultants and could be improved by appointing more than one advisor per region (where possible).
- The new AEAT procedures for premature completion cases appear satisfactory.
- SSA is most successful in cases where good links between advisors and local authorities exist.

8.3 Reporting requirements

Reporting requirements are initially issued to advisors by AEAT as part of presentations given during training workshops and are also included within the contract between advisors and AEAT (see Appendices 13.2 & 13.3). The guidelines given for the final site visit report are as follows:

- “[The report should be] no more than 8 pages in length plus annexes. The site visit report shall in all cases:
 - Give an analysis of the problem, including particular issues facing the organisation visited;
 - Provide guidance on solutions / recommendations;

- Include a bullet point action plan that the organisation can implement.”
- “If there is potential for any follow-up work, the Contractor may recommend that the work is carried out by himself, but he is required, at all times, to provide at least two alternative organisations that could undertake the requisite follow-up activities.”
- “The Contractor shall submit four hard copies of a final site visit report and an electronic datafile of key information in Microsoft Word 6.0/95 format.”

The idea is to have a brief report to accompany an appendix of work undertaken for the client.

As noted in section 6.2.3, the clients reported a high level of satisfaction with the final reports. However, the project team analysis of the reports suggested that there was room for improvement regarding a number of aspects. In particular analysis of site issues and the requirement to identify next steps, timescales and who is responsible for each action.

Partly in response to some initial evidence of some reports being of a low standard, in 2003 (during the period of this evaluation), reporting guidelines were communicated (re-issued) to all advisors in written form. In the light of this development, it was decided to undertake a further analysis of the most recently submitted final reports (36 in number) to see if they showed improvements compared to the above analysis of earlier SSA projects (see Section 6.2.3). This used the same 1(low) to 5(high) rating as in the previous analysis and the task was given ‘blind’ to a project team member to undertake (they were not aware of the previous scores). The results are shown in Tables 8.1 to 8.4.

For analysing the travel problem there was a marked reduction in the lowest scores (1 and 2) and a very encouraging rise in the highest (4 and 5).

Table 8.1 Distribution of rating of ‘analysis of the problem’

Grading	1	2	3	4	5
Earlier reports	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	3 (13%)	11 (48%)	5 (22%)
Later reports	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	4 (11%)	20 (56%)	10 (28%)

For guidance on recommendations, the position was more static, with 61% scoring a 4 or 5 - a relatively low proportion.

Table 8.2 Distribution of rating of ‘guidance on recommendations’

Grading	1	2	3	4	5
Earlier reports	0 (0%)	2 (9%)	7 (30%)	11 (48%)	3 (13%)
Later reports	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	11 (31%)	18 (50%)	4 (11%)

For action plans, the scoring had slightly worsened (although 67% still scored a 4 or 5).

Table 8.3 Distribution of rating of ‘bullet point action plan’

Grading	1	2	3	4	5
Earlier reports	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (30%)	13 (57%)	3 (13%)
Later reports	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	10 (28%)	19 (53%)	5 (14%)

The overall grading improved a little in the later reports compared to the earlier reports, particularly brought about by a shift from scores of ‘3’ going up to ‘5’.

Table 8.4 Overall distribution of rating of final reports

Grading	1	2	3	4	5
Earlier reports	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (35%)	11 (48%)	4 (17%)
Later reports	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	8 (22%)	20 (56%)	5 (14%)

Overall this analysis does indicate that the quality of more recent SSA final reports is better than the earlier reports, although the identification of action plans requires attention.

While, it is recognised that the variety of tasks and applications involved in undertaking SSA might exclude the rigid use of a standardised report pro-forma, the evaluation team are of the opinion that many of the deficiencies of poor reports could be overcome if a pro-forma were available to advisors for guidance. This could be issued in electronic form and include the following headings: site issues/problem; strength/weakness analysis; requests from client; recommendations; timeline and budget, plus appendix of materials produced. The objective would be to raise the quality of all reports up to an acceptable minimum standard. Including a more detailed action plan (with timescales and responsibilities allocated) may also help in achieving the shift from strategy to practice.

A potentially useful tool for monitoring future report standards is the Documentation Analysis Guide developed by this evaluation. This uses a tick-box checklist to assess a report document according to a number of criteria that include: client expectations, report format, report content and the guidelines issued by AEAT. The guide is simple to use and takes only around 5 minutes to complete per report. The evaluation team suggest that AEAT should use the report analysis method used for this evaluation study to monitor future report standards. (A copy of the Documentation Analysis Guide is included in Appendix 13.6 of Report.)

Key findings: Reporting requirements

- Reporting requirements seem appropriate, but are not always adhered to by the SSA advisors. Although writing the report constitutes only one of the contracted responsibilities of an SSA advisor, for accountability the advisor needs to show that they have addressed the requirements of the work.
- Report standards have improved, with the incidence of very poor reports being low. However there are still examples of poor reporting.
- A standardised electronic report format could be issued to advisors to ensure that all reports achieve a minimum standard. This would include site issues/problem; strength/weakness analysis; requests from client; recommendations – timeline and budget, plus appendix of materials produced.
- The report analysis method (Document Analysis Guide) used for this research could be used to monitor the standard of future reports.

8.4 SSA Panel: appointment, management and quality assurance

8.4.1 Panel appointment

With the SSA programme being renewed for two years from April 2004 it will be necessary to reappoint the panel of SSA advisors. The AEAT Manager felt that an important issue was that the pool of consultants remains small. There is a need to develop professionals with Travel Plan expertise. The criteria for appointment depend strongly on capabilities outside of the SSA programme and showing that the consultant is not too dependent on SSA business. They need to have an all round Travel Plan capability. He also emphasised that a key role of consultant being able to get into senior management. This is an important strength of SSA. This key role needs to continue to be emphasised to consultants.

A related issue to the appointment of new panel members (and advisor training) is one of accreditation. A national accreditation scheme would greatly assist the expansion of the Travel Plan support sector by providing nationally recognised standards. It would therefore be advantageous for AEAT, in partnership with interested organisations, to investigate the development of a UK accreditation scheme for Travel Plan advisors (for SSA and other advisors). It is likely that this

could be achieved through partnership with existing agencies such as the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise, UKLAST and the Association for Commuter Transport.

8.4.2 Quality assurance procedures

The AEAT Manager noted that the contract with the consultancy is under government purchasing guidelines, which form part of Quality Assurance (QA) process. The contract specifies the individual(s) within the consultancy company who are involved to do SSA work. The contract is always through the consultancy, although it specifies individuals to do the SSA work. Warrants (for individual SSA projects) and contracts can be terminated by AEAT (though, to date, this has never been done).

QA is the responsibility of two AEAT project officers (one for schools and one for employer SSA). Reports are checked. The Feedback Forms form part of QA procedure and AEAT follow up with clients if they do not receive a feedback form. If something seems wrong they will contact consultant. If consultant has broken conditions of contract then AEAT can refuse payment, although, as with the termination of contracts, this has never been done.

8.4.3 Use of junior staff

One issue raised during the evaluation was the use of junior staff on SSA projects. The AEAT Manager noted that this is not normally permitted as it is considered that this could have a detrimental effect on the quality of the assignment. His view is that the appointed SSA advisors need to have the responsibility for SSA work and only the named consultant should have contact with the site. It is accepted that non-contact support work could usefully be done by other staff and this could be an efficient use of consultant's time to do so. But report and contact work must be done by the named advisor.

The formal contractual position between AEAT and advisors is that only members of the panel are contracted to work with SSA clients. Junior members of staff within consultancies are not permitted to perform contact tasks with the client, but are able to accompany (or 'shadow') panel members on site visits to organisations in order to gain experience. This position needs to continue to be made clear at the introductory training workshops run by AEAT.

Key findings: SSA Panel: Appointment, Management and Quality Assurance

- In reappointing the SSA Panel, the current criteria for employer advisors appear appropriate but an emphasis should be given on the ability to motivate senior management to back Travel Plans.
- A national accreditation scheme would greatly assist the expansion of the Travel Plan support sector by providing nationally recognised standards.
- QA procedures appear appropriate and there is need for flexibility in procedures. However there does need to be clarity in all aspects, which has not always been present. Some informal arrangements need to be documented and be more transparent.
- The existing position on the use of junior staff appears workable and appropriate, but needs to be made clear in training workshops and applied consistently.

8.5 Hotline/Helpline

Linked to the TransportEnergy Best Practice Programme is the *TransportEnergy Hotline*. This is a general telephone enquiry line, run for the EST by a commercial call centre, through which enquirers can be put in touch with AEA Technology if they are interested in SSA. The Hotline covers all initiatives and programmes under the TEBP programme.

The current telephone service has not always existed in its present form. Previously there had been a telephone *Helpline*, originally provided for the Envirowise programme and then expanded for

Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme (EEBPP). This service permitted enquirers to contact officers and panel of consultants for up to 2 hours on any energy efficiency issue. In 2002, this service was tendered under the Energy Efficiency programme and AEAT lost part of the work, the Helpline being awarded to WS Atkins. It was agreed that Atkins would deal with basic enquiries and more details enquiries passed onto AEAT. Then, in June 2002, as part of EST taking overall management control, the transport panel was split out and moved to EST. There was a delay in shifting transport part of the helpline to EST and AEAT took it over in the meantime. From January 2003, it was transferred to EST.

The current Hotline is organised with the integrating ethos in mind. The Hotline covers all that EST does and is run by the Prolog call centre in Nottingham. The call centre's staff have no specialist knowledge and need to pass on all but basic enquiries to AEAT. A caller is told that a specialist will contact them and enquiries are emailed to AEAT who then ring back to the enquirer. This is usually later the same day or first thing next day. Thus, what was previously a dedicated Travel Plan Helpline staffed by people with technical knowledge has become a call centre-operated Hotline that deals with basic enquiries and requests for literature and passes on more detailed enquiries to appropriate staff.

There is evidence that, in its present form, there does appear to be a serious problem with telephone enquiries. This view arises both from anecdotal reports from users and also from the sharp drop in the number of call made since the dedicated Travel Plan Helpline became incorporated into the Hotline with the aim of providing a 'one stop shop' for all TransportEnergy inquiries (Table 8.5).

Table 8.5: Use of Travel Plan Helpline/Hotline 1999-2003

June 1999 - February 2001 (June 1999 – transport advice was added to existing helpline)	1447 calls (average 15 per week)
February 2001 - February 2002 (Feb 2002 - transport helpline was handed over to WS Atkins)	1669 calls (average 32 per week)
16th December 2002 – 22nd January 2003 (Interim period during which AEAT was again answering helpline calls)	171 calls (about 34 per week)
Period 23 Jan 2003 onwards	No figures available – but anecdotal evidence of significant reduction in Travel Plan related enquiries

When interviewed, the EST Manager was generally satisfied with the call centre approach and noted that EST is treated differently by Prolog from other customers in that there are dedicated staff for the EST account (which is not so for other accounts). This is because it is more specialist than normal. In support of the current service, the manager made the point that there are notable benefits of linking Travel Plan advice with the other BestPractice and TransportEnergy programmes, which include providing a comprehensive service. However, he has noted that calls to AEAT are running at only 30% of the level in the past, which may imply that not all travel plan calls are being captured and passed on to AEAT.

The reported drop in Travel Plan enquiries being passed onto AEAT is of concern given that this is a total reverse of the trend up to when the EST Hotline took over from the dedicated Helpline. An interesting observation came from an AEAT Manager who reported that many calls come straight through to AEAT or TransportEnergy staff rather than via the Hotline. The view of the evaluation team is that, those that are 'in the know' are avoiding the Hotline because using it wastes time, and are also passing to others direct contact numbers of the appropriate experts in AEAT.

In principle, once an enquirer is in contact with AEAT, they can receive up to 2 hours free advice and can be passed onto a consultant to provide distance advice (which is separate from any SSA project). This is called a 'gearing consultancy'. Although available in principle, in practice this support service is hardly used at all. The evaluation team are of the opinion that this service should be, once again, promoted where appropriate, and should include a review of the current administrative/invoicing process for this 2-hour advice service.

Key findings: Hotline/Helpline

- There is clearly a problem with Travel Plan inquiries being accommodated within the EST's Hotline service. There has been a decline in the number of inquiries dealt with at a time when they would be expected to rise.
- Travel Plans are very different from the other Hotline inquiries. Most involve a 'technical fix' rather than a behavioural change approach.
- The question arises as to whether SSA inquiries have been integrated with the 'wrong' network. Rather than being integrated into networks of Travel Plan advice, they have been integrated with technical energy efficiency advice. Indeed, through the Hotline system, SSA inquiries have been isolated from Travel Plan networks. This links into the finding that, even after an SSA project, clients are often still isolated from the Travel Plan networks that exist.
- Consideration should be given to returning to a dedicated Travel Plan Helpline operated by AEAT, staffed by trained officers who have experience of Travel Plan issues. This should operate in parallel with the TransportEnergy Hotline, which should continue to provide basic information and would also transfer enquiries to the Travel Plan Helpline where appropriate.
- The revised dedicated Travel Plan Helpline should also promote the 2-hour phone advice service for stand-alone and post-SSA project advice.

8.6 Overall management structure

The management structure has changed over the history of the programme. Currently, the Department for Transport has a contract with the Energy Saving Trust who has overall management responsibility for the TransportEnergy programme. The EST contracts AEA Technology to run TransportEnergy Best Practice (TEBP), including the SSA scheme. AEA Technology appoints the panel of advisors and sets up contracts for them to undertake work with SSA clients. The advisors are the ones who deliver the end product (Site Specific Advice) to the end users. The evaluation team are of the opinion that the SSA programme has a somewhat long management chain.

The involvement of the Energy Saving Trust appears to be based on the assumption that there are benefits of a whole range of programmes going through EST, through the integration of a variety of transport related activities. As such, EST adopted this approach to integrate SSA with the rest of TransportEnergy. In practice this has proved difficult, as EST's expertise has historically focussed on issues of technology, freight and fleet travel, rather than Travel Plans and their associated ethos of behavioural change.

The EST Manager reported problems in two areas:

- (a) Practicalities: Unrealistic assumptions were made regarding how quickly EST could integrate sets of people 'used to doing their own things'.
- (b) Strategic issues: Regarding the integration of programmes, little consideration was given as to whether it was right to integrate the three elements through TransportEnergy Best Practice. He has come to the conclusion that the three areas need to be split out (however it may be presented to the customer). Management needs to be separate and tailored to each programme.

The second point raises fundamental questions as to the role of EST in the management structure of the SSA programme. The current role of EST is viewed as unsatisfactory by the evaluation team. The long chain down to the consultants and clients makes it hard for EST to relate to what is going on at ground level. This was one of a number of unresolved difficulties identified by the Trust's SSA Manager. Unlike with other programmes, in which EST had been involved in developing and designing them, they had 'inherited' SSA. They, therefore, currently feel unclear where their responsibilities start and finish relative to the DfT. Responsibilities have not been sufficiently clearly defined.

Regarding the future role of the Trust, EST would like to be more than simply an administrator of the SSA programme, as this doesn't provide the opportunity to deliver the additional value that they feel they could contribute. As to what this added value might be, the EST Manager suggested that they could make more progress on promoting what Travel Plans do and participate in 'cross selling' as well as general consultant training. They have similar situations in other programmes and feel they can address the 'ghetto' syndrome of Travel Plans. The situation is somewhat eased by the fact that, from April 2004, SSA will only be applicable to the workplace clients. Therefore, EST's involvement with Travel Plans will be assisted by their existing relationships with the business sector through PowerShift, Car & Van Fleet BestPractice, CleanUp and the Carbon Trust.

This position itself raises difficulties as such a role is already fulfilled by AEAT, who undertake extensive Travel Plan and SSA promotion, including seminars, cross selling in Local Authorities and other general marketing. In addition, AEAT have all the Travel Plan expertise and experience that EST lacks. The discussion with the EST Manager therefore explored whether, instead of managing AEAT, a more appropriate structure might be AEAT and EST working in parallel or partnership. Both could report directly to DfT. This would improve focus on priorities rather than on the chain of command.

Key findings: Overall Management Structure

- The current SSA programme has a somewhat long management chain.
- The current role of the Energy Saving Trust has not been sufficiently clearly defined.
- Instead of managing AEAT, a more appropriate structure might be AEAT and EST working in parallel or partnership, both reporting directly to DfT. This would improve focus on priorities rather than on the chain of command.
- SSA is being integrated with the 'wrong' area of information. It is being linked to other energy best practice programmes and not other Travel Plan advice networks.
- The SSA programme should be integrated with the developing permanent Travel Plan advice networks that, presumably, will replace it in the long term.

9 Integration of SSA and Local Authority Activities

“LAs should manage SSA in their regions to make [SSA] advice effective” [Local Authority]

9.1 Local authority Travel Plan strategies and the SSA Programme

A number of observations can be drawn from interviews conducted with local authorities that had supported a relatively large number (a ‘cluster’) of SSA projects. The first is that the most successful authorities (in relation to SSA) are the ones who have a clear strategy for Travel Plans in their region. The precise strategies may change across the country and will have, by necessity, different approaches. However, having a strategy seems to be associated with success more than the precise details of the strategy itself. Secondly, successful local authorities are also those who have dedicated staff for the purpose (either funded through the bursary scheme or self-funded).

Although different in emphasis, style and extent, many of the strategies investigated have a number of important features in common. The first is having transparent selection criteria with which to select those organisations that should be offered Travel Plan support. Typical considerations are organisational motivation, level of car use, local level of road casualties, potential for modal change, level of deprivation, geographical constraints, and proximity to development zones and areas where complimentary actions are occurring. Almost without exception, successful local authorities identify the motivation of the organisations to be the overriding factor and would not turn away a positive organisation that were very keen to develop a Travel Plan.

The second common approach is to develop formal or informal methods to identify which organisations are likely to be most receptive in receiving SSA (or other) support. Methods employed range from the use of locally held seminars to find the most committed organisations, to the use of behavioural change models that categorise the stage at which an organisation has reached. These approaches are intended to time any interventions, such as SSA, to maximum effect. In the words of one Travel Plan co-ordinator, you “can’t send in SSA unless [the organisation is] committed”. Strategies that initially gauge levels of organisational motivation maximise the effectiveness of the SSA (and other support) delivered.

A related aspect of the SSA management by local authorities is the use of selection criteria to match an organisation’s requirements with a number of further support tools. For example, one council assesses schools’ needs by conducting an initial travel survey as part of the Safe Routes to Schools programme. Depending on the outcome of the initial assessment, schools either receive a one-off payment for relief staff (to enable teachers to take part in a limited Travel Plan process) or are supported to apply for five days SSA advice.

A third success factor for SSA is for local authorities to take a long-term view of Travel Plan development in their region. This involves the use of SSA within an extended support strategy that extends well beyond SSA, both in scope and in time-scale. Again, a number of approaches in achieving this objective are apparent. These include the provision of a Travel Plan consultant (funded in this case by the local authority) to support former SSA recipients *after* completion of the programme advice. In this case the consultant provides around four days per month follow-up work to continue supporting a sub-group of post-SSA clients. The rationale for this policy is that ongoing support is considered essential if the positive effects of the Travel Plan outcomes are to be maintained and consolidated.

Another approach to the same end is the use of formal partner agreements with organisations. By signing a formal agreement, schools and workplaces agree to commit wholeheartedly to the Travel Plan process. In return, the local authority agrees not to abandon organisations post-SSA. These agreements help to clarify respective roles and to ensure that senior management is aware and

committed to Travel Plan process. They also ensure continued support by the authority into the future.

The central issue here is that these local authorities are taking a very proactive role in managing the Travel Plan support including SSA provision. This involves setting selection criteria, dealing with enquiries from organisations, providing advice, information and contacts, co-ordinating Travel Plan and other initiatives and organising various Travel Plan forums within the region. By engaging with potential partners, the local authority can thereby assess local organisational and transport issues and use this information to make informed decisions about the most appropriate support tools to use in each case. In the words of one Travel Plan co-ordinator, the local authorities “should manage SSA in their regions to make [SSA] advice effective” and co-ordinate work of the SSA advisor. (Typically, the pattern of involvement is that the local authority is very proactive in co-ordinating the Travel Plan process in the first and second year. By the third year, involvement is more responsive to workplaces and schools, and is limited to phone call support and occasional visits when required.)

In a sense, this managerial role is very similar to that of a Travel Plan bursary post holder or equivalent. Indeed, in section 6.1.3, it was noted that “of those SSA cases which advisors scored the local authority helpfulness at 4 or above, nearly two-thirds of cases were supported by a bursary post, whereas, of those SSA cases which advisors scored the local authority helpfulness at 2 or below, only a quarter of cases were supported by a bursary post”. This provides evidence that having key personnel within an authority responsible for Travel Plans is an important indicator of how helpful and how much support is provided. However, what seems to be of importance here is not necessarily that a bursary post be in place, but that well trained staff are available within the local authority. Indeed, one of the most proactive authorities (mentioned earlier in this section) is staffed by a self-financed team of six Travel Plan co-ordinators.

9.2 ‘Application’ of SSA by local authorities

Interestingly, the local authorities surveyed approach the use of the SSA in very different ways. It seems that some authorities use SSA for discrete and targeted areas of work such as where complex engineering solutions are required which are outside the experience of the authority. They utilise SSA for specific tasks more than for support of the Travel Plan process. This approach could be considered contrary in some ways to the original intention of the SSA programme, which is to develop Travel Plans rather than perform particular tasks. However, these authorities seem to have found a productive way to use the SSA as an additional resource with which to compliment other Travel Plan support services. In the words of one Travel Plan co-ordinator, the SSA scheme is “really useful to supplement areas” which are outside the skills-base of the local authority.

What is expected from the organisations also varies greatly. Although most local authorities will be very involved with supporting the SSA application process by providing assistance with completion of PVQs, some expect the organisations themselves to head up the Travel Plan (writing of report etc), rather than have the SSA advisor doing the work. It is as if some local authorities see the SSA consultant’s role as they do their own; i.e. Travel Plan co-ordinators and SSA advisors “work closely [with organisations] but do not write [Travel Plan]”. The rationale behind this approach is that organisations that conduct most of the work themselves are more likely to be successful in developing a productive strategy. (However, it is worth noting here that, according to the programme, SSA advisors are supposed to write the Travel Plan as part of their remit.)

Regarding the time allocated to SSA advisors (usually five days), the general view of authorities is that SSA in an unsupported environment may not in itself lead to real change. Where it can make a difference is as part of a larger support system that includes some degree of follow-up and continuing support to organisations. The perceived danger is that SSA merely leads to a report ‘on the table’ with no implemented changes following thereafter. Furthermore, an effective support system needs people on the ground to provide long-term support to effect modal shift. Therefore, according to many local authorities, SSA needs to be seen as part of larger process.

9.3 Reasons for lack of integration of SSA and local authority activities

While it is important to note those local authorities that are most proactive in developing Travel Plans in their regions and disseminate best practice, it is also interesting to ascertain why other authorities are not so successful in supporting the development of Travel Plans (and promoting SSA). While there are obviously a large number of reasons in operation, interviews conducted as part of the evaluation have provided some anecdotal evidence of why this may be the case.

As previous sections have shown, for SSA to work successfully, there has to be an effective partnership between the client organisation (with strong senior management support), the SSA advisor (who is contracted to contact and work with the local council), the local authority (who ideally promote SSA within a larger Travel Plan strategy) and AEAT.

However, in several instances, there have been cases where any one of these parties has failed to form a sufficient link with other partners. For example, at least two proactive authorities have reported instances in which advisors made little or no contact with the authority, in the worst cases failing to confirm and attend meetings. From a motivational perspective, this is analogous to clients that have failed to secure senior management commitment to the Travel Plan process. For their part, there are also some local authorities that, for many reasons (e.g. level of funding or staff resources), have not sufficiently promoted Travel Plans and SSA within their region. The role of AEAT is also important in supporting the whole process and the report notes that some advisors would welcome more feedback from AEAT regarding the effectiveness of advice provided. In the words of one advisor, “[I] don’t know if I’m doing right”.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse all the reasons underlying the success or otherwise of Travel Plan development on a regional basis, the above evidence does point to the need for commitment to the Travel Plans process by, and good communication between, all parties involved, in addition to sufficiently resourced local authorities. If these elements are not in place, the chances are that advisors may be raising expectations that local authorities cannot deliver and that client commitment will not be maintained over a sufficiently long period for significant benefits to follow-on from a completed Travel Plan.

Therefore, the evaluation team is of the opinion that, the DfT, EST and/or AEAT should investigate new ways to support local authorities in developing Travel Plan advice for their region. All three organisations are well placed to provide such support given their existing links with local authorities. While many options exist, increased support could be achieved through partnership with existing agencies such as the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise, the Association for Commuter Transport and UKLAST. Increased government funding for these types of organisations would also be beneficial, particularly in terms of being able to develop support measures which would be beneficial to the SSA programme and other Travel Plan initiatives. (For example, the organisations mentioned above already have forums and websites dedicated to travel plan issues.)

Key findings: Integration of SSA and Local Authority activities

- Successful local authorities (in relation to SSA) are ones who have a clear strategy for Travel Plans in their region. Three strategic elements seem to be important: the adoption of criteria to initially select organisations, the identification of the most motivated recipients for support and the need to take a long-term view of Travel Plan development.
- Advisors are occasionally not making sufficient links with the relevant local authority, as they are contractually obliged to do by their contract with AEAT.
- It would advantageous to investigate new ways to support local authorities in developing Travel Plan advice for their region and disseminate best practice. While many options exist, increased support could be achieved through partnership with existing agencies such as the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise, the Association for Commuter Transport and UKLAST.

10 Models for the provision of Travel Plan advice

10.1 SSA-type schemes in other countries

Site Specific Advice type programmes for companies that want (or are required) to develop a Travel Plan are offered in a number of places. Outside of the UK, these are usually provided on a regional basis. For example, The Space Coast Area Transit Agency in Southern Florida, USA supports the Space Coast Commuter Assistance (SCCA) program to help commuters use alternative modes. The agency helps develop individualised commuter trip reduction programs for each business, and makes no charge for SCCA's services (Litman 2001).

In Canada, direct cash subsidies have been used in Montreal, where a fund of \$3.18m (£1.5m) is being used to offer employers of more than 50 workers financial help to develop travel demand management plans (Coulliard 2002). In Italy, the Environment Ministry has set aside €15.5m (£11m) over three years to finance up to 50% of the company mobility plans design and implementation costs (MOST 2001). Another example is found in Linz, Austria, where the City Council offers a free mobility consulting service to the 450 companies with 50 employees or more (Schippiani 2002).

In the Netherlands, companies are helped to set up Travel Plans through independent regional bodies called Transport Co-ordination Centres or VCCs (Van der Hoef 2002). The role of VCCs involves them approaching companies and providing information as to how they can deliver Travel Plans and make their businesses more efficient. They also act as intermediaries between the companies and the Province so as to try and deliver improvements to local alternatives to the car. A key part of this service is free site-specific advice. A local VCC will spend two days at a company providing advice for free on how to set up a Travel Plan. Any time spent after that time must be paid for.

To obtain more details on the Dutch situation, a telephone interview was arranged with H A van der Hoef, Mobility Manager, Provincie Holland Zuid²⁶. This provided basic information on the way the Dutch provide site-specific advice. This is through the local VCC organisations, which set up ten years ago across the Netherlands. The Hague and Rotterdam each have a VCC with around 3-4 staff, while in North Holland there is a single VCC with around 10 staff. VCCs are funded by National Government through the Provinces, but from 2004/5 this source of funding will stop. At that point, some will continue to be funded or part funded through the Provinces while others may become commercial operations. Indeed, some are already going down that road. The central government programme funding was thus to get local VCCs established and for them to link into permanent funding arrangements.

In South Holland, as of late 2002, 60% of companies had been approached and 14% of the total have agreed to take part. The trend is now to talk to groups of companies as opposed to the previous approach of dealing with individual companies. This is to develop an area Travel Plan which member companies then join. Typically these area-wide schemes may cover an urban area and consist of 20-50 companies and more than 1000 employees. Companies are therefore being more involved in making decisions that directly affect them. One other trend is that in the past companies were approached and left alone if they were not interested. This has changed and over the last two years or so, more pressure has been applied through the 'company responsibility' and 'company benefits' buttons to companies. This approach is proving rather more successful. The idea is therefore, that improving the neighbourhood is not only good for society but also improves the value of the company.

²⁶ Interview with H A van der Hoef, Mobility Manager, Provincie Holland Zuid, 29th November, 2002. See also the CEC LEDA project.

The issue of developing towards a model where SSA became a Local Authority or regional function was discussed with the AEAT SSA Manager. He raised the point that there are two alternatives:

- (a) Where Travel Plan advice is very 'hands-on' and close to the local authority.
- (b) Where SSA provides independent advice. In this the local authority is a partner in an independent process.

His preference was for the second model and he felt that the SSA programme fits better with this. He noted that there is a danger that if the local authority is too involved, private businesses may not wish to raise potentially sensitive issues (like exploring options that may result in different planning consent conditions). This interview raised an important issue of local authority conflict of interest. Travel plan advice needs to be separate from development control rather than integrated with the development control function.

10.2 The future provision of Travel Plan support in the UK

The evidence from other countries that have introduced Travel Plan SSA-type advice schemes is that they have integrated it into evolving local and regional support networks, which have then taken over the advice function to provide it on a permanent basis. Although now renewed until 2006, there needs to be a consideration of whether the SSA Programme should be a temporary or a permanent programme and how it can link into a more general programme which makes effective provision of Travel Plan advice.

Some local authorities in the UK offer Travel Plan advice. For example the TransACT scheme in Nottingham (Batifois and Fleming 2002). This was set up by the City of Nottingham, in conjunction with the Nottinghamshire Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Business Link, and allocates money from the Department for Transport's congestion charging fund to help companies of between 20 and 50 employees to set up Travel Plan measures. Eligible companies can claim up to £2,000 for expert advice from consultants and a further £18,000 for a grant towards capital costs of implementing a Travel Plan.

The question is whether SSA is intended to be a permanent government service that will continue to be used in the future, or a transitional scheme? If it is the latter, consideration needs to be given to what long-term support structure could be developed for the future. The options range from the delivery of advice by independent regional organisations to a long-term nationally funded function that is integrated with other advice sources, but remains a separate institution.

Key findings: Models for the provision of Travel Plan advice

- Site Specific Advice type schemes feature in many countries pursuing transport policies similar to those of the UK.
- Site Specific Advice tends to be provided at a regional level by organisations with a remit to work with local employers on a range of mobility management measures. These organisations may be linked to local authorities, but act independently of them (avoiding a clash of interest with development control functions).
- Schools are generally not included in other countries SSA schemes.
- Only some schemes involve private planning consultants.
- The UK's SSA Programme is currently a centrally funded service that is time-limited (due to end 2006). In the longer-term, although one option for provision of Travel Plan advice is a continued nationally funded function, a transition to permanent, locally managed, privately funded service is expected to occur.

11 Conclusions and Recommendations

11.1 Recent Developments

This report notes that it has been announced (in October 2003) that the SSA programme will continue for workplace organisations for a further two years from April 2004. The evaluation team welcomes this development.

For primary, secondary and LEA maintained nursery schools²⁷, the decision has been made that they can no longer apply for Site Specific Advice (assignments currently underway will be completed but no further applications from schools will be accepted). However, from April 2004, £7.5m a year for at least two years has been allocated to fund more local authority based School Travel Advisers and for schools to carry out surveys and prepare and implement Travel Plans. Part of the School Travel Advisor allocation can be used to pay for consultancy advice if this is considered necessary and represents best value.

Recommendations are made in the light of these developments.

11.2 Recommendations

11.2.1 Overall assessment

In summarising the key findings, the first point is to note the strengths of the SSA programme. SSA is probably one of the most cost-effective transport behaviour programmes in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions and effecting modal shift. When considering wider external costs and benefits, central estimates of SSA projects yield a cost-benefit ratio of better than 1:20 for workplaces and almost 1:4 for schools. These ratios indicate that the SSA programme delivers significant net benefits.

In practice, the survey shows that many organisations seeking SSA are at the initial stage of developing a Travel Plan and often lack a clear idea of what help they require, or the extent of the task they face. One of the successful roles of an SSA advisor, therefore, is to provide strategic guidance on what organisations need, not simply help with specified tasks. In particular, gaining the support of senior management is often more important than the client initially envisages.

In terms of the impact of the SSA programme, it is clear that it is having a number of beneficial effects. In particular, SSA makes a substantial difference to clients' understanding of Travel Plans, and is increasing the commitment of staff time and resources. Clients stress the way changes brought about by SSA relate to galvanising internal support, although convincing senior management to support particular measures can remain difficult. Overall, both clients and advisors feel that SSA is resulting in better Travel Plans, with new or faster development resulting directly from the advice. However, recommendations from SSA are only being partially implemented, due to internal or external resistance to change or resource constraints.

The improvements in resources available for travel planning that result from SSA suggest that advisors have an authority with management that in-house coordinators do not. This important 'leverage' is a notable success of the scheme. Without the SSA programme, it is likely that there would be a slower rate of Travel Plan development nationally (this is especially the case for workplace organisations).

Overall, the results of the evaluation survey show that SSA is proving a powerful tool for Travel Plan promotion, one that is available in all areas (of England), irrespective of the distribution of pro-active Local Authority Travel Plan Co-ordinators and Bursary Posts. Moreover, SSA provides

²⁷ Independent nursery schools will continue to be eligible for SSA from April 2004.

independent advice through a simple universal application process. It is also a programme that gives implicit national endorsement of the importance of Travel Plans.

For these reasons, the evaluation study recommends that:

- 1. From April 2004, AEAT continues to promote SSA for workplace organisations and independent nursery schools.**
- 2. The DfT continues to issue guidance to local authorities that, from April 2004, local authorities will be able to use part of their School Travel Advisor allocation to pay for consultancy advice if they consider that this is necessary and represents best value.**
- 3. That the SSA programme continues to be available beyond April 2006.**

11.2.2 Delivery of Travel Plan advice

Advisors are usually involved at the early stages of Travel Plans. In part, they help organisations both articulate what they want from the advice and identify overall Travel Plan needs. However, some advisors feel that advice at the early stage could be provided by other methods. For example, the relevant local authority could also deal with some technical issues, such as the appropriate application of survey techniques.

A related issue is that SSA projects are not always well linked with the other forms of Travel Plan advice available. Clients do not seek SSA via all possible routes, many are unaware of other sources of advice and advisors feel that the programme could be better linked with other Travel Plan-related resources, such as websites, telephone helplines, and regional Travel Plan networks. Therefore, more information regarding other Travel Plan support needs to be made available to SSA applicants and new SSA recipients.

It is clear that advisors see the gaining of senior management support as critical, and it often forms a more important part of a particular SSA process than clients imagine prior to receiving advice. To increase senior management engagement, one possibility would be to make the providing of an opportunity to meet with senior management a key requirement for organisations seeking SSA. Another approach would be to promote the use of formal contractual agreements between clients, advisors and local authorities, in order to clarify responsibilities, guarantee commitment and encourage action.

In general, most clients are very satisfied with the advice that they received, with only a few recording dissatisfaction. However, clients' views of advisors suggest that knowledge of local context, and of the organisations for which they are working, are two areas where advisors' skills could be improved. Given that many clients are beginning the Travel Plan development process, it is very clear that advisors need to be flexible, supportive, and not simply technically skilled. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of advisors establishing both senior management and local authority involvement from an early stage. There is some evidence that the skills-base necessary to engage senior management could be increased and that, in a few cases, advisors were not making sufficient links with the relevant local authority as they are contracted to do.

Both clients and advisors think that a modest increase in the time per client would be useful. To avoid the danger of this leading to too much dependence on government subsidy, the scheme could allow applications for short-term follow-on advice at half cost. This would require a commitment from the client organisation while still providing a positive incentive.

For these reasons, the evaluation study recommends that:

4. **AEAT should advise on, and send out, DfT Travel Plan resource materials, and advise new SSA applicants on local sources of support, at the same time as supplying Pre-Visit Questionnaires.**
5. **AEAT should modify the Pre-Visit Questionnaire by adding compulsory questions that require applicants to provide evidence of the commitment of senior management.**
6. **AEAT should oblige advisors to have regular contact with each of the local authority teams in the areas covered by the advisor in order to establish good working relationships. Programme funding should be made available to advisors to attend meetings as required.**
7. **From April 2004, the SSA programme could usefully include short-term follow-up advice at half cost. There should be clear criteria for eligibility for additional advice beyond the (usual) initial 5 days.**

11.2.3 Management of the scheme by AEAT

Overall, the evaluation team, clients and advisors perceive SSA to be a well-managed programme. However, some detailed management aspects do require attention. For example, SSA reporting requirements are clear and appropriate, but are not always adhered to by advisors²⁸. Following reiteration of the guidelines in 2003, there is evidence that report standards have improved, with the incidence of very poor reports being low. Although this suggests that AEAT's quality assurance procedures are appropriate and effective, the evaluation team are still of the opinion that the use of an electronic report pro-forma (used for guidance) would raise the quality of the remaining poor reports up to a minimum standard. The pro-forma should include: site issues; strength/weakness analysis; requests from client; advisor's recommendations; action-plan showing responsibilities; timeline; budget; and an appendix of materials produced.

AEAT ran a number of induction training workshops for new consultants during the period 2001-2003, the aim of which was to explain the SSA programme in detail. The workshops provided information on procedural issues and advisor responsibilities and were also an opportunity for advisors to exchange experience in delivering Travel Plan advice. However, when interviewed, many advisors noted that more information and/or induction training regarding the SSA programme would have been useful. These views are somewhat at odds with the position that all panel members should already be 'experts' in Travel Plan issues. However, it seems that there is a real need to prepare new SSA advisors *at the induction stage* who, although very knowledgeable, have a variety of previous professional experience.

The extension of the SSA programme for a further 2 years (from April 2004) will involve the appointing of a new panel and the opportunity should be taken to improve training for new recruits. Based on information gathered during interviews, this evaluation study has identified the need for further training at future induction and training workshops in the following areas: the importance (and contractual duty) of involving the local authority in all SSA cases, the importance of gaining support from senior management, the adherence to existing report writing guidelines, and the clarification of the allowed roles for junior staff.

The series of interviews conducted for the evaluation indicated that some advisors would have benefited from more feedback (from AEAT and other colleagues). In some cases, advisors were informally self-organising in order to share information and experiences of working with clients. This leads the evaluation team to conclude that there does not seem to be an effective support network for advisors as present, in spite of there being an existing e-mail group with an archive facility run by AEAT for SSA panel members.²⁹ Therefore, AEAT should promote existing e-groups for panel members and expand website support for advisors to disseminate information, best

²⁸ AEAT report writing guidelines are presented to advisors at training workshops and are issued in writing.

²⁹ There is no equivalent of UKLAST for workplace Travel Plan advice as there is for schools.

practice and promote information and experience exchange. This could be achieved through partnership with existing agencies such as the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise and the Association for Commuter Transport.

AEAT already promotes the SSA programme through seminars, cross selling in Local Authorities and other general marketing. Although this is regarded as successful in most respects, more could be done to increase awareness for potential clients and to strengthen the Travel Plan support network. This might include an increase in AEAT co-ordinated regional workshops. There is also some evidence that the successful local authorities are the ones who have a clear strategy for rolling out Travel Plans and dedicated staff for the purpose. Therefore, we recommend that the DfT, EST and AEAT should do more to support local authorities in developing regional Travel Plan strategies to increase the targeting and effectiveness of the SSA delivered.

The evaluation team contend that the promotion of SSA by consultants can also be positive for the programme as a whole, particularly if linked to promotion by Local Authorities. However procedures in allocating SSA projects to consultants need to ensure that no conflicts of interest occur. This could be addressed by ensuring that, during the reappointing of the SSA Panel, where possible, there is more than one advisor per region.

Although the existing position on the use of junior staff appears workable and appropriate, it needs to be made clear to all consultants and applied consistently. The position is that only individuals who are members of the panel are contracted to work with SSA clients. Junior members of staff within consultancies are not permitted to perform tasks with the client, but are able to accompany panel members to organisations in order to gain experience. As already mentioned, new panel members should be reminded of this position during the induction training session presentation given by AEAT.

For these reasons, the evaluation study recommends that:

- 8. For guidance, AEAT should send out standardised electronic format in order to ensure all reports achieve a specified minimum standard. This should include: site issues; strength/weakness analysis; requests from client; advisor's recommendations; action-plan showing responsibilities; timeline; budget; and an appendix of materials produced.**
- 9. AEAT should use the Documentation Analysis Guide used for this evaluation study to monitor report standards. (A copy of the Guide is included in Appendix 13.6 of the Final Report.)**
- 10. As part of the process of appointing a new panel of SSA advisors (due April 2004), there should be induction training for new recruits as has occurred previously. In addition, every effort should be made to ensure that more than one advisor is appointed per region.**
- 11. When appointing a new panel, care should be taken to ensure that all new panel members have appropriate negotiation skills to work with senior management and Travel Plan partners. It may be necessary to provide additional training to focus on these key skills.**
- 12. AEAT should promote existing e-groups for panel members and expand website support for (particularly workplace) advisors to disseminate information, best practice and promote information and experience exchange. This could be achieved through partnership with other Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society and TravelWise.**
- 13. In allocating the time available for larger organisations, AEAT should clarify, and make more transparent, the process for allocating more than five days.**

- 14. The DfT, EST and/or AEAT should investigate new ways to support local authorities in developing Travel Plan advice for their region. Increased support could be achieved through partnership with existing Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise and UKLAST.**
- 15. AEAT should investigate the development of an accreditation scheme for consultants who provide Travel Plan advice (or a short term version of this if the Department is already developing a more advanced accreditation programme for the long term). This could be achieved through partnership with existing Travel Plan agencies, including: the Association for Commuter Transport, the Transport Planning Society, TravelWise and UKLAST.**
- 16. Panel members should be reminded of the existing position regarding the permitted use of junior staff during the introductory training session presentation given by AEAT.**

11.2.4 Energy Saving Trust and TransportEnergy Hotline

The rationale of including the Energy Saving Trust within the SSA Programme management chain appears to have been to integrate SSA with the Trust's other best-practice programmes. However these other programmes are primarily about technical issues and not behavioural change. Although there is a case for linking SSA with other programmes within TransportEnergy, the evaluation team are of the opinion that, at present, the role of the Trust is not significantly 'adding value' to the SSA scheme and needs to be more clearly defined. Furthermore, EST has relatively little expertise in behavioural change initiatives and is stretched keeping up with its core responsibilities.

This raises a fundamental question as to whether SSA has been incorporated within the 'wrong' set of policy initiatives. Rather than being integrated into networks of Travel Plan advice, it has been integrated with technical energy efficiency advice. (In a sense, the imminent transfer of all Travel Plan advice for schools to local authority management will achieve integration with an appropriate network.) In addition, the current management structure does not readily integrate SSA into the developing local and national Travel Plan networks, with which AEAT and the advisors have better links (such as ACT, TPS and IHT etc). This view is supported by the fact that AEAT is already well placed to further develop the support network for advisors discussed in Section 11.2.3.

To address these issues, the evaluation team are of the opinion that a review of the existing management structure is required. One option would be for the DfT to manage AEAT directly and ask EST to liaise with AEAT in the areas where a partnership would be useful (e.g. where EST's link with fleet managers and local authorities might be extended to cover Travel Plans as well). This would also shorten the rather long management chain.

There is also a related problem with Travel Plan enquiries being accommodated as part of the TransportEnergy Hotline service. There has been a decline in the number of enquiries dealt with at a time when they would be expected to rise. This is related to the issue of the SSA programme's management structure, as Travel Plan requests are very different from the other Hotline enquiries. By moving to a Hotline system within TransportEnergy, SSA enquiries have been isolated from Travel Plan networks. This links with the evaluation's findings that indicate that even after an SSA project, clients often remain isolated from the Travel Plan networks that already exist.

Although the strength of the single national Hotline is that it provides simplicity, this is not necessarily the most appropriate style of telephone support for Travel Plan advice given that enquirers are often initially uncertain about what they require. Therefore, a return to a dedicated helpline that links enquirers with people experienced with Travel Plan issues would be extremely valuable. It should not just be an SSA service, but one that could help integrate the range of Travel Plan advice provided both locally and nationally.

For these reasons, the evaluation study recommends that:

- 17. The overall management structure should be reviewed. While only one of several options, DfT should consider managing AEAT directly with EST liasing with AEAT in the areas where a partnership would be useful (e.g. where EST's link with fleet managers and local authorities might be extended to cover Travel Plans as well).**
- 18. There should be a return to a dedicated Travel Plan Helpline to be operated by AEAT, staffed by trained officers who have experience of Travel Plan issues. This should operate in parallel with the TransportEnergy Hotline, which should continue to provide basic information and would also transfer enquiries to the Travel Plan Helpline where appropriate.**
- 19. The revised dedicated Travel Plan Helpline should be promoted at a number of levels, including: general enquiries, PVQ request, SSA support, 2-hour 'gearing' advice and post-SSA project advice.**

11.2.5 Future provision of Travel Plan support

The evidence from other countries that have introduced Travel Plan SSA-type advice schemes is that they have integrated it into evolving local and regional support networks, which have then taken over the advice function to provide it on a permanent basis. Although now renewed until the end of March 2006, there needs to be a consideration of whether the SSA Programme is intended to be a permanent government service that will continue to be used in the future, or a transitional scheme. If it is the latter, consideration needs to be given to what long-term support structure could be developed for the future. The options range from the delivery of advice by independent regional organisations to a long-term nationally funded function that is integrated with other advice sources, but remains a separate institution.

For these reasons, the evaluation study recommends that:

- 20. A review of the long-term options for Travel Plan advice should be conducted by DfT (in conjunction with AEAT and EST) well before March 2006 to assess the strengths of different models of Travel Plan advice provision in the UK.**

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