LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review of research on the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions

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DMH Associates

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CfBT Education Trust

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DMH Associates was established in August 2008. This Derbyshire-based organisation works to strengthen the inter-connectivity between career guidance policy, research and practice. Its research, consultancy and evaluation activities seek to inform and support the design and development of effective local, regional, national and international careers and guidance-related policies and practices.

Executive Summary

'Measuring and assessing the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions is not simply about measurement; it is more about effective communication and building a learning community that has a strong and confident multi-dimensional voice that responds well to the pressure from policymakers and consumers to deliver more relevant and cost-effective interventions.'

Hughes, 2009

Introduction

In November 2008, CfBT Education Trust commissioned DMH Associates to develop and produce a practical resource to inform and support the impact and assessment of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) interventions within Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) in England.

This literature review has informed the design and development of an *Evidence and Impact: careers and guidance-related interventions* online professional resource. The work is situated within the newly devolved arrangements from central to local government for the commissioning of 14–19 services, as outlined in the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007).

It focuses primarily, though not exclusively, upon research findings from careers and guidance-related interventions aimed at young people. Lessons learned from the research findings are designed to inform and consolidate professionals' understanding and articulation of what constitutes effective CEIAG-related interventions, as well as identifying gaps in the evidence-base for measuring and assessing the impact of CEIAG provision in England.

Methodology

The initial searches of published material, and the more detailed subsequent screening, were carried out in late 2008 and early 2009. A wide range of keywords were used to identify evidence that would be directly relevant to the impact of universal and targeted careers and guidance-related interventions, and also more generic impact research. This process resulted in the identification of a total of 100+ sources which feature throughout the review. In addition, the key findings of 45 of these were summarised and presented. The main research findings are organised into the following five categories:

- studies of factors influencing the decision making processes of young people's learning, attainment and progression;

- studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services;

- Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations;

- studies of targeted support for young people, including those at risk of exclusion; and

- other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance.

The impact of CEIAG interventions

The extensive body of research evidence that endeavours to show the impact of CEIAG interventions in terms of participation and retention in education, training, employment, and other 'hard' outcomes is open to interpretation. As a result, it is difficult to quantify in 'precise terms' the impact that these interventions have on young people's intermediate and longer-term learning, social and/or economic outcomes.

However, there is a reasonably strong case to be made that CEIAG interventions can and do make a difference in terms of 'soft' outcomes such as increased self-confidence and enhanced decision-making skills that can be seen as *precursors or proxy indicators* that make a significant contribution to longer-term socio-economic outcomes. The findings

> *Evidence shows that teachers in 11–18 schools, in general, lack impartiality by encouraging some students to stay on in their school sixth forms.*

strongly suggest that managers, teachers and Personal Advisers often tend to view, value and manage the impact of their work in terms of identifying 'soft' outcomes.

Decision-making processes of young people

It is clear that well-developed career exploration skills, and clear career goals and expectations, are important in helping young people to achieve their potential whilst at school and to make successful transitions post-16. Good-quality CEIAG has an important role to play in the development of these skills.

The **decision-making processes of young people**, including those involving career planning, are influenced by many factors – some 'formal' and some 'informal'. The impact of CEIAG, including the particular role of teachers and Connexions staff needs to be seen within, and moderated by, this wider context.

'Formal' sources of CEIAG may have significantly less impact than that of 'informal' sources and influences. In view of this, new and innovative CEIAG approaches are required that connect into the informal social networks within which young people interact.

Although formal Connexions inputs may be overshadowed by informal influences, their unique selling point may be the reassurance of professional authority and impartiality that they confer, especially within the context of schools with sixth forms and for pupils whose parents/carers may have limited career horizons.

There is also compelling government policy and research evidence which points towards the need for young people to be introduced to exploring careers and options much earlier than from Year 9 onwards.

Evidence shows that teachers in 11–18 schools, in general, lack impartiality by encouraging some students to stay on in their school sixth forms. New legislation contained within the Education and Skills Act 2008, further supported through the introduction of CEIAG principles and quality standards for schools, colleges and local authorities, will seek to address this serious deficiency in current arrangements.

Guidance models based on a traditional 'matching' approach appear to be no longer sustainable in fast-changing national and global economies. New theories are now required that move beyond 'differentialist' matching models to include more personalised and responsive approaches such as learning from career narratives and trajectories, labour market transitions and web-based interactions. In this context, research findings highlight that greater recognition should be given to young people's (and adults') decision-making processes, which are not wholly rational, but instead complex and often chaotic.

The language of CEIAG needs to become more explicit and accessible and should be part of the process of helping students to make well-informed and realistic decisions. Younger students are likely to require more explanation and clarification of careers language, and activities need to be introduced earlier in the curriculum.

The need for greater involvement of the practitioner and customer voice in building the evidence-base for Connexions work has been highlighted. How this is clearly articulated to the 'uninitiated', in order to ensure that clear and coherent key messages are conveyed, is now the major challenge for practitioners, managers, researchers and policymakers.

The majority of research into ethnicity and gender in relation to career exploration and development has tended to separate these two factors. However, it has been argued that the interaction between ethnicity and gender must be considered. One important feature of the interaction of gender and race is the impact of gender-role socialisation. An important task for those working in the CEIAG field will be to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values with personal beliefs and goals.

Insufficient research has been carried out into the career development of minority ethnic groups. The relationship between gender and sexual orientation is also a neglected area. In developing a new body of knowledge, there is a danger of falling into the same theoretical trap of generalising findings from one population to another for which these findings are not relevant. In order to measure

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Research findings indicate that guidance delivered by telephone can be of a high quality when measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance…

and assess the impact of CEIAG interventions, research populations should represent more fully minority ethnic groups, non-heterosexuals and other dimensions of diverse and multi-cultural communities.

Remotely delivered information, advice and guidance

The review of research into the impact of **remotely delivered information, advice and guidance** demonstrates how the influence of technology has significantly influenced individuals' behaviour patterns in terms of how and when they access and utilise services to meet their particular needs. The alternative channels of communication that technology provides further enhance access to individually tailored and personalised services. There is compelling evidence that increased volumes of users are now accessing both telephone and online support services. The increase in online usage partly reflects the impact of mass marketing and the general popularity and penetration of the internet, particularly broadband, throughout the UK.

Research findings indicate that guidance delivered by telephone can be of a high quality when measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance. Telephone guidance can also be effective, with callers attributing both hard and soft outcomes to the intervention, but especially for outcomes such as increased motivation, self-awareness and confidence, and a greater awareness of opportunities. A particular feature of high-quality and effective telephone guidance is CEIAG delivery staff who are well qualified and highly trained to deliver information, advice and guidance services.

Also, it is clear that new technology offers significant potential to support organisations' CEIAG delivery work with young people, parents/carers and employers, whilst simultaneously affording new opportunities to gather information on customer journeys and career trajectories more systematically.

The materials reviewed indicate that these developments need to continue apace in order both to respond to the general public's growing familiarity with and access to ICT, particularly broadband, and to match the

increasing sophistication of the developing technology.

Finally, there is scope to improve the utilisation of technology to help assess impact and the effectiveness of services. Linked to this, CEIAG workers' skill sets in managing and responding to the changing interface between internet resources and individual users' behaviours are broadly underdeveloped.

Evaluation surveys of Connexions services

The review of **evaluation surveys of Connexions services** shows that these have tended to focus upon: profiles of users and of usage; users' satisfaction levels; and user impact, usually expressed in terms of how useful the service is rated. There is little or no published evidence of the longer-term tracking of student/client/customer journeys within the user survey process.

Although satisfaction levels are generally high, where improvements are suggested by users these most frequently include the need for advisers to be more helpful and supportive and to offer better advice, and the need to have more advisers available to take calls.

There is considerable variation of policy and practice in terms of the frequency, range and volumes of surveys carried out and their levels of perceived impartiality. Qualitative research that focuses on young people's lived experiences characterised in case studies and career narratives remains patchy and under-developed. Also, the lack of involvement of young people in the design and development of capturing CEIAG impact data from their peers, using technology to support this process, is an apparent gap in the current system.

Targeted support for young people

The review of the research into **targeted support for young people** highlights a number of common 'critical success factors' that need to be addressed in order to successfully tackle the problems of being not in education, employment or training (NEET). There is also a need to accept that many young people face multiple risks in their lives and that impact is needed in more than one

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area with recognition of the importance of both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes.

Research findings show that the proportion of young people who are NEET has hovered at around 10% since the mid-1990s despite significant investment in targeted support and other policy measures. Indeed, the figures since the mid-1980s indicate that the overall buoyancy of the economy in terms of general employment rates is a significant factor associated with NEET levels.

Despite the fact that the NEET group is not homogeneous, many disaffected young people are characterised by a number of recurring themes and risks. The cost of being NEET, especially long-term NEET, is not only to the health and economic well-being of the individual but also to society, in terms of increased social welfare expenditure and societal dysfunction.

Many young people who are NEET feel alienated from formal education, especially as a result of their experience and perception of school, and there is a need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment. In particular, a greater range and flexibility of training and learning provision is required, including more pre-level 2 and flexible 'roll-on/roll-off' provision.

Evaluations of targeted support for young people at risk of exclusion, and for those who are lowly qualified and in jobs without training, show that the motivational, emotional and attitudinal support of Connexions advisers is particularly valued in addition to the information and brokerage services that they provide.

Generic careers-related impact research

The review of the more **generic careers-related impact research** shows a very mixed picture both in terms of the many possible outcomes of service interventions and in terms of the availability and robustness of the underlying evidence.

Taking into account both the number of studies available and the type of evidence they provide, there is a reasonably strong case to be made that careers education, information, advice and guidance-related interventions can and do make a difference in terms of increased levels of personal confidence and self-esteem.

There is also a significant body of evidence on the impact of information, advice and guidance (IAG) on career exploration and decision-making skills. Indeed, self-confidence and decision-making skills are related, and the literature findings suggest that the one acts as a precursor to the other.

There are several studies which suggest that IAG has a positive impact on participation in learning, and there is one particularly robust study showing a strong link between advice and/or guidance and increased participation in informal learning (as opposed to formal learning). Although the evidence that CEIAG, *per se*, results in improvements in academic attainment is mixed, there is evidence that CEIAG is associated with improvements in retention in full-time education and reduced course-switching.

There is good evidence of the highest level of rigour that intensive multi-stranded support for job seekers, including the provision of guidance, can reduce the length of time taken in finding employment. Several other studies also show a link between IAG and participation in employment, and/or improved employment, with many individuals reporting that the IAG they received was a significant factor in improving their employment situation.

There is also evidence of the highest level of rigour showing that in-depth support in the form of advice and guidance is positively associated with attitudinal work-related outcomes, including increased work satisfaction and confidence in gaining a desired job.

Other overarching conclusions

In addition to the conclusions from the review of the five thematic areas above, a number of **other overarching conclusions** are reached. These include the challenges associated with the interpretation of evidence and the inherent difficulty in demonstrating the impact and cost-effectiveness of policy interventions.

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In some cases, even the most targeted and generously funded social policy initiatives are unable to show the level of impact that was originally anticipated.

Local authorities, schools, colleges and Connexions services are required to assess the impact of their work and to involve users and practitioners in the development of performance measures. New approaches should include qualitative as well as quantitative information and 'soft' as well as 'hard' outcomes, and should take into account longer-term customer journeys.

All of the above factors have influenced and informed the design and development of an *Evidence and Impact: careers and guidance-related interventions* online professional resource. Available at: **www.eep.ac.uk/**

1.0 Introduction

"…it is timely and appropriate that lessons learned from relevant research findings can be captured and applied profitably…"

Evidence and Impact: Careers and guidance-related interventions

1.1 In November 2008, CfBT Education Trust commissioned DMH Associates to develop and produce a practical resource to inform and support the impact and assessment of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) interventions within Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) in England. This literature review has informed the design and development of an *Evidence and Impact: Careers and guidance-related interventions* online professional resource. The online professional resource contains a series of 'digestible' and user-friendly key facts and statements about the evidence base and impact of careers education, information advice and guidance. It also contains practical strategies currently in use within local authorities, Connexions services, schools and colleges.

The resource is designed to inform practitioners, managers, trainers and policymakers on the subject of building a strong evidence base for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). This literature review of significant factors related to measuring and assessing the impact of CEIAG represents an important body of knowledge.

1.2 At present, the planning and implementation of government youth policy throughout England is being transformed at a rapid pace. Recent changes in the machinery of government are necessitating a major rethink in the strategic planning, funding and delivery of local services for *all* young people, adults, employers and training providers. Newly devolved arrangements from central to local government for the commissioning of 14–19 services, as outlined in the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), include requirements for a seamless universal and targeted support service. The drive for significantly improved CEIAG in all schools and colleges[1], underpinned by the introduction of new quality standards in information, advice and guidance (IAG), is a key feature. Also, the raising of the participation age (RPA) to 18 (DCSF, 2007) and the delivery of new specialised Diplomas by 2013 (DfES, 2005) necessitate new skill sets, not only for young people and parents/carers, but also for staff, employers and training providers working with schools, colleges and Connexions services, and in other community settings.

1.3 In this dynamic context, the issue of what works best, with whom, and in which set of circumstances will be a central feature in the successful design and development of new 'Integrated Youth Support Services' (IYSS) led by local authorities across England. Whilst it might be overly optimistic to suggest that the raising of the participation age will, at a stroke, remove all young people from the risk of social exclusion, it should nevertheless require IYSS to establish different impact indicators beyond traditional NEET measures.

1.4 Therefore, it is timely and appropriate that lessons learned from relevant research findings can be captured and applied profitably to help consolidate professionals' understanding and assessment of effective policies and practices, as well as address existing gaps in the IYSS evidence base throughout England. This literature review does not comprehensively cover every aspect relating to Connexions. Instead, it focuses on key lessons learned from impact and assessment studies, linked not only to Connexions but to other information, advice and guidance services, primarily, though not exclusively, in the UK.

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[1] An 'end-to-end review' of careers education and guidance (DfES, 2005a) found that there was a significant problem over the priority given to careers education in schools, colleges and work-based training. It concluded that 'the greatest potential for improving careers education and guidance delivery lies in driving up the quality and relevance of careers education in schools'.

> *Initial searches and detailed screening of published material were carried out using a wide range of keywords…*

Scope and methodology of the literature review

1.5 Literature searches were carried out in late 2008 and early 2009. In the interests of relevance and currency, most material sought and identified was published within the last ten years. Most searches were carried out through government department, university, research institution and professional association websites, particularly those most relevant to IYSS, CEIAG and Connexions service developments. Also, Google and Google Scholar were used to obtain additional references. Bibliographies of the most relevant publications retrieved were also scanned for additional material. This process resulted in the identification of a total of over 100 sources which feature throughout the review. In addition, the key findings of 45 of these were summarised and are presented separately in **Appendix A**.

1.6 Initial searches and detailed screening of published material were carried out using a wide range of keywords designed to identify not only evidence that would be directly relevant to the impact of universal and targeted careers and guidance-related interventions but also other, more generic careers and guidance-related impact research. Material was also identified that related to young people's choices and decision-making on the grounds that it would be important to place the impact of CEIAG services within this broader context of organisational and informal influences on young people. A number of gender, ethnicity and class research studies were also identified.

Studies were also identified and reviewed which provided evidence on Connexions and other IAG services delivered remotely by telephone or on the worldwide web. The issue of 'personalised services' (as espoused by Leadbeater, 2004) challenges government and public sector agencies to create the conditions for individuals to become more active/proactive citizens. Leadbeater refers to this as 'bottom-up, mass social innovation, enabled by the state' (p.16). In this context, personalised services are often informed by client satisfaction reports and relevant studies of these have also been included. Finally, careers-related impact studies were identified which, although not directly related to young people's services, were of high generic significance and relevance, yielding important lessons about impact of guidance-related interventions and the nature of evidence. Further details of the key words and the sources used in the searches are given in **Table 1** (following page).

1.7 Using this broad evidence-based approach, the main selected references were assigned to one of the following key topic areas for a final detailed analysis:

- studies of factors influencing the decision making processes of young people's learning, attainment and progression;
- studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services;
- Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations;
- studies of targeted support for young people, including those at risk of exclusion; and
- other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance.

Structure of the report

1.8 **Section 2** provides the context: an overview of recent UK learning, social and economic policies and the drive to demonstrate impact and to achieve best value; a definition of key terms; and an examination of the nature of evidence in relation to careers education, information, advice and guidance-related interventions.

Section 3 summarises the findings from the material finally selected for the review; these findings are organised in terms of five key topic areas into which the material was categorised.

Section 4 presents the main conclusions in relation to the proposed careers and guidance-related impact assessment professional resource.

Appendix A provides summaries of the key findings from a selection of the main bibliographic sources, whilst **Appendix B** provides a full bibliography.

TABLE 1: Keywords and sources
Websites interrogated
Centre for Enterprise (CfE)
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Connexions
Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
European Guidance & Counselling Research Forum (EGCRF)
Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre)
Institute for Employment Research (IER), Warwick University
Institute for Employment Studies (IES)
International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP)
International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), Derby University
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
National Guidance Research Forum (NGRF)
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC)
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
Scottish Executive
UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)
Search engines used
Google
Google Scholar
Keywords used in searches
Primary list: Connexions, careers guidance, careers service, careers education and guidance, educational guidance, information advice and guidance (IAG), NEET, social exclusion, personalised services, vocational guidance.
Secondary list: Impact, outcome, benefit, effect, contribution, influence, social benefits, participation, access, employment, unemployment, decision making.

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2.0 Context

> *…a single set of 198 national indicators, which places greater emphasis upon self-regulation (and less external inspection), locally negotiated targets and the customer voice.*

The policy context

Learning, social and economic policy priorities: the drive for best value

2.1 The UK public policy context, particularly in the last decade, has been characterised by two complementary themes. The *first* is the drive for greater social inclusion and upskilling to meet the needs of the knowledge economy through means such as:

- the reduction of child poverty;
- greater support for those at risk of exclusion; and
- increased participation in lifelong learning.

The *second* is the penetration into all public services of data collection and reporting arrangements, driven by performance targets, to ensure cost effective delivery and best value in the use of taxpayers' money.

2.2 In England, there has been a plethora of government Green and White Papers embodying major learning, social and economic policy goals. The Green Paper, *Every child matters* (DfES, 2003), set out the government's proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families to support all children to develop their full potential and to protect those at risk of harm and neglect. In July 2005, the government launched its Green Paper *Youth Matters* (DfES 2005b) and in the following year its response to consultation, *Youth Matters: Next Steps,* (DfES 2006). These set out the vision for empowering young people, giving them 'somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to'. The government also published a Skills Strategy White Paper (DfES 2005c) that set out targets and strategies for ensuring that individuals have the skills to be employable and to enjoy fulfilled lives. The government's Leitch Implementation Plan (DIUS, 2007) that emerged from the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) made explicit how best to achieve the optimal skills mix in order to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice through a variety of measures including the launch of a new, universal advancement and careers service for adults in England.

2.3 Being able to assess the impact of these policies is important for a number of reasons, not least for policymakers to demonstrate impact and to justify current levels of funding, but also for managers and practitioners to be able to reflect upon and improve their services. Achieving and demonstrating best value in the use of public funds is a statutory requirement for local authorities in England and Wales under the Local Government Act 1999. The policy imperative of seeking to demonstrate value for money continues even though the Local Government White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities* (DCLG, 2006). This sets out a single set of 198 national indicators, which places greater emphasis upon self-regulation (and less external inspection), locally negotiated targets and the customer voice.

2.4 A number of authors have indicated that most public service performance measures tend to be almost exclusively funding-driven and tend to be imposed 'top down'. Keep (2004) argues that performance targets within education and training tend to embody the priorities of central government. He argues that this acts as a set of perverse incentives which make cooperative management of the system harder than it needs to be, focusing as they do on that which can easily be measured in education and training, i.e. volumes of delivery and qualifications. He also promotes the concept of a 'democratisation of performance measures' to be developed closely in consultation with others, including students and practitioners. Keep indicates that the profile of measures needs to be more balanced and comprehensive and should include *qualitative* as well as *quantitative* information. Longer-term outcomes such as employment and earning patterns, as well as short-term measures such as qualification levels, are required.

2.5 In their survey of UK performance indicators in careers guidance, Hughes and Gration (2006) detail the range of data collection carried out by all of the main

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> *The linkages between levels of education and training within the workforce or sections thereof and subsequent performance at the level of the firm, sector or national economy are extremely complex…*

providers of information, advice and guidance (IAG), including:

- customer characteristics and intervention histories;

- volumes and types of service interventions;

- penetration of services within targeted population groups;

- user satisfaction levels; and

- a variety of service outcomes, usually in terms of employment and education/training outcomes.

They indicate that there is no shortage of IAG-related data collection and that much of it is required by funding bodies for the purposes of contract compliance and contract renewal or tendering processes. Although some of the data is used by provider organisations to feed into quality assurance systems and professional development programmes, there is little scope for the needs of practitioners to use it to improve their practice.

Constructing the evidence base

2.6 Given the plethora of learning, social and economic policy initiatives, and the need to demonstrate best value, we might ask: what evidence is there that major policies designed to support social equity and lifelong learning actually make a difference? This is highly contested territory: government and opposition parties will seek to exploit any available evidence to support their own particular policy perspective; and, crucially, the socio-economic behaviour of individuals is inherently complex and subject to so many interacting factors and influences that it makes reaching clear conclusions hazardous, to say the least.

2.7 The way that government and opposition parties will seek to exploit any available evidence to support their own particular policy perspectives is illustrated by the current debate on social mobility. Although there appears to be a general consensus that social mobility in Britain *did not* improve

between 1970 and 2000 despite the huge economic, social and political changes that took place (Cabinet Office, 2008), the same government publication argues that new research findings seem to show that there have been encouraging signs since 2000, and that a child's academic achievement – measured by the number of GCSEs they pass – may now be less dependent on their family's wealth. Not surprisingly, politicians have been quick to comment on these findings[2] with the Labour Government stating that its policies of increased nursery places, improving exam results, more people staying on at school after the age of 16 and better on-the-job training, meant that poorer people's life chances were improving. The Conservatives, on the other hand, pointed to the tentativeness of the conclusions reached by the research and the 'fractional' nature of the impact perceived, relative to the size of the public spending involved.

2.8 The complexity of human behaviour and performance is illustrated by a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007) in which the variables associated with low achievement in schools include an interaction of factors such as ethnicity, gender and the quality of schools, as well as socio-economic disadvantage, itself a complex combination of a lack of *financial, social* and *cultural capital* (Aldridge, 2004). Also, Keep (2004) specifically cautions that trying to relate education and training outputs (such as participation rates and qualification levels) to their impact on wider social and economic outcomes is fraught with difficulty. 'The linkages between levels of education and training within the workforce or sections thereof and subsequent performance at the level of the firm, sector or national economy are extremely complex and subject to intervention by a very wide range of other factors' (p.17).

2.9 The challenge of demonstrating the impact of learning, social and economic policies does not become easier even when looking at specific, targeted initiatives. For example, a Learning and Skills Development

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[2] BBC News web page, Monday, 3 November, 2008. Accessed 12.11.08 at:
 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7705444.stm

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> *The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has hovered at around 10% since the mid-1990s… despite significant investment in targeted support and other policy measures.*

Agency (LSDA) review of regional variations in NEET (Sachdev *et al.* 2006) reports that up to 2006 the national roll-out of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) had shown much more modest gains in participation at age 16 than was expected with only 1 percentage point increase compared to the expected rise of four percentage points. By the age of 19, EMA had ceased to have any noticeable effect on participation in full-time education and there was no significant effect on attainment levels. This data has led some researchers to question the cost-effectiveness of EMAs and the return against investment. Delorenzi and Robinson (2005) suggest strongly that: 'The EMA may have been over-sold as an instrument for improving participation and especially attainment' (p.90).

2.10 Similarly, the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has hovered at around 10% since the mid-1990s (Nuffield Review/Rathbone 2008), despite significant investment in targeted support and other policy measures. Indeed, the figures since the mid-1980s indicate that the overall buoyancy of the economy in terms of general employment rates could be the most significant factor associated with NEET.

2.11 Demonstrating the impact of learning, social and economic policies is inherently problematic. This is further complicated by the interaction of so many socio-economic and behavioural variables, often blurred by political perspectives. Another crucial complicating factor is the nature of the research evidence itself and the extent to which we can rely upon it to make clear, confident and accurate conclusions. In assessing the evidence we need to interpret its *reliability*, *robustness* and *transparency*. Before focusing on the detailed literature it is important to clarify a number of key terms and discuss the nature and reliability of research evidence.

Definitions and the nature of evidence

Key terms

2.12 In discussing the impact of learning, social and economic policies, several authors (for example Rodger *et al.* 2007)

distinguish between 'inputs', 'outputs' and 'outcomes'. Further relevant terms include 'impact measures', 'performance targets', 'performance indicators' and 'benchmarks'.

2.13 '**Inputs**' refers to the allocation of resources and the underlying processes which provide the necessary foundation for the delivery of services. The term '**outputs**' is commonly used to refer to a provider's volumes of delivery, its '**turnover**', or '**throughput**', for example the number of interventions delivered per quarter or the number of interventions per client. The term '**outcome**' is commonly used to describe the effect that a service has had, either on the individual client, or on the wider community or economy as a whole. In this sense, '**outcome**' is really what we mean by the '**impact**' or '**impact measure**' of a service. Sometimes the terms 'outputs' and 'outcomes' are used interchangeably, though we believe it more appropriate to use them separately in the way described above.

2.14 A '**performance target**' or '**performance indicator**' is a figure (usually expressed as an absolute number or as a percentage) that has been selected by policymakers, funding bodies or managers, as an agreed, key indicator against which a service's delivery levels and/or impact is measured. A '**benchmark**' can be defined as the publishing of a performance indicator as a standard, or 'norm', to enable comparisons to be made between different individuals, providers, regions or countries which deliver equivalent services.

2.15 Having defined the term 'outcome' to mean the impact that a service can have on its customers and society as a whole, it is important to describe the various forms of outcomes that are theoretically possible, even if not always actually achieved. Hughes *et al.* (2002) describe a number of possible outcomes from information, advice and guidance (IAG) interventions ranging from those that can be said to be observable at, or soon after, the intervention (**immediate outcomes**) to those that are observable significantly later (**intermediate** and **longer-term outcomes**). These possibilities are summarised in **Table 2** (following page).

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TABLE 2: Summary of IAG service outcomes as possible impact measures
Immediate outcomes
• *Knowledge/skills*, including: increased awareness of opportunities; ability to action plan; job application skills; enhanced decision-making skills.
• *Attitudes and motivation*, including: increased optimism; reduced anxiety/stress; positivity in relation to work and/or learning.
Intermediate outcomes
• *Search strategies*, including: sustaining of search strategies beyond initial period; exploration of channels of information and progression routes.
• *Decision making*, including: carrying out action plans; applying for jobs/training/learning; coping with, and planning beyond, initial disappointments.
Longer-term outcomes (individual)
• *Training and education*, including: taking up opportunities; successful completion; increased attainment levels.
• *Employment*, including: re-entering the labour market; change of employment; change of role and/or promotion; increased wages.
Longer-term outcomes (economy)
• *For employers and learning providers*, including: increased productivity; increased flexibility; enhanced enrolments, retention and achievement.
• *For the economy*, including: GDP growth; reduction of skills gaps and shortages; lower unemployment; exchequer savings.

Connexions performance targets and indicators

2.16 From their inception, Connexions Partnership arrangements have emphasised the main performance target set by central government which relates primarily to reducing NEET (expressed in terms of a given percentage reduction to be achieved within a given timescale). Other targets have also been set for local priority groups. For more universal services, Connexions Partnerships have agreed other indicators; for example, in the form of levels of customer satisfaction, improved self-esteem and improved attitudes towards learning and work, though this varies considerably throughout England. In view of recent IYSS developments, it is clear that there is significant scope to address the issue of how best to identify and agree additional performance indicators that embrace both 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes.

2.17 Although NEET reduction is likely to remain as a central priority within local authority partnership arrangements, particularly NEET at 18+, it would appear that other details of the performance impact measures are yet to be formalised for Connexions services and other providers. For example, although it is clear that Connexions/Careers Services, together with other key local providers, will be expected to contribute to the five Every Child Matters outcomes (DCSF, 2007), and the national IAG Quality Standards (DCSF, 2007a), it appears less clear how performance responsibilities will be apportioned through Local Area Agreements.

2.18 The situation is likely to be further complicated by:

(i) the new overall local authority performance management system outlined in the White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities* (DCLG, 2006); and

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(ii) the role of Ofsted in inspecting Connexions services given the broader partnership inspection arrangements and the replacement of the Joint Area Reviews (JARs) and the Annual Performance Assessments (APAs) with a possibly more generic and 'lighter touch' Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

2.19 Despite this current apparent lack of clarity, a number of chief executives of Connexions/careers services in England, as Watts and McGowan (2007) indicate, have articulated the kind of performance measures they *thought* were *likely* to emerge under the new arrangements. In addition to NEET reduction, these included:

- further measures in relation to vulnerable groups (e.g. special-needs groups, young people in care, offenders)

- additional measures in relation to reaching out to black and minority ethnic young people

- reducing drop-out from post-16 education provision

- reducing the proportion entering jobs without training

- raising achievement levels

- increasing entry into apprenticeships

- increasing the proportion entering higher education

- increasing the number of schools attaining a nationally recognised careers quality standard.

The nature of evidence

2.20 It is important when presenting information on the impact of Connexions and guidance-related interventions, or of any other learning, social and economic policy initiatives, that it should be presented in a way which is capable of being inspected by others (*transparency*) and capable of withstanding critique from sceptics (*rigour*). Impact can be evaluated at a number of different levels of increasing rigour, and building upon earlier work (Hughes *et al.* 2002, pp.16–17) the following five levels have been identified (Hughes *et al.* 2008).

2.21 Level 1 comprises **opinion studies**, where users of guidance services provide feedback

on the perceived effects of the services they have received. This may be through:

- Qualitative research involving in-depth interviews and/or focus group sessions.

- Quantitative research involving questionnaires administered to larger samples.

In both cases, they are based on a system of self-reporting.

2.22 Level 2 comprises **outcome measurement studies with no counterfactuals**. Such studies measure specified variable(s) representing outcomes following the intervention; for example, rates of progression to full-time education or to employment. 'Counterfactuals' are indications of what would have happened in the absence of the guidance intervention. If no evidence on counterfactuals is available, there may be little basis on which to attribute causality.

2.23 Level 3 comprises **outcome measurement studies with weak counterfactuals**. These are more robust than Level 2, but still subject to reservations. They may include:

- Comparisons with measures of the same variables prior to guidance; though where gains are made, these may have been due to other factors.

- Comparisons with a population parameter, e.g. mean duration of unemployment; though the sample that has experienced the guidance may differ from this population in other respects, and any variations between them may be due to these differences.

- Comparisons between groups of users and of non-users of guidance, typically where the two groups have resulted from self-selection and where there has been no adequate 'control by calculation' (see below).

2.24 Level 4 comprises **outcome measurement studies with control by calculation**. Here, multivariate statistical techniques are used to control retrospectively for those who have and have not been exposed to guidance interventions. For example, where a group of individuals who have *actively sought out* guidance are being compared with those of a non-guidance group, how can we be sure that any observed differences in outcomes (such

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> *A major methodological issue in studying the impact of careers guidance is that any research providing the highest level of rigour (Level 5) presents an ethical dilemma, as well as a number of practical challenges, by denying access to guidance to some… but not to others…*

as participation in employment and/or learning) are a result of the guidance and not caused by any pre-existing social or motivational differences between the two groups?

In this example, a technique known as 'propensity score matching' can be used whereby individuals from the two groups are matched on a range of observable characteristics (such as age, gender, learning/work histories) on the grounds that, having removed as many personal differences as possible, any differences in outcomes between the two groups can be more reliably attributed to the intervention. However, there still remains the possibility that any apparent impact may have been due to additional unmeasured and unmatched variables; the greater the number of relevant variables that can be included in such analyses, the more this risk is reduced.

2.25 Level 5 comprises **experimental studies with a control group**. Classically, this involves random assignment to a guidance group (the 'experimental' or 'treatment' group) and to a non-guidance group (the 'placebo' or 'control' group). Depending on the sample sizes, randomly assigning individuals should ensure that there are no differences between the groups other than the guidance intervention to which any differences in outcomes can be reliably attributed.

2.26 A common problem associated with evidence is the spurious causal association of two variables where there are no clear counterfactuals indicating what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. A typical, and topical, example of this can be seen in a recent television advertising campaign where it is stated that people who successfully quit smoking are more likely to have received support from the NHS. This may be factually correct but in terms of causality it is potentially misleading: it could well be that those individuals who are motivated enough to actively seek NHS support are already pre-disposed to quit and may well have done so even without this external support. As we shall discuss in the next section, this same problem of interpretation arises with much of the research evidence on the impact of Connexions, careers education, information, advice and guidance services.

2.27 A major methodological issue in studying the impact of careers guidance is that any research providing the highest level of rigour (Level 5) presents an ethical dilemma, as well as a number of practical challenges, by denying access to guidance to some (the placebo, control group) but not to others (the experimental, treatment group). This ethical dilemma, and the associated practical challenges, would be even more pronounced in trying to demonstrate the longer-term effects of careers guidance (as opposed to the more immediate, short-term effects) through random assignment to control and experimental groups. As Watts (1999) put it: 'control cannot be indefinitely extended, nor guidance indefinitely denied' (p.16). As we shall see later, it is not surprising that few studies exist at level 5 relevant to the impact of careers guidance-related interventions.

2.28 In reviewing impact research, as well as the level of rigour, the volume of evidence is also important, both in terms of sample size and of numbers of studies. More confidence can be placed in evidence emerging from studies with large samples, or which emerges consistently from different studies. In the case of smaller, but comparable studies, where the results can be combined and interrogated as a single data pool, more reliable conclusions can be reached by a so-called 'meta-analysis'.

2.29 One further point needs to be made: it is important to indicate clearly the nature and frequency of the guidance interventions whose impact is being measured and not to assume equivalence between different frequencies of the same type of intervention.

For example, one would not expect equal impact from a single event and from a programme containing a sustained series of interventions over a period of time. Indeed, given what we have said about the difficulty in demonstrating the impact of even the most intensive and ambitiously funded social policy initiatives, we should not be surprised if single careers guidance interventions do not directly result in outcomes such as getting a job, other than for a minority of those receiving the service. In these cases it may be that the proper role of single interventions is to make a part contribution to positive outcomes, working together or alongside many other potential influences.

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3.0 Key findings

"Differences in parental involvement have a much bigger impact on achievement than differences associated with the effects of school in the primary age range."

3.1 As outlined in **Section 1**, a wide-ranging search and screening strategy was used to identify material that would be directly relevant not only to the impact of universal and targeted interventions but also to other, more generic careers and guidance-related impact research. Using this broad CEIAG evidence-based approach, the main selected references were assigned to one of the following key topic areas for a final detailed analysis:

- studies of factors influencing the decision making processes of young people's learning, attainment and progression;

- studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services;

- Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations;

- studies of targeted support for young people, including those at risk of exclusion;

- other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance.

Studies of factors influencing the decision-making processes of young people's learning, attainment and progression

3.2 These studies were included in the review because it was deemed important to place the impact of CEIAG services within the broader context of organisational and informal influences on young people's decision-making processes. For example, Moon *et al.* (2004) indicate that careers education and guidance (CEG) is only one of many factors that can influence young people in transitions at Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4). They argue that to have the greatest impact, careers education and guidance, wherever possible, should take account of the influence of parents, socio-economic background and gender. Similarly, Bimrose *et al.* (2007) conclude that school and Connexions staff will be helped in the effective execution of their professional roles by having a better

understanding of the factors that influence the decision-making processes of young people at different stages of their educational careers. These include the influence of: family; peers; self-perception of ability; gender; ethnicity; social class; labour market conditions; educational institutions; and academic attainment. The relevant findings in this category are further developed below. In addition, more detailed summaries of 15 of these studies are presented in **Appendix A**.

Informal influences on young people's decision-making processes and/or achievement

3.3 Nearly all of the studies highlighted the importance of 'informal sources' of information, advice and guidance (IAG) to young people – sources such as parents/carers, friends and the media. Foskett (2004) contends that the influence of these informal sources is as great, if not greater, than that of formal sources such as careers teachers and Connexions services. However, the author emphasises that of the formal sources, Connexions services are valued more highly than other in-school guidance, which is identified as being subject to 'spin'.

3.4 Researching the factors impacting upon pupil achievement, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) report that parental involvement has a significant effect on both children's achievement and their adjustment, even after all other factors (such as social class, maternal education and poverty) have been taken into account. Differences in parental involvement have a much bigger impact on achievement than differences associated with the effects of school in the primary age range. They also find that 'at-home' relationships and modelling of aspirations by parents play the major part in their impact on school outcomes, even more so than their 'at school' involvement. Interestingly, in terms of a 'weight of evidence' issue, they argue that although there have been many interventions to enhance parental involvement, and though they are highly valued by providers and clients in satisfaction surveys, the research base is too weak to be objective about their effectiveness in terms of hard outcomes.

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> *The key factor that seemed to underpin successful transition at 16 was the level of young people's career exploration skills.*

The role of CEIAG programmes and careers-related skills on young people's decisions and transitions

3.5 Research commissioned by Careers Scotland (Inter-ed, 2004) found a link between career goals and educational attainment in secondary schools. The research also found strong evidence that pupils with clear goals derive some benefit in terms of subsequent educational performance, in part explained by pupils with goals being able to link the relevance of school study to life beyond school. There was also some evidence that those with clear goals are more likely to believe that they have some control over their future, whereas those without clear goals are more likely to include some people who believe that they are victims of fate.

3.6 Research by Morris *et al.* (1999) examined the impact of careers education and guidance provision on young people's transition post-16. A key finding was that young people with more highly developed career exploration skills were more positive and confident about the choices they made post-16 and were more likely to make a successful transition.

> *'The key factor that seemed to underpin successful transition at 16 was the level of young people's career exploration skills. Those who demonstrated such skills by the end of Year 11 were the least likely to have made significant changes to their courses, post-16. They were also more likely than other young people to have made a transition that indicated progression; that is, to be working towards a qualification at a higher level than that which they attained at GCSE.'*
>
> (p.3)

3.7 Morris (2004) explores some of the findings from a number of large-scale research studies on careers education and guidance conducted over the previous decade on behalf of the DfES, its predecessor departments, and a number of different careers services. The author argues that it is possible to identify the skills that promote successful transition and to trace some of the links between successful transition and programmes of careers education and guidance.

> *'One of the key factors that appeared to be significantly related to the development of a positive attitude to higher education, for example, was the quality and extent of the provision of information, advice and guidance that young people had received pre-16, about higher education and higher education courses.'*
>
> (p.5)

3.8 Brown *et al.* (2004) used data from the British *National Child Development Study* to explore the determinants of children's career expectations formed at the age of sixteen and found that career expectations are an important determinant of human capital accumulation in later life which, in turn, is a key determinant of actual occupational status.

> *'Our findings suggest that the attitudes of parents and school teachers are important determinants of a child's labour market expectations and that these expectations impact favourably on both the acquisition of human capital whilst at school and on the social status of the individual's occupation on leaving school.'*
>
> (p.21)

3.9 Morgan *et al.* (2007) highlight the importance of the impartial IAG provided by Connexions as a means of balancing or offsetting the influence of informal sources when students rely heavily on information supplied by their family that may be out of date, incorrect or based on hearsay. Foskett *et al.* (2004) note that although the parents of pupils likely to pursue academic pathways post-16 are a more important source of advice than the school, for pupils from low socio-economic background in schools without a sixth form, the school and Connexions were very important sources of advice. McCrone *et al.* (2005) found that teachers (as well as parents) were identified by pupils as an influence on their decision making at KS3, but it was not clear which aspects of teacher input, for example their personality or the quality of their teaching, was the source of the influence.

3.10 We have already noted the view of Foskett (2004) that of the formal sources of IAG, Connexions services are valued more highly than other 'in-school' guidance, which is identified as being subject to 'spin'. Further evidence of 'spin' comes from Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006), who found that teachers in

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A number of the studies found evidence that pupils would benefit by receiving CEG, and related decision making skills, earlier than was normally the case…

11–18 schools sometimes showed a lack of impartiality by encouraging students to stay on in their school sixth forms. Foskett *et al.* (2004) found that some schools often actively promote post-16 academic routes compared to other forms of post-16 participation, and that schools with a sixth form had a tendency to provide post-16 advice and guidance more closely related to academic sixth form provision than to that required of the broader provision of the Further Education (FE) sector.

The importance of the timing of CEG and IAG

3.11 A number of the studies found evidence that pupils would benefit by receiving CEG, and related decision-making skills, earlier than was normally the case; for example, Foskett *et al.* (2004) and Smith *et al.* (2005). Another study (Morgan *et al.* 2007) found that the majority of schools examined did not start substantive CEG until Year 9, contrary to the national framework for CEG that applied at that time. Other studies emphasise the importance of the timing of specific CEIAG interventions in school relative to the young person's needs. For example, Howieson and Semple (2001) found that the most critical factor in determining whether pupils rated their one-to-one careers interview as useful was whether it been at the right time within their decision-making process emphasising the importance of flexible 'on demand' appointment systems.

3.12 Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) found wide variations in young people's decision-making processes, in terms of timing and mindset, suggesting that a single approach to support will not work for all young people and that all individuals need varying levels and types of support at different stages in their school careers.

The relevance of labour market information (LMI) and the wider world of work

3.13 Some studies argue that Connexions and careers education and guidance (CEG) would have greater relevance and impact if it were more connected to the wider world of work, education and training. Foskett (2004) suggests that such an awareness of the wider world of work should be developed very early on in a child's school experience and would require the integration of IAG into the curriculum in a way that means it would be class teachers in primary schools and either class tutors or those teaching citizenship or personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in lower secondary schools who would be charged with the task.

3.14 Bimrose *et al.* (2007) identified the extent to which CEG took account of the changing labour market for which young people are being prepared as one of the key factors in the successful delivery of CEG programmes in schools. In particular they emphasised the importance of the extent to which LMI is available; and, (even more importantly) the confidence with which Personal Advisers (PAs) and/or careers co-ordinators feel able to use LMI. However, at the same time they recognised that the use of soft outcomes (e.g. developing self-confidence and self-esteem) as well as hard outcomes (e.g. placement into education, training or employment) are important in measuring the impact and success of CEG programmes.

The integration of CEG

3.15 Smith *et al.* (2005) point to apparent inconsistencies in the quality of CEG provision and providers. They suggest that the integration of careers education programmes with guidance provision and with the wider curriculum is a key factor in determining the effectiveness and impact of CEG on young people's skill development and transitions.

3.16 Similarly, Bimrose *et al.* (2008) highlight opportunities for the enhancement of the status of CEG through imaginative partnership working and integration with the extensive and varied curricular activities which have some relevance and overlap with CEG. However, they also recognise that such an approach would present challenges for the monitoring and evaluation of CEG integrated across the curriculum.

Relationship of CEG and Connexions within the whole-school context

3.17 Several studies highlight the importance of the relationship of CEG and Connexions inputs within the whole-school context, both in terms of the organisational arrangements of the school and its overall curriculum responsibilities. Bimrose *et al.* (2007) emphasise the importance

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> *…social class, gender, ethnicity and academic attainment are key factors involved in the complex process of choices…*

of support structures for PAs, which enable them to operate effectively within schools on a day-to-day basis. Connexions Partnership protocols and service agreements which are regularly reviewed by all parties and involve senior managers are critical success factors. Bimrose *et al.* (2008) point out that when schools move towards new models of CEG delivery, although they are likely to recognise the potential value of input from Connexions, it is the extent to which Connexions is able to accommodate the vision and objectives of schools that is likely to determine the nature and extent of their involvement.

3.18 Morgan *et al.* (2007) highlight the tensions between CEG, including the input of Connexions, and the many competing demands of an already overcrowded curriculum. CEG has been '*squeezed out*' over the last few years with other demands on PSHE time such as the introduction of Citizenship, as confirmed by senior school staff who cite timetable pressures in KS3 as the main reason for lack of CEG.

Why do some pupils choose to have a one-to-one careers guidance interview while others do not?

3.19 The work of Howieson and Semple (2001) is important because it shows why some pupils have a one-to-one interview in school with a Careers Scotland Adviser and others do not. Generally, higher attainment, individual discussion with non-guidance teachers, plans to leave school soon and/or plans to apply to FE each increased the likelihood that they would have an interview; whereas serious truancy and having no career ideas each decreased their chances. Around half of pupils who did not have an interview had not wanted one. Those pupils who had not wanted an interview were more likely not to have any ideas about their post-school plans.

3.20 This work has relevance to those studies that show an association between in-depth intervention, such as a one-to-one careers guidance interview, and longer-term outcomes such as improved progression rates to learning and/or employment. It suggests that the relationship between the intervention and the later outcomes may not always be a causal one but could often be an observed

association. It may be that many individuals who actively seek out in-depth support are simply more motivated and/or more focused than those who do not, and it could be that it is these attributes which are the main determinants of the later outcomes. We will return to this issue of interpretation in a later section when we look at other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance.

Other factors involved in career planning and development, including gender and ethnicity

3.21 Wright (2005) identifies social class, gender, ethnicity and academic attainment are key factors involved in the complex process of choices that young people make at various points during their 14–19 transition. In terms of ethnicity, Wright concludes that the evidence for the influence of this factor on decision making is fairly weak. Ethnic minorities are under-represented in the samples of most of the large longitudinal surveys so it is difficult to explore large-scale patterns and associations effectively. However, national administrative data and more localised surveys indicate that white young people (especially males) are marginally less likely to stay on in full-time education and training than ethnic minorities.

3.22 McCrone *et al.* (2005) state that a pupil's decision at Year 9 about which subject options to follow is influenced by:

- how much they 'enjoyed' a subject or had an inherent liking or interest in it;
- their self-perceptions of their ability at a subject (which was often linked to subject enjoyment); and
- the apparent usefulness of a subject to future careers, jobs or training.

3.23 Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) suggest that research has neglected an examination of the relevance of career theory for non-white and working-class clients. Betz and Fitzgerald (1995) state that research has tended to separate race from gender. In reality, minority ethnic women suffer double disadvantage – social and economical – referred to as 'double jeopardy'. They argue that the interaction between race and gender must be considered and they note that one important feature of the

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"An important task for those working in careers guidance is to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values with personal beliefs and goals.

interaction of gender and race is the impact of gender-role socialisation. For example, the extent to which women are expected to work outside the home as adults differs across groups. An important task for those working in careers guidance is to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values with personal beliefs and goals. They also argue that insufficient research has been carried out into the career development of minority ethnic groups. For example, measures of work values do not necessarily take into account the value systems of cultural groups. Also, the whole process of test administration and interpretation needs to be considered within a cultural context.

3.24 The relationship between gender and sexual orientation is another neglected area. In their study of the career development of lesbians, Morgan and Brown (1991) observed that the unique career development issues of lesbians have not been addressed, although women's career development is now attracting a good deal of attention. They argue that the needs of lesbians have erroneously been subsumed under the study of the general female population, and that:

> *'It is now time to expand this area to address the unique needs of lesbians and thus to eliminate heterosexism in the field of career and vocational development.'*
>
> (Morgan and Brown, 1991, p.289)

Gaps and shortcomings in the research evidence

3.25 Several authors have pointed to gaps in the research evidence, additional to those already noted above in relation to ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. For example, three studies identify gaps and shortcomings in the quantity and quality of published research into the impact of CEG delivered at crucial stages in the development of young people. In commenting on these gaps, Bowes *et al.* (2005) recognise that whilst good-quality research is largely dependent on the availability of funding, once funding has been secured it is incumbent on researchers to ensure that their findings are sufficiently robust and reported in a clear and transparent way that is open to scrutiny. Moon *et al.* (2004) point to a lack of robust studies which are able to demonstrate the impact of

CEG at KS3 and KS4; with only two out of the ten studies that they examined providing a high weight of evidence. Wright (2005) concludes that there are a number of gaps in the evidence as it relates to the decision-making process of young people, including:

- a shortage of longitudinal studies (both qualitative and quantitative);

- few studies looking at decisions at 14 (as opposed to 16); and

- little research on the choice of 'subject' and on *exactly how* educational institutions influence decision making.

Studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services

3.26 The studies reviewed in this category include the National Audit Office evaluation of web-based and telephone helpline IAG services, evaluations of Connexions Direct (all channels) and the Connexions Direct website, and evaluations of the learndirect website and telephone helpline services. The relevant findings from the sources reviewed in this category are cited below, and detailed summaries for each of them, eight in total, are presented in **Appendix A**.

Market penetration and effectiveness of learndirect

3.27 A report from the National Audit Office (2005) highlights the achievements of learndirect to date, emphasising that it is unique and one of the largest e-learning networks in the world with a well-known and highly visible brand. It notes that learndirect has pushed the boundaries of the application of technology to provide information and support and to help make learning much more flexible. In 2004/05, it provided around 6 million advice sessions, 1 million by phone and 5 million via the website, attracting learners who might otherwise not have taken up learning; just under half of all callers to the National Advice Line Service, and a third of website visitors, had not undertaken any learning in the previous three years. Over half of callers to the National Advice Line Service went on to undertake training or learning.

"Shifts in employment status have to be treated with some caution, since the extent to which this can be attributed to guidance alone is debatable."

3.28 Findings from a study reported by Tyers and Sinclair (2004) suggest that the learndirect helpline has had an impact in increasing participation in learning. Helpline users are less likely to have had a recent learning experience than people in general, *but* participation in learning 18 months after their initial call to the learndirect helpline was much higher than average. These comparisons suggest that the helpline has had an impact in increasing participation in learning, though it is not clear what other factors may have motivated them to seek professional information and advice and which, in addition to the helpline support, may have contributed to the participation outcome.

Increased usage of web-based services

3.29 Watts and Dent (2008) identify three trends in the evolution of the UK learndirect advice service, namely:

- the partial migration from telephone to web-based services;

- the shift, within the telephone service, from information/advice-oriented interventions to more guidance-oriented interventions; and

- the move from a mainly learning-oriented service to a more career-oriented service.

They suggest that the changing balance between the use of learndirect's telephone and web-based services reflects, in part, national trends in the general use of communication technologies across the population, linked to the spread of broadband. They say that the shift to more guidance-oriented interventions within the telephone service, and the move to a more career-oriented service, are linked, and that both developments have been largely marketing-driven. Examples are highlighted of advertising campaigns that promoted a shift from learndirect as a course provider, and the helpline as a means of choosing courses, to addressing career development needs alongside and in support of the telephone guidance trial summarised in 3.31.

3.30 Watts and Dent (op. cit.) also suggest that the proposed integration of the learndirect and nextstep services in England is likely to facilitate cross-referrals and lead to a service in which the alternative channels (telephone, web-based, face-to-face) are seen simply as different ways of accessing an integrated service. They point to the challenge facing the new careers service as to how effectively it can provide a career-oriented, rather than narrowly learning-oriented, service as closer integration with Jobcentre Plus takes place.

Piloting guidance delivery with adults

3.31 An evaluation of the learndirect telephone guidance trial (Page *et al.* 2007) found that it has reached clients new to guidance, with 75% of users not having accessed careers guidance since leaving school. Telephone was the preferred medium via which to receive guidance for 42% of the users; 36% indicated that they preferred face-to-face, while 11% preferred email. A scored quality analysis of 100 calls indicated that the guidance given by telephone was of a good quality as measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance. Fifty-two per cent of a sample of calls were graded 'good' or 'excellent' and only 9% scored as flawed or poor. Callers reported both hard outcomes (such as participation in learning and/or work) and soft outcomes (such as increased motivation, self-awareness and confidence, and a greater awareness of opportunities) after receiving guidance from learndirect. Overall, callers were more likely to attribute soft outcomes to learndirect than they were the harder outcomes. Although many callers say that their participation in learning and employment would not have happened without learndirect, caution needs to be exercised in attributing causality. As the authors themselves note: 'Shifts in employment status have to be treated with some caution, since the extent to which this can be attributed to guidance alone is debatable' (p.72).

User satisfaction and mystery shopping surveys of Connexions Direct (all channels)

3.32 Hall *et al.* (2008) present the findings from a survey of users of all Connexions Direct (CXD) channels of enquiry: via telephone, text message, adviser online (webchat) and email. The survey included a total of 986 CXD users who completed a website interview or telephone survey, depending on which communication method they had used to contact the helpline. In addition, 529 teenagers

were surveyed via an omnibus questionnaire, and four focus groups were conducted. Key findings are summarised in **Table 3** below.

3.33 Lambley (2007) presents the findings from a mystery shopping survey of all Connexions Direct (CXD) channels of enquiry: via telephone, text message, adviser online (webchat) and email. In total 1459 mystery shops were conducted using the following scenario topics:

Enquiries about local Connexions services; Careers, Learning and Jobs; General, Sexual and Mental Health Issues; Family and Personal Relationships; Money; Housing; Bullying; and Legal Issues/Rights. Mystery shop evaluations were validated further after each phase of fieldwork, through a series of focus group sessions with young people and Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs). Key findings are summarised in **Table 4** below.

TABLE 3: Key findings from the 2008 Connexions Direct User Satisfaction Survey (*Hall et al. 2008*)

Results indicate that females are three times more likely than males to use the service. By age, the majority of users are fairly evenly split between those 13–15 years old and those 16–19 years old, and a minority of users are 20+. The majority of adult users were using the service on their own behalf.

Over two thirds of respondents stated that career and educational queries were the reasons for their contact with Connexions Direct, with contact for personal issues being more commonly dealt with through email and web services. Queries concerning topics such as education, personal or family relationships, and bullying were more typical of the younger 13–15 year old age band, whilst those who were 16–19 years old were significantly more likely to have enquired about careers, apprenticeships and money.

Rating of overall satisfaction with Connexions Direct was extremely positive; slightly more than nine out of ten respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the service, which is consistent with the 2005 and 2006 results. Generally, satisfaction levels rise with the age of the user; older respondents were more likely to be calling about more practical issues such as careers and money, and so could receive clear-cut advice or answers to questions that suitably addressed their needs, and thus feel more satisfied.

Overall, nine out of ten or more respondents are either very or quite likely to use Connexions Direct again. Just under one in ten respondents felt that they were unlikely to use Connexions Direct again; of the three user groups, email respondents were the least unlikely to use the service again. Over a third of respondents said that they had no improvements to the service to suggest. As in 2006, the most frequently mentioned improvement was to improve the adviser service; this included suggestions such as that advisers should be more helpful and supportive, and offer better advice; and more advisers should be available to take calls.

TABLE 4: Key findings from the 2007 Connexions Direct Mystery Shopping Survey (*Lambley, 2007*)

When mystery shoppers were asked to reflect upon, and give a score out of 10 for the service as a whole, the average score given was 7.7. For the individual channels it was: webchats – 7.5; telephone interactions – 7.9; email responses – 8.3; and SMS text messages – 6.8.

In a third of cases, mystery shoppers reported that the adviser had directly provided them with relevant information. Also in a third of cases it was reported that advisers had recommended websites which would provide useful or relevant information; two in five resulted in a recommendation to look at the CXD website though significantly fewer (just 1 in 20) resulted in a recommendation to visit a local Connexions Partnership website. Almost a third of mystery shops resulted in a recommendation to contact the local Connexions centre or a PA in school.

Continued…

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Table 4 continued

In almost all cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone of voice or writing kept them at ease throughout the entire interaction. Again, in almost all cases advisers were assessed to have remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction. In a minority of cases (just fewer than 1 in 40) the adviser was felt to have used language that was unclear or inappropriate to young people. Three quarters of interactions were felt to have been at the right sort of pace; very few were felt to have been too fast, but around one in six were felt to be slightly too slow. Similarly, most interactions were felt to have provided about the right amount of information; very few felt that they had been given too much information, but almost a third felt that they would have liked more information.

Although assessments of greetings, listening and probing, and closure of interactions varied very little according to the detail of the scenario, the type of information and/or advice did vary according to the scenario used for the mystery shop. Overall quality of service ratings out of 10 ranged from 7.3 (for mystery shops related to housing problems) to 8.1 (graduate career options). Satisfaction scores for information and advice given by advisers ranged from 7.6 (for mystery shops seeking contact details for the nearest Connexions centre) up to 8.3 out of 10 (sexual health issues).

It is important to young people that they receive reassurance from advisers that the service is confidential and anonymous. Young people prefer individually tailored advice, rather than standard or pre-prepared answers. Advisers must be able to put themselves in the position of the young person seeking their assistance. Many CXD users are using the service for the first time, and they may be nervous and possibly embarrassed. Periods of silence on telephone calls or lack of outwards text in webchats (however brief) can feel longer, and cause concern, to the young person.

Satisfaction is lower than average where advisers have not addressed all questions or areas of concern revealed (or hinted at) by young people. The more interactive communication channels (telephone and webchat) were sometimes felt to last longer than necessary, as advisers sometimes seemed to find it difficult to close the session clearly and positively.

Connexions Direct website evaluation

3.34 Lambley *et al.* (2007) present the findings from a Connexions Direct (CXD) website evaluation that consisted of a quantitative online survey, open to all website users, and a series of ten interactive focus group sessions with young people, parents and professionals. The study also focused on young people who are under-represented as users of the service. Key findings are summarised in **Table 5** below.

TABLE 5: Key findings from the 2007 Connexions Direct website survey (*Lambley et al. 2007*)

Four fifths of respondents to the online survey were female, and a similar number were of white ethnic origin; the vast majority was under 18 years of age with just over one in ten being 18 or over. For a fifth of respondents this was their first visit to the CXD website, and almost another fifth had visited more than ten times in the last year. Many online respondents indicated that they had more than one reason for visiting the CXD website on the day they completed the survey. Seeking information about careers, training, job choices or advice about employment was the most common reason for visiting the website, with learning being the next most common reason. The Careers area was visited most often followed by Work, then the Learning, Money, Health and Relationships sections.

Almost a fifth of online respondents found the information they wanted and slightly fewer said that they found everything they were looking for and more. Two out of five found some information they were

Continued…

Table 5 continued

looking for, and a similar number said that they did not find any of the information they were looking for. Views of the website were very positive. Around nine out of ten agreed or strongly agreed that the website provides useful information and that it is targeted at people 'like me'; around eight out of ten either strongly agreed or agreed that the content covers real issues of concern and that information is easy to find and understand. Almost all said they would be likely or very likely to visit the website again and three quarters would be likely or very likely to recommend it to a friend.

All focus group participants (young people, parents and professionals) had heard of the Connexions service; many were aware that their local Connexions Partnership had a website; but relatively few were aware of Connexions Direct, and fewer still had previously seen the CXD website. This apparent lack of awareness of the CXD website was expected as the focus groups were targeted at groups of young people who are under-represented amongst CXD users.

Most young people said they found navigating the CXD website relatively easy and instinctive. However, some difficulties were encountered when trying to find specific content; particular confusion seemed to exist between 'Careers', 'Work' and 'Learning' and between 'Health' and 'Relationships'. Although the words most frequently used to describe the CXD homepage were 'colourful', 'busy/lively' and 'eye catching', compared to other websites aimed at providing information and advice to this age group, CXD was generally thought to be 'average' in design. Many participants (young people, parents and professionals) expressed surprise at the range of topics and at the depth of information available on the CXD website. It was common for there to be a lack of awareness of the wider remit of Connexions to provide information and advice on all issues affecting the lives of 13–19 year olds.

Recommendations included: raising CXD's profile with Connexions Personal Advisers, teachers, and other professionals and volunteers working with young people; and reviewing website content and images to ensure that all echelons of society are reflected, including the presentation of positive images of young people in alternative lifestyles and challenging situations.

Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations

3.35 The studies reviewed in this category include user satisfaction surveys of generic Connexions services, an evaluation of Connexions impact over time, and other surveys having relevance to Connexions work. The relevant findings from the sources reviewed in this category are cited below. In addition, more detailed summaries of three of these studies are presented in **Appendix A**.

User satisfaction surveys of generic Connexions services

3.36 Brunwin *et al.* (2005) present the key findings from the second wave of the user satisfaction survey carried out in the 15 'Phase 1' Connexions Partnerships, following on from the first wave of the survey which was conducted in all 47 Connexions Partnerships and reported in Clemens *et al.* (2003). Over 18,000 young people who had been in contact with Connexions were interviewed during this second wave in 2004 using a range of different methods: face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and postal self-completion questionnaires. The main summary given here will focus on Brunwin *et al.* (2005), on the grounds that as well as analysing the results from the second wave, this report also compares key results against the comparable results from wave 1. The second wave survey notes some small improvements in some satisfaction levels. Key findings are summarised in **Table 6** below.

TABLE 6: Key findings from wave 2 of the Connexions user satisfaction survey (*Brunwin et al. 2005*)

Of those who had talked to someone at Connexions, just over three quarters had at least two contacts, almost a half had between two and four contacts, and nearly a third had contacted Connexions five times or more. Young people with a higher than average number of contacts with Connexions were more likely to be from Priority categories 1 and 2, and/or to be older, i.e. 18–20 year olds.

The main reason for using Connexions, at both waves, was to discuss education- or work-related issues. There was also evidence that some young people were in contact with Connexions about more personal issues such as money and benefits, feeling stressed, and alcohol and drugs. This was especially the case among young people receiving a higher level of support.

Over nine in ten young people who had been in contact with Connexions said they were satisfied with the service they received. Young people at all stages of fieldwork rated Connexions staff very highly on such aspects as 'friendliness' and 'knowing what they are talking about'; being 'easy to get hold of' was rated slightly lower than the other two measures.

Seven out of ten said that Connexions had helped them decide what to do in the next couple of years, with those under the age of 18 much more likely to say that Connexions had helped them decide what to do. Almost a third said that they had done something they had not previously considered as a result of their contact with Connexions.

Half of respondents said that their contact with Connexions had made them more confident overall, and just under a half said their contact had made no difference in terms of confidence. There was a clear variation by age, with younger respondents much more likely to say that Connexions had made them more confident.

Awareness of Connexions Direct was significantly lower than awareness of Connexions overall, and was even lower for the Connexions Card, with awareness of the Youth Charter being lowest of all.

The survey concludes that the most significant drivers for determining whether Connexions helped users decide what to do were: whether contact with Connexions had increased their confidence; overall satisfaction with the service; the usefulness of advice given on various topics; and being helped to see all of the options available to them. These last two were, in turn, key drivers of the first two measures and, since they can be directly targeted for improvement, may be the best areas to concentrate on in terms of maintaining and building upon the positive results seen so far.

Evaluation of Connexions impact over time

3.37 To enhance understanding about the role and value of the Connexions service, Joyce and White (2004) explored the views of 135 young people who had been in contact with Connexions, 79 of whom were re-interviewed the following year to investigate their longer-term reflections and experiences. They found that for most young people, contact with the Connexions service had reduced since the first stage of the research, with some young people having had no further contact at all. Young people suggested that this was as a consequence of:

• not having received any follow-up contact by the adviser;

• the PA being unavailable; or

• the young person making a deliberate decision to stop visiting Connexions.

Where further contact was reported, young people typically identified between one and three contacts occurring.

3.38 Joyce and White (2004) found that face-to-face, one-to-one meetings were generally favoured over a group situation (or via other means such as the phone, email or letter) because the user felt more able to discuss issues and build rapport and was less inhibited by the presence of others. Respondents liked having someone to talk to

> *Young people in the qualitative study felt that increased confidence resulted from the support, encouragement and friendship they received from their adviser, as well as the knowledge and advice the adviser provided.*

about their problems, and they also liked the practical assistance they received with various aspects of the jobsearch process. PAs were often seen as the public face of Connexions and as a result often affected the young person's overall perception of the service they received. Discussions and assessments of the PA tended to be centred on views of their personality and character as well as their knowledge with many positive traits identified.

3.39 Joyce and White (2004) also found that in circumstances where young people had a limited exposure to the service, it sometimes proved hard for them to discern any tangible benefits resulting from their contact with Connexions. Where impacts were reported, these covered a wide range of different activity related to the level of support they received. Connexions was commonly said to have resulted in young people undertaking a new activity in education, training or employment, particularly by those categorised as 'Priority Level 1 and 2'. A number of personal impacts were also raised, and these revolved around:

- increasing levels of self-confidence;
- improving communication skills;
- changing behaviours or attitudes; and
- improving personal circumstances.

Young people in the qualitative study felt that increased confidence resulted from the support, encouragement and friendship they received from their adviser, as well as the knowledge and advice the adviser provided. The increase in confidence resulted in a range of outcomes; for example young people suggested they found it easier to: ask questions and seek advice and information from other people; motivate themselves; make decisions and be decisive; and it resulted in them exploring or undertaking new activities. For some young people – particularly those categorised as Priority 1 – communication and interpersonal skills were also said to have improved.

3.40 In their conclusions, Joyce and White (2004) say that although young people identified a number of positive impacts arising as a result of their contact with Connexions, it would be naive to assume that Connexions

was the sole reason for this occurring, particularly as it is clear that Connexions is collaborating with other partner agencies and services.

Other surveys with relevance to Connexions work

3.41 A recent small-scale survey (Sherbert Research, 2008) found that young people's knowledge and enthusiasm for IAG regarding careers in schools was mixed. It was reported that the current IAG offer relating to careers seems ad hoc, with input varying between geographic location and individual schools and for individuals within schools. The latest TellUs3 survey (Ofsted, 2008) asked children and young people across England to report on how healthy they are, how safe they feel, whether they enjoy school, whether they are happy, and whether the advice they receive on matters like sex and relationships is sufficient. It found that only 28% of young people in Years 8 and 10 thought the information and advice they received on learning and careers were good enough: 62% felt they needed more and 10% did not know what was available (p.5). The National Union of Students (2008) has recently established student juries, which have exposed strong views from students that CEIAG services are not impacting positively on their lives.

Studies of targeted support for young people, including those at risk of exclusion

3.42 The Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) report acknowledges the complexity of the issues involved in addressing the NEET group and says, crucially, that although there are no simple policy solutions, there are a number of insights and themes that might help in framing and implementing more effective strategies. Bysshe *et al.* (2008) review the evidence base for 'what works' in tackling NEETs and they identify a number of critical success factors. Three of these – recognising the diversity of needs subsumed under the NEET title, the importance of advocacy and trusting professional relationships, and the importance of innovative and flexible provision – are discussed below in the light of the available evidence. In addition, the costs of being NEET,

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> *Many have little affinity with their community, some look to gangs for a sense of belonging and many struggle with multiple disadvantages, but they often have aspirations even if they do not know how best to achieve them…*

and some observations about 'soft' versus 'hard' outcomes in NEET strategies, are also discussed. The relevant findings from the sources reviewed in this category are cited below. In addition, more detailed summaries of seven of these studies are presented in **Appendix A**.

Better recognition of the context and characteristics of the NEET group

3.43 Bysshe and Berry-Lound (2008), in their review of research into NEET, say: 'It is clear too from the literature that the term NEET itself (as is currently being highlighted by the Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training), although a well used piece of 'policy shorthand', tells us only what *young people are not*, rather than *what they are*. The review of research would suggest that the group are far from homogeneous and, as DfES have indicated, do not have many common characteristics. Previous research would indicate that individuals in the group range from those who are simply 'misplaced', following a 'false start', to those who are suffering from multiple disadvantage who are likely (without ongoing support) to be at risk of ongoing social exclusion' (p.16).

3.44 The Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) report highlights the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the characteristics of those who are NEET. Not all are from a low socio-economic background; some are middle-class young people who have 'opted out' for various reasons. Many have little affinity with their community, some look to gangs for a sense of belonging and many struggle with multiple disadvantages, but they often have aspirations even if they do not know how best to achieve them: *'want to have a job and a nice family; don't want to be living in this hole,'* (page 32). It also calls for a classification system that includes, in addition to the familiar 'long-term NEET' and 'transitional NEET', a further category for which no figures are available, namely that of 'prospective NEET', i.e. those young people currently registered at school who are at risk of becoming disengaged.

3.45 The DCSF (2008) strategy to reduce the number of NEETs by 2013 indicates that the number of young people recorded as

NEET peaked in the mid-80s when youth unemployment was at its highest. Despite falling since then, levels remain stubbornly high, with the regional pattern showing that the highest numbers are in the North East, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside areas. The strategy indicates that:

(i) the NEET group is not static but rather a rapidly changing group;

(ii) the vast majority of the group are moving in and out of the system as they drop out of, or complete, their previous activity; and

(iii) only around 1% of 16–18 year olds are 'long-term NEET', defined as young people who are NEET at each of the three survey points: 16, 17 and 18.

The DCSF NEET strategy concluded that:

> *'The NEET group is not homogenous', and contains 'young people with quite different characteristics'.*
>
> (p.7)

3.46 Sachdev *et al.* (2006), in their study of regional and sub-regional variations in NEET say that understanding the characteristics of young people who were likely to become NEET on leaving school appears to be key to designing programmes and initiatives that work and achieve the aim of NEET prevention. They argue that young people likely to become NEET are actually a heterogeneous group with multiple needs, and that successful interventions appear to be those which take into account the complexity and multiplicity of problems faced by individuals and offer appropriate level of support.

3.47 Hughes *et al.* (2008), in a review of 39 research studies into NEET, identified the many factors that contribute to improved understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with measuring the impact of NEET interventions. These studies highlight the crucial role of factors such as:

- understanding where young people live and the social networks they provide;

- membership of some minority ethnic groups;

- truancy from school before the age of 16 and low or no educational achievements at the age of 16;

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The findings concluded that young people experienced a 'snakes and ladders effect', whereby entry routes to learning and training were often fluid and/or restricted as a result of institutions and employer requirements for formal qualifications.

- negative attitudes towards school arising from boredom, poor relationships with teachers, anti-school cultures and viewing education and qualifications as having little value in the world of work;

- personality/behavioural difficulties; and

- learning disabilities/disadvantage.

The importance of a trusting relationship

3.48 Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) found that many NEET young people suffer from a lack of belonging and from failed relationships, and need someone they can trust and rely on, to help them re-engage. They indicate that much of this may often be related to a pronounced feeling of alienation from school and an inability to cope with the necessary authority structures that underpin the structures of schooling. The support from youth workers, Connexions PAs, and the voluntary and community sector, is particularly valued, often above that of teachers and other authority figures.

3.49 Hoggarth and Smith (2004) emphasise that a trusting relationship between the PA and the young person is key to making an impact on those at risk and that it is important to bring young people who need it into the Connexions process as early in their 'risk career' as possible and with the time to build up trust. SQW (2005) report that young people at risk of exclusion particularly valued the emotional support provided by Careers Scotland Key Workers (an equivalent of a Connexions PA) and that, as a result, there had been a noticeable improvement in time management and self-control. Blythe *et al.* (2008) emphasise the 'beyond brokerage' emotional and social support that PAs were able to provide to young people in jobs without training (JWT) through the Lancashire Learning Agreement Pilot.

The limitations of a 'qualifications first strategy' and the importance of innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people

3.50 In relation to the pronounced feeling of alienation from school that many NEET young people feel, Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) point to the limitations of a 'qualifications first strategy'. They highlight the need to develop

more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment.

'It appears that attempts to rationalise provision to promote programme-led funding can act against the interests of the young people of concern to the Engaging Youth Enquiry. What they may need is more flexible alternatives, including more flexible opportunities to learn and gain qualifications at work.'

(p.48)

3.51 The importance of using flexible provision to meet the needs of young people who are NEET has been stressed by DCSF, and some case studies have been produced (DCSF, 2008a). The report points out that:

'No young person should have to wait for the following September to get back into education or training, and they should have the same choice of provider as young people who have never been NEET.'

(p.3)

3.52 Both Blythe *et al.* (2008) and Sachdev *et al.* (2006) highlight the need to provide a greater range and flexibility of training and learning provision, including more pre-level 2 and flexible 'roll-on/roll-off' provision. In relation to the pronounced feeling of alienation from school that many NEET young people feel, Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) point to the limitations of a 'qualifications first strategy' and the need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment.

3.53 As well as the importance of greater involvement of young people in decision making, Sachdev *et al.* (2006) emphasise the need for a fuller recognition of their achievements and of innovative practices in engaging young people in informal and non-academic learning. Hughes *et al.* (2008) investigated this issue as part of a small-scale ethnographic research project in the Doncaster area. The findings concluded that young people experienced a 'snakes and ladders effect', whereby entry routes to learning and training were often fluid and/or restricted as a result of institutions and employer requirements for formal qualifications.

> *They also find that many of the young people in their study faced multiple risks in their lives and that impact is needed in more than one area with a recognition of the importance of both hard and soft outcomes.*

The cost of being long-term NEET both to the individual and to society as a whole

3.54 The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (2005) reports that characteristics associated with young people being NEET include poor educational attainment, persistent truancy, teenage pregnancy, use of drugs and alcohol, looked after children, disability, mental health issues, crime and anti-social behaviour. Data shows that chances of being NEET amongst young people increase for those with certain characteristics. Amongst all 16 year olds nationally, 7% are NEET. Yet this rises to 11% of 16 year olds from the lowest social class groups, 13% amongst those with a disability, 22% amongst those excluded from school, 32% amongst those who are persistent truants and 74% amongst teenage mothers.

3.55 A report from the Mayor of London (2007) on strategies to try to prevent young people becoming NEET states:

'It has been estimated that young people dropping out of education at 16 could cost an average of £97,000, with those with additional support needs potentially costing as much as £300,000 per young person. Longer term, the impact of this group could be significant equating to an additional economic cost of £15 billion up to 2060 particularly given the likely support needs of a group including individuals more likely to become teenage mothers, suffer poor health, become involved with drugs or engage in criminal activity than their counterparts who engage in relevant education, employment, or training between 16 and 18 years of age.'

(p.54)

3.56 Godfrey *et al.* (2002) present similar estimates of the cost of being NEET:

'The average per capita total present value costs over a lifetime are £45,000 resource costs and £52,000 public finance costs. The current per capita costs for NEET 16–18 year olds are £5,300 resource costs and £5,500 public finance costs. Thus if 10,000 (less than 10% of the estimated population of 157,000 NEET population) people were removed from the group of NEET or socially excluded young people, total current

savings would be £53m in resource costs and £55m in public finance costs. This assumes the 10,000 would be 'average' and not have an over-representation of those NEET individuals with clusters of problems. If lifetime present value savings were considered, these would be £450m in resource costs and £520m in public finance costs.'

(p.56)

'Soft' versus 'hard' outcomes

3.57 Sachdev *et al.* (2006) highlight the concern shared by many agencies about the emphasis that funders place upon hard outcomes at the expense of soft outcomes such as motivation and self-esteem. In the long run, these soft outcomes can act as precursors of hard outcomes such as employment and/or training. Rodger *et al.* (2007), in their approach to 'individual risk modelling', emphasise the role of instruments that accurately identify the softer risk and resilience factors associated with a young person's self-esteem as part of the process of optimising the impact of NEET reduction strategies.

3.58 Hoggarth and Smith (2004) highlight that having *care responsibilities* for a family member, having *emotional or behavioural difficulties*, being a *young offender* or being a *teenage mother* are contributory factors to becoming NEET. They also find that many of the young people in their study faced multiple risks in their lives and that impact is needed in more than one area, with a recognition of the importance of both hard and soft outcomes. Further work is needed to develop ways of measuring and recording soft outcomes concerned with personal development and underlying needs, *which young people may need first* in order to be able to achieve the harder outcomes. They note that several partnerships were exploring ways of recognising and measuring such outcomes, for instance with the Rickter Scale. Others were working on personal development models, enabling 'then' and 'now' comparisons and the tracing of a biography of a young person, or other locally devised systems based on Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR).

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3.59 Blythe *et al.* (2008) highlight the importance of tracking and monitoring young people's employment and/or career journeys over time in order to build the evidence-base for effective careers education and information, advice and guidance interventions.

Other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance

3.60 Although these studies, in the main, do not involve services for young people, they are useful for two reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate a number of important issues about the nature and weight of evidence, with examples of the various levels of evidence as discussed in **Section 2**. Second, they illustrate the many possible outcomes of careers guidance-related services that the various research studies have tried to demonstrate. The relevant findings from the sources reviewed in this category are cited below. In addition, more detailed summaries of 12 of these studies are presented in **Appendix A**.

Self-confidence and self-esteem

3.61 Taking into account the number of studies available and the type of the evidence they provide, there is a reasonably strong case to say that guidance-related interventions can make a difference in terms of personal confidence and self-esteem. For example, Hughes *et al.* (2002), in their review of the research base, cite seven published studies that provide evidence for the motivational and attitudinal benefits, including increased self-confidence and self-esteem, of guidance. We will now look at other more recent evidence.

3.62 Bimrose *et al.* (2006), in their study of the role of careers guidance in the development of career 'trajectories' over a number of years, report that guidance was found to be useful, especially when it enabled participants to focus ideas and provide insights, and improve their self-confidence. A number of participants felt that although they had not significantly improved their career circumstance in material terms, they nevertheless felt that the guidance had been useful in terms of their self-esteem and their prospects for the future. In this sense, it could be argued that increased self-esteem and self-confidence

act as a 'precursors', helping to facilitate later, harder outcomes in terms of, for example, progression to work or better employment.

Killeen and Kidd (1991) use the term 'precursor' to refer specifically to a subset of what they term 'learning outcomes': those concerned with 'changes in client attributes which facilitate rational decision making and implementation but may also accompany them (e.g. attitude to decision making, attitude to guidance, reduced decision anxiety, internal locus of control)' (p.5).

3.63 The Bimrose *et al.* (2006) study of career 'trajectories' provides valuable and detailed insights into the role of careers guidance. However, in terms of the weight of evidence provided, we should note that results are based upon the opinions and stories from a relatively small sample (36 clients who were successfully contacted three years after the first case-study interview). There are other relevant studies based upon much larger sample sizes and using different research designs. For example, SQW with TNS (2005) report an evaluation of the Scottish All-Age Guidance projects (AAG) involving an initial telephone survey of 596 AAG participants three months after clients' contact with Careers Scotland (CS), and a second telephone survey of most of the same participants (506) carried out six months later. The majority of clients reported that CS, and the guidance provided, had influenced their career decisions, and felt that they now had more confidence to make career development decisions. The majority believed that the support had provided a significant enhancement to their career prospects and for those who had made a number of positive career changes, significant numbers believed that the intervention of CS had been a critical factor.

3.64 Although the evaluation of the AAG projects was based upon a significantly large sample size, and although the interviews were carried out in a systematic and structured way, no counterfactuals were used, i.e. no way of knowing exactly how the individuals would have subsequently fared had they not been involved in the AAG projects.

For example, the study was not able to provide any baseline on the scale or quality

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> *Indeed, self-confidence and decision-making skills are related, and one could argue that the one acts as a precursor to the other.*

of service prior to the introduction of AAG, and there was no control group with which to make comparisons. This is not to say that the benefits of guidance reported by the AAG clients, including their increased self-confidence, did not make a contribution to the later progression outcomes. Pollard *et al.* (2007) is a study that did include the use of counterfactuals.

3.65 In Pollard *et al.* (2007) participants who received information only (the I group) were matched (by variables such as age, gender, learning/work histories) against those who received more in-depth advice and guidance (the AG group). The rationale is that since the two groups have been matched as closely as possible in terms of individual characteristics, then any difference in outcomes should be attributable to the difference in the level of IAG received. In effect, the I group is acting as a quasi-control group, by calculation, and the AG group is acting as the experimental group. Some 4000 adults who had received some level of IAG in the previous six months took part in an initial survey, and a majority of these were followed up again two years later. In addition to control by calculation, those of the original I group who went on to receive more in-depth support, after a two-year period, were analysed separately to provide a further level of sophistication. As we shall discuss later, this study sheds light on the possible longer-term benefits of guidance; however, the study also found that in-depth support helps people recognise and value what they have achieved and increases confidence in planning for the future and general self-confidence.

Career exploration and decision-making skills

3.66 As with self-confidence and self-esteem, there is a significant body of evidence on the impact of IAG on career exploration and decision-making skills. Indeed, self-confidence and decision-making skills are related, and one could argue that the one acts as a precursor to the other.

3.67 For example Killeen and Kidd (1991), in their review of the research base, argue that attitudinal change or emotional changes, such as attitude to choice, career salience, reduced anxiety, and confidence in one's ability to

exert influence over events, have a strong prima facie relationship to the acquisition of decision-related knowledge and skills, either as precursors or as products. Killeen and Kidd (1991) examined 46 studies from which they identified those that reported gains on:

- one or more measures related to rational decision making and implementation;
- decision-making skills;
- self-awareness;
- opportunity awareness (and information search);
- certainty or decisiveness; and
- transition skills.

Only four studies reported no gains, and a further ten reported null results in addition to significant gains.

3.68 The Killeen and Kidd review marshals a significant body of evidence for the impact of guidance on decision-making skills. However, the authors indicate that there are doubts as to the validity and reliability of many of the outcome measures employed in the various research studies, and that most evaluate whole interventions which differ in many ways from one another. However, more recently, Whiston *et al.* (2003), have provided further valuable evidence of the positive impact of career interventions upon career planning and decision-making skills.

3.69 Whiston *et al.* (2003) carried out a meta-analysis that combines the results of several studies which address a set of related research hypotheses, namely: does the way in which career counselling is delivered (e.g. individual versus group career counselling, or career workshops versus computer interventions) affect its effectiveness? To be eligible for inclusion in the meta-analysis, each individual piece of research had, amongst other things, to involve a random assignment of participants to different types of career counselling intervention. Originally, 347 studies were identified for possible consideration; after the application of the search criteria, this was reduced to 57 studies involving 4,732 participants, 149 modality comparisons, and 736 outcome comparisons. Although the

> *The majority of respondents said that as a result of the guidance interview they were clearer about their career plans, had carried out actions to achieve their plans, and had experienced significant career-related life changes, including participation in learning.*

individual studies did not include comparisons with groups that did not receive any career counselling intervention at all, i.e. the classic 'placebo' control group, the random assignment of participants to the various treatment groups does provide a very high level of evidence in terms of experimental and statistical robustness.

3.70 The overall finding from this meta-analysis is that the intervention of a career counsellor does appear to have a positive and beneficial impact upon the development of decision-making skills. In general, interventions that did not involve a counsellor were found to be less effective than other treatments that did involve a counsellor. Results also indicated that workshops or structured groups tended to produce better outcomes than non-structured career counselling groups. Furthermore, participants who used a career computer system supplemented by counselling had better outcomes than those who used only a computer system.

Participation in learning/training

3.71 There are several studies which show a link between IAG and participation in learning and there is some particularly strong evidence to show that IAG does result in increased participation in informal learning (as opposed to formal learning).

3.72 Findings from a study reported by Tyers and Sinclair (2004) suggest that the learndirect helpline has had an impact in increasing participation in learning. Helpline users are less likely to have had a recent learning experience than people in general, *but* participation in learning 18 months after their initial call to the learndirect helpline was much higher than average. These comparisons suggest that the helpline has had an impact in increasing participation in learning, though it is not clear what other factors may have motivated them to seek professional information and advice and which, in addition to the helpline support, may have contributed to the participation outcome.

3.73 Reed *et al.* (2005) report the findings from a survey of 1,000 adults who received guidance from Careers Wales during 2004 and who were followed up by telephone at three and six months following the intervention.

The majority of respondents said that as a result of the guidance interview they were clearer about their career plans, had carried out actions to achieve their plans, and had experienced significant career-related life changes, including participation in learning. The survey did not include a matched control group, nor was a comparison made between the rate of progression to learning of the survey respondents and that of the general adult population, hence these results are not conclusive. However, some corroboration of the impact of the careers guidance on participation in learning is derived from the fact that a majority of the survey respondents who progressed to learning say that they *believed* the support they received to have been a significant influential factor.

3.74 James (2001) evaluated the effectiveness of placing a Learning Adviser in GP surgeries to provide information, advice and guidance as a means of widening participation in learning among adults. A total of 196 people were referred to and seen by the Learning Adviser between September 2000 and March 2002. Of the first tranche of participants referred to the Learning Adviser, just over 60% went on to participate in some form of recognised learning. It is not clear over what timescale the learning took place, nor was any comparison made with other similar groups who were not involved in the initiative. However, almost all the people interviewed said that they probably would not have taken up learning without the help of the project and the support of the Learning Adviser.

3.75 In our discussion of the impact on self-confidence, we have already seen that Pollard *et al.* (2007) compared participants who received information only (the I group) with matched participants who received more in-depth advice and guidance (the AG group). The same study also looked at the impact of guidance on longer-term outcomes including participation in learning. The study distinguished between formal learning and informal learning, which was defined as undertaking taught courses designed to help develop skills that might be used in a job but which do not lead to a qualification, and other courses such as evening classes, driving lessons, online learning and self-directed study

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etc. Although this study provides evidence of a high level of rigour, the results for participation in learning are mixed. Increased participation in formal learning was not conclusively associated with the AG group, though over time the learning of the AG group became more focused upon specific jobs or careers, and correspondingly was more likely to involve employers in providing support. Informal learning, however, was found to be positively associated with the provision of advice and guidance. Informal learning becomes more common over time, especially amongst the group who, after receiving information, moved on to access further in-depth support.

Improved academic attainment and retention

3.76 The evidence that IAG can lead to improvements in academic attainment is mixed. As already reported earlier in **Section 3**, there is evidence that young people with clear career goals and expectations achieve better school examination results (Inter-ed 2004), and tend to do better in terms of their acquisition of human capital whilst at school and their occupational status on leaving school (Brown *et al.* 2004). However, there will have been other factors involved in the development of such clear career goals and expectations, additional to the input of formal CEIAG programmes. Equally, although there is a link between IAG and increased levels of participation in learning and/or training (for example: Pollard *et al.* 2007; Tyers and Sinclair, 2004) it is not possible to say that any resulting increase in attainment can be directly attributed to the IAG per se, above and beyond that which one would expect from the increased levels of participation.

3.77 Killeen and White (2000), in their study found that employees who had received guidance had achieved a higher rate of qualification than a comparison sample, but this was in line with the increased rate of participation and the analysis was not extended to consider relative wastage. Killeen *et al.* (1992) reported that UK studies which include educational attainment as an outcome of guidance were methodologically flawed and/or inadequately reported, and that as a consequence, there was a lack of good evidence in this area.

3.78 There is some evidence that CEIAG is associated with improvements in retention and successful completion in education, particularly full-time education. For example, in an American study, Folsom *et al.* (2002) found that participation in a structured career development course for college students had a positive impact on both credit hours taken to graduate and the number of course withdrawals executed prior to graduation. These findings led to the conclusion that course participants took significantly fewer credit hours to graduate, and executed significantly fewer course withdrawals than non-participants. SWA Consulting (1999), in their evaluation of the early development of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), reported an association between low drop-out rates and those who had received specialist careers advice. In reporting the results of a national retention survey, the Responsive College Unit (1998) noted:

'Students who lacked initial information about their courses or made a late decision to enrol were significantly more likely to leave early.'

(p.2)

3.79 Martinez and Munday (1998) carried out what was then the largest study of persistence and drop-out ever undertaken in FE in the UK. The study consisted of a survey of the views of some 9,000 students and staff in 31 FE colleges. It found that one of a number of key factors associated with the likelihood of dropping out of college was students not feeling they have been placed on the most appropriate course. There was also other evidence that indicated the importance of good guidance in preventing drop-out and excessive course switching.

'More positive messages, mainly from staff, were that effective pre-entry guidance makes a substantial contribution to retention by ensuring that students are enrolled on courses relevant to their personal and career goals and appropriate to their ability.'

(p.82)

In addition, they noted that:

'A significant number of the students coming to college as a result of parental pressure are poorly motivated, change their minds and eventually drop out.'

(p.81)

> *Results reviewed revealed that the distinguishing characteristic of withdrawn students, compared with those who stayed on, was their relatively lower level of satisfaction with teaching quality and support.*

3.80 Davies (1999) presents a summary of the evidence concerning student retention and withdrawal in the further education sector, with a particular emphasis upon full-time 16–19 year old students. The evidence reviewed includes the author's own research on behalf of the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), in which the main approach adopted was to compare the characteristics of withdrawn students with those of continuing students in order to identify the factors associated with withdrawal. He notes that some authors suggest that improvements to information and guidance services could form part of a successful interventionist strategy. He also includes the support that students receive in helping them settle into college at the beginning of their course as a significant factor in student satisfaction. However, his findings overall suggest that issues related to the perceived quality of the educational experience, whilst at college, tend to outweigh the influence of other factors, in particular financial hardship, on student drop-out.

Results reviewed revealed that the distinguishing characteristic of withdrawn students, compared with those who stayed on, was their relatively lower level of satisfaction with teaching quality and support. Students also *perceived* personal problems, financial hardship, insufficient financial assistance, and conflict between job and studies, as being amongst the most important causes of withdrawal, but the incidence of these difficulties did not seem to be any greater for those who withdrew.

Reduced unemployment and improved employment

3.81 There is evidence that intensive multi-stranded support for job seekers, including the provision of guidance, can reduce the length of time taken in finding employment. For example, in the USA, the Job Club method has been experimentally evaluated, providing level 5 evidence on its impact on reducing unemployment. Azrin *et al.* (1975) randomly assigned matched pairs of job seekers to control and experimental groups. The median period that elapsed before entry into full-time work was reduced from 53 days (for the control group) to 14 days (for the experimental group) and after three months 93% of the experimental group were in full-time employment compared with 60% of controls.

3.82 In the UK, Pearson (1998) explored the impact of a 'bridge' guidance programme on the re-employment rates of unemployed managers and professionals, and concluded that the provision of guidance can have a positive impact. The re-employment rate of those on the programme, being 92% at six months, was significantly higher than the re-employment rate of the general unemployed population. However, the results need to be interpreted with some caution; unlike the study by Azrin *et al.* (1975), the comparison was not with a matched control group.

3.83 There are several studies that show a link between IAG and participation in employment and/or improved employment; for example: Reed *et al.* (2005); Milburn Trinnaman LaCourt (2008); and, Pollard *et al.* (2007).

3.84 Milburn Trinnaman LaCourt (2008) report the findings from a national telephone survey of 1,823 adults of working age who received information and advice (IA) services and were chosen randomly across all 47 LSC areas of England. The survey includes progression to employment as one of the benefits associated with the information and advice provided. The study reports that 15% of participants started in employment between receiving IA and the survey, and that 65% of these felt that IA was a significantly influential factor. However, this study did not include a matched control group; nor was a comparison made of the rate of progression to learning and work of the survey respondents with that of the general adult population. Therefore it is difficult to determine the significance of the reported progression rates. However, even if such a comparison had been made, and even if it had shown higher rates of progression for the survey respondents, one could argue that this might simply reflect the higher motivation of those who seek out information and advice services. Counterbalancing this is the fact that a majority of the survey respondents who progress to learning or work say that they *believe* the information and advice they received had been influential.

3.85 As we have already seen in our discussion of the impact on self-confidence and

> *…the giving of really good information could be guidance in disguise.*

participation in learning, Pollard *et al.* (2007) provide research evidence of a particularly high level of rigour. This study also looked at employment outcomes and came to some very interesting conclusions. They conclude that in-depth support is not associated with any observable labour market outcomes in the medium term, that is:

- participation in the labour market; or

- participation in paid work, movement into paid work from unemployment, or (continued) household reliance on state benefits.

However, they do say that in-depth support is positively associated with three attitudinal work-related outcomes:

- satisfaction with a current job;

- confidence in gaining a desired job; and

- increases in confidence over time.

The authors also conclude that information provision (as opposed to the more in-depth support) was useful to many individuals, in that it either provided them with what they needed at the time when they could act upon it, or it spurred them on to seek further support. They suggest that it could be that careers information is better than is traditionally regarded by the guidance community: 'Indeed, the giving of really good information could be guidance in disguise' (p.107).

Wider socio-economic benefits (including health benefits)

3.86 Providing evidence on the wider socio-economic benefits of guidance, including possible health benefits, presents a challenge because of reasons noted in our earlier discussions on the policy context and on the nature of evidence. In addition to the political 'spin' associated with debates about the impact of social policy, these challenges principally include:

(i) the inherent complexity of socio-economic behaviour, being subject to so many interacting factors and influences of which guidance is but one small part; and

(ii) the impracticalities and costs associated with the kind of large-scale, long-term

follow-up studies that would help provide the necessary evidence (not to mention the ethical constraints in conducting any randomly controlled trials).

It is not surprising, therefore, that we find little or no evidence on the possible wider socio-economic benefits of guidance. However, there are two reports that provide detailed calculations of cost-saving benefits that can be attributed, on a hypothetical basis, to the social policy interventions; and, there is one study that points to the actual, indirect health benefits of IAG.

3.87 The work of Godfrey *et al.* (2002) has been mentioned earlier in relation to the costs of NEET to society and to the economy as a whole. Godfrey *et al.* focus upon calculating the costs to the public purse of NEETs in terms of educational underachievement, unemployment, inactivity, crime and health, and the cost saving that would accrue from each percentage point reduction in NEET. Although this work does not address the separate and specific cost-saving potential of careers guidance, there is an implication that *if* careers guidance could be proven to result in a quantifiable reduction in NEET, *then* the calculations contained in this report could be used as a means of calculating the cost saving attributable to careers guidance.

3.88 Hughes (2004) makes reference to a small number of studies that relate careers guidance to participation in education and to increased levels of confidence. Her central focus is to then go on to indicate how hypothetical amounts of careers guidance impacts could be used to calculate possible savings for the public purse in terms of: NEET reduction and savings in social security payments; increased participation in employment, and increased productivity and tax revenue; reduction in crime and the costs of crime; and health benefits and reduced national health spending.

3.89 A more relevant study in terms of providing actual research results is that of James (2001), who evaluated the effectiveness of placing a Learning Adviser in GP surgeries to provide information, advice and guidance as a means of widening participation in learning among adults. The research also attempted

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> *Participants reported increased confidence, social contacts, increased activity pleasure and improved quality of life, all of which could be mediators through which learning impacts on health.*

to identify the health impacts that occur as a result of participation in learning in adults. A total of 196 people were referred to and seen by the Learning Adviser between September 2000 and March 2002. In-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews were carried out with a sample of individuals referred to the projects, to gather qualitative information on their experience of the guidance interviews, their experiences of learning, and the perceived health outcomes from participating in learning.

3.90 Although the James (2001) study does not provide any conclusive evidence about the direct impact of careers guidance on increased health and well-being, it does provide evidence of the possible indirect benefits of guidance by showing a link between IAG and learning on the one hand and the health benefits that appear to follow from the resulting participation in learning on the other. The research showed that successful learning can have a positive effect on individuals' health and well-being, and almost all the people interviewed said that they probably would not have taken up learning without the help of the project. Some individuals felt that participation in learning had an immediate and direct effect on their physical and mental health. Participants reported increased confidence, social contacts, increased activity pleasure and improved quality of life, all of which could be mediators through which learning impacts on health.

4.0 Conclusions

It is clear that well-developed career exploration skills, and clear career goals and expectations, are important in helping young people to achieve their potential whilst at school and to make successful transitions post-16.

Main conclusions from the material selected for in-depth review and analysis

Studies of factors influencing the decision-making processes of young people's learning, attainment and progression

4.1 It is clear that well-developed career exploration skills, and clear career goals and expectations, are important in helping young people to achieve their potential whilst at school and to make successful transitions post-16. Good-quality CEIAG has an important role to play in the development of these skills. However, the decision-making processes of young people, including those involving career exploration, are influenced by many factors – some formal and some informal – and the impact of CEIAG, including that of teachers and Connexions, needs to be seen within, and moderated by, this wider context. Indeed, there needs to be a recognition that 'formal' sources of CEIAG may have significantly less impact than that of 'informal' sources and influences. In view of this, new and innovative CEIAG approaches are required that connect into the informal social networks within which young people interact; where appropriate, this should harness the growing prevalence of ICT and the social networks that it supports.

4.2 Although formal Connexions inputs may be overshadowed by informal influences, their 'unique selling point' may be the reassurance of professional authority and impartiality that they confer, especially within the context of schools with sixth forms and for pupils whose parents/carers may have limited career horizons. Evidence shows that teachers in 11–18 schools, in general, show a lack of impartiality by encouraging some students to stay on in their school sixth forms. Also, 'external' advice, i.e. that provided by professional personal and careers advisers, is often cited as a valued and useful information source of CEIAG (partly because these professionals are not based in the school; therefore, they are viewed as more 'independent' than school-based careers or subject teachers). New legislation contained within the Education and Skills Act 2008, further supported through the introduction of CEIAG principles and quality standards for schools, colleges and local authorities, will seek to address this serious deficiency in current arrangements.

4.3 There is also compelling government policy and research evidence which points towards the need for young people to be introduced to exploring careers and options much earlier than from Year 9 onwards.

4.4 Guidance models based on a traditional 'matching' approach appear to be no longer sustainable in fast-changing national and global economies. New theories are now required that move beyond 'differentialist' matching models to include more personalised and responsive approaches, such as learning from career narratives and trajectories, labour market transitions and web-based interactions. In addition, more creative strategies are required to support young people's decision making through enhanced careers-related resource materials for use in the classroom and online. In this context, research findings highlight the fact that greater recognition should be given to young people's (and adults') decision making processes, which are not wholly rational, but instead complex and often chaotic.

4.5 Research suggests that the language of CEIAG needs to become more explicit and accessible, and should be part of the process of helping students to make well-informed and realistic decisions. Younger students are likely to require more explanation and clarification of careers language and activities need to be introduced earlier in the curriculum. In addition, the need for greater involvement of the practitioner and customer voice in building the evidence base for Connexions work has been highlighted. How this is clearly articulated to the 'uninitiated', in order to ensure that clear and coherent key messages are conveyed, is now the major challenge for practitioners, managers, researchers and policymakers.

4.6 The majority of research into ethnicity and gender in relation to career planning and

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> *One important feature of the interaction of gender and race is the impact of gender-role socialisation.*

development has tended to separate these two factors from each other. However, it has been argued that the interaction between ethnicity and gender must be considered; for example, minority ethnic women suffer double disadvantage – social and economical – referred to as 'double jeopardy'. One important feature of the interaction of gender and race is the impact of gender-role socialisation. For example, the extent to which women are expected to work outside the home as adults differs across groups. An important task for those working in careers guidance may be to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values with personal beliefs and goals.

4.7 Insufficient research has been carried out into the career development of minority ethnic groups. For example, measures of work values do not necessarily take into account the value systems of minority groups. The relationship between gender and sexual orientation is also a neglected area. In developing a new body of knowledge, there is a danger of falling into the same theoretical trap of generalising findings from one population to another for which these findings are not relevant. In order to assess and measure the impact of careers and guidance-related services, research populations should better represent minority ethnic groups, non-heterosexuals and other dimensions of diverse communities.

Studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services

4.8 The influence of technology has significantly influenced individuals' behaviour patterns in terms of how and when they access and utilise services to meet their particular needs. The alternative channels of communication that technology provides further enhance access to individually tailored and personalised services. There is compelling evidence that increased volumes of users are now accessing both telephone and online support services. Mass marketing has had a significant impact on the volumes and types of telephone and online IAG enquiries; in addition, the increase in online usage partly reflects the general popularity and penetration of the internet, particularly broadband, throughout the UK.

4.9 Research findings indicate that guidance delivered by telephone can be of a high quality as measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance, with a quarter of calls surveyed being graded 'excellent'. Telephone guidance can also be effective, with callers attributing both hard and soft outcomes to the intervention, but especially for outcomes such as increased motivation, self-awareness and confidence, and a greater awareness of opportunities. A particular feature of high-quality and effective telephone guidance is CEIAG delivery staff who are well qualified and highly trained to deliver information, advice and guidance services.

4.10 Also, it is clear that new technology offers significant potential to support organisations' CEIAG delivery work with young people, parents/carers and employers, whilst simultaneously affording new opportunities to gather information on customer journeys and career trajectories more systematically. The materials reviewed indicate that these developments need to continue apace in order both to respond to the general public's growing familiarity with and access to ICT, particularly broadband, and to match the increasing sophistication of the developing technology. Finally, there is scope to improve the utilisation of technology to help assess impact and the effectiveness of services. Linked to this, CEIAG workers' skill sets in managing and responding to the changing interface between internet resources and individual users' behaviours are broadly underdeveloped.

Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations

4.11 Surveys of Connexions services have tended to focus upon: profiles of users and of usage; users' satisfaction levels; and user impact, usually expressed in terms of how useful the service is rated. There is little or no published evidence of the longer-term tracking of customer journeys within the user survey process.

4.12 Although satisfaction levels are generally high, where improvements are suggested by users these most frequently include the need for advisers to be more helpful and supportive and to offer better advice, and the need to have more advisers available to take calls.

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> *Qualitative research that focuses on young people's lived experiences characterised in case studies and career narratives remains patchy and under-developed.*

4.13 Whilst customer satisfaction surveys feature universally in most, if not all, provision, there is nevertheless considerable variation of policy and practice in terms of the frequency, range and volumes of surveys carried out. There is also variation in the levels of perceived impartiality linked to whether they are carried out by independent research organisations or performed in-house. Qualitative research that focuses on young people's lived experiences characterised in case studies and career narratives remains patchy and underdeveloped. Also, the lack of involvement of young people in the design and development of capturing CEIAG impact data from their peers, using technology to support this process, is an apparent gap in the current system.

Studies of targeted support for young people, including those at risk of exclusion

4.14 Independent reviews of the issues associated with being not in education, employment or training (NEET), and of strategies to tackle NEET, have identified a number of common 'critical success factors' that need to be addressed in order to successfully tackle the problem. In particular, these factors include:

- recognising the diversity of needs subsumed under the NEET title;

- the importance of advocacy and trusting professional relationships to support individuals who are NEET; and,

- the importance of innovative and flexible learning and training provision.

4.15 To support more sophisticated NEET reduction strategies there is a need to better understand the complexities of the characteristics of young people at risk of exclusion and a need to recognise that NEETs are not a homogeneous group. There is also a need to recognise that many young people face multiple risks in their lives and that impact is needed in more than one area, with recognition of the importance of both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes.

4.16 Research findings show that the proportion of young people who are NEET has hovered at around 10% since the mid-1990s despite significant investment in targeted support and other policy measures. Indeed, the figures since the mid-1980s indicate that the overall buoyancy of the economy in terms of general employment rates is a significant factor associated with NEET levels.

4.17 Despite the fact that the NEET group is not homogeneous, many disaffected young people are characterised by a number of *recurring themes* and risks, including: adverse family circumstances; traumatic events; personality/behavioural difficulties; learning disabilities/disadvantage; disaffection with school; truancy; health problems; bullying; being in care; crime; drug abuse; homelessness; immaturity; lack of support; and a lack of money.

4.18 The cost of being NEET, especially long-term NEET, is not only to the health and economic well-being of the individual but also to society, in terms of increased social welfare expenditure and societal dysfunction. Calculations indicate that the cost of NEET to society, in addition to unemployment and disability payments, could also include a greater burden upon the health-care and criminal justice systems.

4.19 Many young people who are NEET feel alienated from formal education, especially as a result of their experience and perception of school, and there is a need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment. In particular, a greater range and flexibility of training and learning provision is required, including more pre-level 2 and flexible 'roll-on/roll-off' provision.

4.20 Evaluations of targeted support for young people at risk of exclusion, and for those who are lowly qualified and in jobs without training, show that the motivational, emotional and attitudinal support of Connexions is particularly valued, in addition to the provision of information and brokerage.

Conclusions from other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance

4.21 Taking into account both the number of studies available and the type of evidence they provide, there is a reasonably strong case to

"There is some particularly strong evidence to show that IAG does result in increased participation in informal learning (as opposed to formal learning)."

be made that careers information, advice and guidance-related interventions can and do make a difference in terms of increased levels of personal confidence and self-esteem.

4.22 As with self-confidence and self-esteem, there is a significant body of evidence on the impact of IAG on career exploration and decision-making skills. Indeed, self-confidence and decision-making skills are related, and one could argue that the one acts as a precursor to the other.

4.23 There are several studies which show a link between IAG and participation in learning, with many individuals reporting that the IAG they received was a significant factor in their enrolling on a learning or training programme. There is some particularly strong evidence to show that IAG does result in increased participation in informal learning (as opposed to formal learning).

4.24 Although there is evidence that young people with clear career goals and expectations achieve better school examination results, and although there is a link between IAG and increased levels of participation in learning which then leads to increased qualification levels, it is difficult to say that CEIAG, per se, results in improvements in academic attainment. However, there is clearer evidence that CEIAG is associated with improvements in retention in full-time education and reduced course-switching.

4.25 There is good evidence of a high level of rigour that intensive multi-stranded support for job seekers, including the provision of guidance, can reduce the length of time taken in finding employment. Many other studies also show a link between IAG and participation in employment, and/or improved employment, with many individuals reporting that the IAG they received was a significant factor in improving their employment situation. There is also good evidence of a high level of rigour showing that in-depth support in the form of advice and guidance is positively associated with attitudinal work-related outcomes, including increased work satisfaction and confidence in gaining a desired job.

Other overarching conclusions

4.26 The UK public policy context is characterised by the drive for greater social inclusion and upskilling of the workforce, and the imperative to be able to ensure that learning, social and economic policy goals are delivered cost-effectively with best value in the use of taxpayers' money.

4.27 However, attempts to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of policy interventions are fraught with difficulties, often because of practical methodological reasons, but also because of the inherently complex nature of human behaviour and the reality that any possible impact needs to be set within the context of the many other, often more influential, drivers of human behaviour.

4.28 Given this, it is not surprising that for even the most targeted and generously funded social policy initiatives, it is often not possible to demonstrate the impact that was originally anticipated. In this context we might well question what level of impact Connexions and CEIAG can realistically achieve, especially in the case of single or infrequent customer interventions.

4.29 A number of authors have emphasised the need to involve users and practitioners in the development of performance measures that should include qualitative as well as quantitative information and 'soft' as well as 'hard' outcomes, and that should take into account longer-term customer journeys.

4.30 Large-scale surveys, especially longitudinal studies, are extremely expensive to carry out and are almost certainly beyond the resources of even the largest of individual provider organisations; it is not surprising then that such studies tend to be commissioned on the behalf of regional or national provider networks.

4.31 In terms of the development of the online professional resource, of which this literature review forms a part, it is important to build upon DCSF and local authority policy implementation plans including outcome measures that will inform and underpin effective CEIAG work in schools and colleges.

Appendix A: Summaries of selected material

"The language of CEG needs to be explicit and accessible to all and should be part of the process of helping students make informed decisions."

Studies of factors, including Connexions and CEIAG, influencing the decision-making processes of young people's learning, attainment and/or progression

1. Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A. and Marris, L. (2008). *Establishing World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Connexions Kent & Medway: In-depth case studies.* Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research. Available from: **http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/ fac/soc/ier/people/jbimrose/cxs_km_case_ study_report_final_07.01.08.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

The aims of the study were to provide an in-depth account of elements of careers education and guidance (CEG) provision in schools and to establish which critical success factors and strategies contribute to the delivery of coherent CEG services in the region. The study focused upon five schools of different types located in different regional sites across Kent and Medway. Students, school-based CEG staff, other school staff, including senior managers, and Connexions Kent and Medway staff were interviewed.

Key findings:

The study methodology provided insights into five particular aspects of CEG in schools in the Kent and Medway region: the language of CEG; partnership and planning; CEG curriculum models; labour market information for CEG; and reintroducing CEG into schools.

The language of CEG needs to be explicit and accessible to all and should be part of the process of helping students make informed decisions. Younger students require more explanation and clarification of careers language, and activities need to be introduced earlier in the curriculum. Year 11 and 12 students had very clear understandings about careers, choices and the role of the Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs).

Effective partnership working should not be taken for granted and effort should be invested in its maintenance. The Partnership Agreement and Delivery Plan work well in the school, though improvement is always possible. Staff changes may impact on the operation of partnerships and curriculum changes (i.e. the introduction of vocational pathways) will require a fundamental review of how the Partnership Agreement operates.

The extensive and varied curricular activities which have some relevance and overlap with CEG provide both opportunities for the enhancement of the status of CEG through imaginative partnership working and challenges for the monitoring and evaluation of CEG integrated across the curriculum. A further challenge relates to the perceived differences between CEG and information, advice and guidance (IAG).

Labour market information (LMI) is critical to the objectives of CEG provision, although time and resource constraints will determine how much LMI can be researched. Useful LMI includes: local labour market information; regional employment trends; employment areas of growing importance and in decline (locally, regionally and nationally); earnings, including starting salaries for graduates; routes in to specific jobs; and career narratives. Although some participants in this research were confident in using LMI, further provision would need to be supported by training. A further challenge is that of producing LMI in a format that can be easy digested and utilised in current, and future, CEG activities.

The particular context in which any school operates will determine, at least in part, the capacity of the school to focus on CEG. In moving towards a new model of delivery, schools are likely to recognise the potential value of input from Connexions, but will scrutinise the quality of provision on offer. The extent to which Connexions is able to accommodate the objectives of schools is likely to determine the nature and extent of involvement.

> *There is consistency in the growing body of research evidence into the impact of Connexions services regarding the overall positive impact on young people.*

2. Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A. and Marris, L. (2007). *Establishing World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Kent and Medway: A literature review.* Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research. Available from: **http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/people/jbimrose/cxs_km_literature_review_final_25.07.07.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

This literature review examines factors that influence the operation of CEG programmes in schools in England and its primary purpose was to provide the evidence base to inform an in-depth study of CEG provision in Kent and Medway, reported elsewhere in Bimrose *et al.* 2008.

Key findings:

There is consistency in the growing body of research evidence into the impact of Connexions services regarding the overall positive impact on young people. Studies have been inconsistent, however, in their findings relating to which particular groups of young people Connexions serves best. There is evidence from studies over the past decade or so that indicates how the level of young people's career-related skills are an important factor in their successful transition at 16, with those possessing a high level of skill being less likely to modify choices or switch courses. Careers education and guidance appears to have a positive contribution to make to the development of these skills.

Whilst schools have a statutory duty to provide appropriate careers education, it is recognised that it competes with other priorities. Partly as a consequence of this, the quality of schools' provision is very variable. The research identified a number of key factors in the successful delivery of CEG programmes in schools:

• The organisation and management of relationships with schools within Connexions Partnerships, including: protocols and service agreements which are valued and regularly reviewed by all parties; and the involvement of senior managers in schools in the partnership arrangements.

• The professional conduct of the Personal Adviser (PA) in schools, including: the quality of relationships with young people characterised by a high level of trust, and continuity; and commitment to the school demonstrated through flexibility in their ways of working.

• Support structures for PAs, which enable them to operate within schools on a day-to-day basis, such as: access given to Connexions services to relevant information, including pupil data; and effective promotion of the service offered by Connexions.

• The changed and changing labour market within which CEG is delivered and for which CEG is preparing young people, including: the extent to which labour market information (LMI) is available; and (more importantly) the confidence with which PAs and/or careers co-ordinators feel able to use LMI.

Other factors contributing to the success of CEG programmes which emerged from the literature include: the recruitment, training and professional development of careers co-ordinators; clarification of the language used around CEG provision to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation; and the use of soft outcomes (e.g. developing self-confidence, etc.) as well as hard outcomes (e.g. placement into education, training or employment) in measuring the success of CEG programmes.

In addition, the review highlighted the importance of a knowledge of factors that influence the decision-making processes of young people at different stages of their educational careers, in assisting staff in the effective execution of their professional roles. This includes knowledge of such factors as: the influence of family and peers; self-perception of ability; gender; ethnicity; social class; labour market conditions; educational institutions; and academic attainment.

3. Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A. and Hughes, D. (2006). *Developing Career Trajectories in England: The Role of Effective Guidance.* Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research. Available from: **http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/publications/2008/egreportnov06.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

This is the third report of a study to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance by tracking

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> *The findings show that careers guidance can have a positive impact on clients' self-confidence, motivation, decision making skills, career planning skills and progression into learning and work.*

the career trajectories of originally 50 adults over a five-year period and analysing the role of guidance in this process. Fifty in-depth case studies were initially completed (dating from December 2003 to March 2004). One year on, after their case-study interview, 45 clients were successfully interviewed, and a second report based on follow-up findings in relation to career progression, reflections on the guidance interview, future plans and next steps was published by the Institute for Employment Research (IER). This research report is based on data collected from the 36 clients who were successfully contacted three years after the first case-study interview.

Key findings:

The research focuses on how the career trajectories of participants in England are developing and, in particular, it highlights the career decision-making styles of the clients, together with a consideration of the barriers and influences on these career choices and decisions. Although the results need to be interpreted with caution, taking into account the relatively small sample size and the reliance upon self-reporting, this opinion study demonstrates the richness of case study material when developed over a significant period of time. The findings show that careers guidance can have a positive impact on clients' self-confidence, motivation, decision-making skills, career planning skills and progression into learning and work. Specific findings include:

- Qualification levels of clients have risen; 33% of clients (n=12) have increased their highest qualification level by one level or more, with the majority increasing by one or two levels (75%, n=9).

- Twenty-six of the 36 clients successfully contacted still regarded their guidance interview as useful, though five were now unsure of its usefulness, and a further five could no longer recollect the guidance they had received.

- Clients found guidance useful when it: provided valuable insights; helped to focus ideas; improved self-confidence, provided opportunities to reflect and gave access to expert information.

- Just over half of clients stated that they would consider further guidance in the future in order to: access and utilise resources for job hunting; obtain further information on different courses; get help with future direction; get advice on application and CV writing; and talk over ideas.

- Clients identified three barriers which were impeding their career progression: ill health; local labour markets; and childcare commitments.

- Two types of career changers were identified: those approaching career change proactively, being strategic in the way they managed their career change, taking time to plan their next step; and those who were more reactive, taking chances that came along in a somewhat opportunistic way.

- Four distinct career decision-making styles have emerged from the data: evaluative, strategic, opportunistic and aspirational.

4. Blenkinsop, S., McCrone, T., Wade, P. and Morris, M. (2006). *How Do Young People Make Choices at 14 and 16?* RR 773. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov. uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR773.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

This study explored the *interaction* between structural contexts and young people's decision making processes. The research design was primarily qualitative, involving detailed one-to-one interviews with young people, teachers and parents in England. Year 9 and 11 pupils were surveyed, exploring the choices they were making at that time. Pupils were revisited after six months so that they could reflect on the decisions they had made at the end of the previous key stage. In its early stages it was informed by a DfES-commissioned literature review (McCrone *et al.* 2005).

Key findings:

The findings indicate that schools can make a difference to how young people make decisions. Specifically:

- The research shows a link between schools which appeared to be effective in relation to curriculum management, student support, staff expectations and school leadership,

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The evidence suggests that many young people who had clear ideas about what they wanted to do had been influenced by close relatives, friends or neighbours who worked in their chosen field.

and the young people who were making the most rational, thought-through decisions, and who remained happy with their choices six months later.

- When students felt supported in decision making by the school, they were more influenced by school factors (such as individual talks with teachers, and the careers education and guidance provision) and less reliant on external factors such as friends and family.

- Young people valued having sufficient time to make choices, the opportunity to have individual conversations with teachers to discuss their options, and detailed, clear and impartial information on courses and pathways so that they could make informed choices.

- Evidence shows that teachers in 11–18 schools sometimes showed a lack of impartiality by encouraging students to stay on in their school sixth forms.

- Young people made decisions in different ways. The quality of their decisions seemed to vary according to context (including the curriculum offer, and support mechanisms in place to support them in decision making), the ways in which information and advice was being provided to them, and their own individual approach to and skills of decision making.

- Young people brought different mindsets to the decision-making process, and made decisions differently across and within schools. Their decisions had also often fluctuated over time, even amongst students who had at first appeared very decided about their choices. These issues suggest that any single approach to support will not work for all young people and that all individuals need varying levels and type of support at different stages in their school careers.

- Few young people, particularly at age 14, made the link between careers education and guidance activities, and the personal decisions they were actually making, suggesting the need for schools to make such links more explicit.

5. Bowes, L., Smith, D. and Morgan, S. (2005). *Reviewing the Evidence Base for Careers Work in Schools*. CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Available from: **http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/reviewing_the_evidence_base.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

This review involved an in-depth examination of twenty relevant studies identified and reviewed on the basis of a systematic methodology devised by the EPPI-Centre. The main conclusion is that there is evidence that CEG contributes towards the success of subsequent transitions, but that the strength of this impact is affected by a number of factors that include the nature and type of CEG intervention, the timing of interventions, and the extent to which interventions are tailored to meet the needs of the individual. The evidence suggests that many young people who had clear ideas about what they wanted to do had been influenced by close relatives, friends or neighbours who worked in their chosen field.

Key findings:

The evidence suggests that a good-quality careers education programme, coupled with impartial guidance provision, can equip pupils with the career-related skills they need in order to make informed decisions and successful transitions at KS3 and KS4, provided that they are tailored to individual rather than organisational needs, appropriately integrated into the timetable and the wider curriculum, and delivered at relevant points in time by suitably qualified staff.

However, the *effectiveness* of CEG is affected by a number of factors, including the strategic and operational management and planning of CEG in schools, the quality of provision, and the school's capacity to deliver it. The *impact* of CEG on young people and the transition process is further constrained by a number of other external and internal factors linked to young people's attitudes and abilities, as well as their social and economic circumstances. The findings suggest that few schools in the UK have adequate capacity to deliver CEG effectively; as a result, some provision falls

> *For policy-makers, the key challenge is to ensure that the proposed reforms to schools, and 14–19 provision in particular, enable educational institutions and guidance providers to build on existing good practice…*

below acceptable quality standards. In the absence of good-quality CEG, there is evidence that other sources of 'informal' guidance from parents, friends and non-careers teachers are having a powerful influence over young people's choices; for some, this has resulted in unsuccessful transitions.

The results raise a number of issues and key challenges for policymakers, managers, practitioners, and researchers. For policymakers, the key challenge is to ensure that the proposed reforms to schools, and 14–19 provision in particular, enable educational institutions and guidance providers to build on existing good practice in order to implement high-quality, appropriately tailored and fully integrated universal and targeted information, advice and guidance services for pupils. This will inevitably have resource implications but will be essential if the Government is to achieve its policy objectives linked to the skills agenda, and in particular to Public Service Agreement targets for the achievement of qualifications at Level 2 and above.

Although it is recognised that practitioners may not always have the autonomy to implement changes to their practice without reference to their managers, their position on the 'front line' means they are well placed to consider the implications of research findings and to seek to influence those responsible for planning and managing CEG processes. Of critical importance for managers within schools, and the youth support agencies such as Connexions that work with them, is the development of coherent strategies to support the implementation of the National Framework for CEG for pupils from Year 7 across all key stages. In order to deliver this strategy, managers should also be concerned with capacity. Managers could explore more flexible and creative approaches to delivery that ensure effective use of scarce resources. This could include the utilisation of information and communication technologies in order to address capacity issues, in addition to mechanisms to recruit and upskill new and existing staff.

With the support of their managers, practitioners need to continue to develop their practice through training and professional development in order to ensure that they are equipped with the skills to respond to the diverse range of pupil needs, and to combat the internal and external factors that can negatively influence the effectiveness of CEG and the transition process. Finally, the systematic review process has identified a number of gaps and shortcomings in the quality and quantity of existing research evidence. Although the extent to which researchers are able to address gaps in research is largely dependent on the availability of funding, once funding has been secured it is incumbent on them to ensure that the outputs are sufficiently robust and crucially reported in a clear and transparent way that is open to scrutiny.

6. Desforges, C. with Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review.* RR433. London: Department for Education and Skills. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR433.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

In this review the authors stress that most of the data sets are rather dated, having been collected at least a decade ago. Additionally, most of these studies are located in the American educational context. It should be emphasised however, that where similar large-scale UK studies have been conducted, they replicate American conclusions.

They also emphasise in their conclusions from this research review that it is necessary to distinguish between research on spontaneously occurring parental involvement in their children's education, and research on attempts to intervene to enhance such involvement. In contrast to research on spontaneous parental involvement, research on intervention programmes is technically much weaker. Samples are typically very small and research characteristically has taken the form of 'after the event', subjective evaluations without reference to comparison groups. On the other hand, many of the studies of intervention programmes are recent and it is possible to find a broad body of work in the English context.

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> *Parental involvement continues to have a significant effect throughout the age range although the impact for older children becomes more evident in staying-on rates and educational aspirations than as measured achievement.*

Key findings:

Research on spontaneous parental involvement has revealed a range of activities in which parents engage to promote their children's educational progress. These range from: at home, encouraging constructive social and educational aspirations and values relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship; to direct involvement in school-related activities and issues such as finding out about the school's rules and procedures, the curriculum, homework, assessment and the like, and visits to school to discuss issues and concerns as these arise.

Research also establishes that parental involvement has a significant effect on children's achievement and adjustment, even after all other factors (such as social class, maternal education and poverty) have been take out of the equation between children's aptitudes and their achievement. Differences in parental involvement have a much bigger impact on achievement than differences associated with the effects of school in the primary age range. Parental involvement continues to have a significant effect throughout the age range although the impact for older children becomes more evident in staying-on rates and educational aspirations than as measured achievement.

Of the many forms of parental involvement, it is the 'at-home' relationships and modelling of aspirations which play the major part in impact on school outcomes. Involvement works indirectly on school outcomes by helping the child build a pro-social, pro-learning self-concept and high educational aspirations. Research reveals large differences between parents in their levels of involvement which are associated with: social class or aspects of poverty or health; and the parents' values or feelings of self-confidence or effectiveness.

Research on attempts to intervene to enhance parental involvement reveals a number of approaches ranging from parent training programmes (to promote the psycho-social health necessary for good parenting), through to initiatives to enhance home-school links and programmes of family or community education aimed to increase levels of human and social capital.

Evaluation studies make clear that there is both a perceived increase in need for this provision and an evident increase in demand showing consistently high levels of commitment, enthusiasm and appreciation amongst providers and clients for the provision, and considerable appreciation for its effects. That being said, it is impossible from an objective research standpoint to describe the scale of the impacts on pupils' achievement and adjustment on the basis of the evidence available.

The research base referring to intervention studies is too weak to enable questions to be answered about the relative effectiveness of work in different key stages. From the subjective view of participants at all stages everything seems to work equally well. If this is the case, then from the point of view of individual pupils, every stage is a worthwhile target. From the point of view of return on investment, the earlier the intervention, the longer the run of return.

7. Foskett, N. (2004). *IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) and young people's participation decisions 14–19.* Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training Working Paper 25 (based on Discussion Paper given at Working Day VI, 26 Oct 2004. Oxford: Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training. Available from: **http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents136-1.pdf** [Accessed 13 November 2008]

This review is based upon a Discussion Paper given at Working Day VI of the Nuffield Review of Education and Training, 26 Oct 2004. Key sources quoted include: Foskett *et al.* (2004) and Morris, M. (2004) *The Case for Careers Education and Guidance for 14–19 year olds. Slough: NFER*.

Accepting the importance of providing appropriate information, advice and guidance (IAG), the review explores what we know about IAG and 'choosing' by reviewing the research evidence in relation to four key questions:

- Where do young people get their IAG from?

- When do young people need access to IAG?

- Is the IAG that is provided perceived to be of value by young people themselves?

- How objective is IAG?

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> *Connexions services are valued more highly than other in-school guidance, which is identified as being subject to 'spin' in line with a school's priority aims rather than the needs of the individual.*

Key findings:

The paper identifies that the importance of informal sources of IAG (parents, friends, the media) is greater than that of formal sources (careers teachers, Connexions services).

Connexions services are valued more highly than other in-school guidance, which is identified as being subject to 'spin' in line with a school's priority aims rather than the needs of the individual. Connexions, however, is constrained by a significant mismatch between the resources available to the service and the IAG needs of young people.

Existing IAG is seen as emphasising information and providing insufficient support in relation to key notions of 'lifestyle' and 'fashionability', which are important elements in young people's choices.

The need for earlier engagement of young people with the process of developing an understanding of both choice skills and the nature of the range of choices is identified as an important theme for future policy development.

Earlier IAG might properly focus on under-standing the nature of the world of work, education and training, and such an approach requires the integration of IAG into the curriculum in a way that means it will be class teachers in primary schools, and either class tutors or those teaching citizenship or PSHE in lower secondary schools, who will be charged with the task.

The paper concludes that IAG is challenged by the sheer complexity of choice beyond 16 and by the continuing tension between the need for young people to be informed and advised, and the needs of institutions to compete for young people's choices in the education and training market place.

8. Foskett, N., Dyke, M. and Maringe, F. (2004). *The Influence of the School in the Decision to Participate in Learning Post-16.* RR538. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR538.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

This research study was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to enhance understanding about the role of the school in shaping the perceptions and choices of post-16 pathways amongst young people in school. The primary aim of the study was to identify the nature and influence of school-based factors in the choices of young people about their post-16 education, training and career pathways. The research was based on a series of qualitative interviews in 24 schools across nine local authorities. Focus groups were undertaken with young people in Years 10, 11 and 12. Interviews were also conducted with headteachers, heads of year and heads of careers, as well as a postal survey of parents being undertaken.

Key findings:

- Choice was a dynamic process, in that the precise nature of the preferences expressed by young people changed over time as a range of factors influenced their ideas.

- The provision of a sixth form within the school was an important influence on the decision of young people to stay on and participate in post-16 education and training. Schools, particularly those with sixth forms, often actively promote post-16 academic routes, compared with other forms of post-16 participation which were much less clearly promoted.

- On a comparative basis, knowledge about post-16 provision in schools and colleges tended to be strongest amongst pupils in schools with sixth forms and weakest in schools with no sixth form. The opposite was true about knowledge of post-16 training and labour markets. However, awareness of work-based routes was low across all schools.

- The effectiveness of the school in providing advice and guidance often depended on the way the school was organised. This research identified six school-based factors which were particularly influential on young people's choices: school type; available careers programme; socio-economic status of the school catchment; school leadership, culture and ethos; teacher influence; and subject curriculum issues. Schools with a more pupil-centred ethos, rather than school-centred, often built a richer and broader understanding of post-16 routes.

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> *Pupils in schools with sixth forms tended to judge the advice and guidance functions of their schools as being less impartial than those in schools with no sixth form.*

- Careers advice in schools with sixth forms was qualitatively different from that in 11–16 schools, with pupils attending the latter more positively inclined towards the careers education they had received. Pupils in schools with sixth forms tended to judge the advice and guidance functions of their schools as being less impartial than those in schools with no sixth form. There was greater tendency in schools with a sixth form to provide post-16 advice and guidance which was more closely related to academic sixth-form provision than to that of the broader Further Education sector.

- Connexions was an important intervening agency for the majority of pupils, particularly in low socio-economic status schools without sixth forms, and those with stable or falling participation rates. Pupils expressed satisfaction with Connexions where it had a permanent residential status in the school.

- School was a less important source of advice than parents or home-related influences for pupils likely to pursue academic post-16 pathways. For pupils from low socio-economic background in schools without a sixth form, the school was a very important source of advice.

- Experience of a broad and balanced curriculum was acknowledged as an important facet of supporting choice post-16. Alongside a continuing preference for academic pathways there was a growing tendency amongst pupils to opt for subjects combining vocational and academic learning.

- Pupils wanted more direct experiential learning to inform post-16 choices, rather than information. Young people placed a great premium on visits to post-16 providers and on concrete experience gained from interacting with outside visitors. The prominence given to work experience highlighted the need for an experiential careers curriculum, rather than one based on text and the transmission of information.

- While final decisions were rarely made before Year 11, the majority of pupils wanted careers advice well before then. This research showed that Year 9 is the time when the majority of pupils start to think about post-16 options. Equally, many pupils did not consider the timing of school interventions as suited to their needs, and therefore it is likely that pupils needed careers advice and guidance earlier on to help them with their thinking.

9. Henderson, A. and Mapp, K. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement.* Texas: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available from: **www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf** [Accessed 11 June 2009]

This review from the National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), Austin, Texas, examines the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference to student success. An annotated bibliography of more than 200 research studies, conceptual or theoretical pieces, practice and policy-oriented works, and literature reviews is available as an online, searchable database titled *The Connection Collection* (2002) on the SEDL website at: **www.sedl.org/connections/resources/**

Key findings:

This review shows strong evidence that families can improve their children's academic performance in school. Families also have a major impact on other key outcomes, such as attendance and behaviour, that affect achievement. When families, whatever their backgrounds, are engaged in their children's learning, their children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and pursue higher education. Clearly, children at risk of failure can profit from the extra support that engaged families and communities provide.

All students, but especially those in middle and high school, would benefit if schools support parents in helping children at home and in guiding their educational career. Studies that look at high-achieving students of all backgrounds found that their parents encourage them, talk with them about school, help them plan for higher education, and keep them focused on learning and homework. The continuity that this constant support provides

> *The studies identified several ways that schools can assist families in developing their capacity to support their children's education…*

helps students through changes of school, programme, and grade level.

The ways in which parents are involved at school should be linked to improving learning, developing students' skills in specific subjects, and steering students towards more challenging classes. Parent involvement programmes should also be designed to develop close working relationships between families and teachers.

The studies identified several ways that schools can assist families in developing their capacity to support their children's education:

- Engage them at school, so they understand what their children are learning.

- Give them a voice in what happens to their children.

- Provide information about how to help their children at home, what their children need to learn, and how to plan for college, post-secondary education, and a career.

- Foster social connections among families and with teachers.

- Build their understanding of the education system and how to guide their children through it successfully.

- Offer access to social services and community agencies.

- Identify and build on strengths in the community and among families.

10. Howieson, C. and Semple, S. (2001). *The Effectiveness of Careers Services*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department. Available from: **http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/ PDF%20Files/Careers_Report.pdf** [Accessed 14 November 2008]

The research was commissioned by the Scottish Office in 1997 to map Careers Service (CS) provision across Scotland and consider its effectiveness after a period of major change to its organisation and management. In addition to a range of interviews with the five Careers Service Companies, school staff, and a variety of stakeholder representatives, a number of surveys were carried out with school pupils. Pupils in S4, S5 and S6 in ten schools were surveyed about their opinion and experience of the Careers Service, and contacted again a year later.

Key findings:

The results show the possible reasons why some pupils have a one-to-one guidance interview and others do not. Around three-fifths of S4 and S5 pupils had an interview with the Careers Adviser (CA). The likelihood of having an interview differed across Careers Service Companies, and this was not explained by differences in Careers Service Companies' stated interview policies. For S4 pupils, higher attainment, individual discussion with non-guidance teachers, and plans to leave school soon, each increased the likelihood that they would have an interview. Serious truancy and having no career ideas each decreased their chances. For S5 pupils, having a positive attitude to school, an individual discussion with a guidance teacher, an individual discussion with non-guidance teachers, and the intention to apply to FE each increased the likelihood of having an interview. A considerable proportion of pupils who did not have an interview had not wanted one (S4: 43% and S5: 58%). Those pupils who had not wanted an interview were more likely not to have any ideas about their post-school plans.

Most pupils thought their careers interview had been useful. Among S4 pupils, there was a slight variation in opinion across Careers Service Companies. A number of factors each increased the likelihood that pupils would find their careers interview useful. The most critical factor for both S4 and S5 pupils was whether their careers interview had been at the right time. This underlines the importance of Careers Service Companies doing as much as possible to ensure that pupils get an interview at the time that they see as appropriate to them.

In addition to the timing of their interview, other factors each had a positive effect on S4 pupils' opinions:

- being higher attainers;

- having a positive opinion of their careers education;

- having higher levels of discussion of career plans with parents; and

- planning to apply to FE.

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> *The research was divided as to the extent of parental influence over Year 9 options, though parents were often identified as an important source of information for Year 9 pupils.*

For S5 pupils, the significant factors in addition to the timing of their interview were:

- having a positive attitude to school;

- having individual discussions with a guidance teacher;

- having individual discussions with non-guidance teachers;

- greater frequency of careers education;

- having a positive opinion of careers education; and

- intention to apply to FE.

11. McCrone, T., Morris, M. and Walker, M. (2005). *Pupil choices at Key Stage 3 – Literature review*. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW68.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

Much of the research to date on decision making of young people has concentrated on Key Stage 4 (for example Foskett *et al.*, 2004; and Payne, 2002). The purpose of this study was to investigate and report on literature which had bearing on the processes by which decisions are made during and at the end of Key Stage 3 (including on what subjects to study at Key Stage 4).

Key findings:

- There is evidence that most Year 9 pupils chose their options because they 'enjoyed' a subject or had an inherent liking or interest in it. The research is less clear on what influences this enjoyment, and the extent to which various factors, for example teaching methodology, sway young people to like a subject.

- Year 9 pupils also appeared to consider the apparent usefulness of a subject as regards future careers, jobs or training. The extent to which this perceived usefulness is attributed to school factors, to local employment and training aspects, or to parents, is not clear from the research.

- Young people in Year 9 were also influenced in their decision making by their self-perceptions of their ability at a subject, which was often linked to subject enjoyment.

- When delivered effectively and timed appropriately, careers education and guidance appeared to offer scope for equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills required to allow them to make informed subject choices.

- The research was divided as to the extent of parental influence over Year 9 options, though parents were often identified as an important source of information for Year 9 pupils.

- Teachers were identified as an influence on young people, but it was not entirely clear as to which aspects of teacher input (personality or quality of teaching, for example) most influenced young people's decision making.

Even though it is known that important factors in decision making at 14 include subject enjoyment, extrinsic worth and young people's self-perception of their ability at a subject, further research is recommended in these areas in order to enhance pupils' motivation and engagement in the learning process, and to increase their self-awareness of how to tackle decision making. Further research is also recommended on: the extent to which CEG influences young people and the impact of delivery in different types of schools; the extent to which parents are influential over and above other influences; and the ways in which teachers, including their teaching methodology and personality, influence young people's choices.

12. Moon S., Lilley R., Morgan S., Gray S., and Krechowiecka, I. (2004). *A systematic review of recent research into the impact of careers education and guidance on transitions from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 (1988–2003)*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Available from: **http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=EcL1IOSJodQ%3d&tabid=343&mid=1272&language=en-US** [Accessed 15 November 2008]

This review followed the five-stage systematic literature review process developed by the EPPI-Centre involving: searching; screening; keywording; data extraction; and synthesis. At

> *The review points to a lack of robust studies which are able to demonstrate the impact of CEG at KS3 and KS4.*

the data extraction stage, additional guidelines are used to assess the 'weight of evidence' provided by a study in terms of its internal methodological coherence and its relevance to the review question and study topic. The initial search yielded 6,766 studies but this was eventually reduced to ten which met all of the criteria. Of the ten documents to be included at the latter stage in-depth review, only two were deemed to provide a high weight of evidence.

Key findings:

The findings cover not only the impact of CEG but also the effects of other external factors such as parents, young people's motivations and family relationships. They suggest that to have the greatest impact, careers education and guidance, wherever possible, should work with these additional factors.

The review points to a lack of robust studies which are able to demonstrate the impact of CEG at KS3 and KS4, with only two out of the ten studies examined providing a high weight of impact. The results raise concerns for policymakers, practitioners, researchers and other end-users, about the quantity and quality of published research that considers the impact of CEG delivered at this crucial stage for young people.

The review also points to the confusing use of terminology by some authors. For example, the unqualified use of the term 'significant' implies statistical significance. Therefore, caution is needed when interpreting the results of studies where authors are not explicit about the analysis of data. A further example is the use of the terms 'knowledge and skills'. In some cases, authors use these terms to describe particular pre-defined knowledge and skills that are subject to measurement in the studies. However, there are also cases where these terms are used generally and without qualification. Such instances lead to vague conclusions which can mislead the reader.

Specific findings include:

- Three out of the ten final documents suggested that young people's participation in specific CEG programmes or interventions can have a positive impact on their transitions between KS3 and KS4.

- CEG is one of many factors that influence young people in transitions at KS3 and KS4; these include parents, socio-economic background and gender.

- Overall evidence suggests that provision of CEG varies from school to school.

- There is some evidence to suggest that 'guidance' may be negatively perceived by some young people as a resource which is dedicated to those who are disadvantaged or less able.

- It is important that CEG is received in a timely enough manner to optimise impact on young people.

- There is a lack of quality published research into the impact of CEG delivered at KS3 and KS4.

13. Morgan, S., Hutchinson, J. and Crompton, N. (2007). *Effective Transitions for Year 8 Students*, CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Available from: **http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_ effective_transitions_for_year8_2007.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

This report aims to establish the extent to which current careers education and guidance (CEG) provision in Years 7 and 8 is effectively equipping students with the key skills they need to make realistic choices and successful transitions in Year 9. The study involved focus groups with practitioners and managers, and with Year 8 and Year 9 pupils in 12 educational institutions in Lancashire; 190 questionnaires were returned providing the views of parents/ carers of Year 8 pupils.

Key findings:

While schools are building some careers education and transition support into the curriculum for Year 8 students, there remain gaps in provision for this group. The majority of schools are not yet operating to the standards set out in *Careers Education and Guidance in England: A National Framework 11–19* (DfES, 2003) for delivery to Years 7 and 8, with nine out of the twelve participating schools commencing substantive careers education in Year 9. This has implications in light of the 14–19 agenda which will see young

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> *The majority of young people at Years 8 or 9 had not heard of Connexions; where they had, they were not aware of what the Connexions service is or what it does.*

people making decisions about specialisms that could have consequences for their future career choices.

There was some difference of opinion among young people regarding the value of having more CEG in Years 7 and 8 and some evidence that students at Year 8 have not made the link between CEG and option choices. Consequently, the demand for quality CEG from young people might be expected to rise if that link were made more explicit.

There is a range of issues associated with the organisation of an individual school and its delivery of the PSHE curriculum that compromise the delivery of CEG and effective decision making by young people. These include timetabling pressures; the importance of CEG relative to other subjects, such as drugs and health, sex education, and citizenship, which all require space in the PSHE curriculum; the influence of peers and parents/carers; the local environment and local work opportunities; and the level of home support.

This research highlights the urgent need to improve the delivery of CEG to Year 7, 8 and 9 students, as evidenced by the finding that young people attending schools with a dedicated careers module in Years 7 and 8, with a clear understanding about the purpose and learning outcomes of each activity, are more likely to have a better awareness of careers and an understanding of the world outside school. In order to prepare young people for an effective transition, CEG in the future must: increase the decision-making readiness of students; emphasise the personal development of students; raise the self-awareness of students to enable them to make informed choices; raise aspirations and motivation; and challenge gender and race stereotyping in relation to option and career choices.

Whilst school staff support the work of Connexions and would value further input in Years 7 and 8, they are keen to ensure it does not detract from their input at Years 10 and 11. The majority of young people at Years 8 or 9 had not heard of Connexions; where they had, they were not aware of what the Connexions service is or what it does.

There was evidence of the impact of unmediated information on young people's decision making. Students relied heavily on information supplied by their family, which has implications as the majority of parents/carers are receiving their knowledge primarily from other family members and friends as opposed to their child's school or careers/Connexions service. This indicates that they may be reliant on information which may be out of date, incorrect or based on hearsay. The introduction of new routes and pathways leaves parents/carers at a disadvantage as they have no previous experience to rely upon. For parents/carers to become more involved in their child's decision-making, it is important that more support be offered in Years 8 and 9 to enable parents/carers to develop their understanding of the choices available.

14. Smith, D., Lilley, R., Marris, L., Krechowiecka, I. (2005). *A systematic literature review of research (1988–2004) into the impact of career education and guidance during Key Stage 4 on young people's transitions into post-16 opportunities*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. Available from: **http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=346** [Accessed 15 November 2008]

This review at Key Stage 4 builds upon the earlier EPPI review (Moon *et al.* 2004) focused on transitions from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. It followed the five-stage systematic literature review process developed by the EPPI-Centre involving: searching; screening; keywording; data extraction; and synthesis. At the data extraction stage, additional guidelines are used to assess the 'weight of evidence' provided by a study in terms of its internal methodological coherence and its relevance to the review question and study topic. The initial search yielded 8,692 reports which were reduced to a total of ten studies being included in the in-depth review. None of these studies was judged to provide a high weight of evidence; only two were judged as providing a medium/high weight of evidence with the majority providing a medium weight of evidence.

In its analysis of the research reviewed, the report indicates that the most common outcomes measured included: progression to

…there is evidence that it would have been more useful to have received careers guidance at an earlier stage.

employment, education or training; personal characteristics such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and team working and problem solving skills; attitudes towards school and progression; and knowledge of career routes and post-16 options.

Key findings:

The level of young people's career-related skills seems to be an important factor in their transition at 16, with those with a high level of skills being less likely to modify choices or switch courses; CEG provision appears to have a positive impact on the development of pupils' career-related skills.

There appear to be inconsistencies in the quality of CEG provision and providers, and the integration of careers education programmes with guidance provision and with the wider curriculum may be a key factor in determining the effectiveness and impact of CEG on young people's skill development and transitions.

CEG interventions, timetables and tools appear to be more effective if they are flexibly designed to meet the needs of individual young people, or specific groups of young people, rather than the needs of the organisation and its (and others') systems.

Young people's perceptions of how good careers guidance is may be contingent upon whether they made substantive progress towards reaching a conclusion, or resolving a dilemma, during their careers interview.

Young people identify gaps in the information they receive and would like to receive more information about courses, jobs and careers, especially through the workplace and contacts with working people; and LMI might be more effective if it were presented in a range of formats and used in a variety of ways and by a variety of deliverers, including within the curriculum.

Young people would like more help with their decision making at times that best suit their needs, and there is evidence that it would have been more useful to have received careers guidance at an earlier stage.

Many studies found evidence that the impact of general CEG provision is different for different groups of young people: for example, underachieving young men; those with higher or lower expected or actual attainment; those likely to leave or stay in education; and those in schools with different characteristics. CEG provision appears to have the greatest impact on pupils of moderate/higher ability in schools with lower/average achievement, typically without sixth forms.

Additional CEG provision, tailored to meet the needs of young people identified as being 'at risk', and delivered by those with appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes, can have a significant impact on young people's learning outcomes and can help them to prepare for post-16 transitions.

Young people appear to value the involvement of people in the provision of careers information, seeing them as more important and/or more helpful than written sources of information. There is some evidence that individual subject teachers and other teachers have an influence upon the choices made by young people, both outside and within CEG provision. Parents are seen as a key source of information and influence upon a young person's career choices. Evidence suggests that both careers education and the support of parents are important in helping young people through the transition process.

There is evidence to suggest that careers advisers need access to systematic training designed to ensure that their occupational knowledge and awareness of LMI is kept up to date. Practitioners need to explore approaches that will help young people to widen their views of the options open to them and provide them with strategies to counter the socio-economic factors and the social and cultural constraints that impact upon them, and increase their self-confidence and self-esteem.

15. Wright, S. (2005). *Young people's decision making in 14–19 education and training: a review of the literature*. Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training Briefing Paper 4. Oxford: Nuffield Review of Education. Available from: **http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents91-1.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

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> *A number of studies reveal that academic attainment is an important influence on decision making and that destinations at 16 are significantly influenced by academic attainment.*

This paper reviews research on an important aspect of 14–19 transitions: the decisions individuals make, the process of decision making, and the outcomes of these decisions. Although the focus is on decisions related to education and training, these decisions are not taken in isolation from other areas of young people's lives. The review emphasises that the factors involved in decision making are only separated for discussion purposes, whereas in reality they are intertwined, making it very difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a generalised theory of associations between different factors or of causal priority.

Social class: A number of studies reveal that social class is linked to the decision to opt for a vocational or academic 'pathway', with students from primarily middle-class family backgrounds being more likely to opt for academic pathways.

Family and friends: Most research reviewed has found that the families (and particularly parents) influence the decision making of 14–19 year olds. Studies suggest that few young people choose a particular post-16 route merely because their friends have chosen it. Nevertheless, peer group appears to influence decision making in a number of ways. One study found that 16-year-olds whose friends were staying on in college post-16 were more likely to go to college themselves.

Gender: By 1970 the huge gap between the sexes in the numbers who stayed on at school at 16 (with males in the majority) had almost closed, and more recent studies indicate that females are slightly more likely than males to either intend to or to actually stay on in full-time education at age 16 (though far fewer females than males opt for work-based learning). Some recent studies suggest that gender divisions in subject preferences – particularly a clear delineation between sciences and arts – may have decreased over time (or at least been concealed by changing subject boundaries under the National Curriculum).

Ethnicity: Evidence about the influence of ethnicity on decision making is fairly weak. Ethnic minorities are under-represented in the samples of most of the large longitudinal surveys, so it is difficult to explore large-scale patterns and associations effectively. However, national administrative data and more localised surveys indicate that white young people (especially males) are marginally less likely to stay on in full-time education and training than ethnic minorities.

Academic attainment: A number of studies reveal that academic attainment is an important influence on decision making and that destinations at 16 are significantly influenced by academic attainment. Those with the highest levels of educational attainment were most likely to remain in full-time education after 16. One study suggests that once other factors are controlled for, academic attainment is the most significant factor affecting decisions to stay on or leave at age 16.

Information, advice and guidance: There is strong evidence that many schools provide slanted and partial evidence on post-16 options; for example, many teachers were well informed about academic routes, but far fewer knew about vocational routes and work-based training. Also, there is some evidence that teachers rarely offered direct advice and guidance on what to do at the end of compulsory schooling, except advising some of the more academically able to stay on.

Researchers suggest that effective and impartial careers education and guidance appears to be particularly important for students from working-class backgrounds. Students from middle-class, professional backgrounds can rely on family resources (information, contacts, support, money) when making decisions about what to do at the end of compulsory schooling.

Students appear to value some forms of careers education or advice and guidance more than others. Many students placed a greater premium on 'experiential information' (visits to institutions, work experience, face-to-face contact with outside visitors) than paper-based forms of information. One study found that 'external' advice, i.e. from professional careers advisers, was valued as the most useful source of careers advice and guidance (partly because they were not based in the school and were seen as more 'independent' than school-based careers or subject teachers).

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> *There is a growing body of evidence that occupational preferences start to develop during the early secondary school years or even at primary school.*

Timing and career preferences: There is a growing body of evidence that occupational preferences start to develop during the early secondary school years or even at primary school. Many pupils begin the process of decision making (as distinct from making actual decisions) long before most post-16 institutions produce their marketing material, before many pupils are exposed to any formal careers education and guidance, and before information is available about work-based programmes and financial support arrangements.

On the basis of this review of research, Wright concludes that there are a number of gaps in the evidence as it relates to the decision-making process of young people. These gaps include:

- There is a shortage of longitudinal studies (both qualitative and quantitative) which enable us to evaluate large-scale patterns, and the process of decision making, over time; and few longitudinal studies link the decision making of 14–19 year olds with decisions related to education and training after age 19.

- Few studies attempt to link qualitative and quantitative data, or attempt to link processes of decision making with patterns or outcomes.

- Few studies look at decisions at 14 and many studies focus on the end of compulsory schooling i.e. decisions made about what to do age 16.

- There are significant gaps in the research on choice of 'subject'.

- There is little research on *exactly how* educational institutions influence decision making, i.e. which aspects of the school or schooling are important, and through what processes this influence is exerted.

Studies of information, advice and guidance services delivered remotely via the worldwide web and/or telephone helpline services

16. Hall, L., Wreford, S. and Huckle, C. (2008). *Connexions Direct: User Satisfaction Survey 2008*. RW042. London: DCSF. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW042.pdf** [Accessed 13 November 2008]

Connexions Direct (CXD) provides impartial information, advice and support to young people aged 13–19 via telephone, text message, adviser online (webchat) and email, from a centralised contact centre. In this study a total of 986 CXD users completed a website interview or telephone survey, depending on which communication method they had used to contact the helpline. In addition 529 teenagers were surveyed via omnibus questionnaire, and four focus groups were conducted.

Key findings:

Results indicate that females are three times more likely than males to use the service. In terms of age, the majority of users are fairly evenly split between those 13–15 years old and those 16–19 years old. Overall, a minority of users are 20+ though 44% of telephone users are adult; the majority of adult users were using the service for their own benefit.

Career and educational queries were stated by over two thirds of respondents as reasons behind their contact with Connexions Direct, though contact for personal issues was more commonly dealt with through email and web services. Significantly more of the younger age band of 13–15 year olds' queries were concerning topics such as education, personal or family relationships, and bullying, whilst those who were 16–19 years old were significantly more likely to have enquired about careers, apprenticeships and money.

Rating of overall satisfaction with Connexions Direct was extremely positive; 92% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the service, which is consistent with the 2005 and 2006 results. Generally, satisfaction levels rise with the age of the user; older respondents were more likely to be calling about more practical issues such as careers and money, and so could receive clear-cut advice or answers to questions that suitably addressed their needs and thus feel more satisfied.

Overall, 90% or more of respondents were either very or quite likely to use Connexions Direct again. Of the total respondents only 8% felt that they were unlikely to use Connexions Direct again; of the three user groups, email respondents were the least unlikely to use the

"In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone of voice/writing kept them at ease throughout the entire interaction…"

service again (5%). Over a third of respondents said that they had no improvements to the service to suggest. As in the 2006 survey, the most frequently mentioned improvement was to improve the adviser service, (13% in 2006, 14% in 2008), this included suggestions, among others, that advisers should be more helpful and supportive, and offer better advice; and more advisers should be available to take calls.

17. Lambley, C. (2007). *Connexions Direct Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7.* RW021. London: DCSF. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/ uploadfiles/DCSF-RW021.pdf** [Accessed 21 November 2008]

Connexions Direct (CXD) provides impartial information, advice and support to young people aged 13–19 via telephone, text message, adviser online (webchat) and email, from a centralised contact centre. In this survey 1459 mystery shops were conducted, covering all of the Connexions Direct channels of enquiry and the following scenario topics: Enquiries about local Connexions Services; Careers, Learning and Jobs; General, Sexual and Mental Health Issues; Family and Personal Relationships; Money; Housing; Bullying; and Legal Issues/Rights. Mystery shop evaluations were validated further after each phase of fieldwork, through a series of focus group sessions with young people and Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs).

Key findings:

When asked to reflect upon, and give a score out of 10 for the service as a whole, the average score given was 7.7: webchats – 7.5; telephone interactions – 7.9; email responses – 8.3; and SMS text messages – 6.8.

In a third (32.9%) of cases, mystery shoppers reported that the adviser had directly provided them with relevant information. In a similar proportion (32.3%) of cases it was reported that advisers had recommended websites which would provide useful or relevant information; 21.4% resulted in a recommendation to look at the CXD website; and 6.2% in a recommendation to visit a local Connexions Partnership website. Three in ten mystery shops (29.2%) resulted in a recommendation to contact the local Connexions centre or a PA in school.

In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone of voice or writing kept them at ease throughout the entire interaction: 97.7% by email, 96.8% by telephone and 90.3% by webchat. Again, in most cases (97.4%), advisers were assessed to have remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction. In a minority of cases (2.4%) the adviser was felt to have used language that was unclear or inappropriate to young people.

Three quarters (74.5%) of interactions were felt to have been at the right sort of pace; very few were felt to have been too fast, but around one in six (17.9%) were felt to be slightly too slow. Similarly, most interactions were felt to have provided about the right amount of information; very few felt that they had been given too much information, but three in ten (29.9%) felt that they would have liked more information.

Although assessments of greetings, listening and probing, and closure of interactions varied very little according to the detail of the scenario, the type of information and/or advice did vary according to the scenario used for the mystery shop. Overall quality of service ratings out of 10 ranged from 7.3 (for mystery shops related to housing problems) to 8.1 (graduate career options). Satisfaction scores for information and advice given by advisers ranged from 7.6 (for mystery shops seeking contact details for the nearest Connexions centre) up to 8.3 out of 10 (sexual health issues).

It is important to young people that they receive reassurance from advisers that the service is confidential and anonymous. Young people prefer individually tailored advice, rather than standard or pre-prepared answers. Advisers must be able to put themselves in the position of the young person seeking their assistance. Many CXD users are using the service for the first time, and they may be nervous and possibly embarrassed. Periods of silence on telephone calls or lack of outwards text in webchats (however brief) can feel longer, and cause concern, to the young person.

Satisfaction is lower than average where advisers have not addressed all questions or areas of concern revealed (or hinted at) by young people. The more interactive communication channels (telephone and

> *Many online respondents indicated that they had more than one reason for visiting the CXD website on the day they completed the survey.*

webchat) were sometimes felt to last longer than necessary, as advisers sometimes seemed to find it difficult to close the session clearly and positively.

18. Lambley, C., Smith, A. and Fairbrother, L. (2007). *Connexions Direct Website Evaluation 2007.* RW025. London: DCSF. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/ uploadfiles/DCSF-RW025.pdf** [Accessed 19 November 2008]

Connexions Direct (CXD) provides impartial information to young people aged 13–19 through a website, as well as one-to-one provision of information, advice and support via telephone (or mini-com), text message, adviser online and email. Using a quantitative online survey, open to all website users, and a series of ten interactive focus group sessions with young people, parents and professionals, this study aimed to provide an independent evaluation of the CXD website from the perspective of current users and from groups of young people who are under-represented as users of the service.

Key findings:

Four fifths (79%) of respondents to the online survey were female; 82% of respondents were of white ethnic origin; two fifths (41%) were under 16; 46% were aged 16 or 17; and 10% were aged 18 or 19, with just 2% of respondents aged over 19. For a fifth (22%) of respondents, this was their first visit to the CXD website. Almost another fifth (18%) had visited more than ten times in the last year.

Many online respondents indicated that they had more than one reason for visiting the CXD website on the day they completed the survey. Seeking information about careers, training, job choices or advice about employment was the most common reason for visiting the website, with learning being the next most common reason. The Careers area was visited most often, followed by Work, then the Learning, Money, Health and Relationships sections.

Almost 19% of online respondents found the information they wanted, and a further 16% said that they found everything they were looking for and more. Two out of five (41%) found some information that they were looking

for and 18% said that they did not find any of the information they were looking for.

Views of the website were very positive: 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the website provides useful information; 81% either strongly agreed or agreed that the content covers real issues of concern; 87% agreed that it is targeted at 'people like me'; and 81% agreed that information is easy to find and understand. Almost all (94%) said they would be likely or very likely to visit the website again, and three quarters (76%) would be likely or very likely to recommend it to a friend.

All focus group participants (young people, parents and professionals) had heard of the Connexions service; many were aware that their local Connexions Partnership had a website; but relatively few were aware of Connexions Direct, and fewer still had previously seen the CXD website. This apparent lack of awareness of the CXD website was expected, as the focus groups were targeted at groups of young people who are under-represented among CXD users.

The words most frequently used to describe the CXD homepage were: 'colourful'; 'busy'; 'lively'; 'eye-catching'. Most young people said they found navigating the CXD website relatively easy and instinctive. However, some difficulties were encountered when trying to find specific content, often because young people were not sure in which section to look for content. Particular confusion seemed to exist between Careers, Work and Learning and between Health and Relationships. While many thought that the design of the home page was a bit too 'busy', index pages were thought to be clearer. However, most young people were critical of the pages with detailed content, which are largely text based, with a plain background and little colour or illustration. The text size was felt to be a bit too small to encourage young people to read it: after exploring the 'make text size bigger' option, many were happier.

When comparing the CXD website to other websites aimed at providing information and advice to this age group, CXD was generally thought to be 'average' in design. 'Better' and 'worse' examples were viewed and discussed. Many participants (young people, parents

learndirect has pushed the boundaries of learning methods by making innovative use of technology to help make learning much more flexible.

and professionals) expressed surprise at the range of topics and at the depth of information available on the CXD website. It was common for the Connexions brand to be associated with careers and learning information and advice, and for there to be a lack of awareness of the wider remit to provide information and advice on all issues affecting the lives of 13–19 year olds.

Recommendations included: raising CXD's profile with Connexions Personal Advisers, teachers, and other professionals and volunteers working with young people; and reviewing website content and images to ensure that all echelons of society are reflected, including the presentation of positive images of young people in alternative lifestyles and challenging situations.

19. National Audit Office (2005). *Extending access to learning through technology: Ufi and the learndirect service.* Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 460 Session 2005–2006, 4 November 2005. London: National Audit Office. Available from: **http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_ reports/05-06/0506460.pdf** [Accessed 25 November 2008]

This examination of the success and cost effectiveness of the learndirect service in England drew upon a range of methodologies, including consultation with stakeholders and interest groups, a survey of learndirect centres, and focus groups with learners and small and medium-sized companies.

Key findings:

The report highlights the achievements of learndirect to date and points to some areas where improvements can be made. It emphasises that learndirect is unique: it is one of the largest e-learning networks in the world (it has the largest number of students of any educational organisation outside China) and there are no similar organisations (most other e-learning networks in the UK and elsewhere are associated with university education). It is a well known and visible brand; for example, in summer 2005, awareness of learndirect stood at 74% of the adult population.

learndirect has pushed the boundaries of learning methods by making innovative use

of technology to help make learning much more flexible. It provided around 6 million advice sessions in 2004-05, 1 million by phone and 5 million via the website. It has attracted learners who might otherwise not have taken up learning; just under half of all callers to the National Advice Line Service, and a third of website visitors, had not undertaken any learning in the previous three years. Over half of callers to the National Advice Line Service went on to undertake training or learning.

The report noted that the overhead costs of learndirect were very high and, although these were reducing, areas of further cost reductions were identified, including reducing the high costs of marketing now that the brand has been established, and the rationalising of its supply chain arrangements.

Also, in terms of further progress, learndirect could do more to exploit its products and brand, for example by marketing materials more widely to employers for workforce development, or to schools. The work that learndirect does with employers is successful, but could be increased substantially from the current level of 4.1% of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The proportion of people using learndirect and UK online who progress on to other learning could be higher. Ufi captures data on progression to other learning and progression rates through surveys. A recent survey that tracked people for up to two years after their initial contact with learndirect indicated that 9% of learndirect learners below Level 2 gained a full Level 2 qualification over the two years.

20. Page, R., Newton, B., Hawthorn, R., Hunt, W. and Hillage, J. (2007). *An Evaluation of the Ufi/learndirect Telephone Guidance Trial.* DfES Research Report RR833. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/rr833.pdf** [Accessed 25 November 2008]

This evaluation of the learndirect telephone guidance trial assessed how successful it had been in generating and meeting demand for telephone guidance, the extent to which short-term positive outcomes of guidance had been achieved, and the cost-effectiveness

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> *There are some groups of callers for whom learndirect appears to be less helpful, such as callers who lack access to a computer and the skills to use it effectively, and callers with English as a second language.*

of telephone guidance compared to face-to-face services. The evaluation draws on the findings from a number of research strands, including a scored quality analysis of 100 calls to the service, a survey of 1,000 service users, interviews with learndirect advisers, and an analysis of management and financial information.

Key findings:

The trial is generating and meeting demand from its target groups of women returners and those wishing to qualify to Level 3; this demand is likely to continue as learndirect has only worked with a small proportion of the overall population in the target groups.

learndirect has reached clients new to guidance (75% of users had not used careers guidance since leaving school), and is servicing a different client group to nextstep. Telephone is the preferred medium via which to receive guidance for 42% of users.

A three-stage model of help underpinned the trial, with the first call focusing on scoping and action-planning, the second on a review of progress, and the third on motivational support and 'exit'. The three-stage call-back model has not been used by the majority of callers, although individuals who report a greater number of calls to the service and recognise that they have developed an action plan are more likely to report outcomes. This suggests an association between the intensity of the intervention and likelihood of outcomes.

learndirect has capacity to deliver guidance, and the number of Lifelong Learning Advisers (LLAs) has been expanded throughout the lifetime of the trial. Although demand for the service has increased slightly, the number of advisers has increased slightly faster.

The majority of users are satisfied with all key aspects of the service, with 'helpfulness of the adviser' and the 'adviser's knowledge' being the most highly rated.

Callers reported both hard outcomes (such as participation in learning and/or work) and soft outcomes (such as increased motivation, self-awareness and confidence, and a greater awareness of opportunities) after receiving guidance from learndirect. Overall, callers were more likely to attribute soft outcomes to learndirect than they were the hard outcomes.

There are some groups of callers for whom learndirect appears to be less helpful, such as callers who lack access to a computer and the skills to use it effectively, and callers with English as a second language.

The cost-effectiveness of learndirect compared to nextstep depends on the costs that are included in the calculation. On the basis of the available data, nextstep advice and learndirect guidance are broadly similar in terms of cost per 'guidance' session.

An assessment of a sample of calls suggests that learndirect at its best is as good as the best face-to-face practice. Fifty-two per cent of a sample of calls were graded 'good' or 'excellent' and only 9% scored as flawed or poor. However, there are some areas where the service could be strengthened. The quality of calls could be improved with, for example, slight changes to the Information Adviser (IA) and LLA handover, and with staff development. Data should be collected on whether or not a client is eligible for an action plan, and on whether call-backs are completed.

Although many callers say that their participation in learning and employment would not have happened without learndirect, caution needs to be exercised in attributing causality. As the authors themselves note: 'Shifts in employment status have to be treated with some caution, since the extent to which this can be attributed to guidance alone is debatable' (p.72).

21. Starling, E. (2005). *Connexions Direct: Mystery Shopping Evaluation Study.* RR693. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR693.pdf** [Accessed 13 November 2008)

Drawing on recommendations from an earlier TNS evaluation (RR509), this project trialled a mystery shopping approach designed to support future performance monitoring and quality assurance. Although the purpose of

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> *Feedback from advisers suggested that the inconsistency in the service had resulted from different training being given over the last year.*

the pilot was largely to develop and test an effective programme of mystery shopping, the results attained provide a valuable insight into user perceptions of e-guidance. The sample was constructed to replicate the contacts which the service receives in terms of day, time and contact method, with contacts being made by: telephone; webchat; email; and SMS text. To structure their enquiries, mystery shoppers were given realistic scenarios which had been agreed following consultation with Personal Advisers from Connexions Partnerships and young people.

Key findings:

- Email contacts were given the highest mark out of 10, scoring 8.1; telephone contact scored 7.7; webchat scored 7.3; SMS text scored 6.7.

- Mystery shoppers were given a 'definitive answer to their question' (as opposed to being 'signposted' or referred to another agency) in 26% of contacts. This was most common in response to one scenario where a definitive answer was given in 69% of cases.

- 12% of mystery shops were abandoned due to there being no response to emails or texts, being left on hold, receiving a garbled text message response or, in the case of webchat, losing the link.

- Webchat and text had a high rate of abandonment; this did not happen at all with email or telephone.

- 26% of webchats were abandoned because contact was repeatedly lost or because there was no initial response.

- Mystery shoppers felt that the Adviser's tone 'put them at ease' most often in email (97%), telephone (93%) and webchats (87%) and significantly less so via text (71%).

- Mystery shoppers felt that a satisfactory response was given to their question in 97% of email contacts, 86% of telephone calls, 83% of webchats and 80% of texts.

- The information was most likely to be perceived as 'clear and relevant' via email (100%). In webchats this fell to 97%, for telephone contacts it was 92% and for text 86%.

- In a minority of contacts, mystery shoppers felt that they were given too much information; one mystery shopper commented, 'the call was long and I was bombarded with information which was a little overwhelming'.

The report concludes that the pilot mystery shopping programme worked well and provides a good basis for future work. There are a number of suggestions for adjustments to the approach, including a recommendation that mystery shopping should be combined with other methods to make an overall assessment of service quality. Feedback from advisers suggested that the inconsistency in the service had resulted from different training being given over the last year. It is clear that some 'quick wins' can be achieved by ensuring that all advisers are given the same advice and training. The Service needs to guide and train advisers to give the most effective advice, whilst at the same time managing the high volume of enquiries received. Advisers should know where they can find the advice and further information needed by young people, rather than simply acting as a referral mechanism.

22. Tyers, C. and Sinclair, A. (2004). *Tracking Learning Outcomes: Evaluation of the Impact of Ufi*. RR569. London: Department for Education and Skills.

This study consists of two surveys of learndirect users conducted during winter 2003. In total, the surveys involved 1,567 individuals. Of these, 787 were referred into the study because they had been taking learndirect courses in November and December 2001, and 780 had used the learndirect helpline in February and March 2002. The comments contained in this summary relate to the survey of learndirect helpline users only.

Key findings:

The findings suggest that the learndirect helpline has had an impact in increasing participation in learning. Helpline users are less likely to have had a recent learning experience than people in general, *but* participation in learning 18 months after their initial call to the learndirect helpline was much higher than average. These comparisons suggest that the helpline has had an impact in increasing

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participation in learning, though it is not clear what other factors may have motivated them to contact learndirect in the first place and which, even without the support of the helpline, may have been sufficient to lead them into learning.

Helpline users are very positive about the use of IAG sources, particularly those who were repeat users of learndirect services (i.e. helpline and website). Participation in learning 18 months after their initial call to the learndirect helpline was, again, much higher than average. Participation rates at the time of the second survey were higher for helpline users (32%), than for the general population (around half of this).

Other outcomes include:

- 9% of learndirect helpline users gained a qualification, but 16% of those with a baseline qualification at Level 1 did so.

- 27% had received a performance-related pay rise over the 18 months.

- Almost all helpline users reported having gained something from learning where they had taken part; most commonly they had gained self-confidence, but also the opportunities to progress to further qualifications.

- Around one third had changed jobs over the tracking period.

- Those with the most positive outcomes were most positive about the role of learndirect in these changes.

- Also, there is some evidence of the role of IAG in helping to facilitate changes to attitudes towards learning and learning behaviour.

23. Watts, A.G. and Dent, G. (2008). The Evolution of a National Distance Guidance Service: Trends and Challenges. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **36** (4), pp.455–465.

This article identifies three trends in the evolution of the UK learndirect advice service, and each is discussed in terms of the extent to which it is linked to changing patterns of customer needs and behaviours, or the effects of policy decisions reflected in social marketing campaigns. Comparable information from New Zealand is presented, and implications for the proposed integration of the learndirect service in England into a new careers service for adults are discussed.

Key findings:

The first trend is the partial migration from telephone to web-based services. Alongside increased use of the website, it is noted that increasing use is being made of email requests for information, advice or guidance. It is suggested that the changing balance between the use of learndirect's telephone and web-based services reflects, in part, national trends in the general use of communication technologies across the population, linked to the spread of broadband.

The second trend is the shift, within the telephone service, from information/advice-oriented interventions to more guidance-oriented interventions; in the early years of the service most of the calls were for information and advice, whilst a much higher proportion are now associated with a need for in-depth guidance. This trend is reflected in the increase in the proportion of learndirect advisers qualified to a higher level and equipped to provide more in-depth support.

The third trend is the move from a mainly learning-oriented service to a more career-oriented service; this is linked to the second trend and it is suggested that both have been largely marketing-driven. Examples are highlighted of advertising campaigns that promoted a shift from learndirect as a course provider, and the helpline as a means of choosing courses, to addressing career development needs, alongside and in support of the telephone guidance trial.

In relation to the proposed integration of the learndirect service in England into a new careers service for adults, it is noted that the extent of public awareness of nextstep is much more limited than for learndirect and that, currently, cross-referrals between learndirect and nextstep seem limited. It is suggested that an integrated service would be likely to further facilitate such referrals; it would also make it possible to develop a service in which the alternative channels (telephone, web-based, face-to-face) are seen simply as different ways

of accessing an integrated service. It is noted that full integration between the new careers service and Jobcentre Plus is likely to be problematic and that the challenge to the new careers service will be to see how effectively it can provide a career-oriented, rather than narrowly learning-oriented, service without integrating fully with Jobcentre Plus.

Connexions user satisfaction surveys and related evaluations

24. Brunwin, T., Clemens, S., Deakin, G., Jones, A., Mortimer, E. and Tarvin, K. (2005). *Improve your Connexions: Connexions Service Customer Satisfaction Survey. Summary of Wave 2 Survey Results for all Phase 1 Connexions Partnerships (2004)*. RR622. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR622.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

This report summarises the key findings from the second wave of the Connexions service user satisfaction survey carried in the 15 'Phase 1' Connexions Partnerships, following on from the first wave of the survey which was conducted in all 47 Connexions Partnerships. Over 18,000 young people who had been in contact with Connexions were interviewed during this second wave in 2004 using a range of different methods: face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and postal self-completion questionnaires. As well as analysing the results from the second wave, this report also compares key results against the comparable results from Wave 1.

Key findings:

Of those who had talked to someone at Connexions, 21% had been in contact only once, 47% had between two and four contacts and 31% had contacted Connexions five times or more. Young people receiving higher levels of support tended to have a higher than average number of contacts with Connexions (50% of those in Priority 1 had five or more contacts), as did older respondents in general (44% of 18–20 year olds had five or more contacts).

The majority of respondents at both waves used Connexions to discuss education- or work-

related issues: at Wave 2 in Phase 1 CXPs, 86% discussed jobs and careers, 74% discussed education and 51% discussed training or work-based learning. There is also evidence that some young people were in contact with Connexions about more personal issues; 40% of Wave 2 Phase 1 respondents who had made contact with Connexions had discussed one of the six more personal topics identified in the survey, such as money and benefits, feeling stressed, and alcohol and drugs. This was especially the case among young people receiving a higher level of support.

Over nine in ten young people who had been in contact with Connexions said they were satisfied with the service they received (93%). Overall satisfaction was slightly higher among those receiving lower levels of support, but in terms of the proportion who were 'very satisfied', this was higher among those receiving higher levels of support. Young people at all stages of fieldwork rated Connexions staff very highly on such aspects as 'friendliness' (99% of those in Wave 2 Phase 1 CXPs said staff were 'very' or 'fairly' friendly), 'knowing what they are talking about' (93% agreement), and being 'easy to get hold of' (82% agreement, slightly lower than the other two measures).

The majority (70%) said that Connexions had helped them decide what to do in the next couple of years. Those under the age of 18 were much more likely than older respondents to say that Connexions had helped them decide what to do. 31% said that they had done something they had not previously considered as a result of their contact with Connexions; again this is an increase on the Wave 1 Phase 1 result (26%).

Half (53%) of respondents said that their contact with Connexions had made them more confident overall (45% said their contact had made no difference in terms of confidence; only 1% of respondents said it had made them less confident overall). This was a slight improvement from Wave 1 Phase 1 CXPs, when 46% said that Connexions had made them more confident. There was a clear variation by age, with younger respondents much more likely to say that Connexions had made them more confident, as was the case at Wave 1 Phase 1 fieldwork.

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> *The advice given by Connexions in all these areas was generally rated as very or fairly useful.*

Awareness levels of other aspects of the Connexions service (Connexions Direct, the Connexions Card, the Connexions Youth Charter) were significantly lower than awareness of Connexions overall; 37% were aware of Connexions Direct, 31% had heard of the Card, and just 4% had heard of the Youth Charter.

The most significant drivers for determining whether Connexions helped users decide what to do were: whether contact with Connexions had increased their confidence; overall satisfaction with the service; the usefulness of advice given on various topics; and being helped to see all of the options available to them. These last two were, in turn, key drivers of the first two measures and, since they can be directly targeted for improvement, may be the best areas to concentrate on in terms of maintaining and building upon the positive results seen so far.

25. Clemens, S., Griseri, L., Mackey, T., Mortimer, E., Oleinikova, K. and Ullman, A. (2003). *Connexions Customer Satisfaction Survey: Phase 1 Partnerships.* RR463. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR463.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

This report summarises the key findings from the first stage of the Connexions service user satisfaction survey carried out in fifteen 'Phase One' Connexions Partnerships (CXPs) that began delivering the service between April and September 2001. Over 16,000 young people who had been in contact with Connexions were interviewed between January and March 2003, using a range of different methods: face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, postal self-completion and web self-completion questionnaires.

Key findings:

Young people receiving higher levels of support were, unsurprisingly, more likely to report having spoken to someone from Connexions: 88% of young people in Category 1 reported having spoken to someone, compared with 85% in Category 2 and 80% in Category 3. They were also more likely to report that this contact had been frequent: 50% of young people in Category 1 had contacted someone five times or more, compared with 24% of those in Category 3.

The majority of respondents used Connexions to discuss education- or work-related issues: 86% discussed jobs and careers, 76% discussed education and 58% discussed training or work-based learning. There is also evidence that some young people were in contact about other issues, such as money and benefits, feeling stressed, and alcohol and drugs. This was especially the case among young people receiving a higher level of support (for instance, 35% of young people in Category 1 had received advice on money and benefits).

In general, young people rated the Connexions service highly: the vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the services provided (91% were very or fairly satisfied with the service). Satisfaction was slightly higher amongst younger respondents and those receiving a higher level of support. Respondents were also satisfied with Connexions staff, who were perceived to be friendly (98%) and knowledgeable (92%). Again, young people in higher support categories and lower age groups tended to give more positive ratings.

The advice given by Connexions in all these areas was generally rated as very or fairly useful. Young people thought that Connexions had had a positive impact on them: most stated that it had helped them make decisions regarding their future (68%), and many felt that their contact with the service had made them more confident (47%). This was especially the case for younger respondents and those receiving a higher level of support.

Awareness of other aspects of the Connexions service (the Connexions Card and Connexions Youth Charter) was significantly lower than awareness of Connexions overall: 19% were aware of the Card, and 5% of the Charter.

26. Joyce, L. and White, C. (2004). *Assessing Connexions: Qualitative Research with Young People*. RR577. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR577.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

This longitudinal qualitative study of young people with experience of using Connexions aimed to enhance understanding about the role and value of the Connexions service.

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> *For most young people, contact with the Connexions service had reduced since the first stage of the research, with some young people having had no further contact at all.*

The research comprised two stages: Stage 1 explored the views of 135 young people and in Stage 2, 79 of these young people were revisited in the following year to investigate their longer-term reflections and experiences.

Key findings:

For most young people, contact with the Connexions service had reduced since the first stage of the research, with some young people having had no further contact at all. Young people suggested this was as a consequence of: not having received any follow-up contact by the adviser; the PA being unavailable; or as an effect of the young person making a deliberate decision to stop visiting Connexions. Where further contact was reported, young people typically identified between one and three contacts occurring.

Face-to-face, one-to-one meetings were generally favoured over a group situation or via other mediums, such as the phone, email or letter. Preference for this type of contact was due to the ease with which young people felt they could discuss issues and build rapport, and this was said to have facilitated more open and detailed discussions. In contrast with one-to-one sessions, group meetings were criticised for resulting in young people feeling inhibited by the others, which resulted in young people finding it more difficult to discuss issues.

The emotional and practical support received was an aspect of the service that young people valued. Respondents liked having someone to talk to about their problems, and they also liked the practical assistance they received with various aspects of the jobsearch process, such as: contacting employers on the client's behalf; helping complete application forms; assisting in looking for job vacancies; helping construct a CV; carrying out mock interviews. PAs were often seen as the public face of Connexions, and consequently often affected the young person's overall perception of the service they received. Discussions and assessments of the PA tended to be centred on views of their personality and character as well as their knowledge. Advisers were identified as having a number of positive personality traits, including being: 'nice', 'friendly', 'kind', 'calm', 'funny', 'chatty', 'lovely', 'sociable', 'and 'down to earth'.

In circumstances where young people had a limited exposure to the service, it sometimes proved hard for them to discern any tangible benefits resulting from their contact with Connexions. Where impacts were reported, these covered a wide range of different activity related to the level of support they received. Connexions was commonly said to have resulted in young people undertaking a new activity in education, training or employment, particularly by those categorised as Priority level 1 and 2. On the whole, it was felt that the primary contribution of Connexions in this area was that it helped young people to overcome a range of education-related difficulties; for example, it helped young people to return to education; to manage workloads; to re-develop and establish friendships; to avoid trouble and keep out of difficult situations.

A number of personal impacts were also raised and these revolved around: increasing levels of self-confidence; improving communication skills; changing behaviours or attitudes; and improving personal circumstances. Young people in the qualitative study felt that increased confidence resulted from the support, encouragement and friendship they received from their adviser, as well as the knowledge and advice the adviser provided. The increase in confidence resulted in a range of outcomes; for example young people suggested they found it easier to: ask questions and seek advice and information from other people; motivate themselves; make decisions and be decisive; and it also resulted in them exploring or undertaking new activities. For some young people, particularly those categorised as Priority 1, communication and interpersonal skills were also said to have improved.

In some circumstances Connexions was said to have led to a change in behaviour and/or attitude in the young person, as a direct result of the advice provided by the adviser, and as a consequence of the supportive and often close relationship that had been established between the adviser and the client. Furthermore, a number of young people's personal circumstances were greatly improved as a result of their contact, especially for those categorised as Priority 1. For example, Connexions was said to have:

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helped a young person to address and/or stop themselves being bullied; improved financial circumstances; deterred young people from engaging in criminal activity; helped with coping with stress; and improved relationships between the young person and their family.

Although young people identified a number of positive impacts arising as a result of their contact with Connexions, it would be naive to assume that Connexions was the sole reason for this occurring, particularly as it is clear that Connexions is collaborating with other agencies and services.

Studies of NEET strategies and outcomes and other targeted support for young people at risk of exclusion

27. Blythe, J., Elo, L., Gration, G. and Hughes, D. (2008). *The Learning Agreement Pilot in Lancashire, England: supporting young people in jobs without training.* iCeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), University of Derby. Available from: **http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_the_learning_agreement.pdf** [Accessed 12 November 2008]

The Learning Agreement Pilot (LAP) began in April 2006 in eight areas in England, aimed at increasing learning options for 16–17 year olds in jobs without training (JWT). This report summarises key findings from the evaluation of the first year of the Lancashire Learning Agreement Pilot (LAP) in which a sample of participating young people and employers were surveyed by telephone using a semi-structured questionnaire. The report also draws upon findings from the national evaluations (Johnson *et al.* 2008; Maguire *et al.* 2008) and raises a number of important issues about the central role of the Personal Advisers and of information, advice and guidance in the LAP.

Key findings:

Of the young people surveyed within Lancashire, a clear majority were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the programme overall. The Personal Advisers' knowledge of the training available, the effectiveness of their support and advice, and their understanding of the young people's needs were particularly highly rated by the respondents. Young people valued the training they received, and its impact on their future careers, as reflected in the finding that for the majority of respondents, participation in the pilot was not dependent upon the financial bonus payment. A clear majority of the employers surveyed in Lancashire were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the professionalism of the Personal Adviser and the overall service they received. A clear majority of the employer sample reported that they would be happy to recommend the service to others.

Drawing upon the survey results and upon a model of youth re-engagement from a related DCSF publication (Johnson *et al.* 2008), the report highlights the central role of the Personal Advisers and of appropriate information, advice and guidance within the LAP. The added value of the Personal Adviser role is discussed in terms of moving beyond 'basic' brokerage activities towards an enhanced approach that not only connects young people to labour market information opportunities, but *also* provides employability skills designed to help young people thrive and survive in the world of work.

The report argues that there is significant potential to increase the emphasis of Personal Advisers connecting with employers, to help them develop their workforce plans specifically with young people in mind. The tracking and monitoring of young people's employment and/or career journeys over time is highlighted in order to build the evidence-base for effective careers education, information, advice and guidance interventions.

28. Hoggarth, L. and Smith, D.I. (2004). *Understanding the Impact of Connexions on Young People at Risk.* RR607 London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR607.pdf** [Accessed 13 November 2008]

At the time when this study took place, Connexions was still a relatively new programme bringing together the services offered by former Careers Services and a wide range of holistic support for young people. This study aimed to enhance the

> *The primary mechanism of impact lies in the interaction of PAs with young people and a trusting relationship is key in impacting with young people at risk.*

understanding of the impact of the Connexions service on young people, particularly those at risk of underachievement and disaffection. A total of 1,299 interviews were carried out with staff and young people across seven Connexions Partnerships; 855 of the interviews were with young people (including 161 follow-up interviews).

Key findings:

The primary mechanism of impact lies in the interaction of PAs with young people and a trusting relationship is key in impacting with young people at risk. It is important to bring young people who need it into the Connexions process as early in their 'risk career' as possible, with sensitive and well-timed assessment of risk and priority, and the time to build up trust.

Many of the young people in the sample faced multiple risks in their lives and needed intensive attention. A holistic and non-stigmatising approach to these problems was most effective, and single-stranded interventions had less impact. For most young people at risk, impact is needed in more than one area for real progress to be achieved. Both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes therefore should be recognised as necessary. Further work is needed to develop ways of measuring and recording soft outcomes concerned with personal development and underlying needs, *which young people may need first* in order to be able to achieve the harder outcomes.

Several partnerships were exploring ways of recognising and measuring such outcomes, for instance with the Rickter Scale. Others were working on personal development models, enabling 'then' and 'now' comparisons and the tracing of a biography of a young person, or other locally devised systems based on Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR).

There is a structural tendency of the service to divide along universal and targeted lines, and in the attitudes and working practices of many staff whose training and professional aspirations pre-date the Connexions ethos. This is also reflected in the deployment of resources, whether thinly spread to support universal provision with mainly minimal support

on post-16 transition needs; or a focused pattern of targeted support of an intensive or intermediate nature, which addresses much wider needs, but which is concentrated on much smaller numbers of young people judged to be at risk. Overall, resources appeared inadequate to meet the needs exacerbated by the dilemma over the balance between Connexions as a service targeted on young people at risk, and Connexions as a wider service for all young people who wish to use it.

In some school settings, PAs are not treated as an integral part of the pupil support systems and are often marginalised. The most positive practice identified was where a joint school/Connexions approach was used to devise tailored programmes for young people most at risk. Special schools, where statutory roles include Connexions, offered a more positive example of the benefits of such joint working. Protocols with schools and other partners are essential, but the evidence of this study showed they were often not actively used or familiar to operational staff.

Assessment of risk and priority was not fully effective for the young people in this study. About half the young people in the top two priority groups reported that they were not receiving current support. Even where assessment was working well, there was not always the capacity to respond. There is significant unmet need amongst young people who satisfy the requirements for intermediate or intensive support but do not receive it.

Management supervision and support of staff appeared weak. Staff were often isolated in the face of challenging decisions and partner relationships. Greater awareness of referral routes and how to meet the needs of specific risk groups was also needed.

29. Hughes, D., Davies, D., Bright, G. and Dyke, S. (2008). *NEET Speaks: Influences Shaping Young People's Choices of Education, Training and Employment* – pending.

This study included a review of 39 research studies into the many complex NEET factors that contribute to improved understanding of the complexities and challenges associated

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with measuring the impact of NEET interventions. These authors and the key issues they raise are summarised below.

Bysshe and Berry-Lound (2008) highlight that 'within the existing body of NEET research literature, the term NEET itself (as is currently being highlighted by the Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training), although a well used piece of 'policy shorthand', tells us only what *young people are not*, rather than *what they are*' (p.16).

Brown (2008) has recently undertaken a detailed study in Croydon (South London), using a statistical model based on school leaver data since 2001, reviewing factors which were the best predictors of young people becoming NEET. The study identified that 13 factors were found to predict NEET, the most powerful of which was: *'disengagement by age 13'*. Those at most risk of becoming NEET were identified as: *'White British boys in specific schools of low socio-economic status'*. The results of the study indicate that young people's disengagement with the qualification system could be averted by intervention with specific pupil groups prior to Year 9, to ensure success at Key Stage 4.

Green and White (2007) highlighted in a recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation research report the crucial role of understanding *where young people live* and the *social networks they have,* given: 'they shape how young people see the world'. They indicate that *place-specific factors*, such as geographical location, community norms, historical and current patterns of employment are central to understanding how and whether interventions work, alongside who is involved in delivery. This calls for *local flexibility.'*

Coles *et al.* (2002) shed light on a number of additional factors that led young people to become NEET. These include *truancy from school* before the age of 16, *low or no educational achievements* at the age of 16 and membership of some *minority ethnic groups*.

Payne (2002) identified *negative attitudes towards school* as contributing to young people becoming NEET. These arose from: 'boredom, poor relationships with teachers,

anti-school cultures, and viewing education and qualifications as having little value in the world of work'.

Stone, Cotton, and Thomas (2000), in detailed qualitative research with NEET young people, described how many young people spoke in terms of *'chains of events'* where behaviours such as truancy and involvement in drug and alcohol abuse were symptoms of, and reactions to, a series of preceding events. They indicated that the participants often recognised that they were making decisions – leaving home, quitting education – without any information, advice or support.

Merton (1998) identified a *range of circumstances and recurring themes* that characterised young people's disaffection and non-participation in education, employment and training. These included: adverse family circumstances; traumatic events (including bereavements); personality/behavioural difficulties; learning disabilities/disadvantage; disaffection with school; truancy; health problems; bullying; being in care; crime; drug abuse; homelessness; immaturity; lack of support; and lack of money.

30. Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008). *Rathbone/Nuffield Review Engaging Youth Enquiry: Final consultation report*. London: The Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training. Available from: **http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/ files/documents196-1.pdf** [Accessed 17 November 2008]

This report presents the findings of the Engaging Youth Enquiry (EYE) into young people who are classified as 'NEET', and opens the Rathbone/Nuffield Review Open Consultation into the issues involved. The Nuffield Review drew on the network of academics and researchers working in this area, some of whom are members of its core group, and many of whom have contributed to the Enquiry. Rathbone drew on the network of voluntary sector organisations and other relevant bodies with which Rathbone collaborates, such as Connexions, the youth service, youth offending teams, employers, housing officers and magistrates. Further, Rathbone facilitated the organisation of the

> *Employment, even in quite mundane entry-level jobs, provides the opportunity for young people to grow up, to act like adults, to take responsibility and make a contribution.*

young people's workshops held in contexts familiar to the young people, with trusted adults as facilitators.

Key findings:

This report acknowledges the complexity of the issues involved and that, crucially, there are no simple policy solutions. However, it does offer a number of insights into NEET that might help in framing and implementing more effective strategies.

The report highlights the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the characteristics of those who are NEET. Not all are from a low socio-economic background; some are middle-class young people who have 'opted out' for various reasons. Many have little affinity with their community, some look to gangs for a sense of belonging, and many struggle with multiple disadvantages but they often have aspirations even if they do not know how best to achieve them: '*want to have a job and a nice family; don't want to be living in this hole*' (page 32). It also calls for a classification system that includes, in addition to the familiar 'long-term NEET' and 'transitional NEET', a further category for which no figures are available, namely that of 'prospective NEET', i.e. those young people currently registered at school who are at risk of becoming disengaged.

One of the main characteristics is a pronounced feeling of alienation from school, with the implication that making the curriculum more flexible or practical may not be sufficient to solve the problem. The real problem may be an inability of NEETs to cope with the necessary authority structures that underpin the structures of schooling. Many NEET young people suffer from a lack of belonging and of failed relationships, and need someone they can trust and rely on to help them re-engage. Rathbone and Connexions, amongst others, have worked hard at this kind of support, but the problem is often one of time, though frequently the support required may be relatively straightforward and not always time consuming. The support from youth workers and the voluntary and community sector was also particularly valued, often above that of teachers and other authority figures.

The young people who participated in the Enquiry emphasised the importance of getting paid work. Employment, even in quite mundane entry-level jobs, provides the opportunity for young people to grow up, to act like adults, to take responsibility and make a contribution. However, current policy seems to view participating in the labour market via such jobs, which may provide little opportunity to undertake training leading to a qualification, as illegitimate. The raising of the participation age will reinforce this illegitimacy and force many employers, who would have offered jobs to less well qualified 16 and 17 year olds, to think again.

The report concludes with a series of suggested questions for wider consultation, and a key issue reflected in many of these is the limitation of a 'qualifications first strategy' and a recognition that we need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment.

31. Rodger, J., Palmer, H. and Mahon, J. (2007). *Targeted Youth Support Pathfinders: Interim Evaluation*. RR016. London: DCSF. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/ research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR016. pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

The *Youth Matters* Green Paper (2005) sets out a vision of integrated youth support services helping all young people to achieve the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. In early 2006, 14 children's trusts became involved as pathfinders to start work on redesigning services to provide timely, effective and co-ordinated support for vulnerable young people by a range of different agencies working across universal, targeted and statutory services. This evaluation, which commenced in October 2006, has focused on six pathfinder case studies to measure the impact of the changes brought about. This report presents the findings of evaluation activities undertaken between March and August 2007.

Key findings:

This development work on self-evaluation and performance measurement was conducted with the Gateshead Pathfinder, and a guide for pathfinders using Gateshead illustrations

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> *The guide sets out a seven-step process to support effective planning, self-evaluation and performance measurement.*

has been produced and shared with the other case studies. The guide sets out a seven-step process to support effective planning, self-evaluation and performance measurement. It provides advice and illustrations in relation to each of these steps. The guide is also supported by an evaluation toolkit, which provides pathfinders with useful information in relation to evaluation methodologies and approaches. While the study facilitated the overall development process, pathfinders have largely chosen their own indicators, thus ensuring greater buy-in and ownership.

At this interim stage in the evaluation it was not possible to provide significant evidence regarding the impact of pathfinder activity on outcomes for young people, due to the slower than anticipated progress in implementing planned change on the ground. However, the study was able to develop the methodological tools to measure impact on young people. These include: a young person's questionnaire to measure and model changes in the risk profile of young people following service intervention; and a framework which can be used by pathfinders to specify performance indicators.

The young person's questionnaire builds a risk profile of individual young people. The term 'individual risk modelling' has been applied to mean risk profiling that requires information that is not routinely collected on young people. The questionnaire has been designed in two parts. The first is a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which picks up softer risk and resilience factors associated with self-esteem. The second is a series of behavioural questions that pick up participation in activities both positive and negative, which are known to affect the likelihood of poor outcomes in the future. The questionnaire is about to be introduced in Gateshead and, after that, in Derby, Wandsworth and Leicester.

In developing a performance indicator framework, the study addressed the potential for confusion between inputs, outputs and outcomes by segmenting a five-component indicator hierarchy. This included:

- inputs – processes/allocation of resources which provide the necessary foundation, e.g. development of an area panel;

- outputs – the next level added value from inputs, being a measure of progress towards impact, e.g. initiation of CAF;

- results – the transition point between outputs and outcomes (this is not a standard evaluation term and it was introduced because pathfinders were, in many cases, achieving additional value beyond what appeared to be outputs but which fell short of outcomes); and

- universal outcomes – measures of impact, where the interventions will have contributed to the achievement, but direct causality cannot be attributed (these tend to be high-level impact measures, such as attainment, truancy, exclusion etc).

32. Sachdev, D., Harries, B. and Roberts, T. (2006). *Regional and sub-regional variation in NEETs – reasons, remedies and impact.* London: Learning and Skills Development Agency. Available from: **http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/SouthWest/swr-lsn-neetstudy-2006.pdf** [Accessed 16 November 2008]

The study aimed to highlight the possible reasons underpinning the observed variation in NEET numbers within and across the two regions, and to identify the solutions being developed and tested locally and nationally, including their perceived impact by young people and relevant professionals working with NEETs. The study involved a literature review of what was already known, followed by the collection of primary data by means of interviews with staff from Connexions, local LSCs and other organisations working with NEETs. In addition, focus groups of young people were held in each of the two LSC regions to ascertain their perceptions of what causes young people to become and remain NEET.

Key findings:

Whilst the size of the NEET group has remained stable (at around 9–10% of the 16–18 cohort since 1994), the make-up of the group has not, with young people entering and leaving the NEET group (NEET churn) for a variety of reasons, and only 1% of this group appearing to remain NEET right through from 16 to 18 years of age. Furthermore, despite the stability of the overall figure for the NEET

> *Clients value the service, with the majority reporting that Key Workers had helped with their self-confidence, and their ability to listen and work in a group.*

cohort in England, the numbers within any one region can vary dramatically from one area to the next. For example, the NEET numbers for young people aged 16 to 18 vary from 3.1% in Surrey to 7.8% in Berkshire, compared to the national average of 7.6%, and between 4.2% in North Yorkshire and 11.2% in South Yorkshire (November 2005).

The reasons identified for regional variations include: the ineffectiveness of financial incentives in areas of high unemployment and benefit take-up; differential access to labour markets, especially in areas of large numbers of SMEs or specialist employers unlikely to appreciate non-academic qualifications; and disadvantaged communities with multigenerational unemployment, poor role models, poor sense of mobility and poor infrastructure.

Aspects of what appears to work best in NEET reduction include: better recognition of the characteristics of the NEET group and local contexts and more appropriate targeting of resources; positive partnerships between relevant agencies/organisation including Connexions, employers, post-16 education and training providers, and the voluntary and community sector; greater involvement of young people in decision making and a recognition of their achievements, no matter how small they might appear; innovative practices in engaging young people in informal and non-academic learning.

In identifying factors that impede the progress of NEET reduction strategies, the study highlights the concern of many agencies about the emphasis that funders place upon hard outcomes at the expense of soft outcomes such as motivation and self-esteem that, in the long-run, can act as precursors of hard outcomes such as employment and/or training. In the factors that impede the progress of NEET reduction strategies, the study also includes the insufficiency of pre-level 2 provision and 'roll-on/roll-off' provision.

33. SQW (2005). *The National Evaluation of the Careers Scotland Inclusiveness Projects.* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Social Research, Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. Available from:

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0009690.pdf
[Accessed 11 November 2008]

The inclusiveness projects began in 2001 and were then extended for a further two years by Careers Scotland. The projects aimed to provide services to 16 to 24 year olds with additional support needs to assist the transition from school, or care, to the labour market. 'Additional support needs' was given a wide definition to include young people with low levels of attainment and those at risk of exclusion.

The evaluation took place from 2002 to 2004 and included: a longitudinal survey of over 600 clients, and in-depth interviews with 18 clients and parents/guardians; two email surveys of the project co-ordinators; and a telephone survey of 30 partner organisations involved at a local level with the inclusiveness projects.

Key findings:

Clients value the service, with the majority reporting that Key Workers had helped with their self-confidence, and their ability to listen and work in a group. (The Key Worker is a designated role within Careers Scotland not dissimilar to that of a specialist Connexions Personal Adviser.)

After a year there were significant improvements in client time management, self-esteem and emotional control, though significant minorities showed evidence of 'slipping back'. The proportion of clients in employment increased from 15% to 20% by the end of 12 months, but the proportion becoming unemployed also increased from 18% to 35%.

An effective inclusive approach has been delivered in that the service: has been intensive when it needed to be; offers long-term support when required; and supports employability in its widest sense, with Key Workers recognising emotional and personal support.

A key recommendation was the need to pursue the mainstreaming of inclusiveness in a way that both protects the effectiveness of the Key Worker role within Careers Scotland and exploits the wider opportunities for mainstreaming, e.g. amongst partner service providers.

> "*Students also perceived personal problems, financial hardship, insufficient financial assistance, and conflict between job and studies, as being amongst the most important causes of withdrawal.*"

Another key recommendation was the need to implement Careers Scotland's client information management system to differentiate the type of support offered to clients by level of intensity, and to differentiate those aspects of the projects that have proven to be effective, particularly in relation to the role of the Key Worker.

Other careers-related impact studies of generic relevance

34. Davies, P. (1999). Student retention in further education: a problem of quality or of student finance? In: *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference*, Brighton, 2–5 September 1999. Available from: **http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ documents/00001257.htm** [Accessed 15 November 2008]

This paper presents a summary of the evidence concerning student retention and withdrawal in the further education sector, with a particular emphasis upon full-time 16–19 year old students. Following a review of research elsewhere, it then sets out in more detail the findings of research in which the author participated, on behalf of the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), in which the main approach adopted was to compare the characteristics of withdrawn students with those of continuing students in order to identify the risk factors associated with withdrawal.

Key findings:

His findings overall suggest that issues related to the perceived quality of the educational experience, whilst at college, tend to outweigh the influence of other factors, in particular financial hardship, on student drop-out. He notes that some authors suggest that improvements to information and guidance services could form part of a successful interventionist strategy. He also includes the support that students receive in helping them settle into college at the beginning of their course as a significant factor in student satisfaction.

Taken overall, the results of the FEDA surveys revealed that the distinguishing characteristic of withdrawn students, compared with those who stayed on, was the relatively lower level of satisfaction of the former group with factors connected with teaching quality and support. Students also perceived personal problems, financial hardship, insufficient financial assistance, and conflict between job and studies, as being amongst the most important causes of withdrawal. However, the incidence of these difficulties did not seem to be any greater for those who withdrew than for those who were retained.

The FEDA results also revealed that the variables which most strongly correlate with the rating for overall satisfaction with a college, or the propensity to recommend somebody else to attend, are those connected with the opinions of the help received in settling in and of the quality of teaching, rather than with the perceptions of other aspects of the service provided, or with demographic factors. Almost half of the students involved expressed dissatisfaction with the level of financial assistance they received, but this was much less strongly linked with overall levels of satisfaction than were the other factors indicated above.

In the light of this research, the author points to a number of possible interventionist strategies that can have significant short-term effects on non-completion rates. These include rigorous early follow-up of absence from class, improvements to induction programmes and tutorial support, and student mentoring schemes.

35. Godfrey, C., Hutton, S., Bradshaw, J., Coles, B., Craig, G. and Johnson, J. (2002). *Estimating the Cost of Being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' at Age 16–18.* RR 236. London: Department for Education and Skills.

This report provides information on potential, hypothesised improvements in relation to 'reductions in crime and offending behaviour' and 'reductions in social security and NHS costs'.

Key findings:

The report exclusively focuses upon calculating the costs to the public purse of NEETs in terms of educational underachievement, unemployment, inactivity, crime and health.

'The average per capita total present value costs over a lifetime are £45,000 resource costs and £52,000 public finance costs. The current per capita costs for NEET 16–18 year olds are £5,300 resource costs and £5,500 public finance costs. Thus if 10,000 (less than 10% of the estimated population of 157,000 NEET population) people were removed from the group of NEET or socially excluded young people, total current savings would be £53m in resource costs and £55m in public finance costs. This assumes the 10,000 would be 'average' and not have an over-representation of those NEET individuals with clusters of problems. If lifetime present value savings were considered, these would be £450m in resource costs and £520m in public finance costs' (p.56).

The report makes no direct reference to careers guidance, though there is clearly an indirect link with IAG and personal support being a key factor in most NEET reduction strategies. One could argue that *if* careers guidance could be proven to result in a quantifiable reduction in NEET, *then* the calculations contained in this report could be used as a means of calculating the cost saving attributable to careers guidance.

36. Hughes, D. & Gration, G. (2006). *Performance Indicators and Benchmarks in Career Guidance in the United Kingdom.* CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), University of Derby. Available from: **http://www.derby. ac.uk/files/icegs_performance_indicators_ and_benchmarks2006.pdf** [Accessed 13 November 2008]

This UK study was part of Europe-wide research commissioned by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) on behalf of the European Commission Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance set up by the Commission in 2002. The research was carried out by questionnaire followed by in-depth telephone interviews with managers and policymakers associated with all of the main providers of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services within the UK, for both young people and adults, including: Connexions, Careers Services, learndirect, nextstep, Jobcentre Plus and further and higher education advisory services.

Key findings:

Just as it is recognised that the delivery of careers guidance services is well developed in the UK compared to most other developed countries, the study concludes that arrangements for collecting and using management information, including performance indicators (PIs), are also well developed compared with most other developed countries.

They indicate that there is no shortage of IAG-related data collection, and that much of it is required by funding bodies for the purposes of contract compliance and contract renewal/tendering processes. Although some of the data is used by provider organisations to feed into quality assurance systems and professional development programmes, there is little scope for the needs of practitioners to use it to improve their practice.

The study distinguishes between the *availability* and the *use* of management information, including PIs, in relation to the key IAG providers in the UK. In terms of the *availability* of management information, the following conclusions are made:

- Providers collect a wealth of information covering all of the main aspects of the services they provide. This information is particularly rich in capturing aspects of delivery, including volumes of service interventions and penetration of services in targeted population groups. Data on service outcomes is also collected, usually in terms of work and education/training outcomes and/or user satisfaction ratings.

- One area where there is little evidence of available management information is that concerning the unit costs of IAG delivery; there is even less evidence of any reporting of the relationship between the *costs* of delivery and the *outcomes* of delivery.

- The management information that is reported is invariably capable of being analysed electronically and can usually be broken down by a number of variables that are broadly consistent across equivalent providers in all parts of the UK. These variables include: number and type of intervention; client characteristics and equal

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opportunity monitoring data; and service outcome measures.

- The precise nature of the data collected, and the variables by which it can be analysed, typically reflect the particular performance targets and the requirements of quality assurance frameworks that apply for each provider.

In terms of the *use* of management information, the following conclusions are made:

- At the *operational* level: IAG performance data is used mainly to support continuous self-improvement by informing the development of systems and procedures, management arrangements, and staff development programmes.

- At the *provider funding* level: performance against targets is considered within the contract tendering and renewal process or, where renewable contracts do not apply, within the funding agreement process affecting the level, and targeting, of funding agreed for the forthcoming year.

- At the *policymaker* level: performance against targets is one of a number of factors influencing future policy, delivery arrangements, and the overall level of funding via the Public Service Agreements that cover IAG services.

- Although IAG performance data is used at both national and local levels as indicated above, there is little evidence of its use for *benchmarking* purposes – that is, as published standards or 'norms' to enable active comparisons to be made between equivalent IAG providers.

37. Hughes, D. (2004). *Investing in Career: prosperity for citizens, windfalls for government.* Winchester: The Guidance Council. Available at: **http://lifework.ca/UK%20Investing%20in%20Career%2005-04.pdf**

This report provides information on potential, hypothesised improvements in relation to 'increased well-being which contributes to health benefits for society', 'reductions in crime and offending behaviour' and 'reductions in social security and NHS costs'.

Key findings:

There is an argument in this paper that careers guidance makes a contribution to a number of important socio-economic benefits, in terms of well-being, crime reduction etc., and that these reductions can be quantified in terms of savings to the public purse and increases in productivity. The paper makes some reference to a small number of studies that relate careers guidance to participation in education and to increased levels of confidence. Its central focus is to then go on to indicate how hypothetical amounts of careers guidance impacts could be used to calculate possible saving for the public purse.

38. James, K. (2001). *Prescriptions for Learning: 1st Evaluation Report.* Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. Available from: **http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/PfL1.pdf** [Accessed 14 November 2008]

This research evaluated the effectiveness of placing a Learning Adviser in GP surgeries to provide information, advice and guidance as a means of widening participation in learning among adults. The research also attempted to identify the health impacts that occur as a result of participation in learning in adults. A total of 196 people were referred to and seen by the Learning Adviser between September 2000 and March 2002. In-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews were carried out with a sample of individuals referred to the projects, to gather qualitative information on their experience of the guidance interviews, their experiences of learning, and the perceived health outcomes from participating in learning.

Key findings:

Of the first tranche of participants referred to the Learning Adviser, just over 60% went on to participate in some form of recognised learning; however, it is not clear over what timescale the learning took place, nor was any comparison made with other similar groups who were not involved in the initiative.

This opinion study does not provide any conclusive evidence about the direct impact of careers guidance on health benefits. However, it does indicate the possible health benefits

> *One-to-one in-depth guidance gave individuals the time and opportunity to explore ambitions and options, as well as anxieties and concerns.*

associated with learning and therefore points to the possible indirect relevance of guidance to wider social and economic benefits.

The research showed that successful learning can have a positive effect on individuals' health and well-being. Some individuals felt that participation in learning had an immediate and direct effect on their physical and mental health and was a factor in improving health behaviours. Almost all the people interviewed said that they probably would not have taken up learning without the help of the project. One-to-one in-depth guidance gave individuals the time and opportunity to explore ambitions and options, as well as anxieties and concerns. This appeared to be a critical success factor in helping them to feel motivated to access learning.

Project participants were questioned about the impact that learning had on their lives in general. The responses given, such as increased confidence, social contacts, increased activity pleasure and improved quality of life, are all mediators through which learning impacts on health. Other responses such as improved skills and improved employment prospects are also indicators of probable health status. Improving literacy, numeracy and language skills is linked to improved access to health services and information. Improved employment prospects through the achievement of qualifications might also improve socio-economic status, which in turn is also linked to improved health status.

39. Killeen, J. and Kidd, J.M. (1991). *Learning Outcomes of Guidance: a Review of Research.* Research Paper No.85. Sheffield: Employment Department.

This report reviews research into the possible impact of careers and guidance-related activities from the 1920s to the 1990s. Early UK research findings (1920s to 1970s) report results favourable to guidance. They review findings from 47 USA evaluation studies of career interventions for college students and indicate that the most frequently assessed outcome measures were: (i) career maturity; (ii) decision making; (iii) locus of control; (iv) anxiety; and (v) self-concept.

Key findings:

A classification of learning and associated variables derived by the authors, on the basis of research reported in 1980-89, shows that learning outcomes are 'forms of knowledge or skill acquired or improved by guidance' (p.3). The authors note that attitudinal change or emotional changes, such as attitude to choice, career salience, reduced anxiety or improved internal locus of control (confidence in one's ability to exert influence over events), have a strong *prima facie* relationship to the acquisition of decision-related knowledge and skills, either as precursors or as products.

The authors indicate that there are doubts as to the validity and reliability of many of the outcome measures employed in the various research studies They highlight the rise to prominence of 'learning outcomes' and define these as the skills, knowledge and attitudes which facilitate: (i) informed and rational occupational and educational decision making; and (ii) the effective implementation of occupational and educational decisions. They argue that measures indicating that individuals have improved the certainty of their decisions are both commonly employed in research, and are a *prima facie* accompaniment to successful learning. The authors are concerned only with learning outcomes in which it has been possible to classify with a moderate degree of confidence.

They identify 17 studies that report gains on one or more measures of precursors to and correlates of rational decision making and implementation; 8 studies report gains in decision-making skills; 12 studies report gains in self-awareness; 13 studies report gains in opportunity awareness (and information search); 10 studies report gains in certainty or decisiveness; and 4 studies report gains in transition skills. Only 4 studies report no gains, and a further 10 report null results in addition to significant gains. The general conclusion gathered from their analysis is that most of the studies described evaluate 'whole interventions', which 'differ in many ways from one another' (p.7); whilst positive results are reported for each main type of guidance intervention (classes and courses, workshops and groups, individual guidance, test interpretation and feedback, experience-based

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> *The most important medium-term and broader impact of IA is to encourage and support clients to engage in learning; 66% of users indicated that this was the case.*

interventions, and multi-method interventions), it should be noted that the outcomes, client groups and interventions in each study vary.

40. Milburn Trinnaman LaCourt (2008). *The Impact of nextstep Adult Information and Advice Services: National Analysis 2007.* Coventry: Learning and Skills Council. Available from: **http://www.nextstepstakeholder. co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1BC48256-952A-4344-A483-8DC39B7033E7/0/LSC_ IAimpact0708National07May08.pdf** [Accessed 25 November 2008]

This report presents the findings from an independent assessment of the impact of information and advice (IA) services. This national survey involved 4,001 adults of working age who received information and advice services between August 2006 and July 2007. The interviews were carried out by telephone during November and December 2007, and respondents were chosen randomly across all 47 LSC areas of England.

Key findings:

Information and advice services are highly valued by the majority of users; overall, 88% of respondents were satisfied with these services and 87% would use their provider again should the need arise; 90% of respondents felt satisfied with the premises where they received IA services; 7% of those surveyed were dissatisfied with the service they received.

Overall, 82% of users who subsequently engaged in learning said that the IA they received was influential in enabling this to happen, and over two thirds (69%) of those who started a job after receiving IA felt the same way.

The most immediate benefits of receiving IA take the form of helping users to find and make best use of relevant information (79%) and increasing their awareness of learning and job opportunities most relevant to them (72%). Increasing an individual's self-confidence was identified by 68% of respondents, which is 18 percentage points greater than the 2006 survey.

The most important medium-term and broader impact of IA is to encourage and support

clients to engage in learning; 66% of users indicated that this was the case. The same proportion of IA users felt that their career and job prospects had improved. Increasing a person's confidence to engage in higher levels of education and training, including more advanced qualifications, was alluded to by 65% of users.

The proportion of clients surveyed who were without a Level 2 qualification was 65% in 2007 and, of these, 44% went on to participate in learning, which is nearly in line with the LSC's key performance indicator for IA which is 45%. In addition, 48% of all users (Level 0–5) started in learning at some stage since receiving IA and the 2007 survey taking place, which compares with an average of 44% over the five annual surveys.

Achievement at Level 2 and above increased from 30% of the sample when IA was received initially to 32% when the survey was undertaken. The proportion of users in full-time education or training was 2 percentage points higher at the time of the survey compared to when IA was received, while the proportion of users who were in work was 20 percentage points higher. The proportion of those interviewed who were unemployed fell by 22 percentage points. The proportion of users who went into employment after IA increased dramatically from 21% in 2006 to 34% in this year's survey, compared with an average of 26% over the five years.

Suggested improvements to the services included: more information about financial support for learning products/services (34%); more emphasis given to careers, job opportunities, the local labour market and the changing world of work (33%); more emphasis given to a wide range of learning opportunities, routes and destinations (29%); better sign-posting to other sources of IA services (29%); and better processes for following up clients later on, and assessing progress and offering further support.

This study did not include a matched control group; nor was a comparison made of the rate of progression to learning and work of the survey respondents with that of the general adult population. Therefore it is difficult

> *IAG is generally more effective when experienced as part of a process, rather than as an isolated event.*

to determine the exact significance of the reported progression rates. However, even if such a comparison had been made, and even if it had shown higher rates of progression for the survey respondents, one could argue that this might simply reflect the higher motivation of those who seek out information and advice services. Counterbalancing this is the fact that a majority of the survey respondents who progress to learning or work say that they believe the information and advice they received had been influential.

41. Pollard, M., Tyers, C., Tuohy, S. and Cowling, M. (2007). *Assessing the Net Added Value of Adult Advice and Guidance.* RR825A. London: DfES. Available from: **http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/ pdflibrary/rr825a.pdf** [Accessed 19 November 2008]

These results follow two waves of research, with an initial cohort of over 4,000 adults known to have received publicly funded information, advice and guidance (IAG) services between October 2003 and March 2004. The first survey, in summer 2004, (reported in Tyers and Sinclair, 2004) gathered information from respondents who had accessed IAG services in the previous six months, including: how they used the services; personal characteristics; learning and work histories; and attitudes to learning and work. The initial sample of individuals was randomly drawn with the help of three providers of IAG services: learndirect, Jobcentre Plus, and nextstep (formerly Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships). The second survey, in summer 2006, tracked respondents' progress on these measures and gathered information on any further support services accessed since the first survey.

The research aimed to explore the impact of IAG on adults in work or education over time, and specifically to investigate the relative impact of more in-depth careers support (advice and guidance, AG) over that of information provision (I). In order to have greater confidence in attributing any differences in the outcomes to the differences in level of IAG support received, it was important to 'match' them as closely as possible. This was done by 'propensity score matching', taking account

of differences between the groups on a range of observable characteristics (such as age, gender, learning/work histories) in the analysis. In addition to the initial analysis of results from the first survey phase, in which the AG group outcomes were compared to those of the I group, a second, later analysis took place whereby the original I group was split into those who went on to receive more in-depth support and those who did not.

Despite the highly sophisticated research, some caution should be exercised in interpreting the results. The propensity score matching does not entirely rule out the possibility that those who actively sought out the more in-depth support were generally more highly motivated and perhaps might have progressed without any formalised external support. However, the two-stage analysis does help to provide a further control for the possibility of this spurious effect, as indicated in the first of the key findings listed below.

Key findings:

IAG is generally more effective when experienced as part of a process, rather than as an isolated event. Around two thirds of respondents went on to receive further support beyond their initial intervention. Those initially accessing information only, but going on to receive more in-depth support, showed the most positive outcomes in terms of undertaking further learning and making positive changes within work.

In-depth support is positively associated with a range of observable learning and career outcomes. Recipients were more likely to engage in informal learning than those accessing information only, and were more likely to make job changes, perhaps reflecting an increased focus on their careers. In-depth support helps people to recognise and value what they have achieved, and increases both confidence in planning for the future and general self-confidence.

Low-skilled adults are likely to need more than initial in-depth support if they are to make progress in the labour market. Findings suggest that the group of adults who originally received advice and guidance faced intense labour market barriers, and were embarking on

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> *People who receive in-depth support engage in a different, more work-focused type of learning experience in the medium term as compared with those who received information only.*

a longer journey of change to overcome these than perhaps were the information-only group.

People who receive in-depth support engage in a different, more work-focused type of learning experience in the medium term as compared with those who received information only. The in-depth group are relatively more likely to undertake learning that is more focused on a specific job or career, involves some degree of reskilling (rather than just upskilling), and involves employer encouragement and support. The outcomes from these learning experiences may translate to work changes in the future.

They conclude that in-depth support is not associated with any observable labour market outcomes in the medium term, that is: participation in the labour market, participation in paid work, movement into paid work from unemployment, or (continued) household reliance on state benefits. However, they do say that in-depth support is positively associated with three attitudinal work-related outcomes: satisfaction with a current job; confidence in gaining a desired job; and increases in confidence over time.

The authors conclude that information provision was useful to many individuals, in that it either provided them with what they needed at the time when they could act upon it, or it spurred them on to seek further support. They suggest that it could be that careers information is better than is traditionally regarded by the guidance community: 'Indeed, the giving of really good information could be guidance in disguise' (p.107).

42. Reed, K., Mahony, K. and Gration, G. (2005). *Career Guidance for Adults in Wales: Making a Difference.* CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Available from: **http://www.derby. ac.uk/files/icegs__career_guidance_for_ adults_in_wales_making_a_difference.pdf** [Accessed 29 November 2008]

This study reports the findings from a survey of 1,000 adults who received guidance from Careers Wales during 2004 and who were followed up, by telephone, at three and six months following the intervention. The adults were asked a series of questions including

how clear they were about their future career plans before and after the guidance, about their progression to learning and/or work following the guidance, and the extent to which they felt the guidance had been a significant factor in bringing about any career-related changes.

The majority of respondents said that as a result of the guidance interview they were clearer about their career plans, had carried out actions to achieve their plans, and had experienced significant career-related life changes where the guidance had been a main or contributing factor. The vast majority of respondents said that they found the guidance interview to be useful, with many making very positive and detailed comments about the help and support they received. Respondents also reported 'softer' outcomes from the guidance interview, reflecting the added value of guidance in terms of confidence, encouragement, sense of purpose, and greater focus.

At three months following the guidance interview:

- 82% said they were clear about their future plans, compared with 38% before the guidance interview;

- 79% said they had carried out some, or many, actions to achieve their plans;

- 60% reported career-related changes including: progression to employment, education/training, voluntary work;

- 64% of those who reported career-related changes said these would not have occurred without the guidance interview; and

- 91% rated the guidance interview as 'useful' or 'very useful.

At six months following the guidance interview:

- 49% had carried out some, or many, additional actions to achieve their plans since the first follow-up;

- 56% reported career-related changes since the first follow-up, including: progression to employment, education/training, voluntary work; and

- 58% of those who reported career-related changes at six months said these would not have occurred without the guidance interview.

> *The majority of clients believed that the support had provided a significant enhancement to their career prospects.*

The survey did not include a matched control group, nor was a comparison made between the rate of progression to learning and work of the survey respondents with that of the general adult population. Counterbalancing this is the fact that a majority of the survey respondents who progress to learning or work say they *believe* the information and advice they received had been significantly influential.

43. SQW with TNS (2005). *Evaluation of the All Age Guidance Projects*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Social Research, Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. Available from: **http://www.scotland.gov.uk/ Resource/Doc/37428/0009701.pdf** [Accessed 11 November 2008]

The Scottish All-Age Guidance (AAG) projects were set up to provide a single source of information, advice and guidance on careers, training and education for people of all ages in Scotland. The majority of the projects started in 2001, with Careers Scotland taking over the management in 2002. The evaluation included: an initial telephone survey of 596 AAG participants three months after clients' contact with Careers Scotland, and a second telephone survey of most of the same participants (506) carried out six months later; face-to-face interviews with a subset of the telephone interviewees; and an omnibus survey of the Scottish population, carried out every six months from April 2002 to March 2004, to assess interest in careers information and advice, and the profile of Careers Scotland (CS).

This study was not able to provide any quantitative baseline on the scale or quality of service prior to the introduction of AAG; this means that it is difficult to assess the counterfactual case, i.e. to assess how the individuals would have fared had they not been involved in the AAG projects. However, based on the evidence from the survey and an assessment of what was previously in place, the authors assert that the projects have added substantially to the scale and quality of provision.

Key findings:

Satisfaction with AAG services was universally high. The results indicate that the AAG service represents a qualitative improvement on other services (39% thought that the AAG service

was much better and 14% a bit better, while 9% thought it worse than alternatives they had used). The very high level of client satisfaction was attributed to the willingness of advisers to spend time with clients and the extent to which the support was tailored.

The majority of clients reported that CS had influenced their career planning, and felt that they now had more confidence to make career development decisions. The majority of clients believed that the support had provided a significant enhancement to their career prospects. Where clients had moved from unemployment to a job, or had changed jobs, 66% overall thought that careers guidance had been of some influence.

The number achieving employment or training and learning outcomes continued to increase over time. While after three months, 31% had started a new job, after nine months this had risen to 65%. Although baseline statistics suggest that the majority of clients would have progressed regardless of service interventions, the evidence suggests that the CS influence on decision making resulted in the outcomes achieved being different, pointing to a better match between jobs and individuals.

The percentage of the Scottish adult population who reported that they would find advice or guidance about careers, training or other opportunities very useful rose from 12% to 21% between March 2002 and April 2004. The percentage that had heard of Careers Scotland rose from 37% to 76% of the population over the same period.

A key recommendation was that for any future evaluation to be effective it would need to capture the longer-term effects or at least recognise their existence. The fact that the outcomes in this evaluation proved to be sustainable and improved over time would not have been picked up by a single-point evaluation.

44. Tyers, C. and Sinclair, A. (2005). *Intermediate Impacts of Advice and Guidance.* RR638. London: Department for Education and Skills. Available from: **http://www.dcsf.gov. uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR638.pdf** [Accessed 19 November 2008]

> *The study used matched control groups to strengthen the suggestion that this association is a causal one…*

This DfES publication reports the findings from a large-scale longitudinal study on the intermediate impacts of advice and guidance, carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies in association with MORI. It represents the first phase of the related longitudinal study reported in Pollard *et al.* (2007).

Over 4,000 recipients of IAG were surveyed, consisting of a group of advice/guidance (A/G) recipients and a control group of those receiving Information (I-only). Individuals from the I-only group were matched against individuals from the A/G group using propensity score matching.

Although these results may reflect the impact of the higher-level intervention of advice and guidance, compared to the provision of information only, the results need to be interpreted with caution. These results show an association between careers guidance and a number of positive outcomes. The study used matched control groups to strengthen the suggestion that this association is a causal one; however, as the authors themselves say: 'without a true baseline measure the fact that the A/G group are simply more positive about everything cannot be discounted' (pp.ix-x).

Key findings:

The A/G users were more positive than the I-only group about their current or previous work and learning achievements and their current labour market position. There are clear differences in the work and learning outcomes and in changes to the levels of confidence, motivation and opportunity awareness between the two groups. In all cases, the A/G group is significantly more likely to report having undergone changes since their intervention as a result of the help they have received. Key findings include:

- 35% of the A/G group had learned how to write a CV/application letter or complete an application form, compared with 23% of the I-only group;

- 20% of the A/G group had got a job, compared with 15% of the I-only group;

- 36% of the A/G group had enrolled on a course, compared with 30% of the I-only group;

- 35% of the A/G group had taken part in a training course, compared with 25% of the I-only group; and

- the A/G group were more positive about, and more satisfied with, their current or previous work and/or learning situations than were the I-only group.

45. Whiston, S.C., Brecheisen, B.K. and Stephens, J. (2003). Does treatment modality affect career counseling effectiveness? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, **62** (3), pp.390–410.

This research is a meta-analysis that combines the results of several studies which address a set of research hypotheses related to the question: Does treatment modality (the format in which career counselling is delivered) affect career counselling effectiveness? All of the individual pieces of research involved a random assignment of participants to different types (modalities) of counselling intervention. Although the individual studies did not include comparisons with groups that did not receive any career counselling intervention at all, i.e. 'placebo' control groups, the random assignment of participants provides a high level of evidence in terms of experimental and statistical robustness.

This meta-analysis involved the direct comparison of treatment modalities used in career interventions to individuals' career development and/or their career decision-making ability. Examples of the treatment modalities examined included: individual versus group career counselling; career workshops versus computer interventions.

To be eligible for inclusion in the meta-analysis, each study must have: (a) compared two or more career interventions; (b) involved random assignment to treatment groups; and (c) contained the necessary statistics to calculate effect size. Originally, 347 studies were identified for possible consideration; after the application of the search criteria, this was reduced to 57 studies involving 4,732 participants, 149 modality comparisons, and 736 outcome comparisons.

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> *In general, interventions that did not involve a counsellor were found to be less effective than other modalities that did involve a counsellor.*

Key findings:

- This meta-analysis provides valuable evidence of the positive impact of career interventions upon career planning and decision-making skills.

- Although the results do not relate directly to the longer-term education/training and economic outcomes, the resulting enhanced career planning and decision-making skills could provide the necessary precursors.

- In general, interventions that did not involve a counsellor were found to be less effective than other modalities that did involve a counsellor.

- Results also indicated that workshops or structured groups tended to produce better outcomes than non-structured career counselling groups.

- Furthermore, participants who used a career computer system supplemented by counselling had better outcomes than those who used only a computer system.

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