



Evidence and Impact

## Careers and guidance-related interventions

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## Using this resource

### ***Who is this professional resource for?***

This professional resource is aimed at policymakers, managers, practitioners and trainers to inform the evidence base for careers and guidance-related interventions within an Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) context in England.

### ***What does the professional resource seek to do?***

It specifically focuses upon impact assessment and measurement issues that need to be addressed in relation to accountability and service design and delivery so that effective careers and guidance-related provision is made available to all young people.

The resource also provides:

- key facts and impact statements supported by research findings; and
- strategies, tools and 'tips' that can be applied to everyday practice.

### ***How should the professional resource be used?***

The contents are wide ranging and they have been specifically designed to provide a flexible and adaptable set of materials relevant to policy and practice which are accessible through the Educational Evidence Portal (eep). The user can choose from a series of impact-related background issues, key facts, impact statements, and practical strategies, tools and tips. By making use of the hyper-links available throughout the online resource the user can access materials to suit his or her individual needs.





## Introduction

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, training providers and employers. Newly **devolved arrangements** from central to local government for the commissioning of 14-19 services, as outlined in the Children's Plan,<sup>1</sup> include requirements for a **seamless universal and targeted support service** with significantly **improved careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG)** in all schools and colleges.<sup>2</sup> It is within this context that integrated youth support services (IYSS) in England will be expected by government to ensure the delivery of a **new 14-19 entitlement for all young people** as outlined in the government's report on *14-19 Reform: Next Steps* (DCSF, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Policy developments are unfolding at a rapid pace with **new national information, advice and guidance quality standards** and new legislation in place. Local authorities and their partner organisations are now required to give greater attention to the role of **impartial** careers education, information, advice and guidance.

The **Education and Skills Act (2008)** received royal assent in December 2008. The legislation specifies a rise in the participation age in young people's education and training from 16 to 17 by 2013 and from 17 to 18 by 2015. In the Government's 2009 Budget, an extra 54,500 places for 16 and 17 year olds in school and colleges as well as 17,500 places allocated to expand 16-17 apprenticeships were announced. From this and other related developments, it is clear that services will become increasingly accountable for reporting on the impact of their services and provision.

Given the raising of the compulsory participation age to 18<sup>4</sup> and the entitlement to access all four of the 14-19 qualification routes, including the 17 Diploma lines by 2013,<sup>5</sup> there is a renewed interest in **Connexions and CEIAG outcomes and performance indicators** i.e. the theory being that NEET figures at 16+ should 'technically reduce'; therefore new universal 'performance indicators' will be required to assess the impact of careers work in general. This necessitates **new knowledge and skills development**, not only for **young people and parents/carers**, but also for those **working in local authorities, schools, colleges, and with employers and training providers**.

*Finding new ways of measuring and assessing the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions is a challenge which now needs to be met.*

<sup>1</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*. The Stationery Office, Norwich: England, December 2007

<sup>2</sup> An 'end-to-end review' of careers education and guidance (DfES, 2005a) found that there was a significant problem over the priority given to career education in schools, colleges and work-based training. It concluded that 'the greatest potential for improving career education and guidance delivery lies in driving up the quality and relevance of careers education in schools'.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Delivering 14-19 Reform: Next Steps*. October 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005b) *14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan*. London: Department for Education and Skills.



## 1. Key questions about evidence

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The challenge of measuring and assessing impact: some headlines
- 1.3 ‘Soft’ versus ‘hard’ outcomes
- 1.4 Some key terms and definitions
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## 1.1 Introduction

Effective guidance-related interventions are at the heart of several core UK policy initiatives such as Every Child Matters and the Raising of the Participation Age. Not surprisingly, the UK Government invests considerably large amounts of time and money into the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG). Being able to assess the effectiveness of IAG is important for policymakers to demonstrate the impact of these policies and to justify current levels of funding in the associated services. But evidence-based practice is also important for service managers to enable them to deploy and target resources more effectively and to achieve quality standards. Equally, it is important for practitioners to be able to identify good practice and to be able to reflect upon their own performance and improve the contribution they make. Evidence-based practice also serves to maintain a focus upon the customer and the customer's voice, and upon the customer's needs and the extent to which the service is meeting these.

If assessing the impact of IAG is considered important by policymakers, managers and practitioners alike, is there general agreement about what constitutes impact and what should be measured and assessed? Much of the performance of IAG services is monitored in terms of targets that are often seen to be imposed 'top down' from policymakers and funding bodies, and are often restricted to those that are most easily observable and measurable such as volumes of delivery, qualification levels and employment statistics. There may be other benefits to customers that are not so easily quantifiable but are nevertheless just as valid and important. Indeed, it could be argued that measuring the impact of any public policy initiative is inherently problematic given the complexity of human behaviour and the difficulty in teasing out the many influences and factors involved.

## 1.2 The challenge of measuring and assessing impact: some headlines

The introduction of target-driven approaches to publicly funded services, in career guidance and in other areas such as health and the police, raises a number of challenges such as:

- Can the true impact of public policy initiatives ever be realistically measured given the complexity of human behaviour and the interaction of so many variables?
- If so, what measures should be used to avoid any unintended or 'perverse' consequences of introducing a target-driven culture?
- How should the data be collected and interpreted to avoid or minimise any bias from the researchers themselves and from the policymakers?

Drawing upon a variety of sources, including research reports and the news media, we have devised a number of **headlines** to present some of these challenges and issues in an easily digestible way with links to the underpinning detail.





**The careers guidance community is not alone in the difficult task of showing that it makes a difference; trying to quantify the impact of most public policy initiatives can be like searching for the 'holy grail'.**

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).

Reference: Keep, E. (2004). *The Multiple Dimensions of Performance: performance as defined by whom, measured in what ways, to what ends?* Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training Working Paper 23. Available from:

<http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents29-1.pdf>

The inherently complex nature of human behaviour, and the many interacting factors and influences involved, presents a major difficulty in demonstrating the impact of public policy initiatives and makes reaching clear conclusions 'hazardous', to say the least. This complexity of human behaviour is illustrated by a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study (Cassen & Kingdom 2007) in which the possible variables associated with low achievement in schools include an interaction of many factors, only one of which is the quality of the school and the impact of the school experience. They indicate that other factors are at play, such as ethnicity, gender and the levels of socio-economic disadvantage of the individual pupils.

Reference: Cassen, R. and Kingdon, G. (2007). *Tackling low educational achievement*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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, there is disagreement on the level of social mobility achieved since 2000 with the data being interpreted differently according to political perspectives. The Labour Government argues that new research findings (Cabinet Office 2008) show an improvement in social mobility thereby demonstrating the impact of their policies such as increased nursery places, better education leading to improving exam results, more people staying on at school after the age of 16 and better on-the-job training. The Conservatives, on the other hand, point 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.

Reference: Cabinet Office (2008). *Getting on, getting ahead. A discussion paper: analysing the trends and drivers of social mobility*. London: Cabinet Office.

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/66447/gettingon.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/66447/gettingon.pdf)

BBC News web page, Monday, 3 November 2008. Accessed 12.11.08 at:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7705444.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7705444.stm)

Demonstrating impact can be very difficult even when looking at targeted and highly specific public policy initiatives. For example, a Learning Skills Development Agency (LSDA) review of regional variations in NEET (Sachdev *et al.* 2006) reports that up to 2006 the national roll-out of EMAs had shown much more modest gains in participation at age 16 than was expected with only 1 percentage point increase compared to the anticipated rise of 4 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).

References: 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>

Delorenzi, S. and Robinson, P. (2005). *Choosing to Learn: Improving participation after compulsory education*. London: IPPR.








The proportion of young people not in employment, education and training (NEET) has proved stubbornly resistant to public policy intervention and has hovered at around 10% since the mid-1990s (Nuffield Review/Rathbone 2008). This is 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 possibly be the most significant factor associated with NEET.

Reference: 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>

 **Many Performance Indicators (PIs) focus upon that which can be easily measured, i.e. counting that which can be measured rather than measuring what counts**

Keep (2004) argues that performance targets within the provision of education and training tend to embody the priorities of central government, and act as a set of perverse incentives which make co-operative 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, e.g. volumes of delivery and qualifications. He indicates that the profile of measures needs to be more balanced and comprehensive and should include qualitative as well as quantitative information, and longer-term outcomes such as employment and earning patterns as well as short-term measures such as qualification levels.

Reference: Keep, E. (2004). *The Multiple Dimensions of Performance: performance as defined by whom, measured in what ways, to what ends?* Nuffield Review Working Paper 23. Available from:

<http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents29-1.pdf>

In their survey of performance indicators in career guidance in the UK, Hughes & Gration (2006) detail the extensive range and volume of data collection carried out by all of the main providers of information, advice and guidance (IAG), including: customer characteristics; types and numbers of service interventions; and a variety of service outcomes, usually in terms of employment and education/training outcomes. They indicate that although there is no shortage of IAG-related data collection much of it is required by funding bodies for the purposes of contract compliance and contract renewal/tendering processes with little scope for the needs of practitioners to use it to improve their practice.

Reference: 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](http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_performance_indicators_and_benchmarks2006.pdf)

A report to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (CHERI 2008) highlights some of the presentational and interpretative difficulties associated with the publication of HE institutional data in the form of five major league tables. These include the perceived tension between league table performance and institutional and governmental policies and concerns (e.g. on academic standards, widening participation, community engagement and the provision of socially-valued subjects). The report concludes that, given the increasing influence of the league tables, there is an onus on policymakers and institutions themselves to promote greater public understanding of league tables and alternative sources of information about higher education. There is also an argument for codifying good practice in the compilation of rankings as a reference point for both compilers and users of league tables.

Reference: CHERI (2008). *Counting What Is Measured or Measuring What Counts? League Tables and Their Impact on Higher Education Institutions in England*. London: HEFCE. Available from:

[http://oro.open.ac.uk/11799/1/Locke%2C\\_W\\_et\\_al\\_\(2008\)\\_Counting\\_What\\_is\\_Measured\\_Or\\_Measuring\\_What\\_Counts\\_-\\_League\\_Tables\\_%26\\_Their\\_Impact\\_On\\_HEIs\\_in\\_England.pdf](http://oro.open.ac.uk/11799/1/Locke%2C_W_et_al_(2008)_Counting_What_is_Measured_Or_Measuring_What_Counts_-_League_Tables_%26_Their_Impact_On_HEIs_in_England.pdf)





### ▼ 'Chasing targets' can sometimes have unintended, often self-defeating or 'perverse' consequences.

There have been many headlines in the media on how target setting and 'target chasing' may have reduced the quality of patient care in the NHS, or may have resulted in unnecessary bureaucracy. For example, the *Times online*, under the headline 'Poor leadership and chasing targets hampers patient care', reported that: 'A lack of leadership, inadequate team-working and focusing too much on government targets emerged as common themes in the Healthcare Commission's review of its 13 major investigations between 2004 and 2007. It concluded that some boards were focused on mergers between organisations after a shake-up of NHS trusts, or on meeting targets at the expense of patient care.'

Reference: *Times online*, 10.03.09:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article3300539.ece>

Similarly, the *Telegraph online*, under the headline 'Chasing politically driven targets' reported the views of one doctor on the possible consequences of a new contract: 'An increasing part of our pay will be conditional on meeting politically driven targets set by the Department of Health. Instead of being independent advocates for patients, we will be encouraged to pressurise patients into accepting treatments ordained by government diktat. This will have a corrosive effect on the doctor-patient relationship and, as it has done in the hospital sector, pervert clinical priorities. An increasing amount of our already limited time will also be needed to collect a bewildering amount of data, ready for inspection by the new health police body that is to be established for this task.'

Reference: *Telegraph online*, 10.03.09:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/3575688/Chasing-politically-driven-targets.html>

It is not only doctors who worry that 'target chasing' may make them less, not more, effective. Under the headline 'Police chief says officers chasing targets distort picture of crime', the *Times online* reports the views of Sir Ronnie Flanagan, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who called for an urgent need for national leadership on cutting bureaucracy and for police officers on the front line to begin to exercise judgment and discretion. The picture of violent crime in Britain is being distorted by nervous police officers recording minor incidents such as playground squabbles as serious incidents. Police officers who complained about mountains of unnecessary paperwork were responsible for generating much of it themselves as a result of a 'just in case' culture in the service.

Reference: *Times online*, 10.03.09:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article2441818.ece>

In their book *Freakonomics*, Levitt and Dubner (2005) write about some of the more unusual aspects of economic policies and some of their unintended and occasional perverse consequences. 'For every clever person who goes to the trouble of creating an incentive scheme, there is an army of people, clever or otherwise, who will inevitably spend even more time trying to beat it. Cheating may or may not be human nature, but it is certainly a prominent feature in just about every human endeavour.' (p.24) They go on to quote an example in education where a culture of accountability is based upon examination results. 'In a recent study of North Carolina school teachers, some 35% of the respondents said they had witnessed their colleagues cheating in some fashion, whether by giving students extra time, suggesting answers, or manually changing students' answers.' (p.34)

Reference: Levitt, S.D. & Dubner, S.J. (2005). *Freakonomics*. London: Penguin Books.



## 1.3 'Soft' versus 'hard' outcomes

As indicated in the previous section, one of the many issues involved in measuring and assessing impact is agreeing what measures should be used. Central to this is a discussion of 'soft' versus 'hard' outcomes.

The term '**outcome**' is commonly used to describe the effect that a service has had, either on the individual customer, or on the wider community, or for the economy as a whole. In this sense, 'outcome' is frequently used to describe the 'impact' of a service. So-called '**hard outcomes**' are those that can be easily seen and measured in terms of simple quantities. For example, in the case of a training provider this could include a given percentage increase in the number of trainees gaining a recognised qualification. In the case of Connexions services it would include a percentage reduction in 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET). So called '**soft outcomes**' are those that are more subjective, more qualitative and often not so easy to quantify. For example, they could include positive changes of a personal nature such as increased self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, independence, or decreased aggression and a better ability to cope positively with stress.

Within the context of IAG, soft outcomes such as increased self-confidence and motivation are often seen as intermediary and necessary stages (or '**precursors**') towards achieving a longer-term, harder outcome, such as gaining employment after a significantly long period of unemployment. '**Distance travelled**' is often used to refer to the progress individuals make in achieving soft outcomes that may contribute to, and ultimately lead towards, sustained employment or associated hard outcomes. Measuring distance travelled normally requires assessing an individual on at least two separate occasions (and preferably more) to understand what has changed.

Because of the need for government and funding bodies to demonstrate value for money and the impact of their social and economic policies, it is clear that they will continue to set targets for IAG services that focus upon the 'harder outcomes'. For example, the new [National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships](#), introduced for use in 2008/2009, provide numerical targets for the performance of 14-19 local partnerships that include: Level 2 and Level 3 attainment at 19 years of age; participation of 17 year olds in education and training; and the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET.

Despite the government emphasis on these kind of targets, much of the available research evidence suggests that it is not always easy to demonstrate the impact of IAG in terms of the 'harder' outcomes, especially those related to longer-term labour market outcomes. This is partly because of the methodological challenges in carrying out the necessary research with members of the public, and partly because of the complex nature of human decision-making and the difficulties in teasing out the many different interacting influences and factors.

There is, however, an extensive body of evidence demonstrating the impact of IAG upon the softer, precursor outcomes. In addition, the work of practitioners is often more directly focused upon these softer precursors, with outcomes such as helping customers clarify goals, improve job search skills, re-focusing and enhancing motivation and self-confidence. Not surprisingly, many techniques and instruments have been developed to try and assess the impact of IAG and other related services in terms of soft outcomes. Some of these are highlighted in greater detail in Section 3 (for example: CAF, the Rickter Scale, the SOUL Record, and Dare to Ask?).

## 1.4 Some key terms and definitions

'**Outcome**', '**hard outcomes**', and '**soft outcomes**' have already been defined as the terms commonly used to describe the 'impact' of a service either upon the individual customer, or on the wider community, or for the economy as a whole. There are many other terms used within the context of impact assessment, some of which are briefly defined here. *(A more comprehensive coverage of key terms and definitions is given in the **Glossary**.)*

The term '**outputs**' is commonly used to refer to a provider's levels of activities and services. This could include 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. Sometimes the terms 'outputs' and 'outcomes' are used interchangeably, though it is more appropriate to use them separately in the way described above.

'**Inputs**' refers to the allocation of resources – both human and material – that contribute to the underlying '**processes**' which provide the necessary foundation for the delivery of services. There are also several different '**models**' that seek to relate 'inputs' and 'processes' to 'outputs' and outcomes' in the form of overarching impact assessment or quality assurance '**frameworks**'.

There are many different types of research '**methodologies**' used to assess the impact of IAG services. Some of these are '**qualitative**' in nature focused upon, for example, listening to what customers have to say about services in '**focus groups**' or through '**one-to-one interviews**'. Others are '**quantitative**' in nature focused upon collecting data associated with 'hard outcomes' such as employment and qualification levels.

Associated with the different research 'methodologies' – both 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' – is the issue of the nature and quality of the research evidence itself and the extent to which we can rely upon it to make clear, confident and accurate conclusions. Evidence should be presented in a way which is capable of being inspected by others ('**transparency**') and capable of withstanding critique from sceptics ('**robustness**'). The nature of research evidence and its 'robustness' is dealt with in greater detail later in this section.



## 1.5 What are the possible ‘outcomes’ (‘impact measures’) of careers and guidance-related interventions?

In theory there are many possible outcomes of IAG, some of which may be more realistically achieved and more easily demonstrable than others. The full range of possible outcomes can be listed in terms of those that might be observed at or soon after the intervention, and those that might only be observed in the longer-term, some time later. Further details about the possible outcomes of IAG are summarised in the [The Economic Benefits of Guidance](#) Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) research report (Hughes *et al.* 2002)<sup>6</sup>.

Outcomes that may be apparent at, or soon after, the intervention (so-called ‘**immediate outcomes**’) could include improving a customer’s knowledge, for example of jobs or of education opportunities; they could also include improving a customer’s skills, for example in job application or CV writing skills.

Outcomes that may only be apparent some time after the intervention (so-called ‘**intermediate outcomes**’) could include a customer sustaining job search strategies for a significant period after the initial intervention; they could also include the customer carrying out a series of actions agreed upon during an IAG interview.

‘**Longer-term outcomes**’ could include a customer successfully finding employment in a career following their decision to embark upon a particular training programme or a course in further or higher education. Outcomes for the economy, and for society as a whole, are also possible in the longer-term; these could include increased productivity, greater social inclusion and reduced public spending associated with greater inclusion.

### The range of possible IAG service outcomes

#### 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 and exchequer savings.

<sup>6</sup> Hughes, D., Bosley, S., Bowes, L. & Bysshe, S. (2002). *The Economic Benefits of Guidance*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby pp.16-17.

## 1.6 The nature of evidence: are some types of evidence better than others?

A common problem associated with evidence and the interpretation of evidence is when two things are seen to be associated together and it is assumed or implied that the relationship is a **'causal'** one, that is to say that one thing had caused the other to happen. A 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, with the implication that if a smoker were to receive help in this way they too would be more likely to stop. This association 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.

One way of helping with this problem of interpretation is to rely upon studies that use **'counterfactuals'**; that is to say, studies that try to demonstrate the effect of an intervention by making a comparison with a situation where the intervention **did not** take place (the counterfactual situation). **'Before and after'** studies fall into this category; for example, where the level of an individual's awareness of career opportunities before receiving career guidance is measured against their awareness **after** the intervention. Alternatively, comparisons could be made against a **'population parameter'**; for example, the mean duration of unemployment of individuals after they had sought career guidance could be compared with that of an equivalent sample of individuals who did not seek this kind of support.

Such 'before and after' studies, and the studies making population parameter comparisons, could be said to use rather 'weak' counterfactuals. For example, in the 'before and after' situation it is typically impossible to say that individuals who go on to achieve positive career outcomes did so because of the intervention and not some other factors. Similarly, when a comparison is made between individuals who have experienced guidance and a population parameter of those who have not, the two groups may differ in many other respects and any variation of outcomes may be due to these differences rather than the guidance intervention itself.

Counterfactuals can be made stronger by the use of **'control by calculation'** where 'multivariate' statistical techniques control and reduce retrospectively, as it were, the differences between two comparison groups other than the most important difference – that one received guidance and the other did not. For example, in a technique known as **'propensity score matching'** individuals from the two groups are paired and matched together 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 matched pairs 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 more relevant variables that can be included in such analyses, the more this risk is reduced.

The strongest counterfactuals are those provided, not by retrospective control by calculation, but by the **classical experimental study** approach. Here, individuals are **randomly assigned** by the researcher to two groups: a group where the individuals go on to receive the intervention (the so-called **'experimental'** or **'treatment'** group) and a group that does not receive the intervention (the **'placebo'** or **'control'** group). Depending on the sample sizes, assigning individuals randomly should ensure that there are no significant differences between the groups other than the guidance intervention to which any differences in outcomes can be attributed.

## 1.7 A five-level model of robustness of evidence

A **five-level model** has been developed to describe impact studies in terms of the robustness of the research design and the reliability of the evidence they provide. Generally speaking, the higher the level the more robust the evidence provided.


Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Opinion studies involving small-scale qualitative in-depth interviews or larger-scale quantitative surveys	Outcome measurement studies with no counterfactuals	Outcome measurement studies with weak counterfactuals	Outcome measurement studies with control by calculation	'Classical' experimental studies

**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: (i) qualitative research involving in-depth interviews and/or focus group sessions; or (ii) quantitative research involving questionnaires administered to larger samples. In both cases, they are based on self-report.

**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.

**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).



**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 as participation in employment and/or learning) are a result of the guidance and not to 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 more relevant variables that can be included in such analyses, the more this risk is reduced.

**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.

In reviewing impact research, the **volume of evidence** is also important, both in terms of sample size and of numbers of studies, as well as its level of rigour. More confidence can be placed in evidence emerging from studies with large samples, or which emerge 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’. But volume of evidence at lower levels cannot compensate for lack of evidence at higher levels.





## 2. The evidence base

### 2.1 Ten Key Facts ‘Careers Specialists Know For Sure’

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#### 2.2.2 News stories

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## 2.1 Ten Key Facts ‘Careers Specialists Know For Sure’

### 2.1.1 Background

In May 1999, Dr. Mark Savickas, Professor and Chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Rootstown, Ohio, delivered a keynote presentation at a major International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy held in Ottawa, Canada. He identified from literature reviews and longitudinal studies ‘14 key facts that careers specialists know for sure’ and could assert in debates about *public policy regarding workforce development and career guidance*.<sup>7</sup>

On the basis of discussions with practitioners and managers, Savickas’ earlier work was deemed relevant to current youth policy developments; however, it became clear that over the last decade the social and economic climate had changed. In February 2009, Professor Savickas kindly granted Dr. Deirdre Hughes (independent researcher) permission for these international research findings to be reviewed and adapted, where necessary, to relate specifically to *public policy developments in England regarding careers and guidance-related interventions*.<sup>8</sup>

At this point, two broad areas of need were identified from the local authorities, schools, colleges and Connexions service which included:

1. *Key facts that careers specialists ‘know for sure’* i.e. a brief overview of ‘key facts’ linked to national and international research findings that complement and extend Savickas’ earlier findings, where appropriate. The idea is to provide digestible information for those who have limited knowledge or experience of the work of careers specialists.
2. *Impact statements* i.e. access to an extensive and more detailed body of research evidence drawing upon UK and international research findings on careers and guidance-related interventions.

In addition, Connexions staff requested that *linkages should be made to national quality standards frameworks*, where feasible. In view of the timescale for the project it was agreed to provide some examples of how the quality standards relate to key facts that careers specialists ‘know for sure’.

As a result, ‘ten key facts that careers specialists know for sure’ are outlined below and these are presented as serious propositions, supported by robust research findings, that can be asserted in debates on the role and influence of careers and guidance-related interventions. Unsurprisingly, the findings can also relate to adult guidance and workforce development policy and practice.

<sup>7</sup> Available from ASK iCeGS email: [icegsenquiry@derby.ac.uk](mailto:icegsenquiry@derby.ac.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Further work is planned by Dr. Deirdre Hughes to expand the research and translate the findings into a wider UK context



### 2.1.2 Connecting talent with opportunities

In England current systems and processes that connect talent with opportunities are inefficient. Too many young people fail to see the relevance of their studies to future work and life roles. Many do not know how to identify suitable employers who may need their unique talents and many do not know how best to select a suitable institution or programme of study that can enhance their learning and personal development. This can result in a lack of motivation to optimise the learning opportunities on offer. Far too many young people are marginalised, unemployed or underemployed. Conversely, employers have no efficient mechanism to identify future talent in their own community. They lament that school, college and higher education systems are not delivering students with the employability and self-management skills, character and attitude they need. Essentially, the process of matching talents to opportunities is a hit-and-miss affair, and there are vast economic, social and human consequences.

In addition, occupations used to be relatively stable over time; now, old occupations are disappearing, new ones are being invented at a rapid rate, and the work that is done within an occupational title may be considerably different from what it was a few years ago (Savickas, 2000).<sup>9</sup> Where 'career' was once thought of as a single commitment to a lifelong occupational pursuit, it is now thought of as a lifelong journey whereby individuals participate in differing learning and work roles.

<sup>9</sup> Savickas, M.L. (2000). Career development and public policy: The role of values, theory, and research. In B. Hiebert & L. Bezanson (Eds.), *Making waves: Career development and public policy*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Career Development Foundation.

### 2.1.3 Ten key facts that careers specialists 'know for sure'

1. Childhood socialisation influences adult work performance and job satisfaction.
2. The transition from school to work can be smoothed.
3. Knowing how the world of work is organised eases vocational decision making and job transitions.
4. Individuals who have a high level of decision-making capability and a low level of life complexity generally experience less difficulty in making choices.
5. Career interventions support occupational choice and enhance transitions into learning and work.
6. Congruence between the worker and the job improves performance.
7. Workers can learn to cope more effectively with occupational stress.
8. Conflicts between career aspirations, work responsibilities and family obligations can cause personal tensions and can result in lower productivity in the workplace.
9. Occupational segregation and skill shortages are major inhibitors to individual and workforce development.
10. Part-time and temporary work affects the socialisation and development of adolescents.




**Key Fact 1: Childhood socialisation influences adult work performance and job satisfaction.**

**We know that attitudes towards work are formed early in life, so career education, information, advice and guidance policies and programmes should begin at an early stage.**

Vocational psychologists such as Super, Crites, Gribbons, and Lohnes, as cited by Savickas (1993), have each concluded from their longitudinal studies that planful competence in early adolescence relates to more realistic educational and vocational choices, occupational success, and career progress. Longitudinal studies in other fields such as epidemiology, sociology, psychiatry, and developmental psychology also have shown that early experiences help to shape an individual's worklife.

Reference: Savickas, M.L. (1993). Predictive Validity Criteria for Career Development Measures. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 1, 93-104.

The sociologist Clausen (1991) used a 50-year longitudinal study to show that planful competence in early adolescence, i.e. a syndrome of self-confidence, dependability, and effective use of intellectual resources, led to orderly careers in which individuals were stable and satisfied, with fewer disruptions of career and marriages in mid-life. Low competence related to recurrent life crises that involved career problems, marital conflict, divorce, depression, and alienation. Clausen demonstrated that planful competence allowed adolescents to make better life choices, helped them elicit social support, contributed to them reaching their goals, and enabled them to deal with the ill-structured dilemmas of work life.

Reference: Clausen, J.S. (1991). Adolescent competence and the shaping of the life course. *American Journal of Sociology*, 96, 805-842.

The epidemiologists Kalimo and Vuori, as cited by Savickas (2000), traced the development of Finnish children for 25 years. They concluded that poor self-esteem and deficient social conditions in childhood constrained the development of personal resources and resulted in greater probability of entering and remaining in inadequate jobs as well as more prevalent adult health problems.

Reference: op.cit.

Using the perspective of psychodynamic psychiatry, Valliant and Valliant, as cited by Savickas (2000), reported that for underprivileged men the capacity to work in childhood predicted mental health and capacity for relationships at mid-life, surpassing family problems and all other childhood variables in predicting success in adult life. By the age of 47, men who were competent and industrious at age 14 were twice as likely to have warm relationships with a variety of people, five times more likely to be well paid for their adult work, and 16 times less likely to have suffered significant unemployment. Intelligence was not an important mediating factor.

Reference: op.cit.

As cited by Savickas (2000), the developmental psychologist Bynner (1997) analysed data from a major British longitudinal study involving 17,000 people who were born in the same week in April, 1970 and were surveyed at ages 5, 10, 16, and 21. Individuals with poor basic skills (reading, spelling, writing, and counting) at age 10 showed different career paths at age 16. Rather than continue their education, they tended to get jobs (about 45%), enter Government Youth Training Programmes, or be unemployed. Problems with basic skills clearly led to problems in staying in school and acquiring more specific work-related skills.

Reference: op.cit.

Using the perspective of career learning theory as espoused by Law (1996) and Law and McGowan (1999) which draws upon experimental and survey work carried out by development psychologists and social-learning theorists, children's impressions of what happens in working life can be identified at a very early stage through curriculum and work-related activities in primary and middle school settings.

References: Law, B. (1996). A career-learning theory. In A.G. Watts *et al.*, *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Law, B. and McGowan, B. (1999). *Opening Doors – A Framework for Developing Career-related Learning in Primary and Middle Schools*. Cambridge: CRAC-NICEC.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting an *early interventionist approach* demonstrates that an individual or organisation is being mindful of the need to influence curriculum development. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG in England, specifically in relation to quality standard (QS 2) and evidence indicator 2.4.

**QS 2 | Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal well-being and financial capability issues that they need.**

**Evidence indicator 2.4** Young people at risk or who may need specialist support or help with personal development, confidence building and self-esteem are identified and given the help that they need.

### **Key Fact 2: The transition from school to work can be smoothed.**

**We know that having access to career exploration activities helps broaden horizons and motivates individuals to engage in learning and work.**

**We also know that effective school leadership and investment in the development of staff and students acts as a catalyst for unleashing potential.**

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.'

Reference: Morris, M., Golden, S. and Lines, A. (1999). *The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Transition at 16*. RD21. Sheffield: DfEE.

Five years on, Morris (2004) explored findings from a number of large-scale research studies on careers education and guidance conducted over the previous decade. She argued 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. In particular, the importance of career exploration skills were highlighted; for example, the skills that young people need in order to use computerised systems, paper sources and people, to enable them to find out about their career options and/or the courses available to them.

Reference: Morris, M. (2004). *The Case for Careers Education and Guidance for 14-19 Year Olds*. Slough: NFER.

[http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf\\_docs/MM483.pdf](http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf_docs/MM483.pdf)

A Work-Related Learning Baseline Study (QCA, 2004) highlighted the differences between male and female students, and between urban and rural students, in terms of reported attitudes to work-related issues and in terms of reported levels of participation in work-related learning activities. For example, girls are more likely to have a positive attitude towards learning about jobs and working life than boys, and students from schools in urban areas are more likely to have done certain work-related activities than students in rural schools. The relationship between work-related learning and careers work in schools needs to be tightened to ensure adequate career exploration activities are available for all pupils.

Reference: QCA (2004). *Work-related learning baseline study*. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Bandura *et al.* (2001) indicate that perceived self-efficacy and a sense of agency, rather than actual achievement, is a key determinant of self-identity and career aspirations.

Reference: Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. and Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-Efficacy Beliefs as Shapers of Children's Aspirations and Career Trajectories. *Child Development*, 72, 1, 187-206.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting a *leadership in careers education approach* and ensuring access to *career exploration activities* demonstrates that an individual or organisation is being mindful of the need to influence and shape curriculum programme design and development for young people *and* schools staff. This is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG in England, specifically in relation to quality standard (QS 2, 4 and 9) and evidence indicators 2.2, 4.9, 9.1 and 9.2.

#### **QS 2 | Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal well-being and financial capability issues that they need.**

**Evidence indicator 2.2** Young people reaching the upper age limit for young people's information, advice and guidance services are supported in their transition to specialist services for adults.

#### **QS 4 | Young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options.**

**Evidence indicator 4.9** Young people with special needs/learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided (where required by statute or desirable) with a Transition Plan from Year 9 and a section 140 assessment in Year 11 (or later if they need it).

#### **QS 9 | Programmes of career and personal development for young people are planned and provided collaboratively.**

**Evidence indicator 9.1** Learning providers and external information, advice and guidance providers collaborate in the planning and provision of information, advice and guidance provision and in the delivery of the curriculum.

**Evidence indicator 9.2** Learning providers receive training and support from external information, advice and guidance providers and others (e.g. Local Authority advisers) to help them to deliver effective programmes of career and personal development and of financial capability.



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**Key Fact 3: Knowing how the world of work is organised eases vocational decision-making and job transitions.**

**We know that when individuals face an initial occupational choice or change jobs it helps tremendously to have a compact view of the world of work.**

**We also know that vocational exploration and information-gathering increases self-knowledge and awareness of suitable educational and occupational options.**

When individuals face an initial occupational choice or change jobs, they must often choose from among lots of differing options. Savickas (1999) highlights one of the best ways to determine the realism of a specific career choice is to assess the amount and relevance of information that an individual has collected about that choice. In addition to encouraging exploratory experiences, public policies should continue to support occupational information delivery systems, especially those that use computer technology and the internet to widely distribute services and products.

Reference: Savickas, M. (1999). *Career Development and Public Policy: The Role of Values, Theory, and Research, International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy: International Collaboration for National Action Ottawa, Canada, May 2-4, 1999*

As cited by Savickas (2000), Dawis highlights that vocational psychology has shown that it helps tremendously to have 'a more compact view of the world of work at a more manageable level of abstraction'. Of course this view can be socio-economic in terms of pay and fringe benefits or functional in terms of tasks and work conditions. Career interventions can also smooth job transitions by helping job changers learn which jobs are easiest for them to move into and what specific skills they need to acquire. Reference: op.cit.

Based on 40 years of research, Holland (1997) has provided a compact view of the work world in terms of psychological attributes. He organised all jobs onto a hexagonal model of the world of work. Because jobs are mapped using personality traits, it is easy for individuals to identify how their own personality traits relate to jobs. By organising occupational information and personality types using the same language, career development specialists ease decision making by teaching clients that the work world has a meaningful structure into which they must fit themselves. Knowing how environments are organised is a transferable skill that individuals can use to adapt to many diverse life situations.

Reference: Holland, J.L. (1997). *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments*, 3rd edition. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Bimrose *et al.* (2008) reported on findings from a five-year longitudinal study in England which involved tracking the career trajectories of 50 adults over a five-year period to evaluate the role of guidance in the process of career development and progression. The findings showed that whilst career trajectories often shift, reverse, and/or remain static, adults moving between and within education, training and paid employment generally seek to better understand how the world of work is organised through a range of differing approaches to career decision making. The idea of simply matching their personality and traits to jobs is a small part of the overall process. In most cases, adults apply a pragmatic approach to the realities of the labour market based on differing sources of information to form a compact view of the availability or otherwise of appropriate work opportunities.

Reference: Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A. & Hughes, D. (2008). *Adult Career Progression and Advancement: A five-year study of the effectiveness of guidance*. Warwick: Institute for Employment Research, Warwick University.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting a *compact view of the labour market, vocational exploration and information-gathering activities* demonstrates an individual or organisation is being mindful to support young people on their journey to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and work. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 3) – evidence indicator 3.1; quality standard (QS 4) – evidence indicator 4.3, quality standard (QS 9) – evidence indicator 9.6.

#### **QS 3 | Young people have the information they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and careers.**

**Evidence indicator 3.1** High-quality up-to-date and impartial information about the full range of learning and career options; the progression opportunities that they lead to, including pathways to higher education; the labour market and opportunities within it (including pay rates across different sectors) community, voluntary and other developmental activities; financial support, including the range of support available to higher education students is provided in a range of formats reflecting the different ages, needs and abilities of young people.

#### **QS 4 | Young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options.**

**Evidence indicator 4.3** Careers advice and guidance is always impartial (e.g. independent of the vested interests of the person/organisation providing the advice). It is based on a young person's needs and on up-to-date labour market information and intelligence about opportunities available locally, nationally and internationally.

#### **QS 9 | Programmes of career and personal development for young people are planned and provided collaboratively.**

**Evidence indicator 9.6** Learning providers and external information, advice and guidance providers have strong links with local employers and understand their needs.

### **Relationship to the QCA Framework: Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19**

The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which help young people to develop a *compact view of the labour market, vocational exploration and information-gathering activities* and thus contribute to successful transitions.

- Element 1** Recognise, develop and apply skills for enterprise and employability.
- Element 3** Develop an awareness of the extent and diversity of opportunities in learning and work.
- Element 4** Use their experiences of the world of work to extend their understanding of careers and work.
- Element 5** Learn from contact with people who work.
- Element 6** Learn about how and why businesses operate.
- Element 7** Learn about working practices and environments.
- Element 8** Undertake tasks and activities set in work contexts.



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**Key Fact 4: Individuals who have a high level of decision-making capability and a low level of life complexity generally experience less difficulty in making choices.**

We know that the assessment of career decision-making readiness involves considering individuals' decidedness, as well as their capability to make decisions given the complexity of the life they lead.

We also know that public policymakers expect careers services to deliver the right level of service, to the right person at the right time and at the lowest possible cost. This has resulted in a differentiated service delivery model emerging in youth policy and adult guidance systems throughout Western society.

Individuals' level of readiness for decision making can be categorised as high, medium, or low. Individuals who are decisive and decided generally have a higher level of readiness and experience less difficulty in making choices. Individuals who are indecisive or undecided generally have a lower level of readiness and find it more difficult to make career choices.

Leading cognitive psychologists, such as Klaczynski *et al.* (2001) and Sampson *et al.* (1999), indicate that readiness also includes the capability of adolescents and adults to make decisions and the complexity of their life circumstances. Capability refers to internal factors that influence an individual's capacity to make effective career choices. Complexity refers to external factors that make it more, or less, difficult to make effective career choices. Specific aspects of complexity include: the family; the economy; employing organisations; society; and catastrophic events. Individuals who have a low level of decision-making capability and a high level of life complexity generally have a lower level of readiness and experience more difficulty in making choices.

References: Klaczynski, P., Byrnes, J. and Jacobs, J. (2001). Introduction to the special issue: The development of decision-making. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22, 225-236.

Sampson, J., Peterson, G., Lenz, J., Reardon, R. and Saunders, D. (1999) *The use and development of the Career Thoughts Inventory*. Florida: Psychological Assessment Resources. Florida State University, USA.

Studies that have compared adult with adolescent decision making, such as those carried out by Byrnes and McClenny (1994) and Halpern-Felsher and Caufmann (2001), show that adults have greater analytical skills and can search a greater range of options for problem-solving, whilst adolescents are less likely to consider the risks and benefits associated with decisions, and are less likely to seek clarifying information or advice.

References: Byrnes, J. and McClenny, B. (1994). Decision-making in young adolescents and adults. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 58, 359-388.

Halpern-Felsher, B. and Caufmann, E. (2001). Costs and benefits of a decision: Decision-making competence in adolescents and adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22, 257-273.

Sociological accounts of career choice explain decision making with reference to social class positioning, inequality of opportunity and educational disadvantage, resulting in 'anticipatory socialisation': individuals having low expectations, taking what they can get, and learning to like what is available rather than what they aspire to. Hodkinson *et al.* (1996) highlight a limiting, class-related world view which is reproduced in certain cultural contexts and adopted by many young people, distilling to habitual beliefs and preferences. Grossman *et al.* (1992) indicate that some youngsters are equipped with protective factors and the capacity to cope with stress, adversity and disadvantage 'against the odds' others less so. Effective careers guidance interventions provide a safe place for individuals to assess their state of readiness for decision-making and career progression.

References: Hodkinson, P., Sparkes, A. and Hodkinson, H. (1996). *Triumphs and Tears: Young People, Markets and the Transition from School to Work*. London: David Fulton.



Grossman, F., Beinashowitz, J., Anderson, L., Sakurai, M., Finin, L. and Flaherty, M. (1992). Risk and resilience in young adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 21, 5, 529-550.



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**Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting a *decision-making readiness approach* demonstrates an individual or organisation is being attentive in supporting young people and their parents/carers to make well-informed and realistic decisions the world of work. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 1) – evidence indicator 1.1; quality standard (QS 4) – evidence indicator 4.3; quality standard (QS 7) – evidence indicator 7.11.

**QS 1 | Young people are informed about how information, advice and guidance services can help them and how to access the services they need.**

**Evidence indicator 1.1** Young people understand the service they can expect from local information, advice and guidance providers; their own responsibilities in relation to the usage of these services; where they can go for help if they are not getting the services that they can reasonably expect.

**QS 4 | Young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options.**

**Evidence indicator 4.3** Careers advice and guidance is always impartial (e.g. independent of the vested interests of the person/organisation providing the advice). It is based on a young person's needs and on up-to-date labour market information and intelligence about opportunities available locally, nationally and internationally.

**QS 7 | Parents and carers know how information, advice and guidance services can help their children and know how these services are accessed.**

**Evidence indicator 7.11** Parents and carers are supported and enabled to provide their children with impartial information, advice and guidance.

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**Key Fact 5: Career interventions effectively support occupational choice and enhance transitions into learning and work.**

**We know that effective career interventions help individuals gain self-knowledge and improved self-esteem that can inform where they can be satisfactory and satisfied workers.**

Citing Killeen and Whiston *et al.*, Savickas (2000) highlights that career interventions help individuals gain self-knowledge about where they can be satisfactory and satisfied workers. The interventions can also smooth job transitions by helping job changers learn which jobs are easiest for them to move into and what specific skills they need to acquire. Individuals who demonstrate autonomy, self-esteem, and a future orientation, not only plan their careers more successfully, they also become more satisfactory and satisfied workers.

Reference: *op.cit.*

Evidence also supports the effectiveness of teaching individuals job-seeking skills. 'Give a person a fish and they eat for a day... teach them how to fish and they eat for the rest of their life.' The City & Guilds of London Institute (2004) reported that the proportion of people considering a career change (at any point in time) could double over the next 20 years, from roughly 10% to 20% of employees. In 2004, approximately 1 in 10 people in the UK had a current intention to change their career. With rising unemployment levels in the UK there is growing evidence of the need to teach individuals to develop a greater awareness of their self-worth, knowledge, skills and experience.

Reference: City & Guilds of London Institute (2004). *Portfolio Careers*. London: CGLI.

Over 75 years of systematic research has produced a clear understanding of interests as a motivational construct along with a sophisticated technology for measuring vocational interests of men and women across the life span and within diverse cultures. Most importantly, this research has documented how best to communicate interest inventory results to clients in a manner that fosters their occupational self-efficacy, vocational exploratory behaviour, and career decision making (Savickas & Spokane, 1999). Self-knowledge about vocational interests enhances educational and vocational decision making. Conversely, knowledge about a candidate's interests can be useful in selecting individuals for training programmes. The measurement of vocational interests is a singular accomplishment of vocational psychology.

Reference: Savickas, M.L., Spokane, A.R. (Eds.) (1999). *Vocational interests: Meaning, measurement, and counseling use*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting strategies for self-improvement demonstrates an individual or organisation is developing personalised services that are more meaningful to young people. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 5) – evidence indicators 5.2, 5.4 and 5.6 and quality standard (QS 8) – evidence indicators 8.8, 8.10 and 8.11.

#### **QS 5 | Information, advice and guidance services promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes.**

**Evidence indicator 5.2** Information, advice and guidance services are personalised to meet the needs of individual young people.

**Evidence indicator 5.4** Services are sensitive to the faith, cultural, and family background that people come from.

**Evidence indicator 5.6** Communications with young people are adapted to reflect the different needs of recipients (e.g. in relation to basic skills needs or disabilities).

#### **QS 8 | Information, advice and guidance providers understand their roles and responsibilities.**

**Evidence indicator 8.8** Every learning provider and external information, advice and guidance provider has policies on: promoting equality (including age, gender, racial and disability equality); impartiality; diagnosing and assessing the needs of individuals for information, for advice, and for guidance; engaging parents and carers; data sharing; the monitoring and evaluation of information, advice and guidance provision; and the impact and implementation of these policies are reviewed annually with action taken to rectify weaknesses.

**Evidence indicator 8.10** Learning providers notify external providers of information, advice and guidance when a young person drops out of learning.

**Evidence indicator 8.11** External providers of information, advice and guidance take swift action to re-engage young people that have dropped out of learning to mitigate the risk of long-term disengagement.

### **Relationship to the QCA Framework: Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19**

The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which encourage young people to become self aware and to seek guidance interventions which help them to achieve this in relation to career aspiration.

**Element 1.** Recognise, develop and apply skills for enterprise and employability.

**Element 2.** Relate their own abilities, attributes and achievements to career intentions, and make informed choices based on an understanding of available options.



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### **Key Fact 6: Congruence between the worker and the job improves performance.**

**We know that the goal of career interventions is to help individuals move to increasing congruence with the work environment, defined by job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity as opposed to turnover, absence, tardiness, and interpersonal conflicts.**

Edwards, cited by Savickas, M.L. (2000), concluded from a literature review that ‘across a variety of measures, samples, job content areas, and operationalisations, person-job fit has demonstrated the expected relationships with outcomes.’ Congruence is also important from an employer’s perspective, especially in terms of productivity.

Reference: op.cit.

Mayston (2002), a leading economist at York University, highlights the economic policy importance of a well-functioning labour market and a reduction in the extent of social exclusion to which high quality career guidance can make positive contributions. A central concept in the economic evaluation of the benefits of career guidance is that of human capital. The value of an individual’s human capital is that resulting from the individual’s current and future life-time earnings. Career guidance can help to add value of the individual’s human capital beyond what it would have been in the absence of career guidance.

Reference: Mayston, D. (2002). *Evaluating the Benefits of Careers Guidance*. CeGS Research Report Series No. 4. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Employers who can select more congruent employees from a better applicant pool certainly have an advantage over their competitors. After conducting a meta-analysis of 85 years of research on personnel selection, Schmidt and Hunter (in press) concluded that ‘the cumulative findings show that the research knowledge we now have makes it possible for employers today to substantially increase their productivity, output, and the learning ability of their work-forces by using procedures that work well and avoiding those that do not.’ In short, person-job congruence benefits the worker, the company, and the nation.

Reference: Schmidt and Hunter (in press)



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting a congruence perspective demonstrates that an individual or organisation recognises the need for impartial and improved information advice and guidance. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 2) – evidence indicators 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6; (QS 3) evidence indicator 3.7 and (QS 4) – evidence indicator 4.10.

#### **QS 2 | Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal well being and financial capability issues that they need.**

**Evidence indicator 2.3** Young people accessing initial advice and guidance on personal, social, health and financial issues are referred to impartial specialist services as appropriate.

**Evidence indicator 2.4** Young people at risk or who may need specialist support or help with personal development, confidence building and self-esteem are identified and given the help that they need.

**Evidence indicator 2.6** Young people's needs are assessed as appropriate (this is likely to be through the Common Assessment Framework if they are likely to need support from a range of agencies or their needs are unclear).

#### **QS 3 | Young people have the information they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and careers**

**Evidence indicator 3.7** Young people are matched and successfully placed into training and employment opportunities.

#### **QS 4 | Young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options.**

**Evidence indicator 4.10** Young people reaching the upper age limit for young people's information, advice and guidance services know about careers services for adults and how to access them, and support is provided to facilitate a smooth transition.

### **Relationship to the QCA Framework: Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19**

The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which encourage young people to develop emotional resilience and transition skills.

**Element 1.** Recognise, develop and apply their skills for enterprise and employability.

**Element 7.** Learn about working practices and environments.



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**Key Fact 7: Workers can learn to cope more effectively with occupational stress.**

**We know that role overload, insufficient resources to do tasks, excessive responsibility, and noxious physical environments are elements which cause stress, but how much of the occupational stress becomes personal strain depends on a worker's coping resources.**

The context in which work is performed also influences mental health. As jobs are being redesigned to emphasise process over content, public policy has an opportunity to reinforce the importance of including intrinsic rewards and importance into new jobs. If particular jobs cannot be redesigned to promote health, then employers can be prodded by careers specialists and other professionals to provide workers with training in coping with occupational stress.

Workers experience less strain if they cope with stress by recreation, self-care, social support, and rational problem solving. These four types of coping behaviours have direct effects on strain, but they do not have a direct link to job satisfaction (Fogarty *et al.* as cited by Savickas 2000). Public policy can encourage employers and career specialists to increase their efforts in teaching these commonsense and empirically-validated coping techniques.

Reference: op.cit.

Good jobs foster mental health whereas poor jobs cause distress (Loscoocco & Roschelle, as cited by Savickas 2000). Good jobs usually provide substantive complexity, challenge, feedback, variety, and autonomy. Jobs are even better in this regard if they include significant tasks with which workers can identify. In contrast, poor jobs involve excessive workload or responsibility, role ambiguity, forced overtime, conflicting roles, tasks more complex than ability, and lack of control over job demands.

Reference: op.cit.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting a positive action approach demonstrates an individual or organisation is focusing on the need to provide impartial information, advice and guidance. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards 1–7 for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 2) – evidence indicators 2.2 and 2.6; (QS 3) – evidence indicator 3.1 and (QS 5) – evidence indicator 5.4.

#### **QS 2 | Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal well-being and financial capability issues that they need.**

**Evidence indicator 2.2** Initial advice and guidance is available at times and in places that are convenient for young people.

**Evidence indicator 2.6** Young people's needs are assessed as appropriate: (this is likely to be through the Common Assessment Framework if they are likely to need support from a range of agencies or their needs are unclear).

#### **QS 3 | Young people have the information they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and careers.**

**Evidence indicator 3.1** High-quality up-to-date and impartial information about:

- the full range of learning and career options
- the progression opportunities that they lead to, including pathways to higher education
- the labour market and opportunities within it (including pay rates across different sectors)
- community, voluntary and other developmental activities
- financial support, including the range of support available to higher education students.

#### **QS 5 | Information, advice and guidance services promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes.**

**Evidence indicator 5.4** Services are sensitive to the faith, cultural, and family background that people come from.

### **Relationship to the QCA Framework: Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19**

The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which encourage young people to develop and implement decisions based on an understanding of their own and others' life and work roles.

**Element 2.** Relate their own abilities, attributes and achievements to career intentions, and make informed choices based on an understanding of available options.

**Element 5.** Learn from contact with people who work.



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**Key Fact 8: Conflicts between career aspirations, work responsibilities and family obligations can cause personal tensions and can result in lower productivity in the workplace.**

We know that competing priorities can cause significant personal strain and that this can have an impact on performance in the workplace.

We also know that problems can be bi-directional, with work problems contaminating family life and family responsibilities (e.g. child care, care of elders) distracting work concentration.

Conflicts between career aspirations, work responsibilities and family obligations can cause significant personal strain and result in lower productivity in the workplace. Problems can be bi-directional, with work problems contaminating family life and family responsibilities (e.g. child care, care of elders) distracting work concentration. Research on work-family conflict has accelerated during the last 25 years prompted by the increasing number of dual-earner partners or single parents.

Loscocco & Roschelle, as cited by Savickas 2000, highlight that legislative and employer initiatives that enact 'family-friendly' work policies such as flexibility in work scheduling can alleviate some of this conflict.

Reference: op.cit.

After reviewing 59 empirical studies on work-family conflict, Greenhaus and Parasuraman, as cited by Savickas 2000, suggested work-family integration as a possible new paradigm, one which focuses on opportunities wherein multiple roles can expand rather than deplete resources. Positive spillover (enhancement) can be made to outweigh negative depletion (conflict). Two examples of positive spillover are 'status enhancement' and 'personality enrichment'. Status enhancement means using money, connections, and other work resources to promote family well-being. Personality enrichment means transferring skills and attitudes from one domain to the role. Public policies that reduce conflict and increase integration will be good for families, as well as organisations and individual workers.

Reference: op.cit.



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Adopting a work and family integration approach demonstrates an individual or organisation is focusing on the need to help young people prioritise their personal and career needs. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 1) – evidence indicators 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 and 1.5; (QS 2) – evidence indicators 2.1 and 2.9; and (QS 5) – evidence indicators 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7.

**QS 1 | Young people are informed about how information, advice and guidance services can help them and how to access the services they need.**

**Evidence indicator 1.1** Young people understand:

- the service that they can expect from local information, advice and guidance providers,
- their own responsibilities in relation to the usage of these services,
- where they can go to for help if they are not getting the service that they can reasonably expect.

**Evidence indicator 1.2** The benefits of information, advice and guidance services are promoted to all young people.

**Evidence indicator 1.4** Young people understand the different roles and responsibilities of information, advice and guidance providers.

**Evidence indicator 1.5** Young people are aware of, and know how to access, appropriate local and national prospectuses, websites and helplines, including Connexions Direct.

**QS 2 | Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal wellbeing and financial capability issues that they need.**

**Evidence indicator 2.1** Information about personal and economic wellbeing and financial capability issues is provided to all young people (including through parents/carers).

**Evidence indicator 2.9** Young people receive the specialist advice and guidance that they need at the time they need it.

**QS 5 | Information, advice and guidance services promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes.**

**Evidence indicator 5.2** Information, advice and guidance services are personalised to meet the needs of individual young people.

**Evidence indicator 5.4** Services are sensitive to the faith, cultural, and family background that people come from.

**Evidence indicator 5.5** Stereotypes and limited career aspirations are challenged, for example through the use of positive actions, activities, taster sessions, the use of appropriate role models and work placements.

**Evidence indicator 5.7** Active efforts are made to ensure that the information, advice and guidance workforce reflects the diversity of the wider community.



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The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which encourage young people to develop the ability to identify their own career needs and to manage personal priorities based on knowledge of available options.

**Element 2.** Relate their own abilities, attributes and achievements to career intentions, and make informed choices based on an understanding of available options.

**Element 3.** Develop an awareness of the extent and diversity of opportunities in learning and work.

**Element 4.** Use their experiences of work to extend their understanding of careers and work.

**Element 5.** Learn from contact with people who work.

**Key Fact 9: Occupational segregation and skill shortages are major inhibitors to individual and workforce development.**

We know that individuals with low expectations often take what they can get rather than follow their dreams and aspirations.

We also know that occupational segregation by gender has shown a stubborn resistance to change despite many women entering the labour market more highly qualified.

Gender inequality is a feature of labour markets around the world. Despite the general recognition that the economic prosperity of all nations can only be enhanced by the full and equal integration of women into labour forces at every level and within each occupational sector, women continue to be marginalised. Whilst the progress made by some women is encouraging, in general terms they are far from enjoying equity with their male counterparts. Inequality is not only limited to gender but extends to race, disability and social class.

Sociological accounts of career choice outlined by Banks *et al.* (1992) and Willis (1977) explain decision making with reference to social class positioning, inequality of opportunity and educational disadvantage, resulting in 'anticipatory socialisation': individuals having low expectations, taking what they can get, and learning to like what is available rather than what they aspire to.

References: Banks, M. *et al.* (1992). *Careers identities*. London: OU Press.

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: how working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnham: Saxon House.

Two types of occupational segregation are discernible: (i) horizontal, referring to the tendency of women to be employed in a restricted range of occupational areas different from those in which men are employed; and (ii) vertical, referring to women being employed at lower levels in organisations. The cost of occupational segregation to economies is substantial. In the UK, it has been estimated that removing barriers to women working in occupations traditionally done by men and increasing further women's participation in the labour market could be worth between £15 billion and £23 billion, or 1.3 to 2.0 per cent GDP (Women & Work Commission, 2006). A combination of occupational segregation and part-time working has resulted in women's pay being consistently set at levels lower than men's.

Reference: Women & Work Commission (2006). *Shaping a Fairer Future*. Retrieved from February 2006.

[http://www.womenatwork.org.uk/Userfiles/Files/Reports/wwc\\_shaping\\_a\\_fairer%20future\\_execsum06.pdf](http://www.womenatwork.org.uk/Userfiles/Files/Reports/wwc_shaping_a_fairer%20future_execsum06.pdf)

The Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol highlights there is also a body of research literature relating to the support needs of people with learning difficulties, including the strategies which carers and advocates can use to enable individuals with learning difficulties to take part in decisions which affect their lives.

Reference: Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol *Having a Voice (supporting children with learning difficulties to express their views)*.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/>



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Purcell (2000) indicates that whilst women are increasingly gaining access to previously male-dominated employment, there has been little change in the balance of domestic labour and responsibilities for children. Women are still taking the full weight of domestic responsibilities. The pay gap between men and childless women has closed.

Reference: Purcell, K. (2000). Changing boundaries in employment and organisations. In Purcell, K. *Changing Boundaries In Employment*. Bristol: Academic Press.

Bimrose (2001) argues it is essential for those entering the labour market to ensure they are able to offer the skill set to employers that is required. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects are critical for labour market progression. For example, a study of the factors that inhibit women's career progression identified the lack of mathematics as a major barrier to progression.

Reference: Bimrose, J. (2001). Girls and women: Challenges for careers guidance practice. In *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 29, 1, pp 79-94. [ISSN 0306-9885]

### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting strategies that *promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes* demonstrates an individual or organisation is addressing the need to provide impartial information advice and guidance. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards 1–7 for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 5) – evidence indicators 5.1 – 5.7.

#### **QS 5 | Information, advice and guidance services promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes.**

**Evidence indicator 5.1** Services reach all young people in the local community, including disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

**Evidence indicator 5.2** Information, advice and guidance services are personalised to meet the needs of individual young people.

**Evidence indicator 5.3** Young people facing barriers to access to learning, training and employment are given the help that they need to overcome these barriers.

**Evidence indicator 5.4** Services are sensitive to the faith, cultural, and family background that people come from.

**Evidence indicator 5.5** Stereotypes and limited career aspirations are challenged, for example through the use of positive actions activities, taster sessions, the use of appropriate role models and work placements.

**Evidence indicator 5.6** Communications with young people are adapted to reflect the different needs of recipients (e.g. in relation to basic skills needs or disabilities).

**Evidence indicator 5.7** Active efforts are made to ensure that the information, advice and guidance workforce reflects the diversity of the wider community.



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### **Key Fact 10: Part-time and temporary work affects the socialisation and development of adolescents.**

**We know that along with family, school and peer group, work can be a key social context affecting the development of youth. In particular, appropriate part-time work opportunities can help improve motivation and self-confidence as well as addressing feelings of low self-esteem and limited aspiration.**

Along with family, school, and peer group, work can be a key social context affecting the development of youth (Stone and Mortimer, cited by Savickas 2000). Social scientists debate whether young people should be encouraged to work and whether some jobs are better than others to foster healthy adolescent development; nevertheless, a proportion of school leavers work for pay outside the home during the academic year. Unfortunately, adolescents' work experience is usually unconnected to their occupational aspirations and career plans.

The National Skills Forum (2009) reported that work experience is usually organised by schools, which either allocate placements or advise pupils on finding their own placements. It is likely that pupils asked to find their own placements will do so based on gender stereotypes about job roles. There is also evidence to suggest that when schools allocate placements they do so based on traditional assumptions about gender roles.

References: op. cit.

National Skills Forum (2009). *Closing the Gender Skills Gap: A National Skills Forum report on women, skills and productivity*. London, February 2009.

Over the last two decades a number of researchers have turned their attention to the issue of child employment. In a review of this work, McKechnie *et al.* (1996) suggested that the data indicated that approximately one third of children were likely to be employed, while an additional third would have worked at some time in the past. Such data is important in supporting the view that part-time employment is a normal part of the pre-16-year-old's experience in Britain.

Reference: McKechnie, J., Lindsay, S., Hobbs, S. & Lavalette, M. (1996). Adolescents' Perceptions of the Role of Part-Time Work, *Adolescence*, Vol. 31, 1996.

Based on their evaluation of the empirical evidence, Stone and Mortimer (as cited by Savickas 2000) recommended that public policy explicitly link school to work so that school personnel supervise work and make the workplace a context for youth development. This would allow teachers to connect work to school in meaningful ways, thereby helping students to view work as a complement to school, not a separate domain. The links between school and work now are especially loose at lower levels, with school being almost irrelevant for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Stone and Mortimer also encouraged employers to provide moderate work hours over a long period of time, improve the quality of jobs, and increase opportunities for skill development.

Reference: op.cit.

Even more radically, policy could reconstruct adolescence as a life stage. As cited by Savickas 2000, Grubb highlights that adolescence, as a distinct period in life, is synonymous with twentieth century industrial societies. Currently adolescence is socially constructed as period of preparation for work, a life stage truncated by employment. As society moves toward lifelong learning and job flexibility, adolescence could be reconstructed as mix of work and schooling that extends into the thirties, giving greater flexibility around decisions related to career choice and certainty about it. Such a reconfiguration of adolescence as a life stage could reduce the floundering, drifting, and stagnating among school leavers while increasing training and employment.

Reference: op.cit.



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### **Relationship to National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Adopting strategies for *exposure of young people to part-time work and critical reflection* demonstrates an individual or organisation is taking steps to strengthen links between local employers and programmes of career and personal development for young people. This approach is compliant with the national quality standards for young people's IAG, in particular: quality standard (QS 6) – evidence indicator 6.1; and quality standard (QS 9) – evidence indicator 9.6.

#### **QS 6 | Learning providers and external information, advice and guidance providers have strong links with local employers and understand their needs.**

**Evidence indicator 6.1** Young people from all backgrounds are engaged in: the design, planning, quality assurance and evaluation of information, advice and guidance services; processes for commissioning information, advice and guidance services; the delivery of information, advice and guidance services, for example, through peer mentoring and workshops.

#### **QS 9 | Programmes of career and personal development for young people are planned and provided collaboratively.**

**Evidence indicator 9.6** Learning providers and external information, advice and guidance providers have strong links with local employers and understand their needs.

### **Relationship to the QCA Framework: Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19**

The QCA Framework: *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11-19: a framework for supporting economic well-being* (QCA, 2008) provides guidance on the provision of learning opportunities which encourage young people to become enterprising and employable.

**Element 1.** Recognise, develop and apply skills for enterprise and employability.

**Element 5.** Learn from contact with people who work.

**Element 8.** Undertake tasks and activities set in work contexts.

### **Conclusion**

The above-mentioned ten key facts that careers specialists know for sure offer a foundation to build upon in terms of assessing the influence and impact of careers and guidance-related interventions. Most importantly, these provide stimuli research findings that complement the impact statements and research findings outlined below in sections 2.2.1 – 2.2.5.



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## 2.2 News stories and impact statements

### 2.2.1 Participation, attainment and progression

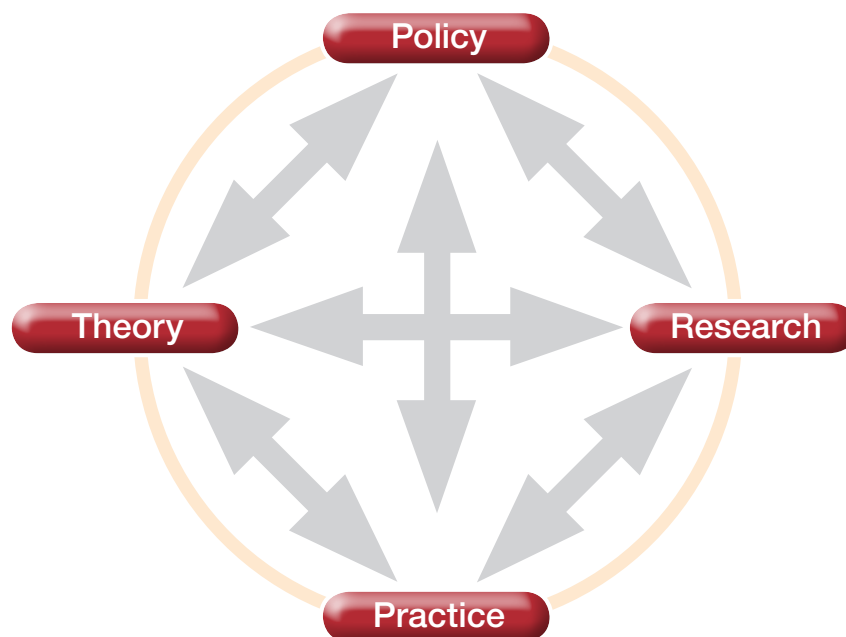
As outlined in Section 1, within the government's 14-19 information, advice and guidance strategy,<sup>10</sup> there are a number of key components designed to bring about change and improvement in integrated youth support services for all young people. These include:

- raising **participation levels** and reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment and/or training (NEETs);
- improving **attainment levels**, supported by co-ordinated information, advice and guidance services and the introduction of IAG quality standards; and
- enhancing **progression routes** through: the expansion of apprenticeships, the introduction of new Diplomas, and widening participation in higher education and their relationship to current and future labour markets.

### 2.2.2 News stories

**What can headlines in the media tell us about the current participation, attainment and progression issues?**

The inter-relationship between policy, research and practice is complex and dynamic and often subject to political bias, interpretation and other influences.



News stories and headlines in the media about careers and guidance-related issues provide a 'window' that can help reveal the inter-relationship between government policies, research and practice, and help expose some of the political bias and other influences. A selection of relevant media stories is shown below to help reveal these inter-relationships and influences.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit.



### 'Youngsters Confused By New 14-19 Diplomas'

A study<sup>11</sup> commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families found some young people believed the new diplomas would be too hard, academic or 'posh'. Others thought them too work-oriented. Decisions about them drew on sometimes inaccurate understanding, it said. Their key findings are that there was a general welcome for the Diploma, but that the information, advice and guidance for young people, parents and staff varied.

BBC website, 5 February 2009

### 'Thousands of pupils drop out of school at 14'

As many as 25,000 teenagers disappear from school rolls in England when they are 14, a leading educationist says. Sir Mike Tomlinson, a former chief inspector of schools and head of Hackney Learning Trust, says they feel school 'has nothing to offer them'. The law says they should be in full-time education to age 16, and that is being changed to require some form of learning to age 18.

*The Daily Telegraph*, 23 February 2009

### 'Teenage pregnancies and the poverty of aspiration'

The Office for National Statistics revealed yesterday that the number of teenage pregnancies rose in 2007. For decades, teenage pregnancy has been regarded as a class issue because it has tended to be more common among less prosperous social groups. There is a powerful stereotype of the single mother living in local council accommodation who keeps producing more children in order to qualify for higher support payments. Yet it is too simplistic to explain the trend as a consequence of an over-generous benefits system.

*The Independent*, 27 February 2009

### 'Tear it up. Labour's new deal isn't working!'

A new generation are growing up jobless. If they haven't worked, they should receive less benefit than those who have. The recession calls for a totally new, two-stage programme of welfare reform. But first we must acknowledge that the Government's New Deal and 'making work pay' strategies have failed to get many unemployed people into work, even at the height of the boom. It has been an expensive failure – various tax credit schemes and New Deal projects have cost the taxpayer £75 billion since 1997.

*The Times*, 20 February 2009

### 'Truancy rate at 10-year high'

The truancy rate has risen to its highest since Labour won power. In English schools, 1.01 per cent of half-days were missed because of unauthorised absence in 2007-8 – only a touch higher than the previous year but much higher than the 1997-8 rate of 0.78 per cent. The Department for Children, Schools and Families suggested the rise might be because the Government was cracking down on authorised absences, which are agreed with parents.

*The Financial Times*, 27 February 2009

### 'What Employers Really, Really Want'

A new report<sup>12</sup> from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) supports company bosses' case that many young people lack the skills they need at work. CBI members consistently say that new recruits do not have the skills they need to enter the world of work and firms are having to spend time and money they can ill afford teaching new starters basic 'work etiquette'. Developing employability skills is not easy, the report suggests. Again, it finds broad agreement that it should involve: 'experiential action-learning' rather than simply gathering knowledge; work experience; opportunities to reflect on work experience that has been done using feedback from employers and co-workers; and the importance of appearance and personal presentation.

*The Guardian*, 10 February 2009

<sup>11</sup> O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. & Haynes, G. (2009). *National Evaluation of Diplomas Preparation for 2008 Delivery*. National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in association with the University of Exeter. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Research Report No. DCSF-RW079.

<sup>12</sup> UK Commission for Employment & Skills (2009). *The Employability Challenge: Full Report*. Wath-upon-Deane: UK Commission for Employment Skills, February 2009.

So far, there has been very limited success in actually convincing the media, schools and colleges, and more importantly, the general public of the merits of investing in high-quality careers and guidance-related interventions. For the first time in the last decade, the new Education and Skills Act (2008) enshrines in legislation a statutory requirement for **impartial IAG for all young people**. In a society where:

- **organisations are competing for limited resources**, this Act and new statutory guidelines will provide a catalyst for accountability to ensure the right resource and the right level of support is being made available at the lowest possible cost;
- **professionals are expected to have 'expert knowledge' on careers education and IAG programme design and development**, this Act and new statutory guidelines will expect IAG quality standards and new inspection frameworks to be used effectively to ensure impartial IAG services for all young people;
- **individuals are displaying more litigious behaviour**, this Act and new statutory guidelines will provide an opportunity for parents/carers and young people in the future to challenge and seek recompense in situations where they feel their requirements and/or expectations have not been met.

### 2.2.3 Impact statements

**Can research findings say something useful and memorable about the impact of careers and guidance-related services on participation, attainment and progression issues?**

Although most policy statements and assertions made through the media tend to be linked in some way to independent research findings, they are often subject to bias, which can be political, organisational and/or personal. It can be argued that no forms of human communication are free from bias of some sort or another, including research findings reported by 'independent researchers'. Indeed, we have highlighted in **Section 1** some of the many challenges and difficulties associated with measuring and assessing the impact of careers and guidance-related services and other public policy initiatives.

Despite the many challenges and difficulties associated with measuring and assessing impact, many of the managers and practitioners interviewed in the development of this resource indicated a desire to be able to say something about the impact of their work that could be expressed simply, and briefly, whilst at the same time could be substantiated and underpinned by reliable research evidence. In response to this, we have drafted a series of so-called '**impact statements**' that attempt to summarise what research evidence tells us about the benefits of careers and guidance-related services in language that is both **effective** (i.e. persuasive, relevant, 'to the point' and useful) and **circumspect** (i.e. accurately reflects the weight of evidence and does not 'under-sell' or 'over-sell' any benefits).



The impact statements we have drafted either directly say something about the impact of an aspect of careers and guidance-related interventions (as in '**Good careers education programmes have a significant and positive impact on the development of young people's career planning and decision-making skills**') or they say something significant about the underlying issues that need to be addressed to improve practice and effectiveness (as in '**The term NEET tells us only what young people are not; it tells us little about what they are and about their needs that should be addressed**').

We have drafted our impact statements carefully, to try and reflect the availability and quality of the relevant research evidence in a way that takes into account the reliability of evidence as summarised in **Section 1** of this resource. We offer these impact statements in the belief that they will be of interest and use to members of the careers and guidance community in articulating some of the benefits of the work they do and some of the underlying issues. We would welcome others to build upon this particular approach to communicating the benefits of careers and guidance-related services.

The impact statements are organised under the following three topic areas:

- Careers Education in Schools and Colleges
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Education, Employment or Training (EET)

### Careers Education in Schools and Colleges

1. Young people with well-developed career-related skills are more likely to make successful transitions at age 16 than those with less well-developed skills.
2. Young people with clear career goals are more likely to out-perform those without clear goals in terms of educational attainment irrespective of the overall performance of the schools they attend.
3. Good careers education programmes have a significant and positive impact on the development of young people's career exploration and decision making skills.
4. Professional impartial careers education and guidance can help reduce course switching and drop-out from post-16 education.
5. A 'unique selling point' of specialist Careers Advisers working in schools and colleges is the reassurance that they provide young people and their parents with independent professional support and access to impartial information.

### Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

6. The term NEET (not in education, employment or training) tells us only what these young people are not; it tells us little about what they are and about their needs that should be addressed.
7. NEET levels remain stubbornly high and resistant to change, and though there are regional differences the general buoyancy of the economy is probably the most significant factor affecting overall levels.
8. Many young people who are NEET feel alienated from formal education and for participation and attainment to improve there is a need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment.
9. At least ten critical success factors have been identified to help tackle NEET.
10. The cost of being 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.

### Education, Employment or Training (EET)

11. Careers guidance develops the skills, attitudes and motivation that enable people to progress to education, training and employment.
12. Unemployed people who get professional help and guidance in job search and job application skills move into employment more quickly than those who do not receive such support.
13. People who have received advice or guidance from professional sources are more likely to participate in learning than those who have not received such support.
14. Not only has the growth of online and telephone IAG services outstripped those provided by more traditional methods, it can also be of the same high quality, increasing self-confidence and leading to participation in learning and/or work.
15. The support from Connexions Personal Advisers increases the self-confidence of young people and can enable them to be more decisive and to do things they would not have otherwise considered.



## Careers Education in Schools and Colleges

### 1. Young people with well-developed career-related skills are more likely to make successful transitions at age 16 than those with less well-developed skills.

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)

Reference: Morris, M., Golden, S. and Lines, A. (1999). *The Impact of Careers Education and Guidance on Transition at 16*. RD21. Sheffield: DfEE.

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. In particular, the importance of career exploration skills are highlighted; for example, the skills that young people need in order to use computerised databases, paper sources or people, to enable them to find out about their career options or the courses they needed to follow. 'As indicated among the survey cohorts, effective and successful transitions in which progression was evident were most apparent in young people with good careers exploration skills and a sound factual knowledge of the courses and routes open to them.' (p.4)

Reference: Morris, M. (2004). *The Case for Careers Education and Guidance for 14-19 Year Olds*. Slough: NFER.

[http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf\\_docs/MM483.pdf](http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf_docs/MM483.pdf)

In their literature review of research into the career decision-making behaviour of young people, Bimrose *et al.* (2007) highlight the importance of career exploration and other career-related skills in making successful transitions at 16. '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, here.' (p.iv)

Reference: 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](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/people/jbimrose/cxs_km_literature_review_final_25.07.07.pdf)

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## 2. Young people with clear career goals are more likely to out-perform those without clear goals in terms of educational attainment irrespective of the overall performance of the schools they attend.

Careers Scotland commissioned research on the possible link between career goals and educational attainment in secondary schools. Not only was this link established but there was also strong evidence that pupils with clear goals derive some benefit in terms of subsequent 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 they have some control over their future, whereas those without clear goals are more likely to include some people who believe they are victims of fate. In terms of the link between career goals and school performance, the authors say: 'Regardless of whether pupils attend a top 50% performing school in Scotland in terms of pupils' higher attainment, or a bottom 50% school, those who have clear goals have higher levels of attainment than those without.' (p.37)

Reference: Inter-ed (2004). *Career Goals and Educational Attainment: What is the link?* Glasgow: Careers Scotland. Available from:

<http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=9358&SID=1164>

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. They 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.20)

Reference: Brown, S., Sessions, J. and Taylor, K. (2004). *What Will I Be When I Grow Up? An Analysis of Childhood Expectations and Career Outcomes*. Working Paper No. 05/2. Leicester: Department of Economics, University of Leicester. Available from:

<http://www.le.ac.uk/economics/research/RePEc/lec/leecon/dp05-2.pdf>

[Accessed 21 April 2009]



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### 3. Good careers education programmes have a significant and positive impact on the development of young people's career exploration and decision making skills.

Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) carried out research that explored the interaction between organisational and curriculum arrangements within schools and young people's decision-making processes. They found that: 'Schools can make a difference to how young people make decisions. The research shows a link between schools which appeared to be effective in relation to curriculum management, student support, staff expectations and school leadership, and the young people who were making the most rational, thought-through decisions, and who remained happy with their choices six months later.' (p.ii) They also found that where these arrangements were not in place young people were at a disadvantage. 'Young people in schools which did not appear to have such support strategies and careers education and guidance provision in place were more likely to have varied approaches to decision-making, to change their minds about their decisions over time, and to have mindsets that reflected a 'comfort seeking' or 'defeatist' approach to decision-making.' (p.vii)

Reference: 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]

In their literature review of research into the impact of career education and guidance on young people's transitions, Smith *et al.* (2005) identified several authors who point to the relevance and importance of careers education and guidance (CEG) programmes. 'CEG provision, such as individual interviews, group-work sessions, access to career-related information and a wide range of work-related activities, appears to have a positive impact on the development of pupils' career-related skills.' (p.4) In addition, they highlight the importance of the integration of career education programmes with guidance provision and with the wider curriculum, and of strong partnership working, as key factors in determining the effectiveness and impact of CEG on young people's skill development and transitions.

Reference: Smith, D., Lilley, R., Marris, L. and Krechowicka, 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. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*, London, EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. Available from:

[http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWebContent/reel/review\\_groups/transitions/trn\\_rv2/trn\\_rv2.doc](http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWebContent/reel/review_groups/transitions/trn_rv2/trn_rv2.doc)

[Accessed 11 November 2008]

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)

Reference: Morris, M. (2004). *The Case for Careers Education and Guidance for 14-19 Year Olds*. Slough: NFER. Available from:

[http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf\\_docs/MM483.pdf](http://www.nfer.co.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pdf_docs/MM483.pdf)

A meta-analysis carried out by Whiston *et al.* (2003) provides valuable evidence of the positive impact of career interventions upon career planning and decision-making skills. In addition, it was noted that the resulting enhanced career planning and decision-making skills could provide the necessary precursors leading eventually to longer-term education/training and economic outcomes.

Reference: Whiston, S.C., Brecheisen, B.K. and Stephens, J. (2003). Does treatment modality affect career counseling effectiveness? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(3), 390-410.

A key finding from McCrone *et al.* (2005) is that when careers education and guidance is delivered effectively and timed appropriately it appears to offer scope for equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills required to allow them to make informed subject choices.

Reference: 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]



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#### 4. Professional impartial careers education and guidance can help reduce course switching and drop-out from post-16 education.

Martinez & Munday (1998) carried out what was then the largest study of persistence and drop-out ever undertaken in further education (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 when students do not feel 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) Reference: Martinez, P. and Munday, F. (1998). *9,000 voices: student persistence and drop-out in Further Education*. London: further education Development Agency. Available from:

<http://www.lsd.org.uk/files/PDF/ISSN14607034-3.pdf>

In his review of research into retention in further education, although Davies (1999) highlights the importance of the perceived quality of the course and the college, he does mention that a number of authors suggest that improvements to information and guidance services could form part of a successful interventionist strategy. He also includes the support students receive in helping them settle into college at the beginning of their course as a significant factor in student satisfaction.

Reference: 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 12 November 2008]

In an American study, Folsom *et al.* (2000) 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.

Reference: Folsom, B., Peterson, G.W., Reardon, R.C. and Mann, B.A. (2002). *The Impact of a Career Course on Retention and Academic Performance*. Technical Report 34. Tallahassee, FL: Career Center, Florida State University. Available from:

<http://www.career.fsu.edu/documents/technical%20reports/Technical%20Report%2034/Technical%20Report%2034.htm>

SWA Consulting (1999) in their evaluation of the early development of Individual Learning Accounts reported an association between low drop-out rates and those who had received specialist career advice.

Reference: SWA Consulting (1999). *Evaluation of early Individual Learning Account development activity*. Research report RR123. London: DfEE.

Students who lacked initial information about their courses or made a late decision to enrol were significantly more likely to leave early.' (p.2)

Reference: Responsive College Unit (1999). *National Retention Survey Report*. Preston: RCU Ltd.



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**5. A 'unique selling point' of specialist Careers Advisers working in schools and colleges is the reassurance that they provide young people and their parents with independent professional support and access to impartial information.**

Morgan *et al.* (2007) highlight the importance of the impartiality of IAG provided by Connexions as a means of balancing or offsetting the influence of less reliable informal sources of information; for example, information supplied by their family may be out of date, incorrect or based on hearsay.

Reference: 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](http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_effective_transitions_for_year8_2007.pdf) [Accessed 12 November 2008]

In a review of research on 14-19 transitions and the decisions individuals make, Wright (2005) highlights that there is strong evidence that many schools provide slanted and partial evidence on post-16 options; for example, although many teachers were well informed about academic routes, 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.

Reference: 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 14-19 Education and Training. Available from:

<http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/files/documents91-1.pdf>

[Accessed 12 November 2008]

Foskett (2004) contends that the influence on young people of informal sources of information, advice and guidance (IAG), such as parents/carers, friends and the media, is at least as great, or even greater, than that of formal sources, such as careers teachers and Connexions services. However, he does go to emphasise that of the formal sources Connexions services are valued more highly than other in-school guidance, which is identified as being subject to 'spin'.

Reference: 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 delivered 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]



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## Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

**6. The term NEET (not in education, employment or training) tells us only what these young people are not; it tells us little about what they are and about their needs that should be addressed.**

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 disadvantage but they often have aspirations even if they don't know how best to achieve them: *'want to have a job and nice family; don't want to be living in this hole'*. (p.32) The Review 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).

Reference: 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]

'It is clear too from the literature that the term NEET itself (as is currently being highlighted by the Nuffield Review of 14-19), 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)

Reference: Bysshe, S. & Berry-Lound, D. (2008). *Work in Progress: A review of best practice in tackling NEETs*. Coventry: LSC.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (2009) literature review for the DCSF explores the key characteristics of young people who are NEET. The underlying research suggests that: 'Two-fifths of young people who are NEET are generally positive about learning and are very likely to participate in education and training in the short-term. A similar proportion face a lot of personal and structural barriers, and are likely to remain NEET in the medium term. A fifth was classified as 'undecided-NEET' – they do not face significant personal barriers to participating in education or training, but are dissatisfied with the available opportunities'. (p.1). A key conclusion of NFER's research was that young people who become NEET need: 'Better information, advice and guidance pre-16, and more information about the range of options available to them, to ensure that they make a more appropriate choice at 16'. (p.6)

Reference: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). *Increasing Participation: understanding young people who do not participate in education and training at 16 and 17*. (DCSF Research Report No DCSF-RR072).

**7. NEET levels remain stubbornly high and resistant to change, and though there are regional differences the general buoyancy of the economy is probably the most significant factor affecting overall levels.**

The DCSF (2008) strategy to reduce the number of NEETs by 2013 indicates that: 'reducing the number of young people who are NEET peaked in the mid-80s when youth unemployment was at its highest and, despite falling since then, levels remain stubbornly high', with the regional pattern showing the highest numbers are in the North East, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside areas.

Reference: DCSF (2008). *Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET): The Strategy*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.  
[http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/neet\\_strategy\\_0803.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/neet_strategy_0803.pdf)



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‘There is a strong correlation between the percentage of young people NEET and the performance of the wider labour market... a simple regional ranking of the percentage of 16–18 NEET and employment and inactivity rates indicates that:

- those areas with the lowest rates of young people NEET (the East of England, South West and South East) are also experiencing the lowest unemployment rates and highest employment and economic activity rates
- those areas with the highest proportion of young people NEET (the North East, North West and West Midlands) also have relatively high unemployment and low employment and economic activity overall.’ (p.5)

Reference: Mayor of London (2007). *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London: Research on young people ‘not in education, employment or training (NEET)’*. London: Greater London Authority.

#### **8. Many young people who are NEET feel alienated from formal education and for participation and attainment to improve there is a need to develop more innovative and flexible ways of engaging young people in learning and employment.**

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, pending). The report points out that: ‘No young person should have to wait to the following September to get back into education and training and they should have the same choice of provider as young people who have never been NEET’. (p.5)

Reference: DCSF (pending). *Using flexible provision to meet the needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

In relation to the pronounced feeling of alienation from school that many NEET young people have, Nuffield Review/Rathbone (2008) point to the limitations of a ‘qualifications first strategy’ and 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)

Reference: 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]

In their study of regional variations in NEETs, Sachdev *et al.* (2006) emphasise, as well as the importance of greater involvement of young people in decision-making, the need for a fuller recognition of their achievements and of innovative practices in engaging young people in informal and non-academic learning.

Reference: 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]

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.

Reference: Hughes, D., Davies, D., Bright, G. and Dyke, S. *NEET Speaks: Influences Shaping Young People’s Choices of Education, Training and Employment*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby – pending.



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### 9. At least ten critical success factors have been identified to help tackle NEET.

Bysshe *et al.* (2008) reviewed the evidence base for 'what works' in tackling NEETs and identified the following ten key areas of work that needed to be addressed:

1. **Outreach and engagement** – Schemes seeking to engage NEETs require an intensive outreach strategy which, as well as using a range of referral agencies (including the community and voluntary sector), maximises self-referral.
2. **Diagnosis of need** – The needs of the NEET group vary extensively and identifying an individual's abilities, career goals/aspirations and motivations, alongside key barriers and enablers (including access to, and support being provided by, helping agencies), is crucial on an ongoing basis as well as at the outset of programmes.
3. **Relevant offer** – Many young people who are NEET say that it is because the right provision is not available or that they do not have the qualifications to progress. The provision for the group must be both initially attractive (including the use of appropriate 'hooks'), and have sufficient flexibility to be adapted to the needs of individual young people and to move them on at a sustainable pace.
4. **Engaging partners to provide a comprehensive service** – To provide the 'holistic' service required by many young people who are NEET requires the active engagement and co-ordination of a range of support agencies and opportunity providers. The role of peers and parents in providing complementary support must also not be underestimated.
5. **Advocacy and brokerage** – The role of PAs and 'significant' others (such as tutors) is crucial in providing necessary advocacy and brokerage so that 'personalised' programmes can be developed and agreed.
6. **Pre-transition and post-transition support** – Support is required both pre-transition and post-transition to ensure both adequate preparation for transitions and that, once made, they are sustainable.
7. **Incentives and rewards** – These can include financial incentives, but need to contain rewards including the attainment of relevant awards and qualifications that reinforce self-worth and achievement.
8. **Involvement of young people** – Involving young people can engender not just a sense of ownership, but also feelings of confidence in respect to their ability to manage transitions, both now and in the future.
9. **Effective staffing** – Staff who are effective in working with the NEET client group have particular attributes and competences such as patience, willingness not to pre-judge children, firmness, consistent approaches, high thresholds of tolerance and willingness to give students a second chance.
10. **Evaluation and review** – Service development needs to be informed by ongoing monitoring and evaluation to identify gaps in provision, the effectiveness of the delivery process (what is working well and why), and to capture both the learner experience and progression outcomes.

Reference: Bysshe, S., Berry-Lound, D., Austin, J., Staton, J. (2008) *Best Practice in Tackling 'NEETs'* – Research Report. Coventry: LSC.

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/YorkshireandtheHumber/HOSTWestYorkshireResearchreport.pdf>



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**10. The cost of being 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.**

'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)

Reference: Mayor of London (2007). *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London: Research on young people 'not in education, employment or training (NEET)'*. London: Greater London Authority.

'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 per cent 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)

Reference: 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*. RR346. London: Department for Education and Skills.

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 and crime and anti social behaviour. Data show that chances of being NEET amongst young people increase for those with certain characteristics. Amongst all 16 year olds nationally, seven per cent are NEET. Yet this rises to 11 per cent of 16 year olds from the lowest social class groups, 13 per cent amongst those with a disability, 22 per cent amongst those excluded from school, 32 per cent amongst those who are persistent truants and 74 per cent amongst teenage mothers.

Reference: Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (2005). *NEET Design Review Presentation*. London: PMDU.



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## Education, Employment or Training (EET)

### 11. Careers guidance develops the skills, attitudes and motivation that enable people to progress to education, training and employment.

In their review of research, Killeen & Kidd (1991) identify 17 studies that report gains on one or more measures of precursors to and correlates of rational decision-making and implementation; eight studies report gains in decision-making skills; 12 studies report gains in self-awareness; 13 studies report gains in opportunity awareness (and information search); ten studies report gains in certainty or decisiveness; and four studies report gains in transition skills. Only four studies report no gains, and a further ten report null results in addition to significant gains.

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

The majority of individuals receiving support from the Scottish All Age Guidance Projects reported that Careers Scotland advisers had influenced their career plans 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 career guidance had been of some influence.

Reference: 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]

In a follow-up of adults who had received guidance from Careers Wales, as well as reporting the help they received in finding employment or training, respondents also reported 'softer' outcomes, reflecting the added value of guidance in terms of confidence, encouragement, sense of purpose, and greater focus.

Reference: Reed, K., Mahony, K. and Gratton, 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](http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_career_guidance_for_adults_in_wales_making_a_difference.pdf)

[Accessed 14 November 2008]

From a large-scale national survey of adults of working age who received information and advice services (IA), it was found that the most immediate benefits of receiving IA take the form of helping users find and make best use of relevant information (79% of respondents) and increasing their awareness of learning and job opportunities most relevant to them (72% of respondents). Increasing an individual's self-confidence was identified by 68% of respondents which is 18 percentage points greater than the equivalent 2006 survey.

Reference: 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](http://www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1BC48256-952A-4344-A483-8DC39B7033E7/0/LSC_IAimpact0708National07May08.pdf)

[Accessed 15 November 2008]

A study of over 4,000 adults known to have received publicly funded information, advice and guidance (IAG) services found that in-depth support (advice and/or guidance) is positively associated with three attitudinal work related outcomes: satisfaction with current job; confidence in gaining desired job; and increases in confidence over time.

Reference: 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]



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### 12. Unemployed people who get professional help and guidance in job search and job application skills move into employment more quickly than those who not receive such support.

In the USA, the Job Club method has been experimentally evaluated providing some very robust 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 (control group) to 14 days (experimental group) and after three months 93% of the experimental group were in full-time employment compared to 60% of controls.

Reference: Azrin, N.H., Flores, T. and Kaplan, S.J. (1975). Job-finding club: a group assisted program for obtaining employment, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Vol 13, pp.17-27

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 was 92% at six months, 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'.

Reference: Pearson, R.W. (1988). Creating flexible careers: some observations on a 'bridge' programme for unemployed professionals, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol. 16 No.3, pp.250-67.

### 13. People who have received advice or guidance from professional sources are more likely to participate in learning than those who have not received such support.

A study of over 4,000 adults known to have received publicly funded information, advice and guidance (IAG) services found that in-depth support (advice and/or guidance) is positively associated with a range of observable learning and career outcomes. Recipients of advice or guidance 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. Informal learning 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, taking driving lessons, online learning and self-directed study etc. Such informal learning becomes more common over time, especially amongst the group who, after receiving information, moved on to access further in-depth support.

Reference: 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]

Findings from surveys of learndirect users, reported by Tyers & 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.

Reference: Tyers, C. and Sinclair, A. (2004). *Tracking learning outcomes: Evaluation of the impact of Ufi*. RR 569. London: Department for Education and Skills.

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.

Reference: 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]



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**14. Not only has the growth of online and telephone IAG services outstripped those provided by more traditional methods, it can also be of the same high quality, increasing self-confidence and leading to participation in learning and/or work.**

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 done any learning in the last three years. Over half of callers to the National Advice Line Service went on to undertake training or learning. Reference: 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](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/0506460.pdf)

[Accessed 25 November 2008]

An evaluation of the learndirect telephone guidance trial (Page *et al.* 2007) found that it has reached clients new to guidance, with 75 per cent 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 measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance, with 23% of calls graded 'excellent'. 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. 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)

Reference: 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/pdf/library/rr833.pdf>

[Accessed 25 November 2008]



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**15. The support from Connexions Personal Advisers increases the self-confidence of young people and can enable them to be more decisive and to do things they would not have otherwise considered.**

Joyce & White (2004) explored the views of young people who had been in contact with a Connexions Personal Adviser, many of whom had been in contact more than once, and a sample of whom were re-interviewed the following year to investigate their longer-term reflections and experiences. In addition to undertaking new activities in education, training or employment, a number of personal impacts were also reported by young people following their contact with Connexions. These personal impacts included: increasing levels of self-confidence; improving communication skills; changing behaviours or attitudes; and improving personal circumstances. Young people 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. Particularly for some young people categorised as Priority 1, a number of personal circumstances had been improved with the help of the Adviser. These included: addressing bullying; improving financial circumstances; turning away from engaging in criminal activity; coping with stress; and improving relationships with the rest of the family.

Reference: 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]

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. The majority of young people (70 per cent of respondents) 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 Connexions had helped them decide what to do. Thirty-one per cent said that they had done something they had not previously considered as a result of their contact with Connexions; this is an increase on the Wave 1 Phase 1 result (26 per cent of respondents).

Reference: Brunwin, T., Clemens, S., Deakin, G., Jones, A., Mortimer, E. and Tarvin, K. (2005). *Improve Your Connexions: Connexions Service Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results from the Second Wave Survey in Phase 1 Partnerships* (2004). RR622. London: DfES. Available from:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR622.pdf>

[Accessed 2 November 2008]

A report by Blythe *et al.* (2008) highlights the central role of Personal Advisers and of appropriate information, advice and guidance within the Lancashire Learning Agreement Pilot (LAP) for young people in jobs without training. The added value of the Personal Adviser role is highlighted 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 enhances employability and communication skills designed to help young people thrive and survive in the world of work.

Reference: Blythe, J., Elo, L., Gratton, 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](http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_the_learning_agreement.pdf)

[Accessed 12 November 2008]



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## 2.3 The literature review – *Evidence and Impact: Careers and guidance-related interventions*

### 2.3.1 Overview

An in-depth literature review was commissioned by CfBT Education Trust as part of this online professional resource situated within the Educational Evidence Portal (eep). It sets out some preliminary considerations on an approach to building a strong evidence-base for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in England. The full version of the literature review is available on the Educational Evidence Portal (eep) and via a link from the CfBT website: [www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation](http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation).

The review focused principally upon CEIAG services and the decision-making processes of young people, though some research within the context of adult services was included where this was felt to provide some lessons of generic importance. The source material, and the findings and conclusions from the review, were organised into the following five categories:

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

A brief summary of the key findings and conclusions from the review is included below.

### 2.3.2 Decision-making processes of young people

It is clear that well-developed career exploration skills, and clear career goals and expectations, are important to help enable 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 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. Indeed, there needs to be 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.

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 in Year 9 onwards.

Evidence shows that teachers in 11-18 schools, in general, lack impartiality by encouraging some students to stay on at 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. Also, 'external' advice, i.e. professional personal and careers advisers, is often cited by young people and/or parents 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).

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 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.

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 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; for example, ethnic minority 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 the CEIAG field will be to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values and personal beliefs and goals.

Insufficient research has been carried out into the career development of minority ethnic groups. For example, measures of work values don't necessarily include the value systems of cultural 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 and assess the impact of CEIAG interventions, research populations should represent more fully ethnic minority groups, non-hetrosexuals and other dimensions of diverse and multi-cultural communities.



### 2.3.3 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. Mass marketing has had a significant impact on the volumes and types of telephone and online information, advice and guidance (IAG) enquiries; in addition, the increase in online usage partly reflects 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 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.

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 more systematically information on customer journeys and career trajectories. The materials reviewed indicate that these developments need to continue apace in order to respond both 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 under-developed.

### 2.3.4 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.

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 and their 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 under-developed. Also, the 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.

### 2.3.5 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 NEET. In particular, these factors include: the need to understand the complexities of the characteristics of those at risk of exclusion and a recognition of 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 for young people. 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 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 homogenous, 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 lack of money. 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.



### 2.3.6 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 information, advice and guidance-related interventions can and do make a difference in terms of increased levels of personal confidence and self-esteem. As with self-confidence and self-esteem, there is a significant body of evidence on the impact of IAG on career planning 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 good 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.

### 2.3.7 Other findings

In addition to the findings from the review of the five thematic areas above, a number of **other overarching conclusions** focus on: (i) the inherent difficulty in demonstrating the impact and cost-effectiveness of social policy interventions; (ii) the nature of evidence itself and its robustness, and whether some types of evidence can be considered to be 'better' than others; and (iii) the involvement of users and practitioners in the development of performance measures, covering both qualitative as well as quantitative information, 'soft' as well as 'hard' outcomes, and taking into account longer-term customer journeys.





## 3. Strategies, tools and 'tips' for measuring and assessing impact of careers and guidance-related interventions

### 3.1 Introduction

### 3.2 Context

#### 3.2.1 An effective Integrated Youth Support Service

#### 3.2.2 The process for joint planning and commissioning of IAG services for young people: impact assessment

#### 3.2.3 Key performance indicators (KPIs) being used by local authorities in their work with Connexions services

#### 3.2.4 Inspection and quality standards frameworks

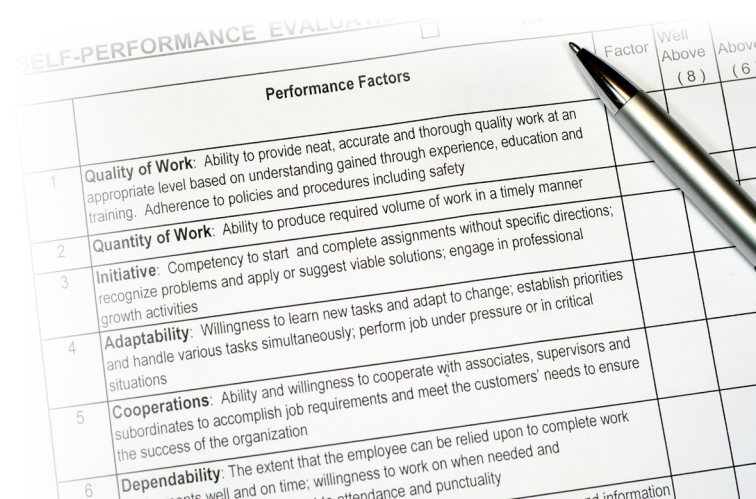
#### 3.2.5 Soft outcomes – a hard call?

### 3.3 Gathering evidence and reporting on impact

#### 3.3.1 Strategic: Connexions services impact assessment approaches

#### 3.3.2 Strategic: Connexions services 'macro impact reports'

#### 3.3.3 Operational: Connexions services impact assessment activities



SELF-PERFORMANCE EVALUATION		Factor	Well Above (8)	Above (6)
1	<b>Quality of Work:</b> Ability to provide neat, accurate and thorough quality work at an appropriate level based on understanding gained through experience, education and training. Adherence to policies and procedures including safety			
2	<b>Quantity of Work:</b> Ability to produce required volume of work in a timely manner			
3	<b>Initiative:</b> Competency to start and complete assignments without specific directions; recognize problems and apply or suggest viable solutions; engage in professional growth activities			
4	<b>Adaptability:</b> Willingness to learn new tasks and adapt to change; establish priorities and handle various tasks simultaneously; perform job under pressure or in critical situations			
5	<b>Cooperations:</b> Ability and willingness to cooperate with associates, supervisors and subordinates to accomplish job requirements and meet the customers' needs to ensure the success of the organization			
6	<b>Dependability:</b> The extent that the employee can be relied upon to complete work assignments well and on time; willingness to work on when needed and report to attendance and punctuality			



## 3.1 Introduction

This section offers additional information on strategies, tools and 'tips' for measuring and assessing the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions in England. It provides some examples of *instruments and approaches* currently being used in differing Connexions services, local authorities, schools and colleges.

The contents aim to provide some potentially useful resources designed by managers, practitioners and researchers working in the field of 'Integrated Youth Support Services' in England. The common factor is that all of the links provided to resources attempt to show ways in which individuals and organisations are gathering *evidence* and reporting on the *impact* of careers and guidance-related work. The resources are not intended to be in any way prescriptive – an approach that suits individuals and/or organisations in one geographical area will not necessarily meet the needs of those in another. Instead, we provide *stimuli materials* for professional practice.

## 3.2 Context

### 3.2.1 An effective Integrated Youth Support Service

An effective Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) is expected to meet the following five key Every Child Matters (ECM)<sup>13</sup> outcomes:

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve
4. Make a positive contribution
5. Achieve economic well-being.

This means that organisations providing services to young people will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. In general, careers and guidance related interventions are specifically associated with young people achieving economic well-being, enjoying and achieving, and making a positive contribution. It is acknowledged that in practice learning and work can be linked to all five elements.

<sup>13</sup> DfES (2003). Every Child Matters. Norwich: HMSO, CM 5860, September 2003.

### 3.2.2 The process for joint planning and commissioning of IAG services for young people

The process for joint planning and commissioning of IAG services for young people as recommended by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to local authorities is outlined below:



Source: DCSF, Sheffield, April 2009

The basic stages in the commissioning process can be summarised as:

- 1. Understand** – get a rich and sophisticated understanding of the needs of children and young people, and their families, based on qualitative and quantitative data, and informed by real engagement with children, young people and parents.
- 2. Plan** – map and plan sustainable and diverse services, designed to meet the needs of children and young people, consulting with them and also discussing closely with providers.
- 3. Do** – make it happen. Not do the provision yourself, but secure it through others. This could be through procurement and contract arrangements or could be through, for example, holding a competition to create a new school, or making the commissioning decision to secure post-16 education. As this is about securing the provision it also includes developing the provider base and encouraging promising new providers to come forward.
- 4. Review** – monitor service delivery of outcomes and take remedial action if necessary, supporting and challenging the provider to improve outcomes.

All four of these stages are viewed as equally important, and should be transparent, with ongoing consultation and engagement with key stakeholders including providers and children, young people and families.



### 3.2.3 Current arrangements for Connexions, careers and IAG services

Within the current arrangements for Connexions, careers and IAG services, the main *key performance indicators (KPIs)* being used by local authorities in their work with Connexions services relate specifically to identifying and supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) which, in turn, feed into the new **National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships**, introduced for use in 2008/2009.<sup>14</sup> These provide numerical targets for the performance of 14-19 local partnerships that include: Level 2 and Level 3 attainment at 19 years of age; participation of 17 year olds in education and training; and the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET. During the next five years, a significant shift in emphasis is likely to be required, as a result of the Education and Skills Act (2008)<sup>15</sup> which received royal assent in December 2008.

The legislation makes explicit a requirement for all 16 and 17 year olds to participate in *accredited education and training* and other *accredited activity* by 2013, and 17 to 18 year olds by 2015. The impact of raising the participation age (RPA) should not be underestimated, particularly in relation to *current measures* used to assess the impact of Connexions careers, information, advice and guidance (IAG) services and *future measures* set by commissioners of services.

We need to move from primarily focusing on NEET management and accountability, to focusing on *all* 16 and 17 year olds' participation in government-approved education and training or other accredited activity.

Also under the RPA, employers will have a statutory duty to provide day or block release to new and existing 16-17 year old employees.

<sup>14</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2008). *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Update on publication of the final definitions for the national indicator set*. Wetherby: Communities and Local Government Publications, February 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit.

At present, the general approach of working primarily, though not exclusively, towards NEET targets remains at the heart of many local and regional initiatives. Local authorities and Connexions services reported they have developed KPIs, spreadsheets and quality improvement strategies to bring greater coherence and accuracy to their NEET monitoring, management and reporting. The following quotes illustrate some issues raised by senior managers in local authorities and Connexions services on the reality of measuring and assessing impact:

*'We have been so busy getting a firm handle on the new commissioning arrangements that we haven't had time to think about the implications of RPA policy developments a few years down the line!'*  
(Local authority senior manager)

*'Commissioners of services are mostly concerned with 'NEET targets' as a key driving force in assessing the impact of Connexions, careers and IAG performance. Overall, the systems that have been set up by the local Connexions service work well in this regard. But, we want to work with the commissioners of services to agree hard and soft outcome measures that could be used in a more meaningful way so that the range and quality of provision can be extended to meet young people's actual needs.'*  
(Connexions senior manager)

*'NEET performance is the primary driver from a local authority perspective. So far, we have not managed to engage in any serious discussion about the implications of the RPA. We hope the new IAG strategy will shed some light on forthcoming new measures linked to accountability and impact assessment. It's too early to anticipate new KPIs that go beyond NEET performance.'*  
(Local authority senior manager)

*'We've been fairly consistent in presenting reports to government office and local authority colleagues that highlight historical and emerging trends for EET and NEET. Our approach has been to stay as close as possible to youth labour market developments and to spot gaps in provision not just NEET... though this has been a real challenge given the allocated level of resourcing.'*  
(Connexions senior manager)

As a result, the process for joint planning and commissioning of Connexions, careers, and IAG services for young people will have to set out new parameters for impact assessment that relate specifically to the RPA requirements.

In summary, the topic of redefining and making explicit impact measures that are 'fit for purpose' in light of forthcoming RPA developments seems to be uncharted territory from many local authorities and Connexions services.

**Activity:** What type of performance indicator(s) might you set to measure and assess the impact of young people's participation or non-participation in government-approved education and training or other accredited activity?

### 3.2.4 Inspection and quality standards frameworks

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) came into being on 1st April 2007. This brought together four previously separate inspectorates. Its [first annual report](#)<sup>16</sup> draws on evidence since July 2007 and reflects the first full year of inspection and regulation by Ofsted across its expanded remit, including findings from childcare, children's social care, and education and skills provision for learners of all ages.

*Three major themes were identified and reported on in 2007-2008 as follows:*

- Theme 1:** 'Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care' which examines the means by which providers achieve and sustain excellence and, in so doing, make significant improvements in the life chances of the most disadvantaged children, young people and adults.
- Theme 2:** 'Ensuring that children grow up safe from harm and neglect, and with the personal skills needed to enter adult life successfully' which examines arrangements to safeguard children.
- Theme 3:** 'Skills for working lives: the quality of provision' which examines how learners are equipped to acquire the skills needed for successful working lives.

In many areas, the Ofsted self evaluation form (SEF) has been applied as a tool for helping to improve careers education and guidance and assisting with identifying impact assessment evidence. Ofsted is currently making changes to the school Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to emphasise the importance of providing effective support and guidance to all young people. These changes will be reflected in a revised Ofsted evaluation inspection process. The forthcoming statutory guidance for schools (including the 'Principles of Impartial Careers Education'<sup>17</sup>) will provide a focus for schools to assess their performance against the requirements of the SEF.

In 2007 a new set of national quality standards for young people's information, advice and guidance<sup>18</sup> was introduced by DCSF to ensure high-quality provision is made available to *all* young people. Ofsted contributed to the development of these national quality standards.



<sup>16</sup> Ofsted (2008). *The Annual Report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/2008*. Norwich: The Stationery Office Ltd, November 2008.

<sup>17</sup> DCSF (2009). *Principles of Impartial Careers Education, Consultation Paper*. Visit: <http://dev.cegnet.co.uk> Accessed 7 May 2009.

<sup>18</sup> DCSF (2007). *National Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)*. London: DCSF, October 2007.

**There are 12 quality standards for information, advice and guidance, each with evidence indicators against which performance against standards can be assessed. In short they set out clear expectations that:**

1. Young people are informed about how information, advice and guidance services can help them and how to access the services they need
2. Young people receive the information, advice and guidance on personal wellbeing and financial capability issues that they need
3. Young people have the information they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options
4. Young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and careers
5. Information, advice and guidance services promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes
6. Young people (reflecting the make-up of their communities) are engaged in the design, delivery and evaluation of information, advice and guidance provision
7. Parents and carers know how information, advice and guidance services can help their children and know how these services are accessed
8. Information, advice and guidance providers understand their roles and responsibilities
9. Programmes of career and personal development for young people are planned and provided collaboratively
10. Staff providing information, advice and guidance are appropriately qualified, work to relevant professional standards and receive continuing professional development
11. Information, advice and guidance services are regularly and systematically monitored, reviewed and evaluated, and actions are taken to improve services in response to the findings
12. Processes for commissioning impartial information, advice and guidance services are effective and result in services that meet the needs of parents/carers and young people.

***Responsibility for the delivery of the quality standards falls to local authorities, learning providers and external information, advice and guidance providers working collaboratively under the leadership of the local authority.***

The forthcoming national IAG strategy is likely to make explicit the inspection framework and requirements that will be in place from 2009 onwards to ensure that impartiality of careers provision in schools and colleges is assured for all young people. Ofsted is likely to perform a key role in assessing the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions.

**Activity:** It is recommended that findings from the evidence and impact literature review, impact statements and '10 key facts that careers specialist know for sure' in Section 2 of this resource are shared with inspectorate colleagues as part of their preparatory work for inspecting Connexions, careers and IAG provision.

### 3.2.5 Soft outcomes – a hard call?

The difference between 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes has already been discussed in Section 1. Unlike hard outcomes, such as examination results and progression to education or employment, soft outcomes are more subjective and more personal. For example, they could include positive changes such as increased self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, independence, or decreased aggression and a better ability to cope positively with stress.

Within the context of CEIAG, soft outcomes are considered important because they can be seen as intermediary and necessary stages (or 'precursors') towards achieving a longer-term, harder outcome, such as gaining employment after a significantly long period of unemployment. Though important, soft outcomes can prove difficult to quantify because of their subjective nature – hence a 'hard call'. A technique often used to quantify soft outcomes is to assess an individual on at least two separate occasions, typically before and after intervention, to see what progress has been made, the so-called 'distance travelled'.

Within many sectors, in education, guidance, counselling, and the voluntary and community sector, a variety of systems and techniques have been developed to measure soft outcomes. When guidance practitioners are asked about approaches used to measure and assess a client's state of readiness for IYSS interventions in a general sense, the most commonly cited example of an intensive support approach is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This, and several other soft outcomes assessment approaches that have actual or potential application within the context of careers guidance and related interventions, are presented here as case studies:

- CAF
- The Rickter Scale
- The SOUL Record
- Dare to Ask?

### Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment Framework is a key part of delivering frontline services that are integrated and focused around the needs of children and young people. It was developed to provide a holistic approach to conducting an assessment of a child's or young person's needs, particularly for those whose needs were unlikely to be met fully by 'universal' services. It comprises a standardised tool that facilitates the process by which different agencies working with the same child can 'join up' and share information and aims to reduce the number of assessments faced by a child.

The CAF was developed from frameworks used across different services for children and young people. For example, it replaces the assessment element of the APIR (assessment, planning, implementation and review) framework previously used by Connexions personal advisers. It does not replace specialist assessment frameworks, such as the Framework for Children in Need and their Families (sometimes referred to as 'the Assessment Framework'), the SEN Code of Practice or assessments that measure the risk of offending.

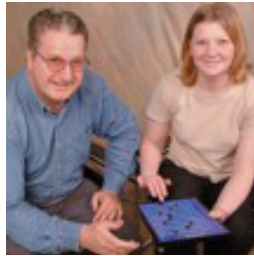
Over two thirds of local authorities chose to use the CAF during the trial year of 2005-06 and materials were issued in April 2005 to support implementation. All local authority areas were expected to implement the CAF between April 2006 and March 2008. Following a two-three year implementation period, CAF is now in operation throughout the UK with local variations.

From a CEIAG practitioner's perspective, CAF is generally viewed as making a contribution to diagnosing need and to some extent measuring 'soft outcomes'; it relates mainly to vocational and learning maturity and progress of the individual.



## The Rickter Scale

The Rickter Scale is a non-paper based instrument using moveable sliders to enable the participant to physically plot on a series of 10-point scales where they feel they are at any given time, against any particular theme or issue. The system was developed by Rick Hutchinson and Keith Stead to respond to the challenge of capturing soft indicators and measuring distance travelled with individuals and groups who might otherwise be labelled 'failures', and dismissed as not capable of overcoming barriers in their lives.



The participant can use the hand-held Rickter Scale board to plot where they feel they are at any given time, against any particular theme or issue, using any Frame of Reference, i.e. a set of headings and questions tailored to the specification of the organisation to reflect the needs of their particular 'client' group. Of the hundreds of Frames of Reference developed to date, examples include performance management and professional development, project evaluation, all aspects of employability, transition management, and mentoring. Simply by moving the set of sliders the participant can consider and record their Present State and Desired State, as well as their subsequent Review State in relation to the issues highlighted within the Frame of

Reference. A solutions-focused process encourages them to explore possibilities, make informed choices, take responsibility for their own goals and contribute to their action plan.

The Rickter Company emphasises how the system incorporates a variety of underpinning approaches to meet the needs of a wide range of practitioners:

*'The Rickter Scale itself is a multi-sensory, solutions-focused assessment and action planning process. It is user-friendly, it is motivational, and is based on what works. It has also been created for practitioners by practitioners, with the minimum of administration but the maximum of interaction with its users. The idea of scaling as a means of assessment, or how we set our own targets within our teams or organisations is nothing new. What is new is the incorporation of scaling, systems thinking, motivational interviewing, Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), solutions-focused working and much more in a single unique and powerful toolkit.'*

Since 1999, the company has trained and licensed over 16,000 practitioners and has developed the instrument from its original application within the field of social inclusion to working more specifically within the education, training and employment sector with a network of associates established throughout the UK, Europe, and Australasia.

The Company's recent development of complementary state-of-the-art web-enabled software – IMPACT-ONLINE – offers aggregation, analysis and generation of reports for population data from multiple sites. Also integrated are action management and multi-rater facilities. The software allows, for example, mentors to keep track of their own case loads, as well as offering various levels of secure access to the case data to other specified and registered staff. This level of access could either be available in the same project or service, or on a multi-agency basis as a means of informing a regional or national network, including the tracking of emerging trends and patterns of all Rickter Scale derived responses.

Further information on the Rickter Scale, its products and services and relevant reports and evaluations, can be accessed via the company's website:

<http://www.rickterscale.com/main.htm>

Alternatively, contact:

Heather Bruce, Director of Business Administration

Telephone: 01463 717177 Fax: 01463 718965

Email: [heather@rickterscale.com](mailto:heather@rickterscale.com)

## The SOUL Record

The SOUL (Soft Outcomes Universal Learning) Record was launched in February 2006, having been developed over the previous two-year period by a close collaboration between Norfolk's voluntary sector and the Research Centre, City College, Norwich. It is an easy-to-use evaluation system for measuring 'soft' outcome progression and informal learning, such as increases in confidence, self-esteem and motivation. The SOUL Record is delivered by a number of trainers based across the UK and is now used by 800+ users across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It is RARPA compliant (a Learning and Skills Council initiative: Recognising And Recording Progress And Achievement *in non-accredited learning*).

The SOUL Record provides materials that are organised into separate sections for children, young people and adults. Organisations select from a range of questionnaires, worksheets and observational sheets so they can use the resources best suited to an individual client's needs. Soft outcomes for adults are divided into three main areas: 'attitude', 'personal / interpersonal' and 'practical', whereas for children and young people, soft outcomes may be measured against the five outcome areas of Every Child Matters.

Sample pages shown below are: the *Children's worksheet*, and the *Adults' worksheet*:

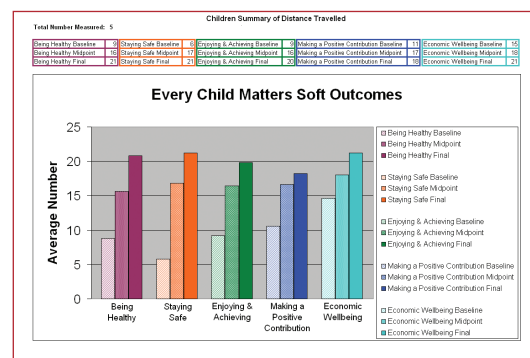
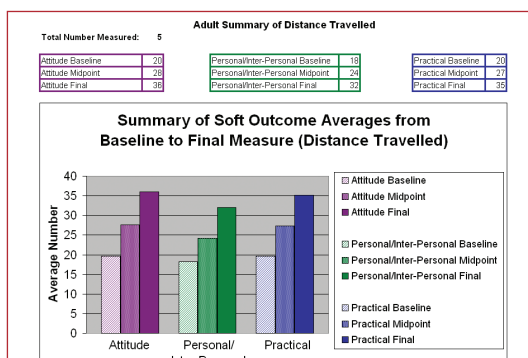
Making a Positive Contribution: In the Community		Sheet Number: _____ Date: _____
<p>Which of these statements describes you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I listen to other peoples' point of view..... (smiley)</li> <li>I usually try and help other people..... (smiley)</li> <li>I help in school..... (smiley)</li> <li>I want to help make the area I live in better..... (smiley)</li> <li>I think laws should be obeyed..... (smiley)</li> <li>I respect other people's property..... (smiley)</li> <li>I think being honest is important..... (smiley)</li> <li>I recycle things..... (smiley)</li> <li>I think bullying is always wrong..... (smiley)</li> <li>I respect people of different races, colour and religion..... (smiley)</li> </ul>	<p>Tell me about any changes or goals you've achieved since the last time we did this activity...</p>	
<p><b>Goals:</b> before the next time I would like to ...</p>	<p>In order to help you think about these ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>when you've listened to other people's point of view</li> <li>things you've done to help people</li> <li>what you do in school</li> <li>how you feel about rules</li> <li>how you treat other people at school</li> <li>what you think of where you live</li> <li>how you feel about people who are different to you</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Progress:</b> 1 point for each statement that describes you and for each example of achievement you have given                      5 points for every goal achieved since the last time</p>	<p>Points total _____ Previous total _____ Difference _____</p> <p>Signed: _____                      Signed: _____</p>	

Attitude: Increasing Self-Esteem		Sheet Number: _____ Date: _____
<p>Which of these statements describes you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel equal to other people <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I accept myself and other people <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I feel that people accept me as I am <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I can share my feelings with others <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I am happy and contented some of the time <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I feel in control of my life <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I like my own company <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I feel secure <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I am optimistic about the future <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>I find ways to resolve conflict and arguments <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	<p>List below some examples of how you have changed since the last time we did this activity and record any goals achieved...</p>	
<p><b>Goals:</b> before the next time I would like to ...</p>	<p>In order to help you try considering the following ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how you feel about yourself and other people now</li> <li>people who accept you as you are</li> <li>when you tell someone how you felt</li> <li>when you have organised an aspect of your life</li> <li>how you feel when you are on your own</li> <li>what good things do you expect to happen in the future</li> <li>the last conflict you resolved or are resolving</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Progress:</b> 1 point for each statement that describes you and for each example of achievement you have given                      5 points for every goal achieved since the last time</p>	<p>Points total _____ Previous total _____ Difference _____</p> <p>Signed: _____                      Signed: _____</p>	



The system concentrates on what an individual can do, rather than things they have been unable to achieve and it is intended as a positive experience for learners. By measuring changes over time in outcomes such as confidence, self-esteem and motivation, organisations are able to show the distance that learners, or groups of learners, have travelled. A Spreadsheet Results Package (SRP) helps organisations collate their results and graphically display them, providing valuable information for funders, management, local government or the clients/workers themselves.

Sample screens from the SRP shown below are the **Adult Summary Graph** and the **Children Summary Graph**:



Organisations who trialled the SOUL Record reported that the framework not only provides a soft outcomes measurement, but that it also provides a valuable diagnostic tool and helps workers to 'get to know' new service users. The SOUL Record is a useful resource for both one-to-one work and group work. Talking a client through the SOUL Record is an important part of establishing a relationship with the client and building up trust with vulnerable groups of people. For the organisation, it also helps pinpoint where a client may require extra support or guidance.

Further details about The SOUL Record can be accessed from these websites:

<http://www.soulrecord.org/> or <http://www.theresearchcentre.co.uk/>

Or contact The SOUL Record: email: [thesoulrecord@ccn.ac.uk](mailto:thesoulrecord@ccn.ac.uk) or tel: 01603 773364

For further information see:

Full report: <http://soulrecord.org/sites/default/files/rs8706.pdf>

Summary report: <http://soulrecord.org/sites/default/files/SOULFeb06.pdf>

## Dare to Ask?

**Dare to Ask?** is a toolkit designed by CfBT Advice & Guidance for the evaluation of career learning. It involves students in evaluating their career learning and helps teachers to gather feedback to support the development of effective careers education. The materials cover all of the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 outcomes from the National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance in England (DfES 2003) with the aim of bridging the gap between the national guidelines and the classroom.

Focused around 18 questionnaires in total, and originally developed as a ring binder pack, an online version is now being introduced on licence, initially in CfBT's Connexions contract areas. This follows a successful year-long trial in one Connexions area. The new version uses the original questionnaires but simplifies the process of producing reports and allows easier comparisons to be made; for example between boys' and girls' results, year on year changes, or responses before and after a careers module. Reports from the online version of Dare to Ask? are presented in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. Students complete the questionnaires online and the results are generated automatically once the teacher has selected the required criteria. From this, the teacher can produce a simple chart to illustrate the results graphically.

The questionnaires focus on the 'softer' outcomes of careers education and guidance. For example, in terms of what students have learnt about: career opportunities and progression routes; career exploration and planning skills; and about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses.

Dare to Ask? can be a key tool in improving the effectiveness of careers work. It can provide valuable evidence towards meeting IAG quality standards, as well as for Ofsted self-evaluation and careers quality awards. The materials can be used in individual discussions or with small or large groups.

### Some of the benefits of Dare to Ask? are that it can:

- improve students' involvement in careers education and guidance, including helping them to understand what they are learning and to recognise their areas of strength and weakness;
- improve evaluation and development planning, including making the evaluation of learning more consistent and highlighting the need for any changes to the programme;
- improve the delivery of careers education and guidance (CEG) and promote shared understanding, including helping to plan work for students with a variety of abilities and needs.

### Quotes from teachers include:

*'This is a really useful resource and tutors have been very positive about it!'*

*'I think this will be really useful for my Investors in Careers work.'*

*'The students have found it easy to use and the questionnaires are quick and easy to complete.'*

*'There were some areas that the students didn't understand, so we've added some work on the local labour market.'*

Further details are available of the [Dare to Ask? evaluation toolkit including sample materials](#).

More detailed information from:

Elaine Barnes, [ebarnes@cfbt.com](mailto:ebarnes@cfbt.com) Tel. 01844 245992 or 07775 922980

Anne Newton, [anewton@cfbt.com](mailto:anewton@cfbt.com) Tel. 01235 534300 or 07919 331848

Careers Education Strategic Support Manager(s)  
CfBT Advice & Guidance (part of CfBT Education Trust)

The following activity is designed to help crystallise your own thinking about the relationship between inspection frameworks, quality standards, soft outcomes, distance travelled and hard outcome measures.

**Activity:** Which approach tells us most about the evidence and impact of careers and guidance-related interventions?

Clearly, new approaches for measuring and assessing the impact of Integrated Youth Support Services in England are now likely to emerge in response to new statutory and non-statutory requirements and inspection regimes for Connexions, careers and IAG interventions. In response, those responsible for the planning, management and delivery of careers education and guidance-related services will need to be able to articulate the added value of their contribution to the IYSS agenda.

### 3.3 Gathering evidence and reporting on impact

A key challenge for anyone seeking to measure and assess the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions is to find a good starting point or platform for development work. The following strategies, tools and tips are designed to simply point to possible ways that this can be achieved. *There is no magic formula!*

It is clear that different organisations adopt different strategic and operational approaches to collecting, using and reporting on the key findings from their work. The following strategies 'tips and tools' are outlined at both *strategic* and *operational* levels.

### 3.3.1 Strategic: Connexions services impact assessment approaches

The following examples of *strategic* approaches adopted by some Connexions services and their partner organisations help illustrate key anchor points for their work, namely, activities based on a:

- *drivers for change model* embedded within a fully integrated company impact performance strategy;
- *quality assurance management model* rooted in impact assessment and/or supported by differing quality assurance frameworks;
- *destinations and client caseload information system (CCIS)* management model linked to reporting on client progress – including NEET performance and other KPIs; and
- *customer voice model* designed to involve young people in the design of services and/or to share their learning journeys.

The four models or approaches mentioned above are not mutually exclusive. In nearly all cases, Connexions services use a combination of these and other approaches designed to capture, assess and report on the impact of careers and guidance-related interventions.

A fundamental issue is how best to develop strategic approaches to impact assessment within organisations and between agencies.

The following examples highlight some strategic approaches to impact assessment:

#### **Case Study 1: A drivers for change model**

Careers South West (formerly Connexions Cornwall and Devon) uses a Performance Driver framework as part of its annual self-assessment and planning process.

Through the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model, Careers South West has used a series of performance 'driver' questionnaires as part of its annual self-assessment and planning process. By using these 'Drivers', Careers South West is able to get constant feedback from its key customer groups and also its employees on the services being delivered.

Underpinning the above are four current 'Drivers':

- Performance Driver feedback for customers/clients (Help Us Get It Right) for young people and for adults) using EFQM enabler headings
- Performance Driver for employees (on leadership and resources etc)
- Performance Driver for parents/guardians/carers
- Performance Driver for employers who use the service.

There is an annual cycle for the questionnaires to be completed, and each year following each 'Driver', Careers South West produces an improvement plan which is included in its next Business and Corporate plan.

Careers South West also provides feedback to customer groups on the results and what it has done or is doing to action any suggestions made. If the company is not able to do that it will explain why.

From the above results Careers South West is able to produce trend data and results and set higher-level improvement targets each year. Results are published on the company's website on the respective customer, parent and employer pages. The senior Management Team and Board of Directors have results presented to them each year and also advise on issues that they would like actioned.

In addition to the above overall views of the company and its activities, Careers South West also analyses satisfaction from customers on a sample basis immediately after they have used the service to see if customer service standards have been met.

With all the above 'Drivers', Careers South West is able to benchmark the quality of service delivery across all its delivery centres, highlighting examples of good practice or where improvements are required. The recent assessment for the national Customer Excellence Award stated that as a result of the Performance Driver programme:

'The consultation of customers is at the heart of the continuous development of the service. A whole range of approaches are used, with outcomes driving the improvements which shape corporate planning. The culture of Careers South West is based on a detailed understanding of customers. There continues to be a whole-hearted commitment, across the service, to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery that is underpinned by the corporate vision and values.'

Further information about the Performance Driver framework can be obtained from:  
John.reed@careerssw.org

### **Case Study 2: A quality improvement management model**

Connexions Nottinghamshire has introduced an 'Impact Assessment Framework (IAF)' which forms part of its overall *performance management strategy* to ensure that:

- standards are set for one-to-one and group work interventions undertaken by Connexions Advisers;
- managers gain information on how effectively their staff are working with young people and relevant partner agencies to achieve the company targets. This includes making best use of resources i.e. staff time;
- contract requirements are met which require the practice of Connexions Advisers to be assessed as competent;
- continuous quality improvement is promoted by managers identifying with staff where they may need further training and development opportunities to enhance their skills; and
- staff have the opportunity to reflect on and develop their practice with young people and partner agencies.

#### **Overview**

Connexions Nottinghamshire (CNXS) first developed an Impact Assessment Framework (IAF) in 2004. This built on a quality framework shared by the late Paul Verity, senior manager from Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions. The IAF was devised by a group of staff drawn from across the CNXS company led by the Business Improvement Manager, Annette Temple. An independent consultant, Dr. Sandra Morgan, supported the development process. In 2007, the IAF was evaluated by team managers and practitioners. The results were positive but highlighted areas for further development and improvement. As a result a further group of staff was formed, again led by the Business Improvement Manager and supported by the same consultant, which revisited and revised the IAF in the light of the evaluation and national changes.

#### **Rationale**

The IAF forms part of the CNXS overall performance management strategy to ensure that:

1. rigorous, consistent standards are set for all one-to-one interventions and groupwork sessions;
2. managers are given evidence on how effectively staff are working with young people and partners to meet the company contract requirements and targets, and make best use of the CNXS resource;
3. continuous quality improvement is promoted by identifying further training needs and developing opportunities to share good practice and enhance staff skills;
4. all staff have the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own practice with young people and partner agencies.

### Practice

The IAF is designed to evaluate both: the progress made by young people; and the impact of an individual Adviser on that progress.

The IAF is designed to focus on the intervention by the adviser, but also to include how effectively he or she makes appropriate use of any prior interventions by CNXS staff and/or partners. This underlies the philosophy of the IAF of gaining evidence to measure how effective CNXS staff are in moving young people from where they are to where they want/need to be over time.

An important aspect of the IAF is its ability to highlight the CNXS company focus which can vary year to year. For example, in 2009-2010, the key focus is on measuring impact in relation to 'raising aspirations' of young people with the relevant criteria highlighted in the framework.

There are two graded assessment outcomes: (i) an impact outcome taking account of the young person's learning and progress; and (ii) a practice outcome considering the extent to which the Adviser, and his or her work with partners, has had an impact on the young person's learning and progress.

There are three gradings which are clearly differentiated; high standard, effective and unsatisfactory. The voices of young people form a part of the assessment and the grading decisions. Every assessor obtains feedback from young people after the intervention using four set questions.

There are separate, but related, performance criteria for one-to-one interventions and for groupwork sessions. These are supported by a comprehensive information pack to make the use of the IAF explicit to ensure consistency across the CNXS company.

### Findings

The results of the IAF are used both by:

- team managers and practitioners in feedback discussions; and
- operations managers compiling reports to the local authorities on key performance indicators.

### Lessons Learned

- The importance of prior and continuing consultation with CNXS staff to gain ownership.
- Making explicit all details of the IAF process to ensure consistency.
- The benefits of evaluation by all users to identify improvements.
- The criteria should specify clear aims for the intervention linked to impact (learning and progress), and practice outcomes, to help the young person move forward.

Connexions Nottinghamshire has produced [guidance notes and impact assessment templates](#) for their Impact Assessment Framework.

### Case Study 3: A quality assurance management model

Aspire-I (formerly Careers Bradford Ltd) has developed impact measures related to quality improvement and self-assessment which forms part of their *overall performance management strategy*. This complements key performance indicators (KPIs) and use of a balanced score card to help assess organisational performance, monitoring and improvement: [Key performance indicators \(KPIs\) and use of a balanced score card](#). The report *Maximising Potential, Improving Lives* illustrates how some of the data is presented to external funders and local partners, including parents/carers and young people.

#### **Case Study 4: A quality assurance management model**

Connexions Cheshire and Warrington has developed a [schools matrix management information tool](#) which forms part of its *overall performance management strategy*. This is used by the Chief Executive and his management team to provide rich data on inputs, throughputs and outputs relating to overall performance in a particular geographical area.

By using an Excel spreadsheet, information is stored for systematic review and analysis to inform strategic discussions and formal presentations on the Connexions services' added-value contribution to local youth support service developments and achievements. The information is also used regularly within and across the company to negotiate and agree the appropriate allocation of resources.

#### **Case Study 5: A destinations and client caseload information system (CCIS) management model**

Connexions Central London has developed systems and procedures for gathering destinations and client caseload information which forms part of its overall performance management strategy to drive forward service delivery and NEET strategies, and improve access for young people to the right CEIAG. The company is working towards delivering a common application process that has direct read-across to the Connexions Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) and is embedded in the 14-19 Area Prospectus. A five-region CCIS bridges the five London sub-regional partnerships to track young people across London. Information systems are constantly being developed in terms of their potential connectivity with one another to improve the quality and range of data on young people's learning and career trajectories.

The example provided below demonstrates that Central London Connexions is pushing the boundary in terms of seeking to achieve more sophisticated read-across to various data management systems so that services to young people can be further improved. An example of a [Central London Connexions quarterly report](#) demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of its impact monitoring and reporting approach balancing data analysis and exploration with data reporting.

Outside of London and the surrounding area, it is interesting to note that different Connexions services report on their destination data in many differing ways. Aspire-I (formerly Careers Bradford Ltd) provides an example of a strategic 'macro report' summarising [school-leaver destinations in Bradford and the surrounding district](#).

#### **Case Study 6: A customer voice model**

Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire has embedded within its *overall performance management strategy* plans for involving young people in the design of local services and mechanisms for gathering data on young people's learning journeys, as exemplified by its [Involving Young People Policy](#) and its [Involving Young People Strategy 2007–2008](#).

### **3.3.2 Strategic: Connexions services 'macro impact reports'**

At a *strategic* level, Connexions services in some areas have developed 'macro impact reports' designed to bring together key information on impact, quality assurance and performance measurement, including the 'customer's voice and experiences'. The general aim is to provide a full picture of Connexions impact and achievements which can be made available to both 'internal' and 'external' audiences.

Connexions Cheshire and Warrington has produced a [Summary management information report](#) which sets out key achievements and issues that are shared with local partners, government offices and inspectorate services.

Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire has produced an [Annual Scrutiny Report](#) containing summarised management information; quality assurance and evaluation data.

### 3.3.3 Operational: Connexions services impact assessment activities

The following examples highlight specific impact assessment activities and reports, typically at *manager and practitioner level, and involving* working with young people, parents/carers, schools and college leaders and staff, including governors, and other 14-19 partners.

Listed below are practical resources designed to identify and assess the impact of Connexions, careers and IAG services. Please note that these are a mixture of PDF, Excel and PowerPoint files, and sizes of documents will vary.

- Example 1:** [Annual Review School and Connexions Partnership Agreement \(Sept 2007 – July 2008\)](#)  
– Careers South West (formerly Connexions Cornwall and Devon)
- Example 2:** [Year 11 Activity Survey 2007 Connexions Report for School Governors](#)  
– Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire
- Example 3:** [Evaluation of Careers Interviews in School – 2007/2008 Survey template and Annual Report](#)  
– Connexions West London
- Example 4:** [Designed symbols for customers to record feedback on careers and guidance-related interventions and template for evaluation of group work sessions](#)  
– Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire
- Example 5:** [‘Tell us what U think’ – Customer survey template and summary report](#)  
– Connexions Cheshire and Warrington
- Example 6:** [Year 11 survey – Student questionnaire template](#)  
– Aspire-I (formerly Careers Bradford Ltd)
- Example 7:** [A Personal Adviser Caseload Review System Monitoring Tool](#)  
– Connexions South London
- Example 8:** [‘Where are the jobs?’: an example of local labour market trends 2008 a Powerpoint presentation 2008](#) – Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire
- Example 9:** [‘Work Experience in Diplomas Myths and Truths’ – Information Bulletin](#)  
– Connexions South London

**Activity:** To what extent could you customise and/or adapt any of the above to further enhance your own professional practice?



**To further support you in measuring and assessing impact, you may find it helpful to:**  
Complete an online 'health check' for your organisation to make the link between theory, research and practice

Visit: <http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/ip/theory/tp/>

Download a useful source of further information about practical issues and techniques associated with the successful evaluation of projects: [A Little Book of Evaluation](#).

Obtain a copy of a planned approach developed by Careers Wales in association with the Centre for Guidance Studies to measure and assess the impact of career guidance services with adults: [Career Guidance for Adults in Wales: Making a Difference](#).

Review an approach to impact measurement and assessment in an adult guidance context: [Measuring the Impact of Nextstep Career Advice in the North East of England](#).

Finally, the case study below is an activity designed to help you take stock of the information you have read so far and to test out ways in which you could use the evidence on impact in a school or college setting. Once you have read the case study, it may be helpful to work alongside someone else to discuss your ideas and preferred tactics.

### Case Study

**School Mission Statement:**

*to encourage all our students to acquire ideas, skills and attitudes which will prepare them to become confident and independent and to lead fulfilled lives as productive members of the community*

Schools and colleges regularly review their policies and practices to ensure that they are providing sound educational opportunities for their students and staff. Most school and college leadership teams fully recognise that changes in government policy can and do have an impact on the school ethos and the extent to which its provision is planned and delivered.

School values are frequently expressed as 'mission' or 'vision statements' which seek to define how the institution operates within a learning community. An important step in raising the profile and position of careers work in schools and colleges is to align the work closely to the 'achievement' or 'added-value' that careers work brings in relation to the institution's mission or vision statement.

**Challenge:** The senior management team in a middle-sized comprehensive school was concerned that the timetable for PSHE and careers activities was being reduced in favour of core national curriculum subjects. A twilight INSET session was held to discuss the issue and the school Personal Adviser was formally asked for ideas and arguments which could be given to the leadership team on matters relating to the impact and evidence base for PSHE and careers work.

Each member of the team, including the PA, was asked to examine the school mission statement and create robust arguments linked to their area of work focusing on skills acquisition, aspiration and attainment.

**Activity:** Explore the role that CEIAG can and does perform in this school setting. Prepare to meet the headteacher and senior management team to explain and, if necessary, defend your work.

**The end goal:** As a result of impressive careers work in this school and the cogent arguments made in relation to the all-round benefits of CEIAG activities it has now fully embraced careers work and is working towards a recognised quality kite-mark to help improve its services and provision to young people, parents/carers and employers.



## 4. The customer voice: personalisation

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Involving young people
- 4.3 Careers and guidance-related policy
- 4.4 Practical approaches
- 4.5 Young people's voices



## 4.1 Introduction

The overarching twin concepts of listening to the 'customer voice' and 'personalisation' are key features that dominate public policy developments within and outside the Connexions, careers and IAG sector. Charles Leadbeater (2004)<sup>19</sup> championed the theme of personalisation through his influential work at DEMOS, London. From this, five dominant themes have continued to influence policy developments relating to the customer voice and personalisation of services:

1. providing people with a more customer-friendly interface with existing services;
2. giving users more say in navigating their way through services once they have gained access to them;
3. giving users more direct say over how public money is spent;
4. enabling users to participate actively in the design and provision of services; and
5. encouraging public good to emerge, in part through public policy, that helps to shape individuals self-organising decisions.

## 4.2 Involving young people

At its simplest level, the customer voice approach in the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) is mainly about involving young people, parents/carers and employers. As discussed earlier in Section 1, the 'customer voice' is crucial in terms of gaining a better understanding of what constitutes effective careers and guidance-related services. Findings from the literature review outlined in Section 2 highlight a paucity of research that specifically relates to the customer voice. Yet, how can services ensure they are accessible and meaningful to differing client groups in the absence of robust research and evaluation?

## 4.3 Careers and guidance-related policy

Career guidance policy reviews initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris, and extended by Cedefop, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the World Bank, were carried out in 37 countries between 2001 and 2004.<sup>20</sup> From these reviews, it was identified that policy development for career guidance needs to be supported by:

- citizen need and demand for services,
- user satisfaction, and
- outcomes and cost-effectiveness of career guidance<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2004). *Personalisation Through Participation*. London: Demos.  
Visit: [www.demos.co.uk/themes/~personalisation](http://www.demos.co.uk/themes/~personalisation).

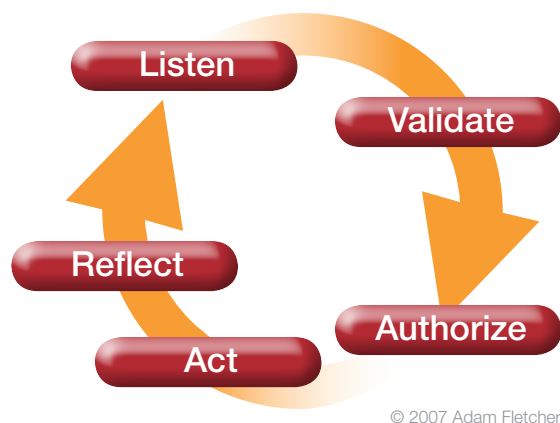
<sup>20</sup> Watts, A.G. & Sultana, R.G. (2004) Career Guidance Policies in 37 Countries: Contracts and Common Themes, *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4 (3) pp.105-122

## 4.4 Practical approaches

In Section 3 some examples are provided of practical approaches used to gather feedback from young people, parents/carers and schools. In addition, summary reports aimed at school governors, senior teachers and parents/carers also illustrate effective engagement and involvement in the design and provision of services.

Fletcher (2007)<sup>21</sup> provides a four-stage cycle of meaningful student involvement that can be applicable in a range of differing settings:

### *Cycle of Meaningful Student Involvement*



#### What can the customers' voice positively affect?

- School improvement goals
- Academic achievement
- The 'engagement gap'
- Individuals' feelings of agency
- Drop out rates
- Retention of students
- Curricular effectiveness
- Teachers' feelings of efficacy

<sup>21</sup> Fletcher, A. (2005). *Meaningful Student Involvement: Guide to Students as Partners in School Change*. Second Edition. Washington: SoundOut.org, in partnership with HumanLinks Foundation. Visit: <http://www.soundout.org/MSIGuide.pdf>

The graphic and explanation below offer a typology that explores a variety of ways young people can be involved in decision-making within and outside of Connexions services, schools and colleges. Professionals and young people can apply this tool to the everyday involvement of individuals in the impact of services by using it to identify how programmes and services involve young people. The Ladder can also encourage individuals working in schools and colleges to aspire to higher levels by presenting the possibilities of meaningful student involvement.



### The Ladder of Student Involvement in School

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Student-led decision-making shared with adults<br/><i>'Student-Adult Partnerships'</i></li> <li>7. Student-led, student-directed, student-centered decision-making</li> <li>6. Adult-led decision-making shared with students</li> <li>5. Adult-led decision-making informed by student voice</li> <li>4. Adult-led decision-making with students assigned to respond</li> </ol> | <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Increasing Amounts of Involvement</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Adults tokenize students in their decision-making</li> <li>2. Adults use students to decorate their decision-making</li> <li>1. Adults manipulate students in decision-making</li> </ol>   | <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Degrees of Non-Involvement</p>        |

Adapted by Adam Fletcher from Hart, R. (1994). *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, New York: UNICEF.

*The Ladder of Student Involvement in School*<sup>22</sup> was adapted from the work of Roger Hart, an international expert on children's participation. By mapping situations and activities that involve young people on the rungs of the Ladder, Connexions services and schools can assess their levels of meaningful individual involvement. The higher the rung on the Ladder, the greater the meaningfulness of student involvement. This guide seeks to help schools reach higher rungs, that is, increase the amount and improve the quality of student participation in schools. Note that the rungs on this Ladder are not necessarily a developmental process that happens over finite increments. Student involvement can go from the second rung directly to the sixth. The Ladder is meant to represent possibilities, not predictions, for growth.

By enabling users to participate actively in the design and provision of services the reputation of profile of an organisation's work can be significantly improved i.e. by word of mouth.

<sup>22</sup> Taken from Fletcher, A. (2005). *Meaningful Student Involvement: Guide to Students as Partners in School Change*. Seattle, WA: HumanLinks Foundation. Available online at [www.soundout.org](http://www.soundout.org)

## 4.5 Young people's voices

Here are some examples of a few young people's perceptions of careers and guidance-related interventions. The quotes below are taken from some ongoing research in the London area designed to find out how young people measure and assess the impact of careers work. Six themes have emerged as a constant reminder of young people's general expectations:

1. Be in school more often in Year 11
2. Find out more jobs
3. Offer more specific routes and pathways for learning and work
4. Offer work experience (in some cases, with money)
5. Not enough part-time work
6. More publicity material, leaflets, posters advertising the service and publicity about the services should be on local radio station and on TV.

### What criteria do young people tend to use to rate the quality and effectiveness of careers and guidance-related interventions?

#### **Often, the basic criteria translates into:**

- Did they enjoy the session(s) and how did this help them?
- Did it seem relevant to their circumstances, interests and future goals?
- Did it help improve their confidence and self-esteem?
- Did the adviser/teacher follow through and action what was promised?

Given individuals, schools and colleges differ, the above criteria can be used as a 'general rule of thumb' to start the process of rating customers' perceptions of quality and effectiveness.

### A few examples of young people's thoughts and ideas of careers and guidance-related interventions

*'We would like information on activities we could take part in from Year 9 which would count towards UCAS points.'*

(Female, Year 10)

*'Work experience briefing at the end of Year 10 would be useful'*

(Female, Year 10)

*'Discussions were more fun than worksheets and work books'*

(Male, aged 17)

*'Information on Year 11 options and more detailed information on A Level subjects that were new to us would be helpful e.g. psychology.'*

(Female, Year 11)

*'My Choice London helped – but need a person too.'*

(Male, sixth form)

*'Some worksheets and work books are pointless – easy to do and learnt nothing I can remember.'*

(Female, Year 9)

The DCSF has established a National Youth Panel to engage in online discussions about Connexions and related issues. Some preliminary discussions have taken place to ascertain young people's views on how best to measure and assess the impact of its work. Examples of three key questions recently presented to the Panel include:

1. How do we know that careers work in schools, colleges and Connexions services is making a difference for young people? What measures do you think should be used to assess the impact of careers work?
2. What would a modern, high-quality careers service look like from your viewpoint?
3. Do young people generally care about the quality of careers work in schools, colleges and Connexions services?

The interim responses indicate that there are questions raised mainly about the relevance and accessibility of careers information, advice and guidance. The issue of following up young people's progress was highlighted by the participants:

*'... following up on seeing if the people who were given advice ended up getting a job'*

*'... you get real statistics from finding out who actually got the jobs'*

*'I would rate you as giving me good advice but then I chose not to get a job out of laziness'*

There was some discussion about the usefulness of introducing a rating system (similar to the YouTube approach) to assess the quality of information and advice delivered online. Some participants indicated:

*'If you just do a 'rate this advice' before you can move on to the next page'*

*'Maybe a little comment... 'cause people can just click whatever number just for the sake of it'*





## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Looking ahead

It is argued strongly that services need to become more sophisticated in their approach to gathering useful data on the impact of differing forms of interventions. The customer voice is often a powerful driver for change; therefore we recommend this is harnessed fully so that the quality and range of careers and guidance related interventions can be used to good effect. Local authorities, Connexions services, schools and colleges will be expected by Government to develop and adopt robust approaches to building their evidence base in order to demonstrate impact. Value for money, self-assessment, accountability and transparency will continue to feature prominently in the delivery of public services.

We offer the material contained within this professional resource in the belief that it will be of interest and practical use to members of the CEIAG community including policymakers, managers and practitioners. We trust this will both support the development of careers and guidance-related interventions and help articulate the wider benefits to those experienced in, and those new to, the CEIAG field.



## Appendix 1: Links to other resources and websites

Association for Careers Education and Guidance [www.aceg.org.uk](http://www.aceg.org.uk)

CEGNET [www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk)

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk)

Careers Research Advisory Council (CRAC) / National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling  
[www.crac.org.uk](http://www.crac.org.uk)

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

European Guidance and Counselling Research Forum (EGCRF) website [www.guidance-europe.org](http://www.guidance-europe.org)

Institute of Career Guidance (ICG) [www.icg-uk.org](http://www.icg-uk.org)

Institute for Employment Research (IER) [www.warwick.ac.uk/ier](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/ier)

International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) [www.derby.ac.uk/icegs](http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs)

Lifelong Learning UK [www.lluk.org.uk](http://www.lluk.org.uk)

National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) [www.naega.org.uk](http://www.naega.org.uk)

National Guidance Research Forum (NGRF) [www.guidance-research.org](http://www.guidance-research.org)

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

UK Commission for Employment and Skills [www.ukces.org.uk](http://www.ukces.org.uk)

## Appendix 2: Glossary of key terms in relation to evaluation and quality assurance

**Action research.** This term is often used to describe a process of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the effectiveness and validity of their own practices. It is usually a cyclical process by which change and understanding can be pursued, with action and critical reflection taking place in turn. (See also: **Reflective practice.**)

**Added value/Value added.** This can be described as the real and measurable contribution made by an organisation, a process or a service. For example, in education the concept was introduced to demonstrate that learners were leaving school or college with assessment grades that showed a significant improvement on the corresponding assessment levels at entry. (See also: **Additionality.**)

**Additionality.** This refers to the extent to which something happens as a result of an intervention, which would not have occurred in the absence of the intervention. The assessment of additionality is an important element in maximising the impact and value for money of a project and ensuring that it delivers real results. (See also: **Added value/ Value added.**)

**Assessment.** This refers to the process of judging or deciding the amount, value, quality or importance of something. A useful distinction is that between 'measurement' and 'assessment'. Measurement is an objective process providing results in the form of quantitative data. Although an assessment may draw upon measurements and may be expressed in terms of quantitative data, a judgement has to be made by the relevant individual for it to be complete. This distinction between 'measurement' and 'assessment' is similar to the distinction between 'monitoring' and 'evaluation'. Assessments can be carried out at different levels for different purposes: practitioners may carry out assessments with individual clients to support their learning and progression; managers may carry out organisational assessments to support overall quality assurance. (See also: **Evaluation, Monitoring.**)

**Baseline data.** This is data collected at the start of a project/service to provide a baseline against which subsequent progress can be measured. For example, in an evaluation of the Make it in Scotland (MiiS) Careers Scotland technology initiative, pupils' views of the manufacturing industry were sought by focus group and questionnaire, before the MiiS Roadshows,

to provide baseline data for any increased awareness following the roadshows. The term benchmark is sometimes loosely used in relation to baseline data. (See also: **Benchmarking, Indicators.**)

**Benchmarks, benchmarking.** Benchmarking can be defined as the publishing of a performance measure, or indicator, as a standard or 'norm' to enable comparisons to be made between different individuals, providers, regions or countries, delivering equivalent services. For example, a range of benchmarks has been published on the internet that enable comparisons to be of the performance of local authorities in delivering the public services for which they are responsible. The term benchmark is sometimes loosely used in relation to baseline data. (See also: **Baseline data, Indicators.**)

**Best value.** This term is commonly used within the context of the delivery of public services. Best value seeks to achieve continuous improvement balancing quality, effectiveness, equality of opportunity and cost considerations. (See also: **Productivity, Unit costs.**)

**Case studies.** These can be defined as complex examples, often drawn directly from practical experience, that can be used to illustrate and contextualise points of principle, theoretical concepts and/or underlying processes. For example, a case study could be drawn from a Careers Adviser's experience of working directly with adults as a way of illustrating good practice in career planning.

**Charter Mark.** This is a government-backed quality award aimed primarily, but not exclusively, at public sector services. To be successful, organisations have to meet key criteria and provide the appropriate supporting evidence. At the heart of the Charter Mark criteria is the fundamental question: what does the customer expect or hope for from the services offered by the organisation and are these expectations being met? A key requirement is consultation and feedback from users to enable the organisation to answer this question. Charter Mark recognises that people on the front line dealing with customers are often the best judges of what needs to be done to improve services. Staff should be involved in the planning of services and should be encouraged and empowered to put things right wherever possible. (See also: **EFQM Excellence Model, Investors in People, Matrix.**)

**Desk research.** This is a research method that involves reviewing and using information that has already been captured in a variety of documents that may include: related research reports both published and unpublished; management information reports; organisational promotional literature. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**EFQM Excellence Model.** The European Model for Business Excellence – now called the EFQM Excellence Model – was introduced in 1991 as a framework for organisational self-assessment and as the basis for judging entrants to the European Quality Award. It is said to be the most widely used organisational framework in Europe and has become the basis for the majority of national and regional Quality Awards. Many organisations have adopted the EFQM Excellence Model as the basis of their quality assurance system focused on organisational self-assessment, identifying gaps in performance and introducing solutions.

The EFQM Excellence Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria. Five of these are ‘Enablers’ and four are ‘Results’. The ‘Enabler’ criteria – including leadership, human resources, policy and strategy, and processes – cover what an organisation does with its resources. The ‘Results’ criteria – including people results and customer results – cover what an organisation achieves. ‘Results’ are caused by ‘Enablers’, and feedback from ‘Results’ help to improve ‘Enablers’. (See also: **Charter Mark, Investors in People, Matrix, Kirkpatrick model**.)

**Evaluation.** Evaluation is a structured exercise to: collect information about a project/service; judge the degree of progress made against a set of predetermined criteria; review implications for future action; and draw conclusions about how to improve. An important distinction is that between *formative* and *summative* evaluation. Formative evaluations strengthen or improve the delivery of the project/service being evaluated by examining the quality of its implementation, including an assessment of the organisational context, personnel, procedures, inputs, and so on. Summative evaluations, in contrast, examine the outcomes of the project/service to determine its overall effectiveness and/or cost effectiveness. Evaluation should not be confused with ‘monitoring’, which is essentially a data collection process feeding into evaluation. (See also: **Monitoring**.)

**Evidence.** Evidence can come in a variety of forms provided by a variety of research methods, and can be of varying strength or robustness. The strength or robustness of evidence would depend upon the research method used and how carefully the research was carried out. The following model describes five ascending levels of robustness.

*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: (i) qualitative research involving in-depth interviews and/or focus group sessions; or (ii) quantitative research involving questionnaires administered to larger samples. In both cases, they are based on self-report.

*Level 2* comprises **outcome measurement studies with no counterfactuals**. Such studies are more objective, in the sense that they measure specified variable(s) after guidance. ‘Counterfactuals’ are indications of what would have happened in the absence of the guidance intervention. If no evidence of counterfactuals is available, there is little basis on which to attribute causality.

*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).

*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 as participation in employment and/or learning) are as a result of the guidance and not to 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 more relevant variables that can be included in such analyses, the more this risk is reduced.

*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. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Evidence-based practice.** The concept of evidence-based practice originated in medicine, and has now been translated to a number of fields of professional practice, including mental health, education, social work and careers guidance. It involves the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current evidence of what works best, and most cost-effectively, to inform policy and practice. Although different, it can be seen as an adjunct to reflective practice.

Evidence-based practice has the potential to: improve the quality of services to customers; maximise efficiency and value for money; support the transparency and accountability of decision-making; empower practitioners and encourage self-directed learning for staff. For evidence-based practice to be truly effective, two key elements must be in place: (i) access to relevant and reliable evidence of the critical factors affecting delivery and of what works best, and (ii) arrangements that ensure the evidence feeds into the decision-making and quality assurance processes, and results in appropriate action. (See also: **Reflective practice**.)

**Focus group.** This is a research method that provides an opportunity for issues to be developed in discussion with a group of individuals. Properly and appropriately conducted, they can be particularly valuable in highlighting shared or common experiences, identifying different or polarised views, and acting as a trigger for wide-ranging debate and stimulation of ideas. The focus group should be moderated by someone who is knowledgeable about the subject and skilled at group facilitation. The moderator should take their steer from a 'thematic topic guide' similar to that used in an unstructured interview but should be careful not to prompt or unduly lead the participants, or allow certain individuals to dominate the discussion. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Impact measures.** This term is often used to describe the effect that a project or service has had, either on the individual client, or on the wider community or economy as a whole. It is often used alongside, or instead of, the term 'outcomes'. (See also: **Kirkpatrick model, Outcomes and outputs**.)

**Indicators, statistical indicators and performance indicators.** A statistical indicator is a measure that provides a meaning and context for the data it represents. It is different from simple statistical data and is more meaningful. For example, the numbers of training participants is a statistic, whilst the training participation rate of the adult population is an indicator. A performance indicator is an indicator that has been selected by policymakers, funding bodies or managers, as a key measure of project/service delivery and effectiveness. (See also: **Outcomes and outputs, SMART objectives**.)

**Interviews: unstructured and structured.** This is a research method that is used when there is a need to collect in-depth information, understand complex circumstances, or discuss issues that might be of a sensitive or threatening nature. Interviews are normally carried out with single individuals on a one-to-one basis. Unstructured interviews have a more conversational and informal structure, with ideas and topics for conversation generated by the interchange between the interviewer and the respondent. Structured, or semi-structured, interviews pose the same pre-defined questions to interviewees to gain specific information about key issues. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Investors in People.** This is a national quality award based upon a planned approach to setting and communicating organisational objectives to all employees at all organisational levels. As such, Investors in People focuses directly on people and communication, and is particularly suited to organisations that want to improve the skills of their employees and encourage them to become part of their vision and success. In working towards Investors in People, an organisation will have to demonstrate that it meets all of the 12 indicators of the standard, including ensuring that employees understand how their work contributes to the success of the organisation as a whole. (See also: **Charter Mark, EFQM Excellence Model, Matrix.**)

**Kirkpatrick model.** This model was originally developed by Donald Kirkpatrick for the evaluation of training programmes. The four levels of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model essentially measure:

- reaction of student – what they thought and felt about the training;
- learning – the resulting increase in knowledge or capability;
- behaviour – extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application; and
- results – the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance. (See also: **EFQM Excellence Model, Outcomes and outputs.**)

**Longitudinal survey/study.** This refers to research that studies the impact of a project, or a service, on individuals at several different points in time over a significant period of their lives; for example, many longitudinal studies follow-up or 'track' individuals at least twice during a period of at least a year. Studies that track individuals only once following a service intervention are perhaps best described as 'follow-up studies'. (See also: **Research methods.**)

**Matrix.** This is a national standard that has been specifically designed for organisations that deliver information, advice and guidance on learning and work opportunities. The matrix standard consists of eight elements, four focused on how an organisation delivers its services and four focused on how it manages those services. In order to be matrix accredited, organisations are assessed independently against the eight elements of the standard. (See also: **Charter Mark, EFQM Excellence Model, Investors in People.**)

**Monitoring.** This is the process of collecting and recording information systematically to check progress against the objectives of a project/service. It can be defined as a routine information collection process feeding into, and supporting, evaluation. (See also: **Evaluation.**)

**Outcomes and outputs.** These terms refer to the effects or end results that the project or service is designed to produce. 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. 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. Sometimes the terms 'outputs' and 'outcomes' are used interchangeably, though it is more appropriate to use them separately in the way described above. (See also: **Impact measures, Indicators, Kirkpatrick model.**)

**Peer review.** This is a system whereby research, or a research proposal, is scrutinised and reviewed by independent peer experts, often referred to as 'referees'. Through peer reviews, referees check the technical soundness, relevance and importance of the research, or research proposal, usually on an unpaid basis. In the case of research proposals, referees' comments are typically submitted to the funding body's research committee for consideration. In the case of research that has already been carried out, referees' comments are typically submitted to a journal editor for consideration prior to the publication of the research findings.

**Performance measures/indicators.** A performance measure/indicator is a measure that has been selected by policymakers, funding bodies or managers, as a way of assessing and measuring the delivery and effectiveness of a project or a service. In education, performance measures often relate to the retention, achievement and progression rates of schools and colleges. In careers guidance, performance measures often relate to the number of interventions, client satisfaction level and positive destinations to be achieved. (See also: **Indicators.**)

**Productivity.** This term is conventionally used by economists as a concept that relates output to a given input. For example, productivity can be defined as the output of a unit of production in a given period. A distinction is commonly drawn between labour productivity, with labour as the input, and capital productivity, with capital as the input. In measuring productivity in a career guidance context, the most obvious input unit to measure would seem to be the time of guidance professionals (labour productivity). (See also: **Unit costs**.)

**Quality assurance.** This is the process by which an organisation ensures its services meet the expectations of customers and stakeholders, and are delivered cost-effectively. Quality assurance typically involves ensuring that all staff understand and accept what is required of them, that the necessary resources for effective delivery are available, and that performance is reviewed regularly and systematically to identify areas for improvement. A number of independently accredited quality standards exist that have been developed to support organisational quality assurance. (See also: **Charter Mark, EFQM Excellence Model, Investors in People, Matrix**.)

**Quality standards.** This refers to the standards that an organisation sets for all of its key business operations, and that help clarify what an organisation expects of its employees in delivering these operations. Quality standards are an important feature of a service's comprehensive quality assurance system. For example, in 2007, the Government published the national IAG quality standards for all local authorities, Connexions providers, schools and other IAG and learning providers as part of the integrated youth support services in England. A related term is 'service delivery standard'. (See also: **EFQM Excellence Model, Impact measures**.)

**Quantitative and qualitative evidence.** Quantitative evidence consists of numerical data and usually involves statistical analysis, whilst qualitative evidence typically consists of verbal descriptions that have been recorded and transcribed for analysis and interpretation. For example, most 'tick box' questionnaires would provide quantitative evidence, whilst focus groups would provide more qualitative evidence. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Questionnaires.** This is a research method that can be used for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. For qualitative data, the questions tend to be 'open-ended' to allow in-depth exploration of a subject by encouraging the respondent to provide detailed information in their own words. Open-ended questions require greater effort on the part of the respondent and the responses themselves may sometimes be difficult to interpret and summarise. For quantitative data, the questions tend to be 'restricted or closed', typically requiring a 'yes' or 'no' response. Closed questions are easier and less time-consuming to complete but do not provide the contextual detail provided by open questions. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Randomised controlled trials.** In the fields of medicine and social sciences, the randomised controlled trial is generally believed to provide the strongest evidence. In such trials an experimental group of people receive a treatment or intervention, and data from this group is then compared with a matched control group that did not receive the treatment or intervention. In the field of careers guidance, the randomised controlled trial is generally impractical, and so the survey is the most frequently used research method to provide useful and meaningful evidence. (See also: **Research methods, Surveys**.)

**Reflective practice.** This is the process by which practitioners reflect upon their experiences at work in order to improve their practice and make their work more fulfilling. Although different, it can be seen as an adjunct to 'evidence-based practice'.

Reflective practice can involve reflection whilst active at work – 'thinking on our feet' – or it can involve reflection after an activity – 'thinking after the event'. It can also be either an individual process or a more social and collaborative process involving discussion with colleagues and collaborative working and planning.

The range of reflection methods available are many and varied and include: reflective writing in the form of maintaining a diary or log; peer review/mentoring; discussion groups; examination of current research findings. (See also: **Evidence-based practice**.)

**Reliability.** This refers to the degree of consistency of the assessment procedure or instrument. For an assessment procedure or instrument to be reliable it should measure consistently across settings and over time. Reliability and validity are different but related concepts and it is important to appreciate that a test or procedure can be reliable but not necessarily valid, and vice versa. For example, a psychometric test can be said to be reliable in that it results in essentially the same outcome when used under the same conditions with the same subjects. However, for it also to be valid it must measure that which is meaningful and useful, and that which it was designed to measure and not something else. (See also: **Validity**.)

**Research methods: qualitative and/or quantitative.** Quantitative research methods deal with numbers and usually employ statistical techniques, whilst qualitative research methods typically deal with verbal descriptions that are recorded and later transcribed for analysis and interpretation. Most questionnaires would be categorised as a quantitative method of data collection, whilst focus groups would be categorised as qualitative. (See also: **Desk research, Focus group, Interviews, Longitudinal survey/study, Questionnaires, Randomised controlled trials, Surveys, Triangulation**.)

**Respondents.** This refers to those individuals who, having responded to and completed a questionnaire or other, similar structured survey, are included in the research sample for the purposes of analysis and data reporting. The related term 'participants' is used to describe those individuals taking part in less structured research methods such as focus groups. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Sample.** In the evaluation of careers guidance, a sample is a group of individuals selected from a larger group in the hope that studying this smaller group (the sample) will reveal important things about the larger group. To provide reliable results, the size of the sample needs to be sufficiently large as to be representative of the wider group from which it is drawn, and it needs to be free of 'bias'. As an example of bias, there is evidence that clients dissatisfied with a service are less likely to accept an invitation to take part in follow-up surveys, and therefore there is a danger that survey results of client satisfaction levels are higher as a result of this potential bias in the sample.

**SMART objectives.** This is a simple acronym used to set objectives. It stands for:

*Specific* – should specify precisely what is to be achieved.

*Measurable* – should be capable of being measured accurately.

*Achievable* – should be achievable and attainable.

*Realistic* – should be capable of being realistically achieved with the given resource.

*Time related* – should clearly specify the timescale of achievement.

(See also: **Indicators**.)

**Surveys.** In surveys, a sample of individuals is drawn from a defined target group and is then examined by questionnaire, interview or focus group, to make generalisations about the whole target group. The size of the sample, and how it is selected, is a critical factor in ensuring the strength and robustness of the evidence produced. (See also: **Evidence, Randomised controlled trials, Research methods, Sample**.)

**Triangulation.** This refers to using different sources of evidence to corroborate essentially the same findings. For example, in an education context, the perceptions of pupils, teachers and parents of the same aspect of service under study could be used to corroborate or 'triangulate' the findings of a study. (See also: **Research methods**.)

**Unit costs.** A key concept within best value is that of 'unit costs', best defined as the total delivery costs divided by the number of outcomes delivered. For unit costs to be meaningful, it is important that all of the relevant costs are included in the equation, including start-up costs and overheads, and that there is agreement on the definition of delivered outcomes. (See also: **Productivity**.)

**Validity.** This refers to the quality of the data-gathering instrument and whether meaningful and useful issues, themes and conclusions can be extracted from the resulting information. In order to assess validity, the researcher must question whether the instrument, or procedure, measures what it is designed to measure, and in so doing meets the aims and objectives of the study. Reliability and validity are different but related concepts and it is important to appreciate that a test or procedure can be valid but not necessarily reliable, and vice versa. For example, a psychometric test can be said to be valid if the results tell us something meaningful and useful about the personality traits we intended to measure. However, for it also to be reliable it should result in essentially the same outcome when used under the same conditions with the same subjects. (See also: **Reliability**.)







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