

DFES/HM Treasury Joint Policy Review on Children and Young People

The Institute of Career Guidance is the largest professional association of career guidance practitioners in the UK. The 3200+ members of the Institute work in all sectors of the career guidance field – schools, colleges, Careers Services, the voluntary sector, Connexions, *nextsteps*, universities, adult guidance agencies, learndirect etc.

What should be the role of universal services in providing access to protective and preventative support, risk assessment and referral?

Universal services have an important role to play in providing access to support according to individual need. The matter of providing universal services and targeting services at those most in need has created a tension between the two policy goals. Current thinking separates the two and this will lead to a separation of strategy, funding, and delivery structures; creating unhelpful duplication of infrastructure and fragmentation of services between service providers.

Youth Matters; Next Steps highlights the need for universal IAG services, however it equates this with services for young people up to the age of 16. The development of policy for targeted services treats them as separate to universal provision; for example, the service approach to tackling NEET amongst young people is regarded as a post-16 service, which fails to recognise the preventative potential of earlier IAG interventions. This dislocation in thinking challenges the concept of a 14-19 progression pathway, which is central to the education and skills strategy.

Careers education and guidance is an important universal service for young people in their latter years of compulsory education. As the 14-19 strategy is implemented it will be important that curriculum provision for careers education enables young people to understand the world of further learning and work and with impartial guidance they can navigate the widening range of options from 14 and make well informed decisions at key stages of transition; at 14, 16, 17 and so on. Skills acquired during this stage will equip young people with the lifelong career management skills which will help them manage other transitions later in life.

By providing access to careers education and guidance for all at an early age young people are enabled to plan their learning and relate it to opportunities in further/higher education and employment. This in turn influences their choices and their behaviour and gives direction, which can help prevent drop out or non participation. Where young people become dissatisfied with their chosen path they will have acquired the skills to review their choice and seek help to change to a more positive alternative.

It is vital that policy, as set out in Youth Matters and elsewhere, enables the adequate resourcing of impartial IAG for young people at all stages of their adolescent development. Impartiality must be secured by the provision of independent and expert IAG free from the bias or narrow focus that can characterise the IAG provision available from individual learning providers. Often learning providers (schools, colleges, etc) provide IAG which they intend to be helpful to the individual, but which does not always represent the range of options in learning and work due to the narrow focus and experience of the provider. Also, as competition for learners post 16 is an issue of concern for most learning providers there can be a lack of impartiality as providers seek to promote their own learning programmes, albeit at times altruistically, to the exclusion of others. . Effective career guidance will be rooted in a comprehensive understanding of education, training and labour market realities.

The experience of the Connexions service has demonstrated that by providing early and continuous impartial (and independent from learning provider interests) support for young

people through teenage years beyond the age of 16 has enabled the building of a positive relationship between a Personal Adviser and young person. This has encouraged many young people to maintain this relationship and seek help when it is needed. Reductions in the number of young people who are NEET, the increase in those in learning and work and the reduction in the numbers of young people whose status is not known has proven the effectiveness of universal service provision.

How can targeted and specialist services intervene earlier to address problems before they become acute?

In the context of learning and work many young people who become 'targeted' by services (according to their particular problems or needs) have low aspirations borne out of the limited horizons of family and community experience, or prevailing stereotypes which hinder the prospects of those from BME communities, those with disabilities or as a consequence of gender. Effective careers education and guidance can provide challenge to individuals to realise their potential and to go beyond traditional stereotypes by making them aware of opportunities and help build confidence to aspire and progress.

Evidence from work with young people who become NEET shows that there are strong intergenerational influences on their situation. There is a direct correlation between worklessness in households/communities amongst adults and NEET amongst young people. Connexions Greater Merseyside commissioned independent research into factors influencing NEET; this report demonstrates the significance of inter-generational impact on young people who are more vulnerable to becoming NEET. By working with young people in this family/community context targeted service provision can identify early signs of disaffection and low aspiration/attainment and work to address this by preventative interventions.

As universal providers of education to young people schools are well placed to identify those young people who are less likely to progress and attain, including identifying signs of personal, health or welfare concern at an early age. However, schools are not always sufficiently aware of the network of specialist support that is available or how to access it. Case conference approaches involving the school and external partners who have roles to play in the school working with young people are an effective means of identifying and addressing early signs of concern. Connexions Personal Advisers working with tutors and learning mentors are able to provide access to specialist support by bringing in outside help as necessary.

How can the impact of intervention to prevent children, young people and families with complex needs repeatedly moving in and out of contact with targeted services be sustained?

In order to tackle the churn of young people and families into and out of service provision we need to adopt an integrated caseloading approach which brings together different services into a coherent and seamless provision from the perspective of the individual or family.

What would be the impact of more preventative services and early intervention on the life chances of children and young people and on the value for money of public spending on children and young people and families?

Prevention and early intervention in the provision of IAG services for young people and families can help to avoid poor decision making by individuals and build their awareness of the risk factors in decision making and their resilience to low aspiration and achievement. Effective IAG service provision can increase the numbers participating and attaining in learning as well as planning their progression to a higher level of skill/qualification. By

increasing levels of participation and attainment we will have a more mobile and productive workforce and fewer people mired in the poverty of worklessness or low skilled employment.

The increased choice and relevance of the new vocational Diploma lines that will be introduced from 2008 into Key stage 4 education are expected to provide a more bespoke curriculum for all young people, but particularly helpful to the 40% of young people who don't achieve level 2 qualifications by age 16. The new curriculum choice will therefore increase the chance of young people engaging in learning for longer due to the 14-19 pathways that will be opened up as well as the variation in the learning experience for those more vocationally inclined from an earlier age.

Increased choice however will not guarantee prevention and progression of itself. Indeed unless young people are equipped to navigate the range of learning opportunities and make decisions based on an understanding of their own interests, strengths and available opportunities there could be confusion for young people at key transition points. As indicated above the availability of informed and expert impartial information, advice and guidance for young people with access to direct referral to appropriate learning opportunities (particularly post 16) is vital. The investment in such support will ensure greater value for money as young people are assisted to make decisions which are suited to their aspirations, needs and potential, reducing drop out, and the potential for more linear progression routes for young people enabled by the guidance provided tailored to their individual need.

REVIEW OF DISABLED CHILDREN

What progress has already been made in addressing the needs of disabled children and families?

Partnership-working with disabled children and their families is a central tenet for GMCP. 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners' (2004), 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' (2004) and 'Every Child Matters' (2005) amongst other documents, emphasise that a central way of ensuring the most appropriate provision for disabled children is when young people, parents and professionals work together.

Nationally, the Connexions Service currently has a responsibility to produce a full assessment of the needs of identified disabled individuals in their final year of schooling. (Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000). This assessment document is communicated to the young person's chosen post school learning opportunity provider to inform the development of a suitably supported learning/training plan.

Strategic level multi-agency working groups are crucial for effectively planning services for disabled young people. Local Authorities have established multi-agency groups to consider the needs of disabled children and young people. These are enhanced where secondments from agencies such as Connexions bring specialist skills such as advice and guidance. In these cases the specific focus of the role is to lead on the development of policy and practice to improve transition for disabled young people.

What are the particular barriers faced by different groups of young people, including disabled young people, in accessing services and what are the policy issues that arise?

Definition of Disability

- Definitions of disability are not consistent between services, organisations and work-based learning/training providers.

Information Exchange

- The flow and availability of information between organisations is often the source of concern and frustration for professionals and families. For example the disability classification systems used by Connexions are different to those used by local authorities.
- Inter-organisation collaboration, although positive in the most part, has attendant problems of information transmission, bureaucracy and confusion over connecting roles. Clear national guidance on the role and resourcing strategy for the Lead Professional role will alleviate the issue.

Preparation for Transition

- Transition is synonymous with leaving school, however, there are many phases of transition that occur in people's lives and it is at these points of change and flux that services most often break down.. Most of the transitions experienced by those with profound and multiple learning difficulties will happen, in spite of, rather than because of them. In particular the transition from FE to supported or independent working is often problematic because of a lack of continuing support. The allocated responsibility of Connexions (and Careers Services previously) for supporting young people with disabilities up to the age of 25 is helpful in assuring at least some consistency.
- There is a lack of clear information for young people and their families regarding transition options from primary to secondary and secondary to post school learning/independent living.(National and local authority area information is needed). Young people from black and minority ethnic communities are particularly disadvantaged. Nationally produced information is of limited use because it is essentially general in approach whereas local materials more relevant to individuals needing specific local information.
- There is inconsistent implementation of Person Centred Planning (PCP), regionally and nationally and it has been focussed on adults. It would be helpful if schools and colleges were encouraged to adopt a PCP approach
- Realistic planning for young people with emotional, behavioural and social problems is particularly difficult due to poor attendance at school and reluctance/inability to contribute to effective planning. There is generally a lack of understanding of the needs of this group of young people amongst providers of training.

Transition into Adulthood

- Transition to adulthood should be a time when young people increasingly make choices. In order to do this they need information about options, to be consulted and listened to, and to be supported to make decision.
- There is significant variability and complexity in the range, type and financing of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during the years of transition from school to adult life. The introduction of 'individualised budgets' is likely to increase the demands on guidance services.
- Only a minority of transition plans cover transfer to adult health or other services. Co-ordination of the transition between all children's and adult services is needed to ensure that young people experience a seamless transition to adulthood.
- Removal of "cliff edges" in service provision; will give disabled young people access to a more transparent and more appropriate menu of opportunities and choices.
- Many young disabled people have no experience of an independent social life, access to transport, telecommunications, or personal assistance over which they have choice or control. Unfortunately funders do not often take this into account in determining specialist training routes.
- Following education and training, young disabled people experience barriers to paid employment. The availability of supported employment varies geographically and projects are often financially insecure. The use of direct payments and Independent Living Fund grants is underdeveloped, particularly for those who have communication and/or cognitive impairments.

Accessing Opportunities

- As there is no duty to provide post-school services for people with profound and complex learning difficulties, the actual range and quality of provision varies greatly. This is particularly the case for young people with the most profound disabilities.
- Best practice in terms of statutory and community/voluntary services and programmes at a regional level are not automatically shared across regions. (SEN Regional Partnerships)
- Inspection Frameworks do not comprehensively review transition planning arrangements and statutory responsibilities for young people with disabilities.
- Those involved in the delivery of training programmes often have very limited training and resources to support disabled young people. (Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council have developed a training programme and resource library to support training providers).

STRATEGY FOR YOUTH SERVICES

The ICG wishes to question the understanding of what constitutes 'Youth Services' in the context of this review; does it encompass all services for young people including Connexions, Education Welfare, Youth Offending Services, etc, or does it relate only to the Youth Worker role in Local Authorities and Third sector?

We believe that it is timely to review the broader definition and to ask the question of what value do these services bring to outcomes for young people and how is this measured?

Youth Matters suggests the development of an integrated youth support strategy, it is in this context that our response is framed. Therefore, in reviewing the roles of youth services we should consider where they will be in the future when integrated youth support arrangements in children's trusts are a reality. The review should consider the role of youth work, focusing on the value of such work with young people, rather than Youth Services which will focus on structures.

Youth Matters proposes the development of integrated youth support, but stops short of raising any expectations of what this should look like or how it can be achieved. Local Authorities should be encouraged and supported to act as strategic commissioners of services for children and young people. In this role they should undertake a root and branch review of services to young people. The devolving of Connexions grant to LAs will achieve this in part, but there is the risk that Connexions services will be subsumed into the LA delivery structure (directly or indirectly) without considering what services need to be provided according to local intelligence on the aspirations and needs of young people. A stronger commissioning expectation supported by a robust commissioning framework based on high quality standards, as recently developed by the DfES, should be the expectation on LAs as strategic commissioners.

Considered commissioning will lead to more relevant and responsive services working together through an integrated approach providing better value for money and accountable in all its forms for achieving desired outcomes.

Is there more that could be done to improve and sustain the effectiveness in the delivery of existing services and activities?

Those services identified in the scope of the review should not be planned or evaluated in isolation from the provision of other services and interventions for young people. The value of 'positive activities' can only be fully realised if they have an impact on the future behaviour of young people. That is, if they increase the likelihood of positive engagement in learning,

volunteering, employment and lead to an aversion to criminal, antisocial or harmful activity. As an example the Positive Activities for Young People project managed by Connexions Partnerships invests in a programme of activities which engage young people and which are followed through by Connexions key workers to lead to more permanent engagement in learning and work by those young people who have benefited from the experience.

Thus, the planning, provision and evaluation of youth services activity must be broadened to include linking 'positive activities' to services which provide on going information, advice and guidance on how these experiences can be channelled in the context of learning and career choices. Providing impartial advice and guidance to young people as part of the menu of positive activity is critical to producing positive outcomes for the individual.

The skills of engagement by the youth worker must be complemented by the skills of the trained guidance practitioner who can help young people to build on their experiences and plan a positive pathway into and through learning to sustainable employment. Without access to quality career guidance the investment in engagement is easily lost or dissipated.

At present the way that youth service provision is accessed is on a voluntary basis; this can disadvantage those young people who are outside a friendship network or other 'mainstream' network, which can be the gateway to such services. Lack of engagement can be due to a lack of awareness of, remoteness from, or confidence to seek out new experiences.

By linking such services to universal service provision, young people will receive better signposting and referral, where necessary with 1:1 support in accessing this provision.

What is the national and international evidence on the effectiveness of different types of services and activities in terms of better life outcomes?

Major reviews of national career guidance policies were conducted by the OECD, the World Bank and the European Commission during 2001 – 2003; the OECD and the European Training Foundation continue to support further international reviews in e.g. the MEDA countries. By using the same survey instruments these three review exercises have generated a unique set of data on national approaches to career guidance services. The findings of the reviews are summarised in the following publications:

- Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap: OECD 2003
- Public Policies for Career Development: World Bank 2003
- Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries: ETF 2003

The reports identify 12 general points relating to delivery:

- The importance of career education and guidance in schools to lay the foundations for lifelong learning and lifelong career development
- The risk of career education and guidance in schools being marginalised within a broad concept of guidance
- There is merit in making specialist career guidance available from an agency outside the school
- Increased policy concern for at-risk young people
- Career guidance services in tertiary education are inadequate
- There is a need to integrate public employment services more closely into strategies for lifelong access to guidance
- Increased demand for career guidance services to be available in the workplace
- Career guidance can play a dynamic role in adult education
- Current career guidance provision is inadequate for those in the third age life stage
- There is still scope to use helplines and web based services
- Good quality career information is essential
- There is scope to redesign facilities on a self help basis

Subsequently the OECD and the European Commission produced a further publication ' Career Guidance – A Handbook for Policy Makers' which outlines clear, practical tools for use by policy makers in addressing some of the key challenges faced when trying to improve career guidance services as identified through the international reviews which covered 36 countries. The handbook covers the key areas of:

- Improving career guidance for young people
- Improving career guidance for adults
- Improving access to career guidance
- Improving the systems that support career guidance

What more can we do to support and enable young people to exert a strong demand side influence on provision? What should we expect in return from young people – their rights and responsibilities?

The experience of guidance practitioners working with young people has demonstrated the untapped wealth of information that is available from young people on the demand side of education and training provision. Guidance workers not only help young people assess their abilities, interests and career/learning options, but they provide an advocacy role where they use the opportunity to feedback planners and funders of provision. Traditionally Careers Advisers, latterly Connexions Personal Advisers, have contributed greatly to the way in which post-16 opportunities are planned and provided for young people, working in close collaboration with e.g. LLSCs and opportunity providers to shape provision based on the needs of young people.

The Careers Adviser and its successor, the Connexions Personal Adviser has managed their relationship with young people based on a clear understanding of respective rights and responsibilities. The contracts with Government under which Careers Services and latterly Connexions Services have operated have included the principles of an entitlement for the young person to IAG services and their responsibility to be available for learning and work where they are NEET and in receipt of such services. Young people understand a something for something culture and the maturity of the relationship between the provider and the young person is important in helping them to think and act responsibly and positively.

What principles and priorities should guide the allocation of current and future resources? And who do we need to target?

The allocation of present and future resources must be based on the principle of measurement of impact against a robust baseline. The Every Child Matter outcomes provide a useful framework for measuring the effectiveness of an investment in resources for young people. The emphasis must be on measuring behaviours and progression longitudinally and not just the number of interventions with individuals.

What measures and milestones need to be in place to ensure that performance can be assessed and delivery monitored at a local level?

All aspects of service provision for young people should be measured in terms of impact and outcomes for individuals. A performance management system needs to identify the cost benefit of interventions and activities. Essentially, policy for young people is geared to enabling them to grow up and develop as healthy, well adjusted and achieving individuals. The investment in young people must contribute to their ability to be positive, responsible and economically active citizens; from this we can distil a series of measures and milestones as articulated in Every Child Matters. Local children's trusts must be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that this investment is well directed through robust commissioning of services based on need and on what is proven to have an impact in outcome terms.

Schools play a key role in enabling children and young people to access services which are appropriate to them; however, schools are not equipped with the range of knowledge and skills that can provide these services. In recognition of this fact schools will use expertise from other sources outside the mainstream school staffing.

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