

Home Internationals 2: Lifelong Guidance for Economic and Social Success

Report on a NICEC/CRAC policy consultation held on 12–13
June 2001 at the Stormont Hotel, Belfast

in collaboration with the Guidance Council and the
Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and
Employment, Northern Ireland

The pivotal role of guidance in helping governments to realise their objectives in policy areas including lifelong learning, economic competitiveness and social inclusion has gained increasing recognition in England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The profile of guidance within the five home nations has risen, though there are significant differences in implementation.

Following an earlier 'home internationals' consultation on adult guidance in October 1999, the aim of this second consultation was to explore practical ways in which national organisations and agencies in the five nations might work together to improve information, advice and guidance services and learn from each other's experience. The objectives were:

- to review the interface between guidance policies for young people and for adults in each of the countries;
- to consider the varying arrangements being made for developing and implementing quality standards (including staff competences) in relation to guidance provision for young people and adults;
- to review the implications of recent research projects on guidance issues;
- to share information on other recent developments and areas of concern in relation to guidance for young people and adults;
- to identify areas for, and next steps in implementing, collaboration.

The 36 participants included representatives from relevant government departments, guidance services, national bodies and guidance professional associations. The consultation was chaired by Tim Glass, Chief Executive of the Guidance Council, and co-ordinated by Tony Watts, Director of NICEC. It was opened by Dr Sean Farron, Minister of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment in the Northern Ireland Executive.

This report outlines the main outcomes of the consultation. It:

- describes key features of guidance provision in each country;
- itemises contrasts and areas of common concern;
- considers joint action, especially in relation to sharing information, experience and research;
- proposes mechanisms and procedures to facilitate co-operation.

The Briefing has been prepared by Geoff Ford, NICEC Fellow. It does not necessarily represent the views of the consultation sponsors, or of any particular participant.



the Guidance Council



The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling is a network organisation sponsored by CRAC. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research.

CRAC

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment.

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KEY FEATURES

▼ England

England has separate policies for young people and adults. Local Connexions Partnerships are being introduced on a phased basis for young people (13-19). They bring together a range of partner organisations including careers and youth services, schools and colleges, community and voluntary groups, and Youth Offending Teams. Main features include: horizontal integration of services; appointment of personal advisers to provide front-line support; emphasis on holistic guidance; and prioritising of young people at risk, within a comprehensive service. A cross-departmental Connexions Service National Unit is responsible at national level.

Locally co-ordinated Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Partnerships have been established for adults and are responsible to the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). Partnership can include: statutory and private career guidance and employment agencies; learning providers; trade unions; employers; the voluntary sector; and higher education careers advisory services. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) draws a distinction between information and advice (free at the point of delivery) and in-depth guidance (which may be chargeable); pilot projects are being funded to evaluate the effectiveness of in-depth guidance (provided free) with specific groups.

Although Connexions and IAG Partnerships are separately administered, coherence between them is receiving increasing attention. Boundaries of both are coterminous with LSCs, and some Connexions Partnerships have lead-partner status within IAG Partnerships.

Full members of IAG Partnerships have to achieve appropriate Guidance Council Quality Standards, which are accredited by the Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB). IAG Partnerships are also required to agree protocols with the national Learndirect helpline, which is managed by Ufi Ltd and supplemented with an on-line information and advice service and a national database of learning opportunities.

The Department for Work and Pensions is responsible for Jobcentre Plus, which provides an increasing range of advice and support services to further its main objective of helping unemployed and economically inactive adults to find suitable employment. Initiatives include Worktrain, the national ICT job database.

DfES has set up a National Board for Guidance to oversee guidance on a cross-departmental basis.

▼ Northern Ireland

IAG is provided primarily through the Careers Service and through the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) and its partners.

The Careers Service is based in the Training and Employment Agency (T&EA), which is part of the Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE). Careers officers work within the JobCentre network, and are responsible to the JobCentre Managers. Career guidance is therefore one of a portfolio of services offered by JobCentres, which also include: job brokering; New Deal; Jobskills (youth training); contract management (e.g. with training providers); and a work programme developed jointly with the Social Security Agency. Careers officers provide guidance to: young people in schools, colleges, training organisations or unemployed; New Deal clients; and adults on request. The profile of career guidance is being raised by the recently completed Government Review of Careers Education and Guidance, and by the Government's developing social inclusion agenda in which the Careers Service is heavily involved.

EGSA is a long-established independent organisation, and a main pioneer of adult guidance in the UK. Since 1999, DHFETE has significantly increased EGSA's funding to strengthen its role in widening adult participation in learning. EGSA has developed an active regional network across Northern Ireland in partnership with over 800 organisations including the T&EA (and Careers Service), further and higher education providers, and community and voluntary agencies. Joint training and development events are organised; information is disseminated via newsletter and web; and the Guidance Council Quality Standards are being introduced, supplemented by a Partnership Code of Practice.

The national Learndirect helpline is located in EGSA, and staffed by advisers recruited by EGSA. EGSA mainstream support staff provide cover on a rotational basis.

The national Basic Skills Unit is also housed in EGSA. The BSU has submitted preliminary advice to government on a basic skills strategy for Northern Ireland; this includes advice on the relationship between basic skills and IAG.

▼ Republic of Ireland

Guidance provision is based in both the education and labour market sectors. The National Training and Employment Agency (FAS) is responsible for providing guidance to adults as a basic universal entitlement for the employed and unemployed, and participants on supported employment schemes and specific skills training courses. Targeted groups include: people with disabilities; asylum seekers; and early school-leavers. Responsibility for Local Employment Services (LES) has recently been transferred to FAS, forming a new dual-standard FAS employment service.

Within the education sector, guidance is a universal entitlement at second level (11-18). Each school has a minimum of 8 hours per week for guidance; schools with 500+ students are allocated a full-time guidance counsellor. The Department of Education and Science (DES) is expanding the guidance programme, especially in relation to community and business links, science education and social disadvantage. At third level (HE) there is a range of guidance and counselling support within institutions. Within adult education, educational guidance services are being developed through the introduction of pilots. Guidance is particularly targeted at participants in the Vocational Opportunities Training Scheme (VTOS), literacy and community education programmes.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) has been involved in developing and promoting quality guidelines in the education sector. These guidelines are currently being piloted in the Adult Education Guidance Initiative as part of the NCGE's participation in an EU Leonardo project. For second-level schools, NCGE has developed Guidelines for Guidance Programme Planning, which will shortly be circulated by DES. At third level, the Association of Graduate Career Services in Ireland promotes quality standards mainly in the university sector.

FAS has developed quality standards and guidelines for its adult guidance provision. Nearly all FAS guidance staff have completed the Certificate in Adult Guidance and Counselling; a substantial number have either completed or are completing the two-year Diploma/Post-Graduate Diploma.

▼ Scotland

Current guidance provision in Scotland consists of: 17 Careers Service Companies (CSCs) run by partnerships between the Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Companies; 17 Adult Guidance Networks (AGNs) involving Careers Service and Local Enterprise Companies, Local Authorities, and F&HE; 24 Education Business Partnerships (EBPs); and 22 Local Learning Partnerships (LLPs). In response to the recommendations of the Duffner Committee's Careers Service Review, the Scottish Executive proposed the creation of a national all-age one-stop Careers Scotland service, which has been agreed after wide consultation. This will offer a unified service in every area, incorporating the roles of the CSCs, AGNs, EBPs, and LLPs, and closely aligned to the existing Enterprise Networks.

Benefits for clients are seen to include increased coherence and accessibility within a universal service. Benefits for staff include: the broad range of services within the new national framework; greater career prospects; and emphases on quality and on staff training and development.

Five Transitional Teams have been established to co-ordinate the reorganisation: on human resources, quality, finance, legal issues, and ICT. The Quality Team is responsible for designing and implementing quality standards and performance measurements.

The Scottish Executive has provided additional funding for:

- 16 multi-agency all-age career guidance projects, including: the use of innovative strategies to encourage key client groups to access IAG; delivery of community-based guidance; and the establishment of ICT careers and learning information points.
- 16 multi-agency projects to promote 'inclusiveness', including: the development of key worker support; identification of learning and support needs; and improved assessment and tracking procedures.

▼ Wales

Careers Wales is responsible directly to the National Assembly for Wales. The National Assembly has contracted with 7 Careers Wales companies to provide: careers services to schools and FE; a placing service to unemployed 16/17-year-olds; adult guidance; the Learndirect helpline; elements of Education Business Links; and the Youth Gateway. All services are marketed under the Careers Wales logo and brand name.

The development of Careers Wales has been evolutionary, seeking to minimise disruption to public services. Some Careers Service Companies already provided most of the required services; however, others have had to grow substantially, taking over services previously delivered by their local TECs.

The National Assembly has prioritised high standards of delivery. A Quality Manual is being developed to cover the expanded remit, building on and developing the previous All Wales Adult Guidance Quality Manual (which had been mapped against the Guidance Council standards). Similarly, Estyn (the Welsh Inspectorate for Education and Training), which is responsible for inspecting Careers Service Companies, is extending its Framework Document to cover all aspects of the all-age brief. Quality development also incorporates evaluation by external consultants, and Estyn thematic studies (e.g. on work with disengaged clients).

The National Assembly has initiated a number of measures to assure a high quality of universal provision in schools:

- Careers Wales is piloting a national evaluation framework for careers provision in schools, which will eventually extend from years 9 to 13.
- From 1 August 2001 all schools and FE colleges will be legally required to provide CEG to students aged 16–19.
- Careers Wales companies are jointly developing a CEG Award for schools and colleges, to raise CEG standards and profile.
- Two Careers Wales Companies are piloting the on-line Learndirect Futures guidance programme within selected schools.

The National Assembly has initiated a 3-year programme to develop assessment and guidance for employed adults with low levels of accredited skills. Careers Wales is responsible for delivering this project in liaison with employers, trade unions, community education, voluntary organisations, and other partners including the Basis Skills Agency.

CONTRASTS

▼ Policy

- Wales and Scotland have opted for all-age guidance systems and for vertical integration in which the career guidance profession retains its identity. In England, two systems have been introduced for the different age groups – Connexions for the 13–19 age group, and IAG Partnerships for adults. The Connexions Service has adopted a system of horizontal integration in which professional boundaries are being redrawn.
- In Northern Ireland, EGSA has emerged from a community-based tradition to become a major influence within the formal system, whilst retaining its community values and ethos. In Scotland and Wales, adult guidance is mainly the responsibility of the statutory Careers Service Companies, which co-ordinate the adult guidance partnerships. In England, voluntary agencies are important partners within the IAG Partnerships; the lead partners can vary between geographical areas.
- Careers Wales has been introduced on an evolutionary basis, with minimum restructuring affecting front-line services. In contrast, the formation of Connexions in England and of Careers Scotland is requiring major restructuring programmes.
- In the Republic of Ireland, the main traditional base of professional guidance expertise has lain in schools; in the United Kingdom, in the Careers Service.
- The Republic of Ireland has used European funding not only to fund, but also to support innovation in, guidance provision.

▼ Quality

- England and Northern Ireland have adopted the Guidance Council Quality Standards for adults. Scotland and Wales are reviewing their current quality systems to ensure that they cover all sectors of all-age guidance. The extent to which the Scottish and Welsh standards will be consistent with the Guidance Council standards remains an open question.
- In England there are approximately 35, often locally designed, sets of standards for CEG in schools; there is potential for these to be harmonised through, and with, the Guidance Council standards. Careers Wales is currently designing national quality standards for CEG in schools.

▼ Practice

- All countries appreciate the role of holistic approaches to guidance in helping young people – especially socially-excluded young people – to progress in learning and work. England is developing personal advisers within the Connexions Service; Scotland is introducing key workers. The role of holistic guidance in assisting adults is less accepted; however, the partnership approaches being developed in the UK contain the potential to extend holistic approaches to adults.
- The Welsh Assembly is making CEG compulsory for students aged 16–19. This does not yet apply elsewhere.
- The piloting of the Learndirect Futures programme (originally designed for adults) in Welsh schools illustrates the potential for cross-fertilisation of approaches within an all-age structure.
- Learndirect is more closely integrated into mainstream guidance provision in Northern Ireland and Wales than in England and Scotland.
- The Welsh Assembly has opted to retain the link between guidance and placement because the two processes are seen to inform each other. In Scotland the issue is still subject to review.

COMMON ISSUES

▼ Policy

Recruitment, selection and retention

- For varying reasons, recruitment, selection and retention of suitably skilled and experienced guidance staff are a problem for all the home nations. Could co-operative action help to ease these problems?

All-age guidance

- What lessons can be drawn from Careers Scotland and Careers Wales that may be of value to the other home nations? Could a 'Career England', a 'Careers Northern Ireland' or a 'Careers Ireland' evolve now or in the future? What form might they take?
- What can be learned from the English Connexions model that could be of value and application to the other home nations, and to older age-groups?

Coherence

- Are 'horizontal' (cross-agency) and 'vertical' (cross-age) integration mutually exclusive? How far can England succeed in promoting coherence between Connexions and IAG Partnerships?
- Will the recent separation of employment policy (Department for Work and Pensions) from learning policy (Department for Education and Skills) weaken the links between employability and lifelong learning? Or will it establish a useful creative tension between the two? How can joined-up thinking best be guaranteed?

Needs-based services and resourcing

- Resource difficulties are a major factor underlying the increased interest by all five nations in the development of needs-based services; this includes interest in the use of diagnostic and assessment strategies to identify client requirements of the guidance process. Can these strategies also help to sharpen the guidance process and ensure client-centredness and relevance?
- Resource issues are a particular problem for adult guidance, and have been aggravated by short-term funding. To what extent can current policies help to underpin the sustainability of adult guidance services?

Marketing and branding

- There is a shared concern that the public does not adequately understand guidance and its relationship to learning and work. What marketing strategies are required to enable clients to understand what guidance can offer?
- Careers Scotland and Careers Wales are each introducing branding policies. Could there be a common brand across the home nations?

▼ Quality

CEG in schools and colleges

- England, the Republic of Ireland and Wales are all engaged in designing, piloting and developing quality standards for CEG in schools and colleges. Could this experience be shared and used to inform future developments?

Guidance Council

- What role could the Guidance Council play in supporting the development and harmonisation of guidance standards across the five nations?

▼ Training

Guidance practitioners

- The five nations share concerns about the standard and applicability of training and professional development programmes for guidance practitioners and managers. Could more detailed work be jointly undertaken on the identification of core competences?
- How far does the new Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG) meet the needs of guidance practitioners throughout the UK (as is its objective)? How can its accessibility be improved?

Guidance intermediaries

- There have been valuable initiatives in training front-line staff in 'intermediary' organisations (where IAG constitutes only part of their responsibilities). How can effective practice in this area be shared and disseminated?

▼ Practice

Targeting

- All five nations are seeking to target specific groups of young people and adults, while offering universally available services. How can the learning from their different strategies for reconciling the two objectives be effectively shared?
- Impressive examples of good practice exist in all home nations in providing guidance to specific groups, e.g. socially-excluded young people and adults, people with basic skills requirements, refugees, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and older people. How can this good practice be disseminated?

Holistic guidance

- What similarities and differences are there between the roles of the personal adviser (England), the guidance counsellor (Republic of Ireland) and the key worker (Scotland), and the approaches they develop and adopt?

ACTION

The five nations could inform and strengthen their own guidance policies and practice considerably by:

- putting in place mechanisms that enable relevant information and experience to be shared on a continuing and easily accessible basis;
- supplementing this where appropriate with joint actions (e.g. bilateral or multilateral research/symposia to identify and compare best practice and, where appropriate, recommend possible solutions).

▼ Sharing information

Sharing of information across the five nations should cover and include: policy developments; quality systems; special projects; innovations and new activities; research; information on 'what works' and 'what doesn't' (much can be learned from failure as well as success); and events of interest and relevance beyond national boundaries.

Possible methods include:

- The extension of the Research and Good Practice Database proposed by the Guidance Council into a five-nation resource.
- Exchange of information via a regularly maintained newsletter, possibly building on the Guidance Council Policy Bulletins.

▼ Research

Research can inform and help to shape policy and practice. The cultivation of a research culture is integral to reflective practice.

There is considerable scope for jointly staffed and resourced research projects to explore common issues. These include:

- Evidence-based research, both qualitative and quantitative, on specific initiatives.
- Longitudinal studies to examine longer-term impact on clients and sustainability.
- 'Quick-fire' surveys, possibly conducted by e-mail, to collate information and frontline feedback for local, regional and national policy-makers on specific issues of immediate urgency.

▼ Co-ordination

To co-ordinate these and other initiatives, a Strategic Working Group should be established, with membership covering policy-makers and practitioners from each of the five nations and with a research input.

Immediate tasks might include:

- Co-ordination of the UK and Irish contributions to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's programme on policies for information, guidance and counselling services.
- Design and implementation of the proposed Research and Good Practice Database.
- A comparative review of the factors affecting the recruitment, training and retention of guidance staff.

Delegates recognised the additional possibilities for European and international co-operation. These could build on work and relationships being developed within the European Commission and the OECD, and through the proposed follow-up to the two international symposia on career development and public policy held in Canada in 1999 and 2001.