

**Cross-government Review of  
Information, Advice & Guidance Services  
for Adults**

**Final Report  
2007**

# Cross-government review of Information, Advice & Guidance Services for Adults

## Final Report

2007

### Partners to the cross-government review:

department for  
education and skills

dti

DWP Department for  
Work and Pensions

>lsc  
Leading learning and skills

skills  
FOR BUSINESS

ufi

jobcentreplus

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*Promoting research & informing practice*

## Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
(i) Purpose of the report	1
(ii) Research and consultation process	3
(iii) Research limitations	5
(iv) Terms	6
(v) Report Structure	6
(vi) Overview of issues and challenges	8
<b>2. PUTTING THE USER FIRST</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Defining and understanding terms	10
(ii) Access patterns, entry points and visibility	13
(iii) Young people and transitions	16
(iv) Older adults and transitions	17
(v) What do adults want and need?	19
(vi) Factors influencing attitudes to guidance	23
(vii) The link between interventions and outcomes	26
(viii) Developing user-focused services	29
<b>3. THE CURRENT OFFER</b>	<b>34</b>
(i) The National Policy Framework and Action Plan	34
(ii) Clarifying the adult IAG offer	35
(iii) Publicly funded provision: an overview	38
<b>4. AN OVERVIEW OF CORE FUNDED PROVISION</b>	<b>42</b>
(i) <i>learn</i> direct advice and nextstep	42
(ii) Purpose and outcomes	46
<b>5. AN OVERVIEW OF EMBEDDED PROVISION</b>	<b>48</b>
(i) Further Education	48
(ii) Higher Education	51
(iii) Jobcentre Plus	54

(iv) Offenders' Learning and Skills Service	57
(v) Other publicly funded provision	59
(vi) Non-publicly funded provision	60
(vii) Private sector providers	62
(viii) IAG in the workplace	64
<b>6. DELIVERY METHODS</b>	<b>73</b>
(i) Overview	73
(ii) <i>learnirect</i> advice telephone guidance trial	74
(iii) SkillsFile/Skills Passport/Skills coaching	77
(iv) The role of ICT in delivering IAG	78
<b>7. QUALITY AND COMPETENCE</b>	<b>83</b>
(i) Quality assurance arrangements	83
(ii) Practitioner competency	86
<b>8. LABOUR MARKET AND COURSE INFORMATION</b>	<b>92</b>
(i) Definitions	92
(ii) Current provision	92
(iii) Client and Practitioner LMI needs	95
(iv) Infrastructure for future delivery of LMI?	96
<b>11. REVIEW SUMMARY</b>	<b>108</b>
(i) The service offer	109
(ii) Accessing the service	111
(iii) Underpinning the service	113
(iv) Areas for further development	115
<b>ANNEX ONE: CAREER GUIDANCE AND SKILLS</b>	<b>120</b>

# 1. Introduction

*The potential effects of career guidance can be thought of at the individual, organisational and societal levels. At the individual level, potential benefits could result from people being better able to manage their choices of learning and work, and to maximise their potential. At the organisational level, potential benefits could flow to education and training providers if learners were assisted to identify and enter learning programmes which meet their needs and aspirations. And they could flow to employers if career guidance resulted in a supply of job applicants whose talents and motivations were matched to employers' requirements.*

*Benefits could result at a societal level if career guidance leads to greater efficiency in the allocation of human resources; for example by enhancing the motivation of learners and workers; reducing drop-outs from education and training; reducing mismatches between labour supply and demand; encouraging up-skilling of the workforce; reducing the incidence of floundering between job transitions; and thus improving the ways that learning and labour markets operate. Social benefits could also result if career guidance helped to widen access to learning and work opportunities (both helping people to avoid social exclusion and helping the excluded to gain access to learning and work), thus enhancing social equity. Career guidance services might also be thought of as reinforcing the value attached in democratic societies to the right of individuals to make free choices about their own lives.*

*These potential effects can be thought of as operating at three stages: immediate attitudinal changes and increased knowledge; intermediate behavioural changes for example through improved search efficiency and persistence, or through entering a particular career path, course or job as a result of career guidance; and longer-term outcomes such as success and satisfaction.*

*OECD, (1994) Bridging the Gap, 33*

## (i) Purpose of the report

- 1.1. The OECD review of “career guidance and public policy”<sup>1</sup> emphasises the benefits to be gained from effective careers guidance at an individual, organisational and societal level, not least through the achievement of greater efficiencies in human resource allocation.

<sup>1</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004). Career Guidance and Public Policy: *Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development.

- 1.2. The 2005 Skills Strategy<sup>2</sup> clearly articulated the major challenge the UK faces in ensuring our workforce is equipped with the skills needed to compete in the global marketplace. The White Paper recognised the problems that people have in piecing together the parts of the work and learning jigsaw. It set out a vision for information and advice as part of a much wider goal to help people make the most of their lives, and achieve their ambitions for themselves, their families and their communities.
- 1.3. Part Two of the 2005 Skills White Paper<sup>3</sup> sets out a clear commitment to increasing access to ‘high quality, expert guidance, meeting each individual’s needs’: It states that:-

*Better skills and qualifications will often be at the heart of that self-advancement. But for many people they will not be enough by themselves. Consistent with the theme of the whole Skills Strategy, they need to be part of a package which helps people fit together the pieces of the jigsaw: how skills and qualifications link to career options; how help with childcare and care of other dependents can support part-time and full-time employment options; and planning for retirement and old age.*

***So this is our long term ambition: that everyone should be able to get help if and when they want it to take stock of where they are in their lives and their careers; to review where they would like to get to; and assess what steps they can take to get there. Some of that can be done through self-assessment, and many people will continue to rely on advice and guidance from informal sources and community groups. But some of it demands high quality, expert guidance, meeting each individual’s needs.***

2005 Skills Strategy, paras. 164 and 165, Chapter 4, p. 41

- 1.4. The White paper concludes, however, that the current infrastructure for guidance *‘is not achieving anything like its full potential in providing high quality, individual information, advice and guidance for adults who want it. Too few people are aware of the service or do not think it would be relevant to their needs’*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work*. Cm 6483. London: The Stationery Office.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work*. Cm 6483. London: The Stationery Office.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work*. Cm 6483. London: Stationery Office. Chapter 4, para. 168, p.42

1.5. The Skills Strategy recommended a cross-government review of information, advice and guidance provision for adults, to be undertaken jointly by the DfES, DWP, DTI, LSC, Ufi/**learn**direct, Jobcentre Plus and SSDA. A Steering Group representing all partners was established to oversee the work. The work of the Review has comprised three key elements, the **learn**direct advice telephone guidance trial; the SSDA Skills Council Labour Market Information project, and this Policy Review.

1.6. The strategic purpose of all three elements of the Review was to:-

- secure high quality Information, Advice and Guidance services for adults that support achievement of the Skills Strategy (as indicated in the Skills Strategy White paper Commitments 148, 149, 152); and
- determine how best to pursue the long-term goal of an IAG service to support adults in progressing their careers; make informed choices on learning and work and enable them to achieve ambitions for themselves, their families and their communities.

#### **(ii) Research and consultation process**

1.7. This report is a summary of the findings of the research undertaken for the Policy Review. It also includes findings from consultations undertaken with expert practitioners at specially convened workshops; discussions with practitioners through conferences, visits and meetings (both formal and informal) and feedback from the Review website. A wealth of data was looked at and a substantial number of papers produced specifically for the Review. Some key research questions framed the early work. Outlined below, these questions were generated to offer focus on issues critical to the research process. In practice evidence has been compiled that goes beyond these questions (to include issues such as quality and competence for example). There are also, however some important and relevant issues that have been noted but not explored in depth (for example, the cost of existing services).

### **Research questions**

#### **A Infrastructure (formal and informal)**

- What is the present information, advice and guidance infrastructure and how can it be made more coherent across ages and providers?

#### **B. Users and prospective users, including promoting Equality and Diversity**

- What do people want and what do people need?

#### **C. Delivery methods**

- What is ICT being used for, and how might its use be extended?

#### **D. Labour market and course information**

- What more might be done to deliver high quality, up-to-date, relevant LMI and course information to the guidance system for adults and young people?

#### **E. Delivery models**

- What are the current models (*nextstep*, *learnirect* advice, JCP, embedded in learning, embedded in workplace etc.); what do they cost and are they targeted effectively and appropriately?

#### **F. Training and support**

- How can training and support arrangements and provision be improved?

#### **G. Engagement and marketing**

- What are we marketing, what should we be marketing, how and to whom?

#### **H. Funding**

- Who should pay for what, i.e. the State, individuals, employers etc? What additional services might users pay for, which users and how much?

1.8. This report has been prepared by Heather Jackson, external policy advisor to the review team and Jo Hutchinson at the Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby on behalf of the Review Working Group.

1.9. In compiling the evidence our approach has been to summarise the key issues as they relate to the review with particular emphasis on those issues that need addressing for future delivery of an effective service, and those that place the needs of the user at the heart of the service. We have tried to balance the findings of recent research with feedback from the various constituencies involved, which is quite a difficult line to tread but one that was felt to be important.

1.10. Our prime focus for the report is the 'user' or 'potential user' of services.

Our goal, in line with the 2005 Skills Strategy, is to contribute to the debate as to how government can increase the number of adults using guidance services; obtain better value for money within existing arrangements (i.e. more users accessing the current offer) and identify key issues to be addressed in future service arrangements.

1.11. As with the service provision itself, previous approaches to research and policy reviews have been fragmented. The OECD Review *Bridging the Gap*<sup>5</sup> observes that while the UK has a strong knowledge base for its career guidance services, much of the research in the UK has been ‘one-off and fragmented rather than strategic, and not disseminated widely or effectively.’ This paper attempts to draw together a whole range of different strands of research and explore how they contribute to the general ‘state of the service’ as it is at the moment. As far as we are aware this is the first time this has been undertaken in such a comprehensive way. We have tried to do justice to the wealth of data available but, inevitably, have not been able to include everything.

1.12. This report presents an overview of the findings from the Review to date, and while decisions about the exact nature and level of funding available for any new Adult Careers Service have yet to be made, the findings from the Review process presented in this report will be used to inform the planning and development of future services.

### **(iii) Research limitations**

1.13. As the initial desk research proceeded it became clear where there was limited or no empirical or other research information available in the following areas:

- the extent that IAG is delivered through the voluntary and community sector;

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<sup>5</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

- the extent to which IAG is delivered within ACL provision;
- the experience of young people as they reach transitions both in their own lives and in their relationship with young people's services and adult IAG services
- the reach of guidance services to support the specific needs of particular target groups
- the extent of the role and impact of 'informal' guidance.

1.14. This report summarises and synthesises a wealth of material that is either in the public domain or that has been commissioned or prepared as part of the review process and can be accessed on the IAG Review Website: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk).

#### **(iv) Terms**

1.15. A key issue emerging from the review is the difficulties over service 'terms' or 'descriptors'. For the purposes of this paper the following terminology is used throughout to describe the generic IAG offer, even though one of the key findings from the Review is that the terms currently used do not reflect, or represent, what is actually on offer:

- Information, Advice and Guidance
- IAG
- guidance service for adults
- adult guidance services, and in some cases
- career guidance
- adult career guidance

#### **(v) Report Structure**

1.16. The report starts with the issue of terms and definitions as part of a wider discussion on the needs and wants of users and non-users as regards IAG services. It examines the transition points when users might need services, and in particular transitions associated with young people moving to adulthood and older people moving to different patterns of working. The specific characteristics of services that people want and value are then rehearsed as are the outcomes that might be attributed to up-take of those services. The section concludes with a summary of principles that should underpin the development of user-focussed services.

1.17. Sections three to five outline the current offer. Based on the National Policy Framework the section presents a critique of the policy followed by the presentation of the services that have been developed in line with both that policy, and other government agendas in which IAG services play a role. Current provision is categorised as either Core or Embedded and an overview of services that make up both is presented. The overview is intended to provide a picture of the range of activities that take place under the IAG banner, within various delivery contexts (including FE, HE, JobCentre Plus and other publicly and privately funded services). A key element of embedded IAG is that which occurs within the workplace and a section is provided to explore what employers want from IAG and the issues associated with building an infrastructure for workplace IAG. Generally, in this section, issues arising out of complex delivery arrangements and policy layering are highlighted, not to criticise individual services but merely to draw attention to how those problems can be experienced by users and potential users of the service and by employers and businesses.

1.18. Sections six - ten summarise other issues about which decisions will need to be made and a clear policy stance taken. These include:-

- Delivery methods
- Quality and competence

- Labour market and course information
- The regional perspective
- Equality, diversity and existing provision.

1.19. The summary (Section Eleven) presents a compilation of the issues that have been discussed throughout the report as a series of policy recommendations relating to

- The features of an adult careers service
- Accessing the service and
- The infrastructure required to deliver that service.

1.20. To contextualise the findings of the review within current policy developments Annex One takes the findings of the Review and places them in the context of recommendations arising from the Leitch Review of Skills<sup>6</sup> and the wider skills agenda.

#### **(vi) Overview of issues and challenges**

1.21. IAG provision for adults is available at a range of levels and in a number of settings and contexts, formal and informal, sometimes delivered discretely, other times embedded within other provision; although most is publicly funded there is also an important contribution to be made by the private sector. Drawing all the elements together into a coherent, quality assured whole is one of the major challenges facing policy makers.

1.22. While the National Policy Framework and Action Plan is clear about the 'type' of services that should be available, and how they should be delivered, there are no underpinning standards that define exactly what IAG provision for adults should look like, what specific activities should be involved, the level at which they should be undertaken and what the

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<sup>6</sup> HM Treasury (2006). *The Leitch Review of Skills. Prosperity for All in the Global Economy - World Class Skills. Final Report*. London: The stationery Office.

key purpose of all provision is. While there is a substantial amount of good work being undertaken its style, approach and content varies from provider to provider and there is no standardisation - a major factor in the confusion and lack of transparency as far as the end user is concerned.

1.23. There is not a strong culture of adult IAG usage amongst the wider population. Generally speaking, adults do not expect to receive (or seek out) adult career guidance once they end formal education; the achievement of increased take up of work-related learning and skills by those not traditionally engaged in such activities will take more than just a change in government policy.

1.24. At the time of the Review young peoples services were also going through a major review. Making sure that there are effective transition arrangements, including consistent quality assurance standards between the new services for young people and those for adults will be essential.

1.25. A revised IAG offer needs to address the employability, skills and learning needs of individuals in an integrated way, and promote sustainable employment and progression to all adults – whether employed or unemployed. This will involve:

- substantially restructuring current delivery arrangements so that the purpose, goals and outcomes are clear to all users, and potential users, of services;
- clarification on how the need to offer 'universal' access will be balanced against the need to provide targeted provision for priority groups;
- strong and clearly stated partnership arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and the wider IAG sector.

## 2. Putting the User First

### (i) Defining and understanding terms

2.1. The OECD<sup>7</sup> report, *Bridging the Gap* defines 'career guidance' in the following way:

*Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any points through their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and make it available when and where people need it.'*

*While personal interviews are still the dominant tool, career guidance includes a wide range of other services: group discussions; printed and electronic information... telephone advice, online help. Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings; schools and tertiary institutions; public employment services; private guidance providers; enterprises and community settings*  
(Ibid. box 1.1, p.19)

2.2. Hawthorn and Ford<sup>8</sup> in a paper produced for the Review felt that while definitions of career guidance such as this are useful at a professional level they are not necessarily shared by the public. Also, questions are raised in their paper as to whether this full range of activities is actually available through the current adult guidance offer and, if it is, whether the term 'Information, Advice and Guidance' accurately describes what is on offer as far as users, and potential users, of services are concerned. Difficulties over service descriptors have bedevilled the adult IAG offer for some time.

2.3. The term Information, Advice and Guidance originates from the work undertaken in 1996 around a 'free to enter – pay to stay service' model

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<sup>7</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

<sup>8</sup> Hawthorn, R. and Ford, G. (2006) Defining IAG: Exploring Terms Purpose and Needs, *Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop 3rd March 2006*. [online]. Briefing Papers Prepared by the Research Partners. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Working Group Paper. Available from: <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers/ICT%20and%20IAG.pdf> [Accessed 9 March 2007]

of provision, when it was used as a way of determining a cut off point for government funding. The basis of the model was that Information and Advice would be universally available and centrally funded, with the individual buying their one-to-one more in-depth guidance through the development of a 'guidance market' (for more detailed discussion of this see paragraph 5.43). In the absence of any better alternatives at the time, it also emerged as the main descriptor of services, even though the term has little resonance with most adults and does not effectively describe what is on offer.

- 2.4. While there has been some development of a more in-depth guidance offer through targeted funding for enhanced services, adult guidance pilots and, more recently, skills coaching, the generation of a visible, accessible market of guidance provision failed to materialize.
- 2.5. In 2003, in response to the Skills White Paper (2003) the DfES *National Policy Framework and Action Plan on Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults* sought to clarify expectations and levels of service from the Information, Advice and 'Guidance' offer as follows:

*'Information' within the context of the IAG programmes, means the provision of information on learning and work, without any discussion about the relative merits of the options through:*

- *printed materials such as leaflets;*
- *audio-visual materials such as videos;*
- *computer software on CD rom or via the internet, and*
- *verbal information to the client on a face-to-face basis or through local or national helpline services such as **learnirect** or worktrain.*

(Ibid, para.12, p6)

*'Advice': The provision of advice requires more interaction with the service user, usually on a one-to-one basis. It may require explanation of some of the information provided, how to assess and use information, and a recognition of when more in-depth services may be required.*

(Ibid, para.14, p8)

- 2.6. 'Guidance' remained within the broad description of services (the term IAG was retained) despite the fact that what was actually available was only Information and Advice (as defined above). There is an underlying problem with an offer that actually delivers less than its service

description implies.

- 2.7. The MORI<sup>9</sup> researchers in their survey of service users recognised the problem, and the accompanying ‘user’ misunderstanding of service terms and descriptors, taking the following approach:

*For the purposes of this study Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) are not dealt with separately but are generally grouped together. This is because the general public, in responding to the survey questions, do not necessarily make distinctions between I, A and G and are not necessarily aware of their technical definitions or of the differences between them. However, it should be noted that subsequent analysis indicates that although the simple majority of respondents perceive themselves to receive information, the overall majority received either advice or guidance.*  
(Ibid, para.2, p3)

- 2.8. The Guidance Council<sup>10</sup> literature review ‘Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults in key target groups’ (2002) also identified ‘user’ difficulties with terms:

*Firstly, an important message for all those involved in adult guidance provision is that the term ‘guidance’ appears to have little meaning for those who are regarded as potential clients. This is important, especially where the ‘hard to reach’ groups are being targeted, as it points up the significance of using meaningful language when seeking to encourage access. This further emphasizes the point that guidance takes place in a range of formal and non-formal settings and points to a necessity for a recognition of the role to be played by staff from a multiplicity of organizations.*  
(Ibid, Section 6: Conclusion 1, Key Issues, 2<sup>nd</sup> para, p.42)

- 2.9. The lack of clarity and transparency around terms has had serious policy consequences and contributes to the difficulties – and concerns about low levels of take up - now being faced. It is not, however, the only explanation.

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor, J., Vasickova, D., Byrom, A. & Dickson, J. (2005). *Demand for, and Perceptions of, Information, Advice and Guidance : A Research Study Conducted for the Guidance Council by MORI.* Leicester: Guidance Council.

<sup>10</sup> Hawthorn, R. (2002). *Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults in Key Target Groups: A Literature Review.* Winchester: Guidance Council.

**(ii) Access patterns, entry points and visibility**

2.10 The MORI research<sup>11</sup> observed that the delivery infrastructure for IAG was complex, with delivery not being confined to that delivered by formal guidance professionals but also available through a number of other settings, both formal and informal. Adults may access services through ‘a diverse pool of alternative sources of IAG, which vary according to age, social class and work status’. On the one hand, this could be viewed as a rich tapestry of provision offering a range and breadth of delivery and access arrangements; on the other hand, it can be seen as a potentially confusing map with unclear pathways and poor signposting.

2.10. Tyers and Taylor<sup>12</sup> in *Information, Advice and Guidance: perceptions and outcomes* (2005) also observed that adults are likely to seek help from a number of different sources, both formal and informal, and will often return more than once. Their research identified complex patterns of IAG use, with individuals appearing to use a range of different interventions, often within quick succession, to help with specific issues as they arise, making ‘the idea of an advice or guidance ‘episode’ as a single encounter with one service providers quite inaccurate’

2.11. Wilson & Jackson<sup>13</sup> came to the same conclusion - that guidance as a one-off activity, leading to an action plan, was only one element of the guidance process. While it might be sufficient for some, for others it would be only one small part of a longer, more complex process.

2.12. Similar findings have emerged from the early work of the ESRC study *Career Development through the Life Course: The ESRC Learning Lives Project* Hawthorn<sup>14</sup> summarised key aspects of that work for the Review

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, J., Vasickova, D., Byrom, A. & Dickson, J. (2005). *Demand for, and Perceptions of, Information, Advice and Guidance : A Research Study Conducted for the Guidance Council by MORI*. Leicester: Guidance Council.

<sup>12</sup> Tyers, C. & Taylor, J (2005) in *Information, Advice and Guidance: perceptions and outcomes*: Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies p.5.

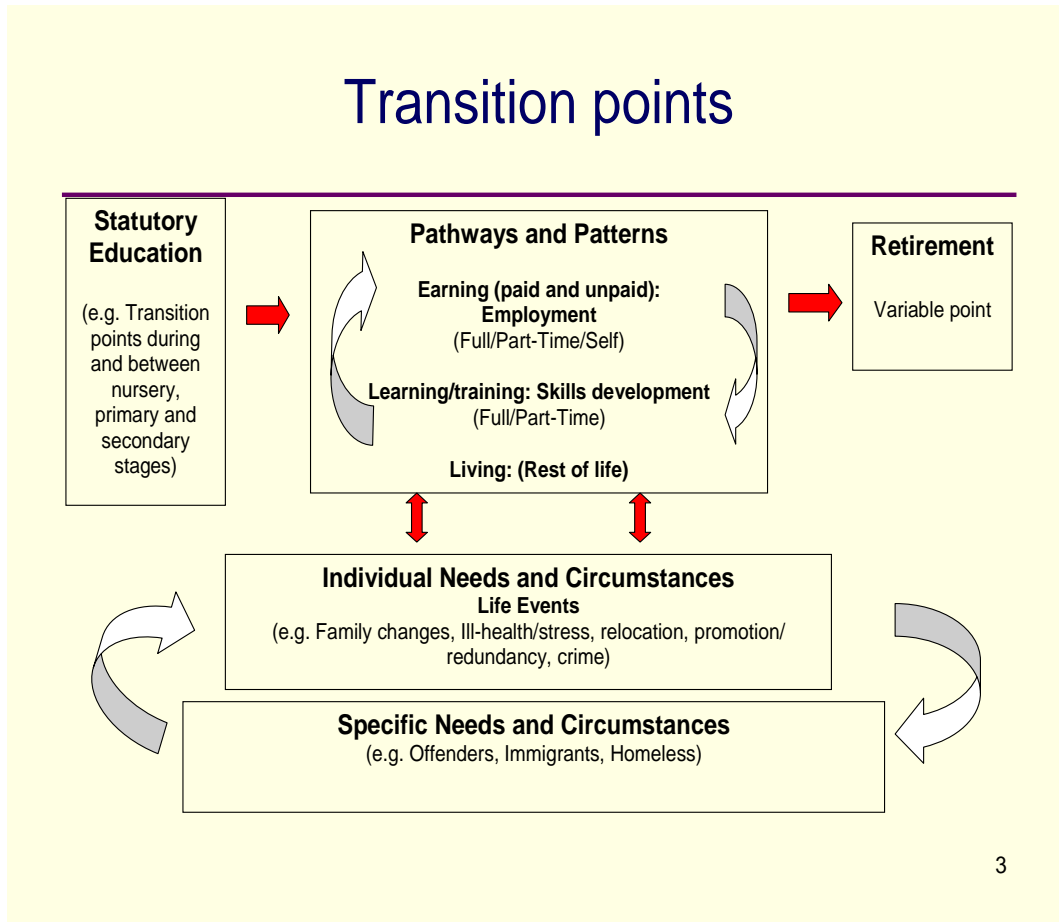
<sup>13</sup> Wilson, J. & Jackson, H. (1999) *What are adults’ expectations and requirements of guidance? A Millennium Agenda?* Winchester: The Guidance Council.

<sup>14</sup> Hawthorn, R. (2006) Summary of ESRC funded study: *Career Development through the Life Course: The ESRC Learning Lives Project*, Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop 3rd March 2006. [online]. Briefing Papers Prepared by the Research Partners. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Working Group Paper. Available from: <http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/publications>

workshop in March, 2006.

- Adults participate in education and training throughout their lives, but many do so intermittently, with periods of engagement interspersed with periods of non-engagement;
- ... for many people, periods of non-engagement arose because the value of attending courses was not apparent or not important and/or because the availability of courses was not known;
- ... people with higher educational levels and from higher socio-economic groups are more likely to find learning for themselves;
- people seek education or training for reasons to do with employment, but also for other reasons such as: in response to life-changing events, out of personal interest and enjoyment and to be able to help others;
- although there are some examples in the study of individuals making decisions as a direct result of advice from a guidance worker, more common are decisions shaped by family, people met through agencies not specifically for career advice, friends or employers;
- for potential learners who lack confidence or relevant economic, social or cultural capital, provision in a local, known community centre is of vital importance;
- individuals can be highly mobile over the course of their lives: there are several examples of people whose studies stopped or started as the result of a move either between countries, between town and country, or even across town.

2.13. The issue of multiple transitions across an individual life course was discussed at length at the Review expert practitioner workshop held in May 2006 resulting in the following diagram:



**Figure One: Transition Points**

2.14. The diagram illustrates that while two fixed transition points can be identified that constitute a universal experience – i.e. the end of statutory education (usually at the end of key stage 4) and retirement (at 60/65 or beyond) individual career pathways and patterns between these points are highly variable, and are cyclical rather than linear. The current thinking is that on average people change their career 6-7 times throughout their lifetime, making career choice and change a lifetime process. Increasingly, people do not fall into easily defined categories as individual lives consist of a varied and changing mix of earning, learning and ‘rest of life’ activities.

2.15. In every life there are a series of critical incidences (positive and negative life events) that spark the need for action and/or consideration of options. These can be enablers (e.g. promotion at work) or disablers (e.g. unwelcome redundancy, illness) and are recurring in nature.

People often seek out 'guidance' during these periods of crisis or transition, although individual responses to each situation can be highly variable.

### **(iii) Young people and transitions**

2.16.A specific transition exists between young people' and adult services.

This transition is delineated by age limits to young peoples' services (currently provided through Connexions) which is a service for those aged between 13 and 19. The exception to this is for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities for whom Connexions continues to provide support until the age of 25.

2.17.Jackson's paper<sup>15</sup> on this subject produced for the Review Consultation Workshop on 3 March 2006 expresses concerns about the transition between young people and adult services, finding considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that young people are at risk of falling down a 'gap' in provision at this stage. Jackson found, however, that the extent to which this is happening is actually unknown as there is negligible research about the specific 19 plus transition and little published research on the experiences of young people going through this transition.

2.18.This, despite the fact, that there is increasing evidence to suggest that the transition into 'adulthood' is taking longer than was previously the case. A recent report by the Social Exclusion Unit<sup>16</sup> reported that there is a view that "*most young people are now taking longer over the transition to adulthood*" which suggests that services to support young people through that transition may be needed beyond age 19, and consequently effective transition and referral from young people to adult services becomes an important issue. This finding is endorsed by the

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<sup>15</sup> Jackson, A. (2006) Transitions: Young People and Adult Services, Briefing Paper, *Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop 3rd March 2006*. [online]. Briefing Papers Prepared by the Research Partners. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Working Group Paper. Available from: <http://www.derby.ac.uk/cegs/publications>

<sup>16</sup> Social Exclusion Unit. (2005). *Transitions: Young Adults With Complex Needs*. Wetherby: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister., Social Exclusion Unit

OECD Study<sup>17</sup> .

2.19. Participants at the consultative workshop on 3 March also raised concerns about the transition of young people to adult services and expressed strong support for, at a minimum, an all age guidance strategy (not to be confused with an 'all age guidance service') that would underpin all publicly funded services and be based on the recognition of significant transitions across the life course that are not based solely on age.

2.20. More research is needed in this area, which should include an exploration of the potential for linking entitlements to services to critical life stages rather than age.

#### **(iv) Older adults and transitions**

2.21. In a paper on the impact of an ageing population on career guidance, Ford et al<sup>18</sup> provide a comprehensive study of current policy issues and future requirements. They argue that IAG needs to pay greater attention to older workers<sup>19</sup>: because they constitute a growing proportion of the workforce, they are less well qualified, and most at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

2.22. Older adults in general have the lowest level of formal qualifications, they are the least likely age group to volunteer for training, and the least likely to be offered training by their employers. Participation in training declines progressively with age, increasing the risk that individuals become unemployable. Although the Government's Skills Strategy guarantees free learning for full Level 2 qualifications and basic skills, and half of those without Level 2 qualifications are over 50, they are seriously underrepresented in this provision. However, those who do continue to train (generally those who are already better qualified) are

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<sup>17</sup> OECD (2004) *Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap*. Paris: OECD.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/45/34050171.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Ford, G. McNair, S. Grattan, P. and Lamb, H. The impact of an ageing population on career guidance, NIACE with TAEN and CeGS, Working Group Review Paper, Unpublished.

<sup>19</sup> There is no agreed definition of an "older worker", and the rate at which people's capacities and aspirations change with age varies enormously. In this paper we are generally concerned with people over 45, the age at which the range of career opportunities open to most people begins to contract.

much more likely to remain in the workforce.

2.23. Although a number of small specialised voluntary and commercial agencies provide services particularly for this age range, current participation in publicly funded adult IAG services is heavily weighted towards younger adults

2.24. Ford et al (Ibid) argue that much of what older people need from IAG services is common to people of all ages. All seek constructive activity, respect, interest, congenial social relationships and financial reward. Work and learning provide these, and many people want to continue working into their 60s, if not longer. This is not an unrealistic ambition: the labour market needs them, and while popular preconceptions about declining physical and mental capacity remain widespread, almost all jobs in the economy can now be undertaken successfully by most people into their late 60s.

2.25. However, as people approach retirement age, the balance of the employment relationship shifts, and most have the option (albeit at a price) to leave work if it fails to meet their expectations – whether to ease gradually into retirement or to seek new challenges.

2.26. They conclude that “while the generic guidance needs may be common to all ages, the special circumstances and characteristics of older people mean that an “age blind” service is unlikely to fully meet the needs of older workers, and there is good reason to believe that current provision is inadequate to meet their needs”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ford, G. McNair, S. Grattan, P. and Lamb, H. (2006) The impact of an ageing population on career guidance, Working Group Review Paper, Unpublished. p10.

**(v) What do adults want and need?**

2.27. Individual adults access help and support through formal or informal arrangements intermittently across a life course in a variety of ways. However, the fact that the terms used to define provision (see section 3.ii) do not have general resonance among adults contributes to a situation where many people appear to stumble across provision rather than make an informed choice about where they will go for their guidance. As a consequence, responses to the question, “what do adults want and need?” will be many faceted.

2.28. The 2005 MORI research<sup>21</sup> asked respondents specific questions about their wants and needs from guidance. Responses were as follows:

(NB: the questions were not open-ended, and the language used reflects the options put by the researchers; only those scoring higher than 10% have been included):

- Opportunities for help on a one-to-one basis (35%)
- Help to identify my work-related skills (31%)
- Specialist advice about specific jobs/careers (31%)
- Help with interview techniques (31%)
- CV/application form support (27%)
- Financial advice (25%)
- Dedicated redundancy services (23%)
- Education links (22%)

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<sup>21</sup> Taylor, J., Vasickova, D., Byrom, A. & Dickson, J. (2005). *Demand for, and Perceptions of, Information, Advice and Guidance : A Research Study Conducted for the Guidance Council by MORI*. Leicester: Guidance Council.

- Help directly linked to getting a (better) job/job search facilities (20%)
- Opportunities for ongoing, long-term help (17%)
- Entitlements/benefits advice (16%)
- Dedicated services for people return to work after a break (16%)
- Employer links (15%)
- Local labour market information (15%)
- Computerised job/skills assessment packages (13%)

2.29. Wilson & Jackson<sup>22</sup>, when asking similar (but open-ended) questions to adults of working age, found that the overwhelming priority for the majority of adults was getting a job – or a better job – and interest was expressed in separate services linked to this goal, as listed below (not in any order of priority):

- Learning information - including that linked to local labour markets
- Job related labour market information;
- Assessment opportunities (including ICT packages, specific skills testing and aptitude testing)
- Specialist vocational advice from ‘experts’ offering practice advice about work in particular sectors, preferably linked to the local labour market;
- Employer links – including work experience as well as better links generally with local industries;

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, J. & Jackson, H. (1999) *What are adults' expectations and requirements of guidance? A Millennium Agenda?* Winchester: The Guidance Council.

- CV/job search support;
- Facilities to test out learning opportunities through access arrangements and tasters;
- Identification of transferable skills;
- Financial and employment advice.

2.30. Research<sup>23</sup> undertaken by the LSC also identified a comprehensive list of adults wants and needs from guidance:

The desire to:

- Learn new skills
  - Get qualifications/additional qualifications
  - Update current skills
  - Find out what qualifications one requires for a specific job or jobs and how to set about obtaining these
  - Try out and sample particular learning opportunities to test personal suitability
  - Find out more about one's potential to learn and the kinds of courses and the methods of learning that are likely to suit one best
  - Find out ways of funding/paying for education/training.
- 
- Find a job/get a new job
  - Change direction and follow new interests
  - Find out about a specific job or career
  - Change the type of job one is currently doing
  - Demonstrate one's skills and abilities to potential employers, e.g. through work trials
  - Discuss the possibility of self-employment and what this may involve.
- 
- Find out how well one is doing in one's current job
  - Reassess one's career and where one is going – establish a new sense of direction
- 
- Prepare a CV
  - Make a job application

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<sup>23</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2002) *The role of information, advice and guidance*,. Coventry, Learning and Skills Council.

- Improve job interview techniques and self-presentation more generally
- Find out what type of job one is best suited to or qualified to do
- Discuss and try to resolve personal issues and circumstances that may affect personal ability to do job
- Seek help and support in returning to work after a break
- Seek help with returning to work after unemployment
- Seek help with return to work after redundancy
- Try out particular occupations or work opportunities through work trials or work experience to test personal suitability
- Find out about volunteering opportunities and decide which might be the most suitable to match personal needs and values
- Seek advice about the ways in which volunteering may lead to paid employment.

2.31. Bimrose et al<sup>24</sup>., reporting the results of a longitudinal study of effective guidance identified what the majority (49 out of 50) of clients found useful about the help they received:

- ‘Supporting positive outcomes for the client, specifically: exploring and challenging client perceptions together with giving direction and a new awareness of learning or employment opportunities;
- giving clients access to networks, information and knowledge, enabling them to feel better informed and better able to progress;
- encouraging constructive change in the client like: increasing self-confidence; developing skills; developing understanding which broadened ideas; as well as motivating, inspiring and encouraging the client;
- providing the client with a positive experience by: creating the opportunity for reflection and in-depth discussion; and by reassuring, confirming and/or clarifying plans and/or progress.’

2.32. They observed that, for all parties, the determining feature of ‘useful

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<sup>24</sup> Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.A., Hughes, D. & Orton, M. (2004) *What is Effective Guidance? Evidence from Longitudinal Case Studies in England*, Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research.

guidance' is the skills held and used by the practitioner<sup>25</sup>.

2.33. For non-users the MORI research<sup>26</sup> notes that they are unlikely to approach service providers due to a perception that it is of "no use at all" to them – and that their needs are more likely to be associated with issues associated with financial advice, returning to work after starting a family, and facing redundancy.

#### (vi) Factors influencing attitudes to guidance

2.34. Individual attitudes towards learning and development, and an individual's willingness to seek support from third parties, are key factors when it comes to the achievement of government skills goals and targets. Humphries<sup>27</sup> notes:

*It is extremely difficult to raise skill levels amongst adults of working age without their willing and active participation, and many need as much convincing that learning is 'worth it' as employers need convincing that skills are assets worthy of investment, not just costs. (p.8) .....*

*Any set of policies designed to significantly increase adult participation in work related learning and skills must seek to overcome the set of attitudes, beliefs and cultural mores amongst individuals and employers that fundamentally perceive access to learning as an elitist right that only brings benefits to the already privileged. Information, understanding, the positive promotion of the benefits, advice and guidance for adults, and the removal of barriers to access, perceived or real, will be essential elements of any successful adult engagement strategy. (p.9)*

2.35. Critical to the success of increasing take up in guidance, learning, development or upskilling by those adults not currently engaged in any of these activities will be the recognition of different individual starting points. In particular, the differing needs of those adults who are:

- **interested but not engaged:** i.e. adults who may only require the right information in the right format and through accessible

<sup>25</sup> Op cit. , p.17-18

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, J., Vasickova, D., Byrom, A. & Dickson, J. (2005). *Demand for, and Perceptions of, Information, Advice and Guidance : A Research Study Conducted for the Guidance Council by MORI.* Leicester: Guidance Council.

<sup>27</sup> C.Humphries, Director General, City & Guilds, January 2006 'Skills in a Global Economy'

channels, and those who are

- **disengaged:** i.e. adults who will require not just the right information in the right format, but also encouragement and support if their aspirations are to be raised.

2.36. Wilson & Jackson<sup>28</sup> identified a number of factors that influence whether an individual shows any interest in presenting themselves for guidance at all or, if they do, their possible responses to engagement with the process. These are:

- *State of readiness:* whether an individual is 'service ready', i.e. is actively seeking out help of some sort.
- *Levels of self-confidence/self-esteem:* Levels of self-confidence/self-esteem will be strong enablers or disablers within the guidance process. Where self-confidence/self-esteem is low more encouragement and in-depth support will be required.
- *Motivation level:* Low motivation levels (which may stem from low self-confidence/self-esteem, or other personal, domestic or financial pressures) are strong disablers within the guidance process. Not only will they act as a barrier to entry, but they might also prevent effective action being taken after a guidance intervention.
- *Previous experience of guidance and/or learning:* Previous experience of guidance and/or learning (whether positive or negative) will influence individual attitudes to guidance, especially as to whether an individual will even present for guidance in the first place.
- *Labour market status:* Low-skilled, low-paid adults spoken to in the study indicated a lack of interest in guidance because 'it would not change anything' or because they were too busy

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<sup>28</sup> Wilson, J. & Jackson, H. (1999) *What are adults' expectations and requirements of guidance? A Millennium Agenda?* Winchester: The Guidance Council.

surviving to consider it. More generally, the employed registered some of the following experiences when approaching services: difficulties over access (during working hours); difficulties with making and receiving phone calls at work; vague signposting and referral activities between providers; identifying suitable learning provision.

- *Personal/domestic responsibilities:* Domestic commitments and responsibilities may be enablers or disablers. On the one hand, a domestic situation might provide a degree of financial and emotional support at a time of change; on the other hand, commitments may be such that the idea of any type of change which has a financial impact or which would require a degree of risk without a guaranteed return, is unlikely to be viewed positively.
- *Financial position:* For most people the priority is to ensure they can earn sufficient to live on, or to support their family and meet their commitments. In some cases, some of those spoken to in the study were doing two jobs to achieve this – taking time out to undertaken learning or skills development was not viewed as a realistic option. . There were indications, however, that those adults who had reached a time in their lives where they felt more settled, and financially and domestically secure, were like to be more open to considering learning.
- *Personal crisis/life transition:* A personal crisis or life transition can be one of the key drivers that brings an adult to guidance.
- *Age:* Age is a central factor in who comes to guidance and when. In some cases people felt the stigma of being ‘past a marketable age’ within the labour market, and had a strong sense of their options closing down. Others felt that re-training at their age might not be worth it. Highly skilled (highly paid) adults who get laid off in mid-life, with ongoing financial and domestic commitments, appear to be confronted by particular problems, finding themselves unmarketable because of their age and the labour market often inflexible with regard to their

needs. Others had experienced guidance and felt that it fell short of their specific requirements – e.g. identification of transferable skills or remarketing themselves in a particular sector.

2.37. The issue of different starting points and ‘states of readiness’ is reflected in the OECD report<sup>29</sup>, which argues that there are good grounds for the use of more differentiated career guidance methods to match different individual needs.

2.38. The use of initial ‘screening tools’ or ‘diagnostic activities’ can be a way of doing this (as well as a way of ensuring that the most effective use is made of staff time). An approach to initial screening to determine an individual’s readiness for decision-making has been proposed as follows:

- *Those who are initially judged to have a high level of readiness for career decision-making can be referred to self-help services: career resource rooms and websites designed to help them to select, find, sequence and use resources with little or no help;*
- *Those judged to have a moderate level of readiness can be referred to as brief staff-assisted services: some help with the use of resources, supplemented by group sessions;*
- *Those with a low level of readiness can be referred to individual case-managed services: individual counselling and longer-term counselling<sup>30</sup>.*

### **(vii) The link between interventions and outcomes**

2.39. A review by Killeen and Kidd (1991)<sup>31</sup> of 40 (mainly US) studies identified positive links between career guidance interventions and the achievement of an individual’s career learning outcome. These

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<sup>29</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. p.80.

<sup>30</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/45/34050171.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Killeen, J. and Kidd, J. (1991). *Learning Outcomes of Guidance: A Review of Recent Research*. London: Department of Employment.

outcomes were framed within six main categories as follows:

- *Precursors*: attitudinal factors which facilitate rational decision-making such as reduced decision-anxiety
- *Self-awareness*: learning about self;
- *Opportunity-awareness*: learning about opportunities and options;
- *Decision-making skills*: learning rational decision-making skills and strategies;
- *Transition skills*: learning skills for implementing decisions (including job-search skills and interview skills);
- *Certainty of decision*

2.40. The findings (Ibid) were overwhelmingly positive: of the 40 studies, only four reported no gains in the categories identified, 30 reported wholly positive results, and gains were reported in each category more often than nil results. Also, positive results were reported for each main type of guidance intervention: classes and courses, workshops and groups, individual guidance, test interpretation and feedback, experience-based interventions and multi-method interventions.

2.41. The OECD<sup>32</sup> report reports similar conclusions found in more extensive and more rigorous US meta-analyses of good quality controlled studies which concluded that:

- Career interventions are effective with most age groups;
- Individual guidance has the biggest effect, following by group sessions and classroom interventions;

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<sup>32</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/45/34050171.pdf>. Page 34.

- ‘Counsellor’-free interventions have the smallest effect sizes;
- Computer delivered interventions are the most cost effective.

**(viii) Assessing user ‘competency’**

2.42. This topic was discussed at an expert practitioner in July 2006. Participants explored the benefits of a competency/outcomes oriented approach that could provide a baseline assessment for the user and for the service provider as well as facilitate the measurement and recognition of distance travelled, and the achievement of positive outcomes. The competency assessment could be at a number of different levels, and could usefully recognise a range of competences such as motivation, knowledge, skills. Three possible levels were identified:

**Basic** – the individual has little knowledge or understanding of their needs and what they might need to do to address them.

**Interpretative** – the individual can articulate their needs and has some understanding of what to do next, but needs information or confirmation.

**Discursive** – individuals have already take some steps to address their needs and need to discuss future actions and options further.

2.43. The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs<sup>33</sup> (National Life/Work Centre, 2000) provides a competency model. It translates career development outcomes into sets of competences (that Canadians require) from childhood to adulthood, to manage their life and work development effectively. The Blueprint is developed from a US model and is used by public and private agencies throughout Canada. The primary aim of the Blueprint is to provide a nationally agreed framework of competences and to design services and products accordingly. The competences are available in four age/stage versions to be applicable equally with young people and adults. The headings, common to all four age/stage

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.blueprint4life.ca>

versions, are as follows:

- Build and maintain a positive self-image.
- Interact positively and effectively with others.
- Change and grow throughout one's life.
- Participate in lifelong learning supportive of life/work goals.
- Locate and effectively use life/work information.
- Understand the relationship between work and society/economy.
- Secure/create and maintain work.
- Make life/work-enhancing decisions.
- Maintain balanced life and work roles.
- Understand the changing nature of life/work roles.
- Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process.

**(viii) Developing user-focused services**

2.44. Reviewing the findings of the research phase of the review, an expert practitioner workshop held in May 2006 identified the following baseline principles required to underpin a user-focused service offer:

1. A service offer that reflects the following:

- career progression is cyclical not linear – transitions recur throughout life and are multiple;
- every ‘individual’ career is different, but there are two fixed points for all – end of statutory education and eventual retirement; patterns around these are highly variable;
- systematic career planning is not the norm; change (especially externally imposed) can cause confusion and anxiety; desire and readiness for change or need to upskill is variable;
- individual attitudes, needs and circumstances vary enormously; a series of life events can be triggers for action (as either enablers or disablers);
- individuals can develop their own career planning and management as a key life skill.

2. Provides clarity, transparency and quality through:

- a standardised offer – regardless of when, where and who delivers it – underpinned by a set of service standards and delivered by professionally qualified advisers;
- flexible ‘multi channel’ delivery – to meet a range of different needs at different times and different stages across a life course;
- availability of a range of self-help/self-managed tools to promote the use of non face-to-face provision at least at the initial stages of the process;
- one *identifier* or *brand* and logo for all provision that meets the required quality standard

3. That ensures equity of access by:

- effectively combining universal access with the prioritizing and targeting of those with the greatest need;
- being responsive, proactive and reactive to those with specific needs;
- encouraging everyone to participate, regardless of age, gender, race, ability/disability;
- recognising the individual nature of adult career needs and pathways

4. Is promoted as a service that is:

- positive, dynamic and accessible to everyone;
- proactive (and not remedial, i.e. to only be used when there is a problem).

2.45 During the wider workshop discussion practitioners present also noted the following:

- It is important to be clear on the nature and purpose of the offer and use language to describe it that is familiar, transparent and accessible.
- There needs to be a range of entry points; a no wrong door approach to access.
- There needs to be a number of different delivery channels and access arrangements, including web, phone, face-to-face, group/workshop sessions, drop-in.
- If levels of individual understanding and capacity to self-manage and self-direct are to be assessed at the entry to the

offer, sophisticated generic tools will need to be developed – possibly at more than one level and involving different types of assessment.

- The emphasis needs to be, wherever possible, about encouraging people to help themselves; promoting the softer outcomes of greater individual autonomy and self-determination as well as the harder outcomes of increased skill levels, learning achievements or improved jobs and careers.
- Individuals will move along learner or a career pathways in different ways. For example, while some individuals may move take steps in an linear way – e.g. a, b, c, d – it is equally likely that will enter from a whole range of different starting points – e.g. b, d, c, a; c, a, b, d. Any model of delivery needs to reflect this.

2.46 At a later Review consultative workshop held in July 2006 practitioners discussed the need to take a ‘holistic’ approach to services – recognising the synergy between personal and working lives. Tensions were identified, however, between the holistic approach to services (promoting the “whole-person”) with the need to promote the links to the skills and employability agenda (promoting the needs of employers and policy makers).

2.47 The discussion identified the challenge of articulating outcomes that are meaningful to the achievement of policy objectives at the same time as being meaningful to the longer-term goals and aspirations of individual users. There was discussion around the restrictive nature of target driven provision – i.e. restricting the offer to that which can be counted rather than what the individual actually wants or needs; eligibility criteria based on qualification levels rather than need. Tensions exist between the hard and soft outcomes of guidance provision, especially on ways of identifying and recording the achievement of the latter.

2.48 There was also discussion about whether the service offer should be conceptualised in the same way as the health service offer, i.e. with

regular check ups (as with the Dental service or paid-for health checks), a source of general advice and support (the GP service), and a more intense service when problems become severe (hospital).

2.49 It was agreed, however, that simple messages about the purpose of adult guidance were essential, i.e. that it supports

- **Getting into work (and keeping the job)**
- **Getting on at work, and**
- **Getting more out of life.**

### 3. The Current Offer

#### (i) The National Policy Framework and Action Plan

- 3.1 The ‘*Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults: National Policy Framework and Action Plan*’ (DfES 2003) was produced by the DfES in response to commitments made in the 2003 Skills Strategy, and provides the policy context in which the current review is being undertaken.
- 3.2 While generally welcoming the Policy Framework, Watts and Hawthorn<sup>34</sup> expressed concern about the lack of clarity over the way services were being described, who would be eligible for what level of service and the proposal to focus on specific priority target groups:

*Hitherto, policy has been based on universal access to ‘information’ and ‘advice’, and rationed access to ‘guidance’. Now, however, it seems that universal access is to be confined to ‘information’, and that access to ‘advice’ is to be rationed. This is certainly the impression given in paragraph 1, which states that all adults should have access to ‘information’, but that the ‘new priority to provide free, high quality advice’ is to be confined to adults without a level 2 qualification. Confusingly, however, the statement about access later declares that ‘core core IAG services will provide access to information and advice services for all adults’. ... The action plan adopts a mid-way position between these two statements, indicating that ‘advice services will be available, giving particular priority to those people without a first full Level 2 qualification.*

*The foreword by Ivan Lewis, parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Vocational Education adds to the confusion. It states that ‘the Government’s efforts and investment of public funds should focus on those who need the most help, and who are least able to pay for it’. This statement is located at the end of a paragraph which earlier affirms that ‘everyone should have access to information’. The same paragraph also states that ‘some people will need advice to help them overcome their barriers to learning, suggesting that this is the only case where a need for advice is to be recognised. The economic and social benefits of assisting the confused, the concerned and the uncertain to make informed and well-thought-through choices about learning and work appear to have been overlooked or dismissed.*

- 3.3 Although the priority target group of those without a Level 2 qualification was clear the wider offer was set within a confusing policy context.

<sup>34</sup> Watts, A.G & Hawthorn, R. (2004) The IAG Policy Framework, *Newscheck*, July.

What happened as a result of the implementation the National Policy Framework is reviewed in more detail in the next section.

- 3.4 While a detailed evaluation of the achievements and impact of the National Policy Framework and Action Plan is not in scope to the Review, it is important to recognise that the Policy Framework from 2003 provides the underpinning policy context of the current adult IAG offer.

**(ii) Clarifying the adult IAG offer**

- 3.5 The terms currently in use describe generic levels of service and outline different stages in the process; they give little or no indication as to the actual nature of the offer, the purpose or, indeed, outcomes. As a result, over the years adult guidance practitioners have found ways of interpreting these service levels into a service offer which, while reflecting user needs and interests, can be different depending on where the service is delivered, and the nature of the funding arrangements underpinning it. Some providers will use CVs as a main activity; some a range of assessment tools; some will actively help clients seek work, or get on to courses; others will focus on longer term career planning and support to decision-making and action planning. Some will do all of these.
- 3.6 While there is no doubt there is a substantial amount of good work being undertaken through the current infrastructure, what is provided is a mix of old-style 'educational' guidance; career guidance; job matching/job search activities; personal guidance and mentoring activities (e.g. building confidence and self-esteem) and some community activism. All delivered under the 'IAG' descriptor.
- 3.7 During a discussion at an expert practitioner workshop held for the Review in July 2006 participants agreed that while there needs to be a clear purpose, set of outcomes and standardised menu of services for adult guidance, there might also need to be different ways of describing services. While any new service which may emerge from the current

Review needs to put the user at the centre of the service, it also needs to take account of the established set of values and principles of the service practitioner base and the wider policy needs of government. Workshop participants considered the following differing priorities:

- **Consumers** - to reflect the needs and interests of individuals for specific stated services; effective links with the labour market (and, where possible, employers) and for clear, user-friendly, flexible provision.
- **Practitioners** – to ensure continuity with the established set of values and principles of service delivery.
- **Policy makers** – to set the service within the frame of the emerging policy agenda.

3.8 For the practitioner, the process of offering careers related information, advice and guidance is multi-faceted. The sector has tended to depend on a typology of services determined by UDACE in 1986<sup>35</sup> - i.e.

- Informing; Advising; Counselling; Assessing; Enabling; Advocating; and Feeding Back (to providers data about unmet needs)

3.9 Marris (2004)<sup>36</sup>, summarising a discussion on ‘What is guidance?’ conducted through the National Guidance Research Forum website and therefore drawing on opinions expressed by practitioners, concluded:

- how careers guidance is defined will be influenced by the objectives of the parties responsible for the definition;
- careers guidance is best viewed as a process, rather than a one-off interaction;

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<sup>35</sup> Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (1986) *The Challenge of Change: Developing Educational Guidance for Adults*. Leicester: National Institute for Adult Continuing Education.

- careers guidance depends on interactivity between adviser and client, which is frequently assumed to be face to face;
- careers guidance is often focused on an individual although its beneficiaries may be wider;
- careers guidance may have multiple outcomes that emerge only over time;
- careers guidance can draw on a large number of different activities and skills depending on the context and aims of the particular client and practitioner involved;
- information provision may form part of a guidance process, but is not in itself guidance.

3.10 For the policy maker, the funding of adult guidance has increasingly become a means to achieve wider goals and policy imperatives – e.g. skills and qualifications. In this way, adult guidance risks becoming a remedial activity used to address other priorities – i.e. weaknesses in the current skills base. For example, prior to the 2003 White Paper on Skills (Ibid) the entitlement to free information and advice services was universally available, with specific targeting and prioritising undertaken at a local level. When the upskilling of those adults without Level 2 qualifications became a priority (following the 2003 Skills Strategy) the adult guidance offer became a key mechanism through which to identify, reach and facilitate the upskilling of the priority target group.

3.11 While prioritising the lower skilled for guidance makes good policy (and practical) sense, an individual's level of qualification is not necessarily an indicator of ability or needs. By making the pre-Level 2 group the main focus of the funding, other groups whose needs may be as great can be disenfranchised.

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<sup>36</sup> Marris, L. (2004) What is career guidance? A practitioner's perspective.[online] National Guidance Research Forum website. Available from: [www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprac/ImpP1/defining/ImpP1i/ImpP1if/](http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprac/ImpP1/defining/ImpP1i/ImpP1if/). [Accessed 8 February 2007]

**(iii) Publicly funded provision: an overview**

3.12 Publicly funded provision represents the vast majority of information, advice and guidance delivered to adults in England. It is defined as those services funded primarily by government through the Learning & Skills Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department of Work and Pensions. However, as Nelson<sup>37</sup> notes other government Departments do offer some services for particular groups. Some form of eligibility criteria applies to nearly all publicly funding.

*Whilst the National Learning & Skills Council (NLSC) has a statutory duty to oversee LSC-funded information and advice services for adults, it also proactively works with other government departments and agencies to encourage the development of services for key priority groups. In this context, a wide range of delivery organisations resourced by at least four government departments, namely DfES, DWP, DTI and the Home Office, have a role in contributing to the design and development of information, advice and guidance services for adults. Educational and community-based organisations, private-sector individuals and companies also contribute in differing and significant forms to the overall existing “mix of services”<sup>38</sup>.*

3.13 The definition of the terms “Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)”, and the distinctive meaning and usage varies within and across the differing organisations which in turn can cause confusion about the actual services and types of interventions delivered to adult clients. For example:

- DWP offer a range of IAG services to unemployed people (mainly through Jobcentre Plus provision) as well as web-based jobseeker information and advice through direct.gov.uk;
- DTI offers a range of services to employed people (through direct.gov.uk) and to businesses through services provided via Business Link;

<sup>37</sup> Nelson, B. (2006) Train to Gain and IAG – Criteria for assessing current IAG provision, Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers, Section 6 p.2. Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

<sup>38</sup> Nelson, B. op cit. page 1.

- The TUC Union Learning Representatives (through **unionlearn**) play a significant role in IAG delivery to union members in the workplace.
- The recently launched DfES/LSC Train to Gain programme offers employers impartial advice and easy access to quality training, matching training needs with training providers and ensuring that training is delivered to meet employer's needs.
- The Home Office has responsibility for the IAG for offender/ex-offenders and through the probation service, working closely with the DfES and the LSC.

3.14 The number of people who benefit from these services is difficult to quantify. **Nextstep** providers, **learnirect** advice and the services offered through Jobcentre Plus all operate within a regime of targets and monitoring, as a result of which relatively full data is collected. However, the picture from FE colleges and HE institutions is much more patchy. Records of activity kept by individual universities and colleges are not collated in a standard format; even if they were it is likely that such records would only relate to IAG that is specifically delivered through careers or guidance services and exclude that provided through tutors.

3.15 The scope and aims of publicly funded IAG increasingly reflects government policies relating to education and employment. In **nextstep**, **learnirect** advice and further education provision the trend has been to increasingly target provision at users identified as priorities for learning and skills funding generally – particularly those who qualify for the 'Level 2 entitlement'. Meanwhile, higher education is being encouraged to identify effective vocational progression routes between different level programmes and make more effective links to workplace provision; Jobcentre Plus IAG is focused on supporting the government's Welfare to Work agenda.

3.16 Feedback from all aspects of the Review has been consistent on the impact of the post-2003 diversion of **nextstep** (and to some extent

**learnirect** advice) funding away from a universal entitlement to information and advice to the priority targeting of the Level 2 entitlement group. While significant achievements have been made in this area, not the least being the way in which **nextstep** have identified and engaged with a range of new partners and providers in order to reach the target group, difficulties have been encountered with regard to wider access to services.

- 3.17 Adults who do not meet the pre-Level 2 entitlement criteria may end up, by default, being disenfranchised from provision. While many **nextstep** partnerships have identified other funding to see adults outside of the pre-Level 2 group, the availability of such provision is erratic and inconsistent. The result is an offer which is not only difficult to identify but also only accessible in some areas rather than universally.
- 3.18 Some examples of groups whose needs may well not be reflected in the current priority eligibility criteria, but whose needs are potentially just as great, are:
- HE non-completers
  - young people in transition into work (and possibly moving around the job market)
  - mid-life career changers (with higher level qualifications)
  - adults experiencing redundancy
  - labour market returners
  - older people looking for a lifestyle change
  - people with disabilities
  - people with longer-term health problems

- newly arrived migrant workers (looking for a whole range of support linked to work)

3.19 The other issue that has arisen consistently throughout the Review research and consultation activities has been the fact that the current priority target groups are often the hardest to reach; the adults who have probably not traditionally engaged in learning or skills development and who may not come forward of their own volition – people who probably need more in-depth support and help to enable them to move towards participation in the labour market. Yet the available offer as it currently stands is information and advice only.

#### **(iv) Core and embedded provision**

3.20 Throughout England, IAG provision has unfolded in differing forms ranging from discrete services to those embedded within and outside of formal learning and work arrangements.

3.21 IAG provision can be divided into two main types:

- **Core:** Services that are directly funded and have the provision of guidance as their main activity.
- **Embedded:** Services delivered across a range of sectors and contexts (for example, the FE sector, HE sector, the workplace, the community and offender learning) and supported, either directly or indirectly, by a variety of funding streams.

3.22 The following sections outline in further detail issues associated with the planning and provision of these services relevant to the Review.

## 4. An Overview of Core Funded Provision

### (i) *learndirect* advice and nextstep

4.1. There are currently two main strands of LSC core funded information, advice and guidance provision for adults, i.e. the 47 local **nextstep** contracts and the ***learndirect*** advice telephone and web-based service (currently running a telephone guidance trial as part of the IAG Review).

4.2. Based on the commitments outlined in the National Policy Framework, an overview – and comparison – of the current arrangements for both **nextstep** and ***learndirect*** advice is provided below.

<u><b><i>learndirect</i></b> advice</u>	<u><b>nextstep</b></u>
<p><b>Contracting arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted out to Ufi/<b><i>learndirect</i></b> through the LSC with the contract managed nationally.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service offer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While, as <b>nextstep</b>, <b><i>learndirect</i></b> advice has targets for the pre-Level 2 priority group, they have a more flexible brief when it comes to handling enquiries outside the priority target group; apart from anything else, generic media advertising will, by definition, enlist a whole range of enquiries at all levels.</li> <li><b><i>learndirect</i></b> advice is underpinned by one dedicated funding stream and all negotiations are undertaken directly between service managers at both <b><i>learndirect</i></b> advice and the national LSC;</li> <li><b><i>learndirect</i></b> advice line is free, and is currently trialling phone-based career guidance as part of the review..</li> </ul>	<p><b>Contracting arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>47 <b>nextstep</b> services, contracted out to a range of providers delivering across LSC areas. Contracts overseen by national LSC, managed locally.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service offer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core funding to offer free, face-to-face information and advice services to pre-Level 2 priority target group (with additional priorities agreed with LSC at a local level); There is some flexibility over the budget allocation to <b>nextstep</b> network managers (to see other groups) as long as targets for information and advice sessions for the priority group are met.</li> <li>Many <b>nextstep</b> services supplement core budgets by bidding to other funding streams - for example AimHigher, Local Authorities, or ESF.</li> <li>Until recent changes <b>nextstep</b> also received funding to run <i>enhanced</i> services, which they could use at their own discretion in consultation with local LSCs.</li> <li>Some <b>nextstep</b> managers have arrangements for charged services. These are usually for corporate clients (e.g. redundancy services) and in-depth services such psychometric testing.</li> <li>Where <b>nextstep</b> services are approached by clients who do not meet either the national or the local targets a number of things may happen: they may use alternative funding streams to see these clients; they may see them 'under the radar'; they may see them and find a way of recording them anyway or they may actually turn them away.</li> </ul>

<u><b>learndirect</b></u> advice	<u><b>nextstep</b></u>
<p><b>Service delivery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are two parts to the <b>learndirect</b> advice service – the telephone advice line and the web-based provision. The advice line is delivered (through a sub-contract with BSS); the web provision is managed by the <b>learndirect</b> advice central team.</li> <li>• The guidance trial aside (which has specific target groups) <b>learndirect</b> advice and <b>nextstep</b> networks have had the same core priority target group of clients below Level 2.</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for the <b>learndirect</b> advice is undertaken directly between Ufi/<b>learndirect</b> and the national LSC.</li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>learndirect</b> advice benefits from a large, dedicated marketing budget with significant media advertising.</li> <li>• No data is available on whether the large numbers going through <b>learndirect</b> advice are as a result of a specific preference for using the phone or more a response to the media marketing campaigns, although it is apparent that most people prefer to stay with the phone line once they have made initial contact.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service delivery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding arrangements generally are much more complex than for <b>learndirect</b> advice. <b>nextstep</b> networks are not expected to directly deliver any more than 40% of the funded information and advice interventions centrally; the other 60% has to be sub-contracted out.</li> <li>• Generally, <b>nextstep</b> network managers will look for sub-contractors who can help them access the pre-Level 2 target group.</li> <li>• This means that local <b>nextstep</b> managers can be managing sub-contracts of anything up to 20 or more different sub-contractors across their area some of which may not offer guidance as a core activity. In some cases minimum criteria are set for recruiting sub-contractors, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- commitment to the <b>matrix</b> Standard;</li> <li>- qualified staff (while the matrix Standard does not state a minimum qualification level the expectation of <b>nextstep</b> managers in this respect may vary from area to area);</li> <li>- additionality (i.e. colleges need to prove that what they are offering with the <b>nextstep</b> money wouldn't be offered otherwise - this can be a grey area);</li> <li>- equality and diversity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LSC chair Local Strategic Partnerships, whose membership includes representatives from Connexions and Jobcentre plus to ensure a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of adult learning and IAG services. The Local Strategic Partnerships will draw on the findings of Strategic Area Reviews.</li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no direct link to <b>learndirect</b> advice advertising. While attempts have been made to develop the referral activities between the different service levels this has not proved successful. The <b>nextstep</b> brand and face-to-face service does not currently feature at all on the telephone advertising, (although the advertising for the guidance trial means that one-to-one guidance is now promoted).</li> <li>• The marketing of services is undertaken as much by building complex local partnership arrangements as it is about direct marketing activity.</li> </ul>

<b>learndirect</b>	<b>Nextstep</b>
<p><b>Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>learndirect</b> advice has the <b>matrix</b> Standard and a grading of 2 across the board from its ALI inspection.</li> <li>• All <b>learndirect</b> advisers have to achieve an NVQ Level 3 or 4 depending on which level of the service they are involved in.</li> </ul> <p><b>Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships at a national level with the media, SSCs, Jobcentre Plus (particularly through the Guidance Trial) and a range of other agencies, including the media (for specific campaigns).</li> </ul> <p><b>Labour Market Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasingly closely liaison with SSCs and development of their own labour market information resources..</li> </ul> <p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>learndirect</b> advice offers some specialist sector advice through links with specific sectors or SSCs – e.g. NHS and Skillset and is continually expanding this more specialist provision.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each <b>nextstep</b> contractor must achieve (or at the very least be working towards) the <b>matrix</b> Standard.</li> <li>• ALI inspections of <b>nextstep</b> networks are now also being undertaken. The ALI Inspection process covers the management and delivery across the whole network, and focuses on the learner experience. Results so far have been mixed, with grades varying between 2 and 4. Although this poses a number of questions about the quality of the offer provided through the <b>nextstep</b> arrangement, it is possible that this is as much a reflection of the complexity and restrictions of the delivery arrangements and <u>must</u> be seen in the context of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>nextstep</b> networks having to manage a large number of sub-contractors who may well not be guidance experts;</li> <li>- the diminishing resource provided for cross-network training and development activities;</li> <li>- working with the hardest to reach client groups within the constraints of only being able to offer short information and advice sessions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some of the ALI inspection reports also suggest that while individual users have felt listened to and responded positively to the service, not enough 'hard' outcomes have been achieved. The viability of whether a service that is only funded to offer information and advice to traditionally hard-to-reach groups, with a range of agencies with limited experience of the process, can then be assessed on hard outcomes requires further discussion.</li> </ul> <p><b>Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong regional and local partnerships with a range of community providers; Jobcentre plus; FE and AE providers; local employers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Labour Market Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to local LMI through local and regional bodies and local intelligence. Partnerships with SSCs at a regional level being developed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>nextstep</b> managers are keen to offer services to the workplace and in many cases are already involved, although the level of involvement is largely dependent on the skill of the local <b>nextstep</b> manager and the opportunities available to them. In most cases (although by no means all) redundancy services tend to be the main <b>nextstep</b> workplace activity. A lot of work is currently being undertaken to support the role of <b>nextstep</b> networks in the roll out of Train2Gain.</li> </ul>

4.3. In the context of the 2003 National Policy Framework and Action Plan, it is clear that the intended aim of supporting the development of an integrated service has not been achieved, despite considerable effort on the part of all those involved. Areas where particular difficulties have been experienced appear to be:

- **learndirect** advice is funded and contract-managed through the national LSC; **nextstep** partnerships work to a national LSC specification, are contract-managed by local LSCs and are influenced, but not directly managed by, the national LSC; **nextstep** partnership managers have to manage a whole range of sub-contractors, many of which may not be guidance specialists, and over whom they have limited management control.
- The operational management arrangements for **learndirect** advice involve a certain amount of autonomy and single contract management; operational management arrangements for **nextstep** are complex and complicated and given the multiple companies that are involved in the contracting arrangements opportunities to influence the way services are run and targets prioritised is problematic
- **learndirect** advice benefits from substantial media advertising which doesn't apply (directly) to **nextstep** provision; while **nextstep** have developed considerable expertise in community outreach a future position would need to provide a better balance between the costs of promoting telephone advice and other forms of provision.
- The common identifier referred to in the Policy Framework never materialised due to difficulties over agreeing what the common identifier should be. A considerable amount of investment has been made in the **learndirect** brand and it has, as a result, high brand familiarity. There continue to be concerns, however, as to whether its strong emphasis on 'learning' reflects sufficiently the breadth and range of an adult career guidance offer.

Any future decisions about a common identifier will need to learn from the difficulties encountered the first time. Decisions will need to be made based on the underpinning rationale and purpose of a new service and the need to present this to users (and potential) users with as much clarity and transparency as possible.

- Effective referral arrangements between telephone and face-to-face services have not been developed and numbers referred have been low.
- Generally, there has been no standardisation of the offer either between the **learn**direct advice and **nextstep** provision, or even across the different **nextstep** providers themselves.

## (ii) Purpose and outcomes

- 4.4. A weakness in the way the value and benefits of the guidance process for adults has been assessed in the past is that *hard* impact measures have been applied to services that, realistically, were only ever funded to deliver *soft outcomes*.
- 4.5. For example, current **nextstep** funding is targeted at pre-Level 2 groups (traditionally hard-to-reach) and is limited in terms of the offer available (restricted to information and advice sessions). Achieving *hard* outcomes from such a set of arrangements was always going to be a challenge. What would have been preferable would have been to identify what type of service would be best suited to the priority group and appropriate provision developed accordingly.
- 4.6. Work needs to be undertaken about the purpose/expectations, impact measures, services requirements, individual expectations/commitment of any future service, with realistic expectations as to what can be achieved, how and in what timescale. The current position of prioritising the hardest to reach clients with a limited offer that does not reflect their

needs is unsustainable, especially if the success of the service is to be assessed on hard outcomes around skills.

- 4.7 Guidance may or may not be a quick fix solution. Where individual needs are simple and straightforward it is possible; for others more time and support will be required which will probably mean **soft** outcomes, at least initially. It is not realistic to try and expect all individuals to have a standard response to the guidance process; targets and impact measures for the revised service will need to reflect this.

## **5. An Overview of Embedded Provision**

5.1 Further Education, Higher Education (and to a lesser extent Adult & Community Learning) all have a commitment to providing adult IAG in some form, although the way they are funded, the levels of commitment and the extent to which provision meets needs varies enormously. An overview of the position of IAG in each of these is provided below:

### **(i) Further Education**

5.2 Generally, Further Education colleges aim to provide basic impartial information, advice and guidance to all students irrespective of age; continuing study guidance (progression) and referral to specialist skills learning where appropriate.

5.3 There are generally a variety of staff involved in the delivery of IAG through FE colleges. Frontline staff provide information relating to course enquiries and to refer callers to the appropriate member of staff for further information or advice. Course tutors offer more substantial advice about a particular programme, and even on the kind of jobs it could lead to in the case of specific vocational provision. Student services offer ongoing advice to support all other student needs (including advice on things like finance and childcare) and personal tutors are available to students for ongoing queries over their learning.

5.4 In many cases there will also be a central guidance unit staffed by permanent employees who have professional training. Information and advice may be provided face-to-face, by phone, in employment or in the community, and is commonly available on a drop-in or appointment basis.

5.5 Many colleges have strong links local with communities, and are engaged in workplace activities (whether this is through formal programmes like Train to Gain or via specific links forged at a local level between the college and local employers). There are also examples of colleges working with and through intermediaries such as learning champions/ learning ambassadors and Union Learning Representatives

in support of their roles.

- 5.6 When it comes to providing IAG to adults, however, the picture becomes more complex, and colleges find themselves not always able to respond, especially with regard to adults who are not students. Where funding is available (for example, **nextstep**) the college will give priority to those people yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification; and the change in Government direction for colleges, generally, means that the principal focus and safeguarded funding is overwhelmingly on 14-19 year old students as identified in Success for All. Evidence from case studies gathered for an early mapping activity undertaken for the Review indicates that colleges are increasingly unable to focus attention on adults outside of those groups who qualify for priority funding.
- 5.7 As very few adults are aware of the impact of such policies, however, colleges are still some of the key places that adults approach when wishing to return to learning, especially in those areas where the local college has a strong community ethos.
- 5.8 The White Paper<sup>39</sup>, '*Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*' identifies a series of measures for the reform of FE. While it recognises the value of the information and advice available through **learnirect** advice and **nextstep** for adults and what is currently provided in colleges through designated services and those embedded in learning, 'from pre-entry to help with progression opportunities and job seeking', it notes:

*'there is considerable local variation and scope for incoherence across ages and providers. Services for adults are a long way from giving everyone advice and guidance when and where they need it. There is also a perception – fair or otherwise – that advice is sometimes prejudiced in favour of universities and non-college provision... We believe that the provision of learner-focused advice and guidance is a key area for action; networks of pathways are not much use without signposts*

- 5.9 The White Paper also emphasises the importance of meeting individual, employer and community needs, with a strong emphasis on the

<sup>39</sup> DfES (2006) *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* London: Department for Education and Skills. Paras 124 – 6.

development of employability:

*'...the key strategic role for the (FE) sector is to help people gain the skills and qualifications for employability, so that they are equipped for productive, sustainable and fulfilling employment in a modern economy.... FE has the leading role to play in helping both young people and adults to acquire the skills which are an essential component of a competitive economy..'*

5.10 A recent study undertaken for the LSC<sup>40</sup> made a number of recommendations on ways of improving the provision of IAG in learning provision for adults (covering FE, ACL and work-based learning providers). These are summarised below:

- To increase consistency in the delivery of IAG embedded in learning and to support progression, providers need to give particular attention to the induction process and continuing professional development for all staff involved in the delivery of IAG.
- Providers should assure that they have the capacity to provide appropriate, sufficient and accessible services, delivered by specialist IAG staff that support learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression.

5.11 The paper also recommends that FE providers should pay particular attention to providing adequate IAG to support progression by adult learners on part-time programmes and training and supporting tutors in the delivery of on-programme IAG, although it is difficult to see how this can be achieved within the current funding arrangements.

5.12 More generally, the changes in the way adult provision (particularly part-time provision) is funded, and the priority given to young people, has meant that traditional routes into education and advice and guidance for adults are reducing. This is a concern that has been expressed consistently throughout the review by guidance practitioners, trade union representatives and FE staff alike. NIACE is currently undertaking work in this area to identify the extent of the reduction of

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<sup>40</sup> LSC, August 2006, *Embedding Information, Advice and Guidance in Learning Provision for Adults*,

opportunity.

## **(ii) Higher Education**

5.13 The review received two papers outlining key issues for the Review from the HE perspective; one from Bimrose and Hughes (2006)<sup>41</sup> and a second submission from AGCAS<sup>42</sup>.

5.14 A recent literature review of evidence regarding curricular and extra-curricular interventions which assist students and graduates to make career-related decisions has identified six types of career development intervention within the HE context.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, these were:

- pre-entry interventions;
- career-related interventions;
- curricular interventions to support vocational trajectories;
- curricular-related interventions;
- extra-curricular interventions; and
- multicultural interventions.

5.15 The actual level of provision across the HE sector varies enormously. The resource bases of different University careers services will reflect not only the financial health of the institution, but the priority attached by senior management to information, advice and guidance. One indicator is the staffing levels available in different services. Variations identified

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<sup>41</sup> Bimrose, J. and Hughes, D. (2006) Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2006. Available on [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

<sup>42</sup> AGCAS (2006) Paper from AGCAS to the IAG Review Group on IAG for Adults in England. Working Group Paper.

<sup>43</sup> Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.A. & Brown, J. (2006) *A Systematic Literature Review of Research into Career-related Interventions for Higher Education*. Manchester: HECSU (in press).

in recent research across just ten universities<sup>44</sup>, revealed a range in the staffing levels between one service that employed over seventy careers staff compared with one other service with less than six.

- 5.16 A review of guidance and counselling for higher education, commissioned by the Council of Europe<sup>45</sup> highlighted several tensions in the provision of services, including that of the extent to which University Careers Services are integrated with the Admissions process. As Careers services within Universities were originally intended to help graduates secure employment at the point of exit careers specialists employed by University services tend not to be involved in admissions to courses, nor to have the authority to make offers. The power of admissions remains with admissions tutors, who are unlikely to have had career guidance training and in many cases, their role is primarily grounded in 'marketing' and/or 'student admissions'.
- 5.17 A recent study<sup>46</sup> on the Demand for Flexible and Innovative Types of Higher Education found that many 'non-students' felt the quality of advice and guidance on HE opportunities available to them was inadequate. This came strongly through research in the groups of under-21s not in HE.
- 5.18 A further issue revealed by research is that gaps exist in service provision. AGCAS specifically noted three groups of adults for whom services are not well developed or accessible:-
- *Adults who wish to enter higher education but cannot access guidance services because they do not fit into the target NEET group or the Level 2 entitlement criteria.*
  - *Adults who drop out of HE and return home.* Whilst University careers staff may be able to offer guidance support to the

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<sup>44</sup> Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.A., Hughes, D. & Orton, M. (2004) *What is Effective Guidance? Evidence from Longitudinal Case Studies in England*. DfES/Warwick Institute for Employment Research. Available from: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/publications/bydate/egr2004.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Bimrose, J. (1996) *Guidance & Counselling for Higher Education*. Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Council of Europe/UCAS.

<sup>46</sup> HEFCE (2006) *Demand for Flexible and Innovative Types of Higher Education*, by SQW Ltd. & Taylor Nelson Sofres. London: HEFCE.

individual as they are coming to their decision to discontinue, once they have left the institution, the ability to continue to support these clients will vary<sup>47</sup>. Data from a survey of higher education careers advisory services (2005) found that while all offered free services to their current students, many restricted their services to their own graduates<sup>48</sup>.

The 'non-completer' is, therefore, in danger of falling into the gap between services provided free by higher education careers advisers and services outside universities which often operate eligibility criteria which may exclude individuals qualified above level 3.

- *Adults who graduate but are either under- or un-employed.* Some universities continue to offer support to their graduates for up to two years after completion and some support students from other universities who have re-located to the area. However, this provision is not consistent.

5.19 Particularly worrying is the fact there is evidence to show that adults and those from non-traditional backgrounds are more likely to fail to complete in HE (sources HESA website<sup>49</sup>). Statistics also indicate that institutions which have the highest non-completion rates are amongst the leaders in widening participation. The challenge of widening participation and aiding social mobility means that it is important not to pursue a policy of minimising non-completion, but rather build pathways and guidance services which support non-completers in HE in their career and learning progression.

5.20 A major research study has been commissioned by the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) in collaboration with the

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<sup>47</sup> Harris (2001) (op cit) indicated that 'The sector needs to agree the services which students are entitled to receive after leaving the institution.....some institutions may want to extend availability of their services beyond two years, either on a fee-paying basis or as part of their strategy for maintaining links with alumni.' (recommendation 9)

<sup>48</sup> In the case of their own graduates, only 38% of HEIs offered an indefinite service; most of the rest restricted it to 2-3 years post-graduation. In the case of graduates from other institutions, many confined it to a limited service and/or for a limited period (usually 2-3 years post-graduation). Extract taken from: Watts, A.G., Hughes, D. & Wood, M. (2005) *A Market in Career? Evidence and Issues*. CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

<sup>49</sup> www.hesa.ac.uk

University and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS). Two cohorts of applications are being surveyed at four points in their careers – the research will provide an unprecedented and robust account of the way students plan and prepare for their working lives beyond university. The core studies will be complemented by a range of shorter-term subsidiary studies examining emerging themes in more depth as part of a funded study on career decision-making.

### **(iii) Jobcentre Plus**

- 5.21 In a summary of the extensive work of Jobcentre Plus, Ford and Watts<sup>50</sup> draw attention to the wide range of contexts in which guidance is offered to clients as a core part of the service offer. Within mainstream Jobcentre Plus services they note that Personal Advisers have time to spend with individuals, normally those who are 'hard to place'. Their role includes responsibility for building good working relationships with these customers, for conducting work-focused interviews which include assessment and drawing up agreed action plans, and then for helping individuals to implement these plans. Guidance-related activities here include information (LMI and financial), signposting, networking, advice, assessment, enabling, mentoring and following-up.
- 5.22 Across the range of other programmes including New Deal and the variety of other programmes (such as Work-based learning for adults, work trials, action teams for jobs, pathways to work, WORKSTEP, redundancy support service and so on), they found that careers support and guidance activities represents a core part of the work of advisers.
- 5.23 A specific example is Skills Coaching and Skills Passports. Skills Coaching is a pilot project which is part of the New Deal for Skills. It is aimed at adults of working age for whom a lack of skills is a barrier to sustained employment. Skills Passports provide a record of learning progress and skills acquisition. Skills Coaching supports individuals

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<sup>50</sup> Ford, G. and Watts, A. G. (2006), Information, advice and guidance aspects of the work of jobcentre plus, Cambridge, National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers,. Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

aged 20 or over (with no upper age limit) to:

- Identify their skills and barriers in improving their skills (Skills Diagnostic).
- Plan and achieve employment-related learning goals (Skills Development Plan).
- Participate in learning to raise their skill levels and improve their chances of sustained employment (Passport).
- Make the transition into the labour market.

5.24 Implicit within these activities are many of the activities that comprise guidance <sup>51</sup>.

5.25 The evaluations of the initiative to date <sup>52</sup> shows that feedback from customers and other participants has been positive, and especially so where they have had access to the same skills coach throughout the programme (turnover of skills coaches has been a problem, which may in part be related to the job insecurity inherent in short-term funding). In Stage 2 over half the participants found work, which they attributed to the help they received during the programme.

5.26 A critical issue found in this example, and from across the services provided through Jobcentre Plus is that of staff training and support. Staff who join JCP are not necessarily selected specifically for front-line work nor to work as Personal Advisers. JCP has a significant number of staff with the potential to provide high-quality guidance, if they were given the time, training and internal management support and encouragement to do so. In general, however, there appears to be limited understanding or appreciation of guidance at either management

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<sup>51</sup> Ford, G. (2005). *Am I Still Needed? Guidance and Learning for Older Adults*. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby

<sup>52</sup> Hasluck, C., Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.-A. & McGivern, G. (2005). *Evaluation of Skills Coaching Trials and Skills Passports: Early Lessons from Implementation and Delivery*. Warwick: Institute for Employment Research.

Hasluck, C., Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.-A., Marris, L. & White, R. (2006). *Evaluation of Skills Coaching Trials and Skills Passports: Stage 2 Qualitative Survey Report*. Warwick: Institute for Employment Research.

or front-line levels. This means that the complexity of much of the front-line work is not appreciated in many sections of the organisation. At the same time, front-line staff themselves often realise they are not properly equipped to provide individuals with the help they require and report feeling inadequately prepared for their roles especially when working with individuals with special needs.

5.27 Ford and Watts<sup>53</sup> do however highlight two other very positive aspects of Jobcentre Plus. The first is the development of a formal partnership agreement to manage referrals with Ufl/**learn**direct so that both organisations can work together to help customers. JCP is also collaborating with **learn**direct advice to ensure that the telephone helpline advice and guidance service is available to JCP customers. JCP and **learn**direct advice staff are working together to give joint presentations on the new service to managers and advisers throughout the regions.

5.28 Second is the development of a framework of performance management to measure the impact of the significant support offered through the service. Significant potential for enhancing the IAG elements of mainstream JCP provision is offered by the National Employment Panel Skills Advisory Board's report *Welfare to Workforce Development* (NEPSAB, 2004<sup>54</sup>). This emphasised the importance of JCP enabling customers to develop their abilities through skills training rather than prioritising immediate reduction of the unemployment register by submitting individuals to (often) unsuitable and unfulfilling vacancies. It accordingly proposed a move from job-entry targets (JET) to job-outcome targets (JOT). Key performance indicators proposed in the report (designed to be applicable to the training and FE sectors as well as JCP) were:

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<sup>53</sup> Ford, G. and Watts, A. G. (2006), Information, advice and guidance aspects of the work of jobcentre plus, Cambridge, National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers,. Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

<sup>54</sup> National Employment Panel Skills Advisory Board (2004). *Welfare to Workforce Development*. London: National Employment Panel.

- Job-entry rates.
- Skills and qualifications achieved.
- Retention in work (seen as distinct from retention in work with an individual employer).
- Wages at entry (higher wages are linked to sustainable employment and are seen as the best proxy for the economic value that an employer places on a job).

5.29 Within JCP, the move to JOT has been accepted and is gradually being implemented. The new model will continue to be targeted through points awarded on a twelve-point scale according to the degree of priority allocated to specific customer groups (e.g. lone parents, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities). But it should provide scope for front-line staff to pay greater attention to the quality as well as the quantity of job placements, and to training to enhance career prospects and assist progression.

5.30 There are close relationships between Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** at a local level in most (although by no means all) areas. Jobcentre Plus will signpost/refer individuals to **nextstep** for a range of guidance activities.

#### **(iv) Offenders' Learning and Skills Service**

5.31 From 31st July 2006, the LSC took responsibility for offender learning and skills across England. The LSC manage planning, funding and delivery of the integrated Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across all nine English regions, having previously had responsibility for three development regions in the Northwest, Northeast and Southwest for a year. The vision for OLASS is

*"that offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need*

*to hold down a job and have a positive role in society*<sup>55</sup>.

5.32 The main focus of OLASS is an early, intense focus on assessment, advice and guidance, leading to the production of an individual learning plan that will cover the offender as s/he passes through the criminal justice system. The aim is to develop an educational system that the offender can pursue through custody and into the community. The contribution of a range of service providers to the success of the service is vital, these include prisons, probation, the LSC, youth justice, **nextstep**, Connexions, training providers and JobCentre Plus. The role of IAG within the process is also vitally important and one that was recognised in the evaluation of the services' first year<sup>56</sup>. OLASS has been associated with improved IAG services for offenders by over half of the sample of those involved in the evaluation. The improvements were linked to:-

- Improved standards in the delivery of IAG (including the delivery of learner focused advice rather than recruitment to what training was on offer)
- Increase in numbers of staff and/or hours that they worked within the institution for face to face delivery with offenders
- Improved multi-agency working and co-ordination of services
- Increase in staff development and training opportunities and
- Greater recognition and prioritisation of IAG.

5.33 Clearly, many of these are mutually reinforcing. Similarly, it was where these factors were not apparent that stakeholders reported few improvements to the IAG received by offenders in their institutions.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2006/externalrelations/press/nat-responsibilityforoffenderlearningpassestothelsc-pr-july2006.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Halsey, K. Martin, K. & White, R. (2006) *The Implementation of OLASS: An assessment of its impact one year on*. Research Report 810. Nottingham, Department for Education and Skills.

## **(v) Other publicly funded provision**

- 5.34 As noted in the introduction to this report, one of the limitations of the research undertaken to date has been the lack of detailed information about the range, extent and quality and purpose of IAG within Adult & Community Learning. Whilst the provision is funded by the LSC and will therefore be underpinned by the LSC's own commitment to quality IAG within all its funded programmes, information as to exactly how much goes on, where and by whom is limited.
- 5.35 The non-vocational nature of ACL provision means that it has not been on the radar of the current policy agenda – i.e. skills and vocational learning. However, part time study around an interest or a hobby remains one of the most important ways in which adults engage with, or may return to, learning. As raised previously in this report, concern has been expressed from a number of stakeholders as to the reduction in adult learning opportunity being experienced as a result of current funding priorities.
- 5.36 The NIACE<sup>57</sup> paper on embedded provision makes some observations and recommendations for ACL. It concludes that providers should pay particular attention to:
- helping adult learners develop the skills to make and act upon decisions about learning and work;
  - where appropriate, preparing and supporting learners with progression into work;
  - adequately training and supporting subject tutors in the delivery of on-programme IAG;
  - assuring that the range of approaches taken to delivering on-programme IAG is adequate to meet the diversity of learners' needs.

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<sup>57</sup> NIACE (2006) NEED REFERENCE DETAILS HERE. **[REFERENCE DETAILS]**

5.37 Other areas for which there is currently a lack of specific information as to the extent to which adult guidance provision is available, but where we feel there is probably a lot of informal advice being provided, are:

- information and advice provided through the work of health and social care professionals (although some of the innovative work undertaken by NIACE in this area needs to be acknowledged);
- information and advice provided through libraries;
- provision for specific groups – e.g. refugees, adults with disabilities;
- community-based provision (funded through a number of different funding streams);
- Ukonline and *learn*direct learning centres.

5.38 More work needs to be undertaken to determine the extent to which the above agencies are involved in the delivery of adult guidance activities, and the extent to which the level and nature of their involvement could be increased (for example, the ukonline infrastructure is located in libraries and other community-based locations).

#### **(vi) Non-publicly funded provision**

5.39 Non-publicly funded provision refers to a range of services delivered through the voluntary and community sector (VCS), business advice and brokerage, the workplace and fee-based provision. It will also include private training providers.

5.40 Although these services are distinguished by the sources from which they generate their income – i.e. fees, voluntary and private sources as well as government - it is important to stress that they overlap significantly with publicly funded IAG provision. For example, voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) account for nearly one-third of providers that make up local *nextstep* networks and they receive client referrals from public sector agencies. Elsewhere, some providers that

are predominantly publicly funded, notably **nextstep** services and higher education services, have developed fee-based strands directed at specific groups of employers and individuals.

- 5.41 Again, quantifying the resources committed specifically to IAG activities, or the numbers of clients using those serviced provided through non-publicly funded routes is difficult. Many organisations operate independently (although private training providers do have an umbrella body, the Association of Learning Providers, which speaks on their behalf); there are no central sources that gather data; funding streams are diverse and dispersed; and IAG elements are often embedded within programmes and projects following a wider remit so may not be easy to discern or measure.
- 5.42 For instance, much fee-based provision is delivered by commercial companies operating in the private and outside any regulatory framework. In the VCS, IAG work has most often attracted funding when it has been included as a secondary aim in wider ranging advice and support interventions. Similarly, when IAG is delivered as part of a business advice service this will usually form only a small part of a broader pack of support.
- 5.43 The chief characteristic of this category of provision, and its main strengths, is the sheer range and diversity of user needs that it is able to address. It is flexible and adaptable and has considerable potential to develop carefully tailored and targeted services through a large number of providers.
- 5.44 VCOs have particular strengths in working with disadvantaged groups and individuals for whom mainstream provision is, in many cases, inaccessible; fee-based providers and business advice services can offer a range of specialist provision directed principally at highly qualified individuals including senior managers; Union Learning Representatives can help address the IAG needs of union members in the workplace. It is perhaps indicative of the often highly specialised nature of some of this provision that, within quite different contexts, much use is made of peer

support to mediate between individuals and sources of IAG. Learning brokerage in business, community activists and learning champions/ambassadors in the VCS, and ULRs in the workplace all provide evidence of this trend.

- 5.45 There is, however, a serious issue about 'regulation' and 'quality' across the whole of the non-publicly funded sector. Recent findings from some of the **nextstep** ALL inspections, for example, indicate a weakness in the IAG provision delivered by some of the sub-contracted bodies. The very strengths that these agencies bring to the range of provision – their capacity to engage with a range of groups; flexible approaches; user constituencies who may not approach other services - are also a potential weakness. They are not specialists, and their interests in becoming even 'para-professionals' within the IAG context is probably as much linked to their capacity to generate income for their own agency as it is an interest in developing their own professional skills in this area.

**(vii) Private sector providers**

- 5.46 A recent analysis of Yellow Pages by the Centre for Guidance Studies<sup>58</sup> in their report for the DfES on 'A Market in Career? Evidence and issues' estimates that there are around 1,400 organisations offering careers advice nationally and of these around 550 are private sector organisations. Some of these have more than one listing, especially the larger companies, which may have a number of offices throughout the UK.
- 5.47 Some of these companies provide services solely to companies, others only to individuals and some offer both. In addition, there is an increasing number of life coaching type services, which may claim to include an element of career coaching. Some are sole practitioner consultancies; others management consultancies or working through private colleges. The UK International Coach Federation has about 650 members and at the top end of the executive coaching market services are offered by

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<sup>58</sup> Watts, A.G., Hughes, D. & Wood, M. (2005). [A Market in career? Evidence and Issues](#). CeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. .

members of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC).

5.48 There is a wide range of provision available through private sector agencies, some specialising, others working more generally. Examples of the types of services they might provide are given below:

- Personal careers consultation/career counselling
- Careers coaching
- Business outplacement services
- How to get interviews and be successful
- CV services
- Psychometric testing
- Personality questionnaires
- Workshops in career rethinking and job search skills;
- Career development at work;
- Interview skills
- Networking and jobsearch skills.

5.49 A significant amount of the in-house career counselling undertaken in the workplace is undertaken by these private sector providers.

5.50 There are also increasing number of web-based agencies who offer similar services on line – in particular CV development and job matching. The CeGS research surveyed a sample of 20 of these and found that nearly half were free and the rest charged for some or all of their services. They offered a range of services including career guidance, psychometric assessment and preparation of CVs. All charged for their CV writing

services although some offered free web-based information on CV writing.

5.51 Again, data is not available on the total volume and value of fee-based provision, the sector generally is not regulated so the quality of services is not assured. That is not to say that staff may not hold qualifications or that the services on offer are not of a high standard. It is just that there is no way of measuring this.

### **(viii) IAG in the workplace**

#### Language and scope

5.52 As with the language associated with defining terms and services for IAG in general, there are similar issues when discussing the nature, role and outcomes expected of IAG in the workplace. The term workforce development has been defined as covering:

*'All activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate effectively in the workplace, thereby increasing their productivity and employability'<sup>59</sup>.*

5.53 IAG has a crucial role to play in workforce development and concerns both learning and work activities. It does this most effectively by ensuring that the right individuals undertake the right learning and development activities, with the right levels of support and so achieve the 'right' outcomes (although what constitutes 'right' will vary from individual to individual) - in terms of maximising their own productivity, employability and progression prospects.

5.54 The evaluation of the Employer Training Pilots<sup>60</sup> suggested in regard to planning learning and development provision in the workplace that this should be provided at key transitions, as follows:

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<sup>59</sup> PIU (2001) *In Demand: Adult Skills on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office.

<sup>60</sup> Hillage, J. Loukas, G. Newton, B. & Tamkin, P. (2005) *Platform for progression: Employer Training Pilots. Year 2 Evaluation report*, Sheffield, Department for Education and Skills.

- Getting in - in terms of understanding what the training is about, overcoming any concerns, ensuring the proposed course is appropriate, having current skills assessed/accredited and any barriers to learning properly identified.
- Getting on - in terms of support with the learning/development process, including maintaining pace and momentum through giving/receiving feedback on progress.
- Moving on - in terms of progression on achievement, including considering what further learning/development would be appropriate.

5.55 Evidence related to career interventions in the workplace was provided to the review in a paper by Bysshe and Hirsh<sup>61</sup>. The paper explores the role employers play in delivering IAG in the workplace. Recent market research by MORI<sup>62</sup> has shown that *one in three* respondents had received IAG via this channel, most of which related to the user's current job and one *quarter* of which related to a future job. The evaluation of the Employer Training Pilots<sup>63</sup> indicated that the majority of learners (71%) agreed strongly that employers should give internal career guidance. The most common approach is for career management support to be provided by line managers.

5.56 There are some concerns that in practice, support is skewed towards a relatively small group of senior or high potential employees<sup>64</sup>. In addition, workforce and career development practice is different in SMEs where there is generally less 'infrastructure' and fewer 'support' functions. As a consequence, smaller companies are typically very lean and career

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<sup>61</sup> Bysshe, S. and Hirsh, W. (2006) Career Interventions in the workplace. *Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop 3rd March 2006*. [online]. Briefing Papers Prepared by the Research Partners. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Working Group Paper. Available from: <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers/ICT%20and%20IAG.pdf> [Accessed 9 March 2007]

<sup>62</sup> MORI (2005) *Demand for, and perceptions of, information advice and guidance*. The Guidance Council: Leicester.

<sup>63</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Platform for Progression: Employer Training Pilots. Year 2 Evaluation Report*. Sheffield: DfES.

<sup>64</sup> Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2003) *Managing Employee Careers*. Survey Report: London.

ladders - where they exist - are short<sup>65</sup>. Finally, the least likely people to receive employer-delivered IAG are manual, older and ethnic minority employers<sup>66</sup>.

### Balancing the needs of employers and employees

5.57 The management of individual career development in the workplace effectively requires an understanding of how best to align individual, wider workforce and business development agendas in a company and to see the relationship between individual and organisational learning. A critical issue is reconciling individual and business needs in the delivery of workplace IAG.

5.58 The challenge is to be able to balance those needs in such a way as to provide a framework of provision, whether it be provided through external intermediaries or as part of a wider approach to the management and development of staff.

5.59 Employers need to consider how best to deliver career support to individuals in the context of their wider human resource development (HRD) strategies. These should include consideration of key issues such as the state of the psychological contract between employers and employees, the extent and nature of performance management and appraisal systems and selected methods of staff training and development (be those formal or mainly informal in nature).

5.60 Hirsh<sup>67</sup>, in a recent paper, takes an employer's perspective on the business case for 'guidance' in the workplace and argues that career development in the workplace has several different business benefits:

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<sup>65</sup> Westhead, P., and Storey, DJ., (1997) *Training Provision and the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses*. DfEE Research Report No 26.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Bysshe and Associates Ltd. (2006) *Developing IAG in the workplace: evaluation of IAG demonstration projects in the East of England*.

<sup>67</sup> Hirsh, W. & Jackson, C., (2004) *Managing Careers in Large Organisations*. London: The Work Foundation.

(i) **Growing skills** which cannot easily be hired on the external labour market. Such skills are usually grown by progressive work experiences, and often involve the acquisition of knowledge and skills quite specific to the employing organisation. This is as true of development potential call centre supervisors or section leads in a retail store as of senior management or highly specialised professionals. In public policy terms this links with the government's skills agenda, the desire to increase social and economic mobility, and the economic drive to a higher-value economy.

(ii) **Deploying skills** more effectively within the organisation. Open internal labour markets are now the norm and rely on employees who know which jobs to apply for. For the employee this offers career opportunity – for the employer, skill mobility. At times of cutbacks or re-organisations, career development is essential to make sure skills are not lost and then re-recruited. In public policy terms this links with policies of flexible labour markets and increasing national productivity, and also of keeping low levels of unemployment.

(iii) **Career development** is where the needs of the individual and the needs of the employer are most explicitly negotiated. Attending to career issues honestly and with care seems to engage employees and have the capacity to motivate them to perform better. It may also improve attraction and retention, although the evidence here is less strong. In public policy terms this links with the desire to see more participation of employees in the workplace and improved employee relations, as well as providing a different route to increased productivity.

5.61 Hirsh goes on to argue that workplace career support for employees in terms of information, advice, guidance and support for action is required to make the process of career development effective. Without this support many employees will not be proactive in developing their potential at work or in finding the jobs which suit them best.

5.62 Companies and organisations (irrespective of their size) that have not considered how best to meet the career support needs of their employees are very unlikely to be maximising the investment they have made in them, or to be releasing fully the potential of the individuals concerned.

#### What do employers want from IAG?

5.63 A paper was produced for the Review by Ann Mason of Skillset and John

Baker of the DTI<sup>68</sup>, in consultation with four Pathfinder Sector Skills councils (with input from the CBI, BCC, the Small Business Council and other employers) on 'What employers want from a universal IAG service for adults?'. The needs of employers were articulated as follows:

- A steady stream of qualified and/or experienced people, with many sectors struggling to achieve this. Generally, trying to attract the right people with the right skills was expressed as a problem – a situation that can only get worse given the current demographics.
- An IAG service that is client-focused and places the onus on the individual to research and approach employers that s/he may be interested in working for.
- Some recognition that employers need to collaborate so that individuals can access accurate, up-to-date, information on their sectors providing a national overview with as much regional breakdown as practicable, to include:
  - qualitative intelligence on sectors;
  - labour trends within individual sectors;
  - career routes into and within specific sectors together with information on related qualifications;
  - information tailored for specific groups within the labour market;
  - the management of expectations on the rates of return from particular careers and the dispelling of perceptions about some industries so that individuals can make informed choices;
  - clear signposting within the system to sources of sector-specific information.

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<sup>68</sup> Mason, A. and Baker, J. (2006) Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers, . Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

- Local chambers could have a role in achieving this given that they already conduct quarterly reports that feed into the Quarterly Economic Survey.

5.64 The paper also presented a summary of responses to questions put to employers for their views of the current delivery arrangements. These were:

- The IAG infrastructure has not been particularly helpful to employers in taking a proactive role in seeking to match their labour requirements with job seekers. There is currently no intermediary role between those visiting job centres and firms needing to fill vacancies. Currently IAG focuses on the needs of jobless individuals and not on the needs of the employer.
- There needs to be a seamless IAG service from school-leavers to adult. This is difficult to achieve with current government emphasis on the 14-19 age group. People need to access IAG services at different stages in their lives, due to changes in their circumstances.
- Support was voiced for the establishment of a single IAG service for employers and those above the age of 19, citing the benefits this would bring to SMEs.
- Specific comments were that the profile of **nextstep** was not high enough (and needs to be raised); **learnirect** service was not effective enough (at the level of careers linked to jobs advice and vacancies) and that Jobcentre Plus were offering businesses the wrong candidates for jobs (poor links between Jobcentre Plus staff and employers).

5.65 The paper also explores the potential role of employers in supporting the provision of sector-specific IAG. For example, Skillset operates a network of industry advisers that provide one-to-one advice and guidance for people wishing to enter or progress within its industries. Recruited from companies in the sector, they are also provided with presentation skills training that enables them to promote their respective industries within

schools, careers fairs and at other events. This type of activity is being developed by an increasing number of SSCs.

### Delivering IAG in the workplace

5.66 Research undertaken for the LSC<sup>69</sup> highlights the range of formalised career development/IAG and learning support that is currently (albeit variably) found in the workplace<sup>70</sup>, for example:

- formalised in-house career management and development programmes (which are a well-established feature in a restricted number of larger organisations);
- Union Learning Representatives ('front-line' learning advice and support for union members);
- learning/training provider support (e.g. provided by assessors/trainers who are supporting work-based learning - including Apprenticeships).
- IAG/guidance providers: this includes public (e.g. **nextstep**) as well as private sector provision (e.g. career/executive coaching).
- Outplacement/Progression: (e.g. support in redundancy situations is extensively available through outplacement; in the context of the Armed Services, extensive resettlement provision is available) and, more recently
- Train to Gain, with an emphasis on the assessment and upskilling of those below Level 3.

5.67 The recent NIACE<sup>71</sup> report recommends that all work-based learning providers should pay particular attention to quality of IAG delivery in the workplace by:

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<sup>69</sup> Learning and Skills Council, (2006) Developing an employer focussed IAG strategy'.

<sup>70</sup> There is very limited research on the actual extent, nature and effectiveness of much of this provision.

<sup>71</sup> NIACE Embedded Learning Reference [REF]

- assuring employees have access to the services of specialist IAG staff as necessary, through either the development of in-house expertise or referral;
- assuring that staff delivering IAG are able to access adequate and appropriate support from specialist IAG staff, either internally or externally;
- reviewing whether their staff handbook could be better used to support staff delivering embedded IAG;
- reviewing whether greater use could be made of ICT to deliver IAG in a workplace setting;
- ensuring that arrangements for progression to further opportunities are adequately and appropriately provided.

### Role of Union Learning Representatives

5.68 Within a working group paper on the role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in the workplace, it was noted that the Union Learning Fund (ULF) has developed almost 500 projects involving most unions, with the development of some 40 learning centres meaning that there are now nearly 12,000 trained ULRs who working with peers, mentors and colleagues helped over 67,000 workers back into learning last year<sup>72</sup>.

5.69 Although the paper notes a number of development issues arising from a project-based approach to learning in the workplace, it does note that “the ULR role is capable of impartiality as the ULR is not usually committed to one specific provider or group of providers and theoretically could provide members with a very broad range of learning opportunities.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hughes, S. and Haughton, L. (2006) Information advice and guidance: a mapping project to explore the relationship and role of ULRs within other work-based intermediaries. TUC Union Academy.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid page 19.

A sustained programme of development

5.70 In summarising the role of IAG in the workplace Bysshe and Hirsh (Ibid)note that there is a need for a sustained programme of activity to develop:

- A clearer understanding of work that is taking place in the field (including the need for inter-agency co-operation).
- The evidence-base (particularly in regard to building the business case for developing career interventions in the workplace).
- The competence and capability of practitioners (including recognising the over-lapping skills of different professional groups and the different contributions they can make in this area).
- The profile of career and wider human resource development (HRD) work and their inter-relationship in contributing to wider policy objectives.

5.71 Many adults that would probably not even consider making an independent approach for careers guidance can potentially be reached through the workplace.

## **6. Delivery Methods**

### **(i) Overview**

6.1 The Evidence from the research and consultative activities indicated that there are a range of approaches and interventions which are effective in engaging service users. These include:

- face-to-face provision (whether individually or in group settings)
- phone and email support;
- drop-in, group or workshop arrangements;
- self-help techniques, increasingly as part of web-based services;
- IAG open-access resource units, which users can approach on a self-service basis, with minimal help;
- targeted and personalised services embedded in the workplace, in learning and across other group guidance activities;
- harnessing the expertise of community members, sometimes on a voluntary basis, to deliver some aspects of IAG services; and
- using support staff to work alongside more highly qualified staff in delivering services: for example, providing help with information searches; managing relationships with community members and providing ongoing support where needed.

6.2 While the National Policy Framework and Action Plan outlines the type of provision that should be made available, there is no clearly defined and agreed set of standards or outcomes which differing methods of delivery can be assessed against. In a study undertaken in 2005

Hillage<sup>74</sup> et al highlighted the absence of a common set of agreed performance indicators and/or standards for assessing and measuring the effectiveness of different approaches on outcomes – i.e. different providers largely use their own customised systems.

6.1 The different ways in which adult guidance is delivered are well known, as is the fact that adults will approach services through a variety of routes, locations and arrangements and have personal preferences as to whether they initially want to access services, face-to-face, by phone, email or online. No detailed analysis exists on how and why users of services make specific choices. The **learnirect** advice line (both in its work during the last few years, and through the guidance trial) has been very successful in drawing in large numbers of adults to its service. While there is no doubt the telephone is a major strand of any delivery system, what is unknown is whether those individuals who have responded have done so because they made a specific choice for telephone advice, or whether it is the only service that has had sufficient profile to reach their attention. Whatever the position, it is clear that, that visibility, ease of access and cost are critical factors. Also, evidence from the Review indicates that the use of workshop and group activities; the development of a range of advocacy support activities and the need to promote, equally, a range of different ‘delivery channels’ will need to be important features in the design of any future service.

6.2 It is also useful to look in more detail at some of the new delivery methods being tried (or explored). A brief summary of some of these is provided below, along with an analysis of the role of technology in future provision. There are fuller papers on all of these available as part of the Review documentation.

**(ii) *learnirect* advice telephone guidance trial**

6.3 The 2005 Skills White Paper established a trial extension of the Ufl/**learnirect** telephone advice service to provide in depth personal

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<sup>74</sup> Hillage, J. Loukas, G. Newton, B. & Tamkin, P. (2005) *Platform for progression: Employer Training*

guidance. The service was to target an audience of callers looking to develop their careers or progress to a Level 3 qualification or beyond or who were seeking to return to work. An evaluation of the trial<sup>75</sup> which initially ran from January to July 2006 generates a number of conclusions that are relevant for the Review:

- Over 85,000 adults used the service in the first 12 months. 15,000 more than expected.
- It has successfully generated demand for careers guidance among people who haven't had any help recently - 75% of users haven't used careers guidance since leaving school; and it reached its intended target groups - 55% women; 60% either unemployed or not in work; and 36% qualified to Level 2 but without a Level 3 qualification. There was under-representation of the over 50's (possibly due to their lack of familiarity or ease with communication technologies).
- Telephone was the preferred medium via which to receive guidance for many users who valued the convenience and accessibility of the service, although this is unsurprising given the nature of the television advertising campaign.
- 86% of users rated the quality of advice as good and expert assessment showed that it was often as good as the best face-to-face guidance.
- Even in the short time since the start of the service the outcomes achieved by users were impressive. 20% said they had gained employment since their first call and 30% had already started learning or training courses.
- 52 per cent of callers indicated that the telephone guidance service had been a significant or quite a big influence in helping them to

make decisions about their career.

- But the evaluation also suggested some improvements. For example, while people with career plans achieved more positive outcomes, some customers were a little reluctant to develop them. So more needed to be done to overcome that.

6.4 The trial demonstrates that guidance can be delivered over the phone in an effective and user-friendly way. Telephone guidance will not meet universal needs, however, and should be seen as a significant service offer to be combined with a range of other delivery channels and mechanisms.

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<sup>75</sup> Page, R., Newton, B., Hawthorne, R., Hunt, W. & Hillage, J. (2007). *An Evaluation of UFI/Learndirect Telephone Guidance Trial*. DfES Research Report no. 833. London: Department for Education and Skills

**(iii) SkillsFile/Skills Passport/Skills coaching**

- 6.4 Skills Coaching aims to offer support to individuals to help them find the most effective and efficient route to improved employability. Skills Coaching is intended for adults of working age (20 years and over with no upper age limit) for whom lack of skills is the main barrier to sustained employment.
- 6.5 Two key elements of the programme are the SkillsFile and the Skills Passport which are undertaken as mediated activities with a trained Skills Coach. The purpose of the SkillsFile is to record existing skills and help individuals to identify where they may want to further develop skills or obtain employment in the future. The Skills Passport provides the opportunity to summarise individual skills and achievements to show to a prospective employer. The Skills Passport will benefit the employer because it not only tells them what qualifications and competences an individual has but also what other skills they are working towards. An employer can also use the Skills Passport as a development tool.
- 6.6 The paper based passport is compiled using the information gathered in the Skillsfile. The Passport is a way of showing all the skills a person has and includes the following:
- A brief introduction to employers
  - Space for CV
  - Skills profile (taken from the Skillsfile) and evidence (e.g. certificates, qualifications and assessments)
  - A skills development plan (adapted from the Skillsfile)
  - Space for any other appropriate information
- 6.7 The target audience is adults of working age (20 years and over with no upper age limit) with specific focus on two key groups:

- Inactive benefit recipients for whom lack of skills is the main barrier to employment and who intend to return to the labour market in the mid to longer term but want to do something in the short term to improve their job prospects, and
- JSA recipients for whom lack of skills is the main barrier to employment, including those moving into employment with a company or organisations participating in Train to Gain.

6.8 Additional planned target groups are adults aged 50+, black minority and ethnic groups and low skills women . It is not expected that these groups will be formally signing on at jobcentres, so community outreach activities by Skills Coaching providers is expected.

6.9 It is anticipated that skills coaching support will cease once the individual secures employment, although referral to the *learnirect* advice service may be appropriate as a source of further support.

#### **(iv) The role of ICT in delivering IAG**

6.10 Summarising the evidence on the current and potential use of ICT in the delivery of guidance services Watts and Offer<sup>76</sup> presented a paper to the Review that stressed the different uses of ICT as follows:

- As a medium for the interaction between a guidance worker and a client and
- As a resource in the decision-making process.

6.11 Email, chat, newsgroups, SMS, telephone and videoconferencing can all be used as *media* for technically mediated guidance-worker/client interactions, supplementing or replacing face-to-face interactions. Websites and software, on the other hand, are *resources* which guidance workers may use in their interactions with clients, or to which

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<sup>76</sup> Watts, A. G. and Offer, M. (2006) The Current and Potential Role of ICT in Delivering Information, Advice and Guidance IAG Review: Summary of Thematic Literature Review for the Consultative Workshop 3rd March 2006. [online]. Briefing Papers Prepared by the Research Partners. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. Working Group Paper. Available from: <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers/ICT%20and%20IAG.pdf> [Accessed 9 March 2007]

they may refer clients, or which may be used quite independently of a guidance worker.

- 6.12 There is some evidence that users prefer different media for different IAG tasks. For example, Behrens & Altman<sup>77</sup> in a survey of US students found that 80% would rather gain information from a computer than from a book, 85% would rather use a computer program to help them develop a résumé, and 70% thought computers would help them find jobs much faster than would traditional job-search methods. But when a job search did not work out, 75% would rather discuss that frustration in a face-to-face counselling session than via a video hook-up, and 90% would rather get personal feedback from a career counsellor than from a computer when practising interview techniques.
- 6.13 Meanwhile, in terms of resources there is growing evidence that users look significantly to the Internet for information.<sup>78</sup> It is also clear that the Internet is changing the ways in which employer-employee matches are made, as the labour market becomes increasingly 'wired'.<sup>79</sup> The impact of the internet as a resource but also as a communication media will change further as the hitherto separate 'analogue streams' of the computer, the television and the telephone are increasingly merging into an integrated 'digital river'.<sup>80</sup> Individuals are now able to access the Internet not only through their personal computers but also through their televisions and mobile phones. Greatly enhanced bandwidth is enhancing its speed and its capacity for transmitting video and audio as well as text. Alongside this, the likely move towards more ready domestic access to videophones or interactive digital television will enhance the range and flexibility of the services that can be offered.
- 6.14 Using the English experience, in 2000 roughly equal numbers of people rang the **learnirect** helpline and accessed the **learnirect** website,

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<sup>77</sup> Behrens, T. & Altman, B. (1998) Technology: impact on and implications for college career centers. *Journal of Career Planning and Employment*, 58(2), 19-24.

<sup>78</sup> Also, in a separate MORI survey of final-year undergraduates, 83% of those actively looking for careers information used the Internet to do so. Market and Opinion Research International (2001) *Careers Information and Career Planning: a Survey of Degree Finalists*, Study conducted for the Higher Education Careers Services Unit. London: MORI.

<sup>79</sup> Autor, D.H. (2001) Wiring the labor market. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15(1), 25-40.

<sup>80</sup> Cunningham, P. & Fröschl, F. (1999) *Electronic Business Revolution*. Berlin: Springer.

today ten times as many people access the web site as ring. Furthermore, nearly one third of those calling have previously visited the website. In terms of the types of people preferring each method, Ufi profiled **learnirect** advice callers in 2006 who also used the website compared to those who called the helpline but did not use the website and found the following;

- The main drivers are working status and qualification level. Website users are much more likely to be full time workers (38% are full time workers) compared to callers who have not used the website (29% are full time workers).
- Enquirers who are retired, home bound or home based are much less likely to have used the Internet - indicating that enquirers use their work online access
- 86% of web enquirers have qualifications, compared to just 75% of callers who have not enquired over the web
- There are slight differences by age - internet users are marginally younger (under 34) but the differences between age of user are not significant
- There is very little difference by ethnicity or gender

6.15 Website developments in both Scotland and Wales (for Careers Scotland and Careers Wales respectively) and the North West Regional Development Agency have been significant and are good models that have facilitated access for the individual users as well as other partners and providers. Careers Wales is particularly interesting in that it does not mention the terms Information, Advice, Guidance or even Careers, preferring to use a range of specific headings:

- Looking for a job
- Facing redundancy

- Returning to work
- Moving to a new area
- Returning to learning
- Thinking about training
- Retirement
- Volunteering
- Developing in your current job
- Promotion
- Changing direction
- Getting to know yourself
- Find out what's available
- Planning for action

6.16 Careers Northwest is a resource for all young people, adults and advisers, highlighting and promoting career opportunities in the Northwest. The website “[www.careersnorthwest.com](http://www.careersnorthwest.com)” brings together information that supports individuals and advisers in their efforts to:

- Find out about growth industries and major project information on where job opportunities may arise
- Match skills to appropriate careers through “fun” skills matching tools, and
- Search through over a 1,000 job profiles

6.17 Careers Northwest has also produced a series of 26 sector fact sheets,

major project fact sheets and a CD-Rom specifically for advisers containing the latest labour market information on employment, business data and forecasts for future employment.

- 6.18 Support for practitioners can also be found on the National Guidance Research Forum website; [www.guidance-research.org](http://www.guidance-research.org) which has brought together sources of LMI from across a range of 30 sectors and broad occupational groups that can be interrogated by sector, individual characteristic and by region. A recently developed self-directed learning module to support individuals' knowledge, understanding and use of LMI can also be found on the website.
- 6.19 The government's own directgov website is planned as the single portal to public services and, as such, will be the obvious choice within which to locate any web-based activities developed for a future service. The challenge for policy is to assess how ICT can be used as both a media and a resource to offer a blended approach to effective service delivery attending to clients varied needs and preferred learning styles.

## **7. Quality and Competence**

### **(i) Quality assurance arrangements**

- 7.1 It was agreed at the outset of the Review that while Quality arrangements would be an essential aspect of the Review, a detailed analysis of the existing quality arrangements would be undertaken as a second stage activity, when it was clearer what the findings were and what a future service might look like. The issue came up consistently throughout the Review, however, and was the subject of a small group session at one of the expert practitioner workshops. A summary of the points raised and issues causing concern is provided below.
- 7.2 The underpinning quality assurance framework and systems must reflect the purpose and objectives of the service and the organisations that deliver them. Similarly the competences required by professionals will need to underpin the services that are offered and reflect both the mode of delivery and its context.
- 7.3 Quality should be considered in a number of ways:
- the quality assurance process must reflect the service that is offered;
  - it must be underpinned by a set of sector standards;
  - it must focus on outcomes achieved by service users;
  - the process must be clear with greater coherence between different but overlapping quality arrangements; and
  - robust and consistent quality arrangements will drive up demand.
- 7.4 There are a number of quality assurance arrangements that either directly or indirectly involve (some level of) adult guidance activities, i.e.

- the **matrix** Standard
- Common Inspection Framework administered by the Adult Learning Inspectorate
- Investors in People
- LSC performance requirements for contractors
- Targets for externally funded projects

7.5 At the time of the Review the first round of inspections of the core funded guidance provision was being undertaken by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, so there was insufficient data to make any detailed assessment of the position. Concerns were being expressed by practitioners, however, which are related later in this report about the increasingly complexity of arrangements of quality arrangements, especially with the differing demands being made by matrix and the CIF.

7.6 **matrix** is a national standard that has been specifically designed for organisations that deliver IAG 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 become matrix accredited, organisations are assessed independently against the eight elements of the standard. The **matrix** website<sup>81</sup> publishes the number of accredited organisations (1660 in Feb 2007), and the number of accredited sites (3330 in Feb 2007).

7.6 There were concerns about the high levels of investment of time and resources required by some organisations that are obliged to meet the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework and **matrix** accreditation. While the view was that it is possible to use evidence generated for one to support the other, a more coherent system would produce enhanced benefit for both organisations and practitioners. There would be scope to deliver a more coherent framework through

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<sup>81</sup> [www.matrixstandard.com](http://www.matrixstandard.com)

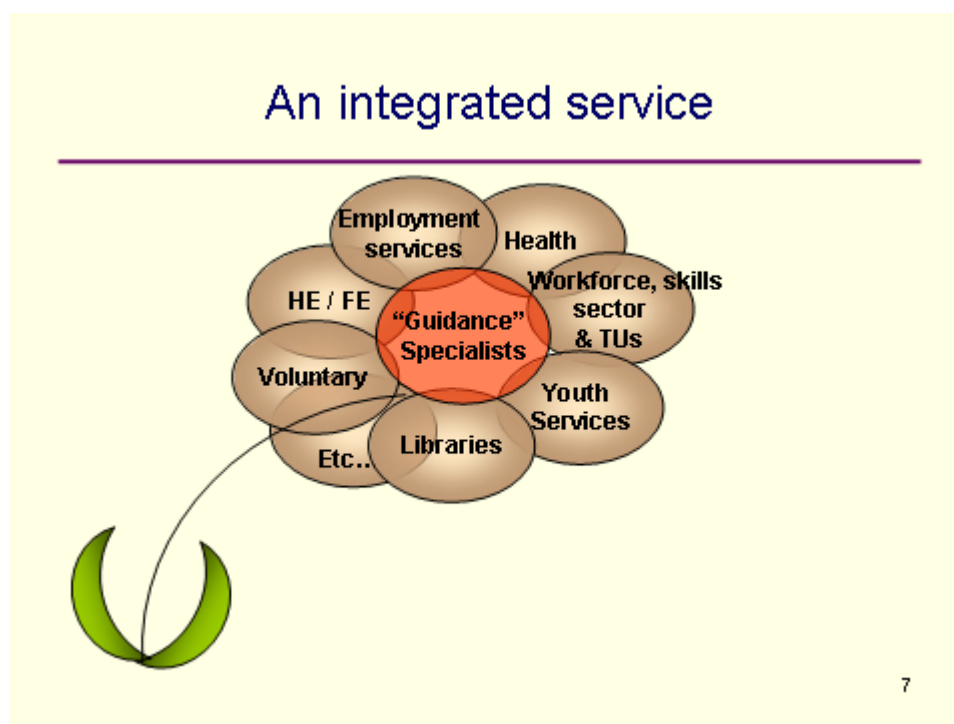
- simultaneous assessment (e.g. for liP and **matrix**)
- dual-branded inspectors (e.g. ALI inspectors that can award **matrix**)

7.7 Participants at the workshop raised a number of issues related to the delivery of quality services generally:

- As the development and achievement of quality is a continuous process, a quality mark that is graded not binary may encourage wider take up and would also recognise ongoing efforts and achievements.
- The quality brand should have a recognised logo, which should also be considered as the ‘branded logo’ for the service as a whole. This could be the **matrix** brand (although despite efforts to invest the brand with a salience for the public it is not widely recognised). Alternatively, a new brand could be created – a ‘thumbs-up’ logo was suggested.
- The nature of the service must be clearly articulated by the sector and underpinned by sector standards and learning outcomes. This is essential in order to improve clarity and consistency of the offer across the sector but, even more importantly, to provide transparency of the offer, and increased familiarity and relevance, to individual users – or potential users – of services.
- Informed customers are critical to the achievement of a quality service. An imperative is to devise ways to communicate what the service is and what it offers individuals and develop a brand identity that reflects this. The group briefly discussed ‘life-nav’ (as opposed to sat-nat) as an example - the service being about giving people a landscape and showing them to way to navigate it.
- Partners working within a range of other contexts (health, workforce, learning institutions, voluntary and community

sectors etc.) are a further critical element of a quality assured service, whether delivering IAG services themselves or in a signposting and referral role. With the right kind of support, and understanding of the service offer, these partners can be very effective at identifying individuals who need IAG services even if potential users themselves might not be aware of it. They can be very effective signposters to the service offer, thus contributing to an integrated model of quality assured provision.

- 7.8 The flower concept represents the relationships between a range of different providers as part of an integrated service, the basis for the delivery of which should be a recognition that there is a core profession of guidance specialists who have relevant qualifications and who are subject to a set of professional standards.



**(ii) Practitioner competency**

- 7.9 As with Quality, no detailed work was undertaken on practitioner competence as part of the Review, although it was considered in one of the expert practitioner workshop groups and was the subject of a report commissioned by the LSC through NIACE.

7.10 Findings and feedback generally indicates that the fragmented nature of adult IAG services in England is reflected in the approaches that are currently taken to qualifications, training and CPD of the adult IAG workforce.

7.11 At a practitioner workshop held in Stratford, May 2006<sup>82</sup> a discussion around practitioner competency identified three clear imperatives for action. These were:

- to revisit (with a view to redesigning and enhancing) the qualifications framework that provides the foundation for the trained practitioner;
- to have a clear career pathway for those working in partner services, and
- to ensure the systematic take up of continuous professional development.

7.12 A review of the current qualifications framework (and underpinning standards) needs to:

- revisit existing roles (including those of key signposters in a range of different settings); identify new roles and develop a qualifications framework accordingly;
- review the fact that there is no 'licence to practise';
- address the fact that no single qualification route exists for staff delivering IAG to adults, and the ones that are used are very different in style and approach with subsequent impact on practitioner competency and knowledge;
- take account of the changed wider environment in which the sector now operates;

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<sup>82</sup> Expert practitioner Workshop of IAG Services, Stratford-upon-Avon (2006) , Summary Report.  
[www.iagreview.org.uk/papers](http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers)

- take account of new ways of working – for example: guidance via email and synchronous versus asynchronous discussions.
- recognise the emphasis on analytical rather than process skills - the NVQ portfolio approach does not necessarily develop analytical skills;
- enhance theoretical underpinning to practice – obtain a better mix of academic and practical competency;
- formalise the ‘sole trader’ role through appropriate accreditation
- explore the need to accredit separate modules or units to cover specialist activities such as telephone advice; using the web to support users; using diagnostics; analysing and interpreting labour market information
- address the needs of staff working with specific client groups who have complex IAG needs, and are more likely to be accessing IAG services in larger numbers due to policy initiatives such as Welfare to Work and New Deal; others may include ex-offenders, adults with disabilities and learning difficulties; people with mental health difficulties; refugees and asylum seekers and migrant workers<sup>83</sup>.

7.13 On the issue of continuing professional development, specific concerns were expressed around the following:

- there are a number of professional associations/practitioner organisations with differing terms of membership;
- there is increasingly a lack of clarity as to what the minimum requirement is for a ‘professional guidance practitioner’;
- there is no single register of professionals

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<sup>83</sup> Work with groups of users who have complex needs often requires extensive additional knowledge and skill requirements. For example, work with refugees and asylum seekers will require a knowledge of related legislation; migration patterns and equivalence of qualifications

- there is no requirement of a licence to practice
- there is no standard requirement for professionals to undertake CPD and, as a consequence, no systematic approach to identification and response to workforce needs.

7.14 The other significant issue that was raised was the way that quality standards such as **matrix** and liP promote accreditation and CPD. The LSC's 2005 strategy for a co-ordinated and quality controlled CPD programme across its IAG provision noted that:

*all organisations in receipt of LSC programme funds to deliver I and A services are contractually required to quality assure their services by achieving **matrix** accreditation (LSC, 2005)*

7.15 Element 6 of the **matrix** Standard requires that 'Staff competence and the support that they are given are sufficient to deliver the service', and includes a requirement to undertake appropriate CPD to ensure that "The competence of staff is maintained and developed to meet service demands'. However, the **matrix** Standard does not define what competencies are required.

7.16 A final, cross cutting theme raised was the need for a sectoral anchor. The guidance profession needs a strong national presence with guardianship offered by a national organisation – such as a Sector Skills Council. This anchor organisation would own and lead the development of national standards and codes of professional practice, and would build the profile of a guidance sector that would draw in a range of practitioners, including sole traders, life coaches and private and voluntary groups.

#### Developing adviser roles

7.17 Discussions at the January 2007 expert practitioner workshop recommended further work be undertaken on a number of new 'roles' for the IAG sector, with particular regard to the need to consider a standardised approach to skills diagnostics and future service delivery

in the future. The roles proposed were:

- 'Skilled' advisers
- 'Informed' advisers
- Sector/occupational mentors (or sector/occupational champions; sector/vocational advisers; sector/vocational specialists) possibly to be identified through BLINKs, Chambers, SSCs, FE and employers
- Personal voluntary mentors/advocates

These were suggestions only. More work needs to be undertaken in this area.

7.18 A summary of additional anecdotal concerns captured on this topic during the Review is provided below:

- Standards haven't been completely revised for nearly 10 years. While the current standards (that underpin the NVQ) are been reviewed recently they still do not reflect the realities of the work that is now being undertaken, and will almost certainly fall short when the skills agenda becomes mainstreamed through the guidance process.
- The ways in which contracts are structured, and the need to meet targets sometimes prevents staff from being released to attend training and CPD.
- Where practitioners are working with both young people and adults, priority is likely to be given to training for work with young people, particularly where this relates to legislation and meeting targets, and
- Apart from occasional **nextstep** and ICG conferences, access to regular CPD and updating is minimal and does not always address operational practice.

- Concern was expressed about the quality of provision delivered by **nextstep** sub-contractors which are often not IAG specialists, where staff turnover may be high and the requirement is only that staff are 'working towards a qualification'. Maintaining quality control over what is often a large number of sub-contractors who may have actually achieved the **matrix** Standard but still be falling short of the expected standard is problematic and needs addressing.

## 8. Labour Market and Course Information

### (i) Definitions

8.1 Labour market information (LMI) is variously defined<sup>84</sup> as:

- ‘data about the workplace, including employment rates and salary information’;
- ‘any information about the structure and working of a labour market and any factors likely to influence the structure and working of that market, including jobs available, people available to do those jobs, the mechanisms that match the two, changes in the external and internal business environments’;
- ‘essentially data, statistics and research about the workplace including things like unemployment rates, salary, demand for, and supply of, labour’.

8.2 The Learning and Skills Council<sup>85</sup> note the distinction between labour market information and labour market intelligence. The former relates to information about supply and demand and covers all those aspects outlined above. While labour market information can be assimilated as part of a skilled technical process, labour market intelligence requires skilled interpretation of data to assess and comment on the reliability, quality and appropriateness of the available data.

### (ii) Current provision

8.3 Bimrose’s<sup>86</sup> paper for the Review states the importance that is ascribed

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<sup>84</sup> Offer, M. (2003). *Labour Market Information on Careers Service Web Sites in Higher Education*. Cambridge: NICEC.

<sup>85</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2006) “Developing an employer focussed IAG strategy, reported in Graver, A. Harrison, J. and Letman, C. (2006) Sector Skills Council Information Advice and Guidance Project: Bringing industry and IAG services together, Final Evaluation Report, DfES.

<sup>86</sup> Bimrose, J. Labour Market and Course Information: A position paper for Skillset, Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers, Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk/papers](http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers)

to LMI within several key policy agendas. Foster's<sup>87</sup> review of FE provision notes that learners report how "*information, advice and guidance is out of date, fragmented and ill-informed*". Regarding information provided to **learnirect** he states that "*as a condition of receiving public funding, providers should also be under an obligation to keep the information for these external signposting services current and helpful to potential learners*". Relating the issue to the skills agenda, Leitch<sup>88</sup> characterized the problem as an "information failure".

8.4 However, shortcomings and gaps in current LMI provision have been documented for example, a scoping exercise by ASW Consulting Services (2004) found that there was a scarcity of LMI in a format that was 'digestible' (Appendix 5, p.37) and identified the need for improved LMI<sup>89</sup>.

8.5 The OECD<sup>90</sup> report also flags up a number of concerns about prevailing LMI systems. The concern is that in several countries existing labour market information does not capture changes within occupations, is slow in capturing and describing new occupations, and recommends a 'competency-based approach'.

8.6 Bimrose<sup>91</sup> has identified a number of more specific limitations to currently available LMI:-

- LMI that is available on-line across varied websites is reasonably comprehensive but can be difficult to find.
- There is currently no common formatting or presentation style.
- Whilst the type of occupational information examined from

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<sup>87</sup> Foster, A. (2005). *Realising the Potential: A Review of the Future Role of Further Education Colleges*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>88</sup> Leitch, S. (2005) *Skills in the UK: the Long Term Challenge*. London: HM Treasury. P.5.

<sup>89</sup> ASW Consulting Services (2004). *Scoping the National Resource Services, Report* [Online] Available From: [http://www.learnirect-advice.co.uk/nrs/existing/research\\_papers/scoping\\_nrs2004.pdf](http://www.learnirect-advice.co.uk/nrs/existing/research_papers/scoping_nrs2004.pdf) [Accessed 9 March 2007]

<sup>90</sup> OECD *Bridging the Gap* (INSERT REF: FULL REPORT NOT THE COUNTRY ONE)

<sup>91</sup> Bimrose, J. Barnes, S.A. Green, A. Orton, M. Davies, R. (2005). *Enhancement of the National Resource Service: Local Labour Market Information*. Coventry: Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick

selected sources was found to be similar, the detail and type of information is varied. Additionally, the on-line presentation of the information differs and the availability of occupational information as downloadable and printable pdf documents is limited.

- Many IAG Partnerships do not directly collect vacancy information, but rely more on available local information and knowledge. Collation of a comprehensive list of sources (both online and in hard copy) is therefore indicated.
- Local information routinely gleaned by practitioners in the course of their work would represent a valuable source of intelligence. However, operational difficulties that need to be addressed before local information could be linked to a national database include IT compatibility and resources.
- Local labour market information (LLMI) is consistently identified by practitioners as centrally important to effective guidance practice. However, whilst existing provision offers rich sources of LLMI for this purpose, it has considerable shortcomings. In particular, there are gaps regarding information at regional and (more particularly) at sub-regional level. Provision of these data would create a far more comprehensive LMI coverage to support further the work of practitioners. However, it would not be feasible to include all existing local labour market information (LLMI) sources in one on-line LLMI facility because of their dynamism, number and range.

8.7 The digital divide is an important consideration in making LMI directly available to clients. A recent study found that the expansion of LMI services delivered through ICT risks leaving behind the most disadvantaged in society.<sup>92</sup> Practitioner-mediated provision of LMI would reduce the risk of penalising those with least access to information technology.

8.8 A training need for practitioners is indicated by inconsistent approaches to

the use of LMI by advisers, reluctance of some advisers to see LMI as part of their remit; and uncertainty in how to relate LMI to an individual client<sup>93</sup>.

### (iii) Client and Practitioner LMI needs

8.7 Bimrose notes that there is considerable overlap between the types of LMI identified by practitioners for guidance and that required by clients. For LMI to be of value to clients, it is argued that it needs to focus on: the demand for labour, progression routes; geographical availability; trends; transferability of skills and qualifications; and recruitment and selection methods.<sup>94</sup> Practitioners have identified, via the NGRF website, consensus regarding what they feel to be essential, useful and desirable elements of LMI:

LMI identified by practitioners as **essential** included:

- local information and trends;
- equal opportunities issues;
- regional data and trends;
- self-employment trends;
- detailed occupational information (including career paths, entry point and salaries);
- qualification level of the sector's workforce;
- current developments in education and training;
- types of employers in the sector (such as number of SMEs);
- vacancies information; and
- destination of graduates with sector specific degrees.

LMI judged **useful** by practitioners:

- up-to-date local data (vacancies, training opportunities, salary levels);

<sup>92</sup> Lindsay, C. (2005). Employability, Services for Unemployed Job Seekers and the Digital Divide, in *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 325-339.

<sup>93</sup> Bimrose, J. & Orton, M. (2005) *Labour Market Information (LMI) for Effective Guidance within Skillset*, Warwick: Warwick Institute for Employment Research

<sup>94</sup> Offer, M. (2000) The Discourse of the Labour Market, in B. Gothard, P. Mignot, M. Offer & M. Ruff (eds) *Careers Guidance in Context*, London: Sage, pp. 78-79.

- trends related to skills, organisational change and labour market restructuring;
- client-centred, accessible materials;
- specific, sector-based examples (e.g. particular career paths);
- information that can be printed out and given to clients;
- information on skill mis-matches;
- information on how skills transfer between contexts; and
- information available via the internet.

LMI practitioners would **most like** to have:

- LMI specifically targeted at adults;
- information about 'new' job titles, skill levels, career paths<sup>95</sup>;
- information that helps clients think about the future and jobs available (such as applicant/entrant ratios and information about the types of employers offering particular types of employment);
- information with an equal opportunities dimension;
- information on salary levels (continually up-dated) for different occupations;
- fact sheets on particular areas;
- samples of job descriptions at different entry points; and
- simple summaries of government employment initiatives.

#### **(iv) Infrastructure for future delivery of LMI?**

8.8 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) should be well positioned to collect and disseminate high quality, current and comprehensive sector-based LMI for guidance. The £2.4 million Sector Skills Council Information Advice and Guidance Project sought to enhance the capacity of SSCs in delivering sector-specific IAG services including LMI for guidance

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<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that there is always (and will be) a delay in standard statistical sources attending to 'new' developments, such as job titles.

services. The evaluation<sup>96</sup> of this project found that capacity of SSCs to conceptualise, model requirements, introduce processes to fulfil these requirements and deliver quality LMI has been enhanced, although Although they do query the sustainability of this improved capacity post-Project..

- 8.9 The evaluation also notes substantial improvements in the awareness and use of SSC LMI among practitioners. Initially the level of awareness and understanding of SSCs and their IAG role among IAG practitioners was low. This has been improved, particularly via workshops which have been well received by practitioners. The workshops have also significantly altered some advisers' views and attitudes towards specific sectors.
- 8.10 Finally, the evaluation notes that *"The project has confirmed that the principal role of SSCs should be to produce timely sector LMI and make this accessible to a range of IAG practitioners"* and that *"they see their role as providing an expert service in relation to sector intelligence and its interpretation for use by practitioners"*. The extent to which these conclusions could be extrapolated across the full range of SSCs is questionable as they have been established relatively recently and are at different stages of development. Consequently, some remain more advanced than others in operating systems of data collection from their sectors of relevance to guidance.
- 8.11 There are also other players in the field at a local and regional level. Traditionally local planning authorities have undertaken labour market research; the LSC, RDAs and local Chamber of Commerce have all been involved and, more recently the Regional Skills Partnerships have an interest.

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<sup>96</sup> Graver, A. Harrison, J. and Letman, C. (2006). *Sector Skills Council Information Advice and Guidance Project: Brining Industry and IAG Services Together. Final Evaluation Report*. York: Impact Research Limited.

**9 The Regional Perspective** NIACE provided a paper entitled 'IAG Review and the English regions: some implications'. The paper focuses on how IAG featured in each of the English Region's Regional Skills Action Plans<sup>97</sup>. Initially formed out of the 2003 Skills Strategy White Paper: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills; Regional Skills Partnerships bring together key strategic agencies at a regional level on both the supply and demand sides for skills. Whilst partnerships have some common features (some prescribed by government), their membership, maturity and emphases vary. Each RSP has the task of prioritising spending to reflect regional priorities, which are articulated in a Regional Skills Action Plan.

9.2 NIACE analysis of these Plans reveals that:-

- “there is a general lack of strategic focus on IAG for adults in regional planning” (p.11)
- “generally IAG is referred to in relation to the development of business support and brokerage... and to upskilling and engaging young people” (p.8)
- “there is little linking of IAG with useful analyses of skills gaps and skills needs (p.11)
- “the linking of the work of RSPs with other agendas, for example, health, regeneration and culture is understandably at an early stage” (p.11)

Whilst there is some variation between regions of the stated potential role of IAG in promoting regional skills and learning priorities, there is an underlying acknowledgement that IAG infrastructure is important in the delivery of key agendas – including that of widening participation. The report concludes by urging that a regional dimension to IAG planning and delivery is included in the implementation of the Review findings.

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<sup>97</sup> NIACE (2006), IAG Review and the English Regions: Some Implications, Cross Government Review of Information Advice and Guidance Services for Adults, Review Working Group Papers, Available from: [www.iagreview.org.uk](http://www.iagreview.org.uk)

## 10 Equality, Diversity and Existing Provision

### (i) Policy Definitions

10.1 The Equality Review<sup>98</sup> was commissioned by the Prime Minister as an independent review to set out a vision of for an equal society, one that seeks equality in the freedoms that people have to lead a fulfilling life. The Review sets out landmark improvements in addressing inequality and discrimination but notes that “entrenched inequalities in education, employment and quality of life remain”. It summarises the three key reasons why inequalities still persist in Britain today, namely prejudice, lack of awareness and understanding about what equality means, and little clarity over who should deliver what and whose responsibility it is to take the lead.

10.2 The review outlines a series of measures that need to be taken to promote an equal society defined as:-

*“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.*

*An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be”*

10.3 Those measures are presented as part of a systematic overall framework in which all stakeholders in our society have a part to play and include targeting action on persistent inequality and enabling and supporting organisations in all sectors.

10.4 While the review does not focus on adult guidance *per se* it does set its findings in the context of the same policy imperatives that are framing the IAG Review.

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<sup>98</sup> The Equality Review (2007) *Fairness and Freedom: The final report of the equalities review*. London: The Equalities Review.

## (ii) Issues of equality and diversity in the labour market

10.5 The labour market is experienced differently by different groups. In a comprehensive summary of guidance issues for girls and women Bimrose<sup>99</sup> highlights the gender aspects of guidance work. She notes the research evidence that highlights the particular challenges faced by men and boys with regard to career progression, like: the devaluation of their work; the loss of secure employment; more career shifts in lateral or downward directions; increasing ambivalence about the role of work in their lives<sup>100</sup> ; and difficulties encountered when entering traditionally female jobs<sup>101</sup>. In her focus on women and girls however she highlights the employment patterns of women in developed European countries which are characterised by increased levels of economic activity and which in turn have brought with them ever increasingly complex patterns of female labour market participation resulting in different types and varying levels of commitment to paid employment.

10.6 For example, whereas it has been assumed that women take a block of time as a career break to raise young children, the increasing recognition that early returns to work are of key importance to women's future economic prospects, together with the financial pressures associated with consumer debt, have resulted in employment patterns for women that have been minimally disrupted by childbirth<sup>102</sup>. Alongside this trend has developed a significant decline in satisfaction with hours worked and workload due to the intensification of work and shifts in values<sup>103</sup>.

10.7 Consequently therefore a more recent conceptualisation of women's commitment to employment, is of three broad groups of women: one committed to their full-time careers; a second giving priority to their

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<sup>99</sup> Bimrose, J. (2007 forthcoming), Guidance for Girls and Women, Book Title, Chapter 21. XXXXXXX

<sup>100</sup> Ackah, C., & Heaton, N. (2004). The reality of 'new' careers for men and for women. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 28, 141-158.

<sup>101</sup> Bagilhole, B., & Cross, S. (2006). 'It never struck me as female': Investigating men's entry into female-dominated occupations. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 15, 1, 35-48

<sup>102</sup> Smeaton, D. (2006). Work return rates after childbirth in the UK – trends, determinants and implications: A comparison of cohorts born in 1958 and 1970. *Work, Employment and Society*, 20, 1, 5-25

<sup>103</sup> Rose, M. (2005). Job satisfaction in Britain: Coping with complexity. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*

domestic lives; and the third combining work and family in different ways<sup>104</sup>

10.8 The Women and Work Commission<sup>105</sup> emphasise the economic and social opportunity costs of pursuing policies that do not recognise issues of gender and diversity. They report that:-

*Women who work full time earn 13 per cent less than men who work full time, base on median hourly earnings, and 17 per cent less based on mean hourly earnings. These lower earnings leave women at greater risk of falling below the poverty line and of being off than men in retirements. Women face an unfair disadvantage and the UK economy is losing productivity and output.*

*Women are crowded into a narrow range of lower-paying occupations, mainly those available part time, that do not make the best use of their skills. The Commission estimates that removing barriers to women working in occupations traditionally done by men, and increasing women's participation in the labour market, could be worth between £15 billion and £23 billion.*

*There are huge opportunities for change....*

*Women and Work Commission, (2006) p1.*

10.9 BME groups also experience the labour market differently from an early age. Evidence of differences between white young people and young people from ethnic minorities are apparent in relation both to subject choices and career aspirations<sup>106</sup>. The Transitions Review Group<sup>107</sup> (2003) noted that science, business studies, accountancy and computing were attractive subject choices amongst the Asian community. The influence of ethnicity can also be seen in career aspirations, with analysis

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<sup>104</sup> Hakim, C. (2006) Women, careers, and work-life preferences. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 34, 279-294

<sup>105</sup> Women and Work Commission Report (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*, London, Women and Work Commission

<sup>106</sup> Hutchinson, J. Lamb, H. and Crompton, N. (2007) Review of literature on support for work choices, Unpublished report for YWCA, Oxford.

<sup>107</sup> Transitions Review Group (2003). *A Systematic Review of Research into the Impact of Careers Education and Guidance during Key Stage 4 on Young People's Transitions to Post-16 Opportunities*. London: EPPI-Centre

by BME group indicating that “the choice of a trade was noticeably absent from the groups except white British”. The Review Group concludes that ethnicity narrows the choice of curriculum choices and results in a preference for high status jobs.

10.10 As for women, intra-group differences are also significant. Research by the Equal Opportunities Commission<sup>108</sup> identified differences in the experiences of Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women entering the workforce.

10.11 There are also differences in the importance attached to qualifications, with young people from ethnic minorities increasingly regarding them as “the only route to a good job’. Dale et al<sup>109</sup> report that the attachment to vocational qualifications is particularly strong for young Asians as this provides a means of overcoming the ‘ethnic penalty’:

*“For young Asians, having a specific vocational qualification is likely to provide one means by which labour market barriers can be lowered, either at first entry or on subsequent re-entry following child bearing” (Dale et al, p.954).*

10.12 It is, however, important to note that, at the same time it is folly to generalise between BME groups, it is also in poor judgement to apply findings to both men and women. For example, Britton et al.’s<sup>110</sup> (2002) study of disaffected groups identified profound gender differences from those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent, including the reaction of families to the education and employment.

### **(iii) Equality and diversity in adult guidance services**

10.13 It is a policy imperative that adult guidance services are underpinned by

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<sup>108</sup> Equal Opportunities Commission (2006a). *Moving On Up? Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean Women and Work: Early Findings from the EOC’s Investigation in England*. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

<sup>109</sup> Dale, A., Shaheen, N., Kalra, V. & Fieldhouse, E. (2002). Routes into education and employment for young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25(6), 942-968

<sup>110</sup> Britton, L., Chatrik, B., Coles, B., Craig, G., Hylton, C. & Mumtaz, S. (2002). *Missing Connexions: the Career Dynamics and Welfare Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Young People at the Margins*. Bristol: Policy Press

equality and diversity frameworks. Since 2006 the Adult Learning Inspectorate has been conducting inspections under the Common Inspection Framework that has equality and diversity issues running throughout all questions but with specific focus on the following elements;

- Equal opportunities is promoted and discrimination tackled
- Equal opportunities statistics are collected and monitored
- Evidence of targeting clients
- Appropriate publicity and materials offering support
- Research has been conducted into the profile of clients
- Examples of clients being provided with additional support in relation to equal opportunities.

10.14 The definition of equality and diversity used by ALI<sup>111</sup> (and therefore familiar throughout the **nextstep** community) is as follows:-

*“equality of opportunity must be reflected in the ethos of the whole organisation and promoted to ensure that all learners achieve their potential. It includes the provider’s work in widening participation; targeting under-represented groups; developing an inclusive curriculum, which acknowledges diversity in the learning situation; and recruiting a diverse workforce. Providers need to ensure that there is a framework of effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour and that they comply with the increasingly complex and challenging range of legal requirements. This includes the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and Disability Act (2001).”*

10.15 Management information collected on the users of the current IAG services show performance against targets including overall use, user satisfaction, advice to adults without L2 qualifications, those aged 50+, and

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<sup>111</sup> Adult Learning Inspectorate (2004) *Making an impact on individuals and communities: the effect of adult and community learning provision today*. Coventry: Adult Learning Inspectorate.

those with learning difficulties or disabilities. This shows that services are reaching those target groups and doing so using methods and resources that recognise the several needs of equality and diversity principles.

10.16 The critical importance of ensuring effective practice in relation to equality and diversity among the adult guidance community also comes from outside the sector. In recognition of the role of IAG services to addressing such equality and diversity issues the EOC's recent study<sup>112</sup> 'Opening up opportunities through advice and guidance' had three main aims:

- to identify the key agencies delivering IAG on jobs, learning and careers to young people and adults;
- to assess the extent to which these agencies enable individuals to consider and pursue non-traditional choices and ways of working and encourage women to overcome the barriers they may face in participating in working and learning;
- to assess the extent to which agencies recognise and relate to the changing nature of work, including flexible and other non-traditional working patterns.

10.17 The research identified seven main barriers and gaps in provision in relation to opening up opportunities for adults through the existing information, advice and guidance provision:

- The current priority given to individuals with qualifications below NVQ Level 2...leads to limited access to guidance for other groups... There is a case for access to guidance to be decided on the basis of need rather than qualification level.
- The scope for partnership working between adult IAG and HE careers services is limited by the focus of adult IAG on meeting the needs of individuals with few or no qualifications. A refocusing of adult IAG to include mature entrants to HE would

assist policy aims to improve skills and promote closer working between HE and IAG services.

- In some agencies, there is resistance to the idea that IAG services should seek to open up opportunities by challenging gender stereotypes. This might be addressed through a stronger policy directive on the role of IAG in opening up opportunities for young people and adults at all qualification levels, and improved training and development for advisers.
- The current review of IAG services for adults is an opportunity to put in place a stronger framework for which can open up opportunities, including through client interventions.
- There appears to be little work within advice and guidance agencies addressing different working patterns and working lives, including flexible working, which is aimed either at individuals or at groups, such as women returners. There is a need for IAG to be more informed by LMI. This would be assisted through closer partnership working with organisations with labour market knowledge, including employers.
- Individuals who take non-traditional routes, including young people, are not given the additional support they may need. Potentially higher rates of turnover among individuals in occupations where they are under-represented could be avoided through support such as mentoring, or even more limited support through follow-up calls by a PA.
- There is a need to promote closer working between Connexions and primary schools, to introduce LMI and challenge gender stereotyping.
- In addition to the steps proposed above, the performance of IAG services needs to be measured in relation to the achievement of equality and diversity objectives.

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<sup>112</sup> Rolfe, H. and Nadeem, S. (2007) Opening up opportunities through advice and guidance, Working Paper Series 49, Equal Opportunities Commission, Manchester.

10.18 In addition the Women and Work Commission<sup>113</sup> have also generated a range of useful recommendations in relation to access to learning and training, careers advice and guidance throughout women's lives. In particular they recommend that:-

- The Department for Education and Skills and relevant Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland departments publish strategic documents... which describe a systematic change in the way education is delivered in order to reduce stereotypical choices, improve take-up of vocational skills training and improve employment outcomes for young women;
- The Sector Skills Councils should work with employers on providing and promoting Apprenticeships for women in industries where there are skills shortages.
- Government information campaigns should show women in occupations not traditionally taken up by them, and men as parents and carers.
- A £20 million package to pilot measures designed to enable women to change direction , and progress in their jobs and careers, through raising their skills levels.... to include free skills coaching for women who are not in work who already have a level 2 qualification....access to a high quality careers information, advice and guidance service which tackles gender stereotypes under the New Deal for Skills and Train to Gain.
- The Department for Education and Skills and relevant Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland departments should develop programmes, linking with Train to Gain and the Sector Skills Councils, identifying best practice on career development and working with partner employers to create career paths.
- ensure that action is taken on all causes of the gender pay gap including occupational segregation, the impact of family

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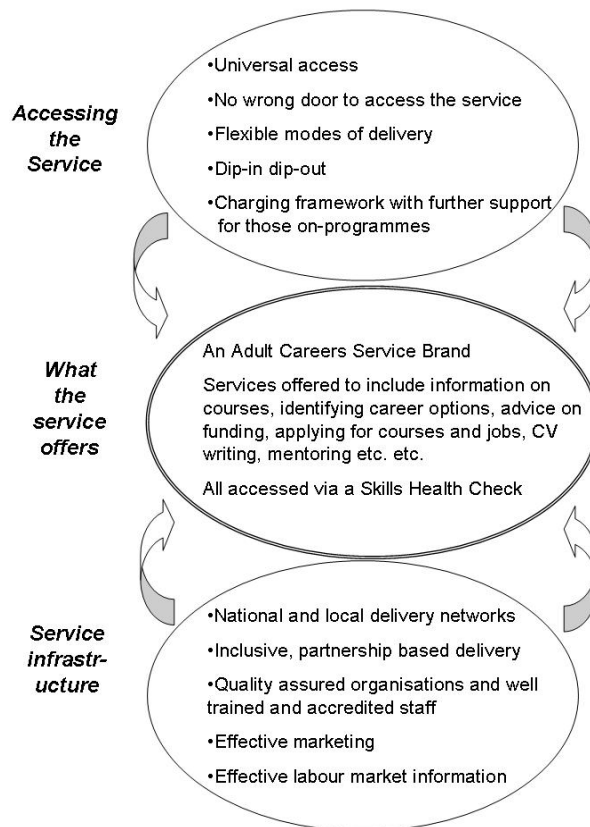
<sup>113</sup> Women and Work Commission Report (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*, London, Women and Work Commission.

responsibilities and unequal pay..... public authorities should ensure that their contractor promote gender equality in line with the public sector Gender Duty.

## 11. Review Summary

11.1 The Review process has been informed by key policy drivers, it has been thorough, consultative, evidence based, and grounded in the reality of practice. It has concluded that there is a need for a powerful new skills and careers service. The purpose of the Adult Careers Service will be to **drive progression in learning, work and careers**. As a result of the work of the Review a set of principles and propositions to underpin the development of the future service have been generated.. While decisions about the exact nature and level of funding available have yet to be made, the findings of the Review provide a clear statement of ambition with regard to the development of an Adult Careers Service that supports the imperatives presented by Leitch and achieves the policy goals of a range of partners.

11.2 This section presents a summary of those principles and propositions. It will focus firstly on the nature of service, how people access the service and the infrastructure that needs to be in place to underpin effective, network based delivery of the service. This is presented diagrammatically below.



**(i) The service offer**

11.3 At the heart of the proposed Adult Careers Service there would be a service that offered an individual a variety of ways to drive and to achieve progression. The service offer would be presented to the individual as a menu of services.

11.4 The **menu of services** should be developed that clusters services within the following phases; Assessing Need, Exploring Options, Taking Action, Following up, with other Additional Activities that individuals may find helpful. Menu options will include introductory services; skills diagnostic activities; individual learning action plans; career options assessment and planning; course information; CV writing and job getting skills; access to and advice about financial support such as learner accounts and adult learner grants; specialist services; and signposting and referral to other parts of the service. Building on the

consensus achieved at the January 2007 Derby consultation event<sup>114</sup>  
the menu of services should:-

- Be described in very clear and simple language, and
- Have clearly defined outputs so that a service user knows that participation will provide them with tangible and real outputs, whether it be an improved CV, a list of training opportunities, or an appointment to see a guidance practitioner
- Be presented in a way that encourages an individual to move through, back and around the various services – in recognition of the fact that job acquisition, learning and career development is rarely a linear process,
- Be supported by up-to-date and relevant labour market information. Some decisions that individuals take are based on a personal analysis of the cost implications and potential cost benefits.

11.5 From the website feedback<sup>115</sup> there has been general agreement that effective linking, signposting and referral would be central to the effective operation of a new menu system of services.

11.6 At the heart of the menu would be a **Skills Health Check**. The function of the Skills Health Check would be to provide an initial diagnostic front-end activity to determine for every client exactly what type of specific support and/or assessment is required either from within the wider Skills Health Check portfolio of assessment tools, or from the Menu of Services.

11.7 There should be four different elements to the process:

- One: an exploration of motivations including readiness for

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<sup>114</sup> IAG Review: Expert Practitioner Workshop, 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> January, Breadsall Priory, Derby. Summary Report. Available on : <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers>

<sup>115</sup> Bimrose, J. (2007) IAG Review: Summary of Responses from the IAG Review Website, Available on : <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers>

change / action

- Two: further exploration of interests, skills and experiences and initial skills profile (e.g. up to 50 questions – not necessarily sequential)
- Three: Reflecting back, i.e. these are the results, what do the results tell you and do you recognise and value the accuracy of the assessment? If yes... if no.....
- Four: What next? Do you want to improve and/or to change? Where you can go next in relation to (i) key skills, (ii) vocational skills and (iii) personal management skills.

11.8 On completion of the Skills Health Check an individual should have a clear idea of what they need to do next. If the Health Check is used in a mediated setting then it should enable an advisor to identify those unemployed and inactive people who would benefit from participation in skills training, especially those for whom up-skilling is necessary to get good quality, sustainable employment.

11.9 The services offered should promote a positive, proactive approach to managing learning, skills and career development. For some target groups of service user (current policy imperatives would include for example offenders, migrants, and those on long term incapacity benefit), an out-reach strategy would be required to ensure engagement with the service and encourage recognition of its potential utility.

#### **(ii) Accessing the service**

11.10 To encourage recognition and access it will be important to have a common brand and logo that identifies the Adult Careers Service. The brand should stand for professionalism, putting the customer first, giving people appropriate, high quality help about employment and skills, and a demonstration of the links between learning and work and economic and social benefits. It should be promoted through a national multi-media marketing strategy at an appropriate time.

11.11 The Skills Health Check forms the start of a substantive relationship between the client and the service. In many cases, but not all, the Skills Health Check will be the introduction to the service. There will be a “no wrong door” approach to the service. The aim would be that no matter where people approach the system (whether through a job centre, a college, by telephone or on-line, through face-to-face provision or in the workplace) individuals and employers will get the right help about employment and skills.

11.12 The service should be characterised by flexible delivery modes: on-line, mediated face-to-face or over the telephone, ensuring that users have a choice about the nature, level and type of service they want to use, and access at a time and place to suit them. Those who can help themselves will be encouraged to do so; estimates of the proportion needing individual, case-managed services tend to vary, but fall somewhere between 10% and 50%<sup>116</sup>.

11.13 Mediated services will be used in a variety of ways to meet the needs of clients. Mediation can be provided in a number of ways including:-

- face to face with one, or a series of, meetings with an adviser
- telephone contact with a named adviser;
- telephone contact with a series of advisers informed by a client information database;
- ongoing email dialogue with advisers;
- chat room support with advisers or peer mentors;
- workshop sessions with small groups.

11.14 The principle of universal access for all adults has been established. There will need to be more resource intensive options, such as face-to-

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<sup>116</sup> Samson, J.P, Palmer, M. and Watts, A.G. (1999), Who needs guidance? CeGS Occasional Paper, Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

face advice, targeted on particular groups such as benefit recipients, the low-skilled, young adults and others with Skills Strategy priority. Marketing would be targeted in order to ensure that the service reached under represented groups such as BME communities, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, older workers or people wishing to return to the labour market.

- 11.15 A charging framework for services could be explored. Any charging policy should be clear and explicit within the menu of services, and be clearly established from the initial launch of the service.
- 11.16 The services would not be delivered solely by professionals working within a core Adult Guidance Service. Rather, the range of professionals and voluntary sector workers who already have established relationships with client groups (including ULRs and HR professionals) can be supported through training and quality accreditation processes to offer part, or all, of the Menu of Services.
- 11.17 There should be reformed 'on-programme' support, linked to the skills and careers service, for those in LSC funded learning offering personalised support to learners – from pre-learning skills assessment and help to make the right choice of providers and courses, to expert on-programme input from tutors and advisors, to further advice at the end of the course to achieve outcomes and progression to further job or learning opportunities.

### **(iii) Underpinning the service**

- 11.18 Advisers require high quality labour market information, purpose built by Sector Skills Councils and accessible to all advisors. Feedback from the *learnirect* telephone guidance trial suggests that customers want and expect industry specific information and in some instances callers required a depth of sector specific information that is not currently generally available. Eventually there will be comprehensive information about all careers including pay rates and the economic value of

particular qualifications which can be examined at local level. This will help advisors to guide the career choices of people who are considering what new skills to develop, looking to re-enter the labour market, moving into a different industry or occupational area, or relocating to another part of the country. LMI given by advisors must challenge stereotypes and give users an understanding of occupations not traditionally take up by their gender.

11.19 The service must be clearly branded, and the brand must be synonymous with quality provision evidenced by a national quality standard mark, to be further developed but building on the **matrix** national quality Standard. In the longer term there could be scope to develop closer links between adult standards and those being developed for Youth Matters. In the future the accountability of individual advisors could be improved by introducing customer feedback mechanisms, possibly using the eBay model.

11.20 The delivery of a universal service requires a reformed, empowered signposting and referral **network** of libraries, voluntary and community organisations, learning centres, employer representative organisations, Union Learning reps etc which will help to promote the service, involve hard –to-reach groups and refer people on to qualified advisors and other service menu options as appropriate. The Adult Careers Service must have recognition among the Regional Skills Partnerships as a key partner and should be able to generate synergies of partnership working within partnerships at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

11.21 Quality service delivery through network arrangements requires a comprehensive workforce development strategy to support all delivery partners. The foundations to this are currently being laid with the exploration of the possibility between YP IAG and FE colleagues of developing a joint workforce development strategy.

11.22 Clear links would be established with employers and employer-facing support, integrating the service with support programmes such as Train to Gain and Business Link, offering effective workplace information and

guidance to help individuals in work-related learning and career planning, and assist employers to develop and plan their workforce.

11.23 The Adult Careers Service should offer feed-back information to learning providers about the provision that customers are demanding, whilst at the same time, mediating messages from employers and sector skills councils about skills gaps and labour market trends.

11.24 The delivery of a seamless service to individuals could be facilitated through a database that is able to link their Unique Learner Number with a personal customer record and tracking system. Such a system could build on data sharing arrangements with DWP. Using this facility career plans would be updated as, for example, skills were developed and the customer enters and progresses in employment or learning. Progression would be encouraged by repeat contact with the learner, who is now a member of the learning community, so that further learning entitlements, work and skills opportunities, and new incentives can be promoted. The need to assure confidentiality and develop information-sharing protocols within this development was emphasised in the web-based feedback<sup>117</sup>.

11.25 A user-focussed service will require funding arrangements and incentives increasingly focused on the delivery of outcomes whilst achieving value of money. Contractual targets could include increasing the take-up of services by low/no skilled and harder-to-reach groups, users entering jobs or training and users achieving sustained employment and progression. The aim is that more secure funding streams for high performing delivery partners will mean less reliance on short term contracts and chasing other sources of funding.

#### **(iv) Areas for further development**

11.26 The Review process has achieved a great deal. It has identified the defining features of a new service that could offer world class support to

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<sup>117</sup> Bimrose, J. (2007) Summary of Responses from IAG Review Website. Available on : <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers>.

individuals who need to achieve progression in work, learning and careers. It could deliver services which are coherent, demand led and responsive to the needs of individuals and employers. It could open up opportunity for those in and out of work to gain the skills and qualifications they need to progress their career throughout their working lives (only a small minority of the workforce currently does any career planning or CPD). It could raise individual ambitions, encouraging personal enterprise and the appetite for increased responsibility for those in the workforce. It would also be used and valued by employers (especially small and medium employers without an HR function), helping them assess and develop the skills of their workforce and providing links to employer facing support such as Train to Gain, Business Link etc.

11.27 There is however, further work to be done.

11.28 Firstly, the evidence base, thorough and extensive though it is, is incomplete. Some “unknowns” include:-

- How to successfully integrate charged for services with those that are free to the user in a manner that is open, transparent and fair
- How to encourage private sector practitioners to adopt the quality standards that are required for public services
- The role of IAG within the healthy living agenda
- The role of IAG and the active ageing agenda
- The role of the voluntary sector within the network of delivery partners – how might their role best be supported and encouraged?
- How best to position the service for adult and community learning

- The extent of the role and impact of informal guidance
- What the specific characteristics of need are for typical life course transitions, and for specific groups (and how they can be most effectively supplied within the new Adult Careers Service).

11.29 Secondly, the management and structures associated with possible delivery models have been proposed but the metrics to identify the costs and benefits of particular models of delivery have not been fully developed.

11.30 The cultural shift required among guidance practitioners and those delivering guidance in other professions or as volunteers to embrace new ways of working, and closer case-work based system. The overwhelming feedback to the IAG Review website that face-to-face activities are both more attractive and more effective suggests that a managed change programme would assist the development of an Adult Careers Service.

11.31 Related to this is the need to identify and quantify those outputs that could be expected to be delivered by the Adult Careers Service and its partners. The service must have clearly defined outputs and outcomes that measure both progress and achievements. The targeted level of outputs should be challenging but represent reasonable expectations of what might be expected with particular client groups. Those client groups would be self-referrals and those identified in the prevailing skills strategy. A performance measurement framework needs to be developed and tested prior to implementation that measures inputs, throughputs, outputs and outcomes utilizing management information and intelligence generated through the customer database to maximum effect.

11.32 Thirdly, the specification for Skills Health Check, the Menu of Services and associated tools and resources requires tight definition. Feedback

to the Review via the website<sup>118</sup> broadly welcomed the development of a Health Check and it was noted that although many types of skills inventories already exist, there were concerns about general fitness for purpose, consequently careful design and development of a new version would indeed be necessary.

11.33 Similarly, the definition of a brand and the specification for a marketing strategy to target the service are also yet to be undertaken.

11.34 Finally, the development of an all age strategy. Provision in Scotland and Wales is described as 'all age' services. This does not mean that young people and adults can access the same help – in fact, services differ considerably by age. But it does mean, because provision for both young people and adults are operated by the same organisation, that there is scope for common branding, a common website, and some commonality in terms of quality and workforce development etc, which certainly gives an impression of coherence.

11.35 However, there is no evidence that an 'all age' service of this type more effectively meets users' needs than properly connected age related services and, in practice, given the clear direction of travel following *Youth Matters Next Steps* for young people's IAG provision based upon Children's Trusts, there would appear to be little scope to achieve this at this stage. We believe that a better option is to develop a coherent, **all age strategy** for careers advice, taking account of the extension to the participation age to 18 years. The strategy would ensure that transitions between services were managed effectively and that common issues such as quality standards, labour market and occupational information, contracting and workforce development were increasingly looked at collaboratively, wherever possible. But it would also ensure that the different concerns and problems of adults and young people would be acknowledged and respected in the way they were responded to.

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<sup>118</sup> Bimrose, J. (2007) IAG Review: Summary of Responses from the IAG Review Website. Available on : <http://www.iagreview.org.uk/papers>.



## Annex One: Career Guidance and Skills

*People's knowledge and skills play a strong role in economic growth in OECD countries. The importance of human capital as a source of economic growth appears to be increasing (OECD, 2000c; OECD 2001b). Traditionally human capital has been defined largely in terms of people's productive capacity and characteristics: in other words in terms of 'skills', broadly defined. Newer and wider ways of thinking about human capital (OECD, 2002) point out that less than half of earnings variation in OECD countries can be accounted for by educational qualifications and readily measurable skills. It argues that a significant part of the remainder may be explained by people's ability to build, and to manage, their skills. The characteristics that are important in the development of human capital include the ability to acquire skills: in other words, to learn, to identify one's learning needs, and to manage one's learning. They also include the ability to understand how best to use these skills. Included in this category are career planning, job search and career management skills. There is a close harmony between this wider view of human capital and some notions of employability. Seen in this wider context, it seems that many aspects of career guidance have the potential to contribute significantly to national policies for the development of human capital.*

OECD Bridging the Gap <sup>119</sup>

Skills is a term that is used generically as well as specifically. Leitch <sup>120</sup> ) defines skills in the following way:

Box 1/p6

What do we mean by skills?

Skills are capabilities and expertise in a particular occupation or activity. There are a large number of different types of skills and they can be split into a number of different categories. Basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and general skills, such as team working and communication, are applicable in most jobs. Specific skills tend to be less transferable between occupations. Most occupations use a mix of different types of skills.

The most common measures of skills are qualifications. On the job training in the workplace is a vital source of skills development and career progression. The Review recognizes the importance of looking at these wider definitions. For individuals, they provide portability in the labour market, allowing them to demonstrate the skills they have acquired. For employers, they provide valuable signals when recruiting new workers and also motivate employees to complete their training. Qualifications form a major part of employer recruitment strategies, especially screening candidates prior to interview. As a result, the majority of individuals prefer studying towards a qualification and over one half of employers say they would like to support their employees to gain qualifications through staff training.

Qualifications can be grouped into five different levels: full level 2 equates to 5 good

<sup>119</sup> Sweet, R. & Watts, A.G. (2004) *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

<sup>120</sup> HM Treasury (2006). *The Leitch Review of Skills. Prosperity for All in the Global Economy - World Class Skills. Final Report*. London: The stationery Office.

GCSEs or their vocational equivalent, full level 3 to two or more A Levels and Level 4 and above to degree level qualifications. Levels of literacy and numeracy tend to be based on surveys or on the proportion of the workforce with English or Maths qualifications.

The term 'skills' can mean different things in different contexts to different individuals and agencies.

The Leitch Review of Skills was asked to '*consider what the UK's long-term ambition should be for developing skills in order to maximise prosperity, productivity and to improve social justice*' (Foreword, Lord Leitch, pp1-2). The skills goal is three-pronged – i.e. to maximize prosperity, productivity and improve social justice. Any developments around a *Skills Health Check* will need to reflect the breadth and range of this goal.

In Leitch's view while there have been achievements, there are also considerable weaknesses:

**p1/second to last paragraph**

We have many important strengths – an excellent high education system where more people than ever are studying for degrees; many good initiatives on vocational training; an increasingly effective school system; and a record of improvement over the past decade.

**p1/last paragraph**

'We also have very considerable weaknesses. Today, more than one third of adults do not hold the equivalent of a basic school-leaving qualification. Almost one half of adults (17 million) have difficulty with numbers and one seventh (5 million) are not functionally literate. This is worse than our principal comparators. Continuing to improve our schools will not be enough to solve these problems. Today, over 70% of our 2020 workforce have already completed their compulsory education.

**p2/first paragraph**

Our intermediate and technical skills lag countries such as Germany and France. We have neither the quantity nor the quality of necessary vocational skills. We have made enormous progress expanding higher education – and this is critical to becoming a high-skill economy. Over one quarter of adults hold a degree, but this is less than many of our key comparators, who also invest more. Our skills base compares poorly and, critically, all of our comparators are improving.

**p2/third, fourth and fifth paragraphs**

Our recommendations start with an ambitious vision. The UK must become a world leader in skills. Skills is the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation.

We recommend radical change right across the skills spectrum. We have defined

clear ambitions at basic, intermediate and higher skills. ....

Economically valuable skills is our mantra.....

Too many of us have little interest or appetite for improved skills. We must begin a new journey to embed a culture of learning. Employer and individual awareness must increase.

The report identifies the following as being critical to future skills development:

- Improving basic skills/functional literacy.
- Improving the quantity and quality of intermediate skills and higher level skills through a flexible demand-led system.
- Developing 'economically' valuable skills.
- Increasing individual appetite for and interest in skill

## DEVELOPING SKILLS-BASED DIAGNOSTICS

### (i) Developing a Skills Health Check

The Leitch Review of Skills recommends all adults should be entitled to a free *Skills Health Check*, to be delivered through the Adult Careers Service. A number of references are made to the proposed health check:

#### **p24/para 81**

People who struggle to stay in employment will receive a full Skills Health Check at the start of their claim, which will shape their Back to Work Plan. They will also receive additional in-work support. Individuals will be able to access labour market advice from the new adult careers service operating 'virtually' and in a number of locations, including a one-stop shop within Jobcentre Plus. Motivation will be increased through a high profile national awareness campaign, back up by local activity.

#### **p103/second bullet point in chapter summary**

- making informed choices. In England, a new adult careers service, learning from those elsewhere in the UK, providing a universal source of labour-market focused and accessible careers advice for adults, including a free Skills Health

Check.

**p109/6.23**

The new (universal careers service for England to give people the advice they need to progress in the modern labour market and adapt to change) service will be responsible for:

- integrated delivery. Advice delivered through a number of channels and locations, including co-location with Jobcentres to provide a high profile place to go for job search facilities and employment and skills advice;
- integrated advice. Careers advice based on local labour market information;
- effective screening. Everyone entitled to a free Skills Health check to assess their skills needs
- proactive. Reaching out rather than waiting for people to come. The service will be rewarded for raising participation rather than through a block grant;

**p110/6.28**

**Skills Health Check**

Unless people are aware of their own skills needs, they will not be able to tackle them. At the heart of the new service will be the offer of a full assessment of people's skills in the context of the career they wish to develop. The Review recommends that all adults should be entitled to a free Skills Health Check, building on the success of a similar approach in Sweden, that would identify an individual's skill needs and strengths.

People should be able to access this by contacting the new careers service.

Following on from this, advisers will ensure that people are advised on the most effective action, whether that is going on a course, doing work experience or learning at work, to tackle their needs and develop their careers.

**p116/6.60**

The Review recommends a new offer to people to embed a culture of learning across society. At the heart of this is a national campaign, backed by local action, to raise aspiration and awareness. This will be driven by a new national adult careers service in England, drawing current sources of support into one place and offering everyone a Skills Health Check to assess their skills needs. It will be backed by action to ensure clear and targeted financial support and giving people choice and control by entitling them to a Learner Account.

**p124/second to last bullet point**

- improved support for people returning to benefits. The Government should consider requiring people cycling between welfare and work to have a full Skills Health Check, which would be acted on in their 'Back to Work' plan;

**p127/7.47**

The Review recommends that people making repeat claims get fuller support to find and stay in employment. The Government should consider whether all claimants making multiple benefit claims in a given period, or out of work for a certain proportion of the previous year, should get extra support. This could include a full Skills Health Check, wider than the basic skills screening. This should be acted on in their Back to Work plan. The Government should also consider whether people with an identified basic skills need who make multiple benefit claims in a given period should be required to improve their basic skills earlier in their claim than the six month period recommended above.

**p135/7.83**

In particular, the Review recommends that all benefit claimants be screened for basic skills needs at the start of their claim. Where basic skills needs are a barrier to work, they will be referred to part-time basic skills improvements, alongside activity to find work. Where they find work, they will be referred to skills development in work, through train to Gain in England. JSA claimants with basic skills needs who remain out of work for more than six months will be required to improve their basic skills, alongside action to find work. The Review also recommends fuller support for those who find it difficult to stay in work. The Government should consider a full Skills Health Check for those who find it most difficult to stay in work with the results shaping their Back to Work plan. These reforms will ensure that skills help is fully integrated with help to find a job.

**p110/8.25**

This service (universal adult careers service for England) will be charged with raising aspiration and awareness of the importance and benefits of learning, particularly among those that have missed out in the past. It will lead a sustained national campaign to promote skills development among groups that would not normally consider learning. The Review recommends that all adults should be entitled to a free 'Skills Health Check', building on the success of a similar approach in Sweden, that would identify an individual's skills needs and strengths.

The Review is neither clear nor consistent on what it means by, or expects from, a *Skills Health Check*, however. It refers to: a full *Skills Health Check*; a *Skills Health Check* being used specifically for basic skills assessment; a *Skills Health Check* being about enabling individuals to identify career progression and a *Skills Health Check* as part of a Back to Work programme for those people who have been out of work for some time.

Most of the diagnostic assessment tools currently in use have been developed with career development or progression in mind, rather than specific skills assessment – although the assessment of softer employability skills (sometimes referred to as key skills) that features strongly in all of the current models is central to the process of enabling individuals to identify their strengths and interests with a view to progression and achieving work goals.

*(There is the potential for some tension between the need of the government to increase the 'harder' vocational skills (usually involving qualifications) that can be identified and used to match the UK's performance against other countries and the need to identify 'softer' employability skills which are not normally formally accredited.)*

If a *Skills Health Check* is to be developed clarity as to what type of skills are being assessed – and why - will be essential. In some cases specific and specialist assessment tools will be required; in others more generic tools will be appropriate.

To get some sense of the task ahead, the following is a suggested break down of 'skills groups' and the type of assessment that may be required (only may be – assessment will ultimately be an individual process):

**Basic skills:**

**Where basic literacy and numeracy is not at a functional level**

(Leitch proposal for 2020: 95% of adults to achieve the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy (an increase from 85% literacy and 79% numeracy)

Type of assessment: specialist to determine literacy and numeracy levels and actions necessary for progression.

**Intermediate and Higher Level skills:**

**Increasing the numbers of adults with Level 2 skills**

(Leitch proposal for 2020: 90% of adults qualified to at least Level 2 (an increase from 69% in 2005)

**Shifting the balance of intermediate skills from Level 2 to Level 3**

(Leitch proposal for 2020: This means 1.9 million additional Level 3 attainments over the period and boosting the number of apprentices to 500,000 a year)

Type of assessment: vocationally specific, to determine current skill level and work goals and what action may need to be taken to aid progression; assessment to be underpinned by up-to-date labour market information and vocationally specific advice as appropriate.

Strong focus on workplace assessment and work with FE

**Increasing the number of adults with Level 4 and above**

(Leitch proposal for 2020: 40% of adults qualified to Level 4 and above (up from 29% in 2005, with a commitment to continue progression.

Type of assessment: vocationally specific, to determine current skills level and work goals and what action may need to be taken to aid progression; assessment to be underpinned by up-to-date labour market information and vocationally specific advice as appropriate.

Strong focus on workplace assessment and work with FE and HE providers to improve numbers progressing from Level 3 to appropriate 'economically valuable' Level 4 provision.

**Employability:**

The softer employability 'competences' often described by employers as the things they look for when recruiting (and retaining) staff, e.g. communication skills; working as part of a team; flexibility; problem solving. These types of skills are more likely to be based on experience than formal accreditation.

Type of assessment: General, identification of 'employability' competences to enable individuals to recognize existing skills and experience and use them to progress identified work goals.

**Back to work:**

The knowledge and skills required to re-enter the job market after a period away. This will involve a range of assessments and activities to determine what kind of skills development an individual adult needs to re-enter the labour market, as well as individual support to boost confidence and improve motivation. Assessment of literacy, numeracy, IT literacy and employability skills may feature.

Type of assessment: The type of assessments currently undertaken through the Skills Coaching initiative (see 8.4), including a Skills Passport which individual users can take to employers to demonstrate skills and experience.

Outputs for all of the above – personal statements of skills with recommendations for action/action plans.

Individual adults may well have a complex 'portfolio' of skills needs – high skills levels in some areas; low in others – and need anything from 'bitesize' chunks

of upskilling to complete 'upgrades' or 'skill makeovers'. The offer of universal access to a *Skills Health Check* will need to reflect this complexity.

There appear to be two ways to approach the *Skills Health Check* to ensure all needs are met:

- The provision of an initial assessment activity followed by selection from a number of diagnostic tools assessing skills, competences and work goals, with referral to specialist in-depth specialist assessment as appropriate (see point (ii)).
- The provision of a comprehensive, generic tool which assesses a range of different skills, competence and work goals resulting in a 'skills action plan' or, in some cases, referral to in-depth specialist assessment\*.

(The only diagnostic tool which combines skills, competence and work goals assessment in this way at the moment is the Skills Coaching SkillsFile/Skills Passport (see 8.4). The Skillsfile is currently used as a mediated activity with Jobcentre plus clients. There is potential, however, for it to be developed as a standalone tool and made available to a much wider target audience.)

Whatever happens, it is very clear that *the Skills Health Check* cannot stand alone – it will require a range of other services available through the Adult Careers Services that adults can access following their *Skills Health Checks*. These should come under the auspices of the Adult Careers Services but may be delivered through different settings – e.g. over the phone, online (where this is possible and feasible); through group sessions run by ukonline centres in libraries and other community settings; through the FE and HE sector and on employers premises. Much of this provision could be delivered just as effectively (sometimes better) in group sessions (e.g. CV workshops; career progression workshops; job search sessions) rather than one-to-one, making cost savings and enabling drop-in facilities to be provided.

Some of the provision that may need to be developed includes:

- Opportunities for adults to gain work experience

- ‘Employability’ programmes that enable individuals to identify and develop a whole range of softer ‘employability’ skills essential in the labour market
- Career progression and development programmes/workshops
- ‘Credit’ workshops (to identify how to record and promote existing ‘non-accredited’ achievements and experience)
- Skills mentors (to provide ongoing one-to-one motivational support to individual skills development) support – provided either by phone, online (where feasible) and face-to-face.

While a *Skills Health Check* would be the mechanism by which an individual understands their skills strengths and needs, an interpretation of the meaning of the findings and identification of next steps may require professional advice/guidance

An initial breakdown of types of skills was provided, as follows:

- Basic skills: where literacy (including IT literacy) language skills, and numeracy are not at a functional level.
- Intermediate and higher level skills: vocational or academic skill levels identified formally through the qualifications framework – levels 2&3 intermediate skills; level 4 (and above) higher level skills.
- Workplace vocational skills: vocationally specific skills acquired through the workplace.
- Employability skills: the skills needs often raised by employers as being important – communication skills, working as part of a team, flexibility, problem solving, all of which are more likely to be based on experience than on formally accredited learning.
- Back to work/re-entering the labour market/progressing in the labour market: the knowledge or skills required to re-enter or

progress in the labour market, e.g. may involve level of job search/job application skills as well as current levels of literacy, numeracy, IT literacy and employability skills.

- Generic career development skills: the ability of an individual to manage and develop their career progression through assessment of own areas of strengths and weaknesses; identification of goals and options; making decisions; taking action and achieving objectives.

While the above list was recognised as a useful starting point, participants had a number of changes and additions:

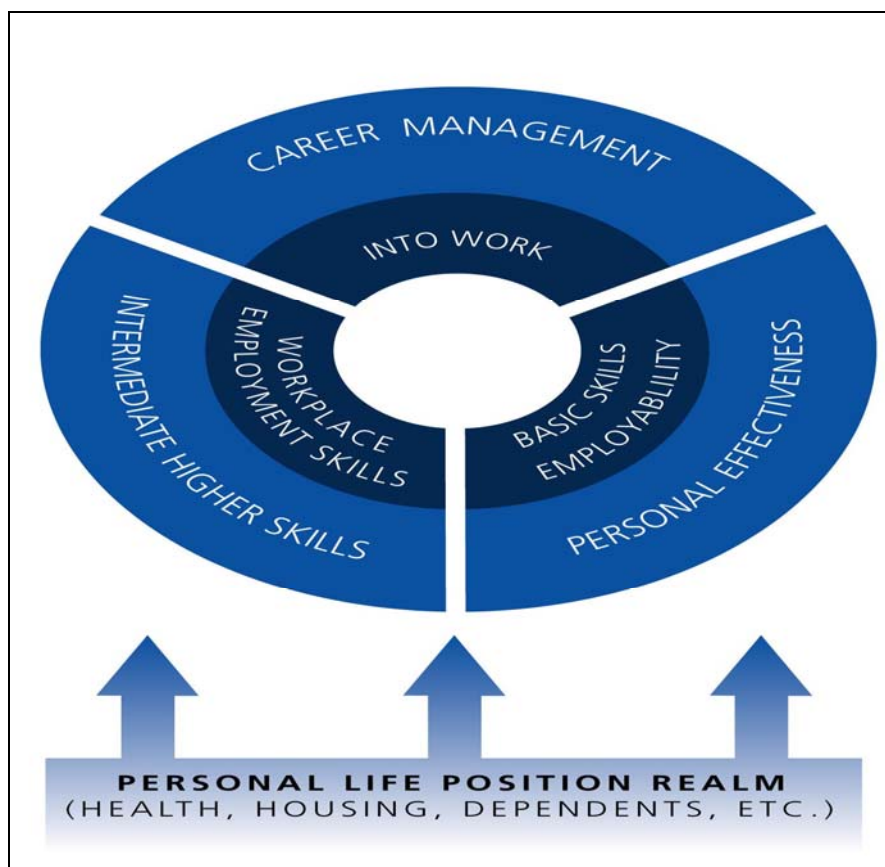
- A *holistic approach* to skills identification should be used, to include skills acquired through voluntary work; parenting and other community or family-based activities and responsibilities.
- The following should be added:
  - *Foundation level skills*
  - *Life management skills*
  - *Language skills (to Basic Skills)*
  - *Self-awareness (to Back to work)*
  - *Self-employed/entrepreneurial skills*
- Back to work/re-entering the labour market/progressing in the labour market should be changed to read:
  - *Back to work: the knowledge or skills required to re-0enter the labour market, e.g. may involve level of job search/job application skills as well as assessment across the other skills categories*
  - *Progressing in the labour market: the knowledge or skills required to progress in the labour market, e.g. may involve knowledge of labour market conditions and cross-sector transferable skills.*

Responses to whether skills could be clustered resulted in the following breakdown and diagram which had majority support:

- **Career management.** This refers to the skills required to manage and develop your own career.

- **Personal effectiveness.** This includes generic skills that individuals may require in the workplace, ranging from basic skills to those such as communication, team working and problem-solving.
- **Vocational skills.** This refers to vocationally specific skills regardless of how they are acquired, as well as intermediate and higher level skills acquired through the formal qualifications route.

The model below illustrates this. It also acknowledges the role of other interdependences that impact on an individual's skill levels, skill needs and potential to undertake change including the propensity of an individual to take action.



**NB:** People may be at different levels in different sections at any one time. For example, a university graduate may have high level qualifications but lack career management skills.

## General points

- ***A personal skills portfolio:*** A key purpose of a skills diagnostic activity might be the development of a *personal skills portfolio* reflecting the full range and level of skills held (work undertaken through Skills Coaching/Skills File/Skills Passport relates).
- ***Assessing vocational skills:*** Assessing vocational skills where no formal accreditation is available may require the involvement of industry specialists, especially where the aim is to identify skills (and subsets of skills) which may be transferable to other jobs.

To explore possible models for a *Skills Health Check*, in particular whether there should be:

- one generic tool, or
- a front-end initial diagnostic tool leading to a range of more specialist diagnostic activities.

To consider models which reflected the following essential criteria:

- a *no wrong door* approach to access
- flexible provision through multiple channels
- how the complexity of individual skill needs would be addressed through the process
- encouraging as many people as possible to 'help themselves'
- providing support to online activities, and
- making best use of the existing infrastructure (e.g. ukonline)

access through libraries; vocational expertise available through colleges, work of SSCS).

The *Skills Health Check* was variously conceptualised as a front-end service; a signposting mechanism and a service reception desk. It was agreed, however, that the concept of *triage* should be applied to the *Skills Health Check* – i.e. an initial diagnostic front-end activity to determine exactly what type of specific support and/or assessment is required.

A number of issues or principles were agreed:

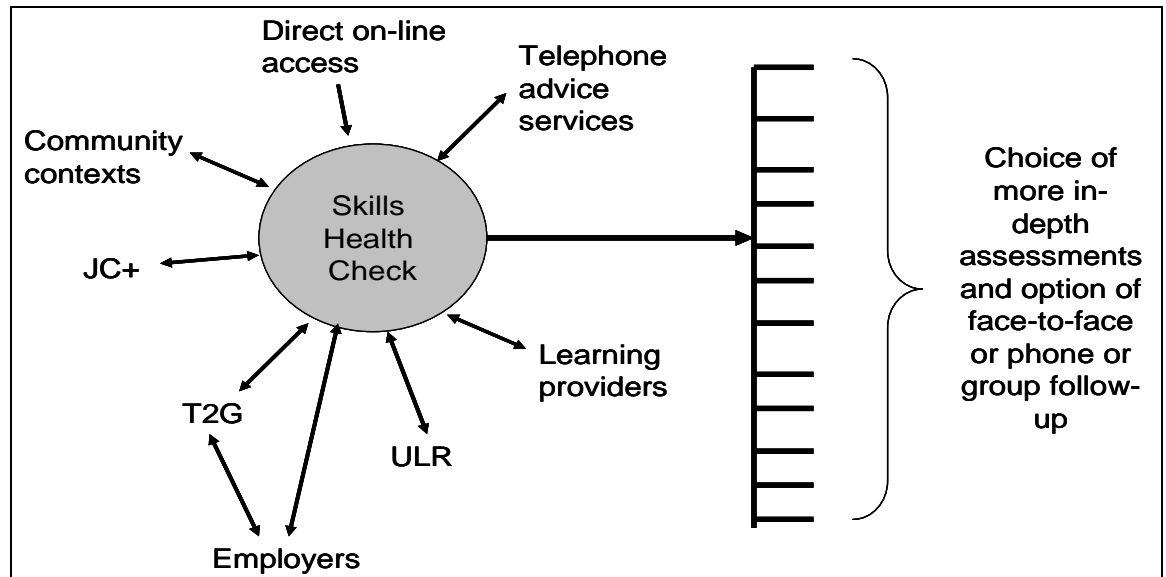
- At the point of delivery there should be no attribution of priority to any particular set of skills. Users of the *Skills Health Check* should be able to set their own priorities and use the tool(s) to reflect their own individual and personal needs.
- The *Skills Health Check* should include an initial assessment of need leading to a range of more specific skills assessments.
- Individuals should be able to return to the range of tools available through the *Skills Health Check* as often as they choose.

It was noted that the *Skills Health Check* has a number of possible functions:

- Signposting – gateway to a number of different services
- Motivator – to access further services
- Record – of response to act as a baseline for tracking
- MI (and feedback) – information from users to be included as part of planning for wider service provision, e.g. course provision.

Access to the initial diagnostic tool will need to be available through a range of settings, with signposting to more in-depth specialist assessments or other

services:



While it is proposed that an initial diagnostic activity should lead individuals to more in depth, specific assessments (with signposting and referral to mediated services as appropriate) a number of different elements were identified to the whole *Skills Health Check* process:

- One: an exploration of motivations including readiness for change / action
- Two: further exploration of interests, skills and experiences and initial skills profile (e.g. up to 50 questions –not necessarily sequential)
- Three: Reflecting back, i.e. these are the results, what do the results tell you and do you recognise and value the accuracy of the assessment? If yes... if no.....
- Four: What next? Do you want to improve and/or to change? Where you can go next in relation to (i) key skills, (ii) vocational skills and (iii) personal management skills.

The health check must not leave people with a “so what?” feeling.

Follow-up and follow-through is essential and should be clearly signposted – either self-directed or mediated (one-to-one, group, by telephone, e-mail etc).

Signposting clients to the *Skills Health Check*, onward progression after completing the initial diagnostic and referral within the whole process to mediated support are all critical to maximising the potential of the individual within the process.

- An analogy was drawn with the 'assess/plan/implement/review' (APIR) model used by Connexions partnerships where initial assessment is only part of the process and its completion is through dialogue with an advisor and a number of activities. This model assesses the whole person and does not attempt to distinguish a persons work or learning from other factors about themselves and their situation.
- The 'universal' access to the *Skills Health check* – a free service for everyone – would include access to any specialist assessments identified as well as the initial diagnostic activity. Also, 'universal' in this sense should mean multiple access as and when required, and not a 'one-off' activity.
- How the *Skills Health Check* is marketed will be critical. Marketing approaches will need to reflect the different stages people are at in terms of their interest in, or readiness for, this type of activity. Marketing will also need to emphasise a positive, pro-active approach to skills development rather than a remedial one.
- It is important that Government continues to provide targeted support to priority groups. If the goal of greater 'universal' involvement and engagement is to be achieved, however, this will need to be reflected in the way targets and outcomes are set for the future services.
- While mediated support to the *Skills Health Check* will be available, the initial diagnostic tool(s) should be developed in online format with simple and clear language. There are

existing good examples of this – e.g. DVLA renewing your tax disc online instructions; self-assessment tax on line offers a range of detailed self-assessment tolls with a simple front-end menu; the Prospects website.

#### General points

- **Mediated support:** Taking online access as a starting point, on what basis would the need for mediated support be identified – (i) individuals choose; (ii) triggers embedded to help individuals decide whether they want mediation or not (iii) rationing access to specific diagnostic/assessment needs.
- **Links to industry specific advice:** How would this be achieved where a need is identified. Who would be involved?
- **Motivational support:** How can access to motivational support be provided, especially where initial access is 'online'?
- **Formats and languages:** The needs of the visually impaired and the deaf will need be addressed. Also, access to formats in a range of community languages will need to be considered.
- **Skills Coaching:** There are some important lessons to be learned from the work undertaken through Skills Coaching/Skills File/Skills Passport.

#### Skills health Check: Eligibility, Access, Added value

##### Eligibility

All adults should be entitled to a free *Skills Health Check* that would identify their skills needs and strengths and enable them to identify progression in their learning, work or career.

The term 'all' needs to encompass the equality agenda as well as those with specific or special needs. Detailed work needs to be undertaken to identify which groups need specific support; what is required and what arrangements need to be put in place.

### Access

The *Skills Health Check* will need to be available as either a mediated or unmediated activity, through all channels and with multiple access opportunities – adults should be able to access any one of the proposed *Skills Health Check* tools at any time they choose across a work, learning, career pathway.

The *Skills Health Check* would be promoted through the Adult Careers Service. Access arrangements should be through multiple channels and multiple outlets, e.g.

- face-to-face (including drop-in and specific referral), online or over the phone;
- as either a mediated or an unmediated activity;
- by individuals in their own time and for their own purposes or as part of a training and skills package provided by employers;
- through one-stop shops located within Jobcentre Plus offices, other providers of employment support and at colleges;
- through libraries and other community-based provision.

More in depth work needs to be undertaken as to whether different access channels are better for some things than others

### **Added value of the Skills Health Check**

Access to diagnostic assessment of skills through a *Skills Health Check* would not only enable individuals to get an assessment of their existing skills and competences, it would also potentially:

- provide individuals who have never thought about their own skills development before with the opportunity to do so;

- provide a common, consistent portfolio of diagnostic tools for use through the Adult Careers Service;
- increase confidence through recognition of previously unidentified skills;
- increase interest generally in skills development;
- improve motivation to take some action;
- open up the potential of some individuals to take a 'different pathway';
- the identification of 'soft skills' and 'transferrable skills' in the context of improving progression in learning and work;
- increase understanding of the importance of being proactive in individual career planning.

The quality of the *Skills Health Check* offer would need to be under pinned by specific standards and quality assurance arrangements that include the concept of 'accredited' providers. There are currently a number of different funding streams that work with adults which include an element of skills assessment/career guidance. Careful thought will need to be given as to whether additional funding is required in these cases or whether it will be sufficient to offer quality support to enable agencies to become 'accredited' suppliers.

### **The role of credit in *Skills Health Checks***

Work needs to be undertaken to find ways of giving individuals credit for competence and experience in some of the softer 'employability' skills so often requested by employers.

A national credit framework is being developed for recognition and portability of awards across institutions. This might be developed to include an additional,

less formal, framework that provides individuals with ways of identifying and gaining credit for their existing skills and experience. This work has traditionally been undertaken under the APL/APEL banner, but never really become mainstream. The work undertaken by QIA on the development of a system for 'Recording Previous Achievement' appears to have become a victim of recent cuts in funding. It may need to be resurrected.

The Skills Coaching Skillsfile and the Skills Assessment for Older Workers Tool both undertake processes that enable individuals to record earlier achievements – particularly around 'softer' skills – and use these in the development of CVs (in the case of Skills Coaching a Skills Passport) for job search purposes.