

CLOSER WORKING?

**A review of working relationships between
Careers Service Organisations and
Higher Education Careers Advisory Services**

**A.G. Watts
Deirdre Hughes
Denise Haslam**

**Centre for Guidance Studies
University of Derby**

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Executive Summary

This report examines existing forms of collaboration between Careers Service Organisations (CSOs) and Higher Education Careers Advisory Services (HECASs), addressing examples of good practice, plus factors facilitating or impeding such practice.

Section 1 outlines the origins and recent history of the two sets of services, identifies the similarities and differences between them, and describes the background to the study. Despite very different historical roots, there has been some convergence between the two groups. Nonetheless, there are continuing differences in relation to political accountability, professional organisation, professional qualifications, location and functions, and culture and status.

Section 2 examines the extent of existing links between CSOs and HECASs. The vast majority have some links with one another at local level, and may indeed have links with a number of services; there are some cases, however, where no links exist. The quality of the links is perceived to vary greatly, though most are felt to be “good” or better. The links cover a variety of types and purposes. CSOs tend to be a little more favourable to the development of links than do HECASs. Both sides, however, tend to be more dissatisfied than satisfied with current links. The most important factor facilitating good links is felt to be trusting relationships; views on the value of formal agreements are mixed. The most commonly-cited hindrances are perceptual factors, notably regarding the perceived expansionist ambitions of some CSOs.

Section 3 looks in more depth at the nature of the working links, and at the tensions between collaboration and competition in each of the areas which they occur. Collaboration on pre-entry work with students coming direct from school or college tends to be unproblematic, with HECASs working in support of CSOs’ remit for such students. Guidance to enrolled students is recognised as being the core business of HECASs, but there are some ambiguities here, particularly relating to discontinuing students and to the interface between further and higher education. There is also some anxiety about CSOs wishing to “take over” services within higher education institutions, though the only reported example of such “contracting-out” is based on distinctive circumstances. A further contested area is guidance for graduates in the couple of years following graduation. The broader area of adult guidance is viewed as “open territory”, with opportunities both for competition and for collaboration. Cross-cutting these various areas of work are links relating to labour-market information, to staff development and to quality standards.

Section 4 reviews the developments related to closer working which are anticipated by CSOs and HECASs. A substantial majority envisage significant developments over the next couple of years which are likely to involve them and their corresponding local services working together. These cover the full range of areas explored in Section 3, with adult guidance being the most commonly-cited area of development. The growing trend towards regionalisation and devolution seems likely to encourage greater collaboration. In the longer term, some thought there was likely to be a trend towards integration of services; most however favoured a process of gradual development in particular areas of activity, with sensitivity to local differences.

Section 5 presents the conclusions from the study. It notes that the policy context is now changing, with greater emphasis on collaboration rather than competition. It suggests that services should give consideration to the range of collaborative possibilities outlined in the report,

and that AGCAS and CSNA should explore the possibility of joint agreements relating to the consisted areas identified. It also proposes five policy areas that require attention. The first is whether higher education institutions should be mandated to provide a core guidance entitlement for enrolled students. The second is the need for clearer national guidelines, linked where appropriate to processes for local resolution, on groups of students who fall at the boundaries between the core provision of the two groups of services. The third is clearer recognition of the implications for guidance services of current debates relating to the interface between further and higher education, including the Government's decision to allow further education colleges to bid directly for higher education funding. The fourth is clearer guidelines, supported by appropriate funding, for guidance of graduates in the two or three years immediately following graduation. Finally, careful attention is needed to the roles of CSOs and HECASs, and the relationship between them, in the new national framework being developed for adult guidance.

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Preface

This is the first research report from the new Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. It is a particularly appropriate topic in this respect, because the Centre is itself a joint initiative of a group of Careers Service Organisations (the Careers Consortium (East Midlands) Ltd) and of a university (the University of Derby).

We are grateful to the Department for Education and Employment and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services for providing financial support for the study; and to the Careers Services National Association for their general support for the work. We have received valuable advice from our Project Steering Group, which has been chaired by Professor Roger Waterhouse (Vice-Chancellor, University of Derby, and a member of the Board of Derbyshire Career Services Ltd.), and has also included Rosemarie Barber (DfEE), John Harradence (DfEE), Pat Raderecht (Higher Education Careers Services Unit), Bryony Pawinska (Institute of Careers Guidance), Martin Thorne (AGCAS) and Shelagh Woolliscroft (CSNA). We are greatly indebted to all the services which replied to our questionnaire, and particularly to the staff involved in our five case-studies. Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to Avis Butcher and Maureen Flanders for providing secretarial support for the project.

Deirdre Hughes
Denise Haslam
Tony Watts

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Deirdre Hughes is Manager of the Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. Denise Haslam is an Associate of the Centre, and is also Head of the Career Development Centre at the University of Derby. Tony Watts is Visiting Professor of Career Development in the Centre for Guidance Studies, and is also Director of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling.

The Centre for Guidance Studies is a partnership initiative of the University of Derby and of the Careers Consortium (East Midlands) Ltd. Its aims are to promote and undertake research, and to enhance good practice in careers education and guidance regionally, nationally and internationally.

Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB
(tel. 01332-621351; fax. 01332-622726).

1. Introduction

Complementarity

- 1.1. Careers Service Organisations (CSOs) and Higher Education Careers Advisory Services (HECASs) are the two longest-established structures of career guidance professionals in the United Kingdom. Both can date their origins back to the turn of the twentieth century. The other major groups of such professionals – including careers and guidance teachers in schools and educational guidance workers – are of more recent origin and are less strongly structured and less strongly professionalised (see Watts *et al.*, 1996).
- 1.2. CSOs and HECASs are also, in an important sense, complementary to one another. The role of the CSOs, enshrined in legislation, is to offer a statutory career guidance and placement service to young people. Currently this includes all full-time students, part-time students on courses commonly undergone by persons in order to fit them for employment, and anyone else aged under 21 who has left education or full-time training up to two years earlier (there is no particular age or time restriction in the case of people with disabilities) (DfEE, 1995). Higher education students are however explicitly excluded from this provision. There are two rationales for such exclusion: one is the autonomy of higher education institutions; the other is the fact that most such institutions have historically provided specialist career guidance and placement services for their own students. In other words, the existence of the HECASs is part of the reason for limiting the Careers Service Companies' statutory remit, on the grounds that their complementary provision completes the notion of a student entitlement.

Origins

- 1.3. Nonetheless, the historical roots of the two groups of services are very different. The origins of Careers Service Organisations stem from the Juvenile Employment Bureaux set up just before the First World War. These developed into the Youth Employment Service, with a strong emphasis on job placement of statutory-age school-leavers. In 1973 this became the Careers Service, provided as a mandatory duty of Local Education Authorities, with greater attention to guidance as well as to placement, and to older as well as younger leavers. Following new legislation in 1993, the service was restructured. In Scotland, partnerships to run CSOs were formed between Local Education Authorities and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). In England and Wales, the restructuring process was managed through competitive tendering: most of the contracts went to existing providers restructured as partnerships between Local Education Authorities and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs); there was also however some *expansionism* (partnerships winning contracts for areas other than their own) and some *new entrants* (notably CfBT and Nord Anglia) (for a more extensive account of this history, see Killeen & Kidd, 1996; also Watts, 1998).
- 1.4. Higher Education Careers Advisory Services, by contrast, evolved from University Appointments Boards. The oldest – in Oxford – can trace its roots back to 1892. By the mid-1950s, all universities had such a board. They were placement-oriented, and staffed by people with experience in the fields of work on which they were advising, but no

formal guidance training. In the 1960s and 1970s, these appointments boards were transformed, both in function and in title, into careers services, with more attention to career guidance. Stronger forms of professional collaboration began to be established between services in different institutions, with greater attention to the professional development of staff. The expansion of higher education, including the elevation of many former colleges to university or polytechnic status, led to greater diversity of provision. Some services began to pay more attention to developing careers education programmes. There was also a move in many services away from the traditional concentration on hour-long interviews, these being complemented (or in some cases largely replaced) by an open-access approach focused around information rooms including computer-aided guidance systems and short “duty adviser” interviews (for fuller accounts, see Watts, 1996; 1997).

Convergence

- 1.5 Some of these developments led to convergence between the two sets of services. In particular, the creation of the polytechnics in the mid-1960s meant that the statutory Careers Service for a period developed a base within the higher education system. Polytechnics were under the control of Local Education Authorities, and many were serviced by the LEA Careers Service. However, when the polytechnics were granted independent corporate status in the early 1980s, many of the staff involved moved over to the institutions’ own pay-roll.
- 1.6 At the same time, the growing concern with professionalism within HECASs meant that the Diploma in Careers Guidance – the traditional professional qualification within the statutory Careers Service – began to be given more attention in recruitment to HECAS careers adviser posts. The tradition of recruiting people with industrial or other experience continued in some institutions, though even here there was encouragement for such staff to develop professional guidance skills, if often on a voluntary, short-course basis. Movement from the Careers Service into HECASs, however, became a common career route. The combination of this and the effects of polytechnic incorporation meant that by the early 1990s, over half of higher education careers advisers had previously worked as careers officers within the statutory Careers Service (Kidd *et al.*, 1993).

Continuing differences

- 1.7 Nonetheless, important differences have remained. One is *political accountability*. CSOs, because of their dependence on a statutory contract with the Government, are expected to be directly responsive to Government policy. HECASs, by contrast, tend to be less directly responsive to Government and more immediately responsive to the policies of their own institutions, which determine the level and nature of their funding, their functions and their structure within the institution.
- 1.8 A second is *professional organisation*. Careers advisers within CSOs who wish to belong to a professional association commonly join the Institute of Careers Guidance *as individual members*; they look to the Careers Services National Association to represent their organisations at policy level; and their national information needs are met largely through the Careers and Occupational Information Centre, which is part of the

Department for Education and Employment. Some HECAS staff also join the Institute of Careers Guidance. More generally, however, HECASs belong *as organisations* to the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, which represents them in policy circles and also acts as a focal point for professional development; their national information needs are met largely through their co-operative work with the Higher Education Careers Services Unit, which is an agency of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and related bodies but also maintains very close working links with AGCAS. Because of the structures of AGCAS and CSU, collaboration between HECASs has in recent years tended to be stronger than collaboration between CSOs, particularly in England and Wales where the tendering process outlined in para.1.3 cultivated a climate of competition between the latter.

- 1.9 A third is *professional qualifications*. Careers advisers working for CSOs have to possess a Diploma in Careers Guidance or an NVQ Level 4 qualification in guidance. HECAS careers advisers, by contrast, still hold a variety of different qualifications. An AGCAS survey in 1996 indicated that 48% of heads of services and 58% of careers advisers held a Diploma in Careers Guidance. In all, three-quarters held a postgraduate qualification of some kind: these included academic postgraduate degrees, teaching certificates, and diplomas in personnel management, librarianship, management and counselling. While their academic qualifications tend to be higher than those of CSO staff, and while it could be argued that the range of their qualifications enriches the professional resources within HECASs, the perceived lack of a consistent standard of professionalism remains a weakness in outsiders' perceptions of HECASs (Watts, 1997, p.53). As an AGCAS initiative to address this issue, a Certificate and Diploma in Careers Guidance in Higher Education have now been developed at the University of Reading, designed as open-learning qualifications which careers staff can acquire while remaining in post: they are still however optional rather than mandatory, adding to the range of existing options. AGCAS is currently investigating the equivalence of these qualifications to the NVQ in guidance.
- 1.10 A fourth important set of differences relates to *location* and *functions*. CSOs work closely with schools and colleges, but do so from the outside, and are seen as complementing the guidance provision within the schools and colleges themselves. A common division of function is for CSOs to have the main responsibility for individual interviews, and schools and colleges the main responsibility for delivering careers education within the curriculum. HECASs, by contrast, are based within higher education institutions themselves, and tend to be expected to take a more prominent role in the delivery of the full range of career education and guidance functions.
- 1.11 A final set of differences is concerned with *culture* and with *status*. These in part reflect the origins of the two sets of services: one in élite universities, with a tradition of autonomy and collegiality; the other as fairly low-grade officials in local government bureaucracies. The structural changes in both cases outlined in paras.1.3-1.4 above have meant that such status differences have become more blurred, with CSOs adopting more of a business culture. Nonetheless, salaries and conditions of service in HECASs have tended to continue to be superior to those in CSOs. Whilst it has become common for people to move from the latter to the former, movement in the reverse direction is rare.

The recent context

- 1.12 In the early 1990s, the political context to relationships between CSOs and HECASs became more volatile. Part of the intention behind the contracting-out of the Careers Service to CSOs (para.1.3), as stated by Ministers in the relevant debates in Parliament, was to encourage enterprise in developing services for non-statutory clients (Watts, 1998). Moreover, the political preoccupation with quasi-market led to consideration being given to the adoption of such mechanisms in relation to career guidance within higher education. The Confederation of British Industry (1994) controversially suggested that all higher education students should be given a guidance credit which could be used to purchase provision from a number of services, including a careers service in their own or another institution, or the local CSO. This idea was not pursued, but some higher education institutions began to look at the alternative possibility of “outsourcing” their careers service, along with other student and administrative services. Options discussed in a few institutions included contracting out the careers service to an employment agency or to a CSO. Arguments advanced for the latter included their contacts with small and medium-sized enterprises and their knowledge of local labour markets: it was also argued that the graduate labour market was no longer as segmented as it used to be, and that the case for careers guidance in higher education being a specialist activity was therefore not as strong as previously. In the event, only a few small institutions examined this option with serious intent. Such debates did however excite the expansionist interest of some CSOs, and produced defensive responses on the part of some HECASs to what they regarded as predatory designs. They also led to a recognition that the key argument against outsourcing was the distinctive benefits of embedding careers services within higher education institutions – including their links with the institution’s strategic aims and policies and with the curriculum (Watts, 1997, p.25).
- 1.13 A further set of debates which affected the relationship between CSOs and HECASs was the growing interest in moving towards a more integrated and student-driven lifelong learning system: in particular, increased blurring of the boundaries between further and higher education, and individuals moving much more flexibly in and out of different institutions. It was argued that such a lifelong learning system needed to be supported by lifelong access to career guidance. Providing such access could be achieved by extending the statutory role of the CSOs, perhaps working in partnership with others where appropriate; alternatively, it could be achieved through a multiple-provider model based either on a collaborative approach or on a competitive market approach. A lifelong guidance service of this kind – possibly incorporating an element of fee payment by clients – could be seen as complementing services based within higher education institutions, as was already the case in relation to schools and colleges (see para.1.10). Alternatively, HECASs could see themselves as key players or partners in providing such a lifelong guidance service. A review of strategic directions for careers services in higher education discussed a range of options along these lines (Watts, 1997).
- 1.14 The Dearing Report on *Higher Education in the Learning Society* addressed some of these matters. It recommended that institutions of higher education should, “over the medium term, integrate their services more fully into academic affairs”, and that “the Government, in the medium to long term, should integrate careers advice for lifelong learning, to complement services based inside higher education institutions (NCIHE, 1997,

recommendation 11). The official response to this recommendation stated that “the Government will be addressing, with interested parties, the scope for closer working between careers services within and outside higher education” (DfEE, 1998a, p.17).

The study

1.15 As a first step in the implementation of this response, the DfEE in March 1998 commissioned the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling to run a 24-hour policy consultation, comprising 27 representatives from CSOs and HECASs, from DfEE itself, and from other organisations. One of the recommendations from this event was that “DfEE should commission a mapping exercise on existing forms of collaboration between careers service companies and higher education careers services, addressing examples of good practice, plus factors facilitating or impeding good practice” (NICEC, 1998).

1.16 In the light of this recommendation, DfEE commissioned the Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby to conduct the survey reported here. The study comprised two elements:

- (a) A postal survey of all CSOs and HECASs in England, Wales and Scotland, carried out in August-September 1998. Of the 99 CSOs approached, 77 (78%) responded; of the 149 HECASs approached, 96 (64%) responded.
- (b) Case-studies of five examples of good or interesting practice, carried out in November-December 1998. These case-studies were selected from the questionnaire responses and some telephone follow-up work, with the aid of advice from the Project Steering Group (see Preface). The criteria included diversity in relation to geographical location, size and age of institution, types of links, and level of development of links. The selected case-studies were:

<i>CSOs</i>	<i>HECASs</i>
• Y Cwmni Gyrfa – The Careers Company	University of Wales Bangor
• Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians	University of Edinburgh
• St Helens Career Services	Edge Hill University College
• Sheffield Careers Guidance Services	Sheffield Hallam University; University of Sheffield
• Surrey Careers Services	Surrey Institute of Art and Design

1.17 The remainder of the report is structured in four sections. In Section 2, we provide an overview of the extent of existing links, drawn mainly from our postal survey. In Section 3, we look in more detail at specific areas of collaborative practice, drawing more from our case-studies. In Section 4, we examine the views expressed by services on possibilities for collaboration in the future. Finally, in Section 5, we present our conclusions.

2. Extent of Links

Introduction

2.1 In this section, we look at the *range* of links between CSOs and HECASs, and at the *quality* and *types* of such links. Next we look at how *proactive or reactive* each group reports itself as being in developing these links. Finally, we examine factors which are reported as *facilitating* or *hindering* the links.

Range of links

2.2 The vast majority of CSOs and HECASs have some links with one another at local level, and many have multiple links. Because the geographical distribution of CSOs is more regular than that of higher education institutions, multiple links are particularly likely in the case of the former: as shown in Table 1, nearly three-quarters of CSOs have links with two or more HECASs, whereas only just over a third of HECASs have links with two or more CSOs.

Table 1: Number of institutional links

<i>No.</i>	<i>HECAS links with CSOs</i>	<i>CSO links with HECASs</i>
0	7 (8%)	7 (11%)
1	47 (57%)	11 (16%)
2	19 (23%)	17 (25%)
3	7 (8%)	18 (27%)
4+	3 (4%)	14 (21%)
Total	83	67
No reply	13	10
Grand total	96	77

2.3 On the other hand, around one in ten CSOs and HECASs have no such links at all. Table 1 shows that 7 HECASs have no links with any CSO. Some (but by no means all) of these are old-established universities:

“This institute has a national and international student intake and concentrates on working with its own students and alumni” (HECAS).

Conversely, 7 CSOs have no links with any HECAS. Several of these have no local higher education institution; others take a narrow view of their remit –

“The simplest reason seems to be that our client groups are quite distinct” (CSO).

2.4 In addition, 26 HECASs with some links with local CSOs indicated that there were others with which they had no links. Many referred to lack of time, and to a wish to concentrate only on the immediate locality, sometimes associated with pressure to adhere to a narrow agenda –

“We are resourced to deal with our customers, i.e. graduates including recent graduates, so not really interested” (HECAS).

In one case, the change of a particular CSO provider as a result of contracting-out had changed the relationship with them:

“We had an extremely good relationship with the previous providers... but this degenerated when the service was privatised, e.g. we asked them to co-operate in providing placements for DCG students and their reaction was ‘it’s not in our business plan’... We can get co-operation from other local services, we don’t feel we particularly need anything from X” (HECAS).

2.5 Conversely, 13 CSOs which had some links with local HECASs had no links with others. Several of these were based in localities with a large number of higher education institutions and felt they had to restrict the extent of their links. In general, CSOs without links with some/any local HECASs seemed substantially less satisfied with the situation than HECASs without links with some/any local CSOs (Table 2). Several recognised the need to build stronger links in future:

“A revision of local procedure is needed, given the increasing number of graduates contacting local services” (CSO).

“Stronger links are necessary in the future due to a higher proportion of students entering higher education in their home area” (CSO).

Table 2: Level of satisfaction with lack of links with local CSOs/HECASs

<i>5-point scale</i>	<i>HECASs without links with some/any local CSOs</i>	<i>CSOs without links with some/any local HECASs</i>
Very satisfied (1)	3 (10%)	1 (6%)
(2)	9 (29%)	2 (12%)
(3)	11 (36%)	2 (12%)
(4)	2 (6%)	5 (29%)
Not satisfied (5)	6 (19%)	7 (41%)
Total	31	17
No reply	2	3
Grand total	33	20

Quality of links

2.6 To get some idea of the quality of the links that had been established, we asked each group of services to rate the quality of activity and communication with up to three of the other group: we indicated that it would be helpful if these could cover a contrasting range. The ratings are shown in Table 3. They show considerable variability, but no strong or consistent pattern of differences either between the two groups or between the two criteria. In all categories, at least 7 out of 10 links were rated “good”, “very good” or “excellent”.

2.7 In 14 cases, it was possible to compare reciprocal ratings given by paired CSOs and HECASs. In 10 of these cases, the ratings were identical or closely similar. In 4 cases, however, there was a substantial discrepancy, with the ratings given by the CSO being substantially more positive than the reciprocal ratings given by the HECAS.

<i>Table 3: Ratings of quality of links</i>		
	<i>HECAS ratings of CSO links</i>	<i>CSO ratings of HECAS links</i>
<i>Quality of activity</i>		
Excellent	16 (11%)	12 (9%)
Very good	50 (35%)	34 (26%)
Good	35 (24%)	47 (35%)
Fair	25 (18%)	21 (16%)
Poor	17 (12%)	19 (14%)
Total	143	133
<i>Quality of communication</i>		
Excellent	18 (15%)	17 (14%)
Very good	35 (29%)	41 (34%)
Good	37 (31%)	31 (26%)
Fair	13 (11%)	19 (16%)
Poor	17 (14%)	12 (10%)
Total	120	120

Types of links

- 2.8 To explore the types of links, we asked each service to focus on the corresponding service with which they had the strongest links. We then asked them to indicate the frequency of contact in relation to four types of activities: informal networking, formal meetings, joint initiatives, and training. Table 4 shows that the most common form of link was informal networking (at senior manager and/or practitioner level). Formal meetings were frequent in over a quarter of cases, but non-existent in around one in five. Joint initiatives and project development work were fairly common; joint training and staff development activities somewhat less so.
- 2.9 Services were then asked to indicate other activities which did not fall into the categories identified in Table 4. Activities listed included client referrals, guidance support for discontinuing students, development of work-experience opportunities, and careers and higher education fairs (which some other services might have included under “joint initiatives”).

	<i>Frequent</i>	<i>Occasional</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>No reply</i>
<i>CSO responses</i>					
Informal networking	29 (48%)	30 (50%)	1 (2%)	60 (100%)	17
Formal meetings	17 (28%)	33 (55%)	10 (17%)	60 (100%)	17
Joint initiatives/project development work	9 (15%)	40 (68%)	10 (17%)	59 (100%)	18
Training and staff development activities	3 (5%)	39 (63%)	20 (32%)	62 (100%)	15
<i>HECAS responses</i>					
Informal networking	29 (35%)	53 (65%)	0 (0%)	82 (100%)	14
Formal meetings	22 (26%)	46 (54%)	17 (20%)	85 (100%)	11
Joint initiatives/project development work	13 (17%)	42 (54%)	22 (29%)	77 (100%)	19
Training and staff development activities	6 (8%)	39 (52%)	30 (40%)	75 (100%)	21

2.10 Services were next asked about the *purposes* of these links. The results are presented in Table 5. Of the six purposes identified on the questionnaire, all were ticked by over half of both groups, with the exception of “guidance support for higher education students in further education institutions”, which was a feature of only a minority of the links. The most salient purposes from the perspective of CSOs were “guidance support for prospective higher education students” (82%) and “guidance support for graduates seeking employment or other work-related opportunities” (74%); whereas the most salient from the perspective of HECASs were “guidance support for unemployed graduates” (70%) and “collaboration in guidance networks to develop local strategies for adult guidance” (66%). These purposes will be explored in more detail in Section 3.

	<i>CSOs</i>	<i>HECASs</i>
Sharing of labour market information	40 (66%)	43 (52%)
Guidance support for prospective higher education students	50 (82%)	47 (57%)
Guidance support for higher education students in further education institutions	30 (49%)	29 (35%)
Guidance support for graduates seeking employment or other work-related opportunities	45 (74%)	52 (63%)
Guidance support for unemployed graduates	42 (69%)	58 (70%)
Collaboration in guidance networks to develop local strategies for adult guidance	40 (66%)	55 (66%)
Total	61 (100%)	83 (100%)
No reply	16	13

Proactivity/reactivity

- 2.11 We asked each group of services to indicate how proactive/reactive their current approach was to working with the other group. HECASs tended to have adopted a more reactive stance: 44% gave ratings on the reactive side, as opposed to 24% of the CSOs. This was confirmed in some CSOs' additional comments:

“We are the organisation that makes overtures” (CSO).

“ I would say that we tend to approach the HEI Careers Advisory Services, rather than them contact us” (CSO).

A couple of CSOs commented that their proactivity had been rebuffed:

“Our proactivity... has not always been welcomed so now tends to be reactive” (CSO).

“We feel we have been proactive but have been met with suspicion (probably understandable) by HE colleagues” (CSO).

Others had experienced more positive responses:

“We have been delighted by the response from HE colleagues” (CSO).

In some cases, on the other hand, HECASs were the more proactive partner. On both sides, many services indicated that they would like to be more proactive but were prevented by lack of time and resources:

“We have challenging targets in our core contract which leaves little time for this” (CSO).

“Time and staffing are significant factors. Slashing of our budget will make this difficult in the future too” (HECAS).

Table 6: Proactivity/reactivity of approaches to working links

	<i>CSOs</i>	<i>HECASs</i>
Reactive – 1	8 (12%)	14 (15%)
– 2	8 (12%)	26 (29%)
– 3	30 (43%)	21 (23%)
– 4	17 (24%)	26 (29%)
Proactive – 5	6 (9%)	4 (4%)
Total	69 (100%)	91 (100%)
No reply	8	5

Levels of satisfaction

- 2.12 Each group of services was asked how satisfied they were with the existing level of collaborative activity with the other group. The results (Table 7) show that both sides

tend to be more dissatisfied than satisfied with their current working links. In some HECASs, satisfaction was linked to a perception of limited need for such links:

“Not a lot of point in collaborating for the sake of it, unless there are activities you both want to collaborate over” (HECAS).

“I don’t really feel the benefits would justify the input necessary” (HECAS).

Others, however, felt that much more needed to be done:

“We have to work more closely together” (HECAS).

“We must collaborate in the interests of our client group(s)” (HECAS).

This was paralleled by some CSOs:

“We should all do more” (CSO).

“There would seem to be considerable scope for developing more collaborative activity to our mutual benefit” (CSO).

Table 7: Levels of satisfaction with existing level of collaborative activity

	<i>CSOs</i>	<i>HECASs</i>
Satisfied – 1	7 (11%)	6 (7%)
– 2	10 (15%)	17 (19%)
– 3	23 (34%)	28 (31%)
– 4	15 (22%)	30 (33%)
Dissatisfied – 5	12 (18%)	9 (10%)
Total	67 (100%)	90 (100%)
No reply	10	6

Facilitating factors

2.13 Each group of services was asked which factors, in their experience, facilitated good working links. The responses in relation to the six items listed are shown in Table 8. On both sides, it was felt that *trusting relationships* was the most important factor. Some of these had been built up, with great care, over a long period of time. A few HECASs were however sceptical about the likelihood of such relationships developing:

“Would be useful but unlikely to happen!” (HECAS).

The personal aspects of such relationships could be important:

“The most valuable part of the relationship is not necessarily a specific activity, but (I believe) genuine, mutual respect, understanding and trust between myself and the chief executive of the local careers company” (HECAS).

Table 8: Factors perceived to facilitate good working links

	<i>Very useful</i>	<i>Quite useful</i>	<i>Not useful</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>No reply</i>
<i>CSOs</i>					
Formal agreements Signed by both parties	17 (35%)	24 (49%)	8 (16%)	49 (100%)	28
Informal discussions	47 (75%)	16 (25%)	0 (0%)	63 (100%)	14
Trusting relationships	49 (83%)	10 (17%)	0 (0%)	59 (100%)	18
Shared agendas	44 (75%)	13 (22%)	2 (3%)	59 (100%)	18
Common targets	20 (37%)	28 (52%)	6 (11%)	54 (100%)	23
Joint initiatives/projects	47 (77%)	14 (23%)	0 (0%)	61 (100%)	16
<i>HECASs</i>					
Formal agreements Signed by both parties	16 (25%)	27 (43%)	20 (32%)	63 (100%)	33
Informal discussions	59 (68%)	27 (31%)	1 (1%)	87 (100%)	9
Trusting relationships	66 (90%)	7 (10%)	0 (0%)	73 (100%)	23
Shared agendas	43 (54%)	36 (45%)	1 (1%)	80 (100%)	16
Common targets	33 (45%)	32 (44%)	8 (11%)	73 (100%)	23
Joint initiatives/projects	45 (58%)	31 (40%)	2 (2%)	78 (100%)	18

Trust permitted flexibility:

“Trust sometimes means accepting a certain amount of overlap and it also involves the need to accept that sometimes another organisation may be in a better position to help particular clients” (HECAS).

2.14 Beyond this, as indicated in Table 8, much emphasis was placed on the value of *informal discussions*, *shared agendas*, and *joint initiatives/projects* – though in each case, CSOs tended to be more positive than HECASs. Common targets, on the other hand, received lower ratings overall, but slightly higher ratings from HECASs than from CSOs. The notion of “shared agendas” was linked in some cases to a common interest in defending the importance of professional, impartial guidance:

“... presenting a unified voice for professional adult guidance work” (HECAS).

2.15 The lowest-rated item in Table 8 was *formal agreements signed by both parties*. It was also the only item that received a substantial number of “not useful” responses. With HECASs, indeed, these responses exceeded the “very useful” responses; with CSOs, this was not the case.

2.16 The services were asked to indicate whether they had a formal partnership agreement with any local service from the other group. A little over one in five had such an agreement, and in a small number of other cases it was under discussion (Table 9). A few HECASs in particular, however, felt that such an agreement could be counter-productive:

“Not really needed in my opinion, and could get in the way of useful work” (HECAS).

“If it got to the stage where everything was hidebound by contract then it would be a negative step” (HECAS).

	CSOs	HECASs
Yes	14 (21%)	21 (23%)
Being discussed	6 (9%)	2 (2%)
No	47 (70%)	70 (75%)
Total	67	93
No reply	10	3

The mean satisfaction ratings of those with a formal partnership agreement tended to be somewhat higher than the ratings of those without such an agreement (Table 10). This may mean that a formal agreement produces greater satisfaction; or that more satisfactory partnerships are more likely to lead to such an agreement.

	CSOs	HECASs
With partnership agreement	3.00	3.00
Without partnership agreement	3.28	3.28

Note: On scale from 1 (satisfied) to 5 (dissatisfied) (cf. Table 7).

2.17 Where formal agreements existed, they seemed to divide into three broad groups:

- (a) Those limited to *specific initiatives* – e.g. New Deal or work-experience placements.
- (b) Those concerned with drawing *demarcation rules* in particular areas of work –
 “We provide advice and guidance to graduates living in the area” (HECAS).
- (c) *Comprehensive* agreements –
 “The full range of guidance and information services” (CSO).
 “All areas of possible collaboration, e.g. sharing information, training, etc.” (HECAS).
 “Joint guidance directory, preparation of bids to further objectives, enhancement of referral mechanisms, work towards common quality standards” (HECAS).
 “Roles, targets, resources allocated including time, delivery methods” (CSO).
 “Premises, shared resources, information, access to relevant students” (CSO).

Some agreements covered the CSO’s relationship not only with the HECAS but with the higher education institution as a whole.

2.18 In addition to such agreements, there were some examples of *formal representation* within the structure of the linked service. There were, for instance, a few cases of a HECAS (or its institution) being a stakeholder in the CSO:

“The university is a minor share/stakeholder in X. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor has a seat on the board” (HECAS).

“Both universities are shareholders of [careers service] company” (CSO).

In other cases, HECAS directors were represented on CSO boards in a non-voting capacity, or on CSO advisory committees. Conversely, a few CSO chief executives were members of HECAS boards or advisory committees. Some such links were reciprocal:

“Membership of each other’s committees keep us in touch with each other’s activities – good for PR and ensure communication lines are maintained” (HECAS).

2.19 Three other facilitating factors were mentioned:

(a) The fact that some HECAS staff were *former CSO staff* (see para.1.6):

“This has helped us to appreciate the strengths and limitations of their service” (HECAS).

On the other hand, one HECAS manager pointed out that:

“It is extremely dangerous for those in HE who have a careers service background to view today’s careers companies in the light of what they left” (HECAS).

(b) The availability of funding opportunities for which *joint bids* could be developed:

“Some funding sources encourage collaborative activity” (HECAS).

“Preparing joint bids seems to trigger off partnerships” (CSO).

(c) HECASs being located in higher education institutions which favoured *community links*:

“The tremendous belief in community responsibility held by the university” (HECAS).

“Much depends on whether the universities see themselves as having a local community dimension. X are brilliant” (CSO).

Hindrances

2.20 The services were also asked to indicate which factors hindered good working links. The factors listed can be divided into three broad groups: internal constraints, policy pressures, and perceptual factors.

2.21 *Internal constraints* related to lack of time and resources, and to management pressures to focus on “core business”:

“Lack of time to network” (CSO).

“Pressure of other commitments” (HECAS).

“It is not the desire but the time that is the limiting factor” (CSO).

2.22 *Policy pressures* related particularly to the climate of competition rather collaboration fostered by competitive tendering and bidding processes. There was a widespread view among HECASs that the contracting-out of the Careers Service under the previous Conservative Government had been a significant hindering influence in this respect:

“There has been less collaboration since the ‘privatisation’ of careers companies” (HECAS).

“Funding of careers companies encourages them to seek markets of core business which will generate income. This doesn’t lend to local guidance agency networking as other agencies distrust their motives – often with justification” (HECAS).

The bidding processes also adopted in relation to New Deal and various development programmes were felt to have been hindrances as well as being facilitating factors (cf. para.2.19b):

“Funding can not only bring people together but can potentially be most divisive. Putting a pot of money out there and saying anyone that does guidance can bid for it to do innovative and interesting activities can be explosive” (HECAS).

“The creation of a ‘bidding culture’ tends to foster competition rather than collaboration between organisations in general. Also a tremendous drain on resources” (CSO).

A HECAS head of service suggested that funding sources could act as “cement” to partnerships but also as a “wedge” enabling organisations to encroach on each other’s territory (HECAS).

2.23 In addition, reference was made by several CSOs to the effects of the new Labour Government’s policy of “refocusing” their work to give more attention to disaffected young people:

“The refocusing of the Careers Service may impede the resources we have available to network with HEIs” (CSO).

“With the current refocusing agenda we are in danger of perceiving careers guidance as something for the disaffected rather than a lifelong learning process” (CSO).

It was noted that the current priorities assigned to CSOs by DfEE focused on engaging 16/17-year-olds in learning: nowhere in the planning guidelines was there any mention of improving retention rates post-18. This could reduce the attention CSOs gave to higher-education-related work.

- 2.24 Other policy hindrances mentioned included the inadequacy and inconsistency of funding both for adult guidance in general and for new graduates in particular, and the lack of any coherent national strategy in these areas:

“The lack of a national funding strategy for adult careers guidance. This creates wasteful competition for what funding exists and prevents long term planning” (CSO).

“Posturing towards adult work, public statements about so called commitment to it – but in reality clients are turned away. There seems a disjuncture between what the DfEE think goes on, TEC says goes on and client experience” (HECAS).

- 2.25 More generally, a few services perceived a lack of policy co-ordination within DfEE:

“Split of responsibilities/funding mechanisms in DfEE! – different sections. Them not talking to each other or to us leading to similar pieces of work being funded by different sections leading to duplication and waste” (CSO).

“Different forms of funding for very similar objectives” (CSO).

- 2.26 *Perceptual factors* were the most commonly-cited hindrances. On the HECAS side, there was a fairly widespread suspicion of the *expansionist ambitions* of CSOs:

“Perception of local careers companies as predatory” (HECAS).

“Predatory tactics, i.e. poaching of our own clients” (HECAS).

“Fear of takeover” (HECAS).

In some cases such suspicions were explicitly levelled at a few CSOs rather than at all:

“Predatory/empire builders – a minority of careers companies with expansionist aims” (HECAS).

“The expansion of *some* careers companies. Fear of the above in HE services – whether legitimate or not” (HECAS).

The legitimacy of such suspicions was recognised by some CSOs:

“There are bound to be tensions if it is not made clear that no ‘predatory’ motives exist” (CSO).

- 2.27 This was linked to the notion that CSOs were driven by *profit-making* considerations:

“The commercial nature of careers companies inevitably leads to a possible mistrust of motives/working practices” (HECAS).

“Careers services are now into income generating” (HECAS).

“Local careers companies being driven (almost exclusively in our area) by the profit motive” (HECAS).

“I feel that management of the careers company are motivated by business rather than service interests and cannot wholly be trusted” (HECAS).

It is worth noting in this connection that some CSOs were concerned about pressures towards fee-charging within HECASs (see para.3.23). It is also noteworthy that one CSO chief executive drew a clear distinction between CSOs which were non-profit-making organisations and “reinvest all generated income back into the company”, and those which distributed profits among their shareholders.

- 2.28 The perception of CSOs being business-driven was linked to the notion that their *organisational culture* was fundamentally different:

“Differences in philosophy, funding, pressures, working patterns, different concepts of professionalism, pressure of work” (HECAS).

“I think the modus operandi is quite different. They tend to be very target driven” (HECAS).

“Their need to meet quotas, targets and concentrate on the documentation of their interviews. Our students prefer time spent on them” (HECAS).

Some of these differences were acknowledged by CSOs:

“HEI careers advisory service suspicious of business approach and need to achieve targets... Culturally miles apart in how we operate. They have changed very little compared to us” (CSO).

“We are largely, though not exclusively, driven by our targets. This hasn’t really impacted on higher education careers services whose activities are broad and general” (CSO).

- 2.29 Some HECASs felt there had been a loss of morale in CSOs linked to erosion of their *professionalism*:

“The high level of dissatisfaction amongst staff in local careers companies is reflected in the large number of applications we receive from this sector whenever our vacancies are advertised” (HECAS).

Conversely, some CSOs had doubts about the professionalism of HECASs:

“Staff of HEI careers services do not have to possess a mandatory guidance qualification” (CSO).

“[HECASs have] a cosy set-up whereby there is less scrutiny of their work and training and development is often less well developed compared to careers service companies” (CSO).

- 2.30 Some CSOs felt that HECASs were *elitist*:

“Our perceptions of HE services as being élitist” (CSO).

“Snobbery, suspicion, lack of interest” (CSO).

“Regarding specialism of graduate (and undergraduate) clients as being more ‘rarified’ than other client groups” (CSO).

2.31 It is important to note, however, that some CSOs and HECASs were not aware of any significant hindrances:

“I am not aware of impediment – so long as there is a willingness by both parties to work together” (CSO).

“Neither party is obstructive – it is just a matter of time” (HECAS).

Commentary

2.32 On the basis of the data presented in this section, it seems that CSOs tend to be rather more favourable to links with HECASs than do HECASs to links with CSOs. They are less satisfied with the absence of links (Table 2), more sanguine about the links that exist (para.2.7), and more proactive in developing such links (Table 6). The magnitudes of differences in these respects is not however great. A wide range both of facilitating factors and of hindrances to the development of links have been identified. Nonetheless, an extensive variety of links exist. These will be explored in more detail in Section 3.

3. Nature of Links

Introduction

- 3.1 In this section we will examine the nature of the working links between CSOs and HECASs in more depth, drawing particularly on our case-studies in addition to our postal questionnaire survey. In doing so, we will seek to distinguish different kinds of links, and also to address issues related to the tensions between collaboration and competition.
- 3.2 To help us in this respect, we suggest that it may be useful to *classify the links* between CSOs and HECASs by using a typology adopted in a number of previous studies (Miller *et al.*, 1983; Watts *et al.*, 1994; 1997):
- (a) *Communication* – where no working patterns are changed, but efforts are made to help services to understand what each other offers so that they can, for example, cross-refer clients appropriately.
 - (b) *Co-operation* – where two or more services co-operate on some joint task.
 - (c) *Co-ordination* – where two or more services alter their working patterns to bring them more closely into line with one another, while remaining within their existing professional boundaries.
 - (d) *Cross-fertilisation* – where efforts are made to encourage services to share and exchange skills, and in effect to work across professional boundaries in ways that may re-draw the boundaries themselves.
 - (e) *Integration* – where the cross-fertilisation process is developed to a point which means that the boundaries between the different services disappear altogether.
- 3.3 Similarly, in analysing the *tensions between collaboration and competition*, distinctions can be drawn between:
- (a) *Areas of perceived complementarity* – where there is due recognition of potential benefits from establishing links between activities that are contiguous to, but separate from, one another.
 - (b) *Uncontested territory* – where the area of work is acknowledged as the responsibility of one side, and any involvement of the other side is recognised as supporting this work.
 - (c) *Areas of perceived incursion* – where one side perceives the other as intruding upon its specialist area of work.
 - (d) *Contested territory* – where it is recognised that both sides have potential claim on a particular area of work.

- (e) *Open territory* – where it is recognised that there are needs for services which neither side is yet in a position to meet.

In some cases, perceptions in these terms may vary between the two parties: for example, a particular area may be regarded as contested territory by one party, but as incursion by the other.

- 3.4 Such perceptions are likely to be influenced by the *saliency* of the area of work to the parties involved. Where one party regards a particular activity as being part of its *core business*, it is likely to view any major movement of the other party into this area as being an incursion; where however the activity is more *marginal* to its main concerns, it is more likely to be open to collaborative approaches. On the other hand, the more marginal an activity is to the service's main concerns, the less likely it is that resources will be committed to building collaborative links. This suggests that it may be in areas of medium rather than high or low salience that effective collaboration is most likely to occur.
- 3.5 It is important to note that there may be differences in these respects not only *between* but also *within* the two groups. This is particularly true in the case of HECASs, which are based in a wide variety of institutions (from large traditional universities to small colleges of higher education, and including unique institutions like the Open University), and vary from reasonably well-resourced services with a wide range of activities, to small services struggling to offer a minimal service to their own students (see Watts, 1997). CSOs tend to be more uniform in terms of their core contract, though they too can vary a great deal in what they do outside this.
- 3.6 In examining the links in these terms, we propose to analyse them mainly in relation to particular target-groups. We will look first at services to students *pre-entry*, *on-course*, and *post-exit*. We will then look at the wider issues relating to *adult guidance*. Finally, we will look at a number of activities which cross-cut these different areas of work: *labour-market information*, *quality standards*, and *staff development*.

Pre-entry

- 3.7 Pre-entry work with students coming direct (or almost direct) from school or college is part of the core business of CSOs, for whom most such students are part of their statutory client-group. The CSOs' main higher education links in this respect tend to be not with HECASs but with other parts of higher education institutions:

“Much of our contact is with school/college liaison/admissions rather than the HEI Careers Advisory Service” (CSO).

As noted earlier (Table 5), over half of HECASs see themselves as providing guidance support for such students. In the vast majority of cases, however, this is not individual guidance, but is limited to co-operation in such events as higher education fairs – mainly providing information on the graduate labour market in order to help students in their course choices (this is supported through AGCAS/CSU activities like the Prospects website and the annual publication *What Do Graduates Do?*). It was noted in one of our case-studies that students and parents are now demanding more such information as a

result of the introduction of student loans and fees. HECAS support of this nature is welcomed by CSOs:

“Destinations information is very valuable in guidance work with potential HE students” (CSO).

“Important for effective service delivery on our part for the statutory careers contract” (CSO).

Extensions of this kind of support are outlined in Boxes 1 and 2.

Box 1

Edge Hill University College has recently initiated and planned a Higher Education Millennium Event, in consultation with St Helens Career Services Ltd. The event was aimed at post-16 careers co-ordinators and advisers, to update and inform them on changes in higher education and student issues. Workshops were planned in response to an earlier needs analysis survey. Areas covered included government higher education policies and the implications of the Dearing Report, careers work at the college, student finance, accommodation, and occupational updates.

Box 2

At the University of Wales Bangor, the Career Development Unit has a schools project co-ordinator who is responsible for a variety of schemes, including sixth-formers shadowing students in a related subject for a day, and undergraduates visiting schools during lessons or as part of homework clubs. Discussions have taken place to expand the shadowing concept and take the undergraduates into schools identified by the local CSO (Y Cwmni Gyrfa – The Careers Company): the undergraduates would be trained to deliver three sessions within the framework of the school’s careers education programme, designed in conjunction with the CSO. Further discussions have taken place about supporting the design of careers education modules for years 12-13 pupils in local schools; and piloting in a local school and college a system similar to the university’s computer-based Personal Development Profiling System (in the management of which the Career Development Unit is closely involved). All these activities are being developed and carried out in close co-operation with the CSO, and are seen as strengthening the CSO’s work rather than representing any form of incursion into its territory.

- 3.8 One factor which might limit any significant expansion of HECASs’ role in pre-entry guidance is that it could potentially present them with some difficulties in maintaining their impartiality, where they can be perceived as acting – overtly or tacitly – in a recruitment role on the part of their institution. This has been a major issue in further education (Payne & Edwards, 1997). In the case of north-west Wales (Box 2), the HECAS is under no institutional pressure to perform such a recruitment role, or to give privileged attention to Bangor’s own course provision. But it was recognised that this might not be true elsewhere. The same issue arises in relation to access work with adults, which we will discuss later in this section (see para.3.34). Clarity on impartiality is an important issue for all guidance providers, and is being addressed in the quality standards

being developed by AGCAS and more generally by the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance.

- 3.9 With a few exceptions, pre-entry work as defined here is an area of high salience for CSOs and of low salience for HECASs. For this and the other reasons indicated above, it can be viewed as uncontested CSO territory, with many HECASs adopting an unthreatening, usually low-key, supportive role.

On-course

- 3.10 Career guidance to enrolled students is the core business of HECASs. In principle, therefore, it too is uncontested territory. Many CSOs recognise that they have no role in this area:

“We are formally prohibited from offering services to undergraduates and likewise excluded from obtaining much, if not all, of the CSU material for undergraduates and postgraduates” (CSO).

“Our client group excludes higher education students so we refer them to the local institutions” (CSO).

The main general caveat to this is that, with more higher education students interested in local jobs in small and medium-sized organisations, there is some recognition that CSOs may have more contact with such organisations and be able to provide relevant local labour market information (see para. 3.37 below). In some respects this can be seen as paralleling the HECAS role in supplying graduate labour-market information to support CSOs’ pre-entry guidance (see para.3.7 above).

- 3.11 There are however a number of groups of on-course students where the position is more complex. One is *discontinuing students*. A HECAS careers adviser in one of our case-studies mentioned that the service would want to see their institution’s own students who were discontinuing, but would refer to the CSO those who were local, as the CSO was probably the most appropriate provider of guidance and placement support. Such students are presumably likely to be seeking entry to further education, re-entry to higher education, or non-graduate jobs, all of which might be viewed as CSO rather than HECAS terrain. Moreover, many of them could be regarded as still falling into the CSO’s core client group (cf. para.1.2). Not all CSOs, however, appear to accept this: one HECAS reported the local CSO as displaying

“... a reluctance to accept referrals, such as withdrawing students that do not readily fit into careers company official categories” (HECAS).

Discontinuing students are potentially a very large group, amounting to up to 10% of higher education students per year (HEFCE, 1997).

- 3.12 A second problematic group is *further education students in higher education institutions*. In one of our case-studies, non-matriculated students on the university’s modular programme are deemed as low-priority by the HECAS and often have to be referred to the local CSO or elsewhere; in another, however, it is clear that FE students are not regarded

by the service as part of the CSO's statutory client-group where they are based within an HE institution. There appear to be no clear official guidelines in this area. There is a danger, therefore, that such students are currently falling between the two positions.

- 3.13 The same is true of the third category: *higher education students in further education institutions*. Although CSOs' core-contract remit in FE colleges is in principle fairly broad (see para.1.2), in practice the funding is more restricted. A CSO manager in one of our case-studies defined it as covering "students up to the age of 19 who are FEFC-funded"; a manager in another reported that local colleges bought in extra time from the CSO to "beef up" their guidance programmes. Higher education students in such colleges are formally excluded from the statutory client-group. As an extension of its "beefing-up" arrangement, however, a CSO in a further case-study had been given a contract to provide guidance to the college's franchised HE students; a close working relationship between the CSO and the local HECAS meant that the HECAS had been happy for relevant CSO staff to

"...raid the careers information room for key resources because we both knew they were not setting up a HE careers library" (HECAS).

In this instance the local HECAS was not based in the franchising institution, which was located some distance away: it seemed therefore to be viewed as a one-off situation, meriting a specific pragmatic response.

- 3.14 Some universities, on the other hand, have clear policies for offering guidance support to their franchised students (see Box 3). We noted earlier (Table 5) that 35% of HECASs listed guidance support for higher education students in further education institutions as one of the purposes of its working links with CSOs. In 1999/2000 the Higher Education Funding Council for England will be funding 41,000 full-time and 38,000 part-time students in further education colleges (figures from HEFCE).

Box 3

At Sheffield Hallam University, there is a clear university policy to support its students who are based in associated FE colleges. As part of this, a guidance network has been established to offer support to guidance staff within the colleges, including the local CSO staff who service them. Meetings with both groups incorporating training sessions are held biannually, information packs are provided to provide a baseline resource, and there is regular information exchange in both directions. It is recognised that the CSO staff may have the benefit of these resources in working with clients who are not Sheffield Hallam students, but such "leakage" is accepted as inevitable.

- 3.15 There is also one example in our data of a higher education institution *contracting out* its careers service to a CSO (Box 4). This appears, however, to be an isolated case.
- 3.16 It would seem then that the main contested territory in services to students on-course appears at the interface between further and higher education. In many cases, such issues are resolved amicably and flexibly through co-operation. In some instances, however, because these areas adjoin their core activities, HECASs are anxious about conceding ground. There was evidence, for example, that the Surrey case-study (Box 4) was

regarded by some AGCAS members as a form of “take-over” which represented a dangerous precedent.

Box 4

Surrey Institute of Art and Design is a degree-awarding university-sector college with around 2,300 higher education students and around 600 further education students. As a former LEA art college, it had made use of the local LEA Careers Service. Following incorporation, it felt that, as a small institution, it did not have the infrastructure to support setting up its own careers service. Since 1994, it has accordingly had a formal contract with Surrey Careers Services to provide a career guidance service to all its students. This contract is renewed annually; so far it has not been offered more widely on a competitive tendering basis, though there is scope to do so if required. The contract covers both the full career guidance provision and the annual destinations follow-up exercise; following recent discussions, it has now been given a more flexible form to encourage stronger links with the academic curriculum (the service has been moved from Student Services into Academic Services). The advisers have membership of AGCAS. Both sides see benefits to the arrangement: the Institute in having external professional staff linked to a large careers guidance organisation; the CSO in enabling its staff to gain training and expertise in the higher education sector.

- 3.17 Many CSOs appear to have no wider ambitions to offer services to higher education students. Some, however, do. Several expressed awareness of the very limited careers services which some higher education institutions offer to their students:

“Under-resourcing of careers education and guidance for the HE students and graduates at X” (CSO).

“No clear strategic direction and ring-fenced budget in university funding for careers guidance, leading to poor staffing ratios generally and poor focus” (CSO).

Some felt that, given additional resources, they could offer at least as good a service themselves:

“The concept of separate university-based services is outdated” (CSO).

It was felt that this would offer benefits in terms of greater continuity of guidance provision and more effective feedback to earlier stages. It is however worth noting that in the Surrey case-study (Box 4), a CSO manager reported:

“The careers advisory service is a small cog in a big wheel; this has exposed our careers consultants to appreciate the complexities of higher education institutions and the dynamics of working across programme areas... the work is more complicated compared to work in further education colleges” (CSO).

- 3.18 In a few cases, CSO ambitions in this field have been made public, to the annoyance of local HECASs:

“One aspect of the way in which some local careers companies operate which severely impedes good working relationships is the inclusion in their business plans of the desire to run HE services!” (HECAS).

“Local careers company published its corporate plan including a commitment to ‘offer guidance services to HE students’ without consultation” (HECAS).

The fear of “take-over” ambitions on the part of some CSOs has clearly, as we saw in Section 2 (para.2.26), been a major impediment to the development of effective working links between CSOs and HECASs, even in areas where there is no evidence of the local CSO harbouring such ambitions.

Post-exit

- 3.19 A further contested area is that of guidance offered to graduates within the couple of years following graduation. There is evidence that more students are now deferring serious attention to job-hunting until after they have completed their degrees, and that many students now take longer to stabilise in an initial career direction. Many HECASs accordingly make their services available free of charge to their graduates for a period of up to three years or even longer; a few, however, do not (Watts, 1997, p.45).
- 3.20 The position is complicated by the fact that many graduates move back to their home area or elsewhere at some distance from their place of study. Accordingly, a “mutual aid” scheme has been established by AGCAS under which HECASs have agreed to offer what services they can to each other’s graduates (and current students) for three years post-graduation. Current practice, however, varies considerably, from London which charges for all services to such users, to others which offer a free service to all-comers, the only restriction being that they may not have access to full careers adviser interviews during busy times. An AGCAS survey in 1994 suggested that the great majority fell towards the latter end of this spectrum. Nonetheless, the diversity of views on this – and the very different situations faced by services in densely-populated and thinly-populated areas – has made it difficult to promote the “mutual aid” provision as a standard nationally-available service (*ibid*, pp.45-46).
- 3.21 Some CSOs clearly view unemployed graduates as part of HECASs’ responsibility. As one HECAS said:

“[We do] not see X as a competitor in that they refer all unemployed graduates here. This has produced a clear line of demarcation which allows each organisation to work well together” (HECAS).

Sometimes there might be exceptions to this on geographical grounds:

“The only ones we would see would tend to be the ones who just could not travel... it could be a 60 to 70 mile journey to... the local university” (CSO).

Some CSOs, however, felt it was clear that HECASs were unable to cope with the demand:

“In some cases they are besieged by local students and they cannot cope” (CSO).

“Our staff regularly see unemployed graduates who feel left high and dry by their HEI” (CSO).

“Complaints from graduates that they can’t get interviews once they’ve left the institution” (CSO).

- 3.22 A number of CSOs were keen to offer services to recent graduates themselves. Some, for example, ran jobclubs, or provided a wider range of services. In some cases this was welcomed by HECASs:

“[We] alone cannot meet local graduate guidance needs” (HECAS).

Other HECASs, however, clearly regard such CSO services as representing incursions into their territory:

“Predatory moves by X to get involved with graduate guidance without talking to us about it” (HECAS).

“... careers companies... tout for business in areas such as guidance for new and recent graduates even where they themselves are aware that the local HE service is the logical provider” (HECAS).

On the other hand, it was clear that some CSOs were unable to cope either, particularly where they were not able to secure extra funding to provide services to such students:

“Demand by graduates for guidance is becoming too great for us to handle given existing resources” (CSO).

Moreover, one CSO recognised that this was an area where co-operation with the HECAS was desirable:

“... because the local labour market cannot offer opportunities which meet the needs of local graduates” (CSO).

- 3.23 Tensions in this area seemed to be exacerbated where fees were charged. One HECAS felt that the local CSO’s fee-charging policy impeded closer links:

“X charges graduates – we do not as yet” (HECAS).

Conversely, one CSO mentioned the growth of fee-charging by HECASs in the same terms:

“Move to charging graduates of other institutions for services... would have negative effect on working relationship” (CSO).

On the other hand, some CSOs offering charged services still took care to explain the possibilities of free help within the mutual-aid scheme:

“We have a commercial service for recent graduates, but we always refer them to the universities in the area as they have a reciprocal arrangement with universities across the country” (CSO).

- 3.24 There were several examples of joint initiatives for recent graduates. These included, for example, a series of job-hunting seminars for unemployed graduates run by a CSO in association with two local HECASs. Several of the successful projects in the DfEE’s “Guidance for Graduates” development programme were based on CSO/HECAS partnerships. We saw earlier (Table 5) that guidance support for unemployed graduates was the most common area of working links with CSOs named by HECASs.
- 3.25 A further complicating element in the post-exit area is the impact of the New Deal arrangements for young people aged 18-24. These arrangements vary considerably between localities. In one of our case-studies it was felt that the Employment Service personal advisers, now being trained up to NVQ Level 3 in guidance, were not referring graduates to either CSOs or HECASs, but were dealing with them themselves. In another, however, the CSO was a lead agent for the Gateway element of the New Deal, and had made arrangements to sub-contract work relating to graduates to local HECASs (though no referrals had yet been made at the time of our visit). Similar arrangements were being considered in a third case-study.
- 3.26 It would thus seem that guidance post-exit is contested territory, with potential for competition but also for co-operation. Several services commented on the need for greater public funding for provision in this area.

Adult guidance

- 3.27 The line between post-exit guidance and adult guidance is a blurred one. What HECASs view as post-exit guidance may be viewed by CSOs as part of adult guidance. One CSO indeed suggested that HECAS claims over post-exit work denied adult status to graduates:
- “Not being able to regard graduates as adults (in careers service terminology)” (CSO).
- 3.28 Clearly, however, beyond the two or three years immediately following graduation, issues related to providing guidance to graduates become part of the wider issue of making guidance available to adults in general. This was, in many respects, viewed as open territory, in the sense that – as was pointed out by several services on both sides – no clear national strategy had yet emerged for responding to the demand for adult guidance. As noted earlier (para.1.13), it was unclear how far such services were to be paid for by individuals or subsidised in some way; and if provision was to be made by several providers, how far their relationships were to be based on collaboration or on competition.
- 3.29 In the absence of a national strategy for adult guidance, some CSOs and some HECASs clearly regarded it as outside their terms of reference:
- “It is university policy that the careers centre are not involved in non-core work” (HECAS).

“It is not the local careers companies who are providing services to adults in this area” (HECAS).

Others were keen to develop services for adults, but many were still struggling to find effective means of doing so.

3.30 Over the years, efforts have been made in many areas of the country to form networks of adult guidance providers. We noted earlier (Table 5) that two-thirds both of CSOs and of HECASs refer to collaboration with one another in such networks. The networks commonly also include representatives from TECs/LECs, Local Education Authorities, the Open University, colleges of further education, training providers, and the voluntary sector – as well as, increasingly, the Employment Service. They usually meet periodically and often produce local directories of adult guidance providers. They also provide frameworks for accessing funding for adult guidance, including European funding linked to social priority areas.

3.31 Some networks have been managed by TECs, which have routed funding to the member services on a *per capita* basis – sometimes limited to unemployed or unwaged adults, but sometimes with broader terms of reference. In some cases membership of the network has been limited to organisations meeting specified quality standards (see para.3.47). Where HECASs have been members of such networks, there has been a tendency for graduates to be referred to them, though often clients are free to approach whichever agency they choose. A few HECASs felt that the TEC was prejudiced against them:

“Our TEC owns/manages the local CS – so the TEC is more inclined to support them than us” (HECAS).

“Local TECs focus on funding careers services to detriment of others i.e. ourselves” (HECAS).

A couple of HECASs felt positively excluded:

“There is total inflexibility with regard to adult guidance in that in effect the HE services are excluded from being considered as providers” (HECAS).

“I have lobbied the TEC and the careers service to allow funding for graduates to be interviewed in our HEI CAS to no avail!” (HECAS).

In a few cases, the HECAS was involved but resource constraints limited the extent of its involvement. Thus one university which offered its own students an entitlement to a short 15-minute signposting interview, but not necessarily a confidential booked interview, felt that it could offer only the former to local adult guidance clients.

3.32 In some areas, notably in Scotland, adult guidance networks are co-ordinated by CSOs. An example is outlined in Box 5.

Box 5

In Edinburgh and Lothians, the local CSO was involved in initiating the Lothian Adult Guidance Network in 1985. It currently covers around 120 public-, private- and voluntary-sector organisations ranging from HECASs to Citizens Advice Bureaux. Funding has been provided by the Scottish Office – through the Scottish Adult Guidance Initiative – to support the development of the network, including its work on staff development, quality standards development, strengthening the local network information base, establishing a referral point for enquiries from the national learning helpline, and developing a marketing strategy for information and guidance provision. The local HECASs have been closely involved in these developments and have run on a pilot basis a series of extended open evenings to provide information and guidance, particularly for non-recent graduates not eligible for the “mutual aid” arrangements: they were seen as a way of enabling local people to benefit from the expertise and information resources available in HECASs. The take-up of guidance appointments was high, exceeding supply capacity in some cases: the director of one participating HECAS took the view that if further funding were available, the service could be continued and extended – through use of supply staff – to cover further evenings and perhaps also Saturday mornings. The CSO is now instituting a charging policy for adults in employment who are seeking careers guidance and have the means to pay; the HECAS is thinking of doing the same, and considers that it is important for the two services to have a consistent charging policy “to avoid confusion and competition between services”.

- 3.33 Several HECASs took the view that adult guidance was an area where links with CSOs could be particularly fruitful, on a mutually beneficial basis:

“Network arrangements which bring shared resources and training from TEC are good because you gain without having to give away your competitive position” (HECAS).

“We are the key agencies in moulding a local policy and delivery support for adults and graduates” (HECAS).

Some HECASs felt it was important to assert their distinctive expertise within such arrangements:

“Safeguarding our position as the graduate specialists is important” (HECAS).

- 3.34 A further way of viewing adult guidance from a HECAS perspective is as part of lifelong learning. One HECAS manager saw adult guidance provision as a university’s “loss leader” because

“... by maintaining a good relationship with their local graduate population an institution is more likely to be able to invite them to take up CPD opportunities” (HECAS).

In other words, within a lifelong learning perspective, adult guidance becomes a dimension of pre-entry guidance (see Box 6).

Box 6

At Sheffield Hallam University, the HECAS has been integrated into a broader grouping of “access and guidance services” designed to provide continuous support for students from pre-entry through to exit and beyond. This is recognised as requiring closer collaboration with the local CSO in relation to its community-based work. It is also acknowledged that the “loss leader” argument (para.3.34) could compromise the service’s impartiality (cf. para.3.8): the principle of impartiality is accordingly being explicitly affirmed.

- 3.35 Adult guidance represents the major area of open territory in the relationships between CSOs and HECASs. Within a conventional model of young people progressing from school/college into higher education, it constitutes an extraneous area for both groups. Within a lifelong learning model, however, it could represent a way of extending and reconstructing their core business.

Labour-market information

- 3.36 Cross-cutting these various areas of work are links relating to labour-market information. These include three main elements: information on specific vacancies, more general links with employers, and broader information on labour market trends.
- 3.37 There appears to be some sharing of vacancy information and employer contacts. In one of our case-studies, for example, the HECAS sends copies of all its locally-produced vacancy bulletins to the local CSO. In another, arrangements for exchanging information on employers offering graduate vacancies are being discussed. A few HECASs felt that CSOs had more to gain than HECASs from such arrangements:

“Careers companies have everything to gain... but... we get potentially little (or so I’ve heard others say)” (HECAS).

On the other hand, other HECASs felt they had much to gain too:

“Students and graduate clients need improved access to local jobs” (HECAS).

This was particularly the case in view of the Dearing Report’s recommendation on expanding opportunities for undergraduate work experience (NCIHE, 1997, recommendation 19).

- 3.38 An important source of labour-market information is the follow-up survey of graduate destinations carried out by HECASs. Several CSOs reported that they valued this information:

“... LMI clearly key to decisions in choosing careers and HEIs have the information first hand from graduates” (CSO).

“... useful information on graduate destinations etc. which keeps careers advisers up to date” (CSO).

One felt that its presentation and availability could be improved:

“We would appreciate clearer destination information but understand this is difficult for HEIs to provide” (CSO).

- 3.39 In some respects the HECAS surveys complement the school/college destination surveys carried out by CSOs. Some CSOs made a point of sharing the results of the latter with all local HECASs. Tracking of young people by CSOs is now receiving greater attention both nationally and locally. At present this does not usually extend to higher education. In one of our case-studies, however, the CSO regularly carried out its own survey of local graduates (Box 7). In two other case-studies, the local CSO felt that there was much to be gained from extending tracking studies to cover higher education, particularly with more students entering higher education locally. It was pointed out that this would be particularly important if the funding model for higher education became more like that in further education, with attention given to student retention, drop-out rates, and progression.

Box 7

Since 1993, St Helens Career Services Ltd. has conducted a Graduate Destination Survey of 1,000 graduates from the St Helens area. The survey information is obtained from the LEA grants and awards section. Initially it was funded by the local TEC: now it is funded by the CSO itself. It is viewed as providing valuable labour-market information as well as indicating the guidance required by graduates. Because it covers students from the locality studying all over the country, it is seen as complementing the local HECASs' first-destination surveys, which relate to their own graduates a few months after graduation. The outcomes are disseminated to all HECASs in the North-West. The needs identified from the survey have led to a series of job-hunting seminars for unemployed graduates: these are run by the CSO in collaboration with local HECASs.

- 3.40 In broader terms, there was recognition on both sides that there was in principle a great deal of complementarity between the databases and information resources held by CSOs and HECASs, with potential benefits on both sides from greater sharing. On the other hand, it was noted that this could raise difficult issues of intellectual property rights:

“... I think everyone is rather fearful for their IP rights and their income generating ability...” (HECAS).

“... protective of knowledge” (CSO).

- 3.41 The increasing use of the Internet for information is recontouring these issues. One CSO felt there was a

“... need to share information, in particular to make better use of Internet systems linking websites” (CSO).

In one of our case-studies, the CSO and the HECAS are both involved in the development of websites on labour-market information: it has been agreed that the planning of the two sites will be co-ordinated and that reciprocal links will be built between them.

Staff development

- 3.42 In general, as indicated in Section 1, the structures of initial training and of staff development for CSOs and HECASs tend to be separate from one another. Certainly a substantial number of HECAS staff come from a CSO background (see para.1.6). But once they are working in a HECAS, most of their training is provided within AGCAS networks.
- 3.43 Some of the initiatives outlined in earlier parts of this section have however included some opportunities for CSO and HECAS staff to be involved in training each other, or in joint staff development. In one of our case-studies, for example, CSO staff have provided training for some HECAS staff in relation to their roles within local adult guidance and New Deal initiatives. In another, there are plans to involve HECAS staff in offering mentoring for other members of the adult guidance network. Such networks also offer opportunities for joint training sessions.
- 3.44 More generally, staff development was seen in some cases as a fertile area for further co-operation. One CSO mentioned that staff swaps were being considered for the future. At least one HECAS was already making use of CSO staff:

“I couldn’t staff my service without utilising the careers advisers for part-time cover. This arrangement is with individual staff rather than a contract with the company but they are aware of the situation” (HECAS).

Quality standards

- 3.45 A final area where some links are tentatively being developed is in relation to quality standards. There are three dimensions to this.
- 3.46 The first is that a number of CSOs have been involved in developing and implementing local quality standards for career education and guidance programmes in schools and colleges. In one of our case-studies, it was intended that the local HECASs would play a significant role in this, with representation on the steering group and on the assessment team.
- 3.47 The second is that in some areas, as noted in para.3.31, public funding of adult guidance has been limited to organisations regarded as meeting specified quality standards. In some cases such standards were developed by TECs/LECs; increasingly, these have been influenced by the draft standards developed nationally by the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance. CSOs and HECASs which are part of adult guidance networks in these areas have been subject to such standards. From 2001, all adult guidance providers which are members of local information, advice and guidance partnerships will be expected to possess the Guidance Council Quality Mark as a condition of grant (DfEE, 1998c).

- 3.48 The third is that the national standards developed by the Guidance Council have been designed to cover all sectors of career education and guidance provision. At the same time, CSOs are subject to government standards in relation to their core contract, while in higher education AGCAS is developing quality standards for HECASs. If these two set of standards are harmonised with the Guidance Council standards, this could provide a strong influence for harmonisation between the two sets of services. Moreover, if the implementation mechanism for the standards includes a strong local component, there could be interesting questions about the respective roles of CSOs and HECASs – as the two most strongly professionalised services – in their local application (as in the school/college example in para.3.46).

Commentary

- 3.49 In terms of the framework outlined in the introduction to this section, it would seem that the main links established to date relate to communication, co-operation and co-ordination. Communication links include informal networking and formal meetings. Co-operation links include various joint initiatives and project development work (e.g. para.3.24). Co-ordination links, comprising some alteration of working patterns within existing professional boundaries, include arrangements in relation to New Deal (para.3.25) and adult guidance (Box 5). We saw earlier (Table 4) that communication links are common; the others a little less so.
- 3.50 More radical links, related to cross-fertilisation or integration, are much more rare. The one example of integration (Box 4) is based on distinctive circumstances. Links related to staff development and quality standards (paras.3.42-3.48) could be regarded as forms of co-operation, but have the potential for cross-fertilisation – i.e. for facilitating work across professional boundaries in ways which may redraw the boundaries themselves. Activities in these areas are fairly limited at present, though with potential for growth.
- 3.51 On the tensions between collaboration and competition, it would seem that labour-market information is viewed widely (though not universally) as an area of perceived complementarity. CSOs' pre-entry guidance and HECASs' on-course guidance are largely uncontested territory, though with some tensions related to perceived incursion from CSOs in relation to the latter. These tensions relate mainly to the interface between further and higher education, where there is some contested territory. The other major contested territory is post-exit guidance. Adult guidance is, in the main, viewed as open territory.

4. Looking Ahead

Introduction

4.1 In this section, we will look first at what developments related to closer working were anticipated by CSOs and HECASs over the next two years. Next we will examine the implications of regionalisation and of devolution. Finally, we will look at how services saw relationships between CSOs and HECASs developing over the longer term.

Next two years

4.2 In our postal survey, services were asked to indicate whether they envisaged any significant developments during the next two years which would involve them and their corresponding local services working together. Table 11 presents the responses. Over three-quarters of the CSOs, and over two-thirds of the HECASs, answered “yes” or “possibly”.

<i>Table 11: Developments anticipated in next two years?</i>		
	<i>CSOs</i>	<i>HECASs</i>
Yes	45 (70%)	52 (59%)
Possibly	5 (8%)	9 (10%)
No	14 (22%)	27 (31%)
	64	88
No reply	13	8
<i>Areas anticipated</i>		
Pre-entry	3	2
On-course	4	–
Post-exit	5	8
Adult guidance	22	9
LMI	5	2
Staff development	–	2
Quality standards	1	2
Other	5	1
<i>Notes</i>		
(1) The question asked for “yes” or “no” responses: the “possibly” replies were volunteered by respondents. It seems likely therefore that the number of “possible” replies would have been greater had it been offered as one of the options.		
(2) The areas of development mentioned by the “yes” or “possibly” replies were not pre-coded: they are therefore illustrative rather than exhaustive.		

4.3 As shown in Table 3, we analysed the responses into the categories adopted in Section 3. On this basis, much the largest category – especially of CSOs – related to *adult guidance*. Some saw collaboration in this area as inevitable:

“Closer collaboration inevitable in a move towards an ‘all-age’ guidance service” (HECAS).

Others thought it was conditional on policy initiatives:

“Much will depend on the TEC’s structure of government funding, policies set up by RDAs, political drive towards a *quality* all-age guidance service” (HECAS).

“Possibly, if Euro funding can be attracted” (CSO).

Reference was made to Learning Direct, to the University for Industry, to Individual Learning Accounts, and to the New Deal. Some envisaged specific joint initiatives in this area:

“Adult guidance network – in particular development of ‘local access points’” (CSO).

“Perhaps a shop-front all-age (including graduates) Guidance Centre in X: there’s a reasonable argument for it!” (HECAS).

4.4 Reference was also made, however, to each of the other areas discussed in Section 3. On *pre-entry* guidance, responses included:

“Further development of higher education conference. Talks into sixth forms” (CSO).

“Possibly the continuation of the joint ESF project ‘Transition to HE’ for A-level/GNVQ students” (CSO).

“Funding implications for HE mean that pre-entry guidance is vital and therefore closer working is essential” (HECAS).

“Largely in the pre-entry area: (1) increase in demand for pre-course information relating specifically to employability; (2) even more locally based students” (HECAS).

4.5 In terms of *on-course* guidance, no reference was made by either side to any CSO taking over core work from a HECAS. The four comments here – all from CSOs – related to higher education students at further education colleges:

“Hope to come to some agreement over the provision of careers guidance to undergrads at local FE colleges” (CSO).

“X college moving into University of Y, and their CAS service being offered on campus alongside their resources. We are investigating closer collaboration with this CAS service, particularly to continue our service to FE students” (CSO).

“A more co-ordinated approach to HE input in FE institutions” (CSO).

“Joint working on widening participation for higher education students in further education colleges” (CSO).

- 4.6 On *post-exit* guidance, more mentions were made by HECASs than by CSOs. Some were specific to joint work in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises:

“Currently working on a proposed project to promote graduate careers in SMEs – participation by local careers company(ies) envisaged” (HECAS).

“Joint inputs into regional graduate/SME brokerage initiative is in progress” (HECAS).

“HE Development Fund project to develop a regional approach to the graduate/SME interface” (HECAS).

Some related to the New Deal:

“We are a gateway provider. X [CSO] are the lead organisation for New Deal locally” (HECAS).

Others were more general in nature:

“Likely to develop a code of practice, referral mechanisms and joint practical activities regarding the delivery of graduate guidance” (HECAS).

“I would hope we would work more closely together e.g. on initiatives for unemployed/mature graduates” (CSO).

- 4.7 The references to *labour-market information* covered a range of initiatives:

“We are working together on a shared database LMI system” (CSO).

“Develop video and internet services” (CSO).

“We are talking about... sharing employer information” (HECAS).

“We shall set up a more formal structure to share LMI” (HECAS).

- 4.8 The references to *staff development* and to *quality standards* tended to be general in nature, but a few were more specific:

“Guidance Consortium – negotiating joint quality standards” (HECAS).

“We are currently developing programmes of accredited careers education for pupils and students which will complement our careers education quality standards. We will need to consult with the universities regarding these developments” (CSO).

- 4.9 In addition, there were a few *other* areas of collaboration that were identified. Some were very geographically specific, relating for example to the introduction of the University of the Highlands and Islands (CSE 06, 14, 17) and of “a community university for North Wales” (CWA 04). Others were broader in nature:

“Possibly additional projects, funded by DfEE” (HECAS).

“Any funding bids to the Government Office or DfEE will be joint bids” (HECAS).

4.10 Finally, a number of more *general* comments were made:

“We have to change the present unsatisfactory situation and are taking steps – in collaboration with other AGCAS members in [the region] – to remedy the situation” (HECAS).

“We feel ourselves and the HEI careers advisory services share a common agenda and understanding of guidance issues and are therefore natural allies” (CSO).

“The matter of collaborative work has begun to be addressed and developments are expected over the next year or so” (HECAS).

“Even closer links” (HECAS).

“It is the obvious sensible way forward” (HECAS).

The regional/national dimension

4.11 A number of services commented on the growing trend towards regionalisation, and its likely impact in encouraging stronger collaboration:

“Regionalisation. Perception that we have to work together” (HECAS).

In some cases, this was linked to European Social Fund monies related to economic regeneration:

“More and more people are recognising now that they need to build in the guidance elements to any bid and initiative around job creation and that [our services] are the only two agencies in the area that could offer the impartial and independent guidance” (CSO).

More broadly, it was linked to the emergence of Regional Development Agencies:

“Within a few years there will be a growth in the number of regional forums links to RDA developments, feeding into a national network... [This] will strengthen the interface between higher education careers advisory services and careers service companies” (CSO).

4.12 It was noted that higher education institutions were being encouraged to align themselves regionally, and that AGCAS already had strong networks in some regions. CSNA, too, has adopted a regional structure, and close regional partnerships have been established in some cases between CSOs. Links between these networks could be fruitful:

“Liaison between the two could be a very positive force for common-sense collaboration on the one hand and recognition of differing missions and ‘territories’ on the other” (HECAS).

- 4.13 Several references were made for the need for professional associations – notably AGCAS and the Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges of Higher Education (ACACHE) on the one hand, and CSNA and ICG on the other – to work together more closely at both regional and national levels. Some or all of these bodies should:

“... find common ground and develop a joint policy which would advocate the way forward in partnership” (CSO).

One HECAS manager noted that:

“AGCAS is clearly starting to think about the part it wants to play in the overall national guidance community... and is moving towards a position which is less exclusive than it used to be... and more aware of the other players in the overall guidance field” (HECAS).

- 4.14 Particular reference was made in our case-studies to developments in Scotland and in Wales. In Scotland, it was reported that a Scottish Guidance Advisory Group had been formed to advise the Scottish Office on the strategic development of adult guidance work in Scotland. Both CSOs and HECASs were represented on this group. It seemed likely that this group would review the communication links with existing networks in Scotland, would help to shape policy, and might then oversee the implementation of quality standards in guidance throughout Scotland (cf. paras.3.45-3.48).
- 4.15 In Wales, it was noted that an Education and Training Action Group for Wales had been set up to make recommendations to the Welsh National Assembly on the structure and provision of education and training. A draft consultation document produced in October 1998 included a chapter on information, advice and guidance. This recommended that “the National Assembly should remit the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to benchmark standards for careers provision in Welsh higher education institutions and take steps to ensure that all undergraduates have access to a clearly defined and consistent level of service across Wales”. This was placed within an overall recommendation that “the National Assembly for Wales establish a National Information, Advice and Guidance Service – Gyrfa Cymru Careers – by April 2001” (ETAGW, 1998, pp.34 and 36-37). A comment on one of our questionnaires noted:

“ETAG outcome, if taken up by the National Assembly, will strengthen collaboration” (CSO).

The longer term

- 4.16 Finally, services were asked how they saw the relationships between CSOs and HECASs developing over the longer term. A few HECASs felt that the *status quo* was likely to remain:

“We do not see significant changes in our relationship with careers service companies” (HECAS).

“Continuing to operate in separate and independent fields of activity” (HECAS).

Most, however, felt that growing collaboration was likely. In some cases, such collaboration was envisaged as taking place in one or more of the specific areas outlined earlier in this section. In others, they were seen as being more general in nature:

“Over the longer term and following Watts and Dearing recommendations, as well as the implications of lifelong learning, there *must* be relationships developed between HEIs of whatever kind and careers companies, characterised by collaboration and mutual respect, not competition” (HECAS).

The extent of collaboration might however continue to vary between different geographical areas, and according to different institutional cultures and missions:

“I think developments are likely to be influenced by the local situation which pertains. In some cases, I foresee extensive collaboration – in others, none at all” (HECAS).

4.17 It was widely noted that much depended on government policy:

“Unless political agendas move consistently and strongly towards all-age guidance, and funding is available, I am not sure much will change (HECAS).

“It depends on this government’s attitude to careers advice and on how much of Dearing will become reality” (HECAS).

“Depends on a wide range of actors, not least the political will of the government to follow through in supporting the changes recommended by Dearing and the lifelong learning paper” (HECAS).

4.18 There was a sense that some of the difficulties in relationships between CSOs and HECASs might now be beginning to be surmounted:

“In our specific area there is a lot of damage to be undone, caused by the way in which careers service contracts were awarded. We are hopeful that better links will develop and that we will get involved in some collaborative projects” (HECAS).

“Just came through a difficult patch where relations were strained. Better now due to efforts on both sides” (CSO).

4.19 In terms of models for the future, some were based on communication, co-operation and collaboration within more clearly demarcated boundaries:

“A clear division of responsibility” (HECAS).

“Need a proactive referral system and agreed ‘services’ we can refer clients to” (CSO).

“Where there are common objectives and a recognition of each other’s roles and contributions” (HECAS).

4.20 Some services, however, argued for greater cross-fertilisation *across* professional boundaries:

“Possibly working together in a more seamless way” (HECAS).

“More ‘seamless’ provision of guidance” (HECAS).

“If lifelong learning is to be meaningful, then there must be good lifelong careers guidance and information which is totally seamless” (HECAS).

4.21 A few seemed to envisage moving towards full integration:

“Becoming more closely integrated” (HECAS).

“Possible merging of services” (HECAS).

“If the trend towards ‘home town’ university attendance grows, both careers companies and ourselves will be providing local services to local people. From the client’s point of view, multiple agencies will cease to make any real sense” (HECAS).

“[The present provision] reflects institutions’ self interest and preservation of familiar structures... Merging existing careers services is essential... The Employment Service should stop messing around with benefits. They should transfer them to DSS and merge the rump of the Employment Service with local careers services and higher education careers services” (CSO).

4.22 Others, however, were strongly against such integration:

“HEI careers services are effectively part of a national (even international) careers service network but with the huge advantage of working within institutions... I can see some pooling of information and agreements on joint projects but it would be very much to the detriment of HE students to have any general pooling of resources with ‘localised’ providers” (HECAS).

“Careers guidance for HE students/recent grads should remain the exclusive responsibility of university careers services as only they have institutional contacts/specialist expertise/information resources with national perspective. There is some scope for collaboration re. graduates where local university provisions poor and re. pre-entry guidance” (HECAS).

It was also noted that any moves to integrate the services would be hampered by differences in salary structures and in terms and conditions of employment.

4.23 Some thought that integration might be possible in specific areas of activity:

“It is possible that they could merge to provide a one-stop adult guidance service” (HECAS).

“They could provide joint graduate services” (HECAS).

4.24 In relation to lifelong guidance, it was noted that CSOs and HECASs were not the only agencies involved:

“The role of other lifelong learning/guidance services should not be forgotten however. They are probably more significant in terms of serving potential mature students for HE than local CS, and possibly mature graduates” (HECAS).

Some CSOs saw themselves as having a strategic co-ordination role in this respect:

“One of our company strategic aims is to be the lead organisation in supporting other providers of advice and guidance services” (CSO).

Some HECASs, however, were resistant to such a notion:

“Links need to be in the form of a genuine partnership – local service has tended to act unilaterally, assuming a dominant role” (HECAS).

4.25 Most comments seemed to favour a process of gradual development in particular areas of activity, with sensitivity to local differences:

“The best way of encouraging co-operation is through locally funded initiatives to provide improved service for graduates and a more co-ordinated approach to local industry” (HECAS).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- 5.1 Our survey has revealed a great diversity both of attitudes and of practice in the relationships between CSOs and HECASs. In some areas, there are very close working relationships, based upon trust and personal contacts built up over a long period of time. In others, there is lack of contact, or – more negatively – some mistrust and suspicion. Between these two extremes are areas where contacts tend to be limited to specific activities.
- 5.2 Our review has identified many examples of collaborative practice. These cover a wide variety of activities related to a range of client-groups. If all services felt willing to address the full range of possibilities indicated by the practices we have reported, the scope for expanding such collaboration would be considerable. This does however depend a great deal on developing a climate of trust. This has to be built up gradually, and can easily be undermined by misunderstandings, by behaviours perceived as threatening, or by policies perceived as encouraging competition rather than collaboration.
- 5.3 Where negative attitudes exist, they have in many cases been closely linked to the impact of the contracting-out of CSOs (para.2.22). This has meant that the organisational climate in CSOs is now perceived by some to be very different from that in HECASs (para.2.28). It has also meant that, with some CSOs having a profit-making structure, and others adopting an entrepreneurial approach within a non-profit structure, there has been considerable suspicion of their expansionist ambitions (para.2.26). Such suspicions have not always been groundless: some CSOs have publicly indicated an interest in taking over higher education services (para.3.18). But the suspicions have significantly hampered possibilities for collaboration even sometimes in areas where the CSO has harboured no such ambitions.
- 5.4 The range of variation *within* CSOs and *within* HECASs means that generalisations which each group makes in relation to the other cannot always be substantiated. Thus some HECASs view CSOs as being driven by business motives linked to fee-charging and income-generation (paras.2.27-2.28); but some HECASs have also been under pressure to engage in such activities (e.g. paras.3.20 and 3.23), and most CSOs are non-profit organisations. In a sense, both groups of services have a core contract or remit – CSO from government, HECASs from their institution – to provide a free service to a core group of clients, and have to confront issues related to fee-charging and income-generation if they want to move much outside that. Some staff on both sides feel uncomfortable about these issues (though by now more CSO than HECAS staff may be reconciled to them): we suspect (though we are moving beyond the boundaries of our data here) that some of the tensions between the two groups of services may have been based on projection of this discomfort.
- 5.5 In practice, the proportions of CSO and HECAS budgets which comprise contributions from core contracts and from other sources of income seem to vary considerably within each sector. Collecting comparable data on this is not easy, because – particularly in the case of HECASs – some costs are hidden or merged under different budget heads. We

hypothesise, however, that the range of the proportions covered by the core contract are broadly similar (perhaps 60-95%) across the two groups.

- 5.6 The policy context is now changing. Whereas the clear policy of the previous Conservative Government was to encourage competition between guidance agencies (Watts, 1998), the new Labour Government is more predisposed to collaboration. The annual report of the statutory Careers Service notes that “careers services are... starting to collaborate with other services rather than working in competition with them” and that “partnership has become pre-eminent as a key working principle during the year” (DfEE, 1998b, p.38). Moreover, the Government’s recent policy statement on adult guidance states explicitly that “we wish to avoid competition between different local agencies, where that detracts from the quality of service available to local people” (DfEE, 1998c, p.7).
- 5.7 Other aspects of the new Government’s policies are likely to influence the future relationships between CSOs and HECASs. One is its concern to “refocus” the role of CSOs to give more attention to disaffected young people. This could, as noted in para.2.23, have the effect of reducing the attention which CSOs give to higher-education-related work within their core contract. On the other hand, the fact that CSOs are one of the four key partners in the new local Lifelong Learning Partnerships (DfEE, 1999), alongside their likely significant role in local partnerships for offering information, advice and guidance to adults (DfEE, 1998c), could mean greater attention to some of the fields of work discussed in this report.

Recommendations

- 5.8 In the light of all this, we wish to make recommendations on a number of areas related to our study. At *service* level, we recommend that both CSOs and HECASs give consideration to the full range of possibilities for collaboration outlined in this report: guidance pre-entry, on-course and post-exit; adult guidance; labour-market information; staff development; and quality standards. The fact that some CSOs and HECASs have worked together fruitfully in all these areas suggest that there are possibilities for other services to do likewise. A useful step in this direction would be a national conference at which the areas of collaboration we have identified, and strategies for building on them, could be explored.
- 5.9 Linked with this, we recommend that closer attention be given to inter-service collaboration in professional development and organisational development strategies. This applies not only to CSOs’ and HECASs’ relationships with each other, but also to the wide range of “partnership” relationships which both sets of services have with other bodies. In the commercial field, Kanter (1994) argues that inter-company relationships are a key business asset and that knowing how to nurture them is an essential managerial skill; the same is increasingly true in other sectors too. Much can be learned from the processes of partnership working elsewhere (see Hutchinson & Campbell, 1998).
- 5.10 At *professional* level, we recommend that AGCAS and CSNA pursue the discussions we understand they have already started on issues related to collaboration between CSOs and HECASs. Discussions of this kind might also fruitfully be pursued on a regional basis.

They might include exploring possibilities for joint agreements related to some of the areas of “contested territory” and “perceived incursion” identified in this report.

- 5.11 At *policy* level, we recommend that government departments, funding councils and other relevant bodies address five issues identified in our study. The first is whether higher education institutions should be mandated to provide a *core guidance entitlement* for enrolled students. This is difficult terrain, because of the autonomy of higher education institutions (see Watts, 1997, section 5). Until however some such entitlement is provided, HECASs’ claims to provide an adequate overall provision will be undermined, and CSOs will experience some of the backwash from the gaps in this provision (see para.3.17). One route might be to enshrine a guidance entitlement within the quality-assessment methodology being developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. It is interesting in this connection to note the moves in Wales to establish benchmark standards for careers provision in higher education institutions (para.4.15).
- 5.12 Secondly, policy attention is needed to the groups of students who *fall at the boundaries* between the core provision of the two groups of services: in particular, discontinuing students (para.3.11), further education students in higher education institutions (para.3.12), and higher education students in further education institutions (para.3.13). There are at the moment ambiguities in all three areas. In some cases these have been resolved by local agreements, but in others this is not the case. There are dangers of confusion here, and also of some groups of individuals not receiving the services they need. Clearer national guidelines, linked where appropriate to processes for local resolution, are needed in all three cases.
- 5.13 Thirdly, linked with this, clear recognition is needed of the implications for guidance services of current debates relating to the *interface between further and higher education*. The arrangements for guidance in the two sectors are at present very different from one another: in further education, guidance is effectively mandated through the Further Education Funding Council’s funding, audit and inspection mechanisms, as well as through some students being part of CSOs’ statutory client group; in higher education, neither is the case. Within a context of lifelong learning, there are arguments for co-ordinating the arrangements in the two sectors more closely.
- 5.14 More immediately, the Government has recently decided to allow colleges to bid directly for money from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which is taking over responsibility for funding all degree, HND and HNC courses from the Further Education Funding Council in 1999/2000. This may incline universities to review their franchise arrangements with such colleges (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 4 December 1998). The issue of who is responsible for providing career guidance to higher education students in further education institutions would seem to merit particularly urgent review in the light of these changes.
- 5.15 Fourthly, attention is needed to the guidance needs of graduates in the two or three years immediately *following graduation*. Providing adequate support to graduates during this period is arguably critical if the nation, and students and their parents, are to achieve full benefits from their substantial investment in higher education. The current “mutual aid” arrangements between HECASs are valuable in this respect, but insufficient (paras.3.20-3.21); we understand that they are currently being reviewed by AGCAS, and that some rationalisation is likely. CSOs potentially have a role to play here too, though HECAS

attitudes to their involvement vary (para.3.22). Short-term initiatives and development programmes are indicating new possibilities for collaboration (para.3.24), but need to be developed into more systematic provision. It would be helpful if DfEE and other relevant government departments, in consultation with AGCAS, CSNA and other relevant bodies, could develop some clear guidelines here, supported by appropriate funding. In this connection, we note with interest the recommendation in a recent report by Coopers & Lybrand (1998) that post-graduation programmes on employability skills might be supported through the funding council's mainstream methodology.

- 5.16 Finally, it is clear that the long-term future of the relationship between CSOs and HECASs rests to a significant extent on whether there is to be a coherent *national strategy for lifelong access to guidance*, incorporating guidance for adults as well as for young people. The recent DfEE consultation document on adult guidance (DfEE, 1998c), linked to parallel initiatives in Scotland and Wales, offers the prospect of significant moves towards a national framework based on co-ordinated local diversity in delivery; these initiatives are closely linked to the formation of Local Learning Partnerships (in which CSOs are one of the four key partners) and the development of the University for Industry. CSOs and HECASs both have potentially major contributions to make to local delivery. The roles of both sets of services, and the relationships between them, need to be given careful attention in developing the national framework. We hope that our report will helpfully inform these discussions.

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