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**SHAPING THE FUTURE: CONNECTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

UK COUNTRY PAPER

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The UK context

Policy making and government in the UK has many of the features of a country with a federal system. In 1999/2000 certain powers, including those covering education and training, were devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which now have their own administrations: the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales. With a population approaching 60 million¹, the United Kingdom is one of the larger countries in the OECD. Devolution provides the means for greater autonomy in different parts of the UK.

These similar, yet differing, arrangements partly reflect the geography, culture, complexity and relative population sizes of the regions; they are also linked to differences in the legal and constitutional responsibilities, as described above. Crucially, in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, careers companies deliver an all-age service, whereas in England different institutional arrangements apply for services delivered to young people and adults, i.e. Connexions and nextstep services. The delivery of publicly-funded employment services in England, Scotland and Wales is the responsibility of the UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and is managed across the three countries by Jobcentre Plus, whilst in Northern Ireland similar, but separate, arrangements apply. Details of the institutional arrangements for the delivery of lifelong guidance in the UK are given in Appendix 1, highlighting the complex and varied situation that applies across the four constituent countries.

Despite these quasi-federal arrangements, lifelong learning, workforce development and social inclusion are principles that are central to all current UK policy on learning and skills, irrespective of the separate policies emanating from the devolved administrations and the UK parliament. The targets specified in each separate nation's skills strategy² include those relating to increasing qualification levels, increasing participation in post-compulsory education, and

¹ Of the total population, around 5.1 million live in Scotland, 3 million in Wales, and 1.7 million in Northern Ireland. Some 84% of the population, then, lives in England.

² Northern Ireland -http://www.delni.gov.uk/skills_strategy_2006.pdf ;
Wales - <http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/c5104-seap-report-e.pdf> ;
Scotland:- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w7/sfs-00.htm>

increasing participation in workforce development. The key objectives include supporting individuals to achieve their ambitions through better information, advice and guidance, tackling the obstacles that people face in accessing training and jobs, and encouraging the role that employers and trades unions play in addressing skills and training needs.

The labour market context

In August 2005, the number of people in employment in the UK reached 28.76 million. This is the highest figure since comparable records began in 1971. However, although registered UK unemployment rates are low, there are labour and skills shortages, with pockets of very high levels of unemployment or economic inactivity in particular geographical areas and social groups. Unemployment remains high for older workers, people lacking educational and vocational qualifications, disabled people, black and minority groups and residents of deprived and poor neighbourhoods. A study by the Employment Policy Institute for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation³ found that during the preceding 20 years there had been a marked increase in non-activity among men aged 50 and over, whereas women were becoming more economically active as a group.

The UK has a growing, if ageing, population: in mid-2004 this stood at 59.8 million people, and for the past 100 years there have been more births than deaths in the UK. Since the late 1990s an additional and increasingly important factor in population growth has been net migration from abroad, including, recently, migration from the new EU member-states.

Themes 1 & 4: Human capital and career development services for workforce development

Policy recognition

The UK government recognises the impact of global change on the demand for skills and the need to improve the skills of its workforce.⁴ Policy-makers highlight intensifying international competition, accelerating technological change and changing patterns of consumer expectations as increasing the demand for higher-level skills. This is consistent with human capital theory⁵ which emphasises the importance of increasing individuals' knowledge, creativity and innovative flair as a critical means of gaining competitive economic advantage. Current policies in the UK focus both upon developing human capital and upon promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, emphasis is placed on increasing investment in physical capital, promoting research and development, and strengthening competition within and across organisations. The latter is important because human capital theory can sometimes overlook the contribution to competitiveness made by factors such as investment, changes in work organisation, consensus-based industrial relations and new managerial approaches.⁶

³ Gregg, P. & Wadsworth, J. (1998) *Unemployment and Non-employment: Unpacking Economic Activity*. London: Employment Policy Institute.

⁴ <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A72/61/81.pdf>

⁵ Becker, G. (1975) *Human Capital Theory: a Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁶ Coffield, F. (ed.) (1999) *Speaking Truth to Power: Research and Policy on Lifelong Learning*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Publicly-funded services

Whilst the arrangements for publicly-funded career development services⁷ vary across the four UK nations, all recognise the critical importance of workforce development and all are seeking to find the most effective way of delivering both universal and targeted services. In reviewing these arrangements, the UK team identified specific examples as summarised below.

One of Careers Scotland's strategic aims⁸ is to develop people who are in work. Careers Scotland is part of, and therefore funded through, the Enterprise Networks (Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise) where there is strategic emphasis placed on effective career planning, designed to help individuals achieve career progression, increase their long-term employability, and reduce the risk of skills becoming obsolete. In addition, Careers Scotland has explicitly formulated a differentiated service delivery model to help target its available resources to individuals and employers.

In Wales, there exists a highly acclaimed interactive website provided by Careers Wales Online⁹. This offers young people and adults scope to create and self-manage their own personalised 'e-portfolio'. The website also informs and supports employers and those working in education and training on a wide range of career development and workforce development issues.

In Northern Ireland, 'Workforce Development Forums' are currently being established as part of the Department for Employment & Learning's (DEL) Skills Strategy. This work is parallel to a project designed to establish an independent all-age Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (EIAG) strategy. It will ensure that the mechanisms are in place to enable Careers EIAG to be based on up-to-date labour market information. Through better-informed decision-making, the project is aimed at encouraging increased participation in education, training and employment. It will be taken forward in conjunction with the Department of Education (DoE) and other key stakeholders.

In England, a government inter-departmental review of information, advice and guidance (IAG)¹⁰ services for adults has been launched, underpinned by a research and analysis phase, to help examine current infrastructure and delivery arrangements. As part of this review process, information, advice and guidance for adults within the workplace is currently being explored.

⁷ "Career development services" is not normally used in the UK; the terms "career guidance services" and "careers advisory services" are more common.

⁸ Scottish Executive (2004). *A Smart Successful Scotland – Strategic Directions to the Enterprise Networks and an Enterprise Strategy for Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

⁹ Careers Wales Online website: <http://www.careerswales.com>

¹⁰ In the UK, the term "information, advice and guidance (IAG)" is normally used to describe a range of services that elsewhere are often collectively known as "guidance"; in the UK, "guidance" is often (but not always) reserved to describe the more intensive support element of IAG. The term "counselling" is normally used within a therapeutic or clinical context. Those delivering counselling services are generally viewed as a specialised profession separate to those delivering career guidance.

A UK-wide example is the University for Industry (Ufi) learndirect helpline. This is marketed nationally, has a single telephone number, and is subject to a four-nation agreement to offer minimum common standards of service. It was established in 1998 as an information and advice service; since then, it has operated within an integrated service delivery model linking with local information, advice and guidance providers. The number of calls taken has remained stable at around one million annually, and satisfaction levels have remained consistently high (at more than 90%).¹¹ In Scotland, the contract is held by the Scottish University for Industry (SUfi), which is separate from Ufi. In England, a major pilot has recently been launched to extend the service to offer more intensive, personalised guidance, directed at those returning from career breaks and those aiming at Level 3¹² qualifications. This is currently being promoted through a highly publicised TV marketing campaign. The expansion of this service creates opportunities for policy-makers and Ufi developers to test out the feasibility of service delivery using an ICT-based solution. However, an important issue is the extent to which ICT-based delivery can be optimally blended with face-to-face interventions, taking into account individuals' varied needs and preferred learning styles. The findings will feed into the review of information, advice and guidance services for adults in England. The differing policy contexts in which this service operates will strongly influence the future development of the service.

The UK government is committed to a policy of social inclusion through a process of welfare to work. Given this commitment, and the need to make best use of public funds, public employment services in the UK have a particular focus upon those who are unemployed and/or those with low educational attainment. For example, the main UK-wide public employment service, Jobcentre Plus, was launched in April 2002 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), across the whole of the United Kingdom, to bring together the Employment Service and parts of the Benefits Agency that deliver services to working age people. Jobcentre Plus aims to help more people into work and employers to fill their vacancies, and to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also offers a national Jobseekers website designed to encourage access to a wide range of services, including career development information and advice, located within a centralised ICT resource base¹³; more recently, it has piloted on a small-scale basis 'skills coaching', designed to support unemployed adults into education and/ or work. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his March 2006 budget speech, announced the intention to double the number of skills coaching pilots, with a specific emphasis on helping low-skilled women return to work.

The UK's strategy for workforce development has been further strengthened by the establishment of the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and affiliated Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)¹⁴. In most cases, Sector Skills Agreements are now in place and twelve SSCs have made a formal commitment to producing labour market information for careers services. In a few cases, SSCs

¹¹ In the UK, work-related competence-based qualifications are well established. They assess the skills that individuals demonstrate at work and are available at five levels, from level 1 – for routine jobs – to level 5 – for jobs with complex tasks and substantial responsibility. (Extract taken from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority).

¹² Watts, A.G. & Dent, G. (2006) The 'P' word: productivity in the delivery of career guidance services. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34(2), 177-189.

¹³ www.directgov.uk

are offering careers information, advice and guidance to those seeking to work in the sector. The main purpose of these UK organisations is to engage employers more fully in the skills agenda and to improve the linkage between the demand and supply side of workforce development.

In England, the Leitch Review of Skills¹⁵ will report on how skills and employment policy can better complement each other. Further and higher education institutions are well placed to contribute to the development of a highly skilled and well qualified workforce. Significant funding incentives have been provided to encourage them to develop their services and partnerships with industry, commerce and public services. For example, the Welsh Development Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales have established a joint initiative to support institutions' development of placement and other career-related programmes designed to improve graduate employability. Funding has been made available to encourage and reward institutions undertaking contract research, consultancy and training, thereby encouraging closer links with industry and contributing to the future prosperity of Wales.

Employer-based provision

In the UK, it is widely recognised that employers play an important role in delivering career development services in the workplace. Recent market research by MORI¹⁶ has shown that one in three adults received information through this means; most of this related to the user's current job, but one-quarter related to a future job. The findings indicate that many individuals look to their employers for support in relation to career development and progression. An evaluation of Employer Training Pilots¹⁷, which is about to be officially extended and reframed as 'Train to Gain', showed that the majority of learners (71%) agreed strongly that employers should give internal career guidance; a further 26% tended to agree. Research undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES)¹⁸ offers more detailed evidence of the kind of career support which good managers can give their staff.¹⁹ Some major employers offer more formal career support to their own employees.²⁰ Far more give personalised career attention to senior managers and 'talent pools' but now to all employees. So far, there has been very limited public funding to support the development of services for employees in the workplace.

Career development at work is problematic for managers and HR professionals in large organisations.²¹ A Chartered Institute of Personnel Development survey²² indicated a desire to

¹⁵ HM Treasury (2005) *Skills in the UK: the Long-Term Challenge: Interim Report*. London: Stationery Office.

¹⁶ The Guidance Council (2005) *Demand for, and Perceptions of, Information Advice and Guidance*. Leicester: Guidance Council.

¹⁷ Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Platform for Progression: Employer Training Pilots: Year 2 Evaluation Report*. Sheffield: DfES.

¹⁸ Hirsh W., Silverman M., Tamkin P., & Jackson C. (2004) *Managers as Developers of Others*. IES Report 407. Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies, University of Sussex.

¹⁹ Hirsh, W., & Jackson, C. (2004) *Managing Careers in Large Organisations*, London: The Work Foundation.

²⁰ Hirsh, W., Silverman, M., Tamkin, P. & Jackson, C. (2004) *Managers as Developers of Others*. IES Report 407. Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies.

²¹ Hirsh, W., Jackson, C., & Kidd, J. (2001) *Straight Talking: Effective Career Discussions at Work*. NICEC Project Report. Cambridge: CRAC.

improve career development for all employees, but in practice showed most effort went into a relatively small group of senior or high potential employees. Only a quarter of respondents had a strategy for career development for employees and only a third felt that senior managers were committed to career management activities. It concluded that, for career development in companies to be most effective, they must be driven by a committed senior manager(s).

Bysshe & Hirsh²³ in a recent overview of formalised career development and learning support in the workplace²⁴ found that this currently includes:

- *Formalised in-house career management and development programmes* (which are a well-established feature in a number of larger organisations).
- *Union Learning Representatives* ('front-line' support that can be provided in unionised workplaces).
- *Learning/training provider support* (e.g. provided by assessors/trainers who are supporting work-based learning, including apprenticeships).
- *Information, advice and guidance providers*: This includes publicly-funded career and employment services (e.g. nextstep) as well as private sector provision (e.g. career coaching).
- *Outplacement/progression support* (e.g. support in redundancy situations is extensively available through outplacement; in the context of the Armed Services, extensive resettlement provision is available).

In England, Scotland and Wales, the launch of the Union Learning Fund has been a major catalyst for the development of the role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in the workplace. There are around 12,000 trained ULRs working across all sectors and at all skill levels. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) anticipates that by 2010 there will be a network of 22,000²⁵ ULRs. The key functions of the Union Learning Representative are set out in the Employment Act 2002²⁶, which gave the role a statutory basis.

Market-based provision

Current public policy remains ambivalent about market-based provision in career development services. Measures to encourage market-based provision have, so far, been limited. In England, a key objective is to achieve a 'step change' in the use made of the information, advice and guidance infrastructure and to help many more individuals, including employers. This focuses attention on the extent to which a significant part of career development support should operate through a market-based approach in which services are purchased by individuals or by employers on behalf of their employees. There are three possible policy roles that government could adopt:

²² Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2003) *Managing Employee Careers*. London: CIPD.

²³ Extract drawn from Bysshe, S. & Hirsh, W (2006) IAG and workforce development. Paper prepared for DfES Consultation Event, Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby, 3 March.

²⁴ There is very limited research on the actual extent, nature and effectiveness of much of this provision.

²⁵ Trades Union Congress (2005) *Learning and Organising - Union Strength through the Learning Agenda*. London: TUC (www.tuc.org.uk).

²⁶ The Act gives rights to paid time off for ULRs provided they are in independent unions and are in workplaces where unions are recognised for collective bargaining purposes.

(i) stimulating the market in order to build and strengthen its capacity; (ii) regulating the market and assuring the quality of services, both to protect the public interest and to build consumer confidence; (iii) compensating for market failure where this is appropriate. Such a market-based approach presents certain risks to policy-makers, including the issue of consumer protection, ensuring consistent quality of provision, and the potential exposure of government to criticism should the market not deliver. This is a key issue for the current policy review.

Key challenges

The ongoing challenges to be addressed in order to ensure career development services are a major contributor to workforce development include:

- The development and use of common terminology among key stakeholders is needed to ensure closer alignment to key policy and institutional goals and to help create more coherent and consistent career development services for individuals within and outside the workplace.
- There is a need for greater recognition of differing and potentially competing agendas from the employer/ employee and government policy perspectives. Linked to this is the desirability of finding ways of integrating these contrasting perspectives so that all round mutual advantage can be achieved.
- The practice of workforce and career development in small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is different to that in large organisations, and this presents a number of challenges. Smaller companies are typically very lean; career ladders - where they exist - are often short. A consistent finding from surveys of training activity is that smaller firms are less likely than larger firms to provide formal training.²⁷ Whilst all organisations face barriers to workforce development, for many small firms the concern with ensuring short-term survival is much more acute.²⁸
- The role of government is to create the conditions to ensure that both individuals and employers embrace the benefits of career development and ensure that targeted support is delivered in the most effective way. It is important that this process is underpinned by clear and robust conceptual models that clarify the complex inter-relationships between the individual, business-development and wider workforce-development agendas.
- There is a need to strengthen the links between professional associations and employers' groups so that innovative approaches to career development and workforce development can be fostered, with attention to how this relates to the training of careers professionals.

Theme 5: The information base for public policy making

The two International Symposia held in 1999 and in 2001 highlighted the critical importance of developing a stronger evidence base to inform and support policy decisions at a national and

²⁷ Skills Task Force (2000) *Skills for All: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force*. London: DfEE.

²⁸ Westhead, P. & Storey, D.J. (1997) *Training Provision and the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses*. RR 26. London: DfEE.

international level. Since then, a number of positive outcomes have emerged designed to develop strategies for a more sustainable evidence base for careers work.

On a UK-wide basis, a national review of performance indicators and benchmarks in career guidance²⁹ highlighted that providers collect a wealth of information covering all of the main aspects of the services they provide. This information is particularly rich in capturing aspects of delivery, including volumes of service interventions and penetration of services in targeted population groups. Data on service outcomes is also collected, usually in terms of work and education/training outcomes and/or user satisfaction ratings. One area where there is little evidence available is that concerning the unit costs of information, advice and guidance delivery; there is even less evidence of any reporting of the relationship between the costs of delivery and the outcomes of delivery.

In Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the Futureskills Scotland (FSS) initiative includes within its aims the enhancement and analysis of labour market information to inform policy-making. FSS has developed Research Online³⁰, the first service in the UK that gives free on-line access to reports on the labour market.

In 2004, Careers Scotland published the results of a research project (undertaken by Inter-Ed Ltd) to establish whether there is any evidence of linkage between career goals and educational attainment. The findings indicated that pupils at S3 to S6 stage (aged 15 to 17) who have career goals are consistently: (i) more committed to engaging with school work than those with no career goals; (ii) more able to link the relevance of school study to life beyond school; (iii) more personally ambitious; and (iv) outperforming others in terms of academic attainment. The findings held true across all levels of academic ability and socio-economic groups. The key message is that having a career goal motivates young people to apply themselves to learning which they then see as relevant to achieving their goal.

In Wales, a team of quality-assurance managers from all six Careers Wales companies have worked closely with university researchers to assess and measure the effectiveness of careers work with adults. The team designed, developed and successfully implemented a survey involving the tracking of 1,000 adults three and six months following careers guidance interventions. The policy significance of this in-house approach to evaluation approach is its potential to provide an effective way of driving up evidence-based practice within provider organisations, and of ensuring ownership of the results so that they can feed into established quality assurance systems. In parallel to this tracking exercise, the Careers Wales companies in partnership with the National Assembly have recently piloted performance indicators (PIs) for careers work, focusing on differing types of career interventions with differing client groups, including work with employers.

In England, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned in 2003 a five-year longitudinal study³¹ designed to investigate the nature of effective guidance and how over the

²⁹ Hughes, D. & Gration, G. (2005) *Indicators and Benchmarks in Careers Guidance – UK Summary Report*. Thessaloniki, Greece: Cedefop.

³⁰ <http://www.researchonline.org.uk>

³¹ The project is led by Jenny Bimrose, Institute for Employment Research (IER), University of Warwick, in association with the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), University of Derby, and the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC).

longer-term it can add value to post-compulsory learning and enhance employability. The DfES also commissioned a longitudinal telephone survey³² of over 4,000 recipients of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services in England to test out whether the provision of IAG makes a difference to the work and learning outcomes of individuals by tracking them over time.

In Northern Ireland, a national review of careers education, information, advice and guidance is being conducted, specifically linked to the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) Skills Strategy. In March 2006, the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in conjunction with the Department of Education (DoE) brought together key stakeholders for a two-day 'Futuresearch' Conference. This was the first such conference to be jointly held by these two separate Departments.

Other key relevant policy initiatives include:

- A National Guidance Policy Forum (NGPF) has been established, to bring together policy-makers and other key bodies from across the UK. This provides an opportunity to review at a strategic level the existing structures for collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination of career development services across the UK.
- A Government inter-departmental review of information, advice and guidance services for adults has been launched in England underpinned by a research and analysis phase examining current infra-structure and delivery arrangements. Alongside this, a new set of national quality standards are being developed for young people aged 13 -19 years old.
- A National Resource Service has been set up to provide a centralised resource base for practitioners working with adults in the information advice and guidance field.
- A National Guidance Research Forum (NGRF) website³³ has been developed, designed to bring policy, practice and research in careers work closer together.
- A National Library Resource for Guidance³⁴ has been established, which holds over 10,000 online, catalogued historical and contemporary research literature.

Key challenges

The ongoing challenges to be addressed to develop the necessary information base to support public policy-making include:

- The requirement to use Labour Market Information (LMI) more effectively. While it is recognised that accurate, current LMI underpins quality careers provision, questions still remain about: (i) what level of information is required and in what form; (ii) who collects it

³² Tyers, C. & Sinclair, A. (2005) *Intermediate Impact of Advice and Guidance*. RR 638. London: DfES.

³³ <http://www.guidance-research.org>

³⁴ <http://www.derby.ac.uk/nlrg/>

and how is it disseminated; (iii) how currency of information is maintained; (iv) what the relationship is between national and local LMI; (v) how best to develop relationships in local areas to ensure accurate and up-to-date local LMI; and (vi) the role of practitioners in the mediation of LMI.

- The need for more systematic and comprehensive information to assess how the right balance can be achieved between providing high-quality centralised ‘critical mass’ resources and localised client-centred services, whilst at the same time avoiding incoherence and fragmentation at the point of delivery.
- The need to improve the research evidence relating to the effectiveness of different strategies for workforce development, particularly within the workplace, given that much of the current research within the UK has not specifically addressed career development in the workplace.

Conclusion

Devolution has provided opportunities for innovation and experimentation and has resulted in differences both in terms of public policy and practice. However, it has also created levels of uncertainty, particularly in relation to where best to strategically locate career development services that currently operate within both enterprise, education and training and social inclusion policy goals. There is a need for a sustained programme of activity to develop:

- a clearer understanding of the evidence base, particularly in relation to building the business case for developing effective career interventions in the workplace;
- a coherent training programme to underpin and develop the competence and capability of those involved in the delivery of career development interventions;
- a consistent approach to raising the profile of ‘career’, and its potential for actively supporting the UK skills and competitiveness agenda.

Appendix: Glossary of key publicly-funded career development services in the UK

Careers Scotland: Careers Scotland provides free careers information, advice and guidance to the people of Scotland - whatever their age, background or circumstances. The service is part of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise set up by Scottish legislation in 1990. The two enterprise organisations operate in terms of two separate systems and procedures and each is managed by its own Chief Executive. However, both organisations have a common national brand, and operate according to common strategic objectives contributing to the economic well-being of Scotland. The strategic direction of the enterprise network is set out in *A Smart Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks*. Careers Scotland's activities and performance are mapped against the learning and skills targets of this document, the full version of which can be downloaded at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/enterprise/sss-00.asp>

Careers Wales: Careers Wales is the national brand for the all-age careers information, advice and guidance services funded by the National Assembly for Wales. Established on 1 April 2001, it combines the strengths and best practices of the six careers companies working in Wales. Careers Wales works with young people from the age of 11 (with some primary school work in Education Business Activities) upwards, and with adults, to provide them with the information, advice and guidance to help achieve their career development goals.

Connexions: Connexions is the government's support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England. It aims to provide integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for this group and to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. Connexions is delivered through local partnerships covering the same geographical areas as the Learning and Skills Councils (LSC).

EGSA (Educational Guidance Service for Adults): EGSA is a major player in delivering adult educational guidance services throughout Northern Ireland. It is a 'company limited by guarantee', recognised by the Inland Revenue as having charitable status. In 2004, the majority of its income was provided by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland.

Jobcentre Plus: Jobcentre Plus was launched in April 2002, across the whole of the United Kingdom, to bring together the Employment Service and parts of the Benefits Agency that delivered services to working age people. Jobcentre Plus aims to help more people into work and employers to fill their vacancies, and to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled.

Learndirect: Learndirect operates a network of more than 2,000 online learning centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland providing access to a range of e-learning opportunities. It also provides a national telephone helpline and website for adults wishing to access integrated information, advice and guidance on opportunities for learning and employment. Learndirect Advice is the information and advice service brand for England. In Scotland, Learndirect services are delivered by the Scottish University for Industry (SUFI). SUFI was established by the Scottish Executive as a private limited company in 2000. It became a non-departmental public body, responsible to Scottish Ministers, in April 2005, and retains its private limited company status. It provides a telephone helpline and website in Scotland for adults wishing to access integrated information, advice and guidance on opportunities for learning and employment. Close working links have been established between Careers Scotland and SUFI, including a

‘memorandum of understanding’ which covers cross-referral of customers, reciprocal use of databases, and exploring possibilities for collaboration in call centre activities. Currently, Careers Scotland has a national number routed to its careers centres, and is also planning to pilot a call centre approach in one region of the Scottish Enterprise area.

Nextstep: Nextstep is the brand name for local face-to-face information and advice (IA) services funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There is a nextstep service in each of the 47 local LSC areas in England, with a total of 592 subcontractors who are responsible for managing the delivery of IA services and targets through the co-ordination of a network of sub-contractors. These networks typically include: colleges of further education, voluntary and community organisations, trades union representation, and some employers.

Northern Ireland Careers Service: The Northern Ireland Careers Service operates within the Department for Employment and Learning’s (DEL), Skills and Industry Division. It offers an all-age careers guidance service throughout the province. Its mission is “to assist economic and social development in Northern Ireland by enabling clients to make informed, realistic and sound decisions about their futures” and “to ensure equality of service to young people and adults within an open and responsive, progressive and innovative culture”. Careers advisers are based in Careers Offices, Job Centres, and Jobs and Benefit Offices.