

A Review of Information, Advice and Guidance Policy and Practice: 1980 to 2010

Background

This piece of work was commissioned by the Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Lifelong Learning Network (SSOTSTW LLN). Specifically, it was requested by the LLN Sustainability sub-group which is concerned with identifying which of those aspects of the LLN's work might be sustained after the end of its funding period and in order to explore how that sustainability might be achieved.

The work was undertaken by Amelia Rout, Research Officer at SSOTWTW LLN who undertook the initial literature search and outline review and David Round, IAG and Student Support Co-ordinator. Although the Group was particularly interested in the period of the past 15 years, this review takes in a slightly longer perspective about IAG policy and practice as the view is taken that more recent policy initiatives need to be seen in a longer historical context. The review therefore goes back to the 1980s. This has an additional benefit because it provides a comparative historical perspective on the impact of economic recession upon IAG policy and practice.

IAG Policy and Practice 1980 - 1998

Careers education delivery for young people in schools began to be embedded in the early 1970s (Watts, 2001) with the appointment of careers teachers and the establishment of local authority-run Careers Services in 1973 (Andrews, 2006). This system of careers education, whilst normally national in scope, was highly variable in terms of the quality and accessibility of delivery at the local level. Bayliss (1999) describes careers education for young people in the 1980s as occupying very much of a "quiet backwater" in terms of visibility and policy direction. However, this period was marked by an increasing professionalization of careers education with the formation of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC), the delivery of staff development courses for careers teachers and the development of national careers and occupational classification systems. Significant work also took place to develop robust curriculum frameworks for the delivery of CEG for schools and the models of careers education and guidance used now in schools are to a large extent based on the four elements of CEG established in the 1970s i.e. self awareness, opportunity awareness, decision learning and transition learning (Law and Watts, 1977).

The initiatives in schools in the 1980s to introduce a new technical and vocational education curriculum (TVEI) led to an increasing focus on careers education in order to support this new curriculum. Local authorities appointed careers education advisory teachers and a number of government reports on the future of the schools curriculum – which eventually gave rise to the establishment of the National Curriculum – emphasised the central importance of careers education. In the event, the National Curriculum did not make careers education and guidance (CEG) a core subject but it did feature as one of the five cross-cutting themes (Andrews, 2006).

Also highly significant in influencing IAG policy and practice during this period was the rising level of youth unemployment of which the riots in London and Liverpool in 1981 were a highly visible

manifestation. A number of schemes including the Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOS) in 1978, the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and the New Training Initiative were developed to respond to this growing problem. The role of a newly established government agency – the Manpower Services Commission – in seeking to respond to heavily rising youth unemployment created a dual track approach to IAG with the local authority-run careers service running in parallel with the MSC which was much more focussed on short term responses to youth unemployment. Tensions between the local authorities and the MSC became more apparent as resources were increasingly directed through the MSC (Peck, 2004 p. 49).

Advice and guidance for adults also experienced significant change in the 1980s. In 1981 the national Occupational Guidance Service which had been established in the mid 1960s was abolished. This service had provided access to locally-based guidance specialists for adults and it was part of what was then a highly progressive holistic approach to guidance, of which careers guidance was a part (Sultana and Watts, 2005 p.32; Bayliss, 1999). As David Peck notes, the history of the Occupational Guidance Service has some very close parallels to current debates about an all age careers service as a major part of its role was to provide help for those who had ‘made a false start or who were looking for new opportunities’ (Peck, 2004 p. 38). The deepening recession in the early 1980s and the high costs of running a local service led directly to the closure of the Occupational Guidance Services, although some local authorities continued, often with ESF support, to fund and operate adult advice and guidance services into the 1990s often through adult education college structures e.g. Wolverhampton’s GATE (Guidance for Adults in Training and Education) and a similar service in Dudley in the Black Country. Equally significantly, the recession focused minds on the instrumental aspects of IAG for adults (i.e. job search, narrow vocational re-training etc.) and this became the primary focus for IAG through the Employment Service at the time. Indeed, as Higginbottom and Hughes note, this has become a recurring theme in adult IAG policy which contrasts unfavourably with best practice internationally:

‘In terms of the IAG focus of recent work in the UK with adults, the emphasis on career management skills has been downplayed compared with other countries such as Australia and Canada. Here in the UK, Government policies for skills and workforce development tend to be targeted mainly at remedial strategies for the unemployed (or under-employed), low skilled or disadvantaged groups’. (Higginbottom and Hughes, 2006 p. 2)

Careers education and guidance in the higher education environment during this period exhibited the same fragmentation that had become increasingly evident in the schools and adult IAG sectors as a consequence of the need to respond to rising unemployment and economic recession. Historically, careers services in universities and other institutions of higher education were ‘intended to help graduates at the point of exit, rather than secure entry to courses’ (Bimrose and Hughes, date?). Pre-entry information and advice for aspiring higher education learners was provided either within the school or college context often by non-specialist Heads of Sixth Forms or tutors or by academic staff involved in the admission process. Some of the post-92 higher education institutions established high street located ‘one stop shops’ for pre-entry IAG for higher education as part of their commitment to access and strategies for growth (Farewell, 2002). In some cases, these services were established as early as the mid 1980s (e.g. the HE Shop at the then Wolverhampton Polytechnic). Such units sometimes lived a hybrid existence disconnected from other parts of the

formal internal and external IAG structures. Also notable was the tendency to recruit staff from wider multi-disciplinary backgrounds rather than from mainstream careers education backgrounds.

The 1991 White Paper 'Education and Training in the Twenty First Century' marked a significant change in the structures for careers education and guidance. The local authority careers service was to be replaced by a privatised service delivering careers advice through 42 careers companies. The then Minister, Ann Widdecombe, stressed the role of CEG in supporting the economic life of UK plc, the need for a more business-like approach to the management of careers guidance and the imperative to raise quality standards (Peck, 2004 p. 74). The White Paper drew particular attention to the role of IAG in helping to raise skill levels and to improving economic performance; it also noted that learning and work routes were becoming increasingly complex and that guidance provided to young people needed to reflect this. The subsequent 1994 White Paper on competitiveness ('Competitiveness: helping business to win') cemented the role of careers education in the curriculum by establishing an entitlement to CEG for all young people aged 11 to 18 with particular emphasis upon 'transition points' at Key Stages 3, 5 and 5.

The changes to the organisation and delivery arrangements for careers education and guidance reflected the wider direction of travel within the Conservative government, by then led by Prime Minister John Major. The careers companies were to be formed as a result of a competitive bidding process in which bids were encouraged from private companies and others including not for profit company partnerships formed from local authorities and the business-led Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The purchaser-supplier contracting relationship underpinned the new arrangements for CEG. There was a clear requirement for careers education to be managed on more business-like footing with measurable service delivery requirements and targets, an elision of the concept of the traditional IAG 'client' into a 'customer' and an 'emphasis on the right to manage' (Davis, 1995 cited in Peck, 2004 p. 76). The centrality of the role of CEG in meeting the needs of the economy was underlined by the comment by the Conservative Government minister James Paice that a careers service was 'an essential part of the machinery we need to forge a strong and flexible labour force for Britain' (Peck 2004 p. 75). Interestingly, however, the senior civil servant working on these reforms at the time, Valarie Bayliss, commented later in 1999 that the changes in the organisation of careers education sprang more 'from political motivations far removed from any understanding of guidance needs' and were more connected with the Conservative party's 'general approach to public services' (Bayliss, 1999 p.5). Nonetheless, the new structure for the delivery of CEG for young people was fully in place by 1996.

Conversely, the impact of these changes was to reduce access to adult IAG. The intention was that adults who needed specialist advice and guidance would pay for it or that local partnerships involving local authorities, the newly-established careers companies and education providers such as colleges and HEIs would develop local arrangements and access external funding. However, surveys undertaken by the Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) in the mid 1990s indicated that the provision of adult IAG had reduced markedly (Peck, 2004 p. 99).

IAG, the 'Inclusion' agenda and skills, 1997 - 2007

A survey of the policy initiatives in the wider landscape of information, advice and guidance in the period since the return of Tony Blair's New Labour government in the landslide election in 1997 reveals a not inconsiderable number of major themes which have impacted upon careers education

and guidance for young people and for young people over the period. Mapping some of these themes and government priorities against the range of policy initiatives in the wider education and training environment including IAG gives a clear indication of the keen interest in this area over the period.

Lifelong Learning

Skills & the economy

Social Inclusion

Basic Skills/Skills for Life (Moser report 1999)

No 10 Social Exclusion Unit (1997) – various reports inc. 'Bridging the Gap'

IAG Partnerships (Adults) 2000/20001

Basic Skills Agency & The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit

Integration of Youth Services and Careers Guidance ('Connexions')

Targeting of CEG for those at risk of exclusion (NEETs)

- The development of the social inclusion agenda and the establishment of No 10's Social Exclusion Policy Unit in 1997
- The refocusing of CEG on those at 'greatest risk' of exclusion (NEETs)
- The development of 'integrated' IAG for young people (Youth work/careers - Connexions)
- Widening Participation and the role of higher education in improving life chances and supporting economic growth (Aimhigher, HE Outreach)
- Curriculum change (14-19 agenda) and vocational progression (LLNs)
- Adult (Basic) skills and the skills deficit (the Moser report, 1999) - the Basic Skills Agency and the Basic Skills Unit, Adult IAG partnerships in 2000/1, University for Industry and Learndirect
- Workplace skills and the economy and the emerging skills agenda (the Leitch port
- IAG and the workforce (Train to Gain, Union learn/ULRs)
- Every Child matters – establishment of Children's Services
- Technology and IAG (Learndirect/UFI etc.)

2007-2010

- Changes to the structure of careers guidance
- HE, employment and skills
- All age careers service?

Young People

- Development of an IAG guarantee for young people
- Commitment to raise standards in IAG delivery (increased role for Ofsted). Also they are reporting on training of Connexions PA s in CEG later this year (new qual framework for IAG has been mooted)
- Focus on 'soft skills' development for young people
- Increased use of new technologies (improve connexions direct)
- Enhancement of the role of IAG leadership in schools
- IAG provided at Key Stage 2 (primary)
- Recognition of the role of subject teachers in basic IAG – hence increased commitment to CEG in teacher training
- Reinforced role of LA s (Children's Services) in driving and leading IAG (they now have responsibility for Connexions of course and responsibility for 16-19 funding)
- 'Joining up' IAG for young people with that for adults (very loosely defined at the moment)

There is recognition of the importance of Aimhigher and Aimhigher-type activities in terms of raising aspirations for young people to consider HE and the wider WP benefits.

Adults

- Establishment of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service (interesting that the word careers has been used) this year (pilots started last year). The adult careers services was first mentioned in the response to the Leitch report in 2007; strangely, Nextstep already existed then)
- In effect, this means joining up Nextstep with JCP and aspects of other programmes e.g. Train to Gain brokerage service (?!), national apprenticeship scheme

- Talks about integrated and holistic advice in which a range of IAG can be sort (not just learning and work, which has hitherto been the main focus – this has parallels with the Adult Occupational Guidance service that was scrapped in 1981).
- Use of new technologies (talks about text, emails, online mentoring etc.)
- Introduces ‘Skills Accounts’ (same as scrapped Individual Learning Accounts?; however, it looks as though it is about providing information about how much existing financial support they could access plus a ‘voucher’ to request this from a provider)
- Re-branding Learndirect as the Careers Advice Service (website and help line)
- Use of diagnostic tools
- Role of colleges in providing careers advice to adults
- Partnership approach with JCP, local authorities, the voluntary and community sector, Nextstep contract holders etc. JCP will be feature large in the local arrangements it would seem.

It is unclear at the moment whether the AACCS will be a universal entitlement or whether it will continue to be targeted at those groups identified in the greatest need. It talks about providing a ‘universal offer’ which is a ‘single service, available to everyone’ but it goes on to say that it will provide ‘targeted support focusing on those with specific barriers getting info and on into and those seeking to return to work’. Careers England – which is a key IAG policy and lobbying organisation – seems to think that the focus on the low skilled, unemployed, offenders etc will continue. There is no real mention anywhere of HE.

The service is intended to go live 2010 to 2011 (the scheme was announced 2008). However, will the recession and the public debt problem cause this commitment to be honoured)? A figure of £50m has been identified. Is this new money though?

The ‘vision’ for the AACCS (from the current AACCS website - very low key) is

- *a ‘no wrong door’ approach - the new service is open to everyone;*
- *a more targeted approach to those groups who do need more help: those who have stuck in low-paid jobs or who are ‘remote’ from the labour market;*
- *flexible delivery methods that suit the customer (online, phone, face-to-face);*
- *a streamlined Skills Funding Agency that routes public money swiftly and securely to FE colleges and providers;*
- *better public information about the new service;*

- *better guiding of customers to the right training (college, workplace, apprenticeship);*
- *advice on barriers to learning (caring responsibilities, financial worries, housing issues)*
- *faster response to skills pressures and bottlenecks - that are often manifested in sectoral, regional and sub-regional patterns - i.e. rarely following local authority boundaries.*

In short, our vision is for an adult advancement and careers service that responds to the needs of individuals and employers - and that helps people find sustainable work that in turn makes us more competitive and successful on the global stage.

It is possible to see considerable parallels with the work in the 1999 - 2005 period when the government set up IAG Partnerships locally to provide an adult IAG service. This had quite a strong emphasis upon community engagement, working with the third sector and outreach. There was always a tension with the CEG professionals who were largely located in the careers companies that then ran Connexions and the service was a distributed locally-based service. The service didn't have much visibility and over time the focus became much more about impacts upon jobs and training. The service was re-branded as 'Nextstep', contract changes led to a diminished role for partnership working and the third sector and the careers companies increasingly delivered the service centrally. There was also an increased focus on the low skilled (level 2 only) and those in vulnerable and hard to reach groups.