

Inspiration and Aspiration

Realising our Potential in the 21st Century

The final report of the Skills Commission's inquiry into
information, advice and guidance (IAG).



**Skills
Commission**

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The Skills Commission

The Skills Commission is comprised of a select group of key individuals with a stake in skills policy and is co-chaired by Barry Sheerman MP and Dame Ruth Silver. It brings greater direction and focus to skills policy and acts as a steering body for the National Skills Forum and Associate Parliamentary Skills Group.

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- [Dame Ruth Silver DBE](#), Principal, Lewisham College
- [Professor Michael Thorne](#), Vice Chancellor, Anglia Ruskin University (IAG inquiry Chair)
- [Professor Alison Wolf](#), Kings College London

Guest members

For the duration of the IAG inquiry, the Skills Commission was joined by key experts from areas covered by the inquiry:

- [Jack Constantinides](#), Head of Human Resources, Monster.co.uk
- [Mike Elms](#), Chief Executive, Hotcourses.com
- [Professor Stephen Heppell](#), Heppell.net
- [Stephen Uden](#), Head of Skills and Economic Affairs, Microsoft

Contents

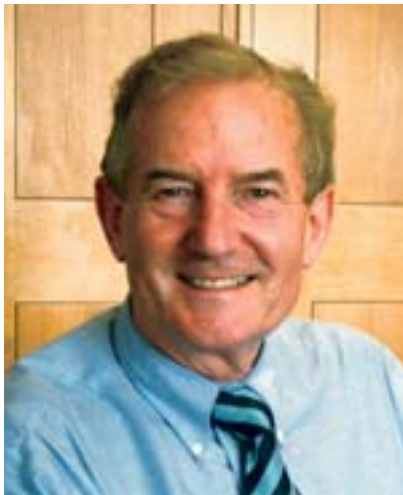
1. Foreword	8
2. Introduction	9
3. Executive summary	10
3.1 Definitions	10
3.2 Research methods	10
3.3 Sources of IAG	10
3.4 Approaches to IAG	10
3.5 Training careers advisors	11
3.6 Ensuring high quality provision	11
3.7 IAG for young people	11
3.8 IAG for adults	12
3.9 All-age delivery of IAG	13
4. Recommendations	14
5. Definitions and understandings	16
5.1 Careers Education and Guidance (CEG)	16
5.2 IAG	16
6. Research methods	17
7. Sources of IAG	18
7.1 Informal vs formal advice	18
7.2 The increasing importance of the internet	18

8. Traditional approaches to IAG	20
8.1 The matching model.....	20
8.2 Problems with the matching model	20
8.2.1 Portfolio careers	20
8.2.2 Complexity of the labour market	20
8.2.3 The desire for flexibility	21
8.2.4 The need for autonomy in decisions	21
9. Delivering IAG in the 21st century	22
9.1 The role of the internet.....	22
9.1.1 Moving beyond traditional approaches	22
9.1.2 Access to a wealth of information	22
9.1.3 Fusion of careers guidance and notification of vacancies	22
9.1.4 Avoiding the stigma of careers guidance.....	23
9.1.5 Access to those with experience.....	23
9.2 The role of careers advisors	25
9.2.1 Demand for access to careers advisors	25
9.2.2 The changing role of careers advisors	25
10. Training and continuing professional development	26
10.1 Introduction.....	26
10.2 The existing system.....	26
10.2.1 The Qualification in Careers Guidance.....	26
10.2.2 The NVQ in Advice and Guidance	26
10.2.3 Training for staff in schools	27
10.2.4 Continuing professional development	27
10.3 Addressing the problem: the need for a review	28

11. Inspection	29
11.1 Ensuring high quality	29
11.2 Ofsted.....	29
11.3 Customer satisfaction polls	29
12. Young people	30
12.1 Introduction	30
12.2 Importance of IAG for young people.....	30
12.2.1 Personalised learning	30
12.2.2 Ensuring engagement.....	30
12.2.3 Equality of opportunity.....	31
12.2.4 Evidence that IAG helps young people.....	31
12.3 Connexions	31
12.3.1 The importance of Connexions	32
12.3.2 Lack of funding for Connexions.....	33
12.3.3 Ensuring no further decline in funding	34
12.4 Careers education	34
12.4.1 The role of schools.....	34
12.4.2 Work experience	35
12.4.3 Implications of raising the learning participation age.....	35
13. Adults	36
13.1 Introduction	36
13.2 Importance of IAG for adults	36
13.3 Public sector provision for adults.....	37
13.3.1 learndirect Careers Advice.....	37
13.3.2 nextstep	38

13.3.3 Jobcentre Plus	38
13.3.4 unionlearn	38
13.3.5 Further Education	39
13.3.6 Higher Education	39
13.3.7 Other	39
13.4 Private sector provision.....	39
13.5 Planned changes to public sector provision.....	40
13.5.1 Leitch Review of Skills.....	40
13.5.2 World Class Skills	40
13.5.3 Opportunity, Employment and Progression.....	41
13.5.4 Raising Expectations.....	42
13.5.5 Two policy priorities: universality and targeting.....	42
13.6 A universal but targeted service	42
13.7 Maintaining a reputation for impartiality	44
13.8 The advancement element.....	44
14.All age delivery of IAG.....	45
14.1 Current trends	45
14.2 The case for an all-age service	45
14.3 Proposed future changes.....	46
Appendix I: Methodology.....	47
Appendix II: Acronyms.....	50

1. Foreword



The Skills Commission is comprised of a leading group of opinion-formers from the skills sector. Set up in 2004, we bring fresh thinking to the skills debate and act as a steering body for the National Skills Forum and Associate Parliamentary Skills Group. Bringing together business, Parliament and other key stakeholders, we deliver strategic direction and focus to the skills agenda.

We established an inquiry into the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) because we recognised the need for innovative thinking about this important policy area.

Young people face an increasing array of educational choices and need help in making decisions. Adults cannot be expected to navigate the labour market, and improve their skills, without services to inform them about the available opportunities.

It is by ensuring the provision of high quality and impartial IAG that we can make both young people and adults aware of the exciting learning and career opportunities that are out there.

At the moment, IAG is not accessible and it is often not of a high quality. This report is important because we propose ways of going forward which, if implemented, would improve beyond measure the quality of IAG services. By making maximum use of new technologies, IAG services can link people considering careers with those that have experience of them.

The Government has been helpful throughout the course of our inquiry and the proposals that we now make are well intentioned. We urge the Government to act on them.

We are indebted to Andy Powell and the Edge Foundation for sponsoring this inquiry.

Barry Sheerman MP
Co-Chair, Skills Commission

Dame Ruth Silver
Co-Chair, Skills Commission

2. Introduction



Everyone in this country should have access to high quality and impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) about learning and career options. At the moment, people do not know where to go for IAG and, when they do, what they find is not of a sufficient standard. There is much work to be done.

Our report sets out how to ensure that IAG services are of a high quality. We describe the urgent changes that are required if IAG services are to be relevant and useful to people in the future. I would like to highlight three of our findings.

The first is the need to ensure that services are based on models of delivery fit for the 21st century. They must make maximum use of technology. People welcome being able to access IAG themselves, from their home. We need to make sure that they can do this by promoting online provision of IAG.

Online social networking creates a new opportunity for people to talk about different careers with those who have experienced them. By making use of online interactive networking we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn from those in skilled and rewarding careers. This will inspire people; it will also encourage aspiration across society.

The second finding that I would like to emphasise is the need for a review of the existing entry-level training and continuing professional development for careers advisors. Despite the increasing importance of people accessing IAG services themselves through new technology, well-trained careers advisors will always have a role. Yet the current training system does not work and many advisors do not possess the necessary skills to carry out their function. This is something which the Government must address.

The third finding to emphasise is the importance of the Government thinking again about its decision not to introduce an all-age IAG service. The evidence we received made it quite clear that the all-age service is the preferred model amongst experts. It was pointed out to us that there is an all-age service in New Zealand, and this is widely regarded as the best service in the world.

I am grateful to the Edge Foundation for their sponsorship and constant support throughout the course of this inquiry, and to Hugo Donaldson who has so ably crystallised the Commission's views into this report.



Professor Michael Thorne
Chair, Skills Commission IAG inquiry
Vice Chancellor, Anglia Ruskin University

3. Executive summary

3.1 Definitions

The term information, advice and guidance (IAG) originally referred to services aimed at helping people make decisions about learning and careers, but recently it has come to refer additionally to services offering advice on broader issues such as personal relationships and health. These issues are important in their own right, of course, but our interest is in how to help people make decisions about learning and careers.

3.2 Research methods

The findings in this report are based on evidence sessions, in which we met with a variety of experts and stakeholders, written submissions to the inquiry, and desk research. We also conducted our own research exploring the views of those that receive IAG. To this end, we met with young people and adults from different regions, different ethnic groups, different ages, and different education and employment backgrounds. The opinions of those that contributed to our research are referred to throughout this report.

3.3 Sources of IAG

It is very clear that most people prefer to talk to personal contacts and people who have experienced the careers in which they are interested rather than to careers advisors. People do and will increasingly search on the internet to find information about jobs and routes into different careers. IAG services should reflect this.

3.4 Approaches to IAG

Much of the time IAG relies on the 'matching model', formulated in the first decade of the 20th century. This model works on the basis that it is possible to identify people's traits and, from these, careers to which they are suited. Yet people do not necessarily want to be matched. They want to find the information for themselves and talk to people with experience in careers in which they might be interested. They are open to being inspired.

► Recommendation 1

The Government must recognise that IAG is often provided using outdated delivery models and that IAG services will become increasingly irrelevant unless this changes.

By using the internet, many of the problems that result from traditional methods of delivering IAG are circumvented. There are many advantages to internet provision. It cuts out the need for an intermediary, provides ease of access to a wealth of information, facilitates the fusion of broad information about different career pathways and specific details about particular job vacancies, it allows people to access IAG from the privacy of their own home and in so doing sidestep the stigma sometimes attached to visiting an advisor. Most importantly of all, though, online discussion forums create the opportunity for people to hear about different careers from those who have experience of them. In the past, people from disadvantaged backgrounds would not have had the personal contacts to learn about some of the more challenging careers. Online social networking changes this.

► Recommendation 2

The Government must make sure that people have access to websites where they can find information about training routes and use forums to discuss different careers with those who have experienced them.

Internet IAG services can be provided cost-effectively and they will be sufficient for most people, who can find out about learning and career opportunities themselves when supported by well-designed and thorough websites. However, some people require access to careers advisors, a more resource-heavy type of provision. People require access to careers advisors because they wish to talk through the decision-making process, because they are uncomfortable with new technology, or because their circumstances mean that they require greater levels of help.

► *Recommendation 3*

The Government must ensure that people have access to careers advisors. Most of the demand for IAG can be met online, which is cost effective, allowing resources to be directed towards those who would benefit from speaking to a careers advisor. Groups that particularly value being able to talk to an advisor when looking for employment include older people, those that need to re-skill and up-skill, and those with long-term health problems or disability.

3.5 Training careers advisors

Careers advisors will only be able to help people if they are adequately trained. Experts that we spoke to expressed strong dissatisfaction with the current training and continuing professional development for those involved in the delivery of careers guidance. The two main qualifications for careers advisors are the Qualification in Careers Guidance and the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Advice and Guidance. There are inadequacies with both, though particularly the NVQ. Further, between 30% and 50% of careers coordinators, those with overall responsibility for careers education and guidance in schools, do not hold any relevant qualification. We were told that too few of those dispensing IAG go back into the world of work to update their knowledge about occupations.

► *Recommendation 4*

The Government should commission a review of the initial training and continuing professional development for those involved in delivery of IAG and careers education. The review must make proposals for a new training system.

3.6 Ensuring high quality provision

We must ensure that all services, however they are delivered, are of a high quality. In recent years, inspection regimes have not been sufficiently focused on IAG services. For example, Connexions Partnerships have only been inspected as part of Joint Area Reviews, which cover a range of services alongside delivery of IAG. Further, surveys measuring the satisfaction of clients using IAG services are either not taking place or the results are not being widely disseminated.

► *Recommendation 5*

Ofsted must regularly inspect IAG services and the Government must ensure that IAG services are subject to regular customer satisfaction polls.

3.7 IAG for young people

Providing high quality IAG for young people is vital. The Government has stated that it wishes to develop 'personalised learning' which it describes as including 'clear learning pathways through the education system'.¹ Young people can only be expected to navigate an increasingly complex educational landscape with the help of high quality IAG. High quality IAG, by helping young people understand the link between the skills that they are developing and their future employment goals, will also help to ensure engagement in education or training.

¹ See DCSF website: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/downloads/personalisedlearning.pdf>.

At present, IAG for young people is inadequate. Despite the importance of providing young people with high quality careers guidance, the Government has not given due priority to this policy area. Since 2000-01, there has been nearly a 16% drop in funding for IAG. Responsibility for Connexions has been transferred back to local authorities as of 1 April 2008.

► *Recommendation 6*

Local authorities must ensure that they devote sufficient funds to Connexions and that the service delivers high quality, impartial careers guidance for all young people.

Local authorities are more likely to devote sufficient funding to Connexions if they are aware that the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee, the two parliamentary education select committees and local authority select committees will be monitoring their commitment to this policy area.

► *Recommendation 7*

Scrutiny bodies both in Parliament and at local authority level must review local authority delivery of Connexions and assess whether sufficient levels of funding are being invested in the service.

For IAG services to be truly effective, individuals need to know how to access and use the IAG provided. They need to gain the knowledge and skills to plan and manage their journeys through learning and into work. The purpose of careers education programmes is to enable individuals to acquire these skills. At present, learning providers are only required to deliver careers education to pupils aged between eleven and sixteen. Given that the 2008 Education and Skills Bill will require young people to stay in education or training up until the age of eighteen, new regulations should be introduced to ensure that young people develop their career planning and career management skills to the same age.

► *Recommendation 8*

The Government should make it a statutory duty for learning providers to ensure that young people receive careers education up to the age of eighteen.

3.8 IAG for adults

It is very important that adults have access to high quality IAG. Research shows that 31% of adults are dissatisfied with their job, and the greatest source of frustration is lack of career progression or challenge. Evidence shows that, when told about learning and career opportunities, a high proportion of adults improve their skills. High quality IAG is vital if we are to meet the Government's ambitious targets to improve skill levels.

At present, a complex service landscape means many adults are confused as to where to go for IAG. When able to access services, however, adults do find some to be of a high quality. In particular, learndirect Careers Advice has been a great success, and has been graded two ('good') by Ofsted. The Government has announced that it plans to introduce an advancement and careers service, which will bring together learndirect and nextstep. This is welcome, as it will help end the confusion many adults feel about where to go for careers guidance.

Government announcements about the new service show there to be a tension between two policy priorities: the need to increase skill levels across society, requiring an advancement and careers service that is available to all, and the need to offer targeted help to groups most in need such as the unemployed and the low-skilled.

It will be possible to meet both policy priorities by making maximum use of remote provision, over the internet and telephone. The experience of learndirect Careers Advice shows that it is possible to reach large numbers of people, at a limited cost, by delivering IAG over the internet and by telephone. This in turn allows resources to be devoted to providing face to face services for the most in need. The Government appears to have recognised this, which is to be welcomed. However, it must not allow the undoubted necessity of helping targeted groups

supersede its commitment to making the advancement and careers service available to all.

The advancement and careers service will reach more people if a strategy is developed ensuring that it works in partnership with existing high quality providers, both from the private sector and public sector operations such as unionlearn.

► *Recommendation 9*

The Government must demonstrate its commitment to designing an advancement and careers service that is available to all. This requires making maximum use of internet and telephone based provision, together with a strategy involving those with proven success working with adults such as unionlearn and leading private sector providers.

Although the advancement and careers service and Jobcentre Plus should work in partnership, it is important not to allow a perception to develop that the advancement and careers service is merely an extension of the services offered by Jobcentre Plus.

Part of the role of Jobcentre Plus includes helping people out of the benefit system. Consequently, Jobcentre Plus is not perceived as providing impartial careers guidance with the clients' best long-term interests in mind.

► *Recommendation 10*

The Government must not allow the advancement and careers service and its brand to become too closely associated with Jobcentre Plus and the policing of the benefit system. To do so would damage the new service's reputation for impartiality.

The Government has stated that, as well as providing information about learning and career opportunities, the advancement and careers service will offer clients access to advice on economic, social and legal issues which hinder individuals from making progress in work. This idea is welcome, but the Government should not try to incorporate different advisory services into the advancement and careers service with the expectation that the staff will be able to offer high quality advice on a whole range of issues.

► *Recommendation 11*

The Government should ensure that the advancement and careers service signposts clients on to other services if they require advice on issues other than learning and careers.

3.9 All-age delivery of IAG

The Government has ruled out introducing an all-age IAG service in England. Yet elsewhere in the UK IAG is delivered by services which provide for both young people and adults. Reviews of Career Wales and Careers Scotland (both all-age services) are positive, and contrast markedly to our findings about some of the services in England.² New Zealand has an all-age service, and its delivery of careers guidance is widely regarded as the best in the world.

The greatest problem with dividing services for young people and adults is that when individuals reach the age of transition between services they do not necessarily approach the service for adults and do not receive the help they otherwise would.

► *Recommendation 12*

The Government should reassess its decision not to introduce an all-age service for delivery of IAG. If it continues to rule out the introduction of an all-age service, then the Government must continue to develop an all-age strategy.

² See for example <http://www.hie.co.uk/careers-scotland-progress.html>.

4. Recommendations

Approaches to IAG

1. The Government must recognise that IAG is often provided using outdated delivery models and that IAG services will become increasingly irrelevant unless this changes.

2. The Government must make sure that people have access to websites where they can find information about training routes and use forums to discuss different careers with those who have experienced them.

3. The Government must ensure that people have access to careers advisors. Most of the demand for IAG can be met online, which is cost effective, allowing resources to be directed towards those who would benefit from speaking to a careers advisor. Groups that particularly value being able to talk to an advisor when looking for employment include older people, those that need to re-skill and up-skill, and those with long-term health problems or disability.

Training careers advisors

4. The Government should commission a review of the initial training and continuing professional development for those involved in delivery of IAG and careers education. The review must make proposals for a new training system.

Ensuring quality

5. Ofsted must regularly inspect IAG services and the Government must ensure that IAG services are subject to regular customer satisfaction polls.

IAG for young people

6. Local authorities must ensure that they devote sufficient funds to Connexions and that the service delivers high quality, impartial careers guidance for all young people.

7. Scrutiny bodies both in Parliament and at local authority level must review local authority delivery of Connexions and assess whether sufficient levels of funding are being invested in the service.

8. The Government should make it a statutory duty for learning providers to ensure that young people receive careers education up to the age of eighteen.

IAG for adults

9. The Government must demonstrate its commitment to designing an advancement and careers service that is available to all. This requires making maximum use of internet and telephone based provision, together with a strategy involving those with proven success working with adults such as unionlearn and leading private sector providers.

10. The Government must not allow the advancement and careers service and its brand to become too closely associated with Jobcentre Plus and the policing of the benefit system. To do so would damage the new service's reputation for impartiality.

11. The Government should ensure that the advancement and careers service signposts clients on to other services if they require advice on issues other than learning and careers.

All-age delivery of IAG

12. The Government should reassess its decision not to introduce an all-age service for delivery of IAG. If it continues to rule out the introduction of an all-age service, then the Government must continue to develop an all-age strategy.

5. Definitions and understandings

5.1 Careers Education and Guidance (CEG)

The term Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) divides careers guidance into two component parts.

Careers education refers to programmes designed to help individuals develop the knowledge and skills that they need so that they are able to make successful choices and manage learning and career transitions.

Careers guidance refers to single or series of interventions to help individuals at a time when they are making decisions relating to learning and careers.

5.2 IAG

The term information, advice and guidance (IAG) was introduced in 1996 and divides careers guidance into three component parts.³

- Information refers to the provision of facts and figures relating to learning and careers, but without discussion about the relative merits of the different options. Information can be imparted verbally by a careers advisor or by printed material and internet sites.
- Advice requires more in-depth interaction with the client. It includes the explanation of information and explanations about how to access and use information.
- Guidance involves an in-depth session or series of sessions between the client and careers advisor, in which the careers advisor helps the client through the process of making decisions about learning and careers.

Most careers advisors have retained this understanding of the term IAG. However, the Government now frequently uses the term to refer to a wider body of advisory services, covering advice on learning and careers but also on personal issues such as health, housing, and money.⁴

Although the Skills Commission understand that these personal issues are important, our interest is in how to help people make decisions about learning and careers.

³ Consultation Paper on a National Strategy for Adult Guidance (National Advisory Council for Careers & Educational Guidance, 1996).

⁴ For example, *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2007), 5.16.

6. Research methods

The inquiry ran from October 2007 until March 2008. The report is based on evidence sessions, additional meetings with experts and stakeholders, written submissions and desk research.

The evidence sessions were as follows:

- Meeting One (10 October 2007): 'IAG and new media I'
- Meeting Two (26 November 2007): 'Advisor skills'
- Meeting Three (13 December 2007): 'The spectrum of advice'
- Meeting Four (10 January 2008): 'IAG and new media II'
- Meeting Five (5 February 2008): 'Government policy'
- Meeting Six (19 February 2008): 'Consumer voice'

In the first five meetings, the Skills Commission heard the views of a variety of experts.

In the sixth meeting, the Skills Commission met with fifteen young people and fifteen adults from across the country to hear their views about IAG.

The guests were chosen to ensure that the Commission heard the views of individuals from different regions, different ethnic groups, different ages, and different education and employment backgrounds.

Prior to the meeting, each of the guests had carried out a questionnaire, asking at least three personal contacts for their views on IAG.

A full methodology, including the names of participants, is included as an appendix.

7. Sources of IAG

7.1 Informal vs formal advice

IAG comes from a variety of sources, both 'formal' careers guidance services, such as learndirect Careers Advice, and 'informal sources', such as employers, friends and family members.

Most of the young people and adults whose views on IAG we heard used informal advice more often than they used formal advice. When asked where people go for careers guidance, answers included "people around me who have experience in the areas that I am interested in" and, from an individual hoping to find employment in publishing, "an employer or someone with experience of magazine/publishing industry, e.g. editorial consultant, etc".

A MORI survey carried out on behalf of the Guidance Council asked respondents whether they had received IAG from one or more of a listed selection of sources in the past two or three years (Figure 1). The results showed that informal IAG is more prevalent than formal IAG. A greater number of people had received IAG from friends (25% of respondents) than had received IAG from careers advisors (18%). The most common source from which people had received IAG in the preceding two or three years was employers (33%).

The MORI survey found that Jobcentre Plus is the most frequently used formal source of IAG (21%). Although informal sources of advice are most prevalent overall, Jobcentre Plus and learndirect Careers Advice are important sources of help for those of social class D and, particularly, E (Figure 2).

7.2 The increasing importance of the internet

Many of the young people and adults whose views on IAG we canvassed used the internet as their first port of call for IAG. When asked whether they thought that the internet could be used for careers guidance, a typical response was: "Yes because you may want information fast and you may not be able to see your careers advisor".

The MORI research found that the internet is the most popular channel for finding out about IAG services, but that it is also rapidly becoming one of the most popular sources for delivery of IAG. The internet was found to be the third most common source of IAG, with 29% of MORI respondents reporting that they had received IAG over the internet in the past two or three years. Among adult internet users, looking for information about education, training or courses is the sixth most common internet-based activity.⁵ In 2000, roughly equal numbers of people rang the learndirect Careers Advice helpline as accessed the learndirect Careers Advice website, whereas today ten times as many people access the website as call the helpline.

⁵ National Statistics: First Release (28 August 2007). Available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/inta0807.pdf>.

Figure 1 The percentage of surveyed individuals who had received IAG from various sources in the 'two or three' years prior to the survey (MORI, 2005).

Qualified individuals/specialists		People you know	
A teacher/tutor (20%)		Employer (33%)	
A careers advisor (18%)		A friend (25%)	
A specialist in a particular field of work (16%)		Me/myself (24%)	
A recruitment consultant (9%)		A work colleague (21%)	
A social worker (3%)		A family member (17%)	
A youth worker (2%)		My wife/husband/partner (8%)	
A probation officer (<0.5%)		Religious/community worker (3%)	
Professional organisations	Media and other resources	Places	
The Jobcentre/Jobcentre Plus (21%)	Books, newspapers, magazines (32%)	College (24%)	
learnirect (13%)	Internet (29%)	University (12%)	
Local Education Authority (11%)	College prospectus (24%)	Recruitment agency (10%)	
Professional body (10%)	Word of mouth (23%)	School (9%)	
Citizen's Advice Bureau (7%)	Specific internet websites (22%)	Community/religious centre (2%)	
Connexions service (6%)	Library (17%)		
The local council (6%)	Leaflets (14%)		
A trade union (5%)	Specialist/trade publication (8%)		
Social services (4%)	Job recruitment fair (8%)		
Local careers service/company (3%)	Telephone helpline (7%)		
Business Link (2%)	Careers fair/convention (6%)		
Worktrain (1%)	Television/radio programmes (5%)		
Connexions Direct (1%)	A video (5%)		
IAG Partnerships (<0.5%)	Education fair/convention (4%)		

Figure 2 The percentage of individuals from different social classes who had received IAG from various sources in the 'two or three' years prior to the survey (MORI, 2005).

Source	Social class				
	AB	C1	C2	D	E
Jobcentre/Jobcentre Plus	14%	18%	22%	34%	29%
learnirect	9%	12%	13%	13%	22%
Professional body	18%	12%	8%	1%	2%
A specialist in a particular field	21%	19%	13%	7%	10%
An employer	37%	39%	37%	20%	13%
A work colleague	30%	26%	17%	11%	5%

8. Traditional approaches to IAG

8.1 The matching model

Professor Jenny Bimrose, Principal Research Fellow at Warwick Institute for Employment Research, told the Skills Commission: “Traditionally, careers advisors have used the ‘matching model’ to recommend appropriate career pathways to clients.” The matching model is based on the theory that correct occupational choice takes place when individuals achieve:

- an accurate understanding of their personal traits;
- a knowledge of jobs and the labour market; and
- a reasoned evaluation of the relationship between their personal traits and the labour market.

The matching method assumes that it is possible to measure individual talents, measure the attributes required in particular jobs, and make a link between the two.

Professor Bimrose said that, in various forms, the matching model has remained a dominant influence on guidance since the model’s formulation in the first decade of the 20th century. She and other experts said that there is an urgent need to recognise that the matching model is flawed. Professor Bimrose described the matching model as “a hundred years out of date” and Gareth Dent, former Head of Advice and E-services at University for Industry (Ufi), argued that “it is important that we move beyond this approach”.

8.2 Problems with the matching model

8.2.1 Portfolio careers

The matching model was developed at a time when there was a job for life culture, in which people assumed that the process of choosing a career took place once at the start of an individual’s working life and was not then repeated. Yet experts addressing the Skills Commission emphasised that this is no longer the case, with regular changes of jobs and careers throughout working lives. Derek Osborn, International President of the Association of Career Professionals International, told the Skills Commission: “Instead of the job for life, individuals now build up portfolio careers”. Pablo Lloyd, Deputy Chief Executive of Ufi, told the Skills Commission: “DIUS data shows that on average people now have thirteen different jobs, across three different career areas, in the course of their working lives.” Derek Osborn also said: “Rather than trying to match individuals to a single job that perfectly meshes with their personal traits, we must recognise that people go through a number of different jobs which each utilises a different aspect of their skills and challenges them in different ways.”

8.2.2 Complexity of the labour market

For the matching model to be effective the labour market must be simple enough to allow careers advisors to establish expertise on it and the skills required for different careers. Yet both Ufi/learndirect Careers Advice and monster.co.uk told the Skills Commission that the labour market is not simple, making it difficult for careers advisors to make generalisations about different careers. The experience of one young person that attended one of our evidence sessions demonstrates this. He told the Skills Commission about a positive and negative experience of careers guidance:

Positive – “A person I know through my brother is an architect and has his own firm in Manchester; I was worried that I did not have the qualifications to become an architect because it was what I really wanted to be. I had the impression that to be an architect you needed at least one A-level in maths or physics, but he said this was not the case. If I wanted to specialise in a certain area of architecture such as the engineering side, then I would need maths and physics. However, the area in which I was interested in was the design side and as I have taken art at A-level he said I could do a course in Interior Architecture. He and his friend ran a course at Cardiff University and so they told me in depth what was involved and the careers opportunities which led from it. I was greatly inspired and so investigated more, and it definitely appealed to me. The course was only 3 years in comparison to the 7 year architecture course and it was more practical based than the ordinary course.”

Negative – “I asked my tutor about architecture and the immediate response was a look at my subjects which met with a shake of the head and pointing finger saying “well you haven’t got maths or physics”. And that the course I would have to take would be 7 years long and heavily academic and this really didn’t seem like the right thing for me as well as impractical money wise. As I found out under my own accord, there is a way into architecture without maths and physics and that was a shorter course, less academic and more practical.”

8.2.3 The desire for flexibility

The matching model presupposes that people want to formulate an exact career plan and keep to it for the rest of their working lives. Professor Bimrose told the Skills Commission: “Actually, many individuals are content to act on circumstances and opportunities as they arise.” She went on to describe her research, which has found that only a small minority of people wish to formulate a career plan in the way that the matching model assumes.⁷ In a written submission to the inquiry, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers cite research which indicates that young people change their mind about their futures continually.⁸

8.2.4 The need for autonomy in decisions

The matching model does not recognise that people feel more comfortable with decisions that they have made themselves. Dr Ilona Boniwell, Senior Lecturer in Positive Psychology at the University of East London, told the Skills Commission: “Recent research in the field of positive psychology indicates that autonomy, including autonomy of decisions about important aspects of life such as careers, is one of the three fundamental psychological human needs.” The matching model can result in career recommendations that feel like impositions.

► Recommendation 1

The Government must recognise that IAG is often provided using outdated delivery models and that IAG services will become increasingly irrelevant unless this changes.

⁷ J. Bimrose, S.A. Barnes, D. Hughes, *Developing career trajectories in England: the role of effective guidance* (DfES and the Warwick Institute for Employment Research, 2006).

⁸ S.J. Ball, M. Maguire and S. Macrae, *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economics in the Global City* (Routledge Falmer, 2000).

9 Delivering IAG in the 21st century

9.1 The role of the internet

9.1.1 Moving beyond traditional approaches

The internet should play an important role in delivering IAG. By using the internet, many of the problems that result from traditional methods of delivering IAG are circumvented. Albert Ellis, Chief Executive of Harvey Nash, told the Skills Commission: "Employers understand that there is a need to move beyond older methods of delivering careers guidance to ensure that, when they advertise a post, they receive applications from enthused individuals with relevant skills."

Public and private sector internet sites allow individuals to search for information about careers quickly and without the need for intermediaries. Witnesses speaking to the Skills Commission observed that this is a change that is to be celebrated. Young people and adults that we spoke to about IAG articulated this:

"Gives you an option rather than always having to have one to one interviews."

"I think it should be just like going to the jobcentre just accessible from home."

9.1.2 Access to a wealth of information

There is a great amount of information available on the internet, both on general sites and sites about specific sectors. Particularly notable is the site monster.co.uk, a site to which one in seven of the UK's workforce is registered. The site allows prospective employees to register their curricula vitae which employers can then search through. Additionally, employers can post vacancies for job searchers to look through. The site provides advice on a great range of issues, with sections entitled: 'Finding a Job'; 'Changing Career'; 'CV Advice'; 'Job Interview Advice'; 'Starting a New Job'; 'Leaving a Job'; 'Money & Salary Advice'; 'Law & Regulations'; and 'In the Workplace'. Each section is further divided, so for example the 'Finding a Job' section discusses 'Choosing your First Job'; 'Choosing the Right Company'; 'Pushing for Promotion'; 'Taking the Next Step'; 'The Art of Networking'; and 'Talent Pools and Headhunting'. The site also has pages which have been written by experts from particular industries.

The National Learner Database contains details about approximately one million learning opportunities in the UK and can be accessed from the learndirect Careers Advice website and approximately one hundred other portals including Sector Skills Councils and Regional Development Agencies. The database is maintained by Hotcourses LTD under contract by learndirect Careers Advice.

9.1.3 Fusion of careers guidance and notification of vacancies

The internet has increased the fusion of broad information about different career pathways with specific details about particular job vacancies. Whilst public and private sector sites provide information on different careers, they also list vacancies. Andy Ramsay, Business Development Director at Monster.co.uk, told the Skills Commission: "Over two thirds of organisations now advertise vacancies on their websites. Arguably, the integration of guidance with information about vacancies better reflects the way people want to manage their careers, acting on specific circumstances and opportunities as they arise."

9.1.4 Avoiding the stigma of careers guidance

For some, speaking to a careers advisor retains a stigma, because they believe that to do so is a sign of failure. Internet provision of guidance has allowed individuals who are not willing to speak to a career advisor to benefit from IAG. Pablo Lloyd told us: "As internet usage has increased, so too has the reach of learndirect Careers Advice". He observed that "discussing aspirations and skill levels is a highly personal experience which many find embarrassing. There is a perception that in contacting a careers advisor you are making an admission of failure or inadequacy."

Some of the young people and adults with whom we discussed IAG said that they felt more comfortable accessing IAG through the internet. One young person commented: "I often wonder what I am going to do and if [careers guidance] was just on the internet I would be able to go and have a quick look when I wanted to without having to talk to anyone or feeling pressured into it."

9.1.5 Access to those with experience

Most recently, the internet is putting individuals in touch with people who have experienced particular courses and careers. The site growingambitions.org puts volunteer speakers from different educational and career backgrounds in touch with learning providers so that young people can hear directly about some of the different pathways that are open to them. Another site, u-xplore, encourages local employers from different sectors to put together videos explaining what is involved when working in different roles. These videos are then made available to local authorities in those areas.

Meanwhile, interactive sites allow individuals to communicate directly with people who have taken particular courses or experienced particular careers. learndirect Careers Advice and Monster.co.uk have recently introduced forums in which users can discuss careers. 60,000 'stories' were posted on the learndirect Careers Advice forums in the first five months. Other sites offering similar forums are proving equally popular, notable examples being www.hotcourses.com and www.horsemouth.co.uk. 15.1 million people used the hotcourses.com website in 2006.

Horsemouth.co.uk is a not-for-profit online mentoring site. Users can sign up to the site to seek advice from mentors or act as mentors themselves. Careers are one of the most common issues on which people seek advice. People exchange tips about how to get into different careers, discuss how to make informed careers choices, and debate issues such as maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Gareth Dent told the Skills Commission: "The introduction of peer to peer support reconnects careers guidance with the changing world of work. Much of the change in the labour market is change within occupations. Clients with experience of occupations can provide guidance that has resonance and authenticity."

Young people and adults that we spoke to discussed such forums and were extremely enthusiastic, making comments such as:

"I can get advice from real people who have been through taking big decisions or are going to."

"I think this is a great idea, it gives you an inside insight into the nooks and crannies of a job, the plus and the negative side, especially the negative side as this is never advertised for obvious reasons."

By making use of online social networking we can ensure that everyone can learn from those in skilled and rewarding careers. Everyone can benefit from the expertise and knowledge of people in different careers, not just those fortunate enough to have personal contacts in the careers in which they are interested. This is very important if we are to provide similar levels of advice to people from different backgrounds. We will provide inspiration and encourage aspiration.

It is important that both central and local government recognise the importance of the internet in delivering IAG. Central government can play a role by ensuring that the internet is an important part of publicly funded provision of IAG. Local government must also work to forge partnerships with internet providers to ensure that young people benefit fully from the use of the internet for purposes of careers guidance.

► **Recommendation 2**

The Government must make sure that people have access to websites where they can find information about training routes and use forums to discuss different careers with those who have experienced them.

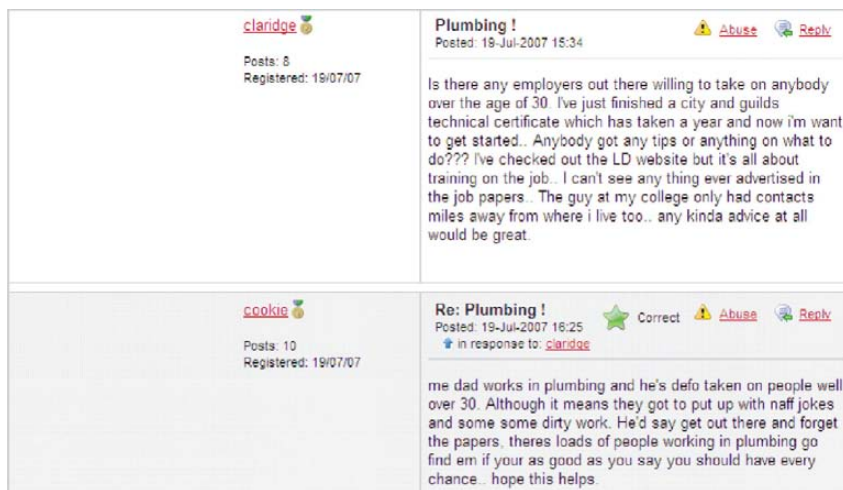


Figure 3 Views and experiences on plumbing being shared at the learndirect Careers Advice website

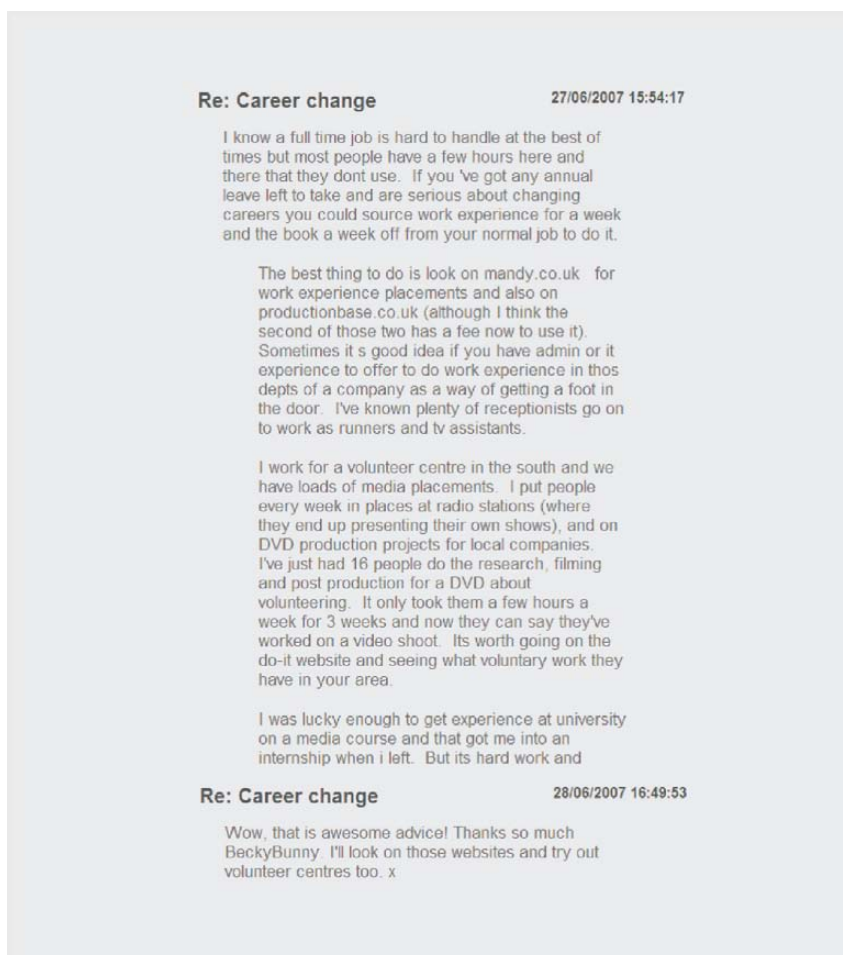


Figure 4 Views and experiences about getting work experience for careers in the media being shared at www.horsemouth.co.uk

9.2 The role of careers advisors

Internet IAG services will be sufficient for most people. Yet some people require access to careers advisors. As internet services can be provided cost-effectively, this frees up resources for ensuring that those that require it have access to careers advisors. Internet provision of IAG should not replace IAG delivered in person, but the two services should sit alongside each other.

9.2.1 Demand for access to careers advisors

There are three main reasons why people require access to careers advisors. Firstly, some individuals like to have the opportunity to talk through the career decision-making process.

Secondly, some people are uncomfortable with new technology. 52% of those with no qualifications and 47% of those over 44 are not interested in receiving IAG over the internet.⁹ In their written submission to the inquiry, Futurelab comment: 'Even individuals traditionally labelled as socially-excluded are bucking the trend by engaging with digital technologies. However, we must not forget that around 20% of the UK's population (5% of whom are socially included) are resistant users of technology – hence the need for a mixed approach to provision.' Meanwhile, Skillset comment in their written submission: 'Older users may not be comfortable with web delivery of information, and a significant proportion of the population still lacks regular internet access.'

Thirdly, the circumstances of some groups within society mean that they require greater levels of help. Penny Brodie, Director of Linking Education and Disability (LEAD) Scotland, which provides IAG to disabled people, told the Skills Commission that "it is important that the Government understand that, for some groups, in-depth and extended engagement is required." There was unanimous agreement among witnesses we spoke to that, for groups such as these, continued access to careers advisors is essential.

9.2.2 The changing role of careers advisors

The role of careers advisors is changing. A first change is that careers advisors role as providers of information is diminishing. Since 2000 the proportion of approaches to practitioners involving requests for information has reduced in relation to the number of clients requiring advice or guidance. When learndirect Careers Advice receives a call, depending on the nature and depth of help that callers require, they will be transferred to information advisors, learning advisors or, for those needing most help, careers coaches. The proportion of callers directed to information advisors has declined whilst the proportion directed to careers coaches has risen. In 2000, 61% of callers were directed to information advisors and 3% to careers coaches. In 2006, 23% of callers were directed to information advisors and 44% to careers coaches.¹⁰

A second change, which should be welcomed, is a move away from the matching model. Instead of assuming that careers advisors can supply the answers, there is increasing recognition that their main role should be facilitating the process whereby clients make decisions for themselves. learndirect's decision to refer clients to those offering guidance as Careers Coaches is to be welcomed, as the name recognises that the guidance profession can learn much from the coaching profession. We spoke to a number of people from a coaching background about their approach to helping clients with careers, including Derek Osborn and Dr Ilona Boniwell. Derek Osborn commented: "Coaches specialising in careers do not tell clients what to do. Rather, we help clients work through the decision-making process to identify a career themselves. We ask the right questions rather than supplying answers". Dr Boniwell commented: "Coaching is a growing phenomenon, which builds on the insights from fields such as positive psychology. I am glad that coaching is increasingly becoming integral to delivery of IAG, but it seems to me that there is scope for still greater use of coaching techniques for careers guidance".

► Recommendation 3

The Government must ensure that people have access to careers advisors. Most of the demand for IAG can be met online, which is cost effective, allowing resources to be directed towards those who would benefit from speaking to a careers advisor. Groups that particularly value being able to talk to an advisor when looking for employment include older people, those that need to re-skill and up-skill, and those with long-term health problems or disability.

⁹ J. Taylor, D. Vasicikova, A. Byrom and J. Dickson, *Demand for, and perceptions of information, advice and guidance* (MORI/The Guidance Council, 2005).
¹⁰ A.G. Watts and G. Dent, *The Evolution of a National Distance Guidance Service: Trends and Challenges* (paper submitted to the British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 2007), p.7.

10. Training and continued professional development

10.1 Introduction

Careers advisors have an important role to play in future delivery of IAG but, to ensure that they are able to fulfil their role, the systems and programmes for their initial training and continuing professional development (CPD) need to be radically overhauled. Deirdre Hughes, Director of the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby, wrote in her submission that the current training system is 'incoherent' and 'fragmented'. These serious deficiencies in the existing system account for many of the problems with existing provision of IAG.

10.2 The existing system

10.2.1 The Qualification in Careers Guidance

The Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG) is the main route of qualification for those who wish to work with young people. Although the QCG retains credibility, many we spoke to said that the qualification needs significant reform.

Kieran Gordon, former Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) President and Chief Executive of Greater Merseyside Connexions, told us: "I spoke to my line managers, and asked them to tell me their experiences of working with QCG graduates. They told me that graduates demonstrate insufficient understanding of the world of work and labour markets". Across the country, new Connexions employees with the QCG qualification are required to complete additional units known as the 'careers guidance cluster' from the NVQ Learning, Development and Support Services for Young People.

Dr Rachel Mulvey, Head of the Centre for Training in Career Guidance at the University of East London, told us about the problems that the QCG suffers in comparison to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). She said: "QCG students have to do four placements - one of which is in schools, two are with guidance providers, and one in a community organisation. Securing QCG placements in schools is more difficult than securing a PGCE placement because we can't offer the school any financial incentive. Funding for QCG students, through DCSF bursaries and sponsorships, is also rather less advantageous than funding for PGCE programmes. This is a concern, as is the lack of a period of post-qualification induction equivalent to the Newly Qualified Teacher for subject teachers."

10.2.2 The NVQ in Advice and Guidance

The NVQ in Advice and Guidance was introduced to ensure a supply of qualified staff to the increased number of guidance providers for adults. The availability of an accessible course for careers advisors wishing to work with adults is to be welcomed. However, a number of witnesses questioned the robustness of the qualification in its current form, observing that it does not provide practitioners with adequate understanding of career paths and the labour market. There are no requirements that students visit different workplaces to make sure that they understand what is involved in a variety of jobs. Jonathan Reeve, who teaches the NVQ in Advice and Guidance at Manchester College of Arts and Technology, commented: "There is a lack of any overt reference to theory of career choice or models of guidance".

New Standards for the NVQ were introduced in 2007 which, according to Jonathan Reeve, make the qualification even easier to attain than it has been in the past. He listed some of the problems with the new qualifications:

- There are too few units at Levels 3 and 4. NVQ Level 4 is achieved on completion of eight units, not the eleven units that were previously required.
- It is far too easy to move between NVQ Levels, with some units appearing across all levels.
- Students can progress from NVQ Level 3 to NVQ Level 4 in a matter of weeks.
- Level 4 lacks an interviewing unit specific to that Level to make it distinct from Level 3.
- The NVQ contains some units concerned with careers education, but take-up is poor.
- Information giving has been relegated to a single element of a mandatory unit at Level 3.

Jonathan Reeve told us that the NVQ in Advice and Guidance has become a “hostage” to the sector. He commented: “Many employers seek to get their staff NVQ 4 qualified less for reasons of individual development rather than for business considerations, i.e. to enable them to win ‘enhanced service’ contracts”. The lack of distinction between Levels 3 and 4 in the standards means that NVQ Level 4 can be taught very quickly, and training providers find that they lose business if they do not deliver the course speedily.

10.2.3 Training for staff in schools

Careers coordinators, those with overall responsibility for CEG in a school, are very often ill-prepared for the role. Estimates of the proportion of careers coordinators who hold relevant qualifications vary between 30% and 50%. In-service training for careers coordinators is available through Connexions, whilst universities provide regional certificate and diploma courses. However, provision is inconsistent across the country and there is no requirement for careers coordinators to participate in training.

According to David Andrews OBE, independent consultant and trainer in careers education and guidance: ‘The role is often filled either by a teacher with insufficient time to do the job properly or, following recent workforce reforms, by a non-teaching member of staff who often lacks the status to fulfil the responsibilities.’ Yet the role is a demanding one and requires high levels of responsibility, time and training.

It is not just careers coordinators but all teaching staff that play a role in delivery of CEG, either through teaching careers education or through interactions with individual pupils. At present, there is no requirement that teaching staff are trained for their involvement in CEG.

10.2.4 Continuing professional development

Although there are a number of different CPD programmes available, there is no system of accredited CPD. At present, all organisations on LSC contracts must ensure that staff undertake appropriate CPD and ‘meet service demands’ under clause 6 of the matrix standards. However, as service demands are not defined, this stipulation is insufficient. Heather Jackson, Vice-President of the National Association of Guidance for Adults, and Simon Bysshe, Senior Associate at HOST Policy Research, stated in their written submission: ‘There is no standard requirement for professionals to undertake CPD and, as a consequence, no systematic approach to identification and response to workforce needs’.

10.3 Addressing the problem: the need for a review

There is broad agreement that there is an urgent need for a review which, in the words of the ICG's submission to the inquiry, includes a 'thorough audit of workforce capacity' and investigation of 'current arrangements for initial training and CPD'.

Although Ufi/learnirect, nextstep and Connexions each hold data about their own workforces, nowhere is there comprehensive information about careers advisors and the qualifications that they hold. Former ICG President Chris Evans, Executive Director of the Institute of Careers Guidance, comments: "It is an irony that a profession that relies so much on labour market information cannot call on detailed statistics about its own workforce".

Experts such as Deirdre Hughes and Heather Jackson suggest that, given the inadequacy of existing qualifications, the review should be carried out with a view to replacing existing disjointed training arrangements with a core initial training for all practitioners, regardless of whether they work with young people or with adults. Deirdre Hughes writes in her written submission: 'There is growing consensus that there should be core initial training or a benchmark for all practitioners, regardless of whether they work with young people or with adults. argued that all practitioners should have similar philosophical and skills requirements. From a consistent and transparent benchmark, practitioners could then build on their qualification to develop further expertise in specialist areas. This process would support progression within a learning framework and within the profession, providing transparency for employers and practitioners alike.'

In particular, the review needs to address the inadequacy of training for careers coordinators in schools. David Andrews commented in his written submission: 'The Government has supported the development of a national certificate for teaching PSHE and a national certificate for teaching citizenship. There is an urgent need to develop a national, professional qualification for careers coordinators.'

The review should consider the introduction of a compulsory careers education and guidance element as part of Initial Teacher Training. Deirdre Hughes wrote in her written submission: 'Over the past twenty years, there have been recommendations that IAG training should become a core requirement for all teacher training programmes. This would provide an initial level of qualification for all who provide support for learners, and would better integrate IAG throughout the whole of the learning journey.'

The labour market is constantly changing, as are the opportunities available. A new CPD system must ensure that careers advisors understand as best they can how different occupations are changing so that they do not give clients outdated information. For a new training and CPD system to be successful, it will need clear leadership. Currently, leadership in the sector is divided between the Children's Workforce Development Council, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), ENTO and various guidance bodies. It is to be welcomed that, in their written submission to the inquiry, ENTO note: 'With regard to LLUK, we have talked and continue to talk around issues of responsibility.'

► Recommendation 4

The Government should commission a review of the initial training and continuing professional development for those involved in delivery of IAG and careers education. The review must make proposals for a new training system.

11. Inspection

11.1 Ensuring high quality

We must ensure that all services, however they are delivered, are of a high quality. One of the best ways of encouraging good practice is carrying out regular and public assessments of services. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) should inspect IAG services, whilst client satisfaction levels should be measured regularly and the results published.

11.2 Ofsted

Ofsted should develop a single, all-age system for inspection of guidance services. The system should be based upon a fit-for-purpose framework designed specifically for inspection of guidance providers, and delivered by inspectors with a relevant background and expertise.

Between 2002 and 2004, 28 of the 47 Connexions Partnerships were inspected by Ofsted, but since then inspections of Connexions Partnerships have come as part of Joint Area Reviews. These do not provide sufficient focus. Inspections of guidance providers should operate discretely, rather than forming part of wider inspections of education provision.

The 2008 Education and Skills Bill includes provision for Ofsted inspections of IAG services following the transfer to local authorities, and it is important that such inspections takes place.

11.3 Customer satisfaction polls

In the past, surveys measuring levels of client satisfaction have either not taken place or the results have not been widely disseminated. Regular client satisfaction polls would give potential users an indication of the quality of the service they might receive, and would also act as a spur for providers to improve provision.

► Recommendation 5

Ofsted must regularly inspect IAG services and the Government must ensure that IAG services are subject to regular customer satisfaction polls.

12. Young People

12.1 Introduction

The inquiry found that there is much concern about the provision of CEG for young people. In their submission to the inquiry, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers noted that:

'Currently, IAG is a sideshow to the main business of subject timetable and assessment....IAG is not independent, impartial nor informative to the needs of young people.'

12.2 Importance of IAG for young people

12.2.1 Personalised learning

It is the Government's wish to develop 'personalised' learning, which it has defined as 'taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child's and young person's learning, in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate'.¹¹ Personalised learning involves 'clear learning pathways through the education system and the motivation to become independent, e-literate, fulfilled, lifelong learners.'¹² This means ensuring that young people have access to IAG so as to ensure that they are following the paths most suitable to their aspirations and abilities.

Chris Evans told us: "There are an increasing number of choices for young people, including accredited in-work training, A-levels, Apprenticeships, Diplomas and GCSEs. This choice could become the essence of personalised learning, but only if it comes alongside high quality IAG to help young people navigate the choices."

12.2.2 Ensuring engagement

The Government wants to see every young person engaged in education or training, through either traditional academic routes or through new and expanding vocational options. Careers guidance will play a role in ensuring engagement. Young people who talked to us about IAG commented:

"I believe it would benefit me a lot because I'm not sure what I want to do when I leave school. I would go on to study at college, but would like advice on careers."

"It would allow me to understand and think more clearly about what I want to do next with my life and what skills I need to achieve to be where I want to be. It will put me on the right track career and education wise."

Professor Tony Watts, Life President and Founding Fellow of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling, referred us to a statement by the Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Professor Watts commented: "Ed Balls has recently stated that one of the four building blocks for the successful raising of the education participation age is 'advice and guidance that helps all young people make the right choices'....The Secretary of State deserves credit for recognising the importance of advice and guidance."

Paul Chubb, Director of Careers England, and Mark Corney, Director of MC Consultancy, told us that it is important that high quality guidance is available by 2010-11, when the year group who will be required to

¹¹ See DCSF website: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/about/>.

¹² See DCSF website: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/downloads/personalisedlearning.pdf>.

stay in education or training beyond sixteen will be in Year 9 and making decisions. Mark Corney commented: "Without high quality guidance, the Year 9s in 2010-11 will have a tough task deciding between the many available options."

12.2.3 Equality of opportunity

Chris Evans told us that "high quality IAG increases equality of opportunity." Careers guidance from friends and family is valuable but, when this is the only source of information available, the result can be a tendency for young people to enter professions requiring a similar level of education as achieved by their parents.¹³ Additionally, high quality careers guidance can challenge gender stereotyping and, particularly, the perception that certain careers are not open to women.¹⁴ Richard Wainer, Acting Head of Education and Skills at the Confederation of British Industry, told us that "careers advice must challenge gender stereotyping about different jobs to ensure employers have the deepest possible talent pool from which to recruit."

In their written submission to the inquiry, the National Union of Teachers comment: 'The NUT believes that equality of opportunity for young men and young women should underpin good careers education and guidance.'

12.2.4 Evidence that IAG helps young people

There is a large body of evidence showing that when young people are provided with high quality IAG they make better progress through the education system with more successful transitions between Key Stages and levels of qualification. A recent paper which includes an overview of the published evidence concludes that high quality careers guidance has 'a positive effect on young people' and can 'contribute towards the success of subsequent transitions made at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.' One study involving 2,280 pupils found that there was a positive correlation between successful transition and the presence of 'a programme of careers education and guidance and a pre-16 curriculum that was perceived as wide-ranging and as promoting useful skills and knowledge'. Correspondingly, evidence suggests that, in cases where IAG is not of a high quality, pupils are more likely to make poor choices as they enter post-16 learning.¹⁵

12.3 Connexions

Connexions delivers a number of advisory services, including careers guidance, to young people aged between thirteen and nineteen years of age, or between thirteen and twenty-four years of age for individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities. Connexions advice covers a number of areas including careers and learning, health, housing, free time, money, relationships, rights and travel.

Connexions operates out of centres located in towns and cities across the country. It also runs internet and telephone advice services, which are collectively called Connexions Direct. Connexions works in partnership with schools, which are required to allow Connexions' advisors access to pupils under the terms of the 1997 Education Act and the 2000 Learning and Skills Act.¹⁶

Connexions offers a service that is available to all young people but is also targeted at young people who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from education or training.

Responsibility for the Connexions service transferred from Connexions Partnerships to local authorities on 1 April 2008.

13 M. Morris, *The case for careers education and guidance for 14-19 year olds* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2004).

14 *Free to choose: Tackling gender barriers to better jobs* (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005), p.23; *Action for Change* (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005).

15 M. Morris, *The case for careers education and guidance for 14-19 year olds* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2004).

16 1997 Education Act, Section 44; 2000 Learning and Skills Act Sections 144-122.

12.3.1 The importance of Connexions

Research carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) exploring delivery of careers guidance in different countries found that the best way to deliver careers guidance to young people is for an external agency to work in partnership with schools.¹⁷ Richard Longson, President of the ICG, told us: "Provision by schools without the involvement of an external body can result in institutions furthering their own interests above those of pupils". There is a tendency for British schools to encourage pupils to stay on into the sixth form despite the availability of other options that may be better for individual pupils. One in three young people feel that their school does not give them enough information about post-16 options.¹⁸ A recent research paper commissioned by the Government notes:

*'Careers advice in schools with a sixth form is qualitatively different from that in 11- 16 schools, with pupils attending the latter more positively inclined towards the careers education they had received. Pupils in schools without a sixth form tended to judge the advice and guidance functions of their schools as being more impartial than those in schools with a sixth form. There is a tendency in schools with a sixth form to provide post-16 advice and guidance which is more closely related to sixth form provision than that which the broader FE sector would require.'*¹⁹

The involvement of an external agency also results in stronger links with the labour market. It has been noted that when careers guidance is delivered entirely through schools, guidance can tend to focus on the immediate next step, for example, GCSE choice, with little regard to the longer-term learning and career implications of these decisions.²⁰ Additionally, schools tend to promote traditional academic routes over other options such as apprenticeships. Young people that attended an inquiry evidence session commented:

"School advice is very limited and should be expanded to cover trade not just written work and exams."

"School careers advisors just want you to stay on in school and follow the academic route."

In England, Connexions is meant to play the role of the external agency, ensuring that young people have access to impartial guidance. However, the experts we spoke to said that Connexions is not fulfilling this function and that there has been a decline in the quality of careers guidance since Connexions replaced the Careers Service in 2001.

Linda Taylor, Secretary General of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, told us: "Connexions has done some brilliant work with some very difficult teenagers, but it has not been able to deliver careers guidance for the majority at the same time as focusing on young people with difficult needs".

The Government has acknowledged this. The *End to End Review of Careers Education and Guidance* stated: 'Connexions Partnerships do not have the resources to deliver both targeted support and CEG' and 'the significant flaws in the current arrangements for delivery of CEG mean that they are not sustainable'.²¹ In an effort to improve the performance of Connexions, responsibility for the service has been transferred from Connexions Partnerships to local authorities as of 1 April 2008.

However, experts told us that they do not believe that this change will improve delivery of careers guidance because it does not address the main problem: insufficient funding combined with an ambitious remit to offer both universal and targeted support.

¹⁷ *Careers guidance and public policy: Bridging the Gap* (OECD, 2004).

¹⁸ M. Morris, *The case for careers education and guidance for 14-19 year olds* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2004). See also *Young Participation in Higher Education in the Parliamentary Constituencies of Birmingham Hodge Hill, Bristol South, Nottingham North and Sheffield Brightside* (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 2007), p.22.

¹⁹ N. Foskett, M. Dyke and F. Maringe, *The Influence of the School in the Decision to Participate in Learning Post-16* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES) research report, 2004).

²⁰ *Young Participation in Higher Education in the Parliamentary Constituencies of Birmingham Hodge Hill, Bristol South, Nottingham North and Sheffield Brightside* (HEFCE, 2007), p.22.

²¹ *End to End Review of Careers Education and Guidance* (DfES, 2005), p.21.

12.3.2 Lack of funding for Connexions

	Careers Services £ (millions)	Connexions Partnerships £ (millions)	Connexions budget spent on IAG £ (millions)	Total spend on IAG £ (millions)
98-99	210			210
99-2000	223			223
2000-01	233			233
2001-02	173	110	46	219
2002-03	52	337	142	194
2003-04		439	184	184
2004-05		458	192	192
2005-06		464	195	195
2006-07		466	196	196
2007-08		467	196	196

Figure 6 Spend on career guidance over the past ten years. Parliamentary Written Question 153839 (8 October 2007)

Funding for young people's IAG has reduced by nearly 16% since 2000-01 (Figure 6). In 2000-01, £233 million was spent on IAG, compared to £196 million in 2007-08. Julia Neal, President of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, told us: "Although Connexions receives considerably more funding than did the Careers Service, the wider range of advice that Connexions provides, together with the focus on helping disengaged young people, means that less funding is devoted to careers guidance". Only 40% of young people in England now receive an individual, face-to-face intervention with a Connexions Personal Advisor.²²

It is likely that the decline in funding for careers guidance will continue under local authorities. In their written submission, the National Association of Connexions Partnerships comment: 'In the future, the money will go into local authorities via the Area Based Grant and be managed through a Local Area Agreement, which means it is not guaranteed for use by services working with young people. It will face competing pressures within the Children's Services "block" and it may be subject to being overly targeted at services to vulnerable groups at the expense of all young people, who have an entitlement to Connexions services. From an IAG point of view, the situation is made worse in some areas by recent changes to the formula used to calculate Connexions allocations. Whilst no area will be allocated less in cash terms in 2008-09, a number of areas will receive a stand still allocation, which represents a reduction in real terms. Over the following couple of years, a number of areas will receive reductions in their allocations.'

The National Union of Teachers state in their submission to the inquiry: 'We have long been concerned at pressure on funding for local authority central services, particularly those that allow and indeed rely on schools' "buy-in"'.

²² Policy Commentary 9 (Careers England, 2008).

12.3.3 Ensuring no further decline in funding

There is an urgent need to ensure that careers guidance for young people does not suffer further reductions in funding. This requires local authorities to recognise the importance of providing high quality, impartial careers guidance to all young people. They must devote sufficient funds to the careers guidance element of Connexions remit.

► *Recommendation 6*

Local authorities must ensure that they devote sufficient funds to Connexions and that the service delivers high quality, impartial careers guidance for all young people.

To encourage local authorities to devote funds to the provision of careers guidance for young people, it is important that scrutiny bodies in Parliament and in Local Government – the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee, the two education select committees and local authority scrutiny committees – make assessments of how much funding local authorities commit to Connexions over the coming years.

► *Recommendation 7*

Scrutiny bodies both in Parliament and at local authority level must review local authority delivery of Connexions and assess whether sufficient levels of funding are being invested in the service.

12.4 Careers education

As David Andrews stated in his written submission: 'For IAG services to be truly effective, individuals need to know how to access and use the information, advice and guidance provided. They need to gain the knowledge and skills to plan and manage their journeys through learning and into work, which include the knowledge and skills to make effective use of IAG services. The purpose of careers education programmes is to enable individuals to acquire these career development skills.'

12.4.1 The role of schools

The 1997 Education Act requires schools to provide careers education to all children over thirteen years of age; in September 2004 this was extended to include all children over eleven years of age.²³ The 2008 Education and Skills Bill stipulates that schools must present careers education in an impartial manner.²⁴

Although a statutory requirement, careers education is not part of the national curriculum and there is no prescribed programme of study that schools must follow. In 2003 the Government launched a non-statutory framework of careers education and guidance (CEG).²⁵ The framework is based around a set of recommended learning outcomes for Key Stages 3 and 4 and for post-16 learners.

In its review of the secondary curriculum, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority presents careers education as part of a new programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability within personal, social, health and economic education.²⁶ Adherence to this new programme of study is not a statutory requirement, although the careers education element within it will remain so under the terms of the 1997 Education Act and the further regulations that came into force in September 2004.

23 1997 Education Act, Section 43.

24 2008 Education and Skills Bill, Clause 66.

25 *Careers Education and Guidance in England: A National Framework 11-19* (DfES, 2003).

26 National Curriculum 2007 (Qualification and Curriculum Authority, 2007).

The Children's Plan: building brighter futures states that in future all secondary school pupils should have a personal tutor, whose role will include a careers guidance element: 'They will work with young people to identify their long-term aspirations and guide them on the best choice of subjects at age 14 and 16...they can help young people to find out more about activities available through extended schools and to look to future education, training and careers choices'.²⁷

12.4.2 Work experience

Many of the young people that we spoke to said that they thought that careers education should include a greater amount of work experience than at present. Comments included:

"We should have days out of school to try out jobs. Even one or two would be an insight."

"It would be good if there was more work experience in more lines of work just to experience what it is like."

When giving evidence to us, representatives of the Department for Children, Schools and Families said that they intended to increase the amount of work experience that young people receive. This is to be welcomed, and implementing such a change must be given high priority.

12.4.3 Implications of raising the learning participation age

The 1997 Education Act includes provision for the Secretary of State to introduce regulations requiring educational institutions to provide young people with careers guidance up to the age of eighteen.²⁸ Many of the experts that advised us suggested that, given that the 2008 Education and Skills Bill will require young people to stay in education or training up until the age of eighteen, it would be beneficial were these new regulations introduced so that young people can develop their career planning and career management skills to the same age. Such a change has already taken place in Wales.

A recent report by the Public Accounts Committee notes that 22% of those entering Higher Education drop out.²⁹ It is likely that ensuring that young people receive careers education up to the age of eighteen would reduce this figure.

► Recommendation 8

The Government should make it a statutory duty for learning providers to ensure that young people receive careers education up to the age of eighteen.

²⁷ *The Children's Plan: building brighter futures* (DCSF, 2007), 5.19.

²⁸ 1997 Education Act, Section 46.

²⁹ *Staying the course: the retention of students on higher education courses* (Public Accounts Committee, 2008).

13. Adults

13.1 Introduction

Adults are confused about where to go for careers guidance. When the adults we consulted were asked where they would go for careers guidance, comments included:

"I have no idea."

"As an adult, I would not really know where to go. Might use the internet to do some research. Possibly the library, but ultimately, Connexions (however, I am aware that said organisation is for young people only)."

The Government has plans to introduce an 'advancement and careers service' from 2010-11. Witnesses that we spoke to were enthusiastic about this change, arguing that the existence of such a service would end some of the confusion about where to go for careers guidance. However, to be a success, the advancement and careers service must be carefully planned. Some important principles that must be adhered to in planning the new service are outlined here, in Sections 13.6 to 13.8.

13.2 Importance of IAG for adults

Witnesses told the Skills Commission that any successful market depends on informed demand, and the labour market is no exception. Individuals need high quality information on labour market opportunities in order to make informed choices.

In *World Class Skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*, the Government states that the UK will not remain competitive if its workforce does not develop the skills to operate in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.³⁰ This means that the UK workforce needs to up-skill. Achieving this goal will mean continuing to educate young people to a high standard but also encouraging adults to learn.

Careers guidance and the identification of future employment opportunities can help individuals to see how they need to develop in order to remain competitive within the changing economy. In their written submission Heather Jackson, Vice-President of the National Association of Guidance for Adults, and Simon Byshe, Senior Associate at HOST Policy Research, comment: 'the reason individuals commit to learning or skill development is most frequently related to being able to do a job better; getting or keeping a job; and/or finding a better, more satisfying, and/or better paid job.'

In their written submission to the inquiry, u-xplore comment: 'The purpose of IAG for adults is to ensure men and women of all ages are exposed to far wider opportunities of work and careers, so influencing and encouraging their own skills development.'

Adults we consulted told us that careers guidance would help them improve their skills. They described how it would help them:

"To understand what steps to take next in my career and the skills/experience needed to get there."

"To enable me to advance my career opportunities. To direct me to courses, grants and funds."

³⁰ *World Class Skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), 2007), p.9.

Evidence suggests that individuals who receive careers guidance are more likely to progress in learning and employment. Furthermore, the greater the levels of guidance they receive, the more likely individuals are to up-skill. Gareth Dent, former Head of Advice and E-services at Ufi, alerted the Skills Commission to a longitudinal telephone survey of over 4,000 recipients of careers guidance. The survey compared the outcomes for individuals receiving information with the outcomes for individuals receiving advice or guidance. 45% of the advice/guidance group improved their existing skills or learnt new skills, compared to 35% of those from the information-only group.³¹ Another study found that, two years after a guidance intervention, 33% of the clients had increased their level of qualification.³²

Pablo Lloyd, Deputy Chief Executive of Ufi, told the Skills Commission: "Research by learndirect shows that, amongst the 31% of the population that are dissatisfied with their job, the greatest source of frustration is lack of career progression or challenge." This sense of frustration, with individuals' skill levels not matching the potential that they feel they have, explains the high proportion of people who enter training after guidance. Pablo Lloyd said that the statistics show "the huge potential that readily available career guidance could unlock". 132 million working years are wasted because British employees have jobs that do not best suit their skills (YouGov research on behalf of the Skills Commission, 2008).

13.3 Public sector provision for adults

13.3.1 learndirect Careers Advice

University for Industry (Ufi) runs learndirect Careers Advice through a national contract managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The contract specifies targets for contact with adults without Level 2 qualifications, but Ufi/learndirect is also given the flexibility to offer guidance to individuals outside the target group.

The learndirect Careers Advice service comprises a telephone advice line and a website. The advice line is designed and managed by Ufi with four sub-contractors delivering aspects of the service, whilst the internet provision is managed by the learndirect Careers Advice central team.

Depending on levels of need, callers to the telephone advice line are directed to information advisors, learning advisors or careers coaches. In January 2007, learndirect Careers Advice began a Guidance Trial, offering callers from target groups a greater level of service. The Guidance Trial has been extended and is still ongoing. learndirect Careers Advice now offers a full range of information, advice and guidance services, including a comprehensive database of course availability in England.

learndirect Careers Advice benefits from a dedicated marketing budget and has run high profile advertising campaigns. It has its own Labour Market Information resources, and is now working increasingly closely with Sector Skills Councils.

learndirect Careers Advice is widely regarded as a success. Since its launch in 1998 learndirect Careers Advice has taken more than eight million calls and there have been more than 20 million web sessions on its website.³³

An Ofsted report rated the service as grade two ('good') and further notes that: a high proportion of learndirect Careers Advice clients enter learning; the services' advice and guidance makes good use of a range of resources; and the service is run by well-trained and qualified staff.³⁴ Client satisfaction with learndirect Careers Advice's core services is 94%, and 91% for the guidance trial.

31 C. Tyers and A. Sinclair, *Intermediate Impacts of Advice and Guidance* (2005).

32 J. Bimrose, S.A. Barnes, D. Hughes *Developing career trajectories in England: the role of effective guidance* (2006), p.14.

33 See <http://www.learndirect.co.uk/aboutus/>.

34 *Inspection report: learndirect Careers Advice* (Ofsted, 2005).

13.3.2 nextstep

47 nextstep networks hold contracts with the LSC to deliver nextstep services. nextstep providers are contracted to offer free, face-to-face information and advice to individuals without Level 2 qualifications, though additional priorities can be agreed with the LSC at a local level. Many nextstep networks offer enhanced services by supplementing their budget with money from other funding streams including AimHigher and the European Social Fund.

In his final report as Chief Inspector of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, David Sherlock said: 'In 2005-06, the ALL began inspections of nextstep, the nation's adult careers information, advice and guidance service. Nine providers were inspected out of the 47 which hold contracts across the country. All nine were satisfactory; only one was judged to be good overall.'³⁵

13.3.3 Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus supports people of working age from welfare into work, and helps employers to fill job vacancies. Personalised advice, guidance and job search form a core part of the work of Jobcentre Plus through the work of advisors. Recent reforms aim to transform the focus of Jobcentre Plus from filling immediately available vacancies to helping individuals find sustainable employment. Jobcentre Plus hopes to achieve this by allowing advisors more flexibility to decide what is best for individual clients. Ruth Owen, Director of Business Strategy and Planning at Jobcentre Plus, told the Skills Commission: 'It will take a cultural change, but the reforms now in place should allow a shift in our focus away from filling vacancies and towards helping individuals find sustainable employment'.³⁶

The National Audit Office praise Jobcentre Plus, stating that 'there is evidence that Personal Advisors have contributed to the high employment rate in the United Kingdom' whilst 'customer research shows advisors have a positive impact by raising customers' confidence, equipping them with improved job-seeking skills and assisting with job applications'. Nonetheless, some problems with DWP funded Jobcentre Plus provision persist and the NAO voice concerns about staffing.³⁷ 'Some witnesses that we spoke to argued that Jobcentre Plus would never be seen as a completely impartial source of careers guidance, because of its role policing the benefit system.

13.3.4 unionlearn

The Government created the Union Learning Fund (ULF) in 1998 to encourage and develop trade unions' delivery of education. The ULF is now managed by unionlearn, the learning division of the Trades Union Congress. Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) are trained by unionlearn to help fellow employees into training and learning programmes. unionlearn has recently set up a telephone and internet IAG service in partnership with learndirect.

The service provided by unionlearn is highly regarded. A number of schemes have been extremely successful in helping employees to up-skill, a notable example being that the scheme at the bus company metroline in London. Tom O'Callaghan, a ULR on the scheme, told the Skills Commission:

"We started six and a half years ago and have helped many employees and their family members into learning. The scheme is a powerful tool which aids staff retention by helping staff and their families obtain qualifications; this in turn helps to foster good relationships between staff and the company. Finally, the opportunity for staff to up-skill assists with internal recruitment and promotions thereby helping the company build for the future."

³⁵ The Final Annual Report of the Chief Inspector (Adult Learning Inspectorate, 2006), p.18.

³⁶ Ready for work: full employment in our generation (DWP, 2007).

³⁷ Jobcentre Plus: delivering effective services through Personal Advisors (NAO, 2006).

Adults who spoke to the Skills Commission praised unionlearn, with one participant commenting that a ULR "gave me confidence to return to education".

13.3.5 Further Education

Whilst some colleges fund a specialist careers guidance unit staffed by qualified careers advisors, a variety of college staff are involved in IAG provision. Reception staff impart information to individuals enquiring about courses, as well as referring people to relevant tutors for further information. Colleges' student services offer advice on a variety of issues including courses and careers. A recent report by the Learning and Skills Council shows there to be great diversity in what is offered by colleges.³⁸

13.3.6 Higher Education

University careers services mainly work with current students, but some provide a lifelong service. Margaret Dane, Chief Executive of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, told the Skills Commission about what university careers services provide. These include access to written information, relevant internet sites, face to face interviews and face to face interactions with employers. The quality and extent of IAG offered varies from university to university, with the number of careers advisors universities employ ranging from over 70 to less than six.³⁹

13.3.7 Other

There are a variety of other public sector sources of IAG, including that delivered by the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service, libraries, health and social care professionals, and the Adult and Community Learning Fund.

13.4 Private sector provision

There are around 1,400 organisations offering careers advice nationally, 550 of which are private sector companies.⁴⁰ Some companies work for individuals, but a higher number work for employers. The most commonly offered services are outplacement (preparation for redundancy), CV preparation and personal marketing, psychometric assessment, preparation for retirement, preparation for self-employment, and redundancy counselling.⁴¹

Private sector provision of IAG on the internet is flourishing. One in seven of the UK's workforce is registered on Monster.co.uk, a site that lists job vacancies and provides information about different careers.⁴²

Quality standards, now known as the Matrix Standards, were introduced in 1999 in order to provide a guarantee of quality around which a market for career guidance could develop. However, only a small number of private sector companies are accredited as meeting the standards.⁴³

38 *Embedded Information, Advice and Guidance in Learning Provision for Adults* (Learning and Skills Council, 2006), 36.

39 J. Bimrose, S.A. Barnes, D. Hughes & M. Orston, *What is effective Guidance? Evidence from Longitudinal Case Studies in England* (Department for Education and Skills/Warwick Institute of Employment Research, 2004), pp.122ff.

40 A.G. Watts, Deirdre Hughes & Michelle Wood, *A Market In Career? Evidence and Issues* (Centre for Guidance Studies, 2005), p.7.

41 *Ibid*, p7.

42 Evidence submitted to the inquiry by Andrew Ramsay, Business Development Director, Monster.co.uk.

43 A.G. Watts, Deirdre Hughes & Michelle Wood, *A Market In Career? Evidence and Issues* (Centre for Guidance Studies, 2005), p.8.

13.5 Planned changes to public sector provision

13.5.1 Leitch Review of Skills

The Government commissioned Lord Leitch to undertake an independent review of the UK's long term skills needs and his report recommended a radical redevelopment of IAG services as a means of encouraging individuals to invest more in their skills development. In his final report in December 2006, Lord Leitch proposed the establishment of 'a new careers service for adults', replacing previously disjointed provision with the amalgamation of learndirect and nextstep.⁴⁴

Leitch recommended that the service should be 'universal' but also 'charged with raising aspiration and awareness of the importance and benefits of learning, particularly among those that have missed out in the past'.⁴⁵

13.5.2 World Class Skills

In *World Class Skills: implementing Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* (July 2007) the Government endorsed many of Leitch's recommendations and announced that a new adult careers service will be introduced in 2010-11.⁴⁶ The Government provides further details about the composition of the new service:

a. Access through a variety of channels according to individual circumstances and preferences – face to face, online, by telephone and by a combination of these.

b. A 'no wrong door' approach – the quality and appropriateness of the support should be the same, irrespective of whether the initial contact is with a jobcentre, a learning provider or the careers service itself.

c. A menu of services comprising personalised assessment through a skills health check, advice on skills and employment, Skills Accounts and continuing support for progression.

d. Ongoing support and follow-up for individuals. For people who are out of work and have low skills, the service will play a crucial role in helping them get the right balance of job search and training to help them into sustained employment and to progress in their career. The service will also signpost individuals to other services, where they have other needs than those related to skills alone, for example child care or advice on employment rights.

e. Strong links between Jobcentre Plus and Train to Gain brokerage and employer training funds. Employers who take on workless people through Jobcentre Plus should be clear what support they can get through Train to Gain mechanisms. And Jobcentre Plus customers who undertake skills training prior to finding a job should be clear that they can carry on with appropriate training once they are in work.

f. A reformed system for reaching out to those who are low skilled, in financial need and who do not see learning as relevant to them. We need to reform and increase the ways in which people can take the first steps towards learning. We will work through libraries, voluntary and community organisations and learning centres. We will utilise Union Learning Representatives and continue to foster networks of learning champions or learning ambassadors, particularly in deprived areas, to promote the service and to help it reach hard to reach groups.

⁴⁴ *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills* (2006), 6.22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 6.24.

⁴⁶ *World Class Skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* (DIUS, 2007), p.21.

2.29 Within the resources available for the universal adult careers service, more intensive support provided face-to-face will be targeted on particular groups such as benefit recipients, the low-skilled, those cycling between welfare and work, and others at key transition points in their careers.

2.30 The service will increasingly provide advice on financial support, such as Adult Learning Grants and Career Development Loans. It will ensure access to a new Skills Development Fund, replacing existing Learner Support Funds, in order to ensure potential learners are able to make well-informed decisions about training, with up-front information about the availability of funding.

2.31 The new service will focus on sustainable employment and progression, working closely with Jobcentre Plus. Advice will be underpinned by high quality labour market and occupational information developed and maintained by SSCs, Jobcentre Plus and other partners. Funding arrangements will involve incentives to increase the take up of services by low-skilled and harder-to-reach groups, users entering jobs or training, and users progressing in employment.⁴⁷

Much of this echoes ideas put forward by Leitch, although more focus is given to the role of Jobcentre Plus. Whilst initially the new careers service and Jobcentre Plus are to be coordinated and possibly co-located, they are not at present to be integrated, although the possibility of fuller integration is not ruled out. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills will 'advise in 2010 on whether there should be further institutional change to secure better integrated employment and skills services'.⁴⁸

13.5.3 Opportunity, Employment and Progression

The subsequent White Paper, *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work* (November 2007), released jointly by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), reframes the terms by which the new service will be designed.⁴⁹ The paper focuses on providing 'not just jobs, but jobs that pay and offer retention and progression'.⁵⁰ The new service is discussed in this context, and is referred to as an 'advancement and careers service'. The careers guidance element of the service will be complemented by an 'advancement' element. The advancement element appears to be based on ideas put forward by John Denham MP, now Secretary of State for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, in a speech to the Fabian Society in May 2004. The speech outlined a vision for an advancement service offering advice on economic, social and legal issues which hinder individuals from making progress in work.⁵¹

Although the Government's commitment to creating a universal service is restated, the White Paper devotes most of its attention to the role that the advancement and careers service will play in helping Job Seekers Allowance claimants into sustainable employment. The skills health check, a feature of the service announced in *World Class Skills* (see extract above), will no longer be a service available to all, but rather available to 'half a million workless people and a further half a million adults in work, targeting those with low skills or who need to retrain to progress'. The skills health check will be compulsory for individuals who have been claiming unemployment benefit for a sustained period of time.⁵²

The initial budget for the advancement and careers service will incorporate the learndirect and nextstep budgets, together with an additional £50 million. The new service will be trialled in ten localities from the autumn of 2008.⁵³

47 Ibid, 2.28 – 2.31.

48 Ibid, 2.18.

49 *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: Making Skills Work* (DWP and DIUS, 2007).

50 Ibid, p.8.

51 *Making work work: creating chances across the labour market* (John Denham lecture to the Fabian Society, 17 May 2004).

52 Ibid, p.16.

53 Ibid, p.23.

13.5.4 Raising Expectations

Raising expectations: enabling the service to deliver (March 2008) provides details about the management of the new service, together with further details about its composition.

The White Paper announces that the Learning and Skills Council will be disbanded, and responsibility for those aspects of its role that relate to the adult population will be transferred to a new body called the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The SFA will manage the advancement and careers service.

In this document the Government restates its commitment to making the advancement and careers service available to all, though on this occasion details are provided as to how this will be achieved: 'One web site and phone number will unify the service...The nationally delivered services for web site development and telephone support are a crucial element of delivering a universal service'.⁵⁴

At the same time, in this paper the Government reasserts its commitment to helping those most in need: 'local delivery of information and advice will continue to be a vital part of the service, and closer link with Jobcentre Plus and joining up advisory services will significantly improve this'.⁵⁵

13.5.5 Two policy priorities: universality and targeting

Witnesses addressing us were generally enthusiastic about the idea of an advancement and careers service, recognising that the existence of such a service would reduce the confusion many adults feel about where to go for careers guidance.

Louise Proctor, Lifelong Learning Director at the Learning and Skills Council, comments: "It is great news that the Government intends to introduce an advancement and careers service. This will help many more people."

However, a number of witnesses observed that Government announcements about the new service show there to be a tension between two policy priorities: the need to increase skill levels across society, requiring an advancement and careers service that is available to all, and the need to offer targeted help to most in need groups such as the unemployed and the low skilled.

It is possible to meet both policy priorities. In the following sections we outline important aspects that must form part of the design of the advancement and careers service if it is to succeed in meeting both policy priorities.

Before the publication *Raising expectations: enabling the service to deliver*, policy documents increasingly put emphasis on reaching the unemployed and the low-skilled at the expense of providing a service available to all. It is pleasing that *Raising expectations: enabling the service to deliver* shows that the Government is now moving in the right direction and thinking about how to meet both policy priorities. Government must not allow the undoubted necessity of helping targeted groups supersede its expressed desire to develop a service that also caters for all.

13.6 A universal but targeted service

Evidence that has been presented to us suggests that it is possible to create an advancement and careers service that is available to all but is also targeted at the low-skilled and unemployed. However, such a service

⁵⁴ *Raising expectations: enabling the service to deliver* (DIUS and DCSF, March 2008), 10.1 – 10.5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 10.5.

will only be successfully implemented if it makes full use of internet and telephone based provision. Of the IAG sessions currently administered by learndirect Careers Advice and nextstep, 80% are delivered by learndirect Careers Advice. The main reason that learndirect Careers Advice delivers a greater number of IAG sessions is that it is based on internet and telephone provision.

Figure 7 shows a breakdown of existing provision of IAG by learndirect Careers Advice and nextstep. The two services deliver about 14.5 million IAG services per year. learndirect Careers Advice has modelled the new advancement and careers service (Figure 8) and shown that, given the available budget, it will be possible to deliver 22 million IAG sessions per year by making maximum use of internet and telephone provision. It is therefore important for the new Skills Funding Agency to ensure that it has access to the right competences to manage and develop sophisticated web and phone based services, particularly as learndirect Careers Advice is now heavily dependent on Ufi's core ICT services which will not transfer to the new agency.

Figure 7 Current annual provision of IAG by learndirect Careers Advice and nextstep

Service	learndirect: number of sessions provided	nextstep: number of sessions provided	Total number of sessions provided
Information	11.5 million	2.5 million	14 million
Advice	0.2 million	0.3 million	0.5 million
Guidance	<0.1 million	<0.1 million	0.1 million

Figure 8 Ufi's projections showing the number of IAG sessions that the advancement and careers service could deliver per annum

Service	Method of delivery	Total number of sessions provided
Information	Internet	20 million
Advice	Internet, phone and face to face	1 million +
Guidance	Face to face and phone	1 million

The advancement and careers service should allow everyone to have access to information and advice over the internet and telephone, but with more in-depth help available to clients with greater levels of need. Guidance should be available over the telephone for individuals with qualifications below Level 3. Additionally, face-to-face guidance should be available to clients without Level 2 qualifications, Jobcentre Plus clients and other priority groups including those in danger of exclusion.

An additional advantage to ensuring that the new service makes full use of internet and telephone based provision is that this will build on the provision currently being delivered by learndirect Careers Advice, which has shown high customer satisfaction levels and has been graded 'good' by Ofsted.

The advancement and careers service will likely reach a greater number of people, and be more successful, if a strategy is put in place to ensure linkage with existing providers of a high quality, in particular unionlearn but also the leading private sector providers.

► **Recommendation 9**

The Government must demonstrate its commitment to designing an advancement and careers service that is available to all. This requires making maximum use of internet and telephone based provision, together with a strategy involving those with proven success working with adults such as unionlearn and leading private sector providers.

13.7 Maintaining a reputation for impartiality

Although the advancement and careers service and Jobcentre Plus should work in partnership, it is important that the new service does not become overly associated with Jobcentre Plus. Professor Tony Watts told us that “this would discourage clients from seeing the new service as truly impartial, with their best long term interests at heart, because Jobcentre Plus is necessarily associated with policing the benefit system”. Other witnesses observed that too close an association with Jobcentre Plus would discourage the employed from using the service, because a perception would develop that, like Jobcentre Plus, the advancement and careers service is aimed at the unemployed. The Government should confirm that, although Jobcentre Plus and the advancement and careers service will work in partnership, they will maintain a significant degree of independence.

► Recommendation 10

The Government must not allow the advancement and careers service and its brand to become too closely associated with Jobcentre Plus and the policing of the benefit system. To do so would damage the new service’s reputation for impartiality.

13.8 The advancement element

Most witnesses agreed that the Government is right to recognise that there are a number of barriers that stop individuals progressing in work and many members of society will benefit from advisory services on issues such as childcare, employment law, health, and housing. For example, Gareth Dent told the Skills Commission: “Clearly, it is not just lack of information about jobs and careers that is hindering some members of society from finding work that they like”.

It was therefore suggested that the new advancement and careers service should develop close partnerships with bodies and organisations offering advice on these and other issues. Organisations could include both public sector services and third sector organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. The advancement and careers service can then signpost clients to relevant services. In some cases it may be appropriate for the new service to co-locate with other organisations.

However, although most of the witnesses that spoke to the Skills Commission would welcome a signposting system between services, there was near unanimous agreement that the Government should not try and incorporate different advisory services into the advancement and careers service with the expectation that the staff will be able to offer high quality advice on other issues alongside learning and careers. Heather Jackson told us: “This is what was initially expected of Connexions’ Personal Advisors and it has not proved a successful way of operating”.

In its written submission to the inquiry, Skillset comments that the new service should signpost users with no careers-related needs: ‘To expect a single service to provide “all” could lead to lower standards and would require the bringing together of services currently funded from a wide range of Government departments and other bodies.’

► Recommendation 11

The Government should ensure that the advancement and careers service signposts clients on to other services if they require advice on issues other than learning and careers.

14. All-age delivery of IAG

14.1 Current trends

The Government has stated that it is 'unconvinced of the case for an all-age service' but plans to introduce an 'all-age strategy'.

Despite separate funding streams, there has until now been a degree of integration between young persons' and adults' services in some parts of England. Some careers companies hold contracts for both Connexions and nextstep, and have operated the two services from a single office.

During our inquiry, witnesses expressed a concern that the transfer of responsibility for Connexions to local authorities will discourage the practice of shared offices for young persons' and adults' services. Some local authorities will municipalise delivery of careers guidance to young people, whilst others will oblige contractors to operate services for young persons and adults on a separate basis. For example, Guidance Services, part of the VT Group, previously held Connexions and nextstep contracts in North Yorkshire. They operated the two services out of shared offices. Now North Yorkshire County Council has said that they will not allow the company to continue this practice in the future.

More positively, the Government has begun to introduce measures which could help to limit the trend towards increasingly sharp division between services for young people and adults. *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver* states:

'Young people, especially those with low skills, must have a coherent experience through the teenage years and into adulthood. Most young people until age 20 will continue to use Connexions, or alternative IAG arrangements for young people in future. But as part of the design of the new adult advancement and careers service, we will examine the option that 18 and 19 year olds using Jobcentre Plus would be referred to the adult service instead, unless there is an already established and well-functioning relationship between that person and Connexions.'

14.2 The case for an all-age service

It is widely argued that the best careers service in the world is that in New Zealand, and an important reason for the service's quality is its all-age structure.

All-age services exist in other parts of the UK. Careers Service Northern Ireland, Careers Scotland and Careers Wales all provide for individuals from every age group.

Professor Watts told the Skills Commission: "There has been a marked divergence of policy between England and elsewhere in the UK. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have adopted vertical approaches, with careers guidance across age groups. England has adopted a horizontal approach, with careers guidance joined to other advisory services". Reviews of Careers Wales and Careers Scotland are positive, and contrast markedly with reviews of England's careers guidance services for young people.

Many of those that we spoke to were of the opinion that the Government should introduce an all-age service along the lines of the services elsewhere in the UK. Gareth Dent, among others, noted that people progress through transitions at different ages. He referred the Skills Commission to *Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2005), which states:

'Many policies assume that youth ends at 18 or 19 but the reality is that for some disadvantaged young people – teenage parents for example – this may be when support is most needed. Many of the issues that are thought

of as the problems of teenagers are in fact as bad (or worse) for those in their early twenties, on whom much less policy has been focused.'

Paul Chubb, Director of Careers England, told us that the extension of the minimum education leaving age to eighteen has the potential to exacerbate this problem, with many young people who would previously have made transitions in their late teens now making transitions in their early twenties. He argued: "the extent of problems which individuals face in their early twenties means that it is unhelpful to divide services in such a way that individuals within this age bracket (18-25) must seek out a different support agency, increasing the risk of many older teenagers becoming 'lost' unless a robust system to support this transition is in place in all 150 LA areas in England".

In their written submission, ENTO comment: 'there does need to be a coherent all age strategy, where there are robust transitional arrangements between young people's services and adult services'.

14.3 Proposed future changes

The views that were expressed to us suggest that the Government should reassess its decision to rule out the introduction of an all-age service. One long term possibility would be to introduce an all-age service by extending the remit of the advancement and careers service to include careers guidance for young people, at the same time as removing responsibility for careers guidance from Connexions' remit. If still unconvinced of the need for an all-age service, the Government must continue to develop an all-age strategy.

► *Recommendation 12*

The Government should reassess its decision not to introduce an all-age service for delivery of IAG. If it continues to rule out the introduction of an all-age service, then the Government must continue to develop an all-age strategy.

Appendix I: Methodology

Introduction

The inquiry ran from October 2007 until March 2008. Interim findings were published in December 2007 and this, the final report of the inquiry, is published on 1 April 2008.

The recommendations in this report are based on Skills Commission evidence sessions, additional meetings with experts and stakeholders, written submissions, and desk research.

Evidence sessions

Evidence was taken in a series of meetings in which the Skills Commission discussed various aspects of IAG policy with experts and stakeholders.

Meeting 1 (10 October 2007): 'IAG and new media I'

Witness:

- Andrew Ramsay, Business Development Director, Monster.co.uk

Meeting 2 (26 November 2007): 'Advisor skills'

Witnesses:

- Kieran Gordon, Former ICG President, Greater Merseyside Connexions
- Heather Jackson, Vice-President of the National Association of Guidance for Adults
- Dr Rachel Mulvey, Head, Centre for Training in Career Guidance, University of East London
- Jonathan Reeve, Manchester College of Arts and Technology
- Professor Tony Watts, Life President and Founding Fellow, National Institute of Career Education and Counselling

Meeting 3 (13 December 2007): 'The spectrum of advice'

Witnesses:

- Dr Ilona Boniwell, Senior Lecturer in Positive Psychology, University of East London
- Bert Clough, Research and Strategy Manager, unionlearn
- Margaret Dane, Chief Executive, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
- Tom O'Callaghan, Union Learning Representative, Metroline
- Derek Osborn, International President, Association of Career Professionals International
- Ruth Owen, Director of Business Strategy and Planning, Jobcentre Plus

Meeting 4 (10 January 2008): 'IAG and new media II'

Witnesses:

- Jenny Bimrose, Principal Research Fellow, Warwick Institute for Employment Research
- Penny Brodie, Director, LEAD Scotland
- Pablo Lloyd, Deputy Chief Executive, University for Industry

Meeting 5 (5 February 2008): 'Government policy'

Witnesses:

- Chris Barnham, Deputy Director, Employment and Skills Unit, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- Andrew McCully, Director, Supporting Children and Young People Group, Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Bindy Shah, Connexions Transition Team, Department for Children, Schools and Families
- John Thomson, Team Leader for the Young People's IAG Team, Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Aled Williams, Policy Advisor, Advancement and Careers Service Team, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Meeting 6 (19 February 2008): 'Consumer voice'

In this meeting the Skills Commission met with fifteen young people and fifteen adults from across the country to hear their views about IAG. The guests were chosen to ensure that the Commission heard the views of individuals from different regions, ethnic groups, ages, and from different education and employment backgrounds. Prior to the meeting, each of the guests had carried out a survey, asking at least three personal contacts for their views on IAG.

The young people and adults that met with the Skills Commission were: Nasema Akthar, Claire Askham, Jake Baldini, John Baldini, Ruhena Begum, Simon Binns, Dean Chapplehow, Julie Cooper, Annie Hewgill, Patrick Higgins, Sinem Hussein, Max Jackson, Michael Jones, Jackie Kehoe, Lisa Laye, Damian Low, Cevre Mehmet, Nese Mehmet, Sarah Nash, Helen Meyrell, Annette Minto, Adam Kydd, Danny Parr, Jackie Pembroke, Linden Reeves, Maureen Romaniuck, Natasha Cooper Stewart, Helen Thomas, Georgina Thompson, Lynette Wieland.

Additional meetings

Alongside the evidence sessions, members of the Skills Commission or their representatives discussed the policy area with a number of other leading experts and stakeholders. These included:

- Lord Adebawale
- Paul Chubb, Director, Careers England
- Mark Corney, Director, MC Consultancy
- Marianne Craig, Firework Coaching
- Gareth Dent, former Head of Advice and E-services, University for Industry
- Sally Davis, Managing Director, Growing Ambitions
- Albert Ellis, Chief Executive, Harvey Nash
- Chris Evans, Executive Director, Institute of Careers Guidance
- Jackie Fletcher, Transitions Life Coaching
- James Frith, Policy and Communications Manager, u-xplore
- Mike Hurley, Chair, Standards Committee, European Mentoring and Coaching Council
- Roger Little, Management Consultant, National Association of Connexions Partnerships
- Richard Longson, President, Institute of Careers Guidance
- Kish Modasia, Lead Your Life
- Julia Neal, President, Association of Teachers and Lecturers
- Professor Stephen Palmer, Honorary President, Association for Coaching
- Nick Pearce, Education Advisor to the Prime Minister

- Louise Proctor, Lifelong Learning Director, Learning and Skills Council
- Neil Scotton, UK President, International Coach Federation
- Sue Stockwell, NorthEast Higher Skills Network
- Linda Taylor, Secretary General, International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
- Alastair Thomson, Senior Policy Officer, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- Trevor Tucknutt, Policy Manager, Advancement and Careers Service Team, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- Richard Wainer, Acting Head of Education and Skills, Confederation of British Industry
- Anne Weinstock, Director, Youth Task Force, Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Clarissa Williams, Vice President, National Association of Head Teachers
- Simon Withey, Managing Director, VT Education and Skills

Written evidence

The Skills Commission received written evidence from the following individuals:

- David Andrews OBE, independent consultant and trainer in careers education and guidance
- Deirdre Hughes, Director, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby
- Heather Jackson, Vice-President, National Association of Guidance for Adults
- Brian Stevens, Director, FEdS Consultancy Ltd
- Professor Tony Watts, Founding Fellow, National Institute of Career Education and Counselling

The Skills Commission received written evidence from the following organisations:

- ENTO
- Institute of Careers Guidance
- Futurelab
- Ufi
- National Association of Connexions Partnerships
- National Union of Teachers
- Skillset
- u-xplore

Appendix II: Acronyms

CEG	Careers education and guidance
CPD	Continuing professional development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
ICG	Institute of Careers Guidance
LEAD Scotland	Linking Education and Disability Scotland
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
QCG	Qualification in Careers Guidance
Ufi	University for Industry
ULF	Union Learning Fund
ULR	Union Learning Representative
UCAS	University and College Admission Service



For further information, please contact:

Hugo Donaldson
Skills Commission
c/o Policy Connect
CAN Mezzanine
32-36 Loman Street
Southwark
London SE1 0EH

Tel: 020 7202 8577

Email: hugo.donaldson@nationalskillsforum.org.uk

Web: www.policyconnect.org.uk/skills