

NICEC PROJECT

DEVELOPING
CAREERS WORK
IN SCHOOLS:
ISSUES AND
CONSIDERATIONS

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This is a report on a curriculum development project that ran from September 2004 to October 2005. The aim was to develop careers work in 14-19 institutions. The catchment area was a typical inner city area, a combination of pockets of considerable wealth mixed with significant poverty and deprivation. In the year of the study almost 90% of the students in further education were from areas of socio-economic deprivation and over 40% from minority ethnic groups. A similar proportion of secondary-school pupils were eligible for free school meals; and had English as their second language. Pupils achieving grades A* to C in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) was at a level about 13% below the national average.

The project worked with careers co-ordinators and some senior managers in an 11-18 school, three 11-16 schools, a further education college, 2 special schools, and a work-based learning provider. The work was generously funded, with access to supply cover for workshops, institution-based consultancy, and for internal planning and development; and ring-fenced funding for the development of a 3-year strategy for careers work in each institution. In common with most clusters of educational institutions, each began at a different point along the spectrum of development, with some having rather less far to travel than others.

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Islington 14-19 Partnership

The Islington 14-19 Partnership's role is to facilitate collaboration between the borough's secondary schools and support services, and local FE colleges and training providers, and to coordinate the planning and delivery of a wider curriculum offer for young people. Its purpose is to promote the development of personalised learning and career development pathways aimed at raising students' motivation and aspiration and helping them to secure successful progression.



NICEC
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The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling is a network organisation initiated and sponsored by CRAC in 1975. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research.

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Developing Careers Work in Schools: Issues and Considerations

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NICEC PROJECT

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The project owes much to the vision of Jonathan Swift, who led the Pathfinder 2003-2005, and who recognised the critical need for career learning to be at the heart of curriculum. The aim was to ensure that young people in the Borough were enabled to access appropriate opportunities available for them and engage with sustainable decision making, so that they could move on successfully.

The team at the 14-19 Islington Pathfinder and Partnership were immensely helpful in facilitating initial contacts, and offering support for the project activity. Helen McNulty, Vocational Programme Co-ordinator, never failed to find time and energy for this work, and Jane Leggett, Health / Education Partnership Co-ordinator, consistently offered a range of useful insights and comments. Thanks also to Samantha Taylor who achieved miracles with the admin.!

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The other key group of people who made the project possible were the participants – senior and middle management staff from secondary, further education and work-based learning settings. They committed time and effort to working on this project, and their 'home' institution supported them in the inevitable disruption caused to their normal timetabled commitments. The thinking and development suggestions they so generously shared helped to make the project a stimulating experience for both the core team and the other participants.

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Executive summary

This is a preliminary report on the Islington Career Development Project undertaken between September 2004 and October 2005. The project was commissioned by the 14-19 Islington Pathfinder with support from the 14-19 Islington Partnership. It involved three 11-16 schools, an 11-18 school, two special schools, a further education college and a work-based learning provider. The aims were: to establish career learning as a central feature of the main curriculum; to focus on development that was coherent, progressive and outcomes-led; and to secure institutional commitment to implement this transformation over a period of 3-5 years. Where possible school-based colleagues worked with Connexions Personal Advisers attached to their school¹.

The project process addressed the management of learning as a supporting frame from within which to revisit programme design and development. It began with a self-review of careers work in all the participating institutions to establish the baseline on which development was to be built. It covered both provision and management of careers work, and revealed four areas of development that all schools needed to engage with:

- a re-examination of the scope and nature of careers work to rethink the work for a changing context of chances, choices and partnerships;
- an analysis of local needs to provide evidence for development priorities;
- a curriculum audit to find out on what terms careers work was already supported;
- a strategic plan to agree what needed to be done, by whom and when, over the next 3-5 years.

Through workshops and consultancy visits, using customised frameworks and processes developed for the project², participants addressed the above. It became clear that careers work development was more likely to happen when a combination of three factors were in place - when participants were able:

- to consider new ideas and new thinking about what careers work needed to help young people in their institution to achieve;
- to draw on, or create, a strong infrastructure of 'good practice' to support development - including role status, efficient management practices, support from colleagues and a strong partnership with Connexions;
- to access both institutional and professional influence to enable appropriate developments and to embed them within institutional structures.

The effective development of careers work within the project, in all instances, depended on:

- the degree to which these three factors were effectively in place;
- the management of the interactions between them;
- the ability and willingness to recognise and address any 'weak links'.

¹ 'Schools' is used as a generic term to cover all participating institutions

² see McGowan, B. *Developing Careers Work in schools: Tools and Processes* (NICEC 2006)
www.nicec.org.uk/publications/publications.htm

1 Context

1.1 Background

This is a report of a curriculum development project that ran throughout the academic year 2004-2005. The project was an initiative of the 14-19 Islington Pathfinder in collaboration with, and supported by, the 14-19 Islington Partnership. The opportunity to join was open to all education institutions in Islington catering for 14-19-year-old students, and reflected the Islington 14-19 Partnership commitment to career learning as needing to be at the heart of curriculum.

All the participating institutions were volunteers: each had recognised their need to engage with some career development work. The career offer varied in quality and extent across the institutions. The most challenging scenarios were those where colleagues reported previously fragmented development and delivery, narrowly targeted on key points of transition, and focused on provision rather than learning outcomes. The more encouraging contexts reported coherent, planned and more extensive provision that reflected student needs. The aims of the project were: to establish career learning as a central feature of the main curriculum in all participating institutions; to focus on development that was coherent, progressive and outcomes-led for all; and to secure institutional commitment to implement this transformation over a period of 3-5 years.

An external consultant from the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) was engaged to conduct a review of careers work in all participating institutions, and to design and deliver a development programme to enable them to begin to work towards these goals.

Whilst the project was focused on the development of careers education, the career offer to young people was through a partnership between educational institutions and Connexions, and Personal Advisers (PAs) were encouraged to become involved. Where the term 'careers work' is used, it is as a generic descriptor to include careers education programmes, career learning within and beyond the curriculum, and both internal and external information, advice and guidance activities that are part of, and draw on, career learning.

The work was generously funded. All institutions had access to supply cover for workshops, institution-based consultancy, and for internal planning and development.

1.2 Locality

Islington is a part of London with sharp social contrasts. There is much wealth and prosperity, but also significant poverty and deprivation. Islington is described as the fourth most deprived authority in London and the second most densely populated. The area attracts a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. Nearly 27% of Islington residents are from minority ethnic groups with almost half of these being Black African or Black Caribbean. In 2003/04, some 89% of the further education college's students were from areas of socio-economic deprivation and approximately 43% from minority ethnic groups. Of secondary-school pupils, about 43% were eligible for free school meals and about the same proportion had English as their second language. The proportion of pupils in Islington schools achieving grades A* to C in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) in 2003 was 38.6%, against a national average of 52.9%³.

³ extracted from the City and Islington College Ofsted Report, November 2004

A key task for careers work in Islington schools was encouraging young people to see themselves as having more extensive opportunities than their immediate family or community setting might support or suggest, and enabling them to access appropriate career relevant learning to implement sustainable decisions within these wider horizons.

1.3 Participants

All state schools, further education and work-based learning providers catering for 14-19-year-old students were invited to participate. In fact only 8 organisations were actively involved in the project. Thirteen institutions, out of a total of 15 schools and colleges, showed initial interest, but due to other pressures – examples included an impending Ofsted inspection, the need to respond to a special measures development agenda, and senior managers feeling they did not have sufficient time to get involved - the others withdrew by the middle of the first term. Those remaining were three 11-16 schools, an 11-18 school, a further education college, 2 special schools, and a work-based learning provider. Each began at a different point along the spectrum of development, with some having rather less far to travel than others. Several Connexions Personal Assistants (PAs) associated with these institutions were consistent and active project participants, and contributed to the developments and outcomes.

To retain anonymity for the further education college and the work-based learning provider, who were single representatives of their sector in the study, there can be no specific identification of them. No institution or individual has been identified in the report, not has any comment been attributed directly to them.

1.4 Positioning note

The purpose of the project was to identify the potential for the development of careers work within participating institutions; hence it was seeking out those areas of work that could benefit from professional support and attention. Some of the greatest strengths and achievements within the frame of the project were in those contexts where potentially difficult issues were recognised and worked on. This report needs to be read as a commentary on that development process.

The purpose described above meant that the project was not focused on, or seeking out, examples of good practice in careers work; and this report is not concerned to specifically identify such in any of the participating institutions. Examples of excellence emerged within the project and some instances will be recognisable by inference or description within the general context, but are not featured in the report per se.

The report does not claim to ‘prove’ the picture reported by participants. Individuals act on the basis of what they believe to be true, and perception can be as powerful a determinant of action as transparent fact. The disclosure and openness of all the participants was both valued and respected. If the picture presented varies from the reader’s perception of the situation, it needs to be recognised that individuals and institutions were reporting their experiences with integrity.

Where ‘schools’ is used it is as a generic term for all institutions. It is recognised that the further education college and the work-based leaning provider were working in contexts that varied from that of schools, but the development principles were congruent, the processes applicable and the frameworks adaptable for all settings.

2 Reviewing careers work

2.1 Getting started

The starting point was to find out about the current position of careers work in each institution. A self-review process was the most cost-effective approach to establishing this baseline data. The process used structured frameworks to review both provision and the management of the work in each institution⁴.

As it was important to establish that the project was focused on *action* for change, it was planned to use the outcomes of the self-review to initially identify some specific short-term priority improvement in each institution that could be begun fairly immediately, and provide some early experience of managing change in this context. Each institution was given support to draw up a sustainable action plan to develop this. The short-term projects selected were concerned with: the development of staff training to engage non-specialists in the development and delivery of career learning; some programme development focused on web-based provision; and the development of some experiential learning opportunities for young people at KS4.

Four of the participating institutions chose not to get involved in this short-term work. They engaged immediately with the second intended use of the review data, to embark on a process of strategic planning. All four said that the chief outcome of the self-review was the realisation that for them this was *the* critical first step in order to make best use of any existing and potential resources available.

2.2 What the self-review revealed

2.2.1 *Generic responses*

Whilst the range of participating institutions was diverse, all seemed to address the same issues in a parallel manner. The variations were in the context, motivations, experience and levels of commitment to the project, not in the essence of the work being reviewed.

The majority of participating staff reported that both the provision and management of careers work was more fragmentary and/or uncoordinated than they would wish. Some had effective systems in place but lacked time to use them to best effect, others had not been able to access sufficient resource to establish clear frameworks. All welcomed the opportunity to work on these developments.

The findings summarised below represent a ‘tidying up’ into an organising framework of the self-review material that was submitted. The purpose was to re-present to participants what they had said in the review about their programmes, in a format that could be used as a basis for development. This analysis was discussed with institutions and used as a template for participants to evaluate their own position, and to begin to identify a development agenda. It was also used as a strategy to engage senior managers of institutions in this work, being circulated to them for comment and discussion. Those already actively working in the project responded very positively.

There were few surprises revealed by the self-review. The findings are summarised in 2.2.2 to 2.2.8 below.

⁴ The frameworks and support materials used in the project are reproduced in full in McGowan, B. *Developing Careers Work: Processes and Tools* (NICEC 2006) and can be found at www.nicec.org.uk/publications/publications.htm

2.2.2 *Approaches to delivery*

Provision of careers work was realised via a range of models that could be characterised as:

- **Explicit:** where the work was clearly recognisable both within and beyond the curriculum from the focus and language commonly used. This kind of provision was often stand-alone: for example, careers education and guidance (CEG) lessons; and career guidance interviews;
- **Implicit:** where careers work was clearly recognisable from the focus and language commonly used, but was carried within a non-‘career’ context in the curriculum, and was frequently not co-ordinated. For example, work on job search skills within English lessons; and community interactions within active citizenship;
- **Inferred:** where the work was probably not couched in career terms, and was happening in a range of settings both within and beyond the curriculum, with its relevance often unrecognised. For example, science lessons were supporting the development of research skills; Saturday jobs and a range of relationships in school were helping students to differentiate and develop appropriate role relationships.

These were not mutually exclusive models; mostly, examples of all three were present in the same institution, although most careers co-ordinators found it difficult to know the extent of the inferred delivery – they believed it happened, could quote individual examples, but no-one had mapped it.

2.2.3 *Organisational roles*

The work was carried via a cluster of roles that can be categorised as:

- **Focal:** where the job role was focused on careers work, and usually carried some organisational responsibilities. For example, careers co-ordinator and some Connexions PAs;
- **Accommodating:** where the job role encompassed some careers work but where it was not the main focus; the careers work here was usually supported by someone with a focal role. For example, tutors supported by the careers co-ordinator; counsellors supported by the careers co-ordinator and/or a Connexions PA;
- **Symbiotic:** where the job had nothing to do with careers work as the role was articulated, but there was a mutually beneficial collaboration between the role activity and careers work – this was often under-developed. Examples included: career-related scenarios used as a relevant context for developing drama activities; an exploration of the local job market offering similar relevance for work in geography on the economic environment.

This range of roles supported careers work in most institutions, although further down the list (as in provision, above) more effort and time was involved for the careers co-ordinator to establish any kind of coherence for student learning, and no-one had been able to attempt it.

2.2.4 *Teaching and learning methods*

Careers work was delivered via a similar range of methods in all institutions:

- Didactic: young people – chiefly at key stage 4 (14-16 year olds) and post-16 - were provided with written information and given opportunities to listen to inputs from (largely) external speakers. These were focused mostly on outlining available future options in learning and earning;
- Participative: young people were engaged in some active learning. For example, researching the potential of local learning and earning opportunities; identifying appropriate work experience placements for themselves;
- Experiential: young people were involved in some processes that enabled them to influence the endings and learn from the outcomes. For example, an interview to obtain a work experience placement; engaging with scenarios with a number of possible endings, as in the Real Game.

Whilst all these teaching and learning approaches were evident in all the institutions, there were examples where there was an emphasis on the didactic; there was participative work in most places, and particularly in special schools; experiential learning opportunities were not common. However, there was little opportunity in any of these approaches – even, surprisingly, in any experiential work - for young people to reflect on their own career narrative, to be enabled to ‘tell their own stories’ and reflect on the significant elements within them, and hence to have a chance to evaluate their options from within the complex reality of their lives. A small window for this more ‘dynamic’ engagement was available in the best of the mentoring encounters (formal and informal); in guidance interviews with some PAs; and in some tutorial sessions. This was largely one-to-one provision and was demanding of resources; however staff engaged in this work reported student feedback that indicated the high value put on this type of intervention, and their personal rewards from offering it. It was largely confined to students targeted because of some educational or social need.

2.2.5 *A credible rationale*

A big area of concern – but not unexpected - was that there was little evidence of any career development work that was underpinned by theoretical thinking. In practice, as in many other areas, there was a strong tendency to focus very strongly on support for transitions - at 14+, 16+ and 18+ - as both a need, and a rationale that was convincing to senior managers. The nature of the career provision seemed to reflect a range of pragmatic considerations:

- Resources: much of what was in place was based on what was available within the budget, and was within the experience and expertise of those who had to deliver the work;
- Habit: much of what was done was routine - it had ‘always been there’; it could be resourced; it was familiar and had come to be expected; it attracted little resistance; and it was developed incrementally;
- Influence: much of what was done was said to reflect policy guidance issued by DfES / QCA / local initiatives; it had the authority to attract support and resources; and it faced little challenge.

There was nothing unacceptable about any of these bases: teachers and others involved in careers work both within and out of educational institutions can be hard pressed for time, curriculum space, and informed support to operate outside these frames. However, if the project was to initiate a ‘sea change’ in careers work in the area, then some theoretical and thoughtful underpinning that was broader than these bases was needed to anchor the future direction of the work.

2.2.6 *Attention to local needs*

There was some evidence in a few of the participating institutions of some careers work that was specifically focused towards support for locally identified needs. An understanding of local needs was going to be one of the key sources of evidence for identifying development priorities in each institution. There were, concurrently with the project, other local initiatives seeking to focus provision on a greater personalisation of the curriculum offer for young people.

At the time of the review, the development of most careers work in the majority of participating institutions seemed to be provider-led not user-led, needs being overtaken by considerations like:

- Assets: much of the work could not be evaluated against local needs. It seemed that there was already enough to do to organise and deliver this work, as well as carry out the other tasks attached to the work roles of those responsible for careers work. The time, money and training needed to enable a re-consideration of an organising frame had not been generally available;
- Authority: much of what was in place was said to be based on a cluster of key guidance materials issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), which, because of their intrinsic authority, were deemed to be sufficient to meet local needs. Even so, few of the participants were familiar with, for example, *Careers Education and Guidance in England: a National Framework 11-19* DfES (2003);
- Assumptions: much of what was offered seemed like common sense; colleagues in a range of relevant professional roles agreed what needed to be in place; and assumptions were made about the views and needs of those who were not consulted.

Again, there was nothing improper about these considerations, and many people in all areas with responsibility for careers work will be acting within this frame of reference. But if the project was going to engage with its change agenda, then future development needed some evidence to underpin decisions about what should happen next. Institutions needed to be able to state that '*this is what we know about our situation*', and hence have the authority to prioritise, plan and act for identified needs.

2.2.7 *A common language*

One of the key issues was finding a common language for the work. Professional conversations with the participants revealed that there was no agreement about the nature of careers work, its scope and focus. This was the case both between and within institutions, and between agencies; other studies have revealed similar findings⁵.

2.2.8 *Generic needs*

In using the self-review to identify a development agenda it was clear that there were some common threads – generic issues - that needed to be addressed in all institutional plans, although the degree to which participants needed to engage

⁵ For example: Andrews, D., Law, B., McGowan, B., and Munro, M. (1998) *Managing Careers Work in Schools: the Roles of Senior Managers, Careers Co-ordinators and Governors*. NICEC Project Report, Cambridge, CRAC

with this development work varied across institutions, reflecting their differing starting points. Some participants had begun to engage with this thinking; for others these considerations were a major departure in their practice⁶:

- To re-examine the scope and nature of careers work in order to explore a common language; rethink careers work for a changing context of chances and choices for young people; and develop a vision for careers work that supported the project's aim;
- To analyse local needs to provide evidence for development priorities. The objective was to find out what 'significant others' felt career learning must help with, including internal and external colleagues, young people and parents, and those with a significant role in relation to the institution, for example governors and local employers;
- To conduct a curriculum audit to map the support already in place in each institution. This was to find out where, and in what terms, careers work was already supported, both within recognisable career provision and the wider curriculum; and what staff were involved outside and beyond named roles, responsibilities and the institution;
- To create a strategic plan to agree what needed to be done, by whom and when. This was to support the development of careers work over the next 3-5 years, and offer some detailed planning for the coming academic year.

⁶ The frameworks and support materials used to engage all institutions in addressing these four development needs are reproduced in full in McGowan, B. *Developing Careers Work: Tools and Processes* (NICEC 2006) and can be found at www.nicec.org.uk/publications/publications.htm

3 Developing careers work

3.1 Participant gains from engaging with the development process

Each institution was encouraged and supported to customise a development agenda to meet their specific needs as indicated by the outcomes of their self-review. In working on their plans participants reported that the project process successfully supported development work for them.

Value was found in:

- opportunities to meet and share ideas, to reflect on and evaluate current careers work, to identify areas for development, and to have support and time to plan strategically;
- the opportunity to work with a wide range of colleagues in developing this work, particularly having time to plan and consolidate work with partner Connexions staff;
- surprise at the extent to which teachers in the wider curriculum could – and, especially in the special schools, already did – support careers work, and the transferability of both tutor skills and curriculum contexts for this work;
- the way the project had helped to raise the profile of careers work in the school, including with some senior managers;
- the professional rigour and focus of the project, and the degree of support that could be accessed by individuals and institutions for the work.

The mutual professional support and collegueship that emerged amongst participants in this project would benefit from nurturing, and some ‘infrastructure’ encouragement, to enable it to continue⁷.

3.2 Implications emerging for the effective development of this work

As there were some generic needs to address, so some generic issues emerged in the development process that impinged on the ability of all the institutions to effectively progress the career development agenda.

There was no single factor that made development more likely or less likely. The reality was more complicated. As the project progressed, a combination of three kinds of considerations emerged as significant, and the interactions between them determined the degree to which substantial and effective development of careers work occurred:

1. *useful ideas* – how far participants were able and prepared to think through what developing careers work involved;
2. *sound infrastructure* - the extent to which they were able to draw on an effective organisational and management infrastructure to support these ideas;
3. *influence* – what levels and degree of institutional support they could access for the development agenda.

⁷ An Islington Careers Forum – a regular meeting of careers co-ordinators and Connexions PAs - which had been allowed to lapse, was re-invigorated as a result of this project and now meets on a regular basis (May 2006).

These three elements were mutually dependent. Without some good ideas for developing careers work, there was little new ground to move into; without an effective underpinning - an infrastructure of good practice - there was no supporting context in which good ideas could be nurtured; without access to institutional support, it was hard to achieve any substantial recognition for, and embedding of, any development, however good the thinking.

The reflections on this triangulation are reported below from first hand participant comments and observed behaviour throughout the duration of the development phase. The development phase is only just complete, and yet more will emerge from the period of implementation, when a systematic assessment of the impact of the work will be possible.

3.2.1 Ideas

The starting point for a re-examination of the nature and scope of careers work was *Careers Education and Guidance in England: a National Framework 11-19*⁸, which reflected the QCA framework for careers work: self-development; career exploration; and career management. This was a familiar and recognisable document to some participants, but relatively unused by others; most knew of it, but few had worked with it. Participants also worked with an adaptation of Coverage, Process and Influence (CPI)⁹ as a theoretical model for developing their thinking. CPI is a much-developed reincarnation of the DOTS Analysis¹⁰ and helped participants to build on the QCA framework.

The readiness of individuals and institutions to engage with any of this thinking, and to recognise and embrace the implications for the development of work in their institution, varied greatly. Key variations concerned:

- An understanding of what constituted 'careers work'. There was no accord about what it should be addressing or how to achieve it¹¹. The initial concepts presented ranged from a very limited 'matching and fixing' role in terms of young people's next steps into learning or earning opportunities; to much broader, personal development learning, of which career learning was a part. This is a common picture, and findings in other studies have reported a similar scenario¹².
- A willingness to engage with re-thinking careers work. This varied across institutions. Most participants recognised the relevance and value of the ideas being discussed, and commented that they found the extended approach of CPI helpful: 'very ... thought-provoking'; 'very useful and challenging'; 'it ... made me re-think what I am doing'; and 'against all the odds it helped me to feel motivated to tackle the problems in my school which have hitherto seemed overwhelming' (this latter comment was from a senior manager). Several participants worked to track through the implications of this approach for developments in their own institution. For other participants, there was little change in their framing of careers work throughout the life of the project, and the status quo prevailed.

⁸ *Careers Education and Guidance in England: a National Framework 11-19* DfES (2003)

⁹ See www.hihihiho.com for a full explanation and copy of the original material, devised and developed by Bill Law

¹⁰ DOTS (Decision-making, Opportunity awareness, Transition learning & Self-awareness) was first produced and published in *Schools, Careers and Community* by Bill Law and A.G. Watts in 1977 (London: Church Information Office).

¹¹ Each participant setting was different, and progress towards the project's aim was particularly difficult at times when some of the support professionals involved unwittingly 'bought into' the restricted local parameters for young people, and so reinforced them. It was not clear whether this was a sincere belief that the young people concerned could not achieve outside these parameters, or whether it was 'protective channelling' to prevent them from taking perceived risks (for 'protective channelling' see John Wrench "New Vocationalism, Old Racism and the Careers Service" *New Community* Vol.16 No.3 April 1990, 425-440)

¹² *Report of the End-to-End Review of Careers Education and Guidance*, DfES, July 2005.

Some of these variations were consistent with other findings: as David Andrews put it, ‘the problem of teachers not being able to get out of school to attend courses is ... only part of the picture. Some careers co-ordinators are not interested in taking developments forward and do not attend, others attend but there is little impact on provision in school’.¹³ This is a regretful position, but clearly a common one. The reasons may not be straightforward or simple.

3.2.2 *Infrastructure*

The working context for all participants varied greatly. A few had some strong systems, processes and institutional contexts that were robust and flexible enough to respond to new developments. In other situations, this good-practice ‘infrastructure’ was not always sufficient to embark on a major development project. There were also considerable variations in relation to:

- The status accorded to the career role in the institution. Where this was perceived by the individual and the institution as a significant middle management role, with expectations around targets and outcomes, then the work was managed in a manner similar to any other mainstream area of the curriculum, and the potential for development was enhanced accordingly.
- Effective management systems devised and/or used by careers co-ordinators for supporting and developing careers work. One co-ordinator reported having little authority to negotiate curriculum, resources, staff or organisational development. Two co-ordinators had extensive processes and systems in place, with one context particularly well developed; another recognised the gap early on in the project and put considerable time and resource into establishing this underpinning. Some staff conducted an annual review of the work, with systems in place to accommodate varying degrees of development; in one instance, these identified developments were a direct result of some self-evaluation and prioritising, and addressed the resource and staffing implications for changed practice.
- Appropriate levels of resourcing. Some institutions had relatively high levels of resourcing, permitting extensive up-to-date provision; of the others, two said they had no designated base or curriculum time for careers work; in addition, one of them reported that no curriculum time was allocated for any aspect of the personal development curriculum. Three participants said they had other extensive curriculum responsibilities, leaving little time and energy for the development of careers work. The pressure on professional colleagues should not be underestimated.
- Supporting ethos. Some - particularly, but not exclusively, special schools in the project - emphasised holistic, integrated personal development learning alongside the qualifications students could achieve. In these settings career learning was highly valued as a key contributor to personal development, attracting commitment and resources. Other career co-ordinators represented their schools as being driven almost exclusively by externally determined ‘hard’ targets – like the percentage of A-C grades achieved - and reported difficulties in attracting interest and attention from senior managers for work that was not perceived as making a contribution to that agenda. However, at least one of these senior managers had a different point of view, being very keen that careers work should have a higher profile than the careers co-ordinator was currently achieving.

¹³ Andrews, D. *Support and Training for CEG within Connexions Partnerships: Review and Emerging Trends* (2004 DFES for circulation to all Connexions Partnerships)

- Support for career learning in the wider curriculum. In some institutions – particularly, but not exclusively, in the two special schools - there were instances where people from a range of related roles were enabled to contribute to career-relevant learning: for example, teachers of Citizenship and PSHE; tutors, mentors and teaching assistants; a school counsellor; and even staff from external services like the school nurse; as well as a few subject staff teaching, for example, English and drama. Some participants reported that staff working in the personal development areas of the curriculum had not always recognised this degree of convergence previously. In other institutions, the work was defined very narrowly, and delivery and development were restricted to designated careers staff. Staff in these latter institutions frequently expressed the need to find more support for the work, saying they were too pressured to engage with development; but not all seemed able to recognise any basis for engaging with this wider network, in or out of the institution. It seemed that some colleagues were ‘trapped’ into a restricted frame of thinking from which they found it difficult to escape; the project offered them opportunities to engage with some alternative frames of reference.
- Strong partnership working with Connexions. Some PAs were actively and consistently involved in the project with colleagues in their partner institutions; others joined during the project. Some were professionally qualified and experienced; others were engaged in obtaining a first career guidance qualification, with many doing an NVQ4 that unfortunately does not directly address curriculum. Some made a strong contribution to the development and delivery of careers work, as specialists in guidance, and to the curriculum. One key factor reported by all institutions was the belief that PAs offered a critical complementary input of labour-market-related advice and guidance, expertise that most institutions did not see themselves as being able to provide internally. One institution had a very strong and effective partnership with Connexions; others worked at this within the project. However, in two cases there did not appear to be any link with Connexions for the project over long periods. At times, here and elsewhere organisational level support from Connexions was problematic, and the career guidance element of the PA role was not always evident.
- Engagement with professional development opportunities. The readiness of individuals to draw on these varied:
 - Take-up of workshops and individual consultancy support varied. Staff teams from some institutions, including their partner PAs from Connexions, attended all the workshops and had up to four consultancy visits. Others missed workshops and consultancy visits.
 - Levels of professional commitment varied. Some participants worked hard between workshops and visits, even taking up the offer of telephone support from the external consultant as an additional input. Others rarely progressed the work between workshops and visits, expressing little or no motivation to engage with further professional development. It may be important to investigate how far this was due to time constraints and other demands on the role, and how far other factors were involved. Some adapted the workshop frameworks and developed others to suit their needs; and made considerable and consistent efforts to network and discuss with relevant colleagues the implications of their emerging ideas, even engaging some in the planning and implementation processes. At least two involved school governors in the planning, with one governor attending a workshop as part of the staff team.

3.2.3 *Influence*

This has often been seen as the key to being able to develop careers work, increasing its status and scope and moving it nearer to a central role in the curriculum. The potential for accessing institutional influence varied:

- Senior managers were not accessible to the project developers as a group. It was not feasible to check out and offer support for developing levels of understanding and get backing for the project's agenda from most of them. Whilst senior-management support was seen as critical to the project's ability to deliver effective development of careers work, there were factors that affected this on-going commitment. Some head teachers expressed strong institutional support for initial engagement in the project, but could not always translate this later into practical strategies for embedding development in institutional planning. Where senior managers were participants, they consistently supported the agenda of the project and enabled significant institutional development.
- The professional expertise, experience and status of careers staff varied. Some institutions had specialist and experienced careers staff who already had or who developed a rigorous and extended understanding of the nature and scope of careers work, and the needs of the young people in their institution. They were committed to the development and delivery of high-quality careers work; assumed responsibilities and accountabilities consistent with other middle managers; engaged with on-going professional development; had an effective working relationship with the appropriate senior manager; and had the authority and status to engage with a development agenda. There was even a specialist team in one place. There were some very enthusiastic 'extended professionals' engaged in the work of this project: they were strategic thinkers, and had the organisational status to make things happen, and the understanding to know what are useful bases for development in their institution. At the other end of the scale, some career co-ordinators reported having little significance within the management hierarchy, and no engagement with strategic planning or even annual resource planning, seeing that as beyond their range of influence.
- Potential external authority for the development of this work. This only became available towards the end of the project. Connexions developed, consulted on, and published a plan for improving CEG, towards the end of the project's development phase. There was extensive common ground between the objectives in these documents and the work of the project. For example, each were working towards:
 - improving self-review and evaluation in CEG;
 - building commitment to a shared vision of CEG in 14-19 educational establishments;
 - promoting and nurturing the senior management role as a strategy for improving CEG;
 - clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and commitment to working together of all partners;
 - delivering in-service training and professional development for careers staff in schools and colleges, and for Connexions PAs;
 - encouraging the involvement of parents in career development and planning for and with young people.

Throughout the project, a curriculum adviser worked in a collaborative manner with several of the participating institutions, and a senior manager

from Connexions offered strategic inputs to the development work as a member of the Project Steering Group.

The local authority services became involved through the School Improvement Partnership as the project was completing. They expressed strong support for the project agenda.

The potential of both Connexions and the local authority services to support the work of the implementation phase is considerable.

4 Examining the interaction of the three 'Is' – Ideas, Infrastructure and Influence

It is within the crucible of these three 'Is' that effective careers work is enabled - or not.

4.1 Ideas

The reasons offered for a reluctance to embrace change revolved around institutional issues. Participants quoted, for example, perceived lack of:

- resources, especially the time required in an already crowded job role;
- status to initiate such an extensive rethink;
- opportunity to set up a dialogue with relevant senior managers;
- support from SLG as there were other conflicting priorities in the school;
- need, due to extensive existing provision already in place.

It was difficult to know whether any of these factors were a recognition of an immovable practical reality for some institutions, or a rejection of the implications of the thinking. If the latter, it may have been for other reasons related to professional confidence / willingness to get involved in work outside a 'comfort zone' / and the scale of the demands.

The encouragement offered through the project to focus on learning outcomes, rather than provision as the determinant of programme development, was acknowledged as useful by most participants, but in reality later ignored by many.

Some participants enthusiastically engaged with this re-think, relating new ideas to existing work and identifying new opportunities suggested by this perspective. Four institutions reported the need to embark immediately on a total re-think of careers work: they welcomed the opportunity to do this with professional support, and to 'get careers on a strong footing'.

This is a key area in determining the extent of any development of careers work. Without some willingness to engage with developmental thinking, new ideas and different ways of doing things, there is no new territory to move into and the status quo remains.

4.2 Infrastructure

Similarly, without the presence of elements of an effective infrastructure it was difficult to sustain any significant development work, whatever enthusiasm individuals expressed for new thinking. However, it was difficult to unpick what was cause and what was effect. Was it the perceived status of careers work and the career co-ordinator role by the individual and the institution that led to good underpinning practice? Or was it the 'good practice' manner in which the career co-ordinator operated which resulted in a stronger curriculum and role status for careers work in the institution? There were undoubtedly some real issues for individuals related to levels of resourcing and institutional ethos, but where this was a recognisably responsible and status-holding role for the individual, there seemed to be motivation, commitment, and a sense of empowerment to communicate with confidence with senior managers, and take forward a development agenda.

The reality may be more often a less polarised situation, but there is a clear interaction between these positions, and it is important to give some attention to this in any development agenda.

4.3 Influence

Accessing institutional influence is an important key to any sustainable development of careers work, but access is determined from both directions. The *role* authority of senior managers was a significant factor in the ability of the project to influence institutional careers work development. On the other hand, the *professional* authority of the careers co-ordinator was critical for any informed and sustainable development.

The development agenda is clearly negated if there is no access from either direction, and seriously undermined when only one side of the channel is open. It can make little difference which one is closed or open.

4.4 Completing the triangle

When aspects of all three elements were present – useful ideas for developing careers work, an infrastructure of good practice, and access to influence – development of careers work was more likely than not; but the key to the extent and sustainability of the work was the nature of the interaction between the elements. The permutations are extensive, and in all settings 'weak links' of many kinds, within any of the three elements, and between any of the personnel, occurred.

The key to the effective development of careers work within the project, in all instances, was the degree to which there was recognition of the interdependence of the three aspects, and ability and/or willingness to recognise and address any 'weak links'.

5 Some Reflections

This Report is a preliminary review of the work of this project; more and interesting data and thinking will emerge as each institution implements its identified agenda for development. However, some initial reflections indicate that there are some more widely applicable issues and considerations to address. Some issues are strategically significant, others are more concerned with improving practice, but they all have relevance beyond the boundaries of one London Borough.

The structure seemed to offer optimum conditions for the development of this work¹⁴, but the development profile for each institution was markedly different. This is not concerned with 'starting points' – some individuals and institutions had much less far to travel than others – but with progress. The project has hypothesised a model of factors affecting careers work development, but individuals and institutions responded very differently. In the next few years all will deal with inevitable change in the development, delivery and management of careers work. Further exploration of factors affecting the *response* of institutions to the development of careers work could usefully identify what needs to be done to enable a more consistently affirmative reaction. Some of the following issues are relevant to this, but do not claim to map the territory.

5.1 Strategic Considerations

5.1.1 *Involving senior managers*

Senior managers in more than half of the participating institutions could not be actively involved in the project. In those circumstances it was almost always more difficult for colleagues to engage with a development agenda, to identify relevant aspects for their school, and to implement and sustain it. When senior management colleagues are engaged in the development agenda it not only facilitates internal progress, frequently enabling curriculum integration and networking, it also strengthens the position of the institution in organisational negotiations with external partners. There is both clarity and clout in those discussions. As new partners and new ways of conducting partnerships are emerging, this is a key area for attention.

5.1.2 *Recruitment, training and professional development of careers co-ordinators*

Challenging and developing ideas of what is possible, enabling young people to broaden horizons, and engage with sustainable decision-making is at the heart of careers work for most professionals. This career learning is focused largely through curriculum, and useful learning outcomes result from effective programme design. This requires an understanding of careers in the curriculum; a facility with varied approaches to career teaching and learning; and a grasp – however limited - of career theory. Some careers co-ordinators either had or developed these through experience and professional development courses. However, all need opportunities and support to acquire and/or develop this underpinning, and qualifications for career teaching are not always easy to find¹⁵.

¹⁴ The project offered: free and open workshops for all participants - any relevant colleagues could attend; free consultancy to participants on their own premises; supply cover for workshops / consultancy visits / work between sessions; an external consultant who developed and delivered workshops and customised consultancy, and offered an on-going telephone helpline.

¹⁵ See *Directory of Professional Qualifications for CEG in England* (2006) which can be found at www.cegnet.co.uk

The implications for training include the need for a ‘career’ module in all Initial Teacher Training (ITT); the need for professional qualifications easily available and institutionally supported for teachers who are recruited as career specialists, particularly as more careers co-ordinators are being appointed from a non-teaching background¹⁶; and for on-going professional development opportunities for all who have responsibility for careers work. The Training and Development Agency (TDA) could do much to support this agenda; and both DfES and QCA could overtly encourage such developments.

5.1.3 *Clarifying language*

CEG (Careers Education and Guidance) does not describe the same package of careers work as IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance). IAG does not explicitly refer to career *learning*, which for young people is usually focused within the curriculum; although it may imply its existence. Career learning underpins the ability of young people to respond positively to career information, and engage more dynamically with the learning opportunities offered through advice and guidance as and when it becomes available, internally or externally to the institution. Coherent design and delivery of career learning in the curriculum is therefore critical to the success of IAG provision for 14-19-year-olds.

Working on a common language was one of the key needs in the project. Accepting, often by default, a lack of clarity in dialogue weakens the professional position of those engaged with the work; is confusing to many in a range of roles who could offer support; and can undermine the potential for effective partnership working. This is some of the most important work with young people, and each of us can help to ‘eat this elephant in bite-sized chunks!’

5.1.4 *Framing development*

Prior to the publication of the National Framework¹⁷ in 2003 it was common for schools to map careers programmes by provision – ‘what do students need to do?’ The framework was intended to prompt a re-think from provision as a determinant of programme development, to learning outcomes – ‘what do students need to learn?’ This project was focused on an outcomes-led approach, using the initial, suggested learning outcomes and helping schools to evaluate and develop them to reflect local needs. The National Framework had been published for almost two and a half years when the project began, yet it was not a familiar working document to many participants. There is no reason to believe that this is different to the national picture.

The framework is more than a potential map for careers work; it represents a radical shift to accountability via learning outcomes. This has implications for the management and co-ordination of career learning and for programme design. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes both locally and nationally could do much to support this re-focus; but the time required, the time-scale needed, and the level of institutional support necessary, should not be underestimated. This radical re-think is not easy, but it is essential. A learning outcomes model offers opportunities for progression and integration of career learning; has the potential to reflect individual learning needs; and can involve young people in its set up, encouraging them to become independent learners.

¹⁶ Andrews, D. ‘Non-teachers’ as careers co-ordinators: benefits and challenges – for whom? *Careers Education and Guidance* (journal of ACEG June 2006)

¹⁷ *Careers Education and Guidance in England: a National Framework 11-19* DfES (2003)

5.1.5 *Commitment and vision*

The single most important factor in initiating development of careers work in any institution seems to be the existence of an individual with a strong commitment to, and extended vision for, this work. This may or may not be a person occupying a senior management role, or someone who spends the majority of their time engaged with the work, but it will be someone who arrives at work each day with *careers work as a professional priority, conviction and commitment*. This can happen from a variety of work roles. By itself this factor may not be sufficient to ensure thoughtful and sustainable development, but without it, it is very difficult indeed to either initiate or begin to establish any development programme in an institution.

All 14-19 institutions can be expected to have an ‘expert’ who is able to speak with clarity, recognisable coherence, and authority about Maths or English, which like careers are key ‘service’ areas of learning affecting young people’s future life chances. In the changing landscape of careers work it is critical to ensure that there is such a ‘champion’ for career learning in all 14-19 institutions.

5.1.6 *A model for professional support*

Islington appeared to be typical in terms of the development needs of individuals and institutions. The findings from the review of careers work produced few surprises. The range of responses to working with the development programme was also typical. Yet even institutions and individuals who found progress more problematic put a high value on the development opportunities offered through the project. Particularly and frequently valued was the opportunity to dedicate recurring periods of structured, supported and clearly focused time to work with partners, especially Personal Advisers, but also other colleagues in relevant roles. The structure and resource available helped to define roles and responsibilities and encouraged the development of a common understanding of the scope and nature of the work. It ensured that each element of learning was complementary as well as making a distinctive contribution. This longer-term professional development model could be useful in supporting other colleagues working with the emerging holistic package of personal development learning, as well as with the changing emphasis for career learning within the vocational curriculum.

5.1.7 *Working in partnership*

Effective partnerships are able to bring both internal and external resources to enrich the student offer, including curriculum expertise, externally sourced advice and guidance, and a range of perspectives on young people themselves. However, internal partnerships can be ‘enforced structures’ – for example, groups of tutors who find themselves with relevant responsibilities but not the expertise – making the work vulnerable to gaps in understanding and commitment. Whilst external partnerships are able to contribute elements that are difficult for internal staff to offer – for example, relevant labour market intelligence (LMI) - there is not always a strong alignment or shared understanding with the institution. The project indicated that partnerships worked best when they:

- had time and other resources allocated to build collaborative working and deliver practical activities;
- were based on mutual trust and respect;

- were between organisations and individuals that shared a common understanding of the work to be done;
- were between individuals with equally high levels of knowledge and expertise within their respective roles;
- clarified the terms and conditions for working together;
- defined, negotiated and agreed roles and responsibilities for all involved;
- had strong management and planning systems;
- had strong institutional support;
- attended with care to succession planning.

In the present world of emerging and changing partnerships for careers work it is essential for curriculum, institutions and agencies to be able to work effectively together in new and different ways to deliver a career-relevant offer to all young people. Working together successfully needs vision and planning: the outcomes can only be as strong as the inputs and negotiated processes are able to underpin.

5.2 Practical considerations

5.2.1 *Status of careers co-ordinators*

Careers work colleagues, whatever their work title, have unequal status across institutions: it is a commonly recognised phenomenon, but there is no uniform explanation. The project seems to indicate a direct correlation between status, and the effectiveness of the career development agenda in schools. If career learning is recognised as a key area for all young people, then this inequality is a critical area to address. This is not just about professional development, although that may be a useful first step in some instances; it is profoundly concerned with management priorities. As careers work fails to appear in many of the key performance indicators for schools, this is an uphill struggle in some situations. It is a structural issue and could benefit from some structural intervention at policy level.

5.2.2 *Commitment of careers co-ordinators*

This cannot be legislated for. David Andrews described ‘the problem of teachers not being able to get out of school to attend courses (as) ... only part of the picture. Some careers co-ordinators are not interested in taking developments forward and do not attend, others attend but there is little impact on provision in school’.¹⁸ This is a regretful position, but not an uncommon one nationally, and attention could usefully be given in another study to exploring underlying factors that help to explain why this is so. Without some identified causal relationship it is difficult to make progress, but the circumstance is too significant to be ignored.

5.2.3 *Isolation of careers co-ordinators*

The role of the careers co-ordinator is relatively isolated, and can be professionally lonely. In the results of the curriculum audit several participants found it quite surprising that the work they were doing was so widely supported by other colleagues. As the project progressed several participants recognised that there were other people in and beyond their institution who could be usefully involved in the work. Some professional development work, focused

¹⁸ Andrews, D. *Support and Training for CEG within Connexions Partnerships: Review and Emerging Trends* (2004 DFES for circulation to all Connexions Partnerships)

via local resources, could support the survey of potential partners for all careers co-ordinators. Linked to some work to encourage and enable networking and negotiation skills – why should colleagues be presumed to have these just because they occupy this role? - and some organisational will to recognise the benefits, some inroads could be made into this difficult issue.

5.2.4 *The Careers Forum*

Participants uniformly valued the opportunities for meeting and working together that were offered through the project. Maintaining this momentum and collegiality through the re-invigorated Islington Careers Forum should help to strengthen the role and position of careers work in these institutions. This type of model can be more generally applicable to help and sustain the work of careers co-ordinators, and perhaps Connexions or other staff who engage with curriculum, within any area. It is not uncommon to find such an arrangement, but as in Islington it requires an individual with an overview of relevant learning needs within the area to convene and structure inputs for the meetings as part of his/her job role. A person from one of the agencies – the Local Authority, Connexions, or other - is probably best placed to fulfil this.

These are underlying factors that are influencing the capacity of individuals and institutions to develop and deliver careers work effectively in Islington: as this area is not untypical the conclusions can reasonably be applied more widely.

Careers work has received policy support over the past decade through legislation for careers work programmes, the National Framework for CEG, and the work of Connexions services. Legislative change is now supporting new frameworks and ways of working in the career offer to young people. However, new structures, new funding routes, and new partnerships are unlikely to resolve some or all of the above. The issues and considerations outlined in this report are live, relevant and equally demanding within this new scenario.

Questions for discussion, overleaf, have relevance for institutions, agencies, partnerships, and anyone with responsibility for developing and/or delivering the career offer to young people.

6 Some questions to consider

The changing contexts for careers work present challenges to all those responsible for developing the work. This report has suggested some of the supports available and some of the barriers that exist for school-based career development in the present situation.

Any serious and sustainable effort to ‘drive up the quality of CEG in schools’¹⁹ will need to address structural weaknesses. Given the climate of change about who does what in terms of careers work, the work needs to be promoted and support negotiated for it. This requires both internal and external collaboration, and involves existing and emerging partners. Actions will be needed by various key players to support the work.

Specific questions to initiate discussion about developing useful and sustainable careers work in schools include:

1. How can individuals and institutions be encouraged and enabled to promote career learning? How can they effectively negotiate support for career guidance? Who needs to be involved? At what levels? What kinds of support do they require?
2. What kind of professional, structural and funding relationship between career learning and career guidance providers would most effectively support the career development needs of young people?
3. Can careers work be integrated with other personal development learning, for example the single framework for Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PELTS) being developed for use in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers? In this setting will careers work be able to retain its unique contribution to the future of young people? If YES, what curriculum and management structures would be most effective? If NO, where is its future?
4. What are the professional development implications for those in key roles to enable them to effectively promote, support and develop this work: especially in settings where IAG must be negotiated, sometimes by and with new partners?
5. What might be some useful starting-points in institutions to encourage careers work to move in from the margins? For example:
 - i. What degree of shared understanding of the nature of careers work, and of local needs of young people, exists within the institution?
 - ii. How far is there understanding between the school and its external partners of the nature of careers work – both career learning in the curriculum, and school-based and labour-market-linked career guidance?
 - iii. How effective is the dialogue between the key players – both internally and externally?
 - iv. To what extent is there clarity of roles and responsibilities by and between the key players?
 - v. Is there both clear, and clearly designated, *role* and *professional* authority, able and inclined to influence change?
 - vi. How effective and clear are the management processes and procedures for careers work? Who is accountable to whom, for what?
 - vii. To what extent is the Senior Leadership Group committed and equipped to support this work?

¹⁹ Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Report of the End to End Review of Careers Education and Guidance*, London DfES

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