

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CAREERS SERVICES

**THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE ENTERPRISE AND
LIFELONG LEARNING DEPARTMENT**

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REPORT SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- The research was commissioned by the Scottish Office in 1997 to map Careers Service (CS) provision across Scotland and consider its effectiveness after a period of major change to its organisation and management.
- The research defined effectiveness in terms of the extent to which provision met clients' needs rather than whether Careers Service Companies (CSCs) were operating effectively within their existing resources.
- The research was focused on the core work of the Careers Service and aimed to consider how well provision met the needs of young people, employers and Training Organisations.
- At the beginning of the research, most Careers Service Companies were in their third year of operation following their move out of local authority (LA) control and into a partnership model, with the key partners being LAs and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). During the period of the research, LA reorganisation took place, resulting in 9 of the 17 Careers Service Companies operating in partnership with more than one LA.
- Company Boards had been set up, and some initial difficulties dealt with by the issue of *"Governance, Openness and Accountability – Guidelines for Careers Service Companies"* (SOEID, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

- National documentation and statistics were reviewed and interviews conducted with key informants.
- All Careers Service Companies in Scotland were involved in the first stage of the research which included collection of documents and statistics from each Careers Service Company, completion of a Careers Service Company profile and interviews with Heads of Service (HoS) and Careers Advisers (CA).
- On the basis of the data from all the Careers Service Companies, a typology of Careers Service Companies was developed which characterised each Careers Service Company in relation to a number of features.
- The typology of Careers Service Companies was used to select five that represented the variety of approaches and provision across the Scottish Careers Service for further, in-depth study. Although developed for research purposes, the typology has another possible function as a management tool for Careers Service Companies.
- A programme of interviews was carried out in the five Careers Service Companies with a range of Careers Service Company staff; school staff; and Careers Service Board, LEC, LA, and Education Business Partnership (EBP) representatives.
- Three surveys were conducted in the case study Careers Service Companies. Pupils in S4, S5 and S6 in 10 schools were surveyed about their opinion and experience of the Careers Service and contacted again a year later. The responses from S6 pupils were excluded

from the analyses because of the very wide variation in response rates across the schools. A second survey covered 300 employers in the five Careers Service Companies. The third survey was of 60 Training Organisations.

CHAPTER 3

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CAREERS SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

Functions and core client groups

- The document “A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies” (SOEID, 1998) sets out the key aims of the Careers Service: “The key aim of the Careers Service is to contribute to the increasing achievement and prosperity of individuals, their communities and the economy and in doing so, to promote equality of opportunity.
- The core client group, to whom a service *must* be offered, includes:
 - individuals in full-time education and those in part-time education if preparing for employment (higher education students are excluded);
 - 16 and 17 year olds who have left education; individuals of all ages with disabilities; parents and guardians;
 - employers and training providers; and
 - educational institutions.
- A service *may* be offered to young people up to the age of 24 (New Deal group) and to other adults seeking careers guidance and information.

Careers Service role as a transition service

- The Careers Service is essentially a transition service. Career development research shows that transitions occur as a result of two types of prompts.
- One type of prompt arises from how the education and training system and the labour market operate and can be termed “externally prompted transitions”.
- The second type of transitions arise from aspects that are personal to each individual and related to their particular stage of career development and also to the wider personal circumstances of their life. These can be termed “personally prompted transitions”.
- Most people will experience a combination of both types of transition but Careers Service Companies tend to focus on externally prompted transitions.
- For many young people the transition period extends beyond the first transition after school but Careers Service support is focused primarily on initial transitions at the expense of continuing transitions.

The balance of Careers Service work

- The Careers Service’s work was geared towards school pupils and, to some extent, the young unemployed with less work done with young people in work and training and with students in further education. This is a result of policy direction from central government, resource limitations and a focus on short-term decisions and adjustments.

- Scottish Executive used Careers Service Business and Development Targets to encourage particular priorities in Careers Service Company work. Careers Service Company managers took varying approaches to using the targets as management tools to change the balance of practitioners' work in line with company and Scottish Executive targets.

Policy context and conflicting demands on the Careers Service

- The Careers Service is expected to help deliver various government priorities but they are sometimes contradictory and not matched to existing resources. The result is conflicting demands and expectations of the Careers Service.
- Conflicting demands included:
 - raising clients' aspirations vs helping them adapt to the demands of the local labour market; being advocates for disadvantaged young people vs meeting the needs of employers for good quality candidates;
 - reducing the number of unemployed and meeting the Guarantee vs offering employers a wide choice of candidates;
 - offering an impartial service vs promoting the value of vocational qualifications; and
 - developing an enhanced role in economic development vs delivering social outcomes.
- There are issues about who makes decisions about what the Careers Service should be doing. In particular, what is the balance between the role of Careers Service Boards and the Scottish Executive (on behalf of the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning) in doing so?
- The existence of a core contract has implications for the stated role of Careers Service Boards and their decision-making in their communities. There are issues about the role of a limited company that provides a statutory service.

Conditional status of the Careers Service

- The Careers Service has extensive responsibilities but very little accompanying power. It has duties placed on it but must work through and with others to fulfil them. What are the implications of a statutory service that cannot require anything of anybody?
- To meet its statutory duties, Careers Service Company staff may need to challenge the decisions and operations of a school, a college, an employer, a Training Organisation or a partner organisation but to function effectively for its clients the Careers Service Company has to rely on co-operation from these organisations. The result can be variation in provision for young people, not based on young people's needs but on the nature of the Careers Service's relationships with others.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGED MANAGEMENT OF THE CAREERS SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

Impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

- While all Careers Services had experienced a degree of change as a result of the setting up of the new companies, around a third had made radical changes.

- Both managers and staff in Careers Service Companies were in the main positive about the changes, citing improved status in the eyes of employers, Training Organisations and education authorities. They valued the greater financial autonomy, less bureaucracy and the capacity to respond more quickly.
- Many of the Careers Service's partner organisations noted its increased business orientation and its contribution to economic development.
- Negative aspects of the changes included: the financial responsibility of budgeting; and, in some cases, less consultation with staff due to a fore-shortened decision-making process. How may staff be adequately consulted in a business environment?
- As Heads of Service (especially in larger Companies) became more focused on business development, they increasingly had to rely on practitioners and middle managers to provide intelligence on client need and the likely effect of policy options for practice.

Careers Service Boards

- The initial focus of Careers Service Boards was on finance. Staffing, quality assurance, Careers Service Company profile and partnerships were other areas of concern.
- There was variation in the extent to which staff thought that Careers Service Boards contributed to Company development and were supportive of the Head of Service. Where problems arose they were due to personality difficulties, conflict of interest and internal Board relationships.
- Boards were viewed as ineffective when members did not lay aside other agendas; were uninformed or suggested major changes of policy on the basis of anecdotal evidence; or did not understand the limitations arising from the need to meet the core contract.
- Boards could contribute through applying financial rigour to proposals and through raising the profile of the Careers Service Company in the wider community. Another positive effect of having a Board was that it required the Head of Service to have a clear focus when developing and presenting policy.
- The majority of practitioners involved in this research felt the Board to be remote. Some Careers Service Companies kept the relationship between the Board and staff distant, but the trend was to promote contacts between Board members and staff. What is an appropriate level of involvement between Boards and Careers Service staff, and how can effective relationships be developed?
- Boards varied in the extent to which they had worked through the implications of being strategic rather than operational. At the mid-point of our research, around a third of Boards were clearly strategic, with a further half equally strategic and operational.
- Boards defined their *strategic* role in relation to the development of the Careers Service Company as a *business* and viewed the direction of the Careers Service Company as a *careers guidance service* as an *operational* matter. How much does it matter whether Heads of Service and Boards see careers guidance priorities as operational and not strategic?

Funding

- The research identified three types of Careers Service Company funding: core funding, enhanced core funding and non-core funding. Core funding is money to deliver the core contract to core clients; enhanced core funding is external additional funding which enhances the service to core clients; and non-core funding is external additional funding which provides a service to non-core clients.

- All Careers Service Companies had both core and enhanced funding, and most had some non-core funding. But Companies varied in the importance they gave to the different sources of funding and the way in which they applied the funding to staffing.
- Careers Service Companies and their partners were concerned to ensure that the service to the core client group was not damaged through over-extending Careers Service Companies' resources through time-consuming bids and initiatives.
- Both enhanced and non-core funding were short-term and vulnerable to changes in priorities by other organisations. What are the implications for the core work of a statutory service if the additional funding used for this purpose cannot be guaranteed?
- The use of enhanced funding for core clients was not evenly distributed across Scotland, resulting in variation in the level of service to clients. There are, therefore, implications for the entitlement of clients to careers services.
- Additional funding is often subject to particular conditions that can inhibit an integrated approach to clients or prevent the Careers Service from meeting the needs of clients.
- The principle of competition for external funding could bring the Careers Service into direct competition with agencies with which it was meant to work in partnership.
- Virtually all Careers Service Companies viewed the General Aggregated Expenditure (GAE) formula as inappropriate.
- There is a discrepancy between what the relevant Act requires of the Careers Service and the funding received for core clients (particularly with respect to further education students). At the very least, the funding formula should match the core client group or the core client group should be changed.

Changing relationships with the Scottish Executive

- The Scottish Executive relationship with Careers Service Companies in Scotland was a positive one based on partnership and flexibility.
- The negative side of this flexibility was that sometimes Scottish Executive staff did not give clear direction based on the actual requirements of Company status.
- The role of Scottish Executive staff as external auditors for the Careers Service for the Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS), allowed them to use the external audit as a development tool and as a way of focusing the Careers Service on certain priorities.
- Central support for research and professional publications from the Scottish Executive was missing, in contrast to the support given by DfEE.

Changing relationships with the Local Authority (LA)

- The new arrangements had created a greater distance between the Careers Service and education departments, but had also broadened its links to other departments in LAs .
- Decision-making was speedier in most Careers Service Companies outwith the control of education departments. Ring fencing of budgets protected Careers Service Companies from local authority cutbacks. Most Careers Service Company staff and managers were happy to be out of the direct control of LAs.
- LA reorganisation meant that Careers Service Companies had to develop new relationships with their new authority/ authorities.
- In a time of financial stringency, some LAs were keeping development funding for their own staff and services, viewing the Careers Service as no longer their own service.

- The local authority brings a public service ethos, a determination to safeguard the service to schools and a focus on social and community outcomes to the Careers Service Board.

Changing relationships with the Local Enterprise Company (LEC)

- LECs were one half of the partnership in Careers Service Boards. The research noted increased funding from the LEC for specific projects, and as the Careers Service successfully completed such work, the relationship became closer with links to a wider range of LEC departments.
- LECs had generally come to see the Careers Service Company as a key delivery arm for their strategic objectives.
- But some LECs were frustrated that the Careers Service Company did not appear to share a similar strategic vision: these LECs had a more dynamic view of the possible contribution of Careers Service Companies to economic and skills development than did their Careers Service Companies.
- The developing relationship between the two organisations was contributing to significant progress in the provision of LMI to clients.
- Relationships with LEC training managers and local representatives showed a degree of variation, to a large extent dependent on personality and expectations.

Other partnerships

- Across Careers Service Companies, relationships with the Employment Services were good, and had improved with the Careers Service's involvement with the New Deal.
- In a small number of Careers Service Companies, the Careers Service and Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) were part of the same organisation but were separate in most. Relationships were being developed according to local circumstances.
- Confusion in responsibilities and roles between Careers Service Companies and EBPs does not help clients. What is the best model of joint working for these two organisations, operating together under the Education for Work banner?

CHAPTER 5

THE PUPILS' PERSPECTIVE

The survey

- The pupils' perspective is based on our survey of a 50% sample of S4, S5 and S6 pupils in 10 case study schools. S6 pupils have been excluded from analyses because of the low response rate in some schools from this year group.

Pupils' contact with the Careers Service

- The majority of S4 and S5 pupils had contact with the Careers Service although most reported that they had not had contact when in the lower school. Whether or not pupils had had contact at any stage varied across Careers Service Companies and, in some cases, on the school attended. Do these differences reflect differences in pupil needs or are there other reasons?

- S4 pupils who were serious truants were less likely to have contact; a challenge for the Careers Service is how to make contact with this group.
- The likelihood of having contact with the Careers Service was not affected by pupils' attainment, but attainment did make a difference to the types of Careers Service inputs that pupils experienced.
- By far the most likely pupil contact with the Careers Service was the individual interview, especially in S5. Is there a need for Careers Service Companies to adopt a greater variety of approaches to meet the varying needs of pupils?
- How might Higher Still affect the level and type of contact needed?

Extent of careers interviews

- Around three-fifths of S4 and S5 pupils had an interview with the Careers Adviser (CA). The likelihood of having an interview differed across Careers Service Companies and this was not explained by differences in Careers Service Companies' stated interview policies. Aspects of the school-Careers Service relationship may have a bearing on this.
- A number of other factors each had a separate effect on the likelihood that a pupil would have a Careers Adviser interview. There were some differences in the factors that affected S4 and S5 pupils.
- For S4 pupils, higher attainment, individual discussion with non-guidance teachers, and plans to leave school soon each increased the likelihood that they would have an interview. Serious truancy and having no career ideas each decreased their chances.
- For S5 pupils, having a positive attitude to school, an individual discussion with a guidance teacher, an individual discussion with non-guidance teachers and the intention to apply to FE each increased the likelihood of having an interview. The particular Careers Service Company was the one factor that might decrease the likelihood of an interview.

The management of interviews

- The majority of pupils were satisfied that their interview had been at the right time for them (S4: 61%; S5: 75%). The probability that they would be satisfied with the timing of their interview was not related to Careers Service Company interviewing policy.
- A number of factors each had a separate effect on the likelihood that pupils would think that their interview had been at the right time, for example, higher levels of discussion with parents about career plans had a positive effect but careers education had a mixed effect.
- A considerable proportion of pupils who did not have an interview had not wanted one (S4: 43% and S5: 58%). Those pupils who had not wanted an interview were more likely not to have any ideas about their post school plans. It may be that some pupils do not understand the purpose of a careers interview and think they cannot see the Careers Adviser unless they have some career ideas to discuss.
- Only a minority of those who had an interview knew what to expect from it. This and the previous bullet point suggests that pupils need a better understanding of the purpose of the careers interview and schools and the Careers Service might review their approaches to this.
- Over a half of S4 pupils who had not had an interview had either requested one but had not had it, or had not understood enough about the interview system to make a request. The same applied to around two fifths of S5s who had not had an interview.

- The reasons why pupils did not have an interview varied across Careers Service Companies but also between year groups within the same Careers Service Company.
- What scope is there for Careers Service Companies and schools to manage interview requests differently to reduce waiting times and to keep pupils informed about waiting times? It seems that strategies being used to inform pupils about the interview system are not effective with some pupils.
- There is demand for earlier timing of interviews in S4 and S5. Can Careers Service Companies accommodate this demand by revising their interview systems?
- There is also demand for interviews before S4. What input should the Careers Service have in the lower school and how realistic is it to expect Careers Service Companies to meet this demand within current resources and priorities?

The effectiveness of interviews

- Most pupils thought their careers interview had been useful. Among S4 pupils, there was a slight variation in opinion across Careers Service Companies.
- A number of factors each increased the likelihood that pupils would find their career interview useful. The most critical factor for both S4 and S5 pupils was whether their careers interview had been at the right time. This underlines the importance of Careers Service Companies doing as much as possible to ensure that pupils get an interview at the time that they see as appropriate to them.
- The particular Careers Service Company made a difference to S4 pupils' opinion of their interview. In addition to the timing of their interview, other factors each had a positive effect on S4 pupils' opinion:
 - being higher attainers;
 - having a positive opinion of their careers education;
 - having higher levels of discussion of career plans with parents; and
 - planning to apply to FE.
- For S5 pupils the significant factors in addition to the timing of their interview were:
 - having a positive attitude to school;
 - having individual discussions with guidance teacher;
 - having individual discussions with non-guidance teachers;
 - greater frequency of careers education;
 - having a positive opinion of careers education; and
 - intention to apply to FE.
- Discussion of their plans with their parents had a positive impact on pupils' view of their interview and reinforces the importance of Careers Service Companies supporting parents in their guidance role.
- Having individual discussion with teachers (especially non-guidance teachers) had a positive effect on pupils' opinion of their careers interview: this points to the value of schools giving pupils as much opportunity as possible for this to happen.
- Careers education appears to help pupils make the most of their careers interview. It was the frequency of careers education classes rather than the amount of careers education that made the difference. This has implications for how schools timetable careers education.
- Pupils were confident about the impartiality of the Careers Adviser and thought that the Careers Adviser had explained their post school options and had helped to widen their

ideas. Around half said that they had not had their career ideas challenged by the Careers Adviser. A substantial minority did not think they had been helped to relate their career ideas to their personal characteristics.

- There were differences across the Careers Service Companies in pupils' views about the interview process and its outcomes for them. This variation raises questions about young people's entitlement to a common minimum standard of guidance.
- Those planning to enter FE or HE were more likely to think they had received relevant information than those planning to enter the labour market. How can Careers Advisers make better use of labour market information (LMI) in a careers interview?
- Careers Advisers seem to be considered to be more effective in respect of some aspects of the interview than others. Pupils' opinion of the interview process and its effectiveness varied across Careers Service Companies. Both findings point to the need for greater attention to the monitoring of Careers Advisers' guidance practice and to appropriate staff development.

Pupils' career ideas

- A number of factors reduced the likelihood that pupils would have no idea about what to do after leaving school. For both S4 and S5 pupils these included frequency of careers education classes and also discussion with parents for both. In addition, for S4 pupils, individual discussion with PSE teachers and having an interview with the careers adviser each had an effect.

Pupils career-related skills and knowledge

- Several factors each had a positive impact on S4 pupils' careers-related skills and knowledge: having had a high level of careers education; finding careers education useful; having a high level of individual discussion with guidance teachers; having a positive opinion of their interview with a careers adviser; and planning to do to college.

CHAPTER 6

THE CAREERS SERVICE WORK IN SCHOOLS: CLIENT CONTACT, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICE

Overview of careers advisers' work in school

- All of the school staff involved in the research believed the Careers Service performed an essential role and valued its work in their schools. They generally wanted an increase in the Careers Adviser's time allocation.
- The pattern of Careers Advisers (CA) work was similar across all Careers Service Companies. The bulk of their time was devoted to scheduled interviews with S4-S6 pupils although they were involved in other inputs such as drop-in sessions, talks and careers evenings and in contributing to careers education programmes and in-service training.

Client contact systems

- Definitions of the common models of school client contact systems (blanket, selective and self-referral) vary across and within Careers Service Companies. There are also discrepancies between stated policies on contact systems and what happens in practice.

- In practice, all Careers Service Companies in Scotland operated a mixture of the three models and differences relate to the particular mix of each model.
- Current models of client contact systems do not adequately encompass the complexities of practice. It proved impossible to compare the effectiveness of the different client contact systems. There is a need for careers guidance professionals to develop new models of client contact.

The interview system

- Most Careers Service Companies operated a system of diagnostic questionnaires which gave pupils the opportunity to request an interview.
- In around half of the Careers Service Companies, Careers Advisers thought that targets had an impact on how they responded to pupils' requests for interview.
- The role of guidance staff in publicising career Service provision, in identifying pupils for interview and encouraging them to ask for an interview was critical, especially where self referral operated in practice
- Self-referral systems tended to be less popular with schools; Careers Advisers were divided in their opinion of the (de)merits of self-referral. A number of Careers Service Companies that had an official policy of self referral did not actually operate one in practice.
- Interview programmes were generally based around categories of pupils and their expected transitions eg S4 leavers, HE applicants. Even in self-referral systems interview priorities tended to be set on this basis.
- Although Careers Advisers and guidance staff explained the interview system, they recognised that some pupils did not understand how the system operated, including how to access an interview and about waiting times and interview priorities.
- The management of interviews in all types of client contact systems was an issue. Waiting times for interviews varied considerably across schools and at different times of the year. This is a critical issue since, as this research has indicated, having an interview at the right time is the most critical factor in determining whether pupils find it useful.
- By the later stages of the research, some Careers Service Company managers were trying to build more flexibility into the system.
- How well schools prepared pupils for interview varied; Careers Advisers frequently commented on the need to cover basic points about their role and the purpose of the interview during the interview.

Group work

- Most group work undertaken in Careers Service Companies was in the form of presentations to large groups of pupils eg classes or year groups. More interactive sessions with smaller groups of pupils were more limited; only a minority of Careers Service Companies showed significant development of this kind of approach.
- There was little support among Careers Advisers or teachers that small group work might replace interviews for certain pupils.
- But a number of Careers Advisers thought that small group work would be a valuable addition to interviews, especially as preparation for interview. Group work as an interview review mechanism was less commonly mentioned.

- Targets had had some effect in prompting group sessions although a considerable proportion of careers advisers believed that their targets for interviews restricted their opportunity to undertake group work.
- Some schools were unable or unwilling to organise groups of pupils, especially small groups, usually because of timetable constraints and the demands of subject teaching.
- Small group sessions were generally used to cover information on popular topics or as interview preparation. Post interview group work to review pupils' progress was much less common.

Careers education

- The extent and nature of Careers Adviser involvement in careers education varied across the Careers Service Companies but there was a general trend for Careers Service Company management to emphasise Careers Advisers role as consultants rather than as deliverers of careers education. Not all Careers Advisers were happy with this development and schools commonly wanted some degree of delivery of careers education by Careers Advisers.
- Careers Advisers' knowledge of schools' careers education programmes varied but few were familiar enough with provision to be able to plan their inputs to fit in with pupils' careers education.
- The respective roles of the Careers Service and the Education Business Partnership (EBP) varied considerably across Careers Service Companies, partly because of the high levels of variation in the provision of EBPs themselves across Scotland. An effective approach could be seen where the Careers Service Company and the EBP planned developments together and had complementary roles.

CHAPTER 7

THE CAREERS SERVICE WORK IN SCHOOLS: CLIENT GROUPS, ORGANISATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

The full school client group

- The current variation in careers education provision in Scottish schools means that careers education cannot replace the need for careers guidance nor is there evidence that careers education can replace careers guidance.
- The policy focus on inclusion has added to the debate about whether all pupils need contact with the Careers Service. Some of our interviewees considered that academic pupils had less need of contact and that the Careers Service should focus on the less academic or disadvantaged. The evidence from this and other research, however, does not support the view that academic pupils do not need or want careers guidance. There is also a danger that the needs of the middle attaining "ordinary" pupil may be overlooked.
- Most Careers Service Companies were withdrawing from work with S2s but there was considerable demand from pupils and schools for involvement at this stage. Other research has identified the importance of inputs in the lower school when pupils' career ideas are formed.

Priorities and pupil needs

- Most Careers Service Company staff supported the idea of all pupils having contact (and preferably an interview) with the Careers Service but recognised that priorities have to be set. Careers Service Companies have to reconcile available resources, pupil needs, school demands and requirements on them arising from government policies.
- The research found little evidence that priorities were set on the basis of the identified needs of individual pupils taking into account their particular stage of vocational maturity.
- Priorities were based on the perceived needs of categories of pupils and government priorities and focused on externally prompted transitions with little account taken of personally prompted transitions. Self-referral systems tended to respond to pupil demand rather than identified pupil need. Identification of individual client need was most likely to happen as part of the guidance process when a client was interviewed.
- There is a need for more systematic identification of individual pupil need than the current diagnostic questionnaires that are typically used to establish the level and types of careers guidance each pupil requires. It is likely that a range of strategies, not just the interview, are necessary to meet the particular needs, learning styles and career maturity of individuals. Issues relating to the identification of need are discussed further in Chapter 12.
- Current work is heavily based on the full vocational guidance interview and Careers Advisers and teachers believed strongly that this is the “best” sort of input. But there is evidence that various combinations of long and short interviews, group sessions and planned individual use of information and guidance systems are more effective in moving clients forward in their career thinking.
- The current system of Business Activity Targets that Careers Service Companies work to is not appropriate for an approach based on individual need.
- Careers Service Company managers generally tried to ensure a similar level of Careers Service input across schools with the level of service based largely on the school roll. There was a common view that it was necessary to prevent a more demanding school getting a higher level of Careers Service input than others were. However an issue is whether some of the variation in school demands arise from differences in pupils’ needs and are therefore justifiable.
- Careers Service Companies record their activity with the different year groups. They did not collect and use information strategically to develop an understanding of which pupils in each school had contacts with the Careers Service, and the triggers for contact, or to gain a picture of those pupils with less or no contact. The computer systems coming into operation in Careers Service Companies offer the potential to develop such guidance management information systems.

School-Careers Service link

- A common arrangement was for the Careers Service to liaise with a nominated member of staff, usually a guidance teacher, about the organisation of interviews and other Careers Service inputs on an everyday basis.
- Careers Service Companies and schools generally preferred the system of a single contact person on the school staff because it is administratively efficient but it could have the effect of distancing the Careers Adviser from other members of the guidance team.

- The research showed that how the school-Careers Service link is structured is critical to the integration and profile of the Careers Adviser in the school and to widening the ownership of careers education and guidance in the school.
- Several Careers Service Companies had or were introducing Careers Education Management Teams (CEMTs) to involve a wider range of school staff including a member of senior management. CEMTs have the potential to co-ordinate and integrate CEG provision and to link careers provision to school policy and development planning.

Service Level Agreements

- All Careers Service Companies had a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each school that sets out Careers Service input to the school and the responsibilities on each side. All Careers Service Companies had annual or termly reviews of the SLA to monitor progress.
- The SLA is the main vehicle for negotiating the formal relationship between a school and the Careers Service Company. Over the period of the research, it became more common for senior management (on both sides) to be involved in SLA negotiations.
- There was variation across Careers Service Companies in how tightly SLAs were applied. In around half of the Careers Service Companies both Careers Advisers and school staff believed SLAs restricted the Careers Advisers flexibility to respond to school requests.
- A high level of prescription could arise because Careers Service Company managers saw the SLA as a mechanism for managing resources and Careers Advisers workloads especially within the context of a standstill budget and to ensure equity of Careers Service provision across schools.
- Most Careers Service Companies believed that in practice SLAs met Careers Service needs rather than those of the school.
- Schools were more likely to be proactive in using the SLA to secure the provision they wanted where senior management was committed to and recognised the importance of the Careers Service and CEG.

The status of the Careers Service in school

- Careers Service Companies saw SLAs as helpful in clarifying the obligations of the school as well as of the Careers Service and providing an opportunity to address outstanding issues with the school in a context where the Careers Service had no rights of access to schools, to reports on pupils or to involvement in the curriculum.
- The Careers Service has a “conditional” status in schools and must negotiate and persuade school staff. In this situation, Careers Service staff were sometimes reluctant to push issues with schools despite the opportunity provided by the SLA negotiations.
- Careers Service managers in particular thought that Careers Advisers should be more prepared to challenge schools. However there is a clear tension between this and how schools judged the effectiveness of a Careers Adviser: a key indicator for them was that the Careers Adviser fits in with the needs of the school.
- Longstanding difficulties such as Careers Service access to pupils, the provision of pupil reports and accommodation for the Careers Adviser remained live issues with some schools.
- Generally a member of school SM had formal responsibility for Careers Service liaison. Both Careers Advisers and guidance teachers saw their commitment and involvement at appropriate points as critical to the Careers Service profile and status in the school. We

found that school SM commitment to and involvement with the Careers Service and CEG varied across schools.

- Careers Service work was not generally part of schools' Development Plans but some teachers and Careers Advisers felt that the Careers Service needed to link its work more explicitly to schools' development needs; this would help to raise the status of the Careers Service in schools and promote its integration. The development of social inclusion initiatives in schools may be one area where Careers Service Companies could most easily relate their contributions to the achievement of the school's development aims.

The impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

- Some school staff had not noticed any difference in the service to their school and to pupils as a result of the re-organisation of the Careers Service while others attributed any changes the particular Careers Adviser attached to the school. But some did think that, overall, the Careers Service had changed, developing a more business-like and professional approach.

School-Careers Service relationships

- It was clear that informal links and individual relationships were critical to a good school-Careers Service relationship and that individual teachers and careers advisers could have a major impact on the Careers Service work in schools. But while individuals are extremely important, recognition of this should not lead to organisational and structural factors being ignored.
- The Careers Service-guidance team relationship was seen both by school and by the Careers Service as the key relationship. In most Careers Service Companies the policy was that Careers Advisers should attend guidance meetings regularly but this did not always happen in practice. However, Careers Advisers generally had regular informal contacts with their contacts in the guidance team careers. Schools commonly wanted greater Careers Service involvement with guidance and other teachers including the provision of in-service training but the extent to which this happened was often limited by the Careers Advisers time constraints.
- Both guidance teachers and Careers Advisers identified the interest and commitment of senior management in a school to careers education and guidance and the role of the Careers Service as critical to an effective school-Careers Service relationship.
- Continuity of Careers Adviser was seen by schools as critical to building up productive relationships. A number of schools were unhappy about a lack of continuity, usually a result of staff turnover rather than policy. However there were few examples of structured induction programmes for Careers Advisers starting work in a new school.
- An established classification of school-Careers Service relationships comprises three models: "parallel provision", "pyramidal provision"; and "the guidance community". The common school-Careers Service relationship in Scottish Careers Service Companies could be classified as "pyramidal". In this model the careers interview is seen as the culmination of the CEG process with the school and the Careers Service working fairly separately towards it but with good exchange of information.
- This classification of the school-Careers Service relationship is a useful basis from which to analyse the complexity of the Careers Service work in schools which might be helpful to Careers Service Companies when reviewing their role and relationships in schools.

An effective Careers Adviser

- Schools had consistent views about the characteristics of an effective Careers Adviser. These included:
 - flexibility and willingness to get involved beyond the letter of the SLA;
 - the ability to fit in with the needs and approach of the school and able to respond to school requests without always checking with their manager;
 - a person who is approachable by pupils and teachers and able to build rapport with pupils;
 - reliable; and
 - well-informed about FE/HE and the labour market and keeps guidance staff up-to date with such information.
- Careers Service Company staff identified a number of skills necessary to effectiveness, some of which were similar to the schools' view: communication skills; the ability to relate to different types of young people and different types of schools; negotiating skills; organisational skills; keeping well informed about educational developments as well as careers information; the ability to update skills and knowledge; and identifying and passing on issues to Careers Service Company management.

CHAPTER 8 POST–SCHOOL SERVICES

Definitions of post-school clients

- The post-school clients within the Careers Service core client group are:
 - those who are unemployed;
 - Skillseekers trainees;
 - Skillseekers employees, including Modern Apprentices;
 - young workers (non-Skillseekers);
 - students in further education.

Overview of post-school client' transitions

- Many post-school clients move out of their first destination, or otherwise change career direction or status, within a year or two of leaving; some may make several changes. There are positive and negative reasons for these changes. The development of a young person's "career" is often not the linear progression that policy makers tend to expect.
- The Careers Service is often only aware of these changes if they impinge directly on the service's work, and the first destination statistics collected by Careers Service Companies obviously do not track young people's subsequent transitions. How might this best be done?
- Young people need careers guidance support at transitions beyond the first entry to an opportunity. To what extent is this given? What are the resource implications of providing such support?

Careers Service work with unemployed clients

- All Careers Service Companies used standard approaches to work with unemployed clients; a minority of Careers Service Companies were also involved in significant levels of innovative work, often dependent on funding support from the LEC. Staff showed high levels of commitment to supporting young unemployed people.
- The Careers Service's role with benefits created problems for staff in working openly and supportively with young unemployed people. The Careers Service's role in policing benefits needs to be removed or changed.
- The relative responsibilities of the careers adviser and the careers assistant for work with unemployed clients was changing in many Careers Service Companies. There was also uncertainty about the importance (and practicalities) of ensuring continuity of the contact person for unemployed young people. How important is continuity of contact in this situation?
- Careers Service Companies had an increasing focus on outreach work. The possibility of complementary first level guidance links with other agencies and organisations working with unemployed young people should be examined and developed.
- Innovative approaches to identifying and working with (and through) each unemployed young person's informal support network are required.
- Client contact systems for unemployed young people need to take into account both personally prompted and externally prompted transitions.
- Careers guidance has a role to play in improving the situation of unemployed young people. What is this specialist contribution, and how can specialist careers guidance techniques be applied to the needs of unemployed young people. What is the balance between meeting social, personal and careers guidance needs of unemployed young people?
- There was little variation in how Careers Service Companies worked with unemployed clients based on difference in local labour markets. To what extent should features of the local labour market be taken into account when designing interventions with young people?
- Job-finding systems are important for unemployed young people, but need to be accompanied by continuing careers guidance support for these young people when they are in work or training. How are the resources to be found for this?

Work with young people entering, engaged in and completing Skillseekers or Modern Apprenticeships

- The Careers Service has responsibility for assessing young people's Special Training Needs (STN). Careers Service Companies' approach to this ranged from the use of the careers interview to the management and delivery of externally funded assessment systems.
- The Careers Service was reported by Training Organisations as having a higher level of involvement with STN trainees (52% always or usually involved the Careers Service at the mid-point review) than with mainstream Skillseekers and Modern Apprentices once they have entered training.
- Training Organisations were uncertain whether the current level of Careers Service Company involvement with young people in training was appropriate. What is an appropriate level of involvement of the Careers Service in the ongoing and pre-exit guidance of young people in training, particularly those with STN?

- Referrals to the Careers Service of young people at risk of dropping out of training were lower than might be expected. Of Training Organisations surveyed, 35% said they “never” and 24 % “occasionally” involved the Careers Service when a trainee was at risk of dropping out.
- How are the resource implications of any major increase in involvement to be addressed?
- The role of the Careers Service with young people once they have entered training needs to be discussed and agreed with Training Organisations and LECs. Strategies need to be adopted to ensure each organisation and its young people are aware of the Careers Service role, for example, via Service Level Agreements with Training Organisations and through young people’s Skillseekers induction programme.
- The extension of guidance support to both trainees and Training Organisations is likely to strengthen the advocacy role of the Careers Service on behalf of vulnerable and disaffected clients seeking to enter training.

Work with young workers

- Young workers are free to use the Careers Service but Careers Service Companies do not actively promote their services to this group. The opening hours of Careers Service Companies can be a practical barrier to use by young workers.
- The research also revealed that most young people surveyed viewed the Careers Service as the organisation to go to when they first left school but less so once they had been in the labour market for some time.
- The Careers Service has few contacts with young workers, and policy guidance to Careers Service Companies reinforces a focus on initial transitions.
- Young people in work have continuing careers guidance needs, particularly in a more complex labour market. What are the implications for the career development of young workers if impartial careers guidance is not available to them? How may a continuing service to young workers be resourced?

Work with further education students

- In most Careers Service Companies, work with FE students is a marginal activity compared to school work despite the fact that they are a core client group. The careers guidance needs of FE students need to be assessed and quantified.
- There is a disjunction between policy guidance and the funding formula for the Careers Service (GAE). Resourcing and policy need to be more closely tied together.
- Applicants to FE, unless already in a core client group, can only access impartial careers guidance through adult guidance provision.

Post-school clients’ view of the Careers Service

- When young people in the five case-study Careers Service Companies were surveyed for a second time, 40% of them had left school. Over a half of them had had contact with the Careers Service in their first year after leaving school. Unemployed young people were most likely to have had contact.
- Post school clients thought the most important tasks for the Careers Service were: to be good at advising young people who were unsure about their future (ie focusing on the careers guidance function of the Careers Service); to treat young people with respect; and keep up to date with information on courses and jobs.

- Young people's expectations and opinion of the Careers Service varied by their status at the time of the survey (ie whether they were in the labour market, at FE or at HE). Careers Services need to look more closely at the needs and expectations of different groups of young people, particularly those of HE entrants who appear to have distinct views.
- Young people were very positive that the Careers Service treats young people with respect (83% always/usually) and could be trusted with confidential information (85% always/usually). This suggests that the relationship between the Careers Service and its young clients is a positive one, based on respect and trust in certain key areas.
- The Careers Service's performance in some aspects of guidance and information was judged less positively by post school clients, especially HE applicants and students.

CHAPTER 9

THE PLACEMENT SERVICE

The placement role and tensions in it

- All Careers Service Companies provided, as was required of them, a vacancy-handling service for school leavers. This put the Careers Service into the centre of the tensions in the local labour market.
- Difficulties for the Careers Service include: the mismatch between some young people's aspirations and the availability of opportunities; the increased proportion of labour market entrants who are not "job-ready" or "good calibre" as more young people continue in education; and the government guarantee and the social inclusion agenda that require the Careers Service to try to find work or training for disadvantaged and unemployed young people.
- The placement service is the point at which the needs of young people and of employers and training providers meet. Under previous policy guidance, the young person was Careers Service's "the client" but the most recent guidance also defined employers and training providers as its "clients". Whose needs should a placement service serve? If there is a conflict, whose get priority? This tension is especially clear where a Careers Service Company sets up a specialist employer unit.

The operation of the placement service

- The placement service was viewed by many Careers Service Company staff as a very resource intensive activity that often had discouraging results; some Careers Service Companies noted unacceptably high levels of unfilled or withdrawn vacancies.
- The extent of circulation of vacancies within Companies was variable. Most Careers Service Companies had arrangements for circulating vacancies within the travel-to-work area and some Careers Service Companies systematically displayed vacancies in schools and sometimes in colleges.
- No Scottish-wide vacancy circulating system operated across Careers Service Companies. There are strong arguments in favour of a national (Scottish or UK wide) system of vacancy handling. Different approaches are possible and the development of IT systems is likely to be of benefit here.

The development of the placing service

- A number of improvements are needed to make the placement service more effective. These include: reliable computerised matching systems at a Scottish level (with a commitment to resource continuing development); a single national system and strategy for the collection and use of LMI; a review of the way in which vacancies and clients are matched to better reflect changing skills and demands in the labour market; the inclusion of a wider range of young people registered with the Careers Service to provide genuine choice to employers; and increased advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged clients.
- Many of the young people who use the Careers Service's placement service are likely to require continuing support to develop their employability skills and respond to the increased demands made by a flexible labour market.
- The provision of a placement service should be retained as a Careers Service function but consideration should be given to the development of a two-tier placement service, one operating according to market approaches and the other with built in support systems for young people, employers and training organisations.

CHAPTER 10

EMPLOYER WORK

The Careers Service role with employers

- There are clear tensions in the Careers Service's role that impact on its work with employers and training organisations and on its placement service. It is impossible for the Careers Service to satisfy the demands of employers for the best range of applicants and to meet the government guarantee and the social inclusion agenda that requires it to find work or training for unemployed young people some of whom have low levels of skills and qualifications.
- All Careers Service Companies recognised the value of employer work but the priority that Careers Service Company managers gave to the policy on employer work was not always reflected in practice. Careers Advisers in many Careers Service Companies appeared more focused on the demands of school work schedules than on the Company's employer strategy.
- Many Careers Service Companies acknowledged that employer work was an area that needed considerable development. In addition to a recognition of its professional importance, improvements in employer and labour market services were driven by Careers Service Boards, the LEC and the Scottish Executive guidance and funding priorities.
- Careers Service Companies found it particularly difficult to work effectively with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and to engage with employers who were non-users of the service. In the majority of Careers Service Companies, strategies for employer work were under review; evidence from this research could usefully contribute to further review.
- Significant developments could be seen in employer work across Scotland. Several Careers Service Companies had set up specialist employer units, and where this was done systematically and was well resourced, it had a positive impact on vacancies and on employers' perceptions of the Careers Service.

- All Careers Service Companies showed evidence of development in their employer work, including new approaches to employer visits, new ways of liaising and communicating with employers and offering employers an expanded range of services. Some of these initiatives were externally funded by the LEC or the Scottish Executive.

The employers' perspective

- 300 employers were surveyed across the five case study Careers Service Companies. The majority were users of the Careers Service. The response rate was 50%.

Employers' contacts with, and awareness of, the Careers Service

- Employers' contact with the Careers Service was largely about recruitment. They had limited contact with Careers Service Companies to provide information about their company and about labour market trends or to be updated by the Careers Service about educational developments and about local school leavers and the kind of jobs they were interested in. The nature of employers' contacts did not vary across the five Careers Service Companies.
- Employers were not aware of the wider Careers Service Company role beyond its placement function. The Careers Service is required to keep employers aware of developments in education and training and on supply and demand in the young person's labour market (Scottish Office, 1998) but only a minority were aware of its role in giving companies information and advice on the school education system and qualifications and on school leavers entering the labour market. Increasing employers' awareness of their wider role is an aspect for development by Careers Service Companies.
- The majority of employers responded that they would use the Careers Service to recruit a 16-18 year old but that they would also use other methods as well, especially the Job Centre and recommendations from existing employees. The Careers Service must prove itself effective against other methods of recruitment if they are to build up a good pool of vacancies for their clients.
- Employers rated using the Careers Service as the most effective method of recruitment; the next most effective method, the Job Centre, was some way behind.
- An expectation that the Careers Service would not have suitable applicants was the commonest reason given by those companies that did not use the Careers Service for recruitment. However, just over half of those who did use the Careers Service for recruitment were pleased with the suitability of young people sent for interview.
- Employers thought the Careers Service had changed over the past three years and become more business-like, more aware of what companies needed and had made more contacts with companies. This applied across all five case study Careers Service Companies.
- Most employers who had used the Careers Service: would recommend it to other employers; a majority rated its speed of response and knowledge of young people as good or very good. Employers were somewhat less positive about the Careers Service's understanding of their company's requirements (52%) and of their business sector (42%).

Employers' views of a useful and effective Careers Service Company

- How the Careers Service communicates with employers is important aspect of effectiveness. Employers wanted to be linked to a known member of staff and for the Careers Service Company to keep in regular telephone contact but were less likely to think that regular visits and mailshots were an effective means of communication with them.

- Employers judged the usefulness and effectiveness of the Careers Service particularly in terms of how well it performed its placement role. They also thought that advising them on grants and incentives to employ or train young people were indicators of effective work.
- Employers were least likely to identify aspects related to the Careers Service role as a “bridge between school and work” as useful. Most did not rate, for example, being given information school leavers as a useful functions. But the high number of “not sure” responses suggests that they were not rejecting the Careers Service’s wider role but were simply unaware of it.
- If employers are not aware of (and accept) the wider information and advisory functions of the Careers Service, then there is a mismatch between what the Careers Service is expected to do by local and national policy makers and how they judge its effectiveness and what employers expect it to do and how they evaluate it.
- Employers’ responses showed some degree of recognition of the Careers Service’s social inclusion role but this contrasts with their views on the importance of being sent high quality applicants by Careers Service submissions. It confirms the tension between the Careers Service’s social inclusion role and the servicing of employers’ recruitment needs.

CHAPTER 11

TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Overview

- Although Careers Services felt that they generally had good relationships with Training Organisations, there were a number of sensitive areas, mainly relating to the exchange of information on applicants, the referral of young people and a mismatch between opportunities and young people.
- In the majority of Careers Service Companies, a named member of staff liaised with a particular Training Organisation. The use of careers office premises by Training Organisations for selection interviews was common.
- Service Level Agreements were in place with Training Organisation Networks in a number of Careers Service Companies; SLAs with individual Training Organisations were less common

Training Organisations’ perspectives

- There was a 77% response rate to the questionnaire sent to Training Organisations in the five case study Careers Service Companies. The Training Organisations surveyed were nearly equally divided between those offering mainstream provision only and “dual providers” offering both mainstream and special training needs provision .
- Training Organisations’ occupancy levels had an impact on their views of the Careers Service’s work; those with under-occupancy were more likely to be negative. This is understandable since levels of occupancy affect the financial success of Training Organisations and the Careers Service is their main source of referrals of both mainstream and STN young people.
- Careers Service Companies could consider taking extra steps to maintain good relationships during periods of low occupancy.

- There is a need to be aware of occupancy levels when interpreting customer feedback from Training Organisations.

Recruitment and selection of mainstream Skillseekers

- Virtually all of the mainstream providers always or usually contacted the Careers Service when recruiting for Skillseekers including Modern Apprentices. Most rated the Careers Service as very or fairly important to their selection and recruitment and were very or fairly satisfied with it.
- Around two thirds of Training Organisations responded that they always informed the Careers Service whether they had taken on the young people submitted to them; those with lower occupancy rates were less likely to say this. Interviews with Careers Service Company staff highlighted the communication of submission results as more of a problem than did the survey of Training Organisations.

Recruitment and selection of young people with Special Training Needs

- The Careers Service was by far the main source of Training Organisations' referrals of 16-18 year olds with Special Training Needs. Most used the Careers Service endorsement form and had direct contact with Careers Service staff as part of their selection process.
- Most Training Organisations were satisfied with Careers Service support for their selection of young people, with a majority "very satisfied".

Views of the effectiveness of Careers Services at the selection stage

- At the selection stage, a large majority of Training Organisations rated the Careers Service as performing very or fairly well in terms of the appropriateness of young people submitted, their knowledge of the young people and the briefing given about the Training Organisations.
- Training Organisations, especially mainstream providers, were less positive about how well the Careers Service passed on appropriate background information on young people. But it may be that the expectations of Training Organisations for as much information as possible are in conflict with young people's desire that the Careers Service respects their confidentiality.

Overall impression of the effectiveness of the Careers Service

- Training Organisations' overall impression of the Careers Service was generally positive. A large majority rated the Careers Service as very good or good on most criteria including knowledge of the education system, of young people, of the world of work, and understanding of their particular requirements as a Training Organisation. They were least positive about the suitability of young people sent for interview.
- Most Training Organisations would recommend the Careers Service to another Training Organisation but most also thought there was room for improvement in the Careers Service's work with Training Organisations.
- There were some differences between dual providers and Training Organisations with only mainstream provision in their perspectives on what constitutes effective Careers Service practice.
- When Training Organisations' responses to what indicates an effective Careers Service approach were compared with their experiences of what happened in practice, there was very little similarity.

CHAPTER 12

MANAGEMENT

Progress made by Careers Service Companies

- There was evidence of positive changes in the management of Careers Service Companies prior to and during the period of the research. These included: the development of systems and policies; greater attention to resourcing and cost/benefits analyses of activities; increased emphasis on quality assurance; the development of client evaluations; a greater focus on staff review and development; and more attention to marketing.

The impact of targets

- Targets were set for a variety of activities. In some Careers Service Companies there were differences between Heads of Service' perceptions and those of practitioners as to whether staff felt "target driven".
- Targets were applied more rigidly in some Careers Service Companies than in others. In a few, client need and demand had to fit into targets to be met. In most Careers Service Companies, some or considerable flexibility existed.
- The research found little evidence that targets had been quantified on the basis of personally prompted client need or on systematic assessment of the needs of categories of clients. Targets were commonly formulated on the basis of the figures achieved the previous year.

The balance of Careers Service work

- The balance of work in most Careers Service Companies was heavily towards school work with employer work fitted in when possible. Careers Service Company staff, especially Heads of Service were conscious of the need to develop work with employers.
- School work was predominately delivered through the individual interview; some Heads of Service wanted to develop a more varied approach.

Staff appraisal, review and development

- A minority of Careers Service Companies had a staff appraisal system, the others had staff review and development systems. SQMS and IIP were key influences on Careers Service Companies' development of both appraisal and staff review systems.
- Most practitioners were positive about their appraisal or review system and noted an increase in the amount of training they received.
- There was evidence of significant advances in formal staff development across Careers Service Companies seen, for example, in the extent to which senior managers had achieved management-related qualifications and support staff relevant VQ qualifications.
- The impact of review or appraisal systems on practitioners' work appeared to be related to the way their Area Manager organised the process. It was also difficult for Careers Service Companies to balance Company and individuals' needs.

Quality assurance

- All Careers Service Companies had or were aiming to achieve SQMS and IIP so there was little variation in how quality assurance issues were handled across Careers Service Companies.
- Initial concerns about SQMS and IIP had proved unfounded and the experience of working towards gaining the awards had benefited Careers Service Companies in a number of respects.
- Nevertheless, having these two systems in place did not guarantee the quality of the careers guidance being provided by a Careers Service Company. The research identified differences between policy and practice within Careers Service Companies, and pupils' responses also highlighted unexplained variation.

Staff accountability, monitoring and autonomy

- Most Careers Service Company staff felt more accountable than in the past, in particular, because of Business Activity Targets but everyone was clear that the targets did not assess the quality of professional practice.
- Client evaluation had developed as part of the SQMS process but Careers Service Companies recognised the limitations of client feedback as a way of assessing the quality and effectiveness of careers guidance. They recognised the need also to monitor the work of staff and to encourage self evaluation.
- Careers Service Companies had adopted a number of strategies in respect of (self) evaluation of professional practice but there was considerable scope across most Careers Service Companies to develop more systematic and comprehensive approaches. Those with formal appraisal systems were more likely to have structured approaches to the evaluation of professional practice.
- Careers Service staff valued their autonomy and there was some feeling among all levels of Careers Service staff that the increased emphasis on evaluation and accountability was at odds with this autonomy. This may partly explain the reluctance of some middle managers to push the evaluation of professional practice. It is possible, however, to be more accountable without having less autonomy. Time and the lack of appropriate methods to use were other reasons such evaluation was limited.

Identification of need

- The identification of need is fundamental to the achievement of effective outcomes for clients and Careers Service Companies and their Boards were increasingly being encouraged by the Scottish Executive to plan strategically on the basis of identified need.

The process of the identification of need

- The research identified three stages to the identification of needs: the recognition of needs; the analysis of need; and the assessment of need linked to provision. Subsequently, there needs to be a review to ensure that needs have been met.
- This process can be used to identify the needs of individual clients and also of particular groups of clients.
- "Recognition of need" is where there is a basic level of identification which recognises a presenting problem without analysing it.

- “Analysis of need” refers to the analysis of the needs underlying the presenting problem; this requires professional careers guidance skills.
- “Assessment of need linked to provision” is the stage at which individual or group need is related to careers guidance or other provision and a choice of interventions made or gaps in provision identified.
- An awareness of these three stages to the identification of need allows Careers Service Companies and others to assess Careers Service Companies’ approaches to identifying client needs and is essential if Careers Service Companies are to plan strategically on the basis of identified need.

The identification of needs in practice

- All Careers Service Companies showed some evidence of identification of need of both individual clients of different client groups but there was little evidence of a systematic and comprehensive approach encompassing all aspects of the process.
- The first stage “recognition of need” was most common and was done for most clients. The careers interview was the most usual occasion for the second stage, the “analysis of need “ in respect of individual clients. But whether this is done in practice depends on the competence of the particular Careers Adviser; clients who do not have an interview do not have this opportunity. Analysis of group needs through multi-agency consultations had become more common but these might not focus sufficiently on careers guidance needs.
- Careers Service Companies used a number of approaches to identify needs but they still required to develop an overall strategy for identifying the needs of individuals and groups.
- The research identified a number of instances where the identification of need had led to changes in Careers Service Company practice or to requests to other agencies for inputs. There were also examples of where the Careers Service Company had been at the forefront of identifying the outstanding needs of particular client groups.
- Partnership and networking was critical to identifying client needs; schools and LECs were particularly important.
- The Careers Service Board could use its own members to identify needs and employer representatives were considered particularly valuable. But Careers Service Board members had varied levels of relevant background knowledge and experience and few were experienced in guidance issues or the identification of guidance needs. It is essential that Board members recognise the need for strategy to be decided on the basis of a systematic identification of need rather than personal experience.
- Careers Service Company staff tended to question how far young people are able to identify their own needs and to use the Careers Service appropriately. Some were doubtful that employers knew enough about the Careers Service and transition issues to recognise their needs or how the Careers Service might help them.
- It is increasingly important that Careers Service Companies have communication strategies that enable the information that practitioners have about client need to be fed into the Careers Service Companies’ strategic planning.

Communication and decision-making

- Careers Service Companies varied in the priority given to internal communications in policy and in practice. A number of Careers Service Companies had adopted new strategies for communicating with staff.
- The increased speed of decision-making could make it difficult for managers to keep staff as informed about developments as previously although they recognised the importance of doing so given the level of continuing change.
- More than half the Careers Service Companies characterised their process of developing ideas about policy and practice as mainly “top-down” from managers via the Board with subsequent discussion among staff. The others had a more mixed process with ideas coming from all levels of staff.
- The research evidence suggested that those Careers Service Companies that encouraged and received ideas on policy and practice from all grades of staff were also those most likely to be reflective in policy and practice.

Changed role and skills of staff

- The role and skills of all staff were changing but the greatest changes were required of Area Managers. This may be because of the key position they occupy between senior management and practitioners. Increasing demands were being made on them in respect of networking, marketing, initiating developments and fund-raising in their area, and of staff review and development. They had an increasingly critical role in ensuring strategic policy and operational issues informed each other and in explaining Careers Service Company policy to staff.
- Heads of Service had also experienced considerable change and had had to develop expertise in handling financial, legal, personnel and estate management matters especially in Careers Service Companies that were companies limited by guarantee.
- Most change in Careers Service Companies was at the company level and concerned the development of a business orientation with less change in relation to professional guidance. This may explain the limited changes experienced by Careers Advisers; their main change was a greater level of accountability via targets. But Careers Advisers were thought to need considerable skill development and attitude change to meet likely future demands on them.
- Changes had taken place in the roles of careers assistants. In some Careers Service Companies, their role had been extended to deliver group work to unemployed clients or to provide placing services to pupils on school premises. A common trend was for Careers Service Companies to give careers assistants greater responsibility, for example, giving them a management role or becoming largely responsible for the office’s work with unemployed clients.

Variation within and across Careers Service Companies

- Part of the research brief was to identify the extent of variation across Careers Service Companies in Scotland.
- Careers Service Company staff had different views as to whether variation in policy and practice within their Careers Service Company was a negative feature, inevitable or a positive feature.

- The research was based on the view that variation in itself is neither good nor bad but depends on whether it arises from the systematic identification of client need and delivers consistency of outcome for clients (rather than consistency of inputs).
- There was little variation in the objectives of Careers Service Companies although they varied in their emphasis on particular points eg some had a greater focus on entry to employment and economic outcomes for clients.
- A common aim was to maximise contact with clients but this was approached in different ways, for example, variation in the geographical distribution of offices and the extent of face-to-face contact.
- The majority of Careers Service Companies had some or considerable variation in delivery. Practitioners identified a higher level of variation than did Heads of Service.
- SQMS had resulted in the standardisation of some aspects of delivery across all client groups. The completion of Action Plans was the aspect of professional work most likely to be the subject of standardisation.
- The approach of individual schools was thought by Careers Service Company staff to be the main factor in variation in school provision; Careers Service Company staff tended to underestimate the impact of the Careers Adviser in the individual school.
- Careers Service Company staff reported more variation in work with post-school clients and the labour market than in their school work.
- The research identified some variation based on client need. Other variation was a result of deliberate decisions to give responsibility to specific offices or staff for particular projects as a way of developing policy and professional practice within the context of an overall company plan.
- The research also found variation arising from individual staff's or areas' preferred way of working and to suit the organisational convenience of schools and Careers Service Companies. In other cases there was a lack of variation despite differences in client need.

Guidance management information

- Careers Service Companies are required to keep a record of their activities but they could develop their use of statistics to gain a better understanding of the pattern of usage and non-usage of its services to help them plan provision.

CHAPTER 13

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CAREERS SERVICE

- The research brief treated impact, utility and effectiveness as three separate measures but we concluded that impact and utility are actually components of effectiveness.
- The research considered effectiveness in relation to the extent to which provision meets clients' needs rather than whether Careers Service Companies (CSC) were operating effectively within their existing resources.
- We defined effectiveness as "does the existence of the Careers Service make a positive difference to clients and to the community".
- There are particular issues in assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service in Scotland arising from its conflicting objectives; limited control over its work and its dependence on the work of other agencies for successful outcomes.

- Different approaches to assessing the effectiveness of a careers guidance service are possible: quantitative monitoring of activities; client and stakeholder feedback; learning outcomes measures; longitudinal measures of impact; internal professional review; and external review. There are a number of limitations or difficulties associated with each.
- The systematic identification of need is a pre-requisite to the development of effective provision but, as discussed in Chapter 12, the research found little evidence of a systematic approach.
- The research found that the assessment of the effectiveness of the Careers Service in Scotland was mainly through quantitative measures of activity; SQMS and customer/stakeholder feedback. There was limited internal review of professional practice. Several Careers Service Companies had commissioned external reviews, the impact of such reviews was varied. Learning outcomes measures were rarely used.
- These approaches are inadequate, they do not sufficiently assess the quality of careers guidance, and are not carried out on a common and systematic basis across Scotland. Minimum standards of service to clients cannot be guaranteed.
- The research has developed two approaches to assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service: one model is “How Good is Our Careers Service At..” and the other is a set of effectiveness descriptors covering the main areas of Careers Service work.
- Both approaches are at an early stage of development and now require further work and piloting in conjunction with Careers Service Companies.
- In developing these two approaches, we have identified a number of key attributes of effectiveness and these are listed in full.

CHAPTER 14

CAREERS GUIDANCE ISSUES

The careers guidance business

- Careers Service Companies had developed considerably as businesses over the period of the current contract, but, perhaps inevitably, had made fewer advances in careers guidance practice and policy. There were some tensions between business and careers guidance imperatives.
- The use of targets to manage staff activity often had the effect of driving careers guidance practice. This sometimes boosted certain activities but it could also limit the development of a range of strategies for different groups.

An inclusive service

- The Careers Service is well placed to take forward the government’s social justice agenda but a truly inclusive careers guidance service must meet the needs of all types of client groups and those in all post-school statuses.
- The research has confirmed that young clients in different situations have identifiable careers guidance needs. The Careers Service and its policy makers must retain a genuine commitment to the full client group, one that is based on realistic resourcing.

The distinct contribution of careers guidance

- While recognising that young people need an integrated approach, more attention needs to be given to the distinct contribution that careers guidance can make to the support of young people.
- Careers Service Company staff need to focus on developing their role as careers guidance professionals.
- Careers guidance is potentially powerful in challenging systems and in advocacy for individuals and groups of clients. This needs to be built on good careers guidance management information and on a well-founded professional rationale to be credible to individual clients and Careers Service Company partners. This needs further development.

Supportive processes to careers guidance

- Effective careers guidance requires good preparation and support through careers education and careers information. The forthcoming Framework for Career Education in Scotland will provide an opportunity for Careers Services and schools to develop provision and integrate careers education into careers guidance.
- Good quality labour market, educational and careers information is also essential for effective careers guidance. But the provision of information (while necessary) is not sufficient by itself to change perceptions and aspirations, its links into careers guidance are essential.

Lifelong careers development

- Careers Advisers and teachers need to integrate careers information into their practice. Particular attention needs to be given to ensuring practitioners have good post-initial labour market information.
- Lifelong learning requires lifelong career development but the current focus on initial transitions limits the practitioner's understanding of post-initial transitions and labour markets.
- One possible way of ensuring that young people's careers guidance takes account of the realities of the adult labour market and adult career development is to involve the Careers Service in all age, generically delivered, careers guidance.

Working with partners

- First level careers guidance can be effectively delivered through other professional colleagues such as teachers, social workers and community education staff, and strategies are needed to support this.
- Young people's decisions are heavily influenced by a range of other individuals and groups but the Careers Service's work with young people through these "significant others" is currently limited, with most attention being given to parents. But to support young people's career development effectively, the Careers Service needs to work with individual clients through these influential individuals and groups.

Development challenges

- Some aspects of Careers Service Companies' work can best be developed at a level beyond the individual company, and probably at national level. These aspects include career and labour market information, marketing, and vacancy handling.
- The vision of effective careers guidance arising from this research is a broad one and would require policy changes at a Scottish level and some shift in perception from Careers Service Company practitioners and managers. It also has obvious resource implications.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This first chapter gives an overview of the purpose of the research and provides an introduction to the situation of the Careers Service in Scotland at that time. It also clarifies some key terms and briefly describes the structure of the report.

SUMMARY

- The research was commissioned by the Scottish Office in 1997 to map Careers Service (CS) provision across Scotland and consider its effectiveness after a period of major change to its organisation and management.
- The research defined effectiveness in terms of the extent to which provision met clients' needs rather than whether Careers Service Companies (CSCs) were operating effectively within their existing resources.
- The research was focused on the core work of the Careers Service and aimed to consider how well provision met the needs of young people, employers and Training Organisations.
- At the beginning of the research, most Careers Service Companies were in their third year of operation following their move out of local authority (LA) control and into a partnership model, with the key partners being LAs and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). During the period of the research, LA reorganisation took place, resulting in 9 of the 17 Careers Service Companies operating in partnership with more than one LA.
- Company Boards had been set up, and some initial difficulties dealt with by the issue of *"Governance, Openness and Accountability – Guidelines for Careers Service Companies"* (SOEID, 1998).

Background to the research

Careers education and guidance has been the focus of increasing attention over the past decade as policymakers have identified its role as a contributor to the economic prosperity of individuals, communities and society. Vocational guidance has been recognised as a key element in Lifelong Learning and good quality careers guidance and labour market information is seen as necessary to the achievement of the government's education and training targets (DfEE, 1998). The increased profile of careers education and guidance has brought with it a critical focus on the work of careers guidance agencies, (and, in particular, the work of the Careers Service, the key careers guidance agency for young people), and a concern to evaluate its effectiveness.

It was against such general interest in the effectiveness of careers guidance that this research was commissioned by the then Scottish Office in 1997 to consider the effectiveness of Careers Services in Scotland.¹ But more specifically, there was the feeling that the time was

¹ During the period of the research, the Scottish Office became the Scottish Executive. For ease of understanding, the term "Scottish Executive" is used throughout the report.

right for such research in view of the extended period of change that the Careers Service had experienced as each local service became a Careers Service Company and moved out of direct local authority control. The DfEE in England and Wales had sponsored a number of studies on the impact of the new management arrangements and on particular aspects of the work of the Careers Service but little had been carried out in Scotland. (Examples of DfEE funded studies include: the Careers Service work in school (Morris et al, 1995); the impact of the new management arrangements (Morris and Stoney, 1996); group work (DfEE, 1997; 2000); and job broking (DfEE, 1996)). An earlier study of guidance in Scottish secondary schools had included careers education and guidance within its scope but the work of the Careers Service was not the prime focus of this research nor did it consider management aspects of the Careers Service (Howieson and Semple, 1996). Although staff in the Scottish Executive regularly monitored Careers Service Companies' business activity rates and held annual discussions with all the companies, a more detailed view of what was happening in the Careers Service Companies had been difficult to come by. The move away from a traditional inspection model by the Careers Service Inspectors (CSIs) which took them into all the Careers Service Companies to one based on thematic reviews and consultancy had also had an impact in this respect.

The Scottish Executive felt therefore that it was timely to commission research on the Careers Service in Scotland to consider its work and the impact of the changed management and funding arrangements.

Aims of the research

The three key aspects of the brief for the study were:

- To consider the effect of the changes in management and structure of the Careers Service in Scotland following the move to companies
- To identify the degree of variation in provision across the Scottish Careers Service
- To review the impact, utility and effectiveness of the Careers Service in Scotland

The brief specified that the study should identify the impact, utility and effectiveness of the Careers Service in its work. In our early considerations of the definitions of these terms, it became clear that both impact and utility were subsets of effectiveness, and although the concepts of utility and impact were borne in mind throughout the research, effectiveness is the term used throughout this report.

The research defined effectiveness as the extent to which the work of the Careers Service met clients' needs, rather than whether Careers Service Companies were working effectively within existing resources. Chapter 13 of this report considers definitions of effectiveness in more detail.

The scope of the research

The research brief was restricted to the core work of the Careers Service although we did gather some evidence on enhanced core and non-core activities where relevant to our understanding of the Companies' core work. The brief covered the Careers Service's work with employers and Training Organisations as well as with young people.

It was agreed with the Scottish Executive that research about Careers Service work with young people with special needs would be a low priority in the study since this was being covered by the Beattie Committee.

We would also note that the research design as required by the brief meant that we were not able to gather direct evidence from young unemployed people.

Towards the end of the research period, the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning asked that the Careers Service be reviewed, and a review group was set up for that purpose. The researchers produced a report for the review group based on the findings of the research to date and also gave oral evidence to it.

The situation of the Careers Service in Scotland

The decision by the previous political administration to change the management of Careers Services in the UK was interpreted differently in Scotland than in England and Wales. Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Companies were invited to submit a bid to run their local Careers Service on a partnership basis: if an acceptable bid could be submitted, the delivery of a Careers Service would not be the subject of competitive tendering. In the majority of cases the partnership bids were accepted and the partnerships held together. In two cases competitive tendering had resulted in a revised or new partnership bid being accepted, and those Companies began operation one year later.

All the Careers Service Companies in Scotland, therefore, were working on a partnership model. When the research was commissioned, the Careers Service Companies were operating on the following models:

- Nine were Companies limited by guarantee, with charitable status;
- Two operated on a secondment model whereby staff remained employees of the local authority and were seconded to the Careers Service Company; and
- Six were run on a sub-contract basis with the Company sub-contracting Careers Service work to the local authority. Staff remained employees of the local authority. All these Careers Service Companies were located in the same local authority region, subsequently broken up in the re-organisation of local authorities. One of these Careers Service Companies became a company limited by guarantee with charitable status during the period of the research.

At the beginning of the research 15 of the 17 Careers Service Companies in Scotland were in their third year of operation following their move out of local authority control and into a partnership model. The other two Companies which had experienced competitive tendering for the contract were in their second year.

The 17 Careers Service Companies were historically based on Regional Council (or in the case of the largest one, Divisional) boundaries and coterminous with them. Careers Service Partnerships between local authorities and local enterprise companies were originally set up involving the Regional Councils but at the beginning of the second year of Careers Service Company contracts, local authorities were reorganised. Consequently, although eight Careers Service Companies still had only one local authority to work with, the remainder had several local authorities, with four the maximum.

The document that governed the operation of the Careers Service in Scotland at the beginning of the study was “Requirements and Guidance for Providers of Careers Services in Scotland” (SOEID, 1993). A draft of the revised version of this document had just been circulated and the final draft, “A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies”, was issued in April 1998 (SOEID, 1998).

Company Boards had been set up, and some of the initial difficulties encountered by companies and board members had been tackled through the publication of “Governance, Openness and Accountability – Guidelines for Careers Service Companies” (SOEID, 1998), a document broadly welcomed by Heads of Service.

Some of the initial anxieties that practitioners and Heads of Service had had about the change of management of Careers Services had been eased by the experience of settling into contract delivery. At the start of our research, Companies took the view that there was still sufficient time available to them before the end of the contract period to allow a broad focus on the range and effectiveness of their work rather than the demands of re-contracting. It was, therefore, a good time to seek views on the impact of the changes and the provision of Careers Service work.

Terminology used in the research

We have standardised terms for Careers Service Company staff, including where posts have slightly different duties. We have done so partly for ease of reading but also to avoid using terms which might identify Companies or individuals. We use the following terms:

- “Head of Service” to refer to Chief Executives, Principal Careers Officers etc;
- “Area Manager” to refer to team leaders, customer services local managers etc;
- “Careers Assistant” to refer to employment assistants and placement advisers;
- “Senior Careers Assistant” to refer to office managers in local offices;
- “Careers Adviser” was generally used.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 describes the research methodology. Chapter 3 sets the scene and Chapters 4 - 14 form the body of the report. The structure of Chapters 3 - 12 is that we begin each with a summary and issues section before going on to report and discuss the findings in detail. Chapters 13 and 14 are more synoptic and focus on effectiveness and careers guidance issues. Each of these chapters is written to be largely self-contained and so, where relevant, will have some reference to issues that are also discussed in more detail in other chapters.

The appendices contain examples of approaches to assessing effectiveness. They also include the main research instruments that we developed as part of the study. We have included them since to do so is normal good practice in writing a research report but also because they may be useful tools for Careers Service Companies to use or adapt for their own purposes.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 2 describes the range of data gathered, the criteria for choosing case study Careers Service Companies (CSCs) and schools and the nature and size of samples in the surveys of young clients, employers and Training Organisations. It also notes response rates.

SUMMARY

- National documentation and statistics were reviewed and interviews conducted with key informants.
- All Careers Service Companies in Scotland were involved in the first stage of the research which included collection of documents and statistics from each Careers Service Company, completion of a Careers Service Company profile and interviews with Heads of Service (HoS) and Careers Advisers (CA).
- On the basis of the data from all the Careers Service Companies, a typology of Careers Service Companies was developed which characterised each Careers Service Company in relation to a number of features.
- The typology of Careers Service Companies was used to select five that represented the variety of approaches and provision across the Scottish Careers Service for further, in-depth study. Although developed for research purposes, the typology has another possible function as a management tool for Careers Service Companies.
- A programme of interviews was carried out in the five Careers Service Companies with a range of Careers Service Company staff;² school staff; and Careers Service Board, LEC, LA, and Education Business Partnership (EBP) representatives.
- Three surveys were conducted in the case study Careers Service Companies. Pupils in S4, S5 and S6 in 10 schools were surveyed about their opinion and experience of the Careers Service and contacted again a year later. The responses from S6 pupils were excluded from the analyses because of the very wide variation in response rates across the schools. A second survey covered 300 employers in the five Careers Service Companies. The third survey was of 60 Training Organisations.

Description of methodology and activities

The methodology adopted was a reflection of the aims set out in the research specification, the difficulties involved in the evaluation of the Careers Service and the time and budget available to the project. We wanted, for example, to have direct contact with a group of unemployed young people but this was not possible within the budget for the project.

The aims specified for the project required a study that would provide an overview of careers provision in Scotland (in relation to core work) but also one that was sufficiently focused to explore the nature of variation in approaches within and across Companies and to examine the appropriateness and effectiveness of different methods and provision. Our research

² We use the term 'staff' to cover all grades of Careers Service Company personnel, including managers.

strategy therefore combined two levels of study: work at a national level to map the forms and types of Careers Service provision in Scotland followed by a second stage of more intensive work in five Careers Service Companies. Within each of the case studies we used multiple sources of information on Careers Service provision. This enabled us to compare the expectations and perceptions of the Careers Service held by clients, by stakeholders and by Careers Service staff at different levels and to compare views across different clients and organisations. This approach also allowed us to consider the changing relationships between the Careers Service and other organisations.

Review of documentation and interviews with key informants

One of the first activities of the project was a review of documentation prior to field work with Companies. This review covered: centrally-held records of business activity statistics; Careers Service Company business development plans; planning meetings between Careers Service Companies and Scottish Executive staff; and Scottish Quality Management Systems (SQMS) external audit records. The review was supplemented by seven interviews with key informants.

Mapping of Careers Service Companies in Scotland

Each of the 17 Careers Service Companies in Scotland was asked to provide a range of local statistics, a profile of staffing, copies of quality and procedural manuals, policy papers and information about the educational, labour market and economic background to the area. These were analysed in preparation for interviews with Careers Service Company staff.

Interviews were conducted with the Heads of Service of all 17 Careers Service Companies. Interviews were also planned with a practitioner in each of the Companies. The criterion for choosing a practitioner was to have someone with a number of years' experience in careers guidance who could speak knowledgeably about more than one local area of the company or compare it with another Careers Service Company. Interviews took place with practitioners in 14 of the 17 Careers Service Companies. Of the remaining three Careers Service Companies, two were small Careers Service Companies and this combined with staff absences due to illness or vacant posts meant that no practitioner was available for interview. The third Careers Service Company was undergoing an internal review and the Head of Service thought that an interview with a practitioner as part of this research would be inappropriate at that point. In total, 40 interviews were conducted in this stage of the research. The interviews were extensive in their scope and generally lasted between two and four hours.

The data from Careers Service Companies was analysed to form the most complete picture of the Careers Service in Scotland at that time. We considered presenting this data separately in this report but agreed with our Advisory Committee that it would be better to integrate it into the main thematic chapters of this report.

From this first stage of the research, we developed a typology of Careers Service Companies in Scotland with which to conceptualise and describe the nature and variation across Careers Service Companies in Scotland (see Appendix 4). These dimensions included such aspects as:

- Size, location and nature of geographical area;

- Company management model;
- Range of funding sources;
- Company priorities;
- Approaches to school and labour market work;
- Relationships with partners and other organisations.

The typology enabled us to select five Careers Service Companies that represented the variety of approaches and provision across the Careers Service in Scotland and these Careers Service Companies were invited to be involved in the next stage of the research as case studies.

While the typology was developed as a research tool it became clear that it might also be useful as a management tool for self-review by companies.

Case studies of Careers Service Companies

Meetings were held with managers in each of the case study Careers Service Companies to choose one operational area of the Company as a focus for the field work. This involved an analysis of the varying features of each area of the Company in terms of provision, approaches and staffing. Once the operational area was chosen, a detailed review of the features of each secondary school in the area was conducted to choose two schools within it. The schools were chosen to provide a variety of catchment, attainment and post-school destinations, school/Careers Service relationships and client contact systems.

Programme of interviews

A programme of interviews was then carried out in the five case study Careers Service Companies. In each Careers Service Company, this involved interviews with:

- the Head of Service;
- the Area Manager;
- the Careers Advisers for each of the two schools;
- the Careers Adviser or Manager specialising in labour market work;
- a Senior Careers Assistant;
- a member of the school management team in each of the two selected schools;
- the careers co-ordinator in each of the two schools;
- the Chair of the Careers Service Company Board;
- a LEC representative with knowledge of the Careers Service Board's operations or with a functional link to the Careers Service;
- a local authority representative with knowledge of the Careers Service Board's operations or with a functional link to the Careers Service;
- the Education Business Partnership (EBP) manager.

Survey of young people

We carried out a postal survey of a random 50% sample of S4, S5 and S6 pupils in the 10 selected schools in the five case study Careers Service Companies. They were surveyed twice; once in May 1998 and again in May 1999. Examples of the surveys are contained in (Appendices 5 and 6). The surveys gathered information about:

- young people's attainment;

- attitude to school;
- truancy;
- experience of careers education;
- contact with the Careers Service;
- stage of career thinking and career ideas;
- the extent of help from their parents; and also
- information about their parents including education and occupation.

The overall response rate to the first survey was 54%. While there was some variation across schools in the response rate of S4 and S5 pupils (which we were able to compensate for by applying a weighting procedure) the differences were extremely marked in respect of S6 pupils and we decided that we should exclude them from the analysis. The second survey had a response rate of 58%.

Survey of employers

We carried out a postal/telephone survey of 300 employers across the five case study Careers Service Companies (see Appendix 4). Employers were selected from across the whole Company and not restricted to one of its operational areas as was the case with the survey of young people. Since the research was concerned with the effectiveness of the Careers Service's work with employers, we selected mainly employers who had had some contact with the Careers Service and could comment on the basis of some experience. The five Careers Service Companies provided details of employers who had used their services in the past three years and also details of a small number of employers whom they defined as potential but not actual users of the Careers Service (for example, because they recruited under18s although they did not use the Careers Service to do so). We selected 300 employers from this to make up a sample that reflected the local opportunity structure in each Careers Service Company.

The questionnaire covered:

- employers' awareness and use of the Careers Service;
- their recruitment practices;
- opinion of the Careers Service; and
- views on young people.

In view of the typically poor response rate from employers to surveys, we adopted a dual approach, offering them the option of completing the questionnaire and sending it back to us or being surveyed by telephone. The final response rate was 50% (27% postal and 23% telephone responses).

Survey of Training Organisations

The final survey was of Training Organisations (see Appendix 5). The five case study Careers Service Companies identified the most significant Training Organisations in their Company area in terms of the extent of the provision of training for young people in their area. 60 Training Organisations were surveyed using the same dual postal/telephone approach as with employers. Two thirds of the Training Organisations surveyed had more than 50 young people in training (in some cases well in excess of this) and in two Careers Service Companies those surveyed were responsible for the large majority of training places in the

Company. We ensured that the Training Organisations selected represented a broad range of occupational categories and that our selection provided a mix of Skillseekers, Modern Apprenticeship and Special Training Need (STN) provision. A 77% response rate was achieved.

CHAPTER 3

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CAREERS SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

In this chapter we describe the main aspects of Careers Service work as laid down in central government guidance and in the relevant Act. We also identify a number of key issues arising from the nature of the Careers Service's role and functions in the education, training and labour market systems. Many of these issues are well known to those working in the field of careers education and guidance, but they have emerged strongly from our research and, more importantly, are critical to definitions and measures of effectiveness.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Functions and core client groups

- The document "A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies" (SOEID, 1998) sets out the key aims of the Careers Service: "The key aim of the Careers Service is to contribute to the increasing achievement and prosperity of individuals, their communities and the economy and in doing so, to promote equality of opportunity.
- The core client group, to whom a service *must* be offered, includes:
 - individuals in full-time education and those in part-time education if preparing for employment (higher education students are excluded);
 - 16 and 17 year olds who have left education; individuals of all ages with disabilities; parents and guardians;
 - employers and training providers; and
 - educational institutions.
- A service *may* be offered to young people up to the age of 24 (New Deal group) and to other adults seeking careers guidance and information.

Careers Service role as a transition service

- The Careers Service is essentially a transition service. Career development research shows that transitions occur as a result of two types of prompts.
- One type of prompt arises from how the education and training system and the labour market operate and can be termed "externally prompted transitions".
- The second type of transitions arise from aspects that are personal to each individual and related to their particular stage of career development and also to the wider personal circumstances of their life. These can be termed "personally prompted transitions".
- Most people will experience a combination of both types of transition but Careers Service Companies tend to focus on externally prompted transitions.
- For many young people the transition period extends beyond the first transition after school but Careers Service support is focused primarily on initial transitions at the expense of continuing transitions.

The balance of Careers Service work

- The Careers Service's work was geared towards school pupils and, to some extent, the young unemployed with less work done with young people in work and training and with students in further education. This is a result of policy direction from central government, resource limitations and a focus on short-term decisions and adjustments.
- Scottish Executive used Careers Service Business and Development Targets to encourage particular priorities in Careers Service Company work. Careers Service Company managers took varying approaches to using the targets as management tools to change the balance of practitioners' work in line with company and Scottish Executive targets.

Policy context and conflicting demands on the Careers Service

- The Careers Service is expected to help deliver various government priorities but they are sometimes contradictory and not matched to existing resources. The result is conflicting demands and expectations of the Careers Service.
- Conflicting demands included:
 - raising clients' aspirations vs helping them adapt to the demands of the local labour market; being advocates for disadvantaged young people vs meeting the needs of employers for good quality candidates;
 - reducing the number of unemployed and meeting the Guarantee vs offering employers a wide choice of candidates;
 - offering an impartial service vs promoting the value of vocational qualifications; and
 - developing an enhanced role in economic development vs delivering social outcomes.
- There are issues about who makes decisions about what the Careers Service should be doing. In particular, what is the balance between the role of Careers Service Boards and the Scottish Executive (on behalf of the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning) in doing so?
- The existence of a core contract has implications for the stated role of Careers Service Boards and their decision-making in their communities. There are issues about the role of a limited company that provides a statutory service.

Conditional status of the Careers Service

- The Careers Service has extensive responsibilities but very little accompanying power. It has duties placed on it but must work through and with others to fulfil them. What are the implications of a statutory service that cannot require anything of anybody?
- To meet its statutory duties, Careers Service Company staff may need to challenge the decisions and operations of a school, a college, an employer, a Training Organisation or a partner organisation but to function effectively for its clients the Careers Service Company has to rely on co-operation from these organisations. The result can be variation in provision for young people, not based on young people's needs but on the nature of the Careers Service's relationships with others.

DISCUSSION

Functions and core client groups

The Employment and Training Act 1973, as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, places a duty on the Secretary of State for Scotland to secure

the provision in Scotland of careers guidance and placing services for those undergoing relevant education in schools and colleges. The Act also gives the Secretary of State powers to arrange for the provision of such services for other people. These services should be provided in accordance with guidance given by the Secretary of State. During the period of the research, an updated document, “A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies” (SOEID, 1998) was produced which sets out the key aims of the Careers Service as delivered through Careers Service Companies. This identified the key aim of the Careers Service:

“to contribute to the increasing achievement and prosperity of individuals, their communities and the economy and in doing so to promote equality of opportunity. This is to be achieved by the provision of effective and impartial information services, careers guidance and assistance to enter appropriate education, training and employment.”

(“A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies”, SOEID, p.5: 1998)

Although the Careers Service was still to be “a confidential and impartial service centred on individuals”, the new document changed its client groups. Previously, stakeholders such as employers, Training Organisations, colleges and schools had been entitled to a service as part of the “supportive processes” to the Careers Service’s work with young clients, but now with the Guidance Framework they became clients in their own right.

Under the Guidance Framework, clients are divided into those to whom a service *must* be offered and those to whom it *may* be offered. The client group to whom a service *must* be offered comprises:

- Statutory clients ie pupils and students of any age in full time education, and those undergoing part time education in order to prepare them for employment at all institutions other than within the higher education sector;
- 16 and 17 year olds who have left education;
- Individuals of any age with disabilities (including learning disabilities);
- Parents and guardians of individual clients;
- Employers and training providers; and
- Educational institutions.

Those to whom a service *may* be offered covers:

- Individuals up to and including age 24 (ie to match the New Deal categories); and
- Other adults seeking careers guidance and information.

The Guidance Framework described the nature of the careers guidance and careers and labour market information which clients could expect to receive, emphasising the need for impartiality, accuracy and accessibility. The document also covered the importance of strategic partnerships with other organisations, funding arrangements and support for the development of career education. Increased flexibility in delivery arrangements and in funding sources was encouraged.

The Careers Service role as a transition service

The UK is one of a small number of countries which has a careers service that bridges education and the labour market for those leaving education. More common is an education based careers information and counselling service where practitioners are based in schools or

colleges alongside a separate, community based service providing information on labour market opportunities and vocational guidance (Watts *et al*, 1993; Bartlet and Rees, 2000). The Careers Service in the UK is designed to encourage the development of career thinking and career management skills during education in partnership with schools and to support the subsequent entry into the labour market of new young entrants.

The Careers Service is the main agency for careers education and guidance for young people, and it is expected to base its provision and delivery arrangements on identified need:

“The new framework offers greater flexibility to careers service companies in determining local needs of clients and prioritising accordingly.”

(*ibid*, p.3: 1998)

What are the needs of young people in transition? What is it that prompts young people to seek careers information and guidance, to change their career ideas, to take action in preparation for transition? Career development research shows that transitions in career thinking occur as a result of two types of prompts. One type of prompt arises from how the education and training system and the labour market operate. Some examples include:

- Subject choice in S2, in S4/S5 and in S5/S6;
- Results from internal or external exams;
- The impact of work experience on previously held career ideas;
- Stress in the lead up to SQA exams;
- Coming close to leaving school or leaving a Skillseekers programme of training;
- UCAS application dates; and
- College and employer/training organisation closing dates.

These may be termed “externally prompted transitions” in career thinking. These often act on groups of young people rather than on individuals and may be predicted, as they result from known events. Consequently careers guidance activities can be anticipated and timetabled, and many of them can be delivered to groups rather than to individuals.

The second type of prompt to transition arises from aspects that are personal to each individual and related to their particular stage of career development and also to the wider personal circumstances of their life. These may be termed “personally prompted transitions” in career thinking. These prompts act on individual young people: they can rarely be predicted, cannot be timetabled in advance and need to be dealt with individually in most cases. Personally prompted transitions might arise from the impact of:

- family circumstances: for example, a young person who has been lackadaisical about seeking work may be prompted by a parent’s redundancy to take action;
- personal behaviour: for example, a young person who has refused to consider a Skillseekers training place may be prompted by an imminent court appearance to seek an interview for Skillseekers;
- friends: for example, when other members of a close friendship group seem to have sorted out their career ideas;
- the individual’s stage of career development: for example, an S3 pupil may become anxious that s/he has no idea about what s/he will do in the future, or an S6 pupil who has focused narrowly for a number of years on one career idea now experiences doubts;

- experience: for example, when a young person in work, training or FE discovers the work or course to be so different from what was expected that a change of direction is considered.

Most people will experience a combination of both types of prompt to transition in career thinking, and these transitions in career thinking can be experienced across the whole of the Careers Service's core client group, not just those in schools. For some clients, personally and externally prompted transitions may occur at the same time, and can be supported through one careers guidance intervention. For many they will occur at different times. Careers guidance services that aim to meet the needs of clients must encompass both types of transitions. We discuss client contact systems in detail in Chapter 6, but the evidence of our research is that the Careers Service currently focuses its work more on externally prompted transitions than personally prompted ones, particularly in its work with school pupils.

A further issue is that of the continuing need for careers education and guidance. The reality of young people's experiences is that, for many, the transition period extends beyond the first transition after school. At present careers guidance support from the Careers Service is focused primarily on initial transitions at the expense of continuing transitions.

The balance of Careers Service work

This emphasis on initial transitions was reflected in the balance of the Careers Service's work, which was heavily focused on school pupils and, to some extent, the young unemployed. Less work was done with other core clients such as young people in training and work or students in further education. This was a result of policy direction from central government, resource limitations and a focus in practice on short-term decisions and adjustments. The importance given by many LECs to job readiness as an essential component for new entrants to the labour market also contributes to a focus on initial transitions. For a more detailed discussion of initial and continuing transitions, see Chapter 8.

The Scottish Executive used Careers Service business and development targets to encourage particular priorities in Careers Service Company work. Careers Service Company managers took varying approaches to using the targets to change the balance of practitioners' work in line with Careers Service Company and Scottish Executive targets. We note in Chapter 10 that work with employers was more of a priority for managers than it was for practitioners. This may be because the needs of individual young clients seem more apparent and immediate than those of employers. Careers Service Company managers used targets to change priorities towards increased employer work, and this approach was also used to change the balance of work between school and post-school clients, between different year groups of school pupils and between interview and group work approaches.

Policy context and conflicting demands on the Careers Service

The Careers Service is expected by central government to help deliver various priorities but these priorities are sometimes contradictory and not matched to existing resources. At the same time Careers Service Boards are expected to identify and respond to local needs; this assumes that central government priorities and local needs match. The result is conflicting demands and expectations of the Careers Service which impact on the effectiveness of the Careers Service. There are a number of examples of these conflicting demands.

Firstly, the Careers Service is one of the organisations expected to help raise the aspirations of young people, to challenge narrow, low and stereotypical expectations based on class, gender, race and disability. The increased motivation to learning that can come from appropriate careers guidance is expected to feed into improved educational performance. The Careers Service is expected to contribute to the achievement of national education and training targets through raising the aspirations of young people to higher achievement. Within this, disaffected and disadvantaged young people, and those from dispirited communities are a particular focus of attention. However, young people's raised aspirations may not be capable of being met by the opportunities in the local labour market. A small number of those involved in our research suggested that the Careers Service would best serve young people's interests by encouraging them not to be over-ambitious (by adapting to what was available in the local labour market) and by discouraging choices that could not be met locally.

Secondly, Careers Services are expected to persuade and influence employers and training organisations to take on disadvantaged and disaffected young people. While both Training Organisations and employers generally recognised this as an appropriate role for the Careers Service, employers' demands were for high calibre young applicants, and any dissatisfaction they had with Careers Service Companies tended to centre around this issue.

Connected with this is the expectation that Careers Service Companies should help reduce the numbers unemployed and give high priority to meeting the Guarantee of an appropriate post-school opportunity to young people. The effect of giving this group first priority for opportunities means that employers may not be offered a wide choice of candidates. In addition, if Careers Service Companies strive to raise young people's aspirations as expected, this may have the effect of encouraging young people to remain in full time education, thus limiting the numbers of well-motivated young people entering the labour market.

The provision of an impartial service versus the promotion of particular opportunities or routes to clients is another example of conflicting demands. Government guidance to Careers Service Companies recognises impartiality as absolutely central to the Careers Service's work, and this and other research shows the extent to which young people and their parents' support the need for the Careers Service to offer impartial guidance (Semple, 1994). Careers guidance practitioners hold very strongly to impartiality as part of their professional integrity. But occupational and professional groups are sometimes inclined to blame the Careers Service (and schools) if young people do not choose to enter their area of work or have misperceptions of it. More seriously, LECs and central government expect the Careers Service to be an advocate to schools, young people and parents of the work-based training route, which does not have parity of esteem with academic routes in the eyes of many. It is appropriate for careers advisers to broaden ideas and challenge such misperceptions, but to what extent? When does "broadening ideas" become "pushing one option too hard" for an impartial guidance service?

Lastly, the Careers Service is expected to develop an enhanced role in economic development and also deliver social outcomes as part of the social inclusion agenda.

Effectiveness measures take into account client satisfaction and this is often based on expectations. The view of stakeholders on the effectiveness of the Careers Service's work is likely to be measured against their own objectives rather than the Careers Service's. This needs to be considered when measures of satisfaction are interpreted.

There are issues about who makes decisions about what the Careers Service should be doing. In particular, what is the balance between the role of Careers Service Boards and the Scottish Executive (on behalf of the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning)? The Scottish Executive sets the overall priorities and then it is up to the Boards to develop a strategic plan to deliver them. To what extent should priorities be centrally determined, and to what extent should they be open to local variation? Does the use of centrally driven targets and funding effectively set priorities and take away decision-making from Careers Service Boards? This becomes more likely in the context of funding limitations.

There are other questions about the role of a limited company that provides a statutory service. A number of Board members felt that the core contract was so rigid that Boards lacked any real power to make a difference in their area. On the other hand, some Board members seemed prepared to make major changes in the service without a well-founded rationale for doing so. In the context of a statutory service the core contract is probably necessary to ensure some degree of consistency across Scotland. But the existence of a core contract has implications for the stated role of Careers Service Boards and for their ability to attract high calibre individuals as Directors.

Conditional status of the Careers Service

While acknowledging the value of partnerships, the research suggests that the conditional status of the Careers Service had an impact on the extent and quality of its work. As we noted in Chapter 2, the Careers Service has extensive responsibilities but very little accompanying power. It has duties placed on it but must work through and with others to fulfil them. One Head of Service described the situation in this way:

“The Careers Service is the opposite of the harlot who has power without responsibility: the Careers Service has responsibility without power.”

What are the implications of a statutory service that cannot require anything of anybody? To meet its statutory duties a Careers Service Company may need to challenge the decisions and operations of its partners, for example:

- Schools and colleges with poor careers education programmes or badly resourced careers libraries;
- Employers or Training Organisations unwilling to consider applicants from particular backgrounds or locations, or reluctant to pay a reasonable wage or offer appropriate training;
- Schools/colleges and employers/Training Organisations with misperceptions of the other’s provision;
- The local authority regarding policy on career education;
- The LEC on the quality of training provision.

However, the Careers Service needs the co-operation and flexibility of these organisations in order to function effectively on behalf of its clients. A school which feels itself criticised in the Service Level Agreement discussion for its poor careers library may effectively limit access by the careers adviser to times convenient to the school timetable. Employers and training organisations may place their vacancies elsewhere, and LECs and Local Authorities may become reluctant to fund Careers Service work. There is no basic minimum co-operation that must be provided:

“You can’t be too blunt with a school because we’re guests in the school.”

Head of Service

Where the Careers Service’s challenge makes the relationship poorer, the service to young people may suffer, with variation in provision for young people not based on young people’s needs but on the nature of the Careers Service’s relationship with others.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGED MANAGEMENT OF THE CAREERS SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

Chapter 4 describes the impact of the changed management of the Careers Service on its staff and on its relationships with key partners. It looks at the effect of changing funding sources and at the link between the Careers Service's funding and policy direction on its role.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

- While all Careers Services had experienced a degree of change as a result of the setting up of the new companies, around a third had made radical changes.
- Both managers and staff in Careers Service Companies were in the main positive about the changes, citing improved status in the eyes of employers, Training Organisations and education authorities. They valued the greater financial autonomy, less bureaucracy and the capacity to respond more quickly.
- Many of the Careers Service's partner organisations noted its increased business orientation and its contribution to economic development.
- Negative aspects of the changes included: the financial responsibility of budgeting; and, in some cases, less consultation with staff due to a fore-shortened decision-making process. How may staff be adequately consulted in a business environment?
- As Heads of Service (especially in larger Companies) became more focused on business development, they increasingly had to rely on practitioners and middle managers to provide intelligence on client need and the likely effect of policy options for practice.

Careers Service Boards

- The initial focus of Careers Service Boards was on finance. Staffing, quality assurance, Careers Service Company profile and partnerships were other areas of concern.
- There was variation in the extent to which staff thought that Careers Service Boards contributed to Company development and were supportive of the Head of Service. Where problems arose they were due to personality difficulties, conflict of interest and internal Board relationships.
- Boards were viewed as ineffective when members did not lay aside other agendas; were uninformed or suggested major changes of policy on the basis of anecdotal evidence; or did not understand the limitations arising from the need to meet the core contract.
- Boards could contribute through applying financial rigour to proposals and through raising the profile of the Careers Service Company in the wider community. Another positive effect of having a Board was that it required the Head of Service to have a clear focus when developing and presenting policy.
- The majority of practitioners involved in this research felt the Board to be remote. Some Careers Service Companies kept the relationship between the Board and staff distant, but

the trend was to promote contacts between Board members and staff. What is an appropriate level of involvement between Boards and Careers Service staff, and how can effective relationships be developed?

- Boards varied in the extent to which they had worked through the implications of being strategic rather than operational. At the mid-point of our research, around a third of Boards were clearly strategic, with a further half equally strategic and operational.
- Boards defined their *strategic* role in relation to the development of the Careers Service Company as a *business* and viewed the direction of the Careers Service Company as a *careers guidance service* as an *operational* matter. How much does it matter whether Heads of Service and Boards see careers guidance priorities as operational and not strategic?

Funding

- The research identified three types of Careers Service Company funding: core funding, enhanced core funding and non-core funding. Core funding is money to deliver the core contract to core clients; enhanced core funding is external additional funding which enhances the service to core clients; and non-core funding is external additional funding which provides a service to non-core clients.
- All Careers Service Companies had both core and enhanced funding, and most had some non-core funding. But Companies varied in the importance they gave to the different sources of funding and the way in which they applied the funding to staffing.
- Careers Service Companies and their partners were concerned to ensure that the service to the core client group was not damaged through over-extending Careers Service Companies' resources through time-consuming bids and initiatives.
- Both enhanced and non-core funding were short-term and vulnerable to changes in priorities by other organisations. What are the implications for the core work of a statutory service if the additional funding used for this purpose cannot be guaranteed?
- The use of enhanced funding for core clients was not evenly distributed across Scotland, resulting in variation in the level of service to clients. There are, therefore, implications for the entitlement of clients to careers services.
- Additional funding is often subject to particular conditions that can inhibit an integrated approach to clients or prevent the Careers Service from meeting the needs of clients.
- The principle of competition for external funding could bring the Careers Service into direct competition with agencies with which it was meant to work in partnership.
- Virtually all Careers Service Companies viewed the General Aggregated Expenditure (GAE) formula as inappropriate.
- There is a discrepancy between what the relevant Act requires of the Careers Service and the funding received for core clients (particularly with respect to further education students). At the very least, the funding formula should match the core client group or the core client group should be changed.

Changing relationships with the Scottish Executive

- The Scottish Executive relationship with Careers Service Companies in Scotland was a positive one based on partnership and flexibility.
- The negative side of this flexibility was that sometimes Scottish Executive staff did not give clear direction based on the actual requirements of Company status.

- The role of Scottish Executive staff as external auditors for the Careers Service for the Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS), allowed them to use the external audit as a development tool and as a way of focusing the Careers Service on certain priorities.
- Central support for research and professional publications from the Scottish Executive was missing, in contrast to the support given by DfEE.

Changing relationships with the Local Authority (LA)

- The new arrangements had created a greater distance between the Careers Service and education departments, but had also broadened its links to other departments in LAs .
- Decision-making was speedier in most Careers Service Companies outwith the control of education departments. Ring fencing of budgets protected Careers Service Companies from local authority cutbacks. Most Careers Service Company staff and managers were happy to be out of the direct control of LAs.
- LA reorganisation meant that Careers Service Companies had to develop new relationships with their new authority/ authorities.
- In a time of financial stringency, some LAs were keeping development funding for their own staff and services, viewing the Careers Service as no longer their own service.
- The local authority brings a public service ethos, a determination to safeguard the service to schools and a focus on social and community outcomes to the Careers Service Board.

Changing relationships with the Local Enterprise Company (LEC)

- LECs were one half of the partnership in Careers Service Boards. The research noted increased funding from the LEC for specific projects, and as the Careers Service successfully completed such work, the relationship became closer with links to a wider range of LEC departments.
- LECs had generally come to see the Careers Service Company as a key delivery arm for their strategic objectives.
- But some LECs were frustrated that the Careers Service Company did not appear to share a similar strategic vision: these LECs had a more dynamic view of the possible contribution of Careers Service Companies to economic and skills development than did their Careers Service Companies.
- The developing relationship between the two organisations was contributing to significant progress in the provision of LMI to clients.
- Relationships with LEC training managers and local representatives showed a degree of variation, to a large extent dependent on personality and expectations.

Other partnerships

- Across Careers Service Companies, relationships with the Employment Services were good, and had improved with the Careers Service's involvement with the New Deal.
- In a small number of Careers Service Companies, the Careers Service and Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) were part of the same organisation but were separate in most. Relationships were being developed according to local circumstances.
- Confusion in responsibilities and roles between Careers Service Companies and EBPs does not help clients. What is the best model of joint working for these two organisations, operating together under the Education for Work banner?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

The extent of re-organisation

The setting up of the new Companies to deliver the Scottish Executive contracts created the potential to change structures and conditions.

We examined the evidence available to us and concluded that, while all Careers Service Companies had obviously experienced a degree of change since the Companies were set up, the degree of this change was variable. Just over a third of Careers Service Companies had undergone (or were proposing) radical or considerable re-organisation (including structural and staffing changes). The remainder had undergone minimal or limited change.

Perceptions of positive aspects of the new Careers Companies

The aspect that was most commonly noted by Careers Service Company staff and others as a beneficial consequence of the new arrangements was that the standing of the Careers Service had improved in the eyes of employers, Training Organisations and local authorities. The Careers Service was seen as having more of a business orientation and its contribution to economic development was more valued.

“Having a commercial orientation helps the Careers Service to relate to the commercial world”

Head of Service

Both Heads of Service and practitioners commented that it was now possible to be more proactive and developmental, and to have more autonomy:

“The Careers Service is much more the master of its own destiny”

Careers Adviser

The capacity to respond more quickly to external demands, to changing circumstances, to personnel and staffing issues and to the need to improve premises was noted and valued. This was linked to a view that, in most Companies, there was less bureaucracy and a smaller number of levels of consultation involved in decision-making. It was also helped by the ability to identify and control the Careers Company’s budget and financing separately, in contrast to the previous situation where Careers Service financing had not been ring-fenced from the education budget. Another positive aspect was the noticeable developments in quality assurance resulting from work towards the Scottish Quality Management System (SE, 1995; SO, 1998) which had in turn benefited from, and contributed to, more systematic use of customer feedback. Many Careers Service Companies had also developed more sophisticated corporate images. A positive view of the impact of the changes was very much the most common one.

Some Heads of Service and practitioners commented that there had been no particular impact on the quality of provision to clients. This comment was commonly made to emphasise that earlier fears about any potential negative impact of the changes on clients had proved unfounded. We are not sure to what extent it is true to say that there had been no particular impact on provision to clients. As we will see later in this chapter when we examine the extent of non-core work, we observed that core work with clients was enhanced across many

Companies by non-core funding, some of which was unlikely to have come to the Careers Service prior to the change of management. In considering why respondents might underestimate the extent of the impact on provision to clients we wondered whether this was because many practitioners tended to be focused on school work whereas most of the enhanced core work appeared to impact on post-school clients.

Practitioners in Companies whose management had distanced staff from some of the discussions at Board level about company priorities were more likely to see the changes as peripheral to the job of guidance. This distancing was usually deliberate, often to protect staff from anxieties that might be aroused during the settling-in period, to ensure commercial confidentiality regarding possible developments or to keep Board members away from too great an involvement in operational issues. However some distancing was unintended and reflected a switch of managerial focus from service delivery to the operation of the Board. This switch of focus was something that most Careers Service respondents at all levels acknowledged.

“(The Head of Service) is much more orientated to the Board than to the service now”

Careers Adviser

Perceptions of negative aspects of the new Careers Companies

The lead up to the change of management was seen as having been stressful, and Careers Service respondents still showed some degree of uncertainty about the future. The capacity of the Careers Service Company to act speedily in response to commercial time-scales was sometimes accompanied by a fore-shortened consultation process, which gave less opportunity for staff to be involved in decision-making. This could be critical. Heads of Service in larger Companies, as they became more focused on business development and more distant from practice, increasingly needed to rely on practitioners and area managers to provide intelligence on client need and implications for practice.

Heads of Service were well aware that one effect of the power to control budgets was their responsibility for mistakes and that Companies would not be bailed out by the local authority as had been a theoretical possibility in the past. But some of the worst fears had not been realised. An emerging problem was that expectations might be too high:

“In the past staff put up with poor conditions because they knew the council couldn’t change things, but now there’s the expectation that the Careers Company can change things like salary etc”

Head of Service

Careers Service Boards

The most obvious result of the changed management of the Careers Service was the setting up of Careers Service Boards. For the majority of Boards, the initial focus inevitably was on finance, with staffing, company profile and partnerships following on. Many Boards had taken an overview of quality assurance strategies, particularly focusing on customer feedback.

Boards varied in the extent to which they had worked through the implications of being strategic rather than operational. Some were clearly aware that the Board was non-executive while others were interested in reviewing operational issues. Around a third of Boards could

be seen to be clearly strategic in their role, around a half functioned using mixed approaches and the remainder could be seen as clearly operational in their approach.

An issue that we identified throughout the research related to definitions of “strategic” and “operational” in a careers company whose business is the provision of careers guidance. “A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies” (SOEID, 1998) confirmed that:

“Careers Service Company Boards have the responsibility for the strategic direction and overall integrity of the company”

(“A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies”, SOEID, p.10: 1998)

The role of the Board was to include setting priorities and agreeing budgets. But the strategic setting of priorities in a business such as a Careers Company does need to take account of careers guidance priorities. A scenario emerging from our evidence was that of the strategic direction of a business in contrast to the operational direction of a careers guidance service. Can, and should, Boards and Heads of Service see careers guidance priorities only as operational and not also strategic? The following quotes illustrate a tension of which Heads of Service were aware:

“The Board has an over-riding focus on finance with guidance issues seen as operational”

“We have to be clear about the extent to which the Careers Service is a business... or is it business-like?”

“How can you be business-orientated about social outcomes?”

Many Boards had had their teething problems and this was reflected in comments from our respondents. In considering the extent to which the Boards contributed to company development and were seen as supportive of the Head of Service, we concluded that seven Boards could be classified as helpful, five as unhelpful and five as either neutral in impact or at different times helpful or unhelpful. Personality difficulties, conflict of interest issues and internal Board relationships were the most likely causes of problems experienced by Heads of Service.

In most Companies, the Board met three or four times in a year. Decisions required urgently in the interim period between meetings would normally be discussed between the Board Chair and the Head of Service, and “Chair’s action” used to take decisions forward if necessary. The quality of the relationship between the Chair and the Head of Service was, therefore, critical.

The value of an effective Board was seen as:

- requiring senior managers to have a clear focus when developing and presenting policy. Board meetings could be uncomfortable for Heads of Service but the challenging nature of the debate and the requirement to justify proposals was valued. Some Heads of Service found it easier than others to adjust to the different requirements of presenting proposals to a Board (especially costed proposals) compared with the approach taken to preparing an item for discussion at an Education Committee;
- applying financial rigour to proposals. This was seen as particularly useful, though a willingness to accept a degree of risk was also helpful;
- raising the profile of the Careers Service Company. This was a key way in which Boards and their members had been effective;

- having a range of interests in Board members (especially when employers were involved) helped the development of partnerships and broadened the focus of policy; and
- providing strong support for the Head of Service through a committed Chair.

The effectiveness of Boards was limited when:

- Board members were not able to lay aside other agendas and show a loyalty to the development of the Careers Service Company, a particular issue for LA and LEC officials in some companies, and in some cases, for elected members;
- Board members were uninformed, or suggested major changes of policy on the basis of anecdotal evidence; and
- Board members did not understand the limitations of the core contract on the strategic decision-making of the Careers Service Company, for example, where they thought that careers services could be withdrawn from school pupils and diverted elsewhere.

The vast majority of practitioners whose views we gathered felt that the Board was remote and that they knew little about its operation or interests. Heads of Service varied in the extent to which they felt closer contact and knowledge between the Board and Careers Service Company staff was desirable. One HOS, for example, did not want the Board to get too close to practitioners in case it led to Board members' inappropriate involvement in operational issues while in contrast another HOS encouraged Board meetings in area careers centres. In this latter situation, practitioners felt more in touch with the Board.

Funding

Income generation

Between the start of the contract period and the beginning of the research there had clearly been an increase in the extent to which income was being generated by Careers Service Companies. There were clear differences across Companies in the importance given to income generation, ranging from the Careers Service Company where non-core work was built into the strategic plan to one whose Head of Service said, "We've got enough to do with core work!". However, in a situation where a standstill budget was expected, finding more sources of funding was likely to increase in importance. Indeed "A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies" specifically encourages this approach.

"The Scottish Office encourages careers service companies to pursue a policy of diversity in funding... Careers service companies are encouraged to be innovative and enterprising in revenue generation, particularly where this will enhance the service to The Scottish Office contract groups."

("A Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies", SOEID, p.10: 1998)

We defined the funding that Careers Service Companies were operating with in three ways:

- Core funding: money from the Scottish Executive to deliver the core contract to core clients;
- Enhanced core funding: external additional funding which enhances the service to core clients;
- Non-core funding: external additional funding which provides a service to non-core clients.

A further distinction in relation to funding is the source of the enhanced or non-core funding. We have defined these as:

- Invited: when Careers Service Companies are invited to bid into a specific tranche of money eg Challenge Funding, or Adult Guidance Network funding;
- Sourced: from partners such as local authorities and local enterprise companies; and
- Competitive and actively sought: where Careers Service Companies compete for contracts with other organisations eg for redundancy counselling.

All Careers Service Companies had both core and enhanced core funding and most had some non-core funding in addition to that associated with Adult Guidance Network co-ordination. But Careers Service Companies varied in the importance they gave to the different types of funding and the different client groups. At a point half way through their contracts, around a third of the 17 Careers Service Companies put a high priority on getting a broad range of funding and working with a wide range of client groups, a small number were heavily focused on core clients with limited use of non-core funding and just over a half were somewhere in between.

There was recognition that Careers Service Companies were “not-for-profit” organisations and senior managers and Board members were concerned to ensure that the core contract (and the service to the core client group) was not damaged through over-extending the Company’s resources through time-consuming bids and initiatives. The impact of enhanced funding was noticeable. This contributed to aspects such as:

- improved services to schools such as the provision of labour market information, and the development of careers education and guidance materials;
- reviews of young people with Special Training Needs (STN) in Skillseekers and pre-assessment programmes;
- support programmes for vulnerable young people leaving school;
- activities in support of work experience; and
- a range of developments in employer work.

Much of this funding was the result of changed relationships, particularly developments in the Careers Service relationship with its local LEC.

Securing funding from a range of sources had several benefits beyond the immediate activities that were funded. It helped to market the Careers Service with other organisations and could benefit both core work and other non-core activities:

“It raises the profile of the Careers Service so that organisations funding non-core work are more amenable to core Careers Service issues”

Head of Service

“It (adult guidance) gives a locus in other areas, for example, adult guidance expertise led the Employment Service to get the Careers Service Company to lead on New Deal, and there’s been a marked change in Employment Service’s attitudes across all our work with them.”

Head of Service

The new work and projects supported by additional funding could have positive effects on staff morale and provide opportunities for staff development:

“Helps the morale of staff to see projects coming through, gives staff skills that are going to be needed since projects tend to be in the forefront of development”

Head of Service

Some of the description of the value of non-core work made clear the switch in priorities that had taken place in the thinking of some senior managers:

*“Non-core projects can enhance careers work, but **more importantly** they enhance the Company”* (our emphasis)

Head of Service

The management of additional funding

There was a difference in how Careers Service Companies managed the funding, largely explained by the size of Company. Larger Companies with more money were more able to dedicate a particular member of staff to a piece of funded work. However, small Companies, especially ones operating in a remote area with limited possibilities to recruit additional qualified staff, were more likely to share the tasks required by extra funding across a number of staff. There are management challenges to be faced in both systems. In the larger Companies, there are dangers that staff become compartmentalised and the cross-fertilisation of practice does not happen. Staff in small Companies were more likely to value the broader perspectives resulting from having enhanced or non-core funded work. However, with smaller Companies, the extra funding could end up propping up the core work, so that staff posts became vulnerable.

For all Careers Service Companies, the management of projects with different funding dates and client groups was complex, and even more complex where the same client was being acted on by several projects with different funding.

“The system is bureaucratically designed with particular cut off points and role divisions... it’s not going to be helped by different funding sources.”

Careers Adviser

Middle managers operating in local areas might want their staff to be untied from specific projects so that they could be used more flexibly in the interests of clients, but this would make it difficult to identify the additional value provided from the funding. Priorities could often be in tension, and effective service delivery to clients could be in conflict with the funder’s need for accountability.

The impact of competitive funding

As noted in Chapter 3, much Careers Service work depends on partnerships, in which there could be natural tensions. However, an added complication to the relationship could develop when a Careers Service Company was proactive in seeking enhanced or non-core funding. This could bring it into direct competition with some of its partners in bidding for the same contract. There were also difficulties if the partner and competitor in question was represented on the Careers Service Board where possible strategies for generating income were being discussed. This problem was most commonly raised with respect to FE colleges and Education Business Partnerships (EBPs).

Balance and nature of funding

There were a number of emerging issues linked to the new funding sources. Firstly, both enhanced and non-core money appeared to be short term and vulnerable to changes in priorities by other organisations. If significant parts of the service to core clients were to come to depend on enhanced core funding whose continuation could not be guaranteed, what implications result for a statutory service? Secondly, it was already clear that the use of enhanced funding for core clients was not evenly distributed across Scotland, with resulting variations in the level of service provided to clients in different Careers Service Company areas. There are implications for the entitlement of clients to careers services.

Thirdly, Careers Service Companies and their Boards were being asked to identify needs as a basis for strategic policymaking: meeting some of these key needs was likely to depend on enhanced core funding, particularly in the context of a standstill budget.

Virtually all Careers Service Companies viewed the General Aggregated Expenditure (GAE) formula as inappropriate, albeit in different ways. They were mostly unable to suggest an alternative. One view was that because the GAE was based on the secondary school population, it did not take account of the variation across Careers Service Companies in the extent of work with post-school and especially unemployed clients. We also noted the discrepancy between what the relevant Act requires of the Careers Service and the funding Companies receive for core clients. For example, the Act requires a careers service to be offered to full-time and part-time vocational students in further education, but the GAE formula only takes account of the school population. The extent to which the Careers Service can deliver the statutory service required of them has to be questioned in such a situation. At the very least, the funding formula should match the core client group (particularly with respect to services to FE students) or the core client group should be changed.

A change that was minimal for some Careers Service Companies and potentially highly resource-intensive for others was the inclusion of independent schools in the core client group from the period of the new contracts. Those Companies with a small independent sector were able from the beginning to offer a broadly equivalent service to that offered to state schools. However, the situation was more difficult in other companies where the potential volume of work with the independent sector, if taken on without extra resourcing, might seriously damage the service to state schools.

The funding of Careers Service involvement in new policy initiatives

The Careers Service's capacity to become involved in new policy initiatives was sometimes constrained by how the funding was organised. The key issue was whether funding came directly to the Careers Service or if Companies had to bid to other organisations for money: this could happen even where the importance of Careers Service involvement had been noted in relevant policy documentation (eg on Social Inclusion). One Board member described what was thought to be needed:

“Some of the money that’s now allocated to other organisations needs to be diverted to the Careers Service Company if it’s to perform the lead role that’s been talked of in some policies (such as social inclusion and Lifelong Learning)”

It was even more difficult if the Careers Service had been missed out of policy documents such as happened in the case of New Community Schools. The locus of the Careers Service

in the Scottish community has become unclear. It is no longer a local authority service, nor is it run by central government. Is it still a public service, or is it a business in competition with others for funds? The omission of the Careers Service from the proposals for New Community Schools (which included a major element on young people's transitions out of school) is an example of what happens when the Careers Service's position is unclear.

Changing relationships with the Scottish Executive

The 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act removed from local authorities the statutory responsibility for providing a careers service. It became the responsibility of the relevant Government Minister. The role of Scottish Executive staff was to ensure that the Careers Service enabled the Minister to fulfil his statutory duty. The relationship between Careers Service Companies and the Scottish Executive had clearly changed.

The approach taken to developing the relationship between the Scottish Executive and the new Careers Service Companies was to aim for partnership and flexibility in the face of local diversity. This was in contrast to the insistence by the Department of Education and Employment in England on contract compliance and the strict achievement of targets.

Less favourable comparisons with England were made over the issue of central support for professional review and development. While the scale of operation was obviously different, in contrast to the stream of research and professional development publications emerging from DfEE, the Scottish Executive had published only a small number of thematic reviews to support the development of careers education and guidance. The extent to which practice and policy is informed by research and evaluation evidence is an issue to which we return later.

The Scottish Executive has historically valued flexibility, negotiation and partnership rather than enforcement through legislation. In the light of this, it seemed unlikely that the arguments made by some Heads of Service and practitioners suggesting that Scottish legislation, similar to that in England, might be adopted to require schools to provide support to Careers Service Companies and to deliver careers education programmes to pupils.

The Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS), which used Scottish Executive staff as external auditors, approached the external audit as a development tool for Careers Service Companies. It had the effect of moving the responsibility for evaluation to Careers Service Companies since the external audit checked on the findings of the company's own internal audit. The external audit was also used by the Scottish Executive as a vehicle to encourage Careers Service Companies in the direction of key priorities such as work with employers, labour market information and work with parents. The importance of SQMS as a mechanism for the Scottish Executive to drive quality issues and implement some of its agenda for the Careers Service can be seen in the heavy focus given to SQMS.

The main tensions in the relationship between the Scottish Executive and Careers Service Companies were connected with funding, in particular:

- There were concerns from Careers Service Companies that the draft Guidance Framework was extending the core client group to include 18 – 24 year olds without providing any extra core funding.
- The General Aggregated Expenditure (GAE) formula mentioned above was the basis of Scottish Executive funding for Careers Service Companies. As we noted earlier, this

educational formula took account of deprivation and rural difficulties but not independent schools or Further Education colleges (both core client groups).

Several Heads of Service and Board members suggested that it would not only be helpful for the Scottish Executive to share business activity figures across the Scottish Careers Services but also to provide vehicles for exchange of good practice and open sharing of experiences. However, it was clear at the beginning of our research that not all Careers Service Companies would feel comfortable sharing “business secrets”, although this feeling was easing throughout the period of the research, particularly after Careers Service Companies were assured that compulsory competitive tendering would not apply for the next contract.

Changing relationships with the Local Authority (LA)

Local authorities had previously been responsible for providing a Careers Service and Regional Councils had been involved in the negotiation of the partnerships which were set up to bid for the Scottish Executive contract. Some LAs had clearly been unhappy about the removal of the Careers Service from their control, but in the case of six Careers Service Companies they had a continued involvement in the delivery of the sub-contract and in two they seconded Careers Service staff to the Company. LAs were partners in Careers Service Boards and elected members (and in some cases, particularly at an early stage, officials) were Careers Service Company Board members. The large majority of Careers Service Companies were happy to be out of direct LA control for a number of reasons:

- The Careers Service Companies were no longer tied to a narrower Education Department agenda. In particular, it was likely to be easier to link into the LA’s economic development strategy;
- Decision-making was thought to be speedier than under Education Department management (this was not necessarily the case for every Company operating under the sub-contract model);
- The Careers Service budget was now ring-fenced; and
- The traditional argument that better relationships with schools would result from being part of the Education Department had proved to be weak, particularly since devolved school management had reduced the power of the LA over schools.

Disentangling the Careers Service from the Education Authority, and estimating the actual costs of running a Careers Service proved a challenge for LAs. In some areas it was suggested that the LA had under-estimated the cost of running a Careers Service. Since the estimated figure was used by the Scottish Executive as an initial basis for the funding of new Careers Service Companies, this could have the effect of making the initial budget of the new Careers Service Company a serious under-estimate of what was required. It was thought that this under-estimate by some local authorities resulted from a combination of a reluctance to recognise the full cost (since this amount would be lopped off the education budget coming from central government) and a genuine difficulty with the actual mechanics of pricing services and premises.

Careers Service Companies had recognised the need to negotiate a new relationship with their LAs. Some had taken particular care to embed the LA perspective at the earliest stage, while others had focused more on the development of relationships with new partners such as the LEC. Local authorities had also anticipated the implications of change in some cases:

“From the authority perspective, it was critically important to get the structure right that would deliver in schools..... retaining the public service ideal was really important”

LA representative

This reflects a common concern from the LA that the historical priorities of the Careers Service (school work and a public service ethos) might be lost if LA Board representatives did not fight for it.

The fact that a local Careers Service had always had a good relationship with its LA did not mean that continued development was not required. The need to work at relationships with LAs became clear when re-organisation into unitary authorities took place. This frequently resulted in well-informed LA personnel with experience of the Careers Service's operations being moved outwith Education Departments or retiring. LA re-organisation was a complicating factor for those Companies that as a result had multiple LAs, each with their own political priorities and economic and educational development plans.

At a point half way through the contract, only a minority of the Careers Service Companies could be said to have a poor relationship with their LAs. The remaining Careers Service Companies were equally split between having a good or having a mixed relationship.

The task was to give LAs a sense of ownership of the new Careers Service Companies. This would require the development of a new relationship. The challenges facing Careers Service Companies in their relationships with LAs included:

- Working with the LA to secure funding. This support is essential to develop bids to European Union projects. However there were early signs that some Councils, in a time of financial stringency, were trying to keep funding for their own staff and services.... And the careers service was no longer their own service;
- LAs were now smaller in size, resulting in a loss of almost all the specialist guidance advisers who had worked closely with the Careers Service in the past to support working relationships with schools;
- Careers Service Companies who had traditionally had a close relationship with their Education Department had noticed that the Careers Service was now a little later in picking up issues from education because of the separation of the two organisations; and
- Area Managers in Careers Service Companies with several LAs in their area were now the local face of the Company to the authority. This made extra demands of individuals and of the organisation. A similar situation applied where the Careers Service Company had multiple LECs in its area.

Service Level Agreements were becoming more common with LAs, and in some cases the Careers Service contributed to the Service Plan for the LA. However, while some LAs would automatically involve the Careers Service Company in working groups, in regeneration strategies and in invitations to tender for social inclusion funding, others would not think of the Careers Service in this way. Strategies used by Careers Service Companies to develop relationships with LAs included:

- The provision of statistics as requested;
- Regular meetings with Directors of Education or of Economic Planning;
- Circulation of Careers Service Company documents widely, picking out examples of ways in which the Careers Service Company was helping to meet the LAs objectives;
- Provision of joint training and dissemination events; and

- Showing willingness to provide free help in small ways before seeking funding.

As we discuss in the following section, Careers Service Companies were receiving increased levels of funding from LECs which was usually greater than the amount coming from the LA. This caused some anxiety on the part of LAs:

“If the LEC use their money in this way, it could upset the balance of power between the partners.”

LA representative

Perhaps many LAs do not see the need to fund the Careers Service as do LECs since the area of Careers Service work of most concern to them - school work - is covered by central core funding. Although some Careers Service Company staff mentioned discussions about the LA funding extra work in schools, only in a small number of cases was there any serious commitment to this. The exception was the funding of initiatives related to social inclusion such as “On Track”. Nor did most LAs appear to see the Careers Service as essential as did LECs to the delivery of their own strategic development plan. In most Companies, the relationship between the two key partners, the LA and the LEC, was productive with respect to their joint role with the Careers Service. In some Careers Service Company areas, historical levels of suspicion between the LA and the LEC, unconnected with Careers Service issues, had first to be overcome.

Changing relationships with the Local Enterprise Company (LEC)

In contrast to prior relationships with the LA, those between the Careers Service Company and the LEC had usually been more distant. There were historical tensions based on the extent to which careers guidance focused on the individual or on the labour market. There had been partnership between the two organisations on the delivery of training programmes to mainstream and Special Training Needs (STN) young people, but this partnership had not been wholly without its difficulties nor had the Careers Service Company and the LEC ever been part of the same organisation. One of the effects of the new contract model was to bring the LEC to the heart of the Careers Service’s operations.

Our observation during the mapping exercise was of greater closeness between the two organisations. We assessed relationships with LECs as poor in only a minority of Careers Service Companies and equally divided between good and mixed in the remainder. Conflict of interest issues relating to the role of some LEC officials on some Careers Service Company Boards had certainly occurred, but these had either been resolved or were in the process of resolution.

In addition to partnership activities in relation to Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships there were many examples of increased funding support from LECs to Careers Service Companies including:

- Education Business Partnerships being managed by Careers Service Companies;
- Compact and work experience;
- Collection, analysis and dissemination of labour market information to schools (through careers education programmes and in-service training), parents and the community;
- Pre-assessment services for young people with Special Training Needs (STN);
- Reviews of Skillseekers with STN;

- Paying the costs of training Careers Advisers in the use of psychometrics to assist employers in their recruitment or paying the costs of the test materials and licence for their use in STN assessment work;
- Joint marketing; and
- Careers clubs for unemployed young people.

LECs appeared to vary in their choice of projects to fund. On the one hand a LEC might have business development as its main focus and see little role in adult or careers guidance. On the other, a LEC might see adult guidance as crucial and provide central support for the Adult Guidance network.

Some LECs initially thought that certain tasks, such as assessment of reviews of STN trainees on Skillseekers or implementation of the Right to Time Off for Study legislation should be accomplished from core funding. They considered that the balance in the use of core funding should move away from schools in order to meet the needs of the labour market. In contrast with the LA which had traditionally expected its needs for Careers Services to schools to be fully met from the Careers Service budget, the LEC had seen its need for labour market information within careers education and guidance and for services to employers, Training Organisations and young entrants to the labour market not fully met because of the focus on traditional school work. It is important to note that the clients that the LEC focuses on are also core clients. It is perhaps understandable that the LEC should wish to limit the extent of its funding to core work. However, a recognition of the realities of the Careers Service budget has meant that most LECs have taken the decision to provide enhanced funding for STN assessments and reviews.

It was clear that labour market information was an area of common interest between Careers Service Companies and LECs across Scotland. We concluded that the developing relationship between the two organisations, the push from the Scottish Executive towards the labour market in its targets and Careers Service Companies' own identification of this as a key issue for clients had moved forward the provision of labour market information (especially with a local focus) significantly over this period.

The relationship between LECs and Careers Service Companies was expected to continue to develop positively. LECs would, like LAs, be crucial partners for Careers Service Companies in bids for money from Europe. As Careers Service Companies proved their expertise in LEC funded projects, Careers Service Company staff expected increased joint working:

“The LEC has got reflected glory from how the Careers Service Company has delivered adult guidance and is therefore using the Careers Service more. The LEC’s a facilitator not a deliverer and the Careers Service Company can deliver for it”

Head of Service

“Now we know the LEC better, there’s more opportunity for joint ventures.”

Head of Service

In some Companies the LEC was identifying local training needs to the Careers Service Company, there was joint case work with young people covered by the guarantee of a training place, and both organisations were actively looking together at problems faced by the unemployed. Relationships with LEC training managers and local representatives showed a degree of variation, to a large extent dependent on personality and expectations. But a feature of the changes over this period was the extent to which LEC departments other than those

responsible for young people's training provision were increasingly engaging in debate and development work with Careers Service Companies. These included departments dealing with marketing, business start-up and economic development.

When the only link between the Careers Service Company and the LEC had been about training provision for young people, it was perhaps inevitable that the needs of the local economy and of school leaver entrants to the labour market would predominate. But closer links by the Careers Service Company to the business development side of the LEC and broader involvement in skill development meant that LECs had been increasingly encouraged to consider the needs of the broader Careers Service Company client group of potential FE and HE applicants, for example, in relation to the need for LMI beyond the local labour market. Nevertheless some different perspectives remained, in particular, whether careers guidance should be predominately focused on individual needs and wishes or should largely reflect labour market circumstances:

“Guidance choices should be in tune with the local economy”

LEC representative

LECs and Careers Service Companies increasingly recognised a shared agenda. It was suggested that the LEC involvement on the Careers Service Board let the Careers Service Company Head of Service understand and contribute to LEC strategy. LECs found that their work with the business community showed the need for the activities of the Careers Service. And LECs were commonly keen to support information and advice services to parents and teachers, as significant influences on young people's decisions. The need for an integrated labour market strategy was recognised by both, with even those who had moved furthest in this respect acknowledging that they were still very far away from achieving it.

In many areas the LEC had come to see the Careers Service Company as a key delivery arm for its strategic objectives, including: communicating with schools especially with respect to labour market information; tightening up on the quality of training for young people; and communicating with employers. Sometimes the LEC had a more dynamic vision of the Careers Service's role than did the Careers Service itself:

“Links to Lifelong Learning are key. There's a need for a body of people charged with protecting the rights of the learner, who could provide independent information, guidance and advocacy. The Careers Service could be the “Citizen's Advice Bureau” for the learner and be responsible for protecting the learner, communicating the learner's needs to education and training providers and putting quality standards in place”.

LEC representative

There was no need to convince LEC respondents in our research of the value of the Careers Service: the more common feeling was that its potential was not being fulfilled. Frustrations existed over the poor quality of Careers Service IT systems. There was also concern over the ability of Careers Service management to communicate key objectives down the line and deliver what had been agreed at Board level or in LEC/Careers Service Company discussions (although LEC representatives acknowledged they experienced exactly the same difficulty within their own organisation). Where the Careers Service had moved to a Limited Company model, it was more likely that the Careers Service Company would be seen as a potential tenderer for contracts.

As LECs and Careers Service Companies moved more closely together, they began to recognise similarities in their situation. Both had to work within conflicting expectations and

priorities (an example of this for LECs was the tension between encouraging business development and delivering on the social inclusion agenda). Both had responsibilities put on them by government, many of which could only be achieved through persuading and influencing other organisations and individuals. And both were concerned about how their performance might be fairly measured in such a situation. We looked at developments in measuring effectiveness in the Scottish Enterprise Network, and have used similar underlying principles in designing examples of effectiveness measures (see Chapter 13).

Other partnerships

Relationships with the Employment Services were thought to be good across Scotland. Regular liaison had led to the Careers Service having a role in the provision of careers guidance for the New Deal, and this had made the relationship closer. Careers Services felt that their potential contribution had been acknowledged:

“Employment Services have recognised the Careers Service’s role in guidance when they supported the Careers Service as lead agency (against others) for guidance in the New Deal in our area.”

Head of Service

Some Careers Service Companies were using Employment Services’ premises as caller stations where they had no local office. Others had, or were planning, a Service Level Agreement with Employment Services.

Relationships with Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) were more mixed. This was partly explained by the considerable variation in EBPs across Scotland, ranging from a small EBP with a single part-time post to a large EBP facilitating several major programmes. Some areas had no EBP. In two Careers Service Company areas, the EBP and the Careers Service Company were part of the same organisation. Relationships tended to be productive where there had historically been a high level of effective schools/industry liaison and where local authority re-organisation had not broken down existing EBPs to small authority level.

There were clearly tensions in some cases. One of the reasons for this was a lack of clarity in the definition and focus of Education for Work. In practice, the early development of the Education for Work agenda was based around education/industry links, with some involvement of enterprise activities, and much of this was accepted as the role of the EBP. Subsequent developments swept up “careers education” under the Education for Work banner, and this was an area of Careers Service Company responsibility in central policy guidance. In the absence of proper policy documentation and definitions of careers education, there was room for confusion over the respective roles of the Careers Service Company and the EBP. The forthcoming National Framework for Career Education in Scotland may help. Some suggested that the policy push to Careers Service Companies to become more involved in income generation had encouraged minor turf wars (or at least skirmishes) in a small number of areas. These became most noticeable at operational level. Difficulties occurred, for example, over the practicalities of visits to employers in a local area and over liaison with schools, particularly over support for careers education programmes.

But tensions also surfaced at a strategic level. There are a number of differences between the two organisations. Firstly, the Careers Service is a statutory service while the EBP is a facilitator. Secondly, although there is some variation in Careers Service provision across

Scotland, the variation in EBP provision is much more extreme, leading to a lack of equality in provision for young people. Thirdly, all Careers Service Companies in Scotland are managed on a partnership model (with all but two at the time of writing being limited companies with charitable status), while EBPs may be based with the LA or with the LEC. The various EBPs have different roles and responsibilities while the Careers Service is broadly consistent. Relationships between a Careers Service Company and its (one or more) EBP(s) had, therefore, considerable local variation.

The way forward in some Companies was a partnership agreement between the two organisations. The use of the Careers Service Company/school Service Level Agreement negotiations to embed EBP and Careers Service Company work together in the school was a productive strategy. Where good relationships existed, there had been success in getting joint funding for development work on Education for Work materials in schools. Overlap in the membership of EBP Boards and Careers Service Boards could be seen to be helpful with each having the potential to help the other to identify client, school, employer and community needs.

CHAPTER 5

THE PUPILS' PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In this chapter we consider young people's experience and opinions of careers education and guidance and of the Careers Service. As detailed in Chapter 2, we surveyed a 50% sample of S4, S5 and S6 pupils in 10 case study schools and, as noted there, we decided to exclude S6 pupils from the report because of the low response rate in some schools from this year group. The survey examined the extent of Careers Service contact with pupils in school, the nature of that contact and the extent to which it appears to meet pupil needs. We report in full on the analyses that we carried out but recognise that some readers may not wish to read this level of detail. We would refer them to the *Implications* sections in this chapter that draw out the key points arising from the data.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

The survey

- The pupils' perspective is based on our survey of a 50% sample of S4, S5 and S6 pupils in 10 case study schools. S6 pupils have been excluded from analyses because of the low response rate in some schools from this year group.

Pupils' contact with the Careers Service

- The majority of S4 and S5 pupils had contact with the Careers Service although most reported that they had not had contact when in the lower school. Whether or not pupils had had contact at any stage varied across Careers Service Companies and, in some cases, on the school attended. Do these differences reflect differences in pupil needs or are there other reasons?
- S4 pupils who were serious truants were less likely to have contact; a challenge for the Careers Service is how to make contact with this group.
- The likelihood of having contact with the Careers Service was not affected by pupils' attainment, but attainment did make a difference to the types of Careers Service inputs that pupils experienced.
- By far the most likely pupil contact with the Careers Service was the individual interview, especially in S5. Is there a need for Careers Service Companies to adopt a greater variety of approaches to meet the varying needs of pupils?
- How might Higher Still affect the level and type of contact needed?

Extent of careers interviews

- Around three-fifths of S4 and S5 pupils had an interview with the Careers Adviser (CA). The likelihood of having an interview differed across Careers Service Companies and this was not explained by differences in Careers Service Companies' stated interview policies. Aspects of the school-Careers Service relationship may have a bearing on this.

- A number of other factors each had a separate effect on the likelihood that a pupil would have a Careers Adviser interview. There were some differences in the factors that affected S4 and S5 pupils.
- For S4 pupils, higher attainment, individual discussion with non-guidance teachers, and plans to leave school soon each increased the likelihood that they would have an interview. Serious truancy and having no career ideas each decreased their chances.
- For S5 pupils, having a positive attitude to school, an individual discussion with a guidance teacher, an individual discussion with non-guidance teachers and the intention to apply to FE each increased the likelihood of having an interview. The particular Careers Service Company was the one factor that might decrease the likelihood of an interview.

The management of interviews

- The majority of pupils were satisfied that their interview had been at the right time for them (S4: 61%; S5: 75%). The probability that they would be satisfied with the timing of their interview was not related to Careers Service Company interviewing policy.
- A number of factors each had a separate effect on the likelihood that pupils would think that their interview had been at the right time, for example, higher levels of discussion with parents about career plans had a positive effect but careers education had a mixed effect.
- A considerable proportion of pupils who did not have an interview had not wanted one (S4: 43% and S5: 58%). Those pupils who had not wanted an interview were more likely not to have any ideas about their post school plans. It may be that some pupils do not understand the purpose of a careers interview and think they cannot see the Careers Adviser unless they have some career ideas to discuss.
- Only a minority of those who had an interview knew what to expect from it. This and the previous bullet point suggests that pupils need a better understanding of the purpose of the careers interview and schools and the Careers Service might review their approaches to this.
- Over a half of S4 pupils who had not had an interview had either requested one but had not had it, or had not understood enough about the interview system to make a request. The same applied to around two fifths of S5s who had not had an interview.
- The reasons why pupils did not have an interview varied across Careers Service Companies but also between year groups within the same Careers Service Company.
- What scope is there for Careers Service Companies and schools to manage interview requests differently to reduce waiting times and to keep pupils informed about waiting times? It seems that strategies being used to inform pupils about the interview system are not effective with some pupils.
- There is demand for earlier timing of interviews in S4 and S5. Can Careers Service Companies accommodate this demand by revising their interview systems?
- There is also demand for interviews before S4. What input should the Careers Service have in the lower school and how realistic is it to expect Careers Service Companies to meet this demand within current resources and priorities?

The effectiveness of interviews

- Most pupils thought their careers interview had been useful. Among S4 pupils, there was a slight variation in opinion across Careers Service Companies.
- A number of factors each increased the likelihood that pupils would find their career interview useful. The most critical factor for both S4 and S5 pupils was whether their careers interview had been at the right time. This underlines the importance of Careers Service Companies doing as much as possible to ensure that pupils get an interview at the time that they see as appropriate to them.
- The particular Careers Service Company made a difference to S4 pupils' opinion of their interview. In addition to the timing of their interview, other factors each had a positive effect on S4 pupils' opinion:
 - being higher attainers;
 - having a positive opinion of their careers education;
 - having higher levels of discussion of career plans with parents; and
 - planning to apply to FE.
- For S5 pupils the significant factors in addition to the timing of their interview were:
 - having a positive attitude to school;
 - having individual discussions with guidance teacher;
 - having individual discussions with non-guidance teachers;
 - greater frequency of careers education;
 - having a positive opinion of careers education; and
 - intention to apply to FE.
- Discussion of their plans with their parents had a positive impact on pupils' view of their interview and reinforces the importance of Careers Service Companies supporting parents in their guidance role.
- Having individual discussion with teachers (especially non-guidance teachers) had a positive effect on pupils' opinion of their careers interview: this points to the value of schools giving pupils as much opportunity as possible for this to happen.
- Careers education appears to help pupils make the most of their careers interview. It was the frequency of careers education classes rather than the amount of careers education that made the difference. This has implications for how schools timetable careers education.
- Pupils were confident about the impartiality of the Careers Adviser and thought that the Careers Adviser had explained their post school options and had helped to widen their ideas. Around half said that they had not had their career ideas challenged by the Careers Adviser. A substantial minority did not think they had been helped to relate their career ideas to their personal characteristics.
- There were differences across the Careers Service Companies in pupils' views about the interview process and its outcomes for them. This variation raises questions about young people's entitlement to a common minimum standard of guidance.
- Those planning to enter FE or HE were more likely to think they had received relevant information than those planning to enter the labour market. How can Careers Advisers make better use of labour market information (LMI) in a careers interview?
- Careers Advisers seem to be considered to be more effective in respect of some aspects of the interview than others. Pupils' opinion of the interview process and its effectiveness varied across Careers Service Companies. Both findings point to the need for greater

attention to the monitoring of Careers Advisers' guidance practice and to appropriate staff development.

Pupils' career ideas

- A number of factors reduced the likelihood that pupils would have no idea about what to do after leaving school. For both S4 and S5 pupils these included frequency of careers education classes and also discussion with parents for both. In addition, for S4 pupils, individual discussion with PSE teachers and having an interview with the careers adviser each had an effect.

Pupils career-related skills and knowledge

- Several factors each had a positive impact on S4 pupils' careers-related skills and knowledge: having had a high level of careers education; finding careers education useful; having a high level of individual discussion with guidance teachers; having a positive opinion of their interview with a careers adviser; and planning to do to college.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pupils' contact with the Careers Service

Contact before S4

Although the main Careers Service client group in schools has generally been seen as pupils in S4 and above, Services have often had inputs before then, most commonly in S2, seeing this sort of contact as a useful way of introducing the Careers Service to pupils. To consider the question of early contacts with the Careers Service we asked S4 pupils what contact they had had with the Careers Service before their 4th year. Under a half reported that they had had none (46%, Table 5.1)³. Under a third (29%) had had contact via a class or group and around a fifth had made use of the drop-in sessions run by the Careers Service (21%).

The chances that a young person would have contact before S4 with the Careers Service varied depending on the Careers Service Company (Table 5.2). If there is variation at Careers Service Company level then it follows there will be variation across the ten schools; the more relevant question is whether there is a difference between the schools within the same Careers Service Company. We found that the likelihood of contact with the Careers Service before S4 varied between the schools within all the Careers Service Companies. This suggests that pre-S4 contact is not always a matter of Careers Service Company policy and may depend on the wishes and circumstances of individual schools and the particular interests of the Careers Adviser. Neither attainment nor gender makes a difference to the chances of a pupil having contact with the Careers Service before S4.

³ The unweighted bases for all the analyses reported in this chapter are: 376 for S4 and 259 for S5.

Table 5.1: Contact with the Careers Service before S4

	%
no contact	46
drop-in session	21
longer interview	6
class/group	29
something else	3
No contact with Careers Service before S4	%
All	46
CSC1	49
CSC2	58
CSC3	42
CSC4	35
CSC5	46
	%
All	46
School 1	52
School 2	33
School 3	38
School 4	51
School 5	72
School 6	-
School 7	43
School 8	27
School 9	58
School 10	45

Contact in S4

15% of pupils reported that they had had no contact with the Careers Service in S4 (Table 5.2). Around three-quarters of these pupils also had not had contact before S4 (75%).

Table 5.2: No contacts with the Careers Service

	S4 pupils	S5 pupils
	%	%
All	15	28
CSC1	16	32
CSC2	13	15
CSC3	26	31
CSC4	13	46
CSC5	10	14
All	15	28
School 1	30	21
School 2	24	40
School 3	14	15
School 4	7	14
School 5	14	14
School 6	8	22
School 7	8	47
School 8	16	45
School 9	23	25
School 10	11	39

* To ensure confidentiality, the numbering of the schools does not relate to the numbering of the Careers Service Companies

The likelihood of having contact varied slightly by Careers Service Company. Fourth year pupils in one Careers Service Company were most likely not to have had contact with the

Careers Service but levels of non-contact were similar across the other services. S4 pupils' chances of contact also differed depending on the particular school attended. Within three Careers Service Companies, S4 pupils in one school were more likely not to have been in touch with the Careers Service than in the other school.

We considered whether truancy is part of the explanation for pupils' non-contact. Truancy does not appear to be a reason for lack of contact *before S4* but is a significant factor in non-contact *in S4*. Serious truants⁴ were more likely to report non-contact than other pupils.

It is clear that S4 pupils' main contacts with the Careers Service is through introductory talks and interviews (Table 5.3). Group work on particular career topics is much more limited than introductory talks. There were differences across the Careers Service Companies in pupils' chances of experiencing the various Careers Service inputs. For example, pupils' in CSC5 were more likely to get an interview than elsewhere; those in CSC3 and CSC5 were less likely to have an introductory talk although those in CSC3 had a greater chance of a group session. Within the same Careers Service there were also differences in the likelihood of pupils experiencing certain Careers Service Company inputs depending on the school. This applied to two Careers Service Companies in relation to interviews, introductory talks and group sessions and to three Careers Service Companies in respect of drop-in sessions (table not shown).

Table 5.3: Contacts with the Careers Service

	in S4	in S5
	%	%
no contact	15	28
any interviews	56	61
(1 interview	44	42
(more than 1 interview	13	19
introductory talk	52	27
group session	14	6
drop-in session	12	8
Sent to vacancies	2	6
received information	38	50

Contact in S5

Moving on from S4, what was the nature and extent of Careers Service Company provision in S5? Towards the end of S5 a large majority of pupils had contact with the Careers Service (85%) and over half had had contact in both S4 and S5 (56%). Over a quarter had only had contact in one year (ie either S4 or S5). 15% of S5 pupils reported no contact at all with the Careers Service in either S4 or S5. Unlike S4s, truancy does not account for S5 pupils' lack of contact with the Careers Service. Given that we have defined contact to include most careers Service inputs, would Careers Service Companies expect a higher level of reported contact in both years? Is a 15% level of non-contact acceptable?

Under three-quarters of S5 pupils had contact with the Careers Service in S5 (28% no contact, Table 5.2 therefore 72% contact). In S5 pupils in CSC2 and CSC5 were most likely to have contact compared with the others and especially CSC4.

⁴ Defined as truanting for several days or weeks at a time.

Pupils' contact with the Careers Service in S5 is even more heavily focused on the one-to-one interview than in S4 (Table 5.3). S5 pupils were less likely to have had an introductory talk, and slightly less likely to have been in a group session and to have used a drop-in clinic than S4 pupils.⁵ The provision of information was more frequent in S5 than in S4. Overall, Careers Service Company work with S5 pupils was less varied than with S4s.

As was the case in S4, in S5 the chance of experiencing most types of Careers Service Company inputs varied across the Careers Service Companies. The only exception was the likelihood of an S5 pupil being sent to vacancies which was at a similar level across the Services. But the chances of experiencing other Careers Service Company provision in S5 did vary (Table 5.4). CSC3, for example, stands out as having a higher level of group sessions than other Careers Service Companies; CSC2 and CSC4 have a higher level of follow-up interviews. No S5 pupils reported attending drop-in sessions in CSC2 and the level of introductory talks is particularly low there. CSC5 has the highest level of information sent or given to pupils.

Table 5.4: Types of contact with the Careers Service by Careers Service Company

	pupils in S4	pupils in S5
	%	%
Any interview		
All	56	61
CSC1	43	55
CSC2	53	71
CSC3	43	64
CSC4	53	45
CSC5	80	74
Introductory talk		
All	52	27
CSC1	64	38
CSC2	54	12
CSC3	41	41
CSC4	51	30
CSC5	48	32
Group session		
All	14	6
CSC1	22	7
CSC2	14	3
CSC3	24	20
CSC4	10	5
CSC5	3	5
Drop-in session		
All	12	8
CSC1	10	2
CSC2	16	-
CSC3	11	17
CSC4	8	11
CSC5	13	15
Received information		
All	38	50
CSC1	33	40
CSC2	43	53
CSC3	27	62
CSC4	37	50
CSC5	47	81

⁵ We are comparing Careers Service provision in S4 with Careers Service provision in S5 rather than the S4 experience of S5 pupils so the figures for S4 relate to all S4 pupils not only those who stayed on into S5.

Differences between schools within the same Careers Service Company were evident. In two Careers Service Companies, the likelihood of an S5 pupil having more than one interview varied between the schools. Whether or not an S5 pupil received an introductory talk differed between the schools to quite a large extent within all but CSC2 eg 12% and 71% in the two schools in CSC1 (table not shown).

Overall, young men/males are more likely to have attended a group session on a career topic (m: 13% vs f: 4%, table not shown). This may be explained by the type of topics often covered in such sessions, that is, career areas traditionally entered by men. A common comment by the Careers Advisers and teachers we interviewed was that pupils still tended to think in a stereotypical gendered way about careers.

Attainment made some difference to the likelihood of pupils' experiencing certain types of input from the Careers Service. The chances of an S5 pupil having an interview did not vary by attainment (measured by their Standard Grade results) but mid attainers were more likely to have a subsequent interview(s) than low and high attainers. Low attainers were more likely to have a group session and to be sent to vacancies than the others.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

These figures raise several questions. Firstly, what level and type of contact does each Careers Service Company think is necessary before S4 and in S4 and S5? Careers Service Companies are having to review their involvement in the lower school. Several of the case-study services were withdrawing from their input in S2 (typically they had involvement in the S2 subject choice process). Pupils' chances of contact with the Careers Service varied between schools within the same Careers Service. The critical question is whether this was because of genuine differences in pupil needs in each school or whether it reflected the particular circumstances of the school-Careers Service Company relationship in these schools and the interests and preferences of the Careers Adviser concerned.

Secondly, contact in S4 was concentrated around two types of input (the introductory talk and the interview) and became more focused on the interview in S5. There is discussion currently about whether the Careers Service should be adopting a wider variety of inputs, in particular, doing more group work. From these figures it would seem that there is considerable scope for a greater variety in Careers Service Company work. Higher Still may make particular demands on Careers Service Company as pupils negotiate their way through the range of pathways open to them, how can Careers Service Companies respond to this and are current patterns of input appropriate? We discuss these points further in Chapter 6.

The extent of careers interviews

Interviews in S4

Overall, 56% of S4 pupils reported having had one or more interviews with the Careers Adviser; 44% had had one interview and 12% more than one (Table 5.5). The chances of pupils having an interview varied across the Careers Service Companies, in particular, 4th year pupils in CSC5 were much more likely to have an interview. There is no clear relationship with the stated policy on interviewing. The policy in three of the Careers Service Companies is selective and the other two have self-referral policies. (For definitions of these

terms see Chapter 6.) Although the service with the most selective approach had the highest proportion of young people reporting an interview, the other two selective systems have much lower levels similar to those with self-referral policies. This may reflect differences between policy and practice that we outline in Chapter 6.

There are also differences across Careers Service Companies in the chances of a 4th year pupil having more than one interview; this is most likely in CSC3 and least likely in CSC4. Again these differences do not appear to be related to stated policy on interviewing.

Table 5.5: Extent of pupil interviews by Careers Service

	pupils in S4	Pupils in S5
	%	%
Any interview		
All	56	61
CSC1	43	55
CSC2	53	71
CSC3	43	64
CSC4	53	45
CSC5	80	74
One interview		
All	44	42
CSC1	35	45
CSC2	36	45
CSC3	25	50
CSC4	50	31
CSC5	64	45
More than one interview		
All	12	19
CSC1	8	10
CSC2	18	26
CSC3	18	14
CSC4	2	14
CSC5	16	29

There is also variation between schools within a Careers Service Company. In all but one Careers Service Company, there is significant variation between the schools within a Careers Service Company in the proportion of 4th year pupils who had an interview. This applies to the services with a selective interviewing policy and those with self-referral.

We used a logistic regression model to examine further the factors that have a bearing on whether an S4 pupil has an interview with the Careers Adviser.⁶ The advantage of this approach is that we can consider the effect of one factor while taking other factors into account, that is, to identify the independent effect of each factor. Table 5.6 shows the factors that we considered: Careers Service Company; gender; attainment; truancy; attitude to school; careers education; discussion with parents; discussion with teachers; post-S4 plans; and career maturity.

The model confirms the variation with respect to Careers Service Company (ie pupils in CSC5 have a higher chances of interview) and by school even when other factors such as attainment and truancy are taken into account. We found that gender was not important, girls were no more likely than boys to have an interview. Attainment affected the chances of pupils having an interview: the higher the attainment the more likely a pupil was to have an

⁶ We first analysed that data using a multi-level model but found that school was not a significant factor and so used a logistic regression including CSC as one of the factors in the model.

likely in CSC4. Whether or not S5 pupils had one interview or more than one interview also differed according to the Careers Service.

As for S4s, we used a logistic regression to investigate the separate effect of different factors that might be expected to have an impact on whether or not pupils have a careers interview(s) in S5.

Careers Service Company is a factor but not as important as for S4s. Gender does not have an effect and, in contrast to S4, a pupil's attainment does not affect whether or not s/he has an interview. A generally positive attitude to school increases the chances that an S5 pupil will have an interview. Once again, careers education does not have any effect nor does discussion with parents about post S5 plans. For S5 pupils, having individual discussions with a guidance teacher has a positive effect and talking to other teachers also has a separate, additional impact.

The large majority of S5 pupils were planning to return to school for a sixth year and of those leaving only 8% were intending to enter the labour market. A similar proportion planned to apply to FE or HE. Those planning to go into FE were more likely to have an interview than any of the others, whether they intended to stay on at school, look for work or training or go into HE.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

Several questions arise from the data on interviews. Is this level of interviewing appropriate, bearing in mind that it was the main source of contact with the Careers Service for these pupils? How confident can Careers Service Companies be that it reflects pupil needs? The variation across Careers Service Companies in 4th year pupils chances of an interview seems unduly large for differences in pupil needs to be the only explanation. To what extent is this variation due to pupil needs, to how well the school-Careers Service Company link was operating in these schools, to pupils' understanding of how the interviewing system operated or how well the interviewing system was functioning?

Careers education had no effect on the chances of pupils having an interview. Individual discussion with teachers seemed to be more important and this suggests that schools might consider increasing the opportunity for pupils to have such discussions. The fact that S4 pupils who did not have any ideas about their post-school plans were less likely to have an interview suggests that more needs to be done to explain the purpose of the careers interview. We return to these issues in the next chapter.

The management of interviews

Reasons pupils did not have an interview with the Careers Adviser

Pupils who did not have an interview were asked the reasons for this. Over two fifths of fourth year pupils did not want an interview but well over a half of them gave what might be termed "negative" reasons for not having an interview: 19% had requested an interview but it had not been arranged and 38% said that they didn't know they could have one or didn't know how to arrange one (Table 5.7). Careers Service Companies varied in the balance of negative reasons. Requesting an interview but it not being arranged seemed more of a problem for S4 pupils in two of the Careers Service Companies; in the other three Careers

Service Companies pupils were more likely to say that they didn't know they could have an interview or know how to arrange one.

Altogether 36% of S5 pupils had not had an interview with the Careers Adviser in S4 or S5. Of these pupils, nearly three fifths had not wanted an interview (58%, Table 5.6). Over a quarter had requested one but it hadn't been arranged (28%) and over a tenth did not know enough about the interview system ie they did not know that they could have an interview or how to arrange one (13%). As in S4, pupils' responses vary by Careers Service Company. In CSC1 a high proportion had requested an interview but it had not been arranged and this Careers Service Company also had the highest proportion of pupils who didn't know about the interview system.

In both S4 and S5 low attainers were more likely to give negative reasons and, in particular, to be unsure about how the interview system operated.

Table 5.7: Pupils' reasons for not having an interview

	S4	S5
	%	%
Didn't want one	43	58
Requested, not arranged	19	28
Didn't know could have one	15	5
Didn't know how arrange one	23	8
Something else	n/a	13
Requested, not arranged	S4	S5
All	19	28
CSC1	25	46
CSC2	23	10
CSC3	19	31
CSC4	8	25
CSC5	14	29
Didn't know could/how	S4	S5
All	38	13
CSC1	25	28
CSC2	20	8
CSC3	64	8
CSC4	50	6
CSC5	58	13

Implications for Careers Service Companies

The results highlight two issues. One is waiting time for interviews. In addition to the findings from this survey, our case study interviews also highlighted the problem of managing requests for interview, as we discuss in Chapter 6. The proportions of pupils who did not get an interview after requesting one suggests that the management of interviews is an area that schools and Careers Service Companies need to work on if pupil demand is to be met. Another aspect is communication about waiting times and interview priorities to the pupils concerned. Our interviews with Careers Advisers confirmed that this did not always happen.

A second issue is ensuring that pupils understand how the system operates. Earlier research identified the problem of pupils' lack of understanding of the mechanics of the interview system (Howieson and Semple, 1996). The issue is not whether pupils have been informed about the system – our interview data suggest that they have – but that current efforts to

inform them are not wholly successful. The findings point to a need for schools and careers companies to assess the effectiveness of their explanations to pupils.

Pupils' opinion about the timing of their interview with the Careers Adviser

Three-fifths of S4 pupils who had had an interview with a Careers Adviser were satisfied that it had happened at the right time. But a sizeable minority, two-fifths, were either not sure about the timing or thought that their interview had been at the wrong time (Table 5.8). Pupils' satisfaction with the timing of their interview did not differ significantly across Careers Service Companies.

Table 5.8: Pupils who had a Careers Adviser interview: if satisfied with timing of interview

	S4	S5
Yes	61	75
No	20	12
Not sure	19	12

We analysed the data using a logistic regression model to consider further the factors relating to satisfaction with the timing of interviews with the Careers Adviser. (An initial multilevel model had shown school was not significant). Table 5.9 summarises the effect of the various factors that we considered. It is worthwhile to note some of the factors that were not significant: attainment; truancy; general attitude to school; and coming from a single parent family.

Table 5.9: Factors affecting the chances of pupils' interview with the Careers Adviser being "at the right time" for them

	S4	S5
School	n/s	n/s
Careers service	n/s	n/s
Gender	n/s	-sig if female
Attainment	n/s	n/s
Truancy	n/s	n/a
Attitude to school	n/s	n/s
Discussion with parents about plans	+sig	+sig
Individual discussion with guidance teacher	n/s	n/s
Individual discussion with PSE teacher	n/s	+sig
Individual discussion with other teacher	n/s	n/s
Extent of careers education	-sig	n/s
Extent of other careers activities (EIL)	n/s	n/s
Frequency of careers education classes	n/s	n/s
Opinion of S4 careers education classes		n/s
...if most useful	+sig	
...if some useful	+sig	
...if a few useful	+sig	
Opinion of S5 careers education classes	n/a	n/s
...if most useful		
...if some useful		
...if a few useful		
If apply to FE	+sig	+sig
If looking for job/training	n/s	n/s
If no career ideas	n/s	-sig

The impact of careers education on pupils' satisfaction with the timing of their interview was mixed. The data show that S4 pupils who had had a greater amount of careers education were slightly less likely to think their interview had been at the right time than those who had had more limited inputs. Pupils' opinion of their careers education had an additional effect. Those

who had found their careers education useful (even a few sessions) were more likely to think that their interview had been at the right time than those who were negative about the value of their careers education (this is an independent effect over and above the extent of careers education and the other factors in the model). Discussion with parents had an effect, those who had had a high level of discussion about their career ideas with their parents were more likely to be satisfied with the timing of their interview.

An even higher proportion of fifth year pupils who had had an interview were satisfied with the timing of their interview compared with those in fourth year (Table 5.8). Our further analysis showed that the Careers Service or school concerned did not make a difference to the chances of fifth year pupils satisfaction with the timing of their interview (Table 5.9). Nor did attainment make a difference. Gender did, girls were less likely to be satisfied with the timing than were boys. Neither the extent nor the frequency of S5 pupils' careers education was significant. S5 pupils who had discussed their career ideas with a PSE teacher on their own were more likely to be happy with the timing of their interview and, independently of this, discussion with parents also increased the chances that pupils would think that their interview had been at the right time.

In addition to the other factors examined, S4 and S5 pupils planning to leave school and go to FE were more likely to think their careers interview had been at the right time. Those pupils who had no career ideas were less satisfied than those who had some ideas, taking all other factors into account.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

It is clear from the data that the different interviewing policies and practices across the five career Services made no difference to the chances of pupils being satisfied with the timing of their interview. It may be that although Careers Service Companies have different interviewing systems (both at the levels of policy and practice) there are also common aspects to how the systems operate, for example, how interview priorities are set to enable the Careers Adviser to spread his/her workload over the year, that mean that a substantial minority of pupils are not interviewed at what is the appropriate time for them. This lack of variation may also be related to how (well) the five Careers Service Companies identify pupil need.

These findings underline the importance of parental involvement and is in line with other research (Howieson and Semple, 1992; Semple, 1992, 1994, 1998).

For fifth year pupils the opportunity of discussing their plans with a PSE teacher on an individual basis had a positive effect. Other research has also shown the benefit to pupils' decision making skills of individual discussions with teachers about their career plans (NFER, 1996). It may also be the case that the PSE teachers encouraged pupils to have an interview or intervene directly with the Careers Adviser to suggest that these pupils should receive an interview quickly. Careers education had an effect only on S4 pupils' satisfaction with the timing of their interview. Those who had had more careers education were less happy about timing. It may be that having a higher level of careers education means that pupils had thought more about their plans, had a greater desire for an interview and were therefore more likely to be dissatisfied if the interview did not happen quickly. Pupils who had no career ideas were less likely to be satisfied about timing, this may be related to their

individual degree of “readiness” for an interview (that is to what we have referred to as “personally prompted” transitions).

Some demand for different interview timing of careers adviser interview

Although a majority of pupils who had an interview were satisfied with the timing, a substantial minority were not (39% of S4 pupils and 25% of S5s). These pupils suggested alternative timing of interviews. There is a considerable demand for earlier interviews among both S4 and S5 pupils (Table 5.10). Well over a third of S4 pupils would have liked an interview in S2 and 46% earlier in S4. Girls in particular would have preferred interviews earlier in 4th year.

Table 5.10: Alternative timing for interview* (pupils not satisfied with timing)

Interview better	S4 pupils
In S2	37
In S3	18
Earlier in S4	46
Later in S4	20
After S4	21
Interview better	S5 pupils
Before S5	39
Earlier in S5	42
After S5	19

* multiple response so percentages may sum to more than 100

The majority of S5 pupils who were not satisfied with their interview timing wanted an earlier interview, either before S5 or earlier in S5. Only 15% wanted a later interview.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

These results raise two different issues. One concerns what the Careers Service input should be in S2 and more generally in the early years of secondary school and we consider this in more detail in Chapter 6. We have already noted earlier in this chapter that Careers Service Companies are having to consider their work in S2 in the light of their resources and other priorities but the survey indicates that there is considerable pupil demand for input at this stage. As we report in Chapter 6, our interviews with school staff also identified demand for Careers Service Company involvement in S2 and the importance of careers education and guidance in the early years of secondary education is highlighted in other research (Munro and Elsom, 2000).

A second issue is how to accommodate the desire for earlier interviews over S4-S6. Careers Advisers obviously have to manage their interviews with all year groups over the school year and, as we outline in the next chapter, we know from our interview with Careers Advisers and teachers that priority is given to pupils who are soon to leave or have to complete UCAS applications. Consequently S4 and S5 pupils who are staying on can sometimes be pushed down the priority list for interview. But this raises issues about the management of interviews and how well the interview system responds to individual needs as well as to system factors such as when applications have to be completed.

There were also some pupils, especially fourth year pupils, who felt that their interview with the Careers Adviser would have been better later, whether later in S4 or after S4 or S5.

Again, this raises the question of how well the interviewing system responds to individual need. It also poses questions about how well pupils understood the interview system, for example, did they realise that they could decline an interview?

Limited preparation for Careers Adviser interview

Pupils' ability to get the most from their interview with a Careers Adviser depends partly on how well they understand the purpose of the interview and the role of the Careers Adviser and how far they have thought about themselves and their ideas before the interview. The Careers Service has a part in this preparation but schools have a major role to play (as do parents).

S4 pupils were asked a number of questions about their preparation for interview. (S5 pupils were not asked this question.) Around a third of S4 pupils felt they knew what to expect before their careers interview (Table 5.11). A higher proportion around two thirds, knew who the Careers Adviser was (65%). Well under a half reported discussing the careers interview in PSE class or with their Guidance Teacher. Three fifths of S4s were satisfied with the notice they had been given of their interview, an important factor in allowing pupils to think about their interview.

Table 5.11: S4 pupils' preparation for careers interview*

	yes	No	not sure
	%	%	%
Know what to expect from careers interview	34	50	16
Know who Careers Adviser was	65	32	3
Discuss careers interview in class/with guidance teacher	43	46	11
Get plenty of advice	60	35	5

* S5 pupils not asked this question

“Knowing what to expect” from a careers interview is the key question so we analysed this further. Whether or not a fourth year pupil knew what to expect from their interview did not vary according to Careers Service Company but did vary between schools within three Careers Service Companies. There is not, however, significant variation in these schools in extent to which pupils had discussed the careers interview in class or with a Guidance Teacher which suggests that this is not the key factor in pupils awareness. This is supported by the differences in awareness by attainment. High attaining S4 pupils were least likely to have discussed their interview in class/Guidance Teacher but were more likely to say they knew what to expect .

The figures suggest that schools need to do more, in partnership with the Careers Service, to prepare pupils for interview. The strategy of discussing the interview in class or with a guidance teacher needs to be reviewed and additional strategies might be considered.

Effectiveness of interviews

Pupils' view of the usefulness of their careers interview

A majority of pupils in 4th and 5th were positive about the usefulness of their careers interview (Table 5.12). Fourth years were most positive, over two-thirds judged it as either “very” or “quite a lot” useful. S5 pupils' opinion was slightly less positive than that of S4 pupils.

Table 5.12: Was your careers interview useful

	very	quite a lot	a little	not at all
	%	%	%	%
S4	30	37	25	8
S5	20	40	31	9

The particular Careers Service Company made a difference to the opinion of S4 pupils, for example, whether pupils were more likely to find their interview “very useful” rather than quite useful as in CSC3. When we combined responses into the two categories of “positive” and “negative”⁷ and compared them, we found no difference in pupils’ responses according to the particular Careers Service Company. Careers Service Company was not a significant factor at all to the opinion of fifth year pupils.

Table 5.13 summarises the effect of the factors that we thought might have a bearing on the likelihood of pupils’ finding their careers interview useful. The analysis considered the effect of each factor taking all the other aspects into account, for example, it enabled us to see what effect careers education alone had on the opinion of two pupils who are exactly the same in every other respect.

The most significant factor in the model was the timing of pupils’ careers interview. Those who judged that their interview with the Careers Adviser had been at the right time were more likely to rate it as useful than those unhappy about the timing.

Attainment made a difference to the probability of S4 pupils finding their interview useful; the higher their attainment the more likely they were to do so. Attainment does not affect S5 pupils’ opinion. Neither truancy nor attitude to school in general made a difference to S4 pupils. Truancy was not significant for fifth year pupils but if their attitude to school was positive, they were more likely to find their careers interview useful than those who thought school had been a waste of time.

The extent to which pupils in fourth year discussed their plans with their parents had an effect. The more discussion they reported, the more likely they were to find their interview useful. Individual discussion with guidance, PSE or other teachers did not affect S4s but for S5 pupils, if they had talked about their plans with a PSE teacher they had a greater probability of having a positive opinion of their interview. If they had talked to another teacher this had a separate additional effect on the chances that their opinion would be positive.

Although the amount of careers education that fourth and fifth year pupils had had did not affect their opinion, for S5 pupils, the frequency of their classes made a difference. Those who had had more frequent classes were more likely to think that their careers interview had been useful. For both year groups, if their opinion of their careers education classes was positive (compared with pupils who responded that none of the classes had been useful), then there was a greater chance that they would find the careers interview useful. The effect was greater for those who rated most or some of their careers education classes as useful than those who thought only a few of their classes had been useful. This result is not just reflecting the fact that some pupils are more positive about school activities generally since attitude to school is controlled for in the model.

⁷ Positive = “very” and “quite a lot” responses; negative = “a little” and “not at all” responses.

Table 5.13: Factors affecting the probability of pupils thinking their careers interview was useful

	S4	S5
School	n/s	n/s
Careers Service	sig	n/s
Gender	n/s	n/s
Attainment	+sig	n/s
Truancy	n/s	n/a
Attitude to school	n/s	+sig
Single parent	-sig	+sig
Discussion with parents about plans	+sig	n/s
Individual discussion with guidance teacher	n/s	n/s
Individual discussion with PSE teacher	n/s	+sig
Individual discussion with other teacher	n/s	+sig
Extent of careers education	n/s	n/s
Extent of other careers activities (EIL)	n/s	n/s
Frequency of careers education classes	n/s	sig
Opinion of S4 careers education classes		
...if most useful	+sig	+sig
...if some useful	+sig	+sig
...if a few useful	+sig	+sig
Opinion of S5 careers education classes		
...if most useful	n/a	+sig
...if some useful		
...if a few useful		
Opinion of S6 careers education classes	n/a	n/a
...if most useful		
...if some useful		
...if a few useful		
If apply to FE	+sig	+sig
If looking for job/training	n/s	n/s
If no career ideas	n/s	n/s
If had interview with careers advisor		
If interview at right time	+sig	+sig

Whether or not S4 and S5 pupils had any ideas about their post school plans did not impact on their opinion of the careers interview; those who had no ideas were just as likely to find their interview useful. Compared to those S4 and S5 pupils who were planning to return to school, there was a greater chance that those intending to go on to FE or HE would have a positive opinion of their interview. But those pupils planning to enter the labour market were no more likely to have a positive view of their interview. As we will see later in this chapter, pupils planning to enter the labour market were least well served in terms of information giving in the interview which may have some bearing on this finding.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

The findings show the critical importance of timing of the careers interview. As we have noted earlier in this chapter, pupils' satisfaction with timing did not vary by Careers Service Company. This is likely to be part of the reason why there was only limited variation across Careers Service Company in respect of pupils' opinion of their careers interview.

Careers education appears to have a positive effect on helping young people make the most of their interview. Both frequency and opinion of classes had separate positive effects. It is the frequency of careers education rather than the total amount of careers education that a pupil had experienced that makes the difference. This has implications for how schools timetable careers education.

Individual discussion of their plans has an impact on pupils' view of their interview. It may be that the more opportunity they have had to discuss their plans, the more likely they are to make best use of the interview and therefore to rate it as useful. We would repeat the point already made that any support given to parents by the Careers Service would pay dividends.

Individual discussion with teachers is another aspect that is significant. On the whole, pupils tend not to be dealt with on an individual basis in schools but as members of a class or group. This research points to the value of enabling pupils to have the opportunity to discuss their plans with teachers on an individual basis. PSE and other teachers emerge as more important in this respect than guidance teachers which suggests that the formal guidance system is not serving this function. This may be because the focus of guidance staff is more on pastoral and behavioural matters than on careers guidance.

Pupils' view of the interview process and outcomes

As we have seen, the majority of pupils who had had an interview with a Careers Adviser found it useful but we wanted to examine in more detail the effectiveness of the interview for pupils, both in terms of the interview process and also the outcomes for them. The question of what constitutes an effective interview is not a straightforward one; among other reasons it depends on the stage which individual pupils are at in their career development and thinking. One way is to consider the effectiveness of an interview is to look at how the Careers Adviser conducted the interview (the interview process) and also to examine if the interview helped pupils to “move on” in their thinking. We therefore asked a number of questions on both the interview process and on its outcomes.

Table 5.14: Pupils' view of the interview process

	very much	quite a lot	a bit	a little	not at all
Do you think the Careers Adviser...					
...encouraged you to talk about yourself					
S4	15	38	32	10	6
S5	16	40	31	10	4
...let you make up your own mind					
S4	36	35	21	6	2
S5	23	44	23	6	5
...gave you honest advice and information					
S4	51	34	11	3	1
S5	51	32	13	3	1

We asked pupils whether the Careers Adviser had encouraged them to talk about themselves and if s/he had let them make up their own mind. These are critical factors in the effective conduct of any interview by a Careers Adviser. It is vital that a Careers Adviser can quickly establish rapport, build a relationship with pupils, allow them to talk about their ideas and plans and support them in making a decision and taking ownership of their own career development. We also asked pupils whether the information and advice given to them was honest, that is, about their perception of the impartiality of the Careers Adviser. This is an aspect that all Careers Advisers see as fundamental to their role and one of the strengths of the Careers Service but some Careers Advisers we interviewed expressed concern that some pupils see them as “pushing Skillseekers”.

Over half of fourth and fifth year pupils felt that the Careers Adviser had encouraged them to talk about themselves to a considerable extent (53% and 56%: very much or quite a lot), only a minority responded “a little” or “not at all” (Table 5.14). Focusing on those who had responded “very much” and “quite a lot”, Careers Service Company did not make a difference to S4 pupils’ responses but did in the case of fifth years (Table 5.15). S5 pupils in two Careers Service Companies were less likely to be positive than pupils elsewhere.

Around two thirds of pupils felt the Careers Adviser had let them make up their own mind to a considerable extent. S4 pupils were more likely to think so than S5 pupils. Considering the “very much” and “quite a lot” responses, the Careers Service concerned made a difference to pupils’ opinion in both year groups but the pattern varied across the years (Table 5.15).

Table 5.15: Pupils’ view of the interview process by Careers Service Company

Very and quite a lot responses	S4	S5	S6
Encouraged you to talk about self			
All	-	56	42
CSC1	n/s	66	59
CSC2	n/s	47	33
CSC3	n/s	65	-
CSC4	n/s	49	28
CSC5	n/s	53	41
Let make up own mind			
All	71	67	65
CSC1	67	70	71
CSC2	51	69	57
CSC3	73	40	-
CSC4	82	68	50
CSC5	74	74	74
Gave honest information and advice			
All	85	83	86
CSC1	79	n/s	80
CSC2	80	n/s	71
CSC3	78	n/s	-
CSC4	97	n/s	74
CSC5	84	n/s	71

Pupils generally were confident about the impartiality of the Careers Service. A large majority felt that they had received honest advice and information. Only around 5% of pupils were negative about this. S4 pupils’ opinion varied across Careers Service Companies (Table 5.15). CSC4 stands out as having the highest proportion of S4 pupils who were positive.

Pupils were asked a number of questions to examine the outcomes of the interview for them. Some of the questions were on aspects likely to have an impact on the chances of pupils making progress in their interview; other questions were about the information they received in interview.

We asked whether pupils felt that the Careers Adviser had explained the options available to them after school. In both year groups, a large majority felt that the Careers Adviser had done so (Table 5.16). Most pupils, therefore, judged their interview as effective in providing them with an overview of the possibilities available to them after school. The extent to which this happened did not vary across Careers Service Companies for S4 pupils but did in respect of fifth years ranging from 70% to 89% (Table 5.17).

Table 5.16: Pupils' view of the outcomes of their interview

	Yes	
	S4	S5
• explained options available to you after school	83	79
• made you think about careers you hadn't considered	65	62
• accepted your career ideas without question	45	49
• helped you decide on a plan for the future	47	46
• helped you think about your strengths and weaknesses and career ideas	58	57

Table 5.17: Pupils' view of the outcomes of their interview by Careers Service Company

	Explained post-school options	Think about other careers	Accepted ideas without question	Helped decide on plan for future	Help think about strengths, weaknesses & career ideas
S4					
All	-	65	45	-	58
CSC1	n/s	n/s	49	n/s	73
CSC2	n/s	n/s	41	n/s	65
CSC3	n/s	n/s	24	n/s	59
CSC4	n/s	n/s	63	n/s	39
CSC5	n/s	n/s	45	n/s	57
S5					
All	79	62	-	46	57
CSC1	89	n/s	n/s	51	64
CSC2	79	n/s	n/s	43	42
CSC3	80	n/s	n/s	81	72
CSC4	70	n/s	n/s	40	51
CSC5	77	n/s	n/s	39	61

* numbers too small to include
n/s = not significant

Another question was whether pupils thought that the Careers Adviser had helped to widen their ideas by making them think about careers they had not previously considered. Around two thirds of S4 and S5 pupils thought s/he had made them think about other careers (Table 5.16). There was no difference across Careers Service Companies in the extent to which pupils felt the Careers Adviser had helped them to think about other careers.

We asked whether the Careers Adviser had accepted their ideas without question. The skill of “challenging” in interview – asking pupils to explain the basis and rationale for their ideas – is a key skill for a Careers Adviser although “challenge” may not be appropriate in every interview. In S4 and S5 around half of the pupils thought that the Careers Adviser had accepted their ideas without question; over a third thought that they had been “challenged”. Pupils’ answers suggest that Careers Advisers were not challenging them enough and requiring them to explain their ideas. We are aware that this is a difficult aspect of an interview, if not handled well pupils can feel that the Careers Adviser is trying to “put them off” their ideas. Nevertheless, it is essential that, where appropriate, Careers Advisers ensure that pupils reflect on their ideas properly.

Under half of pupils thought that the Careers Adviser had helped them decide on a plan for the future. This varied considerably across Careers Service Companies for S5 pupils but not for fourth years. In interpreting the answers to this question it is important to bear in mind that making a plan for the future might not be an appropriate outcome in some cases.

Helping pupils to think about their strengths and weaknesses and career ideas could be seen as the fundamental outcome of a careers interview for pupils. Table 5.15 shows that a majority of pupils, but only a small one, thought that the Careers Adviser had helped them to do so (58% and 57%). There were differences across Careers Service Companies for either year group (Table 5.17). CSC1 is above average in both years; overall CSC5 and CSC3 have quite high responses.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

Pupils were most positive about the impartiality of the Careers Adviser; in addition around two thirds thought that the Careers Adviser had been non-directive and let them make up their own mind. Is this the sort of level of satisfaction that Careers Service Companies would expect? Is the balance of talk in the interview appropriate or too much in favour of the Careers Adviser? We recognise the difficulties: pupils may want a lot of information from the Careers Adviser or the Careers Adviser may feel that s/he needs to go over certain ground that should perhaps have already been covered in careers education which can skew the relative inputs from the pupil and Careers Adviser.

Interviews seem to be most successful in covering the post school options available to pupils and in widening their ideas. They appear to be less successful in helping pupils to think about their strengths and weaknesses and their career ideas and, in particular, in encouraging pupils to reflect properly on their career ideas and the rationale for them. How can Careers Advisers do more to help pupils reflect on themselves and their career ideas? It would seem that Careers Advisers could do more to challenge pupils although we recognise that this might not be appropriate in every interview. But there may also be a tension here between expecting Careers Advisers to do so and the pressures of client evaluation.

Appropriateness of information given in interview

A careers interview is concerned with much more than information giving but it is an important part of it for some pupils. We asked those who had had an interview about the information they had received on different types of opportunities and post-school options. We included a "didn't want information" option to exclude those for whom this was not relevant to their interview. We might note that only a minority did not want information.

We considered the information pupils received in relation to their future plans to seek some indication of the extent to which the information given matched their needs.

We grouped S4 pupils into those planning to return to school for a fifth or sixth year and subdivided this group on the basis of their attainment; a second group of S4s were those intending to apply to a college course and the third those who planned to enter the labour market (find a job or a training place). Table 5.18 shows the extent of each type of information that the groups received in their interview.

Overall, fourth year pupils intending to return to school received more information about FE and HE than about the labour market. The extent to which pupils returning to school received information about college courses did not vary by their attainment but did so in relation to university: high attaining pupils were most likely to get information on university courses. High attainers were least likely to receive much information about the local labour market but

only a minority of mid attaining pupils did so, and low attainers were even less likely to do so.

Table 5.18: Appropriateness of information-giving in interview

	Received a lot or some information on:				
	College courses	university courses	local jobs	Local training places	non-local jobs/training places
	%	%	%	%	%
Pupils' plans					
S4 pupils					
...stay on at school	66	54	23	31	36
low attainment	n/s	42	23	24	n/s
mid attainment	n/s	44	35	44	n/s
high attainment	n/s	69	10	20	n/s
...apply FE	87	22	40	47	50
...enter labour market*	80	26	43	59	37
S5 pupils					
...stay to S6	78	72	17	30	30
...apply FE	89	8	52	45	37
...apply HE	50	71	-	-	-
...enter labour market*	59	54	42	71	36

* combination of "find a job", "find a job with training" and "get on Skillseekers"

A high proportion of 4th year pupils planning to go on to college reported receiving a considerable amount of information on college (87% "a lot/some", Table 5.18) so it would appear that the Careers Adviser was responding to their information needs. Just under a half of these potential FE applicants got information on local training which suggests that the Careers Adviser was exploring this alternative option with them.

Those intending to enter the labour market appear to be the group least likely to get information about the options most relevant to them. Although 59% got a lot/some information about local training opportunities, this leaves two-fifths who did not. They were less likely to get information on local jobs than on training opportunities. Potential labour market entrants were much more likely to get information on FE than they were to get information on jobs and training places.

A high proportion of S5 pupils planning to stay on for a sixth year received information on FE and HE but got much less information on the labour market, especially the local one. A large majority of pupils intending to go to FE got information on this sector and around half of them also got information on the local labour market. There was also a high correspondence between those planning to go to university and receiving information on university courses. Those planning to enter the labour market were more likely to get information on local training opportunities (71%) than local jobs - considerably less than a half did so (43%). Over a third got information on non-local jobs and training; a similar figure for those applying to FE and those continuing into S6.

Implications for Careers Service Companies

Pupils thinking about college or university were more likely to receive information about their planned destinations than were pupils planning to look for work or training. One question is whether there was too much focus in the interview on information-giving to FE

and HE candidates rather than too little to labour market entrants. But a number of Careers Advisers whom we interviewed felt that they were better at incorporating information about educational opportunities than labour market information into their guidance interviews. These results are in line with such comments and suggest that there is an issue about ensuring that pupils who are planning to enter the labour market receive appropriate information. How can Careers Advisers be better informed about labour market information and be enabled to use it more effectively in their interviews?

In general, these findings on the interview process and outcomes, point to issues for Careers Service Companies to consider about the monitoring of interviews and the evaluation of professional practice. We discuss these further later in this report.

Pupils' career ideas

We have seen that if pupils have no idea about what to do after school that this has an effect on the likelihood that they will have an interview with the Careers Adviser (S4 pupils) and, for those who had an interview, on their satisfaction with its timing (S5 only). We were interested in exploring what might make a difference to the chances of pupils not having any ideas. We might note that we are not implying that, in itself, this is a negative state. Equally we are not assuming that having an idea is automatically a more positive state to be in, those who do have some ideas may be adrift in their plans. We are exploring the issue as a way to gain some insight into the variety of pupil needs.

Table 5.19: Factors that reduce the chances that pupils will have no idea about what to do after leaving school

	S4	S5
School	n/s	n/s
Careers service	n/s	n/s
Gender	+sig if female	n/s
Attainment	sig	n/s
Truancy	n/s	n/a
Attitude to school	n/s	n/s
Discussion with parents about plans	+sig	+sig
Individual discussion with guidance teacher	sig	n/s
Individual discussion with PSE teacher	+sig	n/s
Individual discussion with other teacher	n/s	n/s
Extent of careers education	n/s	n/s
Extent of other careers activities (EIL)	n/s	-sig
Frequency of careers education classes		
...high	+sig	n/s
...medium	n/s	n/s
Opinion of S4 careers education classes		
...if most useful	n/s	+sig
...if some useful	n/s	+sig
...if a few useful	n/s	n/s
Opinion of S5 careers education classes	n/a	n/a
...if most useful		
...if some useful		
...if a few useful		
Opinion of S6 careers education classes	n/a	n/a
...if most useful		
...if some useful		
...if a few useful		
If had interview with careers advisor	+sig	n/s

Using the same modelling techniques as before we considered a range of factors to see if they had any effect on the chances of pupils having some ideas about what they wanted to do after leaving school (Table 5.19). Considering S4 pupils, gender and attainment each had a separate effect; girls were more likely than boys to have some ideas and the higher a pupil's attainment the more likely they were to have an idea about what to do after school. The greater the extent to which fourth year pupils had had discussions with their parents the more this improved their chances of having an idea. In addition, individual discussion with a guidance teacher and talking to a PSE teacher each had a separate effect. Pupils who had careers education classes frequently were more likely to have some ideas about their post school plans. In addition to these factors having a careers interview also improved their chances of having some idea.

Fewer factors made a difference to fifth year pupils. Discussion with parents again had a positive effect and if they had found some or most of their careers education classes in S5 useful. Having an interview with the careers adviser did not make any difference. It is also worth noting that attainment did not have an effect on the likelihood of S5 pupils having any ideas about their post school plans.

Implications

A number of the factors that we have already identified as important also emerge here: discussion with parents and teachers and the frequency and opinion of careers education apart from having a careers interview. These are features that seem to help some pupils come up with ideas about their future. Having an idea(s) is only the first step, pupils then have to reflect on it and test it out but these findings may go some way to suggest strategies to adopt with those pupils who have no ideas at all. Careers Service Companies and schools may wish to consider strategies targeted specifically at pupils with no career ideas.

Pupils' career-related skills and knowledge

Pupils were asked to assess their career-related skills and knowledge and for S4 pupils we examined the factors that made a difference to this.⁸ Pupils gave their assessment of their decision-making skills (eg if they felt ready to make a plan for the future); their opportunity awareness (eg how much they knew about courses, training and job opportunities); transition skills (eg know how to complete an application form or letter) and self-awareness (eg know the sorts of jobs or careers that might suit them). From this we then calculated a total score for their knowledge and skills.

We considered a wide range of factors that we thought might contribute towards pupils career-related skills and knowledge. Neither school nor Careers Service made a difference to pupils' estimation of their careers-related skills and knowledge. Having had work experience did not have an impact, nor did their opinion of their work experience ie whether they thought it had been useful. But the extent of the careers education a fourth year pupil had received had a significant impact – the greater the extent of careers education (classes) the higher they estimated their careers-related skills and knowledge to be. Other EIL activities did not make a difference to pupils' estimation of their skills and knowledge. Over and above the extent of careers education received, pupils' opinion of it also had an effect. Pupils who rated it useful had a higher skills and knowledge score than those who had judged their

⁸ We used a multilevel model.

careers education as not useful. Thus pupils' opinion of careers education has an additional effect on top of whether they had attended careers education classes. The extent to which pupils had had individual contact with their guidance teacher was related to a higher score, taking into account all other factors in the model. Whether or not a pupil had had an interview with the Careers Adviser was not significant but pupils' opinion of their interview was: those who rated their careers interview as useful had a higher score on the career-related skills and knowledge. Again this is taking account of other factors. We cannot be sure, however, of the direction of the relationship. Is it the case that having a good careers interview (ie assessed by the pupil as useful) increases pupils' careers-related skills and knowledge or that those with a high level of skills and knowledge will get more out of the interview and so rate it as useful? The extent to which pupils discussed their career ideas with their parents was not significant.

Pupils' plans and career ideas both had an additional separate impact. Pupils who had no idea about what they wanted to do after leaving school had a lower score on career-related skills and knowledge. Is it the case that part of the reason they have no idea is that they lack relevant skills and knowledge? An alternative explanation is that since they have no ideas, they lack the motivation to find out more. The final factor that had an independent effect was pupils plans for after S4. Those who planned to go to college were more likely to have a higher score than those staying on or entering the labour market. One might suggest that those about to leave school would be more motivated to find out information and to have thought more about career-related issues. This does not account for the difference between potential FE entrants and labour market entrants. It may reflect the focus of careers education classes – a higher proportion of pupils reported finding out about courses at college than local job and local training opportunities (68% vs 37% and 45%, table not shown).

Below we summarise the factors that contribute to the chances of S4 pupils having a higher level of career-related knowledge and skill.

Factors that had a positive effect on pupils' career-related knowledge and skills

- having a higher level of careers education;
- having a positive opinion of careers education;
- having contact with guidance teachers on an individual basis;
- having a positive opinion of their interview with a careers advisor;
- planning to go to college.

Factors that had a negative effect

- having no ideas about post-school plans.

Non-significant factors

- gender;
- attainment;
- attitude to school;
- truancy;

- EIL input (non careers education);
- work experience;
- part-time job;
- if had an interview with a Careers Adviser;
- total amount of contact with Careers Service;
- level of parental education;
- parental occupation;
- single parent family;
- extent of help from parents;
- school attended;
- Careers Service Company

Implications

These findings show that careers education has an impact on pupils' estimation of their careers-related skills and knowledge. But both the extent and quality of the careers education are critical to whether it has a positive impact or not. It is evident that joint work by schools and Careers Service Companies to increase the extent of careers education and ensure that it meets pupils' needs would be time well spent.

The findings underline (again) the need for schools to consider how pupils' access to guidance teachers on an individual basis can be maximised and point to the need to ensure that careers advisers are involved with the guidance team.

We would suggest on the basis of the results, along with the evidence from our interviews with teachers and Careers Advisers, that the links between careers education and guidance and EIL need to be strengthened.

Finally, we would suggest that the questions that we used (eg about pupils' careers-related skills and knowledge, their stage of career thinking) might be used, possibly in an adapted form, by schools and CSCs to help identify and analyse the needs of individuals and of groups of pupils. This could contribute to the development of careers education programmes with aspects differentiated according to individuals' level of skill and knowledge and clarity of career direction. The questions could also be adapted and used as a pre-interview tool to allow Careers Advisers to make the most effective use of the contracting process (the point at which the client's perceived needs and expectations and the conduct of the interview is negotiated).

CHAPTER 6

THE CAREERS SERVICE WORK IN SCHOOLS: CLIENT CONTACT, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICE

Introduction

This chapter considers the work of the Careers Service with pupils in school. It starts by discussing the different models of client contact systems operated by Careers Service Companies and the issues that the research revealed, then goes on to describe the operation of interview systems, group work and Careers Service role in careers education.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Overview of careers advisers' work in school

- All of the school staff involved in the research believed the Careers Service performed an essential role and valued its work in their schools. They generally wanted an increase in the Careers Adviser's time allocation.
- The pattern of Careers Advisers (CA) work was similar across all Careers Service Companies. The bulk of their time was devoted to scheduled interviews with S4-S6 pupils although they were involved in other inputs such as drop-in sessions, talks and careers evenings and in contributing to careers education programmes and in-service training.

Client contact systems

- Definitions of the common models of school client contact systems (blanket, selective and self-referral) vary across and within Careers Service Companies. There are also discrepancies between stated policies on contact systems and what happens in practice.
- In practice, all Careers Service Companies in Scotland operated a mixture of the three models and differences relate to the particular mix of each model.
- Current models of client contact systems do not adequately encompass the complexities of practice. It proved impossible to compare the effectiveness of the different client contact systems. There is a need for careers guidance professionals to develop new models of client contact.

The interview system

- Most Careers Service Companies operated a system of diagnostic questionnaires which gave pupils the opportunity to request an interview.
- In around half of the Careers Service Companies, Careers Advisers thought that targets had an impact on how they responded to pupils' requests for interview.
- The role of guidance staff in publicising career Service provision, in identifying pupils for interview and encouraging them to ask for an interview was critical, especially where self-referral operated in practice
- Self-referral systems tended to be less popular with schools; Careers Advisers were divided in their opinion of the (de)merits of self-referral. A number of Careers Service

Companies that had an official policy of self referral did not actually operate one in practice.

- Interview programmes were generally based around categories of pupils and their expected transitions eg S4 leavers, HE applicants. Even in self-referral systems interview priorities tended to be set on this basis.
- Although Careers Advisers and guidance staff explained the interview system, they recognised that some pupils did not understand how the system operated, including how to access an interview and about waiting times and interview priorities.
- The management of interviews in all types of client contact systems was an issue. Waiting times for interviews varied considerably across schools and at different times of the year. This is a critical issue since, as this research has indicated, having an interview at the right time is the most critical factor in determining whether pupils find it useful.
- By the later stages of the research, some Careers Service Company managers were trying to build more flexibility into the system.
- How well schools prepared pupils for interview varied; Careers Advisers frequently commented on the need to cover basic points about their role and the purpose of the interview during the interview.

Group work

- Most group work undertaken in Careers Service Companies was in the form of presentations to large groups of pupils eg classes or year groups. More interactive sessions with smaller groups of pupils were more limited; only a minority of Careers Service Companies showed significant development of this kind of approach.
- There was little support among Careers Advisers or teachers that small group work might replace interviews for certain pupils.
- But a number of Careers Advisers thought that small group work would be a valuable addition to interviews, especially as preparation for interview. Group work as an interview review mechanism was less commonly mentioned.
- Targets had had some effect in prompting group sessions although a considerable proportion of careers advisers believed that their targets for interviews restricted their opportunity to undertake group work.
- Some schools were unable or unwilling to organise groups of pupils, especially small groups, usually because of timetable constraints and the demands of subject teaching.
- Small group sessions were generally used to cover information on popular topics or as interview preparation. Post interview group work to review pupils' progress was much less common.

Careers education

- The extent and nature of Careers Adviser involvement in careers education varied across the Careers Service Companies but there was a general trend for Careers Service Company management to emphasise Careers Advisers role as consultants rather than as deliverers of careers education. Not all Careers Advisers were happy with this development and schools commonly wanted some degree of delivery of careers education by Careers Advisers.

- Careers Advisers' knowledge of schools' careers education programmes varied but few were familiar enough with provision to be able to plan their inputs to fit in with pupils' careers education.
- The respective roles of the Careers Service and the Education Business Partnership (EBP) varied considerably across Careers Service Companies, partly because of the high levels of variation in the provision of EBPs themselves across Scotland. An effective approach could be seen where the Careers Service Company and the EBP planned developments together and had complementary roles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Careers Advisers' work in school

It is important to recognise that all of the school staff involved in the research believed that the Careers Service (CS) performs an essential role and valued its work in their schools. This chapter should be read with this in mind. The most common change in Careers Service work suggested by school staff was an increase in the Careers Adviser's time allocation.

The pattern of Careers Advisers' work in school was similar across Careers Service Companies in Scotland. In a number of Careers Service Companies, Careers Advisers were involved in special projects with particular groups of pupils and in the latter stages of the research, many Careers Service Companies were participating in On Track programmes which involved intensive work with small groups of pupils identified as being at risk of early leaving or under achieving. Nevertheless, Careers Advisers work in schools followed a fairly standard pattern.

The bulk of Careers Advisers' time was devoted to scheduled interviews with S4, S5 and S6 pupils. Most also offered drop-in sessions or clinics at lunch-times or breaks in which pupils could speak to them without an appointment. It was frequently noted that these clinics were particularly useful for S2 pupils who were not routinely included in the scheduled programme of interviews. Introductory talks to S4 and usually also to S5 pupils were standard practice and in a number of Careers Service Companies provided the opportunity for the Careers Adviser to distribute screening forms/diagnostic questionnaires which were then used to set interview priorities. Careers Advisers typically carried out a number of other types of talks/group work to classes, year groups, or particular groups such as winter leavers or higher education applicants. These talks might be on, for example, S2 subject choice, post-16 options; Skillseekers, and HE and the UCAS process. Talks on Higher Still options to young people and parents were becoming more common.

The extent and nature of Careers Advisers' involvement in careers education varied across Careers Service Companies although there was a general move across Companies to emphasise their role as consultants rather than as deliverers of careers education. Careers Advisers also participated in Future Needs Assessment meetings (for pupils with special educational needs) in schools and attended parents evenings at S2, S4, S5 and S6. They were typically also involved in a number of other activities such as option days and evenings as well as careers conventions and careers evenings, and Industrial Awareness Days. They might also be involved in in-service training, usually with guidance teachers.

All Careers Service Companies had a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each school that set out the nature and extent of Careers Service input to the school throughout the year and

their respective responsibilities. On an every-day basis, a common arrangement was for the Careers Adviser to liaise with a nominated member of staff with responsibility for organising interviews and other Careers Service inputs.

Client contact systems

We were interested in the particular client contact system operated in schools by the Careers Service Companies across Scotland to enable us to consider the relationship, if any, between the type of contact systems and the effectiveness of school provision. When Heads of Service and practitioners answered our questions about their client contact systems in school, most responded in terms of the type of interview system rather than the total client contact system. This response reflects the overwhelming importance of the careers interview compared with, for example, group work as the delivery mechanism for careers guidance. The Careers Service Companies which operated open access systems were more likely to respond in relation to the full range of client contacts. It was also noticeable that few Careers Service Company staff thought of client contact systems in relation to post-school work.

Heads of Service and practitioners generally responded in terms of the three commonly recognised models of “blanket” “selective” and “self-referral/open access” systems. Before discussing client contact systems further, we give an explanation of what we understand to be the common view of these three models.

Models of client contact systems

1. Self referral/open access

The principle behind this approach is that a young person should seek a contact with the Careers Service at the point when he/she perceives the need. In this situation, an S1 pupil who requests an interview, or asks to attend a group session on an occupational area, has equal priority to an S6 leaver.

2. Selective

In a selective approach, the Careers Adviser (often in liaison with a guidance teacher or other appropriate member of the school staff) is responsible for prioritising which school client should have the services of the Careers Adviser, what this contact should be and at what time it should be delivered. An example of this would be the Careers Adviser reading a client's background form and deciding that since this client appeared to be uncertain about career direction and planned to leave school at the end of the session, that s/he should have a full vocational guidance interview in the next month after the winter leavers had been interviewed.

3. Blanket

This approach is to ensure that all school clients of a particular type get the same intervention within a recognised period of time, eg that all S4 pupils get a short interview between January and June.

We found it impossible to classify the 17 Careers Service Companies according to the three types of systems (“blanket”, “selective” and “self referral”) and as a result we were unable to consider whether effectiveness was related to the type of client contact system in place. One

problem was that the terminology used was clearly being interpreted differently. One person's "self-referral" was another person's "selective" system eg one Careers Adviser defined the system as "self-referral" because a drop-in clinic session was available although those being interviewed as part of the main interviewing programme were selected by the Careers Adviser.

How school staff operated could also have an impact on how the system functioned in practice, for example, where a Careers Service Company had a self-referral system, teachers in some schools who preferred the previous blanket system, ensured that all pupils completed self referral forms and the Careers Adviser ended up sifting through them to select pupils for interview.

Another problem was the apparent difference in some Careers Service Companies between stated policy and what actually happened in practice eg "*we call it selective, but it's really blanket*". It was also clear that Heads of Service and practitioners sometimes had different views about the type of client contact/interview system in place as we detail in the table below.

Heads of Service were asked to identify their school client contact systems. Twelve stated that the term "self referral" was the most appropriate but practitioners from seven of these Careers Service Companies did not describe the system as self-referral. Four Heads of Service defined their system as "selective" in contrast with practitioners in six Careers Service Companies. In the remaining Careers Service Company, both the Head of Service and the practitioner were in accord that the system was "blanket". The table below records the statements made by Heads of Service (or recorded in Careers Service Company documentation) and by practitioners.

Table 6.1 Type of client contact system: views of Heads of Service and Careers Advisers

	"self referral"	"selective"	"blanket"
HoS view	12	4	1
Practitioner view*	5	6	3

* three Careers Service Companies did not have a practitioner respondent

Finally, our evidence showed no Careers Service Company in Scotland operated any one of the three approaches in its pure form. Work in schools was commonly based on a mix of approaches with some very significant differences in the balance of the approaches in use. These differences could vary by Careers Service Company, by school, by Careers Service area within Careers Service Companies and/or by Careers Advisers. There was also a noticeably strong variation dependent on the client group. For example, a contact system which put heavy emphasis on letting the young person choose whether to have a careers interview or not (self referral) might make a careers interview compulsory for those who confirmed they were soon to leave school for a labour market opportunity (blanket). In some Careers Service Companies, all S4 got an interview (blanket) with S5 and S6 free to choose (self referral) or interviewed in priority order (selective). We could therefore define a fourth type: mixed.

4. Mixed

A mixed approach refers to a situation where client contact systems were a mixture of the three types described above. An example would be where S4 interviews were primarily for

leavers (*selective*), an attempt was made to give at least a short interview to all S5 pupils (*blanket*), and S6 pupils were expected to request an interview if they wanted one (*self referral*). In fact, all Careers Service Companies in Scotland operated mixed systems and the differences across Companies relate to the extent and nature of the particular mixed approach.

We outline different types of mixed systems operating across Scotland in the next section.

Client contact systems in Scottish Careers Service Companies

In considering the different mix of systems used across Careers Service Companies in Scotland, we were able to identify four types of mixed systems and we describe them below. In developing an alternative way to describe school client contact systems across Careers Service Companies in Scotland, it is important to note that we are only trying to *describe the practice* in schools rather than developing an alternative typology of client contact systems.

Mixed client contact systems: Group 1. Strongly self-referral with core blanket elements and optional and variable levels of selective approach.

Elements of such a system would include:

- Introductory talks (*blanket*) to all S4, 5 and 6 pupils (*selective, ie not S1,2 or 3*) to introduce the Careers Service and describe how, why and when to access the different elements of the Careers Service Company menu in the school, most notably interview slots. Written statements of entitlement and the offered service are issued to all and a clear attempt is made to contact 100% of the pupil group (*blanket*). Pupils not in the upper school (most notably S2) may (*selective*) have an introductory input from the Careers Service.
- Access to individual interviews (short or long, with or without an appointment), group sessions, vacancy boards, the careers library or careers-related ICT is by pupil request at the time the pupil recognises the need (*self referral*) and across the school year. Information sessions focused on each of the main post-school routes (eg Skillseekers, the labour market, Modern Apprenticeships, college, university) may be on offer: pupils may opt in (*self referral*) or be sent along as suitable for attending the session (*selective*).
- Pupil groups will be reminded of the menu of Careers Service interventions at different points throughout the school year. This will normally be focused on specific groups identified by the Careers Adviser and/or the guidance teacher (*selective*). These might be S5 pupils after the prelim exams or any category of client thought not to be seeking guidance when there might be a need (for example S6 leavers aiming for the labour market or S2 pupils at the point of Standard Grade subject choice).

We identified six Careers Service Companies where the stated policy or Head of Service's perspective could be allocated to this model. From practitioners' description of policy and practice in these Careers Service Companies, we concluded that only two of the six Careers Service Companies were clearly operating in practice as described by the HOS or in documentation. Two others would be classified as strongly selective and, in another, the practice across the Careers Service Company and within school work had such high degrees of variation that it could be classified as mixed. The sixth Careers Service Company had no practitioner respondent.

Mixed client contact systems: Group 2. Strongly selective with core blanket elements and optional and variable levels of self referral approach.

Elements of such a system include:

- An introductory talk (*blanket*) to the high priority client groups ie S4, S5 and S6 (*selective*). A screening form is completed to allow the Careers Adviser and the school to prioritise those for whom interviews will be arranged (*selective*). The priority system is explained to pupils at the introductory session and may be explained to parents in information leaflets and entitlement statements. Priority is given to those whose career intentions do not appear to match their subjects or their likely attainment, those who show high degrees of uncertainty with respect to career direction and are intending to leave school within the current academic year, and those whose application dates appear critical (ie applications to university). Those pupils likely to use the placing/job broking service of the Careers Service Company are also likely to be given a high degree of priority.
- The screening form commonly has a question asking pupils if they wish to have a careers interview (*self referral*). Pupils who say “yes” to this question may nonetheless be identified as low priority (*selective*) for interview and may not receive one within the current school year.
- Access to individual vocational guidance interviews is primarily on a priority system (*selective*) but drop-in sessions where pupils can seek advice through a short interview without an appointment are available (*self referral*).
- Group sessions for pupils are planned around the priorities on screening forms and pupils are identified from these forms and asked to attend appropriate group sessions (*selective*).

We identified ten Careers Service Companies where the stated policy or Head of Service’s perspective could be placed within this model. As described above we asked practitioners to describe policy in the Careers Service Company. On the basis of this evidence, we concluded that five of the ten Careers Service Companies were clearly operating this way in practice, two should be classified as strongly blanket and one was classified as mixed. Two Careers Service Companies had no practitioner respondents.

Mixed client contact systems: Group 3. Strongly blanket with core self-referral elements and optional and variable elements of selective approach.

Elements of such a system include:

- Interviews are organised for a whole year group: pupils do not have to request an interview, it will be organised as a matter of course for them (*blanket*).
- Within the interview programme, some pupils are given an earlier interview than others, perhaps based on intended leaving date or post-school intention (*selective*).
- Pupils can also seek an earlier interview if they see the need or have access to a drop-in careers clinic without appointment (*self referral*).
- Group sessions on post-school routes are provided for selected pupils (*selective*).

We identified one Careers Service Company in which the stated policy or Head of Service’s perspective could be allocated to this model. The practitioner’s perspective was similar. We classified two other Careers Service Companies as matching this model on the basis of descriptions of practice.

Mixed client contact systems: Group 4. Varying levels of blanket, selective and self referral elements

One Careers Service Company in practice appeared to match the mixed model as described.

Using this analysis, the overall picture of Scottish Careers Service Companies can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 6.2 Client contact systems among Careers Service Companies in Scotland

Mixed client contact systems	Strongly self referral	Strongly selective	Strongly blanket	Mixed
HoS description of policy	6	10	1	-
Practitioner description of practice*	2	8	3	1

* three Careers Service Companies did not have a practitioner respondent

Developing new models of client contact

Philosophies and practices in school client contact systems are the subject of lively debate and strongly held convictions. Our research, however, suggest that an informed debate is problematic because of the lack of common definitions and shared understandings of the different contact systems, the discrepancies between stated policies and what happens in practice and the way in which approaches are frequently mixed in practice. All of which makes it difficult to have an informed discussion about the different types of client contact systems or to compare their effectiveness. Yet fundamental guidance issues underlie decisions about client contact systems, for example, do all clients need to have contact with the Careers Service; do they all need an individual interview or, if not, what proportion are likely to do so and at what point; are clients in a position to identify their own guidance needs and what are the roles of Careers Advisers and guidance staff in this respect? The issues of client contact systems also highlights tensions about where power and responsibility for Careers Service strategy lies, for example, when the Careers Service is used as a delivery mechanism for government policy (perhaps as identified by business targets), can a Careers Service Company choose a system that allows some of its client group to opt out of certain inputs?

The common models of client contact systems - “blanket”, “selective” and “self-referral/open access”- are not helpful. They are inadequate to encompass the complexities of practice, they are not the subject of common understanding and do not provide a sufficient basis for Careers Service Companies to discuss and plan their careers guidance provision. We would suggest that there is a need for careers guidance professionals to develop new models of client contact. Getting definitions of client contact systems right is not an academic exercise but is central to careers guidance, requiring Careers Service Companies to consider fundamental questions about careers guidance.

Meaningful models of client contact systems that are understood and shared by management and practitioners are also necessary before it is possible to compare the effectiveness of different contact systems. There is little research evidence available about the relative impact of different client contact systems on clients’ vocational development but we had hoped to address the issue in this study. We had planned to classify the client contact systems in our case study schools and relate this to effectiveness as perceived by pupils, teachers and Careers Service Company staff. This proved impossible because we could not classify the client contact systems in a specific enough way because of the variation between policy and practice, the different understanding of the terminology, the variation in systems between schools in the same Careers Service Company and the way in which different approaches might be taken to pupils in the same school eg a potential S4 leaver compared with another S4 pupil who planned to return for S5. We concluded that although our description of client systems is accurate, it is still too general for this purpose.

The interview system

In this section we turn to how the interview system operated in practice.

Getting an interview

Most Careers Service Companies across Scotland operated a system of diagnostic questionnaires or screening forms to gather details of pupils' school subjects, career interests and intended leaving date and which usually also gave pupils the opportunity to request an interview. These were usually distributed as part of presentations on the role of the Careers Service Company, talks on post 16 options or other group work. In these Careers Service Companies, pupils could also request an interview outwith this system and both Careers Advisers and teachers stressed that they tried hard to make sure pupils understood that they could "interrupt" the set interview programme:

"They [Careers Advisers] try to emphasise that pupils can interrupt the system and ask for an appointment when it seems urgent to them"

Area Manager

Some were unsure whether all pupils did understand this and in previous research, we found that pupils were unclear about if and how they could interrupt the system (Howieson and Semple, 1996).

During this research, it was evident that around half of the Careers Advisers were clear that targets for interviews and other work had an impact on how they responded to pupils' requests for interview.

In the Careers Service Companies that did not use diagnostic questionnaires, pupils could complete an interview request form and the Careers Adviser worked to ensure pupils' awareness of the provision on offer through presentations, careers clinics, and a variety of publicity:

"Self-referral is triggered by induction talks at the beginning of the year, group work by the Careers Advisers as part of PSE, and where the Careers Adviser has been in the school for a long time and is known"

Head of Service

Guidance staff played a key role in publicising Careers Service provision, in identifying pupils who needed an interview, in encouraging pupils to ask for an interview and in all types of client contact or interview systems. We saw in the previous chapter that having an individual discussion with a guidance teacher was one of the factors that increased the likelihood that a youngster would have an interview. The role of guidance staff was seen as particularly critical where self-referral systems operated in practice:

"Self-referral depends on the school and guidance staff and their efficiency in sending, referring, pushing people"

Head of Service

From our interviews across all Careers Service Companies, it was also clear that guidance staff sometimes went further than just encouraging pupils to have an interview, to what one Careers Adviser called "self-referral with a push". One Careers Adviser described an extreme example of this:

"In some schools, for example, where guidance teachers remember the days of blanket interviewing they hand out self-referral slips to S4 pupils and then I have to sift through the

self-referral slips to decide who to see. It's very difficult to break down this attitude among some guidance staff although they've had in-service on this."

Careers Adviser

Self referral systems seemed to be less popular with schools:

"The self-referral system is operating badly, young people don't self-refer. The staff urge and tell them to self-refer. I'd prefer a compulsory appointment for S4s because pupils are being missed out... it would be okay [with the pupils], particularly if they were told it was part of their PSE programme to find out what's appropriate as a next step and that the careers interview is a key part of this process. I wouldn't support compulsory interviews for S5s and S6s but would still want a good uptake at this stage."

AHT

Some Careers Advisers in Careers Service Companies with a policy of self-referral were unsure about it:

"Self-referral can discriminate against the less confident young person. At school they are quite good at encouraging young people to go for an interview but I'm still a bit torn about the interviewing system and wonder if it might be better for the client to be blanketed."

Careers Adviser

"Self-referral works better in the school where pupils are predominantly middle class and are more willing to come forward [and are not frightened of an interview, have good social skills and perhaps have met family and friends with different jobs and are used to discussing ideas.]

In other schools where there are more working class pupils and they're more distant from school and the teachers, it is alien territory and they are less used to discussing or being asked by adults about their ideas about the future."

Careers adviser

But other Careers Advisers thought that self-referral was a more productive approach:

"The ability of young people to handle a careers interview improved when the Service moved to self-referral. Previously the interview schedule was dragged out and was done alphabetically. Now those who do refer can handle the interview"

Careers Adviser

"...being more client centred it would seem to be a better option giving you more motivated and interested young people to work with"

Careers Adviser

Interview priorities

Interview programmes across Careers Service Companies were generally based around categories of pupils and their expected transitions. It was common for interview programmes to start with the expected S5 winter leavers, followed by HE applicants and then to move on to those intending to leave at the end of the current session with perhaps priority given within this group to those with apparent discrepancies in, for example, their grades and their career intentions; and finally returning pupils. Even where self-referral operated in practice, interview programmes tended to follow this type of pattern. This might be because of how the Careers Adviser set interview priorities among those who requested an interview and/or because of how presentations and other activities to encourage self referral were organised:

"Careers Advisers do publicity first to HE people and then to S4 leavers and from this will get the natural referrals"

Area Manager

Generally priority was given to pupils who were soon to leave or have to complete UCAS or other applications. Consequently S4 and S5 pupils who were staying on could sometimes be pushed down the priority list for interview. This raises issues about the management of interviews and how well the interview system responds to individual needs as well as to system factors such as when applications have to be completed.

Generally, Careers Advisers set interview schedules based on their own estimation of interview priorities, sometimes in discussion with guidance staff, even where a self-referral system did operate in practice:

“On my last interview day in the school there were sudden requests from S6 & S5 for interview. I managed to see the S6s by rearranging some of the fourth years that had requested an interview but I didn’t see the fifth years because they’re coming back next year”

Careers Adviser

Although Careers Advisers and guidance staff explained the need to set priorities, they acknowledged that pupils sometimes did not understand where they were on a priority list and when they would get their interview. We would add that there is a more general issue about how well informed pupils are about the mechanics of the interview system. As we saw in Chapter 5, 38% of S4 pupils either did not know they could have an interview or did not know how to arrange one. All of which would suggest that schools and Careers Service Companies need to review the effectiveness of their information about access to the Careers Adviser.

The management of interviews

In all types of client contact systems, Careers Advisers had to manage their interviews over the school year within a finite time allocation. In all types of interview systems but especially self-referral, the bunching of requests for interview at certain times of year put particular pressure on the management of the interview programme. A rush of interview requests might be generated by other Careers Service inputs or arise from peer group influence or from approaching deadlines or leaving dates, for example:

“it can be a problem because if the leader of the pack asks for an interview everybody asks for an interview so it happens in bursts. At one point X [names Careers Adviser] had 50 requests for interviews and that is difficult to manage”

PT Guidance

“certainly at UCAS application times, work experience and the prelim results, then demand rises after this”

Area Manager

From Careers Service Company and school staff’s answers to our questions, it was clear that across all Careers Service Companies in Scotland waiting times for interview varied across schools, even within the same Careers Service Company, and at different times of the year. At one end of the spectrum, schools reported that pupils were generally seen within a few weeks after requesting an interview if necessary:

“the Careers Adviser is very flexible and responsive, the slowest response when someone has asked for an interview has been three weeks but youngsters have also been interviewed the next day if they are a priority”

PT Guidance

At the other end of the spectrum, a wait of up to five months for some pupils was quoted as not unusual. We were unable to calculate an average figure for waiting times since the necessary information to do so was not available from Careers Service Companies or schools.

Among pupils in the case study Careers Service Companies who had got an interview, a majority thought that it had been at the right time for them (60 % of S4s and 75% of S5s). But there is still the issue of those whose interview is delayed. In earlier research, we identified delays in pupils getting an interview after requesting one because of the way the priority system worked and found that it was a source of dissatisfaction among pupils (Howieson and Semple, 1996). In this research, we found that 19% of S4 and 28% of S5 pupils who had not had an interview had requested one but it had not been arranged. We recognise that “requested” may mean different things to different people. A pupil who ticks a box saying “Do you want a careers interview?” may be allocated a low priority for an interview because of the Careers Adviser’s assessment of the screening form. This misunderstanding needs to be addressed.

The results of the pupils’ survey indicate the importance of pupils’ interview with the Careers Adviser being at the “right time” for them. This was the most critical factor in pupils’ opinion of the usefulness of their interview.

We have already made the point that the problem of long waiting times for interviews is compounded when pupils are not kept informed about when their interview will take place:

“there’s the problem of waiting times. One reason the system doesn’t work well is that those down the list think they’ve been forgotten”

PT Guidance

In Careers Service Companies where self-referral systems did operate, all of those involved acknowledged that waiting times of beyond three to four weeks defeated the object of self-referral ie interviewing pupils at the point they see as appropriate.

A number of school staff commented positively on the efforts that the Careers Service Company made to try and contact pupils who were poor attenders or non-attenders:

“He’s (the Careers Adviser) very keen and even visits young people at home or sees them at the careers office if they’re ill or school refusers”

PT guidance

Careers Service Companies are aware of the problem of poor attenders or truants and, as the quote above illustrates, they try to respond to it in various ways. When we analysed the data from the pupils’ survey, we found that truancy was a significant factor in explaining pupils’ lack of contact with the Careers Service in fourth year. Other research has demonstrated not only the negative impact of truancy on attainment but also its continuing effect: truancy is a factor in poor post-school outcomes (eg Biggart, 2000) so that it is vital that the Careers Service establishes contact with these youngsters. Current initiatives, such as On-Track, that a number of Careers Service Companies are involved in may be one way to address the problem.

Careers Service Companies stated they were keen to be as accessible to pupils as possible and a number reported changes to their system, sometimes in response to comments made as part of client evaluation:

“We had done our own survey three years ago. Quite a lot of young people said it [their careers interview] wasn’t at the right time. Because of this we changed our practice so as to

be more accessible, for example, using drop-in clinics to combat the rigidities of the interview system”

Area Manager

Careers Service managers were keen to build more flexibility into the system for a variety of reasons, including as a way of making better use of resources, for example, by mixing long and short interviews in the same day and by interviewing different year groups at the same time of year:

“We’re trying to make interview schedules more flexible, for example, why could the Careers Officer [sic] not interview S4, S5 and S6 all in the one day? Previously it used to be S5 from November to December”

Area Manager

Pupil preparation for interview

Preparation of pupils for their careers interview by schools appeared to be relatively limited and it also varied across schools. On the whole, most Careers Advisers thought that the majority of pupils whom they interviewed were unclear about the purpose of the interview and about the role of a Careers Adviser and might also lack a basic knowledge of post-16 opportunities. We saw in Chapter 5 that only around a third of S4 pupils who had had an interview reported that they had known what to expect although a higher proportion (43%) had discussed the careers interview in class or with their guidance teacher. It is also the case that most of them would have been given or sent leaflets by the Careers Adviser explaining the Careers Adviser role, describing what happens at a careers interview and the sorts of things that they should think about before their interview. Most Careers Service Companies use such leaflets and some have packs on preparing for a vocational guidance interview. Apart from how much preparation takes place, whether by schools or by the Careers Service Company, the key issue is whether or not it is effective:

“Because youngsters’ level of awareness is so low, last year I asked x [PT guidance] if I could look over the PSD programme to see if they

were actually covering some of the issues. The PSD programme did include options awareness. I don’t know whether the methodology might have been wrong or if it simply wasn’t going in.”

Careers Adviser

A majority of Careers Advisers thought that they had to spend valuable interview time covering basic points about what would happen in the interview and doing what was sometimes described as a “mini careers education programme”:

“I’ve commented to the school that young people sometimes come to the interview not knowing what it’s going to be about so I have to run through the same framework each time...”

“I end up giving a lot of careers information in interview rather than doing guidance. It’s not just that young people are not clued up about the labour market, they also have a poor level of awareness about opportunities in FE. They’re maybe aware of a course but they really don’t have much of a clue about the different level of courses, the entrance requirements and the personal qualities that are required. Even fairly academic S5 and S6 pupils might not know about entry requirements for degrees.”

Careers Adviser

Apart from the school and the Careers Service doing more to ensure that pupils are aware of the purpose of a vocational guidance interview and have sufficient careers-related knowledge

and are able to get the most out of a careers interview, a number of Careers Advisers thought that more group work with pupils prior to their interview would be a productive strategy and we discuss this in the next section.

Group Work

When we asked about group work, most teachers and Careers Advisers referred to talks by Careers Advisers. We think it is useful, however, to distinguish between talks and group work. By talks we mean presentations by the Careers Adviser to large groups of pupils (class size or the whole year group) where there is limited active involvement of pupils. By group work we mean more interactive sessions with groups smaller than normal class size or year group on a targeted basis. Group work in this sense was limited in most Careers Service Companies. The results of the pupil survey in the case study Careers Service Companies reflect this, with very small numbers of pupils reporting participation in a group session (14% of S4s and 6% of S5s).

In practice, the size of group the Careers Adviser was expected to handle could vary from a full year group of more than 100 to a small group of half a dozen, and this required both flexibility and a high skill level from the Careers Adviser. Most Careers Advisers recognised the limitations of sessions with large groups of pupils:

“The sort of option talks to big classes where there’s a wide range of youngsters involved is not really that useful other than as a way to get your face known.”

Careers Adviser

Some Careers Service Companies had prepared central packs of materials to support staff, but several suggested that more staff development on handling group work was needed by Careers Advisers. A number of teachers were also critical of Careers Advisers’ ability to handle group work.

The most common types of small group work were subject choice sessions with S2 pupils and on specific topics such as post-school options, occupational groups, interviewing skills, debriefing of work experience and labour market information.

Four Careers Service Companies showed evidence of having undertaken significant development of group work in schools.

“In S3 nothing was happening in terms of Careers Education so I offered to do a session. I used Microdoors print-outs of 15 common jobs, which youngsters then used in groups to turn in to posters and give feedback to the class, this was developing teamwork skills, access information and presentations to large groups.”

Careers Adviser

We found little support among Careers Advisers or teachers for the idea that small group work might replace interviews for certain pupils. As we described earlier in this chapter, Careers Advisers and teachers generally believed that all pupils were entitled to an interview and that the individual interview was the “best” form of input. Careers Service Company managers were more likely to think that small group work might replace interviews, if only in a limited way ie for some pupils at some stages. This was part of the developing view among managers over the period of the research, that Careers Service Companies need to develop more varied approaches, including small group work as well as different sorts of interview.

However, a number of Careers Advisers believed that small group work could be used as an effective supplement to interviews in several respects. Young people who had had a group session with the Careers Adviser before the careers interview were thought to make more progress in the interview. Group sessions also enabled the Careers Adviser to cover certain information more efficiently with a group rather than having to repeat it at a number of interviews:

“If I could get the six or seven interviewees together in the morning and go over the purpose of the interview it would be better.”

Careers Adviser

“It would be good, for example, to take all my nursery nurse interviewees together in the morning to do a group session. This would include an introduction and a class exercise to get them to look at entry and personal qualities necessary and maybe get them thinking whether or not they might be quite so suited as they thought and therefore the interview could explore alternatives. This would help to maintain my enthusiasm”.

Careers Adviser

Group work after interviews was less commonly mentioned but a number of Careers Advisers thought that this would be a useful strategy to check the extent to which individual action plans had been acted on and generally review pupils' progress after their interview. One Careers Adviser likened it to the sort of customer care programme that many organisations have. Another benefit of post interview sessions that was identified was its role as an evaluation tool since it would enable the Careers Adviser to assess the effectiveness of the interview.

Targets had had some effect in promoting group work as Careers Advisers began to actively seek ways of meeting the Careers Service Company's targets for group work in ways that might be useful for schools and pupils.

“I started to draw back from S2 and S3 work substituting it with S4 leaver group work. I had to do this since I had targets to meet although I couldn't say this to the school and hopefully the S4 group work was meeting a real need.”

Careers Adviser

Nevertheless, a considerable number of Careers Advisers thought that their interview targets restricted their opportunity to undertake group work.

“I'm sure if I suggested some group work on a pilot basis that x [Area Manager] would be agreeable so long as I still achieved my interview targets in the 40 days allocated to my school work. But my interview targets are set on the basis of what is achievable in 40 days”

Careers Adviser

“Most people feel the same and would like to do more group work but are bogged down in 9 interviews a day...I'd like to build in more flexibility for group work, perhaps for diagnostic groups to identify those needing help or giving some group work on occupational areas”

Careers Adviser

While many of our respondents supported the view that more use should be made of group work, it was suggested that some schools found it difficult, or were unwilling, to organise group work sessions for the Careers Adviser (especially if the group of pupils was small in size) because of time-tabling constraints and unwillingness to lose time from subject teaching:

“X [names Careers Adviser] and her predecessor have tried to organise their availability and I’ve tried to organise teaching time to ensure that they’re [pupils] available at the appropriate time, but both departments and parents want to protect subject teaching time.”

PT Guidance

Where schools did not have much time-tabled PSE or social education time, then the organisation of groups was even more difficult:

“The problem would be the logistics of group work for the school... schools are very busy places and the Career Service is sometimes marginal to it. A problem in X is there’s no real PSE so it’s not possible to access pupils through this as it is in many other schools”

Careers Adviser

We would suggest that access to groups could be more difficult to negotiate if Careers Advisers did not offer a professional rationale as the key reason. Where “efficient use of time” was the main rationale then there is a tension between the Careers Service need to make best use of its time and the school’s need for efficient use of teaching time.

Careers education

The extent and nature of Careers Advisers’ involvement in the design and delivery of careers education varied across Careers Service Companies and also across schools within the same Careers Service Company:

“Careers Adviser involvement in careers education varies mainly by school although their involvement does have to follow the Company policy on careers education”

Area Manager

The differences across schools in the extent of careers education provision and the different expectations of schools of the Careers Service both contributed to the differences in Careers Advisers’ involvement.

The general trend across Careers Service Companies was for Careers Service Company management to emphasise the Careers Adviser’s role as a consultant rather than being directly involved in delivering inputs. Increasingly Careers Service Companies were offering consultancy services on careers education programmes, training on computer packages or on labour market changes or careers education materials jointly designed with teachers. The Scottish Office funded initiative, Careers Education Teachers Initiative, was used in conjunction with local authorities to deliver joint training for Careers Service and school staff. A number of teachers commented positively on the increase in the amount of joint training.

The rationale for this appeared to be based on the need to prioritise resources (that delivery of careers education is not the most effective use of Careers Advisers’ time) rather than a view that it was an inappropriate activity:

“I would expect careers advisers to be aware of what is happening in the school’s careers education provision, to make themselves available as consultants to discuss things, but their involvement in delivery would be limited because of resources. Ideally, however, I’d like careers advisers to do a bit more in delivery terms... Both guidance staff and careers advisers agree that it is sometimes useful for a careers adviser to do a part of careers education, youngsters appreciate a different face, and from the careers service point of view, it raises their profile in the school”

Area Manager

Schools commonly wanted the Careers Adviser to do some delivery of careers education and a substantial proportion of Careers Advisers whom we interviewed were unhappy with the trend to restrict their direct role in the delivery of careers education:

“I don’t really like the way Careers Education involvement is going much more towards a consultative role than helping in delivery. I personally like to be more hands-on.”

PT Guidance

and

“I would like to use the Careers Service more in social education and working with youngsters in the careers library. Social education teachers doing careers education have no training in it... I’d like to see a slot with the careers officer working with groups of youngsters but there is no time from the Careers Service point of view”

PT Guidance

There were some early signs that the social inclusion agenda might reverse this trend away from delivery, particularly with respect to early intervention initiatives and to programmes like “On Track” and “Transition Teams” which may require considerable investment of time from Careers Advisers. In addition, the introduction of careers education programmes such as “The Real Game” with different ages of pupils is likely to increase a Careers Adviser’s involvement with a school, perhaps most commonly in partnership or associate-ship mode (Edwards *et al.*, 1999). This might involve planning and evaluation and/or direct delivery of particular appropriate inputs.

There were few examples of the Careers Adviser being used to help evaluate careers education. This may well be an area for development, particularly through the use of evidence from the skills and perceptions demonstrated in careers interviews.

A few respondents made the point that the role of the Careers Service in careers education had to be considered in relation to the wider government agenda of “Education for Work”, one part of which has increasingly been seen as careers education.

“I feel that careers advisors will lose out if they withdraw from Careers Education and I would question how the Education for Work agenda will be achieved if they do so. It won’t be if they [Scottish Executive] expect it to be delivered by teachers”

EBP Manager

The extent to which Careers Advisers were familiar with their schools’ careers education programme varied from those who had a reasonable overview of the various inputs that pupils would experience through to those - a large minority - who did not:

“When I’m interviewing a youngster I’d generally know what they are getting but wouldn’t necessarily know when they get it”

Careers Adviser

and

“I’m not absolutely sure of the content of careers education...I’m so busy interviewing that I’m not always aware of what’s going on”

Careers Adviser

Getting up-to-date copies of schools’ careers education programmes seemed to be an issue in many schools (a situation replicated in other research and training courses in which the researchers have been involved):

“I’ve been asking for copies of the careers education programme to be attached with the Service Level Agreement, but not many schools have given us copies of the careers education programme yet.”

Area Manager

Few were familiar enough with provision to be able to plan their inputs to fit in with pupils’ careers education. Also, as the following quote highlights, the ability of Careers Advisers to integrate their provision with schools’ careers education is not only dependent on their awareness of the programme but also on its quality. One Careers Adviser was in a position to contrast the situation in his current school with that in a previous school:

“I have a copy of the careers education programme but I’m not involved in it. In X [names an English Careers Service] I had the careers education programme and knew exactly who was getting what and when and I slotted in my own group work accordingly to articulate with that. In the school there, the careers education programme was very tightly scheduled so I knew exactly when things were happening.”

Careers Adviser

It may not be coincidental that he was referring to his experience in an English Careers Service Company and school. As we have noted earlier, in contrast with Scotland, there have been for a number of years targets in England and Wales for careers education and guidance at key stages of the National Curriculum and learning outcomes for careers education from 5-18 (Howieson and Semple, 1999).

The respective roles of the Careers Service and the Education Business Partnership (EBP) in careers education and in education industry activities varied considerably across Careers Service Companies. This largely reflected the high degree of variation in EBPs themselves across Scotland in terms of how they are constituted and managed, their levels of staffing and their particular emphases. In two areas the EBP work was managed by the Careers Service Company. In others the organisations functioned separately.

An effective approach could be seen where the Careers Service Company and the EBP planned developments together and had complementary roles, for example, the EBP providing money and staff to start off new work in schools and the Careers Service Company helping schools to embed provision through incorporating new developments in SLA negotiations. One EBP Manager described a number of the EBP’s programmes and commented:

“The Career Service figures in all of these, for example, by inputting up-to-date labour market information and following up in school with interviews.”

EBP Manager

There was considerable potential for confusion and overlap between Careers Service Companies and EBPs. This was not helped by the changing nature of the definition of what was covered by Education for Work. Initially policy statements were clearly focused on what might be termed “education/industry links” and very soon afterwards “enterprise” was included. When the term “and careers education” was increasingly added, disagreements on roles and responsibilities became more apparent. Policy statements did not define the respective responsibilities of the Careers Service and the EBP so that relationships had to be negotiated locally. Particular difficulties arose where both organisations took a proactive approach to generating and developing work. In some cases local agreements between the Careers Service Company and the EBP were worked out:

“The agreement arose from a confusion of the roles which was evident among Board members of both organisations, as well as confusion among other agencies and indeed among EBP and Careers Service staff.”

EBP Manager

We have noted earlier that Careers Education Management Teams in schools in several Careers Service Companies were including EBP representatives in discussions in an attempt to apply a partnership agreement at the level of local delivery to pupils and teachers in schools. While this might work well where an EBP had a number of staff, it would be impossible to copy this approach where an EBP with only one part-time member of staff.

While the overlap between the two organisations was perhaps most apparent in the delivery of Education for Work to schools, there were also some difficulties with respect to approaches to employers.

CHAPTER 7

THE CAREERS SERVICE WORK IN SCHOOLS: CLIENT GROUPS, ORGANISATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the Careers Service's direct involvement with pupils in school. This chapter looks more widely at its role in school and discusses issues about the nature and needs of its client group, its status in schools, its links and relationships with schools, and what constitutes an effective Careers Adviser in the context of school work.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

The full school client group

- The current variation in careers education provision in Scottish schools means that careers education cannot replace the need for careers guidance nor is there evidence that careers education can replace careers guidance.
- The policy focus on inclusion has added to the debate about whether all pupils need contact with the Careers Service. Some of our interviewees considered that academic pupils had less need of contact and that the Careers Service should focus on the less academic or disadvantaged. The evidence from this and other research, however, does not support the view that academic pupils do not need or want careers guidance. There is also a danger that the needs of the middle attaining "ordinary" pupil may be overlooked.
- Most Careers Service Companies were withdrawing from work with S2s but there was considerable demand from pupils and schools for involvement at this stage. Other research has identified the importance of inputs in the lower school when pupils' career ideas are formed.

Priorities and pupil needs

- Most Careers Service Company staff supported the idea of all pupils having contact (and preferably an interview) with the Careers Service but recognised that priorities have to be set. Careers Service Companies have to reconcile available resources, pupil needs, school demands and requirements on them arising from government policies.
- The research found little evidence that priorities were set on the basis of the identified needs of individual pupils taking into account their particular stage of vocational maturity.
- Priorities were based on the perceived needs of categories of pupils and government priorities and focused on externally prompted transitions with little account taken of personally prompted transitions. Self-referral systems tended to respond to pupil demand rather than identified pupil need. Identification of individual client need was most likely to happen as part of the guidance process when a client was interviewed.
- There is a need for more systematic identification of individual pupil need than the current diagnostic questionnaires that are typically used to establish the level and types of careers guidance each pupil requires. It is likely that a range of strategies, not just the interview, are necessary to meet the particular needs, learning styles and career maturity

of individuals. Issues relating to the identification of need are discussed further in Chapter 12.

- Current work is heavily based on the full vocational guidance interview and Careers Advisers and teachers believed strongly that this is the “best” sort of input. But there is evidence that various combinations of long and short interviews, group sessions and planned individual use of information and guidance systems are more effective in moving clients forward in their career thinking.
- The current system of Business Activity Targets that Careers Service Companies work to is not appropriate for an approach based on individual need.
- Careers Service Company managers generally tried to ensure a similar level of Careers Service input across schools with the level of service based largely on the school roll. There was a common view that it was necessary to prevent a more demanding school getting a higher level of Careers Service input than others were. However an issue is whether some of the variation in school demands arise from differences in pupils’ needs and are therefore justifiable.
- Careers Service Companies record their activity with the different year groups. They did not collect and use information strategically to develop an understanding of which pupils in each school had contacts with the Careers Service, and the triggers for contact, or to gain a picture of those pupils with less or no contact. The computer systems coming into operation in Careers Service Companies offer the potential to develop such guidance management information systems.

School-Careers Service link

- A common arrangement was for the Careers Service to liaise with a nominated member of staff, usually a guidance teacher, about the organisation of interviews and other Careers Service inputs on an everyday basis.
- Careers Service Companies and schools generally preferred the system of a single contact person on the school staff because it is administratively efficient but it could have the effect of distancing the Careers Adviser from other members of the guidance team.
- The research showed that how the school-Careers Service link is structured is critical to the integration and profile of the Careers Adviser in the school and to widening the ownership of careers education and guidance in the school.
- Several Careers Service Companies had or were introducing Careers Education Management Teams (CEMTs) to involve a wider range of school staff including a member of senior management. CEMTs have the potential to co-ordinate and integrate CEG provision and to link careers provision to school policy and development planning.

Service Level Agreements

- All Careers Service Companies had a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each school that sets out Careers Service input to the school and the responsibilities on each side. All Careers Service Companies had annual or termly reviews of the SLA to monitor progress.
- The SLA is the main vehicle for negotiating the formal relationship between a school and the Careers Service Company. Over the period of the research, it became more common for senior management (on both sides) to be involved in SLA negotiations.
- There was variation across Careers Service Companies in how tightly SLAs were applied. In around half of the Careers Service Companies both Careers Advisers and school staff believed SLAs restricted the Careers Advisers flexibility to respond to school requests.

- A high level of prescription could arise because Careers Service Company managers saw the SLA as a mechanism for managing resources and Careers Advisers workloads especially within the context of a standstill budget and to ensure equity of Careers Service provision across schools.
- Most Careers Service Companies believed that in practice SLAs met Careers Service needs rather than those of the school.
- Schools were more likely to be proactive in using the SLA to secure the provision they wanted where senior management was committed to and recognised the importance of the Careers Service and CEG.

The status of the Careers Service in school

- Careers Service Companies saw SLAs as helpful in clarifying the obligations of the school as well as of the Careers Service and providing an opportunity to address outstanding issues with the school in a context where the Careers Service had no rights of access to schools, to reports on pupils or to involvement in the curriculum.
- The Careers Service has a “conditional” status in schools and must negotiate and persuade school staff. In this situation, Careers Service staff were sometimes reluctant to push issues with schools despite the opportunity provided by the SLA negotiations.
- Careers Service managers in particular thought that Careers Advisers should be more prepared to challenge schools. However there is a clear tension between this and how schools judged the effectiveness of a Careers Adviser: a key indicator for them was that the Careers Adviser fits in with the needs of the school.
- Longstanding difficulties such as Careers Service access to pupils, the provision of pupil reports and accommodation for the Careers Adviser remained live issues with some schools.
- Generally a member of school SM had formal responsibility for Careers Service liaison. Both Careers Advisers and guidance teachers saw their commitment and involvement at appropriate points as critical to the Careers Service profile and status in the school. We found that school SM commitment to and involvement with the Careers Service and CEG varied across schools.
- Careers Service work was not generally part of schools’ Development Plans but some teachers and Careers Advisers felt that the Careers Service needed to link its work more explicitly to schools’ development needs; this would help to raise the status of the Careers Service in schools and promote its integration. The development of social inclusion initiatives in schools may be one area where Careers Service Companies could most easily relate their contributions to the achievement of the school’s development aims.

The impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

- Some school staff had not noticed any difference in the service to their school and to pupils as a result of the re-organisation of the Careers Service while others attributed any changes the particular Careers Adviser attached to the school. But some did think that, overall, the Careers Service had changed, developing a more business-like and professional approach.

School-Careers Service relationships

- It was clear that informal links and individual relationships were critical to a good school-Careers Service relationship and that individual teachers and careers advisers could have

a major impact on the Careers Service work in schools. But while individuals are extremely important, recognition of this should not lead to organisational and structural factors being ignored.

- The Careers Service-guidance team relationship was seen both by school and by the Careers Service as the key relationship. In most Careers Service Companies the policy was that Careers Advisers should attend guidance meetings regularly but this did not always happen in practice. However, Careers Advisers generally had regular informal contacts with their contacts in the guidance team careers. Schools commonly wanted greater Careers Service involvement with guidance and other teachers including the provision of in-service training but the extent to which this happened was often limited by the Careers Advisers time constraints.
- Both guidance teachers and Careers Advisers identified the interest and commitment of senior management in a school to careers education and guidance and the role of the Careers Service as critical to an effective school-Careers Service relationship.
- Continuity of Careers Adviser was seen by schools as critical to building up productive relationships. A number of schools were unhappy about a lack of continuity, usually a result of staff turnover rather than policy. However there were few examples of structured induction programmes for Careers Advisers starting work in a new school.
- An established classification of school-Careers Service relationships comprises three models: “parallel provision”, “pyramidal provision”; and “the guidance community”. The common school-Careers Service relationship in Scottish Careers Service Companies could be classified as “pyramidal”. In this model the careers interview is seen as the culmination of the CEG process with the school and the Careers Service working fairly separately towards it but with good exchange of information.
- This classification of the school-Careers Service relationship is a useful basis from which to analyse the complexity of the Careers Service work in schools which might be helpful to Careers Service Companies when reviewing their role and relationships in schools.

An effective Careers Adviser

- Schools had consistent views about the characteristics of an effective Careers Adviser. These included:
 - flexibility and willingness to get involved beyond the letter of the SLA;
 - the ability to fit in with the needs and approach of the school and able to respond to school requests without always checking with their manager;
 - a person who is approachable by pupils and teachers and able to build rapport with pupils;
 - reliable; and
 - well-informed about FE/HE and the labour market and keeps guidance staff up-to date with such information.
- Careers Service Company staff identified a number of skills necessary to effectiveness, some of which were similar to the schools’ view: communication skills; the ability to relate to different types of young people and different types of schools; negotiating skills; organisational skills; keeping well informed about educational developments as well as careers information; the ability to update skills and knowledge; and identifying and passing on issues to Careers Service Company management.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The full school client group

The question whether all pupils need contact with the Careers Service is one that arises from the results from our survey, our interviews with Careers Service Company, school and other stakeholders as well as from consideration of client contact systems.

Is careers education enough?

An argument that is sometimes advanced is that contact might not be necessary where pupils have comprehensive and progressive careers education and easy access to careers information, including ICT programmes. Research evidence suggests that careers education is an essential preparation for effective use of careers guidance (Watts *et al*, 1996). Our survey of pupils showed that regular careers education contributed to their career-related knowledge and understanding and to the chances that pupils would find their interview with a careers adviser useful. But we are not aware of any research that shows that careers education can replace careers guidance. In practical terms, careers education in Scottish schools is not well enough developed to mean that some clients do not need to use the Careers Service. Our research shows a substantial inequality of careers education provision for young people across schools. As we have noted, in Scotland there are currently no targets or learning outcomes set for careers education and guidance as is the case in England and Wales (Howieson and Semple, 1999).

A large majority of S4 pupils in our survey reported having careers education classes (84%) but the frequency of these classes varied across Careers Service Companies, and between schools within Careers Service Companies and pupils' opinion of its value also differed across schools. Both school staff and Careers Advisers whom we interviewed thought that careers education was patchy in extent and variable in quality, and a number contrasted its marginal position in Scotland compared with England:

“Careers Education varies from school to school. Most probably have something in place for S1-S4, but there’s variation especially for S5 and even more so for S6. Part of the problem is that there are no rules in Scotland about Careers Education, schools are not obliged to do anything and there’s not the same money put in to it as in England... some schools only pay lip service to it now. There’s a huge variation in how committed schools are”

Area Manager

The research carried out as part of the development of a National Framework for Careers Education in Scotland found similar variation (Semple, 1999).

Careers Service Company role with academic pupils

Opinion varied among Careers Service staff but, on balance, the view was that all pupils should have contact with the Careers Service and preferably should have an interview. However, while the general view among the Careers Service was that all pupils should have contact, the Careers Service has always had to decide on priorities: which pupils should receive which sorts of inputs and when. Here matters become more difficult with the need to reconcile available resources, pupil needs, school demands and government policy and priorities.

A number of interviewees expressed the view that academic pupils had less need of contact with the Careers Service which should, therefore, focus its activities on the less academic or disadvantaged pupil especially when resources are limited:

“If the Company is only getting X amount to pay for X careers advisers then they cannot service everyone...should schools with a high proportion of youngsters going into higher education get as much input as those with a higher percentage of poor souls?”

CSC Board Chair

This was suggested particularly by Careers Service Board members and also by some teachers and a few Careers Service Company staff. Such “re-focusing” of Careers Service work has been happening in England as a consequence of the way in which the Government’s social inclusion agenda is being tackled there. While it is the case that some pupils have less in the way of family resources to support them in their transitions eg youngsters with unemployed parents (Howieson and Semple, 1992) there is no evidence that academic pupils are more vocationally mature, have a higher level of decision-making skills or have less need of careers guidance than other pupils. In our survey, academic pupils were no more likely to be sure about their career ideas than other pupils, and were just as likely to express a need for careers guidance. A number of Careers Advisers described the needs of academic pupils for Careers Service Company input and a few of our interviews also raised the issue of drop-out from Higher Education which, of course, has a considerable economic cost to society, apart from the personal cost to the individual.

“Academic pupils certainly need more than just information, some don’t have a clue what they want to do or may get less good grades than expected...they need to be guided through the pathways, calmed down - some are very stressed about the future when they’re under so much pressure from school and their parents”

Careers Adviser

and

“from what I have seen HE applicants are more likely to drop out now or not cope with it ..it’s a combination of struggling to make the break from home and possibly financial issues”

CSC Board Chair

It was common for those who felt that the Careers Service should re-direct its attention from academic pupils to suggest that school staff were able to take care of academic pupils because they were familiar with information about higher education. Indeed, this is the current position in England where many Careers Service Companies are focusing on pupils at risk of not achieving their learning targets and school staff are being expected to meet the needs of other pupils. Whether school staff have the ability and time to do so has still to be established but, in any case, it is based on the view that academic pupils only need careers information and do not also need careers guidance.

Input in the early stages of secondary education

There is the issue of what level and type of contact is necessary at the different stages of secondary school. The Guidance for Providers of a Careers Service changed the status of work with S2 pupils who were no longer classified as a key client group and increasingly circumstances have meant that Careers Service Companies have had to review their work in S2. A number of Careers Service Companies were withdrawing from, or reducing their involvement in the S2 subject choice process. This might be for several reasons: the need to focus resources on the upper school and/or to re-focus resource on social inclusion initiatives

(some of which might include contact in S3 but only with certain pupils identified as needing early additional support). There is the argument that Careers Service input at the S2 option choice stage is a hangover from the time when this was a critical choice for young people but that since the National Curricular Framework it is not such a crucial transition point and so Careers Service Company involvement is less necessary. Nevertheless, few Careers Advisers reported less demand from schools, or pupils and their parents; indeed Careers Advisers frequently commented that S2 pupils were heavy users of drop-in sessions at the time of option choice.

We know from this and other research that there is a demand from pupils, their parents, and schools for Careers Service involvement lower down the secondary school, especially in S2. However, a substantial majority of pupils we surveyed (46%) in the case study Careers Service Companies, reported that they had not had contact with the Careers Service before S4. Demand is not the same as need but other research evidence does suggest a need for Careers Service Companies input in the early stages of secondary school. This evidence shows the extent to which pupils' attitudes (often stereotypical) to different career areas are formed at or before this early stage: these can be challenged at this point but are not easily shifted later (Munro and Elsom, 2000). Indeed the increasing interest in developing careers work in primary schools illustrates recognition of the importance of early inputs. This is evident in the forthcoming National Framework for Career Education in Scotland (LT Scotland, *forthcoming*) which will cover young people from the age of 3 up to 18. It is likely to provide an opportunity for Careers Services and EBPs to assist primary schools in developing world of work exploration activities. It is clear, however, that responding to the potential needs and demand in the lower secondary school and in primary school would have major resource implications for Careers Service Companies.

Priorities and pupil needs

Under the Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies (SOEID, 1998) pupils have an entitlement to the opportunity of an interview at some point between S4-S6 stage. Within S4-S6, Careers Service Companies have generally given more emphasis to working with particular year groups. During the research we saw changes in the year groups concerned. At the beginning of the project Careers Service Companies were giving more attention to work with S5 rather than S4 pupils reflecting the priorities they had been asked to follow by the Scottish Executive. During the period of the research, Careers Service Companies were then expected to focus on specific types of pupils lower down the school in response to the social inclusion agenda. A later change of emphasis came with the requirement for the Careers Service to do more with S4 as a result of the implementation of Higher Still and the guidance needs associated with the new range of units, courses and group awards it introduced.

All Careers Service Companies had Business Activity Targets for the number of full and short interviews and group sessions with S4, S5 and S6 pupils. Careers Service Companies themselves set provisional targets which were then discussed with the Scottish Executive and either accepted or re-negotiated. Careers Service Companies varied in the extent to which these targets were seen as flexible and whether they were allocated to Careers Advisers on an individual basis (this is something we discuss further in Chapter 12). Here we are concerned simply with the fact that Careers Service Companies work on the basis of projections about

the numbers of pupils in each year group that they expect to have contact with, and the type of contact that this will be.

Individual pupil need

Where does pupil need and, in particular, individual need come into all of this? So far our discussion has been in terms of the Careers Service's role with specific year groups, types of young people and government priorities. This reflects how virtually all of our interviewees talked about the work of the Careers Service and how its priorities might be set. We found little evidence that Careers Service Companies, including those with a self-referral system,⁹ based their strategic planning on the identified needs of individual pupils, taking into account their particular stage of vocational maturity and "personally prompted transitions" as well as "externally prompted ones". It is important to note that while self-referral systems would seem to be a way to respond to pupil needs, it is more accurate to say that they respond to pupil demand and this might not be the same as their needs.

We have discussed the different sorts of transitions elsewhere in this report. We note that the Careers Service's focus is on externally prompted transitions, that is those that have arisen from how the education, training system and the labour market operate eg when leaving dates occur, when applications must be made to FE or HE or when entry dates to opportunities occur. We also note that this focus has arisen in part from the guidance given to Careers Service Companies by the Scottish Executive, and the expectations of stakeholders. When we asked about pupil needs, Careers Service Company staff (and teachers) responded in terms of categories of pupils eg summer leavers, UCAS applicants. Less attention is given to "personally prompted transitions", that is those that arise from aspects that are personal to each individual related to their particular stage of career development and also to the wider personal circumstances of their life. But clients' readiness for careers guidance and their ability to move forward will depend on whether careers guidance happens at a time that not only looks appropriate from an obvious external transition point but at a time relevant to their personal transition stage.

Responding to the needs of individual clients appears a laudable aim and one that few disagree with; Careers Service Company staff frequently articulated such an aim to us. But the reality is more complicated and thinking about client needs raises some fundamental guidance issues about responsibility, autonomy and control that we noted earlier in this chapter. Are clients, for example, seen as capable of identifying their own careers guidance needs, and what is the appropriate role of Careers Advisers?

"Client satisfaction surveys are one way to do it (ie identify needs) but you can't really ask employers and 16 year olds what their needs are."

Head of Service

"Adolescents may be too immature to identify their own need".

Head of Service

Can clients be allowed not to participate in certain inputs where these form part of a strategy to meet government policy initiatives?

⁹ This is irrespective of whose definition of self-referral is used ie HOS, practitioner or our estimation.

The evidence from schools and Careers Service Companies also suggests that some careers education and guidance activity is undertaken not to meet the identified needs of individual pupils in the first instance but to serve the needs of the school and the Careers Service Company. For example, schools need pupils to make choices about subjects at particular times and both school and Careers Service Company input is organised to support this process and to ensure that timetabling goes smoothly. Schools may want the Careers Service to carry out certain activities eg blanket interviewing of S6 pupils, not because they have identified particular needs among these pupils but because there is a demand from their parents and to do so will avoid complaints from them. They may want the Careers Service to interview all S4 pupils as a way of encouraging some pupils not to return to school for a fifth year:

“a lot of young people are staying on inappropriately because no-one is pushing the availability of jobs to them”

AHT

A number of Careers Service Company staff recognised that a school's needs were not necessarily the same as the needs of their pupils, as one Area manager commented:

“Service Level Agreements help to identify school needs though not particularly pupil needs”

Area Manager

Careers Advisers may organise interviews with certain pupils to ensure they meet the Careers Service Company's targets on interviews. Similarly they might choose not to offer much in the way of group work to pupils because their preferred way of working is to carry out individual interviews whether or not this is the best way to meet clients' needs or because they need to be seen to do the “right thing”.

“I don't always think that youngsters benefit from the interview. It's more a case of what the careers advisor needs to cover, for example, I know that if I was being assessed on the interview I would have to cover certain points.”

Careers Adviser

As we discuss in Chapter 12, the impact of targets on Careers Service Companies' response to client need was an issue that concerned many Careers Service Company staff and Companies were aware of the need to monitor how targets were affecting priorities and the balance of work.

Targets, self-referral and pupil need

Some of our interviewees thought that the idea of targets was at odds with the principle of self-referral. We would suggest that this is not the key issue. Self-referral enables pupils to seek contact with the Careers Adviser when they feel it is appropriate and for some this may mean that their needs are being met. But it does not ensure that all pupils' needs are identified and responded to. Without a systematic review of pupil needs and the existence of supporting processes (such as high quality careers education) self-referral systems are likely just to respond to the felt needs or demands of certain pupils. This was a point made by a small number of school and Careers Service Company staff. We would suggest self-referral is an approach to giving pupils some choice rather than, by itself, the means of meeting their careers guidance needs. Firstly, Careers Service Companies need a systematic approach to identifying pupils' needs and following this, need to resolve basic issues such as the extent of

choice that pupils can have. Self-referral is a way to give pupils some choice about if, and when, to participate in careers guidance activities.

We would suggest that the system of Business Activity Targets as they are currently constructed are not appropriate to the approach of careers guidance based on individual need. As we have noted earlier, targets are set largely on the basis of precedence and in response to government priorities that may or may not be congruent with individual needs. As we have also discussed, the Careers Service is subject to conflicting demands and this is one example.

Identification of need

The identification of careers guidance needs is not simple and requires resources to develop and implement appropriate methods but equally the provision of guidance inputs to pupils who do not need them or are not ready for them, is a waste of resources. It was common for both Careers Service Company and school staff to talk about young people who had not had an interview as falling or slipping “through the net”:

“There will always be those who fall through the net so it’s difficult to tell if there’s unmet needs out there”

Area Manager

It seemed that in some cases, in the absence of a comprehensive system to identify pupils’ careers guidance needs, interviewing was done to make sure that young people who needed help were getting it.

When we asked Careers Service Company staff how pupils’ needs were identified, a number of approaches were mentioned: client evaluations and feedback; diagnostic questionnaires; professional judgements (usually based on past experience); identification of certain pupils by guidance staff; and referrals from parents, usually at parents nights. While all of these are valuable, they do not form a comprehensive and systematic approach. Careers Service Companies have made considerable progress in developing client evaluations, but while they are valuable activities, they are mainly concerned with the users of the Careers Service and tend to focus on pupils’ opinion or satisfaction with the guidance they have received rather than the direct identification of needs. Non-users are not routinely contacted although a number of Careers Service Companies have made attempts to investigate the views of non-users’.

Careers Service Companies commonly use diagnostic questionnaires as a way of screening pupils and identifying needs but most staff who used them were critical of their effectiveness: they are frequently given out at the beginning of an academic session and rapidly become out-of-date; and they were limited in their scope. There is now considerable interest and work being done on developing instruments to assess individuals’ guidance needs and their readiness for careers-decision-making and in developing models of practice for providers of careers guidance (for example, Sampson *et al*, 1999). It is important to emphasise that we are not advocating some mechanistic application of assessment instruments. As Sampson *et al* stress, judgements about clients’ needs and the appropriate type and level of input should not simply be based on their score in an assessment instrument but should involve interaction and negotiation with the individual. Developments in this area are likely to offer Careers Service Companies practical ways forward on the identification of individual need. One aspect that it is important to note is that a number of existing approaches to identification of need might be

described as based more on what might be called “social”, “personal”, or “educational” guidance needs rather than “careers” guidance needs. We discuss the identification of need across all client groups in more detail in Chapter 12.

Our survey of pupils identified the extent and pattern of pupils’ contact and non-contact with the Careers Service in each Careers Service Company. Careers Service Companies themselves are required to keep a variety of statistics, for example, details of their activity with the different year groups in school such as the number of vocational interviews with S4, S5 and S6 pupils and the number of repeat interviews. Frequently, however, when we asked staff in Careers Service Companies across Scotland, for example, what percentage of a particular year group had been interviewed or which types of pupils had a second interview, they did not have this sort of information available. Careers Service Companies did not collect and use information strategically to develop an understanding of which pupils in each school had contacts with the Careers Service Company, the triggers for this contact, or to gain a picture of those pupils who had less or no contact. Our survey of pupils in the case-study Careers Service Companies revealed some interesting differences in the extent and nature of contact between schools in the same Careers Service Company. Other work done by one of the researchers through in-service training with schools in 15 of the 17 Careers Service Companies confirms the general and ongoing nature of these variations. Much of this sort of data could be relatively easily collected by Careers Service Companies and would be valuable both in monitoring and evaluating their activities and in helping to identify needs. The computer systems coming into operation in at least some Careers Service Companies should make it easier to develop guidance management information systems.

Towards the end of the research, a number of Careers Service Companies were giving more attention to using information strategically, for example, considering how destination statistics might be used to identify needs and using post code information about pupils and post school clients to identify those from deprived areas.

A varied approach

We argued in the previous section that the Careers Service does have a role with all young people but we would suggest that the precise role is likely to vary depending on the clients’ particular needs, their levels of careers education, particular learning styles and individual career maturity. In this situation a range of strategies, not only the one-to-one interview, is necessary (Howieson *et al*, 2000). Such a flexible but targeted approach needs to be based on the sort of systematic identification of need we have been discussing.

Careers Service Company managers generally tried to ensure a similar level of Careers Service Company input across schools in their area with the level of service based largely on the school roll (ie the number of Careers Advisers and the number of days per week calculated on the school roll). This approach was based on a strong view that the Careers Service needed to be equitable in how it allocated its services. It was also seen as necessary to guard against more “demanding” schools getting a higher level of service from the Careers Service Company than other schools. Clearly, the principle of equity is an important one but it may be the case that variation in schools’ demands of the Careers Service arise from differences in pupil needs and could therefore be argued as justifiable. We would suggest that while equity is one factor to be considered in determining Careers Service input across schools, individual school and pupil needs are other factors that should also be taken into

account. Once again we come back to the issue of systematic identification of pupil need. Certainly any Careers Service Company that varies its input across schools is likely to attract criticism unless it can demonstrate that the variation is a response to clearly identified differences in need.

Careers Advisers' school work was heavily based around the individual vocational guidance interview and the large majority of Careers Advisers and teachers believed strongly that this was the "best" sort of input and that to offer another type of input to some pupils would be to short change the youngster:

"The one-to-one interview is unique, sometimes the careers adviser is the first person to sit down with the youngster, really to listen to them and treat them as an adult"

Careers Adviser

The vocational guidance interview was typically seen as the apogee of the careers education and guidance process that a pupil had experienced. However, there is evidence to suggest that various combinations of long and short interviews, group sessions and planned individual use of careers information and guidance systems are more effective in moving clients forward in their career skills and thinking (Morris *et al*, 1998). Although some Careers Service Companies had historically been interested in developing different strategies, during the period of the research most Careers Service Companies were beginning to give more thought to how to move away from an overwhelming focus on the full vocational guidance interview to developing a more varied approach, for example, more use of short interviews or the use of interest guides with feedback sessions to groups of pupils:

"I don't think the guidance process needs a full guidance interview, the Service needs to work smarter and the idea of having short interviews has gone up the agenda"

Area Manager

Part of the rationale of senior management for such developments was to make best use of the Company's resources. As we argued earlier, Careers Service Companies need to ensure that their resources are well spent but we would also re-emphasise that the use of different approaches and different levels of input should be based on the proper identification of clients' careers guidance needs. The following quote from one of our interviewees sums up our argument:

"Access to an individual Careers Adviser should always depend on the needs of the individual. At the moment, we tend to make assumptions about who needs one-to-one guidance but these are misplaced. I'm against classifying people on the basis of qualifications, unemployment as to whether or not they need individual help...the service does have to be rationed but there are various techniques that could be used to take the pressure off the adviser and make their time more focussed and valuable, for example, by using technology in a mediated way. One aspect of any future strategy will be the use of technology."

LEC member of CSC Board

The school-Careers Service link

A nominated contact

The general Careers Service view was that the school-Careers Service link worked best when a single person had the remit for the day-to-day liaison with the Careers Service, including the organisation of interviews. This person needed to be supported by committed and

informed members of senior management who were involved at appropriate points such as resource allocation and the negotiation of the SLA:

“the key is having a good person there as the guidance contact and for that person to be supported in the management team by someone who knows what they’re doing”

Careers Adviser

Considering the case study schools, this model was in evidence in certain respects: in all but one school the Careers Adviser linked to one member of staff who was responsible for the organisation of the interview programme. With one exception the careers contact was a guidance teacher. Within this there was some variation whether or not the Careers Service contact (often called the Careers Co-ordinator) had responsibility for all aspects of Careers Service links and for CEG in the school, for example, other guidance teachers might have the remit for the careers library or for careers education at different stages. In addition, it varied whether work experience was handled within the guidance team and typically the EIL remit was located elsewhere in the school. These arrangements in the case study schools reflected the general pattern of school-Careers Service contact that we identified across Careers Service Companies in Scotland in the first part of the research.

From the Careers Service Company staff’s point of view, having a single person as their main contact was the most efficient way of organising the interview programme, ensuring pupil profiles were completed and arranging substitutes when interviewees were absent. In the school where there was not a careers co-ordinator, the Careers Adviser had to liaise with different teachers for different year groups, a time consuming and variable process as some teachers were more efficient than others:

“My main contact for S5/6 is fine but useless at organising things so I ended up doing it myself, like putting slips in the folder in the office for S5 interviews. But my contact person for S4 was great and arranged everything.”

Careers adviser

Nevertheless, there were some potential disadvantages to the system of careers co-ordinator. If a school did not have someone identified as the back-up careers contact, then arrangements could break down if the careers contact was absent. There were examples of this happening in two of the case study schools:

“It’s all channelled through one person on the guidance team and if she’s off sick, nothing happens”

Area Manager

Another possible disadvantage is where the careers co-ordinator was seen as the exclusive link with the Careers Service and as the person who “deals with careers”. In this situation the Careers Adviser can be distanced from other members of the guidance team and this can inhibit them from building up relevant knowledge and from getting involved in careers work:

“It’s helpful if there’s a main person who takes responsibility for the link with the Careers Service...whether or not the Careers Adviser is integrated with the other members of the guidance team in this situation varies”

Area Manager

This scenario was evident in several of the case study schools where the interview programme was well administered by the Careers Co-ordinator who had good links with the Careers Adviser but where other guidance teachers were not involved and did not recognise that they had a role to play in CEG. This was evident, for example, in the way that they

would always refer pupils with any sort of career-related query to the Co-ordinator although they were likely to know the young people concerned better and to have initial careers guidance as part of their remit as a guidance teacher.

The evidence from the case study schools indicates that how the school-Careers Service link is structured is critical to widening the ownership of CEG in the school and to integration of the Careers Adviser and the profile of the Careers Service in schools. Having a designated member of staff, usually a guidance teacher, to organise interviews and other Careers Service inputs is administratively convenient for both the Careers Service and the school but it can act as a barrier to the Careers Adviser establishing links with other members of the guidance team. We also wondered whether this administrative role was appropriate for a promoted guidance teacher or whether it could be handled by administrative staff thus freeing guidance staff's time for liaison with the Careers Adviser about pupils and for development work.

Careers education and management teams

A development in Careers Service-school links over the period of the research was the introduction of Careers Education Management Team (CEMT) in several Careers Service Companies. One Careers Service Company in Scotland had had CEMTs for a number of years but the approach was attracting greater interest. CEMTs typically bring together the Careers Adviser, Careers Co-ordinator, AHT, school librarian, and increasingly the school EIL co-ordinator and EBP representative. It was too early to assess the effectiveness of the CEMTs in the areas where they were new developments but in principle, they offer the potential to help co-ordinate and integrate careers education and guidance and link it to school policy and development planning.

Service Level Agreements

The establishment of SLAs

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the school and the Careers Service is the key process by which the Careers Service involvement in each school is determined. The SLA is the main vehicle for negotiating the formal relationship between a school and the Careers Service Company. It sets out what the Careers Service will provide for the school, the responsibilities on each side and the resources each will contribute. It is now an established part of the landscape and all Careers Service Companies have introduced an annual or sometimes termly or six monthly review of the SLA to monitor progress.

The potential value of the SLA was seen as:

- Providing a rationale for Careers Service work, and firming up provision;
- Integrating careers guidance with careers education;
- Providing a vehicle for discussing areas needing development in the school's careers education programme;
- Providing a live, flexible and changing record of the relationship between the school and the Careers Service Company careers provision.
- Encouraging all concerned to focus on making the best use of the limited resource available from the careers service. In some ways the SLA was moving towards becoming a business negotiation;

- Providing a document that could be reviewed jointly and separately at council and Careers Service Company level; and
- Becoming a vehicle by which Careers Service Company policy and strategy could be communicated to school management.

At the time of the first stage of the research, those Careers Service Companies where the negotiations were less formal (and mainly involved the careers adviser and guidance teacher), were in the process of involving senior managers from schools and from the Careers Service Company in a structured way. In the next stage of the project, we found that in all the case study schools, senior staff at the level of AHT at least, were involved in SLA negotiations.

It was thought important to involve management since a great deal rested on the negotiations. In the absence of legislation to formalise links between the school and the careers service (as in England), the SLA negotiation carried the full weight of:

- negotiating access to pupils;
- ensuring the provision of school reports on pupils (and other exchanges of information on pupils);
- agreeing the number of days the careers adviser could allocate to the school;
- building the Careers Adviser's links with careers education;
- agreeing involvement in in-service training;
- setting priorities for the development of careers work in the school; and
- negotiating accommodation for the Careers Adviser.

SLAs were also perceived as more important with the move out of local authority control. In this context, the Service Level Agreement was expected to carry a major responsibility for communicating Careers Service Company strategy and policy to schools and for persuading and convincing schools to work with the Careers Service Company's agenda. The increased importance of SLAs was most noticeable in Careers Service Companies operating on the limited company and secondment model: those Careers Service Companies whose operations were sub-contracted to the local authority were not quite so focused on this issue, though they, too, were trying to make the SLA negotiations more effective.

Ownership of SLAs

The use made of the SLA in practice by the school was also seen as important, in particular, the extent to which others in the school (eg the guidance team as a whole and staff involved in careers education and Education Industry Links) were aware of it. In a majority of the case study schools, Careers Advisers did not feel that the SLA was well known, even amongst guidance teachers, which limited its value:

“The Assistant Head Teacher doesn't give copies of the Service Level Agreement to guidance staff, which makes me question the point of it. Most guidance teachers didn't know what I do other than my interviews in school, for example, they don't really know about my post-school work. If they got copies of the Service Level Agreement they would see this, at least superficially”

Careers Adviser

The majority of Scottish Careers Service Companies felt that SLAs in practice were designed to meet a Careers Service rather than a school agenda. We assessed eight Careers Service Companies as having Service Level Agreements that were primarily driven by the Careers

Service Company agenda, six Careers Service Companies where negotiations of a limited kind took place, and three Careers Service Companies where schools were likely to be more proactive in their negotiation role. A similar pattern was evident in the case study schools where school staff shared the view that SLAs are primarily for the benefit of the Careers Service.

Schools were thought by Careers Service Companies to be quite accepting of Careers Service provision. This was generally the situation in most of the case study schools. We found that a school was more likely to be proactive in using the SLA to secure the Careers Service provision they wanted where the AHT or another member of SMT was committed to and recognised the importance of CEG:

“this school is more likely to make demands and be proactive than many others...unusually the Headteacher is very involved in the Service Level Agreement negotiations which shows that he’s genuinely interested”

Area Manager

We found variation across Careers Service Companies in Scotland in how prescriptive SLAs were, that is, how far the SLA determined the precise nature and extent of Careers Service input to the school throughout the year. This was mirrored in the variation across the case study Careers Service Companies. In three of the five Careers Service Companies, both school staff and the Careers Advisers felt that the SLA restricted the Careers Advisers flexibility to respond to school requests:

“The SLA menu has formalised links with schools so the careers adviser’s and the school’s freedom is limited”

Careers Adviser

but also

“Within the constraints of the SLA, X [Careers Adviser] can adapt to the needs of the school”

AHT

As we noted earlier, Careers Service Company managers were concerned to ensure equity in Careers Service input across schools, and a high level of prescription arose partly from the way Careers Service Company management saw the SLA as a mechanism to achieve an equitable level of service across schools:

“The Service Level Agreement provides a baseline ... The Company also tries to ensure consistency of approach and ensure minimum service and not to allow one school to get more than another.”

Head of Service

A number of Careers Service Companies had introduced model Service Level Agreements to encourage company-wide developments across all schools. Managers also used SLAs as a way to manage Careers Advisers workload; a common comment from Careers Advisers was that they could easily spend all their time in school if they responded to what the school was asking them to do. The role of the SLA as a way to manage resources was particularly evident in the later stages of the research at a time when Careers Service Companies were operating within a standstill budget.

Status of the Careers Service in school

We have discussed the conditional status of the Careers Service in Chapter 3, and the basis on which the Careers Service must operate in the school context: no right of access to schools, to reports on pupils or to involvement in the curriculum, including careers education. In this context, a common view among Careers Service Companies, in particular among managers, was that SLAs were helpful in clarifying what the Careers Service would do and in setting out the obligations of the school thus providing the basis for the Careers Service Company to address outstanding issues. Nevertheless, while SLAs represent a move forward, they do not change the conditional status of the Careers Service in schools. Careers Advisers and their managers must still negotiate and persuade school staff.

It is important to note that we are not saying that schools do not support the role and functions of the Careers Service or do not value its activities. All the school staff whom we interviewed valued the Careers Service and its role in providing informed and impartial careers information and guidance to pupils and in informing and supporting teachers. Typically schools wanted more, not less, of the Careers Service. The issue is that in practice, the Careers Service cannot require anything of schools but has to rely on their flexibility and co-operation and this can have an impact on their service to pupils.

The evidence from the case study schools shows that SLAs could and were being used as an opportunity to raise and deal with outstanding issues eg school reports, access to groups, the management of the careers library. But it was also clear that while the SLA provided an opportunity for raising issues Careers Service staff sometimes were reluctant to push an issue:

“SLAs provide an opportunity to improve the school context but we don’t want to be too high-handed”

Area Manager

And so the same issues might reappear on the SLA from year to year. Several Careers Service Company managers in the case study Careers Service Companies commented that the sorts of issues that had been of concern 20 years ago (typically access to pupils, the provision of school reports on time and accommodation for the Careers Adviser) remained problems with some schools:

“X is a school that has consistently failed to produce any confidential pupil assessments. There’s a long history of raising it with the school but making no progress on it.”

Area Manager

Generally, Careers Service Company managers felt that Careers Advisers needed to challenge the school’s expectations more. On the other hand, where issues were not handled sensitively, school staff could feel that the Careers Service Company was using the SLA meeting simply as the chance to criticise and blame them. Both scenarios point to the need for Careers Service Company staff to have high levels of negotiation skills.

In Chapter 3 we discussed the conflicting demands on the Careers Service, its conditional status and the changes to its client group which have made schools as well as pupils, their clients. All of which mean that for a Careers Adviser and/or a Careers Service Company to challenge the decisions and operations of schools is a difficult and problematic activity. This is illustrated in the way that schools (also the Careers Service Company’s client) judged the

effectiveness of a Careers Adviser. We found that a key indicator of effectiveness for them was that a Careers Adviser fitted into the needs of the school.

Improving the status of the Careers Service in schools

The profile and status of the Careers Service in a school was seen by both Careers Advisers and guidance teachers as highly dependent on the commitment and involvement at appropriate times of a member of the senior management team (SMT) in the school. In all of the case study schools a member of the SMT (usually an Assistant Headteacher, less commonly a Depute Headteacher) had the formal responsibility for Careers Service liaison although in one school this had been devolved to the Careers Co-ordinator. The extent of the AHT/DHT's commitment to and involvement in CEG and with the Careers Service varied. We would summarise the SMT commitment and involvement as limited in two schools; committed but with limited day-to-day involvement in four schools; and committed and directly involved on a regular basis in the remaining four schools. The extent of day-to-day involvement of senior management seemed to be less important in developing careers education and guidance in the school than their visible commitment to it. Being seen to be committed to careers education and guidance was the critical factor.

Some teachers and Careers Advisers noted that a way for the Careers Service to raise its status in a school was to demonstrate that its activities would help the school achieve its aims and contribute to its development plans. Careers Service work was not generally part of schools' formal Development Plans and Careers Advisers were usually not aware of them. Teachers and Careers Advisers who commented on this thought that if Careers Service Companies linked their activities more explicitly to development planning that this would be a way both to enhance their status and also would promote integration:

“The Careers service makes a big contribution (to the Development Plan) but I’m not sure it’s recognised. The management of the school needs to recognise this...If the headteachers could have this pointed out to them centrally, that the Careers Service could contribute to the school Development Plan that would be really helpful and would raise the importance of the Careers Service in the school.”

PT Guidance

“There is no specific part of the school Development Plan linked to careers, although aspiration raising is so key that that this is an overlap area...the Careers Service needs to link much more to the development needs of the school.”

AHT

The development of social inclusion initiatives in schools may be one area where Careers Service Companies could most easily relate their contributions to the achievement of the school's Development Plans.

The impact of the changed management of the Careers Service

Opinion was mixed among school staff about the impact of the changes to the management of the Careers Service. Some had not noticed any difference:

“The Careers Service is very responsive to requests but this isn’t the result of any change to the Company. I’ve generally found the Careers Service to be very co-operative and flexible within their constraints and easy to work with.”

AHT

and

“Under both systems there’s been a fair turnover of Careers Advisers with big gaps which have been filled with temporary staff. This has been a major problem for the school under both systems”

PT Guidance

Others felt that any change was due to the particular Careers Adviser attached to the school rather than the result of the new arrangements for the Careers Service:

“Any differences I’ve seen have depended on the individual Careers Adviser”

PT Guidance

Around half of school staff who commented on this issue thought that the Careers Service had improved. There was a general view among these staff that the Careers Service had developed a more professional and business-like approach:

“There’s a noticeable efficiency there now, for example, when I phone I get a better response than before. They come in with their SLA, there’s a policy there now that’s visible”.

PT Guidance

The quality of information given to pupils was another area that was perceived to have improved:

“There is a lot more effort put into following them up now. The information they get arrives quickly and is produced in professional packaging and they get more documentation and it is more tailored to the individual pupil”.

PT Guidance

In general, the quality of careers guidance that pupils received was perceived to depend on the qualities of the particular Careers Adviser rather than having been affected by the re-organisational changes to the Careers Service:

“It does depend on the individual Careers Adviser and this is my concern, how youngsters respond to the individual Careers Adviser”

AHT

Several staff did note that the school’s Careers Adviser was now reviewing his/her work by holding evaluation focus groups with pupils.

School-Careers Service relationships

The role of individuals

We have described the ways in which the school-Careers Service link operates in schools and the development and functioning of Service Level Agreements. But what was very clear from our interviews with both Careers Service Company and school staff is the importance of the informal links and of individuals to the quality of school-Careers Service relationships:

“There’s both the formal and informal side to how the Careers Service gets on with the school. There’s the formal structures and then on the informal side, there’s the personalities involved and the fact that the people in certain schools go out of their way to work with the Careers Service”

Area Manager

It was evident from interviews with both Careers Service Company and school staff themselves that particular individuals could make a considerable difference to the nature and quality of the school-Careers Service relationship. We saw in several of the case study schools that a change of personnel could make a difference to how smoothly the mechanics of the link worked and to the extent and range of the Careers Service Company’s input to the

schools. In two schools, for example, the appointment of a new AHT with responsibility for the Careers Service had led to considerable developments:

“I’m trying to expand what the Career Service does and make the Careers Service more meaningful for youngsters in the school and involve the Careers Service more with the school. I certainly want more from the Careers Service than just doing interviews. I’ve built x [Careers Adviser] into the guidance calendar for the first time, indeed the guidance calendar itself is a new development.”

AHT

Similarly, there were examples of a new Careers Adviser having a considerable impact on the school:

“As well as introductory talks I’ve also done a range of groups that haven’t been done before in the school in terms of topic and methodology. I’ve done group work with S5s and S6s about HE generally, including HN provision, because many are doing one or two Highers, about social life, independent living and so on. And how to choose.”

Careers Adviser

Although the individual and individual personalities are important and may be difficult to influence, it is important that this does not lead to other factors that might develop the school-Careers Service relationship being ignored. As one Area Manager commented:

“X [Careers Adviser] has done very well in [X school] but has had to deal with personalities...but also the structure there could be improved, since the PT in guidance has other responsibilities than careers. There’s a need to delegate and spread it round the guidance staff and having enough guidance staff interested in careers.”

Area Manager

Relationship with the guidance team

Overall, the Careers Adviser-guidance team relationship was seen both by schools and by the Careers Service as the key relationship in schools. Across all Careers Service Companies the Careers Service Company policy was that Careers Advisers should attend guidance meetings regularly. In practice this did not always happen; in over half of the case study schools the Careers Adviser had not been able to attend guidance meetings over the previous session, mainly because of time pressures. In one school the Careers Adviser was not given access to the guidance meeting. Typically, the Careers Adviser would attend when there was a careers-related item on the agenda or to update guidance teachers on new developments or to present the destination figures for the leavers from the school.

Generally schools wanted greater Careers Service involvement with guidance and other teachers. The guidance teachers and other school staff whom we interviewed frequently expressed concern about keeping up-to-date with the rapid changes and developments in education, training and employment and looked to the Careers Adviser to keep them informed. There was a demand for the Careers Adviser to provide in-service training but the extent to which this happened was often limited by the Careers Adviser’s time constraints.

Another key member of the school staff for a number of Careers Advisers was the school librarian, reflected in his/her inclusion in Careers Education Management Teams. Librarians could be helpful not only in respect of organising the careers library, introducing pupils to the careers library and helping them to access careers information but also in encouraging pupils to ask for a careers interview and in briefing the Careers Adviser about pupils:

“I have a particularly good relationship with the librarians, there’ve been two different ones over my time at [X school]. I’ve got excellent support from them, they give me information on the youngsters informally and suggest to pupils that they see me.”

Careers Adviser

Importance of continuity

School staff saw continuity of Careers Adviser in the school as critical to building up productive relationships:

“Continuity is very important, it takes a wee while to build up the trust on both sides”

AHT

Heads of Service and Area Managers commented that staffing changes were the aspect that most concerned Headteachers. Most staffing changes resulted from the secondment of the school Careers Adviser to work on initiatives or projects that the Careers Service Company had received funding for or because of maternity leave or illness rather than a policy of moving Careers Advisers around schools (although there were examples of this). The secondment or movement of school Careers Advisers is one illustration of the impact of non-core funding on the core work of the Careers Service. Apart from the impact on continuity of staff, another effect was that schools tended to lose the more experienced Careers Advisers since it was usually such Careers Advisers who moved into the special initiatives.

We are not suggesting that staff turnover is purely negative, as clearly there are positives in terms of individual staff development and the fresh ideas and approaches that a different Careers Adviser might bring to a school. But we would suggest that both Careers Service Companies and schools need to give more attention to minimising the negative effects of staff turnover. Staff in one school spoke positively about the efforts of Careers Service Company management to offset some of the problems associated with high turnover:

“They put in two Careers Advisers so that if one changed there would always be somebody to have some level of continuity”

AHT

Shared working in a school is one approach although not all schools liked having more than one Careers Adviser to work; and Careers Advisers often preferred to have “their own school” as a number of Careers Advisers commented to us:

“Now I’m in X area and covering two schools with two other careers advisers, I can’t make my own impression in any of the schools”

But there are other strategies such as structured induction programmes for Careers Advisers starting work in a new school that can also be pursued. But we found little evidence of such programmes in any of the Careers Service Companies in Scotland. This is a strategy that Careers Service Companies and schools could develop.

Models of school-Careers Service relationships

We analysed the nature of the school-Careers Service relationship in the case-study schools using a classification developed in earlier research on the Careers Service’s work in school (Morris *et al*, 1995). This research identified three models of the school-Careers Service relationship: “parallel provision”, “pyramidal provision” and a “guidance community”. No one relationship conforms entirely to any one of the three types but rather they represent a continuum along which each individual school-Careers Service relationship can be located.

“Parallel provision” refers to a situation where there is minimal interaction between the school and the Careers Service Company. Careers education is the responsibility of teachers and the Careers Service Company is not involved in it. Careers Service Company input is restricted to the careers guidance interview and there is little exchange of information between the Careers Adviser, careers or guidance teacher and the pupil. The Careers Adviser gets minimal information about pupils and the pupil receives little information about the purpose of the careers interview.

In the “parallel provision” model, the careers interview is seen as the culmination of the careers education and guidance process with the school and the Careers Service Company working fairly separately towards it but with good exchange of information. In this model, the Careers Service Company is often involved in providing some factual input to the curriculum, support for the careers library and occasional in-service for guidance teachers. Information about pupils is passed on to the Careers Adviser before the interview and a written note of the outcome of the interview is passed back to the pupil and to the school but rarely is used in any continuing careers education and guidance by the school. After the initial interview with the Careers Adviser, further Careers Service Company interventions are conducted on an individual basis with the pupil, in effect, becoming the personal client of the Careers Service Company.

The model of a “guidance community” involves the Careers Service Company (and other agencies and individuals in the community) in curriculum planning and review and in making a range of appropriate inputs. In this model, the careers interview is seen as part of pupils’ educative process and feedback from the interview informs future curriculum development. It is where the different but complementary skills of school and Careers Service Company staff are recognised and used appropriately.

These three models were based around a number of criteria:

- The perceived relationship between the “educational” and “guidance” aspects of careers practice;
- The division of tasks between Careers Service Company and school staff;
- The pattern of information flow between the Careers Service Company and the school;
- The extent of feedback between the Careers Service Company and school;
- The status of the careers guidance interview in the careers programme.

The NFER research found that the guidance community existed in only a minority of cases but that a number classified as “pyramidal” were working towards this broader approach. The study concluded that the “guidance community” model appeared to offer the best opportunity for the Careers Service to “add value” to careers education and guidance in schools and for genuine partnership to be developed.

When we analysed the nature of the school-Careers Service relationship in the case-study schools, we concluded that one school-Careers Service Company relationship could be classified as “parallel provision”. In the other nine cases the model was “pyramidal” but to different degrees across the schools, for example, in three of them, the school-Careers Service Company relationship was moving towards a “guidance community”. The NFER research found that the type of relationship a Careers Service Company had with each of its schools could vary and we found the same in this research: in all of the case study Careers Service

Companies, we concluded that there was a different model of school-Careers Service Company relationships in each of the two case-study schools.

We have spent some time describing the NFER models of school-Careers Service relationships since we think that they are a useful way to capture and make sense of the complexity of the Careers Service Company work in schools. We used them in this research to analyse the case study Careers Service Companies' practice and relationships in their schools. We think that they would be a useful approach for Careers Service Companies themselves to use when reviewing their role and relationships in school.

An effective Careers Adviser

The school view

Schools had consistent views about the characteristics of an effective Careers Adviser. We would note that we are reporting schools' views, not necessarily suggesting that all of the characteristics identified by them are appropriate.

The ability to build rapport and get on well with different types of pupils was seen as a basic requirement:

“An effective Careers Adviser needs to be the sort of person kids would go to and who gets enthusiastic about all sorts of young people.”

PT Guidance

All the school staff whom we interviewed commented that they generally checked on pupils' reactions to their careers interview, usually on an informal basis, rather than by any organised system of de-briefing or follow-up to the careers interview. They also used the number of pupils requesting a repeat interview as an indicator of the Careers Adviser's effectiveness:

“What do young people say? Are they willing to go back to see the Careers Adviser again?”

AHT

Another characteristic of an effective Careers Adviser that a number of school staff identified, was that the Careers Adviser treated each pupil as an individual and that the information and guidance given was tailored to them:

“Do they seem to treat them as individuals, or do they all seem to get the same advice and approach?”

AHT

Some commented on particular skills that a Careers Adviser needed to be effective. A frequent comment related to the ability to handle group work, a skill that they felt not all Careers Advisers had:

“Not all Careers Advisers are keen to speak to groups on their own but X [names Careers Adviser] likes this, she has enough confidence and the kids respect her”

PT Guidance

In schools' view, in addition to working well with pupils, an effective Careers Adviser should also be accessible to and communicate easily with staff, especially guidance and PSE teachers. Schools expected the Careers Adviser to be “the source of specialist knowledge” about FE/HE and the labour market, to keep guidance staff up-to date with such information and to provide wider links for the school:

“Be up-to-date, know computer programmes, to give teachers specialist advice on jobs, be able to link to employers, colleges and universities on the school’s behalf.”

AHT

Reliability was an important aspect of effectiveness for schools. They saw an effective Careers Adviser as someone who was well-organised and reliable, who turned up on time and produced reports and information quickly:

“ [effectiveness is] if they don’t let us down, they get plans of action back to youngsters, and copied to the school, they come in and do the talks”.

PT Guidance

“An effective Careers Adviser should be reliable, turn up when she says she will, not let us down.”

AHT

Schools generally wanted a Careers Adviser who would be flexible and prepared to get involved beyond the letter of the SLA. This characteristic was graphically captured by one Principal Teacher of Guidance when describing the school’s Careers Adviser whom he rated as very effective:

“She will go that extra mile and is prepared to bend over backwards to get involved”

Part of being flexible was the Careers Adviser’s ability to respond to school requests without always checking with their manager:

“It’s not very effective if they (ie Careers Advisers) have to keep checking back at the office every time you ask them to do something, you can’t make arrangements.”

PT Guidance

Another aspect of an effective Careers Adviser identified by schools was the ability to fit in with the needs and approach of the school and not make demands on the school for support. This view relates to the issues we discussed earlier about the conditional status of the Careers Service in schools, and the difficulty Careers Advisers can face if they challenge the school rather than “fitting in”.

“Should be there when the school needs them, flexible enough to help out when the school’s arrangements go wrong and not complain.”

AHT

“An effective Careers Adviser should be a bit like a chameleon, able to adapt to the style of different schools, whether formal or not.”

AHT

Some school staff looked at the overall approach:

“Be available to individuals, to employers, to staff, to parents. To be able to advise on careers education and social education, to be available at parents’ evenings, and available to outside agencies. Should prompt or remind schools about the need for particular inputs.”

AHT

“An effective Careers Service will make sure the guidance given in interviews is tied into what’s happening in social education, should be capable of joined-up thinking and be well organised. And should have a strategy for working with pupils that is about more than interviewing.”

PT Guidance

What was very evident from teachers’ comments, was the importance of the individual Careers Adviser:

“The key ingredient is the personality of the Careers Adviser. Mr X is approachable, the other Careers Adviser who comes in on a part-time basis hasn’t got the right personality.”

AHT

“It really depends on the quality of the Careers Adviser”

PT Guidance

This teacher and several others noted the importance of the selection stage in ensuring that those entering the profession are suited to it:

“It all comes back to the initial selection of Careers Advisers”

PT Guidance

While the qualities of the individual Careers Adviser are clearly critical factors and there are problems if someone has entered the profession who is unsuited to it, it is important not to ignore other factors that can influence the performance and effectiveness of individual Careers Advisers. In particular, we would suggest that there is a need for Careers Service Companies to give more attention to the issue of accountability and the monitoring of Careers Advisers’ professional practice and not just their achievement of numerical targets. This is a starting point to dealing with variation in effectiveness across Careers Advisers.

The Careers Service Company view

Careers Service Company staff identified a similar list of qualities of an effective Careers Adviser which they thought applied across all aspects of work, not just that with schools: good communication and interpersonal skills; the ability to relate to different sorts of young people and to vary the approach depending on the individual:

“It boils down to having good communication skills, this is the basic requirement to be able to talk to young people, get them to think about themselves and help empower them. “

Careers Adviser

“It’s about basic interpersonal skills to form a relationship with the youngster, knowing how to deal with the individual youngsters, trying to read them and to respond to the particular concerns and background that they bring with them”

Careers Adviser

“...taking a different approach, depending on the youngster, for example, adapting your level of language... The ability to develop an appropriate persona is a key skill for a Careers Adviser. “

Careers Adviser

Careers Advisers also identified the need to relate well to school staff and to have good organisational skills to ensure that their work programme in school operated smoothly. Being well informed about careers and labour market information and passing this on to pupils and staff was another aspect of an effective Careers Adviser that was identified. This expertise in careers and labour market information was something that a number of Careers Advisers identified as a particularly valuable contribution they could make:

“Part of my effectiveness with young people is to give correct factual and up-to-date information which is not always what teachers give them”

Careers Adviser

Careers Advisers also recognised that to be effective, they needed to keep up-to-date with educational developments as well as careers-related information. The ability to continually update their skills was identified as an increasingly important requirement for an effective

Careers Adviser, for example, to develop computing skills. Careers Advisers put more emphasis than did teachers on the need to have good negotiating skills.

Careers Service Company staff themselves, particularly Careers Advisers, tended to focus on careers guidance processes and outcomes:

“Effective if it widens young people’s options, helps them look at their strengths and weaknesses, builds up their confidence, gives them new ideas. It’s important to get the level of guidance right, establish what they want and not make assumptions. It’s legitimate for the young person still to be woolly in their ideas at the end of the interview.”

Careers Adviser

“Another key factor would be that guidance should be available at the right time, when clients want it and when clients need it. But clients may not welcome guidance or get it at the wrong time for them.”

Careers Adviser

We have seen from pupil’s questionnaire responses that getting the timing right was of great importance in young people’s perceptions of the effectiveness of the Careers Service’s work.

We have discussed at other points in this report the need for Careers Service Companies’ policy to be informed by practice and several Careers Advisers picked up on this as an aspect of effectiveness:

“An effective Careers Adviser should be aware of issues to be passed on to the Area Manager”

Careers Adviser

CHAPTER 8

POST–SCHOOL SERVICES

Introduction

In Chapter 8, we first take an overview of post-school clients' transitions and then consider Careers Service Companies' work with different post-school client groups including the young unemployed, young people in training, young workers and FE students. We also consider post-school clients' views on Careers Service Companies (CSCs). In this chapter we use data from the mapping of all 17 companies, and the further data from the 5 case study companies including survey data from Training Organisations and young people.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Definitions of post-school clients

- The post-school clients within the Careers Service core client group are:
 - those who are unemployed;
 - Skillseekers trainees;
 - Skillseekers employees, including Modern Apprentices;
 - young workers (non-Skillseekers);
 - students in further education.

Overview of post-school client' transitions

- Many post-school clients move out of their first destination, or otherwise change career direction or status, within a year or two of leaving; some may make several changes. There are positive and negative reasons for these changes. The development of a young person's "career" is often not the linear progression that policy makers tend to expect.
- The Careers Service is often only aware of these changes if they impinge directly on the service's work, and the first destination statistics collected by Careers Service Companies obviously do not track young people's subsequent transitions. How might this best be done?
- Young people need careers guidance support at transitions beyond the first entry to an opportunity. To what extent is this given? What are the resource implications of providing such support?

Careers Service work with unemployed clients

- All Careers Service Companies used standard approaches to work with unemployed clients; a minority of Careers Service Companies were also involved in significant levels of innovative work, often dependent on funding support from the LEC. Staff showed high levels of commitment to supporting young unemployed people.
- The Careers Service's role with benefits created problems for staff in working openly and supportively with young unemployed people. The Careers Service's role in policing benefits needs to be removed or changed.

- The relative responsibilities of the careers adviser and the careers assistant for work with unemployed clients was changing in many Careers Service Companies. There was also uncertainty about the importance (and practicalities) of ensuring continuity of the contact person for unemployed young people. How important is continuity of contact in this situation?
- Careers Service Companies had an increasing focus on outreach work. The possibility of complementary first level guidance links with other agencies and organisations working with unemployed young people should be examined and developed.
- Innovative approaches to identifying and working with (and through) each unemployed young person's informal support network are required.
- Client contact systems for unemployed young people need to take into account both personally prompted and externally prompted transitions.
- Careers guidance has a role to play in improving the situation of unemployed young people. What is this specialist contribution, and how can specialist careers guidance techniques be applied to the needs of unemployed young people. What is the balance between meeting social, personal and careers guidance needs of unemployed young people?
- There was little variation in how Careers Service Companies worked with unemployed clients based on difference in local labour markets. To what extent should features of the local labour market be taken into account when designing interventions with young people?
- Job-finding systems are important for unemployed young people, but need to be accompanied by continuing careers guidance support for these young people when they are in work or training. How are the resources to be found for this?

Work with young people entering, engaged in and completing Skillseekers or Modern Apprenticeships

- The Careers Service has responsibility for assessing young people's Special Training Needs (STN). Careers Service Companies' approach to this ranged from the use of the careers interview to the management and delivery of externally funded assessment systems.
- The Careers Service was reported by Training Organisations as having a higher level of involvement with STN trainees (52% always or usually involved the Careers Service at the mid-point review) than with mainstream Skillseekers and Modern Apprentices once they have entered training.
- Training Organisations were uncertain whether the current level of Careers Service Company involvement with young people in training was appropriate. What is an appropriate level of involvement of the Careers Service in the ongoing and pre-exit guidance of young people in training, particularly those with STN?
- Referrals to the Careers Service of young people at risk of dropping out of training were lower than might be expected. Of Training Organisations surveyed, 35% said they "never" and 24% "occasionally" involved the Careers Service when a trainee was at risk of dropping out.
- How are the resource implications of any major increase in involvement to be addressed?
- The role of the Careers Service with young people once they have entered training needs to be discussed and agreed with Training Organisations and LECs. Strategies need to be adopted to ensure each organisation and its young people are aware of the Careers Service

role, for example, via Service Level Agreements with Training Organisations and through young people's Skillseekers induction programme.

- The extension of guidance support to both trainees and Training Organisations is likely to strengthen the advocacy role of the Careers Service on behalf of vulnerable and disaffected clients seeking to enter training.

Work with young workers

- Young workers are free to use the Careers Service but Careers Service Companies do not actively promote their services to this group. The opening hours of Careers Service Companies can be a practical barrier to use by young workers.
- The research also revealed that most young people surveyed viewed the Careers Service as the organisation to go to when they first left school but less so once they had been in the labour market for some time.
- The Careers Service has few contacts with young workers, and policy guidance to Careers Service Companies reinforces a focus on initial transitions.
- Young people in work have continuing careers guidance needs, particularly in a more complex labour market. What are the implications for the career development of young workers if impartial careers guidance is not available to them? How may a continuing service to young workers be resourced?

Work with further education students

- In most Careers Service Companies, work with FE students is a marginal activity compared to school work despite the fact that they are a core client group. The careers guidance needs of FE students need to be assessed and quantified.
- There is a disjunction between policy guidance and the funding formula for the Careers Service (GAE). Resourcing and policy need to be more closely tied together.
- Applicants to FE, unless already in a core client group, can only access impartial careers guidance through adult guidance provision.

Post-school clients' view of the Careers Service

- When young people in the five case-study Careers Service Companies were surveyed for a second time, 40% of them had left school. Over a half of them had had contact with the Careers Service in their first year after leaving school. Unemployed young people were most likely to have had contact.
- Post school clients thought the most important tasks for the Careers Service were: to be good at advising young people who were unsure about their future (ie focusing on the careers guidance function of the Careers Service); to treat young people with respect; and keep up to date with information on courses and jobs.
- Young people's expectations and opinion of the Careers Service varied by their status at the time of the survey (ie whether they were in the labour market, at FE or at HE). Careers Services need to look more closely at the needs and expectations of different groups of young people, particularly those of HE entrants who appear to have distinct views.
- Young people were very positive that the Careers Service treats young people with respect (83% always/usually) and could be trusted with confidential information (85%

always/usually). This suggests that the relationship between the Careers Service and its young clients is a positive one, based on respect and trust in certain key areas.

- The Careers Service's performance in some aspects of guidance and information was judged less positively by post school clients, especially HE applicants and students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Definitions of post-school clients

The Careers Service's post school client group consists of five groups of young people who are defined as core clients:

- those who are unemployed;
- those who have entered a Skillseekers programme as trainees;
- those who have entered Skillseekers as employees or Modern Apprentices;
- young workers who have entered a job (not part of Skillseekers);
- students in further education.

These are the core clients of Careers Service Companies while the New Deal age group, 18-24, is in the category of "clients to whom a service may be offered" (Guidance Arrangements, 1998). Students in Higher Education are not part of the Careers Service Company's core client group and have specialist Careers Services available to them in their institutions although Careers Service Companies will deal with young people dropping out of Higher Education and returning to their home careers office for advice.

Overview of post-school clients' transitions

Considerable movement of some young people across the categories of post-school clients

There is considerable movement across these five categories by some clients at different points in the post-school period. A number of studies such as the Scottish School Leavers' Survey have demonstrated the extent of young people's movement between statuses in the first few years after leaving school (Lynn & Courtenay, 1997; NCSR, 2000; Howieson *et al*, 2000). Although some will enter a post-school opportunity and stay there for a number of years, others will have periods of temporary work, unemployment, training, not actively seeking work, or in education. Some of these changes will be instigated by young people while others will not be of their choosing, for example the end of a temporary contract or being paid off.

Careers Service Company staff's awareness of the extent of this behaviour was limited by the lack of systematic tracking of post-school clients. Current resources allow (and the Scottish Executive requires) "first destination" statistics to be completed. The data for this comes from a 100% follow-up survey of all school leavers which is compiled within a few months after leaving school. It is, however, a compilation of the first known destination after school. Careers Service Company staff tended to become aware of movements beyond the first destination only when young people sought advice or vacancies from the careers office or when they were required to register at the careers office to get benefit. Other young people

moved in and out of opportunities without accessing the careers office or registering for benefit and their changed situation was not known to staff.

The nature of young people's career development and transitions

Possible reasons suggested to us by Careers Service Company staff for the apparently haphazard pattern of post-school activity by some clients included:

- lack of vocational maturity and of a sense of direction;
- lack of personal maturity (this has been exacerbated in the past two decades by young people's more prolonged transitions and greater financial dependence on their family);
- lack of "job readiness" (ie not having the skills and attitudes to access and keep work);
- poor family, community or peer group support for entry into work, training or further education; and
- lack of motivation and confidence.

These are all negative reasons and as such assume that movement between activities is a problem but this behaviour can also be conceived of in a more positive way:

- some change of career plans is a normal part of the career development process;
- the labour market requires new entrants to be flexible and mobile.

Much career development theory describes the ongoing nature of the career choice process (Super, 1957; Gottfredson, 1981; Krumboltz, 1994). Whether consciously or unconsciously, young people review their career aspirations and values and the possible opportunities open to them in the light of evidence and experiences gained during childhood and the teenage years. Their career planning and perceptions change accordingly. In the earlier stages of this development, family and community aspirations and experiences are extremely powerful, and the media and school experiences also have an impact. Education for Work programmes in school, careers guidance from careers advisers and guidance teachers and part-time work become influential on individual career planning while young people are still at secondary school. But the impact of the actual experience of further and higher education, and of the complexity of the world of work (much of which can only be understood in simple terms while still at school) can change the career planning and self-perceptions of many young people (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1999). It is hardly surprising if a first opportunity after school provides unexpected satisfactions or dissatisfactions leading to a change of course, job or training place for some young people in the few months and years after leaving school. Movement across opportunities (whether changes of course or subjects at university or college or of work or training places) could be seen as a normal part of adolescent career development for many young people. This could apply whether the change has been apparently under the control of the young person or enforced by others.

The actual observable development of a young person's "career", is often not the linear progression that some policymakers expect. There is often an assumption that if young people receive "good" guidance, then they will make the "right" choice first time (Hodkinson, 1997). In addition, the speed of change and the extent of temporary and part-time working in the labour market requires a degree of flexibility in career direction from new entrants and experienced workers alike. For many young people, their career progression is non-linear and this has implications for the effective delivery of careers guidance services, including the

placing/job-broking service, especially one such as the Careers Service (CS) that focuses on the least experienced entrants to the labour market.

The Careers Service is usually described as a transition service, primarily for young people. At present careers guidance support from Careers Service Companies is focused primarily on initial transitions at the expense of continuing transitions. This seems to be a result of policy direction from central government, resource limitations and a focus in practice on short-term decisions and adjustments. The importance given by many Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) to job readiness as an essential component for new entrants to the labour market also contributes to a focus on initial transitions. But, it is clear that for many young people the transition period extends beyond the first transition after school and their careers do not progress in the logical, linear way assumed by much policy.

Careers Service work with unemployed clients

Unemployed young people are a broad group and encompass: recent school leavers; those who have completed an FE course or Skillseekers programme; young people who have been in training, college or work but left before the end; and those who have been unemployed for some months since leaving school.

The term “job-seeker” is sometimes used instead of “unemployed”, being thought to be more politically acceptable. However it is not necessarily accurate. One of the frustrations described by Careers Service Company staff dealing with unemployed young people was the significant minority who did not appear to be seriously looking for work but instead used the Careers Service only as a route to the receipt of benefit. Nor are all “job-seekers” unemployed, some of those seeking a job are at school, college, in training provision or in an existing job. A further confusion is caused by the term “Job Seekers Allowance” (JSA), a benefit available for some young unemployed people seeking work.

We use the term “unemployed” young people to encompass those who have left school and are not in work, training or post-school education. We discuss the job-finding service in the next chapter.

The research brief for this study did not include face-to-face work with post-school clients, and as expected, the number of unemployed young people responding to the postal questionnaire was too small to analyse as a separate category. This section on work with unemployed young people is therefore based on our interview data but tries to compensate for the lack of direct evidence from young unemployed people by drawing on evidence from other studies conducted with them.

Range of Careers Service activities with unemployed young people

A number of Careers Service Companies were using computerised administration systems to record and generate contacts with unemployed clients and this proved an efficient approach.

In assessing their work with unemployed young people, just under three-quarters of Careers Service Companies in Scotland had activities which could be classified as standard. By standard we mean:

- regular face-to-face or telephone reviews;

- meeting the support requirements of the Job Seekers Allowance and Severe Hardship payments;
- focusing on the guarantee group;
- submission to vacancies;
- assessing and endorsing Special Training Needs (STN);
- assisting with the completion of application forms and preparation for selection interviews; and
- working with other agencies to intervene in the labour market on behalf of young people.

A minority also gave examples of occasional innovative projects with unemployed clients. Just over a quarter of Careers Service Companies delivered both the standard service and also significant amounts of innovative work. Innovative approaches were often the result of co-operation with LECs and other organisations and dependent on funding from them. Approaches included:

- Careers clubs for school leavers and job clubs for long term unemployed clients;
- Work with homeless young people and travelling people;
- Group work on job seeking skills, confidence building or other topics, often delivered by careers assistants;
- Special projects for disaffected school leavers in co-operation with council education departments;
- Specialist assessment of young people with Special Training Needs;
- Taster programmes for young people waiting to take up a Skillseekers place;
- Joint reviews with LEC staff of individual clients covered by the guarantee of an offer of a training place; and
- More use of Job Centre premises as caller stations for review work.

There was an increasing focus on outreach work in most Careers Service Companies ie working with young people in youth projects, with community education and in areas where young people might gather.

Variation in approach to contact with unemployed young people

Approaches to reviewing the situation of unemployed young people were similar across most Careers Service Companies in Scotland but did vary significantly across offices within a minority of Careers Service Companies. Some of this variation was due to the geography of the company that meant that offices in different locations used different methods of contact and might vary the frequency of contacts.

All Careers Service Companies worked with unemployed young people on a generic basis (ie Careers Advisers had both a school and an unemployed caseload) although one Careers Service Company was introducing a specialist post-school team and another had appointed senior Careers Advisers to work with the unemployed in the office. The policy in a third of Careers Service Companies had was that the same Careers Adviser who had guided the client at school should have a continuing post-school role. Another third of Careers Service Companies allocated unemployed clients to the paired support of a named Careers Adviser and Careers Assistant.

The importance to the client of continuity of contact by the same member of staff was a live issue that raised both practical and professional issues. Although continuity of contact was commonly seen as more critical in work with unemployed clients than with those in school, there was no unanimity about this:

“Perhaps if their needs are met, the consistency of the person won’t matter”

Careers Adviser

Contact and access issues relating to unemployed young people were often difficult to address in practice. In working with this easily discouraged group it was important to be able to respond very quickly to unemployed young people calling to the office. But if maintaining continuity of contact with a particular Careers Adviser was policy, this could sometimes result in a delay in response, with perhaps another appointment arranged which the young person might miss. Speed of response was, therefore, sometimes in conflict with continuity of contact. The approach which seemed to meet both the need for continuity and for speed of response was pairing a Careers Adviser with a Careers Assistant (the latter would generally be present in the office) to be responsible for a specific group of clients.

Impact of the Careers Service’s benefits role

The majority of those we interviewed felt that the “benefits policing” role of the Careers Service with clients in receipt of JSA and Severe Hardship payments hindered its support and guidance function. On the one hand, careers staff were encouraging young people to speak honestly about their hopes, aspirations and experiences while on the other hand they were being expected by the demands of the JSA and the Guarantee to put pressure on young clients to take what might be seen by others as an acceptable opportunity:

“Guidance goes out the window when young people are forced to take something they don’t want”.

Careers Adviser

The skills of Careers Advisers and Careers Assistants alike were tested by this situation. Some Careers Advisers took special care to distance themselves from support for the enforcement role, explaining that this was a requirement forced on them by others. A particularly difficult situation was where careers staff themselves were sceptical about the quality or appropriateness of some of the available opportunities, especially at times when the number and type of opportunities were limited. They felt their impartiality compromised and were uncomfortable supporting the requirement that young people should take any appropriate opportunity in order to continue to receive benefit. They contrasted their role with clients in this situation with their guidance role in school, which was based on the concept of impartial, non-directive guidance and where pushing one particular opportunity would be regarded as extremely poor professional practice. Many Careers Service Company staff also were of the view that young people pushed into an opportunity that they did not want would be unlikely to use the Careers Service in the future for help with career development.

Not least of the demands resulting from the Careers Service’s role in the benefits system was the time spent in cumbersome administration. The benefit regulations also required claimants to call into the careers office regularly to review their employment situation which added to workloads. It also gave young people extra travel costs and made considerable demands on their time without there necessarily being any concrete result, in the sense of a job or training

opportunity attractive to the young person. This too could add to the frustration of both clients and Careers Service Company staff.

There was a minority view expressed that the Careers Service's benefits role should be retained. Arguments for this included: firstly that some young people would not come to the careers office otherwise, and would miss out on the help on offer; secondly that some young people needed a "carrot and stick" approach to motivate them and it was necessary to keep the "carrot" (a job or training opportunity with a wage or training allowance) in the same hands as the "stick" (the threat of removal of benefit); and thirdly that the Careers Service, unlike other agencies that might take on this role, was on the young client's side, and could mitigate some of the worst effects of the system.

The discomfort and tension in this enforcement role resulted in variation in the application of the benefit rules. Basically, how "hard a line" should be taken with clients? There was variation between individual members of staff in the same office, with some being more judgmental than others about young people thought to be "playing the system". Variation could also be seen between offices in the same Careers Service Company and between Employment Services offices. This was especially noticeable where more than one ES office linked to the same careers office but applied the rules differently.

Some of our respondents who had either worked closely with, or previously been employed by, local employment initiatives commented on the less formal, and possibly more effective, approach of these initiatives. While some of these differences related to a more relaxed approach (eg that gave young people an informal base for refreshments), the most common reason given for the more attractive nature of these initiatives was their lack of a benefits enforcement role.

Respective roles of Careers Advisers and Careers Assistants

The balance of responsibilities between the Careers Adviser and the Careers Assistant for unemployed clients, especially for those with complex problems, was an area under review in many Careers Service Companies. This was usually part of a more general review of the level of responsibility that Careers Assistants might be asked to take on. In one Careers Service Company, the Senior Careers Assistant in each area had been re-graded and given responsibility for work with the unemployed and for deputising for the Area Manager. In small offices, especially in rural areas, Careers Assistants inevitably had considerable responsibility for initial dealings with unemployed clients some of whom had complex problems. An example of this was one area where 75% of the unemployed register was at one point in receipt of Severe Hardship payments ie these young people were seen as sufficiently estranged from the family home to be considered to be living independently. In most offices, Careers Assistants had the initial and most frequent contacts with unemployed clients.

In other Careers Service Companies Careers Assistants were increasingly being encouraged to provide group support to unemployed clients, to take responsibility for limited changes to recommendations on client records and for resubmitting clients with Special Training Needs within the existing recommendation. In some cases the intention was to remove some of the heavy volume of work from Careers Advisers, and in others resulted from the training of Careers Assistants to SVQ level 3 in Guidance, a technician grade.

Careers Assistants were aware of the limitations of what they could do for significant numbers of young unemployed people, for whom finding work was the least of their problems. Careers Service Company staff showed high levels of concern about the situation of many of their young unemployed clients and there was evidence of intensive personal support being provided for a small number of very vulnerable or difficult clients. Some of this work was very resource-intensive and personally demanding of staff.

Variation in local labour markets and the impact on work with unemployed young people

The presence on the careers office register of a “hard core” of young people who appeared to be uninterested in opportunities was demanding on time, skills and morale of staff. At certain points in the year, the unemployed register was low, with only a small pool of motivated young people available to be sent to employers’ vacancies.

We were able to see the impact of a labour market with a choice of vacancies and those with few opportunities on the approach taken by the Careers Service to work with young unemployed clients. In areas where young people had a choice of opportunities, Careers Assistants needed to spend increased time helping clients assess their skills, experiences and aspirations and match these against the choices available. In this situation, staff were more confident that clients would value the careers office’s role, and felt they had something good to offer their young clients which would easily motivate them. In the opposite scenario, staff were required to spend considerable periods of time motivating young clients, whose negative view of the range and number of opportunities was actually shared by careers staff.

The most common approach was to provide support to help unemployed clients develop job search skills (ie filling in application forms, going for interviews etc). Even where this had proved ineffective, (for example, where there was a low uptake of the offer of this support, or where there was little evidence of it positively improving clients’ chances of entering an opportunity) it was still likely to be the most frequent help given. We would suggest that the needs of young people in different labour markets need to be taken more into account in designing practical interventions with unemployed clients.

Staff suggested the need for new approaches, including:

- Earlier interventions with clients before they became unemployed. The government’s social inclusion agenda was beginning to have an impact and initiatives to provide support or a supportive programme to leavers while still at school were developing. In at least one Company with a heavy commitment to post-school work the balance of work was shifting towards school work to attempt to counteract disadvantage at an earlier point;
- Strategies to harness volunteer employers as mentors in providing encouragement and the development of skills and confidence in young unemployed and disaffected clients; and
- The need to develop more efficient matching of unemployed clients and opportunities, perhaps by adopting practices from the Employment Service or from private employment agencies.

The relevance of careers guidance to young unemployed people

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 we considered issues about the nature, frequency and timing of Careers Service Company contacts with school pupils. Can we ask the same questions about the

service to unemployed clients as to school pupils? We have already looked at contact arrangements but could ask:

- Are contacts at the right time for unemployed clients?
- Is the type and frequency of contact right for unemployed clients?
- What are the expectations and needs of unemployed clients?
- Are there significant differences in the way the Careers Service does and should approach unemployed clients compared with clients in other situations?

Firstly we should beware of stereotyping unemployed clients. Some clients will remain unemployed for only a short time, some will learn valuable lessons and move on in career development through a period of unemployment, and some will have personal reasons for unemployment such as ill health, family circumstances and pregnancy which are resolved satisfactorily. Others who might be classified as “lacking motivation to work” might be more appropriately classified as “lacking motivation to do what society (or the government) wants”. They may be much more strongly motivated to other behaviours, including work on the black economy. Others again will have Special Training Needs that restrict choice or delay entry to the labour market.

The identification of client need must, therefore, consider both personally prompted transitions and career development and the externally prompted transitions involved in being unemployed.

It follows that “the right time” for contacts with unemployed young people is likely to vary with the individual. This will also apply to the frequency and type of contact. Unemployed young people, just like school pupils, learn and develop their thinking in individual ways, and there will be points when they are more open to careers guidance than others. Some whose unemployment is associated with uncertainty in career direction may need a series of concentrated short face-to-face contacts with tasks to complete in between. Some whose unemployment is associated with lack of confidence may need contact with the home that may have the potential to draw in family support. Others will benefit from group work which is timed appropriately (eg to prepare for an actual selection interview).

We were interested to note that when we asked Careers Advisers to talk about careers guidance interviews, the great majority talked about school interviews. In discussing their interviews with unemployed young people, many described these as different from school interviews and identified primarily personal and social guidance needs or the importance of finding a job or training place for them. One Board member articulated a view that was not uncommon:

“It’s middle class kids that need vocational guidance: unemployed kids need a job”.

This is a complex issue. It is, of course, the case that some young people have serious personal and social circumstances that are barriers to entry to work or training. Others will have such limited horizons that they effectively exclude themselves from what is actually available. Such young people require considerable support of a multi-agency nature before they can take steps towards work or training. There are real personal and social needs that have to be addressed and it is well known that young people will often share these needs with an individual who is congenial to them, regardless of the actual skills or experience or job title of the listener. Careers staff pick up non-careers issues in this way, as other agency

colleagues pick up careers issues. But it is important to consider what the specialist contribution of a careers guidance service can be to young unemployed people, and to develop that contribution.

Careers education and guidance aims to support individuals as they develop:

- their understanding of themselves and their aspirations, of their skills and their potential;
- their understanding of the way the world of education, training and work operates and of possible opportunities within it;
- their ability to weigh up possible ways of living, learning and working;
- their ability to plan for and handle changes.

With these aims, it becomes clear that careers education and guidance has an important contribution to make to the situation of young unemployed people. We would suggest that one of the development areas for work with unemployed young people is to consider ways in which existing knowledge of careers guidance techniques and expertise is applied to their situation.

Working with other agencies

An important aspect of working with unemployed clients is the relationship between the Careers Service and other agencies. Thinking about the Careers Service work in school, we can see that guidance teachers have what is effectively a first level careers guidance role with pupils. The same approach could be applied to work with unemployed clients and negotiated agreements with other agencies and organisations working with unemployed young people may be the way forward. This approach would involve training the staff of other agencies to provide first level careers guidance to individuals. This might be complemented by similar arrangements to train careers staff to handle first level social, health and personal issues (an area where many of our careers staff respondents indicated a training need). We would suggest that this approach is in tune with the conclusions of the Beattie report and more appropriate than the proposals for the new Personal Adviser role in the Connexions initiative in England (Beattie 1999).

Not only is it appropriate and productive to work with unemployed young people through formal agencies, it is also appropriate to work with the informal network of support that young unemployed people use. Other research in which we are involved suggests that parents, families, friends and girlfriends/boyfriends may all be involved in different ways in giving advice to a young person faced with unemployment (Howieson *et al*, 2000). Innovative approaches are needed to work with and through the “significant others” in a young unemployed person’s life. This is not easy to do, given the need to respect the adult status of the young client.

Finally in this section, we return to the comment we quoted earlier about the importance for unemployed people of getting a job, a statement that we support in many respects. There is no question that the effects on financial security, mental health and self esteem of getting a job (perhaps even any job) can be considerable, and we recognise the importance for the individual of achieving that first stage. But “first stage” is what it is. As young people who have been unemployed take their first steps into the labour market, they have the potential to learn a good deal about themselves and their opportunities from that experience. We would

argue that while an efficient job-finding service is of great importance to young unemployed people, we would suggest strongly that there is a need for continuing careers guidance support for these young people in the months and years following their entry into the labour market. It is this continuing support for young workers that is currently missing in the way the Careers Service operates, as we will see later in this chapter.

An effective Careers Service for unemployed young people

Using evidence gathered by Careers Service Companies themselves, data from other research and the views of our interview respondents, we have identified the following as key features of effective Careers Service Company work with unemployed people:

- A range of careers guidance techniques and strategies based on an identification of client need which takes into account both externally prompted and personally prompted transition points;
- Clarification of the different roles and responsibilities of staff;
- Contacts that have a clear and understandable purpose and have practical outcomes for clients;
- The removal of a policing role for benefit payment;
- Good links to other agencies, acknowledging and developing a mutual first level guidance role;
- Innovative approaches to work with young people through their family and friends;
- Appropriate use of telephone contacts (eg to save clients unnecessary travel and to link Careers Service work to home support where available);
- Local outreach centres;
- Efficient and transparent job-finding and submission systems;
- Open displays of opportunities, well maintained and up to date;
- As broad a range of opportunities on display as possible;
- Use of modern techniques (including computers and videos) in information handling and display; and
- Good customer care (welcoming, listening and friendly staff, attractive premises, waiting time kept to a minimum etc).

Work with young people entering, engaged in and completing Skillseekers or Modern Apprenticeships

In this section we review some of the data from the survey of Training Organisations (other reported findings are in Chapter 11) and use the evidence of our interviews with Careers Service Company staff to illustrate and comment on the issues arising.

Pre-entry and assessment programmes for young people with Special Training Needs

Pre-entry and assessment programmes for the entry of young people with Special Training Needs (STN) to Skillseekers were being developed during the period of the research. Careers Service Companies varied between, on the one hand, using the Careers Adviser's interview as the main assessment measure and, on the other hand, managing externally funded projects

to provide a range of experiences and measures (including psychometric testing) which would provide objective and systematic assessment. Young people on pre-Skillseekers programmes run by other providers were commonly reviewed by Careers Service Company staff prior to entry to Skillseekers provision.

Careers Service involvement with Skillseekers at the mid-term point

The Careers Service had most involvement in the mid term reviews of Skillseekers with Special Training Needs. Reviews of STN young people were occasionally conducted through case conferences involving other agencies, but most commonly on a one-to-one basis. The policy in a minority of Careers Service Companies was that the Careers Adviser who had submitted the particular trainee should do the review but in most, the review was done by a Careers Adviser specially appointed for that purpose or by the Careers Adviser named as the link officer for the Training Organisation in question. Careers Service Companies’ involvement was usually funded by the LEC. This had been a bone of contention in some Careers Service Companies where the LEC had initially suggested that such reviews were part of the Careers Service Company’s core work and therefore to be covered from core funding.

Training Organisations’ responses to the questionnaire survey illustrate the variation in Careers Service Companies involvement with different groups of Skillseekers (Table 8.1). Careers Service staff were fairly likely to be involved in the mid-term reviews of trainees with STN (52% “always or often”) but had a much more limited involvement with mainstream Skillseekers and Modern Apprentices (always or often: 4% and 6% respectively).

Table 8.1 Careers Service involvement in the mid-term reviews of young people’s progress

	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never	(n)
Skillseekers	2	2	12	83	(41)
Modern Apprentices	3	3	6	88	(33)
STN trainees	38	14	17	31	(29)

Careers Service Company and LEC staff whom we interviewed reported a similar picture. Once on a Skillseekers programme, it was rare for a mainstream Skillseekers to have a review contact by a Careers Service Company member of staff. There was usually no further contact between the young person and the Careers Service Company unless prompted by the Training Organisation or another source (eg parent). Typically the next contact with the Careers Service would be if the young person dropped out of Skillseekers or finished it without anything else to go to.

Nearly three quarters of Training Organisations thought that the Careers Service had the right level of involvement in the mid-term reviews of STN Skillseekers (72%, Table 8.2). However, it might be questioned whether involvement at the level reported (52% “always/often”) is appropriate and we discuss this later. Training Organisations, however, were not convinced that the level of mid term reviews of Skillseekers was correct. Just under two-thirds responded either “no” or “not sure”. Their written comments in the questionnaire help to illustrate these figures:

“Once young people are with us, we do not really hear from the Careers Service. Only when a young person is undergoing severe hardship do we hear from Careers.”

“We would like more genuine flexibility in their approach. I think at times the Careers Service is in a time warp with regards to innovation. They have too standardised an approach to a young person’s needs. We would definitely like more contact with the young person’s careers adviser during the training period. I was completely unaware that there was to be a continuing relationship with Careers once young people started. There has been no follow up on behalf of Careers ever to my knowledge unless we identified a problem.”

Table 8.2 Do you think this is the right level of involvement by CSC staff at the mid-term review stage with...

	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
...Skillseekers?	39	23	39	(39)
...Modern Apprentices?	38	22	41	(32)
...STN trainees?	72	8	20	(25)

Careers Service Company staff recognised that continuing guidance contacts with non-STN Skillseekers were limited and acknowledged that the main focus of work with mainstream Skillseekers and Modern Apprentices was at the submission and placing stage. Careers Service staff suggested to us that their own role was to emphasise their potential continuing guidance support to young people when they were being submitted and accepted on to a training programme, and that Training Organisations could reinforce this in the induction programme.

“The main thing is that young people know they can contact the careers adviser if they need to.”

Careers Adviser

We do not know to what extent Skillseekers are aware of this aspect of the Careers Service’s role.

Careers Service staff involvement in final reviews of Skillseekers

The questionnaire also asked about Careers Service involvement with Skillseekers who were coming to the end of their programme and did not have another opportunity to go to afterwards.

Their responses again highlight a difference between the Careers Service role with STN Skillseekers and with other Skillseekers. Almost two-thirds of Training Organisations responded that the Careers Service was always or often involved in the final review of trainees with STN Skillseekers compared with well under a fifth of other Skillseekers (always/often involved: STN 65%; mainstream Skillseekers 15%; Modern Apprentices 14%, Table 8.3).

Table 8.3 Careers Service staff involvement in the final reviews of young people completing Skillseekers without another opportunity

	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never	(n)
Skillseekers	5	10	23	62	(36)
Modern Apprentices	7	7	20	67	(30)
STN trainees	46	19	12	23	(26)

Training Organisations involved in piloting the questionnaire suggested that one possible reason for not referring Skillseekers or Modern Apprentices to the Careers Service at the end

of their programme was that the job-finding services of the Employment Service would be more useful.

A majority of Training Organisations thought that the Careers Service had the right level of involvement in final reviews of STN trainees (Table 8.4: 71% “yes”; 29% “no/not sure”). They were less sure about its level of involvement with other Skillseekers and with Modern Apprentices.

Table 8.4 Has the Careers Service the right level of involvement at the final review stage with...

	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
...Skillseekers?	50	28	22	(39)
...Modern Apprentices?	45	31	24	(29)
...STN trainees?	71	8	21	(24)

Careers Service involvement with Skillseekers needing support or at risk of dropping out

The responses of Training Organisations indicate that the Careers Service had only limited involvement with young people on Skillseekers who needed support or were in danger of dropping out of training (Table 8.5). Just over a half responded that the Careers Service was always or usually involved with young people who needed support. It was less likely to be involved with those in danger of leaving their training programme early.

Table 8.5 Careers Service involvement with “at risk” Skillseekers

	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never	(n)
Is the Careers Service involved if any young person needs support?	13	38	20	29	(46)
Is the Careers Service involved if a young person is in danger of dropping out of your training?	15	26	24	35	(41)

Most Careers Service Companies relied on Training Organisations to remind young people that they could refer themselves to the Careers Adviser, but some Careers Service Company staff felt that it was unrealistic to expect them to do much of this. Most Careers Service Company staff did, however, feel that it was important that Training Organisations understood the points at which a referral back to the Careers Service Company was appropriate, and identified “young people being in need of support” and “in danger of dropping out” as critical referral points. It is of concern that more than a third of Training Organisations reported that they never involved the Careers Service Company if a young person was in danger of dropping out. This means that in this situation the Careers Service Company only became involved after the young person had dropped out and become unemployed and had no chance to take preventative measures or ensure that the young person considered alternatives to leaving the training programme.

Reported levels of Careers Service Company involvement when young people needed support were not greatly higher, with just over a half of Training Organisations reporting that the Careers Service was always or often involved if a young person was likely to drop out of Skillseekers.

Overall level of Careers Service Company involvement with Skillseekers and Modern Apprentices

There is a need for Careers Service Companies to consider and discuss with Training Organisations what is an appropriate level of involvement. There are different arguments. On the one hand it could be argued that once young people are in training, unless they have special training needs, they should be treated as normal employees who would not have the Careers Service checking on them (although we suggest later that the Careers Service's role with young workers also needs to be examined). A counter argument is that given levels of non-completion of training and non-achievement of qualifications, then the Careers Service has a role to play. We have seen how policy thinking about the Careers Service, especially in England, has increasingly emphasised its role in using regular reviews to encourage pupils at risk of under-achieving at school. This thinking could logically be applied to young people in post-school training who are in danger of under achieving and/or dropping out. There are, of course, resource implications of any increase in work with young people in training that would need to be addressed with LECs and others if a more strategic role in tackling non-completion of training and non-achievement of qualifications is to be taken on by Careers Service Company staff.

Although most Training Organisations were satisfied with the level of Careers Service Company involvement in STN mid-term reviews, we would suggest that the levels reported are lower than might be expected ("always/often involved" 52%, Table 8.1). Careers Services provide the initial endorsement that special training support is required, but it is less common to review whether this needs to be continued. We would argue that the progress and career development of young people with STN requires to be monitored and supported throughout the period of training.

The 1998 Scottish Enterprise commissioned evaluation of Skillseekers identified the area of guidance and support of young people on Skillseekers as in need of development (PACEC, 1998). This view was endorsed in the consultation paper "Opportunities and Choices" (Scottish Office, 1999) which noted:

"It [the evaluation] highlighted the number of young people who leave the programme without completing the qualification – the 'early leavers' – and, more importantly, described some of the characteristics of that group of young people who tend to:

- *Be uncertain about the job or training that they want;*
- *Have a lower level of attainment (at entry) than those who stay on and complete the programme;*
- *Be less likely to have employed status;*
- *Be more likely to have special training needs and/or to be working towards a qualification below SVQ II level;*
- *Have more than one Skillseekers job or placement.*

One of the most important issues for young people themselves was their perception that they had not received sufficient or appropriate initial guidance and support, followed by a lack of support during their training."

("Opportunities and Choices", Scottish Office, 1999: Ch 2, para 2.17)

We would suggest that the inclusion of "be uncertain about the job or training that they want" as one of the characteristics of early leavers from Skillseekers supports our view that careers guidance, not just personal and social support, is necessary for, at least some, Skillseekers.

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that Careers Service Company support is available at the right time? One way for Careers Service Companies and Training Organisations to do so is through Service Level Agreements between them. This requires to be supported by regular reinforcement of the referral points to the staff of Training Organisations. Some responsibility must also lie with young people. Induction and briefing should ensure that young people are sufficiently aware that they can (and should) use the Careers Service when they are in a training programme rather than only after they have left it and are back on the unemployed register. However, young people's willingness to initiate a contact with the Careers Service will depend on their previous relationship with the service, including whether they perceive themselves to have been "forced" on to training and their recognition of the Careers Service's post-school or adult role. Practical issues of how a young person in a full time training programme can actually see a Careers Adviser or visit the Careers Office also need to be addressed

A final argument to be considered relates to the particular nature of the relationship between Training Organisations and the Careers Service. It was suggested to us by Careers Service Companies that Training Organisations had a different and closer relationship with the Careers Service than do employers:

"The relationship between the Careers Service and training providers is different from that between the Careers Service and employers. There is a closer partnership with training providers, they are taking the training of young people a stage further. The link with training providers is based on the fact that we are saying, 'Perhaps that young person is not necessarily the best person, but we want you to develop the person'. Whereas for employers you are trying to say, 'These are the best young people'".

Head of Service

If this model of partnership is appropriate, what are the implications for the Careers Service? It could be argued that the service should be working closely with Training Organisations to develop young people's motivation and career aspirations. If Careers Advisers use their advocacy role to persuade Training Organisations to take on disadvantaged and disaffected young people, perhaps they should offer greater support to Training Organisations through active involvement in ongoing guidance. Such advocacy, too, may be more effective if Training Organisations do not feel they are being left to deal with the difficulties alone, especially since the financial costs of non-completing trainees or non-achieving trainees may discourage Training Organisations from "taking a risk" at the selection stage with some of the poorest candidates.

Work with young workers

In comparison with the other demands on Careers Service time, guidance activities with young workers had low priority in Careers Service Companies. We were able to identify only one funded initiative that was designed to help young people stay in work, perhaps responding to the debate on the development of employability. Several respondents recognised the potential value of this work, but resource issues kept its development low on the agenda.

Previously, the Careers Service used to carry out the "Review of Progress of Young Workers". This activity involved contacting young workers within 3 to 9 months of their

entry to employment and could involve an invitation to call to the careers office for help on one evening in the week when the office opened late. The purpose of this contact was:

- to check if young people were happy in their work, if it was what they had expected and if not, to give careers advice and register them for a change of job
- to check if young people were receiving training and if not to help them negotiate this
- to review the careers guidance given and satisfaction with the Careers Service
- to keep the careers adviser up-to-date on employment conditions and opportunities for young people in the area

This activity had fallen into disuse and was dropped from central government guidance to Careers Services. Young workers older than 16 or 17 are, under current guidance, outwith the core client group and are clients to whom a service is optional. Given that reduced numbers of young people are leaving at 16, and that the first entry to work may be after 5th or 6th year or an FE course, few young workers can now be classified as core clients. This confirms our argument that policy guidance to the Careers Service reinforces a narrow view of its contribution as being focused only on initial transitions. However, young people in work have continuing careers guidance needs (Howieson *et al*, 1993).

The “Right to Time Off for Study” legislation introduced towards the end of the research has, to date, had minimum uptake. The Careers Service’s potential role in encouraging the uptake of training by young employees and their employers has been recognised by Scottish Enterprise and an agreement made to fund the Careers Service’s work on an individual client basis. The impact of this initiative on the Scottish Careers Service’s work has been negligible so far.

While the importance of helping young people in jobs without training must be recognised, the broader needs of young people’s career development suggest that the purposes of the “Review of Progress of Young Workers” noted above are as valid as ever, perhaps more so, due to the increased complexity of the labour market. And review of young workers and their experience is valuable from a quality aspect, enabling Careers Service Company staff to evaluate the careers guidance these young people have received. Furthermore, contact with young workers can contribute to staff development by increasing knowledge of the local labour market for young people.

Work with further education students

If the provision of services to young workers is a resource issue, provision for FE students, another core client group, is even more so. It was described by Heads of Service as:

“A bottomless pit”

“There’s an enormous potential demand”

“It would seriously squeeze the school side if really taken up”

One Careers Service Company was heavily involved in provision to FE as part of its core input, and two were significantly involved through the purchase by colleges of the time of Careers Service Company staff. Of the remaining Careers Service Companies, we would assess half as having some involvement with advising FE students and half as having very limited involvement. Particular problems were experienced where the Careers Service

Company had a number of specialist colleges that attracted students from outwith its area but who then became core clients of the Careers Service Company in whose area the college was based.

Given that the GAE funding does not take into account the FE student population, there were significant resource issues for Careers Service Companies. The policy is to provide “relevant services for assisting persons undergoing relevant education”; the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 made no distinction between school and college students in relation to “relevant education”. There was, as a result, considerable disjunction between the policy and the practice which effectively meant that work with college students was a marginal activity compared with school work in most Careers Service Companies.

To what extent does the limited service to FE matter, given there is now a trend for larger colleges to appoint their own Careers Adviser within the college guidance team? This may depend on the extent to which the Careers Adviser’s impartiality is compromised by being part of the institution and the extent to which the college funds its guidance services. Some suggested that improved articulation between FE and HE courses would lessen the need for the Careers Service’s input. However we would suggest that pre-entry and induction guidance would become more rather than less important in this situation due to the extended commitment the client is undertaking. While colleges have a clear responsibility for pre-entry guidance, this would normally be done by departmental staff rather than the college careers adviser. Where, then, is the FE applicant who may be embarking on an extended articulated course of study to get impartial advice? Applicants to FE as such are not within the core client group of the Careers Service Company, they may fall into the category of core client group at the application stage but this would be only for other reasons, for example, if they were unemployed.

Post-school clients’ views of the Careers Service

Our first survey contacted young people while they were all still at school (in S4, S5 and S6). When they were surveyed for a second time, a year later, 40% of them had left and were in various post school statuses. Table 8.6 shows the status of young people at the time of the second survey. We would note that the Skillseekers category is predominately made up of those with employed status (including Modern Apprenticeships); less than one percent were trainees. Only 2% of respondents were unemployed which means that, generally, we have not been able to analyse the responses of unemployed young people as a separate category. For some analyses, we have combined young people on Skillseekers, in work, self-employed and unemployed into one category called “young people in the labour market”. The numbers in the other two categories “looking after the family or home” and “doing something else” are too small to analyse separately.

In the next sections we consider post school clients’ contacts with the Careers Service; their views of the what is important for the Careers Service to do; and report on their opinion of the Careers Service.

Table 8.6 Status of young people at the second survey

	%	(n)
School	60	(892)
FE	11	(158)
HE	15	(217)
In labour market, of whom:	12	(175)
[Job]	[6]	(90)
[Skillseekers (employed and trainee status)]	[4]	(54)
[Unemployed]	[2]	(31)
Looking after family or home	0.4	(6)
Something else	2	(25)

Young people's contact with the Careers Service since leaving school

Young people were asked if they had had contact with the Careers Service since leaving school and, if so, what types of contacts they had had. Table 8.7 shows that nearly a half of respondents reported that they had not had contact with the Careers Service after school (46%). Whether or not young people had had contact varied considerably across the different post school statuses, in particular, nearly three-quarters of those who were in higher education at the time of the second survey had had no contact. It might have been expected that most young people in higher education would have reported some contact (eg a telephone call) since the Careers Service carries out a survey of first destinations of all school leavers 3 to 6 months after leaving. However, because the purpose of this contact is primarily seen as data collection for destination statistics (rather than checking the progress of the young person), this information may be gathered from a simple questionnaire, from a telephone contact with family members, from the school, or from client record data gathered some months earlier as national exam results come out. We have referred earlier in this chapter to the historical Careers Service role of “reviewing the progress of young workers”, a task no longer undertaken. The limited use of this destination statistic contact is perhaps a missed opportunity to remind HE students (and other post-school clients) about the role of continuing careers guidance and to check the careers guidance given against client outcomes.

While a quarter of young people who were in the labour market had had no post school contact with the Careers Service, this varied depending on their particular labour market status. All of those who were unemployed had had some contact with the Careers Service since leaving school. Under a third of those on Skillseekers reported no contact (30%, Table 8.7). The Careers Service Company role in placing these young people into Skillseekers may well have taken place prior to leaving school or they may have found their own opportunity.

Around a quarter of post school clients reported having one or more interviews with a Careers Adviser since leaving school (26%, Table 8.7). Unemployed young people and those in employment reported higher levels of Careers Adviser interview(s) than those in other statuses. Unemployed young people also had the greatest level of contact with Careers Assistants about vacancies or benefits. Altogether the table shows the focus of the Careers Service Company post school work on unemployed clients. This confirms what we say elsewhere about the lack of careers guidance to most post-school clients.

Well over two-fifths (45%) reported contacts using “distance approaches” whereby information was sent or phone calls made to the home (some of these contacts may well have been to gather first-destination information). This type of outreach work is sometimes under-

valued, but can be very effective. An earlier piece of work by the researchers found that parents particularly valued phone calls to their children as it showed a continuing interest in them, allowed parents to keep in touch with what was happening and gave them the potential to intervene if necessary (Semple, 1990).

Table 8.7 Post school clients' contact with the Careers Service

	All post-school clients	Labour Market					
		FE	HE	Labour market	Job	Skill-seekers	Unemp
No contact	46	25	72	25	41	30	-
One interview with a careers adviser	15	18	12	16	16	19	11
More than one interview with a careers adviser	11	4	-	26	29	14	36
Group discussion	7	12	3	4	3	8	-
Interview with a careers assistant	10	2	-	23	21	18	36
Phone call	19	7	7	41	28	53	57
Information sent	26	23	14	39	27	56	46
Other	4	9	1	5	6	5	-
(n)	(581)	(159)	(217)	(175)	(89)	(55)	(31)

Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could tick more than one answer.

Post-school clients' perspective on the important things for the Careers Service to do

The questionnaire asked all respondents for their opinion of the Careers Service, whatever their level of contact at school and since leaving. They were asked for their opinion of how well the Careers Service performed in relation to a number of statements. They were then asked to indicate from the list what they thought were the three most important things for the Careers Service to do, to give an indication of young people's expectations of the Careers Service. We first discuss what post school clients identified as the most important things for the Careers Service to do since this provides the context in which to interpret their responses about how well the Careers Service was performing in relation to the various activities.

For post school clients, in all statuses, the most important thing for the Careers Service to do is to be good at advising young people who are unsure about their future (45%, Table 8.8). Thus respondents think that the *careers guidance* function is the most important aspect of the Careers Service's work. Being good at advising young people who are unsure about their future was an expectation of the Careers Service held by those groups who might be assumed to have made a vocational decision through entering a job, training or a vocational FE course as those still at school. While it may be argued that some may have answered the question on the basis of what is important for all young people and not just themselves, we can see from their responses to other items that their answers appear to be related to their own current status. There is also evidence from other research that confirms that young people post-school may experience continuing uncertainty about their future (Howieson and Semple, 1992).

Treating young people with respect emerged as the second most important thing for the Careers Service to do (35%). Following this, keeping up-to-date with information about

courses and information about jobs were the next most important aspects identified by post school clients (24% and 21%, Table 8.8).

Table 8.8: The most important things for the Careers Service to do

	Post-school clients	FE	HE	Labour market
Treats young people with respect?	35	40	33	33
Can be trusted to respect confidential information?	20	18	15	26
Speaks up on behalf of young people?	18	16	14	26
Good at advising young people going to university?	19	8	35	9
Good at advising young people going to college?	14	15	10	19
Good at advising young people looking for a job or training after school?	17	ns	ns	ns
Good at advising young people who are unsure about their future?	45	49	50	34
Good at helping and supporting unemployed young people?	19	20	12	26
Keeps up-to-date with information about jobs?	21	32	20	21
Keeps up-to-date with information about courses?	24	26	30	13
Good job or training vacancies for school leavers?	13	9	5	28
(n)	(551)	(159)	(217)	(175)

Being good at advising young people who are unsure about their future was the most important aspect for all categories of post school clients. But it is clear that respondents were judging what was important based on their own experience - the level of importance given by young people to all other aspects of the work of the Careers Service varied by their status. Thus, “advising young people going to university” was seen as more important by those in higher education than by any other group of young people (35%, Table 8.8). Similarly, young people in the labour market were more likely to rate as important than other groups: the Careers Service in its advocacy role in speaking up for young people (25%); the ability to trust the Careers Service to respect confidential information (29%); and that the Careers Service should have good vacancies (28%). They were less likely to rate: keeping up-to-date about courses (13%) and being good at advising young people who were unsure about their future (37%), although this last item was still the one most likely to be thought important by young people on the labour market. While recognising there will be differences at individual level, these figures give some indication of the expectations and perspectives of young people in the labour market. It is interesting to note the comparatively high numbers giving a high rating to “being able to trust the Careers Service to respect confidential information” amongst the labour market group. In considering why this difference exists, it may be that the Careers Service’s provision of information on young people under submission to employers or Training Organisations (particularly those young people being endorsed as having Special Training Needs) may be more significant and apparent to this group.

Post-school clients’ opinion of the Careers Service

We now report on post school clients’ opinion of the Careers Service. Their opinion of the extent to which the Careers Service delivered on the various aspects of their work needs to be considered in the context of what they thought was important for the Careers Service to do.

Respondents could answer: “yes, always”, “yes, usually”, “no, not always”, “no, not at all”, and “not sure” to each item in the question. We have combined the “yes, always” and “yes, usually” categories into one and similarly the “no, not always” and “no, not at all” have been combined.

As we noted above, helping young people who were unsure about their future was the most important task identified for the Careers Service. Over a half of post school clients thought that the Careers Service always/usually did so (55%, Table 8.9). Young people who were in HE were least likely to think that the Careers Service always or usually did this and although there is a high level of “not sure” responses from HE students, over a third responded “not always” or “no, not at all” to this (37%, Table 8.9). The responses of HE students were different from those of other respondents for most items; they are inclined to be more negative and, especially, to give a higher level of “not sure” responses. This suggests that more work needs to be done to examine the expectations and experiences of HE students and the way in which the Careers Service works with them.

Table 8. 9: Young people’s opinion of the Careers Service: post school clients

Do you think the Careers Service...		Post-school clients	FE	HE	Labour market
...treats young people with respect?	Always/usually	83	91	78	82
	not always/ no	11	6	11	15
	n/s	6	3	10	4
...can be trusted to respect confidential information?	Always/usually	85	90	83	79
	not always/ no	3	-	2	-
	n/s	13	10	15	14
...speaks up on behalf of young people?	always/usually	55	60	42	69
	not always/ no	20	20	21	19
	n/s	25	20	38	13
...is good at advising young people going to university?	always/usually	49	43	54	49
	not always/ no	28	22	37	23
	n/s	22	35	10	28
...is good at advising young people going to college?	always/usually	61	69	52	66
	not always/ no	11	16	5	15
	n/s	28	15	43	20
...is good at advising young* people looking for a job or training after school?	always/usually	57	59	39	79
	not always/ no	10	8	8	14
	n/s	33	33	53	7
...is good at advising young people who are unsure about their future?	always/usually	55	65	38	67
	not always/ no	26	21	36	17
	n/s	19	14	26	16
...is good at helping and supporting unemployed young people?	always/usually	37	47	21	49
	not always/ no	13	5	12	20
	n/s	51	48	67	32
...keeps up-to-date with information about jobs?	always/usually	48	59	33	60
	not always/ no	19	16	19	20
	n/s	33	25	48	20
...keeps up-to-date with information about courses?	always/usually	65	83	49	69
	not always/ no	13	4	17	13
	n/s	23	13	34	19
...has good job or training vacancies for school leavers?	always/usually	37	45	20	49
	not always/ no	12	8	6	24
	n/s	51	48	74	27

It is interesting to compare FE and HE students' responses. FE students' responses were generally positive with a relatively low level of "not sure" answers. A large majority of those in FE thought that the Careers Service always or usually was good at advising young people going to college (69%, Table 8.9). This compares with over a half of HE students who rated the Careers Service as always or usually good at advising young people going to university (54%, Table 8.9). FE students were also more positive than HE students about the extent to which the Careers Service always/usually kept up to date with information about courses. (83% vs 49%, Table 8.9). It seems that FE students were more satisfied than HE students with aspects of course information provision by the Careers Service.

With the exception of responses to the question about being good at advising young people looking for jobs/training and about keeping up to date with course information, the views of those in the labour market are similar with those in FE. These two groups seem to hold very similar opinions of the Careers Service's performance.

As we saw above, treating young people with respect was an aspect judged by all groups as important for the Careers Service to do. A large majority of post school clients thought that the Careers Service did do this in practice (83%, "always/usually"). A similarly high percentage felt that the Careers Service could be trusted with confidential information (85%, "always/usually"). Both of these responses suggest that the relationship between the Careers Service and its young clients is a positive one, based on respect and trust in certain key areas.

Around a half of respondents in the labour market thought that the Careers Service always or usually had good job or training vacancies for school leavers. (49%, Table 8.9)

While there are a number of positive results on other items, the Careers Service's performance in relation to guidance and information aspects (particularly for HE applicants and students) appear to need some development in the eyes of clients.

CHAPTER 9

THE PLACEMENT SERVICE

Introduction

In this chapter we consider the Careers Service's placement service. We use evidence from our interviews in Careers Service Companies (CSCs) across Scotland and the additional interviews in the five case study Careers Service Companies; our survey of employers ; and we also draw on the report "The Careers Service Performance Assessment Survey: Job Broking" (DfEE, 1996), which is one of few other studies to consider this aspect of Careers Service (CS) work although it did not cover Scotland.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

The placement role and tensions in it

- All Careers Service Companies provided, as was required of them, a vacancy-handling service for school leavers. This put the Careers Service into the centre of the tensions in the local labour market.
- Difficulties for the Careers Service include: the mismatch between some young people's aspirations and the availability of opportunities; the increased proportion of labour market entrants who are not "job-ready" or "good calibre" as more young people continue in education; and the government guarantee and the social inclusion agenda that require the Careers Service to try to find work or training for disadvantaged and unemployed young people.
- The placement service is the point at which the needs of young people and of employers and training providers meet. Under previous policy guidance, the young person was Careers Service's "the client" but the most recent guidance also defined employers and training providers as its "clients". Whose needs should a placement service serve? If there is a conflict, whose get priority? This tension is especially clear where a Careers Service Company sets up a specialist employer unit.

The operation of the placement service

- The placement service was viewed by many Careers Service Company staff as a very resource intensive activity that often had discouraging results; some Careers Service Companies noted unacceptably high levels of unfilled or withdrawn vacancies.
- The extent of circulation of vacancies within Companies was variable. Most Careers Service Companies had arrangements for circulating vacancies within the travel-to-work area and some Careers Service Companies systematically displayed vacancies in schools and sometimes in colleges.
- No Scottish-wide vacancy circulating system operated across Careers Service Companies. There are strong arguments in favour of a national (Scottish or UK wide) system of vacancy handling. Different approaches are possible and the development of IT systems is likely to be of benefit here.

The development of the placing service

- A number of improvements are needed to make the placement service more effective. These include: reliable computerised matching systems at a Scottish level (with a commitment to resource continuing development); a single national system and strategy for the collection and use of LMI; a review of the way in which vacancies and clients are matched to better reflect changing skills and demands in the labour market; the inclusion of a wider range of young people registered with the Careers Service to provide genuine choice to employers; and increased advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged clients.
- Many of the young people who use the Careers Service's placement service are likely to require continuing support to develop their employability skills and respond to the increased demands made by a flexible labour market.
- The provision of a placement service should be retained as a Careers Service function but consideration should be given to the development of a two-tier placement service, one operating according to market approaches and the other with built in support systems for young people, employers and training organisations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The placement role

All Careers Service Companies provided, as required of them, a vacancy handling system for young people, employers and training organisations. The general view among Careers Service Companies was that the Careers Service had a critical role to play in the placement of young people who were in the early stages of their entry to the labour market and that such young people had need of the more personal support that the Careers Service could provide. This was the view articulated by the Association of Careers Service Companies in Scotland (ACSCIS) in its submission to the Careers Review Committee (ACSCIS, 2000).

Some Careers Service Companies put their placing role as central to their work and future development:

“Placing here is seen as the main goal of the service: at least it gives us a measure of the success rate.”

Head of Service

“Our key aim is to improve vacancy handling.”

Head of Service

Most saw their supportive placing function as essential in order to help young people make a smooth transition into the labour market.

A minority view was to wonder whether the New Deal model might be appropriate:

“We’re looking at the Gateway model where the Careers Company does the guidance and the Job Centre does the placing.”

Head of Service

Tensions in the role

Offering a placing service put the Careers Service into the centre of the tensions in the local labour market. The mismatch between young people's stated aspirations and the availability of opportunities in the labour market created a number of difficulties. Firstly, most Careers

Service Companies reported higher numbers of service sector and administrative vacancies and lower numbers of manual and craft vacancies than there were interested registrants.

Secondly, government education and training targets were reflected in young people's increased commitment to post-school learning. As more young people stayed on at school or entered FE or HE in preference to the labour market, a higher proportion of labour market entrants were not job-ready or would not be seen by employers and training organisations as "good calibre" young people. Higher numbers of young people entering FE and HE in preference to the labour market also created a problem for the placing service:

"It's difficult for the Careers Service to fill vacancies when young people are going hell for leather for higher education. At the bottom end there are a number of young people who are hard to place but there is a very thin sandwich in between."

Head of Service

It was a common view that the lack of parity of esteem between work-based training and learning routes and education and training routes in academic institutions also encouraged "good calibre" young people and their families to opt for FE or HE after school.

A third point is that the placement service has been the point at which young people's needs and the needs of employers and Training Organisations met. The traditional Careers Service Company view has been that the needs of the young client come first, though qualified by saying that these can only be served through giving employers and Training Organisations a good service. Earlier policy guidance to Careers Services called the young person "the client" with employers and Training Organisations part of the "supportive processes". However the most recent guidance also calls employers and Training Organisations "clients". Whose needs should a placement service serve? If there is a conflict, whose get priority? This tension is especially clear where a Careers Service Company sets up a specialist employer unit.

Lastly, a commitment to social inclusion means that the Careers Service has had to assist even the most difficult clients to find a niche in the labour market, and has had to give priority to young people covered by the government guarantee of a training place. This may mean that employers and Training Organisations are not getting the best available candidates submitted to their vacancies.

The operation of the placement service

The placement service was viewed by many Careers Service Company staff as a very resource intensive activity that often had discouraging results, with some areas noting unacceptably high levels of unfilled or withdrawn vacancies. Business activity figures for 1998-1999 for the Scottish Careers Services show 8,831 vacancies notified by employers with 4,873 filled job vacancies. A number of mitigating factors need to be taken into account in considering the apparently limited success rate of filling job vacancies.

The number and "calibre" of available young people registered for work varies depending on how soon after a leaving date the employer notifies a vacancy. Also, we have seen that many employers use a number of other methods of recruiting at the same time as notifying a vacancy to the Careers Service. Lastly, employer and Training Organisation expectations of young people may be unrealistic.

However, the figures confirm the significance of Careers Service Company's placing activities for Training Organisations with almost 14 thousand placings into training places over the same period (13,966).

No Scottish-wide vacancy circulating system currently operates within the Careers Service, although a careers office might well phone the receiving careers office to seek labour market information for a young person intending to move to another area. The extent of circulation of vacancies **within** a Careers Service Company area was variable. Most Careers Service Companies had arrangements for circulating vacancies within the travel to work pattern within the Careers Service Company area. Some Careers Service Companies systematically displayed vacancies in schools (and in some cases colleges, especially where vacancies could not be filled from those young people registered with the careers centre).

Where travel to work patterns crossed Careers Service Company geographical boundaries there were resource implications for Careers Companies in handling employer contacts on behalf of neighbouring Careers Service Companies.

Both pre-selection to employers' requirements and open display of vacancies could co-exist in the same situation. Sometimes vacancies were displayed only when pre-selection had failed to find suitable applicants: sometimes vacancies were displayed openly on principle, with Careers Advisers and Careers Assistants prepared to deal with the guidance needs of a young person asking to be submitted to an unsuitable vacancy. The limitations of IT might be responsible for policy in this area, for example where the computer system could only search on the young person's first choice of career opportunity. In this situation the client needed to call to view a display board or telephone the careers centre to check on vacancies for other career choices.

We did no extensive check of vacancies, but our observation of vacancies on display in offices and our review of policy statements led us to conclude that some improvements were needed in the quality of information on vacancies on display to young people. Following a more detailed review of vacancy information, DfEE's Performance Assessment Survey on Job-Broking (1996) found:

"The assessment suggests that the quality of vacancy descriptions is unacceptable in many Careers Services.... There is considerable evidence of failure to consider the vacancy description from the clients' point of view."

("Performance Assessment Survey on Job-Broking", DfEE, 1996: p.15)

It recommended that standards for vacancy information should be developed.

The Careers Service Company staff that we spoke to recognised that the Careers Service's advocacy role in encouraging employers and Training Organisations to take on some of the least skilled and poorly motivated of young people would impact on how employers and Training Organisations viewed the effectiveness of Careers Service Companies in their placing role. Local client contact surveys by Careers Service Companies with employers and Training Organisations confirmed this. There were practical tensions as a result, for example, what should be the turn-around time for filling a vacancy? Young people whose households had a telephone would be easier to contact, but those without a phone might miss an opportunity: households without a phone are recognised as likely to include those suffering from multiple deprivation, who are to be given priority under social inclusion strategies. We need to make clear that these tensions have existed for many years. The Careers Service has

always been expected to show a commitment to disadvantaged young people, and its staff have tended to enter the Careers Service with a service/caring orientation:

“You’ve got to have a commitment and a personal interest in all young people’s futures”

Careers Assistant

“What differentiates the Careers Service from the Job Centre and the school (in submitting young people for vacancies) is its advocacy role now being powerfully heard on behalf of homeless people”

Area Manager

A further complication was that in the past the Careers Service, as part of the education department of the local authority, had an agreement in some areas that any vacancies notified to schools by employers should be referred to the Careers Service. The breaking up of the old authorities had meant at least a weakening of this agreement. It may well be the case that employers go directly to schools because they **do** get a better selection of young people: but schools are less likely to submit and advocate on behalf of poorer candidates, and they have no need to meet a guarantee. Selection and placing is a complicated activity, with particular challenges resulting from working with teenagers, and complicated by legislation and philosophy with regard to equal opportunities. Research suggests that formal channels, such as the Careers Service and Employment Services, are particularly important for disadvantaged groups (notably members of ethnic minorities) and that those who enter their first jobs through formal channels remain in them longer than those who do not (Killeen *et al*, 1992).

The development of the placing service

The use of IT

The use of IT in placing was a live issue. It had the potential to provide flexible searching of client databases for employers, and employer databases for clients. Virtually all Careers Service Companies had used IT for administration, but even where packages had the potential to do searches it was less common to use this aspect of its provision. This partly related to difficulties Careers Service Companies had previously experienced in using these and earlier IT packages: this had made them cautious about over-reliance on them in the key area of placing. At the time of which we are speaking, all Careers Service Companies were in the process of upgrading or changing or reviewing IT systems.

IT could also be used to circulate vacancies. A number of Heads of Service spoke strongly in favour of a national (Scottish or UK wide) system of vacancy handling. This might include the use of the Internet, using the Employment Service’s approach to vacancy handling or developing a central approach to employers who had chains of outlets across a number of Careers Service Companies.

A more sophisticated use of IT is one of a number of improvements needed to make the placing service more effective. Manual rather than computerised matching of clients to vacancies is inefficient, limits the range of clients and opportunities that can be handled and lacks transparency to clients. It also limits the range of search factors that can be included in matching. In Chapter 8 we noted that job seekers might include the following:

- recent school leavers;
- long-term unemployed young people;

- pupils who have returned to school after S4 or S5 but would leave for an appropriate vacancy;
- school pupils or FE students coming up to the end of the session, and available for work shortly;
- Skillseekers who have a trainee rather than an employee contract; and
- young workers who are seeking a change of job.

It is extremely difficult to do a thorough manual search of the records of such a wide group. It is also more complex to search on a young person's second or third choice manually. The implications of manual matching systems may be that:

- the records of young people on the "live" register are searched first when a vacancy comes in (the needs of unemployed young people and the need to meet the Guarantee are additional pressures for this to happen). If sufficient possible applicants are identified at this stage, the likelihood of a broader search is lessened, and employers may not get the best selection of applicants offered to them;
- young people's registered choices may have to be limited, since a manual system cannot cope. However, the need for flexibility in labour market choices is important, especially for new entrants who will be helped by having first, second and third choices;
- methods of matching may be limited, with search factors considered one after another rather than being considered together;
- inability to provide quick information to an employer considering moving into an area about the interests and qualifications of a wide range of young people, or to negotiate with credibility with an employer whose expectations could be shown to exceed what young people could provide; and
- less transparency to young people and their parents. Where a highly desirable vacancy is notified, and the Careers Service is asked to pre-select only a small number of candidates, staff are in a difficult position if young people or their parents ask why **they** have not been submitted? Computerised matching and search factors can often show a professional objectivity that is convincing and reassuring. In general, computerised matching is likely to be a more objective first stage in pre-selection.

Policy on matching appeared to be under-developed, and this could be of great importance. As the DfEE Performance Assessment Survey on Job-Broking (1996) commented:

"The policy on matching is important in ensuring equality of opportunity."

("Performance Assessment Survey on Job-Broking", DfEE, 1996: p.23)

Labour market information and classifications

We became aware when seeking information on employers and training organisations from our 5 case study Careers Service Companies that labour market data was classified in different ways in different Careers Services. This appears to apply across Scottish Careers Services as a whole. We even found differences in classifications of client and opportunity data amongst offices within the same Careers Service Company. When definitions differ, making sense of trends in employment and training, and categorising the labour market intentions of young people seeking work becomes difficult once the data is shared beyond the immediate area or Careers Service Company. A unified system and strategy for the collection and use of LMI is necessary, and this should have an IT base. This should articulate with Scottish-wide databases such as systems being developed by Scottish Enterprise and

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and also allow appropriate exchange of information with Employment Services databases.

Changing skills and demands in the labour market, and different definitions of work mean that the way in which vacancies and clients are matched needs to be radically reviewed. Classifications and descriptions of work used by individual clients, employers and careers guidance practitioners may need to move beyond dependence on the notion of “occupation” towards considering transferable skills, core skills and employability skills as part of a matching process (see “Constructs of Work Used in Career Guidance” (1998) by Hirsh, Kidd and Watts for a detailed discussion of these issues). This is necessary for organisations that match individuals with opportunities, but particularly so for those working with new entrants into the labour market, where work experience and “hard skills” are limited.

Some Careers Service Companies were beginning to look at measures of “soft skills” in young job seekers, mainly with a view to using these measures as part of a supportive guidance process that provided skill development where this was needed. Careers Service Companies in many areas had already been involved in supporting the development of employability skills in school pupils and leavers through work with community and other organisations. Nevertheless, many of the young people who seek to use the Careers Service’s placement service to enter the labour market are likely to require continuing support to develop their employability skills.

The future of the placing service

In considering the future of the placing service, we reviewed the evidence from our research on whether the Careers Service should retain this function. On the one hand, our view was that the placing service was the Careers Service function that was most weak in comparison with others. Some of this was the result of conflicting loyalties between providing a service to employers and Training Organisations and providing it to young people. Some was the result of lack of systematic investment at a national level. And while considerable professional commitment was shown to working with needy young people, we considered that the placing service as a whole was less likely to be the subject of professionally-grounded review.

On the other hand, young people in the labour-market clearly trusted the Careers Service to keep information confidential, to speak up for young people and to treat young people with respect. It was particularly important in the placing of young people with Special Training Needs into training, and was well regarded by employers and Training Organisations for its knowledge of young people. The DfEE’s Performance Assessment Survey of Job-Broking (1996) found:

“Most opportunity providers who used the job-broking service perceive the Careers Service to be an effective recruitment route for young people.”

(“Performance Assessment Survey on Job-Broking”, DfEE, 1996: p.9)

Our own work found the Careers Service well ahead of the Job Centre in the numbers using it to recruit young people into the labour market. The same DfEE report sought a direct comparison with other methods of recruitment and found that the other sources of young people were rated less effective than the Careers Service: the Job Centre was rated as less effective by 46%, local press by 33%, word of mouth by 23% and schools/college by 47%. Only 12% rated the Job Centre as more effective than the Careers Service. We highlight

perceptions of the Job Centre system because it would be the main contender for the role of a public employment agency for young people. Another particular strength of the Careers Service is its embedding in the school system from which young people come, and its resulting links with school guidance systems. Identification of young people who need early interventions in placing can be made more easily.

The key aspects of an effective placing service of young people are:

- transparency and objectivity where possible;
- support systems for those in need, including advocacy;
- honesty and impartiality, which is broadly recognised by all client groups;
- links into school systems;
- professionally grounded matching systems, with flexibility based on the specific nature of new entrants to the labour market;
- high quality exchange of information, to an agreed level by all parties;
- appropriate use of IT systems for matching and labour market information; and
- a placing service which matches widely with young people or with opportunities.

It seems to us that some of the key relationship and support aspects are already in place in the Careers Service. Given the need for the continued development of employability skills, the increased demands made by a flexible labour market of its new entrants and the importance of the Careers Service to Training Organisations, we would recommend that the provision of a placement service should be retained as a Careers Service function. In addition to the developments noted above, consideration should be given to the development of a two-tier placement service in order to recognise the (sometimes different) needs of young people and employers/Training Organisations. In this system, one level would operate a competitive vacancy/young person matching service according to market approaches, and the other level would have built in support systems for young people, employers and Training Organisations alike.

CHAPTER 10

EMPLOYER WORK

Introduction

In this chapter we describe the role the Careers Service (CS) has with employers and how this is delivered in practice by Careers Service Companies (CSCs). In addition to reporting on the data from Careers Service Company and other staff, we use data from our survey of employers to report on employers' experiences and views of the Careers Service.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

The Careers Service role with employers

- There are clear tensions in the Careers Service's role that impact on its work with employers and training organisations and on its placement service. It is impossible for the Careers Service to satisfy the demands of employers for the best range of applicants and to meet the government guarantee and the social inclusion agenda that requires it to find work or training for unemployed young people some of whom have low levels of skills and qualifications.
- All Careers Service Companies recognised the value of employer work but the priority that Careers Service Company managers gave to the policy on employer work was not always reflected in practice. Careers Advisers in many Careers Service Companies appeared more focused on the demands of school work schedules than on the Company's employer strategy.
- Many Careers Service Companies acknowledged that employer work was an area that needed considerable development. In addition to a recognition of its professional importance, improvements in employer and labour market services were driven by Careers Service Boards, the LEC and the Scottish Executive guidance and funding priorities.
- Careers Service Companies found it particularly difficult to work effectively with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and to engage with employers who were non-users of the service. In the majority of Careers Service Companies, strategies for employer work were under review; evidence from this research could usefully contribute to further review.
- Significant developments could be seen in employer work across Scotland. Several Careers Service Companies had set up specialist employer units, and where this was done systematically and was well resourced, it had a positive impact on vacancies and on employers' perceptions of the Careers Service.
- All Careers Service Companies showed evidence of development in their employer work, including new approaches to employer visits, new ways of liaising and communicating with employers and offering employers an expanded range of services. Some of these initiatives were externally funded by the LEC or the Scottish Executive.

The employers' perspective

- 300 employers were surveyed across the five case study Careers Service Companies. The majority were users of the Careers Service. The response rate was 50%.

Employers' contacts with, and awareness of, the Careers Service

- Employers' contact with the Careers Service was largely about recruitment. They had limited contact with Careers Service Companies to provide information about their company and about labour market trends or to be updated by the Careers Service about educational developments and about local school leavers and the kind of jobs they were interested in. The nature of employers' contacts did not vary across the five Careers Service Companies.
- Employers were not aware of the wider Careers Service Company role beyond its placement function. The Careers Service is required to keep employers aware of developments in education and training and on supply and demand in the young person's labour market (Scottish Office, 1998) but only a minority were aware of its role in giving companies information and advice on the school education system and qualifications and on school leavers entering the labour market. Increasing employers' awareness of their wider role is an aspect for development by Careers Service Companies.
- The majority of employers responded that they would use the Careers Service to recruit a 16-18 year old but that they would also use other methods as well, especially the Job Centre and recommendations from existing employees. The Careers Service must prove itself effective against other methods of recruitment if they are to build up a good pool of vacancies for their clients.
- Employers rated using the Careers Service as the most effective method of recruitment; the next most effective method, the Job Centre, was some way behind.
- An expectation that the Careers Service would not have suitable applicants was the commonest reason given by those companies that did not use the Careers Service for recruitment. However, just over half of those who did use the Careers Service for recruitment were pleased with the suitability of young people sent for interview.
- Employers thought the Careers Service had changed over the past three years and become more business-like, more aware of what companies needed and had made more contacts with companies. This applied across all five case study Careers Service Companies.
- Most employers who had used the Careers Service: would recommend it to other employers; a majority rated its speed of response and knowledge of young people as good or very good. Employers were somewhat less positive about the Careers Service's understanding of their company's requirements (52%) and of their business sector (42%).

Employers' views of a useful and effective Careers Service Company

- How the Careers Service communicates with employers is important aspect of effectiveness. Employers wanted to be linked to a known member of staff and for the Careers Service Company to keep in regular telephone contact but were less likely to think that regular visits and mailshots were an effective means of communication with them.
- Employers judged the usefulness and effectiveness of the Careers Service particularly in terms of how well it performed its placement role. They also thought that advising them on grants and incentives to employ or train young people were indicators of effective work.
- Employers were least likely to identify aspects related to the Careers Service role as a "bridge between school and work" as useful. Most did not rate, for example, being given information school leavers as a useful functions. But the high number of "not sure" responses suggests that they were not rejecting the Careers Service's wider role but were simply unaware of it.

- If employers are not aware of (and accept) the wider information and advisory functions of the Careers Service, then there is a mismatch between what the Careers Service is expected to do by local and national policy makers and how they judge its effectiveness and what employers expect it to do and how they evaluate it.
- Employers' responses showed some degree of recognition of the Careers Service's social inclusion role but this contrasts with their views on the importance of being sent high quality applicants by Careers Service submissions. It confirms the tension between the Careers Service's social inclusion role and the servicing of employers' recruitment needs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Careers Service's role with employers

The Careers Service has long had a role with employers but the nature of this role has been redefined in recent years. Traditionally, employers were seen first and foremost as potential recruiters of the Careers Service's key client group - young people. This orientation was reflected in earlier policy guidance in which the Careers Service client group was defined in terms of three groups of young people. Work with employers came under "Supporting Processes", that to ensure clients (young people) received an efficient service, the Careers Service should seek to work effectively with employers. A different focus is evident in the "Guidance Framework for Careers Service Companies" (SOEID, 1998) that replaced this earlier guidance. In this employers, as well as young people, are defined as a client group to whom a service must be offered. At the same time the Scottish Executive has also put more emphasis on Careers Service work with employers in the targets agreed with each Careers Service Company.

It is generally accepted within the Careers Service that employer work has never had the same priority as school work and this was certainly the view expressed in our interviews with Careers Service Company staff. But it was also evident to us that Careers Service Companies were trying to give employer work a higher profile and were considering and, in some cases, implementing different strategies to take their employer work forward. But this refocusing of the Careers Service role with employers is not straightforward when we consider the potential tension that arises when employers are seen more as a client or market in their own right. This was summed up by one Careers Adviser (CA):

"Are we trying to help a disadvantaged youngster get a job or are we trying to send the employer the best candidate for the job?"

Careers Adviser

There are clear tensions in the Careers Service's role that impact on its employer work (and also its work with Training Organisations and its placement service). On the one hand, employers want the best range of applicants submitted to them and Careers Service Companies try to meet that expectation. On the other hand, the government guarantee and the social inclusion agenda require Careers Service Companies to try to find work or training for unemployed young people, some of whom lack the skills and attitudes that employers, and to a certain extent, Training Organisations, want. It is impossible for the Careers Service to satisfy fully both sets of demands.

Importance given to employer work

All Careers Service Companies recognised the importance of employer work for a number of reasons:

- Helping Careers Advisers to understand local industry and to use labour market information in guidance;
- Helping employers to understand the types of skills and attitudes held by young people available at different times of the year, to understand the education system and to plan ahead to meet their own needs and to contribute to meeting young people’s needs;
- Providing credibility and information for Careers Advisers’ work in schools. To be able to find an opportunity for a school leaver was thought to improve the credibility of the Careers Adviser working with pupils, their parents and teachers.
- Meeting a number of objectives for the Careers Service Company and its partners in one activity.

“Careers advisers should do more with employers, if we don’t know more about jobs than Occupations [a careers information handbook] what is the justification for a careers adviser? A guidance teacher could do it!”

Careers Adviser

and

“One visit to an employer would gather information to support client need, get work experience places for the database, help employers to access information on Skillseekers and refer if necessary to partners that are interested in economic development.”

Head of Service

and

“Employers are intrinsically interested in the kids since they are the future workforce but they have to be cultivated, persuaded and encouraged to get involved.”

Careers Assistant

We have said that all Careers Service Companies recognised the importance of employer work. We assessed the degree of importance given to employer work in three ways. Across the 17 Careers Service Companies, we reviewed policy and practice documentation, analysed interview responses from Heads of Service (paying particular attention to policy and funding priorities) and assessed the priority given by practitioners to employer work from the descriptions given by Careers Advisers of their day-to-day work and that of their colleagues. We assessed the importance given to employer work across Careers Service Companies as:

Table 10.1 Degree of importance given to employer work

	High	Medium	Low
Heads of Service	13	4	-
Careers Advisers*	5	4	5

* Three Careers Service Companies did not have a Careers Adviser respondent

We wondered whether those Careers Advisers who had ascribed a low priority to employer work in practice were employed by Careers Service Companies who had appointed specialist staff to work with employers. We found there was no relationship of this kind. The table confirms the view of several Heads of Service that practitioners placed their priorities too heavily on school work. This was a challenge for management:

“We need the same professional development of links at the post-school stage as school”.

Head of Service

Many Careers Service Companies acknowledged that employer work was an area that needed considerable development. In addition to a recognition of its professional importance, improvements in employer and labour market services were driven by Careers Service Boards (especially where employers were Board members), the LEC and the Scottish Executive (through policy guidance, business planning, targets, Challenge Funding and SQMS external audits). Most Heads of Service chose to use targets to encourage a change in the balance of staff activities and to encourage a greater focus on employer work, while others decided that a service to employers could be most effectively delivered through specialist staff or units.

Strategies for employers work

An analysis of Careers Service Companies' current or proposed strategies for employer work showed:

- 11 had a generic approach (all Careers Advisers did employer work);
- 2 were generic but with proposals for specialist employment staff or unit;
- 2 were generic and also had specialist employer units;
- 1 was generic and also had specialist staff;
- 1 had a mainly specialist approach.

Smaller Careers Service Companies, or those with a number of small, widely spread careers centres, were more likely to be generic and to expect to remain that way. Some Careers Service Companies had set up specialist employer units, and where this was done systematically and was well resourced it had a positive impact on employers, on the number of vacancies held and on employers' perceptions.

Variation in practice within Companies was more likely where the Company covered a wide geographical area since the needs of local labour markets could be very different. Smaller Companies in rural or island situations were likely to be able to have a flexible approach. For example, a discussion between a Careers Adviser and a local employer might take place when the employer was attending a parents' evening in his/her role as a parent. Sometimes community networks could make up for poor contacts with employers: in one Careers Service Company where contacts with employers had suffered due to staff shortages, one Careers Adviser commented:

“I personally feel very integrated with the community and the community services, if there is a problem it can be sorted out. Even although employer work in (this area) is not good there is somebody who will know something about each employer or will have a contact who will know.”

Careers Adviser

A particular challenge for Careers Service Companies (and, it was suggested by a number of Heads of Service, for the Scottish Executive in its role of issuing guidance to Careers Service Companies) was to identify an employer strategy that encouraged useful contacts with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). One Careers Service Company found that by managing the contract to find placements in SMEs for undergraduates as part of their degree, it was able to find a rationale for work with small enterprises.

Significant developments in employer work could be seen across Scotland. All Careers Service Companies reported on initiatives (some of which were externally funded) in employer work, including:

- Administering and interpreting trade tests for employers or providing redundancy, pre-retirement or employee development counselling;
- A range of publicity and marketing activities including using employers' newsletters, newspaper job spots, Christmas cards to local employers in a rural area, sponsoring a Chamber of Commerce mailing, joint marketing with the LEC, and area managers joining business clubs. In some Careers Service Companies, suggestions from employer members of the board were particularly influential in developing a marketing strategy;
- Strategies for employer visits based on specific needs such as:
 - sectors identified as lacking in local labour market information or as key targets for local economic development;
 - individual client need eg, the types and locations of employers visited linked to the needs of the young people on the unemployed register;
 - special needs careers staff linked in specific ways to the employer strategy;
 - the Education Department's need to have Health and Safety assessments for work experience.
- Emphasising the importance of employer work by giving area and senior managers (including the Chief Executive) personal targets for work with industry and commerce.

Importance of Local Labour Market Information (LLMI)

The research confirmed strong agreement across all stakeholders that labour market information was essential to make careers guidance effective. Some respondents suggested that Careers Advisers in practice got their labour market information more from vacancies notified to the careers centre than from employer visits. But this approach is inadequate for, at least, two reasons. The first is that careers centres (typically for a public employment agency) receive only a proportion of the vacancies open to young people, therefore the picture presented is incomplete and may be atypical. Secondly, young people, their parents and teachers need more than just information on current vacancies for school leavers. They need a wider picture of the labour market, recent changes and likely trends in it and also information on the range of opportunities available to young people when they have finished a further of higher education course.

However, while comprehensive labour market information is essential, it is important to recognise the limitations of what it can achieve. The views of parents, family, friends, the wider community, the media and school staff will have an impact on most young people's attitude to the labour market and the opportunities in it. We would suggest that information is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the changing of attitudes and expectations of the labour market which are sometimes deeply ingrained in young people and their families (and to a certain extent in school staff). The impact of LMI on young people's decision making can also be limited. This view is supported by recent research funded by DfEE on "Improving responsiveness to the labour market among young people" (Rolfe, 2000). In addition to recommending the development of strategies to improve parents' understanding of the labour market, the author notes:

“The research suggests that knowledge of labour markets needs to be complemented by the skills and confidence needed to use it in practice..... Future LMI materials might include exercises which involve searching for factual information in order to improve skills and strengthen the link between knowledge and decision-making.”

(“Improving Responsiveness to the Labour Market Among Young People”, Rolfe, 2000: p.4]

Challenges for the future

There were a number of challenges facing Careers Service Companies in their employer work. A fundamental need was to develop greater clarity in the objectives of employer work. A second issue was to become more pro-active with employers who were not using the Careers Service. Thirdly, there was genuine uncertainty about how to work effectively with SMEs, which were the vast majority of companies for most Careers Service Companies. Fourthly, the creation of a joint strategy for employer work with local partner organisations, especially the LEC and the EBP, was essential. And finally, the lack of national systems for handling labour market information inhibited understanding of Scottish and regional travel-to-work patterns and labour markets.

The employers’ perspective

We surveyed 300 employers across the five case study Careers Service Companies. We wanted to focus on the effectiveness of Careers Service Company work with employers so we selected mainly employers who had had some contact with the Careers Service and so could comment from the basis of some experience of it. We asked the five Careers Service Companies to provide us with the details of employers who had used them in the past three years. We also asked for the details of a small number of employers whom they defined as potential users of the Careers Service ie those who recruited under-18s although they had not used the Careers Service to do so.

The questionnaire covered: employers’ awareness and use of the Careers Service; recruitment practices; opinion of the Careers Service; and views on young people. Employers could choose to complete it and send it back to us or opt to go through the questions over the telephone. The final response rate was 50% (27% postal and 23% telephone responses).

According to the data provided to us by Careers Service Companies, 14% of the employers included in the sample had not used the Careers Service but, in the survey, 18% reported no contact with the Careers Service Company in their area over the past 3 years. The discrepancy may be (partly) explained if the Careers Service Companies had included employers who had used them more than 3 years before. In all analyses, we define non-users as those employers who responded that they had not had contact with the Careers Service over the past 3 years. The split of respondents is therefore: 82% users of the Careers Service and 18% non users.

The majority of the 82% of employers who had used the Careers Service had had more than one contact:

- 18% one contact;
- 35% 2-4 contacts;
- 29% 5 or more contacts

The nature of the sample should be borne in mind when reading this section: the findings relate largely to users of the Careers Service, the majority of whom had been in touch with the Careers Service more than once.

When we examined employers' responses, we found that those with 2-4 contacts and those with 5+ contacts gave very similar answers but that those reporting no contact or only one contact each had differing responses. We conducted most analyses, therefore, in relation to three groups: no contact; 1 contact; 2 or more contacts. In reporting on the results, we also make use of a small number of questionnaire comments that illustrate the tables. It should be noted that some of the tables presented cover all the employers surveyed but in other cases, they relate to those who had used the Careers Service.

Employers' contacts with, and awareness of, the Careers Service

Employers were most aware of the Careers Service's placement role. The large majority knew that the Careers Service provided applicants for interview and advertised job or training vacancies (88% and 80%, Table 10.2). A smaller proportion, although still a majority, knew that the Careers Service screened applicants (69%).

Table 10.2: Awareness of Careers Service provision

Do you know if the Careers Service provides the following services?		provides	does not provide	not sure	(n)
		%	%	%	
Advertising job or training vacancies	all employers	80	3	17	(109)
	employers with CS contact	82	1	17	(91)
Providing applicants for interviews	all employers	88	3	9	(109)
	employers with CS contact	91	1	8	(91)
Screening applicants before interview	all employers	69	5	27	(108)
	employers with CS contact	72	4	23	(90)
Promoting links between companies and schools	all employers	55	7	39	(108)
	employers with CS contact	56	7	37	(91)
Giving companies information and advice on the school education system and qualifications	all employers	34	11	53	(108)
	employers with CS contact	32	11	57	(91)
Informing companies about the number and type of young people leaving school and the sorts of jobs they are interested in	all employers	26	19	56	(108)
	employers with CS contact	22	22	56	(91)
Explaining about government schemes such as Skillseekers and the New Deal	all employers	62	6	33	(107)
	employers with CS contact	63	7	31	(91)
Giving companies information and advice about further education and training for employees (eg college courses, SVQs)	all employers	42	10	48	(107)
	employers with CS contact	40	12	48	(90)
Explaining about grants to employ or train young people	all employers	44	10	45	(108)
	employers with CS contact	45	9	46	(91)

The Careers Service is required to keep employers aware of developments in education and training and on the supply and demand in the labour market (Scottish Office, 1998). It was this side of the Careers Service role where employers' awareness was more limited. Although around two thirds of employers knew that the Careers Service gave information about government schemes, they were much less aware of the Careers Service role in respect of giving information and advice on the school system and qualifications, or about FE and about training for employees (Table 10.2). Awareness of the Careers Service's ability to provide them with information about the number and type of school leavers and their job interests was particularly low at around a quarter of employers (26%). Two fifths of employers were also not aware that the Careers Service could give information on grants to employ or train

young people (42%). The extent of employers' uncertainty about the wider Careers Service Company role is evident in the high level of "not sure" responses to a number of items in Table 10.2.

There are no differences across Careers Service Companies in employers' awareness of the range of services offered by the Careers Service.

How much contact employers had with the Careers Service made a difference only to their levels of awareness of the Careers Service's placement role. Employers who had no contact or only one contact were less likely to be aware that the Careers Service advertised jobs/training vacancies or provided applicants for interview than employers with two or more contacts. Employers with no contact were less likely to know that the Careers Service could screen applicants before interview than those with any level of contact.

Employers' contacts with the Careers Service were pre-dominantly concerned with recruitment and their awareness seems to be restricted to this. Coming into contact with the Careers Service Company for recruitment purposes does not appear to lead to a wider appreciation of what the Careers Service can offer them.

There is a clear message from these results about the need to publicise the wider Careers Service Company role to all employers, including regular users, and extend their awareness beyond its placing role. This quote from an employer questionnaire illustrates the point:

"I wasn't aware that the Careers Service could give information on grants etc, the only contacts with them is when [our] company initiates it"

The lack of variation across the five Careers Service Companies indicates that the issue of employers' awareness is a common problem. In this case therefore, it might be productive to think about a national as well as a local element to strategies to increase employers' awareness. We might note that in the group session we held with employers to help us develop the questionnaire, they suggested that the Careers Service should develop a national marketing strategy to employers.

Employers mainly had contacts about recruitment

We saw in the previous section that employers' **awareness** of the Careers Service was largely confined to its placement role. Unsurprisingly their **contacts** with the Careers Service followed the same pattern. The large majority of employers who used the Careers Service did so to advertise their job or training vacancies and to provide them with applicants for interview (both 83%, Table 10.3). These two services very much go together. Over 90% of employers who used the Careers Service to advertise their vacancies also used it to provide applicants to them. Although these two services generally came as a package, using the Careers Service to screen applicants was much less common. Less than half had used the Careers Service to screen applicants before interview (41%). Our findings are in line with other research on employers and the Careers Service (Hillage and Wilson, 1992).

A minority of employers used the other services offered by the Careers Service. It might have been expected that a higher proportion of employers would have reported contact with the Careers Service to find out about government training schemes. It may be that they were already getting this information from the Local Enterprise Company (LEC) or from Training Organisations. Clearly, it would not be helpful for the Careers Service to duplicate

information already being provided by other organisations; being contacted by several agencies about the same area is a common complaint from employers. But are Careers Service Companies sure this information is being given to employers?

Table 10.3: Nature of contact with Careers Service (employers with Careers Service contact)

What were your contacts about? Were they...	Yes %	No %
...to advertise your job or training vacancies with the Careers Service?	83	17
...to provide applicants for interview?	83	18
...to screen applicants before interview?	41	59
...to discuss the range of services the Careers Service could provide for you?	29	71
...to provide the Careers Service with information about your company, the jobs done and labour market trends?	31	69
...to discuss ways that your organisation could link with schools?	12	86
...to get updated information on the education system and qualifications?	5	95
...to find out about the number and type of young people leaving school and the sorts of jobs they are interested in?	14	86
...to find out about government training schemes such as Skillseekers and the New Deal?	37	63
...to get information and advice about further education and training for employees (eg college courses, SVQs)?	16	84
...to find out about grants to employ or train young people?	21	80
(n=114)		

We have noted the greater expectations of the Careers Service about their work on LMI. We are aware that LMI can be gathered in a variety of ways, not all involving direct contact by the Careers Service Company with employers and also that Careers Service Companies may decide to target certain sectors of the labour market. Nevertheless, given that a majority of our sample of employers were recruiters of young people, it might have been expected that a higher proportion than 31% would have had contact with the Careers Service to provide it with information about their company, the jobs done and labour market trends. According to employers, contacts between the Careers Service and employers were even less likely to involve the Careers Service providing information on education and training and on the nature of entrants to the labour market.

The *type* of contacts employers had with the Careers Service did not vary across the five Careers Service Companies.

Nor was there much difference across Careers Service Companies according to employers' *frequency* of contact. The only variation was that those with one contact were more likely than those with 2 or more contacts to have had had contact to discuss the range of services the Careers Service could provide (46% vs 24%). Apart from this, employers with one contact had much the same pattern of contact as those reporting 2+ contacts.

The role of the Careers Service in gathering LMI and informing employers about the education and training system and about young people is seen as among the key functions and also the strengths of the Careers Service. This is encapsulated in the way the Careers Service is sometimes described as helping to bridge the transition/gap between school and

work. But employers are not very aware of these functions and do not have much contact for these reasons. A challenge for Careers Service Companies is how to move beyond a placement role to carry out a wider role with employers.

Employers were positive about the Careers Service as an effective method of recruitment

Employers were asked how they would recruit a 16-18 year old. Given that the employers surveyed were mainly users of the Careers Service and that their main contacts were about recruitment, it is hardly surprising that a majority said that they would use the Careers Service to do so (70%, Table 10.4). The next most common method of recruitment was the Job Centre.

Table 10.4: How employers would recruit a 16-18 year old

	All*
	%
Advert in local paper	38
Contact the Careers Service	70
Contact the Job Centre	66
Advertise Internal	36
Ask existing employees to recommend someone	58
Contact local schools	20
Contact local college	23
Contact local providers of Skillseekers training	35
Contact recruitment/employment agency	10 (n=141)
In addition to using Careers Service, would also	%
• advertise in local paper	40
• contact Job Centre	69
• advertise internally	36
• ask existing employees	67
• contact school	26
• contact Skillseekers provider	41
• contact recruitment agency	13 (n=141)
Most effective method	%
• contact Careers Service	35
• contact Job Centre	18
• advert in paper	14
• contact Skillseekers provider	7
• ask employees	6 (n=109)
Less than 5% thought any of the other methods were the most effective	

* multiple response so percentages sum to more than 100

What is of more interest is that all of those who would use the Careers Service would also use other methods as well. Virtually all of them said that they would also use the Job Centre or ask existing employees to recommend someone. Around 40% would also advertise in local papers or contact local Skillseekers providers as well as using the Careers Service. Around a quarter would approach schools directly in addition to using the Careers Service. Careers

Service Companies clearly do not have a captive market in employers but must prove themselves effective against other methods of recruitment if they are to build up a good pool of vacancies to offer their clients.

Employers' use of a number of other recruitment methods also means that when asked about the relative effectiveness of the various approaches, users of the Careers Service were in a position to compare it with other methods that they had experienced. The Careers Service emerged positively being seen as the most effective way of recruiting by the highest proportion of employers (35%); the next most effective method, the Job Centre, was some way behind with under a fifth of employers rating this as the most effective approach. Employers' written comments indicated two sorts of reasons for this positive response: the Careers Service's contact with school and college leavers and saving employers' time:

"The Careers Service keeps in touch with local schools and know from their records who is available and their interest in jobs"

"Because they interview, advise young people and screen suitable applicants so saving us time. They also arrange interview dates."

While remembering the nature of this sample of employers, this is a positive result for the Careers Service.

Reasons why some employers don't use Careers Service Companies to recruit

Although most employers who contacted the Careers Service did so for recruitment purposes, 40% of the employers surveyed had not used it to recruit in the past three years. Their reasons were mainly negative and concerned lack of awareness of what the Careers Service might do for them and a lack of confidence that the Careers Service would provide suitable candidates or was the best method of recruitment (Table 10.5).

"Our contact with the Careers Service has been unsuccessful - they sent unsuitable candidates"

Table 10.5: Reasons why employers had not recruited through the Careers Service in the last three years* (all employers)

	All %
Do not recruit young people	14
Prefer other methods of recruitment	26
Didn't realise Careers Service could help fill vacancy	31
Didn't know how to contact Careers Service	12
Didn't think Careers Service could send me suitable applicants	18
The Careers Service has never contacted me	18

(n=144)

* multiple response so percentages sum to more than 100

Although these results reinforce the need to make more contacts with employers and increase their awareness of what the Careers Service can do, they also bring into focus the tensions we have already noted in the Careers Service's placing role: the need to help place disadvantaged young people but also to service the needs of employers for good quality candidates. It is therefore not surprising that a lack of suitable applicants was the reason given by nearly a

fifth of employers who did not use the Careers Service for recruitment. This reaction is inevitable given the conflicting roles that the Careers Service is currently asked to perform.

Employers see a change in the Careers Service

Careers Service Companies had been trying to become more “business-like” and to boost their work with employers. Employers’ responses to questions about whether the Careers Service had changed indicate that at least some thought it had. Focusing on those employers who had been in touch with the Careers Service over the past three years, two fifths thought it had become more business-like; just under a third that it had made more contacts with their company and over a quarter felt that it had become more aware of what companies needed (Table 10.6).

A substantial proportion of respondents responded “don’t know”. As might be expected, employers who had no or only one contact with the Careers Service were less likely to respond that it had changed and more likely to say that they didn’t know ie they were not more negative, they were simply unsure. These figures suggest that Careers Service Company efforts to change and to increase their work with employers were having an impact and one that was being noticed by employers. There was no variation across the Careers Service Companies so this improvement would seem to be a common feature.

Table 10.6: Has the Careers Service changed over last three years (employers with Careers Service contact)

Over the last three years, do you think that the Careers Service has...	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
	%	%	%	
...become more business-like?	40	29	31	(88)
...made more contacts with your company?	32	54	15	(89)
...become more aware of what companies need?	29	31	39	(89)

No significant variation across Careers Service Companies

Most employers would recommend the Careers Service

Most employers would recommend the Careers Service to other employers. Well over two thirds of employers who had used the Careers Service would recommend it (Table 10.7). The likelihood of employers being prepared to recommend the Careers Service varied a little across the Careers Service Companies. The main difference was between employers in CS2 and those in CS3 and CS5 ie between the lowest and highest proportions of employers who would recommend the Careers Service to other employers.

Table 10.7: If recommend Careers Service to others (employers with Careers Service contact)

	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
	%	%	%	
Employers with CS contact	70	14	16	(100)

Employers who had used the Careers Service were also positive about various aspects of its activities with a majority responding “very good” or “good” to most items (Table 10.8). Within this, more responded “good” than “very good”. The Careers Service’s knowledge of young people and speed of response was judged most positively with around three-quarters

having a very good or good impression of the Careers Service in these respects. Employers were also positive about the Careers Service’s knowledge of the world of work and the appropriateness of their information and advice. They were least positive about the Careers Service’s understanding of their company’s requirements and of their business sector (52% and 44%, “very good/good”).

The opinion of employers who had used the Careers Service varied across the Careers Service Companies in respect of three items:

- knowledge of the world of work;
- understanding of their business sector;
- appropriateness of their information and advice.

The extent of employers’ contact with the Careers Service made a difference to their opinions. Those who had had no recent contact did not appear to have a poor opinion of the Careers Service, they were simply unsure. The data also indicate that employers who had only had one recent contact with the Careers Service were less positive about most aspects of its work than those with two or more contacts. It is not surprising that employers with two plus contacts were more positive. If they had been dissatisfied with the Careers Service they would not have used it more than once. What we cannot tell from the data is the reason why those with one contact were less positive. Was it because they had less knowledge and experience of what the Careers Service could do or because they had not been particularly satisfied by the Careers Service in their one contact and had never used it again?

Table 10.8: Opinion of the Careers Service (employers with Careers Service contact)

What is your overall impression of the Careers Service in terms of the following?	Very good/good	Not very good/poor	Not sure	(n)
	%	%	%	
Knowledge of the world of work	62	14	25	(117)
Understanding of your business sector	44	33	23	(117)
Understanding of your company’s requirements	52	26	22	(118)
Speed of response	76	9	16	(117)
Knowledge of young people	71	9	20	(117)
Suitability of young people sent for interview	57	26	17	(116)
Knowledge of the education system	58	3	40	(118)
Appropriateness of their information and advice to you	60	17	23	(118)

Variation across Careers Service Companies on: understanding your business sector

Table 10.9: Could the Careers Service work with employers be improved?

	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
	%	%	%	
All employers	64	5	31	(144)
Employers with CS contact	63	5	32	(116)

Nevertheless, although employers were positive about the Careers Service, under two-thirds also thought that there was room for improvement (Table 10.9). Whether employers had had contact or not made very little difference to this view.

Communicating effectively with employers

Careers Service Companies had been trying various strategies for communicating and working with employers. We asked employers about this as part of the question on how they judged the effectiveness of Careers Service work with them. A majority felt that Careers Service Company staff keeping in regular telephone contact with them and being employers being linked to a known member of the Careers Service indicated effective working (Table 10.10). The latter was referred to by a number of employers in their written comments:

“I don’t want to deal with a different contact at each point of contact”

“ [it would be better] to know a contact number for a person you can easily contact”

Table 10.10: Communicating effectively with employers (all employers)

Which of the following do you think shows that a Careers Service is working effectively with employers?	Yes	No	Not sure	(n)
Careers Service staff visit employers regularly	40	31	29	(112)
Careers Service staff keep in regular telephone contact with employers	58	21	22	(110)
Each employer links to one member of the Careers Service known to him or her	57	17	26	(110)
The Careers Service does regular mailshots to employers	38	38	24	(109)

Employers rated linking to a single, known member of staff as one of the three most important aspects of an effective Careers Service Company in terms of its work with employers. Perhaps surprisingly, only a minority (two-fifths) thought that regular visits to employers by the Careers Service was an indicator of effective work; it seems that face-to-face contact is not as important as regular telephone contact. Employers did not value communication by regular mailshots. Only 38% saw this as effective working.

These results have several messages for Careers Service Companies: the importance to employers of having a single known contact and of Careers Service Company staff keeping in regular telephone contact with them; and that efforts to communicate with them by means of mailshots are likely to be unappreciated.

Employers’ view of a useful and effective Careers Service Company

In considering the Careers Service response to the needs of employers and their view of its effectiveness in meeting their needs, it is necessary to consider how far employers’ perceptions of the Careers Service match its official statutory responsibilities.

When we asked employers to say how useful they judged various aspects of Careers Service work, they rated the aspects connected to the Careers Service’s placement role as most useful: providing applicants for interview; advertising job or training vacancies; and screening applicants (Table 10.11, 73%, 69% and 56%). The more contact employers had had with the Careers Service, the more likely they were to judge its recruitment services as useful. Just over a half thought explaining about government training schemes was a useful service.

Table 10.11: How useful do you think the following services provided by the Careers Service are? (all employers)

	Useful	Not useful	Don't know
Advertising job or training vacancies	69	5	27
Providing applicants for interviews	73	7	20
Screening applicants before interview	56	14	30
Promoting links between your organisation and schools	37	9	55
Giving you information and advice on the education system and qualifications	36	13	52
Informing you about the number and type of young people leaving school and the sorts of jobs they are interested in	32	21	47
Explaining about government training schemes such as Skillseekers and the New Deal	52	11	38
Giving you information and advice about further education and training for employees (eg college courses, SVQs)	33	16	51
Explaining about grants to employ or train young people	42	11	48

(n=142)

Employers were least likely to judge aspects related to the Careers Service role as a “bridge between school and work” as useful. Giving information about young people leaving school and the sorts of jobs they are interested in; information on the education system; or promoting links between your organisation and schools were rated as useful functions by only a third of employers. The last aspect was the only one where there was any variation across the Careers Service Companies. “Promoting links between your organisation and schools” was more likely to be seen as a useful service by employers in CS2. Overall, employers’ rating of the usefulness of the various services offered by the Careers Service mirrors their awareness of these services and their actual contacts with the Careers Service.

It was noticeable that only a small proportion responded that any of the services listed were *not* useful; they were much more likely to say that they didn’t know. Employers’ were not rejecting the Careers Service’ wider role, they were simply unaware of it.

A related question we asked employers was how they would judge that a Careers Service Company was working effectively with them. (Table 10.12). Advice on grants emerged as important, over two-thirds thought that the Careers Service advising on grants to train or employ young people showed it was working effectively with them. Aspects connected with recruitment were noted by a majority of employers and when asked to identify the features that are most important in showing that the Careers Service was working effectively with them, “submits young people of good calibre” and “the young people submitted meets the employer’s specification” were the top two. (Table 10.12).

At the beginning of this chapter we noted the tension between the Careers Service’s social inclusion role and the servicing of employers’ recruitment needs. Employers’ responses showed some degree of recognition of this wider social inclusion role. Well over half thought that the Careers Service reminding them about equal opportunities legislation was a mark of effectiveness; just under a half felt that an effective Careers Service Company should try to persuade employers to give a disadvantaged young person a chance of a job or training place.

But this response is somewhat at odds with their other responses such as the desire for candidates of “good calibre” and reasons for not using the Careers Service to recruit.

Table 10.12: An effective Careers Service (all employers)

Which of the following do you think shows that a Careers Service is working effectively with employers?	Yes	No	Not sure
Young people submitted by the Careers Service for vacancies are of good calibre	61	8	32
Young people submitted by the Careers Service for vacancies meet the specification the employer has given	65	8	27
The Careers Service advises employers on the qualifications it is reasonable to expect from young applicants	59	16	25
The Careers Service advises employers on the personal qualities it is reasonable to expect from young applicants	52	19	29
The Careers Service gives employers information about the numbers and types of young people in the labour market	40	26	35
The Careers Service reminds employers about equal opportunities legislation in employing young people	58	24	18
Careers Service staff try to persuade employers to give a disadvantaged young person a chance of a job or a training place	49	14	37
Careers Service staff advise employers on grants and incentives to employ or train young people	68	9	23
(n=122)			
Most important features	Most important %		
Submits young people of good calibre	37		
Young people submitted meet the specification	32		
Advise on grants and incentives	13		
All other items 7% or below			
(n=90)			

It is noticeable that only two-fifths of employers identified information from the Careers Service on the number and types of young people in the labour market as an indication of effective working with them. Nor had they seen it as a very useful function of the Careers Service. Yet the Careers Service as the intermediary between school and work and between young people and employers would see this sort of function as an essential part of their role.

These findings suggest that in thinking about employers’ needs, it is not simply the case that the Careers Service has to try and raise employers’ awareness of some of their services. As well as this, the Careers Service needs to help employers appreciate the value of these Careers Service Company activities, for example, that it would be useful to employers to be more aware of the youth labour market and that a better understanding of it this could contribute to meeting their recruitment and skill needs. This “education” about needs is perhaps something that the Careers Service Companies could undertake in co-operation with LECs.

It is important that employers are not only aware of but also accept the wider information and advisory functions of the Careers Service. Otherwise there is a mismatch between what the

Careers Service is trying to do and how employers are likely to judge it. There are also implications for the Careers Service's effectiveness. To take a current example, the Careers Service has been given a key part to play in putting the recent legislation on The Right to Time Off for Study or Training into effect. To do so, employers need to recognise that the Careers Service has a legitimate involvement in this area.

CHAPTER 11

TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Introduction

The first part of this chapter discusses Careers Service Companies' work with Training Organisations. It is based on interviews with Careers Service Company staff and gives their perspective on the Careers Service's relationship with Training Organisations. The second part reports the findings of the survey of Training Organisations which gives some indication of Training Organisations' views of the relationship.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Overview

- Although Careers Services felt that they generally had good relationships with Training Organisations, there were a number of sensitive areas, mainly relating to the exchange of information on applicants, the referral of young people and a mismatch between opportunities and young people.
- In the majority of Careers Service Companies, a named member of staff liaised with a particular Training Organisation. The use of careers office premises by Training Organisations for selection interviews was common.
- Service Level Agreements were in place with Training Organisation Networks in a number of Careers Service Companies; SLAs with individual Training Organisations were less common

Training Organisations' perspectives

- There was a 77% response rate to the questionnaire sent to Training Organisations in the five case study Careers Service Companies. The Training Organisations surveyed were nearly equally divided between those offering mainstream provision only and "dual providers" offering both mainstream and special training needs provision .
- Training Organisations' occupancy levels had an impact on their views of the Careers Service's work; those with under-occupancy were more likely to be negative. This is understandable since levels of occupancy affect the financial success of Training Organisations and the Careers Service is their main source of referrals of both mainstream and STN young people.
- Careers Service Companies could consider taking extra steps to maintain good relationships during periods of low occupancy.
- There is a need to be aware of occupancy levels when interpreting customer feedback from Training Organisations.

Recruitment and selection of mainstream Skillseekers

- Virtually all of the mainstream providers always or usually contacted the Careers Service when recruiting for Skillseekers including Modern Apprentices. Most rated the Careers Service as very or fairly important to their selection and recruitment and were very or fairly satisfied with it.

- Around two thirds of Training Organisations responded that they always informed the Careers Service whether they had taken on the young people submitted to them; those with lower occupancy rates were less likely to say this. Interviews with Careers Service Company staff highlighted the communication of submission results as more of a problem than did the survey of Training Organisations.

Recruitment and selection of young people with Special Training Needs

- The Careers Service was by far the main source of Training Organisations' referrals of 16-18 year olds with Special Training Needs. Most used the Careers Service endorsement form and had direct contact with Careers Service staff as part of their selection process.
- Most Training Organisations were satisfied with Careers Service support for their selection of young people, with a majority "very satisfied".

Views of the effectiveness of Careers Services at the selection stage

- At the selection stage, a large majority of Training Organisations rated the Careers Service as performing very or fairly well in terms of the appropriateness of young people submitted, their knowledge of the young people and the briefing given about the Training Organisations.
- Training Organisations, especially mainstream providers, were less positive about how well the Careers Service passed on appropriate background information on young people. But it may be that the expectations of Training Organisations for as much information as possible are in conflict with young people's desire that the Careers Service respects their confidentiality.

Overall impression of the effectiveness of the Careers Service

- Training Organisations' overall impression of the Careers Service was generally positive. A large majority rated the Careers Service as very good or good on most criteria including knowledge of the education system, of young people, of the world of work, and understanding of their particular requirements as a Training Organisation. They were least positive about the suitability of young people sent for interview.
- Most Training Organisations would recommend the Careers Service to another Training Organisation but most also thought there was room for improvement in the Careers Service's work with Training Organisations.
- There were some differences between dual providers and Training Organisations with only mainstream provision in their perspectives on what constitutes effective Careers Service practice.
- When Training Organisations' responses to what indicates an effective Careers Service approach were compared with their experiences of what happened in practice, there was very little similarity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

Careers Service links with Training Organisations

The most common model of Careers Service Company links with Training Organisations was that of the link Careers Adviser (occasionally a Careers Assistant). Where the Careers Service Company allocated a link member of staff, the duties of that post could include:

- To discuss with Training Organisations the needs of young people submitted for vacant places and to advocate on their behalf;
- To provide information to other careers offices on the number of places available, the nature of the training and the destinations of trainees from information given by the Training Organisation;
- To help in the preparation of Skillseekers information sheets suitable for young people;
- To organise visits by other Careers Service Company staff; and
- To review trainees with special training needs (STN).

As we have noted in Chapter 8, the review of STN trainees was not always the duty of the link Careers Adviser, being carried out instead by the Careers Adviser who had submitted the client or a by specialist member of staff funded for that purpose. The review of STN trainees was thought to be a useful way of keeping in regular contact with the staff of Training Organisations which had STN provision. Where another organisation (for example a college) had been successful in gaining the contract to do these reviews, this was thought to make the relationship between the Careers Service and Training Organisations less strong.

The main focus of Careers Service Company work was on submission and placing on the training programme, with continuing guidance contacts with non-STN trainees limited.

There were many examples of Training Organisations conducting their selection interviews at the careers office. Apart from encouraging closer links, this situation allowed Careers Service Company staff to persuade Training Providers to accept poorer applicants.

A few Careers Service Companies had Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Training Organisations. Some others had an SLA with the Training Organisation network, but this was thought to be of limited effectiveness in percolating down to individual Training Organisations. Careers Service Companies attended Training Organisation Forums on a regular basis, particularly those that focused on provision for young people with STN. However, they were thought to be of limited value as Training Organisations (some of whom were in competition with each other) were sometimes unwilling to discuss issues openly.

Careers Service relationship with Training Organisations

Data from research interviews indicated that the great majority of Careers Service Companies felt that relationships were good or mostly good between Training Organisations and Careers Service Companies. However, it was interesting, given the fact that most Careers Service Company staff described their overall relationship with their Training Organisations as very positive, that when asked to talk in more detail about the relationship, the vast majority of their comments were negative. Problems existed where some Training Organisations:

- Had unrealistic expectations of young people;
- Failed to provide accurate information on who had attended and been accepted for places, the number of places available, the VQ achievements of Skillseekers and their destinations
- Failed to refer to the careers office young people who were leaving the training programme, during or at the end of the programme, without a opportunity to go to; and
- Complained when the careers office notified a Skillseekers of a suitable job that was not connected with the Training Organisation's own provision.

A common and frustrating problem for Careers Service Companies was trying to establish whether apparent vacancies with Training Organisations actually existed and were available. It was common for LEC records to show higher numbers of vacancies than could be identified on the ground.

Despite these difficulties, Careers Service Company staff thought the Careers Service had closer relationships with Training Organisations than with employers. Training Organisations had similar difficulties with their placement employers as those experienced by the Careers Service with employers. These included: persuading placement employers to take on young people with STN or with other difficulties; advising placement employers on equal opportunities and health and safety legislation; keeping up to date with the situation and progress of trainees and employees while they were with placement employers; and other forms of exchange of information. The mismatch between the opportunities available in the labour market and the aspirations, confidence level and "polish" of young people was a major challenge for both Training Organisations and Careers Service Companies alike.

Training Organisations' perspective

For the survey of Training Organisations, the five case study Careers Service Companies were asked to identify the Training Organisations that played the most significant part in the provision of training for young people across their Company. In selecting Training Organisations, we chose as broad a range of occupational categories as possible and ensured that a mix of mainstream Skillseekers, Modern Apprenticeships and STN provision was included.

Sixty Training Organisations were surveyed. In two Careers Service Companies this meant that virtually 100% of the locally based Training Organisations were included in the sample. A 77% response rate was achieved, with rates varying from 58% to 100% across the Careers Service Companies. In reporting on the results, we make use of written comments on the questionnaire to illustrate some of the tables. We also refer to the discussions we held with four Training Organisations when designing the questionnaire.

Profile of Training Organisations

Two-thirds of Training Organisations had over 50 16-18 year olds in training and the remaining third had fewer than this. The majority, nearly two-thirds, offered training in two or three occupational categories; nearly a quarter covered four or more occupational categories and the remainder offered training in one category (16%). (Categories were defined according to the Standard Occupational Classification (OPCS, 1980, 1990)).

Training Organisations in our sample were nearly equally divided into “dual providers” offering both mainstream and special training needs (STN) provision and those offering only mainstream provision. 46% were dual providers, recruiting both mainstream (including Modern Apprentices) and STN young people; 50% were mainstream only and the remaining 4% recruited only STN youngsters.

During June-August (a period when considerable numbers of young people come on to the register) the large majority of Training Organisations had a mismatch of places and applicants. 42% said they had more places than young people to fill them and 45% had more young people wanting places than were available. The remainder had about equal number of places and people (13%). In November – February the position changed a little with a slightly higher percentage of Training Organisations reporting more places than young people to fill them (45%), equal numbers of places and young people (20%) and a smaller proportion with more people than places (35%). Overall, (ie at either time points) 41% had more places; 46% more people and 13% equal numbers. Our analysis showed that Training Organisations’ occupancy levels had an impact on their views of the Careers Service: those with under-occupancy were more likely to be negative. This is understandable, since levels of occupancy affect the financial success of a Training Organisation, and the Careers Service was the main source of referrals of both mainstream and STN young people.

Recruitment and selection for mainstream Skillseekers

The Careers Service was Training Organisations’ most common avenue for recruiting mainstream Skillseekers. 95% of Training Organisations reported that they always or usually contacted the Careers Service when recruiting for Skillseekers, including Modern Apprentices (Table 11.1). Other methods such as using placement employers, the Job Centre, putting an advertisement in a local paper and contacting schools all came a long way behind.

Table 11.1: Recruitment of mainstream Skillseekers

When recruiting a 16-18 year old for Skillseekers (including Modern Apprentices), what do you do?	Always/usually %	Occasionally/never %
Place an advert in the local paper	25	75
Contact the Careers Service	95	5
Contact the Job Centre	28	72
Contact schools	22	78
Contact colleges	11	89
Ask your placement employers to put forward applicants known to them	29	71
Something else	25	75
<i>(n=37)</i>		

When it came to selection, Training Organisations relied on their own application form and interviews. The large majority always or usually used their own application form and also always or usually interviewed applicants (90% and 95%, Table 11.2). As well as interviewing applicants themselves, most Training Organisations said that their placement employers always or usually interviewed applicants (81%). Nearly two-fifths of Training Organisations used the Careers Service to pre-select candidates (38%).

Table 11.2: The selection of mainstream Skillseekers

How do you choose a 16-18 year old for a Skillseekers Place (including Modern Apprentices)?	Always/usually	Occasionally/never
	%	%
Careers Service pre-selection	38	62
Careers Service application form	21	79
Your organisation's application form	90	10
Your organisation interviews them	95	5
Your placement employer interviews them	81	20
Selection test	51	49
School or college report	36	64
Other reference	27	73
National Record of Achievement	43	57

(n=37)

It is interesting to note that around half of the Training Organisations reported that they always or usually used selection tests. We wondered to what extent young people are prepared for this in school or at the careers office? Less than half of Training Organisations generally made use of a youngster's National Record of Achievement (NRA) as part of their selection process (43% "always/usually"). This suggests that, although usage of the NRA (now Progress File) is growing, there is still some way to go.

Table 11.3 shows that the vast majority of Training Organisations rated the Careers Service as very or fairly important to their recruitment and selection for mainstream Skillseekers (96%). Within this, under two-thirds rated the Careers Service as very important (61%). Training Organisations that had difficulties filling their places were more likely to respond that the Careers Service had a very important role in recruitment (74% vs 47%). One implication of this is that Training Organisations experiencing difficulties recruiting might be more likely to view the Careers Service as having considerable responsibility for their difficulties. This suggests that special efforts may be needed at times of under-occupancy to support and maintain a good working relationship between the Careers Service and Training Organisations.

Table 11.3: Importance of Careers Service role in recruitment and selection

How important is the Careers Service role in your recruitment and selection for mainstream Skillseekers (including Modern Apprentices)?	%
Very important	61
Fairly important	35
Not very important	2
Not at all important	2

(n=43)

The majority of Training Organisations were very or fairly satisfied with the Careers Service support of their selection and recruitment of youngsters to mainstream Skillseekers places (82%, Table 11.4). Within this overall satisfaction, more were fairly than very satisfied (54% vs 28%). Just under a fifth were "not very satisfied" but no Training Organisation expressed total dissatisfaction.

Table 11.4: Satisfaction with Careers Service role in recruitment and selection

How satisfied are you with the Careers Service support for your selection and recruitment of mainstream Skillseekers (including Modern Apprentices)?	%
Very satisfied	28
Fairly satisfied	54
Not very satisfied	19
Not at all satisfied	-
(n=43)	

Recruitment and selection of young people with special training needs

As might be expected, the Careers Service emerged as by far the main source of referrals of 16-18 year olds with special training needs. The large majority of Training Organisations reported that they always or usually got referrals from the Careers Service (74% and 13% Table 11.5). Other sources were much less important.

Table 11.5: The recruitment of young people with special training needs

From where do you get referrals of 16-18 year olds with special training needs who require extra support?	Always/usually %	Occasionally/never %
The Careers Service	87	13
The Job Centre	7	93
Schools or colleges	19	82
Social work department	6	94
Other training providers	6	94
Something else	20	80
(n=23)		

In contrast with the recruitment of mainstream Skillseekers, the Careers Service was much more likely to be heavily involved at the selection stage with Training Organisations recruiting youngsters who required extra support (Table 11.6). Training Organisations' responses reflected the formal requirement for a youngster to be "endorsed" by the Careers Service as having special training needs, but there was also a high level of direct contact between Training Organisations and Careers Service Companies through personal discussions about individual submissions (70%, Table 11.6). This indicates a substantial exchange of information and the use of advocacy.

Over four-fifths of Training Organisations reported that they always or usually used the Careers Service endorsement form to help them decide to accept a young person on to their programme (82%). Over half commonly used the Careers Service to pre-select candidates (55%). Training Organisations also commonly interviewed the youngsters (90%) and discussed a training plan with them (95%) but interviews with placement employers were less frequently mentioned compared with mainstream Training Organisations' responses.

It might be noted that Training Organisations made less use of the NRA in selecting young people with STN.

Table 11.6: The selection of young people with special training needs

How do you decide to accept a young person with special training needs to your programme?	Always/usually %	Occasionally/never %
Careers Service pre-selection	55	45
Careers Service endorsement form	82	18
Personal discussion with Careers Service staff	70	30
Careers Service application form	23	77
Your own application form	72	28
School or college report	17	83
Personal discussion with school/college staff	17	83
Other reference	18	82
National Record of Achievement	12	88
Personal discussion with social work staff, if young person has a social worker	43	58
Interview with your organisation	90	10
Interview with a possible placement employer	44	55
Personal discussion with the young person about a negotiated action plan	95	5
Something else	67	33

(n=22)

As might be expected the Careers Service was seen as very important to Training Organisations who recruited young people with STN (Table 11.7).

Table 11.7: The role of Careers Service with STN recruitment and selection

How important is the Careers Service role in your recruitment and selection of young people with special training needs who need extra support?	%
Very important	91
Fairly important	4
Not very important	4
Not at all important	-

(n=23)

Table 11.8: Satisfaction with Careers Service role in recruitment and selection of young people with special training needs

How satisfied are you with the Careers Service support for your selection and recruitment of young people with special training needs who need extra support?	%
Very satisfied	59
Fairly satisfied	27
Not very satisfied	9
Not at all satisfied	5

(n=22)

Table 11.8 shows that most Training Organisations were satisfied with Careers Service support for their selection of young people with special training needs. Training Organisations expressed a higher level of satisfaction with Careers Service support in relation

to STN youngsters than those recruited to mainstream places (59% vs 28% “very” satisfied, Tables 11.4 and 11.8).

Views of the effectiveness of Careers Services

Table 11.9 shows that, at the selection stage (to both mainstream and STN places), a majority of Training Organisations rated the Careers Service as doing very well or fairly well in a number of aspects. These include: the appropriateness of the young people submitted; the Careers Service’s knowledge of these young people; the briefing given to them; and the background information provided to Training Organisations (Table 11.9).

Table 11.9: Effectiveness of Careers Service at the selection stage

At the selection stage, how well do you think Careers Service staff ...	% very well	% fairly well	% not very well	% not at all well	% not sure
...know the young people they send to you?	7	64	21	7	2
...brief young people on the training and opportunities your organisation can provide?	12	61	19	9	-
...give you appropriate background information on the young people they send to you?	9	57	18	16	-
...send appropriate young people to you?	5	76	15	5	-

(n=44)

Training Organisations who had good occupancy levels were more likely to be positive about the Careers Service’s knowledge of young people submitted and the level of information given about them than Training Organisations who had vacancies.

Some Training Organisations were content with the Careers Service’s input:

“We continue to have good relationships about Skillseekers recruitment.”

However, within overall figures, only a small proportion (varying between 5 and 11%) thought that the Careers Service performed “very well”, rather than “fairly well”. Some comments from Training Organisations suggested that the Careers Service was being judged by the behaviour of young people submitted to them:

“Non-attendance at interviews continues to be a major problem”

“A high percentage aren’t ready for the world of work. They are not fully aware of what employers are looking for. The Skillseekers client group appears to be less committed than previously with less turning up for interview.”

While a majority of Training Organisations were satisfied with background information on the young people passed on to them, this was the aspect that they were least positive about – over a third rated the Careers Service as not doing very well or at all well on this. There were some differences depending on the type of Training Organisation. Those providing both mainstream and STN provision were more positive than those with mainstream provision only and almost a fifth of dual providers thought that the Careers Service did “very well” in terms of providing background information (table not shown). Careers Services may give particular attention to briefing Training Organisations about youngsters with special training needs but it seems that many mainstream providers felt that the information they received was inadequate.

“If more information about the young person can be provided, it’s easier to support them”

“A good service from the Careers Service, but it’s mainly because we push for it. In our work in support of disadvantaged young people we find them helpful when we request information. They provide a minimal report.”

(With respect to STN young people) *“ We need to receive information sooner, more detailed, with contacts for additional information. We often have to do a lot of needs analysis ourselves.”*

(We would note that we are reporting the perspectives of Training Organisations, but recognise that some of these need to be interpreted and perhaps challenged. The latter comment illustrates this point. While the submitting organisation, in this case a Careers Service Company, does need to recognise and analyse need prior to submission, placement organisations also carry a responsibility for a work-based analysis of need at induction and early stages of training.)

Careers Service Companies need to discuss and agree the level and type of information that mainstream providers seek, and to negotiate this within the context of young people’s right to confidentiality. Chapter 8 showed the great importance young people give to the Careers Service maintaining confidential information. Young people in the labour market (the group most likely to be submitted to Training Organisations) were significantly more likely to rate this as one of the most important things for the Careers Service to do than young people who were in education.

Training Organisations’ overall impression of the Careers Service was generally positive:

“Our careers contacts are excellent, very helpful and committed.”

A large majority rated the Careers Service as very good or good on most criteria (Table 11.10). The Careers Service was seen as knowledgeable about the education system and about young people (87% and 85%). 80% considered the Careers Service’s speed of response to be very good or good. Around three-quarters rated their knowledge of the world of work as very good or good. A higher proportion felt that the Careers Service understood the particular requirements of their Training Organisation than their business sector(s) as a whole (81% vs 67%).

Table 11.10: Opinion of the effectiveness of the Careers Service

What is your overall impression of the Careers Service in terms of the following criteria?	% very good	% good	% not very good	% not at all good	% not sure
Knowledge of the world of work	20	54	15	7	4
Understanding of your business sector	9	58	22	7	4
Understanding of your particular requirements	16	65	16	2	-
Speed of response	13	67	13	4	2
Suitability of young people sent for interview	7	54	37	2	-
Knowledge of the education system	35	52	4	1	7
Appropriateness of their advice and information to you	25	52	18	2	2
Ability to give unbiased advice	22	57	11	4	7
Knowledge of young people	15	70	13	-	2

(n=46)

Training Organisations were least positive about the suitability of young people sent for interview, with nearly two-fifths judging the Careers Service to be not very good or not at all

good at this. Response did not vary by the size of the Training Organisation or by the nature of their provision. As we have noted earlier, Training Organisations' occupancy level was one factor which seemed to make a difference. Training Organisations who had vacant places (at either of the two time points we asked about) were less positive than other Training Organisations about: the Careers Service's speed of response; suitability of young people sent for interview; the Careers Service's knowledge of young people; and the appropriateness of the advice and information from the Careers Service (table not shown).

The Training Organisations' responses are encouraging and show that they rate the Careers Service highly. Considering how Careers Services could develop further, there is perhaps scope to increase the proportion of "very good" responses. Overall, Training Organisations were least happy about the suitability of the young people sent for interview. This is a long-standing issue between the Careers Service and Training Organisations. Is it partly about better communication, or is it more about accepting that this is an on-going area of tension, with Training Organisations wanting to fill their places and the Careers Service trying to work with the young people they have, suitable or not? However, there may also be an issue about how the placement service is operated and the range of potential clients that the Careers Service has, as we discussed in Chapter 9.

Most Training Organisations would recommend the Careers Service to another Training Organisation (79% - table not shown). This varied depending on whether the Training Organisation had under-occupancy or not: those with vacancies were less likely to say they would recommend the Careers Service (56% vs 95%). Although most would recommend the Careers Service, at the same time, the large majority also thought that its work with Training Organisations could be improved (93% - table not shown).

Training Organisations thought that the Careers Service had developed over the last three years (table not shown), becoming more flexible in its approach (51%); making more contacts with them (49%) and becoming more aware of Training Organisations' needs (37%). Training Organisations with dual provision were more likely to think that the Careers Service had changed in respect of flexibility and awareness than mainstream providers only. Training Organisations who had occupancy problems were less likely to think that the Careers Service had become more aware of their needs over the last three years than other Training Organisations. To what extent are these Training Organisations rationalising their difficulties in filling their places by believing that the Careers Service is not sufficiently aware of their needs - or is this a real issue?

Training Organisations' views of effective Careers Service work in theory and practice

In the survey, Training Organisations were asked to identify the activities that, in principle, would show that the Careers Service was trying to work in an effective way with them. Table 11.11 shows the extent to which Training Organisations thought the various activities listed indicated this.

When asked to identify the three activities they thought were most important in showing that the Careers Service was working effectively with them, Training Organisations selected the following:

- submits young people of good calibre (35%);

- links to a named member of Careers Service staff (33%); and
- briefs young people on the training and opportunities the organisation can provide (33%).

What mattered most to Training Organisations varied somewhat depending on whether they were dual providers or mainstream only. Training Organisations who were dual providers identified both regular visits and telephone contact as among the most important features in Careers Service work with them. Dual providers also gave more importance to the Careers Service giving them information about the numbers and types of young people in the labour market (48% dual providers vs 9% mainstream provision only).

Table 11.11: Activities related to effectiveness

Which of these activities indicates that the Careers Service is operating effectively, and which, in your experience, does the Careers Service actually carry out in practice?				
The Careers Service	Indicates effective work	Carried out in practice	Doesn't carry out in practice	Not sure
Keeps in regular telephone contact with training organisations	89	81	19	-
Gives training organisations information about the numbers and types of young people in the labour market	75	36	57	7
Briefs young people on the training and opportunities the organisation can provide	78	55	24	27
Links each training organisation to a member of Careers Service staff	68	47	47	7
Visits training organisations regularly	78	30	70	-
Submits young people of good calibre	69	36	47	17
Advises training organisations what qualifications it is reasonable to expect from young applicants	59	25	58	18
Advises training organisations what personal qualities it is reasonable to expect from young applicants	50	18	60	23
Reminds training organisations about equal opportunities legislation in employing young people	49	34	54	12
Tries to persuade training organisations to give a disadvantaged young person a chance of a job or a training place	71	56	24	20
Helps training organisations find placement employers (n=45)	51	5	73	23

When Training Organisations' responses to what indicated an effective approach were compared with what happened in practice, there was little similarity (Table 11.11). With the exception of keeping in regular telephone contact, the Careers Service's practice (as reported by the Training Organisations) did not correspond to Training Organisations' view of what constituted an effective way of working with them. There were some big differences, for example, about visiting Training Organisations regularly, helping them find placement employers and giving them information about young people in the labour market. There were also substantial differences between theory and practice in the aspects rated as most important.

Dual Training Organisations were more likely to indicate that Careers Service practice matched their expectations of effective working with them than were Training Organisations offering mainstream provision only. The differences in the responses of mainstream and dual providers to what the Careers Service did in practice reflect the nature of their particular

client groups and the Careers Service's work with STN young people. But they may suggest that the Careers Service should be in more regular contact with mainstream Training Organisations and adopt more of an advocacy role with them.

The comparison of Training Organisations' responses gives an indication of where the Careers Service might focus attention. This is not to suggest that Training Organisations are necessarily correct. It may be that Training Organisations' picture of an effective approach to them differs from that of the Careers Service. If so, then this has to be discussed and a compromise reached at local levels. An understanding of the expectations of clients such as Training Organisations is an essential component of measuring effectiveness.

As we describe in Chapter 13, we have developed a pen picture of "How Good is Our Careers Service At Working with Training Organisations..." as an example of the "How Good is Our Careers Service at..." approach to assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service. The full draft "pen picture" is contained in Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 12

MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter 12 pulls together management aspects from earlier chapters and considers the management tasks involved in delivering an effective Careers Service. It considers such issues as identification of need, ensuring quality, developing staff, communications and decision-making and the balance of Careers Service work.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

Progress made by Careers Service Companies

- There was evidence of positive changes in the management of Careers Service Companies prior to and during the period of the research. These included: the development of systems and policies; greater attention to resourcing and cost/benefits analyses of activities; increased emphasis on quality assurance; the development of client evaluations; a greater focus on staff review and development; and more attention to marketing.

The impact of targets

- Targets were set for a variety of activities. In some Careers Service Companies there were differences between Heads of Service' perceptions and those of practitioners as to whether staff felt "target driven".
- Targets were applied more rigidly in some Careers Service Companies than in others. In a few, client need and demand had to fit into targets to be met. In most Careers Service Companies, some or considerable flexibility existed.
- The research found little evidence that targets had been quantified on the basis of personally prompted client need or on systematic assessment of the needs of categories of clients. Targets were commonly formulated on the basis of the figures achieved the previous year.

The balance of Careers Service work

- The balance of work in most Careers Service Companies was heavily towards school work with employer work fitted in when possible. Careers Service Company staff, especially Heads of Service were conscious of the need to develop work with employers.
- School work was predominately delivered through the individual interview; some Heads of Service wanted to develop a more varied approach.

Staff appraisal, review and development

- A minority of Careers Service Companies had a staff appraisal system, the others had staff review and development systems. SQMS and IIP were key influences on Careers Service Companies' development of both appraisal and staff review systems.
- Most practitioners were positive about their appraisal or review system and noted an increase in the amount of training they received.

- There was evidence of significant advances in formal staff development across Careers Service Companies seen, for example, in the extent to which senior managers had achieved management-related qualifications and support staff relevant VQ qualifications.
- The impact of review or appraisal systems on practitioners' work appeared to be related to the way their Area Manager organised the process. It was also difficult for Careers Service Companies to balance Company and individuals' needs.

Quality assurance

- All Careers Service Companies had or were aiming to achieve SQMS and IIP so there was little variation in how quality assurance issues were handled across Careers Service Companies.
- Initial concerns about SQMS and IIP had proved unfounded and the experience of working towards gaining the awards had benefited Careers Service Companies in a number of respects.
- Nevertheless, having these two systems in place did not guarantee the quality of the careers guidance being provided by a Careers Service Company. The research identified differences between policy and practice within Careers Service Companies, and pupils' responses also highlighted unexplained variation.

Staff accountability, monitoring and autonomy

- Most Careers Service Company staff felt more accountable than in the past, in particular, because of Business Activity Targets but everyone was clear that the targets did not assess the quality of professional practice.
- Client evaluation had developed as part of the SQMS process but Careers Service Companies recognised the limitations of client feedback as a way of assessing the quality and effectiveness of careers guidance. They recognised the need also to monitor the work of staff and to encourage self evaluation.
- Careers Service Companies had adopted a number of strategies in respect of (self) evaluation of professional practice but there was considerable scope across most Careers Service Companies to develop more systematic and comprehensive approaches. Those with formal appraisal systems were more likely to have structured approaches to the evaluation of professional practice.
- Careers Service staff valued their autonomy and there was some feeling among all levels of Careers Service staff that the increased emphasis on evaluation and accountability was at odds with this autonomy. This may partly explain the reluctance of some middle managers to push the evaluation of professional practice. It is possible, however, to be more accountable without having less autonomy. Time and the lack of appropriate methods to use were other reasons such evaluation was limited.

Identification of need

- The identification of need is fundamental to the achievement of effective outcomes for clients and Careers Service Companies and their Boards were increasingly being encouraged by the Scottish Executive to plan strategically on the basis of identified need.

The process of the identification of need

- The research identified three stages to the identification of needs: the recognition of needs; the analysis of need; and the assessment of need linked to provision. Subsequently, there needs to be a review to ensure that needs have been met.
- This process can be used to identify the needs of individual clients and also of particular groups of clients.
- “Recognition of need” is where there is a basic level of identification which recognises a presenting problem without analysing it.
- “Analysis of need” refers to the analysis of the needs underlying the presenting problem; this requires professional careers guidance skills.
- “Assessment of need linked to provision” is the stage at which individual or group need is related to careers guidance or other provision and a choice of interventions made or gaps in provision identified.
- An awareness of these three stages to the identification of need allows Careers Service Companies and others to assess Careers Service Companies’ approaches to identifying client needs and is essential if Careers Service Companies are to plan strategically on the basis of identified need.

The identification of needs in practice

- All Careers Service Companies showed some evidence of identification of need of both individual clients of different client groups but there was little evidence of a systematic and comprehensive approach encompassing all aspects of the process.
- The first stage “recognition of need” was most common and was done for most clients. The careers interview was the most usual occasion for the second stage, the “analysis of need “ in respect of individual clients. But whether this is done in practice depends on the competence of the particular Careers Adviser; clients who do not have an interview do not have this opportunity. Analysis of group needs through multi-agency consultations had become more common but these might not focus sufficiently on careers guidance needs.
- Careers Service Companies used a number of approaches to identify needs but they still required to develop an overall strategy for identifying the needs of individuals and groups.
- The research identified a number of instances where the identification of need had led to changes in Careers Service Company practice or to requests to other agencies for inputs. There were also examples of where the Careers Service Company had been at the forefront of identifying the outstanding needs of particular client groups.
- Partnership and networking was critical to identifying client needs; schools and LECs were particularly important.
- The Careers Service Board could use its own members to identify needs and employer representatives were considered particularly valuable. But Careers Service Board members had varied levels of relevant background knowledge and experience and few were experienced in guidance issues or the identification of guidance needs. It is essential that Board members recognise the need for strategy to be decided on the basis of a systematic identification of need rather than personal experience.
- Careers Service Company staff tended to question how far young people are able to identify their own needs and to use the Careers Service appropriately. Some were

doubtful that employers knew enough about the Careers Service and transition issues to recognise their needs or how the Careers Service might help them.

- It is increasingly important that Careers Service Companies have communication strategies that enable the information that practitioners have about client need to be fed into the Careers Service Companies' strategic planning.

Communication and decision-making

- Careers Service Companies varied in the priority given to internal communications in policy and in practice. A number of Careers Service Companies had adopted new strategies for communicating with staff.
- The increased speed of decision-making could make it difficult for managers to keep staff as informed about developments as previously although they recognised the importance of doing so given the level of continuing change.
- More than half the Careers Service Companies characterised their process of developing ideas about policy and practice as mainly "top-down" from managers via the Board with subsequent discussion among staff. The others had a more mixed process with ideas coming from all levels of staff.
- The research evidence suggested that those Careers Service Companies that encouraged and received ideas on policy and practice from all grades of staff were also those most likely to be reflective in policy and practice.

Changed role and skills of staff

- The role and skills of all staff were changing but the greatest changes were required of Area Managers.¹⁰ This may be because of the key position they occupy between senior management and practitioners. Increasing demands were being made on them in respect of networking, marketing, initiating developments and fund-raising in their area, and of staff review and development. They had an increasingly critical role in ensuring strategic policy and operational issues informed each other and in explaining Careers Service Company policy to staff.
- Heads of Service had also experienced considerable change and had had to develop expertise in handling financial, legal, personnel and estate management matters especially in Careers Service Companies that were companies limited by guarantee.
- Most change in Careers Service Companies was at the company level and concerned the development of a business orientation with less change in relation to professional guidance. This may explain the limited changes experienced by Careers Advisers; their main change was a greater level of accountability via targets. But Careers Advisers were thought to need considerable skill development and attitude change to meet likely future demands on them.
- Changes had taken place in the roles of careers assistants. In some Careers Service Companies, their role had been extended to deliver group work to unemployed clients or to provide placing services to pupils on school premises. A common trend was for Careers Service Companies to give careers assistants greater responsibility, for example, giving them a management role or becoming largely responsible for the office's work with unemployed clients.

¹⁰ Area managers had different titles across the Careers Service Companies, for ease we use the term area manager for all in this type of management post.

Variation within and across Careers Service Companies

- Part of the research brief was to identify the extent of variation across Careers Service Companies in Scotland.
- Careers Service Company staff had different views as to whether variation in policy and practice within their Careers Service Company was a negative feature, inevitable or a positive feature.
- The research was based on the view that variation in itself is neither good nor bad but depends on whether it arises from the systematic identification of client need and delivers consistency of outcome for clients (rather than consistency of inputs).
- There was little variation in the objectives of Careers Service Companies although they varied in their emphasis on particular points eg some had a greater focus on entry to employment and economic outcomes for clients.
- A common aim was to maximise contact with clients but this was approached in different ways, for example, variation in the geographical distribution of offices and the extent of face-to-face contact.
- The majority of Careers Service Companies had some or considerable variation in delivery. Practitioners identified a higher level of variation than did Heads of Service.
- SQMS had resulted in the standardisation of some aspects of delivery across all client groups. The completion of Action Plans was the aspect of professional work most likely to be the subject of standardisation.
- The approach of individual schools was thought by Careers Service Company staff to be the main factor in variation in school provision; Careers Service Company staff tended to underestimate the impact of the Careers Adviser in the individual school.
- Careers Service Company staff reported more variation in work with post-school clients and the labour market than in their school work.
- The research identified some variation based on client need. Other variation was a result of deliberate decisions to give responsibility to specific offices or staff for particular projects as a way of developing policy and professional practice within the context of an overall company plan.
- The research also found variation arising from individual staff's or areas' preferred way of working and to suit the organisational convenience of schools and Careers Service Companies. In other cases there was a lack of variation despite differences in client need.

Guidance management information

- Careers Service Companies are required to keep a record of their activities but they could develop their use of statistics to gain a better understanding of the pattern of usage and non-usage of its services to help them plan provision.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Progress made by Careers Service Companies

It was clear that, as seen in earlier chapters, there were a number of positive changes in the management of Careers Service Companies up to and during the period of the research. These included:

- greater development of systems and clarification of policies;

- more attention to resourcing and increased cost/benefits analyses of activities;
- more emphasis on quality assurance;
- increased development of partnership working, particularly with respect to seeking and using joint resources;
- the development of client evaluations, primarily through questionnaires and focus groups;
- a greater focus on staff review and development; and
- more attention to marketing.

The impact of targets in Careers Service Companies

Under the new contractual arrangements with the Scottish Executive in 1996, Careers Services were required to produce targets and business activity measures. Previously Careers Services had kept statistical records but had not been required to predict their activities nor to set targets for the various activities they planned to undertake. The introduction of targets provided the Scottish Executive with more opportunity to influence the Companies' work and to monitor for contract compliance. Targets meant that Scottish Executive staff negotiating business and development plans were in a position to encourage particular priorities in Careers Service Companies' work through the targets that were agreed, for example, by negotiating increased targets for employer contacts or for group work compared with interviewing. Targets were also a way for the Scottish Executive to increase Careers Service Companies' accountability and to encourage them to develop further a systematic approach to planning.

Careers Service Companies themselves took different approaches to using the targets as management tools to motivate and assess staff and to change the balance of practitioners' work in line with company and Scottish Executive priorities. Eight Careers Service Companies operated targets at an area level only; five set individual targets for practitioners; two allowed Area Managers to decide whether individual targets were appropriate; and in three Careers Service Companies it was not practicable to distinguish between individual, area and Company targets for core work because of the small size of the Company. Targets might be set for action plans, interviews (different targets for different year groups of school pupils were common), group work with school and post-school clients, employer work and contact with parents. One Careers Service Company set practitioners individual targets for employer work and area targets for schoolwork, illustrating the use of targets as a staff management tool to focus on certain aspects of the work.

In some Careers Service Companies there were discrepancies between Heads of Service' and practitioners' perceptions about whether staff were target driven. Heads of Service were more likely to perceive targets as flexible guides to the Company's activities while Careers Advisers were more likely to see them as precise numerical targets that they had to achieve. There was evidence that targets made things happen that might not otherwise have occurred: group work sessions with school and unemployed clients were examples commonly given by practitioners. But poorly managed targets could skew activity in ways that were not helpful, for example, group sessions undertaken to meet targets for group work rather than to respond to an identified need. This could also apply to interview targets.

“This Careers Service Company will follow monthly targets for S4 even if it’s out of step with demand.”

Careers Adviser

The managers of other Careers Service Companies viewed targets in a more flexible and developmental light. They felt that if they did not meet their targets then the reasons for this were something to be discussed with the Scottish Executive and lessons learned from it. Their view was that targets were not yet foolproof as predictors, that not meeting targets was a cue to examine policy and practice and that a demand-led service would inevitably need to adjust its targets:

“I’m happy with differences between profile and actual figures, it shows we’ve got the ability to respond to demand.”

Head of Service

Targets and their relationship to professional practice were a live issue, in particular, whether targets for a certain level of contact with different groups of pupils were at odds with self-referral interviewing systems. Careers Service Companies were watching carefully to see how targets would affect priorities and the balance of work:

“The introduction of targets has changed things. The management trick is to ensure balance in making sure you’re providing the service needed by the clients and the government. The trap to avoid is not to do work to meet the needs of the organisation instead of meeting the needs of clients. The introduction of targets and contracts has made the pendulum swing the other way”.

Head of Service

“Numerical targets do not constrain our ability to respond to need or react.”

Head of Service

While it was clear that targets were being used both by the Scottish Executive and by Companies to emphasise certain priorities, there was little evidence to suggest that targets were encouraging Careers Service Companies to do more to identify client need. Companies’ targets had initially been formulated on the basis of their previous activity and in subsequent years were based on the figures achieved in the previous year with some adjustments to reflect current Scottish Executive and Company priorities. Companies’ approaches to target-setting did not appear to take into account personally prompted client need or to quantify on the basis of a systematic assessment of the needs of different of clients.

The balance of work in Careers Service Companies

The balance of work in most Careers Service Companies was still heavily towards school work, with employer work fitted in when possible. Heads of Service and Careers Advisers were conscious of the need to give a higher priority to employer work, and identified it as a development task for companies. HOS generally perceived the value to the Company in increasing its work with employers, irrespective of the need to meet the Company’s targets in this respect; but the view among Careers Advisers was more mixed. For some, their employer work was driven by the need to achieve their targets, and they described their approach to employer work as “blitzing to meet the targets”.

There were several issues in relation to the balance of school work. School work was still heavily delivered through the one-to-one interview rather than through more varied methods, including group work. Some Heads of Service, especially towards the end of the period of the

research, wanted to encourage greater diversity of approaches and were beginning to introduce changes (for example, the use of group feedback to computerised interest guides) which might change the balance of work away from interviewing. Nevertheless, the strong view among careers guidance practitioners and school staff was that all pupils were entitled to an interview and there were practical difficulties in schools in trying to organise a wider range of Careers Service inputs.

Companies also had to grapple with the task of managing their input in schools in the light of changing priority group(s). At the outset of the research, Companies were refocusing their activities on S5 and S6 pupils in response to high staying-on rates but were then required to focus on S4 as part of the guidance entitlement for Higher Still. The developing social inclusion agenda and associated early intervention initiatives further complicated management decisions about the appropriate stages of interventions by the Careers Service and its deployment of resources.

Staff appraisal, review and development

In our review of the seventeen Careers Service Companies, we found that four Careers Service Companies had appraisal systems in place. One of these included observation of interviews for all staff who had an interviewing role. Another only applied to the Head of Service and senior managers and included performance related pay. The other 13 Careers Service Companies had staff review and development systems in operation but were considering the development of appraisal systems. The move to appraisal systems was a standard recommendation of SQMS external audits across Careers Service Companies, and a functioning staff review and development system was a condition of award for Investors in People (IIP). All Careers Service Companies were aiming for SQMS, therefore considerable work had already gone into the development of appropriate systems. Towards the end of the research all Careers Service Companies had gained SQMS and almost all IIP.

The introduction of staff review and development or appraisal systems were generally welcomed. Most Careers Service Company staff spoke positively about the system they had in place, appreciating the opportunity to have a focused review of their work, their performance and their development needs. There was a general view that the introduction of formal review or appraisal had led to an increase in training. However, some commented that there was considerable sensitivity towards the introduction of appraisal on the part of staff unions.

The ability of the area manager to manage the process seemed to be critical in determining the extent to which reviews had an impact on staff performance. Where staff experienced extended delays in the review process or perceived that the review focused on the needs of the company to the exclusion of their individual needs, or where the area manager had only limited skills in identifying the training needs of staff, then the value of the review was likely to be undermined.

Most Careers Service Companies were trying to match staff development and training priorities with their business plan. Careers Service Company staff generally accepted that the Careers Service Company could not be expected to support individual development activities that did not also contribute to Company needs. Nevertheless, it was clearly difficult for Careers Service Companies to work out the balance between meeting the Company's needs

and meeting individual needs, especially as resources became increasingly tight under a standstill budget.

There was clear evidence of significant advances in formal staff development across Careers Service Companies. By 1997 the large majority of senior managers had already attained qualifications related to management such as IPD, MCI, Open College certification in personnel, accounting, marketing and area managers either held or were working towards a management qualification. There was a substantial increase in formal qualifications among support staff, with Careers Assistants taking VQ level 3 in guidance and Clerical Assistants achieving customer care qualifications at VQ level 2. The increased uptake of VQs was accompanied in most Careers Service Companies by supervisory staff gaining the D32 and 33 standards to allow them to be internal assessors for VQs. Towards the end of the research a number of Careers Service Companies had come together, with the support of the Scottish Executive, to form the Scottish Guidance Consortium to support the development of vocational qualifications for careers guidance. The intention was that all Careers Service Companies in Scotland would join the Consortium.

Quality assurance

There was little variation across Careers Service Companies in how quality issues were handled, mainly because, as noted above, all Careers Service Companies were trying to achieve and keep SQMS and IIP awards. Although some Careers Service Companies had been very involved in the development of quality systems before the introduction of SQMS, much of this had been taken over by preparation for the SQMS assessment. Although there had been some anxieties about the amount of paper work involved, the experience of working towards both awards was thought to have benefited the Careers Service Company and only a minority of staff had negative views:

“Both SQMS and IIP are good, shows commitment to staff and to having sound systems and structures to benefit young people and staff”.

Careers Adviser

“SQMS and IIP possession is seen as a guarantor that operational guidance issues are OK”

Head of Service

“Systems are now a lot clearer and staff know a lot more about how the careers service operates. Previously we knew very little about how the board operates or what should happen. SQMS meant statements of entitlement had to be produced. And it was useful when your Area Manager didn’t have time to tell you what you should be doing, you could look in the evidence folder to find out what you should be doing. You can find out what other members of staff should be doing, and how to do it. SQMS has broken down boundaries of expertise and hierarchy.”

Careers Adviser

Lastly, the external audit had a number of very positive aspects for staff morale:

“Putting together the documentation for SQMS has helped to develop a more professional attitude and made staff reflect on what they’re doing. Staff realise they do a lot whereas perhaps they’d not shouted enough about what they do compared with other Companies.”

Careers Adviser

Overall, there was recognition that quality was important:

“The company is moving gradually into a quality environment. In the last four years, especially after the bid, quality’s overtaken quantity in people’s minds. Nevertheless, we

know quality only comes in after the Scottish Office and the Careers Company is satisfied on the quantitative targets”.

Head of Service

SQMS and IIP have been of value to Careers Service Companies but is it the case that having the two systems in operation is a guarantor that operational **guidance** issues are satisfactory? Although most Careers Service Company staff thought SQMS and IIP were valuable, a minority were more critical, especially of the extent to which it took account of the quality of guidance given.

It is certainly true that evidence for the SQMS internal audit is gathered from client surveys, and external assessors consult client groups with a thoroughness that non-Careers Service organisations have rarely had to face. Nevertheless, respondents described marked differences between policy and practice, and client feedback on its own is an inadequate method of assessing the quality of guidance.

Accountability, monitoring and autonomy

Careers Service Companies recognised that client evaluation alone was not a sufficient means of assessing the quality and effectiveness of their provision. They acknowledged the need to monitor the work of staff and to encourage self evaluation in addition to seeking the views of clients. All Careers Service Companies monitored the targets set for individual staff and/or areas on a weekly, monthly or bi-monthly basis, depending on the Careers Service Company. Staff felt that they were more accountable for their work than in the past:

“There’s a greater accountability, we have to complete statistics, monthly planners and have one-to one meetings with the area manager”

Careers Adviser

But while the monitoring of targets made staff more accountable for their activities, all of our respondents felt that targets primarily monitored the volume of staff activities and did not assess the quality of professional practice. There was, however, a great deal of uncertainty about how to do so and concern among managers about the impact on staff. There was no single common approach in use. The types of strategies evident across Careers Service Companies included:

- monitoring action plans. Six Careers Service Companies noted that this was done. In all six Careers Service Companies, the Area Managers were responsible, and in one there was also peer assessment of action plans;
- observation of interviews by managers. Six Careers Service Companies either currently had this in operation or had done so in the past. It was only systematically applied in one Company, where it was done as part of the appraisal system. In the others it was described as “rare”, “occasional”, “only if a problem” or “only if the practitioner wants it”. Nine Careers Service Companies had tried to encourage peer assessment of interviews, but this was not happening systematically in any of them;
- self review. Staff were expected to be responsible for reviewing their own work in all Careers Service Companies, but self review mechanisms were encouraged specifically in only five Careers Service Companies. In these Careers Service Companies, the strategies for self review included the use of the Vocational Guidance Interview Checklist and the comparison of individual client destinations with the careers guidance given; and
- other approaches such as sampling client records (one CSC) or using a client expectation questionnaire (two CSCs).

Careers Service Companies were generally tentative about the monitoring of professional practice. In a number of Careers Service Companies schemes to do this had been introduced but had been allowed to fall into abeyance, and it was common to make self review, peer assessment or managerial assessment of interviews voluntary. This was partly a recognition that many staff were anxious about this:

“I feel subjected to assessment by people who don’t have an alternative measure to judge me and my activities by.. I’m not sure, are there many other professions in the spotlight as much as a careers adviser? We’re often being assessed on an individual basis on performance in one interview. Maybe there’s a case that there should be more of a balance in terms of assessing careers advisers on a certain percentage of their work.”

Careers Adviser

There were also anxieties amongst managers about the impact on relationships in the office or in a small company of “inspecting” colleague’s work:

“Since our [evaluation questionnaire] responses are good across the board and I’m generally satisfied with the quality of staff there’s no need to rock the boat by targeting individuals in quality terms. The Careers Service’s a team, maybe even a family.”

Head of Service

Hesitation among senior and middle managers about the monitoring of professional practice was also related to a concern not to encroach unduly on the professional autonomy of staff, especially that of Careers Advisers:

“Some Area Managers are mortified at the thought of having to look at their staff’s action plans”

Head of Service

For many Careers Advisers, autonomy in their work was an essential element of the job. It was not only an aspect they enjoyed but also one which they perceived as necessary to enable them to operate effectively and to meet the needs of clients. We might note that schools also regarded a high level of autonomy on the part of Careers Advisers as essential to their ability to work effectively.

“I feel I can adjust the service, it’s lovely to be trusted to do what’s needed”

Careers Adviser

“We believe in the individual professional approach of the Careers Adviser and guidance teacher, you need to play to the strengths of individuals”

Head of Service

However, it is important to make a distinction between autonomy and accountability. We have noted in previous research with guidance staff in schools that many tended to conflate the concepts of accountability and autonomy and to think that in becoming more accountable in their work, they would inevitably lose some of their autonomy (Howieson and Semple, 1996). Similar views were expressed by a number of respondents in this research. We would suggest that it is possible to increase staff accountability without decreasing autonomy, but to achieve this it is necessary firstly to distinguish the two concepts and then to consider the impact on staff autonomy of any measures introduced to make them more accountable.

Apart from the concerns outlined above, Careers Service Companies faced a basic difficulty about which measures to use to assess the effectiveness of a careers interview. Action plans were easier to monitor, as were client records, since standards had been developed locally by Careers Service Company staff for each of them.

Identification of need

Identification of need is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks facing management and careers guidance practitioners but one that is fundamental to the achievement of effective outcomes for clients. Careers Service Companies and their Boards were increasingly being encouraged by the Scottish Executive to plan strategically on the basis of systematically identified need.

The process of the identification of need

We looked first at what is meant by “identification of need”. Firstly, is demand the same as need? How closely is it linked to marketing? Respondents agreed that demand was some indicator of need, but not sufficient in itself, and that it was necessary to consider the needs of those who were not demanding of services. Secondly, whose needs are being identified? In this section we refer both to individual clients and to groups of clients (by which we mean “teenage parents” or “applicants for university” or “Training Organisations with STN provision” or similar). Thirdly, on the surface the meaning of “identification” may seem obvious, but we suggest that it may have three aspects to it:

1. *Recognition of need*: at an individual level it may be seen in statements such as “she seems really confused about whether to go to college or into training”, while at a group level it might be “very few boys say they want to enter the service sector even though that’s where the jobs are”. In other words, there is a level of identification of need that is about recognising a presenting problem without necessarily analysing it.
2. *Analysis of need*: at this point there is a subsequent analysis of the underlying needs. At the individual level it might become clear that the individual client (described above) lacks personal or family experience of college and views training provision with suspicion. At a group level, the young men (described above) might show poor understanding of the local labour market, lack of interpersonal or communication skills or traditional family and peer aspirations. This is a level of identification of need that requires professional skills and (in the case of group need) may most appropriately be identified in conjunction with other agencies or partners.
3. *Assessment of need linked to provision*: individual or group need is related to careers guidance or other provision, and a choice of interventions made. If there is no suitable provision, then this becomes part of advocacy or part of the Careers Service Company development plan, perhaps in conjunction with other agencies or partners.

Subsequent to this there is a review to ensure that needs are met, and the process can start again.

We now consider who might identify needs and how this might be done.

At the *first stage* for individual clients: clients themselves (particularly in a self-referral system), CS staff, guidance teachers and parents/carers are most likely to recognise career needs. For groups of clients, school staff, EBP staff, other agencies and partners and Training Organisations will recognise career needs. It is important to note that the recognition of need is the first prompt to action, and in the case of individual clients will lead to access to Careers Service provision. This also works in reverse, with Careers Service staff recognising, in their clients’ needs, those needs that must be dealt with at second and third stages by other

agencies/partners (for example, homelessness or the need for educational support). The following practices are examples of ways in which the Careers Service recognises individual career needs:

- screening forms which set priorities for careers interviews;
- client forms requesting information or a contact;
- referrals from guidance or other teachers;
- use of school reports;
- referrals from Training Organisations or college staff;
- referrals from parents/carers or other family members; and
- referrals from other agencies such as social work.

Our analysis of screening forms suggests that a “matching model” of career choice underpins the recognition of career need. By that we mean that certain aspects of the client (for instance likely academic attainment or intended school leaving date) are matched against the clients’ career intentions (or sometimes the extent to which clients state their career ideas are developed).

It could be argued that enquiry or clinic interviews (short interviews without appointment or background information on the client) might be classified as a first stage recognition of need. But others might suggest that these interviews allow assessment of career need. It perhaps depends on the time available, the skills of the Careers Adviser and the communication level and self-awareness of the client. These short interviews will often operate according to a matching model, with more detailed probing of the match between individual factors and career intention.

It is at the second stage, *the analysis of need*, that the skills of a careers guidance specialist come most into play. There is the opportunity to gain understanding of the individual client’s situation and of his/her perceptions and influences. This can allow analysis of, for example:

- the client’s stage of career development;
- the client’s perceptions of the opportunity/structure;
- the client’s decision making skills;
- the client’s transition skills;
- the extent to which the client is supported in choices and transitions by others (especially family); and
- the range of influences on the client’s thinking.

Strategies to assess individual career need include a careers guidance interview, self report measures on career skills, interest guides, computer programmes and (possibly in some situations) group work. Opinion is divided on the extent to which group work can be used to assess career need. We suggest that there is a need for Careers Service Company staff to take more account of other theories of career choice and development in addition to the matching approach such as the developmental, opportunity/structure, social learning and community interaction models. This wider perspective would allow approaches to be more refined to the needs of clients to help them manage the choice process. Assessment of the career needs of groups of clients can be done through:

- the collation and analysis of, for example, screening forms, client request forms, referral requests from school staff;
- the use of statistics such as detailed destination figures and local economic and social data;
- structured reviews of need with other agencies/partners;
- reviews of the evidence from case work by Careers Advisers, Careers Assistants and CS managers;
- reference to research and evaluation evidence on client groups; and
- client surveys (although these sometimes identify demand rather than need).

At the third stage, *the assessment of need linked to provision*, different options are considered for individual and groups of clients. For individual clients, various strategies may be considered, for example:

- a one-off or series of contacts with careers guidance practitioners;
- the extension of the client's experience through visits or work experience;
- an action plan for information search;
- the use of more complex interest or aptitude guides;
- strategies from counselling or psychology disciplines (such as Personal Construct Psychology);
- action plans for advocacy with or referral to other agencies; and
- contacts with influential family members.

For groups of clients, an examination of provision against career-related needs should take place. Other needs may appropriately be discussed with other agencies/partners. Where career-related needs cannot be met within existing provision, managers and policy-makers review priorities in the attempt to re-direct resources or bid for new funding or staff.

It may seem that this discussion of the identification of career needs for individuals would lie more appropriately within our chapter on careers guidance issues. However, we have placed it here because one of the key tasks for management is to ensure both group and individual career needs are identified, and that individual needs are reviewed to draw out common elements such that resources are managed in the interests of all clients.

The identification of needs in practice

In all Careers Service Companies we found some evidence of the identification of need of both individual clients and groups of clients, and this identification was done by all grades of staff. Before describing some examples of this, it is important to note that while there were various instances where client needs were identified, there was little evidence of a systematic and comprehensive approach to the issue.

Our evidence suggests that first stage *recognition of career need* was commonly done for both individuals and groups of clients. Second stage *analysis* of individual career need was usually done via careers interviews, and Careers Advisers most commonly described the process in terms that resembled a matching model. Analysis of group needs through multi-agency consultations had become more common, particularly because of the policy imperative for social inclusion. However it was clear that social, economic and educational

needs were more likely to be identified in these discussions than were career needs. We have argued elsewhere in this report that career needs can both exist alongside social, economic and educational needs and also be present where these other needs do not exist. There is a need to develop the strategic identification of career needs.

We found a number of instances where the identification of need had led to changes in practice or to requests to other agencies for input. Careers Service Company staff had recognised:

- the needs of the less academic in high attaining schools;
- the need for support outwith Skillseekers for homeless young people, those on drugs and young offenders;
- the particular support needs of certain groups of unemployed young people;
- the needs of young people in care;
- the needs of disaffected winter school leavers who were leaving school at a point where the number of opportunities was low; and
- the need for provision for the most able young people at the higher end of intellectual impairment.

This shows that Careers Service Companies were conscious of the needs of the most vulnerable. But there were also instances where Careers Service Companies identified needs of other groups and were able to influence guidance interventions. Examples include: a recognition of the pressure on young people of the financial constraints that made “*getting career choice right the first time*” so desirable; and awareness that able young people should be helped to examine work-based training routes by challenging assumptions about higher education.

As we have noted, Careers Service Companies still required to develop an overall strategy for identifying the needs of individuals and of different client groups. We saw in practice several examples of strategies in use but these were usually on an ad hoc basis. Among the strategies in place or being considered were:

- consultation with the Education Business Partnership, education business groups and the Chamber of Commerce network;
- assessment of school leaver destination statistics;
- assessment of the key features of the local labour market;
- use of client post-codes to identify aspects of client group need arising from recognised deprivation;
- consideration of the comments received as part of their complaints system;
- inferring need from client uptake;
- use of client feedback and surveys;
- assessing the number of clients in a particular status, eg those dropping out of work; and
- the professional judgement of staff.

Our analysis of Careers Service Company responses showed the critical role played by partnership and networking:

“Through our collaboration with other agencies, we get a picture of the community trying to deliver services, and that can let us identify young people who are not demanding but have needs”

Head of Service

Schools identified the needs of individual pupils and (less commonly) groups of pupils to the Careers Adviser. Some of our respondents thought that schools were more inclined to recognise the needs of pupils who were unsuccessful rather than those who were successful ie whose career plans needed review because of poorer than expected academic attainment rather than higher than expected. However, although schools had a certain degree of involvement in identifying the needs of particular pupils, only a few identified the guidance needs of their pupils on a systematic basis or fed this information into Service Level Agreement negotiations.

LECs in most areas helped to identify the skill needs of an area and provided information on employment trends and skill shortages that could be used to identify priorities for employer visits. There was potential for LECs and the Careers Service Company to have a joint advocacy role, for example, in seeking changes to local public transport in a rural area.

The Careers Service Board could in theory use its own members to identify need. Employer representatives were considered particularly valuable. However there was a danger that the identification of need could be based too much on personal experience:

“The Board has little to contribute, sometimes they bring anecdotes that may have the germ of an idea”.

Head of Service

We return to a point made elsewhere in this report of the critical role practitioners and Area Managers have to play in feeding intelligence on client needs and operational issues into the strategic decision-making process. Some Boards and their members have more background knowledge than others but few of them are experienced in guidance issues. Intelligence from the field is essential to inform strategic decision-making. It is increasingly important that Careers Service Companies have communication strategies that enable the information that practitioners have about client need to be fed into the Company’s strategic planning.

A common response to our questions about the identification of need was to wonder to what extent young people were capable of identifying their own needs? Careers Service Company staff tended to question how far young people were able to identify their own needs and to use the CS appropriately as a result.

“Surveys are one approach, but you can’t really ask young people what their needs are.”

Head of Service

“Adolescents may be too immature to identify their own need.”

Head of Service

“Young people could have a periodic check up like a medical, it’s the only way to explain the need for guidance to a young person who doesn’t know what they need or want in life.”

Head of Service

This question is a key aspect of the debate on client contact systems. To what extent can the young client be trusted with control of the timing and nature of the Careers Service’s input to them? One of the reasons why Careers Service Companies were keen to develop work with parents was parents’ potential role in identifying their children’s need for guidance. Over the period of the research, computer guidance packages were being developed in England that

would help individual clients identify their own needs and the type of help they needed and at least one Scottish Careers Service Company was piloting this approach. While the technology may become increasingly available to enable individuals to take more responsibility for identifying their own needs and their guidance requirements, the future use of such systems is likely to depend in part on Careers Service Companies accepting that clients, especially young clients, are capable of doing so.

Asking employers and training providers what their needs were was thought to be more appropriate than asking young people. Nevertheless, some Careers Service Companies were unsure whether employers understood enough about the role of the Careers Service Company, or were sufficiently aware of transition issues to recognise their need and to ask for the right support.

Communications, management and decision-making

We considered the range and nature of the staff communication strategies within the seventeen Careers Service Companies and concluded that six Careers Service Companies put a high priority on internal communications in their policy and that this was followed through in practice. Nine put a medium priority in policy and it was reflected in practice, and the remaining two put a medium priority on internal communications but in practice the priority given to this was low.

Some examples of internal communication strategies included:

- “managing change” seminars and communication forums (sometimes organised by staff rather than managers) which helped staff anticipate and feel part of the changes and developments;
- newsletters to staff;
- weekly area meetings
- setting up internal Careers Service Company development groups on such topics as information, marketing, equal opportunities, special needs, parents etc;
- senior managers spending increased time in area offices. As one Head of Service commented:

“At a time of change it’s important to keep people informed, there’s a lot of room for misinformation especially if things are sensitive.”

Where communications were poor, staff commented that:

“We’re consulted too late, it’s like bringing new projects out of the hat. I suppose X [Head of Service] doesn’t want to worry us or get us too excited in case the project doesn’t come through.”

As noted earlier the increased speed of decision-making was thought to mitigate against keeping staff fully informed:

“Historically we’re a consultative service, but the new model of the Careers Company is forcing a pace of decision-making that doesn’t encourage consultation.”

Head of Service

Communications could be difficult in a Careers Service Company which covered a wide geographical area, and where it would, therefore, be expensive and time-consuming to meet more than once or twice a year. New developments in IT offered some measure of a solution

to the problems of physical isolation, and many Careers Service Companies were keen to encourage investment in the Internet.

One Careers Service Company already had its own website, and another had noted significant numbers of Email contacts to the careers office from school clients. This was in an area where schools were well equipped with IT for pupil use. It was clear that the extent to which the client group as a whole would use IT in careers work was very dependent on the extent of technology available in the school or in the community. This is clearly an area where changes may be expected fairly rapidly as initiatives to get computers into schools and community venues kick in. There was considerable concern among Careers Service Companies about how to keep up with developments, especially because of the ongoing costs involved. Several Careers Service Companies thought that Internet and other IT developments were areas that should be dealt with at a national level and that a national strategy should be developed for the Careers Service.

It is not only the client who may be physically remote from the careers office. Two Careers Service Companies already had staff working from home or from a community base with laptop computers and freephone facilities. The move towards freelance or self-employed Careers Advisers might still be in its infancy, but some Companies were thinking ahead, and were aware of the management issues this might involve. In the meantime, as Careers Service Companies increased the number of community based caller station Careers Advisers were already becoming more used to working individually without a full office support system.

Decision-making and reflective policy and practice

We asked Heads of Service and practitioners to describe how development ideas were created in the Company. Ten Careers Service Companies described the process as mostly “top-down”, with proposals coming from managers via the Board, or occasionally from the Board itself, followed by discussion with practitioners on the implications of the decision. Seven Careers Service Companies described a mixed model, with ideas coming from the full range of staff as well as being generated at management or Board level. In the mixed model there were examples of strategies being piloted at area and practitioner level, and tried and tested proposals being presented to the Board or senior managers for ratification. As might be expected, no Careers Service Company operated mainly on a “bottom-up” approach.

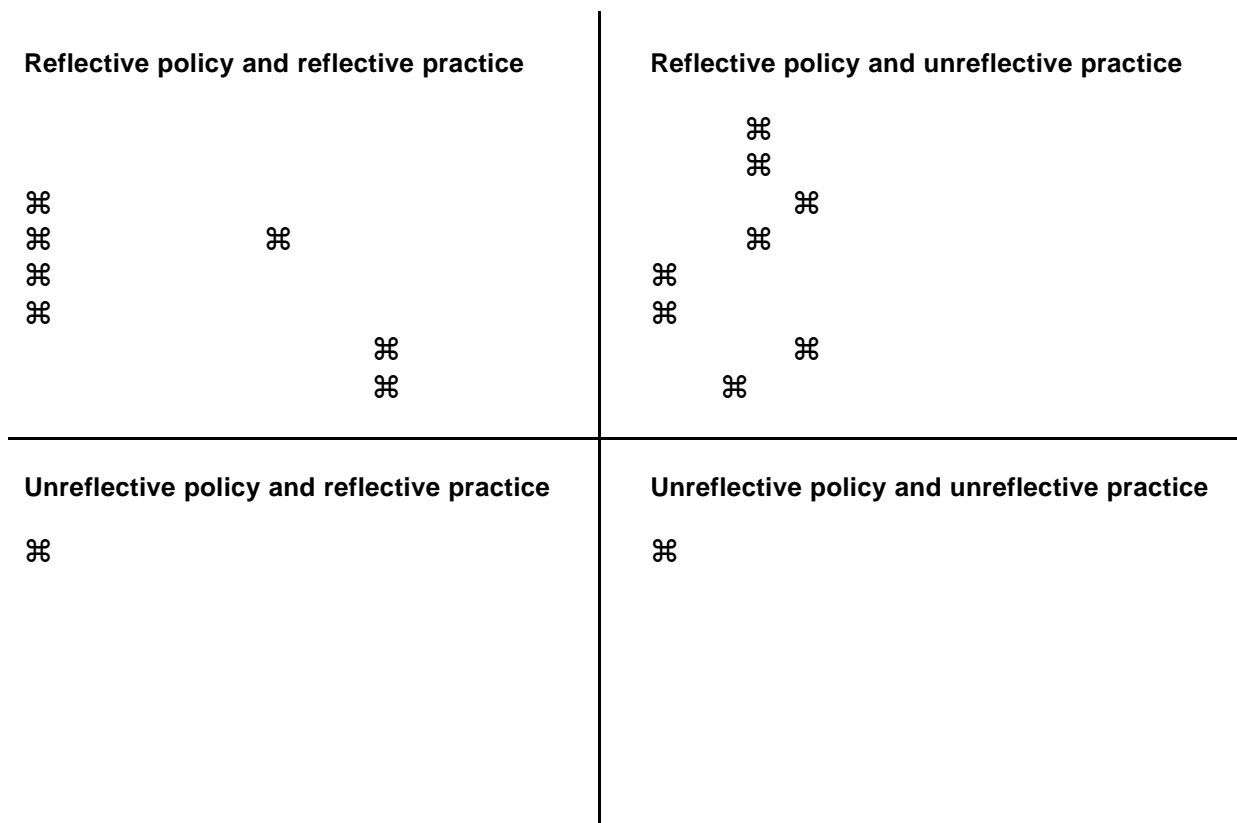
We wanted to consider the management of professional careers guidance issues as well as of business and strategic development aspects of Careers Service Companies. To do so we developed a classification of policy and practice from our observation of Careers Service Companies, taking into account the extent to which Careers Service Companies were reflective or unreflective in terms of their policy and practice. We defined these terms in the following way:

- *reflective policy*: grounded in theory and research and in the identification of need and the evaluation of practice; justified; flexible; related to needs and resources; integrated with wider community strategies.
- *reflective practice*: considered; justified on the basis of regular review and evaluation; grounded in theory, policy and identified need; able to identify practical implications of policy change and client response; able to feedback lessons from practice into policy.

- *unreflective policy*: mechanistic (eg in application of Guidance Arrangements framework); not grounded in theory, research, evaluation and practice.
- *unreflective practice*: unexamined; automatic; routine; not linked to policy, theory, research or evaluation; loosely linked to assessment of guidance needs.

The grid below gives an indication of our assessment of where the 17 Careers Service Companies might be located on these dimensions at the time of our fieldwork. We would emphasise that we would not be too rigid in our classification of Careers Service Companies. One obvious difficulty was that we had to make an assessment of practice through the Head of Service’s perspectives in the three Careers Service Companies which had no practitioner respondent. Moreover, Careers Service Companies were changing as we worked with them and most would be likely to change their position on the grid. These changes were likely to move the majority of Careers Service Companies towards the reflective policy and practice segment. Our location of Careers Service Companies on the grid can only be tentative. But we suggest that these two dimensions might be a useful self review tool for Careers Service Companies to help ensure that professional careers guidance issues receive appropriate attention.

Classification of Careers Services Companies in relation to their policy and practice



We would make two observations on this grid. Firstly, it reflects our view that the new Careers Service Companies had developed considerably in business and strategic development aspects, but less so in careers guidance issues. Secondly, we were interested to note that the Companies we had classified as having reflective policy and practice were virtually identical with the Careers Service Companies which had the mixed model

(described above) for developing ideas in the Company. We are not sure which is the chicken and which the egg, but reflective policy and practice appears to exist alongside proactive policy development which is generated from both practitioners and senior managers (and sometimes also the Board).

Changed roles and skills of staff

We expected that the most noticeable impact of the changes on staff roles would be seen in the post of Head of Service, and indeed many significant changes had taken place at this level. However, the post in which most respondents identified major changes was that of Area Manager. This may have been because Heads of Service, Careers Advisers and Careers Assistants worked directly with area managers and all were therefore able to observe Area Managers' changes in responsibilities. But it may also be because the greatest responsibility for linking strategic and operational issues seemed to lie at the level of this post.

We now describe the ways in which roles of staff and the skills required of them had changed as a result of the changed management of the Careers Service. Some changes had occurred by design, such as re-designation of job descriptions: others had emerged as different demands had been made of staff and the Companies.

Heads of Service had had to develop expertise in handling financial, legal, personnel and estate management matters, particularly in those Careers Service Companies that were Companies limited by guarantee. Board members had been able to help to a certain extent and some Careers Service Companies on the limited company model had appointed staff with accountancy skills. Networking, marketing and customer care activities had become more important, as had financial toughness, project planning, general commercial awareness and bid-writing skills. Each was thought to require further development. In small Companies, the situation of Heads of Service who carried a client caseload was particularly difficult, as they had to cope with the changes required of Heads of Service, of Area Managers and of Careers Advisers.

Area Managers were seen as being the key link between strategic and operational issues, as we have reported. Some Area Managers, whose Careers Service Companies dealt with more than one local authority, carried considerable responsibility for negotiating, networking, marketing and identifying needs with their local authority, though they did receive a good deal of support from senior managers in this.

In Careers Service Companies where senior managers had protected middle management from the most traumatic of the changes, it appeared that Area Managers were slower to make the transition to the new demands. These increased demands on Area Managers included:

- co-ordination of groups, managing a small budget, fund-raising (including identification of possible revenue-earning activities), initiative development and taking forward identified needs;
- managing variation within the area while ensuring staff met the required targets, particularly with respect to employer work;
- developing a commercial attitude in staff;
- staff review, identification of training needs and strategies to encourage staff to apply training within the workplace;

- monitoring of statistics and quality assurance; and
- ensuring that strategic policy and operational delivery informed each other through the identification of client and area need.

At the same time as these demands were being increasingly made of Area Managers, many Careers Service Companies were “de-layering” their organisation and removing the post of Senior Careers Adviser, a post that had effectively functioned as a depute or back-up to the Area Manager.

Careers Advisers were thought to have seen fewer changes in their work than had other grades of staff. Becoming more accountable through having to meet targets was the most noticeable difference. Some respondents also pointed to a culture change that was requiring Careers Advisers to be more proactive in their work. However, it was Careers Advisers who were thought to need most skill development and attitude change. This perhaps reflects our observation that up to this point most change had happened at Company level in the development of a business orientation, and that the changes had impacted least on professional careers guidance issues.

The development needs of Careers Advisers included:

- to develop a more conscious rationale for their professional work and to be able to justify their activities on this basis;
- to develop assertiveness skills eg to say “no” to schools when necessary;
- to work co-operatively with schools in the design and review of careers education provision, and to negotiate with school colleagues an appropriate role for the Careers Adviser in careers education;
- to be flexible enough in interpersonal skills to make formal presentations to other agencies, to develop good working partnerships in informal situations, and to be able to facilitate informal group work with the most vulnerable clients;
- to identify the needs of individuals and groups of clients and appreciate their role as the key marketing link to the Careers Service Company on behalf of the client;
- to review the impact of their work in both qualitative and quantitative terms and to understand the implications of statistics;
- to think strategically when reviewing their professional work; and
- to develop commercial awareness and keep their eyes open for income-generating opportunities.

We would suggest that the most effective Careers Advisers would have shown most of these skills in the past. However, the particular emphasis coming through in the research possibly results from the realisation that poor professional practice is more exposed in Careers Service Companies where staff review, targets and increased customer feedback are in place. The effective Careers Adviser had always been the “antennae” of the Careers Service, picking up quickly on client need and on issues at the interface between education, training and work. “A Guidance Framework” encouraged Careers Service Boards to set strategic priorities based on identified need and all grades of staff needed to contribute to this. Our respondents suggested that many Careers Advisers required training in order to be able to do this.

A new expectation for careers advisers was that they should have sufficient commercial acumen to identify financial opportunities.

It was clear that the move towards this more “business-like” approach was seen by some Careers Service Company staff, especially Careers Advisers, as having deflected attention from “guidance” issues:

“A weakness in the current situation is that we often talk about projects, plans etc when really what we need to talk about are ethics, strategies, interviewing techniques and professional issues.”

Careers Adviser

Changes had taken place in the roles of **Careers Assistants**. In some areas, their role had been extended to deliver group work to unemployed clients or to provide placing services to pupils on school premises. One Careers Service Company had given Careers Assistants the responsibility for liaison with employers and Training Organisations, creating a technician grade of staff who would eventually be qualified to VQ level 3 in guidance. This left the rationale for Careers Advisers’ labour market work based primarily on professional development. Another Careers Service Company planned that Careers Assistants would take over much of the routine work of Careers Advisers with unemployed young people.

One Careers Service Company had re-graded its Senior Careers Assistants, changing their role so that they deputised for Area Managers and were largely responsible for the area’s work with unemployed clients.

Development of ICT skills was likely to be needed across all Careers Service Company staff. This included the skills needed to access the Internet and to design web-sites (or as a minimum, an understanding of how information and advice might be conveyed using this medium).

Variation within and across Careers Service Companies

One of the key aspects of the research brief was to identify the extent of variation across Careers Service Companies in Scotland. We have already addressed a number of aspects of variation in previous chapters. In this section, we focus specifically on variations across Careers Service Companies in philosophy, policy and professional practice and in tackling management issues.

Careers Service Company staff, both Heads of Service and practitioners, responded in differing ways to our questions about variation in policy and practice within their Careers Service Company. Some were defensive, emphasising that they were working to eliminate variations, to ensure standardisation. Others, especially those working in Careers Service Companies that encompassed wide differences in communities, spoke of variation as either inevitable or commendable.

Our own view, which underpins our analysis in this section, is that variation in itself is neither good nor bad. The issue is whether it is appropriate or not. This depends on the extent to which variation is based on systematic identification of client need and whether it delivers consistency in the quality of *outcomes* for clients, rather than being focused on the consistency of *inputs*.

We found evidence of variation based on client need in a number of situations. In other situations, variations were the result of a deliberate policy to give different area offices the responsibility for development work on a topic of interest to individuals and relevant to the Company. In one Careers Service Company, for example, one area had particular interests in

work with travelling people, another in work with adults, another with special needs and the fourth with ICT. This was one way to ensure a level of autonomy that developed policy and professional practice within the context of an overall company plan.

However, we also found a lack of variation where client need was different. Some of this variation appeared to arise from an individual member of staff's preferred way of working or from how different areas within a Careers Service Company had decided to work. This included the extent to which Careers Advisers in an area delivered the service through group work, the priorities they chose for employer visits or the particular approach they took to school interviewing systems. Other variations seemed to be based on what suited organisational convenience, most obviously of schools and Careers Service Companies themselves, rather than the careers guidance needs of clients or client groups.

The varying geography of Scotland was a source of variation but the effect was not as straightforward as might be first expected. The majority of Careers Service Companies had rural areas to cover although the problem was more significant for some who faced a major challenge to ensure equality of access across rural and island areas. But it could not be assumed that the delivery of services in an urban area was less complex: reaching clients in peripheral housing estates with high numbers of disaffected clients was equally difficult. Nor were rural areas exempt from having pockets of disaffection where physical distance and psychological isolation combined to create major difficulties for young people and those advising them. Each Careers Service Company could produce a convincing argument why the special problems of its area required extra funding and attention.

Variation in aims and philosophy across Careers Service Companies

Mission statements across Careers Service Companies in Scotland showed very few differences in the stated aims and philosophies and so we were interested in trying to identify the particular aspects that a Company might give priority to within its overall mission statement.

To get a flavour of Companies' priorities, we asked Heads of Service and Careers Advisers to compare their own Careers Service Company with others. We were struck by the difficulty that most found in doing this. With the possible exception of the island services whose Heads of Service could talk knowledgeably about the differences in their own approaches, respondents commented that they knew little about what other Companies were doing. Some of this was the result of commercial sensitivity resulting from the bid process, but several questioned how they could know this since they thought no-one was in a position to "compare and contrast" the Scottish Careers Service Companies. Previously the Careers Service Inspectors had been able to do so through the regular inspections they had carried out. The Inspectors were now operating as external auditors for SQMS but at this point not all Careers Service Companies had been through this process. There were also thought to be insufficient opportunities for policy and practice experiences to be exchanged. Several partnerships across Careers Service Companies had been formed, but these were the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, Careers Service Companies worked in isolation from each other. It was perhaps inevitable that Careers Service Companies would be focused quite closely on their own operations at early stages of the contract period.

When we analysed Company documentation, bid details, business activity rates and interview responses, we were able to identify different emphases in philosophy or approach. It is important to note that all companies had similar aims, for example, all listed “equal opportunities” as an aim. However some Careers Service Companies put strong emphasis on a particular point, for example, two Careers Service Companies had a particular focus on race and special needs issues within the overall equal opportunities aim. Similarly, lifelong learning was a key driver for one Careers Service Company, independent of the extent to which the Company was involved in adult guidance. Another clarified the key Company aim as:

“To be recognised as the key provider of guidance in this area, that’s why we’ve appointed a marketing manager.”

Head of Service

“The mission statement is about providing a service to everyone in x [names the CSC], Careers Services should be fully funded for all-age guidance.”

Head of Service

Other Careers Service Companies showed different emphases. Some were focused on entry to employment and economic outcomes for young clients:

“Most people want a decent living and the Careers Service should be making a small contribution to that.”

Head of Service

“The basic thing is to help move young people into the right jobs and to help them to stay in jobs”

Head of Service

Perhaps a slightly different underlying philosophy was:

“Careers Advisers should be helping young people to get into something valuable for the community that makes them contributing members of society.”

Careers Adviser

Another identifying feature of some Companies was an emphasis on education/industry liaison (and the work of the Education Business Partnership) as central to both practice and policy in careers guidance.

A common aim was to maximise contact with clients, but this was expressed (and met) in different ways. For some Careers Service Companies, face to face contact was the most obvious way:

“We’re trying to maximise the number of staff in face to face contact with clients”

Head of Service

“The ideal is, of course, 100% penetration rate.”

Head of Service

The individual interview was the key method of delivery of vocational guidance for many:

“The individual interview will still be strongly valued. If the Careers Service were to be a totally private organisation it’s the individual interview clients would pay for because they want that personal support and advice. It’s staggering how low the penetration rate is in X [names another CSC]. If Careers Advisers are not there to interview and give advice, what are they there for? They are withholding the expertise of Careers Advisers from young people.”

Careers Adviser

Another view, at the other end of the spectrum on penetration rates and interviewing, was:

“Vocational development is a normal healthy process. If you have careers education, good information and the chance of work experience you don’t necessarily need a one-to-one input. If we don’t accept that then why are we doing what we are doing? The philosophy of x [names careers company] is that many don’t need a one-to-one interview”.

Head of Service

Maximising contact outwith the school setting was tackled in contrasting ways by Careers Service Companies who had put a particular emphasis on this as a Company aim. One Company had increased the number of offices and caller stations to bring staff as close to customers as possible and to ensure that *“client contact is within their own communities”*. Two had centralised and reduced the number of offices, adding caller stations, and in one case a freephone line, to provide local access.

There was little variation across Companies in what they foresaw as challenges and future development areas. Developments in adult guidance, in partnership with others, and in information technology were commonly seen as important. Developments to increase integration and partnerships with other Careers Service Companies and local community agencies were envisaged.

Variation in provision and practice within Careers Service Companies

Our analysis of internal variation suggests that the majority of Careers Service Companies had some or considerable variation in their delivery (nine: some; five: considerable). The remaining three showed little variation. Most practitioners identified higher levels of variation in delivery than did Heads of Service.

The development of procedures and systems for SQMS had had the effect of standardising some aspects of delivery across all client groups. Standardisation between area teams was favoured by managers in some Careers Service Companies because it allowed staff to be more transferable across areas, made quality assurance and administration easier and stopped too much energy being used on “reinventing the wheel”. However, it was also thought to reduce feelings of ownership and to make it more difficult to manage and motivate staff.

The completion of action plans was the aspect of professional work most likely to be the subject of attempts at standardisation. An aspect of variation that was commonly criticised was where areas and individuals ignored the Careers Service Companies corporate house-style when producing promotional material or in individual communications with clients.

Variation in the service to schools

Most Careers Advisers reported variations in approaches to school work, comparing themselves to others, and their own work in one school to that in another, and they took a mainly positive view of it. For some, variation was related to their professional autonomy which, as we discussed earlier, was viewed as essential to respond to client need. In other cases, variation arose from the individual Careers Adviser’s interests and skills:

“The nature of what’s done in schools depends on who is doing it.”

Careers Adviser

Nevertheless, while the Careers Adviser’s personality and approach might lead to variation in work in individual schools, the school’s approach was thought by Careers Advisers to be a

more significant factor in explaining school level variation. Careers Service Companies' input often varied across schools within their Company as a result of a number of factors which might include:

- the level of efficiency of the school administration and guidance systems, particularly concerning the practical organisation of interview and group sessions;
- the extent, timing and quality of careers education;
- the availability of ICT in schools for pupils and staff;
- changes in school staff year by year;
- the location of the school;
- the level of formality in school relationships; and
- the extent to which schools were proactive in their use of the Service Level Agreement to initiate change.

Careers Advisers, in particular, tended to give considerable emphasis to the role of the schools when accounting for variation. But we would suggest that they underestimated the impact of the Careers Adviser in the individual school, especially in stimulating appropriate demand for interviews and for other items on the Careers Service menu.

Although Education Departments had different policies and development plans, these were of very limited significance compared to school level factors in explaining variation in Careers Service Company work across schools. Where a Careers Service Company worked with multiple local authorities, it was their different policies on community and economic development and on deprivation that caused variation in Careers Service work rather than their policies on education. This may perhaps be a sign of the changing Careers Service-local authority relationship we noted earlier in the report.

Variation in the service to post school clients

We had expected that some aspects of the service to post-school clients, such as the review of Line 9 registrants (ie those covered by the guarantee of training) and benefit-related issues, would require to be standardised in order to link to other agencies. But variations in work with post-school clients and the labour market were even more commonly reported than variations in work with schools. Careers Service Company staff appeared to have a different attitude to variation in post-school work than school work, being more critical of the former. Variation in school work attracted less criticism, more an acceptance or kind of resignation that this was the nature of school work.

Variation in post-school work within Careers Service Companies included:

- differences in the respective duties and responsibilities of Careers Assistants and Careers Advisers in terms of work with vacancies and with the unemployed. Size of office was one reason: in smaller offices there were less clearly demarcated duties.
- differences in the extent of, and approach to, employer work. Reasons included the nature and buoyancy of the local labour market, the number of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the locality; the travel-to-work pattern; and the size of the unemployed register.
- different methods of contacting young people within the Careers Service Company area on the unemployed register. The presence of rural and outlying communities affected this.

For example, more work was done by telephone when clients lived some distance from the office, or where public transport was limited.

Guidance management information

All Careers Service Companies put a great deal of time and effort into recording their activities but there is considerable scope to develop their use of this and other data to gain a better understanding of the pattern of usage and non-usage of its services, to identify needs and to plan provision. This is what we mean when we refer to “guidance management information”. For example, guidance management information in relation to school work might include data on:

- the types of pupils who are using the Careers Service in relation to characteristics such as gender, attainment and family background;
- the types of pupils who are not using the Careers Service in relation to the same characteristics;
- the factors that tend to trigger use of the Careers Service;
- the types of pupils who get repeat interviews;
- the reasons for repeat interviews;
- the characteristics of individuals who opt to use different items on the Careers Service menu; and
- the timing of self-referral and how this relates to pupil characteristics.

Careers Service Companies already have some of this information. For example, the reasons clients have repeat interviews will be noted in their records, but the information is often not extracted and used more generally to build up a picture of how and why clients are using the service or to systematically identify who is not. Some background information on individuals, especially of non-users, would need to be collected from other sources. In the school context, Careers Service Companies should be able to negotiate with schools to get information on all pupils which they can then use to monitor who has contact with the Careers Service and who does not. In several Careers Service Companies, the IT systems being introduced would enable them to handle this sort of data from schools. We suggest that, in addition to administrative requirements, careers guidance management information requirements need to be taken into account when selecting an appropriate IT system.

CHAPTER 13

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CAREERS SERVICE

Introduction

Throughout this report we have discussed various issues relating to the effectiveness of the Careers Service but in this chapter we focus directly on effectiveness and how it might be assessed. We start by defining what we mean by an effective Careers Service and then consider issues related to the role and situation of the Careers Service that need to be taken into account when thinking about its effectiveness. We go on to outline the main approaches to measuring effectiveness that are possible and discuss some of the limitations or difficulties associated with each. We then consider the current approaches that are currently being used by the Careers Service and consider their adequacy. In the final section, we outline the approaches that we have developed to measuring the effectiveness of the Careers Service as part of this research.

It is important to note that we have described what constitutes an effective Careers Service in its delivery of careers guidance and not how effective the Careers Service is within its existing resources. When we have commented in this report on aspects of delivery where there is scope for development, we have noted where this is likely to require additional resources.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

- The research brief treated impact, utility and effectiveness as three separate measures but we concluded that impact and utility are actually components of effectiveness.
- The research considered effectiveness in relation to the extent to which provision meets clients' needs rather than whether Careers Service Companies (CSC) were operating effectively within their existing resources.
- We defined effectiveness as “does the existence of the Careers Service make a positive difference to clients and to the community”.
- There are particular issues in assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service in Scotland arising from its conflicting objectives; limited control over its work and its dependence on the work of other agencies for successful outcomes.
- Different approaches to assessing the effectiveness of a careers guidance service are possible: quantitative monitoring of activities; client and stakeholder feedback; learning outcomes measures; longitudinal measures of impact; internal professional review; and external review. There are a number of limitations or difficulties associated with each.
- The systematic identification of need is a pre-requisite to the development of effective provision but, as discussed in Chapter 12, the research found little evidence of a systematic approach.
- The research found that the assessment of the effectiveness of the Careers Service in Scotland was mainly through quantitative measures of activity; SQMS and customer/stakeholder feedback. There was limited internal review of professional practice. Several Careers Service Companies had commissioned external reviews, the impact of such reviews was varied. Learning outcomes measures were rarely used.

- These approaches are inadequate, they do not sufficiently assess the quality of careers guidance, and are not carried out on a common and systematic basis across Scotland. Minimum standards of service to clients cannot be guaranteed.
- The research has developed two approaches to assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service: one model is “How Good is Our Careers Service At..” and the other is a set of effectiveness descriptors covering the main areas of Careers Service work.
- Both approaches are at an early stage of development and now require further work and piloting in conjunction with Careers Service Companies.
- In developing these two approaches, we have identified a number of key attributes of effectiveness and these are listed in full.

DISCUSSION

An effective Careers Service: a definition

The research brief for this project separated the aspects to be measured into three headings - impact, utility and effectiveness - and in our first draft of measures we tried to define what these might mean in practice. Our work on draft measures convinced us that both impact and utility were, in fact, part of effectiveness.

We have defined effectiveness in terms of “*Does the existence of the Careers Service make a positive difference to clients and to the community?*” This requires that:

- Careers Service provision is based on identified career need;
- Careers Service provision helps young people develop lifelong career management skills and supports them in shorter-term career decision-making;
- clients are able to make appropriate career decisions taking the labour market into account, and are aware of, and able to assess the suitability of, educational and training opportunities;
- clients’ ideas and practices are challenged;
- there is ownership of decisions by clients;
- clients express a readiness to use the Careers Service in the future if appropriate;
- the Careers Service acts at the interface between education and work to promote information exchange, shares and challenges perceptions and encourages the development of practical partnerships across agencies, sectors and viewpoints.

For a Careers Service to achieve this effectiveness, its provision has to be *appropriate* and others must be *aware of it, able to access it, and willing to use it*. We expand on this below.

Appropriate CS provision - at the correct level, at the appropriate time(s) for different clients

Aspects of this include:

- the ability to respond flexibly to demand within an appropriate timescale;
- clients perceive the Careers Service to be useful to them or to others;
- other agencies perceive the Careers Service to be useful to them or others;
- the nature of Careers Service work is appropriate to client needs and in line with national requirements for the Careers Service;

- coverage is sufficient to meet demand;
- careers information provision meets clients' needs.

Clients' and stakeholders' awareness, access to and usage of Careers Service provision

Aspects of this include:

- current and potential clients, customers and relevant agencies are aware of the existence of the Careers Service and its role and functions;
- individuals and agencies appropriately access or work with the Careers Service.
- CS usage is primarily client-driven;
- CS interventions for advocacy effect change for clients and customers.

The effectiveness of the Careers Service: some issues

We recognise, as do all those involved in the careers guidance field, how difficult a task it is to measure the effectiveness of careers guidance and of Careers Service work. There are issues, for example, about what is to be measured, what constitutes success, whether it is possible to establish cause and effect and how to take account of other intervening factors. In the next section we describe some of the possible approaches to measuring effectiveness and the limitations or difficulties of each. But we start in this section by considering some specific issues in assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service.

As we have discussed in Chapter 3, the Careers Service has to work to conflicting agendas. This creates a fundamental problem in thinking about its effectiveness. Which of the (sometimes conflicting) objectives is it to be measured against? We have also noted the different expectations of the Careers Service's various client groups at a number of points in this report. There were clearly different perceptions of what was important amongst different stakeholders and how they judged the effectiveness of Careers Service work. Some schools, for example, valued the Careers Adviser who "fitted in" to the school system, and would be unlikely to view as effective a Careers Adviser who challenged the school's system. Some LEC representatives judged the Careers Service by its advocacy of the work-based route:

"An effective Careers Service will... be impartial but try to encourage young people to enter employment with training in it."

LEC representative

The existence of overlapping and conflicting objectives for the Careers Service compromises firstly, the ability of Careers Service Companies to work effectively and secondly, the design of a sensible system of effectiveness measures. While it is possible to design valid and reliable measures for individual objectives, when taken as a whole some of the measures are likely to be contradictory. We would therefore note that this applies to the approaches that we have developed and which we discuss later in this chapter.

A second type of issue is that much of the Careers Service's work is not wholly within its control. The Careers Service has to work in partnership with others. This raises two issues: firstly how is the specific effect of the Careers Service to be separated out and measured; and secondly it means that the Careers Service is (at least partly) dependent for successful measurable outcomes on the work of others, for example schools.

The effectiveness of Careers Service work is also dependent on other factors outwith its control such as local labour market conditions and the circumstances of its client group. Careers Service guidance to young people can be supported or undermined by the advice and involvement of the informal network of advisers such as parents, family members, teachers and others influential with each individual. As one Careers Adviser said:

“You can have the same quality of careers guidance given to two clients but have different outcomes because one young person’s got more home and school support than the other.”

Is it fair to judge the work of Careers Service Companies when so many factors are outwith its control? A number of our interviewees made this point. However, there is another side to this. The truth is that, fair or not, the Careers Service is already measured informally and anecdotally on this basis, and its image, impact and credibility affected: the Careers Service has to work within the realities of the situation. Secondly, some interviewees made the point that it was the Careers Service’s job to persuade other partners to support its work, and it also was its job to work with young people in the context of their informal network of advisers. It was, therefore, fair to judge the Careers Service in such a way.

“The reason a young person didn’t follow the Careers Service’s advice may be to do with their degree of awareness or other influences... or it may be the Careers Service’s fault for not working enough with the other influences or for not explaining the expectations of the labour market.”

Head of Service

General approaches to measuring the effectiveness of performance

A number of general approaches can be identified which we outline below, considering their advantages and disadvantages (eg see Killeen and Kidd, 1992; Killeen, 1996). We give a brief overview and then describe each of them in more detail.

Quantitative monitoring of activities (or process measures) answers factual questions such as: “how many people, of what kind, had which type of input, when and how often?” This is most commonly a short-term measure, often gathered within a financial or school year.

Client and stakeholder feedback (or customer satisfaction measures) seek to answer the question: “how was it for you?” Perceptions of the Careers Service’s performance, are used to get the views of users (or potential users) of the Careers Service. This may be both a short-term or long-term measure.

Learning outcomes measures operate primarily in the short-term. They try to identify gains in knowledge and understanding or changes in behaviour within a short-term period (usually no longer than about a year, though usually much shorter). They look for “harder” evidence than “what clients say” about the impact of careers interventions. An example would be the issue of a “before and after” questionnaire on knowledge and understanding of the local labour market to those attending a group discussion on the subject.

Longitudinal measures of impact are obviously long-term, seeking to identify long-term economic, social and behavioural outcomes following careers education and guidance.

Internal professional review and external review. These could be either long or short term, but are characterised, in principle, by being better able to assess performance according to professional or other standards.

We now describe each of these approaches, outlining their positive and negative features.

Quantitative monitoring of activities

Quantitative monitoring of work activities is one of the simplest approaches. Such information can answer questions such as “how many, how often, when, who?” It can describe **what** happens to a certain extent, but not **how well** it happens. Measuring activity is relatively easy but provides a measure of input rather than output or outcome.

Quantitative monitoring of work activities is a requirement of the Scottish Executive contract.

A quantitative measure of activity can be combined with funding information and result in a unit cost figure for example, the SE and Careers Service Companies currently use Efficiency Indicators that provide unit costs for the various Careers Service activities. This approach, however, is more a measure of efficiency than effectiveness. There are also issues about whether such an approach can be used to make comparisons across Careers Service Companies. At its most basic it requires that statistics be collected on a similar basis, but we are not confident that this is the case for some Careers Service statistics. One example is the different way Careers Service Companies recorded work with core clients when that work was resourced from non-core funding. Moreover, a valid comparison depends on all aspects related to the activity in question “being equal” ie the same sort of client group, the same sort of locations and so on.

While quantitative monitoring has several limitations as a way of directly measuring effectiveness, it can provide valuable careers guidance management information that is necessary to effective provision. It is valuable to collect information on, for example, how many and what sort of clients have more than one interview, how many people self refer to the Careers Service, which sort of individuals do so and when does this tend to happen and so on? However, Careers Service Companies are not required to collect this type of information about their activities and in our experience they rarely did so.

Client and stakeholder feedback

Client and stakeholder feedback is another approach to assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service and one that has been widely implemented in recent years. The Scottish Executive issued guidance to Careers Service Companies in 1998 on measuring customer satisfaction but did not specify a particular format for this. As part of SQMS audits client and stakeholder feedback is sought, and Careers Service Boards have encouraged development in this area.

Customer feedback is typically sought via customer/client satisfaction surveys and focus groups and offers a measure of clients’ perceptions of the appropriateness and value of the service to their perceived needs.

However, while it is of the greatest importance to gather the views of users (and non-users) of the service, there are a number of cautions that have to be borne in mind. Client expectations and perceptions of the Careers Service’s functions will have an impact on their response. For example, clients who think a Careers Adviser should tell them what career would be best for them or who do not expect their ideas or practices to be challenged are likely to be more negative about the Careers Service’s provision (Howieson *et al*, 2000).

Apart from clients' awareness and knowledge of the role of the Careers Service, their awareness of their own needs is another factor that can impact on the value of client feedback. Some may not be particularly aware of their careers guidance needs.

The mechanics of how client opinion is gathered are critical. There is evidence that clients' opinion of Careers Service activities is likely to be affected by how soon after the event their opinion is sought: opinion is generally more positive soon afterwards than after a number of months. Obviously the questions asked of clients is a critical matter. In this research we have seen the importance of asking specific questions on the different aspects of Careers Service input in order to elicit anything more than superficial statements on usefulness and helpfulness. The use of more detailed specific questions is particularly important if the results are to be used to improve services.

Finally, it is often more difficult to obtain the views of non-users of the Careers Service but the views of these individuals can be particularly useful.

Learning outcomes measures

Learning outcomes measures take a more short-term approach to assessing the effectiveness of Careers Service inputs. They seek to ask what changes have happened in the client's knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour as a result of Careers Service work. They may include "before and after" measures of attitudes and perceptions linked to specific Careers Service interventions. Some of these may be locally designed, while others may be produced by research organisations. One example of the latter is the "Profile of Guidance Outcomes" (POGO) (Morris *et al*, 1999) produced by NFER as a by-product of a range of careers education and guidance research studies. This is normed on young people, and a small number of Careers Service Companies towards the end of our research were examining its potential as a measure of learning outcomes.

Other learning outcomes measures may be behavioural. For example, do young people follow through the recommendations of their careers action plan? Following information sessions by a Careers Adviser, do young people apply at the appropriate time for opportunities, or do they actually use the careers computer or library as suggested?

Researchers have developed other instruments that have the potential to measure changes in perceptions and attitudes, such as career maturity tests. Another approach is using personal characterisations (a technique developed as part of Personal Construct Psychology) as a guidance tool and possibly as a measure of individual change. There is some interest in this amongst a number of practitioners and researchers in Scotland.

Longitudinal measures

Some measures of the economic and social outcomes of careers guidance can only be taken in the long term but this is not an easy task. There are a number of methodological difficulties (Killeen *et al*, 1992; 1999):

- demonstrating causality between the Careers Service's input and the subsequent decisions and behaviours of individuals;
- the effects of careers guidance on economic outcomes are unlikely to be visible for some time;

- the longer the time that passes, the more other factors come into play and so there is a need to control for other variables that might have affected individual's decisions;
- if the purpose of careers guidance is to help individuals to clarify their own goals and take appropriate action, then it is difficult to find appropriate standardised criteria against which to evaluate the outcomes, as individual goals will be different; and
- controlled trials (which are the best way of separating out effects from mere consequences) are difficult to organise over longer periods as careers guidance cannot indefinitely be withheld from a control group.

There may also be a lack of realism about the extent of social and economic effects that might reasonably be expected from the current levels of interventions that the Careers Service is able to make with individuals. This lack of realism was evident in some of our interviews:

“The economy will stand and fall by what goes on between people’s ears, and guidance can help sort that out.”

LEC representative on CS Board

and

“An effective Careers Service should be measured by the extent to which disaffected young people get employment.”

Board Chair

Specially designed longitudinal studies of the effect of careers education and guidance are rare, but those such as a 30 year study in the US of the relationship between the retention and use of career skills and career satisfaction have produced definite findings (Jepsen, 1999).

In Britain existing longitudinal surveys such as the Youth Cohort Study (YCS) and the Scottish School Leavers' Survey (SSLS) can provide some data of value although they were not designed to measure the impact of careers guidance interventions. They have been used to analyse careers education and guidance issues, including the impact of careers education and guidance (Howieson *et al*, 1993; Howieson & Croxford, 1996).

Longitudinal studies are expensive and generally outwith the resources of Careers Companies working alone, but one way forward may be to link Careers Service Companies with researchers for properly funded extended studies. Another is to add appropriate questions to existing surveys such as the SSLS to collect relevant data.

As part of this research we incorporated a longitudinal element by designing two sweeps of the cohort of young people by having two contacts, with a year between the first and second sweep. In the first survey, we were able to identify careers skills outcomes relating to inputs at stage one (as described in Chapter 5). But we were unable at the second survey to find any significant outcomes related to inputs at stage one and stage two. There are likely to be several explanations for this. The time-scale may have been too short, certainly it was too short for most social, economic or behavioural outcomes to be apparent. The sample size limited the analysis that was possible and we were not able to carry out some of the modelling that we had planned because of the sample size. We also found that even the sophisticated modelling techniques that we used were not able to cope with the complexity of the analysis that was sometimes required. It may also be the case that the questions used were not sufficient to identify outcomes. This experience illustrates some of the difficulties involved in the design of longitudinal studies.

Internal professional review

Members of staff of all grades each have the potential to reflect on practice and consider the extent to which their own work and that of the service is effective. The individual member of staff operating as a “reflective practitioner” might use diaries, logs, and self-review exercises. It was clear from our interviews with Careers Service Company staff that while most were able to comment on aspects of effective practice some were more reflective than others. This applied across all grades of staff.

There will be increased pressure on practitioners to reflect on effectiveness if chartered status is awarded to the Institute of Careers Guidance. If this happens, careers guidance practitioners would have to monitor the effectiveness of their own work more strictly as part of the continuous professional development required to retain their chartered status.

In addition to developing the individual’s performance, reflection by individual members of staff can also be used in a systematic way as part of a Careers Service Companies’ review process. In this research we found that the use of practitioner reflection to inform policy and practice at area or Careers Service Company level was not common.

Review of professional practice by colleagues and managers is another strand of internal review approach such as the observation of practice and the professional review of records. A line manager’s on-going review of the effectiveness of professional practice of all members of staff is an extremely important part of this process.

The typology of Careers Services was a tool developed to compare and contrast different aspects of all seventeen Careers Service Companies in Scotland using the data gathered in the first stage of the research. It was designed to identify five case study Careers Service Companies that would illustrate the key features of Careers Service Companies in Scotland. In consultations with the Association of Careers Service Companies in Scotland (ACSCIS) at a mid-point in the research, it was suggested that this might be useful as a self-review and development tool for Careers Service Companies. This typology is attached in Appendix 3.

Professional review can contribute an understanding of the actual context of the evidence and an acknowledgement of the professional issues involved. It can, however, be vulnerable to a charge of subjectivity. It can also be difficult for staff who are acting as reviewers to be critical (however constructively) of colleagues.

External review

External review of Careers Service activities is another approach to reviewing effectiveness. Such reviews might be conducted by government bodies that have responsibility for the Careers Service or by consultants or researchers. The latter may have been commissioned to carry out the review by a Careers Service Company, by a government department or may have other sources of funding, for example, from a research council. The extent to which external reviews can contribute to an assessment of effectiveness depends on their remit, their objectivity and the knowledge and skills of the individuals or organisations carrying out the review. In our research we became aware that the Training Organisations involved in piloting our survey were reluctant to be completely open in their criticisms of Careers Service provision until they were assured that they could not be identified to the Careers Service Company. This was because they depended heavily for their continuing financial viability on the Careers Service’s submissions of young people, and therefore they would not wish to say

anything that might upset Careers Service staff. In situations such as this, external review is likely to achieve more accurate responses from stakeholders than internal Careers Service review.

The Careers Service itself is able to use most of these measures of performance, but cannot do all of them. Obvious exceptions are most longitudinal measures and external reviews. However, even here Careers Service Companies could work in partnership with researchers and external evaluators.

Current approaches to assessing effectiveness

We considered a range of existing approaches to measuring the effectiveness of the work of the Careers Service. We first looked at the existing systems.

- Quantitative measures were mainly gathered as part of the statistical evidence required to monitor the delivery of the core contract. *Business Activity* statistics and related *Efficiency Indicators* were collected. The *School Leaver Destination Return* (SLDR) was also a requirement for all Careers Service Companies. In some areas, work on the SLDR had been extended to include the collation of destinations by postcode to link to indices of deprivation. The SLDR on its own is a blunt measure of effectiveness of Careers Service work (as levels of unemployment may say more about the local labour market and social issues than they do about Careers Service provision). It can give some indication of impact. For example we saw that, following a joint initiative by school and CS staff, levels of entry to FE from one school were raised to match the average for the local authority. The greatest potential for the SLDR is, however, more likely to lie in its contribution to the identification of client need.
- *The Scottish Quality Monitoring System (SQMS)* award is held by all Careers Service Companies in Scotland. The audit instruments include a section specially designed to apply to the Careers Service. SQMS uses quantitative measures, client and stakeholder feedback and both internal and external review to measure performance. SQMS focuses mainly on effective *systems*, and an important part of the external audit for the Careers Service is the gathering of customer/client evidence to confirm that effective systems are in place. While initially anxious about the volume of work involved, Careers Service Companies noted a number of very positive aspects:

“SQMS helped the work become more consistent and focused across the board... and we can use the SQMS evidence folder to find out what we should be doing if the Area Manager isn’t there.”

Careers Adviser

“If everyone in the Company disappeared, because of SQMS the operational guidance systems are there for others to run (provided they were trained, of course)”

Head of Service

- Virtually all Careers Service Companies at the time of the research also held the *Investors in People (IIP)* award. This focuses on staff development and links training into the Company aims and policy.

“Both SQMS and IIP are good, they show a commitment to staff and to having sound systems and structures in place to benefit young people and the staff.”

Careers Adviser

- *Customer/client feedback* had been in increasing use in Careers Service Companies prior to SQMS but the requirements of the internal and external audit had made it compulsory for all Careers Service Companies. The Scottish Executive had provided some central support in training and templates for feedback, but there was still a high degree of

variation in how this was done, and in the appropriateness of the instruments used to seek customer/client feedback. Several Careers Service Companies had consulted focus groups of customers/clients and stakeholders, but the most common approach was the use of questionnaires.

- *Learning Outcomes measures* were used relatively rarely in the Careers Service. A few Careers Service Companies had experimented with instruments such as “The Measure of Guidance Impact”, a questionnaire designed for use with adults and now superseded for young people by the “Profile of Guidance Outcomes” described above. More common was to use “home-grown” quizzes or questionnaires to check on the knowledge gained from careers education and guidance, but only occasionally was a “before” baseline measure gathered as part of this.
- We have referred in Chapter 12 to a reluctance to engage in *internal professional review* of the skills of individual members of staff. We also found little evidence of systematic review of professional casework and of the Careers Service Company’s professional operations and development of its specialist careers guidance functions. The Careers Service Company’s effectiveness as a business was more likely to be internally reviewed than its effectiveness in careers guidance.
- A number of Careers Service Company boards commissioned external consultants or researchers to review performance and make recommendations under specific headings. These included: work with employers; the provision of a placement service; work with unemployed young people; and careers guidance with clients in education. The impact of such external reviews appears to be varied, with examples where the recommendations had not been followed up to any extent to others where the proposals were radical and the Careers Service Companies concerned were required to make major changes in delivery.

Our research suggests that most of the performance measurement in practice in Careers Service Companies were linked to SQMS and IIP. We have recognised in earlier chapters that SQMS and IIP made significant contributions to quality assurance in Careers Service Companies. However, our research has suggested that there were a number of aspects of Careers Service Companies’ work that were not being measured by either of these approaches, for example, the quality of guidance in an interview or the extent to which a particular input met identified needs. A somewhat extreme comment illustrates the point:

“You could be delivering crap careers guidance, but SQMS will ensure you’ve got effective systems in place to do it: and IIP will make sure you train staff well to deliver crap careers guidance!”

This over-states the case, particularly with respect to SQMS, which puts so much weight on external client/customer evidence. However, it seems clear that something more is needed to consider effectiveness in careers guidance. The evidence from this research (both our field work and the survey of young people) shows variation in provision across and within Careers Service Companies. Guaranteed minimum standards are not in place for services to clients.

Our review suggests that:

- Quantitative measures are currently gathered, but careers guidance management information is lacking and requires development. Nor, given the differences in data collection referred to earlier, can Efficiency Indicators be trusted.
- The collection of customer/ client and stakeholder opinions by Careers Service Companies can be observed to have made considerable progress over the period of the research. However, we have seen from our surveys of the views of young people, employers and Training Organisations that there requires to be a level of detail and

sophistication in the design and interpretation of questionnaire items if performance is to be reviewed effectively using such techniques.

- One of the most important aspects for development is internal professional review. Systematic approaches to measuring the standard of work of staff and the quality of careers guidance interventions are essential. The professional reflection on practice which should be part of Continuous Professional Development needs to be strengthened. There also needs to be a change of attitude among Careers Service Company managers to internal professional review, and an acceptance of their role in it.
- While Careers Service Companies could reasonably be expected to make use of learning outcome measures, perhaps the creation of them is not a role for Careers Service Companies on their own. This is an area where those involved in external review and the research community might be able to join with skilled practitioners in the development of a broader range of strategies to measure learning outcomes.
- Lastly, we accessed existing and new research evidence on effectiveness in careers guidance throughout the period of this research. However, it became apparent to us that few practitioners or managers in Careers Service Companies were using this evidence to measuring quality in careers guidance. This was mainly because they were not aware of it. It is important that ways are found to link research on effectiveness with professional practice.

Draft approaches to measuring effectiveness

The development of Performance Indicators or Effectiveness Measures was not part of the brief for this research but the two approaches that we suggest emerged as we considered the issue of effectiveness and reviewed the various methods available. Both approaches are at an early stage of development and would need considerable work before they were usable, particularly through field trials in partnership with Careers Companies.

We reviewed quality measures such as Service First (previously called “Chartermark”) (Chartermark, 2000) and the Business Excellence Model (BEM) (BEM, 2000). Some Careers Service Companies and staff were attracted to Service First because of its service as opposed to a business ethos. However, we considered that these either overlapped with SQMS and IIP (IIP, 2000) or were too general and would require considerable adaptation to make them appropriate to careers guidance.

This research has developed two possible approaches to evaluating effectiveness. The first arises from our review of the model of self-evaluation in schools in Scotland: “How Good Is Our School at...” (SOEID, 1996). We concluded that this model would provide a useful approach to Careers Service evaluation. The second approach is based on the same principles as the model being developed by Scottish Enterprise towards the end of our research. This starts by asking the question: “What would a competitive Scotland look like?” It then audits the national and local situation against this, setting short and long term targets for moving towards this picture. The measurement of effectiveness would, therefore, be based on the extent to which the Network has moved towards the conditions required for a competitive Scotland. In designing the second of our approaches (Effectiveness Descriptors) we have adopted the same principles.

While these two models provide the basic approach, in developing them we have drawn heavily on the way in which our interviewees defined and illustrated what impact, utility and effectiveness might mean in careers guidance practice. We have used evidence from our

surveys of young people, employers and training organisations and we have utilised some of the key findings from other research. They also take account of the expectations that the Scottish Executive have of the Careers Service as seen in Guidance Arrangements for Careers Services (SOEID, 1998).

These two examples are to be found in the appendices, but here we provide some background to their development.

How Good is Our Careers Service At... We list some of the possible aspects might be considered:

- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*careers interviews
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*group work
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with school managers
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with employers
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with training organisations
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*delivering a placing service
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with parents
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with unemployed young people
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with other agencies
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with key partners
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with FE colleges
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with young people in training
- *How Good is Our Careers Service At...*working with young workers

This list could extend further, and several items might be split (for example, to consider the different types of group work or to focus on different clients, for example young offenders).

We have fleshed out one of these “pen-pictures” of effective working, that of “working with training organisations”, and this is attached in Appendix 2. In fleshing this out we made use of the evidence from our interviews, our survey of Training Organisations and our knowledge of other research evidence.

Descriptors of effectiveness. We used the Scottish Enterprise model as the basis of the effectiveness descriptors that we developed. We started by considering “What would an effective Careers Service look like?” and have begun to draft descriptors in relation to a number of areas of work. The principle is that Careers Service Companies would audit their careers guidance performance against these descriptors of an effective Careers Service, set targets that would move them further towards them and then measure themselves (and be measured) by the extent to which they had met these targets.

The draft descriptors of effectiveness that we began to work on cover:

1. Effective careers work with individual clients.
2. Effective outcomes for individual clients.
3. Effective work with other clients and organisations.
4. Effective work with the opportunity structure.

5. Effective strategic development.
6. Support for effective careers guidance processes. (This would be best designed in conjunction with the forthcoming National Framework for Career Education in Scotland.)

There draft effectiveness descriptors in respect of 'Effective careers work with individual clients' and of 'Effective outcomes for individual clients' may be referred to in Appendix 1. There are, however, some key attributes of effectiveness which underpin these descriptors, and we close this chapter by listing them.

The attributes of effectiveness

These include evidence that:

- the Careers Service uses a range of professional strategies appropriate to individuals and to groups of clients, and that these are chosen on the basis of professional rationale founded on the best evidence from research, theory and professional reflection and on client need.
- the Careers Service appropriately challenges limited or stereotypical views of individuals, groups, organisations and those who are influential with clients.
- advocacy skills are used on behalf of individuals and groups of clients and that these interventions have practical outcomes.
- Service Level Agreements are working documents, negotiated on the basis of a professional rationale based on the best evidence from research, theory and professional reflection, and grounded in identified client need.
- guidance management information is systematically gathered and assessed by all levels of staff, and that the evidence of practice from all staff is fed into strategic planning. This guidance management information should include data on the extent of client-driven contact, of the extent and reasons for non-usage and of the extent of unmet need.
- strategic planning is based on systematic identification of careers guidance needs.
- client satisfaction surveys indicate improvements in career-related skills, of relationships founded on respect and understanding, of appropriate expectations of the Careers Service, and of appropriate timing and nature of interventions.
- interventions with individual clients seek to work through the client's own network of guidance support (such as family or friends) and through negotiating first level guidance support or careers education for clients with other agencies.
- national strategies for labour market information, vacancy handling, marketing, careers information and staff development are being taken forward.
- the Careers Service takes account of the reality of young people's transition experiences, works to support continuing transitions and designs its interventions with clients to take account of personally prompted transitions as well as externally prompted transitions.
- careers guidance for young people takes into account the realities of adult career patterns, the adult labour market and the need for lifelong career development.
- the placement service is based on the best available technology, on the realities of work and the labour market and on models which take into account conflicting expectations of different clients.

- individual members of staff take responsibility for their own Continuous Professional Development and that professional performance is monitored and supported by appropriate managers.
- the Careers Service's role is built into development planning of other organisations with which it works, and that the management and staff of these organisations are aware of the Careers Service's full functions, of appropriate referral points and are involved in joint staff development, initiatives and bids. This should be reciprocal.

CHAPTER 14

CAREERS GUIDANCE ISSUES

Introduction

This chapter considers the main issues emerging from this research for the future development of effective careers guidance provided by the Careers Service. It is based on an analysis of the data from all stages of our research, including our review of other research and policy papers.

SUMMARY AND ISSUES

The careers guidance business

- Careers Service Companies had developed considerably as businesses over the period of the current contract, but, perhaps inevitably, had made fewer advances in careers guidance practice and policy. There were some tensions between business and careers guidance imperatives.
- The use of targets to manage staff activity often had the effect of driving careers guidance practice. This sometimes boosted certain activities but it could also limit the development of a range of strategies for different groups.

An inclusive service

- The Careers Service is well placed to take forward the government's social justice agenda but a truly inclusive careers guidance service must meet the needs of all types of client groups and those in all post-school statuses.
- The research has confirmed that young clients in different situations have identifiable careers guidance needs. The Careers Service and its policy makers must retain a genuine commitment to the full client group, one that is based on realistic resourcing.

The distinct contribution of careers guidance

- While recognising that young people need an integrated approach, more attention needs to be given to the distinct contribution that careers guidance can make to the support of young people.
- Careers Service Company staff need to focus on developing their role as careers guidance professionals.
- Careers guidance is potentially powerful in challenging systems and in advocacy for individuals and groups of clients. This needs to be built on good careers guidance management information and on a well-founded professional rationale to be credible to individual clients and Careers Service Company partners. This needs further development.

Supportive processes to careers guidance

- Effective careers guidance requires good preparation and support through careers education and careers information. The forthcoming Framework for Career Education in

Scotland will provide an opportunity for Careers Services and schools to develop provision and integrate careers education into careers guidance.

- Good quality labour market, educational and careers information is also essential for effective careers guidance. But the provision of information (while necessary) is not sufficient by itself to change perceptions and aspirations, its links into careers guidance are essential.

Lifelong careers development

- Careers Advisers and teachers need to integrate careers information into their practice. Particular attention needs to be given to ensuring practitioners have good post-initial labour market information.
- Lifelong learning requires lifelong career development but the current focus on initial transitions limits the practitioner's understanding of post-initial transitions and labour markets.
- One possible way of ensuring that young people's careers guidance takes account of the realities of the adult labour market and adult career development is to involve the Careers Service in all age, generically delivered, careers guidance.

Working with partners

- First level careers guidance can be effectively delivered through other professional colleagues such as teachers, social workers and community education staff, and strategies are needed to support this.
- Young people's decisions are heavily influenced by a range of other individuals and groups but the Careers Service's work with young people through these "significant others" is currently limited, with most attention being given to parents. But to support young people's career development effectively, the Careers Service needs to work with individual clients through these influential individuals and groups.

Development challenges

- Some aspects of Careers Service Companies' work can best be developed at a level beyond the individual company, and probably at national level. These aspects include career and labour market information, marketing, and vacancy handling.
- The vision of effective careers guidance arising from this research is a broad one and would require policy changes at a Scottish level and some shift in perception from Careers Service Company practitioners and managers. It also has obvious resource implications.

DISCUSSION

This careers guidance business: is the "guidance" or the "business" more important?

We have reported on the considerable developments that happened in Careers Service Companies as they took on board the requirements of a business and of a company. Greater clarity in operational systems, more attention to client evaluation and a greater recognition of accountability in business had resulted. A substantial proportion of the employers and Training Organisations we surveyed considered that the Careers Service had become more

business-like over the period. Teachers were less likely to be aware of such changes, but those who had noticed a difference commented positively.

It was noticeable (and perhaps inevitable) that when asked to describe the recent changes that had occurred in the Careers Service, Heads of Service described business developments such as those noted above. When pressed to describe how *careers guidance* had advanced over the same period, many Heads of Service found this more difficult to answer. This may be partly to do with their increased orientation towards the Board and their decreased link to practice. However, in most Careers Service Companies, developments in careers guidance policy and practice were less marked than business developments. Any developments in careers guidance were more likely to be driven by the priorities set for Challenge Fund money than the Careers Service Company's vision of careers guidance in their Company.

There were some tensions between business and careers guidance imperatives. For example, Careers Service Companies had to deliver the core contract and meet the required targets. In principle, if targets are based on systematically identified client need, then services may well be designed and delivered to meet these needs. However, there was little evidence that targets were based on much more than past measures of activities and on an estimate of how much activity could reasonably be expected within the resources available. We have raised concerns in previous chapters about the limited extent to which Scottish Executive guidance to Careers Service Companies (the basis of the core contract) reflects the careers guidance needs of the client group. Consequently there can be tensions between the careers guidance needs of clients and the way in which a Careers Service is delivered in order to ensure contract compliance.

Targets were used to help in the management of staff activity, and this often had the effect of driving careers guidance practice. This was sometimes deliberate to encourage certain activities that managers and/or the Scottish Executive wished to have higher priority, such as work with employers, group work with pupils and the young unemployed and contact with parents. But the need to achieve targets could also limit the development of a range of strategies for different groups. This might be the result of time limitations where a practitioner might decide that the time left in an academic session to work with a school had to be spent on group work to meet targets, whether or not it was the most appropriate approach. Targets could also discourage some practitioners (sometimes already less committed to developmental work) from critically reviewing the effectiveness of their practice, feeling themselves to be measured primarily on the extent to which they met targets.

We would not wish to imply that the development of Careers Service Companies as effective businesses is unimportant. We would suggest strongly that business development can go hand in hand with developments in careers guidance policy and practice, but that careers guidance needs should drive business developments and not vice versa.

An inclusive Careers Service

The Careers Service has historically had an important role to play in supporting socially excluded young people and their families. The Careers Service's placing role has the potential to redress some of the disadvantage that some young people face, for example, those with a family background of unemployment or from an ethnic minority background who may lack a network of contacts in the labour market. It has always invested time and effort in

equal opportunities and social inclusion issues, and is well placed to take forward the government's social inclusion agenda. Indeed the desire to be of help in this way is a very common motivation for the staff of the Careers Service.

However, the Careers Service has also traditionally had a broad client group. The Careers Service's links with schools have been different from those of other external agencies. In contrast to social work services and psychological services, the Careers Service's role is with the full cohort of young people, putting it into a similar situation to that of school staff.

A truly inclusive careers guidance service must meet the needs of all client groups. This research, and that of others, has shown that young people across the range of attainments, aspirations and social backgrounds have careers guidance needs. This applies even to such vulnerable groups as young homeless people (Howieson *et al*, 1993). Nor should a focus on the needs of disaffected young people take away services from the broad client group, who also have careers guidance needs. We feel this requires emphasis, as some Board members have suggested to us, that high attaining pupils had less need of the Careers Service's input, being more able to seek out information for themselves. Not only does this show a limited view of what careers guidance is about, but it is not supported by the evidence of this and other research. Recent research on the under-employment of graduates, for example, noted that "Graduates generally perceived careers education and guidance provision for more able school and college students as deficient and under-developed, although there were examples of good practice....The feedback from graduates reinforces the crucial importance of ensuring that high-quality careers education and guidance provision is available for students planning to enter HE" (Ford & Leeds Careers Guidance, 2000, p.4). They go on to point out the benefits of ensuring that potential students make well-informed and carefully considered HE and career decisions in order to reduce the risk of future graduate under-employment, improve graduates' chances of achieving personal fulfilment and improve the return on the nation's investment in HE.

What have been called "ordinary pupils" need careers guidance, too. There is a group of young people who are neither failing in education, nor achieving their potential either; who under-aspire but manage to find an opportunity in work, training or post-school education; who do not cause trouble in school but are not greatly noticed for their achievements either; and who make minimal use of careers guidance or school guidance services. Some extra investment of careers guidance time in ways appropriate for the individual could boost education and training targets and raise aspiration amongst this group.

The Careers Service and its policy makers must retain a genuine commitment to the full client group and this should be a commitment that is based on realistic resourcing.

This research has shown that young clients in different situations have identifiable careers guidance needs, and this applies also to the post-school group. The current situation is that most young people who have entered the labour market have little continuing support in their career development from the Careers Service: neither policy nor resources encourage this. Those young people who struggle with a first entry to work or training normally have considerable input from the Careers Service, particularly if they are within priority or guarantee groups. In earlier chapters we have discussed the implications of the current focus on initial transitions at the expense of continuing transitions. We would only add here that not

only does this fail to meet young people's needs, but it also limits the practitioner's understanding of post-initial transitions and labour markets.

The distinct contribution of careers guidance

More attention needs to be given to the distinct contribution that *careers* guidance can make to the support of young people, including those who are unemployed. While recognising young people's need for an integrated approach, there is a danger that social, personal and educational support needs may be identified at the expense of vocational needs. Young people who have supportive families, are socially well adjusted and are achieving well at school may also have complex careers guidance needs, and it is important that these are not overlooked. We found that systems were in place to ensure the early identification of young people who needed extra support on entry into work but that these were likely to focus on social, personal and educational needs. Nevertheless, it is recognised that a lack of vocational direction or vocational maturity can also cause problems for young people entering work, training or education post-school. Systems to identify young people's vocational needs were commonly unsophisticated, usually being based on a simple screening form. (We have discussed the identification of need in considerable detail in Chapter 12). This is only one aspect of specialist careers guidance skills. We consider that Careers Service Company staff need to be encouraged to develop a stronger professional identity based on specialist careers guidance skills.

Another example of the need to develop a professional rationale for practice can be seen in the Careers Service's role in challenging systems and clients. Careers guidance is potentially powerful in challenging systems and in advocacy for individuals and groups of clients. But challenging systems is most effective when based on evidence of best practice, on research and on theory: this ensures credibility with individual clients and Careers Service Company partners alike. To illustrate this, we now take two examples.

The first concerns challenging an organisation's practices. Careers Service Companies were asked at one point to increase the amount of group work in schools. Providing access to groups of pupils, especially if they are not in class size groups, is not easy for schools, given the rigidity of many school timetables. In negotiating such access with schools, efficiency was commonly used as a persuasive argument: that more group work would enable more young people to have contact with the Careers Service, and that group work was a way of meeting Careers Service targets. This has the result of putting the Careers Service's convenience before the school's convenience and was perceived as such by the schools. In contrast, an argument based on professional rationale and research would instead focus on effectiveness and the needs of the clients rather than the organisation. Such arguments could include research evidence that a range of strategies is required for effective career development; that some key aspects of career knowledge and understanding are best delivered in a group setting; and that some young people make more progress in their career thinking in a group than in an interview.

The second relates to challenging the perceptions and aspirations of individual clients. An explanation of the professional rationale could make individual challenge more understandable and acceptable to the client. A pupil applying for HE might be told:

“We know from research that large numbers of HE students wish they had thought more about their choice of HE course while still at school. So I’m now going to ask you some searching questions to help you examine your own thinking and consider other options.”

Our interviews with Careers Service Company and school staff suggested that further development of a professional rationale is required. One way of assisting this would be to develop good guidance management information systems that monitored the usage (and non-usage) of careers services, for example, who has more than one careers interview, what prompts them to this, what time of year is it likely that second interviews happen, what are the attainment levels, gender and aspiration levels of those who have more than one careers interview and so on. Such information, when used in Service Level Agreement negotiations, would focus discussion on the needs of young people in an informed way, and allow services to be jointly designed to meet those needs. As we have already noted in this report, we found that the collection of such guidance management information by Careers Service Companies was very limited.

Supportive processes to careers guidance

Effective careers guidance requires good preparation and support through careers education and careers information. The forthcoming “National Framework for Education for Work: Career Education in Scotland” (LTS, forthcoming) will provide an opportunity for Careers Services and schools to develop what is currently very uneven provision across Scotland. It will provide a model for progression and coherence in career education, and will cover young people’s education from age 3 – 18. While it will support the Careers Service’s current consultancy role in secondary schools, it is likely to create new demand from primary schools for support in making career education outcomes more apparent in the 5-14 curriculum. Although many of the attitudes that limit career choice in the teenage years (for example, class, race and gender stereotyping) are already forming in the primary years, the Careers Service has up to this point had no formal role at this stage in education. There will be resource implications for Careers Services in supporting this potentially valuable work in primary schools.

We must stress that good quality labour market, educational and careers information is also essential for effective careers guidance. A number of Careers Service Companies had specialist information posts and most Careers Service Companies had locally produced information leaflets, sometimes funded with LEC support (particularly if they featured training information). But most Careers Service Companies and their staff felt that many young people took insufficient responsibility for researching labour market, educational and careers information sources even where good sources were available.

Some of our interviewees who were not directly involved in the provision of careers guidance (for example, LEC staff) pinned high hopes on the provision of information to teachers, parents and young people as a way of changing perceptions of the labour market and improving the image of the work-based training route. However, while the provision of good quality information is essential to the careers guidance process, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for changing attitudes and aspirations. Other research (Semple, 1994) suggests that this is a more complex task than the provision of information alone. It is crucial that careers advisers and teachers integrate it into their practice, and its links into careers guidance are essential. This needs particular development for clients seeking to enter the

labour market, but for all clients it is important that practitioners understand post-initial labour markets, for example, graduate and adult, local and global labour markets.

Lifelong career development and a generic model of adult guidance

Lifelong learning requires lifelong career development. In addition to developing the Careers Service's role with young people post-school, a lifelong learning perspective could be added by increased involvement in adult guidance. One way to ensure that young people's careers guidance takes account of the realities of the adult labour market and of adult career development is to involve the Careers Service in all-age, generically delivered, careers guidance. The Careers Services that are currently significantly involved in adult guidance generally use specialist staff or a specialist service to do this. A generic model is mostly confined to smaller Careers Service Companies where there is neither the volume of work nor the funding to justify a specialist post.

Given that the model of delivery of adult guidance is a specialist one across the majority of Scotland, it is important to elaborate our reasons for supporting a generic approach. Firstly, we consider that the decision has been made primarily for pragmatic reasons rather than a professional rationale. It has suited funders and been more convenient for managers to ring-fence adult careers guidance in this way. Secondly, significant numbers of practitioners consider that the body of knowledge they require differs significantly between adult and young clients. We would argue that it is precisely that body of knowledge of the adult labour market that many practitioners working with young clients lack. Generic delivery of all age careers guidance would help practitioners to understand post-initial transitions, gain a longer-term perspective on career development and understand the adult labour market and adult career patterns, and would allow them to apply this understanding to careers guidance with young people.

In many Careers Service Companies, the adult guidance service operated quite separately from the core service, and in some cases the staff rarely met and were unlikely to exchange professional experiences. Staff development from specialist to core staff can improve understanding of the adult labour market. Many adult careers guidance interviews can themselves provide training by informing the Careers Adviser about the skills and experiences that the client has had in the labour market, demonstrating the complexities of routes beyond the initial transition. Such interviews can also encourage a lifelong career development perspective, a useful corrective to any short-term view of career decisions.

Many practitioners argue that the skills involved in giving careers guidance to young people and to adults are different. However, their description of these skills shows a high degree of overlap. Those completing the first stage of the Diploma in Careers Guidance have at certain times gone in almost equal numbers into core Careers Service work and into adult guidance, with no apparent difference in their ability to cope. The client groups, too, show important areas of overlap. Both young people and adults (for example, women returners) may be initial or inexperienced entrants to the labour market, or lack confidence in their entry to FE or HE. Some adults in their 20s and 30s lack knowledge, understanding and career management strategies just as some teenagers do. And both client groups may have to separate out personal aspirations and values from the values and expectations of significant others.

We would argue that generic all-age careers guidance would raise the professional standard of delivery of practitioners from both groups by broadening perspectives.

Generic delivery of an all-age service would also encourage family-based guidance, with a single practitioner able to provide services to both the individual client and to the clients' network of family and friends.

Working with partners

The evidence of this and other research indicates that young people's decisions are heavily influenced by a range of other individuals and groups. These may be defined in two ways. First is the formal network, which may include teachers/lecturers/tutors with a recognised responsibility for guidance and others such as social workers and community and youth workers. Second is the informal network, such as parents/carers, families, friends, neighbours, co-workers and fellow students, subject teachers, and supervisors in work, training or college situations. (Some supervisors in structured training situations might be appropriately classified as part of a formal network of guidance support, if that is part of their recognised role.)

The reality of career decision-making is that those who wish to support young people's career development effectively must also work with individual clients through these influential individuals and groups.

The Careers Service already works to a considerable extent with the formal network described above. The research identified many examples of effective working such as links with social work staff over individual clients, joint projects with community education staff, and involvement in Joint Assessment Teams for vulnerable young people. However, we also found some evidence of recent or current tensions between the Careers Service Company and some more newly established local employment and/or community development groups in several localities.

The basis of much joint working had traditionally been to ensure that other partners recognised client career needs and initiated appropriate referrals, thus reinforcing professional specialisms. However, several factors may encourage the idea of using members of the formal network as "first level careers guidance providers", in particular the implementation of the Beattie report which has highlighted the importance of providing an integrated service and the fact that young people will seek help on a range of issues from the person with whom they have a relationship, regardless of that person's job title (Beattie, 1999). Careers Services have experience of using others for first level guidance through the role of guidance staff in schools, and we suggest that this approach is extended to work with other agencies. This would require reciprocal approaches from other professional groups.

Careers Service Companies have mainly concentrated on parents in their work with the informal network of guidance support, with some links established to subject teachers and limited contact with other groups. This research has shown the importance for young people of discussing their career ideas with parents. However, there is scope for the development of more innovative ways of working with parents and families, and work in a New Community School situation may encourage this.

Development challenges

A number of aspects of the Careers Service's work would benefit from a national perspective. The research suggests that *marketing* of careers guidance and the Careers Service requires a Scottish-wide strategy, supported by local campaigns. Secondly, *information provision*, particularly of labour market information, requires national co-ordination and agreed definitions.

A third area for a Scottish strategy is in respect of *IT developments*. This applies particularly to web-site development. IT has enormous potential to provide information, careers education and guidance packages and contacts and make careers guidance more accessible to client groups.

The lack of a national *vacancy-handling* service was criticised by a number of our interviewees. A national system might be linked to the Employment Service's network in some way, or owned by the Careers Service or its partners. The critical need is for a system that will improve the gathering, assessing and circulation of vacancy information.

There is also a strong argument in favour of co-ordinated *training*. One example of a national level approach is in relation to training with the establishment of a consortium to support VQ training; this appears to be an effective approach.

The vision of effective careers guidance arising from this research is a broad one and would require policy changes at a Scottish level and some shift in perceptions from Careers Service Company practitioners and managers. It also has obvious resource implications.

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APPENDIX 1

DRAFT EFFECTIVENESS DESCRIPTORS

Introduction

As part of our work on effectiveness we considered the model being developed by Scottish Enterprise towards the end of our research. This starts by asking the question: “What would a competitive Scotland look like?” It then audits the national and local situation against this, setting short and long term targets for moving towards this picture. We considered “What would an effective Careers Service look like?” and have begun to develop a number of effectiveness descriptors covering different aspects of CSCs work:

1. Effective careers work with individual clients.
2. Effective outcomes for individual clients.
3. Effective work with other clients and organisations.
4. Effective work with the opportunity structure.
5. Effective strategic development.
6. Support for effective careers guidance processes. (This would be best designed in conjunction with the forthcoming National Framework for Career Education in Scotland.)

The principle is that Careers Service Companies would audit their careers guidance performance against these descriptors of an effective Careers Service, set targets that would move them further towards them and then measure themselves (and be measured) by the extent to which they had met these targets. In terms of the practicalities of use, we envisage that aspects of several measures will be overtaken through one evaluation activity eg a client focus group, or an annual review by managers of work with other organisations, or periodic professional review of the needs of specific client groups.

This appendix contains examples of two draft effectiveness descriptors that we developed. We would emphasise that they are very much at a draft stage. These and the other descriptors need further development in conjunction with CSCs themselves.

SECTION A. EFFECTIVE CAREERS WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
A1. Client awareness and use of Careers Service		
a. Accurate awareness of role of careers service by individual clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CS has a comprehensive strategy in place to ensure clients are aware of its role and how to access CS provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of CSC policy and training documentation ▪ review of leaflets produced by CSC for clients ▪ review of publicity strategy with local media ▪ review school/TO/college induction documents for clients for description of CSC role and referral points
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients able to describe the key functions of the careers service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ guidance or evaluation interview; ▪ questionnaire; ▪ guidance or evaluation group discussion; ▪ observations from other professionals
b. Accurate awareness of appropriate personal points for referral to the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients able to describe when and how to make use of the CSC in terms of own situation and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ guidance or evaluation interview; ▪ questionnaire; ▪ guidance or evaluation group discussion; ▪ observations from other professionals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actual referrals show evidence of appropriate reasons and timing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of client records ▪ analysis of information from the monitoring system ▪ professional reflection; ▪ assessment by CSC management; ▪ assessment by managers in relevant partner organisation (eg school);
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients are able to describe the operation of the careers service's client contact systems, including their own responsibility for 'interrupting' the system when in need of guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of client records ▪ guidance or evaluation interview; ▪ questionnaire; ▪ guidance or evaluation group work; ▪ observations from other professionals
c. Appropriate client contact and non contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems are in place to remind clients of appropriate personal points for referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of CSC documentation ▪ records of discussions with colleagues from other agencies/organisations ▪ relevant timetable/running records of CSC staff activities with other agencies/organisations ▪ review of CSC and other agencies'/organisations' notice-boards, public displays/publications

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which client-driven contact in school, college and careers office is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monitoring of the percentage of the client group who seek a guidance or placement intervention, how they do so, their reasons, at what stage and how frequently ▪ review by CSC staff and other staff eg teachers, TO staff ▪ monitoring of the numbers and circumstances of the parents who refer children for guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which non-referral is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ check of a sample of those not referring to identify whether reasons for non-referral are appropriate, through focus groups and contact with professional colleagues.
A2. Identification of individual client need		
a. Comprehensive and systematic identification of careers need by the careers service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A comprehensive system for the identification of career need of users and non users is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review policy documentation ▪ review of guidance management statistics ▪ review of records of strategic and operational decision-making in the CSC ▪ review of records of meetings between CSC and other agencies/organisations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the careers adviser's identification of career need reflects a clear understanding and application of the variety of career choice theories and research evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of client records by CA and AM ▪ observation of discussion of client need through shared case studies by CAs and AM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interview strategies are in place which use a client pre-assessment of need, followed by a contracting process to discuss careers guidance need at the start of careers interviews; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ observation of careers guidance interviews ▪ review of client records ▪ focus group evaluation of clients' experiences of careers guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extent to which careers assistants and related CSC staff recognise client career needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ discussion with Careers Assistants and related CS staff ▪ review of client records ▪ monitoring of referral systems
b. Appropriate identification of own needs by clients and ability to link these to provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ screening mechanisms are in place which explain to individuals how to identify their career guidance needs and how to link this to different aspects of careers provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of purpose of systems (both paper and computer based) ▪ monitoring of level of usage ▪ professional review of systems to identify career guidance needs ▪ review of careers education programmes in schools and colleges to ensure advice on how individuals can identify their own career guidance needs is included and to ensure this input is at an appropriate time for the client group

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which individual clients are able to identify their own careers guidance needs and to link these to different aspects of careers service provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ client feedback ▪ review by CSC staff of appropriateness of client self-identification and access to provision ▪ joint review by CSC staff and other agency/ organisation staff ▪ feedback from parents and parent groups
<p>c. Accurate identification of client career need by others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent of training and support to others who might assist the careers service identify the career guidance needs of individual clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of content, frequency and use of in-service/awareness raising sessions or leaflets on how to identify career guidance needs of individuals with parents, teachers (both guidance and subject), lecturers, training organisations, employers and others eg ES, social work.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which the careers guidance needs of individuals are identified accurately by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monitoring formal school reports, informal contacts from teachers, lecturers, parents, training organisations, employers and others and reasons for referrals; ▪ questioning the client in the careers interview ▪ comparison of subsequent client records with description of career guidance needs identified previously
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which this information is communicated in an appropriate form and at the appropriate time to the careers service, and from the careers service to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ formal school reports are available well ahead of a careers guidance interview for school pupils; ▪ informal reports are available ahead of a careers guidance interview, and the use of this information is clarified; ▪ the careers service gives feedback of a specific nature on individuals (agreed with clients) to ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken for clients by others, and to encourage the support of others for the individual's next step; ▪ feedback of a general nature is given to help increase the level of understanding by others of clients' career guidance needs.
<p>d. Accurate recognition of clients' non career need by CSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CSC staff's level of understanding of the role and referral points of other agencies/organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ observation of CSC staff ▪ discussion with CSC staff ▪ review through meetings with colleagues in other agencies/organisations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent of appropriate referral of CSC clients to other agencies to meet non career needs/organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ numbers referred ▪ review of case records ▪ review through meetings with colleagues in other agencies/organisations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which clients are involved/in charge of, and supported though the referral process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ observation of the referral process ▪ client feedback

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
A3. Individual client satisfaction with the careers service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which the individual client perceives the careers service to be useful, helpful etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ client's stated assessment in person or in response to survey, within both short and long timespan after careers service contact; ▪ client statements to others (eg teachers, training organisations, parents).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which clients would recommend others to use the careers service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monitoring systems recording reasons for client-driven contact including the extent to which it has resulted from the recommendations of previous clients; ▪ specific questions in surveys of individual clients.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether clients feel able and willing to access the service in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ client perception evidence; ▪ extent of self-referral for second or more contact; ▪ the use of careers guidance services in the adult guidance network by clients who have previously used the Careers Service. ▪ the use of Careers Service in FE by those who previously used the service in school
A4. Careers Service responsiveness to individual clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ speed of response/extent of unmet demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ measurement of waiting times for interviews and extent of communication with the client on waiting times; ▪ time measurements of placing actions; ▪ response time to take promised action on behalf of clients; ▪ client feedback from individual interviews, group work, group evaluation or survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extent to which CSC provision is delivered at appropriate time for clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of client records ▪ client statements to others
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extent to which CS provision is delivered flexibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of range of CSC provision available to clients to choose ▪ review of the range and nature of CSC provision against research and theory eg learning styles; appropriate use of career guidance interview (eg relative value of a series of short interviews/group interviews)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ level of, and reasons, for non attendance by clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ records of school interviews; ▪ office diaries and records of appointments; ▪ client record cards; ▪ school review statistics; ▪ employer/training organisation submission sheets.

SECTION B. EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
B1. Effective delivery of careers guidance for clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which guidance inputs are “owned” by clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assessment in individual interviews, follow-up work by colleagues and surveys of client groups of the extent to which action plans and interview processes are seen by the client to reflect the client’s genuine position, aspirations, etc; ▪ comparison of audio or video recorded interviews with client records and action plans indicate the extent to which the interview conclusion has been reached taking account of the client’s statements; ▪ analysis of audio or video recorded interviews to measure the “balance of talk” between careers staff and the client, and the question styles used.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which individual client’s assumptions and expectations about career choice are identified, met and challenged (if appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ analysis of extent and content of pre-careers interview preparation in the careers education programme in a school; ▪ pre- and/or post-careers interview questionnaire or group session; ▪ questionnaire to client group to check expectations and check whether met; ▪ assessment during individual careers interview through contracting re purpose and expectations and seeking client feedback at end; ▪ evaluation interviews, telephone survey and group discussions; ▪ periodic follow-up discussions with colleagues or parents where referral has come from them or been stimulated by them.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which client’s thinking is moved on by contacts with the Careers Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use of the Vocational Guidance Interview checklist, or similar tools, for self review, peer review or managerial review; ▪ recognised psychometric measures of guidance impact and outcomes, with local norms established; ▪ use of “before and after” measures linked to CSC interventions; ▪ periodic review of the extent to which clients follow up the action points in an action plan;

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ client self-report measures used with individual and groups of clients; ▪ comparison of client and careers adviser perceptions of the outcomes of a careers intervention; ▪ extent to which a personal characterisation has become more focused; ▪ extent to which career thinking and skills can be demonstrated in discussion with others or in observation of specific behaviour.
<p>B2. Successful outcomes for clients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which individual clients make appropriate decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ observation by the client's careers adviser, by another careers adviser, by careers managers or by teachers, parents, colleges or training organisations of the extent to which clients can explain the factors they took into account in their decision and show understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the key features of the local and national labour market and educational opportunities; • how to evaluate and take appropriate action to implement their action plan; • the influences of others on their career-related actions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether young people enter an appropriate post-school opportunity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of the progress of young people in work and FE by questionnaire or phone call; ▪ review of sample of HE entrants to assess appropriateness of previous guidance given in relation to course change; ▪ comparison of young people's destinations with CSC records of the guidance given (not necessarily the recommendation made). Particular focus on the level of opportunity and the broad career grouping; ▪ review of FE colleges' data on retention and destinations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level and type of drop-out or inappropriate opportunity-changing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the identification by CS staff, training organisations and college staff of those dropping out of or changing an opportunity over a 3 month period. Monitoring of stage and reason for leaving. Identify CS involvement with clients and whether opportunity change is appropriate through client records.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level and duration of unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review of records of unemployed clients to identify factors that may have contributed to the period of unemployment. Factors fed into the career guidance process for the future and used for advocacy for individuals and groups of clients.

Descriptors	Elements	Evidence from:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level to which young people subsequently use the career management skills they have learned from careers education and guidance, and use the careers guidance they have been given. ▪ Extent to which individual clients are helped to maximise their uptake of training and education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ longitudinal studies; ▪ evidence from later contact with clients if they access CSC provision for adults. ▪ evidence from school clients subsequently accessing FE careers guidance ▪ evidence available from the national studies such as SSLS (analysed at local level where possible); ▪ CSC is involved in the production of local education and training targets; ▪ comparisons of destination statistics from particular schools and colleges over a period of years as the CSC challenges particular assumptions about opportunities; ▪ monitoring of involvement in such initiatives as “The Right to Time Off for Study”.
<p>B3. Extent of advocacy role on behalf of individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of advocacy on behalf of individual clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ through periodic monitoring of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interventions on behalf of individual clients in school or college eg to access particular subjects or work experience or guidance support; • interventions on behalf of individual clients to influence decisions by others on selection and recruitment, access to opportunities, access to benefits or other entitlements.

APPENDIX 2

HOW GOOD IS OUR CAREERS SERVICE AT WORKING WITH TRAINING ORGANISATIONS (DRAFT)

This appendix contains an example of the “How Good is Our Careers Service at..” approach to assessing the effectiveness of the Careers Service. This approach arises from our review of the model of self-evaluation in schools in Scotland: “How Good Is Our School at...”. We concluded that this model would provide a useful approach to Careers Service evaluation and developed, as an example, the pen picture of “How Good is Our Careers Service At Working with Training Organisations...” which appears below.

Role and key functions

- Role and key functions of the Careers Service are understood and can be described by the main Training Organisation contact, by key supervisory staff and by placement employers. Training Organisation internal documentation, notice-boards and external communications signal Careers Service role.
- Role and key functions of the Careers Service with respect to young people undergoing training are understood and can be described by Skillseekers.
- Role and key functions of the Careers Service with respect to young people undergoing training are understood and can be described by parents/those who support Skillseekers.
- Training Organisation staff, Skillseekers and parents/supporters refer to the Careers Service appropriately.
- Careers Service staff, at different grades, understand and can describe (or locate in reference texts) the role, responsibility, company requirements and business sector requirements of the Training Organisation.
- Young people under submission understand and can describe the roles and key functions of a Training Organisation.
- The Training Organisation refers placement employers to the Careers Service for information and advice where appropriate.
- The Training Organisation main contact understands and explains to colleagues the ways in which the Careers Service placing/job-broking service operates.
- The Careers Service contact updates the Training Organisation regularly on legislation and benefit changes that affect the young job seeker or school leaver.

Communication strategy and relationships

- There is a named Careers Service contact who visits regularly, phones very regularly and, when visits, is recognised by staff and identifiable to Skillseekers.
- Purpose and frequency of contacts are negotiated and form part of a SLA between the Training Organisation and the Careers Service. While the timing of contacts is likely to relate to recruitment, selection and progress matters, particular attention is given to the maintenance of the relationship in times of potential tensions. These points of potential tension include periods of under-occupancy, times when priorities on the live register or social inclusion issues are being addressed in placing, the period following a series of

unsuccessful submissions or when the Careers Service is contacting current Skillseekers to submit them to other employers.

- Both organisations exist as businesses with quality assurance and activity targets to meet, and the impact of these (and of externally set agendas) on the relationship and on the service to young people is understood, monitored and discussed (for example the effect of multiple submissions of the same client).
- Work with Training Organisations is part of an overall strategy for labour market work. Labour market work uses the links with Training Organisation placement providers as an opportunity to provide services to employers in conjunction with the Training Organisation and as a method of gathering business sector LMI.
- Training Organisations understand and acknowledge the Careers Service responsibility to notify Skillseekers (including employees who have requested such services) of vacancies which may advance their career. Training Organisations explain and support this aspect of the Careers Service role to placement employers.

Communication and relationships over recruitment and selection

- Written information held by the Careers Service on the opportunities available with the Training Organisation is of good quality, appropriate for the range of clients and unbiased. It includes: details of the selection procedures (including examples of the type of selection tests in use) and the selection criteria; details of the vocational qualifications and placement opportunities in use and the destination statistics for previous Skillseekers; and a negotiated entitlement statement about the speed of response to submission and the nature of feedback.
- The Training Organisation gives speedy and detailed responses to submissions to the Careers Service, and there is a shared understanding of their responsibility to give feedback to the applicant in a way that helps the development of employability skills.
- Information given to the Training Organisation on young people being submitted for an opportunity is negotiated with applicants and agreed. The nature and use of this information is clarified in the SLA between the Careers Service and the Training Organisation. The Training Organisation recognises the importance of analysis of need before young people are endorsed as having Special Training Needs. While the communication to Training Organisations of background information on young people with STN is essential, the Careers Service also recognises the need to provide negotiated information on applicants to mainstream places.
- Customer care strategies are used to discuss the Training Organisation's satisfaction with the process and to feedback the Careers Service's views on the effectiveness of the process.
- The Careers Service uses advocacy strategies to support the applications of individuals and groups of clients to opportunities with Training Organisations, or the adjustment of training provision to meet identified client needs, and these interventions are noted on individual records and on Careers Service management records. The strategy for client advocacy is built on systematic identification of need, and its purpose and the approach to be taken is clarified in the SLA. It is underpinned by a public commitment to equal opportunities issues.

Involvement in reviews of the progress of Skillseekers

- The Careers Service is involved in mid-term reviews of young people with STN, either through attendance at a case conference or through discussions with Skillseekers and supervisors. The stage at which this review will be done is agreed when the young person starts on the programme and may be linked to a predicted time by which it is hoped the young person may no longer need endorsement: this will be based on a joint assessment of individual need. Appropriate points and mechanisms for involvement with mainstream Skillseekers (based on an identification of need) are negotiated and clarified in the SLA.
- Skillseekers completing a programme of training who are unlikely to have an appropriate follow-on opportunity are referred to the Careers Service in good time. The Careers Service works closely with the Employment Service in the support of such Skillseekers and their Training Organisation.
- The Training Organisation refers young people for Careers Service help for appropriate reasons and in good time, especially where young people may be at risk of dropping out or in need of support or vocational guidance. This is part of the SLA.
- The Training Organisation collates and passes on details of young people whose status changes or who leave for another opportunity before the end of training. Destination statistics for those completing the programme are passed to the Careers Service for use with potential applicants and their parents.

Advice and information to Training Organisations

- Careers Service staff provide regular opportunities to Training Organisation staff to be updated on relevant changes in the education system, on labour market information, on young people's occupational aspirations, on school and college leaver destination statistics, on staying-on rates in education, and on the skills, experiences, qualifications and qualities it is reasonable to expect from school-leavers. There is a particular focus on the implications of these factors for recruitment to the Training Organisation's particular opportunities and the Training Organisation is advised by the Careers Service contact how to use this information effectively with its placement employers.
- Where, as part of the Careers Service's employer strategy, companies are identified which might be able to provide appropriate placement experience for a Skillseeker (including Modern Apprentices) the Careers Service in conjunction with the LEC passes details to appropriate Training Organisations. The fact that the Careers Service cannot favour one Training Organisation over another in the provision of this sort of intelligence is discussed and clarified in the SLA. This activity is recorded.
- Careers Service staff provide information on contacts and sources of funding to help the Training Organisation support possible retention of Skillseekers by placement providers. The extent to which placement employers use such information is identified by the Training Organisation and passed to the Careers Service.

Evaluation and quality assurance

- The Training Organisation's satisfaction with the service is reviewed at regular intervals, particular aspects: knowledge of the world of work; understanding of the Training Organisation's business sector; understanding of the Training Organisation's particular requirements; speed of response; suitability of young people sent for interview; knowledge of the education system; appropriateness of Careers Service advice and information to Training Organisation; ability to give unbiased advice; and knowledge of

young people. This is done centrally or externally to allow honest responses from Training Organisations.

- Discussion of these aspects are included in the annual SLA discussions.

Links to research

- Policy and practice in work with Training Organisations is based on the best available research and development evidence. Careers Service staff who interact with Training Organisations, especially the named contact, refer to such evidence in SLA discussions with the Training Organisation and at other appropriate points.

APPENDIX 3

TYOLOGY OF CAREERS SERVICES IN SCOTLAND

Typology of Careers Services. We developed the typology initially as a tool to enable us to analyse the data gathered on the 17 CSCs in Scotland in the first stage of the research. We used it to identify five case study CSCs that would illustrate the key features of the Careers Service in Scotland. In consultations with the Association of Careers Service Companies in Scotland (ACSCIS) at a mid-point in the research, it was suggested that the typology might be useful as a self-review and development tool for CSCs. We believe that it does provide a useful tool for CSCs in this respect but it should be remembered that it was not created for this purpose and it has had limited subsequent development.

Section A. Context of CSC				
A1. Contract Model				
	Company limited by guarantee: charitable	Sub-contracted	Secondment	
A2. Geographical Factors				
	Island and rural	Rural & small town	City	Mixed
A3. Size of staff				
	Small	Small-medium	Medium	Large
A3.1 Core				
A3.2 Non-core				
A4. School leaving rates				
	S4	Winter S5	Summer S5	S6

A5. Destination figures						
	Skillseekers	Employment (non-Skillseekers)	FE	HE	Other	Not known

A6. Labour market			
A6.1 Level of youth unemployment	Low	Medium	High

A6.2 Nature of labour market for young people	Vacancies in only a limited range of occupational areas	Vacancies in a reasonable range of occupational areas	Vacancies in a wide range of occupational areas

Section B. School Work				
B1. Focus of school work*				
	S1-S3	S4	S5	S6
Full VGIs				
Short interviews				
Class work				
Small group work				
Information				
Interest guides				
Other				

* can be completed by indicating balance of work for each year group on a scale eg 1-5

B2. Interviewing (incl VGI and short interviews)												
B2.1 interview philosophy	Blanket			Selective			Self-referral			Mixed		
	S4	S5	S6	S4	S5	S6	S4	S5	S6	S4	S5	S6
CSC management view												
CA view												
School view												
B2.2 interview policy												
CSC management view												
CA view												
School view												
B2.3 Interview practice												
CSC management view												
CA view												
School view												
B2.4 Interview targets	S4			S5			S6			Other		
B2.5 Repeat interviews	% S4s			% S5s			% S6			% other		
B2.6 Penetration rates	% S4s interviewed			% S5s interviewed			% S6 interviewed			% other pupils interviewed		
B2.7 Action plans as % of interviews	% S4s			%S5s			%S6			% other		

B3. Type of group and class work in schools			
	Intro or option talks of standard type	Additional menu of inputs to careers education	Group work varies & designed according to need
B3.1 Class size group work			
B3.2 Small group work			

B4. Careers education			
	Limited	Some	Extensive
B4.1 Careers Adviser's familiarity with careers education in the school			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			
B4.2 Preferred level of Careers Adviser involvement in the design of careers education in the school			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			
B4.3 Actual level of Careers Adviser involvement in the design of careers education in the school			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			

B4.4 Preferred level of Careers Adviser involvement in the delivery of careers education in the school			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			
B4.5 Actual level of Careers Adviser involvement in the delivery of careers education in the school			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			

B5. Involvement of CSC in special initiatives in school			
	Limited	Some	Extensive
Careers Adviser's involvement in special initiatives eg related to social inclusion			
CSC management view			
CA view			
School view			

Section C. Work with Post-School Clients (Core)			
C1. Post-school clients			
C1.1 Work with unemployed	Basic* (eg benefits related/JSA review)	basic and group work	basic and initiatives

* for definition of basic work see Chapter 8

C1.2 Work with STN clients	Basic service (ie pre entry and pre exit reviews)	Basic service plus review if problems arise	Basic service and ongoing reviews
Occasionally			
Sometimes			
Usually			

C1.3 Nature of work with young workers (inc Skillseekers)	Placing	Response to problems	Systematic review of progress

C1.4 Work with FE students	CSC makes limited input to FE	CSC makes some input to FE	CSC makes extensive input to FE

C1.5 Work with socially excluded clients	Major level of work	Some work	Little work
Basic work			
CS special initiatives			
Other agency special initiatives			
Joint special initiatives			

Section D. Labour Market Work

D1. Employers

D1.1 Timing of contacts with employers	Spasmodic	Focussed at certain points in year	Equally through out year	

D1.2 Organisation of CSC services to employers	Generic only	Generic and specialist ie mixed	Mainly specialist	Specialist unit

D1.3 Range of services to employers	Mainly recruitment/ placing	Mainly recruitment/ placing and advocacy	Recruitment/placing and information/advisory	Recruitment/placing, information/advisory and advocacy
D1.4 Importance given to employer work	Low importance	Medium importance	High importance	
Senior management view				
Careers adviser view				
Careers assistant view				
D1.5 Targets for employer work	Individual	Area	CSC-wide	
D2. Training Organisations				
D2.1 Importance of Training Organisations as providers of opportunities in the CSC locality	Low	Medium	High	
D2.2 Organisation of CSC services to Training Organisations	Any appropriate CSC staff	Named CSC staff member(s)	Specialist CSC staff	Assessment services/unit
D2.2.1 Mainstream providers				
Selection and recruitment				
Review and pre-exit				
D2.2.2 STN providers				
Selection and recruitment				
Review and pre-exit				

D2.3 Extent of CSC involvement with Skillseekers	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
D2.3.1 Involvement with STN Skillseekers				
Referral				
Induction				
On-going				
Pre-exit				

D2.4 Involvement with mainstream Skillseekers	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
D2.4.1 Nature of CSC involvement with	Reactive/if problems		Proactive/planned	
STN Skillseekers				
Mainstream Skillseekers				

D3. Vacancy handling	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
D3.1 Vacancy display				
Vacancies displayed publicly in careers office				
Vacancies displayed publicly in schools				
Vacancies displayed publicly in colleges				
Vacancies displayed publicly in TO premises				
Vacancies displayed publicly in community sites				

D3.2 Decision on clients to be submitted	Usually CSC staff select	Mixed	Clients usually free to apply for any vacancies	

D3.3 Type of search	Manual	Mixed	Computerised	

D3.4 Range of search	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Full live register				
Sections of live register				
School pupils included				
FE students included				
Skillseekers trainees included				
Registered young workers/ employed Skillseekers included				

D3.5 Generating vacancies	Reactive	Mixed	Proactive	
Policy: Senior management view				
Careers adviser view				
Careers assistant view				
Practice: Senior management view				
Careers adviser view				
Careers assistant view				

D3.6 Extent of policy on vacancy handling	None	Area Office level	CSC level	
Does policy/good practice guide exist on:				
Matching/searching priorities				
Standards in vacancy information				
Transfer of client information				
Dissemination/display				
Turnaround time				
Complaints				

D4. LMI				
D4.1 Importance given to LMI	Low importance	medium importance	High importance	

D4.2 Use of LMI	Limited use	Some use	Extensive use	
In careers education				
In careers guidance				
In careers information				
With employers and TOs				
With parents				
With school/college staff				

D4.3 Funding for LMI	No	Yes		
Accessed non-core funding for LMI				

D5. CSC and EIL					
D5.1 Links to EBP	No EBP	Few/no links	Some links	Close links	EBP part of CSC
D5.2 Role in WEP	Little/no WEP involvement	No (or almost no) WEP	Not contracted but may promote as part of employer work	Contracted for placements	Total organisational responsibility
D5.3 Importance of EIL in relation to CSC aims	Not at all important	Not very important	Important		

Section E. Characteristics of the CSC

E1. Nature of policy and practice			
E1.1 Policy	Reactive	←.....→	Proactive
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
	Unreflective	←.....→	Reflective
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
E1.2 Practice	Reactive	←.....→	Proactive
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

	Unreflective	←.....→	Reflective
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E2. Non-core work			
E2.1 Importance given to non-core work	Not important	Quite important	Important
Board view			
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E2.2 Attitude to non-core work	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Board view			
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E2.3 Extent of non-core work	Low	Medium	High
Board view			
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E3. IT			
E3.1 Level of usage	Limited use	Some	Significant use
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E3.2 Importance given to IT	Not important	Quite important	Important
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E4. Psychometric testing			
	Limited	Some	Extensive
Usage			
Importance given to it			

E5. Targets			
	Limited	To some extent	Extensively
E5.1 Extent CSC is target driven			
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
E5.2 Extent to which targets have changed practice			
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

E6. Variation			
E6.1 Extent officially encouraged	Not encouraged (variation = inconsistency)	Some encouragement (eg according to school, area factors)	Extensive encouragement

E6.2 Extent in practice	Limited	Some	Extensive
Area level			
Practitioner level			

Section F. Management and organisation

F1. Extent of Company reorganisation

	Limited reorganising	Some reorganising	Extensive changes (not radical)	Radically reorganised (planned, on-going or completed)

F2. Identification of need*

	Recognition of need	Analysis of need	Analysis of need linked to provision
F2.1 Individual			
F2.2 Group need			

* see Chapter 12

F3. Accountability

F3.1 Client evaluation			
F3.1.1 Coverage	Small sample	←.....→	100%
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
F3.1.2 Scope	One client group	Certain client groups	All client groups
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
F3.1.3 Frequency	Infrequent	Sometimes	Regular
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

F3.2 Evaluation of professional practice			
F3.2.1 Frequency	Infrequent	Sometimes	Regular
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			
F3.2.2 Extent	Limited	Some	extensive
Senior management view			
Practitioner view			

F3.3 Targets	Individual	Combined	
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F4. Appraisal						
	No appraisal	No appraisal (but planned)	Vol appraisal (some staff)	Vol appraisal (all staff)	Full, comp appraisal of some staff	Full, comp appraisal of all staff

F5. Staff development			
	Limited	Some	Extensive
F5.1 Link to CSC aims			
F5.2 Range of staff covered			

Section G. CSC Board				
G1. Composition of Board				
G1.1 EA and LEC	% who are officials	% who are nominees	If vote or advise	

G1.2 Extent of other membership	FE	External business (ie not LEC)	Community	Others

G2. Focus of Board			
G2.1 Strategic/operational role	Heavily operational	Mixed	Heavily strategic

G2.2 Focus on core/non-core	Very focused on core	Mainly core	Significant focus on non-core

G2.3 Attitude to non-core funding	Negative	Mixed	Positive

G3. Board relationships			
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
G3.1 Relationship of Chair with HoS			
HoS view			
Chair view			

G3.2 Relationship of Board with HoS			
HoS view			
Board/others view			

G4. Contribution of Board			
G4.1 Helpfulness/impact	Sometimes unhelpful/negative impact	Neutral	Generally helpful/positive impact

G4.2 Overall value	Negative overall	Neutral Overall (-)	Positive overall

G4.3 If problems with the Board?	Rarely/never	Yes, in past	Yes, currently

G4.4 Extent of problems	Minor	Some	Major

Section H. Links with partners

H1. Links with LEC

H1.1 Quality of links	Poor	Mixed	Good

H1.2 Extent of links	Limited	Some	Extensive

H1.3 Extent of funding OR type of links			

H1.4 Contribution to LEC priorities	Low	Medium	High

H2. Links with LA(s)

H2.1 Number	Single	Multiple	

H2.2 Quality of links	Poor	Mixed	Good

H2.3 Extent of links	Limited	Some	Extensive

H2.4 Contribution to Council priorities	Low	Medium	High

H2.5 Services in kind	No	Yes	

H3. Relationships with local initiatives/agencies			
	Limited	Some	Extensive
H3.1 Extent			
H3.2 Type			

APPENDIX 4

EMPLOYERS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 5

TRAINING ORGANISATION QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 6

S4 QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 7

S4 FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

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