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*New Start*  
FOR CONNEXIONS

changing roles for careers coordinators

an examination of the green paper

***Youth Matters***

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The green paper *Youth Matters* is another in a recent line of government publications showing some understanding of how careers work. It is carefully worded – with all the expected acknowledgments of influential stakeholders. However, it does not much use the term 'career'; and there may be more than one lesson in that for the careers-work field. For, despite the omission, the green paper's proposals show a far-from-superficial understanding of what actually happens in people's lives.

In fact *Youth Matters* draws on more evidence from outside the careers-work field than from inside. It is interested in social change; it points to the need for redistributing resources; and it sets out a strategy for locally networking more helping resources. And, whatever word is used, it all assembles into a realistic approach to helping people in their management of working life.

The careers-work field will not get everything it wants from this consultation. But, it is argued here, the important thing is to recognise the strategic opportunity that the green paper presents. It radically re-positions careers work - offering a real opportunity to make a difference to people's chances in life.

*Youth Matters* locates careers work near the heart of a wide-ranging reform of how communities and curriculum respond to change. It envisages this integrative reform as driven by local action. All of this will place programme managers, such as careers coordinators, in key roles.

It will also confront them with three urgent issues:

1. how universal and how targeted should careers work be?
2. how impartial can it be, and does learning-to-learn help?
3. what do managers need to consolidate, before they begin to integrate?

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There is a free-to-download, shorter and electronically-linked version of this paper in  
The Career-Learning Café  
[www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) – in 'the magazine' (in touch)

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The two characteristics which separate this policy document from most of the rest are the scope of its appreciation of change in our society, and the way in which, its proposals have coherence.

We'll come to coherence later; but what about change?

**WHAT CHANGE?** economic, technological, social and cultural change, their helpful and harmful effects – and how they require reform

The green paper deserves to be read with care: between the lines there are indications of what the authors plainly know, but don't quite dare to say. For example they speak of change in the global economy and the technologies which make it possible. But, below the surface, there is also an appreciation of the impact that all of this has on people's lives and in their neighbourhoods. It is not just 'economy', nor even 'technology', it is also 'society':

*Changes in the economy, society and technology mean that young people today have more opportunities than previous generations and most take full advantage of them.*

para. 2

**social change.** A bit overly upbeat, you might think. It could have pointed out that some social change is bad news for people and their neighbourhoods. And it might have owned up to the fact that some of that bad news is directly the result of changes in economy and its technologies - which constrict as well as expand opportunities.

But policy daren't talk like that. And - credit where it's due – *Youth Matters* goes a long way in proposing a socially-rooted framework-for-help. Our work is set in an expanding network of local resources:

*...it is important that we integrate Connexions with a wider range of services at local level.*

para. 39

*Youth Matters* may very well have gone as far as any policy document can go in framing what we can do about careers.

Now it's up to us. And the green paper says so. But what are we to say? There has been a mixed reaction from our people. If we are to continue to resist, we need to be sure that our opposition is not just a failure to understand the extent and dynamics of change. Social, economic and technological change now bring bigger demands than the limited apparatus of careers-education-and-guidance can cope with<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The *End-to-end Review*, published alongside *Youth Matters*, also begins with an account of economic and social change. It responds with what it calls a 'new vision'. Though this aspiration is neither new nor particularly visionary, the review realises that it will not be met from current resources – whether in Connexions or in careers education. In the face of these changes, and in response to the resource shortfall, a conclusion is that the current situation is 'not sustainable'. It sees the greater potential for further development in the quality and relevance of what is done in curriculum and on a 'whole-school' basis (para. 5.12). The review is available at [www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk).

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At the fringes social change is depressed neighbourhoods, kids kicking over traces, neglected families, marginalised cultures, decaying amenities - alienated hopelessness. In many more places it is bored kids, stressed students, disappointed workers, a longing for work-life balance - hope against hope<sup>2</sup>.

**cultural change.** Social change has cultural consequences. *Youth Matters* touches on some:

*The Internet and mobile phones have revolutionised the way young people live and the way in which they communicate and get information. Technologies such as MP3 are transforming the way they access music.*

para. 2

This is also cautiously worded. There's more to it than that: iPod, game-box, soap. BigB and video-phone shape, embed and express beliefs and values. They speak of who we are, and who can be allowed to have a say in our lives. That varies neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood and crew-to-crew; but hang-loose informality, street-level distrust, and demand for respect are prevalent. It is a world in which notions of exclusively-authoritative professionalism serve nobody well.

Such social and cultural changes are well documented<sup>3</sup>. And they have implications for how career management is best enabled. But policy avoids going far down this track. Too exposed.

Helpers – and, in particular, programme managers - can't afford to avoid anything. Actually, if they are in touch with their learners' thoughts and feelings, avoidance is not a possibility. That's their authority. And, this article argues, the proposals in *Youth Matters* are going to need that authority to be fully engaged.

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<sup>2</sup> A Career-learning Network article 'Which way is forward?' traces changes in the contemporary social-and-cultural landscape. It lists both academic and informed social commentaries identifying these changes. It is in [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) – in 'the magazine' (in touch).

Direct observations of social pressures associated with economic change in depressed neighbourhoods form the basis of Nick Davies's *Dark Heart – The Shocking Truth About Hidden Britain*. (London: Vintage, 1998).

Among the many accounts of the consequences of economic and social change for the experience of work is Madeleine Bunting's fully-referenced *Willing Slaves* (London: Harper-Collins, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> A scholarly account of cultural change - from 'post-modern', through 'fundamentalist' to 'excluded' - is Terry Eagleton's *After Theory*. (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

A polemical account of cultural trends in contemporary culture is Frank Furedi's *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?* (London: Continuum, 2004).

For direct observations concerning beliefs and values among young men and women see Nick Barham's *Disconnected: Why Our Kids Are Turning Their Back on Everything We Thought We Knew* (London: Random House, 2004).

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## WHAT MATTERS?

- 1. location** – how careers work is to be positioned in relation to its users and to other sources of help
- 2. integration** – how links are built between the people who help and the matters on which they help
- 3. locality** – how Connexions will have local programme-development links with both community and curriculum

There are issues that the green paper does not resolve. They have mainly to do with how programmes are to be locally managed<sup>4</sup> and what can be done about schools and colleges which effectively opt out<sup>5</sup>. But, in getting to grips with them, we need to separate what we can resolve now and what we must learn from new experience.

We must also attend to the difference between what is strategic and what is tactical. The most strategic issue raised by the green paper is for how careers work is to be positioned in relation to its users and its partners.

### 1. *position*

The most important effect of policy is how it positions helpers to help. That raises questions about what kind of service is to be developed, who can best manage it, in what kind of organisation, and with what range of resources.

The issue of position is addressed first in the green paper by how careers work is to be located in relation to its users. Is it possible for effective careers work to be, before everything else, a universal rather than a targeted service? *Youth Matters* does not start with any assumption that it can. It is true there is much talk of the need to respond to all young people's voice and choice. But the green paper doesn't argue so much from general entitlements as from specific needs. Although it doesn't say so, it is redistributive (another of those avoided words).

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<sup>4</sup> The green paper argues for local decision making. But the argument leaves a lot of questions unanswered. It is argued here (pages 9-14) that programme management is best located at neighbourhood level. But that leaves open questions about what sort of 'central services' need to be locally developed. Among the matters which cannot be wholly managed at neighbourhood level are: fund-stream-bidding, spending priorities and budgeting, recruitment-and-retention, human-resource development, research and evaluation, library and resource provision, quality-maintenance and public relations. The way in which schools-and-colleges, Connexions services, children's trusts and local authorities are best engaged in such matters specifically for careers work remains an open question.

<sup>5</sup> Budgetary allocations to schools and colleges seem unlikely to be ringed fenced. However, the green paper proposes that failure to meet locally agreed standards should be met by withdrawal of devolved funding (para. 174). The assumption here (page 12) is that credible argument and relevant programming will attract more useful attention in schools and colleges than the imposition of performance indicators. To be fair, we know little of the relative impact of either argument or imposition; it must, for the time being, remain an open question. However, the specific line taken here is generally supported in a well-documented analysis of the relationship between marketisation and targets. It is in David Marquand's account of *The Decline of the Public* (London: Polity, 2004).

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The green paper argues for targeting more resources where more are needed:

*The teenage years are also a time of transition and many young people face difficult challenges – relating, for example, to study, money, employment, health, self-esteem and relationships. Some young people, including disabled young people and those who are homeless, may face barriers in accessing education and leisure, and teenagers from some ethnic groups have to face prejudice.*

para. 5

They all do. Some might also need to be helped to face the fact that not all of their early learning and experience, and the social and cultural attachments they form, are serving them well. They are going to need a lot of help.

And, if those who 'face difficult challenges' are to have any kind of priority, questions are raised about the range of help that will be needed. The green paper is looking for breadth:

*...[it] will inevitably mean changes for many of the workforce currently located in Connexions, Youth Services or in targeted support programmes, whether they are employed by Connexions Partnerships, Local Authorities, the voluntary and community sector or private providers.*

para. 273

And so considering position also means thinking about how careers work is to be located in relation to its working partners – both actual and potential. The terms 'multi-disciplinary', 'integrate', and 'voluntary' get a lot of mentions in *Youth Matters*. We are in for some serious re-thinking - about how better to work with other-than-careers helpers and with people helping from other-than-professional bases. Among the reasons:

*...there will also be times when young people want to seek confidential information and advice... from a trusted adult who is not linked to where they live or where they are studying.*

para. 30

The green paper calls it '*remodelling the workforce*' (para. 275). 'Re-positioning helpers' might prove a more useful term. This includes some uses that have not yet been anticipated. For example, a current concern is about how we are ever going to establish a life-long service. *Youth Matters* is not about that; but the way it re-positions careers work will prove useful. There is more hope for the emergence of trusted, credible and accessible help in local networks, than we have ever been able to establish from more-formal bases. An important step along this path is in the way in which the networks will retain contact with people, after they have left school or college.

A concern for the needs of the most vulnerable demands greater access to both community and curriculum. And the re-positioning proposed in the green paper links careers work to both sorts of help. But it does so for all people; and in relation to their roles as learners, workers, citizens, partners and parents. It all offers the kind of connectedness which can become a starting point for helping - life-long.

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## 2. *integration*

Such a re-positioning of careers work in relationship with such a range of partners calls for a different sort of organisational frame. That frame is called integration<sup>6</sup>:

*Our vision is to see services integrated around young people's needs helping all teenagers achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes to the greatest possible extent.*

*para. 11*

The reference to *Every Child Matters* is a reminder of government intentions that alienated and vulnerable children will each find their place in society – 'healthy', 'safe', 'enjoying and achieving', 'making a positive contribution' and 'having economic well-being'. Alongside its proposals for our work *Youth Matters* proposes funding for sport, volunteering and 'places to go and things to do'.

The green paper's authors seem to know that work and social membership are deeply interwoven (para. 150). It is the basis for deepening and widening the range of help. *Youth Matters* says let's do that for sport and volunteering – as well as for citizenship and working roles. It could have said let's also do that for consumer and domestic roles. And, if it doesn't, local managers should. They might yet come up with something more like a life-role-relevant curriculum: that helps people to work out what to do - not only in examination rooms but in their lives.

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<sup>6</sup> It is important not to confuse integration with infusion. Infusion was a feature of attempts to locate careers work as a cross-curricular theme in the 'academic' subject-based National Curriculum. Enquiries find that its effect were no better than a specialised programme in resisting marginalisation by the dominant curriculum. One such study is by Geoff Whitty and others: 'Discourse in cross-curricular contexts – limits to empowerment' (*International Studies in Sociology of Education* 4(1) 1994, pages 25-42). Actually, the idea of integration came first – ahead of infusion by almost a decade. The thinking was first systematised in Bill Law's and A G Watts' direct observations of school programmes, reported in *School Careers and Community* (London: Church Information Office, 1977, pages 130-132.) It was integral to the well-used DOTS analysis of careers-work aims. A feature of integration is that – unlike infusion – it is a structured programme of limited and specific schemes-of-work. It is not, then, an alternative to specialist work, but work that is coordinated with specialist schemes. It was argued at the time that such work is best managed by a coordinator of the overall careers programme. The idea of integration was further operationalised in the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (see page 8). Later still, the government's open-learning pack on careers work describes degrees of integration - none of which entails whole-school infusion, and all of which entail some inter-departmental contracting (Department for Education and Employment: *Integrated Careers Work*. (Sheffield: DfEE, page 12). Despite the distinctiveness of the two ideas there has been some confusion. The *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies* uses the term integration to refer to infusion (*United Kingdom Country Note*, 2003, para. 27). The focus for the OECD work was policy; but, with the need now to work out practical responses to the integrative proposals in *Youth Matters*, it is essential that such confusion is not allowed to continue.

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Integration is the organisational structure which cuts across conventional boundaries - making such programmes possible:

*This focus should be helped by improved integration across professional boundaries and breaking down of barriers between programmes and funding streams.*  
para. 248

Integration links across curriculum, to Connexions and with employers. It also links to the wider resources of other professions, families, voluntary organisations, voluntary helpers, local health centres, youth facilities and drop-in centres. The network of help is curriculum- and community-wide.

To be fair, there were always such outreach elements in careers-service work. The significance of *Youth Matters* is that it builds in that kind of integration - as a design feature.

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### 3. *locality*

The green paper's headline news is that at least some Connexions companies will survive.

*We will encourage Local Authorities to retain the Connexions brand and would welcome views on the range of services it might cover.*

*para. 39*

A brand is only a brand; retaining it doesn't mean that Connexions will survive unchanged. Some companies might not survive at all. But there have been suggestions that government might do with Connexions what governments sometimes do - bale out and start again. Instead *Youth Matters* is suggesting a new, and more-usefully located, start for Connexions.

Why so? Because it now envisages Connexions as part of an already-embedded local network of help, centred on local authority's children's trusts.

*We want to see children's trusts at the heart of these developments, orchestrating a mixed economy of services and opportunities for young people.*

*para. 92*

That network will link Connexions to local youth, social, health and education-welfare services; as well as to professional, voluntary and privately-financed sources of help.

But it is strengthened links in schools and colleges which offer Connexions its big chance. We have barely begun to unlock curriculum potential for helping people to live their lives. And programme managers with good timing will be thinking about that now.

Firstly, under extended-school provisions, schools are to develop their relationship with local communities. There are networking possibilities there. Secondly, we still haven't really made up our mind about the Tomlinson committee's<sup>7</sup> call for greater relevance in curriculum. With the right kind of staff, Connexions can become a serious player here. The green paper mentions the 14-19 white paper – para. 57 - but does not develop the 'Tomlinson' possibilities. There are more possibilities now visible than conventionally-understood careers-education-and-guidance could ever realise.

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<sup>7</sup> *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform* is the final report of the Tomlinson Committee. It is an argument for greater life-role relevance in curriculum, a relaxation of the grip of 'academic' selection, and more integrative uses of a range of different kinds of programmes. It emphasises needs for more vocational development, but it does not ignore importance of learning for other life roles.

The committee sees the socially stratifying effects of assessment as a basic problem for what happens now (compare page 10). It urges the replacement of A-levels with a more flexible and appropriate system. The white-paper response ignores this proposal. However, the needs for reform along the lines that the committee identifies are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. There is accumulating evidence that some schools and colleges have unilaterally anticipated Tomlinson, and that more are prepared to act on it – all through local action. The arguments that make the Tomlinson proposals necessary have not yet been answered.

It is argued here that Tomlinson will become more important in the context proposed by *Youth Matters* (page 12). An account of the reciprocal relationship between Tomlinson and Connexions is set out in The Career-learning Network article 'A bridge too far' – [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) – in 'the magazine' (in touch).

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Government can't tell us how to make any of this work, and it doesn't try:

*...while we expect Local Authorities to develop an integrated youth support service we are not advocating any particular approach.*

*para. 256*

But it urges that all must be locally negotiated<sup>8</sup>.

*...we believe that it is now time for the support and guidance services provided by Connexions to 'go local' so that they can be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents.*

*para. 61*

There is, however, still a question about how local 'local' should be. Economy, community and culture can vary as much within local-authorities as between them. Regional, county, city and district authorities are not local enough. That is why some Connexions companies have already started on cluster partnerships - linking schools and colleges with local resources. It may also be helped by the newly-set-up Joint Area Reviews, involving all appropriate inspectorates in examining how local partners respond to local needs (para. 244).

We need organisations which specifically respond to what is specific in locality. The last time this kind of resource was put at anything like the unfettered disposal of local decision-making was in early-days consortium groups, set up to support the delivery of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. TVEI at its best was good at engaging learners in integrated programme calling on community contacts. And learners were reported to recognise the usefulness to their lives of this learning.

Like TVEI, *Youth Matters* needs local programme managers. They need to be close enough to the ground to understand what is needed, and how it can be made to work. That will be different in different neighbourhoods. And it will re-engage the creativity and sensibilities of the best of our local managers. Indeed, as in local TVEI, we may need to think of neighbourhood management teams.

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<sup>8</sup> *The End to-end Review* (see page 1, note 1) also pulls back from the idea of centrally imposing requirements on local arrangements (para. 2.12).

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## IDEAS FOR ACTION

**1. universal and targeted** – how local managers' commitment to the most vulnerable equip them to develop programmes for the rest

**2. impartiality and learning-to-learn** – how learning processes, rather than hoped-for impartial coverage, is the more promising life-long strategy for dealing with bias

**3. consolidation and integration** – how local managers need to balance the case for flexibility with the need for stability

*Youth Matters'* invites us to work out how an expanded network of resources can best be organised to serve local needs. It looks for specific action not general aspirations.

But, for the moment, the careers-education-and-guidance field has been able to respond only in general terms. Much of what is said is founded on national surveys and international comparisons<sup>9</sup>. We should not ignore the issues they raise. But neither should we assume that global trends are bound to be locally usefully.

Three issues need to be resolved in local action:

1. do we start from a universal or a targeted service?
2. how impartial can it be – and does learning-to-learn help?
3. how much consolidation do we need and how much integration?

### **1. universal and targeted**

Where does a local manager best find an understanding for this work? It is sometimes argued that it is logical to start on that process by thinking of the needs of the many, and developing that first into a universal programme. The needs of the most vulnerable would then be thought as calling for a separate and targeted programme.

There are never any the-same-for-everybody answers to such issues. Reality is not that tidy. But there is a supplementary question: local managers might well ask themselves, 'but wouldn't what we learn from the most vulnerable actually help us better to understand the majority?'. You'd have to try it out to find out.

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<sup>9</sup> Chief among these is *The OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies* and its *United Kingdom Country Note* (see page 5, note 6). The overall findings are published as *Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004 - available at [www.oecd.org/oecd/pages/home](http://www.oecd.org/oecd/pages/home). All of the issues discussed on pages 9-14 are among the issues raised in the OECD reports. A wider range of ways of resolving such issues will be visible at local levels than could ever be visible to the sources for such a geographically wide-ranging and policy-focussed survey.

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A lot of on-the-ground programme development has fruitfully tried it out. Work experience, recording experience, profiling and action-planning were not first developed for the majority; they were developed because what we were doing before wasn't found to be working for the most vulnerable. Indeed, careers guidance itself got started on the basis of helping vulnerable migrant workers find their way into mainstream society. That train of events has repeated itself in the histories of both American and British work in this field. A majority have been offered all these kinds of help after they had been tried out on a needy minority. So, although some now want to answer the supplementary question 'no', much of our history has answered 'yes'. It has given us some of our most effective programmes.

If 'excluded' says anything, it speaks of young men and women whose early learning and experience does not give them access to mainstream roles in our society. Not them, not the adults at home, not many in their neighbourhood. This is an extreme form of social stratification; and Britain is one of the most socially stratified societies among OECD nations<sup>10</sup>. The green paper is pretty good on exclusion by race, gender and disability. It is less good on social class (is 'class' another of those not-ok words?). Yet the evidence is that whatever disadvantage may stem from a person's race, gender or disability, that experience is always significantly worsened - or ameliorated - by her or his starting position on the social-and-economic ladder<sup>11</sup>.

There will be evidence of as much on every local manager's patch - in sequestered privilege, in run-down neighbourhoods, often-enough in both. Social stratification means that, if things are allowed to take their 'natural' course, social origin will predict career destiny. Careers work doesn't necessarily hold with natural courses: they can arbitrarily favour some and penalise others.

And so, much of our history records how careers workers take on the challenge of the ghetto. And how, in doing that, they have discovered - writ large - more about the hidden dynamics of careers in leafy suburbs. The former needs are actually versions of the latter. In locally-managing careers work, it means understanding that the frustration, anger and detachment which draws attention to the 'excluded' is a version of the boredom, stress and depression that a good many of the 'included' quietly endure.

Seen in these terms much of the distinction between 'the targeted' and 'the universal' falls apart. Learning to work with the sharp pain helps us to work with the dull ache. All helping professions advance that way. It sets 'the excluded' among a local manager's most valuable teachers.

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<sup>10</sup> For well-informed and recent account of increases in UK social stratification - and its relationship with life chances, well-being and cultural attitudes - take a look at Anthony Giddens' and Patrick Diamond's (eds) *The New Egalitarianism* (London: Polity, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> A study of contemporary post-16 decision-making (see page 11, note 13) finds that, although schools tend to reproduce socio-economic dynamics, students in areas of low socio-economic status are more likely to rely for help from teachers and Connexions (page 37). Other students have other ways of getting help.

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## 2. *impartiality and learning-to-learn*

Advocates of universal provision tend also to advocate a more-or-less free-standing careers service. You might argue that such independence protects impartiality - helpers can attend, unhindered, to learners' needs<sup>12</sup>.

The matter becomes compelling where helpers work in ways which maximise their organisation's funding needs, rather than serving students' learning needs. It is not hard to find stories of such pressure. All dependent organisations are exposed to the temptation – especially in competitive market-places. There is a question, of course, about whether organisational independence is ever a possibility – in any commercial, public-private contracted, or government-funded organisation.

Reports of partiality are not always based on direct evidence. Even when they are, there is variability – some schools are more arbitrarily self-promoting than others<sup>13</sup>. Few reliable claims are made concerning the prevalence of such abuse. And there are as many pressures against this kind of bias as for it: any manager with good sense knows that there is little to be gained from, for example, plonking kids in courses they don't actually want or need. And students know when it happens (in studies based on direct observation, *they* tell us). Any sensible manager understands that there is a great deal to be lost from trying to inveigle canny 16 year-olds.

There is no room for doubt that people will sometimes favour professional or institutional over user interests. It has been called 'producer capture'. It would be arbitrary to assume, though, that schools and colleges are the only locations in the careers-work system in which such capture is attempted. And there are more subtle - and less visible - ways to play learners against funding. Putting 16 year-olds through 'expert' procedures, which they have little opportunity to question, is an especially pernicious abuse. Learners have fewer ways of noticing it<sup>14</sup>. Claims to impartiality should never be taken at face value.

No local manager can afford to ignore these possibilities. And the green paper's proposals may intensify the risks. Kids will surf recklessly on the ICT platforms it advocates. And any of the network of helpers it advocates can act with bias - whether personal or institutional.

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<sup>12</sup> You'll find this and other arguments against the positions taken here in Tony Watts' article 'The youth green paper and the end-to-end review' – a critical analysis' in *Newscheck*, September, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> This is a finding of Nick Foskett and his University of Southampton colleagues, in *The Influence of the School in Decision in the Decision to Participate in Learning Post-16*. (DfES, 2004 - research report 538, available from [www.dfes.gov.uk/research](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research)). As it happens student-centredness is more prevalent than organisation-centredness in this sample of 24 schools; but the authors do not claim that this can be used as an estimate of general prevalence.

Where partiality occurs it does so more often in schools with sixth forms. It is attributed in part to the 'academic' nature of the curriculum – with not enough 'engagement' or 'fun'.

The authors take their evidence to suggest the need for a complete overhaul of the careers curriculum, so that it shows greater relevance to students and uses experience-based methods (page 82).

<sup>14</sup> The University of Southampton study (see note 13) quotes students who do notice that they are being taken through unhelpful methods - in both specialist careers education and advice-and-guidance (page 35).

The study reports - however - that, where advisers are based in schools, the resulting stability in the availability of advice-and-guidance is valued by students.

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*Youth Matters* seeks safeguards. Even at local levels there will be 'central-service'<sup>15</sup> managements; and they will develop performance indicators – including standards for impartiality. (Although, whether such indicators are more helpful than relying on well-positioned good sense, has become very much a moot point<sup>16</sup>.)

But we can do more than this. A local programme manager can take a radically different approach. It involves, again, asking a supplementary question. The question is not so much about unbiased-coverage - 'what should we be telling them?'. It looks instead to learning-processes - 'how can they know they can trust it?'. Work on processes enables learners to be canny enough to clock any garden path or blind alley the partial helper might point them to.

In programme-development terms this means helping learners to recognise the processes by which they learn - enquiring, sorting, probing, explaining. These are thinking skills; the Café's *CPI Papers* calls them 'learning verbs'<sup>17</sup>. Curriculum is full of learning verbs. A useful 14-19 curriculum would engage them. Historical and scientific method could helpfully feature, as could the introduction of useful psychology and philosophy. Integration might show how all four can help a person in his or her life - in a shared scheme of work. And, once acquired, command of learning processes serves a person life-long – and in all her or his life roles.

The implications for local programming are radical. There is no short step to bringing about this kind of change - *Youth Matters* acknowledges this. But, by insisting on the need to 'go local', it also positions middle managers where they can develop useful programmes.

Curriculum will play an increasingly important part in the reforms. Learning processes – and the way they work out in life-relevant learning, in transfer-of-learning and in life-long-learning – badly needs more curriculum-development. Conventional careers education is in no position to cope. A 'Tomlinson' curriculum would. Indeed, these reforms are not achievable in any other way<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See page 3, note 4.

<sup>16</sup> See page 3, note 5.

<sup>17</sup> CPI sets out three dimensions for how people manage their career development. These three lines of development are: (CPI-1) coverage - what people need to know; (CPI-2) processes - how they find and use that material; and (CPI-3) influences - what emotional-and-social pressures bear on all of this.

Inside this overall framework, the process dimension sets out learning verbs in a four-phase progression: (Se) sensing is getting enough to go on; (Si) sifting is sorting things into useful order; (F) focussing is prioritising what most needs to be probed; and (U) understanding is grasping how one thing leads to another.

You'll find more about CPI and its implications for programme development in *The Career-learning Networks CPI Papers - What Are We Going to do about Careers?* – at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) - in 'the underpinning'.

<sup>18</sup> Parallel conclusions appears in the *End-to-end Review* (page 1, note 1) and in the enquiry into the influence of schools on career-related decision-making (page 11, note 13).

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### 3. **consolidation and integration**

A free-standing careers service would have had a different relationship with children's trusts. Some of its supporters warn against 'integration'; they look instead for 'partnership'<sup>19</sup>.

Both partnership and integration are organisational structures. Advocates of partnerships urge the value of stability - afforded by maintaining boundaries between bilaterally-contracting organisations. Whereas organisational networks look for multilateral links - more sources of help. But then, boundaries are more durable: people can count on continuity in the organisation. While links are more flexible: they are made, suspended and re-made - as changing opportunity and needs suggest. On the other hand, contracts made by partnerships are formal - set out on paper in advance. But hang on, much of what is done in a network can be informal - quickly agreed as and when required.

This issue cannot be settled on this kind of balance-sheet basis. It is certainly not a do-or-don't decision for local managers: integration is a design feature of the green-paper proposals. And the proposals do not respond to evidence generated from within the careers-work field, they look for evidence found elsewhere and answering the question, 'which form of organisation best suits contemporary conditions?'. Better question; stronger idea.

From the point-of-view of a local manager the choice is not really between partnership and integration. Integration is, after all, an extension rather than a suppression of partnership. It is more useful to think of the difference in terms of - on the one hand - stronger boundaries and - on the other - more open links. That makes it a distinction between consolidation and integration<sup>20</sup>.

*Youth Matters* links integration to a case for 'holistic' responses to learning needs. There is something in this; but the idea has a grittier use. The 'integers' in integration are where careers-work specialists make common ground with new partners. Those locations are in the school or college and in the community. They integrate both professional and voluntary contacts. They link work by careers specialists to work by other-than-career specialists. Community-based mentors and school- or college-based citizenship teachers will be key players<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The Career-learning Network's *Integrated Advice and Guidance* sets out directly-reported discussion of pros- and-cons for integration and for partnership. It ranges from why this is now a pressing issue, through how either strategy is an adequate response to change, to implications for policy. You'll find it at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) - in 'the underpinning'.

<sup>20</sup> There is an interactive diagnosis of consolidation and integration in The Network's *Getting to Grips with Priorities for Careers Work*. It uses a three-fold analysis, where consolidating and integrating orientations are seen as possible developments of a more basic humanist orientation. You'll find it at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) - in 'the magazine' (games section).

<sup>21</sup> The Career-learning Network's *Youth in the Community* is a directly-reported account of arguments for the importance of youth workers, children's trusts and extended schools in our responses to change. It examines the likely future of these services, the methods and benefits of consulting young people on their delivery, how encouraging volunteering helps, and what active citizenship will contribute. The future of Connexions, as set out in *Youth Matters*, relies on the validity of these arguments. The Network's account covers the policy context, the learning needs addressed, the impact of provider attitudes and the importance of local organisation. You'll find it at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) - in 'the underpinning'.

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Integration puts learners in touch with other sources of knowledge and experience than conventional careers-education-and-guidance can muster. It is, then, better understood as a way of engaging more resources. *Youth Matters* is looking for a wider range of trusted and credible sources of help. Some of them know about the day-on-day realities of working life better than we do. They draw on experience rather than training. There is no superior and inferior authority here – just different forms of authority. All are capable of being identified as credible, useful and accessible. Making those contacts is a local manager's role. And integration gives local managers more people to work with<sup>22</sup>.

It is important not to confuse 'integration' with 'infusion', which was an attempt to get careers education – cross curricular - into the whole timetable. Its record is not good<sup>23</sup>: it is impossible to keep track of who is doing what; and thinking of careers work as everybody's concern is pretty close to thinking of it as nobody's. At best infusion expressed an undifferentiated and uncoordinated hope. But integration makes negotiated links with carefully-identified partners, for well-defined projects, on the basis of clearly-established authority, over an agreed time-scale. That is not infusion.

There may well be some aspects of careers-education-and-guidance which should be consolidated rather than integrated. These are the aspects which help learners to use systematic sources of information, to make plans for foreseeable action, and to manage resulting application-and-selection procedures. It is not a wide-ranging programme; but it is a necessary one, and calls for specialist knowledge. The green paper ascribes it to the partnership between PSHE and IAG (paras 168-9). But PSHE is a frail and overloaded vessel. And, although heroically steered, by mainly non-specialist helpers, it is hard to keep afloat on the currents and vortices of economic, social and cultural change. Partnership arrangements have not been able to gain enough purchase on curriculum to build anything better. Local managers of integration will be able to do better. But they should also ensure that 'careers education' stays afloat.

The way local managers resolve any of these matters will depend on how change impacts the locality, and on what sort of local resources can be brought in to help. For example, the experience of mentoring may give young learners more contact with the week-on-week experience of work than any professional advisers would be able to offer – however many work visits they have made. And the usefulness of engaging a post-Tomlinson curriculum will be more urgent in some areas than in others. Change is a global phenomenon with no in-built global response. That's why we need local managers.

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<sup>22</sup> For similar reasons, the *End-to-end Review* (page 1, note 1) advocates a 'whole-school' approach to programme development in this field. And the University of Southampton enquiry (page 11, notes 13 & 14) finds young learners who – alongside some dissatisfaction with conventional sources of help - value experience-based learning. Schools enable that learning by developing community links.

<sup>23</sup> See page 5, note 6.

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## MANAGERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

how managers ensure that what we have been doing becomes a springboard for what we are now needed to do

I am arguing that the driving energy for the reforms set out in the green paper will be focussed around middle managers. They will be neighbourhood-based people.

They are already in schools and colleges, youth centres and local Connexions clusters. Some may have been careers coordinators, personal advisers, youth workers, information professionals, or heads of subject departments. That matters less than the fact that their teams will comprise professional and voluntary helpers, from careers work and other helping backgrounds.

What matters more is that the green paper needs managers who know how to map common ground with the academic authority of heads of department. But they also need to be able to do that with volunteers asked to engage an authority that - until now - they never knew they had. It is going to call on a particular management style<sup>24</sup>.

And there is something that may not be entirely new to effective programme managers. It is the need to maintain open and responsive links with the neighbourhood. And to do this in terms from which all who are involved can learn. It might well involve the use of local media. But it is not the sort of self-serving promotional activity that gets listed under public relations<sup>25</sup>.

It might be an overstatement to distinguish all of this from 'bureaucratic management' (managing boundaries) by calling it 'network management' (managing links); all organisations need both styles. But the distinction works well-enough as a matter of emphasis. And some such distinction may turn out to be critical to the practicability of the proposals in *Youth Matters*.

It may have been a while since some of our programme managers have felt called upon to be so creatively autonomous. Agents of change rather than maintainers of systems. Twenty years of policy impact in schools has not prepared us well for these kinds of challenges. The learning curve could be steep. But we know something about how to support the needed independence of mind<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> See *Coordinating Your Network* (a guide to working with local networks) and *CPI-y: What Are We Going to Do About Careers? – Network Management* (why network management is a key concept). Both are in development in The Career-learning Network, and will be available during 2005 - at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com).

<sup>25</sup> Compare page 3, note 4.

<sup>26</sup> How professional career workers develop low and high 'system orientation' is described in a Career-learning Network research report. Low system-orientation is likely to work independently of conventional expectations of institutions, and is – therefore – better able to appreciate learner needs (compare page 11, note 13). Among the many features that can be linked to it there is the probability that low system-orientation will be associated with having engaged in in-depth training. The report - *Helping Personal Advisers Working with Systems* is available at [www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) – in 'the memory' (how do we manage help?).

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And the green paper is both a challenge and a support. The support is in the coherence of its ideas. It is certainly not a cut-and-paste of back-of-envelope whims, over-influential canvassing, and hope-it-works impulses. We won't understand it by looking for where it does and does not serve particular interests. It is a sustained argument; and, on every page, it is necessary to take one thing with another. It is a rare thing: a genuinely interesting policy document. Though over-cautious, it works hard on developing a comprehending diagnosis of what is happening in work and society, and on a correspondingly broadly conceived framework for the local reform of help. Local managers can work with all of that.

Careers work has a lot to contribute; but there is a lot to do. We are needed, not to so much to look for how we can do more of what we have been doing, but to think hard about what better things we can now do.

A shorter html version of this paper, with live links  
available free at  
[www.hihohiho.com](http://www.hihohiho.com) – 'the magazine'.