
Integrated
INFORMATION ADVICE & GUIDANCE

14-19 and beyond

a National Youth Agency conference
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The Career-learning NETWORK

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The conference organisers invited educators, Connexions advisers, youth workers, careers advisers, programme managers and government officials to examine current trends in IAG work.

The focus is on suggested changes to the 14-19 curriculum. However that works out, it is sure to mean:

1. young people are now facing greater choice at a much earlier age;
2. IAG services must be delivered in a more coherent and integrated way.

The background is in the recommendations of The Tomlinson Report, in the DfES end-to-end review of careers guidance, and in recent enquiries into guidance conducted by OECD and by The Guidance Council. The conference anticipates the long-awaited government Green Paper on Youth. An important aspect of that government document will be a focus on the delivery of easily-accessible careers information, advice and guidance.

The word 'integration' is used to signpost these trends.

Speakers were from...

A Learning and Skills Council,
The National Association of Connexions Partnerships,
The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling,
The National Youth Agency,
The Princes' Trust,
A Sixth-Form College, and
UK Youth.

This is an account of the conference. It will be useful as a catalyst for thought, discussion and planning concerning whether and how we should persevere with integration. It comprises direct quotations from the conference – some from the platform, some from the audience and some from conversations.

The quotations are organised into seven sets of issues:

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1. BACKGROUND

today's society, people's perceptions of IAG, different kinds of 'findings'

in today's society

'... a significant minority of young people today experience a wide range of problems and acute crises in adolescence. The scale of these problems is in many cases worse than this country's past experience and worse - apparently - than comparable countries...'

'... the influences on career include family – of which siblings are now a significant element; they include friends - in the formation of general attitudes; and they include teachers - who can understand locality and ethos and the media...'

'... when we professional people choose schools for our children we choose wisely. The disempowered get what we leave...'

'... there has been a cultural change: people distrust politicians, journalists and professionals; they value informality; they are increasingly concerned about work-life balance; they learn through e-communication. We cannot go on doing careers work in the way in which we have been doing it...'

'... people seek hot rather than cold information, they are unimpressed by hard information, they want to know what it is like to be there...'

'... there is a preference for learning by doing...'

'... a young person today needs to find something which is different, helping aspiration, of high quality, challenging, supportive and non-judgemental. A young person needs to be free to "sort myself out", "know what gives me a buzz", and to negotiate her or his own re- entry to education...'

'... we need a clear narrative in our approach to young people and adults. In particular we need to understand the relationships between professional advice and the choices that people actually make...'

how people see IAG

'... the OECD identifies a lack of clearly and readily identifiable "product name" in the eyes of the public...'

'... a Guidance Council enquiry finds that one-in-four adults cannot spontaneously think of any organisation that provides IAG about working training or learning...'

'... the enquiry also finds that IAG use among the public has fallen slightly since 2000, and currently stands at 42%...'

'... it also finds that people without qualifications, reaching the age of 20, are less likely to know about IAG. This is a bit alarming...'

provider perceptions of IAG

'...what everybody seems to lack is a sense of direction...'

'... the conference has been frustrating. They seem to be doing well in Wales and Scotland. Why are we not making more progress in England?...'

'... morale is low among practitioners. It must not be allowed to continue for much longer....'

about 'findings'

'...be careful of the word "findings". When we use that term to refer to what reports say, we are sometimes doing no more than repeating what their sources said. Everything then depends on who was asked. Views expressed by provider organisations and administrators do not give the same kind of findings as what comes from asking people who work in the services - and their learners. They certainly not do not give the same kind of findings as direct observation of how things work on the ground....'

2. PURPOSES

directions for IAG programmes and outcomes to be enabled

directions...

'...raising aspirations and self-belief; realising potential by starting with motivation and interests; recognising achievement by celebrating it with learners and validating it'....'

'... build self esteem and confidence; develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships; create learning and develop new skills; encourage positive group atmospheres; build the capacity of young people to consider risk, a make reasoned decisions and take control...'

'...young-person-centred; acknowledgement of diversity and provision for empowerment...'

'...learning about how to work as a team and how to appreciate different people's skills... outside the sphere of academic work ...'

'...I was confused by IAG, so I asked around; and I found that most people hadn't got a clue....'

outcomes

'... able to function independently and effectively at home, at school or college, at work and in the community; make informed choices and decisions and take responsibility for their consequences - including planning for their own futures and lifestyles; express themselves clearly and vividly; use their initiative to tackle problems and social issues; apply what they know, understand and can do in different situations....'

'...also able to function independently and effectively on the street!...'

'... can think for themselves, understand themselves and their learning and how they can progress their lives, are well informed about local opportunities, able to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their goals, feel part of the process – listened to, respected, their views valued, are committed to learning for life...'

3. RESOURCES

who is in a position to help? with what material support?

IAG specialists

'...it requires an independent, qualified IAG worker, or an employer, or a union representative, or a trained member of the employer's staff....'

'...an appropriate person to deliver IAG will be the line manager, union representative, learning champion or human-resource manager... with suitable training relating to IAG...'

teachers

'... I know a school in which every teacher will be first a teacher of careers education... the Head argues that the thing that students most need to understand is themselves...'

'...not only through curricular and institutional renewal, but strong ties – in a long-term and supportive relationships – bringing social capital... we need to spend more time on the nature of that relationship...'

community experience

'...we need to work outside as well as inside school because these outside settings don't reinforce failure, their relationships are less formal, and there are opportunities to "lift eyes"....'

'... the relationship with trusted adults is important – that is real relationships with real people.'

'...experience helps learners to understand what they are learning and its potential in their life... it is a non-formal thing...'

'... community-based models, bringing in trades-union learning reps, are targeted at low-skilled and poorly-qualified workers...'

technology

'... the OECD sees adult guidance as making impressive use of innovation... "Learn Direct" call-centre and internet technologies...'

'... the internet is an important source of information for young men and women...'

funding

'... it is easier to find funding for "advice" than for "guidance"... guidance is more costly...'

'... new money is unlikely to be found... we must learn to make best use of existing resources...'

4. METHOD

how do we use these resources to achieve these purposes?

start early

'...enterprise education has to start at five, and you have to continue with it – going through to 25...'

'...also in order to gain inclusion we have to start at 5...'

work with feelings

'...the Tomlinson report's account of "personalised learning" and "common knowledge, skills and attributes" requires that we pay attention to what Daniel Goldman means by "emotional intelligence" – "in navigating our lives it is our fears and envies, our rages and depressions, our worries and anxieties that steer us from day to day. Even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions." (Daniel Goleman)...'

'...ask learners whether they can agree with the following: "I can control what happens to me"; "I need to change myself to improve my beliefs determine how I act"; "as soon as I concentrate on the answer to a question, I ignore all the others"; "I have blind spots to avoid facing some truths"...'

focus on learning process

'... a process-driven curriculum would help young people "make contacts", "meet again", "socialise", "take part", "be involved", "organise" and "lead"...'

work in groups

'...teaching means group work, and advisers are often reluctant to take on this kind of work - they see it as outside their area of expertise...'

'...youth work's methods are to learn from experience, in small groups as well as with individuals...'

expand assessment methods

'...awards provide a means for young people to receive accredited recognition for their normal youth-work activities, and for youth workers to have values added to the activities they support - measured against a nationally recognised standard...'

'...the underlying youth-work principles of the award are: peer assessed, externally accredited, non-prescriptive, encouraging and supporting youth participation, progressive...'

'...if there were a qualification attached to careers education then more time would be given to it...'

'...we had stack of action plans which are just boring. So we now give cues to action, based on clear criteria for improvement...'

'... a report on assessment shows that awarding marks has no impact on learner improvement or on increased interest; and that these things do not increase even when the marks are combined with comments. The only form of assessment which increases both improvement and interest is comments alone...'

'...we are moving towards assessment for learning: peer assessment, self assessment, developing question-answer strategies. And we praise task achievement not the ego...'

'...assessment criteria are based on five "Rs" and a "C": "readiness", "remembering", "reflection", "resourcefulness", "resilience"... and "consideration"...'

everything!

'... firing the imagination, education, information, individual learning plans – regularly reviewed and challenged, impartial personalised guidance...'

5. INTEGRATION

what is integration? will it help? can it work?

what is integration?

'...the government's "Every Child Matters" offers a long-term strategy, it is not a quick fix. It looks for partnerships across professional borders. This will require a culture change in the way in which people work. The legislation will encourage and support this change...'

'...a more strategic approach to partnerships: with more "joined up" referral and progression routes; and engaging young people through a wide range of activities including sport, music and the arts...'

'...youth work is a blend goals: personal, social and political development rather than just vocational development...'

'...goals are turned into entitlements; they are relevant – involving young people; responsibilities are clear – we know who has a duty to secure provision; they are accessible, diverse and holistic; they are sustainable – which means resources are provided.'

'...integration means that we share a core set of skills, but that we each have different sorts of knowledge. It is important to move away from competition about who does what?...'

why it is needed

'...when users look at the "diversity" of guidance provision, is it diversity that they see or complexity? If it is to be diversity then there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure coherence...'

'...very few people have the breadth of understanding that looks at the whole circle...'

'...if we believe in multi-intelligence we will see that school can only deal with part of it - not all of intelligence is on the school curriculum...'

'...we need to do something about 14-19 education, the growing importance of life-style considerations, the importance of getting more people into HE, about social and economic change and about the pressures on career development...'

'...the challenge is to support families...'

'... the end-to-end review is likely to suggest that the work is not sustainable in its present form, quality and relevance is not good enough, Connexions is under-resourced, there is confusion about roles, and schools are not impartial in the guidance they offer...'

why it is not needed

'...OECD found that guidance on working roles cannot be subsumed within guidance on personal issues. Careers advisers should be distinguished from personal advisers. Careers guidance needs to retain an identity of its own...'

'...the social inclusion agenda is crucial, but careers education and guidance is not the prime place where it should be addressed...'

'... Connexions is not primarily about careers it is about social inclusion... said to look more like two services than one... it cannot deliver both... the current arrangements are therefore not sustainable...'

'...it may be that for the targeted group the holistic approach works. But there are inadequate resources to support the intensive work needed by young people at risk...'

why it is unhelpful

'...Connexions has taken the careers service budget and used it for another purpose... it was raided in order to make Connexions possible...'

'...research into young people at risk suggests that we are neglecting careers education for all young people by addressing exclusion...'

'... in England we have never seriously addressed the issue posed by schools and colleges where it is decided that it is not worth bothering about careers education and guidance...'

why we don't know yet

'...Connexions using IAG as their model has not secured the rounded service that government really wanted. They are taking their time about working this out...'

'...it is more important that we get it right than that we get it quick...'

why it is going to be difficult to achieve

'... in general school teachers are focussed on their own subject and don't understand why they should be bothered with careers education...'

'...almost all of the speakers at this conference are playing for position. A conference about integration might better be designed by insisting that nobody speaks unless they say what their work cannot do, and that they hope that other people's work can do. This would be genuinely integrative...'

'...we hope that the Green Paper will bring an end to all of the turf wars...'

6. ORGANISATION

does integration mean unification? what are the consequences? what could be lost?

how unified?

'...there are learning points: information should be shared between agencies; we need to think about what kind of integration with statutory services is most constructive...'

'...it is individual workers – at grass-roots level – who work well together; management can get in the way...'

'...the role of Connexions is: more choices for young people, greater need for trusted adults to help navigate the options, an infrastructure already in place, and a sub-regional approaches fits with many young people's lives...'

'...we need to clarify the use of roles and responsibilities and to learning how to respond to what young people want and need...'

consequences?

'...we seem to be moving towards a school- and college-based model for guidance at a time when the OECD has clearly identified its limitations. If that is what is going to happen we must ensure that we do it properly...'

'...the trouble with integrated work experience was that employers found that they were dealing with up-to-six heads of department. They would 'phone into the school to find that not one of the HoDs had talked with any of the others...'

'...if schools are thought to be best placed to bring about an improvement in careers education and guidance, then a major investment is going to be required in practitioner training...'

'...asking "should it be a private or local-authority provision?" is a secondary issue; the primary issue is "how should guidance be developed?"...'

'...progress has to be slow when what we need to know is not yet in place...'

'...integration may be a vague term. But so is partnership...'

'...where OECD looked at guidance services located in schools and colleges it reports that choices and decisions were related to short-term goals, not to being impartial, and to being divorced from the labour market. There was also inconsistency: some schools and colleges do this work well, but some do it badly and some do it not all...'

what losses?

'... to link careers education and guidance to social exclusion is by definition, to marginalise it.'

'...the Scots looked at the English model and rejected it. In Scotland between 85-90% of school students get a guidance interview – although these interviews are not organised on a "blanket" basis. No adult is turned away....'

'...external provision is necessary, with a partnership model for the relationship between schools and colleges and guidance....'

'...Connexions looks more like two services than one... and it cannot meet the demands of both a universal and a targeted provision...'

'...we should, before it is too late, separate Connexions into its two constituent parts, and reconnect careers education and guidance to learning and labour-market agendas. We should learn from Scotland and Wales.'

'...integration is dangerous word. Partnerships is stronger because it maintains boundaries....'

7. GOVERNMENT

what can it do about frameworks and resources?

set out a clear framework for action

'...this government has more visions than St Theresa!...'

'...who has responsibility to secure provision. At the moment the law is a mess...'

'...I have no doubt that the money is there. It is just that it is scattered everywhere...'

allocate adequate resources

'... I have not yet seen a research report that has not said the Connexions is inadequately resourced...'

Bill Law wrote down at the time as much as he could of what was said. The quotations are as accurate as the limitations of his handwriting-speed and acuity can get them. There is occasional paraphrasing, to take account of context. The whole is as impartial as Bill's self-awareness will allow. No claims are made about representativeness or completeness.

Nonetheless the quotations raise critical issues for the future of IAG. The Career-learning Network's 'CPI papers' are intended to set out the research-and-development terms in which these issues now urgently need to be resolved.

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