

# BULLETIN

## Preparing for World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Secondary Schools: Scoping provision in Kent and Medway

This *Bulletin* presents a summary of the findings from an in-depth, qualitative study into the provision of careers education and guidance (CEG) in the Kent and Medway region, commissioned by Connexions Kent & Medway (for the full report see: Bimrose, Marris & Barnes, 2007). This research is based on interviews with 36 stakeholders across 15 secondary schools in the Kent and Medway region. Its aim was to: provide a detailed account of CEG provision in schools throughout the region, from the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in its delivery, and establish which critical success factors and strategies contribute to the delivery of coherent CEG services in the region.

### Introduction

Various recent publications, for example, the '14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005a), the White Paper 'Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b) and 'Youth Matters' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005c), have all identified CEG, or information, advice and guidance (IAG), as important in supporting young people in making successful transitions from education into the labour market.

The research was designed to provide Connexions Kent & Medway service with information on the strengths and weaknesses of current CEG provision, so that it could ensure that services offered to schools complement and enhance those that already exist.

This *Bulletin* will, firstly, give a brief overview of the methodology used for the research. Background information on the respondents is presented next. This is followed by selected findings from an analysis of the interview data, organised by theme. Finally, some selected conclusions of the scoping exercise are presented.

### Methodology

The participation of schools for the survey was essential and that different types of school (e.g. grammar,

technology) and different regional locations (e.g. urban, city) were represented. In total, 22 schools were approached in order to achieve the 15 required with the desired representation. For each participating school, at least one of the Personal Advisers (P.A.s) allocated to the school, together with at least one member of school staff with key responsibility for the delivery of CEG provision, were interviewed by telephone. The proportion of school-based staff, compared with Connexions P.A.s for each school, varied across the sample. Overall, 18 school-based staff were interviewed across the 15 schools. Additionally, nineteen interviews with Connexions P.A.s were completed (though only 18 P.A.s actually participated in the study<sup>1</sup>).

To ensure comparability of data, the telephone interviews were guided by an interview protocol that was developed by the team of researchers, in consultation with the project management team at Connexions Kent & Medway. This protocol was evidence-based, since it was derived from the findings of a literature review on CEG provision in England (Bimrose, Barnes & Marris, 2007), completed immediately before the field research was undertaken.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of analysis, one P.A. was interviewed about her work in two different schools so these were counted as two interviews.

Telephone interviews took place during July-September, 2007, on a date and at a time selected by the participants. Agreement from all participants to participate was explicitly negotiated and recorded. The length of interviews varied from between 26 minutes to one hour and 32 minutes.

### Background of the participants

The 37 participants interviewed across the participating schools can be categorised into three groups, specifically:

- 18 School representatives, with direct responsibility for CEG provision in their school (including Heads of Sixth Form, Deputy Heads, Heads of Key Stage 4, Enterprise officers, Heads of Work-related Learning, Careers and Work Experience, as well as Heads of Careers and Careers Co-ordinators);
- 7 Connexions Lead P.A.s or Team Leaders; and
- 11 Connexions P.A.s (including guidance, intensive support and pre-vocational advisers).

A brief summary of the background information on participants and their current role in CEG, qualification and experience of CEG follows.

Of the 37 participants, 11 are male (30%) and 26 are female (70%). The majority (n=24, 69%) had been in post between 1-5 years, with the range of variation between less than one year (n=7, 19%) and up to 17 years (n=1, 3%). Most had previous experience of CEG prior to their current role (n=23, 62%). Of the 15 schools, ten had posts with some level of responsibility for CEG that were teaching posts; four had non-teaching posts associated with CEG; and one was in transition, with future arrangements uncertain. Connexions Lead P.A.s/ Team Leaders and Guidance P.A.s were found to have had prior experience of CEG, compared with their counterparts in schools.

Of the 18 school CEG representatives, the majority (n=17, 94%) did not hold any accredited CEG related qualifications. Six (35%) had participated in some CEG related CPD activities and/ or Connexions related courses. Eleven (61%) of these 18 school representatives had either applied, volunteered or agreed to take on the responsibility of careers provision. The remaining seven (39%) had had responsibilities allocated. When asked about the time allocated to their CEG role: seven (39%) had no time formally allocated; one had a reduced teaching load; one had about a 10 per cent time allocation. Only half (n=9, 50%) either had a formal allocation of time, or felt they were able to manage their time sufficiently well to discharge their CEG responsibility adequately.

All of the Connexions Lead P.A.s/ Team Leaders (n=7, 100%) and the majority of the Guidance P.A.s (n=9, 75%) held CEG related qualifications, including the Diploma in Careers Guidance, the Qualification in Careers Guidance and/ or the NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance. The four Connexions Lead P.A.s/ Team Leaders with a Diploma or Qualification in Careers Guidance had held an

NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance. Two Guidance P.A.s had attained other relevant qualifications, including an NVQ Level 4 in Learning Development and Support Systems for Young People (one P.A. was 'working towards' this qualification at the time of the interview) and a Diploma for Personal Advisers.

### The language used around CEG provision

The need for a clear and common language around careers education and guidance (CEG) and/ or Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools had emerged as a critical issue from previous research (McGowan, 2006). This finding was confirmed by 62 per cent of participants (n=23), with urgent clarification of terminology considered important in achieving an accurate understanding both of current provision and potential need. The broad range of stakeholders, often transient, who are operating in or around this area (encompassing not only students, but also subject teachers, school managers, parents, employers, Connexions staff and school-based CEG staff), make the use of a common language critical. One view that was expressed in this research referred to the central importance of language in persuading 'multiple audiences' of the value of CEG. An even higher proportion of participants (n=29, 78%) stressed how their own understanding of CEG encompassed a broad range of activities, that typically focused on an holistic understanding of the individual student at the centre of these activities. Taken together, these broad definitions indicate a clear shift in the collective understanding away from a traditional focus on the initial transition from compulsory education into employment, to an all-encompassing educational process that should equip individual students with skills and understanding for life that will support their progression through adolescence into adulthood and beyond.

Whilst there was a degree of consensus regarding broad concepts underpinning CEG, there was less uniformity in the language used to describe its precise nature. The importance of the 'impartiality' was emphasised (unprompted) by six participants. Interestingly, four participants expressed the view that the language of CEG was either unimportant, or of less importance, to the consumers of CEG, compared with the quality of service provision available.

### Current CEG provision in schools

As previously indicated, although CEG is part of the statutory curriculum, it stands outside the national curriculum. Consequently, schools and colleges are free to design their careers education programme and determine the amount of teaching time allocated. Whilst there are no set time allocations for CEG, the following guidelines were provided by the (then) Department for Education and Skills (2004c, p.12): Year 7 – 6 hrs; Year 8 – 12 hrs; Year 9 – 15 hrs; Year 10 – 24 hrs (excluding work experience); Year 11 – 24 hrs (excluding work experience); Year 12 – 20

hrs (excluding work experience); and Year 13 – 20 hrs (excluding work experience).

One of the recommendations from the recent end-to-end review of CEG was that: ‘Schools should be encouraged to adopt a ‘whole school’ approach, incorporating CEG, student support and progression issues, starting in Year 7’ (Department for Education and Skills, 2005d, p.19). However, four distinct models of CEG provision emerged from analysis of the survey data. These are:

- **integrated** – The majority of schools surveyed (n=10) described a model of provision that integrated elements of CEG across the curriculum. This is close to the ‘whole school’ approach recommended by the end-to-end review. In these schools, there were no discrete, identifiable ‘CEG’ lessons – rather, it was ‘embedded’ in different elements of the curriculum;
- **stand alone** – This describes a model where teachers who were subject specialists had no responsibility for delivering CEG across the curriculum. Rather, designated CEG activities were delivered in specified lessons (e.g. PSHE). Only one school out of the 15 that were surveyed identified this particular model of provision, although two others were intending to move away from integrated provision to versions of a ‘stand alone’ model;
- **peripheral** – Two schools surveyed had peripheral models of CEG. In these schools, the perceptions were that CEG was marginalised and given low priority compared with other competing demands; and
- **transitional** – Two schools could be described as being in transition. Whilst CEG was regarded as important, current provision was reported to be ‘inadequate’ and ‘not sufficient’. This situation was, however, destined to change for the better as improvements were expected.

### Models underpinning CEG provision

Frameworks informing practice in the areas of CEG have, in fact, been in development for over a century and have benefited from numerous iterations of development, implementation, review and refinement. In common with many other subject areas, competing perspectives have emerged – with some currently having acquired more rigorous evidence-bases than others. Each of these frameworks, or models, provides a clear rationale for their use, specifies desirable outcomes, together with indications of possible processes and content for the delivery of CEG programmes. At the heart of these models are assumptions about learning and/ or decision-making processes. As with any educational process involving individual learning, it is not unreasonable to expect those delivering CEG services to have at least an awareness, if not a detailed understanding, of principles informing their practice.

However, participants at eight of the schools (53%) had either very little awareness, or no idea at all, of the models underpinning their existing CEG provision.

### Measuring the effectiveness of provision

Any approach to evaluation is likely to be limited where there is lack of clarity regarding the overall purpose of the activity being evaluated. Given the number of schools employing CEG co-ordinators with little, or no, awareness of models underpinning practice, it is perhaps not surprising that eight schools in the survey reported a lack of any formal systematic evaluation procedures for their CEG programmes. Of these eight schools, a few indicated that limited, informal evaluation of CEG programmes was undertaken, but where this occurred, it was typically limited in scope and somewhat *ad hoc* (for example, in one school, statistical data that was routinely collected on what the students intended to do after they left school was identified as the only indication of the effectiveness of CEG provision). Six schools reported evaluation procedures that were part of other processes, rather than undertaken as part of a systematic process of continuous quality improvement of their CEG provision. Only one school out of the 15 described how they undertook systematic evaluations of their CEG, with the specific purpose of improving provision for students.

### Current relationship between Connexions and schools

The quality of the relationship between individual schools and the Connexions service is likely to be a crucial factor in the ability of the Connexions service to deliver a consistently high level of service. Participants were asked, therefore, about the nature of the relationship between the school to which they were attached, or by which they were employed, and the Connexions service. Participants from nine of the 15 schools surveyed reported that their relationship with the Connexions service was either ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. In a number of these cases, the school representative(s) highlighted the quality of the Connexions P.A. as critical to the overall quality of relationship with the school. Overall, 13 of the schools regarded their relationship with Connexions as excellent, good, improving or having the potential to improve. For the remaining two schools surveyed, the current relationship between the service and the schools was reported as poor.

### Connexions Personal Advisers

A crucial success factor in the delivery of high quality CEG services that has emerged recurrently in this research is the approach taken by the Connexions Kent & Medway P.A.s to working in the schools to which they are allocated. The number of P.A.s allocated to each school varied between one and five. This variation reflected a combination of different factors, like the diverse needs of students, the numbers of students in each school, as well as the availability of P.A.s

offering different specialisms (i.e. Pre-Vocational P.As., Guidance P.A.s, Intensive P.A.s and Health P.A.s).

The particular package of CEG services provided by Connexions to schools differed, as could be expected, across those surveyed. Service provision typically included combinations of activities, such as: one-to-one interviews organised on a referral basis for various year groups of students; one-to-one interviews provided as part of lunch-time drop-in sessions; group work of different types addressing topics reflecting the needs of the year groups of students (for example, work experience preparation for Year 10 students and University Admissions for Year 12); attendance at parents' evenings; and various types of presentations at school assemblies.

### Careers library provision

In the majority of schools, the careers library provision was found to be well supported, both by the school and Connexions Kent & Medway; with 13 schools using funding from Connexions Kent & Medway to extend and update careers library provision.

Careers library provision within all schools had dedicated individuals organising the materials, variously including: the P.A.; school librarian; school representative responsible for CEG; and the local Connexions Co-ordinator. Careers library provision was located within the main library in 12 schools, so materials were easily accessible by students. Limited access to the careers library materials was reported in three schools, two of which were addressing the problem by relocating materials to a more student accessible location. In two schools, where materials had gone missing, they were now monitored by staff, so access was restricted.

### Conclusions

It is impossible to generalise about the operational status and duties of those responsible for CEG in schools across the region. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the quality of CEG provision within any one school is likely to be affected by a range of factors, particularly the status bestowed to CEG by the school using mechanisms such as time allocations and teacher status. The nomenclature of school staff with responsibility for CEG provides one powerful illustration of the diversity of organisational priorities within schools.

This research has revealed a lively, varied and expansive terrain of CEG provision, albeit patchy in places. However, the overarching issue seems to be the lack of clarity about the purpose of CEG. There is a lack of shared language for CEG, little evidence of any underpinning models for careers education and guidance coupled with a rather haphazard approach to evaluation mechanisms. This is not to imply that there is not much good and innovative practice evident – only that such provision is not easily identified or shared.

There is much to celebrate regarding the work of P.A.s in schools. Overall, there is ample evidence of innovation and commitment, both of which are critical factors in

establishing constructive working relationships. There are also, however, examples of where careful planning and clear communication could help maximise the impact of available resources for the benefit of young people.

Many positive examples emerged regarding how Connexions Kent & Medway is perceived by the schools in this survey. Particularly valued was the financial support for library provision and training provision (INSET). However, there are undoubtedly some outstanding issues with a continuum of experiences of the quality of the relationship existing between Connexions and individual schools.

### References

- Bimrose, J., Barnes, S-A. & Marris, L. (2007). *Establishing World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Kent and Medway: A literature review*. Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research.
- Bimrose, J., Marris, L., & Barnes, S-A. (2007). *Establishing World Class Careers Education and Guidance in Kent and Medway: A scoping exercise*. Coventry: Warwick Institute for Employment Research.
- Department for Education and Skills (2005a). *14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan*. Nottingham: DfES publications.
- Department for Education and Skills (2005b). *Skills: Getting On in Business; Getting On at Work*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills (2005c). *Youth Matters: Every Child Matters*. Nottingham: DfES publications.
- Department for Education and Skills (2005d). *Report of the end to end review of careers education and guidance*. Nottingham: DfES publications.
- McGowan, B. (2006). *Developing careers work in schools: issues and considerations*. Retrieved June 5, 2007, from [http://www.crac.org.uk/nicec/publications/pdfs/new\\_briefings/dev\\_careers\\_work\\_schools\\_issues\\_considerations.pdf](http://www.crac.org.uk/nicec/publications/pdfs/new_briefings/dev_careers_work_schools_issues_considerations.pdf).

### Further information

This study was conducted by Jenny Bimrose, Sally-Anne Barnes and others at IER. It was extended by the IER team who conducted five in-depth case studies. The aim of these case studies was: to provide an in-depth account of elements of CEG provision in five schools from the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in its delivery; and to establish which critical success factors and strategies contribute to the delivery of coherent CEG services alongside the schools in the region. This report can be downloaded from the IER website: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/people/jbimrose/cxs\\_km\\_case\\_study\\_report\\_final\\_07.01.08.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/people/jbimrose/cxs_km_case_study_report_final_07.01.08.pdf)

Further work undertaken by IER that has been commissioned by Connexions Kent & Medway includes: the development of an e-portfolio for use in schools as part of CEG; and the development of local labour market information.

For more information on these and other related projects contact Sally-Anne at [sally-anne.barnes@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:sally-anne.barnes@warwick.ac.uk).

Previous IER Bulletins can be downloaded from our website: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/publications/bulletins>